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IRAAKSE MASSAVERNIETIGINGSWAPENS

De beweringen

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INLEIDING

Een van de belangrijkste redenen om Irak aan te vallen was dat er sprake was van een onmiddellijke dreiging naar de wereld toe, en wel omdat het bewind van Saddam Hoessein zou beschikken over inzetbare massavernietigingswapens.

Al in de aanloop naar de oorlog werd door de meeste deskundigen, inclusief die van de Amerikaanse CIA, gezegd dat er mogelijkwijs nog voorraden van grondstoffen aanwezig waren waarmee massavernietigingswapens gemaakt konden worden, maar dat ze de kans klein achten dat er inzetbare wapens waren. Bijvoorbeeld met chemische koppen uitgeruste raketten die landen in de regio zoals Israël konden treffen.

Inmiddels is de oorlog gevoerd en Irak bezet. De Amerikaanse regering weigert de VN inspecteurs weer het land in te laten. Al anderhalve maand zoeken duizenden Amerikaanse inspecteurs naar de massavernietigingswapens. Er zijn een paar aanwijzingen gevonden (de mobiele laboratoria) maar van inzetbare wapensystemen is geen sprake, precies zoals de deskundigen zeiden.

De Amerikaanse en vooral Britse regering proberen nu de suggestie te wekken dat het niet alleen ging om de massavernietigingswapens, maar ook om het onderdrukingsbewind van Saddam Hoessein. Daarmee logenstraffen ze een hele reeks openbare uitlatingen en beweringen die in de VN en elders door hen zijn gedaan om aarzelende parlementariërs en regeringen over de streep te trekken. De Nederlandse regering heeft hier ook aan meegedaan, blijkens verklaringen van Premier Balkenende.

Het leek ons nuttig om een deel van deze uitspraken bij elkaar te brengen om het debat hierover te ondersteunen. Wellicht worden er nog aanwijzingen gevonden van het WMD programma van SH: dat heeft zeker bestaan in het verleden. Maar dat is niet de kern van de kritiek: die is dat er een aanvalsoorlog gevoerd is met als argument dat er een onmiddellijk gevaar bestond voor de internationale vrede, dan wel de veiligheid van de lidstaten. Het lijkt er erg veel op dat de bewijzen voor dat gevaar op zijn minst zijn opgeklopt, dan wel verzonnen. Omdat het gaat om zaken van oorlog en vrede, is dat afdoende reden voor een publiek debat, ook in Nederland.

Redactie F&R

CITATEN NEDERLANDSE REGERING EN TWEEDE KAMER

Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, Minister van Buitenlandse Zaken: “[...] Het lijkt weinig twijfel dat Irak beschikt over massavernietigingswapens. De vraag is vooral welke en hoeveel. Bij de wapeninspecties door de VN, die eind 1998 werden afgebroken, bleek Irak te beschikken over een aanzienlijk arsenaal aan massavernietigingswapens (MVW). Bovendien behoort Irak tot de zeer weinige landen die deze wapens ooit werkelijk hebben ingezet, namelijk in de oorlog met Iran en tegen de eigen – Koerdische – bevolking. Er bestaat naar mijn mening geen twijfel dat Irak na het vertrek van de VN wapeninspecteurs (UNSCOM), en ondanks het bestaan van het controleregime voor wat betreft de invoer van «dual use» goederen is doorgegaan met ontwikkeling van met name biologische en chemische wapens. De dreiging die daarvan uitgaat is reëel en wordt, naarmate de tijd verstrijkt, steeds ernstiger. [...]”
(Brief aan de Tweede Kamer, 23432 – nr. 56, 4 september 2002)

Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, Minister van Buitenlandse Zaken: “U hebt via verschillende kanalen kennis kunnen nemen van hetgeen in Helsingör is besproken en welk standpunt de EU heeft ingenomen. U hebt mij niet als dissident gehoord en er mag dus van worden uitgegaan dat de regering dat standpunt onderschrijft. [...] Versta mij niet verkeerd: ik zeg hier niet dat Irak over nucleaire wapens beschikt, maar gebruik dit wel ter adstructie van mijn stelling dat de dreiging die van Saddam Hoessein in Irak uitgaat levensgroot is. En die wordt steeds groter als wij berusten in de huidige situatie en geen grotere druk op Irak uitoefenen om wapeninspecteurs toe te laten. [...] Saddam Hoessein moet op dit onderwerp bewijzen, via de onvoorwaardelijke, vrije, aangekondigde en onaangekondigde teoegang van wapeninspecteurs, dat hij niet over massavernietigingswapens beschikt. Laten wij niet in de verkeerde redenering vervallen [...] dat wij zouden moeten bewijzen dat hij massavernietigingswapens heeft. [...] Wat is het antwoord op de dreiging van Saddam Hoessein? Dat loopt langs het spoor van de Veiligheidsraad van de VN. [...] Het gaat om de op basis van de Veiligheidsraadresolutie geëiste terugkeer van de wapeninspecteurs. Daar staan wij hier en nu voor, dat is de boodschap waarmee ik namens de regering volgende week naar New York afreis. [...] Ook wat de regering betreft, wordt het spoor van de Veiligheidsraad niet beëindigd in de onverhoopte situatie dat Saddam Hoessein de inspecteurs niet wil. Ook dan is nog de opvatting van de regering dat wij niet van dat spoor afwijken. Dat is uiteraard ook de boodschap die met de Amerikaanse administratie zal worden besproken. De Nederlandse regering vindt dat de Veiligheidsraad ervoor is om dit soort onderwerpen te bespreken. [...] Als de internationale gemeenschap nu reeds uitspreekt dat, wat er ook gebeurt en wat de houding van de Iraakse president ook zal zijn, er geen verdere stap volgt, dan weet ik één ding zeker. Dan komen de inspecteurs er nooit in. Dat kunnen wij dan vergeten. Desalniettemin spreek ik ook hier [...] de wenselijkheid van een resolutie van de Veiligheidsraad uit. Ik heb het politieke argument gegeven waarom er geen *conditio sine qua non* is vermeld, waarom er niet ‘noodzakelijk’ staat. Dan zou je je bij voorbaat van het instrument en het argument laten ontnemen om, zo je daartoe zou willen overgaan, een stap verder te zetten. Ook als die verdere stap wordt gezet, zal de volledige inspanning van de Nederlandse regering erop gericht zijn dat dit via de Veiligheidsraad gebeurt. Ik hoop dat het dan lukt, maar ik weet het niet zeker. [...] Je wilt graag een resolutie van de Veiligheidsraad als dat nodig is. Je kunt je echter niet afhankelijk maken van het veto van één permanent lid. Dat is mijn politieke argument. [...] Er is in dit verband ook de mogelijkheid van een verandering van het regime in Irak genoemd. Zo’n verandering vind ik op zichzelf onvoldoende basis voor het gebruik van militair geweld. [...] Maar de legitimatie voor het optreden van de internationale gemeenschap ligt voor mij nagelvast in de kwestie van de massavernietigingswapens. Daarom vormen de inspecteurs ook de eerste stap, het gaat om het bezit van deze wapens en om de enorme dreiging die ervan uitgaat. Dat is dus de basis, ook voor onze inbreng volgende week in de gesprekken met de Amerikaanse regering. Het gaat om de massavernietigingswapens en daarop zijn overigens ook de resoluties van de Veiligheidsraad gericht, niet op een verandering van regime.”

(Debat over de brief van de minister van Buitenlandse Zaken over Irak, Tweede Kamer, 5 september 2002)

Camiel Eurlings, woordvoerder CDA: “De dreiging die uitgaat van chemische en biologische wapens in Irak is zeer reëel.”

(CDA Nieuwsbericht, 7 september 2002)

Camiel Eurlings, woordvoerder CDA: “Voor de CDA-fractie bestaat er geen twijfel over de dreiging die van Irak uitgaat. Niet alleen heeft Irak in 1988 gifgas tegen de Koerden ingezet, maar ook is hiervan gebruik gemaakt tijdens de oorlog tegen Iran. Ook is tijdens de in 1998 afgebroken wapeninspecties door de VN duidelijk gebleken dat Irak beschikte over een aanzienlijk arsenaal aan massavernietigingswapens. Deze situatie laten voortbestaan is een onacceptabel risico.”

(CDA Magazine, nr. 11, 4 december 2002)

Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, Minister van Buitenlandse Zaken: “[...] Vorige week heeft de Britse regering een rapport uitgegeven omtrent het bezit door Irak van massavernietigingswapens en over de capaciteit die verder te ontwikkelen. De analyse in dit rapport van het streven van het Iraakse regime om in strijd met de VR-resoluties capaciteit te verwerven met betrekking tot massavernietigingswapens, alsmede de dreiging die daarvan uitgaat in het licht van de aard van het bewind in Bagdad, stemt overeen met het beeld dat de Nederlandse regering daarvan heeft.

[...] De regering is ervan overtuigd dat de door Irak uitgesproken bereidheid mee te werken met UNMOVIC uitsluitend te danken is aan de sterke internationale druk, in het bijzonder de dreiging met militaire middelen. De regering meent dat die druk in stand moet blijven om Irak ertoe te bewegen daadwerkelijk mee te werken aan de uitvoering van de desbetreffende resoluties van de Veiligheidsraad en aan de ontmanteling van zijn arsenaal van massavernietigingswapens.”

(Brief aan de Tweede Kamer, DAM 450/02, 30 september 2002)

Henk Kamp, Minister van Defensie: “Het is met name Saddam Hoessein die met oorlogsvoorbereiding in de weer is. Het gaat nu niet om de oorlogen die hij al gevoerd heeft, maar om de noodzaak om de dreiging die van zijn regime uitgaat teniet te doen. Daarop zijn de inspanningen van de internationale gemeenschap gericht en met name de VS houden daarbij de nodige druk op de ketel. De massavernietigingswapens moeten worden ingeleverd en als dat gebeurt, hoeft er geen actie te worden ondernomen.”

(Debat in de Tweede Kamer, Handelingen TK 46-3115, 19 februari 2003)

Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, Minister van Buitenlandse Zaken: “[...] Alles wijst erop dat Irak nog steeds de intentie heeft zijn MVW-capaciteit te behouden, en bovendien die op een geschikt moment verder uit te bouwen. Nu het zo evident de kans laat lopen duidelijk te maken dat het die opzet niet langer heeft, moet worden aangenomen dat Irak bereid en in staat is de internationale gemeenschap bij voortduring om de tuin te leiden. Met financiële sancties en inspecties alleen kan die intentie niet afgestopt worden. [...]”

(Brief aan de Tweede Kamer, DAM 145/03, 18 maart 2003)

Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, Minister van Buitenlandse Zaken: “Wij maken ons [...] grote zorgen over de mogelijke inzet van chemische en biologische wapens door Irak en de gevolgen daarvan voor de burgerbevolking. Wij gaan ervan uit dat Irak die wapens heeft. Saddam Hoessein beweert dat hij ze niet heeft, maar dat laat ik ook even terzijde.”

(Debat in de Tweede Kamer, Handelingen TK 50-3310, 18 maart 2003)

Minister-President Jan-Peter Balkenende: “De essentie is echter de ontwapening van een agressor die massavernietigingswapens in zijn bezit heeft en in ieder geval geen antwoord geeft op de vragen die de internationale gemeenschap aan hem stelt.”

(Debat in de Tweede Kamer, Handelingen TK 50-3326, 18 maart 2003)

CITATEN AMERIKAANSE EN BRITSE REGERING

Vice-President Dick Cheney: “There is no doubt that Saddam Hussein now has weapons of mass destruction; there is no doubt that he is amassing them to use against our friends, against our allies, and against us. [Even if U.N. inspectors were allowed to return to Iraq, their presence] "would provide no assurance whatsoever of his compliance with U.N. resolutions. On the contrary, there is a great danger that it would provide false comfort that Saddam was somehow back in his box. Meanwhile, he would continue to plot.”

(Wendy S. Ross, Cheney warns of dangers of Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq, 26 August 2002)

Prime Minister Tony Blair: “The point that I would emphasize to you is that the threat from Saddam Hussein and weapons of mass destruction, chemical, biological, potentially nuclear weapons capability, that threat is real. We only need to look at the report from the International Atomic Agency this morning showing what has been going on at the former nuclear weapons sites to realize that. And the policy of inaction is not a policy we can responsibly subscribe to. So the purpose of our discussion today is to work out the right strategy for dealing with this, because deal with it we must. [...] As I said to you I think at the press conference we gave earlier in the week, this is an issue for the whole of the international community. But the U.N. has got to be the way of dealing with this issue, not the way of avoiding dealing with it. Now, of course, as we showed before in relation to Afghanistan, we want the broadest possible international support, but it's got to be on the basis of actually making sure that the threat that we've outlined is properly adhered to.”

(US Department of State, Transcript: Bush, Blair say international community must act on Iraq, 7 September 2002)

President George W. Bush: “[...] Delegates to the General Assembly, we have been more than patient. We’ve tried sanctions. We’ve tried the carrot of oil for food, and the stick of coalition military strikes. But Saddam Hussein has defied all these efforts and continues to develop weapons of mass destruction. The first time we may be completely certain he has a -- nuclear weapons is when, God forbids, he uses one. [...]”

(President’s remarks to the United Nations General Assembly, 12 September 2002)

British government: “[...] This chapter sets out what we know of Saddam Hussein’s chemical, biological, nuclear and ballistic missile programmes, drawing on all the available evidence. While it takes account of the results from UN inspections and other publicly available information, it also draws heavily on the latest intelligence about Iraqi efforts to develop their programmes and capabilities since 1998. The main conclusions are that:

- Iraq has a useable chemical and biological weapons capability, in breach of UNSCR 687, which has included recent production of chemical and biological agents;
- Saddam continues to attach great importance to the possession of weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles which he regards as being the basis for Iraq’s regional power. He is determined to retain these capabilities;
- Iraq can deliver chemical and biological agents using an extensive range of artillery shells, free-fall bombs, sprayers and ballistic missiles;
- Iraq continues to work on developing nuclear weapons, in breach of its obligations under the Non-Proliferation Treaty and in breach of UNSCR 687. Uranium has been sought from Africa that has no civil nuclear application in Iraq;
- Iraq possesses extended-range versions of the SCUD ballistic missile in breach of UNSCR 687 which are capable of reaching Cyprus, Eastern Turkey, Tehran and Israel. It is also developing longer-range ballistic missiles;
- Iraq’s current military planning specifically envisages the use of chemical and biological weapons;

- Iraq's military forces are able to use chemical and biological weapons, with command, control and logistical arrangements in place. The Iraqi military are able to deploy these weapons within 45 minutes of a decision to do so;
- Iraq has learnt lessons from previous UN weapons inspections and is already taking steps to conceal and disperse sensitive equipment and documentation in advance of the return of inspectors;
- Iraq's chemical, biological, nuclear and ballistic missiles programmes are well-funded.

[...]

(Iraq's weapons of mass destruction; the assesment of the British Government, chapter 3, 24 September 2002)

US House of Representatives: “[...] WHEREAS Iraq both poses a continuing threat to the national security of the United States and international peace and security in the Persian Gulf region and remains in material and unacceptable breach of its international obligations by, among other things, continuing to possess and develop a significant chemical and biological weapons capability, actively seeking a nuclear weapons capability and supporting and harboring terrorist organizations,

[...]

WHEREAS Iraq's demonstrated capability and willingness to use weapons of mass destruction, the risk that the current Iraqi regime will either employ those weapons to launch a surprise attack against the United States or its Armed Forces or provide them to international terrorists who would do so and the extreme magnitude of harm that would result to the United States and its citizens from such an attack, combine to justify action by the United States to defend itself,

[...]

WHEREAS the United States is determined to prosecute the war on terrorism and Iraq's ongoing support for international terrorist groups combined with its development of weapons of mass destruction in direct violation of its obligations under the 1991 cease-fire and other United Nations Security Council resolutions make clear that it is in the national security interests of the United States and in furtherance of the war on terrorism that all relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions be enforced, including through the use of force if necessary,

[...]

SECTION 3:

AUTHORIZATION FOR USE OF UNITED STATES ARMED FORCES.

(a) AUTHORIZATION. The president is authorized to use the Armed Forces of the United States as he determines to be necessary and appropriate in order to

- (1) defend the national security of the United States against the continuing threat posed by Iraq; and
- (2) enforce all relevant United Nations Security Council Resolutions regarding Iraq.”

[...]

(House Resolution authorizing the use of US force against Iraq, Associated Press, 3 October 2002)

Richard Perle, former chairman of US Defence Policy Board: “I cannot see how Hans Blix can state more than he can know. All he can know is the results of his own investigations. And that does not prove Saddam does not have weapons of mass destruction. [...] Suppose we are able to find someone who has been involved in the development of weapons and he says there are stores of nerve agents. But you cannot find them because they are so well hidden. Do you actually have to take possession of the nerve agents to convince? We are not dealing with a situation where you can expect co-operation.”

(Paul Gilfeather, Bush aide: Inspections or not, we'll attack Iraq, The Mirror, 21 November 2002)

Ari Fleischer, White House Press Secretary: “If he declares he has none, then we will know that Saddam Hussein is once again misleading the world.”

(Press briefing, 2 December 2002)

President George W. Bush: “You see, the inspectors are not in Iraq to play hide-and-seek with Mr. Saddam Hussein. [...] Inspectors do not have the duty or the ability to uncover terrible weapons hidden in a vast country. The responsibility of inspectors is simply to confirm the evidence of voluntary and total disarmament.”

(New York Times, ‘Not encouraging,’ Bush says of Iraq on arms demands, 3 December 2002)

Ari Fleischer, White House Press Secretary: “We know for a fact that there are weapons there.”

(Press briefing, 9 January 2003)

Condoleezza Rice, National Security Adviser: “[...] Instead of a commitment to disarm, Iraq has a high-level political commitment to maintain and conceal its weapons, led by Saddam Hussein and his son Qusay, who controls the Special Security Organization, which runs Iraq's concealment activities. Instead of implementing national initiatives to disarm, Iraq maintains institutions whose sole purpose is to thwart the work of the inspectors. And instead of full cooperation and transparency, Iraq has filed a false declaration to the United Nations that amounts to a 12,200-page lie. [...]”

(Condoleezza Rice, Why we know Iraq is lying, New York Times, 23 January 2003)

President George W. Bush: “Our intelligence officials estimate that Saddam Hussein Saddam had the materials to produce as much as 500 tons of sarin, mustard and VX nerve agent.”

(State of the Union address, 28 January 2003)

Secretary of State Colin Powell: “[...] While there will be no "smoking gun," we will provide evidence concerning the weapons programs that Iraq is working so hard to hide. We will, in sum, offer a straightforward, sober and compelling demonstration that Saddam is concealing the evidence of his weapons of mass destruction, while preserving the weapons themselves. [...]”

(Colin Powell, We will not shrink from war, Wall Street Journal, 3 February 2003)

Secretary of State Colin Powell: “We know that Saddam Hussein is determined to keep his weapons of mass destruction, is determined to make more.”

(Remarks to UN Security Council, 5 February 2003)

President George W. Bush: “We have sources that tell us that Saddam Hussein recently authorized Iraqi field commanders to use chemical weapons -- the very weapons the dictator tells us he does not have.”

(Radio address, 8 February 2003)

Prime Minister Tony Blair: “Dr Blix reported to the UN yesterday and there will be more time given to inspections. He will report again on 28 February. But let no one forget two things. To anyone familiar with Saddam's tactics of deception and evasion, there is a weary sense of déjà vu. As ever, at the last minute, concessions are made. And as ever, it is the long finger that is directing them. The concessions are suspect. Unfortunately the weapons are real. [...]]

The time needed is not the time it takes the inspectors to discover the weapons. They are not a detective agency. We played that game for years in the 1990s. The time is the time necessary to make a judgment: is Saddam prepared to co-operate fully or not. If he is, the inspectors can take as much time as they want. If he is not, if this is a repeat of the 1990s - and I believe it is - then let us be under no doubt what is at stake.”

(Speech Labour-congres, Glasgow, 15 February 2003)

Secretary of State Colin Powell: “So has the strategic decision been made to disarm Iraq of its weapons of mass destruction by the leadership in Baghdad? [...] I think our judgment has to be clearly not.”

(Remarks to UN Security Council, 8 March 2003)

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld: "[...] He claims to have no chemical or biological weapons, yet we know he continues to hide biological and chemical weapons, moving them to different locations as often as every 12 to 24 hours, and placing them in residential neighbourhoods. [...]"
(Press briefing, 12 March 2003)

President George W. Bush: "[...] Saddam Hussein has a history of mass murder. He possesses the weapons of mass murder. He agrees – he agreed to disarm Iraq of these weapons as a condition for ending the Gulf War over a decade ago. The United Nations Security Council, in Resolution 1441, has declared Iraq in material breach of its longstanding obligations, demanding once again Iraq's full and immediate disarmament, and promised serious consequences if the regime refused to comply. That resolution was passed unanimously and its logic is inescapable; the Iraqi regime will disarm itself, or the Iraqi regime will be disarmed by force. And the regime has not disarmed itself. [...]"
(Press availability with President Bush, Prime Minister Blair, President Aznar and Prime Minister Barroso, Terceira, The Azores, 16 March 2003)

President George W. Bush: "Intelligence gathered by this and other governments leaves no doubt that the Iraq regime continues to possess and conceal some of the most lethal weapons ever devised. [...] Today, no nation can possibly claim that Iraq has disarmed. And it will not disarm so long as Saddam Hussein holds power."
(Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation, The Cross Hall, 17 March 2003)

Prime Minister Tony Blair: "[...] Iraq continues to deny that it has any WMD, though no serious intelligence service anywhere in the world believes them. [...]"
(Speech in the House of Commons, 18 March 2003)

Ari Fleischer, White House Press Secretary: "Well, there is no question that we have evidence and information that Iraq has weapons of mass destruction, biological and chemical particularly [...] all this will be made clear in the course of the operation, for whatever duration it takes."
(Press briefing, 21 March 2003)

General Tommy Franks: "There is no doubt that the regime of Saddam Hussein possesses weapons of mass destruction. And [...] as this operation continues, those weapons will be identified, found, along with the people who have produced them and who guard them."
(Press conference, 22 March 2003)

Pentagon spokeswoman Victoria Clark: "One of our top objectives is to find and destroy the WMD. There are a number of sites"
(Press briefing, 22 March 2003)

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld: "We know where they are. They're in the area around Tikrit and Baghdad and east, west, south and north somewhat."
(ABC interview, 30 March 2003)

Ari Fleischer, White House Press Secretary: "I think you have always heard, and you continue to hear from officials, a measure of high confidence that, indeed, the weapons of mass destruction will be found."
(Press briefing, 10 April 2003)

President George W. Bush: "We are learning more as we interrogate or have discussions with Iraqi scientists and people within the Iraqi structure, that perhaps he destroyed some, perhaps he dispersed some. And so we will find them."
(NBC interview, 24 April 2003)

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld: “There are people who in large measure have information that we need [...] so that we can track down the weapons of mass destruction in that country.”
(Press briefing, 25 April 2003)

President George W. Bush: “We’ll find them. It’ll be a matter of time to do so.”
(Remarks to reporters, 3 May 2003)

Secretary of State Colin Powell: “I’m absolutely sure that there are weapons of mass destruction there and the evidence will be forthcoming. We’re just getting it just now.”
(Remarks to reporters, 4 May 2003)

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld: “We never believed that we’d just tumble over weapons of mass destruction in that country.”
(Fox News interview, 4 May 2003)

President George W. Bush: “I’m not surprised if we begin to uncover the weapons program of Saddam Hussein – because he had a weapons program.”
(Remarks to reporters, 6 May 2003)

Condoleezza Rice, National Security Adviser: “U.S. officials never expected that ‘we were going to open garages and find’ weapons of mass destruction.”
(Reuters interview, 12 May 2003)

Maj. Gen. David Petraeus, Commander 101st Airborne: “I just don't know whether it was all destroyed years ago -- I mean, there's no question that there were chemical weapons years ago -- whether they were destroyed right before the war, (or) whether they're still hidden.”
(Press briefing, 13 May 2003)

Gen. Michael Hagee, Commandant of the Marine Corps: “Before the war, there's no doubt in my mind that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction, biological and chemical. I expected them to be found. I still expect them to be found.”
(Interview with reporters, 21 May 2003)

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld: “[...] It is also possible that [the Iraqis] decided they would destroy [their weapons of mass destruction] prior to a conflict. [...]”
(Speech to the Council on Foreign Relations, 27 May 2003)

Paul Wolfowitz: “For bureaucratic reasons, we settled on one issue, weapons of mass destruction, because it was the one reason everyone could agree on.”
(Vanity Fair interview, 28 May 2003)

Lt. Gen. James Conway, 1st Marine Expeditionary Force: “It was a surprise to me then — it remains a surprise to me now — that we have not uncovered weapons, as you say, in some of the forward dispersal sites. Believe me, it's not for lack of trying. We've been to virtually every ammunition supply point between the Kuwaiti border and Baghdad, but they're simply not there.”
(Press interview, 30 May 2003)

CITATEN NGO'S EN EXPERTS

Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation: "When will the United States come into compliance with Resolution 1441? On 31 December, the Chairman of the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation, Ken Coates, wrote this letter to the non-permanent members of the United Nations Security Council.

"As was widely reported in the press, The Iraqi Government prepared an 11800 page dossier on its role in relation to weapons of mass destruction. We understand that this dossier was given to the UN and transported to New York, where by some mechanism on which we are not completely clear, it came into the hands of the United States administration, which promised to copy it for members of the Security Council.

It has been reported in the British press that in fact the non-permanent members of the Security Council were given more than 8000 pages fewer than the number which were submitted originally by the Iraqi Government. Is this true? Can you tell us what explanation has been offered for the decision to furnish less than full information about the operation of resolution 1441 to members of the Security Council? How is it expected that you can play a full part in the deliberations which are to come, if you are not in possession of all the evidence?

Since questions of peace and war will be at stake, do you not think that it is obligatory that all members of the Security Council should, by right, receive all relevant information on the subjects to be decided?"

The five permanent members, it was understood, received the full dossier. On 3 February, the German Foreign Ministry replied:

"Dear Professor Coates

Many thanks for your letter of 31st December to the Federal German Foreign Minister Herr Joschka Fischer who has asked me to reply to you,

The facts of the case as you present them are correct. In fact the Iraqi statement of around 12,000 pages of 8th December was given in full only to the 5 permanent members of the Security Council. At this point in time the Federal Republic of Germany was not a member of the security council.

As you know, our temporary membership (of the security council) began on the 1st January. The circumstances of the distribution of documents to the 15 members of the Security Council was a decision of the former chair of the security council, Columbia. I can imagine that the Columbian diplomatic representatives at the United Nations in New York are in a better position to answer your, in my opinion, very valid question, in regard to the reasons for the particular modality of document distribution that took place at that time.

Once again, many thanks for your letter. I ask for your understanding that I've replied in German.

With friendly greetings and best wishes for your work

Writing as instructed

Dr Ingo Winkelmann"

As we pointed out in our letter to the German Foreign Minister the omission of more than 8,000 pages of the dossier undermines the entire exercise.

(Press release, 4 February 2003)

Denis Healey, Labour ex-Foreign Secretary: "I don't think there are any weapons - and the case for war was quite unnecessary. Blair shouldn't have said there were. He followed the Bush line. The really criminal thing was that they wouldn't let Blix go back. Here is a man of outstanding ability and honesty. I think this will be very damaging in Britain. Unfortunately, less so in America where the public doesn't care as much.

(Observer, 1 June 2003)

Dr. Glen Rangwala, Politics lecturer at Cambridge University: "If Saddam Hussein had a chemical and biological capability, as we were assured that he did have prior to the invasion, and Saddam is obviously still at large, it is difficult to imagine what could be a more urgent priority than finding and eliminating those weapons. Either the evidence was deeply flawed, or the present policies are highly reckless."

(Observer, 1 June 2003)

Marc Ginsberg, Former American ambassador to Morocco and expert on the Middle East: "The failure to find WMDs will clearly change global opinion about the war. Although the Democrats have already criticised President Bush on the issue, my own perception is that American public opinion toward the war won't be overly swayed by failure to find biological or chemical weapons."

(Observer, 1 June 2003)

Trevor Findlay, Executive director, The Verification Research, Training and Information Centre, London: "The admission by Donald Rumsfeld that the alleged Iraqi weapons of mass destruction may never be found is astounding. The only legal case under the UN Charter for going to war against Iraq was to enforce Security Council resolutions demanding that Baghdad disarm itself of such weapons. If the weapons never existed to the extent or manner portrayed by the US and UK, then the war was illegal on even more grounds than before."

(Observer, 1 June 2003)

Daryl G. Kimball, Executive Director Arms Control Today: "The stated rationale for President George W. Bush's decision to invade Iraq was intelligence indicating the presence of chemical and biological weapons and renewed nuclear weapons work. Turning its back on a UN arms inspections process it never fully supported, the administration embraced pre-emptive war as its preferred method of curtailing the spread of weapons of mass destruction (WMD).

After scouring Iraq for more than two months, however, the Pentagon has thus far failed to uncover evidence backing up the administration's prewar claims. The case of the "missing" Iraqi weapons requires that we re-examine the administration's rush to war in Iraq, as well as the use of intelligence to justify pre-emptive action against other states. It also underscores the enduring technical and political value of international weapons inspections.

To be sure, Iraq has possessed chemical and biological weapons, used chemical weapons, and pursued nuclear weapons in the past. During the 1990s, the first group of UN inspectors destroyed the bulk of Iraq's chemical and biological weapons and dismantled its nuclear bomb program, but the Iraqi government failed to cooperate fully. For this very reason, arms control advocates pressed for the prompt return of the UN inspectors with expanded capabilities and authority. After three months of renewed inspections in 2002 and 2003, scant evidence of WMD was uncovered. Still, more time and cooperation was needed to resolve a number of serious questions about unaccounted-for nerve and mustard agents, as well as chemical and biological munitions.

Although the administration now cites several reasons for the war, its chief claim was that UN weapons inspections had failed and that Iraq's WMD posed an imminent threat. In his February 5 presentation to the United Nations, Secretary of State Colin Powell asserted that "Saddam Hussein has chemical weapons." A British government report suggested that such weapons could be ready for use within 45 minutes. Vice President Dick Cheney went even further, saying March 16 that Iraq had "reconstituted nuclear weapons."

Now it is the Bush administration urging patience, as the U.S. 'military exploitation teams' that are searching Iraq come up empty-handed. Bush has even suggested that suspected WMD might have been destroyed before or during the invasion. Although it dismissed France's prewar proposal to boost the number of UN inspectors, the Pentagon has belatedly decided to increase the number of U.S. specialists looking for Iraq's banned weapons.

Should the absence of dramatic weapons finds be surprising? Not really, given the likelihood that UN inspections had effectively denied Iraq militarily significant WMD capabilities. Neither should it be

surprising if the Pentagon finds dual-use technology and documentation about prohibited weapons work in the past - after all, Iraq did have active WMD programs at a time when Hussein was considered an ally by Washington.

What is shocking is the failure of U.S. and British forces to secure known Iraqi nuclear facilities in the final days of the war. The Department of Defense says only 200 personnel were assigned to the task. Reports indicate that widespread looting occurred at the Tuwaitha facility and six other sites in early April. As a result, dangerous nuclear materials might now be in unfriendly hands - one of the dangers Bush said the war would prevent. Not until late last month did the Pentagon agree to allow the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to return to help secure the sites.

The lack of clear evidence of Iraqi WMD makes it all the more apparent that the latest round of tougher UN inspections were successful in stopping Iraq from assembling a militarily significant chemical or biological weapons arsenal and that they blocked further nuclear weapons activities. UN and IAEA inspectors should be allowed to return to Iraq to complete the task of long-term monitoring and disarmament. Unfortunately, the U.S.-drafted Security Council resolution on postwar arrangements effectively denies UN inspectors the opportunity to do so.

The case of Iraq also underscores the limitations of national intelligence as a basis for pre-emptive war. A good deal of the administration's case against Iraq was built on information from groups with an interest in the overthrow of Hussein, such as the Iraqi National Congress. In a 2002 report, the CIA itself documented the unreliability of such sources.

If, over time, the dire prewar assessments of Iraq's weapons prove false, it will be harder to win support for efforts to check the proliferation behavior of foes and even friends. In the long run, the United States can ill-afford to undermine international inspection efforts or injure its own credibility by invoking shaky assessments of weapons dangers to fit preconceived political or military objectives."

(Arms Control Today, The case of Iraq's "missing weapons", June 2003)

NIEUWSBERICHTEN

Washington Post

Blair Acknowledges Flaws in Iraq Dossier

Britain Took Some Material That Powell Cited at U.N. From 12-Year-Old Academic Papers

By Glenn Frankel - 8 February 2003

LONDON, Feb. 7 -- Prime Minister Tony Blair's official spokesman today conceded that his office copied material from three academic papers into special intelligence dossier on Iraq that was released to the public this week. The spokesman said the information was used without attribution but insisted it was accurate.

Critics of the government began attacking the dossier's credibility after British television news reported that sections of something the government had presented as a compendium of its own material, including sensitive spy data, were actually taken from publicly available academic papers.

The dossier was cited and praised by U.S. Secretary of State Colin L. Powell during his presentation on Iraq to the U.N. Security Council on Wednesday. "It's embarrassing for the prime minister and for poor old Colin Powell," said Charles Heyman, editor of Jane's World Armies. The controversy has compounded Blair's difficulties in rallying a skeptical British public behind his strong support for the United States and possible military action in Iraq. While no opinion polls have yet been reported, editorials and politicians outside Blair's circle have generally discounted Powell's U.N. address and a public relations campaign that Blair mounted this week.

The incident also opened a rare window on what seems to be a dispute about Iraq between the prime minister's office and British intelligence services. The spy agencies have been much more cautious than Blair in their assessment of Iraq's development of weapons of mass destruction and links with the al Qaeda terror network.

The dossier "was clearly prepared by someone in Downing Street and it's obviously part of the prime minister's propaganda campaign," said Heyman. "The intelligence services were not involved -- I've had two people phoning me today to say, 'Look, we had nothing to with it.'"

The 19-page dossier, entitled "Iraq -- Its Infrastructure of Concealment, Deception and Intimidation," was based on "a number of sources, including intelligence material," its introduction says. The report makes a detailed case that Iraq has tried to conceal its weapons programs from U.N. inspectors. The report also charts the structure of Iraq's major intelligence organizations.

It used, without credit, excerpts from a 12-year-old paper on the buildup to the 1991 Persian Gulf War written by California graduate student Ibrahim Marashi and published in the Middle East Review of International Affairs. The dossier even repeated the paper's typographical errors.

Other sections were copied from Jane's Intelligence Review, and from an article last fall by Cambridge University lecturer Glen Rangwala in the Middle East Review of International Affairs. Rangwala told the Reuters news agency he calculated that 11 of the dossier's 19 pages were "taken wholesale from academic papers."

A Downing Street spokesman who briefed reporters today, and who insisted on anonymity, said the dossier's purpose was to "show people not only the kind of regime we were dealing with but also how Saddam Hussein had pursued a policy of deliberate deception."

The spokesman said the first and third sections of the document were based largely on intelligence material, while the second was based in part on Marashi's work, "which, in retrospect, we should have acknowledged."

"The fact that we had used some of his work did not throw into question the accuracy of the document as a whole," the spokesman said. He did not discuss the other two articles.

"This is the intelligence equivalent of being caught stealing the spoons," Menzies Campbell, a member of Parliament, told the BBC today. He is foreign affairs spokesman for the Liberal Democrat Party.

"The dossier may not amount to much, but this is a considerable embarrassment for a government trying still to make a case for war."

In another apparent example of feuding between Downing Street and the British intelligence world, sources in the Defense Ministry earlier this week leaked to the BBC a classified assessment by a British intelligence agency that there were no current links between Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's government and al Qaeda. The report appeared to contradict Blair's claims that Baghdad was giving shelter to al Qaeda operatives.

Speaking with a BBC interviewer Thursday evening, Blair acknowledged the defense intelligence report's conclusion that Iraq, a secular Arab nationalist state, and al Qaeda, an Islamic fundamentalist movement, were not linked.

New Yorker

Who lied to whom?

Why did the Administration endorse a forgery about Iraq's nuclear program?

By Seymour M. Hersh - 31 March 2003

Last September 24th, as Congress prepared to vote on the resolution authorizing President George W. Bush to wage war in Iraq, a group of senior intelligence officials, including George Tenet, the Director of Central Intelligence, briefed the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on Iraq's weapons capability. It was an important presentation for the Bush Administration. Some Democrats were publicly questioning the President's claim that Iraq still possessed weapons of mass destruction which posed an immediate threat to the United States. Just the day before, former Vice-President Al Gore had sharply criticized the Administration's advocacy of preëemptive war, calling it a doctrine that would replace "a world in which states consider themselves subject to law" with "the notion that there is no law but the discretion of the President of the United States." A few Democrats were also considering putting an alternative resolution before Congress.

According to two of those present at the briefing, which was highly classified and took place in the committee's secure hearing room, Tenet declared, as he had done before, that a shipment of high-strength aluminum tubes that was intercepted on its way to Iraq had been meant for the construction of centrifuges that could be used to produce enriched uranium. The suitability of the tubes for that purpose had been disputed, but this time the argument that Iraq had a nuclear program under way was buttressed by a new and striking fact: the C.I.A. had recently received intelligence showing that, between 1999 and 2001, Iraq had attempted to buy five hundred tons of uranium oxide from Niger, one of the world's largest producers. The uranium, known as "yellow cake," can be used to make fuel for nuclear reactors; if processed differently, it can also be enriched to make weapons. Five tons can produce enough weapon-grade uranium for a bomb. (When the C.I.A. spokesman William Harlow was asked for comment, he denied that Tenet had briefed the senators on Niger.)

On the same day, in London, Tony Blair's government made public a dossier containing much of the information that the Senate committee was being given in secret—that Iraq had sought to buy "significant quantities of uranium" from an unnamed African country, "despite having no active civil nuclear power programme that could require it." The allegation attracted immediate attention; a headline in the London Guardian declared, "african gangs offer route to uranium."

Two days later, Secretary of State Colin Powell, appearing before a closed hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, also cited Iraq's attempt to obtain uranium from Niger as evidence of its persistent nuclear ambitions. The testimony from Tenet and Powell helped to mollify the Democrats, and two weeks later the resolution passed overwhelmingly, giving the President a congressional mandate for a military assault on Iraq.

On December 19th, Washington, for the first time, publicly identified Niger as the alleged seller of the nuclear materials, in a State Department position paper that rhetorically asked, "Why is the Iraqi regime hiding their uranium procurement?" (The charge was denied by both Iraq and Niger.) A former high-level intelligence official told me that the information on Niger was judged serious enough to include in

the President's Daily Brief, known as the P.D.B., one of the most sensitive intelligence documents in the American system. Its information is supposed to be carefully analyzed, or "scrubbed."

Distribution of the two- or three-page early-morning report, which is prepared by the C.I.A., is limited to the President and a few other senior officials. The P.D.B. is not made available, for example, to any members of the Senate or House Intelligence Committees. "I don't think anybody here sees that thing," a State Department analyst told me. "You only know what's in the P.D.B. because it echoes-people talk about it."

President Bush cited the uranium deal, along with the aluminum tubes, in his State of the Union Message, on January 28th, while crediting Britain as the source of the information: "The British government has learned that Saddam Hussein recently sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa." He commented, "Saddam Hussein has not credibly explained these activities. He clearly has much to hide."

Then the story fell apart. On March 7th, Mohamed ElBaradei, the director-general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, in Vienna, told the U.N. Security Council that the documents involving the Niger-Iraq uranium sale were fakes. "The I.A.E.A. has concluded, with the concurrence of outside experts, that these documents . . . are in fact not authentic," ElBaradei said.

One senior I.A.E.A. official went further. He told me, "These documents are so bad that I cannot imagine that they came from a serious intelligence agency. It depresses me, given the low quality of the documents, that it was not stopped. At the level it reached, I would have expected more checking."

The I.A.E.A. had first sought the documents last fall, shortly after the British government released its dossier. After months of pleading by the I.A.E.A., the United States turned them over to Jacques Baute, who is the director of the agency's Iraq Nuclear Verification Office.

It took Baute's team only a few hours to determine that the documents were fake. The agency had been given about a half-dozen letters and other communications between officials in Niger and Iraq, many of them written on letterheads of the Niger government. The problems were glaring. One letter, dated October 10, 2000, was signed with the name of Allele Habibou, a Niger Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, who had been out of office since 1989. Another letter, allegedly from Tandja Mamadou, the President of Niger, had a signature that had obviously been faked and a text with inaccuracies so egregious, the senior I.A.E.A. official said, that "they could be spotted by someone using Google on the Internet."

The large quantity of uranium involved should have been another warning sign. Niger's "yellow cake" comes from two uranium mines controlled by a French company, with its entire output presold to nuclear power companies in France, Japan, and Spain. "Five hundred tons can't be siphoned off without anyone noticing," another I.A.E.A. official told me.

This official told me that the I.A.E.A. has not been able to determine who actually prepared the documents. "It could be someone who intercepted faxes in Israel, or someone at the headquarters of the Niger Foreign Ministry, in Niamey. We just don't know," the official said. "Somebody got old letterheads and signatures, and cut and pasted." Some I.A.E.A. investigators suspected that the inspiration for the documents was a trip that the Iraqi Ambassador to Italy took to several African countries, including Niger, in February, 1999. They also speculated that MI6-the branch of British intelligence responsible for foreign operations-had become involved, perhaps through contacts in Italy, after the Ambassador's return to Rome.

Baute, according to the I.A.E.A. official, "confronted the United States with the forgery: 'What do you have to say?' They had nothing to say."

ElBaradei's disclosure has not been disputed by any government or intelligence official in Washington or London. Colin Powell, asked about the forgery during a television interview two days after ElBaradei's report, dismissed the subject by saying, "If that issue is resolved, that issue is resolved." A few days later, at a House hearing, he denied that anyone in the United States government had anything to do with the forgery. "It came from other sources," Powell testified. "It was provided in good faith to the inspectors."

The forgery became the object of widespread, and bitter, questions in Europe about the credibility of the United States. But it initially provoked only a few news stories in America, and little sustained questioning about how the White House could endorse such an obvious fake. On March 8th, an

American official who had reviewed the documents was quoted in the Washington Post as explaining, simply, "We fell for it."

The Bush Administration's reliance on the Niger documents may, however, have stemmed from more than bureaucratic carelessness or political overreaching. Forged documents and false accusations have been an element in U.S. and British policy toward Iraq at least since the fall of 1997, after an impasse over U.N. inspections. Then as now, the Security Council was divided, with the French, the Russians, and the Chinese telling the United States and the United Kingdom that they were being too tough on the Iraqis. President Bill Clinton, weakened by the impeachment proceedings, hinted of renewed bombing, but, then as now, the British and the Americans were losing the battle for international public opinion. A former Clinton Administration official told me that London had resorted to, among other things, spreading false information about Iraq. The British propaganda program-part of its Information Operations, or I/Ops-was known to a few senior officials in Washington. "I knew that was going on," the former Clinton Administration official said of the British efforts. "We were getting ready for action in Iraq, and we wanted the Brits to prepare."

Over the next year, a former American intelligence officer told me, at least one member of the U.N. inspection team who supported the American and British position arranged for dozens of unverified and unverifiable intelligence reports and tips-data known as inactionable intelligence-to be funnelled to MI6 operatives and quietly passed along to newspapers in London and elsewhere. "It was intelligence that was crap, and that we couldn't move on, but the Brits wanted to plant stories in England and around the world," the former officer said. There was a series of clandestine meetings with MI6, at which documents were provided, as well as quiet meetings, usually at safe houses in the Washington area. The British propaganda scheme eventually became known to some members of the U.N. inspection team. "I knew a bit," one official still on duty at U.N. headquarters acknowledged last week, "but I was never officially told about it."

None of the past and present officials I spoke with were able to categorically state that the fake Niger documents were created or instigated by the same propaganda office in MI6 that had been part of the anti-Iraq propaganda wars in the late nineteen-nineties. (An MI6 intelligence source declined to comment.) Press reports in the United States and elsewhere have suggested other possible sources: the Iraqi exile community, the Italians, the French. What is generally agreed upon, a congressional intelligence-committee staff member told me, is that the Niger documents were initially circulated by the British-President Bush said as much in his State of the Union speech-and that "the Brits placed more stock in them than we did." It is also clear, as the former high-level intelligence official told me, that "something as bizarre as Niger raises suspicions everywhere."

What went wrong? Did a poorly conceived propaganda effort by British intelligence, whose practices had been known for years to senior American officials, manage to move, without significant challenge, through the top layers of the American intelligence community and into the most sacrosanct of Presidential briefings? Who permitted it to go into the President's State of the Union speech? Was the message-the threat posed by Iraq-more important than the integrity of the intelligence-vetting process? Was the Administration lying to itself? Or did it deliberately give Congress and the public what it knew to be bad information?

Asked to respond, Harlow, the C.I.A. spokesman, said that the agency had not obtained the actual documents until early this year, after the President's State of the Union speech and after the congressional briefings, and therefore had been unable to evaluate them in a timely manner. Harlow refused to respond to questions about the role of Britain's MI6. Harlow's statement does not, of course, explain why the agency left the job of exposing the embarrassing forgery to the I.A.E.A. It puts the C.I.A. in an unfortunate position: it is, essentially, copping a plea of incompetence.

The chance for American intelligence to challenge the documents came as the Administration debated whether to pass them on to ElBaradei. The former high-level intelligence official told me that some senior C.I.A. officials were aware that the documents weren't trustworthy.

"It's not a question as to whether they were marginal. They can't be 'sort of' bad, or 'sort of' ambiguous. They knew it was a fraud-it was useless. Everybody bit their tongue and said, 'Wouldn't it be great if the Secretary of State said this?' The Secretary of State never saw the documents." He added, "He's absolutely apoplectic about it." (A State Department spokesman was unable to comment.) A former

intelligence officer told me that some questions about the authenticity of the Niger documents were raised inside the government by analysts at the Department of Energy and the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research. However, these warnings were not heeded. "Somebody deliberately let something false get in there," the former high-level intelligence official added. "It could not have gotten into the system without the agency being involved. Therefore it was an internal intention. Someone set someone up." (The White House declined to comment.)

Washington's case that the Iraqi regime had failed to meet its obligation to give up weapons of mass destruction was, of course, based on much more than a few documents of questionable provenance from a small African nation. But George W. Bush's war against Iraq has created enormous anxiety throughout the world-in part because one side is a superpower and the other is not. It can't help the President's case, or his international standing, when his advisers brief him with falsehoods, whether by design or by mistake.

On March 14th, Senator Jay Rockefeller, of West Virginia, the senior Democrat on the Senate Intelligence Committee, formally asked Robert Mueller, the F.B.I. director, to investigate the forged documents. Rockefeller had voted for the resolution authorizing force last fall. Now he wrote to Mueller, "There is a possibility that the fabrication of these documents may be part of a larger deception campaign aimed at manipulating public opinion and foreign policy regarding Iraq." He urged the F.B.I. to ascertain the source of the documents, the skill-level of the forgery, the motives of those responsible, and "why the intelligence community did not recognize the documents were fabricated." A Rockefeller aide told me that the F.B.I. had promised to look into it.

Los Angeles Times

Are We Dumb Or Just Numb?

By Robert Scheer - 29 April 2003

Forget truth. That is the message from our government and its apologists in the media who insist that the Iraq invasion is a great success story even though it was based on a lie.

In the statement broadcast to the Iraqi people after the invasion was launched, President Bush stated: "The goals of our coalition are clear and limited. We will end a brutal regime, whose aggression and weapons of mass destruction make it a unique threat to the world." To which Tony Blair added: "We did not want this war. But in refusing to give up his weapons of mass destruction, Saddam gave us no choice but to act."

That claim of urgency requiring us to short-circuit the U.N. weapons inspectors has proved to be a whopper of a falsehood. Late Sunday, the U.S. Army conceded that what had been reported as its only significant WMD find two mobile chemical labs and a dozen 55-gallon drums of chemicals "showed no positive hits at all" for chemical weapons.

But we now live easily with lies. "As far as I'm concerned, we do not need to find any weapons of mass destruction to justify this war," writes Thomas L. Friedman in the New York Times. The pro-administration rationalization holds that the noble end of toppling one of the world's nastier dictators assuming that the Iraqi people end up freer and not ensnared in an Iranian-type theocracy justifies the ignoble means of lying to the world. Or, as Friedman puts it, "Mr. Bush doesn't owe the world any explanation for missing chemical weapons (even if it turns out that the White House hyped this issue.)"

Hyping? Is that how we are now to rationalize the ever more obvious truth that the American people and their elected representatives in Congress were deliberately deceived by the president as to the imminent threat that Iraq posed to our security? Is this popular acceptance of such massive deceit exemplary of the representative democracy we are so aggressively exporting, nay imposing, on the world?

It is expected that despots can force the blind allegiance of their people to falsehoods. But it is frightening in the extreme when lying matters not at all to a free people. The only plausible explanation is that the tragedy of Sept. 11 so traumatized us that we are no longer capable of the outrage expected of a patently deceived citizenry. The case for connecting Saddam Hussein with that tragedy is

increasingly revealed as false, but it seems to matter not to a populace numbed by incessant government propaganda.

The only significant link between Al Qaeda and Hussein centered on the Ansar al Islam bases in the Kurdish area outside of Hussein's control. That's the "poison factory" offered by Colin Powell in his U.N. speech to connect Hussein with international terror. But an exhaustive investigation by the Los Angeles Times of witnesses and material found in the area "produced no strong evidence of connections to Baghdad and indicated that Ansar was not a sophisticated terrorist organization." Moreover, the purpose of this camp was to foster a holy war of religious fanatics who branded Hussein as "an infidel tyrant" and refused to fight under the "infidel flag" of his hated secular regime.

The embarrassingly secular nature of the government was summarized in another Los Angeles Times story on the status of women: "For decades, Iraqi women at least those living in Baghdad and some other big cities have enjoyed a degree of personal liberty undreamed of by women in neighboring nations such as Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf emirates."

Those freedoms to drive, study in coeducational colleges and to advance in the professions are now threatened by the fundamentalist forces unleashed by the invasion. The former U.S. general now governing Iraq has stated that he will not accept a reversal of those freedoms, but our long history of cozy relationships with the oppressive Gulf regimes can't be reassuring to Iraq's women.

Such issues would be less compelling had the claim that Iraq's weapons of mass destruction posed an imminent security threat to the U.S. proved true. Our goal, the destruction of those weapons, would then have been clear, and once that goal was accomplished, an expeditious U.S. withdrawal would have been justified.

But in the absence of such a threat, the U.S. role in Iraq becomes inevitably stickier. For "Operation Iraqi Freedom" to be more than a catchy propaganda slogan assumes an enduring obligation to provide the content of freedom to the Iraqi people that Americans claim to believe in. It is hoped that will include the election of a leader who tells the truth.

Guardian

An insult to British intelligence

Ministers doctored secret service briefings to get their way over Iraq

Richard Norton-Taylor - 30 April 2003

Members of parliament returning to Westminster after their Easter break, and congressmen in America for that matter, may well be asking if they have been duped.

Saddam Hussein, they were repeatedly told, posed a threat not just to his own people, but to the national security of the US and Britain. But where is the evidence that he possessed stockpiles of chemical and biological material, and the ability to use them as weapons?

Ministers and intelligence agencies say they are confident that these will turn up and that they were dismantled and hidden well before Hans Blix and his team of UN inspectors started looking for them at the end of last year.

It will take weeks, perhaps months, to track them down, we are warned. Yet isn't this precisely what Blix told the UN security council, only to be met with the response that London and Washington could not wait?

What is now clear, and admitted by all sides, is that whatever weapons of mass destruction Iraq did possess, they were not a threat, not even to British and American forces, from the time the UN inspectors went in.

Iraq, say London and Washington, duped Blix. Only the US and Britain could be trusted to search for the putative weapons.

Yet these are the same governments that have been engaged in the most outrageous abuse of information supplied by their security and intelligence services. "In my experience," Robin Cook, the former foreign secretary, said last week, "the intelligence services are scrupulous in spelling out the limitations of their knowledge. Frankly, I doubt whether there is a single senior figure in the intelligence services who is

surprised at the difficulty in finding a weapon of mass destruction in working order. If the threat from Saddam does turn out to have been overstated, the responsibility must rest with those who made the public statements."

Saddam's "military planning", said Tony Blair in last September's government dossier on Iraq's "weapons of mass destruction", "allows for some of the WMD to be ready within 45 minutes of an order to use them".

Blair and his ministers made much of the discovery of Iraq importing aluminium tubes - evidence, they claimed, of Saddam's nuclear weapons programme. Further evidence, they insisted, was Iraq's attempt to procure uranium from Niger. Experts from the International Atomic Energy Agency exposed the documents on which the claims were made as forgeries.

Britain's intelligence services now admit they were forged. Have ministers come clean? No - and by failing to do so they have further undermined their credibility.

Ministers may be rubbing their hands with glee at journalists in Baghdad turning up documents allegedly implicating George Galloway, the anti-war Labour MP, in the use of funds from Saddam's regime, and suggesting there were links between the regime and al-Qaida, and that France told Baghdad about its private diplomatic conversations with the US.

All very convenient. There must be doubts about the documents' authenticity. But even if they are genuine, intelligence services are notorious for hoarding tittle-tattle, exaggerating and distorting, not least to stress the importance of their own role in their bids for more funds. Heaven knows what we would find if the archives of MI5 and MI6 - and the CIA and FBI - were plundered.

Yet, significantly, it is not ministers who are warning of the dangers of jumping to conclusions. It is the intelligence agencies themselves. "They do not take things further forward," said an intelligence source about the Sunday Telegraph's publication of Iraqi documents appearing to show that Baghdad was keen to meet an "al-Qaida envoy" in 1998.

Tony Blair, we learn, was constantly asking the intelligence services if Saddam would fall like Ceausescu, or if British and US forces would be mired in a new Vietnam. He wanted assurances. Yet intelligence is an imprecise art. Snippets are picked up from communications traffic, informants pass on information that cannot be verified. Saddam and his entourage were notoriously difficult to penetrate.

Of course, questions should be asked about the information Blair and his ministers were given by the intelligence agencies, including about what military commanders were told to expect when they invaded Iraq. (One said he anticipated the Republican Guard coming over to help British and US forces to keep law and order.)

But as important, perhaps more so, is what ministers did with the information. There is sufficient evidence that they and their political advisers doctored it for the consumption of MPs and the public to warrant a parliamentary investigation.

TAZ

Die UNO misstraut den USA

Manipulierte künftige "Funde" von Massenvernichtungswaffen im Irak werden nicht ausgeschlossen. Bisher kein Beweis für die Existenz solcher Waffen

Andreas Zumach - 2 Mai 2003

Nach den zahlreichen Fälschungen und unwahren Behauptungen zum Thema irakischer Massenvernichtungswaffen, derer die USA und Großbritannien bereits im Vorfeld des Irakkrieges überführt wurden, werden bei der UNO jetzt erneute Manipulationen durch die Regierungen in Washington und London befürchtet. "Wir wären nicht überrascht, wenn die amerikanischen und britischen Streitkräfte seit Beginn des Krieges im Irak Waffen oder Bestandteile versteckt haben, die demnächst von Rüstungsexperten der USA 'entdeckt' und der Welt dann als irakische Waffen präsentiert werden", sagte ein Spitzenbeamter der New Yorker UNO-Zentrale der taz. Entsprechend äußerten sich auch hochrangige Diplomaten mehrerer Mitgliedsstaaten des Sicherheitsrates.

Den Anlass für dieses Misstrauen hat die Bush-Administration selbst geschaffen mit ihrer strikten Weigerung, die UNO-Waffeninspektoren der Unmovic zurück in den Irak zu lassen und stattdessen

1.500 eigene Rüstungsexperten zur Suche nach versteckten Waffen des ehemaligen Regimes in den Irak zu schicken. Eine Weigerung, der sich inzwischen auch die britische Regierung angeschlossen hat. Seit Frühsommer letzten Jahres hatten die Regierungen Bush und Blair ständig behauptet, Irak verfüge weiterhin über Waffen, deren vollständige, international überwachte Vernichtung der UNO-Sicherheitsrat der Regierung in Bagdad auferlegt hatte. In im September 2002 von Washington und London veröffentlichten Geheimdienst dossiers hieß es, Irak verfüge zum einen aus der Zeit vor dem Golfkrieg von 1991 noch über umfangreiche Altbestände an chemischen und biologischen Massenvernichtungswaffen sowie über zehntausende von Tonnen und Litern von Grundstoffen zur Herstellung derartiger Waffen. Zum Zweiten - so die Vorwürfe aus Washington und London - habe Bagdad seit 1998 unter Verstoß gegen die Resolutionen der UNO die Produktion von neuen B- und C-Waffen sowie von ballistischen Raketen (mit Reichweiten von über 150 Kilometern) wieder aufgenommen und zudem versucht, Uran und Spezialröhren für ein Atomwaffenprogramm zu importieren. Die britische und US-Regierung äußerten zudem den Verdacht, Bagdad habe Massenvernichtungswaffen an das Al-Qaida-Netzwerk oder andere Terrororganisationen weitergegeben oder beabsichtige dies.

Tatsächlich wurde bis heute nicht eine einzige dieser Behauptungen und Vorwürfe bewiesen. Die Inspektoren der Unmovik, die von Ende November bis zum Kriegsbeginn Mitte März in Irak nach Waffen suchten, waren zwar nicht überzeugt von Bagdads Erklärung, die Altbestände aus der Zeit von vor 1991 seien vernichtet worden. Andererseits fanden die Inspektoren lediglich kleine Reste von Grundstoffen sowie einige wenige, zumeist leere Giftgasgranaten. Mit Blick auf angeblich seit 1998 aufgenommene neue Rüstungsprogramme für ABC-Waffen - die von Bagdad entschieden dementiert wurden - haben die Inspektoren sämtliche konkreten Behauptungen aus Washington und London überprüft und als falsch widerlegt. Lediglich im Bereich der Raketenrüstung traf Unmovik-Chef Hans Blix unter massivem Druck der Bush-Administration die politische (von seinen eigenen Raketenexperten bezweifelte) Entscheidung, die irakische Rakete al-Samud 2 wegen der bei einigen wenigen Testflügen erzielten Reichweite von über 150 Kilometern als Verstoß gegen die UNO-Resolution einzustufen.

Auch die amerikanischen und britischen Truppen haben seit Kriegsbeginn noch keine vom ehemaligen Regime versteckten Waffen finden können. Dass solche Waffen noch irgendwo im Irak existieren, kann zwar nicht völlig ausgeschlossen werden, ist angesichts der Bilanz der letzten fünf Monate seit Beginn der Unmovik-Inspektionen allerdings höchst unwahrscheinlich. Washington und London wollen sich mit der Waffensuche denn jetzt auch "viel Zeit lassen" (Blair), "offensichtlich" - wie die Washington Post diese Woche schrieb - "in der Hoffnung, dass die Welt bald vergisst, dass die angebliche Existenz verbotener Massenvernichtungswaffen im Irak und die davon ausgehende Bedrohung einst die Hauptrechtfertigung für den Krieg war".

Guardian

Weapons of mass distortion

The concept of WMD is dishonest. When they are in friendly hands we call them defence forces

Geoffrey Wheatcroft - 2 May 2003

If the first casualty of war is truth, then language itself sustains the heaviest collateral damage, as Orwell used to point out (before "collateral damage" proved his point by entering the vocabulary of poisonous euphemism). The Iraq war has produced its own rich crop of Newspeak, but the choicest of all is the phrase "weapons of mass destruction".

Even the most credulous supporters of Tony Blair's war are beginning to see they were sold a pup. MPs angrily demand evidence of the WMDs, which they, in their innocence, believed were the reason for the war, rather than its flimsy pretext, while the prime minister insists that WMDs will be found.

But what are they anyway? The very phrase "weapons of mass destruction" is of recent coinage, and a specious one. It replaced "ABC weapons", for atomic, biological and chemical, which was neater, although already misleading as it conflated types of weaponry quite different in kind and in destructive capacity. WMD is even more empty and dishonest as a concept.

By definition atomic and hydrogen bombs cause mass destruction. Ever since they were first built and used in war (by the US, in case anyone has forgotten), they have cast a peculiar thrall of horror, although this is not entirely logical. The quarter-million dead of Hiroshima and Nagasaki had been preceded by nearly a million German and Japanese civilians killed by "conventional" bombing, whose conventionality was small consolation for the victims.

Even supposing that nuclear weapons are uniquely horrible, the Iraq war and its aftermath have only served to confirm what Hans Blix learned, and what the International Institute for Strategic Studies said last summer: that Saddam had no fissile material to build atomic warheads. Nor did he have (for all the shockingly mendacious propaganda) the wherewithal for acquiring such material. Had he possessed warheads, he never had the means of striking London, let alone New York. And if he had ever been tempted to lob one at Israel, he would have been constrained by the certain knowledge that Baghdad would have been nuked minutes later.

Certainly he possessed the biological and chemical material in ABC, although here again the "W" in WMD is notably misleading: "weaponised" was just what this material was not, a fact which makes the pretext for war even more phoney. And certainly Saddam had used biological and chemical weapons against Iran as well as the Kurds. Very nasty they are, but that does not make them mass-destructive in the same sense as nuclear warheads.

A height of absurdity was reached with the claim that one of Saddam's WMDs was mustard gas - a weapon we were using in 1917, and which British politicians at the time defended as comparatively humane beside high-explosive artillery and machine-gun fire.

Even terrorism isn't always more dangerous because of access to toxic substances, and doesn't need a dictator like Saddam to provide them anyway. Robert Harris and Jeremy Paxman have written about biological and chemical weapons in their book, *A Higher Form of Killing*. Harris has pointed out that "a reasonably competent chemist could produce nerve agent on a kitchen table".

In 1995, a terrorist religious cult in Japan did just that, thereby providing an illuminating comparison. Those cultists released sarin nerve gas - another of Saddam's alleged WMDs - into the Tokyo metro during rush hour. Last February in the South Korean city of Daegu, an underground train was attacked, with a milk carton containing inflammable liquid. Twelve people died in the "WMD" attack; old-fashioned arson killed 120.

Soon after September 11, a number of letters containing anthrax spores were posted in America. In the overwrought climate of the moment, it was claimed that this batch of "WMD" could kill the American population many times over, and that may have been true according to some abstract calculation. In the event, five people died.

While terrorism is murderous, it mostly remains technologically primitive. Three people were killed in Tel Aviv on Tuesday by a suicide bomber's belt of explosive and metal scraps, and the IRA have shown how bloodthirsty "spectaculars" can be mounted with nothing more than fertiliser, sugar, and condoms for the timers.

As for the greatest spectacular of all, Blair has repeatedly linked September 11 with the threat of WMDs. But the 3,000 victims in New York weren't killed by WMDs of any kind, they were murdered by a dozen fanatics armed with box cutters. Although it has been irritating subsequently to have the contents of one's sponge bag confiscated at the airport in the name of security, that scarcely makes a pair of nail scissors a WMD.

The truth is that "weapons of mass destruction" is a concept defined by the person using it. "I like a drink, you are a drunk, he is an alcoholic," runs the old conjugation. Now there's another: "We have defence forces, you have dangerous arms, he has weapons of mass destruction." As usual, it depends who you are.

Los Angeles Times

A Nuclear Road Of No Return

Bush's bid for new kinds of weapons could put the world on a suicidal course.

By Robert Scheer - 13 May 2003

It turns out the threat is not from Iraq but from us.

On Sunday, the Washington Post wrote the obituary for the United States' effort to find Saddam Hussein's alleged weapons of mass destruction. "Frustrated, U.S. Arms Team to Leave Iraq," read the headline, confirming what has become an embarrassing truth that the central rationale for the invasion and occupation of oil-rich Iraq was in fact one of history's great frauds.

The arms inspectors "are winding down operations without finding proof that President Saddam Hussein kept clandestine stocks of outlawed arms," reported the Post, putting the lie to Colin Powell's Feb. 6 claim at the United Nations that Iraq possessed a functioning program to build nuclear bombs and had hoarded hundreds of tons of chemical and biological materials.

Unfortunately, this does not necessarily mean the world is a safer place. The deadly weapons of mass destruction have proved phantom in Iraq, but the Bush administration is now doing its best to ensure that the world becomes increasingly unstable and armed to the teeth. Although the nuclear threat from Iraq proved to be nonexistent, the United States' threat to use nuclear weapons and make a shambles of nuclear arms control is alarmingly vibrant.

In its latest bid to frighten the planet into a constant state of shock and awe, our government is accelerating its own leading-edge weapons-of-mass-destruction program: President Bush's allies on the Senate Armed Services Committee have approved ending a decade-old ban on developing atomic battlefield weapons and endorsed moving ahead with creating a nuclear "bunker-buster" bomb. They also rubber-stamped the administration's request for funds to prepare for a quick resumption of nuclear weapons testing.

What's going on here? Having failed to stop a gang of marauders armed with nothing more intimidating than box cutters, the U.S. is now using the "war on terror" to pursue a long-held hawkish Republican dream of a "winnable nuclear war," as the president's father memorably described it to me in a 1980 Times interview. In such a scenario, nukes can be preemptively used against a much weaker enemy millions of dead civilians, widespread environmental devastation and centuries of political blowback be damned.

Building a new generation of battlefield nuclear weapons sets the stage for another round of the most dangerous arms race imaginable. What has been forgotten in all of the patriotic hoopla is that it is our country that pioneered the creation of weapons of mass destruction over the last half-century. And it was our dropping of nuclear bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan, that sparked the arms race of the Cold War.

Faced with the reality that nuclear weapons are useful only for mass international suicide, every U.S. president since World War II has pursued a policy of nuclear arms control. Every administration, that is, until this one, which from its first days has made clear its inveterate hostility to arms control. It attacked the Antiballistic Missile Treaty and resurrected the corpse of the "Star Wars" nuclear defense program, even as Bush's first Nuclear Posture Review telegraphed the development of battlefield nuclear weapons and threatened their use against "rogue" nations.

"We're moving away from more than five decades of efforts to delegitimize the use of nuclear weapons," warned Sen. Jack Reed (D-R.I.), a dissenter on the Senate Armed Services Committee.

Following our lead, why shouldn't India and Pakistan develop battlefield nuclear weapons? Or Beijing for use against Taiwan and vice versa? After getting China and most nations to accept a testing ban, why would this administration seek to resume testing?

The current preponderance of our military power, combined with our overweening, xenophobic fear of the rest of the world, has corrupted all rational thought. Sadly, no one will listen to the mayor of Hiroshima, who last month wrote Bush to warn that new U.S. nuclear weapons development represented "a frontal attack on the process of nuclear disarmament."

But why listen to someone from Hiroshima? What do those people know about weapons of mass destruction?

Christian Science Monitor

Frustrated Hunt For Banned Weapons

With suspected sites in Iraq largely turning up dry, the US emphasis shifts to intelligence and detective work.

By Howard LaFranchi and Faye Bowers - 13 May 2003

WASHINGTON Finding Iraq's "smoking gun" - the large quantities of chemical, biological, and other weapons the US cited to help justify a war - was supposed to be a certainty.

Instead, the search is turning out to be a puzzle. The surprising difficulty and complexity of the weapons-sleuthing has already caused a rethinking of the initial inspections effort that began even before the war started.

Just weeks into the search process, the effort is being overhauled to reach beyond the early focus on suspected weapons sites - which have largely turned up "dry" - to a greater emphasis on intelligence and detective work. A Defense Department official says a team of perhaps 2,000 specialists will interrogate former Iraqi officials, interview key Iraqi scientists, and comb through documents - which might shed light not only weapons but on links between Saddam Hussein's regime and terrorist organizations.

"What we're seeing is the transition from the Easter egg hunt to the complex, more analytical and expert-driven phase of the operation," says Gary Samore, an expert on nonproliferation at the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London. "The first wave of military personnel was good at searches. The problem is, nothing substantial has come up."

The lack of any big hits is worrisome for more than just the morale of the search teams. The lack of hard evidence of the ousted Iraqi regime's weapons is also raising questions about the credibility of prewar assessments by President Bush and Secretary of State Colin Powell.

Beyond that, it is also casting doubts over the quality of US intelligence and about the quality of planning for the weapons search.

With pressure to produce results mounting, the Pentagon plans to modify and expand the operations beginning next week.

The Pentagon plans to augment the 75th Exploitation Group - made up of some 600 people from the military, CIA, Defense Intelligence Agency, and FBI - more than tripling its size. This Iraq Survey Group will be led by the DIA's Maj. Gen. Keith Dayton.

The group will have a "fusion cell" housed within the DIA made up of US government experts. "Their job is going to be to do that kind of in-depth analysis that's necessary in order to make this a successful effort over time," Stephen Cambone, Defense undersecretary for intelligence, told reporters last week.

Clues in a trailer

So far, the 75th Exploitation Group has visited about 70 of 600 sites on its original top-priority list - without finding the "smoking gun" of unconventional arms. The most interesting piece of equipment discovered so far is an Iraqi trailer that was turned over to the US by Kurds in northern Iraq on April 19.

"The Kurds reported to us that the trailer may have been in the company of military vehicles ... along with a decontamination truck," said Mr. Cambone. He added that there were "common elements" between a defector's statement that was used in Secretary of State Colin Powell's February presentation to the UN Security Council and the mobile production facility.

"While some of the equipment on the trailer could have been used for purposes other than biological weapons agent production," Cambone said, "US and UK technical experts have concluded that the unit does not appear to perform any function beyond ... production of biological agents."

The trailer was brought from Mosul to Baghdad, where it is undergoing more extensive testing. It is likely to take weeks before results are available.

The time it is taking to substantiate the dire early claims of Iraq's weapons holdings is not a surprise to all weapons experts. But it is causing a certain discomfort in the Bush administration.

The complexity of weapons inspections always meant surprises were in store, even in a presumably amply scrutinized country like Iraq. "I've been saying for several months that I expected to find chemicals and filled missiles, bombs, or 122mm rockets filled with chemicals," says David Franz, a former UNSCOM inspector who now works for the University of Alabama. "But I wouldn't be shocked if we didn't find biologicals."

Dr. Franz explains that it's very easy to destroy biological agents because they are normally produced in such small quantities. He says that during the first inspection period in the early 1990s, under UNSCOM, investigators looked for biological warfare programs - something the size of a factory. But in the later 1990s, under UNMOVIC, inspectors were looking for "something the size of your kitchen and a weapon smaller than a toaster."

Fallout for US credibility

Still, the slow progress on the weapons front is causing jitters in Washington - worrying some officials that cases against other states suspected of weapons proliferation may now be more difficult, or that the American public may doubt future claims of dangers from countries with weapons programs.

President Bush, in his January state of the Union speech, said Iraq had hundreds of tons of chemical weapons, tens of thousands of missile warheads, and tens of thousands of liters of biological weapons, anthrax, and botulinum toxin among them.

Similarly, Secretary Powell captivated television audiences around the globe with a little vial of mock anthrax he displayed at the Security Council in February

It created a vivid picture of a fearsome threat for a nation and a world where "WMD" - for weapons of mass destruction - had become household jargon.

Like Alabama's Franz, Mr. Samore in London says "no one should be surprised" that no biological agents have been found. "The big surprise so far," he says is that neither large stocks of munitions or chemical agents - both more difficult to dispose of or hide - have turned up.

That doesn't mean the evidence cited in the prewar months was fabricated. "I really don't think anyone did that," Samore says. It could mean arms remain hidden, were moved out of Iraq, or that the regime destroyed them. "We still don't know."

Other experts say the slow search is a reminder that the US suffered from inadequate intelligence and was outmaneuvered by Mr. Hussein in the past. For example, it was the 1995 defections of Iraq's secret weapons chiefs, who were Hussein's sons-in-law, that led UN inspectors to learn that Iraq was about four years ahead of where they thought it was in its WMD programs.

"Everyone from Colin Powell on was talking about ... all the materials the UN knew Saddam had at one point and for one reason or another resisted accounting for," Samore says.

He expects that puzzle to be more complete "in six months to a year. It's going to take a lot of work."

Los Angeles Times

Trailer May Support Bioweapons Claims

Specialists are confident inspections will show its intended use was to make illicit agents.

By Carol J. Williams, Times Staff Writer - 14 May 2003

MOSUL, Iraq U.S. military specialists who have examined a looted trailer equipped with chemical vats and compressors believe with "a reasonable degree of certainty" that the crude equipment was a mobile biological weapons laboratory, the commander of U.S. forces in northern Iraq said Tuesday.

The trailer listing and shorn of its tarpaulin covers, tires, hoses and other accessible parts was found last week. It stands at the edge of the Al Kindi Weapons Research and Development compound awaiting inspection by experts en route from the United States, said Maj. Gen. David Petraeus, commander of the Army's 101st Airborne Division.

Petraeus' forces previously have announced discoveries that might confirm U.S. claims that Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's regime was developing weapons of mass destruction only to find that the items were conventional weapons or chemical compounds commonly used for peaceful purposes.

This time, the general is hopeful that inspections will produce long-sought evidence supporting Secretary of State Colin L. Powell's assertions to the U.N. Security Council last fall that Iraq was poised to expose its enemies to poison gas or biological agents.

"What we'd love to find is some compound that would prove the smoking gun," Petraeus said of the trailer.

Civil affairs experts who have examined the trailer said they were fairly certain it was designed to produce biological agents on the run, to stay ahead of U.N. weapons inspectors who were in the country until a few days before the U.S.-led war began in March. But Petraeus conceded that looting might deprive investigators of proof.

It was also unclear whether the apparently unfinished facility had ever been used, he said. What remains of the trailer teeters on tireless wheels in a gravel lot near the weapons compound. The only major equipment still inside includes a stainless steel boiler, a vat and a compressor bolted to the floor. A placard reads, in English: "Al-Iraq Factory for production of Safety Valves of Compressors."

"We call this guy R2D2," said Army Spc. Erick Corrales, pointing to a robot-like boiler too heavy for looters to steal. The Los Angeles native is one of two dozen soldiers patrolling the site. The stripped trailer is identical to one found two weeks ago near Irbil, 50 miles east of Mosul and just inside an autonomous zone controlled by ethnic Kurds. The vehicles' serial numbers suggested that the Irbil trailer was the first of a production line and that the Mosul vehicle was the second, Petraeus said.

Meanwhile, an Iraqi weapons engineer who worked at Al Kindi warned that the facility's 950 now-unemployed specialists were easy prey for terrorists or rogue nations keen on hiring weapons technology know-how.

Shaheen Ali Dahir, who said he worked in the "intelligent weapons" sector, added that he approached U.S. forces with a proposal to form a civil engineering brigade from the idled experts.

"These people need to be in other work, reconstructing the country," he said. "I worry that if someone comes along and offers them something, they will take it just so they can feed their families."

He met early Tuesday with officers of the 101st Airborne to propose a diversionary program like that initiated in the mid-1990s when numerous Russian scientists with weapons expertise were being hired by Iran, Libya and other countries.

Shaheen suggested that the bombed buildings of the Al Kindi facility should be rebuilt by U.S. forces so the specialists can retain their place of work.

That would be a tall order: The site is a veritable wasteland, where looters carted off what was left after repeated airstrikes by U.S.-led forces. Three of the facility's six buildings were destroyed one by a "bunker-buster" bomb that broke up the foot-thick concrete floor and sprayed pieces hundreds of feet away.

Petraeus brushed off the engineer's proposals.

New York Times

U.S. General Unsure When Or If Weapons Were Destroyed

14 May 2003

WASHINGTON, May 13 An Army general in northern Iraq said today that Saddam Hussein's government might have destroyed stocks of chemical weapons some time before the United States attacked Iraq to topple Mr. Hussein.

But Maj. Gen. David H. Petraeus, commander of the 101st Airborne Division, said it was still too early to determine definitively the location or status of Iraq's suspected arsenal of unconventional weapons.

"There's no question that there were chemical weapons years ago," General Petraeus said, speaking to reporters at the Pentagon by videophone from Mosul. "I just don't know whether it was all destroyed years ago."

General Petraeus said he did not know "whether they were destroyed right before the war," or "whether they're still hidden."

Military teams have scoured dozens of suspected weapons sites, but have not discovered illicit arms.

Gen. Tommy R. Franks, the commander of allied forces in Iraq, has said teams may ultimately have to search several thousand sites to find evidence of such weapons.

General Petraeus, however, did offer new details about a suspected mobile biological weapons laboratory that he said was found May 9 at Al Kindi, a military research center near Mosul.

"Our own chemical section looked at the trailer and confirmed it as a trailer that was very close to identical to the first trailer that was found by Special Forces southeast of here last week," General Petraeus said.

American teams have now located parts of three mobile labs, military and civilian officials say. General Petraeus said, however, that the trailer found at Al Kindi was not completed.

Guardian

Blix suspects there are no weapons of mass destruction

Rory McCarthy in Baghdad and Jeevan Vasagar

24 May 2003

The chief UN weapons inspector, Hans Blix, said yesterday that he suspected that Iraq had no weapons of mass destruction,

He added that "in this respect" the war might not have been justified.

"I am obviously very interested in the question of whether or not there were weapons of mass destruction - and I am beginning to suspect there possibly were none," he said in an interview with the Berlin newspaper Der Tagesspiegel.

Dr Blix, who retires next month, has previously condemned as "shaky" the evidence presented by British and American intelligence before the war, and said that it was "conspicuous" that they had failed to make significant discoveries after the war.

But in yesterday's interview, he went further. He said: "The main justification for the war was weapons of mass destruction, and it may turn out that in this respect the war was not justified."

He referred to Saddam Hussein's chief scientific adviser, Lieutenant General Amer al-Saadi, who surrendered last month and said in an interview: "Nothing else will come out after the end of the war."

"The fact that al-Saadi surrendered and said there were no weapons of mass destruction has led to me to ask myself whether there actually were any," Dr Blix said.

"I don't see why he would still be afraid of the regime. Other leading figures have said the same."

Iraq's evasive behaviour could have been due to Saddam's desire to dictate the conditions under which people could enter the country.

"For that reason he said 'no' in many situations and gave the impression he was hiding something."

The White House, which accused Dr Blix of hindering its drive for international support for the war, has sent its own inspectors to Iraq.

The security situation made it impractical for UN inspectors to return and work alongside the US, Dr Blix said. Collaboration might also be tricky for political reasons. "I also have the impression that the negative attitude to UN inspectors...is turning into a generally defensive attitude towards the United Nations."

Lieutenant General David McKiernan, commander of land forces in Iraq, insisted that the hunt for chemical, biological and nuclear weapon would continue.

"We continue to get reports of locations and we go and exploit them," he said. "I am personally a believer that we have not fully developed the intelligence on locations."

Most of the intelligence was now coming from the Iraqi people themselves.

The US military task force hunting for weapons of mass destruction in Iraq is due to leave next month. Its officers are reported to be frustrated by their failure to find Saddam Hussein's banned weapons .

Mr Blix ended the interview with a touch of humour.

Asked about his retirement plans, he talked of spending time on a small Swedish island where "I look forward to going hunting for wild mushrooms."

BBC News

Iraq's 'weapons' doubts

The US Defence Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, has acknowledged for the first time that Iraq may have destroyed its weapons of mass destruction before the US launched its offensive to topple Saddam Hussein's regime.

So is the Bush administration backing away from its insistence that Iraq did indeed have weapons of mass destruction on the eve of the war?

The public justification for the British and American decision to go to war to oust Saddam Hussein was the clear and imminent threat said to have been posed by his regime's weapons of mass destruction.

The Bush administration, followed by the British Government, seized upon significant failures by Iraq to account for its weapon programmes to UN inspectors as a clear indication that Saddam Hussein had something to hide.

This was backed up countless intelligence briefings about active weapons programmes.

Just wait - was the underlying message - all will be revealed once British and US troops are actually on the ground in Iraq and the regime has been toppled.

Evidence scarce

But several weeks on, the whole question of Iraq's weapons programmes remains shrouded in mystery.

There have been few spectacular finds.

Documents have been found. At least two trailers have been discovered which could be mobile biological weapons production facilities.

But the search for Saddam Hussein's weapons appears to have been haphazard at best.

While the Americans and British have insisted that significant resources are being deployed in the hunt, the fact remains that many sensitive sites - including Iraqi nuclear facilities - may well have been looted and potential evidence destroyed.

US climbdown

Mr Rumsfeld insists that more information will come to light as Iraqi leaders and maybe hundreds of scientists and technicians are interviewed.

But even he now is forced to admit that Iraq may have destroyed much of its chemical and biological arsenal prior to the war.

The Bush administration and the war's supporters will say "So what? Iraq retained the know-how and probably also the desire to have such weapons again in the future."

But this was not the basis on which the case for this conflict was made.

Regime change in Iraq was said to be a necessary condition for disarmament, not an end in itself.

CNN

War of words over Iraqi weapons

29 May 2003

LONDON, England (CNN) --Nearly two months after the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime, coalition leaders are facing criticism for failing to find the weapons of mass destruction that they claimed were the reason for attacking Iraq.

Now, administrations in the United States and Britain are fending off accusations that they misled the public -- either unintentionally or on purpose -- about the existence of these weapons.

U.S. officials predicted before the war that at least 100 metric tons of weapon-ready chemical and biological agents would be found. For his part, UK Prime Minister Tony Blair had warned that Saddam could launch chemical or biological attacks within 45 minutes.

Yet despite a report Wednesday citing the discovery of apparent mobile weapons labs, U.S. forces have yet to find any banned weapons.

"A lot of people are saying that if those weapons could be ready in 45 minutes, well we've had 45 days now since the war and nothing has shown up. It's a bit suspicious, isn't it?," said CNN European Political Editor Robin Oakley.

"The big question on both sides of the Atlantic is to what extent did the politicians exaggerate and harden up what they were getting from the intelligence services."

On Thursday, UK Defence Minister Adam Ingram denied the government had put pressure on the intelligence services to distort information about Saddam's alleged weapons program to make a stronger case for war.

However, he said Blair's comment before the war -- on Iraq being able to deploy weapons of mass destruction within 45 minutes notice -- was based on a single source. The information "wasn't corroborated," Ingram added.

While acknowledging the search for Iraqi weapons has turned up little since Saddam's regime fell, many U.S. and British officials insist the Iraqi threat was real, at least before the war began.

U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld appeared to support that premise Tuesday, saying a possible reason that Iraqi chemical and biological weapons have not been found was that Saddam's government had destroyed them before the conflict.

So far, the UK government has stood by its original claim, though it has offered little in the way of proof -- other than to say the weapons will eventually be found.

"I know there are a lot of disagreements in the country about the wisdom of my decision to order the action," Blair said Thursday during a one-day trip to Iraq, where he became the first Western leader to visit Iraq since the fall of the regime.

But Oakley believes the weapons issue "could damage his [Blair's] credibility irreparably ... His excuse at the moment [for not finding the weapons] is that there are other priorities -- that they have to rebuild post-conflict Iraq and that there's a huge humanitarian mission, that they have got to concentrate on those things."

Former UK Foreign Secretary Robin Cook, who quit over the issue of war against Iraq, has also re-entered the debate.

He said Rumsfeld's comments vindicated his decision to resign from his Cabinet job as leader of the House of Commons in protest against the war.

"If Donald Rumsfeld is now admitting the weapons are not there, the truth is the weapons probably haven't been there for quite a long time," Cook told British radio.

"It matters immensely," he said, "because the basis on which the war was sold to the British House of Commons, to the British people, was that Saddam represented a serious threat."

Washington Post

U.S. Hedges on Finding Iraqi Weapons

Officials Cite the Possibility of Long or Fruitless Search for Banned Arms

By Karen DeYoung and Walter Pincus - 29 May 2003

Pressed in recent congressional hearings and public appearances to explain why the United States has been unable to find weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, senior Bush administration officials have begun to lay the groundwork for the possibility that it may take a long time, if ever, before they are able to prove the expansive case they made to justify the war.

In the months leading up to the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, administration officials charged that Iraq's Saddam Hussein had spent billions of dollars developing chemical, biological and nuclear weapons, and was poised to hand them over to international terrorists or fire them at U.S. troops or neighboring countries.

Nearly two months after the fall of Baghdad, officials continue to express confidence that the weapons will be found. "No one should expect this kind of deception effort to get penetrated overnight," Deputy Defense Secretary Paul D. Wolfowitz said in an interview yesterday. Wolfowitz said the administration's prewar emphasis on the existence of weapons of mass destruction stemmed from "one

of the most widely-shared intelligence assessments that I know of. . . . We're a long way" from exhausting the search.

But in speeches and comments in recent weeks, senior administration officials have begun to lower expectations that weapons will be found anytime soon, if at all, and suggested they may have been destroyed, buried or spirited out of the country.

The U.S. invasion force moved so quickly into Iraq, Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld said Tuesday in response to questions at the Council on Foreign Relations in New York, that the Iraqis "didn't have time to . . . use chemical weapons. . . . They may have had time to destroy them, and I don't know the answer."

Looking back at the spotlight the administration cast on the weapons issue in building its case for war, Wolfowitz said, "There was no oversell." But he acknowledged yesterday that there "had been a tendency to emphasize the WMD [weapons of mass destruction] issue" as the primary justification for war because of differences of opinion within the administration over the strength of other charges against the Iraqi government, including its alleged ties to al Qaeda.

"The issue of WMD has never been in controversy," Wolfowitz said, "where there's been a lot of arguing back and forth about whether the Iraqis were involved in terrorism."

In a briefing for reporters yesterday, senior intelligence officials released what they said was the "strongest evidence to date that Iraq was hiding a biological warfare program." After examining two tractor-trailers found last month in Iraq, the officials said they found no trace of biological agents but added they are "highly confident" the high-tech equipment built into them was intended to produce biological weapons.

In pressing for international approval of war, President Bush and his top aides said that Iraq possessed weapons that posed an immediate threat to its neighbors and to U.S. territory, and that U.N. inspectors were unlikely to find them in time. Since the Iraqi government collapsed April 9, U.S. military teams have been unsuccessful in finding any proscribed weapons. The teams are being replaced by a much larger weapons survey group that has yet to arrive in Iraq.

The Pentagon has rejected suggestions that U.N. inspectors who left Iraq before the war be allowed to reenter the country and resume their search, although agreement has been reached with the International Atomic Energy Agency to send its experts to secure the Tuwaitha Nuclear Research Center, a nuclear storage site 30 miles south of Baghdad that had been under IAEA seal for years. The site has been looted by Iraqis, and U.S. military teams found high levels of radiation there.

But the agreement restricts the IAEA to a small area within the facility, and specifically prohibits the agency's emergency teams from investigating reports that some of the material has been removed and may be causing radiation sickness in some local communities. "The U.S. has informed us that, as the occupying powers, they have the responsibility for the welfare of the Iraqi people, including the nuclear health and safety issues," an IAEA spokesman said.

Those mild words mask a dispute between the administration and the international agency, which first raised the danger posed by potential looting of the Tuwaitha site and others April 10.

Having rejected the efforts of U.N. inspectors as insufficient before the war, the administration was not about to let them back in to look for weapons now, a senior administration official said, suggesting that the IAEA was looking for a pretext for a wider role in Iraq. "Make no mistake, the IAEA wanted to get back in and do its former inspection role," the official said. "And they were told, in no uncertain terms, no."

The administration has also rejected the readmission into Iraq of the U.N. Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC), which had responsibility for finding chemical and biological weapons, as well as production facilities. Before the war, U.S. officials expressed strong doubts the U.N. inspectors would be able to locate, among other things, the mobile biological laboratories that Secretary of State Colin L. Powell first described to the U.N. Security Council in February.

The two trailers cited by intelligence officials yesterday have been under examination since they were found in northern Iraq last month. The officials said that key equipment in the trailers -- fermenters needed to produce biological agents -- was manufactured in 2002 and 2003, indicating that the units were recently built. They said Iraqi employees at the al-Kindi Research, Testing, Development and

Engineering facility where the fermenters were constructed told them they were used to produce hydrogen gas for weather balloons and other purposes.

But an intelligence official called that "a cover story," and said it would be an "inefficient" use of the facilities. Instead, U.S. officials said the labs closely resembled the description of mobile biological trailers provided in 1999 by an Iraqi defector whose information was the basis for Powell's presentation. David Albright, president of the Institute for Science and International Security and a former U.N. weapons inspector, said yesterday that "the government's finding is based on eliminating any possible alternative explanation for the trucks, which is a controversial methodology under any circumstances." In the absence of "conclusive evidence," Albright suggested that an independent, international investigation was needed, and that "the logical group to perform this investigation is UNMOVIC."

Beginning with Vice President Cheney last August, administration officials delivered a series of speeches expressing absolute certainty the Iraqi weapons existed. "Simply stated, there is no doubt that Saddam Hussein now has weapons of mass destruction," Cheney said in an Aug. 26 address to the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

In October, Wolfowitz said, "Saddam Hussein is not going to easily give up the horrible weapons that he has worked so hard to obtain and paid such a high price to keep," using a phrase that he and Rumsfeld were to repeat often. "This is a man who has shown that he'll give up billions and billions of dollars every year," Rumsfeld said in November, "so that he can be free to develop those weapons and to have those weapons and to use those weapons to terrorize other countries."

In congressional testimony last week, Undersecretary of Defense Douglas J. Feith said he was "confident that we will eventually be able to piece together a fairly complete account of Iraq's WMD programs, but the process will take months, and perhaps years." In the interim, the House Select Committee on Intelligence has asked CIA Director George J. Tenet to review the intelligence underlying administration statements about Iraqi weapons. A similar request has come from the Senate committee, which has asked about specific claims regarding an Iraqi nuclear program.

"I think there are a whole lot of other questions about WMD which are very, very unclear," Sen. John D. Rockefeller IV (D-W.Va.) said Sunday on NBC's "Meet the Press." "They may have overestimated."

Guardian

Blair: WMD dossier claims 'absurd'

Matthew Tempest and agencies - 30 May 2003

Tony Blair today made an angry but opaque denial of accusations that Downing Street asked for a dossier on Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction to be "sexed up".

Speaking in Poland ahead of a speech on the extension of the EU, Mr Blair said it was "completely absurd" to suggest that MI6 was made to "invent some piece of evidence".

However, the actual allegation, made to the BBC yesterday by a senior security official, was that the government had asked for the document to be "sexed up".

Explaining why it had taken 24 hours for the prime minister to answer the allegations, Mr Blair said he had "only caught up overnight" with the claims, although he spent yesterday in Iraq, with a mobile office.

Mr Blair, visibly annoyed that the claims on WMD were still dogging him, went on: "What's happening here is that people who have opposed this action throughout are now trying to find a fresh reason for saying it wasn't the right thing to do. He told reporters: "I have just caught up overnight with some of the allegations that have been made, so let me just say this.

"The evidence that we had of weapons of mass destruction was evidence drawn up and accepted by the Joint Intelligence Committee.

"That evidence of weapons of mass destruction is evidence the truth of which I have absolutely no doubt about at all.

"What's more, the idea that we authorised or made our intelligence agencies invent some piece of evidence is completely absurd."

He continued: "When you go to Iraq and talk to people there and see the freedom they have, you realise why it was emphatically the right thing to do.

"When you say there is no evidence that weapons of mass destruction existed in Iraq, there are 12 years of United Nations resolutions about the weapons of mass destruction found in Iraq. There's no doubt about the chemical programme, the biological programme, indeed the nuclear weapons programme.

"All that is well documented by the UN.

"Our priority, having got rid of Saddam, is to rebuild the country, so the focus at the moment is on the humanitarian and the political reconstruction of the country.

"The threat of weapons of mass destruction, obviously with Saddam out, is not immediate any more. We have only just begun the process now of investigating the various sites.

"We have found two trailers, both of which we believe were used to produce biological and chemical weapons.

"You have just got to have a little bit of patience. I have absolutely no doubt at all when we produce the further evidence, that evidence will be found and I have absolutely no doubt it exists because Saddam's history of weapons of mass destruction is not some invention of the British security services.

"It has been well documented over 12 years of lies and deception from Saddam."

Mr Blair, aware of the irritation he had shown, added: "I'm sorry, I have probably spoken enough."

Later, veteran Labour MP Tam Dalyell tabled a Commons question to the prime minister asking to which Iraqis he was referring when he claimed in Warsaw that he had spoken to local people during his visit to Iraq on the subject of welcoming the American-British military action.

Mr Dalyell, MP for Linlithgow and father of the Commons, commented: "From the public prints and the BBC, I understand that the only Iraqis to whom he spoke were schoolchildren."

New York Times

On Day 71 of the Hunt for Iraqi W.M.D., yesterday, once again nothing turned up.

By Nicholas D. Kristof - 30 May 2003

Maybe we'll do better on Day 72. But we might have better luck searching for something just as alarming: the growing evidence that the administration grossly manipulated intelligence about those weapons of mass destruction in the runup to the Iraq war.

A column earlier this month on this issue drew a torrent of covert communications from indignant spooks who say that administration officials leaned on them to exaggerate the Iraqi threat and deceive the public.

"The American people were manipulated," bluntly declares one person from the Defense Intelligence Agency who says he was privy to all the intelligence there on Iraq. These people are coming forward because they are fiercely proud of the deepest ethic in the intelligence world — that such work should be nonpolitical — and are disgusted at efforts to turn them into propagandists.

"The Al Qaeda connection and nuclear weapons issue were the only two ways that you could link Iraq to an imminent security threat to the U.S.," notes Greg Thielmann, who retired in September after 25 years in the State Department, the last four in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research. "And the administration was grossly distorting the intelligence on both things."

The outrage among the intelligence professionals is so widespread that they have formed a group, Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity, that wrote to President Bush this month to protest what it called "a policy and intelligence fiasco of monumental proportions."

"While there have been occasions in the past when intelligence has been deliberately warped for political purposes," the letter said, "never before has such warping been used in such a systematic way to mislead our elected representatives into voting to authorize launching a war."

Ray McGovern, a retired C.I.A. analyst who briefed President Bush's father in the White House in the 1980's, said that people in the agency were now "totally demoralized." He says, and others back him up, that the Pentagon took dubious accounts from émigrés close to Ahmad Chalabi and gave these tales credibility they did not deserve.

Intelligence analysts often speak of "humint" for human intelligence (spies) and "sigint" for signals intelligence (wiretaps). They refer contemptuously to recent work as "rumint," or rumor intelligence.

"I've never heard this level of alarm before," said Larry Johnson, who used to work in the C.I.A. and State Department. "It is a misuse and abuse of intelligence. The president was being misled. He was ill served by the folks who are supposed to protect him on this. Whether this was witting or unwitting, I don't know, but I'll give him the benefit of the doubt."

Some say that top Pentagon officials cast about for the most sensational nuggets about Iraq and used them to bludgeon Colin Powell and seduce President Bush. The director of central intelligence, George Tenet, has been generally liked and respected within the agency ranks, but in the last year, particularly in the intelligence directorate, people say that he has kowtowed to Donald Rumsfeld and compromised the integrity of his own organization.

"We never felt that there was any leadership in the C.I.A. to qualify or put into context the information available," one veteran said. "Rather there was a tendency to feed the most alarming tidbits to the president. Often it's the most ill-considered information that goes to the president.

"So instead of giving the president the most considered, carefully examined information available, basically you give him the garbage. And then in a few days when it's clear that maybe it wasn't right, well then, you feed him some more hot garbage."

The C.I.A. is now examining its own record, and that's welcome. But the atmosphere within the intelligence community is so poisonous, and the stakes are so high — for the credibility of America's word and the soundness of information on which we base American foreign policy — that an outside examination is essential.

Congress must provide greater oversight, and President Bush should invite Brent Scowcroft, the head of the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board and a man trusted by all sides, to lead an inquiry and, in a public report, suggest steps to restore integrity to America's intelligence agencies.

CNN

U.S. general: Lack of Iraqi WMD 'a surprise'

New search team commander says he trusts intelligence

30 May 2003

SOUTHERN IRAQ (CNN) --A top U.S. military commander in Iraq said Friday that he could not understand why coalition forces have been unable to find any weapons of mass destruction, but a U.S. general who will lead a new inspection team expressed faith in intelligence placing such weapons on Iraqi soil.

"It was a surprise to me then as it remains a surprise to me now that we have not uncovered weapons in some of the forward dispersal sites," said Lt. Gen. James Conway, commander of the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force, which is tasked with holding and patrolling southern Iraq.

"Believe me, it's not for lack of trying. We've been to virtually every ammunition-supply point between the Kuwaiti border and Baghdad, and they're simply not there."

Disarming Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's regime of suspected chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear weapons was a primary reason the Bush administration gave for launching the war. No such weapons have yet been found.

Conway refrained from pointing fingers.

"Intelligence failure, I think, is too strong a word to use at this point," he said. "I don't think that we've given up on the search yet."

He told reporters gathered at the Pentagon for a teleconference briefing: "As we moved north [during the first weeks of the war], there were a couple of times when everybody was sleeping with their boots on and with their gas masks pretty close.

"One of the real surprises we all experienced is that we did not get struck with weapons of mass destruction as we crossed the Euphrates, or even as we crossed the Tigris and went up against the Republican Guard divisions.

"We truly thought that they were distributed, not to everyone, not to regular army divisions that we saw in the South, but my personal belief is that they probably did reside in Republican Guard units," he said. He added that his troops are helping with the postwar search.

More than 1,300 investigators planned for Iraq

Later Friday in Washington, the general leading the new U.S. team that will search for weapons of mass destruction in Iraq said he thinks there is credible evidence that Iraq has such weapons.

He echoed Conway's surprise at the failure of the searches conducted so far.

Maj. Gen. Keith Dayton told reporters that he will leave for Iraq on Monday to head a team of more than 1,300 investigators from the United States, Great Britain and Australia. Between 250 and 300 of those team members -- including some inspectors who were in Iraq before 1998, when all U.N. teams were expelled -- will visit suspected weapons sites, Dayton said.

The transition from the current inspection leadership will start no later than June 7 and take about two weeks.

Dubbed the Iraq Survey Group (ISG), Dayton's team will also be responsible for finding terrorists, war criminals and prisoners of war, the general said.

Dayton estimated that slightly fewer than 200 U.S. personnel have so far checked about a third of Iraq's suspected weapons sites.

Dayton said his team would be better prepared to respond quickly to intelligence reports and would no longer simply check off a list of suspect sites.

"The Iraq Survey Group represents a significant expansion in the hunt for weapons of mass destruction," he said, adding that it would be "a deliberate process and a long-term effort."

IAEA to return next week

Meanwhile, the International Atomic Energy Agency plans to send a team to Iraq for the first time since the war to conduct a safety inspection at an Iraqi nuclear facility that might have been looted, an agency spokesman said Friday.

IAEA spokesman Mark Gwozdecky cautioned: "These are not weapons inspections.

"We are planning to send a team to Iraq tentatively next Wednesday, June 4th, with the purpose of verifying nuclear material held at the Tuwaita Nuclear Research Center," Gwozdecky said.

"This work flows from Iraq's obligations under the nuclear nonproliferation treaty," he added.

IAEA Director General Mohamed ElBaradei told CNN on Friday: "We don't know what to expect. We have seen a lot of reports about looting. We are going to focus on nuclear materials that would [be] under verification. The coalition, however, says that they will take care of the safety and the security of radioactive sources.

"I would, again, continue to say that we are ready to help in case our help is needed."

ElBaradei will not be in the group going to Iraq.

The work will be conducted at Location C, a nuclear material storage facility near the Tuwaita Nuclear Research Center.

According to the IAEA, Location C had about 1.8 tons of low-enriched uranium, as well as 500 tons of natural and depleted uranium. The material was under IAEA seal and has been inspected regularly since 1991, the agency said.

Gwozdecky said fewer than 10 safeguards experts are expected to leave Vienna, Austria, on Wednesday for Kuwait City, then go on to Iraq. The departure date could change because the U.S. military is responsible for logistics, he added.

At the Tuwaita site, the team "will determine how much of it was looted, get control of as much as we can, put our seals on it, secure the facility and come home.

"We have in the last month or more sounded the alarm that these radioactive materials shouldn't be on the loose," he told CNN.

Guardian

MI6 led protest against war dossier

Agencies kept quiet on claims over al-Qaida links and forgeries to avoid embarrassing PM

Richard Norton-Taylor - 30 May 2003

Downing Street's determination to use intelligence to bolster its case for war against Iraq provoked a fierce debate in Whitehall last autumn.

Many in the intelligence community, including MI6 and GCHQ, the government's eavesdropping centre, were against publishing a dossier spelling out their assessment of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction.

They were concerned that MPs and journalists would say the dossier, which was sanitised, contained little that was new. They feared there would be demands for the disclosure of more intelligence-based information.

Above all, they were concerned that Downing Street would use the intelligence agencies to justify a pre-emptive strike against Iraq in the face of widespread opposition at home. Downing Street needed intelligence for political reasons.

The intelligence community's worst fears about this unprecedented use of their information were fully realised. The dossier may have been based on intelligence as Alastair Campbell, Tony Blair's communications chief, insisted yesterday; the question was how the words were used and dressed up.

In the foreword to the dossier Mr Blair said it "discloses that [Saddam's] military planning allows for some of the WMD [weapons of mass destruction] to be ready within 45 minutes of an order to use them".

What the dossier actually says is that "intelligence indicates that the Iraqi military are able to deploy chemical or biological weapons within 45 minutes of an order to do so".

Yesterday, Adam Ingram, the armed forces minister, told BBC Radio 4's Today programme: "That was said on the basis of security service information - a single source, it wasn't corroborated." Intelligence officials said yesterday that whether the claim came from a single source, or many, was a red herring.

What mattered was the reliability of the source. That claim, like all the others in the dossier, was based on intelligence assessments with all the caveats that implies. In this case, it was based on the assumption - which now seems highly unlikely - that Saddam's forces had drums of chemical or biological weapons close to missile batteries.

Intelligence is an imprecise art but Downing Street wanted certainty to back up its case for war. The intelligence agencies' anger was heightened in February when another "intelligence" dossier put out by Downing Street contained information lifted from academic sources and included a plagiarised section written by an American PhD student.

Compilers of the documents included members of Mr Campbell's staff and the Coalition Information Centre, a propaganda body set up in the Foreign Office. Intelligence officials, including John Scarlett, chairman of Whitehall's joint intelligence committee, were reported to be furious. It was a "serious error", a Whitehall source said yesterday.

The intelligence agencies - unused to the limelight, although certainly accustomed to being used for political ends - could not stand up to Mr Campbell, let alone to the prime minister. Their situation was further complicated by tensions with their counterparts in the US about the nature of the threat posed by Iraq and al-Qaida. They strongly contested American claims - put about notably by the highly politicised agency set up by the US defence secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, called the Office of Special Plans - of links between al-Qaida and Baghdad.

Mr Blair went further than the agencies wanted by suggesting to MPs that such links could exist. They had to keep mum because they did not want to embarrass the prime minister. They also were under pressure from the Foreign Office not to upset Britain's relations with the US.

But the agencies, and MI6 in particular, were themselves vulnerable to allegations of "doctoring" or manipulating intelligence. The September dossier claimed that there was intelligence that Iraq "has sought the supply of significant quantities of uranium from Africa".

The claim was seized on by the media. But investigations by the International Atomic Energy Agency, the UN's nuclear inspections body, soon discovered that documents purporting to show that Iraq was trying to buy uranium from Niger were forged. Whitehall officials admit they were forged. Mr Blair, so far, has not.

The episode encouraged the scepticism of Hans Blix, chief UN weapons inspector, about intelligence he was given by western agencies during his visits to Iraq. Whitehall sources yesterday described the government's dossier as based on earlier information and reflecting a current view that, as one put it, the Iraqis "were up to something".

A source said: "It may take several months to decide what the Iraqis were doing". He added that something had to be found if only for political reasons - to support Mr Blair.

The issue presents the intelligence agencies with an important test of their credibility as well as the government's case for pre-emptive military action against Iraq, analysts said yesterday. That action was widely opposed in Whitehall.

Peter Hennessy, professor of modern history at Queen Mary and Westfield College, University of London, and a close watcher of Whitehall said: "If ever we needed a vivid example to show the indispensability of politically neutral crown servants, this is it."

Washington Post

Senator Questions Iraqi Arms

Associated Press - 30 May 2003

If Iraq's weapons of mass destruction posed enough of a threat to justify war, they should have been found by now, the top Democrat on the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence said yesterday. Sen. John D. Rockefeller IV (W.Va.) challenged comments by Bush administration officials that the weapons are well-hidden and may not be located soon.

"You can't quite say that it's going to take a lot more time if the intelligence community seemed to be in general agreement that WMD was out there," Rockefeller said in an interview.

He said that if the weapons are so well-concealed, the United States should have considered giving U.N. inspectors more time to find them.

The Bush administration's main argument for the war was that Iraq possessed chemical and biological weapons and was possibly developing nuclear weapons. Those weapons threatened the region and, if given to terrorists, could be used against the United States, it said.

Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld said yesterday, as he has before, that U.S. teams are unlikely to find any weapons of mass destruction unless Iraqis involved in the programs tell the officials where to look. "We do believe they are there," he said in an interview on the Infinity Broadcasting radio network.

Guardian

Straw, Powell had serious doubts over their Iraqi weapons claims

Secret transcript revealed

Dan Plesch and Richard Norton-Taylor – 31 May 2003

Jack Straw and his US counterpart, Colin Powell, privately expressed serious doubts about the quality of intelligence on Iraq's banned weapons programme at the very time they were publicly trumpeting it to get UN support for a war on Iraq, the Guardian has learned.

Their deep concerns about the intelligence - and about claims being made by their political bosses, Tony Blair and George Bush - emerged at a private meeting between the two men shortly before a crucial UN security council session on February 5.

The meeting took place at the Waldorf hotel in New York, where they discussed the growing diplomatic crisis. The exchange about the validity of their respective governments' intelligence reports on Iraq lasted less than 10 minutes, according to a diplomatic source who has read a transcript of the conversation.

The foreign secretary reportedly expressed concern that claims being made by Mr Blair and President Bush could not be proved. The problem, explained Mr Straw, was the lack of corroborative evidence to back up the claims.

Much of the intelligence were assumptions and assessments not supported by hard facts or other sources.

Mr Powell shared the concern about intelligence assessments, especially those being presented by the Pentagon's office of special plans set up by the US deputy defence secretary, Paul Wolfowitz.

Mr Powell said he had all but "moved in" with US intelligence to prepare his briefings for the UN security council, according to the transcripts.

But he told Mr Straw he had come away from the meetings "apprehensive" about what he called, at best, circumstantial evidence highly tilted in favour of assessments drawn from them, rather than any actual raw intelligence.

Mr Powell told the foreign secretary he hoped the facts, when they came out, would not "explode in their faces".

What are called the "Waldorf transcripts" are being circulated in Nato diplomatic circles. It is not being revealed how the transcripts came to be made; however, they appear to have been leaked by diplomats who supported the war against Iraq even when the evidence about Saddam Hussein's programme of weapons of mass destruction was fuzzy, and who now believe they were lied to.

People circulating the transcripts call themselves "allied sources supportive of US war aims in Iraq at the time".

The transcripts will fuel the controversy in Britain and the US over claims that London and Washington distorted and exaggerated the intelligence assessments about Saddam's nuclear, chemical and biological weapons programme.

An unnamed intelligence official told the BBC on Thursday that a key claim in the dossier on Iraq's weapons released by the British government last September - that Iraq could launch a chemical or biological attack within 45 minutes of an order - was inserted on the instructions of officials in 10 Downing Street.

Adam Ingram, the armed forces minister, admitted the claim was made by "a single source; it wasn't corroborated".

Speaking yesterday in Warsaw, the Polish capital, Mr Blair said the evidence of weapons of mass destruction in the dossier was "evidence the truth of which I have absolutely no doubt about at all".

He said he had consulted the heads of the security and intelligence services before emphatically denying that Downing Street had leaned on them to strengthen their assessment of the WMD threat in Iraq. He insisted he had "absolutely no doubt" that proof of banned weapons would eventually be found in Iraq. Whitehall sources make it clear they do not share the prime minister's optimism.

The Waldorf transcripts are all the more damaging given Mr Powell's dramatic 75-minute speech to the UN security council on February 5, when he presented declassified satellite images, and communications intercepts of what were purported to be conversations between Iraqi commanders, and held up a vial that, he said, could contain anthrax.

Evidence, he said, had come from "people who have risked their lives to let the world know what Saddam is really up to".

Some of the intelligence used by Mr Powell was provided by Britain.

The US secretary of state, who was praised by Mr Straw as having made a "most powerful and authoritative case", also drew links between al-Qaida and Iraq - a connection dismissed by British intelligence agencies. His speech did not persuade France, Germany and Russia, who stuck to their previous insistence that the UN weapons inspectors in Iraq should be given more time to do their job.

The Waldorf meeting took place a few days after Downing Street presented Mr Powell with a separate dossier on Iraq's banned weapons which he used to try to strengthen the impact of his UN speech.

A few days later, Downing Street admitted that much of its dossier was lifted from academic sources and included a plagiarised section written by an American PhD student.

Mr Wolfowitz set up the Pentagon's office of special plans to counter what he and his boss, Donald Rumsfeld, considered inadequate - and unwelcome - intelligence from the CIA.

He angered critics of the war this week in a Vanity Fair magazine interview in which he cited "bureaucratic reasons" for the White House focusing on Iraq's alleged arsenal as the reason for the war. In reality, a "huge" reason for the conflict was to enable the US to withdraw its troops from Saudi Arabia, he said.

Earlier in the week, Mr Rumsfeld suggested that Saddam might have destroyed such weapons before the war.

Sunday Telegraph

Short: 'Blair duped us all along. We were misled. We were deceived'

By Colin Brown - 1 June 2003

Clare Short, the former International Development Secretary, last night accused Tony Blair of "duping" the nation over Iraq's weapons of mass destruction to drive Britain to war against Saddam Hussein.

In an interview with The Telegraph, Ms Short, who resigned from the Cabinet on May 12, said: "I have concluded that the PM had decided to go to war in August sometime and he duped us all along. He had decided for reasons that he alone knows to go to war over Iraq and to create this sense of urgency and drive it: the way the intelligence was spun was part of that drive.

"There was political spin put on the intelligence information to create a sense of urgency. It was a political decision that came from the Prime Minister. We were misled: I think we were deceived in the way it was done."

Ms Short focused her attack on Mr Blair's assertion that Saddam possessed biological and chemical weapons which could be used at 45 minutes' notice, saying that she had seen all the intelligence reports relating to Iraq.

"The suggestion that there was a risk of chemical and biological weapons being weaponised and threatening us in a short time was spin," she said. "That didn't come from the security services."

This is Ms Short's most ferocious attack on Mr Blair since she accused him, in her resignation speech, of "being obsessed by his place in history". The comments will infuriate Downing Street, which is already bracing itself for a political battle this week to defend its presentation of the case for war. Spokesmen have strenuously denied that Number 10 officials "doctored" a dossier published in September on weapons of mass destruction and Mr Blair yesterday insisted that he had concrete evidence of their existence.

But in a recorded interview with Sky News, Mr Blair has said today: "I certainly do know some of the stuff that has been already accumulated as the result of interviews [with Iraqi prisoners] and others which is not yet public. What we are going to do is assemble that evidence and present it properly to people.

"Those people who are sitting there and saying, 'It's all going to be proved to be a big fib got out by the security services, there will be no weapons of mass destruction', just wait and have a little patience." Mr Blair added that there were "literally hundreds, possibly thousands of potential WMD sites that are still being investigated. We have only just begun that task.

"I have no doubt whatever that the evidence of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction will be there. Absolutely."

Mr Blair's official spokesman refused to say when the new dossier would be published, only that it would be done "in the right way and at the appropriate time".

Despite the Prime Minister's claims, Ms Short's words will galvanise those who believe that the threat from WMDs was exaggerated to provide a casus belli - a view reinforced by the failure of the Allies to find any chemical or biological weapons.

Ms Short insisted that she supported the removal of Saddam, her quarrel was with the allegedly dishonourable manner in which Mr Blair secured British support for war.

"The people of Iraq were suffering terribly and Saddam Hussein was defying the UN but there was not the urgency that was produced that helped to steer the route to conflict," she said. "There is a question of deception and whether that is honourable and why it was done. I suppose he [Mr Blair] would argue

it was noble because it was justifiable: I would argue against that. It was not honourable because there was not that urgency. I think that is very serious, that you can mislead the country."

Ms Short was supported last night by members of the Government. One minister said: "I now feel not just let down but betrayed. It is extraordinarily serious when you feel you have been fed a lie for ulterior motives by the highest levels of Government."

Chris Smith, a former Cabinet minister, said: "The failure to find weapons of mass destruction raises a serious question over the justification for going to war. I don't subscribe to the view that there was a deliberate distortion. I think the Prime Minister was entirely sincere in his belief but it raises serious questions." Left-wingers plan to ambush Mr Blair about Ms Short's allegations when he makes a Commons statement on Tuesday. There will be demands for a full select committee inquiry into the intelligence available to the Prime Minister

Observer

Blair: I have secret proof of weapons

Gaby Hinsliff, Nick Paton Walsh and Peter Beaumont - 1 June 2003

Prime Minister Tony Blair last night insisted he had secret proof that weapons of mass destruction will be found in Iraq in his strongest signal yet that coalition forces believe they may have begun to uncover leads to Iraq's alleged deadly arms cache.

Stung by claims that the Government exaggerated the threat from Saddam, Blair said he was waiting to publish a 'complete picture' of both intelligence gained before the war and 'what we've actually found'.

Asked if he knew things he could not yet reveal, he said: 'I certainly do know some of the stuff that has been already accumulated as a result of interviews and others... which is not yet public, but what we are going to do is assemble that evidence and present it properly.'

His words, in an interview with Sky TV, came as Downing Street moved to halt damaging leaks over its handling of the evidence by heaping praise on the intelligence services. 'The Prime Minister hugely values the work of the intelligence agencies,' his spokesman said in St Petersburg, where heads of state were celebrating the Russian city's tercentenary, yesterday.

The pointed comment followed a week of furious rows over whether the intelligence dossier on Iraq published by the Government last September was 'sexed up' to convince a sceptical public that they were in danger from Saddam.

It will fuel speculation that private assurances have been given to the intelligence community that they will not be left to carry the can over the failure to find WMD after a week of briefing against senior Blair officials by intelligence officials over the alleged ramping up of intelligence.

Labour backbenchers, increasingly convinced they were misled, are unlikely to be impressed by Blair's argument that they must trust in proof they cannot see. According to intelligence sources the new leads have been provided by Iraqi scientists and a member of the State Security Organisation who are currently being debriefed by MI6 and the CIA. This follows a week in which Government and intelligence sources appear to have changed their story on the likelihood of finding WMD on an almost daily basis.

One source claimed mid-week that British intelligence suggested Saddam had destroyed his WMD even before UN inspectors visited Iraq, a version of events that had changed by yesterday morning to the claim that chemical weapons may actually have been deployed in the field and then destroyed as American troops advanced.

Yesterday the US announced that another 1,400 experts will join the hunt for banned weapons - a signal that Washington has accepted the political significance of the issue.

In Britain it is thought that Ministers want eventually to publish a checklist of claims made before the war alongside subsequent discoveries which they believe vindicate the warnings. So far the only publicly announced discovery has been that of two trailers thought to have been part of a mobile laboratory system.

Blair said in his interview that claims that the existence of WMD was 'a great big fib got out by the security services' would be proved wrong. He said he had 'absolutely no knowledge' of an alleged meeting between the Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw and his US counterpart Colin Powell, in a New York hotel to discuss concerns over whether the evidence on WMD would be strong enough. Leaked transcripts suggested Straw had warned the issue could 'explode in our faces'.

The Foreign Office insisted the two men had not met on the date given in February.

Downing Street has been hampered in its argument by repeated suggestions from the Bush administration that WMD may never be found. Paul Wolfowitz, deputy to the US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, suggested last week that WMD were a bureaucratic pretext to start a war.

Blair told Sky that WMD were the basis in law for taking military action - but 'that's not the same as saying it's a bureaucratic pretext'.

The Prime Minister was due to leave Russia early this morning for the G8 summit in Evian, France, which is expected to agree new measures to stop WMD falling into the hands of terrorists.

Washington Post

Bush Remarks Confirm Shift in Justifying War

Standard of Proof For Weapons Drops

By Dana Milbank – 1 June 2003

In asserting last week that "we found the weapons of mass destruction" in Iraq, President Bush presented a far less expansive estimate of Saddam Hussein's chemical, biological and nuclear capabilities than the one his administration had used for months in justifying the war.

Since last August, Bush and his top lieutenants said it was an absolute certainty that Iraq remained in possession of significant quantities of banned weapons, particularly chemical and biological munitions. But Bush's remarks Thursday, in an interview on Polish television, made clear the administration had lowered its standards of proof. The president asserted that the discovery in Iraq of two trailers, with laboratory equipment but no pathogens aboard, was tantamount to a discovery of weapons.

"We found the weapons of mass destruction," Bush asserted in the Thursday interview, released Friday. "We found biological laboratories. You remember when Colin Powell stood up in front of the world, and he said, Iraq has got laboratories, mobile labs to build biological weapons. They're illegal. They're against the United Nations resolutions, and we've so far discovered two. And we'll find more weapons as time goes on. But for those who say we haven't found the banned manufacturing devices or banned weapons, they're wrong. We found them."

Bush's assertion, one of many recent administration statements shifting focus from Iraq's weapons to Iraq's weapons programs, indicated the president would consider its accusations justified by the discovery of equipment that potentially could be used to produce weapons. But the original charges against Iraq, presented to the United Nations and the American public, were explicitly about the weapons themselves.

On Aug. 26, 2002, Vice President Cheney told the VFW National Convention: "Simply stated, there is no doubt that Saddam Hussein now has weapons of mass destruction." On Sept. 12, 2002, Bush told the U.N. General Assembly: "United Nations inspections also revealed that Iraq likely maintains stockpiles of VX, mustard and other chemical agents, and that the regime is rebuilding and expanding facilities capable of producing chemical weapons."

In Bush's State of the Union address on Jan. 28, he cited evidence that Hussein had enough materials to produce more than 38,000 liters of botulinum toxin and as much as 500 tons of sarin, mustard and VX nerve agents. "He has given no evidence that he has destroyed them," Bush said.

Secretary of State Colin L. Powell, in the same speech to the U.N. on Feb. 5 in which he discussed evidence of the mobile weapons labs Bush referred to last week, argued: "We know that Saddam Hussein is determined to keep his weapons of mass destruction, he's determined to make more." A month later, on March 7, Powell told the United Nations that Hussein has "clearly not" made a decision to "disarm Iraq of its weapons of mass destruction."

Finally, in delivering his March 17 ultimatum to Hussein to go into exile, Bush told the nation: "Intelligence gathered by this and other governments leaves no doubt that the Iraq regime continues to possess and conceal some of the most lethal weapons ever devised."

Bush's political opponents ridiculed the suggestion Bush made last week that the discovery of two trailers validated the earlier accusations. "Just because they found two mobile labs, to say that's evidence of weapons of mass destruction is absurd," said Kristian Denny, spokeswoman for Sen. Bob Graham (D-Fla.), a presidential candidate.

As the war started in Iraq, the administration continued to say with confidence that weapons would be found. On March 21, White House press secretary Ari Fleischer said "there's no question" biological and chemical weapons would be found and asserted that "this was the reason that the president felt so strongly that we needed to take military action."

But when heavy combat in Iraq ended without the discovery of banned arms, administration officials began to emphasize the search for evidence of weapons programs rather than the weapons themselves. In Lima, Ohio, on April 24, Bush raised the possibility that the weapons might not exist any longer. "We know he had them," the president said. "And whether he destroyed them, moved them or hid them, we're going to find out the truth."

In an interview with Vanity Fair magazine on May 9, Paul D. Wolfowitz, the deputy defense secretary, appeared to minimize the importance of the weapons. "The truth is that for reasons that have a lot to do with the U.S. government bureaucracy, we settled on the one issue that everyone could agree on, which was weapons of mass destruction as the core reason," he said, according to a Pentagon transcript in which he stressed other justifications for the war.