



IRAK (8) – DE MASSAVERNIEGINGSWAPENS

INHOUDSOPGAVE

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INLEIDING

De kwestie van massavernietigingswapens vinden wij van groot belang. Dat komt doordat de proliferatie van massavernietigingswapens een potentieel gevaar vormt voor het voortbestaan van de mensheid. Zo groot dat het steeds meer op de internationale politieke agenda komt te staan. In eerdere F&R 's (zie de lijst achterin) hebben we veel aandacht besteed aan de omvang van de proliferatie en de afbraak van het internationale verdragenstelsel dat oorspronkelijk de bedoeling had om die proliferatie tegen te gaan. Voor de VS regering is het bezit van massavernietigingswapens (MVW) door landen die door haar beschreven worden als 'boevenstaten' een reden om een oorlog te beginnen, desnoods zonder VN mandaat. Ook aan die strategie hebben we aandacht besteed.

De Amerikaans-Britse aanval op Irak was de eerste oorlog die op grond van deze 'casus belli' gevoerd werd, zonder VN mandaat. De bewijsvoering voor de Iraakse MVW is onderwerp geworden van doorlopend onderzoek in de VS, VK en Australië. De Carnegie Foundation heeft een dossier over de aanloop samengesteld, evenals het British American Security Information Centre BASIC.

Van doorslaggevend belang in de omslag van de Amerikaanse opinie was de rapportage van de inspecteur David Kay in het Amerikaanse Congres in januari. Daar waren al onderzoekscommissies ingesteld naar de gang van zaken in de inlichtingendiensten, er is nu ook een nieuwe onderzoekscommissie ingesteld om de relatie tussen de inlichtingen en de politieke besluitvorming te onderzoeken. Deze zal pas in 2005 rapporteren, na de presidentsverkiezingen.

In het Verenigd Koninkrijk werd het Hutton rapport eind januari gepubliceerd. Door de inperking van de onderzoeksopdracht werd geen commentaar gegeven op de waarde van de inlichtingen over de Iraakse MVW, vooral het beruchte 'september 2002' dossier. In de daaropvolgende parlementaire debatten en in de media kwam de controverse over de oorspronkelijke politieke besluitvorming weer naar boven. Een onderzoekscommissie moet in ieder geval de inhoud van de inlichtingen bekijken en rapporteren in de komende zomer.

Maar in Nederland mislukten pogingen van de oppositie in de Kamer om te achterhalen op grond van welke informatie de regering de aanval op Irak had gesteund. Hoewel formeel wordt gesteld dat het ging om het niet uitvoeren van VN resoluties door de Iraakse regering, is het wel duidelijk dat de inschatting van de omvang van een MVW dreiging vanuit Irak een rol moet hebben gespeeld. De vraag is welke rol? In het debat dat in het najaar in de Kamer werd gevoerd weigerde de regering de relevante inlichtingenrapporten af te staan. Na de verslagen van Kay in de VS en Hutton in de VK weigerde de regering ook de eis van de oppositie voor een onderzoek. De regeringspartijen steunden de regering in deze, waardoor de parlementaire controle op de regering voor wat betreft de ondersteuning van een oorlog in feite werd geneutraliseerd.

In deze F&R en de volgende (33, 34 en 34A) hebben we een reeks artikelen en documenten bij elkaar gebracht over de Britse, Amerikaanse en Nederlandse betrokkenheid bij de oorlog. Voor de volledigheid hebben we ook een reeks citaten van voor de oorlog weer bij elkaar gebracht (zie dit nummer). In nummer 34 staan voor in een commentaar op de ontwikkelingen en een reeks vragen waarop nog steeds geen antwoord is gekomen. In een kleine bijlage (34A) behandelen we de kwestie van de mysterieuze dood van de Britse MVW expert Dr. David Kelly.

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Redactie Facts and Reports

Hutton Inquiry

Report Publication

HI 12 – 22 December 2003

The Secretary to the Hutton Inquiry, Lee Hughes, said today that Lord Hutton is well advanced with the writing of his report which will be a lengthy document.

Lord Hutton will be working on the report over the Christmas holiday period and the precise date when the report will be completed is not yet known, but Lord Hutton hopes that the report will be published in January.

Tweede Kamer

23 432 De situatie in het Midden-Oosten

Nr. 139 Verslag van een Algemeen Overleg – 29 december 2003

De vaste commissie voor Buitenlandse Zaken¹ en de vaste commissie voor Defensie² hebben op 27 november 2003 overleg gevoerd met minister-president Balkenende, minister van Algemene Zaken, minister De Hoop Scheffer van Buitenlandse Zaken en minister Kamp van Defensie over:

- de brief van de minister-president d.d. 9 september 2003 inzake kennisneming door de regering van een rapportage van de Britse veiligheidsdiensten over massavernietigingswapens in Irak (23 432, nr. 125);
- de lijst van vragen en antwoorden (vastgesteld 21 oktober 2003) over de brief van de minister-president d.d. 9 september 2003 inzake de kennisneming door de regering van een rapportage van de Britse veiligheidsdiensten over massavernietigingswapens in Irak (23 432, nr. 129).

Van dit overleg brengen de commissies bijgaand beknopt verslag uit.

Vragen en opmerkingen uit de commissies

De heer **Koenders** (PvdA) constateert dat dit het laatste debat met de heer De Hoop Scheffer als minister van Buitenlandse Zaken is en dankt hem voor zijn inspanningen voor Nederland.

In de schriftelijke vragenronde zijn niet alle vragen voldoende beantwoord, bijvoorbeeld die over het bekende rapport van september 2002 en over de periode daaropvolgend. Mede naar aanleiding van inlichtingenrapporten maakte de Nederlandse regering de afweging om de oorlog politiek te steunen. Naar aanleiding van het Hutton-rapport zal daarop nog worden teruggekomen. De discussies daarover waren aanleiding om te beginnen over het «for your eyes only»-rapport. De Kamer heeft geen eigen informatie en heeft van de regering geen informatie ontvangen.

Het «for your eyes only»-rapport was cruciaal. Het leidde tot een strategieverandering van afschrikking naar eventuele militaire afdwinging via een versterkte VN-resolutie. Waarom is een dag na de officiële bekendmaking nog een speciaal rapport geleverd aan de Nederlandse regering? Welk extra element is toen geleverd? De ministers van Buitenlandse Zaken en van Defensie hadden geen informatie ontvangen over geheime achterliggende stukken. Het is nog steeds onhelder waarom de minister-president niet actief is nagegaan waarom dit rapport is doorgeleid via de Britse ambassade in Nederland. Het is onduidelijk hoe het rapport zich verhoudt tot het «langs dezelfde lijnen informeren van andere ministers». Waarom moest het rapport terug naar de Britse ambassade als er geen nieuwe dingen in stonden? Hoe toetste de minister-president de achterliggende stukken, die niet zijn doorgeleverd? De reactie luidde dat de MIVD en de AIVD geen verband hebben kunnen leggen met het document, maar het was wel bekend dat langs dezelfde lijnen zou worden geïnformeerd. De informatie van de Britten zou niet zozeer de aard van de massavernietigingswapens betreffen, als wel de munitie, waarschijnlijk mosterdgas. De Britse rapportage zou geen nieuwe opzienbarende feiten bevatten. Waren de Nederlandse veiligheidsdiensten al van mening dat sprake was van de mogelijkheid tot snelle inzet van massavernietigingswapens door Irak? Was er voor de regering geen aanleiding om te twifelen aan de nieuwe feiten uit de Britse rapportage? Welke betekenis heeft de Britse rapportage voor het kabinet gehad bij de latere politieke afwegingen?

De wijze waarop met cruciale informatie is omgegaan blijft schimmig. Op het ministerie van Defensie bleken analyses te zijn gemaakt, terwijl de minister van Defensie zelf pas veel later van het rapport wist. Dat staat op gespannen voet met artikel 45, lid 3, van de Grondwet en artikel 4 van het Reglement van orde van de ministerraad.

In de periode na deze gebeurtenissen wordt door de Nederlandse regering gesproken van een directe en acute dreiging. In maart wordt besloten politieke steun te verlenen aan de unilaterale actie. Gaat de regering thans nog steeds uit van hetgeen hierover door de Amerikaanse regering gesteld is? Hoe is het mogelijk dat geen kritische analyse is verricht? Wat is de evaluatie van de Nederlandse regering? Het is toch niet vol te houden dat de regering een eigenstandige buitenlandse politiek voerde die alleen met de Veiligheidsraadsresolutie te maken had? Bij de vraag hoe lang werd gewacht met een militaire missie bleken de Amerikaanse en Engelse inlichtingendiensten belangrijker dan de verificateurs van de VN.

Volgens het antwoord op vraag 36 onthoudt de regering zich van een oordeel over bevindingen van buitenlandse parlementaire commissies.

Volgens het antwoord op vraag 48 kon de MIVD de mogelijkheid niet expliciet uitsluiten dat Irak inderdaad in staat zou zijn om binnen 45 minuten massavernietigingswapens in te zetten. Hier wordt ten eerste een uitzondering gemaakt op de regel om niets over dit onderwerp te zeggen.

Ten tweede worden vragen opgeroepen over de wijze waarop de Nederlandse regering kennelijk met de informatieanalyse omgaat.

Het is een gotspe dat de Nederlandse regering in tegenstelling tot andere Europese regeringen zelfs niet vertrouwelijk inlichtingen wil verschaffen over de aanloop tot de oorlog. Hierbij wordt verwezen naar de uitleg van toenmalig minister De Vries van BZK over de reikwijdte van artikel 68 van de Grondwet. Volgens dit artikel moet de regering expliciet motiveren waarom geen inlichtingen kunnen worden verschaft. Minister Kamp heeft gezegd dat het de Nederlandse troepen in gevaar zou brengen. In andere landen speelt dat argument blijkbaar geen rol. De laatste passage in de brief van toenmalig minister De Vries is: «Ten slotte wordt opgemerkt dat de mogelijkheid inlichtingen vertrouwelijk te geven, ertoe bijdraagt dat slechts sporadisch wordt geweigerd inlichtingen te verstrekken met een beroep op het belang van de Staat.» Door de regering is absoluut niet overtuigend aangegeven waarom zelfs niet gekozen is voor de weg van vertrouwelijkheid.

Mevrouw **Van Velzen** (SP) vraagt de regering om een helder chronologisch overzicht van de tijdstippen waarop informatie is uitgewisseld. Optimale openbaarheid is noodzakelijk opdat de Tweede Kamer haar werk kan doen. Het zou mooi zijn als de Kamer zich minister De Hoop Scheffer zal herinneren als de man die vlak voor zijn vertrek helderheid heeft verschaft.

Op 13 september 2002 sprak de minister-president met minister-president Blair. Welke informatie is toen uitgewisseld en welke informatie heeft de minister-president bereikt in de daaropvolgende weken?

Er zijn verschillende versies van het rapport van de Britse regering. Welke versies hebben de minister-president en de overige bewindslieden onder ogen gehad? Is er een analyse gemaakt van de verschillen in de drie versies en de politieke impact daarvan? Wat hebben de inlichtingendiensten hierover gerapporteerd en welke invloed heeft die rapportage gehad op de besluitvorming van de regering? Volgens de premier had de informatie geen aparte betekenis voor de besluitvorming over de politieke steun voor de militaire interventie. Was het debat over de aanwezigheid van massavernietigingswapens in Irak niet van cruciaal belang in het opbouwen van de politieke druk en de militaire dreiging tegen Irak? Juist het rapport van 24 september is toch doorslaggevend geweest? Irak heeft de Veiligheidsraad een uitgebreid overzicht ter hand gesteld. De Nederlandse regering heeft dat overzicht verbazingwekkend genoeg nooit gezien. Hoe heeft de separate afweging dan kunnen plaatsvinden? Kan helderheid worden verschaft over de Nederlandse inbreng in de vermeende opbouw van een arsenaal aan massavernietigingswapens?

Het belang van dit debat moet niet worden onderschat. Ondanks zware inspanningen zijn in Irak geen massavernietigingswapens gevonden. Er moet echt inzicht worden geboden in de toedracht om tot de interventie in Irak te komen.

De heer **Wilders** (VVD) geeft de minister van Buitenlandse Zaken een compliment en wenst hem veel succes als secretaris-generaal van de NAVO.

Het onderwerp van dit debat is de manier waarop het kabinet met de verschillende informatie is omgegaan, zowel onderling als richting Kamer.

In een eerder debat spitste de kritiek van de VVD-fractie zich toe op de vraag hoe het mogelijk is geweest dat informatie die de minister-president had gekregen, niet ook op de departementen van Defensie en van Buitenlandse Zaken terechtgekomen is. Het kabinet had zich commotie kunnen besparen als het antwoord op de vragen 15 en 16 eerder was verstrekt. Er is blijkbaar wel degelijk gecontroleerd of de informatie die de minister-president had ontvangen, gelijk was aan de informatie die de MIVD, de AIVD en het ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken kregen.

Het blijft vreemd dat de minister-president niet zelf aan zijn collega's heeft gevraagd of zij de informatie ook hadden ontvangen. De vooraankondiging was wel naar Buitenlandse Zaken, maar niet naar Defensie gestuurd.

De minister van Buitenlandse Zaken is pas augustus 2003 rechtstreeks door de minister-president geïnformeerd. De minister van Defensie is een dag later door de minister van Buitenlandse Zaken op de

hoogte gesteld. Deze communicatie verdient niet de schoonheidsprijs. Het zou goed zijn als de minister-president dit ruiterlijk zou toegeven.

De heer **Eurlings** (CDA) prijst minister De Hoop Scheffer voor zijn grote kennis en kunde, alsmede voor de altijd serieuze benadering van het parlement. Nederland mag trots zijn op zijn nieuwe positie.

De discussie over bepaalde rapporten is ook in andere parlementen opgelaaid. In het Verenigd Koninkrijk spitst de discussie zich toe op de vraag of Saddam Hussein in staat was om binnen drie kwartier verboden wapens af te vuren. De conclusies van de andere parlementen kunnen slechts worden afgewacht. Het zou goed zijn als de geloofwaardigheid van de bondgenoten herbevestigd kan worden.

De besluitvorming in het Nederlandse parlement is niet afhankelijk geweest van de vraag of een verboden wapen in drie kwartier of in tweeënhalf uur kan worden afgevuurd. De Veiligheidsraad had in resolutie 1441 wederom material breach geconstateerd. Toen bleek dat er wederom geen afdoende medewerking van Saddam Hussein kwam, is een streep gezet. Er is een moeilijke, duidelijke keuze gemaakt.

Het ware beter geweest als de gedetailleerde informatie rond de «advance copy» reeds bij het plenaire debat zou zijn gepresenteerd. Dat had veel onduidelijkheid en de noodzaak van nadere debatten voorkomen. Het is goed dat wordt aangegeven dat wel degelijk is verzekerd dat de betrokken ministers gelijke informatie ontvingen. Gelet op de positie die deze informatie heeft gehad in de Nederlandse besluitvorming, is het voorstelbaar dat het via de coördinator is gelopen.

De heer **Herben** (LPF) vindt dat de Tweede Kamer voldoende is geïnformeerd over de rapportage van de Britse veiligheidsdiensten die op 25 september 2002 vertrouwelijk aan de minister-president ter inzage is gegeven. Hij woont dit debat slechts bij als een blijk van hoffelijkheid jegens de minister-president, die hier ontboden is, jegens de scheidende minister van Buitenlandse Zaken, die veel wijsheid, kracht en succes in zijn nieuwe functie worden toegewenst, en jegens de minister van Defensie, die trouw op zijn post is.

Met voorstellen als het instellen van een luchtembargo en luchtverkenning door de VN is gepoogd de oorlog af te wenden. Gesteld voor de keuze tussen Bush en Saddam Hussein was het antwoord eenvoudig. Het Irakbeleid is steeds gesteund, vooral vanuit geopolitieke redenen. De routekaart naar vrede was onbegaanbaar zolang terreurbewegingen als Hamas werden gesteund door regimes als dat van Saddam Hussein. De ontwikkelingen in het Midden-Oosten baren zorg. Te denken valt aan de situatie in Iran, maar ook aan het democratisch tekort in de regio. De val van Saddam Hussein opende de weg naar terugtrekking van Amerikaanse troepen uit Saudi-Arabië, hetgeen Osama bin Laden het argument uit handen slaat dat hij opkomt voor de bescherming van de heilige plaatsen van de islam.

Als het rapport van de Britse inlichtingendiensten geen aparte betekenis heeft gehad, is het wellicht dienstig als de regering nog even puntig markeert welke redenen wél een rol hebben gespeeld bij het besluit politieke steun te geven.

De heer **Bakker** (D66) sluit zich aan bij de mooie woorden en goede wensen aan het adres van minister De Hoop Scheffer. Aan de orde is de vraag in hoeverre de regering de informatie over massavernietigingswapens de doorslag heeft laten geven bij het standpunt ten opzichte van de oorlog in Irak. Het is niet geheel helder in hoeverre het «for your eyes only»-rapport verschilt van het gepubliceerde rapport. Ook via de weg van de commissie voor de Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdiensten heeft de minister-president de Kamer hierover niet willen informeren.

De onderlinge communicatie binnen de regering heeft bevreemding gewekt. De minister van Defensie is pas veel later op de hoogte gesteld van het rapport van de Britse veiligheidsdiensten. In de toekomst is een optimale communicatie noodzakelijk.

Antwoord van de bewindslieden

De **minister-president** dankt de leden voor de lovende woorden voor minister De Hoop Scheffer.

Hij merkt op dat een deel van de informatie die is gegeven in de beantwoording van de 55 vragen, eerder had kunnen worden gegeven. Daarmee hadden discussies kunnen worden voorkomen. Indertijd is geen bijzondere betekenis gehecht aan de van de Britten ontvangen informatie. Daardoor kostten de latere naspeuringen naar wat er precies gebeurd was, wat meer tijd. Het had beter gekund en gemoeten.

De rapporten die naar Buitenlandse Zaken en de veiligheidsdiensten zijn gegaan, zijn gecheckt door de coördinator. Hij heeft vastgesteld dat er materieel geen verschil was tussen deze stukken en dat er dus geen reden voor actie was. Verder was de informatie niet van dien aard, dat gesproken kon worden van heel nieuwe inzichten. Het was beter geweest als dit de Kamer eerder was gemeld.

De Britse rapportage heeft geen aparte of relevante betekenis gehad voor de besluitvorming in het kabinet over de houding ten aanzien van het militair ingrijpen in Irak, gebaseerd op resolutie 1441. In september 2002 ging het vooral om de vraag of het VN-spoor kon worden bewandeld. In de internationale gemeenschap leefde zorg over de aanwezigheid van massavernietigingswapens in Irak. In het kader van gesprekken daarover en over het volgen van het VN-spoor moest waarde worden toegekend aan de verschillende informatiebronnen.

De informatie werd gewogen door de veiligheidsdiensten, die met rapportages kwamen die vervolgens werden besproken in de raad voor de inlichtingen- en veiligheidsdiensten (RIV), een onderraad van het kabinet. Daardoor kwam de informatie bij de bewindslieden terug en konden inschattingen worden gemaakt. De eenheid van kabinetsbeleid kwam naar voren in gedachtewisselingen in die raad en in besluiten van de ministerraad. Dat is gebeurd op basis van dezelfde informatie. Het Britse rapport was onderdeel van die bredere informatiestroom. De eerste vraag die beantwoord moest worden was of er een resolutie van de VN kon komen. Nogmaals, er vonden nog geen militaire afwegingen plaats. De discussie over de «serious consequences» kwam pas veel later.

Wat wel een rol speelde, was de vraag naar de aanwezigheid van massavernietigingswapens in Irak. Daarover waren er al de nodige resoluties, die niet waren nagekomen. Irak had in het verleden ook gebruik gemaakt van vernietigingswapens. In die context is het Britse rapport verstaan. Er is geen sprake geweest van het achterhouden van informatie tussen departementen. Het Britse rapport had eenzelfde status als de andere informatiebronnen in die tijd. Achteraf kan gezegd worden dat het beter zou zijn geweest als de andere bewindslieden indertijd persoonlijk op de hoogte waren gesteld.

Het openbare rapport, dat op 13 september door premier Blair telefonisch was aangekondigd, verscheen op 24 september. De dag daarop heeft de regering een rapport ontvangen met een begeleidend memo van premier Blair. Vervolgens heeft door de coördinator een vergelijking plaatsgevonden van de documenten aan de minister-president, aan de veiligheidsdiensten en aan Buitenlandse Zaken, en is geconstateerd dat daar geen verschil tussen zat. Daarop was de conclusie gebaseerd dat er geen kennisachterstanden waren.

Er zal niet worden ingegaan op de inhoud van het Britse rapport, inclusief de 45 minuten binnen welke Irak een aanval met massavernietigingswapens zou kunnen doen. De AIVD en de MIVD zijn tot hun algemene bevindingen gekomen op basis van het samenstel aan materiaal en niet op basis van een enkel rapport.

Er is eerder gediscussieerd over het naar buiten brengen van informatie. Artikel 68 van de Grondwet gaat uit van openbaarheid, maar in dit geval gaat het om vertrouwelijke informatie van andere veiligheidsdiensten. Het is goed om die vertrouwelijkheid in acht te nemen. Het is in het belang van de Nederlandse Staat en de militaire organisatie en het raakt ook de betrekkingen met andere landen. Als vertrouwelijke informatie niet vertrouwelijk wordt behandeld, zal bovendien de informatievoorziening mogelijk worden verminderd, terwijl de inlichtingen- en veiligheidsdiensten hun werk slechts kunnen doen op basis van volledige informatie.

De **minister van Buitenlandse Zaken** dankt de leden voor de vriendelijke woorden en zegt dat hij het parlementaire debat zal missen.

De beslissing rond Irak is de moeilijkste beslissing die het kabinet heeft moeten nemen. In de loop van het proces heeft de minister nooit de indruk gehad dat de minister-president over informatie beschikte die hem zelf onbekend was. Daarvoor waren de contacten te intensief.

Op 12 september 2002 ging de Amerikaanse president naar de VN. Er werd toen nog niet over strategieën nagedacht die zouden moeten leiden tot een totaal andere koers. Resolutie 1441, die aan de basis heeft gelegen van het Nederlandse besluit tot het verlenen van politieke steun, is van 8 november 2002. In resolutie 1441 betreurt de Veiligheidsraad dat Irak nog steeds geen accurate reactie heeft gegeven op «all aspects of its programs to develop weapons of mass destruction». De Veiligheidsraad stelt dus vast dat Irak dergelijke programma's heeft. Voor het Nederlandse beleid is de Iraakse weigering tot medewerking op dit punt een ankerpunt voor de eigen afweging geweest.

Ook de Nederlandse regering verkeert in onzekerheid over de aanwezigheid van massavernietigingswapens. De afwezigheid van bewijs voor de aanwezigheid kan echter niet worden uitgelegd als het bewijs voor de afwezigheid van de wapens.

UNMOVIC heeft een lijst opgesteld, die met betrokken regeringen zou worden gedeeld. Dat is nooit gebeurd. De concrete vraag van mevrouw Van Velzen hierover kan derhalve niet worden beantwoord. Er zal nog een keer naar de lijst worden gevraagd. Er kan niet worden toegezegd dat de lijst onmiddellijk naar de Kamer zal worden gestuurd.

De geopolitieke overwegingen van de heer Herben zijn juist. Datgene wat in Irak gebeurd is, heeft verdragende gevolgen voor de hele regio.

De **minister van Defensie** bevestigt dat hij indertijd door de MIVD in het algemeen is geïnformeerd. De dienst heeft het Britse rapport niet gezien als iets wat expliciet onder de aandacht van de minister moest worden gebracht. Het is in algemene zin ook niet gebruikelijk dat de dienst de minister informeert over de bron van informatie. Dat gebeurt alleen als de minister ernaar vraagt. Er wordt feitelijke informatie verschaft, vaak afkomstig uit meerdere bronnen, zodanig geformuleerd dat de minister er zonder terughoudendheid op af kan gaan.

Volgens het antwoord op vraag 48 kon de MIVD de mogelijkheid niet expliciet uitsluiten dat Irak inderdaad in staat zou zijn om binnen 45 minuten massavernietigingswapens in te zetten. De dienst had informatie van derden, die getoetst wordt, en eigen informatie. Een zorgvuldige formulering kan soms cryptisch aandoen.

Terecht is benadrukt dat ervoor gezorgd moet worden dat alle informatie van buitenlandse veiligheidsdiensten die voor Nederland relevant is, voor Nederland beschikbaar is. Een belangrijke voorwaarde daarvoor is dat zeer zorgvuldig wordt omgegaan met informatie die de minister vertrouwelijk ter beschikking wordt gesteld.

Nadere gedachtewisseling

De heer **Koenders** (PvdA) vindt dat de regering de Kamer onvoldoende inlichtingen verschaft en tekortschiet in haar plicht op grond van artikel 68 van de Grondwet. Het punt is te belangrijk om te laten rusten.

Blijkens het antwoord op vraag 2 gaat de regering uit van datgene wat door de Amerikaanse regering wordt gemeld. Geldt dat nog steeds, gelet op de aluminiumbuizen en andere incidenten?

Een Britse parlementaire commissie heeft uitsluitel gegeven over de risico's en het gebrek aan context. Het gevaar zou worden vergroot als Irak zou worden aangevallen. De regering dient daarop te reageren.

Mevrouw **Van Velzen** (SP) sluit zich aan bij de conclusie van de heer Koenders over de gebrekkige openbaarheid. Zij vraagt opnieuw om een chronologisch overzicht van de informatiestroom.

De heer **Wilders** (VVD) vindt het belangrijk dat de informatie gecheckt is door de veiligheidsfunctionaris van AZ en dat de informatie in de verschillende rapporten gelijkkluidend was. De minister-president is te prijzen voor het feit dat hij de hand in eigen boezem heeft gestoken op het punt van de informatievoorziening. Toekomstige debatten over Irak moeten de toekomst van Irak betreffen.

De heer **Eurlings** (CDA) sluit zich aan bij de afsluiting van het betoog van zijn voorganger.

De heer **Herben** (LPF) is er tevreden over dat er bij de minister-president en bij de minister van Buitenlandse Zaken oog is voor geopolitiekestrategische gedachten. De minister van Defensie moet pal blijven staan voor de gegevens van buitenlandse diensten. Nederland heeft de Britse inlichtingendienst in Irak hard nodig.

De heer **Bakker** (D66) vindt dat er veel opgehelderd is over de manier waarop is omgegaan met het «for your eyes only»-rapport. De minister-president heeft de hand in eigen boezem gestoken.

De **minister-president** herhaalt in reactie op de inbreng van de heer Koenders dat hij vanwege het vertrouwelijk karakter geen oordeel zal geven over inhoudelijke stukken.

De chronologie was als volgt. Op 13 september was er een telefoongesprek met premier Blair, waarin informatie werd aangekondigd. Dat is doorgegeven aan het ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken. Op 24 september verscheen het openbare rapport. Op 25 september kwam het «for your eyes only»-rapport en kort daarna kregen de inlichtingen- en veiligheidsdiensten en het ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken een stuk. Op 26 september scande de coördinator de rapporten op eventuele verschillen. Vervolgens is de informatie door de diensten gewogen en teruggekomen in de RIV.

Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

WMD in Iraq – Evidence and implications

By Joseph Cirincione, Jessica T. Mathews, George Perkovich and Alexis Orton – January 2004

(Het volledige rapport is te vinden op: <http://wmd.ceip.matrixgroup.net/iraq3fulltext.pdf>)

[...] Guide to Key Findings

Iraq's WMD programs represented a long-term threat that could not be ignored. They did not, however, pose an immediate threat to the United States, to the region, or to global security. (p. 47)

With respect to nuclear and chemical weapons, the extent of the threat was largely knowable at the time. (p. 47)

- Iraq's nuclear program had been dismantled and there was no convincing evidence of its reconstitution. (p. 47)

- Regarding chemical weapons, UNSCOM discovered that Iraqi nerve agents had lost most of their lethality *as early as 1991*. Operations Desert Storm and Desert Fox, and UN inspections and sanctions effectively destroyed Iraq's large-scale chemical weapon production capabilities. For both reasons, it appears that thereafter Iraq focused on preserving a latent, dual-use capability, rather than on weapons production. (p. 47–48)

The uncertainties were much greater with regard to biological weapons. However, the real threat lay in what could be achieved in the future rather than in what had been produced in the past or existed in the present. (p. 48)

- The biological weapons program may also have been converted to dual-use facilities designed to quickly start weapons production in time of war, rather than making and storing these weapons in advance. (p. 48)

The missile program appears to have been the one program in active development in 2002. (p. 48) Iraq was expanding its capability to build missiles whose ranges exceeded UN limits.

It is unlikely that Iraq could have destroyed, hidden, or sent out of the country the hundreds of tons of chemical and biological weapons, dozens of Scud missiles and facilities engaged in the ongoing production of chemical and biological weapons that officials claimed were present without the United States detecting some sign of this activity before, during, or after the major combat period of the war. (p. 55)

How much radioactive and biological material have been lost and whether they have fallen into the wrong hands remain crucial unknowns. (p. 58–59)

Prior to 2002, the intelligence community appears to have overestimated the chemical and biological weapons in Iraq but had a generally accurate picture of the nuclear and missile programs. (p. 50)

The dramatic shift between prior intelligence assessments and the October 2002 National Intelligence Estimate (NIE), together with the creation of an independent intelligence entity at the Pentagon and other steps, suggest that the intelligence community began to be unduly influenced by policymakers' views sometime in 2002. (p. 50)

There was and is no solid evidence of a cooperative relationship between Saddam's government and Al Qaeda. (p. 48)

There was no evidence to support the claim that Iraq would have transferred WMD to Al Qaeda and much evidence to counter it. (p. 48)

The notion that any government would give its principal security assets to people it could not control in order to achieve its own political aims is highly dubious. (p. 49)

Today, the most likely source of a nuclear terrorist threat would be from theft or purchase of fissile material or tactical nuclear weapons from poorly guarded stockpiles in Russia and other former Soviet states, including Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine. The security of Pakistan's nuclear assets, including technology and know how, is also a major concern. (p. 50)

Administration officials systematically misrepresented the threat from Iraq's WMD and ballistic missile programs, beyond the intelligence failures noted above, by:

- Treating nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons as a single "WMD threat." The conflation of three distinct threats, very different in the danger they pose, distorted the cost/benefit analysis of the war. (p. 52)

- Insisting without evidence—yet treating as a given truth—that Saddam Hussein would give whatever WMD he possessed to terrorists. (p. 52)

- Routinely dropping caveats, probabilities, and expressions of uncertainty present in intelligence assessments from public statements. (p. 53)

- Misrepresenting inspectors' findings in ways that turned threats from minor to dire. (p. 53)

While worst case planning is valid and vital, acting on worst case assumptions is neither safe nor wise. (p. 54)

The assertion that the threat that became visible on 9/11 invalidated deterrence against states does not stand up to close scrutiny. (p. 57)

Saddam's responses to international pressure and international weakness from the 1991 war onward show that while unpredictable he was not undeterrable. (p. 57)

The UN inspection process appears to have been much more successful than recognized before the war. Nine months of exhaustive searches by the U.S. and coalition forces suggest that inspectors were actually in the process of finding what was there. Thus, the choice was never between war and doing nothing about Iraq's WMD. (p. 55)

In addition to inspections, a combination of international constraints — sanctions, procurement investigations, and the export/import control mechanism—also appears to have been considerably more effective than was thought. (p. 56)

The knowledge, prior experience in Iraq, relationships with Iraqi scientists and officials, and credibility of UNMOVIC experts represent a vital resource that has been ignored when it should be being fully exploited. (p. 51)

To reconstruct an accurate history of Iraq's WMD programs, the data from the seven years of UNSCOM/IAEA inspections are absolutely essential. The involvement of the inspectors and scientists who compiled the more-than-30-million-page record is needed to effectively mine it. (p. 56)

Considering all the costs and benefits, there were at least two options clearly preferable to a war undertaken without international support: allowing the UNMOVIC/IAEA inspections to continue until obstructed or completed, or imposing a tougher program of "coercive inspections" backed by a specially designed international force. (p. 59)

Even a war successful on other counts could leave behind three significant WMD threats: lost material, "loose" scientists, and the message that only nuclear weapons could protect a state from foreign invasion. (p. 58)

The National Security Strategy's new doctrine of preemptive military action is actually a loose standard for preventive war under the cloak of legitimate preemption. (p. 60)

In the Iraqi case, the world's three best intelligence services proved unable to provide the accurate information necessary for acting in the absence of imminent threat. (p. 61)

Summary of recommendations

U.S. POLICY

Create a nonpartisan independent commission, including at least one member with first-hand knowledge of the extensive UNMOVIC, UNSCOM, and IAEA archive to establish a clear picture of what the intelligence community knew and believed it knew about Iraq's weapons program throughout 1991–2002. The commission should consider the role of foreign intelligence as well as the question of political pressure on analysts and the adequacy of agencies' responses to it. (p. 51)

No changes in the structure or practices of the intelligence community are worth acting on until the record described above is firmly established. If it reveals that the content and clarity of the intelligence product were significantly affected by the desire to serve political masters, Congress should seriously consider professionalizing the post of Director of Central Intelligence (DCI). (p. 52)

Make the security of poorly protected nuclear weapons and stockpiles of plutonium and highly enriched uranium a much higher priority of national security policy. (p. 50)

Deter any nation contemplating WMD terrorism against the United States by communicating clearly the national resolve to use overwhelming force against any state that transfers nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons to a terrorist group. (p. 49)

The National Security Strategy's dismissal of the utility of deterrence against "rogue" and other potential enemy states merits a focused national debate that has not taken place. (p. 57)

The National Security Strategy should be revised to eliminate a U.S. doctrine of unilateral, preemptive war in the absence of imminent threat (that is, preventive war). (p. 61)

INTERNATIONAL ACTION

The United States and the United Nations should collaborate to produce a complete history and inventory of Iraq's WMD and missile programs. UNMOVIC, the IAEA Iraq Action Team, and the enormous UNSCOM technical archive should all be brought into the present effort by the U.S. Iraq Survey Group. Both the United States and the United Nations should be seriously faulted for the failure to do so to date. (p. 56) This work should include sending UNMOVIC and IAEA teams back to Iraq. (p. 51)

In this joint effort, particular attention should be paid to discovering which of the several international constraints on Iraq were effective and to what degree. (p. 56)

The UN Secretary General should charter a related effort to understand the inspections process itself — an after-action report. The relative value of site visits and analysis needs to be clarified. Also, the various strengths and weaknesses of this pioneering international effort need to be fully understood, including its human resources, access to technology, access to nationally held intelligence, vulnerability to penetration, and contributions to national intelligence agencies. (p. 57)

If the findings in Iraq and of these studies warrant, the UN Security Council should consider creating a permanent, international, nonproliferation inspection capability. (p. 60)

By treaty or Security Council resolution, make the transfer of weapons of mass destruction capabilities by any government to any other entity a violation of international law and a threat to international peace and security. (p. 49)

Pursue initiatives suggested by Presidents Bush and Chirac to strengthen the UN Security Council's resolve and capacity to prevent proliferation and ensure compliance with nonproliferation norms and rules. (p. 59)

Convene international negotiations to define agreed principles for preemptive and/or preventive action to remove acute proliferation threats. (p. 61)

ASSESSING THREATS

Recognize distinctions in the degree of threat posed by the different forms of "weapons of mass destruction." Otherwise, the security risks of actions taken may outweigh the risks of the targeted threat. (p. 53)

Congress and the public must learn to recognize red flags indicating that sound intelligence practices are not being followed. (p. 52)

Examine and debate the assertion that the combined threat of evil states and terrorism calls for acting on the basis of worst case reasoning. (p. 54)

Examine and debate the unexamined assumption that "evil" or "rogue" states are likely to turn over WMD to terrorists. (p. 49)

Statement

HI – 13 - 7 January 2004

There have been a number of reports in the press today about written submissions made to the Hutton Inquiry by the Government. Therefore Lord Hutton has issued the following statement to clarify the position in relation to those submissions:

It has always been public knowledge that after the closing oral statements by their counsel all the parties at the Inquiry were given the opportunity to submit further written submissions. In his closing statement to the Inquiry on 25th September 2003 Mr Dingemans QC, counsel to the Inquiry, said:

"The parties are being given the opportunity to put in any further written submissions and given the opportunity to correct any factual errors they say have been made in any written submissions."

The parties were given this opportunity in the interests of fairness in case any party considered that it had not fully developed all the points it wished to make in the course of its oral submissions.

The BBC, Mr Andrew Gilligan, the Kelly family, as well as the Government, availed themselves of the opportunity to submit further written submissions, and the further written submissions of each party were sent to all the other parties. Therefore, contrary to the suggestions in some of the press reports today, there was nothing surprising or unexpected or of special significance in the making of these written submissions.

The Inquiry received requests for the parties' written submissions to be posted on its website and on 13th October 2003 the Inquiry's solicitor, Mr Martin Smith, wrote to the solicitors for all the parties stating:

"As you will be aware through your counsel, the Inquiry has received requests for the parties' written submissions to be posted on its website. Lord Hutton is currently minded to accede to this request in relation to the parties' final (but not interim) submissions.

"Please let me know whether you have any objections to this course of action."

The parties who had made oral submissions replied stating that they were opposed to the publication of the written submissions pending the publication of the report and, in slightly different terms, they all made the point that publication would encourage a trial of various individuals (against whom no criticism might be made in the report) by the media and that this would be unfair.

After considering this objection, and balancing the need to protect individuals against the benefits of publishing the written submissions before the delivery of his report, Lord Hutton concluded that he should not publish the submissions pending his report, and that he would give further consideration to the publication of the written submissions after the report had been published. Therefore on 22nd October 2003 the Inquiry's solicitor wrote to the respective solicitors for the parties as follows:

"Thank you for your letter containing representations about whether Lord Hutton should confirm his provisional view that it was appropriate for the parties' final (but not interim) written submissions to be published on the Inquiry's website.

"Having reviewed your letter, and those received from the other parties on this issue, Lord Hutton has decided that these documents should not be made available to the public at this stage. Accordingly, the written submissions will not be posted on the website prior to Lord Hutton's report being published.

"Lord Hutton will give further consideration to whether the parties' written submissions should be made public, after his report is published."

US State Department

Powell Restates U.S. Concerns Over Iraqi WMD that Led to War

Tells ABC that Saddam Hussein saw the utility of WMD and had used them - 8 January 2004

Secretary of State Colin Powell said it was "incontrovertible" that the former Iraqi regime led by Saddam Hussein had used weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and had every intention of developing them further.

Speaking January 7 on ABC's "Nightline," Powell justified the U.S.-led military operation that overthrew the former regime on the grounds that President Bush had concluded Iraq possessed WMD and that it was "a danger to the region."

"The Iraqis had the intent. They had the capability. We could not get inside all of Iraq to determine what weapons might actually be there, but there was a sufficient body of intelligence information that suggested to us that there were weapons programs -- chemical, biological, nuclear," he said.

If Saddam Hussein were still in power, the secretary said, "he would be doing much more right now" to develop more WMD "because he saw the utility of such weapons and he's used them in the past."
[...]

US State Department

Powell Affirms Confidence in Decision To Wage Iraq War

Previews coming year, answers questions dealing with all parts of world - 8 January 2004

Secretary of State Colin Powell strongly defended President Bush's decision to go to war with Iraq, saying he is confident of the facts he presented last February to the United Nations Security Council on the threat from the Saddam Hussein regime.

During a January 8 news conference, Powell said "I am confident of what I presented last year. The intelligence community is confident of the material they gave me; I was representing them. It was information they presented to the Congress. It was information they had presented publicly, and they stand behind it. And this game is still unfolding."

He said the Iraq Survey Group that is searching for weapons and weapons programs in Iraq should be allowed to complete its work.

Powell reminded reporters that Saddam Hussein had used weapons of mass destruction against his own people and against Iran, and said Hussein "kept the infrastructure, he kept the programs intact."

Powell also said his presentation at the U.N. "made it clear that we had seen some links and connections to terrorist organizations over time. ... I have not seen smoking-gun, concrete evidence about the connection, but I think the possibility of such connections did exist and it was prudent to consider them at the time that we did."

In his opening statement, Powell outlined foreign policy highlights for 2003 and previewed the year ahead.

He said progress had been made in the war against terror, but a difficult and long challenge remains.

While terrorist cells are being "rolled up" and terrorists brought to justice, he said, "we know that there is still an enemy out there that would do us ill, would do us damage, and we'll be going after that enemy."

Both Iraq and Afghanistan, he said, will remain high U.S. foreign policy priorities.

"We will stay the course in Afghanistan. We will work with our friends. We thank NATO for taking on a new mission in Afghanistan, a unique mission for NATO," he said.

In Iraq, "the challenge is clear," he said. "We are working very closely with the Governing Council. We have a good plan, the 15 November plan, that will result in the creation of a transitional executive branch, as well as a transitional assembly by the middle of the year, we hope."

But he noted the continuing security challenge there, and mentioned the downing earlier in the day of a U.S. military helicopter in Iraq that killed all nine aboard.

"We regret the loss of life of our brave young men and women and other coalition men and women and those civilians who have lost their lives," he said. "But they are serving in a good cause to give the Iraqi people peace and freedom, and what is not there anymore is a horrible, dictatorial, filthy regime that did develop weapons of mass destruction, that used them against people, a regime that filled mass graves. It is gone. It is not coming back."

[...]

Hutton Inquiry

Lord Hutton's report publication date – 28 January 2004

HI – 14 – 15 January 2003

Lord Hutton's report into the circumstances surrounding the death of Doctor David Kelly will be sent to the printers on 19 January and laid and published in Parliament on Wednesday 28 January.

On the day of publication Lord Hutton will make a statement summarising his report in Court 76 at the Royal Courts of Justice. His statement will be available for live broadcast on radio and television. Detailed timings will be announced in due course.

Lord Hutton intends that the six Parties represented at the Inquiry will have 24 hours notice of the report. Parties will be required to sign an undertaking not to reveal the contents of the report before publication.

US State Department

Powell on Netherlands Television Defends U.S. Course on Iraq

16 January 2004

Secretary of State Colin Powell defended the U.S. course in Iraq during an interview January 16 in Washington with Netwerk, Netherlands.

Acknowledging that there was "popular discontent" in Europe with the U.S. decision to go to war, Powell expressed confidence that "the European public, when they see that the Iraqi people are facing a better life, with democracy, and are no longer a threat to themselves or to their neighbors, attitudes will change."

Powell said he has "no second doubts" on the war, adding, "There's no doubt in my mind that [Saddam Hussein] had the intention, he had the capability" to possess weapons of mass destruction.

"How many weapons he had or didn't have, that will be determined. But if we had not stopped him ... if there is anybody who thinks he would not have built that capability up and remained a threat to his neighbors, a threat to the region and the world, and the possibility of those weapons getting into the hands of terrorists, I think they're mistaken."

Powell also discussed the role the United States hopes to see the United Nations play in the return of sovereignty to Iraq. He said the U.N. can help "to bring all parties together to support the 15 November plan, as it is called, which will return sovereignty to the Iraqi people next July 1st, if it unfolds as we hope it will."

He said Iraq's Shiites "are not against the 15 November plan; their resistance and their concern is how we actually put in place, select, that transitional assembly. And we're in good conversations with the Shiite leadership, the Ayatollah Sistani, and we think the U.N. might be able to play a helpful role in these conversations."

In These Times

Web of lies

1 September 2003

By Joshua Meyrowitz; Joshua Meyrowitz is a professor of media studies in the Department of Communication at the University of New Hampshire in Durham. He can be reached at joshua.meyrowitz@unh.edu.

Now that the invasion of Iraq is a fait accompli, the mainstream U.S. news media are finally giving significant attention to the weaknesses in the Bush administration's case for the war. Of the many distortions that could be targeted, the media have focused primarily on the "16 words" in the president's January 2003 State of the Union address -- the sentence that repeated the now-discredited claim that Iraq attempted to buy uranium from Niger to reconstitute its nuclear weapons program. In looking for whom to blame for deceiving the American people about Iraq's weapons (the CIA, the White House staff, the vice president, the president), the news media have left out one key player in the deceptions: themselves.

News organizations encourage journalists to gather news from the most "authoritative sources." To the public, the phrase may sound interchangeable with "reliable experts." Yet in practice it means turning to those in the highest positions of power or their designated spokespeople. In the coverage of the buildup to the war in Iraq, that meant relying primarily on the president and his press secretary, the vice president, the secretaries of state and defense, the national security adviser, and other "official sources," including congressional leaders.

When Rumsfeld and Powell disagreed over how to proceed with Iraq, the news media covered the debate. Newsweek, for example, pictured them side-by-side for a September 16, 2002 cover story on "The War Over War." Yet when these officials moved into sync with each other, the authority-conscious news media mostly reflected that consensus. Even when millions protested the impending war, relatively little attention was given to the arguments supporting dissent.

There are many reasons why journalists seek out authorities for news, rather than interviewing experts and participants or reviewing documents. One such reason is convenience. Authorities take great care to dispense information to journalists in a form that fits easily into news stories. High public officials also enjoy a presumption of veracity that more ordinary sources do not -- which means, as a practical matter, a reporter does not need to verify official statements as rigorously as he or she would those of lesser mortals.

Many other benefits accrue to news organizations whose reporters do not stray too far from official agendas. They can be assured of regular "access" to authorities and to "inside scoops." They can protect themselves against criticism that they are "biased" or "unpatriotic." They can avoid offending and thereby losing audiences, whose attention they sell to advertisers (the major source of media revenues). They can advance their own interests with respect to lobbying for favorable government policies toward media corporations or acquiring government contracts for their non-media businesses. (General Electric, for example -- whose roster of companies includes NBC, MSNBC, and CNBC -- is a major military contractor). Finally, life is just easier for journalists and their parent corporations when they parrot official views in their reports. They are less likely to be attacked by the powerful.

Naturally, there are also good and responsible reasons to pay attention to authoritative sources. Authorities often have access to volumes of information not easily available elsewhere. Moreover, since authorities have the power to act in the name of the country, monitoring their thoughts and plans is an important part of being a watchdog for the people.

A real danger to a democracy comes, however, when journalists rely primarily or exclusively on official sources. Those in the highest positions of authority are often ignorant about things known by less authoritative but more knowledgeable experts. Additionally, officials often strategically withhold and release information to suit their own agendas, trying to shape the amount and type of attention a story will get. (Check out the Saturday newspaper for stories authorities release on Friday hoping they will be "old news" by Monday.) Most significantly, authorities often lie about what they do know. Historically, U.S. administrations have decided on the military actions they wanted to take, and then invented the stories that the Congress and the public needed to believe to support the actions. This seems to have been the case with the recent invasion of Iraq.

For all their supposed watchdog instincts, journalists virtually never report an official story and then add "but the State Department [or the Pentagon or the president] has always lied about such things in the past."

To do so would be to undermine the news media's credibility as well, since it would tacitly admit their past complicity.

On some level, the U.S. news media still understand they have a duty to uphold the truth, as was made clear by the New York Times' soul-searching dismissal of reporter Jayson Blair. His mistake, however, was not simply that he published stories with false information in them, but that he cut out the middleman. That is, instead of doing what many of his still-esteemed colleagues routinely do -- publishing misinformation passed on to them by named and unnamed authoritative sources -- Blair made up the phony information himself.

The official statements reproduced below were given extensive coverage and largely shaped public perceptions about Iraq. As the "corrections" that follow indicate, some reporters made honest efforts to assess the claims of authorities. Indeed, isolated reports discredited every major official claim about Iraq before the war. Rather than simply echoing authorities, these enterprising reporters requested documents, spoke to experts, or compared officials' claims about WMD locations with what U.N. inspectors found when they went to the sites. Even the ultraconservative Washington Times published a major challenge to President Bush's credibility, though the editors buried it on page 16. Yet much more attention was given to the distorted official claims than to the corrections, and no mainstream news organization gave pre-war attention to the overall pattern of deception about Iraq, a pattern that stretches back to prior administrations.

President Bush, at a Camp David press conference, September 7, 2002, citing a report that stated Iraq was six months away from developing a nuclear weapon: "I don't know what more evidence we need."

Joseph Curl, Washington Times, September 27, 2002: "The International Atomic Energy Agency [IAEA] says that a report cited by President Bush as evidence that Iraq . . . was 'six months away' from developing a nuclear weapon does not exist. . . . 'There are no indications that there remains in Iraq any physical capability for the production of weapon-usable nuclear material of any practical significance,' IAEA Director-General Mohammed Elbaradei wrote in a report to U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan."

Bush, Cincinnati address, October 7, 2002: "Iraq possesses ballistic missiles with a likely range of hundreds of miles -- far enough to strike Saudi Arabia, Israel, Turkey and other nations -- in a region where more than 135,000 American civilians and service members live and work."

Walter Pincus and Dana Milbank, Washington Post, March 18: "Inspectors have found that the Al Samoud-2 missiles can travel less than 200 miles -- not far enough to hit the targets Bush named. Iraq has not accounted for 14 medium-range Scud missiles from the 1991 Persian Gulf War, but the administration has not presented any evidence that they still exist."

Colin Powell, at the U.N. Security Council, February 5: "Saddam Hussein has never accounted for vast amounts of chemical weaponry."

Richard Wolffe and Daniel Klaidman, Newsweek, February 17: "U.N. inspectors said they verified the destruction of almost all Iraqi chemical weapons and ingredients after [1991's] Operation Desert Storm. By now, any leftover supplies would have degraded beyond use. This time out, U.N. inspectors have found no evidence of toxic munitions at the alleged chemical-warfare facilities pinpointed by U.S. and British Intelligence."

Bush, Cincinnati address, October 7, 2002: "Satellite photographs reveal that Iraq has rebuilding facilities at sites that have been part of his nuclear program in the past."

Mark Phillips, CBSNews.com, February 20: "When the U.N. went into the new buildings they found 'nothing.'"

Powell, at the U.N. Security Council, February 5: "We have first-hand descriptions of biological weapons factories on wheels and rails. The trucks and train cars are easily moved and are designed to avoid detection by inspectors."

Richard Wolffe and Daniel Klaidman, Newsweek, February 17, 2003: "Biowar experts . . . say truck-mounted labs would be all but unworkable. The required ventilation systems would make them instantly recognizable from above. . . . And U.S. intelligence, after years of looking for them, has never found even one."

Powell, at the U.N. Security Council, February 5: "Saddam Hussein is determined to get his hands on a nuclear bomb . . . so determined that he has made repeated attempts to acquire high specification aluminum tubes from 11 different countries."

Mark Phillips, CBSNews.com, February 20: "U.N. sources have told CBS News that American tips have led to one dead end after another. . . . Example: Interviews with scientists about the aluminum tubes the U.S. says Iraq has imported for enriching uranium, but which the Iraqis say are for making rockets. Given the size and specification of the tubes, the U.N. calls the 'Iraqi alibi air tight.'"

Bush, at a press conference, November 7, 2002: "[Saddam] is a threat. . . . He's a threat because he is dealing with al-Qaeda."

Powell, at the UN Security Council, February 5: "Iraq is harboring [Abu Mousab] Zarqawi and his subordinates. . . . We also know that Zarqawi's colleagues have been active in . . . Chechnya, Russia."

James Risen and David Johnston, New York Times, February 2, 2003: "At the Federal Bureau of Investigation, some investigators said they were baffled by the Bush administration's insistence on a solid link between Iraq and Osama bin Laden's network. 'We've been looking at this hard for more than a year and you know what, we just don't think it's there,' a government official said."

Bruce Crumley, Time, March 3, 2003: "'When we heard Powell citing our Chechen network suspects as the terror link directly to Zarqawi, everyone's mouth dropped open,' says a French investigator -- who calls Powell's Iraq-al-Qaeda link 'unconvincing at best.'"

Bush, State of the Union Address, January 28: "The British government has learned that Iraq has recently sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa."

David Ensor, CNN.com, March 14: "[The uranium] intelligence documents . . . have been dismissed as forgeries by U.N. weapons inspectors."

Walter Pincus and Dana Milbank, Washington Post, March 18: "[Top] CIA officials had significant doubts about the veracity of the evidence, linking Iraq to efforts to purchase uranium for nuclear weapons from Niger, but the information ended up as fact in Bush's State of the Union address."

Powell, at the UN Security Council, February 5: "Saddam Hussein forced out the last inspectors in 1998."

James Foley, State Department spokesman, January 7, 1999: "The United States did not work with anyone at UNSCOM to collect information specifically for the purpose of undermining the Iraqi regime."

After President Clinton dismissed Hussein's claims that UNSCOM inspectors had been infiltrated by CIA spies, UNSCOM withdrew all personnel in anticipation of the U.S. and Britain's December 1998 bombing of Iraq for its "defiance." Yet, in early January 1999, after the bombing was over, Colum Lynch of the Boston Globe, Barton Gellman of the Washington Post, and Tim Weiner of the New York Times confirmed that the UNSCOM teams had been infiltrated by U.S. spies. As Gellman reported on January 6, "Annan is convinced that Washington used the operation to penetrate the security apparatus protecting Iraqi President Saddam Hussein."

The most widely reported stories about Iraq followed conventions of journalistic objectivity. They were true in a narrow, technical sense: The cited officials really did make those claims. Yet, the country went to war based on a web of lies. The most accurate reports were those that employed what scientists view as objectivity: testing claims and accepting only those that survive scrutiny. A fully functioning democracy requires news media that practice the latter form of objective reporting and give the resulting stories the prominence they deserve before major policy decisions are implemented. In the meantime, the public would be wise to pay closer attention to the stories behind the blaring headlines in order to benefit from the reporting of those journalists in the mainstream who are trying to alert the public to the truth.

Guardian

Intelligence heads under fire

Former chief delivers damning attack over Iraq war

By Richard Norton-Taylor – 6 December 2003

A former intelligence chief yesterday delivered a scathing attack on his successors, saying they abused their position by helping Tony Blair to make a case for war against Iraq.

He accused the heads of Britain's intelligence agencies of bowing to government pressure to use secret intelligence to justify a war when other arguments "were cutting too little ice with the public".

In a damning assault, Sir Rodric Braithwaite, a former chairman of Whitehall's joint intelligence committee, the JIC, told the Royal Institute for International Affairs that intelligence chiefs allowed their objectivity to be undermined.

The JIC, whose members include the heads of MI6, MI5, and GCHQ, "stepped outside its traditional role", said Sir Rodric. "It entered the prime minister's magic circle. It was engulfed in the atmosphere of excitement which surrounds decision-making in a crisis".

He added: "Its members went beyond assessment to become part of the process of making and advocating policy. That inevitably undermined their objectivity."

One reason why the government claimed in its controversial September dossier that "intelligence confirmed" Saddam Hussein's weapons threatened British interests was because their "other arguments for war were cutting too little ice with the public", said Sir Rodric.

"But we live in a democracy, and in a democracy the government should not try to justify its actions on the basis of information it is not prepared to reveal."

Secret intelligence was unlikely ever to provide the killer fact, the certainty which would alone justify an exception, he added. The public was always entitled to be sceptical of claims to the contrary. Though he mentioned no names, he made it clear his main target was John Scarlett, the chairman of the JIC who developed a close relationship with Alastair Campbell, Mr Blair's former communications director, as they drew up the September dossier.

Sir Rodric described the dossier as "a pretty muddled affair". Though it was titled Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction, large passages were not about that at all, he said. They were about "Saddam's unpleasant regime and his unpleasant secret policemen. Much of the information in the dossier was in the public domain. Much of it came from the UN inspectors".

He added: "Much of the rest was said to be either 'indicated' or 'confirmed' by intelligence. I have no idea what that intelligence actually was. But the failure so far to find weapons of mass destruction in Iraq does not inspire confidence."

He attacked the way the dossier warned that Saddam could "deploy" weapons of mass destruction within 45 minutes. It spoke of an "imminent" or "current" threat. The press and the public came to alarming conclusions. The headline in the Sun was 45 Minutes to Doom, he said.

He continued: "This illustrates an iron law about the way drafting committees work. In the effort to get consensus, the drafters lose sight of what words mean to the ordinary reader."

Sir Rodric pointed out that Lord Hutton was told the phrase "WMD" simply meant that Saddam could fire chemical shells from field artillery.

In a reference to Mr Scarlett - a candidate to succeed Sir Richard Dearlove, head of MI6, next year - and Geoff Hoon, the defence secretary, he said two witnesses to the Hutton inquiry, into the death of the weapons expert Dr David Kelly, said it was not their fault if the press misinterpreted them.

"That is absurd", said Sir Rodric. "One writes in order to be understood by one's audience. The JIC and Downing Street have only themselves to blame if the public failed to grasp what they were trying to say".

Guardian

Blair in fresh WMD spin row

By Matthew Tempest and agencies – 17 December 2003

The prime minister was under fire this morning for apparently exaggerating the extent of weapons of mass destruction finds in Iraq during an interview he gave to British army radio.

In an interview with the British Forces Broadcasting Service, Mr Blair claimed the Iraq Survey Group (ISG) had found "massive evidence of a huge system of clandestine laboratories".

But the former chief UN weapons inspector, Hans Blix, accused Mr Blair of "innuendo" for implying the laboratories were used for WMD, while the Conservatives accused Mr Blair of spinning the ISG's November dossier.

Last night Downing Street was forced to admit that Mr Blair's comments only referred to that document, and not any information which may or may not have come to light since then. It is possible a backbench MP may raise the issue at today's final prime ministers' questions of 2003.

The controversial assertions came when the prime minister declared: "The Iraq survey group has already found massive evidence of a huge system of clandestine laboratories, workings by scientists, plans to develop long range ballistic missiles.

"Now, frankly, these things weren't being developed unless they were developed for a purpose."

Mr Blix - who has come out of retirement to chair a Swedish commission on WMD - said he now thought Saddam Hussein had destroyed any such weapons in the early 1990s, and that Mr Blair was guilty of using "innuendo" to back up his case.

He told the BBC: "I'm talking about the reactions to the David Kay [leader of the ISG] report where he says that 'we have found laboratories' - well that's innuendo that laboratories were for WMD.

Speaking in Sweden at the launch of a new independent commission on WMD, Dr Blix said it was "increasingly clear" that Saddam had not had any when he was ousted by US and British forces.

"My guess is that there are no weapons of mass destruction left," he said.

Mr Ancram told BBC Radio 4's Today programme - which initially broadcast allegations that Mr Blair had "sexed up" its WMD dossier - that the prime minister's comments were "extraordinary".

"I don't think on your programme it is possibly right to use the words 'sexing up', but once again it is the prime minister using language and playing fast and loose with language on a matter which is very important and he must be very careful with what he says," he said.

"I went and looked up what the ISG actually said, and what it actually said was that a clandestine network of laboratories and safe houses had been found, suitable for continuing chemical and biological weapons research.

"There was nothing about 'massive' and certainly nothing giving the indication that was given yesterday.

"He was using a statement of fact which, when you look at it, is not borne out by the survey group itself.

"We are back into this old spin again. We are back into seeing what we saw right through the last six or seven months. It has been described by an MoD intelligence officer in the Hutton inquiry as 'overegging the information'.

"We are back to what happened last year, where the PM uses language in order to create a particular impression and hopes that when he is challenged, he can say he didn't actually mean that.

"A prime minister should use language in relation to intelligence material with great care. This PM does not and I think he hasn't learnt the lesson that he can't live by spin."

Guardian

Iraq weapons hunter to quit early as hopes of finding arsenal dwindle

By Julian Borger – 19 December 2003

The man leading the US hunt for Iraqi weapons of mass destruction will leave his post prematurely in the next few months amid dwindling expectations that there is anything to be found.

David Kay, a former UN weapons inspector appointed by the CIA to head the Iraq Survey Group (ISG) to hunt for the suspected arsenal that was the US and British justification for the war, is on holiday in the US and might leave before the ISG's next interim report is due in February, according to a report yesterday in the Washington Post.

One former UN colleague said Mr Kay was under pressure to leave from his wife, who was nervous about his safety. He had expected the search to have brought results much quicker and had predicted he would be back in the US by Christmas.

Another former colleague however, said Mr Kay was frustrated at the haemorrhage of personnel and resources from the ISG to the counter-insurgency effort in Iraq. A significant proportion of the group's Arabic translators have been diverted to interrogating suspected guerrillas, leaving the ISG unable to interview officials and scientists who might have knowledge of Saddam Hussein's programmes.

"This is a big blow to the administration and it will signal the effective end of the search for weapons of mass destruction," said Joseph Cirincione, a weapons expert at the Carnegie Endowment Institute for Peace in Washington. "Some will continue looking but very, very few expect there to be any significant finds at this point."

A Pentagon official said he could not confirm Mr Kay's departure but said that even if he left, the search for weapons programmes would continue.

But the White House has not mentioned weapons of mass destruction as a justification for the war in recent months, stressing the removal of Saddam instead. In a television interview this week, President George Bush appeared to deny there was a distinction between his pre-war claims that Saddam had an arsenal of non-conventional weapons, and his administration's current argument that the regime was planning to restart its weapons programmes.

When an interviewer for ABC television, Diane Sawyer, reminded him of claims of the "hard fact that there were weapons of mass destruction, as opposed to the possibility that he could move to acquire those weapons", Mr Bush asked: "What's the difference?"

He added: "If he were to acquire weapons, he would be the danger."

Asked what it would take to convince him that Saddam did not have weapons of mass destruction, the president said: "Saddam Hussein was a threat. The fact that he is gone means America is a safer country."

"It's unbelievable to me," David Albright, another former UN inspector and a Washington expert on nuclear arms.

"He can't possibly have meant it. Because it means we can hit you if we don't like you.

"The administration is redefining its meaning of having stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction to thinking about acquiring large stockpiles. His claims that there is no difference is disingenuous. But they're sticking with that position - that black is white."

Mr Kay's first preliminary report to congress in October conceded the ISG had found only plans to acquire chemical and biological weapon.

Donald Rumsfeld, the US defence secretary, has continued to insist that weapons will be found, pointing out that quantities could be hidden in tiny bunkers around the country the same size as the pit where Saddam was found.

Guardian

New theory for Iraq's missing WMD: Saddam was fooled into thinking he had them

By Richard Norton-Taylor and Julian Borger – 24 December 2003

British officials are circulating a story that Saddam Hussein may have been hoodwinked into believing that Iraq really did possess weapons of mass destruction.

The theory, which is doing the rounds in the upper reaches of Whitehall, is the result of an attempt to find what one official source called a "logical reason" why no chemical and biological weapons had been found in Iraq.

According to the theory, Saddam and his senior advisers and commanders were told by lower-ranking Iraqi officers that his forces were equipped with usable chemical and biological weapons.

The officers did not want to tell their superiors that the weapons were either destroyed or no longer usable.

The trouble for Britain was, the theory goes, that MI6's informants were the senior officials close to Saddam - with the result that British intelligence was also hoodwinked.

The hypothesis, which is being spread privately by officials, is open to the interpretation that the government is searching for an excuse, however implausible, for failure to discover any WMD in Iraq.

"A delicious irony if true" is how it was described yesterday by Gary Samore of the International Institute for Strategic Studies.

He said he was familiar with the hypothesis being put about by British officials "trying to figure out why Saddam behaved in such an irrational fashion".

He said it was possible that Britain or the US had captured documents written by Iraqi officers, and sent to Saddam, making exaggerated claims about Iraq's WMD programme.

Dr Samore also said US and British intelligence had picked up "chatter" during the war interpreted as Iraqi forces preparing to use chemical weapons. That, he said, could be explained by Iraqis "playing games" - pretending the weapons existed to frighten the enemy, knowing they would be overheard. Alternatively, it could indicate Saddam really did order the weapons to be used, said Dr Samore.

US officials reacted sceptically to the suggestion that Saddam was fooled by his own scientists.

"That sort of thing is verifiable, after all. Saddam's people could have gone to check if they had the tube of anthrax or whatever weapon they claimed to have," said one intelligence source in Washington.

But David Albright, a former UN weapons inspector in regular contact with Iraqi scientists, said the system in which those scientists worked was guaranteed to produce misleading information.

"Scientists would hoodwink their own bosses with all sorts of exaggerations of their achievements," said Mr Albright, who heads the Washington-based Institute for Science and International Security.

Hans Blix, the former US weapons inspector in Iraq, said yesterday that most experts on Iraq now believed Saddam almost certainly destroyed his weapons of mass destruction after the first Gulf war in 1991.

"I think the vast majority of people are feeling there is very little likelihood that they [the Iraqis] had anything, and the biggest chance is that they destroyed them in 1991," he told the BBC Radio 4 Today programme.

Dr Blix has always argued that weapons may be unaccounted for, but that did not mean they existed.

Guardian

Blair WMD claim a 'red herring', says Bremer

By Sarah Hall, Richard Norton-Taylor and Luke Harding – 29 December 2003

Tony Blair faced fresh allegations yesterday that he had "sexed up" an official report into Saddam Hussein's ability to produce weapons of mass destruction after the US official running Iraq dismissed out of hand his latest controversial claim.

The Conservatives said Mr Blair's assertion, made to British troops in mid-December, that there was "massive evidence of a huge system of clandestine laboratories" was a piece of "sexed-up information" uttered "to save his skin".

The renewed attacks came after Paul Bremer, the head of the coalition provisional authority in Baghdad, dismissed Mr Blair's claim as a "red herring".

The prime minister made the claim based on the Iraq Survey Group's interim report, published in September, in a Christmas message to troops in which he said the discovery showed Saddam had tried to "conceal weapons".

The ISG is the CIA-led body charged with finding evidence of Iraq's banned weapons programmes.

Yesterday Mr Bremer, unaware the comment had been made by the prime minister, said it was untrue and suggested it was a "red herring" put about by someone opposed to military action to undermine the coalition.

"I don't know where those words come from but that is not what [ISG chief] David Kay has said," he told ITV1's Jonathan Dimbleby programme. "I have read his reports so I don't know who said that. It sounds like a bit of a red herring to me.

"It sounds like someone who doesn't agree with the policy sets up a red herring then knocks it down."

Told the remarks came from Mr Blair, Mr Bremer was forced to row back. "There is actually a lot of evidence that has been made public," he said.

Downing Street said there was no discrepancy between Mr Bremer's comments and the prime minister's views, and Mr Blair, who is on holiday in Egypt, stood by his claim. But critics, aware that Mr Blair's credibility could be damaged by next month's Hutton report, seized on Mr Bremer's putdown.

Robin Cook, who has become a formidable backbench critic on the war, said: "If there is massive evidence of clandestine laboratories it does seem rather curious that Paul Bremer, who is running Iraq, doesn't know about it. The truth is the Iraq Survey Group found no evidence of weapons, no delivery systems, no chemical or biological weapons and found no laboratories to produce them.

"This is unquestionably embarrassing for those who try and claim there is a chemical and biological arsenal and if they can't convince Paul Bremer, who is remarkably on-message, how can they convince anyone outside?"

The Tory co-chairman, Liam Fox, described Mr Bremer's dismissal as "a huge embarrassment for the prime minister", adding: "Once again he seems to have been willing to sex up a piece of information purely to defend his own political position." The Liberal Democrat foreign affairs spokesman, Menzies Campbell, called on Mr Blair to reveal what Britain knew about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction programme at the time of war and what it knew now.

In its interim report the ISG said there was evidence of hidden laboratories but its findings were less emphatic than Mr Blair's interpretation. The document made no reference to "massive evidence of a huge system". The "clandestine network of laboratories" contained equipment that was "suitable for continuing" research into chemical and biological warfare and was "subject to US monitoring".

That finding and the fact the report revealed "no weapons of mass destruction" has prompted Whitehall sources to lower expectations. "Maybe small quantities [of banned weapons] will be found and maybe not" one well-placed source said.

Yesterday the Labour backbencher Diane Abbott said the prime minister risked further rebellions after alienating loyal MPs after using this argument. "I never believed this thing about missiles being ready for fire in 45 minutes but sadly some of my colleagues did, and they are the ones that are most bitter, she told Sky's Sunday with Adam Boulton.

"They went and had private chats with Tony, went back to their local parties and said 'the prime minister has told me... ', and they feel like pillocks."

Clare Short, the former international development secretary, also used an interview on the programme to accuse Mr Blair of telling worse "lies" than John Profumo, and called on him to resign.

One theory doing the rounds in Whitehall - reported in last Wednesday's Guardian - is that Saddam may have been hoodwinked by his commanders in the field into believing that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction. But western intelligence sources have dismissed the idea.

Independent

Hutton stopped far short of a real investigation into the Blair government's abysmal abuse of power

Scott Ritter: The search for Iraqi WMD has become a public joke. But I, for one, am not laughing

By Scott Ritter - 04 January 2004

President George Bush, in his State of the Union address in January last year, told the world that Saddam Hussein had promised he would disarm his weapons of mass destruction, and that this promise had not been

fulfilled. Bush spoke of the Iraqi president retaining massive stocks of chemical and biological agent, as well as an ongoing nuclear weapons programme.

On 20 March 2003, Bush ordered American military forces, accompanied by the armed forces of Great Britain, to invade Iraq and remove Saddam Hussein from power. In hiding since the fall of Baghdad, Saddam was finally run to ground in December. On his capture, he is reported to have said that WMD was an issue created by George Bush to justify the invasion of Iraq. This is a claim that has increasing validity.

Tony Blair had already been embarrassed by a growing recognition that his own intelligence-based estimates regarding Iraqi WMD were every bit as cooked up as the American president's. He faced further ignominy when Paul Bremer, the head of the Coalition Provisional Authority, publicly mocked his assertions that David Kay, the former UN weapons inspector turned CIA agent who headed the so-far futile search for WMD in occupied Iraq, had found "massive evidence of a huge system of clandestine laboratories". Dismissed by Bremer as a "red herring", Blair's discredited comments only underscore the sad fact that the issue of Iraqi WMD, and the entire concept of disarmament, has become a public joke.

The misrepresentation and distortion of fact carried out by President Bush and Prime Minister Blair is no joke, but rather represent an assault on the very fabric of the concept of a free and democratic society which they espouse to serve. The people of the United States are still waiting for a heavily divided Congress to break free of partisan politics and launch a genuine investigation. This should certainly look at the massive intelligence failure surrounding the gross distortion of the Iraqi WMD threat put forward by the US intelligence community. But perhaps more importantly, the investigation should focus on the actions of the White House in shaping the intelligence estimates so that they dovetailed nicely with the political goals and objectives of the Bush administration's Iraq policy-makers.

Many in Great Britain might take some pride in knowing that their democracy, at least, has had an airing of the pre-war Iraq intelligence which has been denied their American cousins.

The Hutton inquiry has been viewed by many as an investigation into the politicisation, or "sexing up", of intelligence information by the British government to help strengthen its case for war. It stopped far short of any real investigation into the abysmal abuse of power that occurred when Blair's government lied to Parliament, and the electorate, about the threat posed by Iraq's WMD. There was no effort to dig deep into the systematic politicisation of

the British intelligence system, to untangle

the web of deceit and misinformation concerning Iraq peddled over the years by the Foreign Office, the Ministry of Defence and British intelligence.

The damage done goes well beyond the borders of the US and Britain. One must also calculate the irreparable harm done to the precepts of international law, the viability of multilateral organisations such as the United Nations, and the concepts of diplomacy and arms control which kept the world from destroying itself during the last century.

Iran, faced with 130,000 American soldiers on its border, has opened its nuclear facilities to inspection. North Korea has done the same. Libya, in a surprise move, has traded in its own overblown WMD aspirations in exchange for diplomatic recognition and economic interaction with the West. But none of these moves, as welcome as they are, have the depth and reach to compare with the decision by South Africa or the former republics of the Soviet Union to get rid of their respective nuclear weapons. The latter represented actions taken freely, wrapped in the principles of international law. The former are merely coerced concessions, given more as a means of buying time than through any spirit of true co-operation. Sold by George Bush and Tony Blair as diplomatic triumphs derived from the Iraq experience, the sad reality is that these steps towards disarmament are every bit as illusory as Saddam's WMD arsenal. They are all the more dangerous, too, because the safety net of international law that the world could once have turned to when these compelled concessions inevitably collapse no longer exists.

Scott Ritter was a UN weapons inspector from 1991-98. He is the author of 'Frontier Justice: Weapons of Mass Destruction and the Bushwhacking of America'

BBC News

Blair urged to show Hutton papers

6 January 2003

Prime Minister Tony Blair has been urged to publish a late submission made by the government to the Hutton inquiry into the death of Dr David Kelly.

News of the extra papers raised "serious concerns", said Conservative leader Michael Howard.

But Mr Blair's spokesman said the inquiry had invited people to correct factual errors in previous evidence.

"If people were going off on the idea that what was referred to was new evidence, that was not the case."

The spokesman said the papers were submitted by the government shortly after the inquiry finished last year.

He would not say whether Mr Blair had corrected any of his own evidence to the inquiry.

"I don't intend to get into commentary on this," he added.

Lord Hutton is likely to publish his report later this month, but not as early as next week, the previously expected date.

Mr Howard has written to Mr Blair about the late submission.

"Your official spokesman has admitted only today that in November the government made a late submission to the Hutton inquiry," he said.

"This submission was therefore made after Sir Kevin Tebbit (top civil servant at the Ministry of Defence) gave his crucial evidence to the inquiry.

"This has given rise to very serious concerns. Given the public interest involved, will you now publish this hitherto undisclosed submission?"

Sir Kevin's recall to the inquiry was delayed while he recovered from an eye operation.

When he was cross-examined in November, he said Mr Blair chaired the "decisive" meeting where it was agreed to confirm Dr Kelly's identity as the suspected source for the BBC's controversial story about the Iraq weapons dossier.

Washington Post

Iraq's Arsenal Was Only on Paper

Since Gulf War, Nonconventional Weapons Never Got Past the Planning Stage

By Barton Gellman – 7 January 2004

BAGHDAD -- Of all Iraq's rocket scientists, none drew warier scrutiny abroad than Modher Sadeq-Saba Tamimi.

An engineering PhD known for outsized energy and gifts, Tamimi, 47, designed and built a new short-range missile during Iraq's four-year hiatus from United Nations arms inspections. Inspectors who returned in late 2002, enforcing Security Council limits, ruled that the Al Samoud missile's range was not quite short enough. The U.N. team crushed the missiles, bulldozed them into a pit and entombed the wreckage in concrete. In one of three interviews last month, Tamimi said "it was as if they were killing my sons."

But Tamimi had other brainchildren, and these stayed secret. Concealed at some remove from his Karama Co. factory here were concept drawings and computations for a family of much more capable missiles, designed to share parts and features with the openly declared Al Samoud. The largest was meant to fly six times as far.

"This was hidden during the UNMOVIC visits," Tamimi said, referring to inspectors from the U.N. Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission. Over a leisurely meal of lamb and sweet tea, he sketched diagrams. "It was forbidden for us to reveal this information," he said.

Tamimi's covert work, which he recounted publicly for the first time in five hours of interviews, offers fresh perspective on the question that led the nation to war. Iraq flouted a legal duty to report the designs. The weapons they depicted, however, did not exist. After years of development -- against significant obstacles -- they might have taken form as nine-ton missiles. In March they fit in Tamimi's pocket, on two digital compact discs.

The nine-month record of arms investigators since the fall of Baghdad includes discoveries of other concealed arms research, most of it less advanced. Iraq's former government engaged in abundant deception about its ambitions and, in some cases, early steps to prepare for development or production. Interviews here -- among Iraqi weaponeers and investigators from the U.S. and British governments -- turned up unreported records, facilities or materials that could have been used in unlawful weapons.

But investigators have found no support for the two main fears expressed in London and Washington before the war: that Iraq had a hidden arsenal of old weapons and built advanced programs for new ones. In public statements and unauthorized interviews, investigators said they have discovered no work on former germ-warfare agents such as anthrax bacteria, and no work on a new designer pathogen -- combining pox virus and snake venom -- that led U.S. scientists on a highly classified hunt for several months. The investigators assess that Iraq did not, as charged in London and Washington, resume production of its most lethal nerve agent, VX, or learn to make it last longer in storage. And they have found the former nuclear weapons program, described as a "grave and gathering danger" by President Bush and a "mortal threat" by Vice President Cheney, in much the same shattered state left by U.N. inspectors in the 1990s.

A review of available evidence, including some not known to coalition investigators and some they have not made public, portrays a nonconventional arms establishment that was far less capable than U.S. analysts judged before the war. Leading figures in Iraqi science and industry, supported by observations on the ground, described factories and institutes that were thoroughly beaten down by 12 years of conflict, arms embargo and strangling economic sanctions. The remnants of Iraq's biological, chemical and missile infrastructures were riven by internal strife, bled by schemes for personal gain and handicapped by deceit up and down lines of command. The broad picture emerging from the investigation to date suggests that, whatever its desire, Iraq did not possess the wherewithal to build a forbidden armory on anything like the scale it had before the 1991 Persian Gulf War.

David Kay, who directs the weapons hunt on behalf of the Bush administration, reported no discoveries last year of finished weapons, bulk agents or ready-to-start production lines. Members of his Iraq Survey Group, in unauthorized interviews, said the group holds out little prospect now of such a find. Kay and his spokesman, who report to Director of Central Intelligence George J. Tenet, declined to be interviewed.

Poxes and Professors

On Dec. 13, as a reporter waited to see the dean of Baghdad University's College of Science, two poker-faced men strode into the anteroom. One was an ex-Marine named Dan, clad in civilian clothes, body armor, a checkered Arab scarf and a bandolier of eight spare magazines for his M-16 rifle. The other identified himself to the receptionist only as Barry.

He asked to see the dean, Abdel Mehdi Taleb, immediately. Dan preceded Barry into Taleb's office, weapon ready, then stood sentry outside.

According to Taleb, Barry asked -- once again -- about the work of immunologist Alice Krikor Melconian. For months, Taleb said, the Americans had sent scientists and intelligence officers to investigate the compact, curly-haired chairman of the university's biotechnology department.

Three Iraqi scientists said U.S. investigators asserted they have reason to believe Melconian ran a covert research facility, location unknown. In July, colleagues said, Melconian emerged from her office with a burly American on each arm and was placed into the back seat of a car with darkened windows. U.S. investigators held her for 10 days in an open-air cell and then released her.

Described by associates as shaken by her arrest, Melconian said she has done no weapons research and knows of no secret labs. "I have never left the university," she said. "I have nothing more to say about this. I do not want to make any more trouble."

Like others on campus, and at a few elite institutes elsewhere, Melconian remains under scrutiny in part because investigators deem her capable of doing dangerous biological research. Investigators said they are casting a wide net at Iraq's "centers of scientific excellence" in an effort to confirm intelligence that is fragmentary and often lacks essential particulars.

Kay's Iraq Survey Group, which has numbered up to 1,400 personnel from the Defense Department, Energy Department national laboratories and intelligence agencies, is looking for biological weapons far more dangerous than those of Iraq's former arsenal. A U.S. National Intelligence Estimate, published in October 2002, said "chances are even" that Iraqi weaponeers were working with smallpox, one of history's mass killers. It also said Iraq "probably has developed genetically engineered BW agents."

As the Associated Press first reported, a scientific assessment panel known as Team Pox returned home in late July without finding reason to believe Iraq possessed the variola virus, which causes smallpox. Even so, interviews with Iraqi scientists led to a redoubled search for work on animal poxes, harmless to humans but potentially useful as substitutes for smallpox in weapons research.

Rihab Taha, the British-educated biologist known in the west as Dr. Germ, has generally been described by U.S. officials as uncooperative in custody since May 12. But according to one well-informed account of her debriefing, she acknowledged receiving an order from superiors in 1990 to develop a biological weapon based on a virus. That same year, a virologist who worked for her, Hazem Ali, commenced research on camelpox.

If truthful and correctly recounted, Taha's statement exposed a long-standing lie. Iraq's government denied offensive viral research. One analyst familiar with the debriefing report, declining to be identified by name or nationality, said investigators believe that Taha's remarks demonstrate an intent to use smallpox, since camelpox resembles no other human pathogen.

"Hearing that from the lips of the people involved is kind of like that MasterCard commercial: 'Priceless,' " the analyst said.

There is no corresponding record, however, that Iraq had the capability or made the effort to carry out such an intent.

Taha, according to the same debriefing account, said Iraq had no access to smallpox. Ali's research halted after 45 days, with the August 1990 outbreak of war in Kuwait, and did not resume. And Taha, like all those in custody, continues to assert that biowar programs ceased entirely the following year.

Chimeras, Science Fiction

More alarming even than Taha's statement, investigators said, were highly classified indications that Iraq sought to produce a genetically altered virus. Australian scientists reported in 2001 that an apparently innocent change in mousepox DNA transformed the virus into a rampant killer of mice.

Investigators spent months probing for evidence that Iraq sought to master the technique, then apply it to vaccinia -- a readily available virus used to inoculate against smallpox -- and finally to smallpox itself.

Survey group scientists discovered no sign of pox research save at the Baghdad College of Veterinary Medicine, which declared the work to U.N. inspectors in 2002. Researchers there were manipulating the viruses that cause goatpox and sheeppox, in well-documented efforts to develop vaccines.

U.S. investigators arrested Antoine Banna, the Cornell-trained dean, but soon released him. Much the same result followed a probe of avian virus research at the Ghazi Institute.

"It was legitimate research, but if they wanted to swing the other way they had some of the wherewithal to do that," said an analyst apprised of the results.

When investigators paid a call on Noria Ali, a genetic engineer who wears the head cover and long robes of an observant Muslim, "they said they knew there was [genetic] research on these viruses, and we had secret labs for this work," Ali said.

Ali acknowledged a history that attracted suspicion. In 1990, she said, Rihab Taha ordered her to build a genetic engineering lab at Iraq's principal bioweapons research center. The Special Security Organization warned her that "any person who talks about his work will be executed," Ali said. But Iraq's invasion of Kuwait left the lab unfinished, an account confirmed by U.S. and European experts.

"We could have done a lot in this lab, but the fact is that this lab never existed," Ali said.

The survey group's most exotic line of investigation sought evidence that Iraq tried to create a pathogen combining pox virus with cobra venom. A 1986 study in the *Journal of Microbiology* reported that fowlpox spread faster and killed more chickens in the presence of venom extract. Investigators received a secondhand report that Iraq sought to splice them together.

Such an artificial life form -- created by inserting genetic sequences from one organism into another -- is called a "chimera," after the fire-breathing monster of Greek mythology commingling lion, serpent and goat.

"They have asked about developing some kind of chimera, a pox with snake-venom gene," said Ali Zaag, dean of the university's Institute for Biotechnology. "You have seen our labs. For us, these capabilities are science fiction."

Investigators also searched for what one of them termed "starter sets" of pathogens, laboratory samples that could be used for later production. For each suspected weapon, the investigators carried a supply of "labeled antibodies," a classified technology used in field kits that resemble home pregnancy tests. "We didn't find anything, so certainly not anything engineered," a coalition scientist said.

Team Pox, as the group of investigators dubbed itself, eventually dropped the chimera investigation.

"You've got to learn to walk before you start running," said a European government scientist who studied Iraq's biological programs last year. "The evidence we have about the virus program is they hadn't started to walk yet."

Recently, Zaag said, the chimera hunt resumed. This time the investigators are intelligence officers. Their approach, Zaag said, is "We'll give you a few more days to reveal something, and then we'll have to take you." Spokesmen for the CIA and the Defense Intelligence Agency declined requests for interviews.

What 'the Traitor' Knew

Late last month, fresh evidence emerged on a very old question about Iraq's illegal arms: Did the Baghdad government, as it said, rid itself of all the biological arms it produced before 1991? The answer matters, because the Bush administration's most concrete prewar assertions about Iraqi germ weapons referred to stocks allegedly hidden from that old arsenal.

The new evidence appears to be a contemporary record, from inside the Iraqi government, of a pivotal moment in Baghdad's long struggle to shield arms programs from outside scrutiny. The document, written just after the defection of Saddam Hussein's son-in-law on Aug. 8, 1995, anticipates the collapse of cover stories for weapons that had yet to be disclosed. Read alongside subsequent discoveries made by U.N. inspectors, the document supports Iraq's claim that it destroyed all production stocks of lethal pathogens before inspectors knew they existed.

The defection of Hussein Kamel was a turning point in the U.N.-imposed disarmament of Iraq in the 1990s. Kamel, who had married one of Saddam Hussein's daughters, Raghda, and controlled Baghdad's Military Industrial Commission, told his Western debriefers about major programs in biological and nuclear weaponry that had gone undetected or unconfirmed. Iraq was forced to acknowledge what he exposed, but neither inspectors nor U.S. officials were sure Kamel had told all there was to tell.

A handwritten Iraqi damage report, composed five days after the defection, now suggests that Kamel left little or nothing out.

The author is Hossam Amin, then -- and until his April 27 arrest -- the head of Iraq's National Monitoring Directorate. As liaison to the inspectors he provided information and logistical support, but he also concealed the government's remaining secrets.

Sufiyan Taha Mahmoud, who was private secretary to Amin in 1995, said in an interview that Amin flew into a rage when he learned Kamel had slipped across the border to Jordan. "It was as if he was hit with a hammer," Mahmoud said.

Five days later, Amin dispatched a six-page letter to the president's son Qusay. The person who provided a copy to The Washington Post had postwar access to the presidential office where he said he found the original. Iraqis who know Amin well and experienced government investigators from the United States and Europe, who analyzed the document for this article, said they believe it to be authentic. They cited handwriting, syntax, contemporary details and annotations that match those of previous samples. Markings on the letter say that Qusay read it, summarized it for his father and filed it with presidential secretary Abed Hamid Mahmoud.

Just before his "sudden and regrettable flight and surrender to the bosom of the enemy," Amin wrote, "the traitor Hussein Kamel" received a detailed briefing on "the points of weakness and the points of strength" in Iraq's concealment efforts.

Amin then listed, in numbered points, "the matters that are known to the traitor and not declared" to U.N. inspectors.

Inspectors knew Iraq tried to enrich uranium for a nuclear weapon, but not, Amin wrote, about the "crash program" to fabricate a bomb with French reactor fuel by 1991. They knew Iraq made biological toxins, but not that it put them in Scud missile warheads. There were major facilities -- Dawrah Foot and Mouth Disease Institute, a centrifuge factory in Rashdiya, and the Al Atheer bomb-fabrication plant -- whose true purposes were unacknowledged to inspectors.

Shortly after Amin sent the letter, Kamel's debriefings and subsequent inspections exposed every item in Amin's catalogue.

Until now, Kamel's debriefers suspected that "maybe he decided to keep something for himself," said Ali Shukri, a Jordanian military officer who debriefed Kamel on behalf of the late King Hussein, speaking in an interview in Amman. After reading Amin's letter in silence and then rereading it, Shukri looked up and said Kamel had held back nothing.

The most significant point in Amin's letter, U.S. and European experts said, is his unambiguous report that Iraq destroyed its entire inventory of biological weapons. Amin reminded Qusay Hussein of the government's claim that it possessed no such arms after 1990, then wrote that in truth "destruction of the biological weapons agents took place in the summer of 1991."

It was those weapons to which Secretary of State Colin L. Powell referred in the Security Council on Feb. 5 when he said, for example, that Iraq still had an estimated 8,500 to 25,000 liters of anthrax bacteria.

Some things Amin's letter did not say may also be meaningful. If Iraq had succeeded in spray-drying anthrax spores to extend their life and lethality, that would have been among the most important secrets of its wide-ranging weapons program. The letter did not speak of it. The letter also enumerated Baghdad's nuclear secrets, but mentioned nothing to suggest Iraq manufactured unknown parts of an "implosion device" to detonate uranium.

There was only one important thing, Amin said, that Hussein Kamel did not know: some of the locations where Iraq hid its library of arms research. That supports long-standing suspicions that Iraq held back portions of a knowledge base that could speed revival of development and production one day.

A U.S. intelligence official, who was provided with a copy of Amin's letter for comment, said the government would not discuss it in detail. He said an initial check of records "suggests that we have not previously seen the letter." Without the original and an account of its origins, he said, government analysts "cannot verify the authenticity of the letter." He added, "It is plausible and, from a quick scan of it, presents no immediate surprises."

'The Stupid Army'

Thair Anwar Masraf, an affable project engineer, made an appointment last summer to see an investigator from David Kay's survey group. He had information, he said in an interview, that might help the Americans interpret two trailer-mounted production plants found near Mosul in April and May.

"I waited more than one hour in the Palestine Hotel," Masraf said. "He did not show up."

Masraf watched with curiosity, in coming months, as the Bush administration touted its discovery of mobile germ-weapon factories.

A joint study released May 28 by the CIA and Defense Intelligence Agency called the trailers "the strongest evidence to date that Iraq was hiding a biological warfare program." Two days later, in Poland, President Bush announced: "For those who say we haven't found the banned manufacturing devices or banned weapons, they're wrong. We found them."

When Iraqi engineers told investigators that the discovered trailers were meant for hydrogen, the CIA dismissed the "cover story."

By July, with contrary evidence piling up, Kay described the trailer episode as a "fiasco." He told BBC Television, which broadcast the tape Nov. 23: "I think it was premature and embarrassing."

Even so, Kay's October report to Congress left the question unresolved. Kay said he could not corroborate a mobile germ factory, but he restated the CIA argument that the trailers were not "ideally suited" for hydrogen.

Had Masraf found Kay's investigator at the Palestine Hotel, he said he would have explained that Iraq actually used such trailers to generate hydrogen during the eight-year war with Iran. Masraf and his former supervisor at the Saad Co. said Masraf managed a contract to refurbish some of the units beginning in 1997.

According to the two men, Iraq bought mobile hydrogen generators from Britain in 1982 and mounted them on trucks. The Republican Guard used one type, Iraq's 2nd Army Corps another.

Iraqi artillery units relied on hydrogen-filled weather balloons to measure wind and temperature, which affect targeting. Munqith Qaisi, then a senior manager at Saad Co. and now its American-appointed director-general, said the trailers used a chemical -- not biological -- process to make hydrogen from methanol and demineralized water.

The feature that analysts found most suspicious in May -- the compression and recapture of exhaust gases -- is a necessity, Masraf said, when gas is the intended product.

In the late 1990s, the Republican Guard sent some of its trailers for refurbishment at the Kindi Co. The 2nd Army Corps signed a similar contract with Saad Co. Masraf said the first units were finished in 2001, including the two discovered by coalition forces around Mosul.

Qaisi's account may also clear up an unexplained detail from the May 28 intelligence report: traces of urea in the reaction vessel aboard one of the trailers. Qaisi said the vessels corroded badly because Iraqi troops disregarded strict orders to use only demineralized water.

"The stupid army pissed in it, or used river water," he said.

Said's Last Experiment

On Thursday, Dec. 11, a ruffled man with a high, balding crown arrived late for work at the University of Technology. In his unpainted office, about the size of a family sedan, electrical fixtures drooped from cement walls.

Sabah Abdul Noor once moved among the nation's elites. He played a part in the most ambitious undertaking of Iraqi industrial science: creation from scratch, and largely in secret, of the wherewithal to design and manufacture an atomic bomb. When the 1991 Gulf War intervened, an Iraqi bomb was -- informed estimates vary -- six months to two years from completion.

Abdul Noor watched as that multibillion-dollar enterprise was reduced to slag under the cutting torches of U.N. inspectors, who arrived under Security Council mandate after Iraq's defeat in Kuwait. Since the fall of Saddam Hussein, Abdul Noor said, U.S. forces have been questioning him for indications that the nuclear program was secretly revived.

"I have just come from such an interview," he said, apologizing for the hour. "They didn't give names. They did not say where they were from. I am kept as long as they wish to keep me."

What the Americans want to talk about, almost always, is Khalid Ibrahim Said.

Until 1991, Said was going to be the man who built Iraq's atomic bomb. Other leading figures were responsible for uranium enrichment. Said led the team -- "PC-3, Group 4," in Iraq's cryptic organization chart -- that would form 40 pounds of uranium into a working nuclear device. Abdul Noor was Said's powder metallurgist.

Said died on April 8 when Marines opened fire on his moving car near a newly established checkpoint. His loss grieved Kay's nuclear investigators, who had many questions for him. When they came across Said's last experiment, the late bomb designer moved to the center of their probe.

Said spent his final days in a warehouse filled with capacitors and powerful magnets. He and his team were building what they described -- in a mandatory disclosure to the International Atomic Energy Agency -- as a "linear engine." The purpose, Iraq declared, was air defense.

The machine in Said's warehouse was more commonly known as a "rail gun." It used electromagnetic pulses to accelerate a small object to very high speed.

When U.S. investigators arrived, they found the gun had been "shooting an aluminum projectile at an aluminum target plate like the skin of an airplane," said an analyst who reviewed their report. But rail gun technology is thought to be decades from use in a practical weapon, and investigators believed Said might have something else in mind.

Impact of an extremely high-velocity projectile in a target chamber, they said, might be used to measure the behavior of materials under pressures that compare to a nuclear implosion. Such "equation of state" experiments, as physicists call them, could be applied to nuclear warhead design. When the U.S. nuclear team looked closely at that question, however, it "saw no evidence of equation of state work" with the rail gun, according to an authoritative summary of the team's report.

A sad look crossed Abdul Noor's face when he tried to explain his bafflement at suspicions that Iraq had secretly rebuilt -- "reconstituted," as the Bush administration put it in the summer and fall of 2002 -- a nuclear weapons program. He and his colleagues still know what they learned, Abdul Noor said, but their material condition is incomparably worse than it was when they began in 1987. "We would have had to start from less than zero," he said, with thousands of irreplaceable tools banned from import. "The country was cornered," he said. "We were boycotted. We were embargoed. The truth is, we disintegrated."

Of his late friend Said, Abdul Noor said: "I don't know what was in his heart. Probably he wanted to return to [nuclear weapons work] one day. That is in the category of dreams."

A common view among investigators today is that Said had the motive but not the means. One Western physicist who knew Said well said the rail gun enabled Said to maintain his team and "hone their skills on diagnostics, flash X-ray cameras, measuring very high speeds, and measuring impacts of ramming things together." The physicist added, "It's basic science. There's no relation to actual [bomb] design and fabrication."

Some investigators have yet to be convinced. They continue to look for warhead research in the guise of the rail gun.

"Today they were asking me that again," Abdul Noor said. "I was not on the same wavelength. I could see they were not pleased with me."

Red on Red on Blue

There is another explanation for the rail gun, according to one man who worked on it and does not want to be named. It was, he said, a deception operation against Saddam Hussein.

Hussein resented U.S. air patrols over "no-fly zones" where Iraqi aircraft were forbidden in northern and southern Iraq. After trying for years to challenge the patrols, another Iraqi said, "we had yet to scratch the wing of one American F-15."

Said gave the president an answer involving futuristic technology. He was a good enough applied physicist to understand the long odds against success, Said's anonymous colleague said, but the project earned him favor, prestige and a substantial budget.

In every field of special weaponry, Iraqi designers and foreign investigators said, such deceit was endemic. Program managers promised more than they could deliver, or things they could not deliver at all, to advance careers, preserve jobs or conduct intrigues against rivals.

Sometimes they did so from ignorance, failing to grasp the challenges they took on.

Lying to an absolute ruler was hazardous, Iraqi weaponeers said, but less so in some cases than the alternatives. "No one will tell Saddam Hussein to his face, 'I can't do this,' " said an Iraqi brigadier general who supervised work on some of the technologies used in the rail gun.

David Kay's survey group has turned up other such cases. Analysts are calling the phenomenon "red-on-red deception," after the U.S. practice of using red to stand for enemy forces and blue to stand for friendly ones. In some cases, they said, "red on red" amounted to "red on blue" -- because Western intelligence collected the same false reports that fooled Hussein.

Sufiyan Taha Mahmoud, who worked for Iraq's National Monitoring Directorate throughout its 12 years, said spurious programs also led to needless conflict with U.N. arms inspectors.

"They couldn't build anything," Mahmoud said of overpromising weaponeers, "but they had to hide the documents because they related to prohibited activities."

Secrecy and a procurement system based on smuggling, Iraqi scientists said, abetted those who inflated their reports.

George Healey, a Canadian nuclear physicist and longtime inspector in Iraq, said entire programs were devised, or their design choices distorted, in order to siphon funds.

"They had a system to graft money out of oil-for-food," he said, referring to the U.N. program that supervised Iraqi exports and imports after 1991. "What you had to have was a project -- the more expensive the better, because the more you can buy, the more you can graft out of it. You'd have difficulty believing how much that explains."

Intertwined with internal deception, many analysts now believe, was deception aimed overseas. Hussein plainly hid actual programs over the years, but Kay, among others, said it appears possible he also hinted at programs that did not exist.

Hans Blix, who was executive chairman of UNMOVIC, the U.N. arms inspection team, said in a telephone interview from Sweden that he has devoted much thought to why Hussein might have exaggerated his arsenal. One explanation that appeals to him: "You can put a sign on your door, 'Beware of the dog,' without having a dog. They did not mind looking a little bit serious and a little bit dangerous."

Defectors who sold false or exaggerated stories in Washington, Iraqi and American experts said, layered on still another coat of deception.

"You end up with a Picasso-like drawing -- distorted," said Ali Zaag, the Baghdad University biotechnologist.

'Long Pole in the Tent'

One line of thought in the survey group now, as it constructs a narrative of the Iraqi threat, is that the Baghdad government set out to revive its nonconventional programs in sequence. Instead of beginning with "weapons of mass destruction" -- nuclear, biological or chemical -- Iraq began with the means to deliver them.

"Missiles are very significant to us because they're the long pole in the tent," Kay told "BBC Panorama." "They're the thing that takes the longest to produce. . . . The Iraqis had started in late '99, 2000, to produce a family of missiles that would have gotten to 1,000 kilometers [625 miles]."

Kay was referring to Tamimi's work, though the designer and details have not been made public before. If reached, a 625-mile range would have menaced Tel Aviv, Tehran, Istanbul, Riyadh, the world's richest oil fields and important U.S. military installations from Turkey to the Persian Gulf.

When that might have happened -- or whether -- is difficult to forecast. Of all Iraq's nascent programs, Tamimi's was among the most advanced. A closer look at its prospects helps answer a question common to all four fields of forbidden arms: Was the country capable of carrying out the presumed intentions of its leader?

Tamimi is a man of robust self-esteem, but he expressed no confidence about his long-range missile, which depended on clustering five engines in a single stage. (An intermediate version called for two engines.) Western missile experts, who suggested questions and reviewed answers from a reporter in multiple rounds of interviews with Tamimi, emerged uncertain of the timetable or outcome.

Their best estimate was that it would take six years -- if the missile worked at all -- to reach a successful flight test. Tamimi would need less time with major help from abroad, but considerably more if he had to conceal the work from U.N. monitoring that persisted until the United States invaded in March. U.S. government spokesmen declined to provide an estimate.

Tamimi "was the star" of Iraq's three rival rocket establishments, said a French expert who has known him for years. Another European rocket scientist said of Tamimi: "In our country he would be a very good design engineer."

But Tamimi lacked access to the modern tools and technical literature of his profession. He left Czechoslovakia's Antonin Zapotecky Military Academy in 1984 with a doctorate degree and a collection of Russian rocketry texts now entering their third decade in print. For the essential modeling of thrust, flight qualities, trajectory and range, he relied on unsophisticated software written in Baghdad. In an e-mail exchange, Tamimi expressed strong curiosity about what the "more accurate modeling programs" of overseas experts might show about his designs.

Tamimi faced challenges he had not encountered before, some of which he knew about and others he did not. He knew he would have difficulty lashing together multiple engines and igniting them at the same instant. "The main problem was synchronization, which we hadn't solved yet," he said.

To fit multiple engines in an airframe based on the existing Al Samoud missile, Tamimi's designs called for a flared missile that nearly doubled in diameter -- from 760mm (30 inches) to 1500mm (59 inches) -- from top to bottom. Foreign experts said the shape would produce enormous strains. "If it didn't break up going up, it would most likely do so on reentry," said a Western expert who did not want to be named, after submitting Tamimi's sketches and descriptions to an evaluation team. "To avoid that, they would have to develop some sort of separation system to abandon the wider bit, and also master terminal guidance after the separation."

Tamimi said "we did not consider the problem of separation." For terminal guidance, which steers a missile in its final approach to target, Tamimi pinned his hope on Russian technology he did not have in hand.

In test flights, the Al Samoud missile never landed -- literally -- within a mile of its target. In 2001, Tamimi obtained a small black-market supply of precision Russian gyroscopes. He hoped they would increase the missile's accuracy from about 1.5 miles to 500 yards. To increase accuracy still further, he said "we were near success" in negotiating a contract -- he would not say with whom -- for a complete Russian-built inertial navigation system.

"He knew very well where he was going, especially in guidance and gyroscope equipment," a foreign expert said.

An enormous problem for Tamimi's program, however, was that he designed it to allow procurement of parts under cover of the openly declared Al Samoud. When inspectors ruled the Al Samoud illegal and destroyed its production lines in March, Tamimi said, he began to doubt the project's viability.

"Saddam Hussein ordered this work, but where would we get the materials?" said an Iraqi general who declined to be named and who kept close tabs on Tamimi's missile designs. "This was the case in every field. People would prepare reports under the order of Saddam Hussein and the supervision of the people around Saddam Hussein. But it was not real."

Washington Post

Powell Refutes Think-Tank Report on Iraq

Analysis Claims Hussein Did Not Pose an Imminent Threat

By William Branigin – 8 January 2004

Secretary of State Colin L. Powell today rejected a Washington think tank's assertion that Iraq posed no imminent threat to the United States last year, and he defended the case he made to the United Nations to justify going to war.

In a news conference at the State Department, his first since undergoing surgery for prostate cancer last month, Powell said he stood by his February 2003 presentation to the U.N. Security Council in which he charged that then-Iraqi president Saddam Hussein was pursuing secret programs for weapons of mass destruction and supporting international terrorism, notably by the al Qaeda network of Osama bin Laden.

He dismissed a finding by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace that the Bush administration had systematically misrepresented the weapons threat from Iraq. The think tank, in a new report entitled "WMD in Iraq: Evidence and Implications," recommended that the United States end its policy of unilateral preventive war.

"It is unlikely that Iraq could have destroyed, hidden or sent out of the country the hundreds of tons of chemical and biological weapons, dozens of Scud missiles and facilities engaged in the ongoing production of chemical and biological weapons that officials claimed were present without the United States detecting some sign of this," the report said. It was written by Jessica T. Mathews, the organization's president; Joseph Cirincione, the director of its proliferation project; and George Perkovich, its vice president for studies.

Powell defended his presentation as "solid and multisourced" and noted that the Carnegie report had said that "we overstated" the threat from Iraqi banned weapons, "not that it wasn't there."

He said his presentation "made it clear that we had seen some links and connections to terrorist organizations over time." He added, "I have not seen smoking gun, concrete evidence about the connection, but I think the possibility of such connections did exist, and it was prudent to consider them at the time that we did."

Powell noted that Hussein had used chemical weapons against Iranian troops and against Kurdish civilians in his own country in the 1980s and had refused to provide assurances to U.N. inspectors that he had destroyed such banned weapons.

Hussein was not "waiting to give all this up," Powell said of the alleged secret weapons programs. "What he was waiting to do was see if he could break the will of the international community . . . and get back to his intentions."

Powell indicated that he still held out hope that evidence of illegal weapons would be found in Iraq. "Let's let the Iraqi survey group complete its work," he said. "I'm confident of what I presented last year . . . This game is still unfolding."

The Carnegie report said Iraq had dismantled its nuclear program and that no convincing evidence had emerged that it was being revived. It said Iraq's ability to produce chemical weapons on a large scale had been destroyed by the 1991 Gulf war and by U.N. sanctions and inspections.

However, the report said Iraq still apparently maintained an active program to produce missiles capable of flying beyond the range permitted by the U.N. Security Council. And it held open the possibility that Iraq

could have been able to resume banned programs, such as biological weapons production, quickly in the future.

In his wide-ranging news conference, Powell also said that the United States is "anxious to have the next round of talks" with North Korea on ending its nuclear weapons program, but he rejected the idea of offering financial incentives.

"We need a clear statement from the North Koreans that they're prepared to bring these programs to an end," Powell said. "What we can't do is say you've been doing things inconsistent with your obligations, and now we're going to pay you to stop doing it."

Powell curtly dismissed a question about a book by former Defense Department official Richard Perle, now a resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, in which Perle described Powell as a leader of "soft-line ideologues" in the Bush administration.

"I don't do book reviews," Powell said.

Guardian

US disbands Iraq team looking for battle weapons

By Julian Borger and Luke Harding – 9 January 2004

The Pentagon has pulled out the 400-strong military team which was searching Iraq for weapons of mass destruction, but US officers insisted yesterday that the hunt would go on.

The disbanded multinational team was known as the Joint Captured Materiel Exploitation Group (JCMEG) and its job, according to a Pentagon official who confirmed its withdrawal, had been to "scavenge the battlefield for military equipment".

It was an important element of the CIA-led Iraq Survey Group (ISG), which has spent seven months hunting for the arsenal that was the justification for the invasion.

Over the past few months the ISG has been stripped of translators, special forces troops and other specialists.

The continuing questions about the justification of the Iraq war are President George Bush's principal weakness as he faces re-election in November against the backdrop of a steadily rising death toll of US troops there.

Yesterday nine soldiers were killed when a US Black Hawk crashed near the town of Falluja. It was not initially clear whether it had been shot down, but Falluja is a stronghold of Sunni resistance.

The ISG, according to some weapons experts in Washington, has been reduced to a remnant of a few hundred specialists from its peak strength of 1,400.

Its leader, David Kay, is said to be on the point of resignation. A colleague in Washington said: "His family is worried about his safety and he is disenchanted, both by the failure to find weapons he was sure were there and because his team has been cut in half."

The withdrawal of JCMEG became known only yesterday, but a defence official said its members had been sent back to their home countries in October, and called its disbanding "old news".

The official denied that the ISG had been reduced to a rump and said that although its number fluctuated, new team members had joined to replace at least some of the departing troops.

Many of the remaining ISG investigators are slowly sifting their way through a mountain of captured documents.

The group includes a specialist unit trained to dispose of chemical and biological weapons, but the New York Times quoted an ISG member as saying that the team was "still waiting for something to dispose of".

Joseph Cirincione, chief proliferation expert at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (CEIP), said: "This is a body blow to the ISG. It has got to be demoralising to see your workforce cut in half. And it's an indication that at senior levels there is a realisation that it's over."

The CEIP produced a report on weapons of mass destruction in Iraq yesterday, co-authored by Mr Cirincione, comparing prewar claims by US officials and postwar findings that concluded that the administration had "systematically misrepresented" the Iraqi threat.

Yesterday, the US secretary of State, Colin Powell, acknowledged that he saw no "smoking gun, concrete evidence" of ties between Saddam Hussein and al-Qaida terror network, but insisted that Iraq had dangerous weapons and needed to be disarmed by force.

Washington Post

The CIA's 'Anonymous' No. 2

Low-Profile Deputy Director Leads Agency's Analytical Side

By Dana Priest – 9 January 2004

Since Sept. 11, 2001, CIA Director George J. Tenet has been unusually visible in supporting the administration's war plans, first the fight against al Qaeda and then the war in Iraq. By contrast, the CIA's second-in-command, John E. McLaughlin, has been "the most anonymous" senior official in Washington, as McLaughlin puts it.

[...] Now, the U.S. occupation in Iraq faces an insurgency more resilient than the CIA publicly predicted before the war, and no weapons of mass destruction have been found, despite CIA assessments suggesting they would be.

During an interview in his office, which adjoins Tenet's, McLaughlin offered assessments of the CIA and world events.

[...] He defended the CIA's assessment that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction, but he lamented the expectation about those weapons that was created by U.S. officials before the war. "I think everyone made a mistake in allowing an image to be created of stacks" of such weapons and "mounds of artillery" shells filled with deadly poisons. "In fact, it wouldn't have to be like that," he said, citing the swimming-pool-size space necessary to hide the tons of chemical and biological weapons the CIA said Iraq possessed.

McLaughlin lauded the frankness of chief weapons sleuth David Kay, whose preliminary report in October stated bluntly that no weapons of mass destruction had been found, although Kay has found proof of weapons programs. "One thing that has escaped public notice is" the report's "utter honesty," he said. "That tells you something about us." [...]

Associated Press

Rice: No Evidence Iraq Moved WMD to Syria

9 January 2004

WASHINGTON - The United States has no credible evidence that Iraq moved weapons of mass destruction into Syria early last year before the U.S.-led war that drove Saddam Hussein from power, National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice said Friday.

Rice said, "Any indication that something like that happened would be a very serious matter.

"But I want to be very clear: we don't, at this point, have any indications that I would consider credible and firm that that has taken place, but we will tie down every lead," she said at a White House briefing about Bush's trip Monday to a hemispheric summit in Mexico.

In nine months, arms control experts in Iraq have failed to find a single item from a long list of weapons of mass destruction. The Bush administration cited an alleged weapons stockpile in Iraq as a primary reason for launching the war against Saddam's government.

"We're going to follow every lead on what may have happened here," Rice said. "I don't think we are at the point that we can make a judgment on this issue. There hasn't been any hard evidence that such a thing happened.

"But obviously we're going to follow up every lead," she said, "and it would be a serious problem if that, in fact, did happen."

Rice said the United States talks with Syria about a number of issues, "including the borders with Iraq and what may have happened in the past there and what may be continuing to happen there." Mainly, she said, the United States opposes Syria's support for terrorism, particularly its support for anti-Palestinian groups Hezbollah and Hamas.

Time

Confessions of a White House Insider

By John F. Dickerson – 10 January 2004

[...] Now O'Neill is speaking with the same bracing style in a book written by Pulitzer prizewinning journalist Ron Suskind. *The Price of Loyalty: George W. Bush, the White House and the Education of Paul O'Neill* traces the former Alcoa CEO's rise and fall through the Administration: from his return to Washington to work

for his third President, whom he believed would govern from the sensible center, through O'Neill's disillusionment, to his firing, executed in a surreal conversation with Cheney, a man he once considered a fellow traveler. Suskind had access not only to O'Neill but also to the saddlebags he took with him when he left town, which included a minute-by-minute accounting of his 23 months in office and 19,000 pages of documents on CD-ROM.

So, what does O'Neill reveal? According to the book, ideology and electoral politics so dominated the domestic-policy process during his tenure that it was often impossible to have a rational exchange of ideas. The incurious President was so opaque on some important issues that top Cabinet officials were left guessing his mind even after face-to-face meetings. Cheney is portrayed as an unstoppable force, unbowed by inconvenient facts as he drives Administration policy toward his goals.

O'Neill's tone in the book is not angry or sour, though it prompted a tart response from the Administration. "We didn't listen to him when he was there," said a top aide. "Why should we now?"

But the book is blunt, and in person O'Neill can be even more so. Discussing the case for the Iraq war in an interview with TIME, O'Neill, who sat on the National Security Council, says the focus was on Saddam from the early days of the Administration. He offers the most skeptical view of the case for war ever put forward by a top Administration official. "In the 23 months I was there, I never saw anything that I would characterize as evidence of weapons of mass destruction," he told TIME. "There were allegations and assertions by people.

But I've been around a hell of a long time, and I know the difference between evidence and assertions and illusions or allusions and conclusions that one could draw from a set of assumptions. To me there is a difference between real evidence and everything else. And I never saw anything in the intelligence that I would characterize as real evidence." A top Administration official says of the wmd intelligence: "That information was on a need- to-know basis. He wouldn't have been in a position to see it." [...]

BBC News

Danes show suspect Iraqi shells

11 January 2003

The Danish army has released pictures of three dozen mortar shells which have provided the only post-war proof that Iraq possessed banned weapons.

The shells were uncovered on Friday and initial tests showed they contained blister agent, a chemical weapon.

But buried among building equipment in southern Iraq, they appeared to have been abandoned for at least 10 years, the Danish army said.

The US-UK coalition launched the war in Iraq over arms banned by the UN.

Coalition experts are currently examining the 120mm mortar rounds to see if the initial tests are borne out.

Results of more extensive tests should be available in about two days, the Danes said on an official website quoted by the Reuters news agency.

The Danish troops, who serve with the US-led coalition in Iraq and are supported by Icelandic munitions experts, will continue searches for any more weapons buried at the same site, north of Basra.

US military spokesman Brigadier-General Mark Kimmitt said of the shells: "Most were wrapped in plastic bags, and some were leaking."

"We're doing some preliminary tests... to be sure that if they do contain any kind of blistering agent they will be disposed of," he said.

The former regime of Saddam Hussein used blister agents against Iranian soldiers during the Iran-Iraq war.

Chemical weapons were also used to kill about 5,000 Kurds in the northern city of Halabja in 1988.

War-time use

Before the US-led war to overthrow Saddam Hussein, Iraq said it had destroyed all its chemical weapons, but the alleged continuing threat from weapons of mass destruction were cited by the US and UK leaders as a key reason for the war.

But a nine-month search for stockpiles of chemical, biological or nuclear arms has found no proof of an ongoing weapons programme which could have been used against coalition forces.

On Thursday, a 400-strong team of weapons disposal experts was withdrawn from Iraq but US administration officials insisted their job had been completed.

Blister agents, such as mustard gas, were developed and first used by the Germans in World War I. Italy and Egypt have also used such chemical weapons against enemies.

The agents burn skin, eyes and lungs as they are absorbed, causing large blisters on skin and inside lungs and windpipes.

Effects are delayed for up to 12 hours after exposure, which can allow the agent to cause severe damage before it is detected.

Associated Press

Blair: Action on Iraq WMD Info Was Right

By Jane Wardell – 11 January 2004

LONDON - Prime Minister Tony Blair insisted Sunday that he was right to take military action in Iraq based on intelligence that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction, though no such weapons have yet been found.

Blair said he believed the U.S.-led Iraq Survey Group would find evidence of the weapons' existence, saying inspectors have found extensive evidence of concealment operations.

Blair the British Broadcasting Corp. that it would have been "irresponsible not to have acted upon" prewar intelligence that Saddam's regime had weapons of mass destruction.

"You can only imagine what would have happened if I'd ignored the intelligence and then something terrible had happened," he said,

The danger posed by Saddam's chemical and biological arsenal was the British government's prime justification for joining the U.S.-led offensive. The failure to find such weapons, and allegations that Blair's government exaggerated the threat posed by Iraq, has heaped pressure on the prime minister.

On Thursday, a report by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, a private think tank, accused the Bush administration of systematically misrepresenting the weapons threat from Iraq.

"It is unlikely that Iraq could have destroyed, hidden or sent out of the country the hundreds of tons of chemical and biological weapons, dozens of Scud missiles and facilities engaged in the ongoing production of chemical and biological weapons that officials claimed were present without the United States detecting some sign of this activity," said a report from three experts from the group.

Blair said observers could not yet be "definitive" about what happened to the weapons but said he believed evidence of weapons would be uncovered.

"What was the point of having all these elaborate concealment mechanisms if there was nothing to conceal?" he said. "There is something bizarre about the idea that Saddam had these weapons, got rid of them and then never disclosed the fact that he got rid of them," he said.

Independent

Powell withdraws al-Qa'ida claim as hunt for Saddam's WMD flags

By Raymond Whitaker - 11 January 2004

The faltering American and British case for war in Iraq has suffered another blow with an admission by the US Secretary of State, Colin Powell, that there was no hard proof of links between Saddam Hussein and al-Qa'ida, contrary to his claims before the invasion.

"I have not seen smoking-gun, concrete evidence about the connection," Mr Powell said last week. Almost at the same moment, the assertion that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction - another crucial aspect of the Secretary of State's presentation to the UN Security Council last February - was being further discredited.

Not only did it emerge that a 400-member military team tasked with searching for unconventional weapons in Iraq had been quietly withdrawn, a leading Washington think tank, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, accused the Bush administration of "systematically misrepresenting" the danger of Saddam's alleged WMD before the war. The Washington Post also reported the discovery of a document suggesting Iraq might have destroyed its biological weapons more than a decade ago, and that subsequent "programmes" existed only on paper.

Mr Powell defended his pre-war statements on Iraq and al-Qa'ida, saying: "I think the possibility of such connections did exist, and it was prudent to consider them at the time that we did." Top administration officials also contend that the WMD hunt is not over, despite indications that scarcely any effort is being made on the ground.

In charge is the 1,400-member Iraq Survey Group - a number itself inflated by the inclusion of Iraqi drivers, translators and other support staff. But the ISG has been severely depleted by the withdrawal of intelligence personnel to deal with a higher priority: the insurgency that is killing large numbers of occupation troops. Its head, David Kay, a hawk who confidently predicted the discovery of WMD, has given notice of his resignation to the Bush administration.

Last week, The New York Times reported that a military team specialising in the disposal of chemical and biological weapons remains part of the ISG in Iraq, but is "still waiting for something to dispose of". Important evidence might be contained in a vast collection of seized Iraqi documents being stored in a secret military warehouse in Qatar, say American officials, but only a small fraction had been translated.

Evidence that the search for WMD has been all but abandoned, and increasingly frank admissions in Washington that the threat from Saddam's regime was exaggerated in the run-up to war, have scarcely dented the Bush administration's popularity. But while the White House can say that WMD was never the main reason it sought "regime change" in Iraq, the danger of Saddam's alleged weapons was central to Tony Blair's case for war, both legally and politically.

The Hutton inquiry into the death of the weapons scientist David Kelly heard much testimony on the question of whether intelligence on Iraqi WMD was distorted. As the Prime Minister awaits Lord Hutton's findings, the failure to find any sign of illegal weapons programmes in Iraq, let alone the weapons themselves, is highly damaging.

As recently as his Christmas message to troops in Iraq, Mr Blair said weapons hunters had unearthed "massive evidence of a huge system of clandestine laboratories" in Iraq, only for the claim to be dismissed by Paul Bremer, America's most senior official in Baghdad, before he knew who had made it.

Significantly, the Prime Minister made no mention of WMD during his lightning visit to Iraq last weekend, instead stressing the role of British forces in bringing stability to the country.

The Carnegie Endowment report, compiled over six months, is scathing about the deliberate errors and omissions of the White House - and, by extension, Downing Street - saying the thesis that Iraq or another rogue state would make WMD available to terrorists was "questionable" and "unexamined".

Officials ignored caveats by the intelligence agencies, and consistently adopted "worst case" assumptions.

Observer

Hutton: spy chiefs face reform over Iraq fiasco

Peter Beaumont and Gaby Hinsliff - Sunday January 11, 2004

A massive shake-up of the way the Government handles secret intelligence in order to prevent its creeping politicisation is to be launched in the wake of the Hutton inquiry.

The radical reforms will overhaul the role of the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC), which drew up the infamous dossier on Iraq's banned weapons of mass destruction that lies at the heart of the judicial inquiry.

They emerged amid fresh uproar triggered by Alastair Campbell, the Prime Minister's former director of communications, who claimed yesterday that 'there was no naming strategy' to identify weapons scientist David Kelly as the likely source of the BBC's allegations last year that Downing Street spiced up the dossier.

In an outspoken defence of his actions in advance of Lord Hutton's findings, Campbell dismissed revelations that he had requested 15 changes to the dossier being drawn up by JIC chairman John Scarlett.

Insisting that while 'we can dance on pinheads till the cows come home', he said the changes - which critics argue dramatically strengthened the dossier - were not hugely significant: 'It does not represent in quotes a "sexing-up" or a "transformation". It is me saying, "This is less clear than that," or, "This is expressed slightly differently to where you've expressed it here.'"

However, his comments - pounced on yesterday by the Tories, who accused him of spinning himself out of trouble in defiance of his own evidence to Hutton - drive a coach and horses through Downing Street's previous policy of shunning comment on the affair so as not to pre-empt the inquiry.

Last night, a poll for the Mail on Sunday found only one in four voters believes Tony Blair told the truth in saying he had not authorised the leaking of David Kelly's name: almost half blamed the Government most for Kelly's death, followed by the Commons select committee who questioned him, with the BBC well behind.

To prevent such politically damaging rows in future, officials are now planning widespread changes to the JIC, the group of intelligence officials, Ministers and senior civil servants that advises the Prime Minister on material produced by MI5, MI6, the Defence Intelligence staff and GCHQ.

They will insist on a sharp separation between material as presented to the JIC by the intelligence services, and its presentation to the public, erecting 'Chinese walls' between the secret services and spin doctors.

So-called 'ownership' of the intelligence product would rest with the intelligence services, ensuring it continued to be viewed in context rather than cherry-picked for political effect.

Ownership of the dossier was a key issue in the Hutton inquiry: while emails stressed it lay with John Scarlett, critics have argued that he had grown too close to Campbell.

The reforms would also rule out purely political appointees who are neither Crown nor civil servants - such as Campbell - sitting on the committee.

'The idea is that intelligence should be seen in the context in which it was gathered,' said one familiar with the suggested reforms. 'It should be logical and procedure-based, and its veracity should be tested more.'

A second proposal includes ensuring the committee is chaired by a senior civil servant rather than member of the intelligence services, Foreign Office or Ministry of Defence.

Liam Fox, the Conservative Party co-chairman, said Campbell's self-defence was belied by extracts from his own diaries, submitted to the Hutton inquiry, revealing how he and Defence Secretary Geoff Hoon had 'wanted to get it out that someone had broken cover' and that 'the biggest thing needed was the source out'.

'What are they trying to cover up?' Fox demanded last night. 'Alastair Campbell should now therefore clarify which set of statements is correct - his statement that "what we wanted was the name out" or his statement in a newspaper that "there was no strategy".'

The row will encourage the Tories, who plan to build on last week's dramatic ambush of the Prime Minister by Michael Howard over whether he had authorised the identification of David Kelly.

They have collated many apparent inconsistencies in testimony from key figures, including Campbell, which they hope to highlight in the run-up to the report's publication later this month.

Testifying to the Foreign Affairs Select Committee, Campbell suggested he had seen JIC intelligence assessments while working on the dossier. Yet, giving evidence to Hutton, he said that he had not. His access to highly secret material was significant because he had said he was involved purely in presentation, rather than in analysing the material itself.

Blair was facing growing pressure last night to promise a vote on the Hutton report when it is debated in the Commons, to give MPs a chance to pass their own verdict.

'If they were that confident they would want to have a vote,' said Oliver Heald, Shadow Leader of the Commons. 'The whole thing reeks of a government running scared.'

Downing Street refused to say yesterday whether there would be a vote. But one senior source said it would depend on the findings: 'What do they think we might be voting on?'

Last night it emerged Lord Hutton had complained in a letter to the Tory MP Peter Lilley of being sent notes made by Private Secretaries which were 'sparse and of no relevance'. He was also not given the transcript of Blair's in-flight press conference last July during which he denied leaking David Kelly's name.

The spotlight will turn this week to the role of the BBC, with the publication of a blueprint under which its governors would be elected rather than made up of political appointees in order to prevent bias.

Broadcasters may face criticism from Hutton over their handling of the dossier story, including whether governors were fully briefed on possible flaws in it before backing the BBC against Downing Street.

A book to be published by the Institute for Public Policy Research think tank on Tuesday, part-funded by the BBC, will call for the governors to be chosen by an electoral college of interested parties instead.

'There is a pressing need to make regulation more transparent,' said author Jamie Cowling. 'We don't think it is appropriate to appoint the board of governors because there is a possibility that, precisely because they are appointed, they feel it more necessary to demonstrate their independence from Government.'

Culture Secretary Tessa Jowell, who will attend the report's launch, is reviewing the BBC's charter and is expected to study the blueprint closely.

The Tories will pile on the pressure tomorrow by introducing measures as a backbench Commons Bill to protect the Civil Service from interference.

They are also demanding assurances that they will receive Hutton's report 24 hours before it is published.

CBSNews

Bush Sought 'Way' To Invade Iraq?

11 January 2004

A year ago, Paul O'Neill was fired from his job as George Bush's Treasury Secretary for disagreeing too many times with the president's policy on tax cuts.

Now, O'Neill - who is known for speaking his mind - talks for the first time about his two years inside the Bush administration. His story is the centerpiece of a new book being published this week about the way the Bush White House is run.

Entitled "The Price of Loyalty," the book by a former Wall Street Journal reporter draws on interviews with high-level officials who gave the author their personal accounts of meetings with the president, their notes and documents.

But the main source of the book was Paul O'Neill. Correspondent Lesley Stahl reports.

Paul O'Neill says he is going public because he thinks the Bush Administration has been too secretive about how decisions have been made.

Will this be seen as a "kiss-and-tell" book?

"I've come to believe that people will say damn near anything, so I'm sure somebody will say all of that and more," says O'Neill, who was George Bush's top economic policy official.

In the book, O'Neill says that the president did not make decisions in a methodical way: there was no free-flow of ideas or open debate.

At cabinet meetings, he says the president was "like a blind man in a roomful of deaf people. There is no discernible connection," forcing top officials to act "on little more than hunches about what the president might think."

This is what O'Neill says happened at his first hour-long, one-on-one meeting with Mr. Bush: "I went in with a long list of things to talk about, and I thought to engage on and as the book says, I was surprised that it turned out me talking, and the president just listening ... As I recall, it was mostly a monologue." He also says that President Bush was disengaged, at least on domestic issues, and that disturbed him. And he says that wasn't his experience when he worked as a top official under Presidents Nixon and Ford, or the way he ran things when he was chairman of Alcoa.

O'Neill readily agreed to tell his story to the book's author Ron Suskind - and he adds that he's taking no money for his part in the book.

Suskind says he interviewed hundreds of people for the book - including several cabinet members.

O'Neill is the only one who spoke on the record, but Suskind says that someone high up in the administration - Donald Rumsfeld - warned O'Neill not to do this book.

Was it a warning, or a threat?

"I don't think so. I think it was the White House concerned," says Suskind. "Understandably, because O'Neill has spent extraordinary amounts of time with the president. They said, 'This could really be the one moment where things are revealed.'"

Not only did O'Neill give Suskind his time, he gave him 19,000 internal documents.

"Everything's there: Memoranda to the President, handwritten "thank you" notes, 100-page documents. Stuff that's sensitive," says Suskind, adding that in some cases, it included transcripts of private, high-level National Security Council meetings. "You don't get higher than that."

And what happened at President Bush's very first National Security Council meeting is one of O'Neill's most startling revelations.

"From the very beginning, there was a conviction, that Saddam Hussein was a bad person and that he needed to go," says O'Neill, who adds that going after Saddam was topic "A" 10 days after the inauguration - eight months before Sept. 11.

"From the very first instance, it was about Iraq. It was about what we can do to change this regime," says Suskind. "Day one, these things were laid and sealed."

As treasury secretary, O'Neill was a permanent member of the National Security Council. He says in the book he was surprised at the meeting that questions such as "Why Saddam?" and "Why now?" were never asked.

"It was all about finding a way to do it. That was the tone of it. The president saying 'Go find me a way to do this,'" says O'Neill. "For me, the notion of pre-emption, that the U.S. has the unilateral right to do whatever we decide to do, is a really huge leap."

And that came up at this first meeting, says O'Neill, who adds that the discussion of Iraq continued at the next National Security Council meeting two days later.

He got briefing materials under this cover sheet. "There are memos. One of them marked, secret, says, 'Plan for post-Saddam Iraq,'" adds Suskind, who says that they discussed an occupation of Iraq in January and February of 2001.

Based on his interviews with O'Neill and several other officials at the meetings, Suskind writes that the planning envisioned peacekeeping troops, war crimes tribunals, and even divvying up Iraq's oil wealth. He obtained one Pentagon document, dated March 5, 2001, and entitled "Foreign Suitors for Iraqi Oilfield contracts," which includes a map of potential areas for exploration.

"It talks about contractors around the world from, you know, 30-40 countries. And which ones have what intentions," says Suskind. "On oil in Iraq."

During the campaign, candidate Bush had criticized the Clinton-Gore Administration for being too interventionist: "If we don't stop extending our troops all around the world in nation-building missions, then we're going to have a serious problem coming down the road. And I'm going to prevent that."

"The thing that's most surprising, I think, is how emphatically, from the very first, the administration had said 'X' during the campaign, but from the first day was often doing 'Y,'" says Suskind. "Not just saying 'Y,' but actively moving toward the opposite of what they had said during the election."

The president had promised to cut taxes, and he did. Within six months of taking office, he pushed a trillion dollars worth of tax cuts through Congress.

But O'Neill thought it should have been the end. After 9/11 and the war in Afghanistan, the budget deficit was growing. So at a meeting with the vice president after the mid-term elections in 2002, Suskind writes that O'Neill argued against a second round of tax cuts.

"Cheney, at this moment, shows his hand," says Suskind. "He says, 'You know, Paul, Reagan proved that deficits don't matter. We won the mid-term elections, this is our due.' ... O'Neill is speechless."

"It was not just about not wanting the tax cut. It was about how to use the nation's resources to improve the condition of our society," says O'Neill. "And I thought the weight of working on Social Security and fundamental tax reform was a lot more important than a tax reduction."

Did he think it was irresponsible? "Well, it's for sure not what I would have done," says O'Neill.

The former treasury secretary accuses Vice President Dick Cheney of not being an honest broker, but, with a handful of others, part of "a praetorian guard that encircled the president" to block out contrary views. "This is the way Dick likes it," says O'Neill.

Meanwhile, the White House was losing patience with O'Neill. He was becoming known for a series of off-the-cuff remarks his critics called gaffes. One of them sent the dollar into a nosedive and required major damage control.

Twice during stock market meltdowns, O'Neill was not available to the president: He was out of the country - one time on a trip to Africa with the Irish rock star Bono.

"Africa made an enormous splash. It was like a road show," says Suskind. "He comes back and the president says to him at a meeting, 'You know, you're getting quite a cult following.' And it clearly was not a joke. And it was not said in jest."

Suskind writes that the relationship grew tenser and that the president even took a jab at O'Neill in public, at an economic forum in Texas.

The two men were never close. And O'Neill was not amused when Mr. Bush began calling him "The Big O." He thought the president's habit of giving people nicknames was a form of bullying. Everything came to a head for O'Neill at a November 2002 meeting at the White House of the economic team.

"It's a huge meeting. You got Dick Cheney from the, you know, secure location on the video. The President is there," says Suskind, who was given a nearly verbatim transcript by someone who attended the meeting.

He says everyone expected Mr. Bush to rubber stamp the plan under discussion: a big new tax cut. But, according to Suskind, the president was perhaps having second thoughts about cutting taxes again, and was uncharacteristically agitated.

"He asks, 'Haven't we already given money to rich people? This second tax cut's gonna do it again,'" says Suskind.

"He says, 'Didn't we already, why are we doing it again?' Now, his advisers, they say, 'Well Mr. President, the upper class, they're the entrepreneurs. That's the standard response.' And the president kind of goes, 'OK.' That's their response. And then, he comes back to it again. 'Well, shouldn't we be giving money to the middle, won't people be able to say, 'You did it once, and then you did it twice, and what was it good for?'"

But according to the transcript, White House political advisor Karl Rove jumped in.

"Karl Rove is saying to the president, a kind of mantra. 'Stick to principle. Stick to principle.' He says it over and over again," says Suskind. "Don't waver."

In the end, the president didn't. And nine days after that meeting in which O'Neill made it clear he could not publicly support another tax cut, the vice president called and asked him to resign.

With the deficit now climbing towards \$400 billion, O'Neill maintains he was in the right.

But look at the economy today.

"Yes, well, in the last quarter the growth rate was 8.2 percent. It was terrific," says O'Neill. "I think the tax cut made a difference. But without the tax cut, we would have had 6 percent real growth, and the prospect of dealing with transformation of Social Security and fundamentally fixing the tax system. And to me, those were compelling competitors for, against more tax cuts."

While in the book O'Neill comes off as constantly appalled at Mr. Bush, he was surprised when Stahl told him she found his portrait of the president unflattering.

"Hmmm, you really think so," asks O'Neill, who says he isn't joking. "Well, I'll be darned."

"You're giving me the impression that you're just going to be stunned if they attack you for this book," says Stahl to O'Neill. "And they're going to say, I predict, you know, it's sour grapes. He's getting back because he was fired."

I will be really disappointed if they react that way because I think they'll be hard put to," says O'Neill.

Is he prepared for it?

"Well, I don't think I need to be because I can't imagine that I'm going to be attacked for telling the truth," says O'Neill. "Why would I be attacked for telling the truth?"

White House spokesman Scott McClellan was asked about the book on Friday and said "The president is someone that leads and acts decisively on our biggest priorities and that is exactly what he'll continue to do."

CBSNews

Treasury Calls For O'Neill Probe

12 January 2004

President George W. Bush on Monday ignored criticism of his policies and governing style by former Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill, but his Treasury Department called for an investigation into documents taken by O'Neill and shown to CBS' *60 Minutes*.

The Treasury Department said Monday that at least one document seen on the broadcast may have included classified "secret" material.

O'Neill told CBS News *60 Minutes* Correspondent Lesley Stahl that planning for the war began during the president's first days in office.

"We don't have any secret documents. We didn't show any secret documents, we merely showed a cover sheet that alluded to secret documents," said *60 Minutes* spokesman Kevin Tedesco.

At President Bush's very first National Security Council meeting, O'Neill said, "there was a conviction, that Saddam Hussein was a bad person and that he needed to go."

"It was all about finding a way to do it. That was the tone of it. The president saying 'Go find me a way to do this,'" says O'Neill. O'Neill also claims to have seen no convincing evidence that Iraq hoarded weapons of mass destruction.

O'Neill is the main source for the book "The Price of Loyalty," written by former Wall Street Journal reporter Ron Suskind, to whom O'Neill provided 19,000 internal documents. O'Neill claims to have no financial interest in the book.

Suskind, who claims the National Security Council discussed an occupation of Iraq in January and February of 2001, tells *60 Minutes* that O'Neill was given briefing materials labeled "Plan for post-Saddam Iraq."

President Bush, who justified the Iraq war partly by arguing the Sept. 11 attacks made preemptive attacks necessary, responded to O'Neill's claims on Monday.

"First let me say, I appreciate former Secretary O'Neill's service to our country," Mr. Bush said during a joint news conference with Mexican President Vicente Fox. "We worked together during some difficult times."

"Sept. 11 made me realize that America was no longer protected by oceans, and we had to take our threats very seriously no matter where they may be materializing," Mr. Bush said. "The stated policy of my administration towards Saddam Hussein was very clear.

"Like the previous administration, we were for regime change."

Presidential spokesman Scott McClellan would not confirm or deny that the White House began Iraq war planning early in Mr. Bush's term. But, he said, Saddam "was a threat to peace and stability before September 11th, and even more of a threat after September 11."

O'Neill was fired in December 2002 when Mr. Bush decided he needed a more forceful spokesman to push a new round of tax cuts through Congress.

CBS News Correspondent Bill Plante reports some administration officials have attacked O'Neill, calling his charges "sour grapes" over his termination.

"No one ever listened to the crazy things he said before, why should we start now?" said one.

O'Neill had publicly questioned the need for new tax cuts given signs that the economy was starting to rebound. He had also made several high-profile gaffes, including one that hurt the dollar in world markets, and been out of the country during two stock market plunges.

"It appears that the world according to Mr. O'Neill is more about trying to justify his own opinions than looking at the reality of the results we are achieving on behalf of the American people," McClellan said in Texas, where the president is staying at his ranch.

The official American government stance on Iraq, dating to the administration of President Clinton, was that the United States sought to oust Saddam.

But O'Neill said the Bush team's approach troubled him.

"For me, the notion of pre-emption, that the U.S. has the unilateral right to do whatever we decide to do, is a really huge leap," he said.

In an interview with Time magazine, O'Neill said he saw only "allegations and assertions" about Iraq's weapons programs during his tenure.

"To me there is a difference between real evidence and everything else. And I never saw anything in the intelligence that I would characterize as real evidence," he said.

A top U.S. administration official told Time that O'Neill was not in a position to have seen the intelligence on weapons of mass destruction because access to it was limited.

However, around the time O'Neill says the National Security Council began discussing Iraq in February 2001, Secretary of State Colin Powell told reporters that Saddam "has not developed any significant capability with respect to weapons of mass destruction."

On Feb. 16, 2001 — barely a month into the Bush presidency — U.S. and British planes launched significant air strikes on Iraq, claiming violations of the no-fly zone in southern Iraq.

Prime Minister Tony Blair's official spokesman, responding to O'Neill's claim, said Britain and the United States wanted to resolve the crisis in Iraq peacefully and were not intent on war.

Since the U.S. invaded Iraq last March, nearly 500 U.S. soldiers have died and no weapons of mass destruction have been reported found.

The Bush administration has never accused Saddam of a role in the Sept. 11 attacks, but has repeatedly suggested the attacks necessitated a new, more forceful foreign policy.

For example, last October, Mr. Bush told a crowd in New Hampshire: "America must not forget the lessons of September 11th ... Our security requires constant vigilance and decisive action. I believe America has only one option: We must fight this war until the work is done."

"We're fighting on many fronts, and Iraq is now the central front," Mr. Bush said.

CNN

Treasury wants O'Neill papers probed

12 January 2004

WASHINGTON (CNN) - The Treasury Department said Monday it is looking into how a government document from the very early days of the Bush administration -- marked "secret" and outlining plans for a post-Saddam Iraq -- became part of a CBS "60 Minutes" broadcast Sunday night.

"Based on the '60 Minutes' segment aired Sunday evening, there was a document that was shown that appeared to be classified," said Treasury Department spokesman Rob Nichols. "It was for that reason that it was referred to the U.S. inspector general's office."

Ousted Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill, now an outspoken critic of the Bush administration, was a guest on the program, along with Ron Suskind, the author of a book for which O'Neill was the primary source. O'Neill said on the program that the administration was preparing plans to move against Iraq "from the very beginning."

Suskind told CNN he had no access to secret documents and O'Neill never improperly took classified papers after leaving the Administration.

"I am certain O'Neill never had it," said Suskind, author of "The Price of Loyalty", referring to a National Security Council document on post-Saddam Iraq.

Suskind said O'Neill gained proper authorization to all 19,000 Government documents used as sources for the book. "He got the documents from lawyers at the Treasury Department when he made a request after he left," said Suskind.

Paul O'Neill was traveling Monday afternoon and did not return a phone call from CNN.

The decision to refer the matter to the inspector general was made at a Monday morning Treasury Department meeting involving senior staff and department attorneys, Nichols said, and was made without the initiation or consultation of the White House.

There is a precedent for former Cabinet members to take information -- such as schedules, letters, press releases and speeches -- with them as they leave, but it would be illegal to take classified information.

The request for the investigation came as O'Neill's comments critical of the Bush administration sparked a fury of controversy in Washington. O'Neill clashed with the president on deficit spending and tax cuts, which ultimately led to O'Neill's departure.

Asked if seeking the probe may look vindictive, Nichols said, "We don't view it in that way," according to Reuters news agency.

In the book, O'Neill describes a disengaged President Bush who appeared determined to bring the United States into a conflict with Iraq for the purpose of ousting Saddam Hussein.

Asked about the assertions Monday in Mexico, President Bush defended his decision to go to war with Iraq and disputed O'Neill's comments.

In the upcoming book, O'Neill compares Bush's presence at Cabinet meetings to "a blind man in a room full of deaf people."

O'Neill also maintains that his advice to Vice President Dick Cheney about steel tariffs and tax cuts was ignored, largely due to political considerations, according to excerpts from the book printed in Monday's *Wall Street Journal*.

O'Neill, who had served in the Ford administration and also as CEO of Alcoa Inc., a big aluminum producer, had argued that tax cuts would do serious damage to the federal budget and that tariffs would do little to help domestic steelmakers in the long run.

O'Neill's account of a disengaged President Bush eyeing war with Iraq from his first days in office drew jeers from White House officials, but Democrats said O'Neill's story shows Bush misled Americans about the road to war.

Commerce Secretary Don Evans, who was Bush's 2000 campaign chairman, said Bush asks tough questions and encourages debate in Cabinet meetings.

"He likes to see debate," Evans said. "He thinks it's very healthy, very constructive for the process. Oftentimes, he has to make the deciding decision when he has his advisers on both sides of the same subject."

Rep. Dick Gephardt, a Democratic presidential contender who supported the war, said at a campaign stop in Iowa: "It's a worrisome fact, and we need to look into it and find out what really went on."

Suskind's book is scheduled for publication Tuesday. O'Neill gave Suskind 19,000 internal documents and took no money for his role in the book.

A CBS News spokesperson said, "We did not show any secret documents. We do not have secret documents. We showed the cover sheet that alluded to such documents."

Former Sen. Bob Dole, the Republicans' presidential nominee in 1996, said he wouldn't suggest O'Neill was "bitter," but "certainly very critical."

"I mean, there's always somebody in somebody's administration who jumps out early, sells a book, and goes after the guy who hired him," Dole told CNN. "I don't know if that's good. It may be good business, it's not good politics."

Washington Post

Study Published by Army Criticizes War on Terror's Scope

By Thomas E. Ricks – 12 January 2004

A scathing new report published by the Army War College broadly criticizes the Bush administration's handling of the war on terrorism, accusing it of taking a detour into an "unnecessary" war in Iraq and pursuing an "unrealistic" quest against terrorism that may lead to U.S. wars with states that pose no serious threat.

The report, by Jeffrey Record, a visiting professor at the Air War College at Maxwell Air Force Base in Alabama, warns that as a result of those mistakes, the Army is "near the breaking point."

It recommends, among other things, scaling back the scope of the "global war on terrorism" and instead focusing on the narrower threat posed by the al Qaeda terrorist network.

"[T]he global war on terrorism as currently defined and waged is dangerously indiscriminate and ambitious, and accordingly . . . its parameters should be readjusted," Record writes. Currently, he adds, the anti-terrorism campaign "is strategically unfocused, promises more than it can deliver, and threatens to dissipate U.S. military resources in an endless and hopeless search for absolute security."

Record, a veteran defense specialist and author of six books on military strategy and related issues, was an aide to then-Sen. Sam Nunn when the Georgia Democrat was chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee.

In discussing his political background, Record also noted that in 1999 while on the staff of the Air War College, he published work critical of the Clinton administration.

His essay, published by the Army War College's Strategic Studies Institute, carries the standard disclaimer that its views are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the Army, the Pentagon or the U.S. government.

But retired Army Col. Douglas C. Lovelace Jr., director of the Strategic Studies Institute, whose Web site carries Record's 56-page monograph, hardly distanced himself from it. "I think that the substance that Jeff brings out in the article really, really needs to be considered," he said.

Publication of the essay was approved by the Army War College's commandant, Maj. Gen. David H. Huntoon Jr., Lovelace said. He said he and Huntoon expected the study to be controversial, but added, "He considers it to be under the umbrella of academic freedom."

Larry DiRita, the top Pentagon spokesman, said he had not read the Record study. He added: "If the conclusion is that we need to be scaling back in the global war on terrorism, it's not likely to be on my reading list anytime soon."

Many of Record's arguments, such as the contention that Saddam Hussein's Iraq was deterred and did not present a threat, have been made by critics of the administration. Iraq, he concludes, "was a war-of-choice distraction from the war of necessity against al Qaeda." But it is unusual to have such views published by the War College, the Army's premier academic institution.

In addition, the essay goes further than many critics in examining the Bush administration's handling of the war on terrorism.

Record's core criticism is that the administration is biting off more than it can chew. He likens the scale of U.S. ambitions in the war on terrorism to Adolf Hitler's overreach in World War II. "A cardinal rule of strategy is to keep your enemies to a manageable number," he writes. "The Germans were defeated in two world wars . . . because their strategic ends outran their available means."

He also scoffs at the administration's policy, laid out by Bush in a November speech, of seeking to transform and democratize the Middle East. "The potential policy payoff of a democratic and prosperous Middle East, if there is one, almost certainly lies in the very distant future," he writes. "The basis on which this democratic domino theory rests has never been explicated."

He also casts doubt on whether the U.S. government will maintain its commitment to the war. "The political, fiscal, and military sustainability of the GWOT [global war on terrorism] remains to be seen," he states.

The essay concludes with several recommendations. Some are fairly noncontroversial, such as increasing the size of the Army and Marine Corps, a position that appears to be gathering support in Congress. But he also says the United States should scale back its ambitions in Iraq, and be prepared to settle for a "friendly autocracy" there rather than a genuine democracy.

To read the full report, go to washingtonpost.com/nation

Guardian

Blair admits weapons of mass destruction may never be found

- PM shows first doubts on central reason for war
- Asked was he wrong on WMD, he says: 'I don't know'

By Sarah Hall, Richard Norton-Taylor and Julian Borger – 12 January 2004

Tony Blair yesterday signalled that weapons of mass destruction may never be found in Iraq, in his first admission of fallibility over the central justification he gave for going to war with Iraq.

In his most downbeat assessment of the contentious issue so far, the prime minister said he did not know whether WMD would be unearthed, and conceded that this flew in the face of widespread initial expectations.

"I do not know is the answer," he admitted. "I believe that we will but I agree there were many people who thought we were going to find this in the course of the actual operation ... We just have to wait and see".

The prime minister's admission - the latest shift in a gradual lowering of expectations - came in a wide-ranging interview on BBC 1's Breakfast with Frost programme.

Asked by the veteran broadcaster if the claim that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction - the basis on which he took the country to war - was wrong, he replied: "Well, you can't say that at this point in time".

He said that he had acted on intelligence on Saddam Hussein's programmes, and stressed that, throughout the conflict, the chief of defence staff, General Sir Michael Walker, had also believed this.

"The chief of defence staff and other people were saying well, we think we might have potential WMD finds here or there. Now these things didn't actually come to anything in the end - but I don't know is the answer."

Mr Blair's uncharacteristically flat response, in an interview in which he was bullish about top-up fees and the Hutton inquiry, spoke volumes about his diminishing certainty that WMD would be found. He pointedly failed to refer to the weekend discovery of 36 shells containing chemical agents in the Iraq desert north of Basra, believed to be remnants from the Iran-Iraq war.

The prime minister's admission of doubt marks a significant shift in his public stance on the weapons issue.

In September 2002, he told the Commons that "Saddam's weapons of mass destruction programme is active, detailed and growing", a stance with which he persisted as he took the nation to war in March last year.

As recently as last June, he told MPs he had "no doubt" they would "find the clearest possible evidence of Saddam's weapons of mass destruction", though he watered down this claim to "WMD programmes" the following month.

But with the Iraq Survey Group which is leading the hunt reporting in September that it had uncovered no weapons of mass destruction, he slid further, to speaking about evidence of "clandestine laboratories".

A similar erosion of confidence has been evident within the intelligence community. "There may be small quantities, and maybe not," a well-placed Whitehall official said yesterday, in stark contrast to the note struck by the joint intelligence committee and MI6 before, during and immediately after the war.

Britain's intelligence community now realise they face a huge credibility problem which could have far-reaching and damaging consequences already manifested by the widespread scepticism that greeted the decision over the new year to cancel British Airways flights to the US.

Senior Whitehall officials are now falling back on the argument that ministers, in their determination to go to war, should never have relied so much on intelligence in the first place.

Intelligence, they say, is almost always a question of assessment and judgment, and not hard facts.

That should have been clear when the government published its Iraqi weapons dossier in September 2002, they imply.

Political opponents reacted to Mr Blair's shift in ground with a mixture of bemusement and derision.

"Once again Tony Blair is hedging his bets," said the shadow foreign secretary, Michael Ancram. "The prime minister should come clean, and explain whether his previous claim to have evidence of weapons of mass destruction was yet another fabrication, and if not what that evidence was."

Paul Keetch, the Liberal Democrat defence spokesman, said it was "disingenuous" to blame intelligence reports when the prime minister had taken the decision to embark on the conflict. "Intelligence is not an exact science. But if he is now saying he's unsure whether there were WMD or not, one would have assumed that uncertainty would have been apparent at the time," he said.

The Labour backbencher Jeremy Corbyn, a fierce opponent of the war, described Mr Blair's shift in language as "ridiculous".

"Ten months ago, he told us that he was absolutely certain there were weapons of mass destruction. He's now saying ... they might not find them. This is ridiculous. We were taken to war on the basis there was a real threat."

The admission of doubt is particularly significant for Mr Blair because, unlike President George Bush, he put WMD, rather than regime change, at the centre of his justification for war.

Mr Blair must now brace himself for the Hutton report into the death of the Iraqi arms specialist Dr David Kelly, which is expected by the end of the month. Yesterday, he vowed he would not hide from any criticisms - a charge put by the Conservative leader, Michael Howard.

It would be absurd for him not to respond to the report on the day it was published, he said, though he refused to confirm he would lead the debate in the Commons a week later.

"I can assure you I have no intention of hiding away from this at all," he said. "On the contrary, I am enthusiastic about being at long last able to debate these issues on the basis of an objective, independent judgment by a judge, rather than speculation."

BBC News

Blair 'will not hide' from Hutton

12 January 2004

Tony Blair insists he has no intention of "hiding away" from the Hutton report into the death of Dr David Kelly.

He told BBC One's Breakfast with Frost he would make a statement to MPs within hours of the report's publication.

But he said no decision had been made on whether he would take part in the lengthier debate on it a week later.

Tory leader Michael Howard says it would be "inconceivable" for Mr Blair not to lead the full debate in the House of Commons.

Lord Hutton's report into the death of the government weapons expert is expected to be published within the next few weeks.

Dr Kelly was found dead, after apparently committing suicide, shortly after being named as the person the government believed was the source for a BBC Today report claiming a dossier on Iraq's illegal weapons had been "sexed up" by Downing Street.

Mr Howard wrote to Mr Blair last week asking him to confirm he would be leading the Commons debate on Hutton.

Totality

Asked by Sir David Frost about this call the prime minister said: "First of all, this is a report which is going to be concerned with issues which I personally have obviously been deeply involved so it would be quite absurd if I wasn't doing the response to the Hutton report.

"The only thing we've said about the debate a week later is that all the decisions about whether you have a vote on it, or who speaks on it, will be done at a later time.

"But I can assure you that I have no intention of hiding away from this at all, on the contrary I am enthusiastic about at long last being able to debate these issues on the basis of an objective independent judgement by a judge, rather than the speculation."

Mr Howard later said it was "absolutely extraordinary" the prime minister had failed to commit to leading the debate for the government.

"I'm afraid that if he doesn't... it will cause a lot of people to think that he's prepared to run away and that he's got something to hide."

One area of Tory attack was highlighted at prime minister's questions last Wednesday when Mr Howard asked Mr Blair if he stood by his denial to journalists shortly after Dr Kelly's death that he had authorised the naming of the weapons expert.

This was, said Mr Howard, at odds with evidence given to the Hutton inquiry. Mr Blair replied during their Commons clash that he stood by the "totality" of what he had said to the journalists.

'It's final, surely'

Asked by Sir David Frost what "totality" meant Mr Blair said: "Everything that has been said, not just taking one bit out here or there."

Mr Howard, speaking on Sky News, said: "I rather suspect that for Mr Blair totality means the bits he wants to pick out of the report, and only those bits."

Mr Blair was also asked by Frost whether Lord Hutton's judgement would be final, or whether anyone criticised in it would still be able to argue their case.

He said: "The reality is that what the judge finds will be of huge persuasive importance for the public, for parliament and I hope for the media... it's final surely."

He said he did not regret commissioning the report, saying that he hoped its publication would bring an end to speculation about Dr Kelly's death.

Liberal Democrat leader Charles Kennedy told the BBC's Westminster Hour he was not approaching the matter in the same way as the Tory leader.

Mr Kennedy said: "Obviously he wants to go for the jugular personally and politically with Tony Blair... I want to do exactly what I did during the whole build up and throughout the course of the Iraq conflict itself, which is to ask the pertinent, relevant questions and I will ask those when Lord Hutton reports. That to me seems to be the appropriate time to do it."

Associated Press

New tests under way for suspected Iraqi blister agent

12 January 2004

COPENHAGEN, Denmark - Results are expected by the end of the week from a new series of tests to determine whether 36 shells found buried in the Iraqi desert contain a liquid blister agent, the Danish army said Monday.

On Friday, Danish and Icelandic troops uncovered a cache of 120mm mortar shells, thought to be left over from the eight-year war between Iraq and neighboring Iran, which ended in 1988.

Preliminary tests on the plastic-wrapped but damaged shells showed they contained a liquid blister agent. The shells were found near Qurnah, north of the southern city of Basra, where Denmark's 410 soldiers are based.

Initial tests by field troops are designed to favor a positive reading, erring on the side of caution to protect soldiers. More sophisticated tests are often necessary.

Members of the Iraqi Survey Group, a U.S.-led group of intelligence analysts, interrogators and translators, were expected to arrive in Qurnah late Monday for more testing, said Maj. Kim Gruenberger of the Danish Army Operational Command.

Gruenberger told The Associated Press that the second round of testing could begin Tuesday.

"We hope to get results as soon as possible. A good guess is at the end of week," he said.

Before the war, the United States asserted that Iraq still had stockpiles of mustard gas, a World War I-era blister agent that is stored in liquid form. The chemical burns skin, eyes and the lungs.

U.S. intelligence officials also claimed Iraq had sarin, cyclosarin and VX, which are extremely deadly nerve agents.

In the weeks after the Iraq war, the U.S.-led coalition found several caches that tested positive for mustard gas but later turned out to contain missile fuel or other chemicals.

Other discoveries early in the U.S.-led occupation turned out to be old caches that had already been tagged by United Nations inspectors and were scheduled for destruction.

Saddam Hussein's regime used chemical weapons against Iranian soldiers during that war and killed an estimated 5,000 Kurdish civilians in a chemical attack on the northern city of Halabja in 1988.

In October, Dutch marines found several dozen artillery shells dating from the 1991 Gulf War in the southern Iraqi town of Samawah, but the shells contained no biological or chemical agents. Samawah is nearly 100 miles west of the southern region where the Danes discovered shells Saturday.

In April, U.S. troops found a dozen 55-gallon drums in an open field near the northern Iraqi town of Baiji. Preliminary tests found possible evidence of the nerve agent cyclosarin and a blister agent that could be mustard gas, but later tests found that the contents were not chemical weapons.

Houston Chronicle

Bush admits wanting new Iraqi regime before 9/11

By Patty Reinert – 13 January 2003

MONTERREY, Mexico -- President Bush acknowledged Monday that he has been in favor of regime change in Iraq since entering the White House.

But he dodged the question of whether he was plotting direct U.S. military action to take out Saddam Hussein long before Sept. 11, 2001.

"The stated policy of my administration towards Saddam Hussein was very clear. Like the previous administration, we were for regime change," Bush said. "And in the initial stages of the administration, as you might remember, we were dealing with Desert Badger, or fly-overs and fly-betweens and looks, as so we were fashioning policy along those lines. And then, all of a sudden, September the 11th hit."

The remarks were Bush's first response to criticism from former Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill, who contends in a new book that Bush was already planning to oust Saddam within days of taking office.

The former Iraqi dictator was forced into hiding when a U.S.-led coalition defied former allies to launch an invasion of the country last March. Saddam was captured late last year and is being held for trial.

Bush justified the preemptive strike by saying military action was necessary to strip the country of weapons of mass destruction. The theory was that Saddam could use the weapons himself, or they could fall into the hands of terrorists.

On Monday, Bush was asked to respond to O'Neill's allegations during a joint news conference with Mexican President Vicente Fox after the two leaders met on the fringes of the 34-nation Special Summit of the Americas.

Asked if he felt betrayed by O'Neill, Bush said, "I appreciate former Secretary O'Neill's service to our country. We worked together during some difficult times."

Bush said that after Sept. 11, the most solemn obligation of a president is to protect his people. "And I took that duty very seriously," he said.

"And as you know, not only did we deal with the Taliban ... we made it clear that Saddam Hussein should disarm. And like he had done with a lot of previous resolutions, he ignored the world's demands. And now he's no longer in power, and the world is better for it."

Bush's Democratic rivals for the White House have made claims on the campaign trail that the president had always planned to attack Iraq in revenge against Saddam, who attempted to assassinate his father, the first President Bush, in 1993.

But Bush said it was the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks along the East Coast that changed his view of his nation's security.

"September the 11th made me realize that America was no longer protected by oceans, and we had to take threats very seriously no matter where they may be materializing," he said.

Earlier in the day, White House Press Secretary Scott McClellan was asked about O'Neill's contention that the White House began discussing Saddam's ouster at the first National Security Council meeting of Bush's fledgling administration in January 2001.

McClellan didn't deny the issue was discussed. But he said the president "exhausted all possible means to resolve the situation in Iraq peacefully" before attacking.

"And the president believes, in the aftermath of September 11th, that it's important to confront threats before it's too late," McClellan said.

He added that the book, *The Price of Loyalty: George W. Bush, the White House and the Education of Paul O'Neill*, was "more about trying to justify personal views and opinions" than about looking at all Bush has achieved.

Salt Lake Tribune

The why of Iraq

13 January 2004

Colin Powell and Paul O'Neill have cast new doubt on President Bush's justifications for invading Iraq. Aside from creating new skepticism of the Bush administration, or perhaps reinforcing it, these observations have value beyond politics if they help to put to rest the misconceptions of many Americans about why the United States is in Iraq.

Secretary of State Powell acknowledged last week that he has no solid proof connecting the former government of Saddam Hussein to the al-Qaida terrorist network. "I have not seen smoking-gun, concrete evidence about the connection. But I think the possibility of such connections did exist, and it was prudent to consider them at the time that we did."

This was a stunning admission, considering that it was Powell who made the dramatic presentation to the United Nations Security Council last Feb. 5 in which the United States attempted to link Saddam to al-Qaida.

The other goal of that presentation was to illustrate how Iraq had foiled the attempts of U.N. weapons inspectors to verify that Saddam's regime did not have chemical and biological weapons. Prior to the war, the president repeatedly argued that Saddam, armed with weapons of mass destruction, was an immediate threat to the United States.

For many Americans, including us, Powell's voice was the one that convinced them of the necessity of war, partly because he had been the most cautious and skeptical member of the Bush Cabinet.

In the aftermath of the U.S. invasion, no weapons of mass destruction have been discovered in Iraq, and the United States has quietly withdrawn the team that was supposed to find them.

Within days of Powell's comments last week, CBS broadcast an interview Sunday with former Treasury Secretary O'Neill in which he said that the Bush administration was fixed on the idea of getting rid of Saddam from the day the president took office, months before the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. The question in White House policy discussions was not whether to get rid of Saddam, or why, but finding a way to do it, according to O'Neill.

These comments cast doubt on the credibility of the president and his reasons for taking the nation to war in Iraq, and by extension they cast a shadow over the goals of the American occupation.

If WMDs and al-Qaida were not valid reasons for an American invasion, we must wonder whether bringing democracy and freedom to Iraq is the real justification for the American occupation. Or is this instead an exercise in projecting American military power into the heart of the oil-rich Middle East and closer to the borders of hostile states, including Syria and Iran?

CNSNews

Australian Opposition Leader Slams Iraq War

By Patrick Goodenough – 13 January 2004

Pacific Rim Bureau (CNSNews.com) - The Iraq war and Australia's involvement in it was "a mistake," according to the leader of Australia's official opposition party, who hopes to succeed U.S. ally John Howard as prime minister.

The comment, coming at a time when the Howard government is in talks about cooperating in Washington's missile defense plans, has highlighted the importance of the U.S.-Australia relationship as an issue in Australia's election campaign expected later this year.

Mark Latham was elected leader of the opposition Labor Party last December, and opinion polls suggest that he holds a significantly better chance of ousting Howard than did the man he replaced. Nonetheless, Howard maintains a healthy lead in the polls.

In his early days as Labor leader, Latham sought to distance himself from some controversial earlier positions, including his stated view that President Bush was "the most incompetent and dangerous president in living memory."

He even held a press conference with an American flag as backdrop, to assure Australians that Labor was behind the bilateral alliance.

But he began the new political year with an attack on the decision to go to war against Iraq.

In a radio interview, Latham was questioned about former Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill's reported charge that Bush had been intent on invading Iraq before the 9/11 attacks.

Latham responded by saying he was worried that the war was executed "on a premise that hasn't been proven and hasn't been justified."

Noting that weapons of mass destruction had not been found in Iraq, he said "I think they made a mistake in going to war in Iraq. Whatever the reason or motivation was, I think it was a mistake."

From Australia's point of view, Latham argued, "we shouldn't be getting into overseas conflicts unless we've got the very best reason to do so."

The comments drew a quick response from the government.

Cabinet minister John Anderson, who is acting prime minister while Howard is on leave, said that by questioning the war, Latham was effectively saying Saddam Hussein should still be in power.

"He's also failed to notice how other rogue states have become noticeably more cooperative since the coalition's action in Iraq," a spokesman for Anderson quoted him Tuesday as saying.

Also responding on the government's behalf was Defense Minister Robert Hill, who questioned whether Latham had what it took to be prime minister.

"In making decisions on national security you don't have the benefit of hindsight. You make judgments on what's necessary to protect Australians and Australian interests on the basis of the information available at the time," Hill said.

"Latham, in his comments, doesn't demonstrate that he would be prepared to do so," he added.

Canberra is going ahead with plans to cooperate with the U.S. plans to provide a defensive shield against missiles fired by rogue states or terrorist groups.

Hill said talks were underway in Sydney Tuesday with U.S. officials, to negotiate a memorandum of understanding on Australia's involvement in the program.

He told Australian radio that the country may in the future deploy destroyers capable of shooting down incoming enemy missiles as part of the defensive shield.

At the last election, Labor's platform opposed the U.S. missile defense proposals, echoing arguments used by Russia, China and other critics that the plans had the potential to undermine non-proliferation efforts and "to trigger a new nuclear arms race."

Since his election as party leader, Latham has yet to comment specifically on Australia's planned involvement. Hill said Labor's previously voiced concerns about the program had more to do with divisions within the party than with defense matters.

If they want to act in a way that protects Australian lives in the future, they would clearly, unambiguously be part of this project," he said. "They're not prepared to do that which suggests to me that they are still deeply divided within."

'Foreign issues will be important'

In a recent Newspoll opinion poll for The Australian newspaper, 49 percent of respondents chose Howard as preferred prime minister while 28 percent named Latham (and 23 percent were undecided). The ruling coalition scored 43 percent to Labor's 37.

Although Howard's lead remains strong, Latham's figures are considerably higher than those of his predecessor, Simon Crean, who never exceeded 18 percent in his last nine months as leader.

Although domestic issues tend to dominate Australian campaigns, experts agreed Tuesday that foreign policy was likely to be more important in the 2004 election than in any previous one since the Vietnam War. During Vietnam, there were clear-cut differences between the parties over whether Australian troops should remain engaged or be brought home.

Since then, it was hard to think of one foreign issue that played a major role in an Australian election campaign, said Dr. Tim Tenbenschel of the political studies department at the University of Auckland.

This time, however, Iraq could make a difference, he said.

Dr. Ian Ward of the University of Queensland's school of political science agreed that foreign issues had not generally been important in campaigns since Vietnam, but said that in the last election, the Howard government had made an issue of "its ability to provide security in a troubled international environment." "I'd expect that in the coming campaign, it will try to essentially rerun the themes [of the last campaign] ... where it merged the question of international terrorism and the threat it posed to Australians with the more localized threat of unwanted immigrants arriving as asylum-seekers."

In the 2004 campaign, Ward said, "the international environment will have some importance. The alliance with the U.S. will be something the government will draw to the attention of the voters."

Latham's appearance with the U.S. flag last month had been an early effort to pre-empt government attacks on his stance with regard to the bilateral alliance, he said.

On the Iraq war issue, Ward said the government had by and large succeeded in sweeping aside questions about WMD - compared to the political problems facing British Prime Minister Tony Blair.

"As Howard has said, the Australian people have moved on."

The issue continued to divide the Labor Party, however.

Tenbenschel recalled that the previous Labor leader, Crean, had also ruffled U.S. feathers on Iraq, "but without saying it in so blunt a way."

He described Latham as a "higher risk" Labor leader than his predecessor, but said he also potentially offered the party a "higher payoff."

He would likely alienate some traditional Labor voters, but would pick up others, especially among the "aspirational working classes" because of his own working-class background.

Howard has yet to call a federal election, but the three-term prime minister is expected to select a date in the second half of this year. Some pundits have tipped Oct. 30 as the most likely date, which would mean Australians go to the polls just three days before their counterparts in the U.S.

Gulf Daily News

UK 'was for peaceful resolution of Iraq crisis'

13 January 2003

Britain and the US always intended the Iraq crisis to be resolved peacefully before they took their fateful decision to invade, Prime Minister Tony Blair's spokesman said yesterday.

Briefing journalists, the spokesman said Blair had no reaction to allegations that President George W Bush was intent on toppling Saddam Hussein long before the September 11 attacks.

The charge was made by former US treasury secretary Paul O'Neill in an interview with the CBS television network on Sunday.

But the spokesman added that Britain's take on the events leading up to the March invasion - that the decision to act was taken by London and Washington after diplomatic options were exhausted - was "well known".

"If you look at what happened in respect to the diplomacy, all countries were trying to resolve this through diplomatic channels," he said.

UN Security Council Resolution 1441, the last in a series ordering Iraq to abandon weapons of mass destruction and comply with UN inspections, "was the international community coming together - the UK, the US, France, Russia and others - saying, 'Here is an opportunity for this to be resolved peacefully'."

"The fact that it wasn't was Saddam Hussein's choice," he said.

O'Neill: 'Frenzy' distorted war plans account

Rumsfeld: Idea of a bias toward war 'a total misunderstanding'

14 January 2003

WASHINGTON (CNN) --Former Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill said Tuesday his account of the Bush administration's early discussions about a possible invasion of Iraq has been distorted by a "red meat frenzy." The controversy began last week when excerpts were released from a book on the administration published Tuesday in which O'Neill suggests Iraq was the focus of President Bush's first National Security Council meeting.

That started what O'Neill described to NBC's "Today" show as a "red meat frenzy that's occurred when people didn't have anything except snippets."

"People are trying to make a case that I said the president was planning war in Iraq early in the administration," O'Neill said.

"Actually, there was a continuation of work that had been going on in the Clinton administration with the notion that there needed to be regime change in Iraq."

The idea that Bush "came into office with a predisposition to invade Iraq, I think, is a total misunderstanding of the situation," Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld told reporters at the Pentagon.

Bush administration officials have noted that U.S. policy dating from the Clinton administration was to seek "regime change" in Iraq, although it focused on funding and training Iraqi opposition groups rather than using military force.

Retired Army Gen. Hugh Shelton, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said he saw nothing to indicate the United States was close to attacking Iraq early in Bush's term.

Shelton, who retired shortly after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, said the brass reviewed "on the shelf" plans to respond to crises with the incoming Bush administration.

But in the administration's first six months, "I saw nothing that would lead me to believe that we were any closer to attacking Iraq than we had been during the previous administration," Shelton told CNN.

O'Neill, former CEO of aluminum producer Alcoa, sat on the National Security Council during his 23 months as treasury secretary.

He was pushed out of the administration in December 2002 during a dispute over tax cuts and growing budget deficits, and was the primary source for author Ron Suskind's book, "The Price of Loyalty: George Bush, the White House and the Education of Paul O'Neill."

"From the start, we were building the case against Hussein and looking at how we could take him out and change Iraq into a new country," O'Neill is quoted as saying in the book.

"And, if we did that, it would solve everything. It was about finding a way to do it. That was the tone of it -- the president saying, 'Fine. Go find me a way to do this.'"

But Tuesday O'Neill said, "I'm amazed that anyone would think that our government, on a continuing basis across political administrations, doesn't do contingency planning and look at circumstances."

Several Democratic presidential candidates seized on O'Neill's comments to argue that the Bush administration misled Americans about the drive to war with Iraq, where nearly 500 American troops have been killed since March.

Democratic front-runner Howard Dean used them as a jumping-off point to attack three rivals -- Rep. Dick Gephardt and Sens. John Kerry and John Edwards -- who supported a congressional resolution authorizing Bush to act against Iraq.

"I would remind Iowans and others that a year ago, I stood up against this war and was the only one to do so of the individuals I have mentioned," said Dean, whose opposition to the war helped propel him to the top of the pack.

Bush repeated his position Monday that his administration turned to war with Iraq only after the September 11 attacks changed the way U.S. officials viewed Baghdad's suspected weapons programs.

That Iraq was a concern before that time was evident in July 2001, when national security adviser Condoleezza Rice told CNN that Saddam "is on the radar screen for the administration," and senior officials met at the White House two days later to discuss Iraq.

During the same time, Iraq began dispersing aircraft and air defense capabilities in preparation for more aggressive U.S. airstrikes to enforce the "no-fly" zones over northern and southern Iraq.

A senior administration official told CNN that early Bush administration discussions regarding Iraq reviewed existing policies and plans.

Officials were particularly concerned with enforcement of the "no-fly" zones, where Iraqi air defense forces had been taking potshots at U.S. and British warplanes since late 1998.

Rumsfeld said Tuesday that Iraq was the only place in the world where U.S. forces were being fired upon "with impunity," and "clearing it was something that needed to be addressed."

Richard Perle, a leading advocate of war with Iraq and a member of the independent Defense Advisory Board that advises Rumsfeld, told CNN the review was still under way when the September 11 attacks occurred.

Guardian

Hutton report out on January 28

By Matthew Tempest – 15 January 2004

The Hutton report into the death of David Kelly will finally be published on Wednesday January 28.

Confirmation of the long-delayed report's date came today from the Department of Constitutional Affairs, and means it comes just the day after Tony Blair faces rebels over the tuition fees vote.

Lord Hutton's report was originally expected in November, then December, then the "new year", and now confirmed for January 28.

After those lengthy delays, it was announced today that publication would be on the Wednesday - the same day as PMQs.

Lord Hutton will also broadcast a live television address from Court 73 of the Royal Courts of Justice summarising his conclusions.

The relevant parties to the report - the government, the BBC, Dr Kelly's family, the Speaker's counsel, Andrew Gilligan and Susan Watts - will have 24 hours notice of the report.

The complex logistics of publication mean that Lord Hutton's report will actually go to the printers on January 19.

BBC sources have already been quick to insist that they will not pass their advance copy on to their news-gathering teams, but keep the report within its legal team and top brass.

Parties will be required to sign an undertaking not to reveal the contents of the report before publication.

The report will also be available simultaneously on the Hutton website, inevitably making it one of the web's biggest destinations on that day.

A publication date for Lord Hutton's report has become one of the biggest subjects of Chinese whispers in Westminster, with various dates being mooted. The most popular had been January 12.

Lord Hutton, who began hearing witnesses in the first week of August last year, had originally hoped to publish his report in November.

The delayed second interview of MoD permanent secretary Sir Kevin Tebbit helped postpone that target, plus Lord Hutton's own determination to write a comprehensive report.

It is rumoured to be over 1,000 pages long, creating a major dilemma for the opposition and news agencies alike attempting to hold the government to account on the day.

Government plans for the publication are still to be confirmed with the Speaker and the leader of the Commons, but the probable scenario is a statement followed by questions led by the prime minister on the day, then a debate the week following.

So far the prime minister has only promised to appear at the start of the debate, while the Conservatives are pressing him to pledge he will stay for the entire occasion.

That still leaves the question of the defence secretary, Geoff Hoon, who many have predicted will be made to fall on his sword if there is criticism of the way the MoD handled Dr Kelly's welfare.

Michael Howard, the Tory leader, has made it clear he will be pressing for the prime minister's resignation if there is any evidence in the report to contradict Mr Blair's assertion to reporters on a plane that it was "absolutely untrue" he had anything to do with the leaking of Dr Kelly's name.

However, the timing of the two events - the top-up fees vote and the Hutton report - so close together may mean some rebels back away from damaging Mr Blair just 24 hours or less before he may be mortally wounded by the conclusions of Lord Hutton.

• Bookmakers today put the odds of Tony Blair quitting within days of the publication of the Hutton report at 20/1.

William Hill has offered those odds on the prime minister losing his job on or before January 31 - three days after the report comes out.

It has also cut the odds on the Tories winning the next election from 11/4 to 5/2.

And it has lengthened the odds of Labour holding on to power from 1/4 to 2/7. The Liberal Democrats are at 50/1.

A spokesman for the firm said: "We have changed the odds due to a combination of things - the publication of the report and the top-up fees row."

Radio Free Europe

Iraq: U.S. Senator Accuses Bush Of Waging War For Political Gain

By Jeffrey Donovan – 15 January 2004

In keeping with the passions of an election year, Senator Edward Kennedy launched a major attack on U.S. President George W. Bush yesterday, accusing him of duping Americans into backing the Iraq war and using it for political gain.

A veteran Democratic leader in Congress and brother of the slain former U.S. president, Kennedy laid out his indictment of Bush's Iraq policies in a speech to a new liberal think tank in Washington -- the Center for American Progress.

Kennedy said Bush was recently asked whether former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein really had weapons of mass destruction -- the main reason cited for going to war -- or only the possibility of acquiring them.

"President Bush answered: 'So what's the difference?' The difference, Mr. President, is whether you go to war or not. No president of the United States should employ misguided ideology, distortions of the truth, to take the nation to war. In doing so, the president broke the basic bond of trust between government and the people. If Congress and the American people knew the whole truth, America would never have gone to war."

Kennedy said the president capitalized on fears from the September 2001 attacks to deceive Americans and justify a war that -- in his words -- could become one of the worst foreign-policy blunders in U.S. history. Almost 500 U.S. soldiers have been killed in Iraq since the war began last March.

Kennedy, a senator from Massachusetts since 1962, said the war was a "political product" marketed by the Bush administration to win mid-term elections in 2002 and presidential, congressional, and gubernatorial elections in November. Kennedy said none of the administration's prewar assessments of the Iraqi threat has so far been proven true. These include assertions that Iraq possessed stockpiles of biological and chemical weapons of mass destruction, that it was trying to produce nuclear weapons, and that Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein had ties to Osama bin Laden's Al-Qaeda terrorist network, blamed for the September 2001 terrorist attacks on America.

As a result of the U.S. focus on Iraq, Kennedy said that bin Laden and his network were allowed to regroup after being knocked down in the war against the Taliban in Afghanistan. "The war has made America more hated in the world, especially in the Islamic world. And it has made our people more vulnerable to attack, both here and overseas." Kennedy also praised former Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill, who earlier this week asserted in comments made in a book about the administration that Bush had begun planning for regime change in Iraq long before the 2001 terrorist attacks.

The administration has denounced suggestions that the war was planned long before the terrorist attacks. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld has said that Bush made the decision to go to war in March 2003 "after trying everything else in the world." White House spokesman Scott McClellan, asked about Kennedy's criticism at a briefing yesterday, replied, "I think the case that we outlined was very clear. Let me remind you that the world is safer and better because of the action that we took to remove a brutal regime from power in Iraq. The president worked to exhaust all diplomatic means possible before taking the action that we took."

But Kennedy said Bush and what he called Bush's "axis of war" -- Vice President Dick Cheney, Rumsfeld, and Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz -- turned their focus on Iraq to divide Congress, distract Americans from the poor economy, and win votes. He said new U.S. plans to turn control over to the Iraqi people this summer are now "intended to build momentum for the November elections."

U.S. House of Representatives Majority Leader Tom DeLay, a Texas Republican like the president, called Kennedy's speech a "hateful attack" that "insulted the president's patriotism."

Reuters

Lawmaker Says Intelligence Wrong on Iraq WMD

By Tabassum Zakaria - 16 January 2004

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - Pre-war U.S. intelligence assessments were wrong about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction and President Bush should offer fixes in his State of the Union speech, the senior Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee said on Friday.

Rep. Jane Harman of California said there were good reasons to support regime change in Baghdad, but better intelligence on Iraq could have allowed more time for diplomacy and to build international support for military action.

"But if 9/11 was a failure to connect the dots, it appears that the intelligence community, in the case of Iraq's WMD, connected the dots to the wrong conclusions," Harman said in a speech to the Los Angeles World Affairs Council, a copy of which was released here.

Democrats have started the election year by criticizing the Republican White House for justifying the war against Iraq on threats from chemical, biological and nuclear weapons programs, when no solid evidence of such arms has been found.

"The president should lead the effort to improve his intelligence on weapons of mass destruction and terrorism. I urge him in his State of the Union address next Tuesday to acknowledge the problems and outline specific steps to fix them," Harman said.

If David Kay, chief U.S. weapons hunter in Iraq, does not return to his post it will be seen by critics as a sign that the search for banned weapons was not expected to find anything significant. Kay has told CIA Director George Tenet that he does not want to return to Iraq, a U.S. government source told Reuters.

"I doubt there would be discussions of David Kay's possible departure if the Iraq Survey Group were on the verge of uncovering large stockpiles of weapons," Harman said.

She criticized a pre-war report, the October 2002 National Intelligence Estimate on Iraq, as a "significantly flawed document" for its assessment that Iraq possessed chemical and biological weapons, and was reconstituting its nuclear weapons program.

"These were centerpieces of the NIE and of the case for war and it appears likely that both were wrong," Harman said.

Stuart Cohen, vice chairman of the National Intelligence Council which produced that report, has defended the estimate as "well-grounded" and based on 15 years of information. He has argued that the hunt for banned weapons should continue.

CNN

Danish army: Iraqi shells WMD-free

18 January 2004

COPENHAGEN, Denmark --Mortar shells found in Iraq and believed to be suspicious in fact contained no chemical agents, the Danish army said after a week of tests.

The 36 shells, found 20 kilometers (12 miles) north of the city of Qurnah in southern Iraq on January 9, had initially been thought by Danish and British troops to contain a blister agent.

But further tests carried out in southern Iraq and the United States were negative, the Danish army said in a statement on Sunday, The Associated Press reported.

It was unclear why the initial field tests were wrong, the Danish army said from its headquarters in Karup, 265 km northwest of Copenhagen.

"The Danish Army Operational Command will now investigate what could be the cause to this," the statement said. It added that the testing kits would be sent to Denmark for examination.

U.S. Army officials had said the 120 mm shells, which are at least 10 years old, was surplus from the Iran-Iraq war in the mid-1980s. Blister agents are used in chemical weapons.

Several hundred Danish soldiers are working with a British-led multinational force responsible for security in southern Iraq.

Both the U.S. and British governments cited the threat of illicit weapons of mass destruction as a main reason for launching the Iraq war. However, no such weapons have been found so far.

The U.S. pulled 400 weapons-disposal experts from Iraq this month in what The New York Times called "a sign that [the] administration might have lowered its sights." The move raised suspicions that weapons are unlikely to be found.

The White House played down the move, saying the group focused on hunting weapons was remaining in Iraq.

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 toegang 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)

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)

KRONIEK 2004

januari	Lord Robertson vertrekt als Secretaris-Generaal van de NAVO
1 januari	Ierland neemt voorzitterschap EU over
1 januari	Einde Nederlands voorzitterschap OVSE
1 januari	Verenigde Staten nemen voorzitterschap G8 over
20 januari - 26 maart	Eerste sessie Conference on Disarmament, Geneve
21-25 januari	World Economic Forum, Davos
6-7 februari	Annual Munich Security Conference, München
20 februari	Parlementsverkiezingen Iran
27 februari	Bezoek Schröder aan Washington
maart	Parlementsverkiezingen Spanje
1 maart	Ministeriële bijeenkomst VS-EU, Washington
8 maart	IAEA Board of Governors Meeting, Wenen
14 maart	Presidentsverkiezingen Rusland
april	Parlementsverkiezingen Zuid-Korea
5-23 april	UN Disarmament Commission, jaarlijkse bijeenkomst, New York
15 april	Parlementsverkiezingen Zuid-Korea
26 april – 7 mei	NPT PrepCom, New York
mei	Bijeenkomst Chemical Weapons Convention, Den Haag
1 mei	Toetreding diverse landen tot de Europese Unie
10 mei -25 juni	Tweede sessie Conference on Disarmament, Geneve
juni	Verkiezingen Europees Parlement
juni	Parlementsverkiezingen Japan
8-10 juni	G-8 Summit, Sea Island, Georgia
28-29 juni	NAVO-top, Istanbul
1 juli	Nederland neemt voorzitterschap EU over
19-30 juli	Biological Weapons Convention, expert meeting, Geneve
september	Start Algemene Vergadering Verenigde Naties, New York
26 juli – 10 september	Derde sessie Conference on Disarmament, Geneve
13 september	IAEA Board of Governors Meeting, Wenen
20-24 september	IAEA General Conference, Wenen
27 september	IAEA Board of Governors Meeting, Wenen
2 november	Presidentsverkiezingen Verenigde Staten
25 november	IAEA Board of Governors Meeting, Wenen
6-10 december	Jaarlijkse bijeenkomst Biological Weapons Convention, Geneve

FACTS AND REPORTS

Eerder verschenen in de reeks PENN – NL Facts and Reports:

1. US unilateralism – official foreign comments
2. Veiligheidsvraagstukken en de verkiezingen – standpunten van de politieke partijen
Relevante delen van de partijprogramma's van de Nederlandse politieke partijen, plus citaten van politici op het terrein van oorlog en vrede.
3. Transatlantic relations – recent developments
Overzicht van recente ontwikkelingen in de transatlantische betrekkingen, met name binnen de NAVO, mede naar aanleiding van uitspraken in de State of the Union.
4. Ontwikkelingen betreffende kernwapens en de Nederlandse politiek – briefing paper
Periodiek overzicht van ontwikkelingen rond kernwapens in de internationale en nationale politiek, met uitgebreide hoeveelheid bijlagen.
5. Nucleaire vraagstukken – standpunten van de Nederlandse regering en de Tweede Kamer
Overzicht april 2001 – april 2002
6. Crisis in de OPCW – de verwijdering van directeur-generaal Bustani
Documenten en artikelen over het ontslag van directeur-generaal Bustani van het OPCW
7. Prepcom van het NPV – nucleaire ontwapening stopt
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10. Konfrontatie in Zuid-Azië – de kernwapenwedloop tussen India en Pakistan
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12. Amerikaans unilateralisme II – officiële reacties
Citaten van internationale politici, diplomaten en NGO's over het Amerikaans unilateralisme.
13. Aanval op Irak – de kwestie van de massavernietigingswapens; feiten, documenten en overwegingen
14. Aanval op Irak (2) – recente ontwikkelingen
15. Documenten First Committee Verenigde Naties 2002 – resoluties, verklaringen, rapporten
16. De NAVO-top in Praag – documenten
17. Aanval op Irak (3) – het inspectieregim
18. Internationaal veiligheidsbeleid Verenigde Staten – officiële documenten en reacties van de Nederlandse regering
19. Veiligheidsvraagstukken en de verkiezingen (2) – standpunten van de politieke partijen
Een update voor de verkiezingen van 22 januari 2003
20. Korea, de tweede crisis
21. Aanval op Irak (4) – de aanloop
22. Aanval op Irak (5) – vooravond van de aanval
23. De andere crises
Informatie over het Amerikaans nucleair beleid, missile defense, de Conference on Disarmament en de recente ontwikkelingen rond Noord-Korea, Iran en India en Pakistan.
24. Aanval op Irak (6) – de slachtoffers
25. Nucleaire vraagstukken (2) – standpunten van de Nederlandse regering en de Tweede Kamer en recent nieuws nucleair beleid Verenigde Staten - Overzicht april 2002 – mei 2003
26. Teststopverdrag Artikel XIV Conferentie – de kwestie van de Amerikaanse minikernwapens
27. G-8 en Proliferation Security Initiative – stappen naar unilaterale contra-proliferatie
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