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Part One: The Script for the Lead-Up to War



Lies and the Spreading of Fake Information - Photo by Kentoh

Twenty years ago this month, America was led into a \$5 trillion war. It cost the lives of more than a million Iraqis and thousands of U.S. soldiers. The Iraq War was based on the transparent lies of leaders whose judgment was hijacked by neoconservative ideologues. The neocons see America as the center of the universe, from which we must rule the world and seize its resources. When that is one's starting point, diplomacy is archaic.

Events after 9/11 were deliberately twisted by the mad martinets of the Project for the New American Century, those monomaniacal specimens locked in the amber of a Post WWII,

unipolar era.

It was those same neocons who impressed upon us their preconceived but instrumental narrative that Iraq's Saddam Hussein (who had nothing to do with 9/11) was the great evil in the world, requiring he and his nation be destroyed.

Once accomplished, the neocons leapt over the wreckage they have created. On to the next conjured enemy. Empire, always empire: Bleed Russia, using the brave Ukrainians as a pawn, then pivot to China, war in no less than three years!

The western media, with few exceptions (Pentagon Papers and Watergate), have been dutiful spear-carriers for the U.S. government. Those who raised questions about the perilous path in Iraq 20 years ago were condemned as useful idiots, censored and cancelled. It is happening again, this time with the lock-step march toward war with China. Ukraine is being sold out. It has never been about freedom. It has been about controlling an energy market.

Post-hoc analysis of war is always painful. *"If I only knew then what I know now, I would not have supported the war"*, is a favorite apologia of some of the more stalwart supporters of invading Iraq. I was a member of the United States Congress from 1997-2013. Over a period of a dozen years, I delivered at least 341 speeches on the floor of the House in opposition to the Iraq war, which I saw as a criminal misuse of power. I knew then and I know now.

Just as we ignored diplomacy in Iraq, America has refused diplomacy that could have prevented bloodshed in Ukraine, choosing instead to pursue a geopolitical fantasy of deposing Putin with the help of Europe.

The U.S. is escalating with Russia at this writing, as a U.S. drone and a Russian fighter jet collided above the Black Sea. The U.S. has been practicing missile launches in the direction of St. Petersburg, sending B-52s over the Baltics towards Russia. Simultaneously the U.S. ratchets up aggression against China, as we threaten to make Taiwan our next Ukraine.

Iraq stands as an important tale of U.S. government arrogance, deception and depravity and the increased danger when there is a media buy-in. The cavalcade of Iraq chaos recited in the timeline below, demonstrates that the perils of prevarication are extreme and the consequences earth shattering.

Please tell me it can't happen again...!

Twenty years ago, America descended into war, pronouncement by pronouncement. Read the words below, and the certainty with which those who took us to war expressed themselves as they led us blindly into a maelstrom of deceit and mass murder rocking the cradle of civilization. Tell me it can't happen again.

In the days following the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, as intelligence agencies stumbled and dissembled in often chaotic private briefings with members of Congress, I heard rumors around Capitol Hill that Iraq was going to be made to pay the price for the attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Iraq? What did Iraq have to do with 9/11? Nothing. But it had everything to do with dying embers of a unipolar world.

Through the following year, the highest U.S. administrative officials made concerted efforts to conflate Iraq with 9/11 and to make claims that were unsubstantiated or and even rejected by intelligence agencies.

This timeline and quotes are by no means complete. But they are characteristic of the much-publicized accusations made against Iraq that led to the March 19, 2003 United States attack on that nation and its people.

Read this and weep, not just for the Iraqi people, but for our own children and grandchildren:

1/29/02: [States such as Iraq, Iran and North Korea] *"and their terrorist allies constitute an Axis of Evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world, by seeking weapons of mass destruction. These regimes pose a grave and growing danger*

.” --President Bush, State of the Union address.

2/2/02: “*His [Saddam Hussein’s] regime has had high-level contacts with al Qaeda going back a decade and has provided training to al Qaeda terrorists.*” -- Vice President Cheney, Speech to Air National Guard Senior Leadership.

3/17/02: “*We know they [Iraqis] have biological and chemical weapons.*” -- Vice President Cheney, Press Conference with Crown Prince of Bahrain.

3/19/02: “*...and we know they are pursuing nuclear weapons.*” -- Vice President Cheney, Press Briefing with Israeli Prime Minister Sharon in Israel.

3/24/02: “*He [Hussein] is actively pursuing nuclear weapons at this time...*” -- Vice President Cheney, CNN Late Edition.

3/24/02: “*The notion of a Saddam Hussein with his great oil wealth, with his inventory that he already has of biological and chemical weapons... is I think, a frightening proposition for anybody who thinks about it*” -- Vice President Cheney on CBS’ Face the Nation.

5/19/02: “*We know he’s got chemicals and biological (sic) and we know he’s working on nuclear*” -- Vice President Cheney, NBC’s Meet the Press.

8/26/02: “*We know that Saddam has resumed his efforts to acquire nuclear weapons...Simply stated, there is no doubt that Saddam Hussein has weapons of mass destruction. He is amassing them to use against our friends, our enemies and against us*” -- Vice President Cheney to the VFW 103rd Convention.

9/8/02: “*We know he has the infrastructure, nuclear scientists to make a nuclear weapon...*

The problem here is that there will always be some uncertainty about how quickly he can acquire nuclear weapons. But we don't want the smoking gun to be a mushroom cloud.
" -- President Bush's National Security Adviser, Dr. Condoleeza Rice. CNN with Wolf Blitzer.

9/8/02: *"...he [Saddam Hussein] has indeed stepped up his capacity to produce and deliver biological weapons, that he has reconstituted his nuclear program to develop a nuclear weapon, that there are efforts under way inside Iraq to significantly expand his capability ."* -- Vice President Cheney, NBC Meet the Press.

9/8/02: *"He is, in fact, actively and aggressively seeking to acquire nuclear weapons."* -- Vice President Cheney, NBC Meet the Press.

9/12/02: *"Saddam Hussein's regime is a grave and gathering danger. To suggest otherwise is to hope against the evidence ."* -- President Bush to UN General Assembly.

9/16/02: *"Iraq continues to defy us and the world, we will move deliberately, yet decisively, to hold Iraq to account"* -- President Bush, speech in Iowa.

9/19/02: No *"terrorist state poses a greater or more immediate threat to the security of our people than the regime of Saddam Hussein and Iraq."* -- Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, Statement to Congress.

9/28/02: *"We've learned that Iraq has trained al Queda members in bomb-making and poisons and deadly gases ."* --President Bush, Weekly Radio Address to the Nation.

10/2/02: *"The regime has the scientists and facilities to build nuclear weapons, and is seeking the materials needed to do so ."* -- President Bush from the White House.

10/5/02: *"In defiance of the United Nations, Iraq has stockpiled biological and chemical weapons, and is rebuilding the facilities used to make more of those weapons. "* --

President Bush speech.

Early on October 2, 2002, President Bush, surrounded by leaders of both political parties, including Democratic Leader Richard Gephardt, a future presidential candidate, announced White House-prepared legislation to be brought to Congress entitled “Authorization for the Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution of 2002.” (Also known as the Iraq War resolution.)

When I first read the text of the Iraq War Resolution, I was incredulous.

So, *this* was the factual narrative the White House intended to pursue to attempt to persuade Congress to authorize a military attack on Iraq?

I immediately went to work, dissecting the claims made in the war resolution, quickly reviewing massive notebooks I had prepared since 9/11, jammed with internal congressional reports, private notes written after intelligence briefings, media accounts, and even reports from Iraq arms inspectors. I saw no evidence from the National Intelligence Estimate, the Central Intelligence Agency or the Defense Intelligence Agency that Iraq posed the kind of threat the Bush Administration was projecting.

The truth was, no matter what the Bush Administration and Congressional leaders said, Iraq had nothing to do with 9/11. Iraq had nothing to do with al Qaeda’s role. Iraq did not have the intention to attack the United States. Iraq, with a military budget about 1% of the U.S. Pentagon expenditures, did not have the capability to attack our nation. Most significantly, it was fairly easy to determine that there was absolutely no proof that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) and, as such, was not preparing to use them against our nation.

I wrote a report on my congressional letterhead categorically discounting the Iraq Resolution’s cause of war, and, on October 2, 2002, I went to the floor of the House of Representatives and, through the next week, personally placed my analysis in the hands of about 250 members of the House, of both the Democrat and Republican parties, with a request that it be read before the vote.

Despite my efforts and that of several of my colleagues in the House, the legislation passed the House on October 10, 2002, by a vote of 296-133. Most significantly, an overwhelming number of Democrats voted against going to war in Iraq, 126 nays to 81 yeas. Fully 60% of House Democrats rejected the war. Only six Republicans, including Ron Paul voted “no.” Bernie Sanders, Independent, also voted “no.”

House Democratic Whip, Nancy Pelosi voted “no,” having issued a statement that included these telling lines: *“Because I do not believe we have exhausted all diplomatic remedies, I cannot support the Administration’s resolution regarding the use of force in Iraq*

.”

Late that evening, the US Senate approved the Iraq War Resolution by a vote of 77-23, with all Republicans voting “yes.” Noteworthy Democratic votes for the Iraq War Resolution included Senators Biden, Clinton, Dodd, Edwards, Harkin and Kerry, all of whom were past or future presidential candidates. Those senators voting “no” included Feingold and Wellstone as well as one-time presidential candidates Graham and Ted Kennedy, with whom I worked closely during the run-up to the vote.

On October 16, 2002, flanked by Secretary of State Powell and Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, President Bush signed the resolution into law, with then senator and future president, Joe Biden, standing close by.

Thus as the United States began preparing to use the full might of its military against Iraq, a horrific realization settled into my heart that the lives of millions of innocent Iraqis were being put at risk, based on fiction promoted by the White House, proliferated by the media and swallowed whole by most congressional leaders. America’s sons and daughters were going to be sent abroad to kill or be killed in pursuit of a mission that was not supported by intelligence agencies and despite easily ascertainable facts and common sense.

After Congress passed the Iraq War Resolution, the Administration accelerated its effort to cement public approval and international participation in the coming war, focusing on a narrative that Iraq was obtaining uranium for enrichment, preliminary to the building of a nuclear weapon.

10/30/02: "...but the danger is so great, with respect to Saddam Hussein having weapons of mass destruction and perhaps terrorists getting hold of such weapons that the President is prepared to act with likeminded nations. " -- Secretary of State Colin Powell, interview with Ellen Ratner, Talk Radio News.

11/20/02: "Today the world is also uniting to answer the unique and urgent threat posed by Iraq. A dictator who has used weapons of mass destruction on his own people must not be allowed to produce or possess those weapons. We will not permit Saddam Hussein to blackmail and/or terrorize nations which love freedom ." -- President Bush to Prague Atlantic Student Summit.

1/20/03: "The [Iraqi] report also failed to deal with issues which have arisen since 1998, including attempts to acquire uranium and the means to enrich it ." --President Bush, letter to Vice President Cheney and the Senate.

1/28/03: "The British Government has learned that Saddam Hussein recently sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa.....Our intelligence sources tell us that he has attempted to purchase high-strength aluminum tubes suitable for nuclear weapons production.... [Saddam Hussein]...could provide one of his hidden weapons to terrorists, or help them develop their own..." -- President Bush, State of the Union Address.

2/5/03: "Every statement I make today is backed up by sources, solid sources. These are not assertions. What we are giving you are facts and conclusions based on solid intelligence... Most US experts think [these tubes] are intended to serve as rotors in centrifuges used to enrich uranium..." -- Secretary of State Colin Powell to the United Nations.

2/5/03: "But the risk of doing nothing, the risk of the security of this country being jeopardized at the hands of a madman with weapons of mass destruction far exceeds the risk of any action we may be forced to take. " -- President Bush to the National Economic Council at the White house.

2/6/03: "All the world has now seen the footage of an Iraqi Mirage aircraft with a fuel tank modified to spray biological agents over wide areas... A UAV launched from a vessel off the American coast could reach hundreds of miles inland ." --President Bush, Statement

from the White House.

3/6/03: *"With every step the Iraqi regime takes toward gaining and deploying the most terrible weapons, our own options to confront that regime will narrow. And if an emboldened regime were to supply these weapons to terrorist allies, then the attacks of September 11th would be a prelude to far greater horrors.*

" -- President Bush, Statement in National Press Conference.

3/16/03: *"We believe he [Saddam Hussein] has, in fact, reconstituted nuclear weapons."* -- Vice President Cheney, Meet the Press.

3/18/03: *"Reliance by the United States on further diplomatic and other peaceful means alone with neither (A) protect the national security of the United States against the continuing threat posed by Iraq nor (B) likely lead to enforcement of all relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions regarding Iraq..."* -- President Bush letter to Congress.

3/21/03: *"I directed U.S. Armed Forces, operating with other coalition forces, to commence combat operations on March 19, 2003."* -- President Bush, in a letter to Congress.