



Written by [Dennis Behrendt](#) on July 6, 2008

Did We Get Lied Into War?

The chairman of the committee, Senator John D. Rockefeller IV (D-W.Va.), noted in a statement accompanying the report: “The president and his advisers undertook a relentless public campaign in the aftermath of the attacks to use the war against Al Qaeda as a justification for overthrowing Saddam Hussein.”



The committee’s minority leader, Sen. Christopher S. Bond (R-Mo.), and three of his Republican colleagues disagreed with the majority conclusion. Committee Vice-chairman Bond and Republicans Saxby Chambliss, Orrin Hatch, and Richard Burr signed a “minority views” statement that did not dispute the reality that “after-the-fact,” postwar evidence indicated that the decision to go to war in Iraq was based on faulty information. However, they accused the majority that produced the report of having a partisan agenda, which — despite the benefits derived from making this information available to the American public — is possible. And they also correctly pointed out that some Democrats also made statements back in 2002 charging that Saddam Hussein was aggressively trying to build a stockpile of weapons of mass destruction.

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In determining if the Bush administration was culpable of publicly twisting the intelligence to suit its ends, it is helpful to start with the report’s own definitions of its scope and methodology. It notes that its scope (quoting from the original 2004 unanimous committee agreement) is to assess “whether public statements and reports and testimony regarding Iraq by U.S. Government officials made between the Gulf War period and the commencement of Operation Iraqi Freedom were substantiated by intelligence information.”

The committee focused especially on five key speeches made by administration officials concerning “the threats posed by Iraq, Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, Iraqi ties to terrorist groups, and possible consequences of a US invasion of Iraq.”

The committee also noted that it selected statements from those five speeches pertaining to eight categories: nuclear weapons, biological weapons, chemical weapons, weapons of mass destruction,



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methods of delivery, links to terrorism, regime intent, and assessments about the postwar situation in Iraq. The report is very repetitious and includes a section for WMDs, though the report itself says WMDs commonly refers collectively to “nuclear, biological and chemical weapons.” Here is a sampling of quotes by members of the Bush administration and the report’s conclusions as to the truthfulness of the statements:

Nuclear Weapons

- “Iraq has made several attempts to buy high-strength aluminum tubes used to enrich uranium for a nuclear weapon. Should Iraq acquire fissile material, it would be able to build a nuclear weapon within a year.” (Bush, September 12, 2002)
- “We have no indication that Saddam Hussein has ever abandoned his nuclear weapons program. On the contrary, we have more than a decade of proof that he remains determined to acquire nuclear weapons.” (Powell, February 5, 2003)

Regarding the above and many other administration statements, the committee report concluded: “Statements ... regarding a possible Iraqi nuclear weapons program were *generally substantiated by intelligence community estimates*, but did not convey the *substantial disagreements* that existed in the intelligence community.” (Emphasis added throughout article.)

The committee also noted that after the United States invaded Iraq, “Postwar findings revealed that Iraq ended its nuclear weapons program in 1991, and that Iraq’s ability to reconstitute a nuclear weapons program progressively declined after that date.” While these “postwar findings” are not relevant in a discussion of what the Bush administration knew before the war, they nevertheless highlight the gap between the Bush administration’s prewar assertions and the reality of the situation.

Biological Weapons

- “The Iraqi regime ... possesses and produces chemical and biological weapons.” (Bush, October 7, 2002)
- “From three Iraqi defectors we know that Iraq, in the late 1990s, had several mobile biological weapons labs. These are designed to produce germ warfare agents, and can be moved from place to place to evade inspections. Saddam Hussein has not disclosed these facilities. He’s given no evidence that he has destroyed them.” (Bush, January 28, 2003)

The committee report’s conclusion noted: “Statements in the major speeches analyzed, as well as additional statements, regarding Iraq’s possession of biological agent, weapons, production capability, and use of mobile biological laboratories were *substantiated by intelligence information*.”

Again, however, the committee concluded: “The postwar review by the Iraq Survey Group (ISG) determined that Iraq was *not* conducting biological weapons production or research after 1996.”

Chemical Weapons

- “United Nations’ inspections also revealed that Iraq likely maintains stockpiles of VX, mustard and other chemical agents, and that the regime is rebuilding and expanding facilities capable of producing chemical weapons.” (Bush September 12, 2002)

The committee’s conclusions initially related that statements by the administration “regarding Iraq’s possession of chemical weapons were *substantiated by intelligence information*.” But then it added: “Statements ... regarding Iraq’s chemical weapons production capability and activities *did not reflect*



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the intelligence community's uncertainties as to whether such production was ongoing."

The committee's "postwar findings" once more contradict prewar administration allegations, finding: "The Iraq Survey Group conducted its review of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction programs and found that there 'were no caches of CW munitions.'"

Links to Terrorism

- "Evidence from intelligence sources, secret communications, and statements made by people now in custody reveal that Saddam Hussein aids and protects terrorists, including members of al Qaeda." (Bush, January 28, 2003)

The report concluded: "Statements ... regarding *Iraq's support for terrorist groups other than al-Qa'ida were substantiated by intelligence information.... Statements and implications ... suggesting that Iraq and al-Qa'ida had a partnership, or that Iraq had provided al-Qa'ida with weapons training, were not substantiated by the intelligence....* Statements ... regarding Iraq's contacts with al-Qa'ida were substantiated.... However, policymakers' statements did not accurately convey the intelligence assessments of the nature of these contacts, and left the impression that the contacts led to substantive Iraqi cooperation or support of al-Qa'ida."

The committee's "postwar findings" statement noted: "Postwar findings indicate that Saddam Hussein was distrustful of al-Qa'ida and viewed Islamic extremists as a threat to his regime, and refused all requests from al-Qa'ida to provide material or operational support. No postwar information indicates that Saddam ever considered using any terrorist group to attack the United States."

There are many more revealing statements in the report that space does not allow us to include. However, readers can find the Senate Intelligence Committee's complete report at <http://intelligence.senate.gov/> under the "Publications" section.



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