



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on May 11, 2015

Jeb Bush Said He Would Have Authorized the Iraq Invasion, Too

Jeb Bush (shown) said he would have authorized the 2003 invasion of Iraq that his brother, President George W. Bush, ordered, with authorization from Congress. Bush made that unsurprising but revealing comment in an interview on *The Kelly File* on Fox News Monday night. Fox News published [excerpts of it](#) on its website Sunday.



“Knowing what we know now, would you have authorized the invasion?” host Megyn Kelly asked the former Florida governor and yet-undeclared candidate for the 2016 Republican presidential nomination.

“I would have,” Bush replied, “and so would have Hillary Clinton, just to remind everybody, and so would have almost everybody who was confronted with the intelligence they got.”

“You don’t think it was a mistake?” Kelly asked.

Jeb said there mistakes made in the war itself, adding that his brother had acknowledged as much: “By the way guess who thinks those mistakes took place as well. George W. Bush,” he said.

Jeb referenced Hillary Clinton’s vote in favor of authorization in October of 2002, when the former First Lady was a United States senator from New York. Clinton, who later served as secretary of state during President Obama’s first term, has declared her candidacy for president and is considered the likely Democratic nominee.

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During her campaign for president in 2008, Clinton refused to concede that her vote in favor of war in Iraq was a mistake, a stand that many consider a decisive factor in her defeat by then-Senator Barack Obama in a closely fought battle for their party’s presidential nomination. In her current campaign she has expressed regret for that vote. But Bush obviously believes her vote will shield him from criticism for supporting his brother’s Iraq invasion should the two become the finalists facing voters in the general election in 2016. The war, which initially enjoyed strong public approval, became unpopular in a few years and contributed to the Republicans’ loss of Congress in 2006 and the presidency in 2008.

In the Fox News interview, Bush demonstrated the political art of evasion by responding to, without answering, direct questions. Or perhaps, in his rush to justify his brother’s war and to remind everyone of Clinton’s support for it, he didn’t listen to the questions. “Knowing what we know now,” was the premise in Kelly’s query, which was not about what Bush would have done, based on “the intelligence they got” at the time. And the follow up question was whether the decision to invade was a mistake, not whether mistakes were made in the prosecution of the war — as they are in every war.

Surely, Bush could not have meant he would have authorized the Iraq War even knowing that no



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“weapons of mass destruction” would be found, that the “regime” change that removed Saddam Hussein from power would result in a civil war that left more than 4,400 Americans dead and more than 32,000 wounded and claim the lives of hundreds of thousands of Iraqis, while making refugees of millions more. He couldn’t mean that bringing a Shiite government to power in Baghdad, drawing Iraq closer to the Shiite regime in neighboring Iran, was a good idea or that creating the power vacuum that opened the door to the influx of al-Qaeda and, later, the rise of ISIS, made it all worthwhile. Not to mention the trillion dollars or more the war has cost so far. He could not mean all that, could he?

Well, maybe he could. In August of 2004, Senator John Kerry, then the Democratic nominee for president and now the secretary of state, was asked if, knowing what he then knew, he would again vote to authorize George W. Bush’s invasion of Iraq. Kerry [said](#) he would because it was “the right authority for the president to have.”

It’s hard to imagine how anyone, even an Ivy League-educated United States senator with a Boston College law degree, could be further wrong about the respective constitutional powers of the Congress and the president on the question of war or peace. While the president is commander in chief of the armed forces, Congress has the authority to declare war, not to authorize the president to invade a country or not, as he sees fit.

Much has been written about the intelligence that was available to the president and the Congress, and the Bush administration’s selective use of weak and inconclusive intelligence to justify its war plans has been [well documented](#). Congress could have and should have known better. It took no classified intelligence reports to convince Representative John J. Duncan (R-Tenn.) that the war was an ill-conceived and foolish venture.

“Iraq wasn’t any threat to us,” he said years later, recalling his vote against war authorization in an interview with the *Knoxville News Sentinel*. “They didn’t have any Air Force to speak of. They didn’t have any Navy. They were no threat to us whatsoever.” Duncan was under considerable pressure from the White House to support the president in his determination to wage war in Iraq. Somehow the idea of going to war with a country over what that country *might* do with weapons it *might* have seemed unconvincing to the Tennessee representative, the only one among the seven House Republicans who voted against the war resolution who is still in Congress.

Well, those decisions were made long ago and, as Hillary Clinton said about what was or was not known prior to the 2012 Benghazi attack, “What difference at this point does it make?” But if a presidential candidate still believes, as Jeb Bush says he does, that the Iraq War was justified (based on “the intelligence they got,” although mistakes were made, etc. etc.), he might be inclined to make the same mistake again on, say, Iran, despite repeated intelligence reports that Iran has thus far made no decision to “weaponize” the nuclear program it claims to have developed for energy and medical uses. Bush has joined the chorus of GOP hawks condemning the Obama administration’s negotiations with Iran over its nuclear program and calling for harsher sanctions. According to a *Time* magazine reporter last month, Bush, when asked if he favors “regime change” in Iran, [replied](#): “I’ll have to give that some thought. That’s a good question.”

Given what he now says about the Iraq War, even with the advantage of hindsight, the American people have little reason for confidence in the outcome when Jeb Bush gives “some thought” to the matter of bringing about another regime change in another far-off land.

Photo of Jeb Bush: AP Images



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