

# The Real Bush Agendum

by Rutherford

As the 'evidence' offered by the Bush administration to support its claims about Iraqi weapons programmes has now been shown conclusively to have been based on false and distorted intelligence, the case for the invasion of Iraq has started to come apart at the seams.

In May 2002, when reports began to appear in the media that the administration had failed to heed intelligence warnings about a possible attack, Vice-President Cheney was quick to take the counteroffensive and claim that "*Suggestions that the attack could have been prevented were thoroughly irresponsible and totally unworthy of national leaders in time of war*".<sup>i</sup> In other words, Don't ask awkward questions or we'll doubt your patriotism. This is an old trick because *it works* -- and the question promptly disappeared without a trace.

Instead, our attention was directed towards the alleged failures within the intelligence community. Is it not possible that the intelligence "failed" only because it was not acted upon? But while we were expected to accept the enormity of this failure, just a few months later, we were expected to believe that intelligence was considered sufficiently credible to make the invasion of Iraq an immediate necessity. When the administration's assertions about Iraqi weapons of mass destruction were discovered to be false -- as shown not only by the UN weapons inspection team<sup>ii</sup>, the IAEA<sup>iii</sup>, but even by respected members of its own intelligence services<sup>iv</sup>, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz,<sup>v</sup> confirmed that Iraqi WsMD were used as the most 'sellable' justification for the invasion. Now, with the administration's shell game about the reasons for removing Saddam from power, we must look for another motive for imposing "regime change".

If American and British soldiers did not give their lives to remove the threat of Iraqi-sponsored terror, what other reason would justify putting their lives at risk? Who has benefited from the invasion -- and from all the other changes that followed 9/11? And how was the American public convinced to support the program?

As those who have tried can attest, 9/11 and the ensuing War on Terror has been very effective in discrediting any and all public criticism of either the administration or its agenda.

In September 2000, the conservative think tank *THE PROJECT FOR THE NEW AMERICAN CENTURY* (whose members include Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz, Lewis Libby and Jeb Bush)<sup>vi</sup>. In a document titled *REBUILDING AMERICA'S DEFENSES -- STRATEGY, FORCES AND RESOURCES FOR A NEW CENTURY*, this group argued that the US should massively increase defense spending (to \$90-95 billion per year) in order to "promote American global leadership" in "a new century favorable to American interests"<sup>vii</sup>. While it is true that groups espousing world domination have come and gone, when the group includes people like Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld and Paul Wolfowitz who possess the means to make their plans a reality, there is reason to take notice.

The potential profits for the defense industry in the War on Terror are too obvious to be detailed here, but well-connected companies within the petroleum sector (are there another kind?) also stand to do very well out of US control of Iraqi oilfields.

Now we read that the administration has signed contracts with a select number of companies to rebuild Iraq whose payment will be financed by the proceeds from Iraqi oil (which explains why the administration were insistent on having the sanctions lifted). The biggest winner (with a contact worth up to \$7 billion over two years<sup>viii</sup>) is Halliburton: the company previously controlled by the administration's *éminence grise* and PNAC member, Vice-President Cheney (and which, just before the war, was Iraq's largest foreign supplier).

Ever since September 11<sup>th</sup>, there has been a well-documented rise in public support for changes in areas affecting 'national security' -- including civil rights, military spending and the expansion of global trade.<sup>ix</sup> As those who have tried can attest, 9/11 and the ensuing War on Terror has been used to 'neutralize' opposition and criticism of the administration and its agenda. White House spokesman Ari Fleischer explained that:

*"Those comments and similar statements by other officials were part of the government's continuing effort to recalibrate public perceptions of the war."*<sup>x</sup>

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Is it possible that the intelligence "failed" because it was not acted upon?

In the days after September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001, an unpleasant and unwelcome thought lodged in my mind like a splinter: that the truth behind the attacks on New York and Washington might be even more disturbing than the events themselves. I could not rid myself of the suspicion that:

- i) a small fanatical group within the current White House (not necessarily including the president) who seek to bring about drastic changes in geopolitics and/or defense spending and/or security policy,
- ii) who learned of a plan (by, say, a fundamentalist Islamic group) to commit a significant act of terrorism inside the United States,
- iii) might have decided to stand back and let it happen as the best way to sell certain policy changes to the American public.

While I am aware of the similarities between my suspicions and some of the 20th century's more colorful conspiracy theories, I believe that our occasional glimpses under the carpets of power show that such a scenario is not impossible.

Before dismissing the idea, consider:

1. Previous administrations have knowingly misled the public about the circumstances behind other ‘unprovoked’ attacks to ensure public support for military action against other states (the sinking of the USS Maine, the Tonkin Gulf incident and the ‘baby incubator’ story). In an even closer analogy, there is evidence<sup>xiii</sup> to suggest that the Roosevelt White House had advance warning of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor -- but withheld the information in order to maximize public outrage in support for a declaration of war against Japan and Germany.
2. In the team assembled by former National Security Advisor, Admiral John Poindexter and Colonel Oliver North, we saw a ‘rogue’ operation run within a White House closely connected to the present administration and acting in the belief that their actions were justified by a ‘higher authority’.
3. A considerable body of intelligence information indicated that al-Qaeda was likely planning an attack on US territory using hijacked aircraft. Although there is obviously much more information that remains classified (but which would have been available to those with the necessary security clearance), even the minimal amount of information subsequently released to the media includes:
  - a) In a 1999 federal report, the government was warned that al-Qaeda might fly a hijacked airliner into the Pentagon.<sup>xiii</sup>
  - b) In July 2001, the FBI received a report from their Phoenix bureau that explicitly warned about al-Qaeda operatives at flying schools and another from the Minneapolis bureau about a suspect who wanted to learn how to fly jumbo jets -- but not how to take-off or land.<sup>xiv</sup>
  - c) A warning from senior government officials also in July 2001, that “(bin Laden) will launch a significant terrorist attack against the US in the coming weeks”<sup>xv</sup>.
  - d) Another warning, in August 2001, that bin Laden might be planning an attack the US using hijacked aircraft.<sup>xvi</sup>
4. On July 4, 2001, two months before the attacks, Osama bin Laden flew to Dubai for ten days to receive treatment at the American hospital. While there, he was visited by the head of Saudi intelligence Prince Turki al Faisal, and by the local CIA bureau chief.<sup>xvii</sup>
5. If, as they claim, no one in the administration had connected the dots, for what reason were the members of bin Laden’s family quickly and secretly whisked out of the country in the hours after the attack?

Imagine crossbreeding Poindexter and North’s ideology with the corporate culture that produced Enron and World Corp. (and United Fruit and Union Carbide and...). Why should it be unconceivable that the offspring of such a union would be prepared to accept a certain degree of ‘collateral damage’ in the interests of global power?

Again, I am not suggesting that a group within the current administration actually *instigated* the attacks on New York and Washington, only that *it is possible* that, having learned of an immanent attack, a small group might have been prepared to let a number of citizens ‘take one for the team’.

In war, people die, and it would not be the first time that a group of well-positioned fanatics has sacrificed civilians in the interests of a 'higher cause' or to achieve the 'greater good'.

Someone once said that freedom is never permanently achieved but must be fought for every day. Citizenship in a democracy sometimes obliges us to ask -- and to insist on answers to -- difficult questions. Of course, we may be afraid of the answers -- and I hope against hope that I am wrong -- but, with what we know has been done in the past, are we wise to ignore even the *possibility*?

Given the scale of global power employed in their name, the American public currently faces what may be the greatest challenge in recent history. Americans rightly cherish the values the country stands for. It remains to be seen however, if we will demand that the government live up to them.

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