

# The Lies that Led to the Iraq War and the Persistent Myth of ‘Intelligence Failure’

by Jeremy R. Hammond

The George Washington University National Security Archive recently published a newly released [CIA document](#) from January 2006 titled “Misreading Intentions: Iraq’s Reaction to Inspection Created Picture of Deception”. The document, the Archive [notes](#), “blames ‘analyst liabilities’ such as neglecting to examine Iraq’s deceptive behavior ‘through an Iraqi prism,’ for the failure to correctly assess the country’s virtually non-existent WMD capabilities.” *Foreign Policy* magazine [describes it](#) as a “remarkable CIA *mea culpa*”. But nothing could be further from the truth. Far from acknowledging the CIA’s true role, the document does not present any kind of serious analysis, but only politicized statements rehashing well-worn official claims designed to further the myth that there was an “intelligence failure” leading up to the U.S. invasion of Iraq in March of 2003.

There was no such “intelligence failure”. On the contrary, there was an extremely *successful* disinformation campaign coordinated by the CIA in furtherance of the government’s policy of seeking regime change in Iraq. The language of the document itself reveals a persistent dishonesty. It speaks of “deepened suspicions” that Iraq “had ongoing WMD programs” and “suspicions that Iraq continued to hide WMD.” Needless to say, however, the Iraq war was not sold to the public on the grounds that government officials and intelligence agencies had “suspicions” that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction (WMD). It was sold to the public with declarations that it was a known fact that Iraq had ongoing programs and stockpiles of WMD. The tacit acknowledgment that the actual evidence only supported “suspicions” that this was so by itself is proof of that the narrative of an “intelligence failure” is a fiction.

The report relies heavily upon the 1995 defection of Saddam Hussein’s son-in-law, Hussein Kamal (respectively spelled “Saddam Husayn” and “Husayn Kamil” in the document), arguing that the information he revealed bolstered suspicions that Iraq was concealing ongoing WMD programs and continued to possess stockpiles of WMD. It argues further that the regime’s behavior indicated he was hiding such weapons. Kamal, who returned to Iraq and was killed there in 1996, was the same individual Vice President Dick Cheney referred to in selling the administration’s case for war on August 26, 2002, when he said that “we now know that Saddam has resumed his efforts to acquire nuclear weapons. Among other sources, we’ve gotten this from the firsthand testimony of defectors—including Saddam’s own son-in-law, who was subsequently murdered at Saddam’s direction.” But the fact is that Cheney was lying, and the CIA’s persistent adherence to essentially the same false narrative renders ridiculous the suggestion that this document is some kind of “*mea culpa*”.

The document states, “Analysts interpreted Iraq’s intransigence and ongoing deceptive practices as indicators of continued WMD programs or an intent to preserve WMD capabilities, reinforcing

intelligence we were receiving at the time that Saddam Husayn continued to pursue WMD.” Yet the examples it lists of Iraq’s “intransigence” and deception do *not* support the CIA’s earlier judgments that Iraq had ongoing programs and WMD stockpiles. “In April 1991, for example,” the document says, “Iraq declared that it had neither a nuclear weapons program nor an enrichment program. Inspections in June and September 1991 proved that Iraq had lied on both counts, had explored multiple enrichment paths, and had a well-developed nuclear weapons program.” This is true. However, the document makes no mention of the fact that it was public knowledge that Iraq’s nuclear program was subsequently completely dismantled. As former Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Mohammed ElBaradei, pointed out, the Agency had “destroyed, removed or rendered harmless all Iraqi facilities and equipment component of Iraq’s nuclear programme” by 1992. The IAEA reported in 1998 that it was “confident that we had not missed any significant component of Iraq’s nuclear programme”.

The document states that in “March 1992, Iraq decided to declare the unilateral destruction of certain prohibited items to the Security Council, while continuing to conceal its biological warfare (BW) program and important aspects of the nuclear, chemical, and missile programs”. As worded, this implies that Iraq in 1992 was continuing these programs. This is disingenuous, because in fact Iraq was at that time trying to conceal *past* programs that it had *ended* following the 1991 Gulf War. Iraq did not continue these programs, but dismantled them and unilaterally destroyed its WMD in order to hide the fact that it had had such programs *in the past*. As the document acknowledges in its “Key Findings” section, “in 1991, Iraq secretly destroyed or dismantled most undeclared items and records”. Yet the very next paragraph contradictorily and disingenuously states, “We now judge that the 1995 defection of Saddam’s son-in-law Husayn Kamil—a critical figure in Iraq’s WMD and denial and deception (D&D) activities—promoted Iraq to change strategic direction and cease efforts to retain WMD programs.” This again implies that Iraq had ongoing WMD programs at least until 1995, which is *false*, as the CIA knew perfectly well at the time this report was written.

Even more importantly, that the programs had been dismantled and the weapons destroyed is in fact *precisely* what Hussein Kamal actually told U.N. inspectors when he defected in 1995. The newly released document in fact points out, “He said that Saddam destroyed all WMD in secret” in 1991. Yet apart from that single buried admission, the document is full of statements implying that weapons programs continued. For example, it states that “Iraqi officials did not admit to weaponized BW agent after the defection of Husayn Kamil”, but fails to clarify that this was an admission of *past* and not *ongoing* activity. The document acknowledges that Kamal’s defection was “the key turning point in Iraq’s decision to cooperate more with inspections”, but then adds that his debriefing with U.N. inspectors “strengthened the West’s perception of Iraq as a successful and efficient deceiver.” Following Kamal’s defection, the document states, “the West”, meaning the U.S., judged that Iraq “was determined to retain WMD capabilities.” In other words, the U.S. continued to claim that Iraq had ongoing WMD programs and stockpiles, and supposedly based that assessment on Kamal’s information, *even though Kamal in fact had confirmed that Iraq’s WMD had been destroyed and its programs dismantled in 1991*.

The document similarly states, “We now judge that the Iraqis feared that Kamil ... would reveal additional undisclosed information. Iraq decided that further widespread deception and attempts to hold onto extensive WMD programs while under UN sanctions was untenable and changed strategic direction by adopting a policy of disclosure and improved cooperation.” The wording here that Iraq was attempting in 1995 “to hold onto” such programs does not merely imply a falsehood, but is an outright lie. Once again, the CIA was perfectly well aware that until 1995, Iraq was attempting to conceal the existence of its *past* WMD programs, which it was *not* attempting “to hold onto” but had dismantled in 1991. This kind of dishonest use of language to suggest Iraq continued to have ongoing WMD programs, even while contradictorily acknowledging elsewhere in the report that this was not true, is illustrative not of a willingness by the CIA to come clean, but to continue to obfuscate the truth and to persist in the false narrative of “intelligence failure”. The CIA in the document even tries to spin its acknowledgment that Iraq’s programs were dismantled and its WMD destroyed in 1991 by saying that this unilateral action left Iraq “unable to provide convincing proof when it later tried to demonstrate compliance”—thus shifting the burden onto Iraq to prove that it *didn’t* have WMD and attempting to obfuscate the fact that U.S. government officials repeatedly *lied* by claiming that the intelligence community had *proof* that Iraq *did* have WMD.

In October 1991, Iraq admitted to the U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) that its Al Atheer site had been built in order to conduct research into enriching uranium to build a nuclear weapon. On August 22, 1995, when Hussein Kamal was asked about the work that went on there, and whether it was continuing somewhere else, he replied, “yes, but not now, before the Gulf War.” That is to say, there were other sites involved in Iraq’s nuclear weapons program, but this program was ended by 1991. He also pointed out that the work done on enrichment “were only studies.” He noted that Iraq already “had highly enriched uranium from France but it was under the IAEA [International Atomic Energy Agency] safeguards.” Iraq thus had worked on building its own centrifuges to enrich uranium, “but had never reached a point close to testing.”

The CIA document nevertheless states that Kamal’s defection “exposed the previously unknown 1991 crash program to develop nuclear weapons.” The program referred to would have entailed using enriched uranium from Iraq’s French-built reactor and enriching additional uranium obtained from Russia to weapons-grade in order to produce material for a bomb. The remarkable dishonesty of this statement is on full display when one compares it with the fact that, when this “crash program” was brought up in his UNSCOM debriefing, Kamal’s actual response was, “no, not true.” He acknowledged that “the decision was already there to use French uranium, but they were not ready with centrifuges.” In other words, the “crash program” was nothing more than a hypothetical contingency plan involving a scenario in which Iraq would make a final desperate effort to produce a nuclear weapon by kicking out U.N. and IAEA inspectors and enriching its own uranium to weapons-grade—a capability Iraq *did not possess*.

With regard to Iraq’s biological weapons programs, Kamal was asked during his debriefing, “[W]ere weapons and agents destroyed?” He answered, “[N]othing remained.” He added that the U.N. inspectors “have [an] important role in Iraq with this. You should not underestimate yourself. You

are very effective in Iraq.” The unilateral destruction of WMD, Kamal said, “was done before you came in.” On the issue of chemical weapons, the discussion turned to Iraq’s development of VX nerve agent during the Iran-Iraq war. After the war, Kamal told his U.N. debriefers, “the factory was turned into civilian production.” He added, “Iran also had mustard and sarin and they used mustard [gas] in small quantities. Some of the chemical components came for the US to Iraq”—that the U.S. supplied precursors for Iraq’s WMD is well known. Kamal continued, “[W]e changed the factory into pesticide production. Part of the establishment started to produce medicine.” He also said, “We gave instructions not to produce chemical weapons.... All chemical weapons were destroyed. I ordered destruction of all chemical weapons. All weapons—biological, chemical, missile, nuclear were destroyed.” (He subsequently clarified, “in the nuclear area, there were no weapons”—he had meant that the nuclear program was dismantled.)

The CIA document repeats the standard refrain that Iraq viewed Iran and Israel as a threat and that this therefore “could explain why Iraq might have continued to give the impression that it was concealing WMD—to instill fear or at least uncertainty in their neighbors”. The propaganda claim that Iraq itself wished to give the impression that it had WMD has been repeated many times over the years. David Kay, who initially headed up the Iraq Survey Group (ISG), the CIA’s effort to find WMD in Iraq following the invasion, in order to explain why the search had turned up nothing, suggested that Saddam had “bluffed” about having WMD in order to deter Iran. In January 2008, the media was abuzz with the supposed revelation from Saddam’s interrogation confirming that he had “bluffed”. His interrogator, FBI agent George Piro, gave an interview with CBS’s *60 Minutes* in which he recalled telling Saddam, “And in June 2000 you gave a speech in which you said Iraq would not disarm until others in the region did.” The *60 Minutes* report then inserted the claim, “That June 2000 speech was about weapons of mass destruction.” Piro reinforced that claim when the interviewer asked him why Saddam would put his nation at risk “to maintain this charade” of having WMD, to which Piro replied, “It was very important for him to project that because that was what kept him, in his mind, in power. That capability kept the Iranians away. It kept them from reinvading Iraq.”

The *Associated Press* reported that Saddam’s interrogation confirmed that he “falsely allowed the world to believe Iraq has weapons of mass destruction”. *USA Today* claimed that Saddam “said he was bluffing publicly about having weapons of mass destruction because he feared showing weakness to Iran”. The headline in the *Christian Science Monitor* declared, “Why Saddam Hussein lied about Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction”; the London *Telegraph* proclaimed, “Saddam Hussein ‘lied about WMDs to protect Iraq from Iran’”; and *Reuters* announced, “FBI: Saddam told us he lied about having nukes to deter Iran”. But in fact the only lie was the claim *that Saddam had lied* about having WMD. The simple fact of the matter is that he never once claimed that Iraq had WMD. On the contrary, he repeatedly, consistently, and *honestly* denied this (the CIA document acknowledges in one place that “what Iraq was saying by the end of 1995 was, for the most part, accurate”).

The entire relevant section from the released FBI summary of the June 11, 2004 interrogation Piro was referring to stated, “SSA Piro then asked Hussein if he wrote his own speeches and they come

from the heart, then what was the meaning of his June 2000 speech. Hussein replied this speech was meant to serve a regional and operational purpose. Regionally, the speech was meant to respond to Iraq's regional threat. Hussein believed that Iraq could not appear weak to its enemies, especially Iran. Iraq was being threatened by others in the region and must appear able to defend itself. Operationally, Hussein was demonstrating Iraq's compliance with the United Nations (UN) in its destruction of its Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD).<sup>7</sup> That was very far from suggesting any kind of confession from Saddam that he had "bluffed" about having WMD.

Furthermore, the speech referred to, contrary to CBS's false claim, *was not about WMD*. Saddam rather had spoken explicitly with reference to Iraq's *conventional* arsenal of weapons. He spoke of how the U.S. had "used the United Nations as a cover" to pursue its own agenda and then added, "However, we must protect our country because we will not give them Iraq. We do not like to collect weapons for the sake of collecting weapons. But we consider the provision of the necessary means to protect our country an ethical and moral responsibility that every Iraqi man and woman must shoulder." He was thus speaking specifically of Iraq's right to self-defense and of maintaining a capability to exercise that right. He continued on to say that Iraq would be "most enthusiastic" to limit its weapons, so long as Israel—which had bombed Iraq in 1983, a watershed event that precipitated Saddam's decision to try to develop a nuclear weapon to deter any further such attacks—did the same: "We told President Husni Mubarak: You can go ahead and announce that the Arabs are prepared to join any treaty to rid the region of the so-called weapons of mass destruction. We told him: This does not mean only ballistic missiles, which are no more than artillery of a longer range." The condition for this proposed disarmament was "that the Zionist entity is the first to sign such a treaty." And while Saddam had used the words "weapons of mass destruction", he was explicitly referring to long-range ballistic missiles, which, although proscribed for Iraq under U.N. resolutions, were nevertheless *conventional* weapons—hence his description of them as "so-called" WMD. "If the world tells us to abandon all our weapons and keep only swords," Saddam continued, "we will do that. We will destroy all the weapons, if they destroy their weapons. But if they keep a rifle and then tell me that I have the right to possess only a sword, then we would say no."

The CIA document concludes that intelligence analysts had wrongly assessed Iraq's WMD capabilities on the grounds that: "A liability of intelligence analysis is that once a party has been proven to be an effective deceiver, that knowledge becomes a heavy factor in the calculations of the analytical observer." But, remarkably, while making vague judgments about the bias of analysts such as this one, the document does not address any of the actual intelligence underlying a single one of the claims made by government officials in their efforts to manufacture consent for the war on Iraq. An examination of the claims that were made and the actual intelligence underlying them reveals the fact that, for the most part, the intelligence community had *not* failed in its assessments of Iraq's WMD capabilities. On the contrary, the top analysts in their respective area of expertise on numerous key claims from the Bush administration in making its case for war *had correctly assessed that Iraq had no such WMD capabilities*.

## How the CIA Coordinated a Campaign of Disinformation

For instance, take the claims that Iraq had reconstituted its nuclear program, belied by open-source information from the IAEA that it had been completely dismantled and that there was no evidence that Iraq had attempted to restart it. The “evidence” cited to bolster these claims were founded primarily on alleged Iraqi attempts to procure yellowcake uranium from Niger and acquisition of aluminum tubes to manufacture centrifuges to enrich the uranium for a bomb. Yet both of these claims were false and were *known* to be false *before* the U.S. invaded. And in neither case did the intelligence community’s assessment support the claims made by administration officials.

President George W. Bush infamously proclaimed, for example, that “The British government has learned that Saddam Hussein recently sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa.” This was a lie. The British government hadn’t “learned” that; it merely *claimed* this was so *with no credible evidence*. In fact, the U.S. intelligence community regarded this claim as so dubious that *the CIA had warned the British government against including it* in the white paper Bush was referring to. In fact, the documents underlying the claim were *forgeries*. The documents were eventually handed over to the IAEA, and in his briefing to the U.N. Security Council on March 7, 2003, Mohammed ElBaradei announced, “Based on thorough analysis, the IAEA has concluded, with the concurrence of outside experts, that these documents—which formed the basis for the reports of recent uranium transactions between Iraq and Niger—are in fact not authentic.”

The role of the CIA in controlling the flow of information in the coordinated effort to deceive the public is best illustrated in the case of the aluminum tubes. Dick Cheney declared that Saddam Hussein “has reconstituted his nuclear program to develop a nuclear weapon.... [H]e now is trying, through his illicit procurement network, to acquire the equipment he needs to be able to enrich uranium to make the bombs.... Specifically aluminum tubes.” He added, “[W]e do know, with absolute certainty, that he is using his procurement system to acquire the equipment he needs in order to enrich uranium to build a nuclear weapon.” He went further, suggesting that Iraq may have already obtained a nuclear weapon. When asked to confirm that Iraq did not at that time have a nuclear weapon, Cheney replied, “I can’t say that.” National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice similarly lied, “We do know that he is actively pursuing a nuclear weapon. We do know that there have been shipments going ... into Iraq, for instance, of aluminum tubes ... that are only really suited for nuclear weapons programs, centrifuge programs.” President Bush also said, “Iraq has made several attempts to buy high-strength aluminum tubes used to enrich uranium for a nuclear weapon.” The same day, the State Department released a report titled “A Decade of Deception and Defiance” that stated, “Iraq has sought to buy thousands of specially designed aluminum tubes which officials believe were intended as components of centrifuges to enrich uranium.” On October 7, 2002, Bush repeated, “The evidence indicates that Iraq is reconstituting its nuclear weapons program.” He cited as “evidence” of this the claim that “Iraq has attempted to purchase high-strength aluminum tubes and other equipment needed for gas centrifuges, which are used to enrich uranium for nuclear weapons.” He added, “Facing clear evidence of peril, we cannot wait for the final proof—the smoking gun—that could come in the form of a mushroom cloud.”

Turning to the actual assessments of the U.S.'s intelligence agencies, the first CIA assessment of the tubes was published on April 10, 2001, and stated that they "have little use other than for a uranium enrichment program." Yet no explanation for how this conclusion was arrived at was provided, and the report also acknowledged that "using aluminum tubes in a centrifuge effort would be inefficient and a step backward from the specialty steel machines Iraq was poised to mass produce at the onset of the Gulf War." The Department of Energy (DOE) issued their own far more detailed analysis of the tubes the following day, which stated that their "specifications are not consistent with a gas centrifuge end use." Additionally, there was no evidence for "related procurement efforts" that would be also required to produce centrifuges, and if the tubes were intended for this purpose, it would be "a centrifuge design quite different from any Iraq is known to have." The DOE report stated, "[W]e assess that the procurement activity more likely supports a different application, such as conventional ordnance production. For example, the tube specifications and quantity appear to be generally consistent with their use as launch tubes for man-held anti-armor rockets or as tactical rocket casings." Additionally, the lax manner in which Iraq had handled its procurement of the tubes "seems to better match our expectations for a conventional Iraqi military buy than a major purchase for a clandestine weapons-of-mass destruction program." After further research, the DOE issued another report on May 9 noting that "Iraq has purchased similar aluminum tubes previously to manufacture chambers (tubes) for a multiple rocket launcher."

The CIA responded with a report on June 14 acknowledging the error of its initial assessment. It admitted that the tubes "could be used as rocket bodies for multiple rocket launchers", but nevertheless clung to its false claim that their specifications "are suitable for uranium enrichment gas centrifuge rotors" and that a conventional use was "less likely". Once again, no rationale was offered for its differing assessment from the nation's top experts on centrifuges at the DOE. The CIA issued another report on July 2 falsely claiming that they "are constructed from high strength aluminum (7075-T6) and are manufactured to the tight tolerances necessary for gas centrifuges. The dimensions of the tubes match those of a publicly available gas centrifuge design from the 1950s, known as the Zippe centrifuge." It falsely stated that "the specifications for the tubes far exceed any known conventional weapons application, including rocket motor casings for 81-mm multiple rocket launchers."

The IAEA first became alerted to the tubes issue in the summer of 2001, and immediately recognized that Iraq had previously used tubes with identical dimensions in a conventional rocket program, for which there was extensive documentation. A CIA analyst from the Center for Weapons Intelligence, Nonproliferation, and Arms Control (WINPAC) identified simply as "Joe", was largely responsible for creating and propagating the argument that the tubes were intended for a centrifuge program. He travelled to Vienna in July to try to convince the IAEA experts of his position, arguing that after cutting the tubes and machining down the thickness, they could be used in a centrifuge that would then have the same mass as rotors in a Zippe centrifuge design (named after Soviet scientist Gernot Zippe). The IAEA experts pointed out to him that there were numerous flaws in his analysis, such as the fact that he had failed to calculate the mass of end caps and other components of such a design.

As the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence Report on the U.S. Intelligence Community's Prewar Intelligence Assessment on Iraq would later observe, nine additional intelligence reports were produced over the next year discussing the aluminum tubes, but "[n]one of these assessments provided any additional information to support the CIA's analysis". The Senate Committee's report offered useful insight into how the CIA was controlling the flow of information on the tubes, revealing how "Most of the assessments were disseminated in limited channels, only to high-level policymakers and were not available to intelligence analysts from other agencies." When asked by the Committee why this was so, CIA officials replied that they were written as responses to specific questions and intended for the President. Apparently relying on the CIA's false claim that the tubes were a "match" to the Zippe design and being out of the loop about the DOE's contrary assessment, the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) produced a report on August 2, 2001 embracing the CIA's case with the comment that "DIA analysts found the CIA WINPAC presentation to be very compelling."

On August 17, the DOE released an additional extensive analysis, once again observing, as had the IAEA, that Iraq had previously used tubes with "the same specifications" to manufacture rockets. The DOE reiterated that the tubes were not well suited for a centrifuge and that the aluminum used "provides performance roughly half that of the materials Iraq previously pursued." Furthermore, the diameter of the tubes was smaller than any known centrifuge and "too thick for favorable use as rotor tubes, exceeding the nominal 1-mm thickness of known aluminum rotor tubes by more than a factor of three." In other words, as the Senate Committee later noted, "The dimensions of the tubes seized do not 'match' the dimensions of any of Zippe's centrifuge designs." Moreover, the DOE also noted, the anodized surface "is not consistent with a gas centrifuge application", which was "unlikely". Rather, "a rocket production application is the more likely end use for these tubes."

Apparently still relying entirely upon the CIA's assessment, the DIA issued a report in November acknowledging that "alternative uses for the tubes are possible, such as rocket motor cases or rocket launch tubes" but parroting once again the false claim that "the specifications are consistent with earlier Iraqi gas centrifuge rotor designs." The DOE tried to set the record straight yet again in a report in December that stated, "The wall thickness is three times greater than that for metal rotor designs used in high-speed centrifuges"—including the Zippe design. The DOE's experts pointed out the inefficiency of any centrifuge built using these tubes, concluding, "In short, we judge it unlikely that anyone could deploy an enrichment facility capable of producing weapons significant quantities of HEU [highly-enriched uranium] based on these tubes." One analyst later expressed his view to the Senate Committee that if Iraq truly intended these tubes for use in a centrifuge, then "we should just give them the tubes."

The CIA was undeterred, publishing another report on August 1, 2002 ignoring the DOE assessment and claiming that the tubes' supposed high tolerances, high cost, and secrecy in procurement were evidence that they were intended for centrifuges. The DIA the following month once again repeated the false claim that alternative uses were "possible" but "less likely because the specifications are consistent with late-1980s Iraqi gas centrifuge rotor designs." Again in September,



the CIA repeated as evidence for an intended centrifuge application its false claims of secrecy in procurement, high cost, tight tolerances, the anodized coating, and that the tubes “matched” known centrifuge specifications. It concluded that it was “unlikely” they were intended for a rocket program.

While administration officials stated as fact that the tubes were intended for centrifuges and that they couldn’t be used for any other purpose, that the nation’s top experts on centrifuges at the DOE disagreed became public information long before the invasion of Iraq. David Albright of the Institute for Science and International Security (ISIS) released a report on September 23, 2002 that noted, “In fact, the intelligence community is deeply divided about the purpose of the tubing, with a significant number of experts knowledgeable about gas centrifuges dissenting from the CIA view.” Furthermore, Albright wrote, “ISIS has learned that U.S. nuclear experts who dissent from the Administration’s position are expected to remain silent.” In a second later report, Albright relayed that one expert “said that people in the administration can ‘release whatever they like, and they expect us to be silent.’” The *New York Times* similarly later reported that on September 13, after the administration had leaked information about the tubes to the press and made their rounds on the talk shows touting their claims, “the Energy Department sent a directive forbidding employees from discussing the subject with reporters.” Albright also made publicly known that the tubes would have to be modified significantly in order to be used for centrifuges, and also that UNSCOM had seen thousands of similar tubes in Iraq—for use in its rocket program. Further public information contradicting the U.S. government’s claims came when the British government released a dossier on September 24, 2002 admitting that “there is no definitive intelligence that it is destined for a nuclear programme.”

The CIA released an unclassified version of its National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) on Iraqi WMD in October 2002, which stated that the tubes “could be used in a centrifuge enrichment program. Most intelligence specialists assess this to be to be the intended use, but some believe that these tubes are probably intended for conventional weapons programs.” Thus “most intelligence specialists” included “Joe” and a number of analysts within the CIA and DIA, while *excluding* the nation’s top experts on centrifuges who had repeatedly pointed out that the CIA and DIA assessments were relying on *false* information.

By contrast, the classified version of the NIE noted that the DOE “assesses that the tubes probably are not part of” a nuclear weapons program. The State Department’s Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR), it also noted, “accepts the judgment of technical experts at the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) who have concluded that the tubes Iraq seeks to acquire are poorly suited for use in gas centrifuges to be used for uranium enrichment and finds unpersuasive the arguments advanced by others to make the case that they are intended for that purpose. INR considers it far more likely that the tubes are intended for another purpose, most likely the production of artillery rockets. The very large quantities being sought, the way the tubes were tested by the Iraqis, and the atypical lack of attention to operational security in the procurement efforts are among the factors, in addition to

the DOE assessment, that lead INR to conclude that the tubes are not intended for use in Iraq's nuclear weapon program."

The NIE included an assessment from the Army National Ground Intelligence Center (NGIC) that, due to the tubes' specifications, they were "highly unlikely to be intended for rocket motor cases." Yet the IAEA had confirmed that the Iraqis were attempting to reverse engineer an Italian rocket, the Medusa, which used the same material, 7075-T6 aluminum tubes with the same dimensions. Furthermore, in a written response to the Senate Committee, the NGIC acknowledged that "lightweight rockets, such as those originally developed for air-to-ground systems, typically use 7075-T6 aluminum for the motor casing because of its strength and weight". The NGIC additionally acknowledged that "it is not unusual to use the aluminum alloy specified by Iraq for casings of unguided rockets." The apparent explanation for the contradiction was once again the CIA's control of information. One expert told David Albright "that he did not believe the CIA analysts presented NGIC with complete information about the case" prior to the publication of the NIE. The Department of Defense (DOD) similarly confirmed that the information its analysts had relied upon had been provided by the CIA. One engineer from the DOD told the Senate Committee that it became clear to him that the CIA "had an agenda" and was trying "to bias us, to encourage us to come up with [the] answer" that agreed with their own assessment.

With regard to the claim that the tubes were "excessively tightly toleranced" for use in rockets, a DOD rocket design engineer told the Committee that this could be explained because Iraqi engineers, who "don't have 40 years of rocket manufacture [experience] like we have", would "tend to err on the conservative side." Another engineer agreed, "If you were starting from scratch, you would tend to go for a straighter, more tightly-toleranced product." The DOE observed that this was common practice for inexperienced engineers trying to reverse engineer equipment, and the IAEA also confirmed this explanation. Further illustrating the dishonesty of the CIA's assessment, the DOE explained that the tubes used in the U.S. Mark-66 rocket in fact had tolerances that *exceeded* those of the tubes procured by the Iraqis. As for the supposed "high cost" of the tubes, DOD design engineers responsible for U.S. rocket systems told the Senate Committee that this was "not correct at all". On the contrary, high-strength aluminum is "around the world the material of choice for low cost rocket systems" and "one of the cheapest materials to make rocket motor cases."

The CIA claimed in the NIE that it had successfully spun one of the tubes and that its test showed that it was "suitable as a centrifuge rotor", even though the DOE had written an analysis of the spin test stating that it actually "would have precluded their use in a centrifuge." The NIE did not repeat the false claim that the tubes were a "match" to the Zippe design, but did claim their dimensions were "similar", and it omitted the fact that they were not consistent with Iraq's previous centrifuge designs and the fact that the tubes' specifications matched perfectly those used in Iraq's existing rocket program.

After U.N. inspectors returned to Iraq under the Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC), chief inspector Hans Blix reported in December 2002 that while it was still investigating the administration's claims, "Iraq has also provided information on a short-range

rocket that is manufactured using 81 mm aluminum tubes”, which was “not a new disclosure”. In January 2003, Mohamed ElBaradei briefed the Security Council that Iraq had explained its attempts to acquire the tubes “in connection with a programme aimed at reverse engineering 81-millimetre rockets.” In order to verify the Iraqi explanation, the IAEA had conducted an extensive investigation finding that “the specifications of the aluminum tubes sought by Iraq ... appear to be consistent with reverse engineering of rockets. While it would be possible to modify such tubes for the manufacture of centrifuges, they are not directly suitable for it.” The assessment of the DOE, as already noted, had already been made public, and the INR’s agreement with the DOE was also reported by the *New York Times* in January. On January 27, ElBaradei briefed the Council again that after extensive investigation, the IAEA had concluded that “the aluminum tubes would be consistent with the purpose stated by Iraq and, unless modified, would not be suitable for manufacturing centrifuges”. He added that “we have to date found no evidence that Iraq has revived its nuclear weapons programme since the elimination of the programme in the 1990s”.

President Bush nevertheless claimed two days later that Saddam Hussein “has attempted to purchase high-strength aluminum tubes suitable for nuclear weapons production” and that he “has not credibly explained these activities.” Secretary of State Colin Powell repeated the administration’s case at the Security Council on February 5, declaring that “Saddam Hussein is determined to get his hands on a nuclear bomb. He is so determined that he has made repeated covert attempts to acquire high-specification aluminum tubes”. While acknowledging that there “are differences of opinion” about the tubes, Powell claimed that “Most U.S. experts think they are intended to serve as rotors in centrifuges used to enrich uranium.” The truth was that, as David Albright later observed, “The vast majority of gas centrifuge experts in this country and abroad who are knowledgeable about this case reject the CIA’s case”, including the nation’s top experts at the DOE who had “virtually the only expertise on gas centrifuges and nuclear weapons programs in the United States government”, as well as the intelligence branch of Powell’s own State Department.

Powell disingenuously and meaninglessly declared that “all the experts who have analyzed the tubes in our possession agree that they can be adapted for centrifuge use”. As one DOE analyst would later explain to the Senate Committee, you could also theoretically “turn your new Yugo into a Cadillac”. Retired Oak Ridge nuclear scientist Dr. Houston G. Wood, one of the top experts in the world on centrifuges, similarly explained that “it would have been extremely difficult to make these tubes into centrifuges. It stretches the imagination to come up with a way. I do not know any real centrifuge experts that feel differently.”

Powell lied that the tubes “are manufactured to a tolerance that far exceeds U.S. requirements for comparable rockets”, even though his own department’s intelligence agency had sent him a memo identifying this claim as a key concern and stating, “In fact, the most comparable US system is a tactical rocket—the US Mark 66 air-launched 70mm rocket—that uses the same, high-grade (7075-T6) aluminum, and that has specifications with similar tolerances.” He cited the anodized coating as evidence, asking why Iraq would “go to all that trouble for something that, if it was a rocket, would soon be blown into shrapnel when it went off?” In fact, the anodized coating was a clear indication

the tubes were intended for rockets, the coating being to protect the tubes from the weather; and since the tubes would require machining to modify them for use in centrifuges, Powell, if he was honest, should have asked why the Iraqis would go to all that trouble if the coating would soon be removed to make centrifuges anyways.

Mohammed ElBaradei refuted Powell's lies again in March, saying that "Extensive field investigation and document analysis have failed to uncover any evidence that Iraq intended to use these 81mm tubes for any project other than the reverse engineering of rockets.... Based on available evidence, the IAEA team has concluded that Iraq's efforts to import these aluminum tubes were not likely to have been related to the manufacture of centrifuges and, moreover, that it was highly unlikely that Iraq could have achieved the considerable re-design needed to use them in a revived centrifuge programme."

Thus, even before the U.S. launched its invasion of Iraq ostensibly to rid it of WMD because the world could not wait for the proof of Iraq's possession of nuclear weapons to come "in the form of a mushroom cloud", it was public knowledge that the British government, the IAEA, the top U.S. experts on centrifuges at the DOE, and the INR all agreed that the evidence did *not* indicate that the tubes were intended for use in a nuclear weapons program. On July 9, 2004, the Senate Committee published its report on pre-war intelligence. It concluded that "the judgment in the National Intelligence Estimate (NIE), that Iraq was reconstituting its nuclear program, was not supported by the intelligence" and, furthermore, that "the information available to the Intelligence Community indicated that these tubes were intended to be used for an Iraqi conventional rocket program and not a nuclear program." In the CIA's final report on the findings of the ISG in September 2004, the agency reluctantly admitted that "Iraqi interest in aluminum tubes appears to have come from efforts to produce 81-mm rockets, rather than a nuclear end use."

Needless to say, given the actual facts, the narrative that the admittedly false claims that Iraq was reconstituting its nuclear weapons program were the product of an "intelligence failure" cannot withstand the slightest scrutiny. This claim is completely fictional. Simply stated, the fact of the matter is that the government *lied*, and no attempt by individuals or agencies responsible for these lies seeking to obfuscate and deny that fact could possibly be considered a "mea culpa" by any serious and honest analyst. The failure of journalists to objectively state the obvious fact that government officials *lied* and the near universal willingness to repeat the official fictional narrative of "intelligence failure" following the invasion is a further reflection of the same intellectual culture in the U.S. that was witnessed prior to the war, when the mainstream media uncritically parroted the government's claims and reported lies and deceptions as fact.

## **A Counterintelligence Success**

One may similarly examine virtually every other aspect of the case for war and see the same repetition of official deception. On February 24, 2001, Colin Powell stated that Saddam Hussein "has not developed any significant capability with respect to weapons of mass destruction." When he went before the Security Council two years later to present the administration's case for war, he

knew he was lying. He knew that the claims he was making were not supported by the available evidence. He knew that his claims were contradicted by the available intelligence assessments of the nation's top experts in their respective fields.

Another example of this was the claim that Iraq's unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) were intended to deliver chemical and biological weapons. On October 7, 2002, President Bush declared, "We've also discovered through intelligence that Iraq has a growing fleet of manned and unmanned aerial vehicles that could be used to disperse chemical or biological weapons across broad areas. We're concerned that Iraq is exploring ways of using these UAVs for missions targeting the United States." According to Senator Bill Nelson, prior to the Congressional vote on the resolution granting the President the authority *to enforce U.N. resolutions through the Security Council*—(contrary to popular belief, the invasion of Iraq was a violation of the U.S. Constitution as well as international law)—members of Congress were told that Iraq could deliver anthrax to U.S. cities using UAVs. He testified, "I was told that not only did he have the weapons of mass destruction and that he had the means to deliver them through unmanned aerial vehicles, but that he had the capability of transporting those UAVs outside of Iraq and threatening the homeland here in America, specifically by putting them on ships off the eastern seaboard of which they would then drop their WMD on eastern seaboard cities. You can see all the more why I thought there was an imminent threat."

In his February 5 presentation before the Security Council, Colin Powell showed a picture of an Iraqi Mirage jet aircraft that he claimed was spraying "simulated anthrax". He claimed that spray tanks capable of dispersing chemical or biological weapons were "intended to be mounted on a MiG-21 that had been converted into an unmanned aerial vehicle, or a UAV." He added that "UAVs outfitted with spray tanks constitute an ideal method for launching a terrorist attack using biological weapons." After making these allegations, he turned his attention to Iraq's actual known UAVs, which were smaller and lighter than a jet aircraft. These, he said, "are well suited for dispensing chemical and biological weapons. There is ample evidence that Iraq has dedicated much effort to developing and testing spray devices that could be adapted for UAVs." He argued that, "According to Iraq's December 7 declaration, its UAVs have a range of only 80 kilometers. But we detected one of Iraq's newest UAVs in a test flight that went 500 kilometers nonstop on autopilot" in a "race track pattern"—that is to say, it "was flown around and around and around in a circle." For this argument, Powell was relying on the ignorance of his audience. He could not have been unaware that Iraq's UAVs necessarily functioned by use of a guiding signal that had a limited range. Thus, while the UAVs were shown to be able to carry enough fuel to fly a *distance* of 500 km, Powell in fact offered no evidence to contradict Iraq's declaration that its UAVs had a *range* of 80 km. This was deliberate sleight-of-hand, a blatant effort to deceive. He further stated that "Iraq could use these small UAVs which have a wingspan of only a few meters to deliver biological agents to its neighbors or if transported, to other countries, including the United States."

The U.N. inspectors, however, had not arrived at the same conclusions. In his report to the Security Council on March 7, Hans Blix only briefly mentioned Iraq's UAVs, saying, "Inspectors are also engaged in examining Iraq's programme for Remotely Piloted Vehicles (RPVs). A number of sites

have been inspected with data being collected to assess the range and other capabilities of the various models found. Inspections are continuing in this area.” In summing up the matter of Iraq’s UAV’s in the book he later wrote on the inspections process, Blix wrote, “The U.S. administration had concluded—almost certainly wrongly, it now appears—that the drone was a violation of the Security Council’s resolution. At UNMOVIC we were not ready to make that assessment. This angered Washington, despite the fact that it must have been known that the U.S. Air Force itself did not believe the Iraqi drones were for the delivery of biological and chemical agents.” And, as Blix also noted, the Air Force was “the greatest repository of U.S. expertise on drones”.

Turning to the actual intelligence underlying the administration’s claims, the Air Force experts had indeed assessed that Iraq’s drone aircraft were *not* designed or intended to disperse chemical or biological weapons, but for surveillance. The classified version of the October 2002 NIE stated that Iraq was “working with unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), which allow for a more lethal means to deliver biological and, less likely, chemical warfare agents.” The NIE judged that the UAVs were “probably intended to deliver biological warfare agents”, and even went so far as to declare that “Baghdad’s UAVs could threaten Iraq’s neighbors, US forces in the Persian Gulf, *and if brought to, or into, the United States, the US Homeland*” (emphasis in original). However, the NIE also made known the “dissent” from these judgments from the nation’s top experts on UAVs. Air Force analysts agreed that “although CBW delivery is an inherent capability”, they did not believe Iraq’s UAVs were intended for that purpose, but rather had a “primary role of reconnaissance”. The Air Force judged that “Iraq is developing UAVs primarily for reconnaissance rather than delivery platforms for CBW agents.... CBW delivery is an inherent capability of UAVs but probably is not the impetus for Iraq’s recent UAV programs.” The CIA relegated this judgment of the nation’s top experts on UAVs to a footnote. Even more revealing, the NIE’s section on biological warfare disclosed that “we have no information linking the current UAV development with BW delivery”—and recall that their use to deliver chemical weapons was even “less likely”. Thus, the CIA admitted *that no evidence actually existed to support its own judgments* that Iraq’s drones were intended to deliver CBW.

Furthermore, the Air Force was not alone in its “dissent” from the CIA’s baseless assessments. The UAV analyst from the INR later informed the Senate Committee that he agreed with the Air Force’s assessment, but that he nevertheless declined to join in the Air Force’s footnote. DIA analysts also testified that they had also agreed with the Air Force’s judgments, but had similarly declined to make this known in the NIE. Even analysts within the CIA agreed with the experts from the Air Force. One CIA UAV analyst admitted to the Committee that “some of Iraq’s UAVs were in fact developed for reconnaissance and as aerial targets”. Others revealed that “they did not believe that CIA’s assessments about the UAVs were accurately represented because the NIE did not address the reconnaissance mission.” The reason offered for this was that “those roles fell outside the scope of the Iraq WMD NIE.” In other words, information which did *not* support the CIA’s judgments was deliberately omitted—or, in the case of the Air Force’s “dissent”, relegated to a footnote.

In a subsequent NIE titled “Nontraditional Threats to the US Homeland Through 2007”, published in January 2003, the Air Force, DIA, and Army all agreed that “BW delivery is an inherent capability

of most UAVs and that Iraq may choose to exploit this capability, but they note that the evidence is unconfirmed and is not sufficiently compelling to indicate the Iraqis done so. There is information, however, on procurements that indicate a reconnaissance mission for the UAV program is more likely.” The picture begins to emerge that what the CIA described as “dissent” in the October NIE was in fact regarded by all of the top American experts on UAVs as sound analysis. Once again, it becomes clear that far from there having been an “intelligence failure”, the government’s claims simply *were not supported by the available intelligence*.

In another illustration of this fact, the report of the Senate Committee observed, “The only intelligence reporting that demonstrated any possibility that Iraq may have intended to use the UAVs to attack targets within the U.S. was reporting that Iraq was trying to procure U.S. mapping software for its small UAVs. The NIE said the procurement effort, ‘strongly suggests that Iraq is investigating the use of these UAVs for missions targeting the United States.’” Subsequent assessments, however, acknowledged that Iraq “may have ordered the U.S. mapping software unintentionally. Based on the new information, the DIA, the USAF, and the Army all chose to include a footnote noting that they interpreted ‘recent reporting to mean that the purpose of the Iraqi request for route planning software and topographic database was to acquire a generic mapping capability—a goal that is not necessarily indicative of an intent to target the U.S. Homeland.’”

Part of Powell’s claims regarding Iraq’s UAVs included the allegation that Iraq had weaponized anthrax that it could spray from the drones. The facts are clear that this claim, too, was not the product of an “intelligence failure”. Bush told the U.N. General Assembly on September 12, 2002, that “From 1991 to 1995, the Iraqi regime said it had no biological weapons. After a senior official in its program defected and exposed this lie, the regime admitted producing tens of thousands of liters of anthrax and other deadly biological agents”. The official he was referring to, of course, was Hussein Kamal, who had in fact testified that “nothing remained” of Iraq’s biological weapons, that they were “destroyed” in 1991—a fact Bush could not have been unaware of but deliberately omitted in order to deceive the public. On September 28, Bush stated, “The dangers we face only worsen from month to month and year to year ... and each passing day could be the one on which the Iraq regime gives anthrax or VX nerve gas or someday a nuclear weapon to a terrorist group.” Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld said on September 19, 2002, that Iraq had “amassed large clandestine stockpiles of biological weapons, including anthrax, botulism toxin, possibly smallpox.” “Less than a teaspoon of dry anthrax,” Colin Powell told his global audience in his presentation to the U.N., holding up a small vial filled with white powder, “about this amount—this is just about the amount of a teaspoon—less than a teaspoon full of dry anthrax in an envelope shut down the United States Senate in the fall of 2001.... If concentrated into this dry form, this amount would be enough to fill tens upon tens of thousands of teaspoons. And Saddam Hussein has not verifiably accounted for even one teaspoon of this deadly material.” Powell claimed that Iraq “had perfected drying techniques for their biological weapons programs” and had “incorporated this drying expertise” into “mobile production facilities”.

That Iraq had destroyed WMD in 1991 was public knowledge. The British dossier in September 2002 acknowledged that “Iraq destroyed unilaterally and illegally, some biological weapons in 1991 and 1992 making accounting for these weapons impossible.” The meaningless use of the adverb “illegally” aside, the relevance of this statement was that it implicitly acknowledged that there was no evidence that Iraq still possessed biological weapons. It rather shifted the burden of proof so that no such evidence was required; Iraq rather had to prove that it *didn’t* have such weapons. The dossier explained the issue regarding anthrax succinctly: “From a series of Iraqi declarations to the UN during the 1990s we know that by 1991 they had produced at least ... 8,500 litres of anthrax”, but the UN inspectors “were unable to account for ... growth media procured for biological agent production (enough to produce over three times the 8,500 litres of anthrax spores Iraq admits to having manufactured)”. In other words, the Iraqis admitted to having produced 8,500 liters of anthrax before the Gulf War, but they could possibly have produced more. As Hans Blix similarly explained, “In most cases, the issues are outstanding not because there is information that contradicts Iraq’s account, but simply because there is a lack of supporting evidence” that it had destroyed all its WMD. That is to say, there was no evidence Iraq still possessed biological weapons; U.N. inspectors just hadn’t reached the point where they could declare that they had verified that all of Iraq’s WMD had been destroyed, as Iraq claimed. Blix explained further that “Iraq has declared that it produced about 8,500 litres” of anthrax, “which it states it unilaterally destroyed in the summer of 1991”. There was “no convincing evidence for its destruction”, Blix said, but he added that “Iraq has provided little evidence for this production”—that is to say, there was no evidence Iraq had destroyed all of its anthrax, but neither was there any evidence it still possessed any, and there was “little evidence” Iraq ever actually produced that much in the first place.

As former U.N. weapons inspector Scott Ritter explained, UNSCOM had “fundamentally disarmed” Iraq, with “90-95% of Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction capability ... verifiably eliminated”. Furthermore, Ritter explained, the anthrax that Iraq had produced had a shelf life that would have rendered it useless many years prior. Iraq had produced only “liquid bulk anthrax”, which “even under ideal storage, germinates in three years, becoming useless.” Contrary to Powell’s claims, there was no evidence that Iraq had ever successfully produced dried anthrax. David Kay later admitted in testimony to the U.S. Senate that Iraq had never dried anthrax, but only a “simulant”. The CIA admitted in its final report that the “ISG has found no information” that Iraq had ever produced “weaponizable dried B. anthracis.” A senior scientist in Iraq’s biological weapons program during the 1980s, Dr. Nissar Hindawi, told the *New York Times* in April 2003 that Iraq had produced “huge quantities” of liquid anthrax before the Gulf War. However, “There were orders to destroy it”, he added. He also confirmed that they had never been able to make dried anthrax.

Powell’s deceptive comments served several propaganda purposes. First, they served to obfuscate the fact that the liquid anthrax Iraq actually produced would have already degraded years before. Second, they served to imply that Iraq had weaponized powdered anthrax. Third, they created a mental association between the anthrax letters mailed in the U.S. shortly after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, which attacks were constantly invoked by the Bush administration in drawing associations between 9/11 and Iraq. This psychological association between Iraq and 9/11 was such



successful propaganda that, according to one poll, 70% of Americans believed that Iraq was involved in the attacks. Thus the country was suffering from a mass delusion resulting from the government's deceptions, such as Dick Cheney's lie that it had been "pretty well confirmed" that alleged hijacker Mohammed Atta had met with Iraqi intelligence agents in Prague—the truth being that U.S. intelligence had concluded this meeting had never occurred. Indeed, the U.S. media had been full of baseless reports accusing Iraq of being behind the anthrax mailings, a false perception Powell was deliberately trying to exploit to manufacture consent for war.

Scott Ritter responded to the allegations that Iraq was behind the anthrax attacks in *The Guardian*: "Under the most stringent on-site inspection regime in the history of arms control, Iraq's biological weapons programmes were dismantled, destroyed or rendered harmless during the course of hundreds of no-notice inspections. The major biological weapons production facility—al Hakum, which was responsible for producing Iraq's anthrax—was blown up by high explosive charges and all its equipment destroyed.... Thousands of swabs and samples were taken from buildings and soil throughout Iraq. No evidence of anthrax or any other biological agent was discovered. While it was impossible to verify that all of Iraq's biological capability had been destroyed, the UN never once found evidence that Iraq had either retained biological weapons or associated production equipment, or was continuing work in the field." Ritter also pointed out that "Iraq procured the Vollum strain of anthrax from American Type Culture Collection"—which is was provided by the United States while it was supporting Saddam Hussein during the period when he committed his worst atrocities, including the oft-repeated crime of "gassing his own people" (a reference to his use of chemical weapons against the Kurdish town of Halabja in 1988). The strain used in the post-9/11 anthrax mailings, on the other hand, was the Ames strain—which had been produced at the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases (USAMRIID) at Fort Detrick, Maryland.

It was already well known at the time that Iraq had obtained its precursors for chemical and biological weapons from the United States. "When Iraq engaged in chemical and biological warfare in the 1980s," author William Blum observed in 1998, "barely a peep of moral outrage could be heard from Washington, as it kept supplying Saddam with the materials he needed to build weapons." A Senate report from 1994 stated that "The United States provided the Government of Iraq with 'dual use' licensed materials which assisted in the development of Iraqi chemical, biological, and missile-system programs, including ... chemical warfare agent precursors; chemical warfare agent production facility plans and technical drawings (provided as pesticide production facility plans); chemical warhead filling equipment; biological warfare related materials; missile fabrication equipment; and, missile-system guidance equipment.... Records available from the supplier for the period from 1985 until the present show that during this time, pathogenic (meaning 'disease producing'), toxigenic (meaning 'poisonous'), and other biological research materials were exported to Iraq pursuant to application and licensing by the U.S. Department of Commerce.... These exported biological materials were not attenuated or weakened and were capable of reproduction."

The CIA's final report, popularly known as the Duelfer Report after Charles Duelfer, who replaced David Kay as the head of the ISG, would later admit, after its failure to find WMD in Iraq, that "in 1991 and 1992, Iraq appears to have destroyed its undeclared stocks of BW weapons and probably destroyed remaining holdings of bulk BW agent."

Returning to Powell's claims that Iraq had "mobile production facilities used to make biological agents", this allegation came from a single source, code-named "Curveball", whom the CIA had never actually interviewed. The CIA had rather relied on German reporting, which had come complete with warnings that he was a drunk and that his claims couldn't be corroborated. On May 30, 2003, several months after the invasion of Iraq, Bush declared that U.S. forces had "found the weapons of mass destruction". They had "found biological laboratories", he lied. "Remember when Colin Powell stood up in front of the world, and said Iraq has got laboratories, mobile labs to build biological weapons?" He answered his own question, "[W]e've so far discovered two", adding that "we'll find more weapons as time goes on". He then made a vain attempt to belittle his critics by saying, "But for those who say we haven't found the banned manufacturing devices or banned weapons, they're wrong. We found them." Inconveniently for the administration, a British team investigated the trailers and concluded that nothing of the sort had been found. One biological weapons expert told *The Observer*, "They are not mobile germ warfare laboratories. You could not use them for making biological weapons. They do not even look like them. They are exactly what the Iraqis said they were—facilities for the production of hydrogen gas to fill balloons." As it turned out, it was the U.K. that had sold the system, known as an Artillery Meteorological System, or "Amets", to Iraq in 1987.

The nature of the U.S. case for war was aptly summarized in the minutes of a meeting of senior ministers of the British government on July 23, 2002, the infamous "Downing Street Memo", which observed: "Military action was now seen as inevitable. Bush wanted to remove Saddam, through military action, justified by the conjunction of terrorism and WMD. But the intelligence and facts were being fixed around the policy."

## Conclusion

The narrative that there was an "intelligence failure" leading up to the U.S. invasion of Iraq on March 19, 2003 cannot withstand the slightest scrutiny. The simple fact of the matter is that *there was no evidence* that Iraq still possessed WMD. The fact of the matter is that top experts in their respective fields within the U.S. intelligence community had correctly assessed that Iraq did *not* have WMD or ongoing WMD programs. The CIA's judgments to the contrary were not the result of a "failure" within the intelligence community to correctly analyze and assess the evidence, but of a systematic effort to control information in order to limit "dissent" and stovepipe products to administration officials that would support the government's official policy of regime change. In other words, the policy was not based on the intelligence, but the CIA's intelligence products were rather based on the policy.

Understood in these terms, it becomes apparent that far from a “failure”, the government’s disinformation campaign designed to manufacture consent for war was a resounding success. The narrative of an “intelligence failure” attempts to pin responsibility on analysts within the intelligence community rather than on senior administration officials such as President George W. Bush, National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, and Secretary of State Colin Powell. It attempts to shift the blame for the lies of senior policymakers onto analysts who supposedly didn’t do their jobs correctly. But the truth of the matter is that analysts who *did* do their job were sidelined and silenced, while assessments from analysts like “Joe” who dishonestly touted the official line were stovepiped to policymakers in “intelligence” products containing judgments completely unsupported by the available evidence.

The narrative of “intelligence failure” attempts to obfuscate the truth of the matter, which is that senior government officials repeatedly lied and willfully deceived the public by making claims unsupported by evidence and by deliberately withholding any information that contradicted their allegations. Seen in this light, it becomes evident that the recently released CIA document is anything but a “*mea culpa*”. It is, on the contrary, just more of the same.