

*How did the U.S. government lead its people to war?*

## Bush Administration Claims vs. The Facts

**The implication that Iraq was involved in the attacks of 9/11 was untrue**



### Pre-War Claims:

Although the Bush administration made no outright claim that Iraq was connected to the attacks of September 11, through suggestion, innuendo, careful use of language, and the repeated use of "Iraq" and "9/11" in the same sentence, it left a substantial portion of the public with that false impression – and subsequently initiated no efforts to correct it.

Among these false linkages was the administration's specific claim that an Iraqi intelligence officer met with 9/11 lead hijacker Mohamed Atta in Prague five months before the attacks.

Furthermore, the global war on terror was initiated by the U.S. in response to the 9/11 attacks, and by declaring Iraq as a central part of the war on terror, the administration encouraged the idea that there was a connection between Iraq and 9/11.

### Facts:

Iraq had no involvement in, or connection to, the attacks of 9/11. None of the hijackers were Iraqi – fifteen were Saudi and the rest were Egyptian, Emirati and Lebanese. Within days, the intelligence community reported that there was no evidence linking the Iraqi regime to the attacks.



Furthermore, 9/11 hijacker Mohamed Atta did not meet with an Iraqi intelligence officer in Prague.

[link to section: [Mohammed Atta Did Not Meet with Iraqis](#)]

### Overview:

The Bush administration and the U.S. intelligence community knew immediately after 9/11 that Iraq had nothing to do with the 9/11 attacks and that al-Qaeda was solely responsible. Yet for months before the Iraq war, and even after the war began, the administration repeatedly implied that there was a connection between Iraq and the attacks of 9/11, leaving a majority of the U.S. public with that mistaken belief.

A Mechanism for War

Rhetoric and Spin

War Through Rose-Colored Glasses

Abuses and Misuses of Intelligence

A Mythic Reality

Items of Note

Bush Administration Claims vs. The Facts

No weapons of mass destruction found

No mobile biological weapons labs

Iraq did not seek to acquire yellowcake uranium

Aluminum tubes not for nuclear weapons

Mohamed Atta did not meet with Iraqis

Iraq did not provide training to al-Qaeda

No collaboration between Iraq and al-Qaeda

● Iraq was not involved in the attacks of 9/11

The Costs of War

**September 11, 2001**

**Al-Qaeda terrorists hijack four U.S. commercial airliners, crashing them into the New York World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and a field in Pennsylvania.**

**September 11, 2001** [reported at a later date]

**At 2:40pm, six hours after the first plane hit the World Trade Center, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld orders the military to plan a strike against Osama bin Laden and investigate any rationales to target Saddam Hussein.**

**As reported by CBS News (on September 4, 2002)** [link to source]

"With the intelligence all pointing toward bin Laden, Rumsfeld ordered the military to begin working on strike plans. And at 2:40 p.m., the notes quote Rumsfeld as saying he wanted 'best info fast. Judge whether good enough hit S.H.' – meaning Saddam Hussein – 'at same time. Not only UBL' – the initials used to identify Osama bin Laden.

"Now, nearly one year later, there is still very little evidence Iraq was involved in the Sept. 11 attacks. But if these notes are accurate, that didn't matter to Rumsfeld.

"Go massive,' the notes quote him as saying. 'Sweep it all up. Things related and not.'"

**September 12, 2001** [reported at a later date]

**According to Richard Clarke, former U.S. counter-terrorism chief for the U.S. National Security Council, on this day President Bush pulled some of his advisors into a conference room. The exchange is detailed in Clarke's book, *Against All Enemies* (pages 30–32, published April 2004)** [link to source]



"Look," [Bush] told us. "I know you have a lot to do and all ... but I want you, as soon as you can, to go back over everything, everything. See if Saddam did this. See if he's linked in any way."

I was once again taken aback, incredulous, and it showed.

"But, Mr. President, Al Qaeda did this."

"I know, I know, but ... see if Saddam was involved. Just look. I want to know any shred."

"Absolutely, we will look ... again." I was trying to be more respectful, more responsive. "But, you know, we have looked several times for state sponsorship of Al Qaeda and not found any real linkages to Iraq..."

"Look into Iraq, Saddam," the President said testily and left us.

**CBS' 60 Minutes reports (on April 29, 2007)** [reported at a later date] [link to source]

"The truth of Iraq begins, according to [former Director of Central Intelligence, George] Tenet, the day after the attack of Sept. 11, when he ran into Pentagon advisor Richard Perle at the White House.

"He [Perle] said to me, '**Iraq has to pay a price for what happened yesterday, they bear responsibility.**' **It's September the 12th. I've got the manifest with me that tell me al Qaeda did this. Nothing in my head that says there is any Iraqi involvement** in this in any way shape or form and I remember thinking to myself, as I'm about to go brief the president, 'What the hell is he talking about?'" Tenet remembers.

**September 16, 2001**

**Vice President Dick Cheney speaks with Tim Russert on NBC News' *Meet the Press*** [link to source]

MR. RUSSERT: Do we have evidence that [Hussein is] harboring terrorists?

VICE PRES. CHENEY: There is— in the past, there have been some activities related to terrorism by Saddam Hussein. But at this stage, you know, the focus is over here on al-Qaeda and the most recent events in New York. Saddam Hussein's bottled up, at this point, but clearly, we continue to have a fairly tough policy where the Iraqis are concerned.

MR. RUSSERT: Do we have any evidence linking Saddam Hussein or Iraqis to this operation?

VICE PRES. CHENEY: No.

**September 18, 2001** [reported at a later date]

**From page 334 of the 9/11 Commission Final Report (publicly issued July 22, 2004)** [link to source] [link to source]



"Responding to a presidential tasking, [chief anti-terrorism advisor, Richard] Clarke's office sent a memo to Rice on September 18, titled 'Survey of Intelligence Information on Any Iraq Involvement in the September 11 Attacks.'..."

"The memo found no 'compelling case' that Iraq had either planned or perpetrated the attacks."

**September 18, 2001**

**The Associated Press reports** [link to source]

"An unconfirmed link to Iraq emerged Tuesday [September 18] in the intelligence community.

"A U.S. official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the United States has received information from a foreign intelligence service that Mohamed Atta, a hijacker aboard one of the planes that slammed into the World Trade Center, met earlier this year in Europe with an Iraqi intelligence agent."

**September 21, 2001** [reported at a later date]

**The National Journal (reported on November 22, 2005)** [link to source]

"Ten days after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, President Bush was told in a highly classified briefing that the U.S. intelligence community had no evidence linking the Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein to the attacks and that there was scant credible evidence that Iraq had any significant collaborative ties with Al Qaeda, according to government records and current and former officials with firsthand knowledge of the matter..."

"The September 21, 2001, briefing was prepared at the request of the president, who was eager in the days following the terrorist attacks to learn all that he could about any possible connection between Iraq and Al Qaeda."

**December 2, 2001**

**Secretary of State Colin Powell on CNN's Late Edition with Wolf Blitzer** [link to source] [link to source]

BLITZER: "As you know, some former government officials and perhaps some within the government are saying there are some strong signs that the Iraqis were connected to the September 11 terrorist attack, specifically the meetings in Prague between Mohammed Atta, the suspected ringleader, and Iraqi intelligence, an Iraqi intelligence agent. As far as you're concerned, was there a connection there?"



POWELL: "Certainly, these meetings took place."

**December 9, 2001**

**Vice President Dick Cheney on NBC News' Meet the Press** [link to source]

"It's been pretty well confirmed that [Mohamed Atta] did go to Prague and he did meet with a senior official of the Iraqi intelligence service in Czechoslovakia last April, several months before the attack."

**July 23, 2002** [reported at a later date]

**On this day, Senior British officials meet with Prime Minister Tony Blair to discuss Iraq. Years later, the highly confidential minutes of this meeting, known as the Downing Street memo, would be leaked to the Sunday Times of London, who first report on the memo on May 1, 2005** [link to source]

"The Americans had been trying to link Saddam to the 9/11 attacks; but the British knew the evidence was flimsy or non-existent. [Sir Richard] Dearlove [Chief of MI6 Secret Intelligence Service] warned the meeting that 'the intelligence and facts were being fixed around the [war] policy.'"

**September 8, 2002**

**National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice speaks with Wolf Blitzer on CNN's *Late Edition***

[\[link to source\]](#)

BLITZER: ... Is there any hard evidence directly linking the Iraqi government to Al Qaeda and the 9/11 terror attacks against the United States?

RICE: There is certainly evidence that Al Qaeda people have been in Iraq. There is certainly evidence that Saddam Hussein cavorts with terrorists.

I think that if you asked, do we know that he had a role in 9/11, no, we do not know that he had a role in 9/11. But I think that this is the test that sets a bar that is far too high.



**September 8, 2002**

**Vice President Dick Cheney speaks with Tim Russert on NBC News' *Meet the Press*** [\[link to source\]](#)

Mr. RUSSERT: One year ago when you were on MEET THE PRESS just five days after September 11, I asked you a specific question about Iraq and Saddam Hussein. Let's watch:

(Videotape, September 16, 2001):

Mr. RUSSERT: Do we have any evidence linking Saddam Hussein or Iraqis to this operation?

VICE PRES. CHENEY: No.

(End videotape)

Mr. RUSSERT: Has anything changed, in your mind?

VICE PRES. CHENEY: Well, I want to be very careful about how I say this. I'm not here today to make a specific allegation that Iraq was somehow responsible for 9/11. I can't say that. On the other hand, since we did that interview, new information has come to light. And we spent time looking at that relationship between Iraq, on the one hand, and the al-Qaeda organization on the other. And there has been reporting that suggests that there have been a number of contacts over the years. We've seen in connection with the hijackers, of course, Mohamed Atta, who was the lead hijacker, did apparently travel to Prague on a number of occasions. And on at least one occasion, we have reporting that places him in Prague with a senior Iraqi intelligence official a few months before the attack on the World Trade Center. The debates about, you know, was he there or wasn't he there, again, it's the intelligence business...



...Again, **I want to separate out 9/11, from the other relationships between Iraq and the al-Qaeda organization.** But there is a pattern of relationships going back many years...

Mr. RUSSERT: Brent Scowcroft – he was national security adviser to the former President Bush, while you were Secretary of Defense – has been very outspoken about Iraq. He wrote a piece in The Wall Street Journal, and this is what he said and I want to show you: "There is scant evidence to tie Saddam to terrorist organizations, and even less to the Sept. 11 attacks. Indeed Saddam's goals have little in common with the terrorists who threaten us, and there is little incentive for him to make common cause with them. There is little evidence to indicate that the United States itself is an object of his aggression."

VICE PRES. CHENEY: You want me to respond...

Mr. RUSSERT: Do you agree?

VICE PRES. CHENEY: ...to my old friend Brent? I don't. I disagree with Brent... I think he's wrong in this case.

**September 8, 2002**

**Agence France Presse reports** [\[link to source\]](#)

"Mohammed Atta consulted Saddam Hussein prior to leading the suicide attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11, according to Richard Perle, an advisor to the U.S. defense secretary.

"Mohammed Atta met Saddam Hussein in Baghdad prior to September 11. We have proof of that, and we are sure

he wasn't just there for a holiday,' Perle told Italy's business daily *Il Sole 24 Ore*."

### September 11, 2002

**On the first anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, President George W. Bush delivers a nationally televised speech from Ellis Island in New York City [\[link to source\]](#)**

"A long year has passed since enemies attacked our country...

"We continue to pursue the terrorists in cities and camps and caves across the earth... And we will not allow any **terrorist or tyrant to threaten civilization** with weapons of mass murder."

### September 18, 2002 [\[reported at a later date\]](#)

**According to the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence's *Report on the U.S. Intelligence Community's Prewar Intelligence Assessments on Iraq* (published on July 9, 2004), a classified CIA assessment, *Iraqi Support for Terrorism*, is issued and contains the following summary [\[link to source\]](#)**



"We have no credible information that Baghdad had foreknowledge of the 11 September attacks or any other al-Qaida strike, but we continue to pursue all leads."

### September 25, 2002

**National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice appears on PBS' *News Hour* and states [\[link to source\]](#)**

"No one is trying to make an argument at this point that Saddam Hussein somehow had operational control of what happened on September 11th. So we don't want to push this too far. But this is a story that is unfolding. And it is getting clearer, and we're learning more."

### October 16, 2002

**In the *Joint Resolution to Authorize the Use of United States Armed Forces Against Iraq*, Congress, utilizing language provided by Bush officials, authorizes the use of force against Iraq, and includes 5 explicit references to the attacks of 9/11. Under "Presidential Determination," it states [\[link to source\]](#)**

"In connection with the exercise of the authority ... to use force, the President shall... make available to the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President *pro tempore* of the Senate his determination that:

"(1) reliance by the United States on further diplomatic or other peaceful means alone either (A) will not adequately protect the national security of the United States against the continuing threat posed by Iraq or (B) is not likely to lead to enforcement of all relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions regarding Iraq, and

"(2) acting pursuant to this resolution is consistent with the United States and other countries continuing to take the necessary actions against international terrorists and terrorist organizations, including those nations, organizations or persons who planned, authorized, committed or aided the terrorists attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001."

### January 28, 2003

**During his State of the Union address, President George W. Bush warns [\[link to source\]](#)**

"Before September the 11th, many in the world believed that Saddam Hussein could be contained. But chemical agents, lethal viruses and shadowy terrorist networks are not easily contained. Imagine those 19 hijackers with other weapons and other plans, this time armed by Saddam Hussein. Take one vial, one canister, one crate, slipped into this country to bring a day of horror like none we have ever known."



### March 6, 2003

**Two weeks before he will order America to war in Iraq, at a press conference devoted to the impending military intervention, President George W. Bush invokes 9/11 and al-Qaeda at least a dozen times. [\[link to source\]](#)**

"[Hussein] provides funding and training and safe haven to **terrorists – terrorists** who would willingly use weapons of mass destruction against America and other peace-loving countries..."

"The attacks of **September the 11th**, 2001 showed what the **enemies** of America did with four airplanes. We will not wait to see what **terrorists** or **terrorist states** could do with weapons of mass destruction...

"The cause of peace will be advanced only when the **terrorists** lose a wealthy patron and protector, and when the **dictator** is fully and finally disarmed...

"**Iraq** is a part of the war on **terror**. **Iraq** is a country that has got **terrorist** ties. It's a country with wealth. It's a country that trains **terrorists**, a country that could arm **terrorists**...

"**September the 11th** should say to the American people that we're now a battlefield...

"I believe **Saddam Hussein** is a threat to the American people... He has trained and financed **al-Qaeda**-type organizations before, **al-Qaeda** and other **terrorist** organizations...

"... We live in a dangerous world... And I hope people remember the- I know they remember the tragedy of **September the 11th**, but I hope they understand the lesson of **September the 11th**. The lesson is, is that we're vulnerable to attack, wherever it may occur, and we must take threats which gather overseas very seriously.

"... It's hard to envision more **terror** on America than **September the 11th**, 2001. We did nothing to provoke that **terrorist** attack. It came upon us because there's an **enemy** which hates America. They hate what we stand for. We love freedom and we're not changing. And, therefore, so long as there's a **terrorist** network like **al-Qaeda**, and others willing to fund them, finance them, equip them - we're at war."

**March 19, 2003**

**The United States launches military strikes, commencing the Iraq war.**



**March 21, 2003**

**President George W. Bush issues a letter to the Speaker of the House and to the Senate President, and cites 9/11 as part of his justification for war in Iraq [\[link to source\]](#)**

March 21, 2003

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

... I have .... determined that the use of armed force against Iraq is consistent with the United States and other countries continuing to take the necessary actions against international terrorists and terrorist organizations, **including those nations, organizations, or persons who planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001...**

Sincerely,

GEORGE W. BUSH

**May 1, 2003**

**In front of a banner that reads "Mission Accomplished," President George W. Bush delivers a speech from the U.S.S. Abraham Lincoln off the coast of San Diego, California [\[link to source\]](#)**

"The battle of Iraq is one victory in a war on terror that began on September the 11, 2001 - and still goes on... By seeking to turn our cities into killing fields, terrorists and their allies believed that they could destroy this nation's resolve, and force our retreat from the world. They have failed...

"We've removed an ally of al Qaeda..."

**September 14, 2003**

**Vice President Dick Cheney is interviewed by Tim Russert on NBC News' Meet The Press [\[link to source\]](#)**

MR. RUSSERT: The Washington Post asked the American people about Saddam Hussein, and this is what they said: 69 percent said he was involved in the September 11 attacks. Are you surprised by that?

VICE PRES. CHENEY: No. I think it's not surprising that people make that connection.

MR. RUSSERT: But is there a connection?

VICE PRES. CHENEY: We don't know. You and I talked about this two years ago. I can remember you asking me this



question just a few days after the original attack. At the time I said no, we didn't have any evidence of that. Subsequent to that, we've learned a couple of things. We learned more and more that there was a relationship between Iraq and al-Qaeda that stretched back through most of the decade of the '90s, that it involved training, for example, on BW [bio-weapons] and CW [chemical weapons]...

If we're successful in Iraq... we will have struck a major blow right at the heart of the base, if you will, the geographic base of the terrorists who have had us under assault now for many years, but most especially on 9/11."

### September 16, 2003

#### National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice is interviewed by Ted Koppel on ABC News' *Nightline* [\[link to source\]](#)

TED KOPPEL (Off Camera): ...What was it that caused you and the President to believe that Saddam Hussein constituted a direct and imminent threat to the safety of the United States?



CONDOLEEZZA RICE: ...Saddam Hussein, who is, in many ways, a quite unique case, you had a bloody dictator, clearly with ambitions in the Middle East, beyond his neighbors... this combination of factors, in the world's most volatile region, a region from which the 9/11 threat emerged. I think the President decided that was a threat he was no longer going to tolerate.

TED KOPPEL (Off Camera): Let me stop you on that note. "The region from which the 9/11 threat emerged." Now, if you're using region in the broadest sense.

CONDOLEEZZA RICE: Yes, region in the broad sense.

TED KOPPEL (Off Camera): Afghanistan being part of that region.

CONDOLEEZZA RICE: Well, Afghanistan being part of that region. And let's be very clear, the Middle East being, in many ways, the homeland.

TED KOPPEL (Off Camera): Are you saying that there was any connection between 9/11, because, as you know, 61, 62 percent of the American public actually believes that Saddam Hussein had a direct responsibility for 9/11, for which there is no evidence whatsoever.

CONDOLEEZZA RICE: And we have never claimed that Saddam Hussein had either, that Saddam Hussein had either direction or control of 9/11.

### September 17, 2003

#### President George W. Bush answers questions in the Cabinet Room [\[link to source\]](#)

REPORTER: Mr. President, Dr. Rice and Secretary Rumsfeld both said yesterday that they have seen no evidence that Iraq had anything to do with September 11th. Yet, on *Meet the Press*, Sunday, the Vice President said Iraq was a geographic base for the terrorists and he also said, I don't know, or we don't know, when asked if there was any involvement. Your critics say that this is some effort – deliberate effort to blur the line and confuse people. How would you answer that?

PRESIDENT BUSH: We've had no evidence that Saddam Hussein was involved with the September 11th. What the Vice President said was, is that he has been involved with al Qaeda... There's no question that Saddam Hussein had al Qaeda ties.

### September 28, 2003

#### National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice speaks on NBC News' *Meet the Press* [\[link to source\]](#)

"... No one has said that there is evidence that Saddam Hussein directed or controlled 9/11..."

### March 21, 2004

#### CBS' *60 Minutes* reports on claims made by former counter-terrorism chief Richard Clarke on discussions with Bush officials on 9/11 [\[link to source\]](#)



"After the president returned to the White House on Sept. 11, he and his top advisers, including Clarke, began holding meetings about how to respond and retaliate. As Clarke writes in his book, he expected the administration to focus its military response on Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda. He says he was surprised that the talk quickly turned to Iraq.

"Rumsfeld was saying that we needed to bomb Iraq,' Clarke said to [CBS News correspondent Lesley] Stahl. 'And we all said ... no, no. Al-Qaeda is in Afghanistan. We need to bomb

Afghanistan. And Rumsfeld said there aren't any good targets in Afghanistan. And there are lots of good targets in Iraq. I said, 'Well, there are lots of good targets in lots of places, but Iraq had nothing to do with it.'

"Initially, I thought when he said, 'There aren't enough targets in- in Afghanistan,' I thought he was joking."

"I think they wanted to believe that there was a connection, but the CIA was sitting there, the FBI was sitting there, I was sitting there saying we've looked at this issue for years. For years we've looked and there's just no connection."

**June 16, 2004**

**The 9/11 Commission issues Staff Statement number 15, "Overview of the Enemy" [\[link to source\]](#)**

"We have no credible evidence that Iraq and al Qaeda cooperated on attacks against the United States."

**July 7, 2004**

**The Report on the U.S. Intelligence Community's Prewar Intelligence Assessments on Iraq by the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence states in Conclusion 96 [\[link to source\]](#)**

"The Central Intelligence Agency's assessment that to date there was no evidence proving Iraqi complicity or assistance in an al-Qaida attack was reasonable and objective. No additional information has emerged to suggest otherwise."

**April 29, 2007**

**On CBS' 60 Minutes, former Director of Central Intelligence George Tenet was asked about Iraq's involvement with 9/11 [\[link to source\]](#)**



"In terms of complicity with 9/11, absolutely none... It never made any sense. We could never verify that there was any Iraqi authority, direction and control, complicity with al Qaeda for 9/11 or any operational act against America. Period."

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