

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

Items of Note

The Importance of September 8, 2002

The launch of an aggressive war marketing campaign

Throughout the fall and winter of 2002/2003, the White House repeatedly told the public and the media that the president had made no decision to go to war with Iraq, and that all options for a peaceful resolution were being explored. However, the leaked [Downing Street Memo](#) tells a different story.

Months earlier, on July 23, 2002, Sir Richard Dearlove, the head of Britain's MI6 intelligence service, had met with British Prime Minister Tony Blair to discuss Dearlove's recent meeting with President Bush. The minutes from this meeting, known as the Downing Street memo, stated that in the White House, "military action was now seen as inevitable... Bush wanted to remove Saddam, through military action, justified by the conjunction of terrorism and WMD... [the intelligence and facts were being fixed around the policy.](#)"



Other reports cite that the Bush administration had made the decision to go to war many months earlier. ['Bush has decided to overthrow Hussein' Feb. 13, 2002](#)

Further proof that the White House had already decided to go to war with Iraq was the creation of the White House Iraq Group (WHIG) in August 2002, with a sole mission: to market a war against Iraq to the American people.

Organized by White House Chief of Staff Andrew Card, WHIG's 10 members included Karl Rove, I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby, Condoleezza Rice, Karen Hughes, Mary Matalin, and Stephen Hadley.

According to a [New York Times](#) article on September 7, 2002, the Bush administration "was following a meticulously planned strategy to persuade the public,

the Congress and the allies of the need to confront the threat from Saddam Hussein" and had decided to "wait until after Labor Day to kick off their plan. 'From a marketing point of view,' said Andrew H. Card Jr., the White House chief of staff who is coordinating the effort, 'you don't introduce new products in August.'"

This intensive rollout of the administration's aggressive case for war began on September 8, 2002, when five senior Bush administration officials – Cheney, Rumsfeld, Powell, Rice, and Myers – appeared on Sunday morning talk shows on the five major news outlets: CNN, NBC, CBS, ABC and Fox. This was just three days before the first anniversary of 9/11, and two months before the congressional mid-term elections (the Bush administration was actively trying to retain and win Republican seats... They succeeded).

Not coincidentally, on the same morning of September 8, the *New York Times* reported that Iraq had [sought to purchase aluminum tubes for alleged use in enriching uranium](#) to build a nuclear weapon (it is now known that this allegation was false). The article cited anonymous "Bush administration officials" who had leaked the story to journalists Judith Miller and Michael Gordon.



Bush officials then had the audacity to cite on television the information from that *New York Times* article – *which the administration itself had leaked* – thereby giving them the opportunity to discuss intelligence that would otherwise be classified.

The five Bush officials also used this television opportunity to outline many other justifications for a preemptive war, displaying a notable coordination in their talking points:

- Hussein's possession of WMD
- Iraqi contacts to lead 9/11 hijacker Mohamed Atta
- Iraq's ties to al-Qaeda
- Iraq was 6 months away from having a nuclear weapon

All of these allegations were false, and were based on little or no credible evidence.

Among other common themes discussed that day were America's increased vulnerability in an uncertain post-9/11 world, and that "doing nothing" was no longer an option.

A Mechanism for War

Rhetoric and Spin

War Through Rose-Colored Glasses

Abuses and Misuses of Intelligence

A Mythic Reality

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● The Importance of September 8, 2002

A Transforming Moment

The Pot Calling the Kettle Black

[Why Iraq?](#)

Bush Administration Claims vs. The Facts

Also noteworthy was the introduction of the fear-provoking slogan:
"We don't want the smoking gun to be a mushroom cloud."

Here is the September 8th sequence from *Leading to War*:

Video: SEPTEMBER 8 ROLLOUT

For further discussion of the themes discussed here, go to the section:[\[A Mechanism for War\]](#).

It is interesting to note that five days earlier, on September 3, 2002, the following exchange occurred between a reporter and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld:



REPORTER: Vice President Cheney said last week that Iraq was once close to producing or obtaining nuclear weapons. And said that they're getting close again. What evidence does the U.S. have that Iraq, Saddam Hussein, may be getting close again to obtaining a nuclear weapon?



RUMSFELD: Oh, I think I'll leave that for the coming days and weeks.

One can speculate that Rumsfeld refused to respond to the question about nuclear weapons since he knew that his administration would be leaking the aluminum tubes story to the *New York Times* only days later, in conjunction with the five television appearances on September 8.

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