

LEADING TO WAR

SEE WHERE THE TRUTH LIES

a film and website that chronicle the path to war in Iraq

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MAKING THE FILM

In 2005, director Barry J. Hershey met with producer Beth Sternheimer with the idea of creating a film to demonstrate how the Bush government led the American people to support a war against Iraq. Beth began exploratory research of the available television material to determine if it could be crafted into a meaningful film.

Focusing strictly on the build-up to war, she combed through vast numbers of news transcripts of Bush officials' public appearances from the 2002-2003 period. She selected sections of press conferences, speeches, and interviews – identifying segments that might be revealing regarding the path to war.

It was a mountain of information, overwhelming at first. Could this be made into a film? Would it be interesting to watch? Would the news networks license the desired video footage that corresponded to these transcripts?

To answer these and the many other questions hanging over the project, Barry and Beth decided to undertake a test: they chose an intriguing two month time frame from August-September 2002, when the campaign for war ramped up to full speed. They honed down the large amount of written material, selecting pieces based on content and variety, then contacted the news networks to obtain 'screener tapes' (low-quality, VHS video footage with timecode, to be used only for editing purposes) of the selected transcript material.

Next, they worked with assistant editor Derek Frank to assemble the material, in chronological order, and edited the footage down to a manageable length.

After screening this test section with friends and colleagues, they decided to move forward with the project and make a film covering the entire pre-war period from January 2002 – March 2003. Editor Marc Grossman and producer Lewis D. Wheeler, who had both previously worked with director Barry J. Hershey, came aboard. More screener tapes were ordered, covering the whole 14 month time frame before the war.

Over the next eight months, the team worked with the footage, wrestling the raw material into a meaningful and cohesive shape. The process of editing was particularly arduous, given the volume of footage – 85 hours for what turned out to be a 1 hour and 12 minute film. Although the film does not follow a specific 'narrative,' themes were discovered and developed, a style and rhythm emerged, and a progression in the selected material evolved. The filmmakers decided to adhere to a minimalist aesthetic: no voice-over, no outside commentary – just the actual words of the administration, presented in chronological order.

In the meantime, because the rights were so costly, no licenses were obtained for the footage during the editing – it would be wasteful to pay for footage that was going to end up on the cutting room floor. And there was no assurance that the networks would license particular material (for example, Sunday morning talk shows), and, if they did, for the full rights desired (all media outlets, worldwide).

While the film was being edited, development of this website began. Co-producer Ellie Lee started researching the claims made by the Bush administration in the film, which are refuted here [LINK TO DESPITES], with extensive government and press reports as documentation.

The analytical sections of this website were developed by the whole team. Much of this analysis arose out of repeated viewings of the film clips over a period of many months, revealing the underpinnings of the Bush administration's rhetoric and tactics. The discussion was further informed by press reports, declassified intelligence reports, books and other films on related subjects.

Finally, with editing completed, high-quality master tapes were ordered from the news networks (fortunately, with all requested rights granted), from which the final, broadcast-quality version of the film was made, which you can watch [here](#).

[\[link to a PDF of this page\]](#)

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

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