LEADING TO WAR
SEE WHERE THE TRUTH LIES

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

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DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

How were the American people persuaded by President Bush and his administration to support a war in Iraq, a war opposed by most countries, even close allies, and most people worldwide? This is a question that has troubled me since before the war started on March 19, 2003.

My primary source of information about the lead-up to the Iraq War was newspapers. Thus, it was quite a revelation when I first looked at television transcripts, and later at the footage, to see how the Bush administration presented the need for war to the American people.

This led to the realization that a film like LEADING TO WAR could provide a unique perspective on these historic events. First, the material could be distilled to enhance clarity. Selected clips from 14 months of speeches, press conferences and ad-hoc remarks could be placed back-to-back in chronological order. Second, this film could be viewed with the perspective of history, with the benefit of knowing the facts that have slowly emerged since the invasion of Iraq. The resulting film provides an experience I find compelling and hope others might as well.

In addition to the insight and perspective the film provides those Americans who lived through this period, there are two groups which did not, and would not, have had broad exposure to this footage. First, people in foreign countries receive fewer broadcasts of American government officials speaking on television. Second, and perhaps more importantly, future generations will not have experienced the case for war when it was presented. These two groups might have a general sense of what happened leading up to the Iraq War, but will lack many of the specifics. A comparison could be made to our fragmented awareness of the escalation resulting in the Vietnam War, for which many people have a broad historical understanding, and yet the details of how the American people were led into supporting that war have been obscured by time.

The genesis of the website for the film is a different story. It is the filmmakers' fate to watch the same footage over and over again. From this experience, we noticed Bush officals employing techniques and rhetorical devices – perhaps on the fifth or tenth viewing – that we did not see on the first. Also, watching the various clips in juxtaposition revealed insights not picked up from viewing a single clip in isolation. This process led to many reflections and insights that we decided to incorporate into an extensive website.

The hope is that LEADING TO WAR, and the companion website, will help people understand more clearly how governments influence their citizenry to support a war. Perhaps this greater awareness will help to avoid unnecessary wars in the future.

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