

IT'S TIME TO STOP BEATING (AROUND) THE BUSH!

Stephen L. Bakke – December 27, 2010

The hard fact is that so long as Saddam remains in power, he threatens the well-being of his people, the peace of his region, the security of the world. The best way to end that threat once and for all is a new Iraqi government ... And mark my words, he will develop weapons of mass destruction. He will deploy them and he will use them.

– Bill Clinton, from the Oval Office, December 1998.



Bush is Chastised, Demonized, and Called a Liar

So much effort has been focused on the democrats and the “left” chastising and demonizing our 43rd president, George W. Bush for his entry into the Iraq war in 2003. Remember in recent years when one catch phrase seemed to be a favorite? “Bush lied – people died.” I have reached a conclusion that this was caused, not by evidence, but simply by time passing, memories fading – and eventually Bush became the enemy. **Regrettably, he didn’t attempt to stop this crescendo of lies about him.** I think that’s just the way he is.

A “Now I Remember” Moment

The purpose of this report is to use recent information and commentary which has given the entire episode a stunningly different perspective. Several things have caused me, and many observers, to experience an **“Oh yea! Now I remember” moment.**

In addition to reviewing news reports and commentary, I have tried to weave together a factual and supportable chain of events which help tell W’s story. I have drawn from his own commentary from his new book, “Decision Points”, as well as observations from others. (The book was released in November, soon after my October meeting and consultation with him – **captured by paparazzi for posterity, in the photo at the end of this report.**)

Some Important Facts and a Timeline

- In response to **Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait**, President George H.W. Bush conducted the “limited purpose” **Operation Desert Storm** during late 1990 and early 1991.

- **UN inspectors discovered** a vast arsenal of WMD including **chemical agents**. Saddam acknowledged they included **anthrax and botulinum toxin**. And UN inspectors that Iraq had a **nuclear weapons program that was about two years from yielding a bomb**.
- On October 31, 1998, after experiencing compelling congressional support, Bill Clinton signed into law the **Iraq Liberation Act of 1998** which states that the policy of the United States is **“to support efforts to remove the regime headed by Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq.”**
- By 1998, Saddam Hussein had persuaded key trading partners like Russia and France to lobby the **UN to loosen the restrictions** imposed by UN resolution after Desert Storm. Then he **forced the UN weapons inspectors to leave the country**. In total, Iraq had **defied 16 UN resolutions** dating back to 1991.
- The Clinton administration responded by launching **Operation Desert Fox** – with bombings conducted from December 16-19, 1998.
- Saddam didn’t just seek and develop WMD, he had used them. This included using mustard gas and nerve agents against the Iranians and **in 1988 he massacred more than five thousand Kurdish civilians** using chemical weapons.
- While they didn’t know where Saddam was keeping his WMD, the fact that he had them previously, and that he didn’t verify they had been destroyed as required by the UN, led **virtually every intelligence agency to conclude that he had WMD** in his arsenal.
- **Then came 9/11/2001**. Terrorist support was a specialty of Saddam – he funded their efforts around the world but was not directly involved in the 9/11 radical Muslim terrorist attack. However, an al-Qaeda affiliated terrorist leader named al-Zarqawi was **operating a chemical weapons lab in Iraq**. **The U.S. still continued to pursue diplomacy**.
- One year after 9/11/2001, George Bush addressed the UN in September 2002, seeking a new resolution - **once again choosing diplomacy**. **He asked the UN: “Will the United Nations serve the purpose of its founding, or will it be irrelevant?”**
- **Following the UN speech** by the President, an editorial by the Washington Post supported Bush by stating: “If the United Nations remains passive in the face of this long-standing and flagrant violation of its authority in a matter involving weapons of mass destruction, it certainly will risk the irrelevance of which Mr. Bush warned.”
- The President received the following (now) unclassified report from the CIA: “Baghdad has chemical and biological weapons as well as missiles with ranges in excess of UN restrictions; if left unchecked, **it probably will have a nuclear weapon during this decade.**” There was widespread agreement with the accuracy of this information: Senators Kerry, Rockefeller, Hagel, Clinton, Biden, Daschle, Edwards and Reid, as well as House Minority Leader Gephardt – to name a few prominent democrats.
- Even Russia and France supported the UN resolution proposed by our President! **Germany, France, Great Britain, Russia, China, and Egypt** believed their own independent intelligence reports, which also agreed with Bush’s information.
- On January 27, 2003, **UN inspector Hans Blix reported** to the UN stated that they had discovered warheads that Saddam had not declared or destroyed – and there were **indications of nerve gas and potential for mustard gas**. **Even the IAEA** (later a Bush critic) stated “The ball is entirely in Iraq’s court Iraq now has to prove that it is innocent

- Even then, with support from Colin Powell and Tony Blair, Bush submitted another resolution request to the UN. This was meticulously presented by Powell on February 24, 2003. Cheney, Rumsfeld, and Condi did not agree with doing this, according to W.
- After no action by the UN, on March 17, 2003 **this resolution was withdrawn.** Bush gave Saddam 48 hours to leave Iraq, or there would be a military conflict. And so the U.S., along with several allies invaded Iraq – defeating Saddam in relatively short order.

George Bush Reflects

Saddam had already had years to comply with international demands. From “Decision Points”:

Whenever I heard someone claim that we had rushed to war, I thought back to this period. It had been more than a decade since the Gulf War resolutions had demanded that Saddam disarm, over four years since he had kicked out the weapons inspectors, six months since I had issued my ultimatum at the UN, four months since Resolution 1441 had given Saddam his “final opportunity,” and three months past the deadline to fully disclose his WMD. Diplomacy did not feel rushed. It felt like it was taking forever.”

“Decision Points” presents things which have puzzled George Bush over recent years:

I’ve always wondered why many critics of the war did not acknowledge the moral argument many of those who demonstrated against military action in Iraq were devoted advocates of human rights. Yet they condemned me for using force to remove the man who had gassed the Kurds, mowed down the Shia by helicopter gunship, massacred the Marsh Arabs, and sent tens of thousands to mass graves. ... I didn’t see how anyone could deny that liberating Iraq advanced the cause of human rights.

And about his mistakes:

I’ve spent a great deal of time thinking about what went wrong in Iraq and why. I have concluded that we made two errors that account for many of the setback ... The first is that we did not respond more quickly or aggressively when the security situation started to deteriorate after Saddam’s regime fell ... The other error was the intelligence failure on Iraq’s WMD ... Supporters of the war believed it; opponents of the war believed it ...

He Didn’t Lie; He Didn’t Rush to War

Everyone believed in the Iraqi threat. And it was over 18 months after 9/11 – finally facing an inability to get the UN to act – that President Bush acted by ordering the military into Iraq. Soon Saddam Hussein was vanquished and eventually executed.

Bush seems to convey complete comfort about his decision regarding starting the Iraq war. He is still puzzled and angry that they never found the WMD they expected to. But given all that was known and confirmed, it’s no wonder he reached the decisions that he did. We may never know the complete WMD story. But it is ever more certain that there is no doubt that they did exist.

And Then Came Wikileaks!

Several people sent me information and links to commentary about Wikileaks material confirming that Bush was viciously and unfairly “smeared” by the opposition. This is a good addendum to the material I have provided above. Here is a summary of some of this new commentary from Larry Elder and others. First some information about Noah Shachtman:

- Shachtman is a nonresident fellow at the liberal Brookings Institution.
- He researched the 400,000 Wikileaks documents from October 2010.
- He found that by late 2003, Bush’s staunchest defenders were gaged on finding WMD.
- **Wikileaks documents indicate that for years after the invasion, U.S. troops continued to find weapons labs and uncover WMD.**
- **Wikileaks documents show that in 2008, our military shipped out of Iraq, what the AP reported as “the last major remnant of Saddam Hussein’s nuclear program.” Included ... were 550 metric tons of the supposed nonexistent yellowcake.**
- Shachtman tries to throw cold water on any enthusiasm about this information among Bush supporters. He wrote: “Skeptics will note that these relatively small WMD stockpiles were hardly the kind of grave danger that the Bush administration presented in the run-up to the war.” Bush critics, even in the face of this evidence, “cut W no slack”.

Shachtman’s research was used by Larry Elder in his commentary. Here’s a summary:

- In the 2003 State of the Union address, W stated: “The British government has learned that **Saddam Hussein recently sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa.**”
- Former Ambassador **Joe Wilson contradicted** that information, writing “No, the Cheney administration sent me to investigate the allegation – and I found it without merit.”
- It was well documented that Wilson reported just the opposite to the CIA. **The “anti-Bush” Washington Post, editorialized that Wilson had lied..**
- The Iraq/uranium claim by Bush dealt with “yellowcake.” This is the seed material for higher-grade nuclear-enrichment. It can be enriched for nuclear energy or weapons.
- Some doubt cropped up in the Bush administration as to the accuracy of their information about “yellowcake.” They backed away from their position a bit. **Time magazine said “no yellowcake equals no WMD equals bogus basis for war,”** according to Elder’s report. At this point the existence of uranium was uncertain, but not refuted.
- **Wilson was made a hero by Time magazine even though an examination of his original CIA reports contradicted his public statements.**
- Elder reminds us that if yellowcake would have been found, it would prove that Saddam was on the road to planning nuclear weapon development. **And there was yellowcake found according to information in Wikileaks, as Elder, and others point out.**
- Why didn’t this ever hit the radar screen of the press? **Elder speculates that this is not what the MSM came to consider materials for WMD.** It was old and degraded.
- **But Wikileaks shows us that these chemicals, agents, yellowcake and mustard gas artillery shells were there, found, and known about – but for some reason their existence was discounted and disregarded (plus, it didn’t fit their “hate Bush” mantra).**

I think Bush added to the confusion. He didn’t dwell on these details because it’s not in his nature to get into public debates. And I believe he truly felt this was not the massive buildup of material he expected to find, and which he confidently represented to the

American people would be found. But certain materials were found, their discovery was significant, and this does qualify as further proof Bush didn't lie.

Larry Elder takes this information and, I believe **correctly concludes that it is “case closed.” Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction and intended to restart his nuclear arms development program.**

I learned that allowing your opponent to define you is one of the biggest mistakes you can make in a campaign.

– George W. Bush in “Decision Points”

I don't believe he followed his own worthy advice on that one. He didn't defend himself at all as he was receiving unfair criticism through the years. His penchant for ignoring criticism overwhelmed this good advice.

Tonight in this hall, we resolve to be the party not of repose but of reform. We will write not footnotes but chapters in the American story. We will add the work of our hands to the inheritance of our fathers and mothers and leave this nation greater than we found it If you give me your trust, I will honor it. Grant me a mandate, I will use it. Give me the opportunity to lead this nation, and I will lead.

– George W. Bush, 2000 Republican National Convention

I believe those were totally sincere words. Bush didn't lie! And I never thought he did. I just didn't look into it before and lay out the facts the best I could. **I say again – Bush didn't lie!**



SB expressing sincere appreciation for the valuable political and policy advice received from one of his senior advisors.