

The Polarized Presidency of George W. Bush

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Charles H. Swannack, Jr., commander of the Army 82nd Airborne Division. General Anthony Zinni, former head of the US Central Command before the war was also an outspoken critic (see Cloud and Schmitt 2006). On 14 April 2006, the Pentagon issued an e-mail memo to former commanders and military analysts noting the military's "unprecedented degree" of involvement in the Pentagon's decision making, citing 139 meetings of Rumsfeld and the JCS and 208 meetings with senior commanders since 2005; as well, President Bush strongly defended Rumsfeld as did General Tommy Franks, the former Central Command head, and General Richard Myers, the recently retired chair of the JCS (Mazzetti and Ruttenberg 2006).

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Intelligence and Decision Making before the War with Iraq

James P. Pfiffner

President Bush made the fateful decision to go to war in Iraq sometime in 2002 or 2003, but he never addressed explicitly the question of whether to go to war in a formal NSC or cabinet meeting. The evidence adduced as the justification for war was ambiguous and incomplete, yet the administration claimed unwarranted certainty about it. The administration attempted to influence the intelligence process to support its case for war, and even though the effort did not fully succeed, it gave insufficient attention to alternative explanations for the intelligence.

The use of intelligence before the Iraq war underscores the insights of Richard Betts (1978, 61) in his analysis of intelligence failures:

In the best-known cases of intelligence failure, the most crucial mistakes have seldom been made by collectors of raw information, occasionally by professionals who produce finished analysis, but most often by the decision makers who consume the products of intelligence services. Policy premises constrict perception, and administrative workloads constrain reflection. Intelligence failure is political and psychological more often than organizational.

As Robert Jervis (2006a, 1) succinctly puts it, "Policy-makers say they need and want very good intelligence. They do indeed need it, but often do not want it."

In the case of Iraq, high officials in the Bush Administration accepted without critical examination the conclusions of the intelligence community that fit their policy preferences. However, they challenged, pressured, and bypassed the intelligence community when intelligence products did not fit their expectations. As a result, the flawed decision-making process, combined with misinterpretation of intelligence, led to a war based on mistaken premises.

Although the bureaucratic pathologies highlighted in Graham Allison's model II (Allison 1971) may have been at work, this chapter argues that in the case of Iraq, a rigid mindset on the part of administration policymakers led to disaster. The commitment to regime change in Iraq blinded the administration to evidence that did not support their arguments for war in Iraq. Thus, they came to conclusions with much more confidence than the intelligence evidence warranted.

The administration had understandable and plausible reasons for seeing Saddam Hussein as a threat to his neighbors in the Middle East. He had used chemical weapons in the past and had made some progress toward a nuclear capacity in the late 1980s. The administration also had reasons to want to thwart Saddam's military ambitions. Saddam was a brutal tyrant who threatened his neighbors and oppressed his own people.

The United States had used military power to oppose Saddam's ambitions since the 1991 Gulf War and had sought to hinder him with economic sanctions and the enforcement of no-fly zones. Saddam, however, seemed determined to continue his internal domination and pursue his external ambitions. Iraq controlled a good portion of the world's oil reserves and Saddam would not hesitate to use this leverage in support of his ambitions. In addition, President Bush believed that Saddam had sponsored an attempt on his father's life. Thus, the conclusion that the Middle East in particular and the world in general would be better off without Saddam was compelling.

Other attempts to remove Saddam from power had been unavailing, and a military confrontation seemed to be the only way to remove Saddam as a threat. Therefore, President Bush resolved to remove Saddam from power through military means. However, in its eagerness to go to war with Saddam, the administration followed a flawed decision-making process, selectively used intelligence, and tried to politicize the intelligence process. Administration officials argued that Saddam had reconstituted his nuclear weapons programs and that he had chemical and biological weapons that were a threat to the United States homeland. They also maintained that Saddam had a cooperative relationship with al-Qaeda.

This chapter examines the use of intelligence by George W. Bush and his administration in decision making before the war in Iraq. I first argue that as the administration moved toward war, decision making was neither deliberate nor deliberative but consisted of a series of decisions that cumulatively led to war. Second, I analyze the arguments of the administration that Iraq was closely linked to al-Qaeda and that it possessed weapons of mass destruction (WMD) that were a threat to the United States. The intelligence produced by the intelligence community was sketchy and ambiguous; political officials in the administration, however, presented it with unwarranted certainty to bolster their case for war. Third, I argue that the administration sought to shape the conclusions of intelligence agencies and downplayed or ignored

contrary evidence and the reservations of intelligence professionals. As a result of flawed decision making, the administration went to war in Iraq under misperceptions that resulted in the undermining of US credibility throughout the world.

Deciding to go to War in Iraq

It is not clear when President Bush finally decided to go to war in Iraq, but from the beginning of his administration he had a predisposition for deposing Saddam Hussein. His first two NSC meetings focused on Iraq (Suskind 2004a, 74–6). Immediately after the terrorist attacks of 9/11 he told his top terrorism expert, Richard Clarke, three times to find a link between Saddam and the 9/11 attacks, even though Clarke told him that the intelligence community had concluded that al-Qaeda was behind the attacks (Clarke 2004, 32).¹ Officials in the war cabinet meetings at Camp David discussed attacking Iraq rather than Afghanistan, but the president thought this option was premature. Nevertheless, the president ordered the Defense Department to examine the possibility of a military confrontation with Iraq (National Commission 2004, 334–6; Kessler 2003).

Plans for war became much more concrete when the president told Donald Rumsfeld on 21 November 2001, to develop an operational war plan. General Tommy Franks pulled together a group of DOD planners and presented his results to Rumsfeld and Bush in a series of meetings between December 2001 and 7 February 2002 (Woodward 2004, 96–115). At that time, the Pentagon began shifting intelligence, personnel, and planning resources from the war in Afghanistan to focus on Iraq (Bob Graham 2004, 126; Ricks 2006, 38).

The president began his public campaign for war with Iraq in his State of the Union address on 29 January 2002, in which he warned of the growing menace from the "Axis of Evil" states: Iraq, Iran, and North Korea. During the spring of 2002, the administration started talking about "regime change" in Iraq, and President Bush began to signal publicly that he was committed to removing Saddam from power. In his meeting with British prime minister Tony Blair in April 2002, he asked for Blair's support in a war against Saddam. Blair agreed, but emphasized that there had to be a political plan in place to convince public and world opinion that war was necessary.

In the summer of 2002, military planning became more intense, and leaks from the Pentagon voiced the concerns of the professional officer corps, particularly the Army, about war with Iraq (Ricks 2006, 40–2). By mid-summer, President Bush had seemingly made up his mind. When State Department official Richard Haass broached the issue with National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice, she told him that the decision had already been made (Lemann 2003, 36). The British foreign secretary characterized US intentions

in July of 2002: "It seemed clear that Bush had made up his mind to take military action, even if the timing was not yet decided. But the case was thin" (Downing Street Memo 2002).

With opposition to war growing in elite circles, the administration decided to make the case for war publicly and explicitly. On 26 August Vice President Cheney, in a speech to the Veterans of Foreign Wars, declared, "Many of us are convinced that Saddam will acquire nuclear weapons fairly soon.... There is no doubt he is amassing [WMD] to use against our friends, against our allies, and against us" (Cheney 2002). Colin Powell met with the president on 5 August 2002 to try to warn him of the dangers of invading Iraq. Although Powell's reasoning about war with Iraq did not convince the president, Bush did agree to go to the United Nations Security Council for a resolution. Tony Blair had also insisted that this was necessary for international support for war.

In September the administration began to gear up its campaign to sway public opinion about the need for war with Iraq. Chief of Staff Andrew Card explained the timing by pointing out, "From a marketing point of view, you don't introduce new products in August" (Woodward 2004, 172). On 3 September the White House Iraq Group (WHIG) was created to coordinate the administration's message on Iraq. Its members included Card, Condoleezza Rice, Stephen Hadley, Lewis Libby, Dan Bartlett, and Nicholas Callio (ibid., 168).

During September 2002 the administration in its public statements began to focus heavily on the direct threat to the United States from Iraq's WMD, chemical, biological, and nuclear. In early September the administration leaked information to the *New York Times* that Saddam was purchasing aluminum tubes in order to refine uranium for nuclear fuel. Vice President Cheney and National Security Adviser Rice quickly confirmed the authenticity of the leak in press interviews. The next disclosure came in a dossier released by the Blair government on 24 September 2002 in which it claimed that Saddam had sought uranium oxide (yellowcake) from Niger and that Saddam could attack with chemical weapons within 45 minutes of warning.

The classified National Intelligence Estimate prepared for Congress on 2 October 2002, followed the British dossier. The NIE asserted that Saddam had chemical and biological weapons and that if he acquired fissile material, he could manufacture a nuclear bomb within one year (CIA 2002a). The NIE also contained dissents by the Departments of State and Energy and the Air Force that undercut the broad assertions in some of the major findings of the document. Shortly after the NIE was given to members of Congress, a White Paper was made public that contained the most disturbing assertions of Iraq's WMD but few of the reservations expressed in the original document (Ricks 2006, 52).²

The president used the intelligence reported in the NIE, most importantly in his 7 October speech in Cincinnati, to convince members of Congress to vote

for a resolution allowing the president to initiate war with Iraq. The timing was important, because congressional elections were coming up in November, and the president wanted to use the votes as campaign issues for those who did not support his request for authority to take the nation to war. With the positive votes from Congress and the Republicans regaining control of the Senate in the November elections, the administration succeeded in winning a unanimous vote from the UN Security Council to force Saddam to give UN weapons inspectors free access to any suspected weapons sites in Iraq.

On 21 December 2002 CIA Director George Tenet and Deputy Director John McLaughlin briefed President Bush in the Oval Office about WMD in Iraq. After McLaughlin had gone over the highly classified evidence for the existence of Saddam's WMD, President Bush was not impressed. He told them, "Nice try. I don't think this is quite—it's not something that Joe Public would understand or would gain a lot of confidence from." Bush said to Tenet, "I've been told all this intelligence about having WMD and this is the best we've got?" Tenet replied, "Don't worry, it's a slam dunk!" The president had concluded that the evidence was less than compelling, but aside from asking his aides to prepare a more effective presentation, there is no indication that he insisted on a fundamental reanalysis of the evidence to ensure that there was a more compelling case (Woodward 2004, 247–250). After the incident, however, neither Tenet nor McLaughlin could recall Tenet having used those words (Suskind 2006, 188).³

The president appears to have made the final decision to go to war in January 2003, but not after any formal meeting. Bob Woodward reported that President Bush had asked Rice and Karen Hughes their judgment about going to war and had informed Rumsfeld (Woodward 2004, 251–265). The president said that he knew how the different members of his administration felt and informed them at different times of his decision. The fact that Rice had to prompt the president to inform Powell that he had made up his mind to go to war highlights the lack of a formal process of decision making. So on 13 January the president brought Powell in for a 12-minute meeting to inform him of his decision. Notably, he did not ask his advice. Even Prince Bandar of Saudi Arabia had known of Bush's final decision before Powell (Pfiffner 2004, 25–46; Woodward 2004, 269–74). On 31 January 2003 the president met with Prime Minister Blair and informed him that he intended to invade Iraq, even if there were no new UN resolution and no WMD were found. At this meeting both Bush and Blair expressed doubts that WMD would be found quickly in Iraq, despite Colin Powell's upcoming speech to the UN (Van Natta 2006).⁴

Although UN weapons inspectors had carte blanche to inspect whatever sites they chose, President Bush became impatient with their inability to locate WMD in Iraq. In his 2003 State of the Union Address, he declared, "If Saddam Hussein does not fully disarm for the safety of our people, and for the peace of the world, we will lead a coalition to disarm him." Hans

Blix, head of the UN inspectors, said that more time was needed to complete the inspections, but President Bush remained skeptical of the UN's ability to locate the weapons. President Bush then insisted that the UN inspectors be withdrawn as US and British troops massed on the borders of Iraq in preparation for the invasion. On 19 March the war began.

The striking thing about the decision to go to war was that there seemed to be no overall meeting of the principals in which the issue of whether to go to war with Iraq was debated. According to Richard Haass, director of policy planning for the State Department, "It was an accretion, a tipping point. ... A decision was not made—a decision happened, and you can't say when or how" (Packer 2005, 45). Thomas Ricks characterized the decision to go to war as being made "more through drift than through any one meeting" (Ricks 2006, 58).

The traditional interdepartmental policy development process of the NSC did not guide the decision-making process. Vice President Cheney and Secretary Rumsfeld dominated the planning for war; Condoleezza Rice did not play the traditional brokering role of the national security adviser (Burke 2005a, b); and Colin Powell was often marginalized. As Colin Powell said, "very often maybe Mr. Rumsfeld and Vice President Cheney would take decisions in to the president that the rest of us weren't aware of. That did happen, on a number of occasions" (Leiby 2006). According to Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage, "There was never any policy process to break, by Condi or anyone else. There was never one from the start" (Suskind 2006, 225). President Bush's tendency to consult only a few of his closest aides and the vice president exacerbated the lack of process. According to Christopher DeMuth, president of the American Enterprise Institute, the circle of Bush advisers was "both exclusive and exclusionary." "It's a too tightly managed decision-making process. When they made decisions, a very small number of people are in the room, and it has a certain effect of constricting the range of alternatives being offered" (Suskind 2004b, 8).

Although an orderly decision-making process cannot guarantee that wise decisions will be made, the lack of a deliberative process in which major decisions are formally debated is more likely to lead to mistakes. The mistake in this case was going to war based on faulty premises (Pfiffner 2005b). As President Eisenhower said, "Organization cannot make a genius out of an incompetent. ... On the other hand, disorganization can scarcely fail to result in inefficiency and can easily lead to disaster" (Eisenhower 1963, 114).

The *Casus Belli*: Saddam's Link to al-Qaeda and WMD

Both the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence in 2004 and the Robb-Silberman Commission in 2005 concluded that US intelligence agencies were

at fault for the incorrect and misleading information used by policy makers in the run-up to the war with Iraq. According to the SSCI, "Most of the major key judgments in the Intelligence Community's October 2002 National Intelligence Estimate ... either overstated, or were not supported by, the underlying intelligence reporting." The report stated that the committee had found "no evidence that the IC's mischaracterization or exaggeration of the intelligence on Iraq's weapons of mass destruction (WMD) capabilities was the result of political pressure" (Senate Select Committee, 203–4). The Robb-Silberman report said, "We conclude that the Intelligence Community was dead wrong in almost all of its pre-war judgments about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction." They also found that the IC did not change any judgments in response to political pressure (Commission on Intelligence Capabilities 2005, 335–46). The implication of these findings was that Bush Administration policy makers were innocent victims of faulty intelligence reporting and analysis. However, this chapter argues that, even though the IC was sometimes mistaken, administration officials consistently ignored contrary evidence and selectively focused on those bits of intelligence that seemed to support their policy preference for war with Iraq.

This section examines the way the administration used intelligence in its decision making about war. The analysis reinforces Betts's insight that, "The use of intelligence depends less on the bureaucracy than on the intellects and inclinations of the authorities above it" (Betts 1978, 61). The administration's commitment to depose Saddam Hussein led it to dismiss or ignore any arguments by the intelligence community that seemed to undermine its case for war. As Betts argued, "a leader mortgaged to his policy tends to resent or dismiss the critical [analyses], even when they represent the majority view of the intelligence community" (*ibid.* 64).

Strong psychological tendencies push policy makers toward interpreting intelligence in ways that are consistent with their expectations and not counter to their preferences. Robert Jervis (2006b, 4) observes, "people are prone to avoid painful value trade-offs if they possibly can. Decision makers talk about how they make hard decisions all the time. But, like the rest of us, they prefer easy ones and will use their great abilities of self-deception in order to turn the former into the latter."

The administration made several primary arguments to convince Congress, the American people, and even themselves that war with Iraq was necessary. The administration claimed that there was a link between Saddam and al-Qaeda, and it strongly implied that this was an operational link and that Saddam was connected to the 9/11 terrorist attacks. It also asserted that Saddam possessed chemical and biological weapons and was working on the ability to deliver these weapons to the US homeland (the unpiloted aerial vehicles, UAVs). Administration officials also asserted that Saddam's regime was well on the way to reconstituting its nuclear weapons capacity. (Although

it never had such a capacity, it was making serious progress before 1991.) It was only after war was virtually inevitable that the administration began to argue that the United States needed to relieve the suffering of the Iraqi people by removing Saddam and that a democratic Iraq would be a beacon of hope for repressed peoples in the Middle East.

The Asserted Link Between Saddam and al-Qaeda

Immediately after the attacks of 9/11, much of the US public believed that Saddam Hussein was connected to the attacks, and statements by the president and other administration officials reinforced this impression over the next several years. Within 24 hours of the attacks, President Bush told Richard Clarke several times to look into "any shred" of evidence of a link, despite Clarke's report that the intelligence community had concluded that al-Qaeda was behind the attacks (Clarke 2004, 30–3). In September 2002 Secretary Rumsfeld said evidence for the link was "bulletproof" "factual," and "exactly accurate" (Schmitt 2002). In his 7 October 2002 speech, President Bush asserted, "we've learned that Iraq has trained al-Qaeda members in bomb-making and poisons and deadly gasses" (Associated Press 2004). The main evidence adduced to prove the relationship was (1) an asserted meeting of hijacker Mohamed Atta with an Iraqi intelligence official in Prague in April 2001; (2) the presence of the terrorist al-Zarqawi in Iraq; (3) several inconclusive meetings in the 1990s; and (4) the confession under aggressive interrogation of Ibn al-Shaykh al-Libi.

ATTA MEETING IN PRAGUE

The administration claimed that there had been a meeting between hijacker Mohamed Atta and an Iraqi diplomat in Prague on 9 April 2001. However, the CIA and FBI found no evidence of such a meeting. They had firm evidence that Atta was in Virginia Beach on 4 April and in Coral Springs, Florida on 11 April and that his phone had been used in the United States on 6, 9, 10, and 11 April (National Commission 2004, 228–9). In the President's Daily Brief (PDB) of 21 September 2001, the CIA reported the conclusion that there was no evidence that demonstrated a link between Saddam and al-Qaeda (Waas 2005). Nevertheless, Secretary Rumsfeld and Vice President Cheney continued to claim the existence of a link, and on 25 September 2002 President Bush said, "You can't distinguish between al Qaeda and Saddam when you talk about the war on terror" (ibid.).

Contrary to the administration's claims, the Senate Select Intelligence Committee concluded that "Despite four decades of intelligence reporting on Iraq, there was little useful intelligence collected that helped analysts determine the Iraqi regime's possible links to al Qaeda" (ibid.). The administration, however, did not allow the Senate Select Intelligence Committee to examine the PDB.⁵

The 9/11 Commission judged that "The available evidence does not support the original Czech report of an Atta-Ani meeting" (National Commission 2004, 228–9).

ZARQAWI IN IRAQ

In June 2004, President Bush said that the terrorist, Musab al-Zarqawi, was "the best evidence of connection to Al Qaeda affiliates and Al Qaeda" (CNN 2004). Although al-Zarqawi was a terrorist, the CIA doubted that he was closely connected with al-Qaeda. A CIA report of August 2004 said that they did not think that Saddam harbored the Jordanian terrorist or members of his group (Bergen 2004; Jehl 2004b). Aside from possible medical treatment in Baghdad, Zarqawi operated from Kurdish territory in Iraq that was not fully under Saddam's control.

AL-QAEDA IN IRAQ

In the 1990s, some meetings between al-Qaeda and Iraq representatives probably did take place, but there is no evidence that they led to any cooperation. According to the 9/11 Commission, meetings between bin Laden or aides "may have occurred in 1999." "But to date we have seen no evidence that these or the earlier contacts ever developed into a collaborative operational relationship. Nor have we seen evidence indicating that Iraq cooperated with al Qaeda in developing or carrying out any attacks against the United States" (National Commission 2004, 66).

CONFESSION OF SHAYKH AL-LIBI

In his major speech about the need for war with Iraq on 7 October 2002 President Bush said, "We've learned that Iraq has trained al-Qaeda members in bomb-making and poisons and deadly gasses." The main source of this claim was the interrogation of Ibn al-Shaykh al-Libi, a Libyan captured in Pakistan, who had been a senior member of al-Qaeda. However, in February 2002 the DIA had judged that al-Libi's statements were suspect because he could not provide credible details about the types of weapons involved, the Iraqis he dealt with, or the location of the meetings. In addition, he was probably subjected to torture to obtain his confession. In November 2005, Senator Carl Levin released portions of the 2002 Defense Intelligence Agency report (DITSUM 044-02) that undermined al-Libi's credibility (Levin 2004).

The DIA concluded in 2002, "it is more likely this individual is intentionally misleading the debriefers. Ibn al-Shaykh has been undergoing debriefs for several weeks and may be describing scenarios to the debriefers that he knows will retain their interest." The report added that, "Saddam's regime is intensely secular and wary of Islamic revolutionary movements. Moreover, Baghdad is unlikely to provide assistance to a group it cannot control."⁶ Libi recanted his

claims in February 2004, after he was returned to US custody and was held at Guantanamo Bay. It was reported that he had been subject to "aggressive interrogation techniques" in order to get him to talk (Isikoff 2004; Jehl 2004b; Priest 2004). Al-Libi confessed to aiding Iraq only after he had been questioned by Egyptian interrogators to whom the US had transferred him. Despite the DIA's judgment in February 2002 that Ibn al-Shaykh was probably "intentionally misleading" his interrogators, President Bush included the claim about al-Qaeda training Iraqis in "poisons and deadly gasses" in his speech on 7 October 2002 (Jehl 2005b).

Paul Pillar, who was in charge of coordinating the intelligence community's assessment of Iraq from 2000 to 2005, wrote: "the greatest discrepancy between the administration's public statements and the intelligence community's judgments concerned...the relationship between Saddam and al-Qaeda. The enormous attention devoted to this subject did not reflect any judgment by intelligence officials that there was or was likely to be anything like the 'alliance' the administration said existed" (Pillar 2006).

The Intelligence Community (IC) reported its conclusions on the link in five separate reports from September 2001 to January 2003, according to the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (Levin 2004). In its January 2003 report, "Iraqi Support for Terrorism," it said that the evidence for such a relationship was "contradictory" and that it "appears to more closely resemble that of two independent actors trying to exploit each other" and that there was "no credible information" that Iraq had any foreknowledge of the 9/11 attacks (ibid. 9).

Despite the lack of support from the Intelligence Community, on 1 May 2003, President Bush still called Iraq an "ally" of al-Qaeda. On 9 January 2004 Vice President Cheney said that a leaked document from Douglas Feith's office in the Pentagon was the "best source of information" on the alleged link (ibid. 32). The report, which was published in the conservative *Weekly Standard*, included many unverifiable assertions purporting to demonstrate the link (Hayes 2003).⁷ However, the Department of Defense disavowed the accuracy of the leaked report.⁸

Thus the administration's decision to go to war in Iraq was based in part on its conclusion that Saddam was allied with al-Qaeda—a conclusion that was explicitly challenged by the intelligence community, especially the CIA and the Office of Intelligence and Research of the State Department.

Chemical and Biological Weapons

Suspicion that Saddam had significant quantities of chemical weapons in 2002 were based on the facts that he had large quantities of chemical munitions in the 1980s and that he had used them internally against the Kurds and in his war with Iran. When Saddam could not account for the weapons having

been destroyed and the UN inspectors could not locate them, intelligence agencies made the reasonable inference that he still possessed them (Hersh 2003c, 87).⁹ Nevertheless, the Defense Intelligence Agency had doubts as the NIE was being prepared in September 2002, though their reservations were not reported in the NIE. DIA concluded, "there is no reliable information on whether Iraq is producing or stockpiling chemical weapons" (Auster, Mazzetti, and Pound 2003; Whitelaw 2004).

The primary, contemporary evidence for the biological weapons and mobile labs claim that Colin Powell asserted in his 5 February UN speech originated with Curveball, who was an Iraqi defector held by the Germans (Kerr 2004).¹⁰ Despite doubts about his reliability, the CIA assured Colin Powell before his UN speech that the sources were multiple and credible. Yet senior German officials of the Federal Intelligence Service (BND) said that they had warned US intelligence officials in the fall of 2002 that Curveball was unreliable. According to them, Curveball was "not a stable, psychologically stable guy." "This was not substantial evidence. We made clear we could not verify the things he said." After hearing the US claims about chemical and biological weapons, the Germans said "We were shocked. Mein Gott! We had always told them it was not proven....It was not hard intelligence" (Drogin and Goetz 2005a, b).¹¹

The German judgment that Curveball was not reliable was passed on to the CIA through Tyler Drumheller, chief of the Directorate of Operations European Division. After he had read a draft of Colin Powell's upcoming speech to the United Nations, Drumheller tried to warn CIA Deputy Director John McLaughlin that the Germans doubted Curveball's mental stability and reliability. McLaughlin reportedly said that Curveball was at "the heart of the case" for Iraq's biological weapons programs. Drumheller also warned Tenet on the night before Powell's speech that Curveball's information was not reliable. Later, Tenet and McLaughlin told the Robb-Silberman Commission that they did not remember Drumheller's warnings about Curveball (Drogin and Goetz 2005a; Drogin and Miller 2005; Risen 2006, 116–20).¹²

In May 2003, after the initial military phase of the war, the US sent nine bioweapons experts, each with ten years' professional experience, to Iraq to examine two trailers that were thought to be mobile biological weapons labs. After a careful examination, the technical team reported back to the CIA on 27 May 2003 that the trailers were not designed for bioweapons production but rather for producing hydrogen for weather balloons. Nevertheless the next day, 28 May 2003, the CIA issued a report stating that the trailers "were the strongest evidence to date that Iraq was hiding a biological warfare program" (Warrick 2006b). The next day, citing the trailers, President Bush declared, "We have found the weapons of mass destruction" (ibid. 2006). Despite the 122-page final report of the technical team, over the next several months administration officials continued to cite the trailers as evidence of

Saddam's WMD.¹³ And on 5 February 2004, George Tenet said in a speech at Georgetown University that the trailers were plausibly bioweapons labs (Warrick 2006a, b). Over the summer and early fall of 2003, the Iraq survey group could not discover any mobile labs or biological weapons. Interestingly, David Kay said that he was not told of the report of the technical team until late in 2003 (Warrick 2006a).¹⁴

The NIE also reported that Saddam had unpiloted aerial vehicles. President Bush claimed in his 7 October 2002 speech, "Iraq has a growing fleet" of UAVs that "could be used to disperse chemical or biological weapons across broad areas. . . . We are concerned that Iraq is exploring ways of using these UAVs for missions targeting the United States" (emphasis added). The Air Force, however, registered a dissent in the NIE: "The Director, Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance, US Air Force, does not agree that Iraq is developing UAVs primarily intended to be delivery platforms for chemical and biological warfare (CBW) agents. The small size of Iraq's new UAV strongly suggests a primary role of reconnaissance, although CBW delivery is an inherent capability" (CIA 2002a, 7). After the initial war, the Air Force was proven correct in its judgment of Saddam's UAVs (Bradley Graham 2003; Pfiffner 2004, 40-1).

Thus, although the premise that Saddam possessed chemical and biological weapons was plausible, policy makers ignored several warnings that did not support their assumptions.

Nuclear Weapons

Although Saddam's supposed participation in 9/11 constituted a strong political argument for revenge against Iraq, the argument that Saddam was close to obtaining nuclear weapons made the most compelling argument for war. Even those most skeptical about the need for war and its consequences had to be shaken by the possibility of Saddam with nuclear weapons. Therefore, the administration played the nuclear card with significant effects in its public campaign for war. The main evidence upon which it relied, however, was shaky. This section first examines the claim that Saddam sought uranium oxide from Niger; it then focuses on the question of the aluminum tubes.

The suspicion that Saddam was in the process of reconstituting his nuclear capacity was not unreasonable. After the 1991 Gulf War, it was discovered that Saddam had made much more progress toward a nuclear capacity than either the UN or the CIA had suspected. That capacity was destroyed by US forces in the war and by UN inspectors after the war. Given Saddam's record, it seemed reasonable that he would again seek nuclear weapons. The problem was that there was no convincing evidence that he was doing so—except for his supposed attempt to acquire yellowcake from Niger and his purchase of thousands of aluminum tubes that the administration asserted were intended to be used as centrifuges to produce fissile material for making

nuclear bombs. Therefore, the administration fastened on these two claims of evidence to make its case that Saddam was on the verge of having nuclear weapons.

URANIUM OXIDE—YELLOWCAKE, FROM NIGER

In January 2002 a report that Iraq might be seeking nuclear materials provoked Vice President Cheney's concern, and an inquiry by his office led the CIA to send former ambassador Joseph Wilson to Niger to investigate. Wilson's report, along with reports from the US ambassador to Niger, concluded that the rumors were false. The conclusions from this report were circulated in the Intelligence Community.

The public disclosure on the reported yellowcake from Niger came in the British dossier that was released on 24 September 2002. The claim was also included in the CIA's NIE of early October (though not in the public White Paper). The State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research, however, concluded in the NIE: "Finally, the claims of Iraqi pursuit of natural uranium in Africa are, in INR's assessment, highly dubious" (CIA 2002a, 84). George Tenet had warned the British that the Niger story was probably not true, but it was included in the dossier nonetheless, and the claim was asserted in a draft of the president's 7 October speech in Cincinnati. However, after two memoranda from the CIA and a personal call from Tenet to Rice's deputy, Steven Hadley, the claim was taken out of Bush's speech (Associated Press 2003; Pfiffner 2004, 31).¹⁵

The report about Niger and yellowcake may have originated in several letters obtained by Italian intelligence sources. On 11 October 2002 Italian journalist Elisabetta Burba gave copies of the Niger letters to the US Embassy in Rome. A summary of the letters was distributed to US intelligence agencies with the caveat that they were of "dubious authenticity." The letters themselves, however, were not given to the CIA until after the president's State of the Union speech on 28 January 2003 (Hersh 2003a; Pincus and Priest 2003b; Priest 2003; Priest and DeYoung 2003; Priest and Milbank 2003). When Mohamed ElBaradei, Director of the International Atomic Energy Commission was given the documents on 7 February 2003, he quickly concluded that they were clumsy forgeries. It is an open question why the CIA did not get the documents until after the president's speech and why, once they did, they did not expose the forgeries but let the IAEA make them public (Isikoff and Thomas 2003; Priest 2003).¹⁶

Given that the basis for the claim for the Niger yellowcake was known by the CIA to be dubious and was disavowed by the State Department, how did the claim make it into the president's State of the Union address? When the State of the Union speech was being prepared, NSC official Robert Joseph faxed a paragraph on uranium from Niger to CIA official Alan Foley,

Foley told Joseph that the reference to Niger should be taken out. Joseph insisted that a reference remain in the speech, so they compromised: Niger was changed to Africa; they did not include any specific quantity; and the source was attributed to the British rather than to US intelligence (Cooper 2003; Pincus and Priest 2003b). Thus there was high-level doubt about the wisdom of including the dubious claim about Niger in the president's State of the Union message, particularly since the same claim had been deleted from the president's 7 October 2002 speech in Cincinnati.

THE ALUMINUM TUBES

In early 2001 a CIA analyst ("Joe") discovered that Iraq wanted to buy thousands of highly specialized aluminum tubes. On 10 April 2001 a CIA report asserted that the tubes "have little use other than for a uranium enrichment program" (Barstow, Broad, and Gerth 2004; Linzer and Gellman 2004; Pfiffner 2004, 34-37). However, the next day the Energy Department said that the tubes were the wrong size for centrifuges and that the openness of the solicitation by Iraq indicated that the tubes were intended for conventional weapons. In June 2001 a shipment of the tubes was seized in Jordan, and the United States assigned its best nuclear centrifuge engineers to examine the case. The Energy Departments (and British) experts concluded that the tubes were meant for conventional purposes, but Joe at the CIA still maintained that they were intended for nuclear centrifuges.

Over the next year and a half the disagreement over the purpose of the tubes was debated within the intelligence community, and the CIA sent fifteen reports on the nature of the tubes to top administration officials. The CIA and Energy experts maintained that they told the top officials about the debate within the intelligence community. On 8 September 2002 the story of the tubes was leaked to the *New York Times*, but without any of the reservations expressed by the nuclear experts. Cheney and Rice, who expressed certainty that the tubes were intended for nuclear purposes, quickly confirmed the validity of the leak. Rice confirmed that the tubes "are only really suited for nuclear weapons programs" (Barstow, Broad, and Gerth 2004, 11). However, on 13 September the Energy Department forbade its scientists from talking with the press, so no reservations about the claim were made public (ibid. 1).

The claim was included in the NIE, but the Energy and State Departments dissented and said the tubes were not likely meant for nuclear purposes. The declassified version of the NIE (the White Paper) stated, "All intelligence experts agree that Iraq is seeking nuclear weapons and that these tubes could be used in a centrifuge enrichment program." Though in the next sentence it stated that "some" believe the tubes were for conventional weapons purposes (CIA White Paper 2002b, 71-6).

Despite the doubts of the best experts, the tubes were mentioned as evidence of Saddam's nuclear intentions in both the president's 7 October 2002 speech and the State of the Union address as well as in many statements by administration officials before the war. In preparing the secretary of state for his speech to the UN on Saddam's WMD, the Bureau of Intelligence and Research warned him that the tubes were not likely meant for nuclear purposes. Nevertheless, Powell in his speech to the UN said that there was "no doubt in my mind" that they were for nuclear purposes (Barstow, Broad, and Gerth 2004).¹⁷

The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence and the Robb-Silberman reports both decided that the administration's conclusions that the tubes were meant for nuclear purposes were wrong. The administration claimed that this was the conclusion of the intelligence community and included in the supposedly authoritative NIE of October 2002. National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice said, "All that I can tell you is that if there were doubts about the underlying intelligence in the NIE, those doubts were not communicated to the president. The only thing that was there in the NIE was a kind of a standard INR footnote, which is kind of 59 pages away from the bulk of the NIE. That's the only thing that's there. . . . So if there was a concern about the underlying intelligence there, the president was unaware of that concern and as was I" (White House 2003). Even though the State Department's INR dissent was placed toward the end of the document, the "Key Judgments" section near the front called attention to the "INR alternative view at the end of these Key Judgments" (Milbank and Allen 2003; Mufson 2003; Priest and Milbank 2003; Waas 2006b).¹⁸

In fact, top officials of the Bush Administration, including the president, knew of the doubts within the intelligence community about the nature of the aluminum tubes. Murray Waas of the *National Journal* reported that George Tenet presented a "President's Summary" of the October 2002 NIE to President Bush and that the president read it in his presence (Waas 2006a, b). The classified summary stated that the Departments of State and Energy doubted that the aluminum tubes were intended to be centrifuge rotors. It said that "most agencies judge" that the tubes were intended for nuclear purposes, but that "INR and DOE believe that the tubes more likely are intended for conventional weapons uses."¹⁹

In its selective use of intelligence, the Bush Administration also ignored what might be viewed as an impressive intelligence coup. Although the CIA was criticized after the Iraq War for its lack of "humint," that is, human intelligence sources who had penetrated the government of Saddam Hussein, Naji Sabri, the foreign minister of Iraq, had been recruited to divulge information. Tyler Drumheller, who had been with the CIA for 26 years and who was the head of covert operations for the CIA in Europe, ran the operation. Drumheller reported that the president was enthusiastic about the

recruitment when told of it by George Tenet. However, when Sabri reported that Saddam had no active WMD programs ongoing, the White House lost its enthusiasm. According to Drumheller, when he told the White House group that was preparing for the Iraq War of Sabri's denial of WMD, they dropped their interest in Sabri. "And we said, 'Well, what about the intel?' And they said, 'Well, this isn't about intel anymore. This is about regime change.'" Drumheller concluded: "The policy was set. The war in Iraq was coming. And they were looking for intelligence to fit into the policy, to justify the policy" (*Sixty Minutes* 2006).

As Betts observed, "Policy perspectives tend to constrain objectivity, and authorities often fail to use intelligence properly" (Betts 1978, 67). In the case of the purported link between Saddam and al-Qaeda, policy workers ignored CIA doubts and continued to imply that there was such a link. Although the premisses of chemical and biological weapons in Iraq were plausible, policy makers suppressed or ignored Tyler Drumheller's warnings about Curveball's credibility and the warning of the team of experts who examined the purported mobile bioweapons labs. In the case of nuclear weapons, policy makers resisted the CIA warnings about Niger yellowcake. They also accepted the CIA's judgment that the aluminum tubes were intended to be nuclear centrifuges, despite the judgment of US centrifuge experts in the Department of Energy that the tubes were not well suited for such purposes. Finally, policy makers discounted the high-level human intelligence obtained from Iraq's foreign minister.

Politicizing Intelligence

The traditional role of the career services in the US government is to provide to political superiors their best judgment about whatever policies are being considered; it is the rightful prerogative of the president and political appointees to make policy decisions within the executive branch. In the case of intelligence, this means that intelligence professionals should present their best judgment as to the evidence in question whether or not it seems to support the policy preferences of the political administration in office.

There is some evidence that the Bush administration may have tried to politicize the intelligence process in several ways in order to bolster its case for war with Iraq. It arguably did this in three ways:

1. it created a separate bureaucratic unit to provide alternative analyses of evidence;
2. it "stovepiped" the separate analyses directly to policy makers; and
3. it brought political pressure to bear on intelligence analysts to affect their conclusions.

British officials articulated a more pithy description of the politicization in the Iraq case. According to the "Downing Street Memo" of July 2002, the head of Britain's Secret Intelligence Service (MI6), after his meeting in Washington with US officials, reported, "Military action was now seen as inevitable. Bush wanted to remove Saddam, through military action, justified by the conjunction of terrorism and WMD. *But the intelligence and facts were being fixed around the policy*" (Downing Street Memo 2002, emphasis added). The normal intelligence process is that analysts carefully vet all "raw" reports from the field to ensure that the sources are credible and that the information fits with what else is known about the particular issue. This might include examining the history of the issue or checking with other US or allied intelligence agencies.

In Betts's (1978, 67) analysis, "The ultimate causes of error in most cases [of intelligence failure] have been wishful thinking, cavalier disregard of professional analysts, and, above all, the premises and preconceptions of policy makers." As was argued in the previous section, the Bush Administration's policy preference for regime change in Iraq influenced how it interpreted intelligence. In addition, its mindset influenced what intelligence was provided (and not provided) to policy makers. As Robert Jervis (2006b) observed about the Bush Administration and Iraq, "Here as in many cases, policy decisions precede and drive intelligence rather than the other way around."

New Bureaucratic Units

In 2002 the political leadership in the Department of Defense and in the White House had become convinced that the US intelligence community, and the CIA in particular, were discounting the link between Saddam and Osama bin Laden and ignoring the information coming from Ahmed Chalabi and his associates. This fit with the general low regard in which many administration officials held the CIA. As articulated by Richard Perle, chair of DOD's Defense Policy Board: "I think the people working on the Persian Gulf at the C.I.A. are pathetic." "They have just made too many mistakes. They have a record of over 30 years of being wrong." He said they "became wedded to a theory" that al-Qaeda was not working with Iraq (Risen 2004, 1; Pillar 2006).

This led Douglas Feith to use the Policy Counterterrorism Evaluation Group, created shortly after 9/11, to provide alternative analytic perspectives to those being produced by the CIA (Goldberg 2005; Hersh 2003c; Jehl 2003; Phillips 2003).²⁰ Feith's units had close working relationships with the Iraqi National Congress, which the United States had funded, and was headed by Ahmad Chalabi. The CIA, DIA, and the INR at State, however, had become skeptical of the reliability of Chalabi and the defectors from Iraq that he supported. They concluded that Chalabi was unreliable and that the defectors had a stake in overthrowing Saddam and thus were exaggerating or fabricating reports of Saddam's WMD. Feith, however, thought the defectors were reporting

accurately and that the CIA was ignoring a valuable intelligence source (Ricks 2006, 104–6).

The leaders of the Counter Terrorism Evaluation Group briefed Undersecretary of Defense for Intelligence Stephen Cambone weekly, and according to one official left “no dot unconnected” (Risen 2004, 4–5). Former analyst for Middle East intelligence for DIA, Patrick Lang, summed up the problem from the perspective of career intelligence professionals: “But the problem is that they brought in people who were not intelligence professionals, people brought in because they thought like them. They knew what answers they were going to get” (ibid. 2). The administration seemed to want to convince itself that its preconceptions were correct and block any alternative analysis.

“Stovepiping” Intelligence

So instead of allowing the CIA to vet the intelligence from Chalabi and the defectors, Feith “stovepiped” the reports of the Iraqi defectors straight to the White House (the vice president’s staff and NSC staff) without any opportunity for comments by career intelligence professionals. According to Kenneth Pollack, who wrote a book supporting the war with Iraq, the Bush Administration: “dismantled the existing filtering process that for fifty years had been preventing the policy makers from getting bad information. They created stovepipes to get the information they wanted directly to the top leadership. Their position is that the professional bureaucracy is deliberately and maliciously keeping information from them” (Hersh 2003c).

On the issue of a link between Saddam and al-Qaeda, Feith’s office presented different versions of the link evidence to the CIA and to the White House. In the White House version, among other differences, Feith presented as a “known” fact the claimed meeting of Atta with the Iraqi Ani in Prague in 2001, despite the IC skepticism that any meeting had taken place. George Tenet testified that he did not know about these prewar White House meetings until February 2004 (Levin 2004, 17–20).

The point here is not that White House officials should not get raw intelligence or direct reports from the field, but rather that to be fully informed, they ought also to get the best judgment of career intelligence professionals about the credibility of the sources and interpretation of the information. However, the administration’s political leadership was convinced that the CIA was biased, and so Feith purposely bypassed the intelligence community in order to present his own analysis directly to White House officials without any vetting by career intelligence professionals. Thus the White House officials, who were predisposed to believe Feith and Chalabi, were misled about the evidence for WMD and Saddam’s link with bin Laden. The result was the use of faulty evidence and non-credible intelligence in decision making about going to war with Iraq and obtaining public support for it.

Cheney’s Visits to Langley

Policy makers may also have tried to politicize the intelligence process by putting pressure on intelligence analysts to arrive at the conclusions favored by the Bush Administration. During the summer and fall of 2002 Vice President Cheney made multiple visits to CIA headquarters in Langley in order to ask sharp questions about CIA analysis of intelligence relating to Iraq. Although it is appropriate for the vice president or other high-level officials to question intelligence conclusions, there is a fine line between skeptical questioning and pressure for a given outcome. Vice President Cheney, having been chief of staff to President Ford and secretary of defense for President George H. W. Bush, was a sophisticated political and bureaucratic operator. He clearly understood the impact that a personal visit and sharp questioning from the vice president would have on CIA analysts. According to one retired career CIA analyst, “During my 27-year career at the Central Intelligence Agency, no vice president ever came to us for a working visit” (McGovern 2003).

Senator Rockefeller, ranking minority member of the Senate Select Intelligence Committee, concluded that there was an atmosphere of “intense pressure in which the intelligence community officials were asked to render judgments on matters relating to Iraq when the most senior officials in the Bush Administration had already forcefully and repeatedly stated their conclusions publicly” (New York Times 2004).

Some intelligence officials said they felt pressure from these visits to write reports that would help the administration make the case for war (Risen 2003). One “senior Bush Administration official told Seymour Hersh: “They got pounded on, day after day.... Pretty soon.... they began to provide the intelligence that was wanted” (Hersh 2003b). Some intelligence professionals felt that “intense questioning” and “repetitive tasking” created pressure to conform to administration expectations. One intelligence veteran said that the pressure on analysts was greater than he had ever seen at the CIA in his 32-year career (Miller and Reynolds 2004). “They were the browbeaters,” according to a former DIA official who was at some of the meetings. “In interagency meetings Wolfowitz treated the analysts’ work with contempt” (Pincus and Priest 2003a).

In one meeting in August 2002 representatives from Feith’s office attended an Intelligence Community meeting to finalize a report about the suspected links between Saddam and al-Qaeda. It was highly unusual for representatives of the Office of the Secretary of Defense to attend such intelligence meetings. Feith’s people pressed for a more positive statement about the link and asked for 32 changes to the draft, about half of which were made (Bamford 2004, 333–4, 337; Levin 2004; Miller and Reynolds 2004).²¹

Another effect of administration pressure on the CIA amounted to self-censorship in one case in which the Agency failed to report what turned out

to be accurate information obtained from human intelligence. In the summer of 2002 the CIA located relatives of Iraqi scientists and convinced them to contact their relatives in Iraq to get information on Iraq's WMD programs. One of them was Dr Sawsan Alhaddad whose brother had worked in Saddam's nuclear program in the 1980s. She traveled to Baghdad to talk with her brother and reported back to the CIA that her brother said that Iraq's nuclear program had been abandoned in the 1990s. In total, thirty relatives of Iraqi scientists reported back to the CIA that Saddam had no nuclear programs of which the scientists were aware. The CIA, however, was convinced that Saddam was pursuing a nuclear program, and they did not forward the reports to senior policy makers in the administration (Risen 2006, 106, 185–208).

In the summer of 2003 Robert L. Hutchings, former chair of National Intelligence Council, told his staff not to inflate the intelligence on Syrian weapons programs at the insistence of State Department political appointee John Bolton. Even though the Syrian incidents with Bolton took place after the Iraq invasion, the attitude of administration officials toward the professional intelligence officials is relevant. According to Hutchings, "This is not just about the behavior of a few individuals but about a culture that permitted them to continue trying to skew the intelligence to suit their policy agenda. . . . When policy officials come back day after day with the same complaint and the same instructions to dig deeper for evidence to support their preformed conclusions, that is politicization." "When those officials seek to remove from office analysts whose views they do not like, that is politicization. The mere effort, even when it is successfully resisted, creates a climate of intimidation and a culture of conformity" (Jehl 2005a).

In one case an important message that Curveball was unreliable did not make it through to Colin Powell. When one DOD biological weapons analyst (the only US intelligence official who had met Curveball) went over Colin Powell's draft speech the day before it was to be delivered to the UN, he felt he had to warn Powell that Curveball, the main source of the reports of the mobile biological weapons labs, was not reliable. But the deputy chief of the Iraqi Task Force wrote him an e-mail saying: "Let's keep in mind the fact that this war's going to happen regardless of what Curve Ball said or didn't say, and that the Powers That Be probably aren't terribly interested in whether Curve Ball knows what he's talking about" (Senate Select Committee 2004, 249; Johnston 2004).²²

Confirmation that pressure was applied to the Intelligence Community with respect to the claimed link between Saddam and al-Qaeda came in a special report by a team headed by Richard J. Kerr, former deputy director of central intelligence. The Report, "Intelligence and Analysis on Iraq: Issues for the Intelligence Community," was issued in July 2004 and declassified in August 2005 (Kerr 2004). With respect to the claimed link between Saddam and al-Qaeda, the Report concluded:

In the case of al-Qa'ida, the constant stream of questions aimed at finding links between Saddam and the terrorist network caused analysts to take what they termed a "purposely aggressive approach" in conducting *exhaustive and repetitive searches* for such links. *Despite the pressure*, however, the Intelligence Community remained firm in its assessment that no operational or collaborative relationship existed.

(ibid. 11; emphasis added)

At one point, the deputy director for intelligence, Jami Miscik, threatened to quit if she was forced to rewrite a report about the purported link between Saddam and al-Qaeda again. She had responded to inquiries from the vice president's office a number of times, but they continued to come back to her to insist on further rewrites to meet their expectations. Tenet convinced her to stay and rebuffed the demand (Suskind 2006, 190).

The Report pointed out that when the Intelligence Community conclusions supported the administration's policy goals—that is, reported that Saddam had WMD—that there was little discernible pressure applied. The irony was that the administration applied pressure when the Intelligence Community had it right (i.e. no link) and applied no pressure when the IC was wrong (i.e. the IC conclusion that there were WMD). The Report also noted that personal briefings "at the highest levels" probably influenced policy makers to have more confidence in their conclusions than written reports, which most often contain caveats about the limitations of the evidence, would have conveyed. In the case of WMD the oral briefings "probably imparted a greater sense of certainty to analytic conclusions than the facts would bear" (Kerr 2004, 11).

Perhaps the most authoritative evidence that policy makers tried to politicize intelligence prior to the Iraq War is the testimony of Paul R. Pillar. Pillar was the national intelligence officer who had responsibility for Middle East intelligence from 2002 to 2005 and directed the coordination of the intelligence community's assessments of Iraq. In an article in *Foreign Affairs*, Pillar (2006, 1) charged that (1) "official intelligence analysis was not relied on in making even the most significant national security decisions"; (2) "intelligence was misused publicly to justify decisions already made"; and (3) "the intelligence community's own work was politicized." According to Pillar, "intelligence on Iraqi weapons programs did not drive [the administration's] decision to go to war," because sanctions were working; rather the Bush Administration wanted to "shake up the sclerotic power structures of the Middle East and hasten the spread of more liberal politics and economics in the region" (ibid.).

According to Pillar, the proper role of policy makers is to influence what areas the intelligence community should focus on, but not insist on specific conclusions. Intelligence professionals, on the other hand, should avoid policy judgments. Among intelligence professionals the term "policy prescriptive" is a pejorative because it implies that the analyst stepped beyond his or

her appropriate role (ibid. 2). In Pillar's judgment, "the administration used intelligence not to inform decision-making, but to justify a decision already made" (ibid.). In addition, the administration "aggressively [used] intelligence to win public support for its decision to go to war. This meant selectively adding data—'cherry-picking'—rather than using the intelligence community's own analytic judgments" (ibid. 3).

According to Pillar, the "principal way" that intelligence was politicized was the continued repetitive questioning of reports that did not match the administration's version of events. The Bush Administration "repeatedly called on the intelligence community to uncover more material that would contribute to the case for war. The Bush team approached the community repeatedly and pushed it to look harder at the supposed Saddam-al Qaeda relationship. . . . The result was an intelligence output that . . . obscured rather than enhanced understanding of al Qaeda's actual sources of strength and support."

The consequences of politicization may have led to "policymaker self-deception," that is, members of the Bush national security team may have actually believed the conclusions that they had preordained with their pressure on the intelligence community. According to Pillar (2006, 5): "The process did not involve intelligence work designed to find dangers not yet discovered or to inform decisions not yet made. Instead, it involved research to find evidence in support of a specific line of argument—that Saddam was cooperating with al Qaeda—which in turn was being used to justify a specific policy decision." President Bush typified the administration's attitude toward the intelligence community in July 2004 when the CIA station chief in Baghdad wrote a pessimistic analysis of US progress in Iraq. The president's reaction was, "What is he, some kind of defeatist?" (Robinson and Whitelaw 2006).

Although Robert Jervis doubts that the Bush Administration successfully politicized the intelligence process, he pointed out that, "At the very least, it created (and probably was designed to create) an atmosphere that was not conducive to critical analysis and that encouraged judgments of excessive certainty and eroded subtleties and nuances" (Jervis 2006a, 33, 36).

Thus, although officials may intend their attempts to politicize intelligence as ensuring that the strongest case is made for a policy decision that has already been made, the consequences can be disastrous, because administration officials will not have an accurate perception of reality. Or at least they will not have the benefit of the best, honest judgment of intelligence professionals. The longer-term consequences are the undermining of the capacity of the intelligence community to provide professional intelligence analysis to future administrations. The attitude on the part of the Bush Administration that "Langley is enemy territory" (Pillar 2006, 6) may have seriously hurt the institution and professionalism of the CIA. The purge of top CIA officers

by Director Porter Goss in 2004 and 2005 and the loss of traditional CIA functions to the newly created Director of National Intelligence undermined the CIA even further. The CIA director no longer reports directly to the president, and it is now merely one of 15 agencies in the intelligence community.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that the Bush Administration's decision making regarding the war in Iraq was flawed, that it misinterpreted some of the intelligence it received, and that it attempted to influence the nature of that intelligence. As a consequence, decisions about war were made based on faulty conclusions about the nature of WMD in Iraq, and American credibility was undermined throughout the world.

The decision to go to war was fragmented, serial, and neither deliberative nor comprehensive. President Bush may have made up his own mind about going to war, and his actions led in the direction of war, but there is no public evidence that he formally deliberated with his cabinet and White House advisers about the question of whether or not war was necessary. In this respect, he did not follow the approach of President Eisenhower in his decision not to intervene in Vietnam in 1964 or John Kennedy's approach to deliberation over the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962. The closest President Bush came to fostering "multiple advocacy" (George 1972; Pfiffner 2005b) was his dinner with Colin Powell in August 2002 when Powell laid out the potential dangers of invading Iraq. Otherwise, the White House staff, the vice president, and the secretary of defense marginalized Powell and ignored warnings from the professional Army officer corps (Ricks 2006, 40–3). The failure to treat these reservations seriously blinded the administration to flaws in its logic about the consequences of war with Iraq.

The administration's use of intelligence before the war was also flawed in that it systematically ignored or refused to consider evidence that challenged its preconceptions about Iraq's connection with al-Qaeda and its WMD. Again, Bush Administration officials reflected Betts's prediction that, "receptivity of decision makers to information that contradicts preconceptions varies inversely with their personal commitments, and commitments grow as crisis progresses" (Betts 1978, 81). In this case, the administration's commitment to regime change in Iraq grew over the course of 2002 up to the beginning of the war in 2003. The administration ignored or dismissed the analyses and some of the conclusions of the State Department, the Air Force, the Department of Energy, and the CIA in the run-up to the war.

Finally, in its search for evidence and analysis to corroborate its preconceptions about Iraq, the administration used several devices of politicization to affect the intelligence process in order to support its conclusions. In doing

so, it led itself to incorrect conclusions that had lasting negative effects on the United States. The intelligence community was caught in the dilemma of balancing its objectivity with its influence. According to Betts (1978, 81), "analytic integrity is often submerged by the policy makers' demands for intelligence that suits them." However "In order to avert intelligence failures, an analyst is needed who tells decision makers what they don't want to hear, dampening the penchant for wishful thinking" (ibid. 80). Some parts of the intelligence community tried to "speak truth to power," but other parts decided that insisting on interpreting intelligence in ways inconsistent with the administration's preference for regime change was either hopeless or dangerous to their bureaucratic self-interest.

Although there is no guarantee that a sound decision-making process or accurately interpreting intelligence will ensure wise policy decisions, we have learned from this experience that the analytic objectivity of the intelligence community must be protected if policy makers are to base their decisions on realistic evaluations of our adversaries' behavior. The lack of a deliberative decision-making process and the compromising of the objectivity of the intelligence community can easily lead to disaster.

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Notes

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1. Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld also moved within hours of the 9/11 attacks to link Iraq with them. He told his aide Stephen Cambone, according to Cambone's handwritten notes, to get "best info fast. Judge whether good enough hit S.H. [Saddam Hussein] @ same time—Not only UBL [Osama bin Laden]. . . . So massive—sweep it all up. Things related + not. Need to do so to get anything useful" (underscoring in original). A facsimile of Cambone's handwritten notes was released under a Freedom of Information Act request and posted on (www.outragedmoderates.org), accessed 24 February 2006. See also CBS News, "Plans for Iraq Attack Began On 9/11 (4 September 2005) posted on (www.cbsnews.com), accessed 24 February 2006. These notes show an initial impulse to go after Saddam Hussein. This could indicate merely a suspicion that Saddam might have had a hand in the 9/11 attacks or it could be read as asking whether there was enough evidence to justify attacking Saddam, aside from whether he had been involved with 9/11 or not.
2. For a detailed analysis of how the White Paper differed from the NIE, see Prados 2004: 51–93.
3. Suskind (2006, 188) reported that the president was carefully prepared for the session in which Bob Woodward was told about the meeting.
4. This report was based on a secret British memorandum cited in the book *Lawless World*, by Philippe Sands, according to Van Natta (2006).
5. Despite President Bush's later claim that Congress had access to the same intelligence that the executive branch had prior to the Iraq War, the President's Daily Brief is one important example of intelligence not available to Congress. See the statement by Senator Feinstein on 15 December 2005 on her website (accessed 16 December 2005) and Memorandum to Senator Feinstein from Alfred Cumming, an analyst at the Congressional Research Service, "Congress as a Consumer of Intelligence Information," also posted on her website on 16 December 2005.
6. Letter from Kathleen P. Turner, chief of the Office of Congressional Affairs, Defense Intelligence Agency (26 October 2005); Press Release: "Levin Says Newly Declassified Information Indicates Bush Administration's Use of Pre-War Intelligence Was Misleading" (Senator Levin's website, 6 November 2005; see also Pincus 2005 and Jehl 2005b).
7. The report's title was, "Summary of Body of Intelligence on Iraq–al Qaeda Contacts (1990–2003)" (see Levin 2004, 25).

8. The Defense Department stated: "News Reports that the Defense Department recently confirmed new information with respect to contacts between al Qaeda and Iraq . . . are inaccurate." The memo published by the *Weekly Standard* "was not an analysis of the substantive issue of the relationship between Iraq and al Qaeda and drew no conclusions" (Pincus 2003).
9. Since they did not turn up after the US invasion, one theory was that Saddam actually used many more of them in the Iran war than he wanted to admit and that he wanted his adversaries to believe that he still had them.
10. The Kerr Report said that "different descriptions of the same source" often led "analysts to believe they had more confirmatory information from more sources than was actually the case."
11. David Kay raised the interesting question that "if the BND [German intelligence service] thought he was a fabricator why did not they just throw him to the US instead of trying to protect him as if he was a valuable source?" Personal e-mail to the author, 13 December 2005.
12. In the fall of 2003, the CIA discovered that Curveball had been fired in 1995, at the time that he claimed to have been working on biological weapons in Iraq. In May 2004 the CIA sent out a notice admitting the Curveball was not a solid source: "Discrepancies surfaced regarding the information provided by . . . Curveball in this stream of reporting, which indicate that he lost his claimed access in 1995. Our assessment, therefore, is that Curveball appears to be fabricating in this stream of reporting" (Drogin and Goetz 2005a, 14; see Drogin and Miller 2005).
13. White House spokesmen said that the president's assertions were based on faulty intelligence rather than an intent to deceive (Warrick 2006b).
14. It is difficult to understand, since so much was at stake, why Kay was not informed of such important evidence compiled by the US technical team (Warrick 2006a, 1).
15. Paul Pillar who coordinated the intelligence community's analysis of Iraq said, "U.S. intelligence analysts had questioned the credibility of the report making [the Niger] claim, had kept it out of their own unclassified products, and had advised the White House not to use it publicly. But the administration put the claim into the speech anyway" (Pillar 2006, 6).
16. The letterhead of one letter was from the military government that had been replaced before the 1999 date on the letter, and the signature on the letter indicated the name of a foreign ministry official who had left the position in 1989 (Isikoff and Thomas 2003: Priest 2003).
17. Later, Powell told Robert Scheer: "The CIA was pushing the aluminum tube argument heavily and Cheney went with that instead of what our guys wrote." He also said of the yellowcake claim in the President's State of the Union speech: "That was a big mistake. It should never have been in the speech. I didn't need Wilson to tell me that there wasn't a Niger connection. He didn't tell us anything we didn't already know. I never believed it." Powell also said of the claim of a nuclear threat from Saddam "That was all Cheney" (Scheer 2006).
18. Also, on 11 July 2003, Rice said on Air Force One: "Now, if there were any doubts about the underlying intelligence to that NIE, those doubts were not communicated to the president, to the vice president or me" (Waas 2006a).

19. Waas 2006 (p. 5 of the 10-page article on the website below). According to Waas, Bush was also informed in his intelligence briefings that Saddam was not likely an imminent threat to the US (pp. 2, 6). Another of the sources that the administration used to make its case that Saddam had chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons was Iraqi exile Adnan Ihsan Saeed al-Haidari. He had lived in Kurdistan and was dedicated to undermining Saddam Hussein's control of Iraq. He claimed to be a civil engineer who had helped hide many weapons of mass destruction for Saddam. The problem was that the CIA determined in a polygraph examination that Saeed was not telling the truth. Nevertheless, his claims were used in a campaign directed by the Rendon Group to influence public opinion about going to war with Iraq (Bamford 2005; 53-62). See the White House website, "A Decade of Deception and Defiance" (www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/iraq/decade/book.html), accessed 21 November 2006. David Kay said that Saeed was "a fabricator" and that when he was brought to Iraq that he was "totally useless" and "every one of his leads turned up nothing." Personal e-mail to the author 11 December 2005.
20. Paul Pillar explained it this way: "The administration's rejection of the intelligence community's judgments became especially clear with the formation of a special Pentagon unit, the Policy Counterterrorism Evaluation Group. The unit, which reported to Undersecretary of Defense Douglas Feith, was dedicated to finding every possible link between Saddam and al Qaeda, and its briefings accused the intelligence community of faulty analysis for failing to see the supposed alliance" (Pillar 2006: 19).
21. According to James Bamford, in January 2003 a CIA official told members of his unit, "if Bush wants to go to war, it's your job to give him a reason to do so" (Bamford 2004: 333-4, 337).
22. The deputy chief later told the Senate Select Committee staff that the DOD analyst had made similar points before and that in his judgment war was inevitable in any case (Senate Select Committee 2004, 246-50, quote on 249; see also Johnston 2004).

Part III

Governing by Campaigning