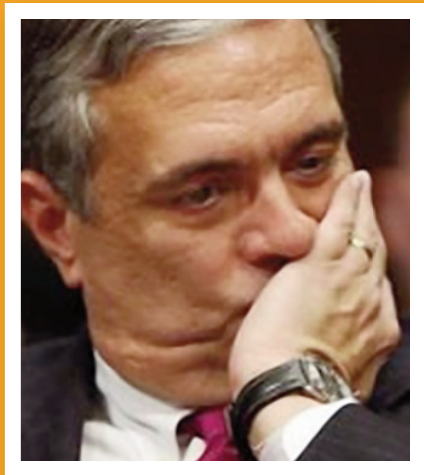


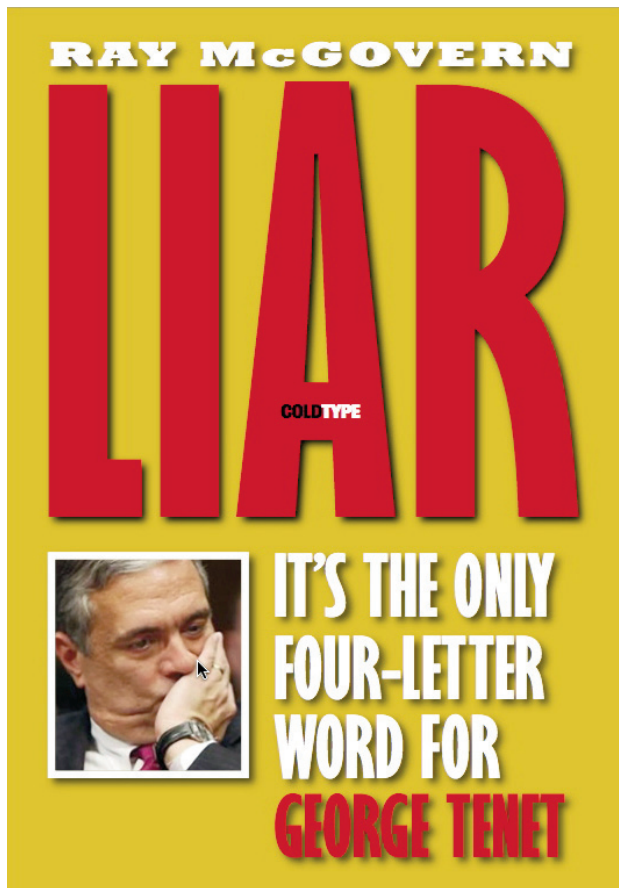
RAY McGOVERN

LIAR

COLDTYPE



**IT'S THE ONLY
FOUR-LETTER
WORD FOR
GEORGE TENET**



Ray McGovern works with Tell the Word, the publishing arm of the ecumenical Church of the Saviour in Washington, DC. His responsibilities during his 27-year service as a CIA analyst included chairing National Intelligence Estimates and preparing the President's Daily Brief. He is co-founder of Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS).

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GEORGE TENET: LIAR | RAY McGOVERN

*If they question why we died,
Tell them because our fathers lied.*

– Rudyard Kipling

MERCIFULLY, the flurry of media coverage of former CIA director George Tenet hawking his memoir, *At the Center of the Storm*, has abated. Buffeted by those on the right and left who see through his lame attempt at self-justification, Tenet probably now wishes he had opted to just fade away, as old soldiers used to do. He listened instead to his old PR buddy and “co-author” Bill Harlow who failed miserably in trying to make a silk purse out of a sow’s ear. By this point, they may be having second thoughts. But, hey, \$4 million is a sizable sum, even if split two ways. But, aside from the money, what else could they have been thinking?

He listened instead to his old PR buddy and “co-author” Bill Harlow who failed miserably in trying to make a silk purse out of a sow’s ear. By this point, they may be having second thoughts. But, hey, the \$4 million advance is a tidy sum, even when split two ways. Aside from the money, what else could they have been thinking?

Tenet’s book is a self-indictment for the crimes with which Socrates was charged: making the worse cause appear the better, and corrupting the youth.

But George is not the kind to take the hemlock. Rather, with no apparent shame, he accepted what one wag has labeled the “Presidential Medal of Silence” in return for agreeing to postpone his Nixon-style “modified limited hangout” until after the mid-term elections last November. The \$4 million advance that Tenet and Harlow took for the book marked a shabby, inauspicious beginning to the effort to stitch together what remains of Tenet’s tattered reputation.

Here in Washington we are pretty much inured to effrontery, but Tenet’s book and tiresome interviews have earned him the degree forchutzpah *summa cum laude*. We are supposed to feel sorry for this pathetic soul, who could not muster the integrity simply to tell the truth and stave off unspeakable carnage in Iraq. Rather, when his masters lied to justify war, Tenet simply lacked the courage to tell his fellow citizens that America was

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about to launch what the post WWII Nuremberg Tribunal called the "supreme international crime"—a war of aggression.

Tenet's pitiable apologia demonstrates once again not only that absolute power corrupts absolutely, but also that the corruption befouls all those nearby.

Cheney's Chess

For those of prurient bent, the book offers a keyhole-peep into a White House of ill repute, with Vice President Dick Cheney playing at his chess board, moving sniveling pawns like Tenet from one square to another.

Someone should have told the former CIA director that unprovoked war is not some sort of game. Out of respect for the tens of thousands killed and maimed in Iraq, it is time to start calling spades spades. It was a high crime, a premeditated felony to have taken part in this conspiracy.

Not surprisingly, few of Tenet's talk-show hosts were armed with enough facts to pierce the smoke and the arrogant now-you-listen-to-me approach from Bill Harlow's PR toolbox. Whether out of ignorance or just habit, celebrity interviewers kept cutting Tenet more and more slack. Understandable, I suppose, for they, like Tenet, were enthusiastic cheerleaders for the attack on Iraq. And so, affable, hot-blooded George was allowed to filibuster, bob, weave, and blow still more smoke. Tenet should not be behind a microphone; he should be behind bars.

With nauseating earnestness, Tenet keeps saying:

"I believed there were weapons of mass destruction in Iraq."

This is a lie. And no matter how many times he says it (after the axiom of his master, George W. Bush, who has stressed publicly that repetition is necessary to "catapult the propaganda"), Tenet can no longer conceal the deceit. Indeed, the only other possibility—that he is (as he complains) being made the useful "idiot" on whom Vice President Dick Cheney and others mean to blame the war—can be ruled out.

Tenet was indeed useful to Cheney and Bush, but he is no idiot. Those who do not rely exclusively on the corporate media for their information know Tenet for what he is—a charlatan. A willing co-conspirator, he did for Bush and Cheney what propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels did for Hitler. The key difference is that Goebbels and his Nazi collaborators, rather than writing books and taking sinecures to enrich themselves, were held accountable at Nuremberg.

Phantom Weapons of Mass Destruction

Tenet knew there were no WMD. Secret British documents reveal not only that Tenet told

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his British counterpart the intelligence was being "fixed" around the policy. They also show that Washington and London developed a scheme to "wrongfoot" Saddam Hussein by insisting on the kind of UN inspections they were sure he would reject, thus providing a convenient *casus belli*.

Saddam outfoxed them by allowing the most intrusive inspection regime in recent history. At the turn of 2002-03 UN inspectors were crawling all over Saddam's palaces, interviewing his scientists, and pursuing every tip they could get from Tenet—and finding nothing.

What did satellite imagery show? Nothing, save for the embarrassingly inconclusive photos that then-Secretary of State Colin Powell displayed on Feb. 5, 2003 at the UN. Were there any photos of those biological weapons trailers reported by the shadowy Curveball? None. And so "artist renderings" were conjured up to show what these sinister trailers might look like.

At least the renderings produced by the CIA graphics shop were more professional than the crude forgeries upon which the fable about Iraq seeking uranium in Africa was based. And the Cheney-Rice-Judith Miller story about aluminum tubes for uranium enrichment got bent hopelessly out of shape as soon as genuine scientists (as opposed to Tenet's stable of malleable engineers) got hold of them.

Exactly four years ago, amid the euphoria of Mission Accomplished and the incipient concern over the trouble encountered in finding WMD, then-deputy defense secretary Paul Wolfowitz told writer Sam Tanenhaus of *Vanity Fair* that Iraq's supposed cache of WMD had never been the most important *casus belli*. It was simply one of several reasons:

"For bureaucratic reasons we settled on one issue, weapons of mass destruction, because it was the one reason everyone could agree on...Almost unnoticed but huge is another reason: removing Saddam will allow the U.S. to take its troops out of Saudi Arabia..."

Absence of Evidence

Who needs real evidence as opposed to allegations of WMD, when the name of the game is removing Saddam? But how to explain the blather about WMD in the lead-up to the war, when not one piece of imagery or other intelligence could confirm the presence of such weapons? Easy. Apply the Rumsfeld maxim: "The absence of evidence is not evidence of absence." And then explain further that the lack of evidence proves nothing but how clever the Iraqis have become at hiding their weapons. Don't laugh; that's what Rumsfeld and the neocons said.

That foolishness had run its course by March 2003 when, despite the best "leads" Tenet could provide and the intrusive inspection regime, the UN inspectors could find nothing. It was getting downright embarrassing for those bent on a *belli* without an ostensible *casus*,

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but by then enough troops were in place to conquer Iraq (or so thought Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz). At that point Bush told the UN to withdraw its inspectors promptly and let them watch the fireworks of shock and awe from a safer distance on TV. (The real shocker is President Bush repeated insistence that Saddam threw out the inspectors. But, again, he has so successfully "catapulted" this piece of propaganda that most Americans do not realize it is a lie.)

How did the White House conspirators think they could get away with all this? Well, don't you remember Cheney saying we would be greeted as liberators...and Ken Neocon Adelman assuring us that it would be a "cakewalk?" We would defeat a fourth-rate army, remove a "ruthless dictator," eliminate an adversary of Israel, and end up sitting atop all that oil with permanent military bases and no further need to station troops in Saudi Arabia. At that point, smiled the neocons, what spoilsport will be able to make political hay by insisting: Yes, but you did this on the basis of forgery, fakery; and where, by the way, are the weapons of mass destruction?

Granted that over recent weeks George Tenet has shown himself a bit dense beneath the bluster. Nevertheless, there is simply no defense on grounds of density—or gross ineptitude or momentary insanity. He clearly played a sustained role in the chicanery. Okay; if you insist: let's assume for a moment that Rumsfeld did actually succeed in convincing Tenet that the reason there was no evidence of WMD was because the Iraqis were so good at hiding them. What then?

Tenet does not get off the hook. There was, in fact, no absence of well sourced evidence that **Saddam's WMD had all been destroyed shortly after the Gulf War in 1991—yes, all of them.**

You Go With the Evidence You've Got

In 1995, when Saddam Hussein's son-in-law, Hussein Kamel, defected with a treasure trove of documents, he spilled the beans on Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. There were none. He knew. He was in charge of the chemical, biological, nuclear, and missile programs and ordered all such weapons destroyed before the UN inspectors could discover them after the war in 1991. He told us much more, and the information that could be checked out was confirmed.

The George-and-Condoleezza-must-have-just-missed-this-report excuse won't wash, because *Newsweek* acquired a transcript of Kamel's debriefing and broke the story on Feb. 24, 2003, several weeks before the war, noting gingerly that Kamel's information "raises questions about whether the WMD stockpiles attributed to Iraq still exist."

It was the kind of well-sourced documentary evidence after which intelligence analysts and lawyers positively lust. But the mainstream press dropped it like a hot potato after Bill

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Harlow (yes, Tenet's co-author), in his role as CIA spokesperson, angrily protested (a bit too much) that the *Newsweek* story was "incorrect, bogus, wrong, untrue." It was, rather, entirely correct; it was documentary—and not forged this time. Curiously, the name of Hussein Kamel shows up on a listing of Iraqis in the front of Tenet's book, but nowhere in the text. Tenet and Harlow apparently decided to avoid calling attention to the fact that they suppressed information from a super source, preferring instead to help the White House grease the skids for war.

In late summer 2002 CIA operatives had a signal success. They had recruited Iraqi Foreign Minister Naji Sabri and had him working in place—for the U.S. Proud of their successful recruitment of a senior Iraqi official, officers of CIA's clandestine service immediately sought and were given an early meeting with President Bush and his senior advisers.

The information Sabri had already passed to us had checked out well. Naively, the agency officers were expecting sighs of relief as they quoted him saying there were no WMD in Iraq. The information went over like a lead balloon, dispelling all excitement over this high-level penetration of the Iraqi government.

When the CIA officers got back to Headquarters and told colleagues what had just happened at the White House, those who had been tasking Naji Sabri asked whether they should seek additional intelligence from him on the subject. According to Tyler Drumheller, the division chief in charge of such collection, the answer was loud and clear: "Well, this isn't about intel any more. This is about regime change."

And then there was Curveball. Tenet and his deputy, John McLaughlin, played a direct role regarding the notorious "Curveball," a former Iraqi taxi driver and convicted embezzler whom German intelligence deemed a mentally unstable alcoholic, who was "out of control." Unlike the unwelcome reporting from the Iraqi foreign minister, Curveball provided very welcome, if bogus, information on alleged mobile laboratories producing biological weapons in Iraq—grist for the "artist renderings" for Powell's UN speech.

It was all a crock. And Tenet and McLaughlin both knew it, because Drumheller gave them chapter and verse before Powell's speech, and has now written a book about this sad story.

Moreover, the normally taciturn, but recently outspoken former director of State Department intelligence, Carl Ford, has noted that both Tenet and McLaughlin took a personal hand in writing a follow-up report aimed at salvaging what Curveball had said. Ford spared no words: The report "wasn't just wrong, they lied...they should have been shot."

Nor can Tenet expunge from the record his witting cooperation in the cynical campaign to exploit the trauma we all felt after 9/11, by intimating a connection with that heinous event and Saddam Hussein. If, as Tenet now concedes, no significant connection could be established between Saddam and al-Qaeda, why did he sit quietly behind Powell at the UN as Powell spun a yarn about a "sinister nexus" between the two? That sorry exhibition

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destroyed what was left of the morale of honest CIA analysts who, until then, had courageously resisted intense pressure to endorse that evidence-less but explosive canard.

A Cropping Worth a Thousand Words

George Tenet's book includes a photo that is a metaphor for both the primary purpose of his memoir and its unintended result. Most will remember the famous photo of Colin Powell briefing the UN Security Council, with Tenet and then-US ambassador to the UN, John Negroponte sitting staunchly behind him. Well, on a centerfold page large enough to accommodate the familiar shot, the photo has been cropped to exclude Tenet altogether and include only Negroponte's shoulder and nose (which, mercifully, he was not holding at the time.) This is an incredibly adolescent attempt to distance Tenet from that scandalous performance, even though he was the one most responsible for it. The cropping also suggests that Tenet and Harlow are only too aware that by including spurious "intelligence" in Powell's speech and then sitting stoically behind him as if to validate it, Tenet visibly squandered CIA's most precious asset--credibility.

"It was a great presentation, but unfortunately the substance didn't hold up," blithely write Tenet and Harlow, without any trace of acknowledgment of the enormous consequences of the deception. In a Feb. 5, 2003 Memorandum for the President regarding Powell's speech that day, we Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS) gave him an "A" for presentation, and a "C-" for content. (If we knew then what we know now we would of course have flunked him outright.) In the VIPS memo we warned the president that intelligence analysts were "increasingly distressed at the politicization of intelligence...and finding it hard to be heard above the drumbeat for war."

That a war of choice was on the horizon was crystal clear—as were the consequences. We urged the president to "widen the discussion beyond violations of Resolution 1441, and beyond the circle of those advisers clearly bent on a war for which we see no compelling reason and from which we believe the unintended consequences are likely to be catastrophic." We take no comfort in having got that one right. Former UN Chief Inspector and U.S. Marine Major, Scott Ritter, was screaming it from the rooftops (and was blacklisted by the domesticated media). It was a no-brainer.

Tenet Breaks Tenet

Tenet's tell-some-but-not-all book is unwittingly self-incriminating in another key respect, an illustration of what happens when you have a politician, with PR help, running U.S. intelligence. Much of the Tenet/Harlow self-justifying prose is transparent to any observer who has been paying the slightest attention to issues of intelligence on Iraq over the past few years. What may not be fully clear is that, in his zeal to indict others and exculpate himself, Tenet plays fast and loose with a cardinal tenet of intelligence work. You don't reveal confi-

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dential discussions with policymakers—and you especially don't quote the president. You simply do not do that. For once you violate confidentiality, not only your effectiveness but also that of those who succeed you will be greatly impaired, if not ended.

In normal circumstances presidents have a right to expect that their conversations with advisers will be kept in strictest confidence, and not revealed later by some buffoon pushing a book. And it is the height of irresponsibility for an intelligence director to quote a president still in office. If the president and senior advisers are unable to count on confidences being kept, it becomes impossible to conduct sensible discussions on policy making.

Why do I say "in normal circumstances?" Because no president has the right to plan a war of aggression with high confidence that accomplices, or others that might become privy to such plans, will stay quiet and not blow the whistle. The oath we take to defend the Constitution of the United States supersedes any promise, explicit or implicit, to enable the president to commit crimes in our name. (And someone ought to tell that to Sen. Dick Durbin, who recently confessed that he knew the intelligence justification for war was a crock, but could not tell the American people because it was secret!)

Am I saying there are circumstances in which conscience may require divulging the confidential remarks of the president of the United States? Of course there are, and these circumstances are a case in point. But that, sadly, was/is far from George Tenet's intent. That he sees fit now to violate the principle of confidentiality in a quixotic attempt at self-justification (and, yes, his share of the \$4 million) betokens not only an adolescent narcissism oblivious to the importance of trust, but also a lack of genuine respect for policymakers, including the president. Those of us who have been privileged to brief the president's father and other senior national security officials—and there must be a hundred of us by now—never violated that trust the way Tenet has done.

Most people do not know that personal access to the president and his top advisers was a rarity during most of the CIA's first three decades. Regularized personal access by CIA officers did not begin until former director and then-vice president George H. W. Bush persuaded President Ronald Reagan to authorize the sharing of the President's Daily Brief (PDB) in one-on-one morning briefings for the vice president, the secretaries of state and defense, and the president's national security adviser. (With White House approval, we later added the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs as a daily consumer.)

These early morning briefings were conducted by us senior analysts who prepared the PDB (and badgered the drafter/analysts with all manner of questions) the day and night before. We were experienced intelligence professionals steeped in substance and just a secure telephone call away from the analysts we knew could provide additional, trustworthy detail if needed. It was a position of great trust.

Our ethos, our job, was to speak unvarnished truth to power, irrespective of the policy

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agendas of the officials we briefed. We were trusted to do that as honestly and professionally as possible. The last thing we needed was a CIA director looking over our shoulder—particularly one, like Tenet, not well schooled in the need to protect the credibility of intelligence by avoiding policy advocacy like the plague. During the Reagan presidency, the CIA director rarely joined us for the PDB briefings and did no pre-publication review. The director had quite enough on his plate. His was a dual job involving herding the cats of a scarcely manageable, multi-agency intelligence community, while trying to manage one agency (CIA) itself conceived with a serious birth defect.

A Structural Flaw

A most unfortunate flaw in the National Security Act of 1947 gave the CIA director not only responsibility for preparing unvarnished intelligence, but the additional duty "to perform other such functions and duties related to intelligence affecting the national security as the National Security Council may from time to time direct"—like running secret wars, as in Nicaragua; overthrowing governments, as in Iran, Guatemala, Chile; and applying President Bush-favored "alternative" methods of interrogation in secret prisons in violation of international and U.S. Army law, as in Afghanistan and Iraq.

This was hardly President Harry Truman's original intent. Long after he left the White House, Truman addressed this directly in an article for the then independent Washington Post on Dec. 22, 1963:

"I have been disturbed by the way the CIA has been diverted from its original assignment. It has become an operational and at times policy-making arm of the government...I never had any thought of that when I set up the CIA... I would like to see the CIA restored to its original assignment as the intelligence arm of the president...and its operational duties terminated or properly used elsewhere.

A pity no one listened to Truman. As a result, for the CIA director each of the two scarcely compatible jobs became full-time challenges. During my 27-year career I had a front-row seat watching nine directors, most of whom did their best to act with integrity and honesty, despite that noxious structural fault. And, if that were not enough, this difficult dual task was accompanied by the additional responsibility to manage the entire intelligence community (16 agencies now). This posed a tri-fold management challenge.

Tenet all but admits he was not up to it. I'm "no Jack Welch," is the way he puts it. Equally unfortunate, he picked inexperienced managers distinguished only by their malleability, their subservience to the perceived wishes of the next level up. Perhaps the best case in point is John McLaughlin, the quintessential affable go-along-to-get-along functionary. McLaughlin very rarely made use of his prerogative as statutory deputy in charge of the intelligence com-

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munity and did not become much involved in operations. At the top of his sins of commission was staffing substantive analysis with weak-reed supervisors, the easier to bend analytic conclusions to the prevailing winds from the White House and Pentagon.

As for poor misunderstood George, instead of tending to his knitting at CIA headquarters, he decided to hitch a ride downtown with the PDB briefer in the morning, and thus secure regular face time with his pal, the president. From all reports there were many "slam dunks" voiced in those very private discussions. Worse still, Tenet felt free to ignore substantive dissent from other intelligence agencies—a practice that, though occasionally tempting, NEVER makes real sense and was an abnegation of his major responsibility. He knew what the president wanted to hear. And the McLaughlin-protégé analysts knew it too. Not only did they serve it up to recipe, but they actually took steps to conceal from colleagues elsewhere in the intelligence community what their boss was telling the president. On those few occasions when colleagues from other agencies learned via the grapevine what Tenet was telling the president, they were aghast and, understandably, angry. But none of their own bosses, including Colin Powell, dared get crosswise with the Cheney-Rumsfeld cabal.

What Tenet should have told Bush? For starters, that:

--State Department analysts had heaped scorn on the Cheney fiction that Iraq had "reconstituted" its nuclear weapons program. They were, of course, right, but why make it harder for the president to keep a straight face when warning of mushroom clouds? Remember, it is not about Intel; it's about regime change.

--State had described the cockamamie report about Iraq seeking uranium from Africa as "highly suspect" well before it was learned that this choice morsel was based on a forgery.

--Department of Energy analysts were having a riotous laugh at the thought those famous aluminum tubes could be somehow warped into use for uranium enrichment. The laugh, though, was mostly a mechanism to help suppress their rage over Tenet's recruitment of pseudo-engineers to spin those aluminum artillery tubes into something more menacing.

--US Air Force intelligence experts thought hilarious the specter of Iraqi planes scarcely larger than the models seen on the Washington Monument grounds somehow flying to our shores to spray chemical or biological agents. But the Air Force, too, caved, acquiescing in their dissent being relegated to a footnote in the infamous National Intelligence Estimate of Oct. 1, 2002 on Iraqi WMD.

But Tenet knew what Bush wanted. And "action officer" Condoleezza could boil down the intelligence estimate into one page and read it to the president, if the opportunity affords itself.

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Tenet's *Ave atque Vale* in the preface to his book speaks volumes. One need read no further. He looks back unapologetically and with satisfaction on his long career as chief of intelligence, "not always successful, but..."striving to do what is right."

"Son of immigrants John and Evangelia Tenet, who left their villages in Greece to give me that chance" ...and give us George Tenet.

Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes.
Beware the Greeks bearing gifts.

– Virgil



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