

Of course Bush knew – and other election tales

THE White House's Weapons of Mass Destruction story has been perpetually in flux, changing monthly as American service personnel and Iraqi civilians continue to die in yet another useless war. The latest spin has a well-intentioned Bush as the victim of bad intelligence data. The story goes like this: Bush didn't intentionally mislead the American people into war – he truly believed there actually was evidence that Iraq was an immediate threat to the US and that they had weapons of mass destruction which they were preparing to use. This scenario has Bush's act of leading the nation into war, the most serious and consequential action a president can undertake, as based on erroneous information. Yes, this admission doesn't bode well for Bush, but it's still a far sight better than admitting he deliberately lied to the world in order to start a war.

I can't see, however, how Bush could have done anything other than lie to the American people. What we now know as the truth concerning Iraq certainly was available for quite some time. It's not a new revelation that Iraq had no weapons of mass destruction. I reported this fact before the war in this column 12 months ago. And it wasn't new news back when I reported it. All it took for me to get the story was a Fall 2002 trip to Syracuse University to hear former US Marines intelligence officer and UN Weapons

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Inspector Scott Ritter present his evidence showing Iraq had no such weapons. On that day, Ritter spoke and fielded questions for two hours, citing data he gleaned in the field.

Back in 2002 and 2003, when the war could still have been prevented, the media either ignored or slandered Ritter, whom history has since proven to be correct. Today, news organizations such as NPR, rather than cite Ritter's prescience now that we know he was correct, would rather continue to allow Bush administration lies to air uncorrected, as they did recently by not challenging Dick Cheney's baseless assertions alleging that trailers found in Iraq were actually bio-weapons labs.

Ritter wasn't alone in his argument that Iraq didn't have Weapons of Mass Destruction. The French and German intelligence services provided their governments with similar information. This led both governments to break ranks with the Bush administration and oppose the war. UN Chief Weapons Inspector Hans Blix joined the chorus, also reporting before the US invasion that Iraq lacked such weapons. Rolf Ekeus, the previous UN chief weapons inspector argued that Iraq was disarmed by 1996. Even CIA Director George Tenet, in October of 2002, told Congress that Iraq posed no immediate threat to the US.

My point is that the intelligence was in place. It was common knowledge that Iraq didn't have Weapons of Mass Destruction and didn't pose a threat to the US. There was no intelligence failure. The US alternative media and the mainstream European media were both reporting this story ad nauseam. I never quite bought into the theory that Bush is as stupid as he would like us to believe he is. To argue that the president of the United States was so out of touch with world news on the eve of war is just not believable. He knew. And if he knew, then he deliberately misled the American people into war. And he was able to do this because a Quisling press corps allowed him to. What part of this is so difficult to understand?

Meanwhile in the primaries

The Democratic primary contests are moving right along. If anything, they have served a deathblow to the neo-conservative Democratic Leadership Council (DLC). The DLC are the folks who hijacked the party into the land of Reagan, giving us Bill Clinton, Al Gore, NAFTA, the FTAA, and by sucking the soul out of the party, George W. Bush. This year they put most of their support behind Joe Lieberman, hoping the Democratic wing of the Democratic Party (to quote the late Paul Wellstone) would split the progressive vote and crash and burn, creating an opening for their candidate. It turns out that it was their horse that ultimately went down with a broken leg on the first lap. Lieberman fancied himself as a "centrist." That being the case, I can't imagine what a right wing Democrat would look like - maybe David Duke? In any event, I certainly won't miss him in the

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Democratic debates. Dean, another candidate with support from DLC notables, is also seeing his candidacy falter. It's amazing what an above average voter turnout can do to a party.

In a bizarre twist, The Village Voice reports that Al Sharpton's campaign is being financed in part by Roger Stone, the Republican Party operative who organized the mob that stormed the Miami-Dade Board of Elections and forced a shutdown of the 2000 recount there. According to The Voice, Stone admitted to helping file Sharpton's application for matching funds and provided experienced campaign consultants to the Sharpton campaign. While we can only speculate on Stone's motivation at this point, we do know that Sharpton accepted his support.

The Democrats may have the spotlight right now, but come primary season, expect the Republicans to step up to the mike. And with a godzillion dollars in campaign contributions, expect any announcement from them to be loud. Foremost will probably be the selection of a new vice presidential running mate for George W. Bush. Cheney's health will be the official excuse. But the real reason is his plummeting popularity numbers. Cheney has taken the concept of in-your-face government corruption and stealing to a new level. Too many recent revelations about his other employer Halliburton, getting no-bid inflated government contracts, and too many government investigations showing Halliburton overcharged on even these inflated service rates, has Cheney's approval numbers plummeting. Recent revelations that Halliburton, under his command in the mid 90s, bribed Nigerian officials to the tune of over \$150 million, also creates public relations problems for the Chen-meister.

And on the subject of predictions – you can expect Osama bin Laden to be captured or killed in late September or early October.