

What Bush would rather you didn't know

WHEN Iraq presented its weapons declaration to the United Nations last month, the Bush administration immediately attacked the report as being incomplete, hinting that producing a partial report might be a justification to unleash upon that nation the most lethal killing machine history has known.

The Bush folks were indeed telling the truth. The report distributed by the United Nations was missing key pieces of information about Iraq's weapons programs. That's because the United States removed over 8,000 pages of information from the 11,800 page report, before passing it on.

The missing pages incriminated 24 U.S. based corporations and the successive Reagan and Bush-Daddy administrations in connection with illegally supplying Saddam Hussein's Iraqi government with myriad weapons of mass destruction and the training to use them.

According to the report, Eastman Kodak (which seems not to have fundamentally changed since collaborating with the Nazis in WWII), Dupont, Honeywell, Rockwell, Sperry, Hewlett-Packard and Bechtel were among the American companies aiding the Iraqi weapons program leading up to the invasion of Kuwait.

The report also reiterated information previously documented by Senator Byrd, and before that, reported in a host of Alternative newspapers and magazines and radio shows around the world, detailing how the U.S. Government directly supplied weapons of mass destruction to Saddam Hussein – weapons he then used against his own people while the U.S. resupplied his arsenal.

In addition to biological and chemical weapons components such as Anthrax, various U.S. government agencies, such as the Department of Energy, Department of Commerce, Department of Agriculture and the Livermore, Los Alamos and Sandia nuclear weapons labs, also supplied Saddam's government with material for its nuclear weapons program

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and training in how to use that material.

Then of course there's Dick Cheney's Haliburton outfit, which got the contract to rebuild Saddam's oilfields after the 1991 Gulf War. This is a new twist on the old bored child's game of building up and knocking down blocks, but only with a fat government subsidy and tens of thousands of dead bodies. But that's another story

Jail for G. Bush Sr.?

None of this comes as any surprise to people who have been following the Iraq situation for the past two decades. In fact, it was American peace activists, and not the gung-ho pro-war flag sticker-on-the-SUV chicken-hawks, who first raised the warning about Iraq's U.S. supported weapons program. In short, the cat's been out of the bag for quite a while on this story – hence outright denial of the Iraqi report's allegations was not a feasible option for the Bushistas. Yet, with the Iraqi report strengthening calls for war-crimes indictments against key Reagan/Bush-Daddy administration officials such as former and current Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, for collaboration with Saddam on the massacres of Iraqi Kurds, young Bush felt compelled to do something about the embarrassing report.

Hence, with all the finesse of a frat boy tossing a coke spoon from a speeding Land Rover with troopers in hot pursuit, Bush simply ordered 8,000 incriminating pages of the Iraqi report snipped and trashed. Who'd know?

This is one of the more frightening aspects of this Bush-league White House: their sheer gall and arrogance. It's what lead Trent Lott to say to the 'out-group' what's he's on record saying to the 'in-group' for years. They're all high on their own power, believing they can get away with anything. By comparison, Richard Nixon comes off like a jaywalker.

The mechanics of this theft were simple. Iraq presented one copy on CD-ROM to the International Atomic Energy Agency, where it was classified "secret," and another to the U.N. Security Council, all of whose permanent members, (Britain, France, China and Russia) whom shared the Bush administration's desire to suppress the report since they were also implicated for their roles in arming Iraq. Russia and China, in fact, are still arming Iraq (remember that next time you see some yahoo in the Wal Mart parking lot loading his flag draped gas guzzler with Chinese sweatshop booty).

The Council is currently chaired by a temporary member, Columbia, whose brutally repressive government is propped up by the presence of the U.S. military, currently fighting a "low-intensity" war in that country. Hence, it didn't take much pressure for the Columbians to look the other way as the U.S. reps snipped two thirds of the report. The

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other members of the Security Council all received the doctored document.

Dropping a dime

The Bush plan fell through, however, since the Iraqis were not about to stand by and be chastised and threatened for not completing a report that they actually completed. The original report was filed as a CD. Now, with CDs costing about a dime, the cost of producing and leaking a few extra copies was clearly within reach for a country whose madman dictator has gold plated toilet seats in his half-dozen palaces.

Nobody can say for sure how many dimes Iraq spent before one of the CDs finally landed in the hand of Andreas Zumas, a journalist with the Berlin newspaper, Die Tageszeitung, who broke the story about the missing pages on December 19th. By December 20th, people around the world were once again reading about how the U.S. armed Iraq, and now, how the U.S. brazenly tried to engineer world opinion by altering Iraq's own document and floating bogus claims of noncompliance with U.N. reporting requirements. Globally, Bush's cheap ploy yielded a full-tilt backfire, with American credibility flushed down the drain.

Back in the U.S. , however, it's another story. Media-wise, we might as well live on a different planet than our global neighbors. With the exception of the alternative media, most notably Amy Goodman's Democracy Now radio show (which broke the story here on December 19th with an interview of Andreas Zumas), the U.S. corporate media censored this piece of headline-grabbing news. Hence, we're still in "Axis of Evil" mode, ready to kick some Iraqi ass – though truth be told, any real battle against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction would have to begin in Washington. Yet, no mass media outlet in the U.S. will dare cover this story or explore what the term "regime change" really should come to mean.

Margaret Sullivan & your right to know

The situation is particularly angering here in Buffalo . On Sunday, January 05, The News' editor, Margaret Sullivan, in an embarrassing display of self-praise, wrote that unlike politically partisan newspapers of days gone by, "mainstream newspapers these days set out to be objective in their news coverage." Hence, she ads, "Reporters are expected to get both sides of every situation and to keep their opinions out of their news stories." To date, however, her paper has still not reported any side of this story – an especially negligent omission considering that our nation is marching off to war based on partial information and misinformation. Sullivan has the rhetoric down all right, but given her paper's shameful biased reporting in favor of pet politicians and developers, coupled with

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its habitual failure to report stories embarrassing to the Bush junta, she clearly doesn't seem to be serious about tackling the challenges of journalism.

Don Boswell's Western New York Public Broadcasting Association is another gatekeeper standing between Buffalonians and international news. While millions of other Americans had the opportunity to learn of the doctored report by listening to Amy Goodman's December 19th Democracy Now radio show, Western New Yorkers were not among them due to WNYPBA president Boswell's refusal to carry the program on either of his organization's two radio stations. The reason why is no mystery. When Boswell was Vice President of Dallas' PBS affiliate, he was quoted by The Corporate Philanthropy Report (April 1991), explaining how such decisions are made. According to Boswell, "We now work more closely with the creative department at the station to try to keep them from producing unfundable projects."

Given WNYPBA's close relationship to the corporate community, it's no wonder they shun the "unfundable" but hard hitting Democracy Now. This is especially frustrating since Western New Yorkers indeed pledged thousands of dollars to WNYPBA during their last fundraising drive, on the condition they broadcast Democracy Now. It's this public commitment that has brought the show to other cities. WNYPBA, however, seems more interested in placating the corporate community, and collecting the more lucrative corporate underwriting, then on bringing serious news programming to its "all-news" station.

So for now, the gall and arrogance of the Bush administration is paying off. With gatekeepers like Sullivan and Boswell on their side, they can and are getting away with paving the road to war with lies and misinformation. And as long as nobody in the corporate media stands tall and takes them to task, our country will be hijacked into war. ●