

IRAQI WMDs



"From a marketing point of view, you don't introduce new products in August."

Andrew H. Card, Jr.
White House Chief of Staff
The New York Times -- September 7, 2002

President [George W Bush](#) had a serious problem. In 2002, he was trying to sell the American people a war against Iraqi despot [Saddam Hussein](#). But despite a wide selection of rationales offered to justify the thing, very few people were buying. When none of his advertising slogans seemed to be working, Bush had no choice but to employ a little old-fashioned puffery.

So the President and his lackeys tweaked the message. They started promoting the idea that Saddam currently possessed significant [weapons of mass destruction](#), poised to strike the United States and Britain. *That* certainly got people's attention. In fact, it scared the shit out of them. Public opinion quickly swayed in favor of military intervention, and the rest is history.

Since the war, however, millions of Americans have concluded that they are victims of false advertising. None of the fabled WMDs has actually shown up, despite months of intensive searching. Understandably, people feel they were lied to.

But let's start at the beginning. Prior to the 2001 [al Qaeda](#) attacks against the Pentagon and the [World Trade Center](#), Bush and his administration were openly uncommitted as to whether there were any extant WMDs in Iraq:

BEFORE 9-11

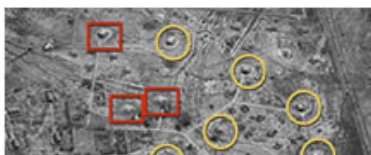
- 2 Dec 1999 During a debate in New Hampshire, Presidential candidate George W Bush declares: "If I found in any way, shape or form that he was developing weapons of mass destruction, I'd take 'em out. I'm surprised he's still there." Asked if that meant he would overthrow Saddam, Bush said he was only talking about "the weapons of mass destruction."
- 11 Feb 2000 Stumping in South Carolina, Presidential candidate George W Bush declares: "If we catch them developing weapons of mass destruction, there won't be any weapons of mass destruction left in Iraq -- if I'm the Commander-in-Chief."
- 11 Oct 2000 During a debate at Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, Presidential candidate George W Bush declares: "We don't know whether he's developing weapons of mass destruction. He better not be, or there's going to be a consequence -- should I be the President."
- 22 Feb 2001 President George W Bush declares: "The Secretary of State is going to go listen to our allies as to how best to effect a policy, the primary goal of which will be to say to Saddam Hussein: we won't tolerate you developing weapons of mass destruction, and we expect you to leave your neighbors alone."
- 24 Feb 2001 In Cairo, Secretary of State Colin Powell declares: "He has not developed any significant capability with respect to weapons of mass destruction. He is unable to project conventional power against his neighbors."
- 17 May 2001 State Department spokesman Richard Boucher declares: "We're working toward what will be a significant change in our approach to Iraq in the United Nations... The focus is on strengthening controls to prevent Iraq from rebuilding military capability in weapons of mass destruction, while facilitating a broader flow of goods to the civilian population of Iraq."
- 7 Aug 2001 President George W Bush declares: "He's been a menace forever, and we will do -- he needs to open his country up for inspection, so we can see whether or not he's developing weapons of mass destruction."

But shortly after September 11, 2001, the Bush administration (and Tony Blair, *and* several members of Congress) suddenly began telling everybody that Saddam Hussein *definitely* possessed weapons of mass destruction, and that those things constituted a clear and present danger against the United States:

AFTER 9-11

- Nov 2001 Pentagon official [Richard Perle](#): "He has weapons of mass destruction. The lesser risk is in pre-emption. We've got to stop wishing away the problem."
- 11 Mar 2002 British Prime Minister Tony Blair declares: "The threat that Saddam Hussein poses is an issue in its own right, because the reason why the UN Security Council passed these resolutions was precisely because we know the threat that there is from the weapons of mass destruction that he has."
- 26 Aug 2002 Vice President [Dick Cheney](#) declares: "Simply stated, there is no doubt that Saddam Hussein now has weapons of mass destruction. There is no doubt that he is amassing them to use against our friends, against our allies, and against us."
- 4 Sep 2002 Senator Joseph Lieberman declares: "Every day Saddam remains in power with chemical weapons, biological weapons, and the development of nuclear weapons is a day of danger for the United States."
- 18 Sep 2002 Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld tells the House Armed Services Committee: "[Saddam] has amassed large clandestine stocks of biological weapons... including anthrax and botulism toxin and possibly smallpox. His regime has amassed large clandestine stockpiles of chemical weapons, including VX and sarin and mustard gas... [he] has at this moment stockpiles of chemical and biological weapons."
- 19 Sep 2002 Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld tells the Senate Armed Services Committee: "There are a number of terrorist states pursuing weapons of mass destruction -- Iran, Libya, North Korea, Syria, just to name a few -- but no terrorist state poses a greater or more

- immediate threat to the security of our people than the regime of Saddam Hussein and Iraq."
- 24 Sep 2002 British Prime Minister Tony Blair declares: "His weapons of mass destruction program is active, detailed and growing. The policy of containment is not working. The weapons of mass destruction program is not shut down. It is up and running... The intelligence picture (the intelligence services) paint is one accumulated over the past four years. It is extensive, detailed and authoritative. It concludes that Iraq has chemical and biological weapons, that Saddam has continued to produce them, that he has existing and active military plans for the use of chemical and biological weapons, which could be activated within 45 minutes, including against his own Shia population; and that he is actively trying to acquire nuclear weapons capability."
- 7 Oct 2002 During a speech in Cincinnati, President George W Bush declares: "Iraq could decide on any given day to provide a biological or chemical weapon to a terrorist group or individual terrorists."
- 28 Oct 2002 During a speech at the Riner Steinhoff Soccer Complex in Alamogordo, New Mexico, President George W Bush declares: "He's got weapons of mass destruction. This is a man who has used weapons of mass destruction."
- 28 Oct 2002 During a speech at the Wings Over the Rockies Air and Space Museum in Denver, President George W Bush declares: "It's a person who claims he has no weapons of mass destruction, in order to escape the dictums of the U.N. Security Council and the United Nations -- but he's got them. See, he'll lie. He'll deceive us. And he'll use them."
- 31 Oct 2002 During a speech at Northern State University in Aberdeen, South Dakota, President George W Bush declares: "This is a guy who's used weapons of mass destruction. He not only has them, he's used them."
- 1 Nov 2002 During a speech at the Pease International Tradeport Airport in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, President George W Bush declares: "Saddam Hussein is a man who has told the world he wouldn't have weapons of mass destruction, and yet he deceived the world. He's got them... We know he's got chemical weapons, probably has biological weapons."
- 2 Nov 2002 During a speech at the University of South Florida, President George W Bush declares: "He's a man who has told the world he wouldn't have weapons of mass destruction, yet he does."
- 2 Nov 2002 During a speech at the Cobb Galleria Centre in Atlanta, Georgia, President George W Bush declares: "He's a threat to America, he's a threat to our close friends and allies. He's a man who has said he wouldn't have weapons of mass destruction, but he's got them... Not only does he have weapons of mass destruction, but, incredibly enough, he has used weapons of mass destruction."
- 2 Nov 2002 During a speech at the Tri-Cities Regional Tn/Va Airport in Blountville, Tennessee, President George W Bush declares: "He told the world he wouldn't have weapons of mass destruction -- 11 years ago he said that. He's got them... We know that this is a man who has chemical weapons, and we know he's used them."
- 3 Nov 2002 During a speech at the Illinois Police Academy in Springfield, Illinois, President George W Bush declares: "Saddam Hussein is a threat to America. He's a threat to our friends. He's a man who said he wouldn't have weapons of mass destruction, yet he has them. He's a man that not only has weapons of mass destruction, he's used them."
- 3 Nov 2002 During a speech at the Xcel Energy Center in St. Paul, Minnesota, President George W Bush declares: "This is a man who not only has got chemical weapons, I want you to remind your friends and neighbors, that he has used chemical weapons."
- 3 Nov 2002 During a speech at the Sioux Falls Convention Center in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, President George W Bush declares: "Saddam Hussein is a man who told the world he wouldn't have weapons of mass destruction, but he's got them... It's a man who not only has chemical weapons, but he's used chemical weapons against some of his neighbors."
- 4 Nov 2002 During a speech at the Family Center in St. Louis, Missouri, President George W Bush declares: "He said he wouldn't have chemical weapons; he's got them."
- 4 Nov 2002 During a speech at the Northwest Arkansas Regional Airport, President George W Bush declares: "This is a man who told the world he wouldn't have weapons of mass destruction, promised he wouldn't have them. He's got them... He said he wouldn't have chemical weapons, he's got them."
- 4 Nov 2002 During a speech at Southern Methodist University, President George W Bush declares: "He has weapons of mass destruction. At one time we know for certain he was close to having a nuclear weapon. Imagine Saddam Hussein with a nuclear weapon. Not only has he got chemical weapons, but I want you to remember, he's used chemical weapons."
- 7 Nov 2002 During a press conference, President George W Bush declares: "Some people say, 'Oh, we must leave Saddam alone, otherwise, if we did something against him, he might attack us.' Well, if we don't do something he might attack us, and he might attack us with a more serious weapon. The man is a threat... He's a threat because he is dealing with [al Qaeda](#)... And we're going to deal with him."
- 13 Nov 2002 Condoleezza Rice declares: "He already has other weapons of mass destruction. But a nuclear weapon, two or three our four years from now -- I don't care where it is, when it is -- to have that happen in a volatile region like the Middle East is most certainly a future that we cannot tolerate."
- 2 Dec 2002 White House spokesman Ari Fleischer declares: "If he declares he has none, then we will know that Saddam Hussein is once again misleading the world."
- 9 Jan 2003 White House spokesman Ari Fleischer declares: "We know for a fact there are weapons there."
- 10 Jan 2003 Senate majority leader Bill Frist tells *Capital Report*: "I am absolutely convinced, based on the information that's been given to me, that the weapon of mass destruction which can kill more people than an atomic bomb -- that is, biological weapons -- is in the hands of the leadership of Iraq."
- 20 Jan 2003 Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld declares: "Saddam Hussein possesses chemical and biological weapons... His regime is paying a high price to pursue weapons of mass destruction -- giving up billions of dollars in oil revenue. His regime has large, unaccounted for stockpiles of chemical and biological weapons -- including VX, sarin, cyclosarin and mustard gas; anthrax, botulism, and possibly smallpox -- and he has an active program to acquire and develop nuclear weapons."
- 20 Jan 2003 Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld declares: "It should be noted that biological weapons -- which Iraq and North Korea both possess -- can be as deadly, and arguably more immediate a danger -- because they are simpler and cheaper and deliver, and are even more readily transferred to terrorist networks than are nuclear weapons."
- 22 Jan 2003 Senate majority leader Bill Frist tells *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*: "What is unique about Iraq compared to, I would argue, any other country in the world, in this juncture, is the exhaustion of diplomacy thus far, and, No. 2, this intersection of weapons of mass destruction."
- 5 Feb 2003 Senator [Hillary Clinton](#) declares: "Iraq both poses a continuing threat to the national security of the United States and international peace and security in the Persian Gulf region and remains in material and unacceptable breach of its international obligations by, among other things, continuing to possess and develop a significant chemical and biological weapons capability, actively seeking a nuclear weapons capability, and supporting and harboring terrorist organizations."



Then Secretary of State Colin Powell went to the United Nations for a Show 'N Tell presentation. He passed around recent surveillance photos taken of Iraqi WMD sites. According to Powell, the black-and-white pictures depicted a chemical weapons complex in Al-Musayyib, as well as 15 chemical weapons bunkers in Taji.

Although the briefing was vague on many details, Powell's exhibits were too specific and

numerous to be ignored. Taken in total, they seemed to portray an ongoing biological and chemical weapons production effort under way in Iraq.

After the United States finally explained what the deal was, the general consensus became: *someone is gonna have to disarm that sneaky motherfucker.*

- 5 Feb 2003 During his U.N. presentation, Secretary of State Colin Powell declares: "Our conservative estimate is that Iraq today has a stockpile of between 100 and 500 tons of chemical weapons agent. That is enough agent to fill 16,000 battlefield rockets."
- 8 Feb 2003 During a radio address, President George W Bush declares: "We have sources that tell us that Saddam Hussein recently authorized Iraqi field commanders to use chemical weapons -- the very weapons the dictator tells us he does not have."
- 8 Feb 2003 During a radio address, President George W Bush declares: "Saddam Hussein has longstanding, direct and continuing ties to terrorist networks. Senior members of Iraqi intelligence and al Qaeda have met at least eight times since the early 1990s. Iraq has sent bomb-making and document forgery experts to work with al Qaeda. Iraq has also provided al Qaeda with chemical and biological weapons training. And an al Qaeda operative was sent to Iraq several times in the late 1990s for help in acquiring poisons and gases. We also know that Iraq is harboring a terrorist network headed by a senior al Qaeda terrorist planner. This network runs a poison and explosive training camp in northeast Iraq, and many of its leaders are known to be in Baghdad."
- 6 Mar 2003 During a press conference, President George W Bush declares: "Saddam Hussein and his weapons are a direct threat to this country, to our people, and to all free people.... I will not leave the American people at the mercy of the Iraqi dictator and his weapons."
- 7 Mar 2003 In a speech, Senate majority leader [Bill Frist](#) declares: "Iraq is a grave threat to this nation. It desires to acquire and use weapons of mass terror and is run by a despot with a proven record of willingness to use them. Iraq has had 12 years to comply with UN requirements for disarmament and has failed to do so. The President is right to say it's time has run out."
- 16 Mar 2003 In an op-ed piece published in the *Washington Post*, Senate majority leader Bill Frist declares: "Getting rid of Saddam Hussein's regime is our best inoculation. Destroying once and for all his weapons of disease and death is a vaccination for the world."
- 16 Mar 2003 Vice President Dick Cheney tells *Meet the Press*: "Let's talk about the nuclear proposition for a minute. We know that based on intelligence, that he has been very, very good at hiding these kinds of efforts. He's had years to get good at it and we know he has been absolutely devoted to trying to acquire nuclear weapons. And we believe he has, in fact, reconstituted nuclear weapons."
- 17 Mar 2003 During an address to the nation, President George W Bush declares: "We cannot live under the threat of blackmail. The terrorist threat to America and the world will be diminished the moment that Saddam Hussein is disarmed."
- 17 Mar 2003 During an address to the nation, President George W Bush declares: "Intelligence gathered by this and other governments leaves no doubt that the Iraq regime continues to possess and conceal some of the most lethal weapons ever devised."
- 18 Mar 2003 British Prime Minister Tony Blair tells the House of Commons: "We are asked now seriously to accept that in the last few years -- contrary to all history, contrary to all intelligence -- Saddam decided unilaterally to destroy those weapons. I say that such a claim is palpably absurd."
- 19 Mar 2003 During an address to the nation, President George W Bush declares: "The people of the United States and our friends and allies will not live at the mercy of an outlaw regime that threatens the peace with weapons of mass murder."

Then, on March 20th, the war began.

DURING THE WAR

- 20 Mar 2003 In a debate on the Senate floor, majority leader Bill Frist declares that we are at war "so we will not ever see" what terrorists could do "if supplied with weapons of mass destruction by Saddam Hussein."
- 21 Mar 2003 White House spokesman Ari Fleischer declares: "Well, there is no question that we have evidence and information that Iraq has weapons of mass destruction, biological and chemical particularly."
- 22 Mar 2003 General Tommy Franks declares: "There is no doubt that the regime of Saddam Hussein possesses weapons of mass destruction. And... as this operation continues, those weapons will be identified, found, along with the people who have produced them and who guard them."
- 22 Mar 2003 Pentagon spokeswoman Victoria Clark declares: "One of our top objectives is to find and destroy the WMD. There are a number of sites."
- 23 Mar 2003 Kenneth Adelman of the Defense Policy Board declares: "I have no doubt we're going to find big stores of weapons of mass destruction."
- 24 Mar 2003 Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld tells *Face the Nation*: "We have seen intelligence over many months that they have chemical and biological weapons, and that they have dispersed them and that they're weaponized and that, in one case at least, the command and control arrangements have been established."
- 25 Mar 2003 British Prime Minister Tony Blair declares: "I have always said to people throughout that our aim has not been regime change, our aim has been the elimination of weapons of mass destruction."
- 30 Mar 2003 Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld tells *This Week with George Stephanopoulos*: "the area... that coalition forces control... happens not to be the area where weapons of mass destruction were dispersed. We know where they are. They're in the area around Tikrit and Baghdad and east, west, south and north somewhat."
- 31 Mar 2003 In a speech, Senate majority leader Bill Frist declares: "We simply cannot live in fear of a ruthless dictator, aggressor and terrorist such as Saddam Hussein, who possesses the world's most deadly weapons."
- 4 Apr 2003 British Prime Minister Tony Blair declares: "I have no doubt that we will [find WMDs]. We have got absolutely no doubt that these weapons exist. But there has been a campaign of concealment by Saddam ever since he knew that UN inspectors were coming back into the country, and I have got absolutely no doubt that those weapons are there."
- 4 Apr 2003 British Prime Minister Tony Blair declares: "We know that he has stockpiles of major amounts of chemical and biological weapons, we know that he is trying to acquire nuclear capability, we know that he is trying to develop ballistic missile capability of a greater range."
- 8 Apr 2003 British Prime Minister Tony Blair declares: "On weapons of mass destruction, we know that the regime has them, we know that as the regime collapses we will be led to them. We pledged to disarm Iraq of weapons of mass destruction and we will keep that commitment."
- 10 Apr 2003 In a message to the Iraqi people, President George W Bush declares: "The goals of our coalition are clear and limited. We will end a brutal regime, whose aggression and weapons of mass destruction make it a unique threat to the world."
- 10 Apr 2003 In a message to the Iraqi people, British Prime Minister Tony Blair declares: "We did not want this war. But in refusing to give up his

weapons of mass destruction, Saddam gave us no choice but to act."

- 10 Apr 2003 White House spokesman Ari Fleischer declares: "We have high confidence that they have weapons of mass destruction. That is what this war was about and it is about. And we have high confidence it will be found."

And then, quietly at first, some doubts began to creep in.

- 24 Apr 2003 President George W Bush declares: "We are learning more as we interrogate or have discussions with Iraqi scientists and people within the Iraqi structure, that perhaps he destroyed some, perhaps he dispersed some. And so we will find them."
- 25 Apr 2003 ABC News journalist John Cochran reports: "Officials now say they may not find hundreds of tons of mustard and nerve agents and maybe not thousands of liters of anthrax and other toxins. But U.S. forces will find some, they say."
- 29 Apr 2003 In Moscow, British Prime Minister Tony Blair wonders openly: "Where is Saddam? Where are those arsenals of weapons of mass destruction, if they indeed were in existence? We don't know whether perhaps Saddam is still hiding somewhere underground in a bunker, sitting on cases containing weapons of mass destruction, and is preparing for blowing the whole thing up, bringing down with him the lives of hundreds of thousands of people. We simply do not know."

On May 1st, President Bush declared the end of combat operations from the flight deck of the USS *Abraham Lincoln*, an aircraft carrier protecting the dangerous waters off San Diego harbor. By then, two mysterious developments had cast serious doubts on the WMD hunt (which began to resemble more and more [Gerald Rivera's](#) 1986 live TV special *The Mystery of Al Capone's Vault*):

1. During the invasion, Iraqi defense forces had somehow restrained themselves from dipping into their stockpiles of chemical agents to use against the American aggressors.
2. In the aftermath of the fighting, none of Iraq's weapons caches were found to contain even slight traces of the offending materials. Not even the sites depicted in satellite photography presented by Colin Powell in his U.N. speech.

Perplexing. After a few more attempts at putting on a brave face, administration officials began to offer excuses why nothing had turned up yet. And the excuses would become more labored as time went on.

AFTER THE WAR

- 3 May 2003 President George W Bush declares: "We'll find them. It'll be a matter of time to do so."
- 4 May 2003 Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld tells *Fox News Sunday*: "we never believed that we'd just tumble over weapons of mass destruction in that country... We're going to find what we find as a result of talking to people, I believe, not simply by going to some site and hoping to discover it."
- 4 May 2003 Secretary of State Colin Powell declares: "I'm absolutely sure that there are weapons of mass destruction there and the evidence will be forthcoming. We're just getting it just now."
- 6 May 2003 President George W Bush declares: "I'm not surprised if we begin to uncover the weapons program of Saddam Hussein -- because he had a weapons program."
- 12 May 2003 National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice declares: "U.S. officials never expected that we were going to open garages and find weapons of mass destruction."
- 13 May 2003 Maj. Gen. David Petraeus declares: "I just don't know whether it was all destroyed years ago -- I mean, there's no question that there were chemical weapons years ago -- whether they were destroyed right before the war, whether they're still hidden."
- 21 May 2003 Gen. Michael Hagee, USMC declares: "Before the war, there's no doubt in my mind that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction, biological and chemical. I expected them to be found. I still expect them to be found."
- 26 May 2003 Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Richard Myers tells *The Today Show*: "Given time, given the number of prisoners now that we're interrogating, I'm confident that we're going to find weapons of mass destruction."
- 27 May 2003 Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld tells the Council on Foreign Relations: "Now what happened? Why weren't they [the WMDs] used? I don't know. There are several possible reasons for that... it may very well be that they didn't have time to... use chemical weapons. It is also possible that they decided that they would destroy them prior to a conflict."

And then this admission dropped out of the sky:

- 28 May 2003 Paul Wolfowitz declares: "For bureaucratic reasons, we settled on one issue -- weapons of mass destruction -- because it was the one reason everyone could agree on."

Remember when President Bush claimed that the WMD hunt had finally turned up something?

- 30 May 2003 President George W Bush tells Polish TV: "We found the weapons of mass destruction. We found biological laboratories... we've so far discovered two. And we'll find more weapons as time goes on. But for those who say we haven't found the banned manufacturing devices or banned weapons, they're wrong, we found them."

Except it later turned out that the equipment was actually used to generate hydrogen gas for artillery balloons. Not a WMD at all. (Oh, well.) Ironically, on the very same day, there was this revelation in Iraq:

- 30 May 2003 During a press conference, Lt. General James Conway, USMC declares: "It was a surprise to me then, it remains a surprise to me now, that we have not uncovered weapons... in some of the forward dispersal sites. Again, believe me, it's not for lack of trying. We've been to virtually every ammunition supply point between the Kuwaiti border and Baghdad, but they're simply not there... We were simply wrong."

D'oh. (Wonder where James Conway is, presently.) And also there were these gems:

- 30 May 2003 During a press conference, Maj. Gen. Keith Dayton of the Defense Intelligence Agency declares: "Do I think we're going to find something? Yeah, I kind of do, because I think there's a lot of information out there."
- 8 Jun 2003 In Iraq, WMD hunter Lieutenant Colonel Keith Harrington declares: "It doesn't appear there are any more targets at this time... We're hanging around with no missions in the foreseeable future."

Anyway, with the 2004 election looming ever larger on the horizon, the administration's self-conscious tapdancing promptly resumed and has carried on unabated ever since:

- 24 Jun 2003 At a press briefing, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld declares: "I don't know anybody that I can think of who has contended that the Iraqis had nuclear weapons." [see *Dick Cheney quote above*, March 16, 2003]
- 26 Jun 2003 Senate majority leader Bill Frist tells *The Today Show*: "I'm not sure that's the major reason we went to war."
- 9 Jul 2003 White House spokesman Ari Fleischer somehow manages to say with a straight face: "Saddam Hussein had biological and chemical weapons that were unaccounted for that we're still confident we'll find. I think the burden is on those people who think he didn't have weapons of mass destruction to tell the world where they are... just because they haven't yet been found doesn't mean they didn't exist. The burden is on the critics to explain where the weapons of mass destruction are. If they think they were destroyed, the burden is on them to explain when he destroyed them and where he destroyed them."
- 13 Jul 2003 National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice tells *Fox News Sunday*: "I believe that we will find the truth, and I believe that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction."
- 14 Jul 2003 President George W Bush declares: "I think the intelligence I get is darn good intelligence. And the speeches I have given were backed by good intelligence. And I am absolutely convinced today, like I was convinced when I gave the speeches, that Saddam Hussein developed a program of weapons of mass destruction, and that our country made the right decision."
- 22 Aug 2003 Former U.N. chief weapons inspector Richard Butler hypothesizes: "I'm a bit shaken, as everyone is, by the fact that the country, now under occupation, hasn't yielded this treasure trove of WMDs."
- 4 Sep 2003 At the US Embassy in Paris, Undersecretary of State John Bolton declares that whether Saddam actually possessed WMDs "isn't really the issue... The issue, I think, has been the capability that Iraq sought to have... WMD programs."
- 10 Sep 2003 In a speech to the National Press Club, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld declares: "I said, 'We know they're in that area.' I should have said, 'I believe they're in that area.' Our intelligence tells us they're in that area, and that was our best judgment." [see *previous quote above*, March 30, 2003]

Complicating matters somewhat was David Kay's interim report on the Iraqi WMD hunt. Regarding the threat of chemical weapons, the Iraq Survey Group reluctantly admitted:

Information found to date suggests that Iraq's large-scale capability to develop, produce and fill new CW munitions was reduced -- if not entirely destroyed -- during Operation Desert Storm and Desert Fox, 13 years of UN sanctions and UN inspections.

And as for nuclear projects:

Despite evidence of Saddam's continued ambition to acquire nuclear weapons, to date we have not uncovered evidence that Iraq undertook significant post-1998 steps to actually build nuclear weapons or produce fissile material.

- 19 Oct 2003 Secretary of State Colin Powell tells *Face the Nation*: "I think Dr. Kay's report certainly suggests that there are programs for the development of weapons of mass destruction. We're looking to see what stocks may be there."
- 26 Oct 2003 Secretary of State Colin Powell tells *Meet the Press*: "If the intelligence was wrong, and people knowing it was wrong presented it as right, that is bad. That is not what happened. I am absolutely convinced that the assessments we were given by the intelligence community reflected their best judgment based on the information they had available to them."
- 7 Nov 2003 During a speech in Denver, Dick Cheney declares: "In Iraq, a ruthless dictator cultivated weapons of mass destruction and the means to deliver them. He gave support to terrorists, had an established relationship with al Qaeda, and his regime is no more."
- 10 Nov 2003 During a five-minute interview via satellite with Fox affiliate WTVT-TV in Tampa, Florida, Condoleezza Rice declares: "Since we've been there, we've been on a consistent and coherent course to try and find out the true nature of the extent of his programs, what became of the weapons of mass destruction that he had. And we're finding interesting things."
- 21 Jan 2004 During his State of the Union speech, President Bush gingerly avoids the topic of whether WMDs actually exist in Iraq by declaring: "We are seeking all the facts. Already the Kay Report identified dozens of weapons of mass destruction-related program activities and significant amounts of equipment that Iraq concealed from the United Nations. Had we failed to act, the dictator's weapons of mass destruction programs would continue to this day."

And then David Kay suddenly resigned his post as head of the Iraq Survey Group and promptly told everyone within earshot that Saddam neither had any of those horrible WMDs, *nor could he have ever developed any*. Needless to say, this outcome posed a problem for the Bush administration.

- 23 Jan 2004 In an interview with Reuters, former weapons inspector David Kay is asked about the WMDs. He opines: "I don't think they existed. I think there were stockpiles at the end of the first Gulf War and those were a combination of U.N. inspectors and unilateral Iraqi action got rid of them. I think the best evidence is that they did not resume large-scale production, and that's what we're really talking about, is large stockpiles, not the small. Large stockpiles of chemical and biological weapons in the period after '95."
- 25 Jan 2004 With a brave face, British Prime Minister Tony Blair tells the *Observer*: "I have absolutely no doubt in my mind that the intelligence was genuine... It is absurd to say in respect of any intelligence that it is infallible, but if you ask me what I believe, I believe the intelligence was correct, and I think in the end we will have an explanation."
- 27 Jan 2004 Regarding the possibility that Saddam might never have had any appreciable WMDs, President Bush puts on the tap shoes: "First of all, I think it's very important for us to let the Iraq Survey Group do its work so we can find out the facts and compare the facts to what was thought."

- 3 Feb 2004 Secretary of State Colin Powell tells the *Washington Post* he's unsure whether he would have recommended invading Iraq if he had known there were no WMDs there. "I don't know, because it was the stockpile that presented the final little piece that made it more of a real and present danger and threat to the region and to the world... [the] absence of a stockpile changes the political calculus; it changes the answer you get."
- 4 Feb 2004 When asked by members of the Senate Armed Services Committee whether Saddam might never have possessed the WMDs in question, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld replies: "I suppose that's possible, but not likely."
- 5 Feb 2004 Former weapons inspector David Kay tells CNN that since Saddam was unlikely to have ever succeeded in developing WMDs: "If the administration had laid out a case based solely on the intentions of the Iraqi regime, I doubt you would have had massive public support or any international support for that. The argument last year was one not only of intentions but of capability and actual possession of weapons of mass destruction."
- 24 Mar 2004 At the annual Radio and Television News Correspondents Association dinner, George W Bush shows slides of himself searching clumsily behind furniture in the Oval Office, joking: "Those weapons of mass destruction have got to be somewhere ... nope, no weapons over there ... maybe under here?"
- 28 Mar 2004 On *60 Minutes*, National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice tells Ed Bradley: "Iraq, one of the most dangerous regimes, I think the most dangerous regime in the world's most dangerous region, in the Middle East, is a big reason -- or *was*, under Saddam Hussein -- a big reason for instability in the regions, for threats to the United States. He had used weapons of mass destruction. He had the intent and was still developing the capability to do so. Saddam Hussein's regime was very dangerous."
- 2 Apr 2004 Secretary of State Colin Powell concedes that the two mobile biological weapon labs he identified at his UN presentation might not have been WMD-related. "Now it appears not to be the case that it was that solid... But at the time I was preparing that presentation it was presented to me as being solid."
- 16 May 2004 Secretary of State Colin Powell tells *Meet the Press*: "When I made that presentation in February 2003, it was based on the best information that the Central Intelligence Agency made available to me. We studied it carefully; we looked at the sourcing in the case of the mobile trucks and trains. There was multiple sourcing for that. Unfortunately, that multiple sourcing over time has turned out to be not accurate. And so I'm deeply disappointed... it turned out that the sourcing was inaccurate and wrong and in some cases, deliberately misleading. And for that, I am disappointed and I regret it."
- 17 May 2004 Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld tells an audience at the Heritage Foundation that he fully expects to find those WMDs, eventually: "I can't guess how much longer it will take to get what we will finally look and say was ground truth -- certainly months, maybe a year-plus. I just don't know how long it will take. We certainly won't just discover anything. I mean, we did not just discover Saddam Hussein, and he was hiding in a hole that was big enough to put chemical weapons in it that would kill tens of thousands of people."
- 5 Jun 2004 During a joint press conference at Elysee Palace with President George W Bush, French President Jacques Chirac declares: "I have always said that I had no information that would lead me to believe that there were, or were not, for that matter, weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. That's a fact. All the information available to us at that time and on that subject did not allow us to take a stand or to reach any conclusion, which is why I said to President Bush that I, personally, was incapable of saying whether or not there were weapons of mass destruction."
- 17 Jun 2004 President Bush attempts to deflect the WMD issue: "I always said that Saddam Hussein was a threat. He was a threat because he had used weapons of mass destruction against his own people. He was a threat because he was a sworn enemy to the United States of America, just like al Qaeda. He was a threat because he had terrorist connections -- not only al Qaeda connections, but other connections to terrorist organizations; [Abu Nidal](#) was one. He was a threat because he provided safe-haven for a terrorist like Zarqawi, who is still killing innocent inside of Iraq. No, he was a threat, and the world is better off and America is more secure without Saddam Hussein in power."
- 6 Jul 2004 British Prime Minister Tony Blair finally concedes: "I have to accept we haven't found them and we may never find them. We don't know what has happened to them. They could have been removed. They could have been hidden. They could have been destroyed."
- 17 Feb 2005 At a banquet for the Conservative Political Action Conference, U.S. Congressman Christopher Cox declares: "We continue to discover biological and chemical weapons -- and facilities to make them -- inside Iraq, and even more about their intended use. [...] The facility in which the weapons were being made also housed a large inventory of perfume atomizers of various shapes and sizes to mimic the existing brands on the store shelves in the United States. It doesn't take a lot of imagination to understand the implications." When questioned later, Cox admits he got his information from a February 13th Fox News story.

MEDIA COVERAGE

Outside the government, everybody's got their pet theories on the unfolding WMD debacle. And that naturally includes members of the media. Most political pundits picked sides on the WMD debate early on, and the ones who lined up behind the White House are beginning to feel the heat.

Case in point: Fox News Channel's own [Bill O'Reilly](#). For several months, O'Reilly was playing a little game regarding the WMD situation in Iraq. Originally, Bill was convinced that when we liberated Iraq, there would be WMDs aplenty. Back in March 2003, he went so far as to tell the *Good Morning America* viewers that "if the Americans go in and overthrow Saddam Hussein and it's clean, he has nothing, I will apologize to the nation, and I will not trust the Bush administration again."

Months later, after President Bush declared the end of combat operations in Iraq and still no weapons of mass destruction had been uncovered, O'Reilly started to regret those words. So he gave the White House an ultimatum to come clean about the WMDs "in the next few weeks." But when that deadline was about to expire, Bill offered a *new* expiration date, granting the President **an additional five months**. Five weeks later, when it became obvious that the administration had no intention of meeting O'Reilly's decree, Bill extended it **another six months**. When you add it all up, the drop-dead date was dragged out **one full year**. How's *that* for accommodating?

In effect, Bill kept hitting the snooze button on his WMD deadline to avoid (or at least postpone) apologizing to the nation and declaring his mistrust for the Bush administration, two things he probably never had any intention of doing under any circumstances. But, in the end, it became unavoidable.

date	O'Reilly quote	deadline
5 Jun 2003	On his television show <i>The O'Reilly Factor</i> , Bill O'Reilly declares: "Reasonable people are faced with two conclusions -	

- one, that the intelligence was wrong, or, two, that more time is needed to find the weapons. *Talking Points* just asks one thing from President Bush: an update on the situation **in the next few weeks**. That's a very reasonable request, and one the President must take seriously if he wants to advance the cause of the USA throughout the world. In the end, if the intelligence was faulty, some people have to be fired. If, God forbid, the intelligence was contrived, and I don't believe that, but if it is proven, then Congressional action must be taken." **1 Jul 2003**
- 11 Jun 2003 On his television show *The O'Reilly Factor*, Bill O'Reilly declares: "It is possible the President did lie, but most of the credible evidence points to wishful thinking on WMDs, rather than outright deception. By the way, the President must tell us his feelings on the guerrilla action in Iraq and the WMDs, or risk losing popularity... We the people deserve an extensive update from the President **before he goes on summer vacation**. This is not a partisan issue. This is a people issue. There are things we have the right to know about, and the President must tell us." **1 Aug 2003**
- 31 Jul 2003 On his television show *The O'Reilly Factor*, Bill O'Reilly declares: "We're confused about the WMDs. And Mr. Bush has an obligation to clear this up **by the end of the year**." **1 Jan 2004**
- 8 Oct 2003 During his appearance on the National Public Radio interview program *Fresh Air*, Bill O'Reilly declares: "Well, certainly the WMD situation is troubling, okay. All Americans should demand **within the next nine months** -- before the Presidential candidate, uh candidates, really swing in -- for an explanation of what exactly happened. Americans will accept mistakes if mistakes were made honestly, but it needs to be defined by the Bush administration why the intelligence was faulty. And, uh, you know, there is no spin on that. They *have* to do it." **1 Jul 2004**
- 10 Feb 2004 Still lacking any substantive explanations from the White House, Bill O'Reilly grudgingly apologizes on *Good Morning America*.

O'REILLY: Well, my analysis was wrong and I'm sorry. Absolutely, you know.

GIBSON: Camera's right there.

O'REILLY: Um, and I'm not pleased about it.

GIBSON: Camera's right there.

O'REILLY: Yeah, I just said it. What do you want me to do? Go over and *kiss* the camera?

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