

America's Ministry of Propaganda Exposed

Downing Street Memo is but the Tip of the Iceberg

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This Article first published in November 2003 sheds light on the web of disinformation emanating from the White house and the Pentagon. The controversial Downing Street Memo was just one piece of evidence in a web of deceit, which points to the criminalization of the upper echelons of the State, not to mention the media which fed the lies on WMD and Islamic terrorists into the news chain.

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[Fabricating Intelligence as a Justification for War](#), Selected articles and essays, Michel Chossudovsky , Editor, Global Research E-Monograph and Reports Series, No. 4, May 2005

A Strategy of Lies: How the White House Fed the Public a Steady Diet of Falsehoods



Colonel Sam Gardiner (USAF, Ret.) has identified 50 false news stories created and leaked by a secretive White House propaganda apparatus. Bush administration officials are probably having second thoughts about their decision to play hardball with former US Ambassador Joseph Wilson. Joe Wilson is a contender. When you play hardball with Joe, you better be prepared to deal with some serious rebound.

After Wilson wrote a critically timed New York Times essay exposing as false George W. Bush's claim that Iraq had purchased uranium from Niger, high officials in the White House contacted several Washington reporters and leaked the news that Wilson's wife was a CIA agent.

Wilson isn't waiting for George W. Bush to hand over the perp. In mid-October, the former ambassador began passing copies of an embarrassing internal report to reporters across the US. The-Edge has received copies of this document.

The 56-page investigation was assembled by USAF Colonel (Ret.) Sam Gardiner. "Truth from These Podia: Summary of a Study of Strategic Influence, Perception Management, Strategic Information Warfare and Strategic Psychological Operations in Gulf II" identifies more than 50 stories about the Iraq war that were faked by government propaganda artists in a covert campaign to "market" the military invasion of Iraq.

Gardiner has credentials. He has taught at the National War College, the Air War College and the Naval Warfare College and was a visiting scholar at the Swedish Defense College.

According to Gardiner, “It was not bad intelligence” that led to the quagmire in Iraq, “It was an orchestrated effort [that] began before the war” that was designed to mislead the public and the world. Gardiner’s research led him to conclude that the US and Britain had conspired at the highest levels to plant “stories of strategic influence” that were known to be false.

The Times of London described the \$200-million-plus US operation as a “meticulously planned strategy to persuade the public, the Congress, and the allies of the need to confront the threat from Saddam Hussein.”

The multimillion-dollar propaganda campaign run out of the White House and Defense Department was, in Gardiner’s final assessment “irresponsible in parts” and “might have been illegal.”

“Washington and London did not trust the peoples of their democracies to come to the right decisions,” Gardiner explains. Consequently, “Truth became a casualty. When truth is a casualty, democracy receives collateral damage.” For the first time in US history, “we allowed strategic psychological operations to become part of public affairs... [W]hat has happened is that information warfare, strategic influence, [and] strategic psychological operations pushed their way into the important process of informing the peoples of our two democracies.”

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld announced plans to create an Office of Strategic Influence early in 2002. At the same time British Prime Minister Tony Blair’s Strategy Director Alastair Campbell was setting up an identical operation in London.



As soon as Pvt. Jessica Lynch was airlifted from her hospital bed, the first call from her “rescue team” went, not to military officials but to Jim Wilkinson, the White House’s top propaganda official stationed in Iraq. White House critics were quick to recognize that “strategic influence” was a euphemism for disinformation. Rumsfeld had proposed establishing the country’s first Ministry of Propaganda.

The criticism was so severe that the White House backed away from the plan. But on November 18, several months after the furor had died down, Rumsfeld arrogantly announced that he had not been deterred. “If you want to savage this thing, fine: I’ll give you the corpse. There’s the name. You can have the name, but I’m gonna keep doing every single thing that needs to be done — and I have.”

Gardiner’s dogged research identified a long list of stories that passed through Rumsfeld’s propaganda mill. According to Gardiner, “there were over 50 stories manufactured or at least engineered that distorted the picture of Gulf II for the American and British people.” Those stories include:

- The link between terrorism, Iraq and 9/11
- Iraqi agents meeting with 9/11 hijacker Mohammed Atta
- Iraq’s possession of chemical and biological weapons.
- Iraq’s purchase of nuclear materials from Niger.
- Saddam Hussein’s development of nuclear weapons.
- Aluminum tubes for nuclear weapons
- The existence of Iraqi drones, WMD cluster bombs and Scud missiles.

- Iraq's threat to target the US with cyber warfare attacks.
 - The rescue of Pvt. Jessica Lynch.
 - The surrender of a 5,000-man Iraqi brigade.
 - Iraq executing Coalition POWs.
 - Iraqi soldiers dressing in US and UK uniforms to commit atrocities.
 - The exact location of WMD facilities
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- WMDs moved to Syria.

Every one of these stories received extensive publicity and helped form indelible public impressions of the “enemy” and the progress of the invasion. Every one of these stories was false.

“I know what I am suggesting is serious. I did not come to these conclusions lightly,” Gardiner admits. “I’m not going to address why they did it. That’s something I don’t understand even after all the research.” But the fact remained that “very bright and even well-intentioned officials found how to control the process of governance in ways never before possible.”

A Battle between Good and Evil

Gardiner notes that cocked-up stories about Saddam’s WMDs “was only a very small part of the strategic influence, information operations and marketing campaign conducted on both sides of the Atlantic.”

The “major thrust” of the campaign, Gardiner explains, was “to make a conflict with Iraq seem part of a struggle between good and evil. Terrorism is evil... we are the good guys.

“The second thrust is what propaganda theorists would call the ‘big lie.’ The plan was to connect Iraq with the 9/11 attacks. Make the American people believe that Saddam Hussein was behind those attacks.”

The means for pushing the message involved: saturating the media with stories, 24/7; staying on message; staying ahead of the news cycle; managing expectations; and finally, being prepared to “use information to attack and punish critics.”

Audition in Afghanistan

The techniques that proved so successful in Operation Iraqi Freedom were first tried out during the campaign to build public support for the US attack on Afghanistan.

Rumsfeld hired Rendon Associates, a private PR firm that had been deeply involved in the first Gulf War. Founder John Rendon (who calls himself an “information warrior”) proudly boasts that he was the one responsible for providing thousands of US flags for the Kuwaiti people to wave at TV cameras after their “liberation” from Iraqi troops in 1991.

The White House Coalition Information Center was set up by Karen Hughes in November 2001. (In January 2003, the CIC was renamed the Office for Global Communications.) The CIC hit on a cynical plan to curry favor for its attack on Afghanistan by highlighting “the plight of women in Afghanistan.” CIC’s Jim Wilkinson later called the Afghan women campaign “the best thing we’ve done.”

Gardiner is quick with a correction. The campaign “was not about something they did. It was about a story they created... It was not a program with specific steps or funding to improve the conditions of women.”

The coordination between the propaganda engines of Washington and London even involved the respective First Wives. On November 17, 2001, Laura Bush issued a shocking statement: “Only the terrorists and the Taliban threaten to pull out women’s fingernails for wearing nail polish.” Three days later, a horrified Cherie Blaire told the London media, “In Afghanistan, if you wear nail polish, you could have your nails torn out.”

Misleading via Innuendo

Time and again, US reporters accepted the CIC news leaks without question. Among the many examples that Gardiner documented was the use of the “anthrax scare” to promote the administration’s pre-existing plan to attack Iraq.

In both the US and the UK, “intelligence sources” provided a steady diet of unsourced allegations to the media to suggest that Iraq and Al Qaeda terrorists were behind the deadly mailing of anthrax-laden letters.

It wasn’t until December 18, that the White House confessed that it was “increasingly looking like” the anthrax came from a US military installation. The news was released as a White House “paper” instead of as a more prominent White House “announcement.” As a result, the idea that Iraq or Al Qaeda were behind the anthrax plot continued to persist. Gardiner believes this was an intentional part of the propaganda campaign. “If a story supports policy, even if incorrect, let it stay around.”

In a successful propaganda campaign, Gardiner wrote, “We would have expected to see the creation [of] stories to sell the policy; we would have expected to see the same stories used on both sides of the Atlantic. We saw both. The number of engineered or false stories from US and UK stories is long.”

The US and Britain: The Axis of Disinformation

Before the coalition invasion began on March 20, 2003, Washington and London agreed to call their illegal pre-emptive military aggression an “armed conflict” and to always reference the Iraqi government as the “regime.” Strategic communications managers in both capitols issued lists of “guidance” terms to be used in all official statements. London’s 15 Psychological Operations Group paralleled Washington’s Office of Global Communications.

In a departure from long military tradition, the perception managers even took over the naming of the war. Military code names were originally chosen for reasons of security. In modern US warfare, however, military code names have become “part of the marketing.” There was Operation Nobel Eagle, Operation Valiant Strike, Operation Provide Comfort, Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Uphold Democracy and, finally, Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The “Rescue” of Jessica Lynch

The Pentagon’s control over the news surrounding the capture and rescue of Pfc. Jessica Lynch receives a good deal of attention in Gardiner’s report. “From the very beginning it was called an ‘ambush,’” Gardiner noted. But, he pointed out, “If you drive a convoy into

enemy lines, turn around and drive back, it's not an ambush. Military officers who are very careful about how they talk about operations would normally not be sloppy about describing this kind of event," Gardiner complained. "This un-military kind of talk is one of the reasons I began doing this research."

One of the things that struck Gardiner as revealing was the fact that, as Newsweek reported: "as soon as Lynch was in the air, [the Joint Operations Center] phoned Jim Wilkinson, the top civilian communications aide to CENTCOM Gen. Tommy Franks."

It struck Gardiner as inexplicable that the first call after Lynch's rescue would go to the Director of Strategic Communications, the White House's top representative on the ground.

On the morning of April 3, the Pentagon began leaking information on Lynch's rescue that sought to establish Lynch as "America's new Rambo." The Washington Post repeated the story it received from the Pentagon: that Lynch "sustained multiple gunshot wounds" and fought fiercely and shot several enemy soldier... firing her weapon until she ran out of ammunition."

Lynch's family confused the issue by telling the press that their daughter had not sustained any bullet wounds. Lynch's parents subsequently refused to talk to the press, explaining that they had been "told not to talk about it." (Weeks later, the truth emerged. Lynch was neither stabbed nor shot. She was apparently injured while falling from her vehicle.)

Rumsfeld and Gen. Myers let the story stand during an April 3 press conference although both had been fully briefed on Lynch's true condition.

"Again, we see the pattern," Gardiner observed. "When the story on the street supports the message, it will be left there by a non-answer. The message is more important than the truth. Even Central Command kept the story alive by not giving out details."

Gardiner saw another break with procedure. The information on the rescue that was released to the Post "would have been very highly classified" and should have been closely guarded. Instead, it was used as a tool to market the war. "This was a major pattern from the beginning of the marketing campaign throughout the war," Gardiner wrote. "It was okay to release classified information if it supported the message."

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For more information contact: Col. Sam Gardiner's entire 56-page report is available in six PDF files that can be accessed beginning with: www.usnews.com/usnews/politics/whispers/documents/truth_1.pdf

On October 21, Col. Gardiner [10/21/03] was interviewed on the Paul Harris Radio Show on The Big 550 KTRS in St. Louis. The Real Audio interview (and another link to the PDF files) can be found here: www.harrisonline.com/audio/listings/samgardiner.htm

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