

The White House Memo

Bush and Blair discussed using American spy plane in UN colors to lure Saddam into war

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Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

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Channel 4 News tonight reveals extraordinary details of George Bush and Tony Blair's pre-war meeting in January 2003 at which they discussed plans to begin military action on March 10th 2003, irrespective of whether the United Nations had passed a new resolution authorising the use of force.

Channel 4 News has seen minutes from that meeting, which took place in the White House on 31 January 2003. The two leaders discussed the possibility of securing further UN support, but President Bush made it clear that he had already decided to go to war. The details are contained in a new version of the book 'Lawless World' written by a leading British human rights lawyer, Philippe Sands QC.

President Bush said that: "The US would put its full weight behind efforts to get another resolution and would 'twist arms' and 'even threaten'. But he had to say that if ultimately we failed, military action would follow anyway."

Prime Minister Blair responded that he was: "solidly with the President and ready to do whatever it took to disarm Saddam."

But Mr. Blair said that: "a second Security Council resolution would provide an insurance policy against the unexpected, and international cover, including with the Arabs."

Mr. Sands' book says that the meeting focused on the need to identify evidence that Saddam had committed a material breach of his obligations under the existing UN Resolution 1441. There was concern that insufficient evidence had been unearthed by the UN inspection team, led by Dr Hans Blix. Other options were considered.

President Bush said: "The US was thinking of flying U2 reconnaissance aircraft with fighter cover over Iraq, painted in UN colours. If Saddam fired on them, he would be in breach."

He went on: "It was also possible that a defector could be brought out who would give a public presentation about Saddam's WMD, and there was also a small possibility that Saddam would be assassinated."

Speaking to Channel 4 News, Mr. Sands said: "I think no one would be surprised at the idea that the use of spy-planes to review what is going on would be considered. What is surprising is the idea that they would be used painted in the colours of the United Nations in order to provoke an attack which could then be used to justify material breach. Now that plainly looks as if it is deception, and it raises some fundamental questions of legality, both

in terms of domestic law and international law.”

Also present at the meeting were President Bush’s National Security Adviser, Condoleeza Rice and her deputy Dan Fried, and the President’s Chief of Staff, Andrew Card. The Prime Minister took with him his then security adviser Sir David Manning, his Foreign Policy aide Matthew Rycroft, and and his chief of staff, Jonathan Powell.

Those present, as documented in Mr. Sands’ book, also discussed what might happen in Iraq after liberation.

President Bush said that he: “thought it unlikely that there would be internecine warfare between the different religious and ethnic groups.”

The Foreign Office issued a statement: “The Government only committed UK forces to Iraq after securing the approval of the House in the vote on 18 march 2003.”

“The decision to resort to military action to ensure Iraq fulfilled its obligation imposed by successive UN Security Council Resolutions was taken only after all other routes to disarm Iraq had failed.”

“Of course during this time there were frequent discussions between UK and US Governments about Iraq.”

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