

U.S. Sets “Decapitation of Government” As Early Goal of Combat

Declassified Documents Show Bush Admin. Diverting Resources to Iraq Less than 2 Months after Launch of Afghan War

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THE IRAQ WAR — PART I: *The U.S. Prepares for Conflict, 2001*

U.S. Sets “Decapitation of Government” As Early Goal of Combat

Talking Points for Rumsfeld-Franks Meeting in November 2001 Outline Policy Makers’ Aims for the Conflict and Postwar Rule of Iraq

Declassified Documents Show Bush Administration Diverting Attention and Resources to Iraq Less than Two Months after Launch of Afghanistan War

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Washington, D.C., September 22, 2010 - Following instructions from President George W. Bush to develop an updated war plan for Iraq, Defense Secretary Donald [Rumsfeld ordered](#) CENTCOM Commander Gen. Tommy Franks in November 2001 to initiate planning for the “decapitation” of the Iraqi government and the empowerment of a “Provisional Government” to take its place.

[Talking points for the Rumsfeld-Franks meeting](#) on November 27, 2001, released through the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), confirm that policy makers were already looking for ways to justify invading Iraq - as indicated by Rumsfeld’s first point, “Focus on WMD.”

This document shows that Pentagon policy makers cited early U.S. experience in Afghanistan to justify planning for Iraq’s post-invasion governance in order to achieve their strategic objectives: “Unlike in Afghanistan, important to have ideas in advance about who would rule afterwards.”

Rumsfeld’s notes were prepared in close consultation with senior DOD officials Paul Wolfowitz and Douglas Feith. Among other insights, the materials posted today by the National Security Archive shed light on the intense focus on Iraq

by high-level Bush administration officials long before the attacks of 9/11, and Washington's confidence in perception management as a successful strategy for overcoming public and allied resistance to its plans.

This compilation further shows:

- The preliminary strategy Rumsfeld imparted to Franks while directing him to develop a new war plan for Iraq
- Secretary of State Powell's awareness, three days into a new administration, that Iraq "regime change" would be a principal focus of the Bush presidency
- Administration determination to exploit the perceived propaganda value of intercepted aluminum tubes - falsely identified as nuclear related - before completion of even a preliminary determination of their end use
- The difficulty of winning European support for attacking Iraq (except that of British Prime Minister Tony Blair) without real evidence that Baghdad was implicated in 9/11
- The State Department's analytical unit observing that a decision by Tony Blair to join a U.S. war on Iraq "could bring a radicalization of British Muslims, the great majority of whom opposed the September 11 attacks but are increasingly restive about what they see as an anti-Islamic campaign"
- Pentagon interest in the perception of an Iraq invasion as a "just war" and State Department insights into the improbability of that outcome

Rumsfeld's instructions to Franks included the establishment and funding of a provisional government as a significant element of U.S. invasion strategy. In the end the Pentagon changed course and instead ruled post-invasion Iraq directly, first through the short-lived Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance and then through Paul Bremer and the Coalition Provisional Authority.

Today's posting is the first of a three-part series of electronic briefing books detailing the run-up to Operation Iraqi Freedom. This edition covers the critical first year of George W. Bush's presidency. The following two - featuring newly available British government documents - will treat the question of whether the Bush administration ever seriously considered alternative strategies for Iraq and how the U.S. and Great Britain attempted to sell the war strategy to the world.

In addition to an analytical essay and the documents, today's EBB includes two research aids - a [detailed timeline](#) and an illuminating [collection of quotations](#) from key individuals and government documents.

THE IRAQ WAR — PART I: The U.S. Prepares for Conflict, 2001 **By Joyce Battle**

More than seven years after the U.S. invaded Iraq the reasons for the war remain in dispute and many questions remain unanswered. Documents released through Britain's Chilcot inquiry have provided some insights about that country's participation in the conflict, but from the U.S. side much remains to be discovered. In time, the narrative of the war will be clarified as more insiders write their personal accounts and as more documents enter the public domain.

Several recently declassified documents compiled here, dating mostly from the first year of the Bush administration, provide new insights into the lead-up to the war. One in particular, comprised of notes used by Defense Secretary

Donald Rumsfeld in late November 2001 during his first face-to-face meeting with Gen. Tommy Franks after sending him the order to start planning seriously for combat, demonstrates again — as so much reporting has done — the influence of the long neoconservative campaign against Saddam Hussein as a primary factor driving George Bush’s Iraq policy.

Other documents reflect the high level of attention paid to Iraq well before the 9/11 attacks, as well as some of the problems that the administration faced as it began strategizing seriously for war – how to justify an unprovoked attack given the dearth of any real evidence that Iraq was a threat to the U.S., how to win over partners that would be willing to join in the U.S. invasion, how to generate positive spin to sell the administration’s controversial choices?

This briefing book includes a [Timeline](#) and a collection of [Quotes](#) to provide additional historical background and to convey a sense of the tone of the rancorous discourse that led up to the Iraq war.

Background

When the Persian Gulf War ended in 1991 the U.N. imposed sanctions on Iraq in order to prevent it from maintaining or reviving its nonconventional weapons programs. Sanctions were controversial from the outset and became increasingly more so over the years as Iraq’s economy and social fabric disintegrated (and as the financial fallout affecting Iraq’s neighbors, close U.S. allies Turkey and Jordan, increased.) To the disappointment of the U.S. the sanctions did not achieve what was probably their principal aim – provoking an internal coup that would oust Saddam Hussein from power.

In time, concern that sanctions were breaking down energized neoconservatives in the U.S. who had long been fixated on Iraq – especially after the collapse of the Soviet Union, their former *bête noir*. In the late 1990s a campaign they had begun soon after the Gulf war to persuade the Clinton administration to pursue a more aggressive policy toward Iraq became more vociferous. Over time the neoconservative strategy came to focus largely on regime change achieved through support for one of many Iraqi opposition groups, the CIA-funded Iraqi National Congress (INC), and its head, Ahmad Chalabi, an Iraqi expatriate and convicted embezzler ([Note 1](#)) with close ties to Iran — and an impressive command of American public relations techniques.

In late 1993 Chalabi had begun promoting a plan for regime change in Iraq that he called “The End Game”. It envisioned a revolt by Iraqi National Congress-led Shi’ites in southern Iraq and Kurds in the north that would inspire a military uprising and lead to the installation of an INC-dominated regime friendly to the U.S. (and Israel.) He also began to use some of his CIA funding to build an armed militia. ([Note 2](#)) Later, retired General Wayne Downing and former CIA officer (and Iran-Contra figure) Duane “Dewey” Clarridge became military consultants to the INC, and Downing developed a variation of Chalabi’s “End Game”. In his version (the “Iraq Liberation Strategy”) INC troops backed by former U.S. Special Forces would incite Iraqi military defections. The U.S. would recognize the INC as Iraq’s provisional government, give it Iraq’s U.N. seat; create INC-controlled “liberated zones” freed of sanctions, give the INC frozen Iraqi assets under U.S. control, launch air attacks, and have equipment prepositioned in the region in case U.S. ground forces were activated. ([Note 3](#)) (Under what authority the U.S. was to implement these measures is not clear.) In April 1998 Senate majority leader Trent Lott (R-Miss.) had Downing brief a bipartisan group of senators at a closed meeting on the plan. ([Note 4](#)) As will be seen, Donald Rumsfeld recycled elements of this approach when he ordered the commencement of serious planning for an invasion of Iraq.

Iraq Liberation Act

After several covert operations against Iraq in the mid-1990s failed, increasingly fraught anti-Iraq rhetoric, endorsed by hawkish Democrats as well as Republicans, culminated in President Bill Clinton's 1998 signing of the Iraq Liberation Act, which partially endorsed the neoconservative agenda. [\[Doc. 2\]](#) The act established regime change as official U.S. policy and provided funds for opposition groups and propaganda operations, but did not call for direct U.S. military action. The Clinton administration still did not view Iraq as a high priority, however, and neoconservatives were disappointed by the government's lack of follow-up after the act was signed.

Their cause clearly entered a new era when George W. Bush was elected president. Two prominent neoconservatives with a long history of regime-change advocacy, Richard Perle and Paul Wolfowitz, had served on candidate Bush's political advisory team; after he took office he appointed a remarkable number of Iraq hawks to positions of power, including his defense secretary, Donald Rumsfeld; deputy secretary Wolfowitz; under secretary for policy, Douglas Feith; and Perle (an advisory role to Rumsfeld.) Many had a long-established relationship with Ahmad Chalabi through academic circles or activities sponsored by the conservative American Enterprise Institute, including Wolfowitz, Perle, and Rumsfeld, as well as Vice President Cheney. Cheney, before the inauguration, had asked the outgoing defense secretary to provide Bush with a policy briefing, and identified Iraq as topic A. [\(Note 5\)](#)

“Regime Change”

Chalabi's comment from the time seems apt: “I think the initial statements of the new appointees are very useful for us ...” [\(Note 6\)](#) Outside observers hoped that the incoming secretary of state, Colin Powell, who unlike the neoconservative faction had genuine military experience and a more nuanced view of the Middle East, might counterbalance a predictable anti-Iraq juggernaut in the new administration. In presumed response to the political environment he had entered, however, Powell asked his staff for background on Iraq regime change policy – three days after Bush's inauguration [\[Doc. 3\]](#).

When the new administration's principals (agency heads) met for the first time at the end of January it was to discuss the Middle East, including Bush's planned disengagement from efforts to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the issue of “How Iraq is destabilizing the region.” Bush directed the Pentagon to look into military options for Iraq and the CIA to improve intelligence on the country. [\(Note 7\)](#) At a February 1 principals meeting Paul Wolfowitz lobbied for arming the Iraqi opposition. [\(Note 8\)](#) When the deputies (agency seconds-in-command) committee met in April for its first discussion of terrorism since the president took office and counterterrorism chief Richard Clarke attempted to focus on Osama bin Laden and the Taliban – five months before 9/11 — Wolfowitz tried to change the subject to Iraq. [\(Note 9\)](#)

Aluminum Tubes

At around this time, the U.S. learned that Iraq was interested in buying 60,000 aluminum tubes (advertisements appeared on the internet). A CIA analyst who was not a nuclear weapons specialist became convinced that the high-strength alloy tubes could only be intended for uranium enrichment centrifuges to manufacture nuclear weapons. The CIA endorsed his opinion and passed it on to Bush in a President's Daily Brief. An April 10 follow-up report was circulated among national security officials and the CIA analysis was immediately questioned by nuclear weapons experts. On April 11 scientists led by the chief of the Oak Ridge National Laboratory's Advanced Technology Division reported that the diameter of the tubes was off by 50 percent (compared to a centrifuge that Iraq tested in 1990), among other discrepancies. The Oak Ridge team concluded the tubes were probably not intended for centrifuges.

On May 9 the Energy Department reported in a Daily Intelligence Highlight, published on a website used by the White House and the intelligence community, that the intercepted tubes were quite similar to ones that Iraq used to build conventional rocket launchers. In June the U.S. got direct access to the intercepted shipment. The CIA analyst admitted they were the wrong size for standard centrifuges, but said they matched the dimensions of those used for a centrifuge designed in the 1950s by a German scientist. The scientist told him they weren't even close.

This direct access to the tubes was met with the highest possible level of interest within the administration. The State Department alerted Secretary Powell, and arranged for a sample to be shown to President Bush immediately — before even a preliminary determination had been made as to the tubes' likely end use. (U.N. arms inspectors, on the other hand, planned to “analyze samples before drawing conclusions.”) What did get priority was planning for “publicizing the interdiction to our advantage,” and “Getting the right story out.” [\[Doc. 4\]](#)

For its part, the CIA notified Congress of the development immediately — without prior coordination with the State Department. [\[Doc. 5\]](#) The agency produced at least nine reports throughout the summer of 2002 that said that the tubes proved that Iraq had restarted a nuclear weapons program, documents that were given to Bush and other high-level officials. Energy Department and State Department Intelligence and Research (INR) analysts, who assumed that the claim had long since been put to rest, did not see the reports. ([Note 10](#))

More than a year after the interdiction, on September 8, 2002, the New York Times reported that “American officials” believed that the tubes were meant for use in centrifuges. ([Note 11](#)) The report was based on documents deliberately leaked by the White House. Cheney, Powell, and Condoleezza Rice appeared on Sunday talk shows the same day to draw attention to the report. Rice said that the tubes were only suitable for nuclear weapons programs, and warned, most famously, “we don't want the smoking gun to be a mushroom cloud.” ([Note 12](#))

Strategizing

On July 13, 2001 the deputies committee met to discuss Iraq and Wolfowitz said again that to achieve “regime change” the U.S. should provide more support for Iraqi opposition groups, recognize a provisional government, and create an enclave in the south that, along with U.S.-protected Kurdistan, would be called “Free Iraq” (the southern enclave strategy was meant to mollify a Turkey made nervous by hints of increasing autonomy for the Kurds in northern Iraq.) The U.S. would then give “Free Iraq” frozen Iraqi assets. The protected zone would be expanded to expropriate Iraq's oil fields and their revenues. Powell thought Wolfowitz's strategy was ludicrous, but Rumsfeld said he wanted Bush's opinion, ([Note 13](#)) and asked Rice to schedule a principals committee meeting leading to an NSC discussion with the president.

In a July 27 memo to Rice, Rumsfeld recommended scheduling the meetings, because sanctions were failing and Iraq's air defenses seemed to be improving — he was particularly disturbed by Iraq's increased use of fiber optics. He outlined a range of policy options and said definitively, “Within a few years the U.S. will undoubtedly have to confront a Saddam armed with nuclear weapons” (and also that Iran will “almost certainly” have nuclear weapons by 2006.) He concluded, “If Saddam's regime were ousted, we would have a much-improved position in the region and elsewhere,” and, “A major success in Iraq would enhance U.S. credibility and influence throughout the region.” [\[Doc. 6\]](#)

During the summer of 2001 a career Pentagon planning official tried to

evaluate the premises of the Chalabi/Downing strategy for Iraq: that is, that the INC could play a major role in ousting Saddam Hussein and Iraqis would welcome Ahmad Chalabi as a hero. His analysis would have focused on what could go wrong, what if INC operations failed, what if Chalabi's supposed popularity were overblown? But he learned that the Pentagon's focus was "not on what could go wrong but on what would go right." ([Note 14](#)) On August 1 the deputies gave a top secret paper on Iraq to the principals with the title of Downing's plan for regime change, "A Liberation Strategy", discussing CIA and other U.S. support for Iraqi opposition groups and possible direct U.S. military action. Wolfowitz said his enclave strategy would easily succeed. Powell tried to warn Bush, telling him, "This is not as easy as it is being presented." In Bush's view, it was "good contingency planning." ([Note 15](#))

By early August the CIA had selected the Cuban-American son of a Bay of Pigs veteran to be chief of its covert Iraqi Operations Group. "Saul" evaluated U.S. plans and concluded that a coup in Iraq, which the U.S. for a decade had hoped could be brought about through a combination of sanctions and covert operations, would fail. To achieve regime change, a full-scale military invasion of Iraq with CIA support would be necessary. ([Note 16](#))

9/11

On September 11 al-Qaeda struck and George Bush immediately assumed that Saddam Hussein was involved. [[Doc. 14](#), p. 334] The same held true for Donald Rumsfeld; famously, within hours of the attacks he directed the Joint Chiefs of Staff to look for evidence to justify attacking Saddam Hussein as well as Osama bin Laden. He instructed Pentagon lawyer Jim Haynes to talk to "PW" (Paul Wolfowitz) to get information establishing a link between the two. [[Doc. 7](#)]

National security staff met at the White House on September 12 and, despite the CIA's determination "that al Qaeda was guilty of the attacks," Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz again argued for attacking Iraq. (Wolfowitz thought that a state sponsor had to be involved; Rumsfeld said that Iraq had better targets than Afghanistan.) Bush endorsed the strategy of overthrowing Iraq's government. According to Richard Clarke, when he told Bush that al-Qaeda was definitely responsible and that past efforts had not found any real evidence connecting it with Iraq, Bush seemed irritated, ([Note 17](#)) and at a September 13 NSC meeting Bush asked again that the CIA look for possible Iraqi involvement. At that meeting Rumsfeld said that attacking Iraq "could inflict...costly damage" and make terrorist-supporting regimes think twice about confronting the U.S. Bush told the Pentagon to give him plans and a cost estimate for an Iraq war. ([Note 18](#)) Clarke began a special project to look again for a link between Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden. ([Note 19](#))

At a September 17 NSC meeting Bush again directed that contingency plans for attacking Iraq be prepared, including a plan to seize its oilfields. He reportedly signed a top secret order directing the Pentagon to begin planning for war with Afghanistan — and an invasion of Iraq. ([Note 20](#))

On September 18 Clarke's office reported the results of its intelligence survey. It noted the wide ideological gap between Iraq's then leadership and al-Qaeda and concluded that only weak anecdotal evidence linked the two. Clarke later told 60 Minutes that the NSC sent back the first draft of the memo because it did not like its conclusions. ([Note 21](#))

A September 21 President's Daily Brief prepared by the CIA repeated that the intelligence community had no evidence of an Iraq link to 9/11 or of any significant collaborative ties with al-Qaeda, and that the few credible reports of Iraq/al-Qaeda contacts involved attempts by Iraq to monitor the group. Bush, Cheney, Rice, Stephen Hadley, Rumsfeld, Powell, under secretaries at the State

and Defense Departments, and other senior administration officials received the paper. ([Note 22](#))

On September 29 Rumsfeld asked the JCS to begin preparing Iraq war options with two objectives: finding WMD and regime change. For the second goal Rumsfeld wanted a plan taking one or two months and the deployment of 250,000 troops. ([Note 23](#))

On October 7 the U.S. war with Afghanistan began.

On November 8 Feith drafted a paper at Rumsfeld's request reviewing Iraq strategy, including what was essentially the Chalabi/Downing plan: use of Iraqi opposition groups to seek collaborators to rebel against the government, build up enclaves in the north and south, and support the Iraqi National Congress. ([Note 24](#)) At a November 17 NSC meeting Bush directed the Defense Department "to be ready to deal with Iraq if Baghdad acted against U.S. interests, with plans to include possibly occupying Iraqi oil fields." ([Note 25](#)) On November 21 Bush told Rumsfeld to start updating contingency plans for war with Iraq but keep it secret. ([Note 26](#)) At around the same time the JCS briefed Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz, and others on the military's current Iraq contingency war plan, which called for a deployment taking some seven months and around 500,000 troops. Rumsfeld rejected the force levels as too high and the timing for deployment as too long. ([Note 27](#))

Briefing Franks

On November 27, 2001 Rumsfeld flew to Tampa to meet alone with Tommy Franks. He told him to question everything in the existing contingency plan for an Iraq war (Oplan 1003). He brought talking points drafted with Wolfowitz and Feith that largely corresponded to the Chalabi/Downing strategy: find a rationale to start a war with Iraq - that is, in response to a move by Saddam Hussein against the Kurds, or U.S. discovery of an Iraqi connection to 9/11 or to recent anthrax attacks, or a dispute over WMD inspections. The document advises, "start now thinking about inspection demands" (perhaps implying that a dispute could be provoked), and recommends recognition of a provisional government ("Unlike in Afghanistan, important to have ideas in advance about who would rule afterwards" - this inserted by Feith), ([Note 28](#)) giving said provisional government revenues from "liberated" oil fields, the concept of a running start: "Start military forces before all required for worst case - larger forces flow in behind", and recommended war crimes indictments for ousted officials - among other measures. Anticipating administration Iraq policy to come, the paper also called for an "Influence campaign" to prepare the way for war. [[Doc. 8](#)] ([Note 29](#))

The notes were headed "Focus on WMD", and the administration certainly took Iraqi WMD seriously - the U.S. was acquainted with Iraq's chemical weapons use during its war with Iran in the 1980s, when Iraq routinely deployed CW against Iran and against Iraqi Kurds cooperating with Iran. When the 2003 war started invasion forces were equipped with protective gear. It may also be true that the administration had already decided upon WMD as its principal official rationalization for war ([Note 30](#)) (while at the same time regularly implying an Iraqi connection with 9/11.)

"Surprise, speed, shock and risk" reflect Rumsfeld's own goal for an Iraq invasion - fight the war the U.S. wanted to fight, emphasizing mobility, flexibility, and reliance on high-tech weapons, and demonstrate that the reforms the defense secretary was then attempting to implement in the Pentagon would prepare the U.S. military for dominance in the 21st century. What better adversary as a pilot project than an Iraq with a collapsed economy, deep internal divisions, an easily demonized head of state, and a military, never considered particularly effective by U.S. defense analysts, now

reduced to a shadow of its former self by two decades of war and sanctions?

The notes also refer to “Decapitation of government,” which the U.S. military indeed attempted to execute at the outset of the Iraq war, destroying communication networks and also, quite literally, targeting Saddam Hussein, with missile attacks on the Dora Farms compound where it thought, on the basis of false intelligence, he was located on the eve of the invasion. In reality, the attacks on the communications system contributed to the social collapse that followed the invasion, while U.S. strikes on Saddam and other high-level leaders were apparently unsuccessful, killing civilians rather than their intended targets. ([Note 31](#))

“Just War”

The “influence campaign” mentioned in an annotation on Rumsfeld’s notes was revved up in the fall of 2001 and continues apace till this day. Part of the effort surely included the administration’s selling of its preemptive invasion of Iraq as a “just war” (like the Obama administration’s defense of its deeply unpopular campaign in Afghanistan). A Pentagon official alerted Douglas Feith to an upcoming op-ed by a conservative Catholic theologian who said what the Bush administration wanted to hear: “how pre-emptive action against Iraq fits into the just-war tradition.” [[Doc. 9](#)] Any such claim, however, would seem to have been demolished in a somewhat later State Department intelligence assessment, “Problems and Prospects of ‘Justifying’ War with Iraq,” which examined the seven principles of just war theory one by one and found that they were not met by the Iraq invasion, in planning or in execution. [[Doc. 11](#)]

Allies

The unlikelihood of objective analysis reaching the conclusion that the Iraq invasion could be considered just or necessary complicated hopes for coalition building as serious war planning moved forward. A December 18 INR intelligence assessment warned of likely difficulties in attracting international support: the lack of evidence of Iraqi involvement in 9/11 that was a matter of little or no consequence to the Bush administration would be less easy to dismiss as the U.S. reached out to potential collaborators. Its major European allies, Britain, France, and Germany, the INR concluded, could all be expected to find a U.S. decision to attack Iraq problematic “absent incontrovertible evidence of links to the September 11 attacks.” Only Tony Blair, “at substantial political cost,” could be expected to support a U.S.-led campaign. This would be true despite the fact that all three countries shared, according to the assessment, the Bush administration’s view that Iraq’s WMD capabilities were a threat – evidently on the basis of intelligence that “Washington has shared” (emphasis added.) For the British, a Blair decision to join in a U.S. war on Iraq would be exceptionally divisive and “could bring a radicalization of British Muslims, the great majority of whom opposed the September 11 attacks but are increasingly restive about what they see as an anti-Islamic campaign.” [[Doc. 10](#)]

Free Iraqi Forces

The Chalabi/Downing plan for regime change envisioned a central combat role for volunteers from the INC with U.S. paramilitary training. From the neoconservative perspective, this was to give an Iraqi face to the war and justify a post-invasion INC assumption of power. Though in the end the Iraqi irregulars’ role was minimal – serving as interpreters, for instance — the Pentagon’s policy office did order that a program for what it called the “Free Iraqi Forces” be organized and funded, and it had the Army set up a training operation in Hungary — met by popular resistance in the host country. After the Iraq invasion the U.S. embassy in Budapest asked for “positive images” to counter the initial criticism and to convey the impression of a mission

accomplished. The embassy planned to use the images “to remind the Hungarian public—and the world—about the success of the FIF volunteers and the singular contribution they are making in this conflict.” [\[Doc. 12\]](#)

Positive images were evidently not easy to come by. The participation of the INC and the Free Iraqi Forces it sponsored in the invasion did not go as the neoconservatives had hoped. Tommy Franks was an obstacle; he had little use for Iraqi exile groups and did not want them interfering with his war plan. Chalabi had assured his backers that he could rally an impressive force of anti-Saddam volunteers who would make a significant contribution to the fighting — that is, they, not a foreign force, would be leading the “liberation” of Iraq. In reality, according to the Gordon/Trainor book *Cobra II*, opposition groups submitted 6,000 names of potential recruits, 622 were vetted by the U.S., 500 were invited to join the force, 95 showed up in Hungary for training, and 73 completed the four-week training program. The operation was budgeted at \$63.5 million. ([Note 32](#)) According to a May 21, 2003 Army memo reporting on lessons learned from the Free Iraqi Forces experience, “Funds necessary for mission preparation, forming and deploying....and sustaining the training task force were not provided at the start of operations,” so the Army had to reallocate funds from critical training needs. In addition, the training mission faced a “Lack of guidance initially as to what tasks the FIF required training on....When the number of FIF volunteers did not materialize as originally forecasted, and no further volunteers were forthcoming,” it was not clear whether the Army was authorized to stop training, nor did it know what to do with the training force. Regarding foreign training missions, it observed, “unforecasted expenditures severely impact the training base.” [\[Doc. 13\]](#)

The Bush Agenda

As available documentation and a review of the literature show, the Bush administration was well along the path to war before the 9/11 attacks, and certainly well before the protracted 2002-2003 debates over the re-admission of weapons inspectors to Iraq and a U.N. resolution to legitimize the targeting of Baghdad. At this point, the weight of evidence supports an observation made in April 2002 by members of the covert Iraq Operations Group – Iraq “regime change” was already on Bush’s agenda when he took office in January 2001. ([Note 33](#)) September 11 was not the motivation for the U.S. invasion of Iraq – it was a distraction from it.

Read the Documents

[Document 1: United Nations Security Council, “Note by the Secretary-General,” S/1997/779, October 8, 1997 \[extract\].](#)

An International Atomic Energy Agency report declares Iraq to be free of nuclear weapons, stating that its nuclear facilities were destroyed by U.S. bombing during the Persian Gulf War and that “There are no indications that there remains in Iraq any physical capability for the production of amounts of weapon-usable nuclear material of any practical significance.”

[International Atomic Energy Agency. Our Work. Verification. INVO.](#)

[Document 2: U.S. Executive Office of the President, Office of the Press Secretary, “Statement by the President,” October 31, 1998.](#)

In a statement accompanying his signing of the Iraq Liberation Act making the overthrow of Iraq’s government U.S. policy, President Bill Clinton indicates that the U.S. is giving Iraqi opposition groups \$8 million dollars to assist them in unifying, cooperating, and articulating their message.

[Document 3](#): U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs Information Memo from Edward S. Walker, Jr. to Colin Powell, “Origins of the Iraq Regime Change Policy,” January 23, 2001.

Informs the secretary of state that the origin of the U.S.’s Iraq regime change policy is the Iraq Liberation Act of 1998, and provides several quotes from Bill Clinton supporting concepts included in the act, but not a U.S. invasion.

[Document 4](#): U.S. Department of State Memo from Robert J. Einhorn and James A. Larocco to Colin Powell, “Update on Efforts to Prevent Iraqi Procurement of Aluminum Tubes,” June 29, 2001.

Indicates early high-level interest in aluminum tubes purchased by Iraq before even a preliminary determination has been made as to whether they are intended for nuclear weapons use — a sample is to be shown to the president the next day. Also shows immediate U.S. government interest in “publicizing the interdiction to our advantage,” and “Getting the right story out.” Conversely, United Nations arms inspectors from UNMOVIC and the IAEA plan to “analyze samples before drawing conclusions.”

[Document 5](#): U.S. Department of State Memo from Vann Van Diepen, James A. Larocco, and James A. Kelly to Colin Powell, “Update on Efforts to Prevent Iraqi Procurement of Aluminum Tubes,” July 2, 2001.

Indicates that the U.S. has concluded that aluminum tubes purchased by Iraq are prohibited items and that it considers it important that the International Atomic Energy Agency find the same. The IAEA Action Team on Iraq will consult with the IAEA director general on whether the team should report the results of its analysis to the U.N.’s sanctions committee “even if it concludes that the tubes do not meet specifications for nuclear end use.” The CIA has already notified Congress of the interdiction, evidently without informing the State Department, although the CIA’s initial briefing included a discussion of diplomatic efforts on the issue.

[Document 6](#): U.S. Defense Department Memo from Donald Rumsfeld to Condoleezza Rice, “Iraq,” July 27, 2001.

Rumsfeld recommends a Principals Committee meeting and then a National Security Council meeting on Iraq, because sanctions are failing and Iraq’s air defenses seem to be improving. He lists policy options, and says, “Within a few years the U.S. will undoubtedly have to confront a Saddam armed with nuclear weapons” (he also says that Iran will “almost certainly” have nuclear weapons by 2006) and that “If Saddam’s regime were ousted, we would have a much-improved position in the region and elsewhere.”

[War and Decision. Documents and Articles.](#)

[Document 7](#): U.S. Department of Defense, Office of the Under Secretary for Policy Notes from Stephen Cambone [Rumsfeld’s Comments], September 11, 2001.

Indicates that a few hours after the 9/11 attacks Rumsfeld spoke of attacking Iraq as well as Osama bin Laden and directed Defense Department lawyer Jim Hayes to get “support” for a supposed link between Iraq and Osama bin Laden from Paul Wolfowitz.

[flickr](#); obtained through the Freedom of Information Act by Thad Anderson.

[Document 8](#): U.S. Department of Defense Notes from Donald

Rumsfeld, [Iraq War Planning], November 27, 2001; Annotated.

Notes used by Rumsfeld to brief Central Command chief Tommy Franks during a visit to Tampa to discuss a new plan for war with Iraq. Rumsfeld prepared them in consultation with Paul Wolfowitz and Douglas Feith. They list steps Defense Department officials believed could lead to the collapse of the Iraqi government, and reflect elements of an existing plan developed with and for the Iraqi National Congress, including seizure of Iraq's oil fields, protection of a provisional government, transfer of frozen Iraqi assets to said government, giving it Iraq's oil revenues, and regime change. The notes list some triggers the administration could use to initiate war, including Iraqi military actions against the U.S.-protected enclave in northern Iraq, discovery of links between Saddam Hussein and 9/11 or recent anthrax attacks, and disputes over United Nations WMD inspections ("Start now thinking about inspection demands.") They show that Rumsfeld wanted Franks to get ready to initiate military action before a full complement of U.S. forces were deployed to the region. A section in the notes on "radical ideas" was withheld from release. The notes include Feith's point: "Unlike in Afghanistan, important to have ideas in advance about who would rule afterwards." They conclude by calling for an "influence campaign" with a yet-to-be established start time.

Document 9: U.S. Department of Defense Memo from Robert Andrews to Douglas Feith, "Pre-emptive Operations," December 17, 2001; Annotated.

The Defense Department's Special Operations chief advises Douglas Feith to read a conservative Catholic theologian's upcoming op-ed asserting a "moral justification for a pre-emptive strike against Iraq" that "demonstrates how pre-emptive action against Iraq fits into the just-war tradition." (A later publication, ["The Just War Case for the War,"](#) by George Weigel, March 31, 2003; conveys the writer's argument: he disagrees with those who find "the Bush administration's just war case for the [Iraq] war wanting," contending that Iraq has an aggressive ideology, has flouted international law, attacked other countries, used weapons of mass destruction, used torture, diverted funds from feeding children to enlarge its military, and controls political activity to make effective internal resistance impossible. He also states that Iraq has chemical and biological weapons, is working "feverishly" to produce a nuclear bomb, and is linked to terrorist organizations. He posits a historical analogy between the 1998 withdrawal of U.N. weapon inspectors from Iraq and Nazi Germany's 1936 military reoccupation of the Rhineland.)

Document 10: U.S. Department of State Bureau of Intelligence and Research Intelligence Assessment, "Europe: Key Views on Iraqi Threat and Next Steps," December 18, 2001.

Indicates that war against Iraq "absent incontrovertible evidence of links to the September 11 attacks" would be highly problematic for France and Germany and that only British Prime Minister Tony Blair, "at substantial political cost," would support a U.S. attack. Paris, Berlin and London share the Bush administration's assessment that Iraq's WMD capabilities are a threat, evidently based on intelligence that "Washington has shared ... on this issue." France will not support an attack on Iraq without a U.N. Security Council resolution, "incontrovertible evidence" of Iraqi links to 9/11, and consensus that diplomatic and other efforts would not suffice to "eliminate terrorist cells." Among British concerns about what would be an exceptionally divisive Blair decision to support a U.S. war on Iraq is that "it could bring a radicalization of British Muslims, the great majority of whom opposed the September 11 attacks but are increasingly restive about what they see as an anti-Islamic campaign."

Document 11: U.S. Department of State Bureau of Intelligence and Research Intelligence Assessment, "Problems and Prospects of

'Justifying' War with Iraq," August 29, 2002.

Indicating that "Many, if not most" U.S. allies are skeptical of U.S. plans to attack Iraq, the INR uses the seven principles of so-called "just war" theory to summarize critiques of U.S. intentions.

First, in modern times only defensive wars are seen as just and therefore the U.S. must provide persuasive evidence that Iraq has current WMD capabilities and intentions that are a threat to international peace.

Second, although the U.S. government might be considered a competent authority to wage war, especially if it "follows its constitutionally mandated procedures for a formal declaration of war," nevertheless if an additional U.S. Security Council authorization is not obtained much of international opinion "may never regard another war with Iraq as legitimate and justifiable."

Third, a war is just only if all peaceful means of resolution have been exhausted, so if WMD is to be used to justify an invasion, every reasonable effort to use U.N. inspections to assess and, if necessary, eliminate any Iraqi capabilities must be pursued; however, "much of the international community perceives the United States to be uninterested in any resumption of U.N. inspections."

Fourth, foreseeable and achievable goals must be seen as justifying "The damage, destruction, and suffering" wars cause. Therefore international opinion would probably demand credible evidence that there is no alternative to the "Protracted, large-scale urban warfare" inflicting "great suffering on Iraqi civilians" that is "now seen as a likely prospect" if the U.S. invades. Also, "Committed, credible, long-term postwar reconstruction plans" would be expected.

Fifth, combatants are expected to be open to peaceful resolution of a conflict, so U.S. categorical demands for regime change are likely to be considered unjustified.

Sixth, although "A reasonable chance of achieving a war's aims is required," there is considerable uncertainty about the costs of an Iraq war, including fear that the region "would become even more unstable and unfriendly to Western countries," and that there would be large refugee outflows to neighboring states.

Seventh, the means of conducting war must be just. Although in theory U.S. precision weapons provide a means for discriminating between military targets and civilians, if a war in reality harms civilians and causes widespread destruction then it cannot be considered just.

[Document 12](#): U.S. Embassy Hungary Cable to U.S. Department of State, et al., "Free Iraqi Forces in Positive Images," April 3, 2003.

The U.S. embassy in Budapest asks for positive images and video it can use to publicize the "successes" of the "Free Iraqi Forces" (paramilitary volunteers from Iraqi opposition groups).

[Document 13](#): U.S. Department of the Army, Headquarters United States Army Training and Doctrine Command Memo from Raymond D. Barrett, Jr. to Commander, Forces Command, "After Action Review, Training and Equipping of Free Iraqi Forces (FIF)," May 21, 2003.

Summarizing its experience providing military training to recruits from Iraqi opposition groups (the "Free Iraqi Forces") to support the U.S. invasion of Iraq,

the Army reports that “Funds necessary for mission preparation, forming and deploying....and sustaining the training task force were not provided at the start of operations,” so it “had to reallocate funding from critical training needs to support the mission.” In addition, it faced a “Lack of guidance initially as to what tasks the FIF required training on....When the number of FIF volunteers did not materialize as originally forecasted, and no further volunteers were forthcoming,” the source of authority to stop training and re-assign the training force was not clear. The command recommends that future missions to train foreign personnel include “more initial notice, support, and guidance,” and upfront funding: “Any reallocation or unforecasted expenditures severely impact the training base.”

Document 14: “Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States,” July 22, 2004 [extract].

Undertaken at the request of President Bush and Congress in response to public pressure for an official inquiry into events leading up to the 9/11 attacks, the investigation’s report identifies a number of intelligence and organizational failures. It finds no evidence supporting allegations that hijacker Mohammed Atta met in Prague with an Iraqi intelligence official. It reports that according to his own testimony Bush suspected Iraq of involvement immediately after the attacks, and that the NSC counterterrorism unit reported back to him that there was no compelling supporting evidence; Donald Rumsfeld, who favored immediately attacking Iraq as well as al-Qaeda targets, then directed the Pentagon to get more intelligence on Iraq. The report says that Paul Wolfowitz was the chief advocate for an immediate attack on Iraq. Bush called for contingency planning for military actions, but deferred a decision to invade.

[“Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States,” July 22, 2004.](#)

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