

The Campus Antiwar Network (CAN) is an independent, democratic, grassroots network of campus- and school-based antiwar committees. The points of unity of CAN are:

1. We stand opposed to all US wars of aggression
2. We stand opposed to the occupation of Iraq
3. We support the right of the Iraqi people to self-determination
4. We demand the immediate withdrawal of all troops from Iraq
5. We demand that the US government pay reparations to the Iraqi people
6. We stand opposed to the oppression of the Palestinian people and the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip
7. We stand opposed to racist scapegoating and all attacks on civil liberties
8. We demand money for education, jobs and healthcare, not war and occupation!

22. "Weapons Dossier Claim Absurd," BBC News, May 30, 2003.

23. Ciar Byrne, "BBC chiefs stress need to attribute war sources," *The Guardian*, March 28, 2003.

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31. Greg Miller, "2 suspect labs could have produced hydrogen," *L.A. Times*, June 21, 2003.

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## FOR MORE INFORMATION...

### ...on weapons of mass destruction:

--Glen Rangwala is the definitive source for detailed analysis of WMD-related claims. His work is compiled at

<http://traprockpeace.org/glenrangwalaindex.html>

--William Rivers Pitt and Scott Ritter, *War on Iraq: What Team Bush Doesn't Want You to Know*. Context Books, 2002.

### ...on media coverage of war:

--Norman Solomon, et al, *Target Iraq: What the News Media Didn't Tell You*. Context Books, 2003.

--Dina Roy, "The Media in a Time of War" in *International Socialist Review*, Issue 29 (May-June 2003), p. 39-48.

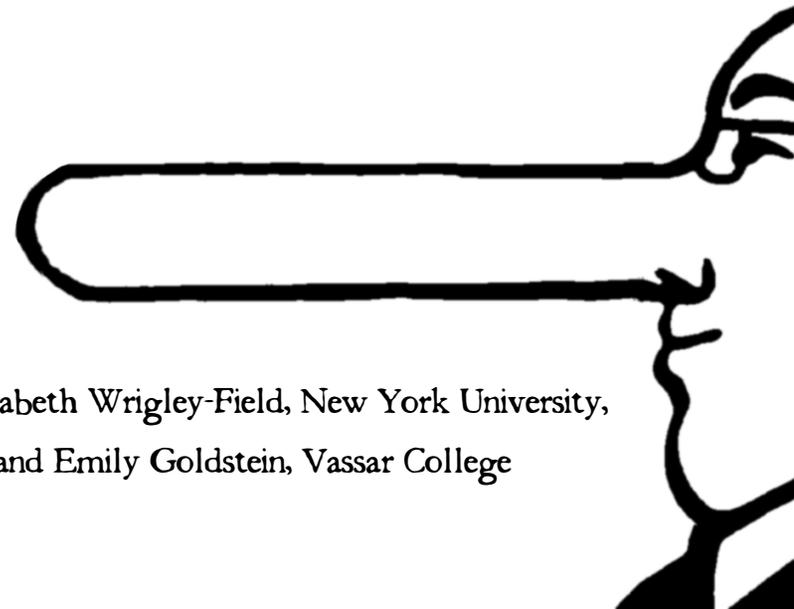
# CAMPUS ANTIWAR NETWORK

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## Weapons of Mass Deception: The Lies They Told To Sell Their War

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# WEAPONS OF MASS DECEPTION

## The Lies They Told to Sell Their War

"For bureaucratic reasons, we settled on one issue -- weapons of mass destruction -- because it was the one reason everyone could agree on."

--Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz to Vanity Fair magazine, May 9, 2003

This statement sums up the real motivation behind the US government's primary justification for going to war with Iraq. For months--before the war, throughout the war, and after its declared end--Bush, Blair and Co. continually said that Iraq had "weapons of mass destruction" (WMD): biological, chemical, or nuclear weapons. They claimed that war on Iraq was necessary to prevent Iraq from attacking the US or other countries with these weapons, or handing them off to others who would. Their goal in making these claims was to scare the public into believing that we had no choice but to go to war with Iraq. Bush even went so far as to fabricate links between Saddam Hussein and al-Qaeda. And the strategy worked--to take just one example, at the start of the war half the country believed that Iraq had played a role in the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks,<sup>1</sup> which is manifestly untrue.

"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. . . We have absolutely no doubt at all that these weapons of mass destruction exist."

--Tony Blair (3/25/03)

Yet two months after the US declared victory in Iraq, not a single WMD has been found, nor has a plausible weapons development program been discovered. Even as they continue to insist that the WMD will be found, they have tried to shift the focus to the "liberation" of the Iraqi people as a retroactive justification for the war.

At the same time, they have begun to backtrack on their repeated and unequivocal statements that Iraq had WMD: on May 14, at a hearing of the Senate's appropriations subcommittee on defense, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld even went so far as to say, "I don't believe anyone that I know in

"Whether or not they find weapons of mass destruction doesn't matter, because the rationale for the war changed. . . Americans like a good picture. And one photograph of an Iraqi child kissing a U.S. soldier is more powerful than two months of debate on the floor of Congress."

--Republican pollster Frank Luntz, (6/10/03)<sup>2</sup>

the administration ever said that Iraq had nuclear weapons." This certainly flew in the face of Vice President Dick Cheney's statement on NBC's Meet the Press on March 16: "We believe he has, in fact, reconstituted nuclear weapons"

As it becomes increasingly clear that Iraq did not and does not have WMD, it is crucial to remember that this was not merely a case of poor intelligence or misinformation. Evidence disproving Bush, Blair and Co.'s case was available well before the war began--they chose to twist and ignore the facts to support their political aims. The justification that was used to sell the war to Congress and the public--the one that Representative Henry Waxman called "the most persuasive"<sup>3</sup>--was based on lies.

Even as Bush and Co. held up these trailers as vindication of their pre-war claims that Iraq had WMD, former UN biological weapons inspector Jonathan Tucker said, "I don't think that even evidence that these were biological labs would be sufficient until there is clear proof that weapons were produced in these facilities."<sup>4</sup> And on June 15, an official

"If one was to take Bush's rhetoric seriously, it would mean that massive amounts of apocalyptic weapons are now lost in a chaotic country infested with al-Qaeda supporters. Yet few war supporters seem to be panicking."

--Salon reporter Michelle Goldberg<sup>32</sup>

British investigation concluded that the trailers were not mobile germ warfare labs. A British scientist and biological weapons expert, who examined the trailers in Iraq, told *The Observer*, "They are not mobile germ warfare laboratories. You could not use them for making biological weapons. They do not even look like them. They are exactly what the Iraqis said they were - facilities for the production of hydrogen gas to fill balloons."<sup>5</sup> A few days later, an *L.A. Times* article noted, "the U.S. Army has its own fleet of vehicles designed for precisely the same purpose."<sup>6</sup>

## CONCLUSION

As time goes on, the extent of Bush, Blair and Co.'s lies becomes increasingly clear. In Britain, Blair faces an investigation by parliament, while the US intelligence agencies are in an uproar. Yet the danger remains that the magnitude of the deception will get swept aside amidst finger-pointing within the administration, accusations of intelligence mistakes, and retroactive justifications for the war on Iraq. The crucial point is that, while there may have been disagreement on which lies to tell, these lies were not mistakes. The Bush and Blair administrations deliberately lied to sell a war that cost tens of billions of dollars and killed thousands of Iraqi civilians.

Most importantly, having succeeded in scaring the public into war using lies as evidence, they are likely to use the same strategy in future endeavors - making it crucial that we continue to expose their deceptions. Join the Campus Antiwar Network in the struggle to stop their endless wars.

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## DEPLOYING WMD

In addition to accusations of possessing WMD, Bush, Blair and Co. repeatedly asserted that Saddam Hussein would use these weapons. In his dossier, Blair accused Iraq of possessing three different types of missiles with ranges longer than the 150 km permitted by the UN. And in the State of the Union Address, Bush accused Iraq of having 29,984 "prohibited munitions." Yet throughout the entire inspections process, the only illegal munitions found were between 80-150 Al-Samoud missiles; these exceeded the UN limit by 33 km or less.<sup>21</sup> Iraq had begun destroying them under UN supervision when the war started.

Blair also accused Iraq of being capable of deploying biological and chemical weapons at 45 minutes notice. In addition to the lack of evidence for the existence of the weapons to be deployed, no such use capability was ever discovered. A senior British official informed the BBC that the Blair administration rewrote the dossier to make it "sexier." The official explained, "The classic example was the statement that WMD were ready for use within 45 minutes. That information was not in the original draft. It was included in the dossier against our wishes because it wasn't reliable."<sup>22</sup>

## POST-WAR LIES

"We're absolutely sick and tired of putting things out and finding out they're not true. The misinformation in this war is far and away worse than any conflict I've covered, including the first Gulf War and Kosovo."

-A senior BBC news source<sup>23</sup>

During and after the war in Iraq, the US government has repeatedly reported on "preliminary" findings of WMD, only to drop the story when these preliminary findings prove wrong. Jonathan Tucker, a chemical weapons expert at the U.S. Institute for Peace, explains the phenomenon: "They are set up to err on the side of false positives, because they're protecting troops and it never hurts to put on your gas mask a few extra times."<sup>24</sup> This pattern serves to create the illusion that WMD are being discovered in Iraq, and masks the truth that not a single WMD has been found. It should not be surprising, then, that a third of respondents in a May 2003 University of Maryland poll believed that WMD had already been discovered.<sup>25</sup>

One of the most widely publicized episodes in this pattern was the US's claim on April 7 to have found a missile cache outside Baghdad with drums that, based on preliminary analysis, they believed contained Sarin and other bio/chem weapons. In addition to the fact that all of the specific agents they believed they had found would have expired long before, follow-up tests were inconclusive as to whether these weapons had ever been there.<sup>26</sup> The US government, however, stressed the possibility of the "inconclusive" finding pointing towards the weapons' existence, then dropped the story without mentioning that their theory didn't pan out.

Similarly, much has been made of the supposed "mobile labs"--the trailers the US government claimed had been used to make biological weapons. On May 30, Bush stated that US forces in Iraq had "found the weapons of mass destruction."<sup>27</sup> In fact what they had found was two trailers. Two days earlier, a CIA report explained: "Coalition experts. . . have been unable to identify any legitimate industrial use. . . that would justify the effort and expense of a mobile production capability. We. . . agree with the experts that BW agent production is the only consistent, logical purpose for these vehicles." However, they failed to find any traces of biological agent, a gap they accounted for by claiming the Iraqis had disinfected the trailers before they left them.<sup>28</sup>

## KEY DOCUMENTS AND SPEECHES

Nearly all the claims Bush and Blair made in selling their war originated in a few documents and speeches.

The first was a joint press conference Bush and Blair held on Sept. 7, 2002. The second was Bush's nationally televised speech on Oct. 7, 2002, four days before Congress voted to authorize the US to pursue war in Iraq. The third was Bush's State of the Union speech on Jan 29, 2003, and the fourth was Powell's address to the United Nations Security Council on Feb. 5, 2003. The UN covered up its usual decoration, a tapestry of Picasso's famous antiwar mural Guernica, for the occasion.

They also relied extensively on Blair's series of dossiers against Iraq, one from Sept. 24, 2002 and one from Jan. 30, 2003. The Jan. 30 dossier became internationally infamous when it was revealed that much of the 19-page document, praised in his UN speech, had three sources. Most of it was thesis almost a decade old.

"Had they consulted me, I would have provided them with more updated information."

which Powell had been plagiarized from taken from a student

Blair left in the thesis' typos errors, but did make a few case: increasing or rounding up phrases, such as "monitoring" to "spying on" and "aiding opposition groups" to "supporting terrorist organizations."<sup>5</sup> The thesis' author, Ibrahim al-Marashi, explained, "By changing the words, they are distorting the meaning and it looks like they [Iraq] are supporting groups like al-Qaida."<sup>6</sup> The fiasco refuted the idea that Bush and Blair had a case for war based on special intelligence unavailable to the rest of us.

--Ibrahim al-Marashi, author of the plagiarized thesis<sup>4</sup>

and grammatical changes that helped his numbers, and replacing

## PRE-WAR ACCUSATIONS

The allegations made leading up to the war can be broken down into three general categories: possession of biological and chemical weapons, possession of nuclear weapons, and ability to use WMD.

## BIOLOGICAL AND CHEMICAL WEAPONS

Among the Bush and Blair administrations' most frequent claims was that Iraq might use biological or chemical (bio/chem) weapons against the US. or other targets. If Iraq were to possess bio/chem weapons, those would have to be either weapons it had held since the 1992 Gulf War, or weapons it had produced since then.

## PREVIOUSLY STORED WEAPONS

Iraq was repeatedly accused, in Blair's dossier, Bush's State of the Union, and Powell's UN presentation, and elsewhere, of having kept bio/chem weapons since the Gulf War. The main problem with this idea is that bio/chem agents--

"We used to joke that the only way an Iraqi biological weapon would ever kill you is if it hit you on the head."

-Scott Ritter<sup>8</sup>

including the ones Iraq was most often accused of harboring, such as VX gas, Sarin, Taubin, and the type of anthrax once produced in Iraq--degrade over time. Any produced before 1991 would have been worthless long before the war.<sup>7</sup>

Moreover, the accusations were often based on the faulty logic, of "unaccounted for" material--something Bush particularly emphasized in his State of the Union Address. As then-Chief UN weapons inspector in Iraq Hans Blix said, "To take an example, a document, which Iraq provided, suggested to us that some 1,000 tonnes of chemical agent were 'unaccounted for.' One must not jump to the conclusion that they exist."<sup>9</sup> This is especially true because UN inspectors acknowledged at the time that Iraq destroyed additional weapons without proper supervision--a fact conceded in Blair's dossier.

#### NEWLY PRODUCED WEAPONS

The Bush and Blair administrations used three major pieces of evidence to suggest that Iraq might be producing new bio/chem weapons.

First, Powell claimed in his Feb 5<sup>th</sup> speech before the UN to have satellite pictures of what he called "active chemical munitions bunkers." Each was a bunker with a truck and a shed or tent next to it. Powell then showed later pictures in which some of the trucks had been driven away--to elude weapons inspectors, he said. However, Gary Milhollin, a respected nuclear expert who heads Iraq Watch in Washington, D.C., says that the aerial photos don't prove much of anything. "We can't tell what's in those buildings. There isn't proof that there's biological or chemical weapons being made there. Those buildings could be used for civilian industrial uses," he said.<sup>10</sup>

Furthermore, Glen Rangwala, of Cambridge University and the Campaign Against Sanctions on Iraq, notes that if the US truly had evidence of banned weapons they should have given it to UN inspectors at the time. Powell claims the weapons were moved on Dec. 22; weapons inspectors were there starting Nov. 27.<sup>11</sup>

The second piece of "evidence" Powell presented was what he called "images of mobile biological weapons laboratories." These were not photographs taken in Iraq, but computer-generated pictures made to conform with what Powell said Iraqi defectors had described. The "images," then, were really a summary of some defectors' testimony.

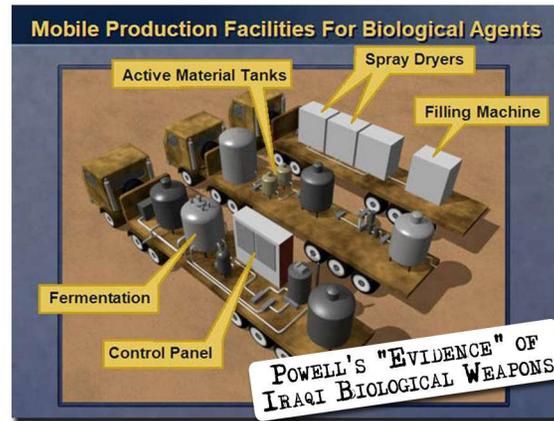
However, these images didn't make sense. The Washington Post reported, "[Robert Zalinskas, microbiologist and former UN weapons inspector,] and other experts said the schematic presented by Powell as an example of Iraq's mobile labs was theoretically workable but that turning the diagram into a functioning laboratory posed enormous challenges--such as how to dispose of large quantities of highly toxic waste."<sup>12</sup>

#### NUCLEAR WEAPONS

The Bush and Blair administrations also claimed that Iraq could prove to be a nuclear threat. That would mean Iraq would have to obtain highly enriched uranium, either by either producing it themselves, or acquiring it from elsewhere.

#### PRODUCING NUCLEAR MATERIALS

The idea that Iraq could produce its own nuclear materials was thoroughly refuted by Scott Ritter, a former chief UN weapons inspector in Iraq and a former member of the Marines Officer Corps (not to mention a long-time Republican who voted for Bush in 2000). He said that Iraq lacked the capability to produce nuclear weapons, and that were it ever to try to do so, the US would definitely be aware of the attempt.



Ritter writes, "For Iraq to reacquire nuclear weapons capability, they'd have to basically build, from the ground up, enrichment and weaponization capabilities that would cost tens of billions of dollars. . . . We eliminated the nuclear program, and for Iraq to have reconstituted it would require undertaking activities eminently detectable by intelligence services."<sup>13</sup> Plus, Iraq's sole uranium-extraction facility, al-Qaim, was visited in Sept. 2002 by journalists who described it as a "near-vacant lot."<sup>14</sup>

Despite all of this available information, Bush's State of the Union Address and Powell's speech to the UN both said that Iraq had tried to purchase high-strength aluminum tubes that could be used to make gas centrifuges, for enriching uranium. This was the US government's major evidence that Iraq might be pursuing a nuclear weapons program.

But according to David Albright, former International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspector and director of the Institute for Science and International Security (ISIS), steel or carbon fiber tubes would have been more suitable for constructing gas centrifuges.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, the IAEA's analysis was that "while it would be possible to modify such tubes for the manufacture of centrifuges, they are not directly suitable for it." It was far more likely that the tubes were meant for a conventional purpose, such as reverse-engineering of rockets--a task the IAEA said they appeared to be well suited for.<sup>16</sup>

David Albright spoke with gas centrifuge experts at Oak Ridge National Laboratory and Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, and they disagree with how this intelligence is being used, but they have been ordered to keep quiet by the Bush administration.<sup>17</sup>

#### OBTAINING NUCLEAR MATERIALS

Blair's dossier and Bush's State of the Union Address both claimed that Iraq had sought significant quantities of uranium from Niger. However, the documents Bush and Blair cited to support this claim were forged. Mohammed ElBaradei, head of the IAEA, said in his March 7 report to the UN Security Council, "Based on thorough analysis, the IAEA has concluded, with the concurrence of outside experts, that these documents--which formed the basis for the reports of recent uranium transactions between Iraq and Niger--are in fact not authentic. We have therefore concluded that these specific allegations are unfounded." Moreover, the forgeries were extremely bad ones: the Minister from Niger whose signature appeared on the documents hadn't been in public office in more than a decade.<sup>18</sup>

And the US government knew they were forged before it cited them as evidence. Back in February 2002, Cheney had asked the CIA to investigate the documents. Within weeks, the senior diplomat assigned to investigate had told the CIA and State Department they were obvious forgeries.<sup>19</sup> The IAEA report and subsequent public revelation of the forgery came in early March 2003, before the start of the war.

In the absence of any real evidence, Bush was perfectly willing to present made-up evidence instead. In a Sept. 7 2002 joint press conference with Blair, Bush said that the IAEA said Iraq was six months away from developing a nuclear weapon. Three weeks later, Mark Gwozdecky, chief spokesman for IAEA, said that no such report exists.<sup>20</sup>