

It's a memo based on a briefing given to British Prime Minister Tony Blair eight months before the invasion of Iraq. U.S. forces had already taken control in Afghanistan. CIA Director George Tenet and his British counterpart Richard Dearlove had just met in Washington. President Bush was busy ratcheting up his rhetoric about Saddam Hussein.

The memo, labeled secret and strictly personal — UK eyes only — summarizes a meeting between Dearlove, the British intelligence chief known as "C," and "Blair."

<https://www.nbcnews.com/id/wbna8337422>

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Last month, five days before Tony Blair's re-election, British reporter Michael Smith obtained the document and the headlines to follow were sensational.

<https://www.nbcnews.com/id/wbna8337422>

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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.

<https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB326/index.htm>

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Indeed, even before 9/11, then-Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld saw Iraq through the prism of status and reputation, variously arguing in February and July 2001 that ousting Saddam would "enhance US credibility and influence throughout the region" and "demonstrate what US policy is all about".

These hypotheticals were catalyzed into reality by September 11, when symbols of American military and economic dominance were destroyed. Driven by humiliation, the Bush administration felt that the US needed to reassert its position as an unchallengeable hegemon.

The only way to send a message so menacing was a swashbuckling victory in war. Crucially, however, Afghanistan was not enough: it was simply too weak a state. As prison bullies know, a fearsome reputation is not acquired by beating up the weakest in the yard.

Or as Rumsfeld put it on the evening of 9/11, "We need to bomb something else to prove that we're, you know, big and strong and not going to be pushed around by these kinds of attacks."

<https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2019/3/20/why-did-bush-go-to-war-in-iraq>

The quote is attributed to Rumsfeld via Richard Clark, chief White House counterterrorism adviser under Bush in a meeting they had following the attacks.

<https://www.vanityfair.com/news/2009/02/bush-oral-history200902>

A majority of Americans favor sending U.S. troops to invade Iraq but want President Bush to obtain authorization from Congress before taking military action, according to a new Washington Post-ABC News poll. (2002)

Nearly 6 in 10 – 57 percent – said they supported a U.S. invasion of Iraq with ground troops, while 36 percent opposed such an action. When asked whether they would favor a ground war if it were to produce "significant" U.S. casualties, support plummeted to 40 percent and opposition rose to 51 percent.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/2002/08/13/poll-americans-cautiously-favor-war-in-iraq/e40e58eb-2194-420c-bdbb-8d0ca40b2128/>

A top member of Al Qaeda in American custody was identified as a likely fabricator months before the Bush administration began to use his statements as the foundation for its claims that Iraq trained Al Qaeda members to use biological and chemical weapons, according to newly declassified portions of a Defense Intelligence Agency document.

The document, an intelligence report from February 2002, said it was probable that the prisoner, Ibn al-Shaykh al-Libi, "was intentionally misleading the debriefers" in making claims about Iraqi support for Al Qaeda's work with illicit weapons.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2005/11/06/politics/report-warned-bush-team-about-intelligence-doubts.html>

Speech source

<https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB80/new/doc%2012/President%20Bush%20Outlines%20Iraqi%20Threat.htm>

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Link to this memo

<https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/2697361-Myers-J2-Memo.html#document/p1>

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<https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB129/part11-nie.pdf>

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Page 5 in the doc, page 9 for the overall pdf

<https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB129/nie.pdf>

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The bill had 136 co-sponsors.

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/107th-congress/house-joint-resolution/114/cosponsors>

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The principal reason for the failure was faulty analysis based on outdated intelligence. According to the Senate committee's July 2004 report, analysts who wrote the NIE relied more on an assumption that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction (WMD) than on an objective evaluation of the information they were reviewing. This group-think dynamic, the report states, led analysts, intelligence collectors, and managers to "interpret ambiguous evidence as conclusively indicative of a WMD program" and led them to "ignore or minimize evidence that Iraq did not have an active and expanding program." This problem was compounded by a lack of reliable information from inside Iraq. After UN weapons inspectors left Iraq in 1998, the U.S. intelligence community did not have any human intelligence sources in Iraq collecting information about WMD.

Other criticism included poor information sharing among intelligence agencies, substandard management, and a stepped-up time frame due to the threat of war. President George W. Bush asked Congress in mid-September 2002 to pass a resolution granting the U.S. broad authority to use military action against Iraq. But no NIE existed on the status of Iraq's WMD program and much uncertainty surrounded the claims being made by Bush administration officials regarding the threat posed by Iraq's WMD. In requesting the NIE on "an immediate basis," Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) wrote to the director of central intelligence that she "deeply believe[d] that such an estimate is vital to congressional decision-making, and most specifically, [to] any resolution which may come before the Senate."

<https://www.cfr.org/background/national-intelligence-estimates#chapter-title-0-6>

American espionage in Iraq, under cover of United Nations weapons inspections, went far beyond the search for banned arms and was carried out without the knowledge of the UN leadership, it was reported yesterday.

An investigation by the Washington Post found that CIA engineers working as UN technicians installed antennae in equipment belonging to the UN Special Commission (Unscm) to eavesdrop on the Iraqi military. When British intelligence asked what was going on, the operation was denied, the report said.

In a book due to be published next month, a former US Unscm inspector, Scott Ritter, is expected to confirm that CIA agents infiltrated the UN inspection teams. Mr Ritter resigned from Unscm last year, complaining that the US was undermining its work by ordering inspections to be reined in to avoid military confrontations at politically inconvenient moments.

Iraqi officials said the report vindicated their claims that Unscm was a front for US and British spies.

According to yesterday's report, Unscm technicians occasionally noted "burst transmissions" but were unable to identify their source. But an Iranian spy in Baghdad was more successful and signaled back to Tehran a message saying that the US was running an electronic espionage operation within Unscm.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/1999/mar/03/iraq.julianborger>

8 November 2002: The UN Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 1441, drafted by the US and UK. The resolution affirmed that Iraq had been and remained in "material breach" of its

obligations under previous resolutions, and demanded Iraq to cooperate immediately, unconditionally and actively with UN inspectors.

The resolution declared that only weapons inspectors – not UN member states – had the authority to report Iraqi violations.

The resolution, however, was subject to interpretation. The US contested that 1441 gave it the authority to launch a war against Iraq, while other members of the council insisted the resolution did not authorise the automatic use of force.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2004/3/16/the-uns-decline-timeline>

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Prior to the March 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1441 in November 2002 giving Iraq a “final opportunity” to comply with its disarmament requirements under previous Security Council resolutions. At issue was Iraq’s failure to provide an adequate accounting of its prohibited weapons programs or to convince UN inspectors that its weapons of mass destruction had been destroyed as Baghdad claimed.

UN weapons inspectors worked in Iraq from November 27, 2002 until March 18, 2003. During that time, inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the United Nations Monitoring, Verification, and Inspections Commission (UNMOVIC) conducted more than 900 inspections at more than 500 sites. The inspectors did not find that Iraq possessed chemical or biological weapons or that it had reconstituted its nuclear weapons program.

<https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/iraqchron#:~:text=UN%20weapons%20inspectors%20worked%20in,at%20more%20than%20500%20sites>.

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In his briefing this morning, Mr. Blix added that while cooperation could and was to be immediate, disarmament, and its verification, could not be instant. Even with a proactive Iraqi attitude, induced by continued outside pressure, it would still take some time to verify sites and items, analyze documents, interview relevant persons, and draw conclusions. That would not take years, nor weeks, but months. To address unresolved disarmament issues and to identify key remaining disarmament tasks, he would submit a draft work programme to the Council this month.

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2009/10/united-nations-weapons-inspectors-report-security-council-progress>

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Mr Blix said weapons inspectors have “not found any such weapons, only a small number of empty chemical munitions, which should have been declared and destroyed”.

But he added: "Another matter, and one of great significance, is that many proscribed weapons and items are not accounted for." Iraq must account for the status of anthrax, VX gas and long-range missiles, Mr Blix said.

He said: "One must not jump to the conclusion that they exist.

However, that possibility is also not excluded. If they exist, they should be presented for destruction." If they do not exist, credible evidence to that effect should be presented, he said.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/feb/14/iraq.markoliver>

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"My colleagues, every statement I make today is backed up by sources, solid sources. These are not assertions. What we are giving you are facts and conclusions based on solid intelligence. I will cite some examples, and these are from human sources."

<https://2001-2009.state.gov/secretary/former/powell/remarks/2003/17300.htm>

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25 February 2003

The US and the UK submit a draft resolution to the UN, stating that Iraq has missed its "final opportunity" to disarm peacefully. But this is opposed by France, Russia and Germany,

<https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-36702957>

<https://www.theguardian.com/media/2003/feb/06/pressandpublishing.usnews>

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A solid 66% majority of Americans favor the use of military force against Iraq, as long as the U.S. has sufficient backing for military action from major allies.

<https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2003/02/20/us-needs-more-international-backing/>

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About half a million people died in Iraq as a result of war-related causes between the US-led invasion in 2003 and mid-2011, an academic study suggests.

University researchers from the US, Canada and Iraq based their estimate on randomised surveys of 2,000 households.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-24547256>

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Under Saddam Hussein, Iraq pursued every major category of WMD, but dismantled its programs under UN supervision following defeat in the 1991 Gulf War. Nonetheless, unfounded U.S. and Western suspicions that it was reconstituting its WMD programs led to the 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq and regime change.

<https://www.nti.org/countries/iraq/>

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In June 2003 Blix issued a report that said the UN inspectors had found no evidence of WMD in Iraq but urged the United States to allow UN inspectors into occupied Iraq to continue their work. The request was met with strong resistance from the U.S. government. Choosing not to extend his term with UNMOVIC, Blix retired on June 30, 2003.

<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Hans-Blix>

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On "Good Morning America" this morning, ABC's Chris Cuomo played for Snow a clip from "60 Minutes" in which Tenet says that the Bush administration "could never verify that there was any Iraqi authority, direction and control, complicity with al-Qaida for 9/11 or any operational act against America, period."

https://www.salon.com/2007/04/30/snow_34/

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Chief United Nations weapons' inspector Hans Blix, who headed inspections in Iraq before the US-led war, has criticised Washington's key argument for invading Baghdad.

"It is sort of fascinating that you can have 100 percent certainty about weapons of mass destruction and zero certainty about where they are," said Blix, speaking at the Council on Foreign Relations in New York.

Blix was responsible for searching for WMD in Iraq from November 2002 to March 2003. He accused Washington of not giving him enough time to find the arms.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2003/6/24/cia-chief-to-face-wmd-grilling>

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