

The twenty lies of George W. Bush

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Monday night's 15-minute speech by President Bush, setting a 48-hour deadline for war against Iraq, went beyond the usual distortions, half-truths, and appeals to fear and backwardness to include a remarkable number of barefaced, easily refuted lies.

The enormous scale of the lying suggests two political conclusions: the Bush administration is going to war against Iraq with utter contempt for democracy and public opinion, and its war propaganda counts heavily on the support of the American media, which not only fails to challenge the lies, but repeats and reinforces them endlessly.

Without attempting to be exhaustive, it is worthwhile listing some of the most important lies and contrasting Bush's assertions with the public record. All of the false statements listed below are directly quoted from the verbatim transcript of Bush's remarks published on the Internet.

Lie No. 1: "My fellow citizens, events in Iraq have now reached the final days of decision."

The decision for war with Iraq was made long ago, the intervening time having been spent in an attempt to create the political climate in which US troops could be deployed for an attack. According to press reports, most recently March 16 in the *Baltimore Sun*, at one of the first National Security Council meetings of his presidency, months before the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, Bush expressed his determination to overthrow Saddam Hussein and his willingness to commit US ground troops to an attack on Iraq for that purpose. All that was required was the appropriate pretext—supplied by September 11, 2001.

Lie No. 2: "For more than a decade, the United States and other nations have pursued patient and honorable efforts to disarm the Iraqi regime without war."

The US-led United Nations regime of sanctions against Iraq, combined with "no-fly" zones and provocative weapons inspections, is one of brutal oppression. The deliberate withholding of food, medical supplies and other vital necessities is responsible for the death of more than a million Iraqis, half of them children. Two UN officials who headed the oil-for-food program resigned in protest over the conditions created in Iraq by the sanctions. The CIA used the inspectors as a front, infiltrating agents into UNSCOM, the original inspections program. The CIA's aim was to spy on Iraq's top officials and target Saddam Hussein for assassination.

Lie No. 3: "The Iraqi regime has used diplomacy as a ploy to gain time and advantage. It has uniformly defied Security Council resolutions demanding full disarmament..."

Iraq has never "defied" a Security Council resolution since the end of the Persian Gulf War in 1991. It has generally cooperated with the dictates of the UN body, although frequently under protest or with reservations, because many of the resolutions involve gross violations of Iraqi sovereignty. From 1991 to 1998, UN inspectors supervised the destruction of the vast bulk of the chemical and biological weapons, as well as delivery systems, which Iraq accumulated (with the assistance of the US) during the Iran-Iraq war, and they also destroyed all of Iraq's facilities for making new weapons.

Lie No. 4: "Peaceful efforts to disarm the Iraqi regime have failed again and again because we are not dealing with peaceful men."

According to the *Washington Post* of March 16, referring to the

1991-1998 inspection period: "[U]nder UN supervision, Iraq destroyed 817 of 819 proscribed medium-range missiles, 14 launchers, 9 trailers and 56 fixed missile-launch sites. It also destroyed 73 of 75 chemical or biological warheads and 163 warheads for conventional explosives. UN inspectors also supervised destruction of 88,000 filled and unfilled chemical munitions, more than 600 tons of weaponized and bulk chemical weapons agents, 4,000 tons of precursor chemicals and 980 pieces of equipment considered key to production of such weapons."

Lie No. 5: "The Iraqi regime continues to possess and conceal some of the most lethal weapons ever devised."

The *Washington Post* article cited above noted that CIA officials were concerned "about whether administration officials have exaggerated intelligence in a desire to convince the American public and foreign governments that Iraq is violating United Nations prohibitions against chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons and long-range missile systems." The article quoted "a senior intelligence analyst" who said the inspectors could not locate weapons caches "because there may not be much of a stockpile."

Former British Foreign Minister Robin Cook, who resigned from the Blair government Monday in protest over the decision to go to war without UN authorization, declared, "Iraq probably has no weapons of mass destruction in the commonly understood sense of the term." Even if Iraq is concealing some remnants of its 1980s arsenal, these would hardly deserve Bush's lurid description, since they are primitive and relatively ineffective. "Some of the most lethal weapons ever devised" are those being unleashed by the United States on Iraq: cruise missiles, smart bombs, fuel-air explosives, the 10,000-pound "daisy-cutter" bomb, the 20,000-pound MOAB just tested in Florida. In addition, the US has explicitly refused to rule out the use of nuclear weapons.

Lie No. 6: "[Iraq] has aided, trained and harbored terrorists, including operatives of Al Qaeda."

No one, not even US government, seriously believes there is a significant connection between the Islamic fundamentalists and the secular nationalist Ba'athist regime in Iraq, which have been mortal enemies for decades. The continued assertion of an Al Qaeda-Iraq alliance is a desperate attempt to link Saddam Hussein to the September 11 attacks.

It also serves to cover up the responsibility of American imperialism for sponsoring Islamic fundamentalist terrorism. The forces that now comprise Al Qaeda were largely recruited, trained, armed and set in motion by the CIA itself, as part of a long-term policy of using Islamic fundamentalists as a weapon against left-wing movements in the Muslim countries. This policy was pursued from the 1950s and was escalated prior to and during the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, which ended in 1989. Osama bin Laden himself was part of the CIA-backed mujaheddin forces in Afghanistan before he turned against Washington in the 1990s.

Lie No. 7: "America tried to work with the United Nations to address this threat because we wanted to resolve the issue peacefully."

The Bush administration went to the United Nations because it wanted UN sanction for military action and it wanted UN member states to cough up funds for postwar operations, along the lines of its financial shakedown

operation for the 1991 Persian Gulf War. Bush's most hawkish advisors, such as Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and Vice President Cheney, initially opposed going to the UN because they did not want diplomacy to slow down the drive to war. They only agreed after Secretary of State Colin Powell argued that the pace of the US military buildup in the Persian Gulf gave enough time to get the UN to rubber-stamp the war.

Lie No. 8: "These governments [the Security Council majority] share our assessment of the danger, but not our resolve to meet it."

This is belied by virtually every statement on Iraq issued by the governments of France, Russia, China, Germany and other countries opposed to military action, which have repeatedly declared that they see no imminent threat from Iraq. Bush brands his opponents on the Security Council as cowards, as though they were afraid to take action against Saddam Hussein. These countries were, in fact, increasingly alarmed—by the United States, not Iraq. Insofar as they summoned up resolve, to the shock of the Bush administration, it was to deny UN support for the war that Washington had already decided to wage.

Lie No. 9: "Many nations, however, do have the resolve and fortitude to act against this threat to peace, and a broad coalition is now gathering to enforce the just demands of the world."

Only three nations are contributing military forces to the war: 250,000 from the US, 40,000 from Britain, and 2,000 from Australia. The other members of the "broad coalition" are those which have been bribed or browbeaten to allow the US to fly over their countries to bomb Iraq, to station troops, ships or warplanes on their territory, or provide technical assistance or other material aid to the war. None will do any fighting. All are acting against the expressed desire of their own population.

Lie No. 10: "The United Nations Security Council has not lived up to its responsibilities, so we will rise to ours."

Bush defines the UN body's responsibility as serving as a rubber stamp for whatever action the United States government demands. In relation to the UN, however, the United States does have definite responsibilities, including refraining from waging war without Security Council authorization, except in the case of immediate self-defense. Under Article 42 of the UN Charter, it is for the Security Council, not the US or Britain, to decide how Security Council resolutions such as 1441 are to be enforced. The US decision to "enforce" its interpretation of 1441 regardless of the will of the Security Council is a violation of international law.

Lie No. 11: "If we must begin a military campaign, it will be directed against the lawless men who rule your country and not against you."

The widely reported US military strategy is to conduct an aerial bombardment of Iraq so devastating that it will "shock and awe" the Iraqi people and compel the Iraqi armed forces to surrender en masse. According to one press preview, US and British forces "plan to launch the deadliest first night of air strikes on a single country in the history of air power. Hundreds of targets in every region of Iraq will be hit simultaneously." Estimates of likely Iraqi civilian casualties from the immediate impact of bombs and missiles range from thousands to hundreds of thousands, and even higher when the long-term effects are included.

Lie No. 12: "As our coalition takes their power, we will deliver the food and medicine you need."

This is particularly cynical, since the immediate consequence of Bush's 48-hour ultimatum was the withdrawal of all UN humanitarian aid workers and the shutdown of the oil-for-food program, which underwrites the feeding of 60 percent of Iraq's population. As for medicine, the US has systematically deprived the Iraqi people of needed medicine for the past 12 years, insisting that even the most basic medical supplies, like

antibiotics and syringes, be banned as "dual-use" items that could be used in a program of biological warfare.

Lie No. 13: "We will tear down the apparatus of terror and we will help you to build a new Iraq that is prosperous and free."

The goal of the Bush administration is to install a US puppet regime in Baghdad, initially taking the form of an American military dictatorship. It is no exaggeration to say that the US government has been the leading promoter of dictatorships around the world, from Pinochet of Chile to Suharto of Indonesia to Saddam Hussein himself, who, according to one recent report, got his political start as an anti-communist hit-man working in a CIA-backed plot to assassinate Iraq's left-nationalist President Qasem in 1959.

A classified State Department report described by the Los Angeles Times of March 14 not only concluded that a democratic Iraq was unlikely to arise from the devastation of war, it suggested that this was not even desirable from the standpoint of American interests, because "anti-American sentiment is so pervasive that elections in the short term could lead to the rise of Islamic-controlled governments hostile to the United States."

Lie No. 14: "Should Saddam Hussein choose confrontation, the American people can know that every measure has been taken to avoid war and every measure will be taken to win it."

This combines a lie and a brutal truth. The Bush administration has taken every possible measure to insure that war takes place, viewing the resumption of UN weapons inspections with barely disguised hostility and directing its venom against those countries that have suggested a diplomatic settlement with Iraq is achievable. In prosecuting the war, the Bush administration is indeed prepared to use "every measure," up to an including nuclear weapons, in order to win it.

Lie No. 15: "War has no certainty except the certainty of sacrifice."

There will be colossal sacrifices for the Iraqi people, and sacrifices in blood and economic well-being for the American people as well. But for Bush's real constituency, the wealthiest layer at the top of American society, there will be no sacrifices at all. Instead, the administration is seeking a tax cut package of over \$700 billion, including the abolition of taxation on corporate dividends. Major US corporations are in line to reap hundreds of millions of dollars in profits from the rebuilding of Iraqi infrastructure shattered by the coming US assault. These include the oil construction firm Halliburton, which Vice President Cheney headed prior to joining the Bush administration, and which continues to include Cheney on its payroll.

Lie No. 16: "[T]he only way to reduce the harm and duration of war is to apply the full force and might of our military, and we are prepared to do so."

Every aggressor claims to deplore the suffering of war and seeks to blame the victim for resisting, and thus prolonging the agony. Bush is no different. His hypocritical statements of "concern" for the Iraqi people cannot disguise the fact that, as many administration apologists freely admit, this is "a war of choice"—deliberately sought by the US government to pursue its strategic agenda in the Middle East.

Lie No. 17: "The terrorist threat to America and the world will be diminished the moment that Saddam Hussein is disarmed."

No one, even in the American military-intelligence complex, seriously believes this. US counter-terrorism officials have repeatedly said that a US conquest and occupation of Iraq, by killing untold thousands of Arabs and Muslims and inflaming public opinion in the Arab world and beyond, will spark more terrorism, not less.

Lie No. 18: "We are now acting because the risks of inaction would be far greater. In one year, or five years, the power of Iraq to inflict harm on all free nations would be multiplied many times over."

This is belied by the record of the past twelve years, which has seen a steady decline in Iraqi military power. Saddam Hussein has never been a

threat to any “free nation,” if that term has any meaning, only to the reactionary oil sheikdoms of the Persian Gulf and to neighboring Iran, all ruled by regimes that are as repressive as his.

Lie No. 19: “As we enforce the just demands of the world, we will also honor the deepest commitments of our country.”

The demands of the world were expressed by the millions who marched in cities throughout the world on February 15 and March 15 to oppose a unilateral US attack on Iraq. Bush seeks to have it both ways—claiming to enforce previous Security Council resolutions against Iraq (“the just demands of the world”), while flagrantly defying the will of the majority of the Security Council, the majority of the world’s governments, and the vast majority of the world’s people.

Lie No. 20: “Unlike Saddam Hussein, we believe the Iraqi people are deserving and capable of human liberty... The United States with other countries will work to advance liberty and peace in that region.”

For “the Iraqi people,” substitute “the Egyptian people,” “the people of the Arabian peninsula,” “the Pakistani people” or those of other US-backed dictatorships, not to mention the Palestinians who live under a brutal Israeli occupation that is supported by Washington. Does the US government believe that any of them are “deserving and capable of human liberty?” When the parliament of Turkey, under the pressure of popular opposition, voted to bar the US from using Turkish territory to invade Iraq, the Bush administration appealed to the Turkish military to pressure the government into overturning this democratic decision.



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