

heavily on Guard and Reserve members. I fear this administration is moving the cost of war on to businesses and families who are our Guard members. I believe they have already sacrificed enough. To do our part, we have to update transition and employment services that we bring to the returning Guard and Reserve members.

As I evaluate today how we were treating our veterans, one thing is clear to me: America's military personnel are providing the highest level of service to our country, but we have got some work to do to make sure our support of them, when they come home, is equal to the service they have provided. I am committing to keep a promise our country has made. I ask for the support and leadership of every member of the Senate to do the same. We owe our veterans nothing less.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. KENNEDY. Madam President, I commend my friend from the State of Washington for an excellent statement and comment. She has been a tireless worker in terms of veterans' rights. Listening to her today, reminds us once again about our responsibility to them. I commend her for her excellent presentation. I certainly want to work with her in every possible way to make sure those efforts are achieved for people not only in the State of Washington and Massachusetts but all across the country.

Madam President, how much time remains?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Seven-teen minutes remains.

Mr. KENNEDY. I ask the Chair to let me know when 1 minute is remaining.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair will notify the Senator.

IRAQ

Mr. KENNEDY. Earlier this week, Madam President, several of our Republican colleagues came to the Senate and attempted to blame individual Democratic Senators for their errors in judgment about the war in Iraq. It was little more than a devious attempt to obscure the facts and take the focus off the real reason we went to war in Iraq. Madam President, 150,000 American troops are bogged down in a quagmire in Iraq because the Bush administration misrepresented and distorted the intelligence to justify a war that America never should have fought. The President wrongly and repeatedly insisted that it was too dangerous to ignore the weapons of mass destruction in the hands of Saddam Hussein and his ties to al-Qaida.

If his march to war, President Bush exaggerated the threat to the American people. It was not subtle. It was not nuanced. It was pure, unadulterated fear mongering based on a devious strategy to convince the American people that Saddam's ability to provide nuclear weapons to al-Qaida justified immediate war.

The administration officials suggested the threat from Iraq was imminent and went to great lengths to convince the American people that it was. At a roundtable discussion with European journalists last month, Secretary Rumsfeld deviously insisted:

I never said imminent threat.

In fact, Secretary Rumsfeld told the House Committee on Armed Services on September 18, 2002:

... some have argued that the nuclear threat from Iraq is not imminent—that Saddam Hussein is at least 5-7 years away from having nuclear weapons. I would not be so certain.

In May of 2003, White House spokesman Ari Fleischer was asked whether we went to war because we said WMD were a direct and imminent threat to the United States. And Fleischer responded, "Absolutely."

What else could National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice have been suggesting other than an imminent threat, extremely imminent threat when she said on September 2, 2002:

We don't want the smoking gun to be a mushroom cloud.

President Bush himself may not have used the word "imminent," but he carefully chose strong and loaded words about the nature of the threat, words that the intelligence community never used to persuade and prepare the Nation to go to war against Iraq.

In the Rose Garden on October 2, 2002, as Congress was preparing to vote on authorizing the war, the President said the Iraqi regime "is a threat of unique urgency."

In a speech in Cincinnati on October 7, President Bush specifically invoked the dangers of nuclear devastation:

Facing clear evidence of peril, we cannot wait for the final proof—the smoking gun—that could come in the form of a mushroom cloud.

At an appearance in New Mexico on October 28, 2002, after Congress had voted to authorize war and a week before the election, President Bush said Iraq is a "real and dangerous threat."

At a NATO summit on November 20, 2002, President Bush said Iraq posed a "unique and urgent threat."

In Ft. Hood, TX, on January 3, 2003, President Bush called the Iraqi regime "a grave threat."

Nuclear weapons. Mushroom cloud. Unique and urgent threat. Real and dangerous threat. Grave threat. These words were the administration's rallying cry to war. But they were not the words of the intelligence community, which never suggested the threat from Saddam was imminent or immediate or urgent.

It was Vice President CHENEY who first laid out the trumped-up argument for war with Iraq to an unsuspecting public. In a speech on August 26, 2002, to the Veterans of Foreign Wars, he asserted:

... We now know that Saddam has resumed his efforts to acquire nuclear weapons ... Many of us are convinced that Saddam will acquire nuclear weapons fairly soon.

As we now know, the intelligence community was far from certain. Yet the Vice President had been convinced.

On September 8, 2002, he was even more emphatic about Saddam. He said:

[we] do know, with absolute certainty, that he is using his procurement system to acquire the equipment he needs in order to enrich uranium to build nuclear weapons.

The intelligence community was deeply divided about the aluminum tubes, but Vice President CHENEY was absolutely certain.

One month later, on the eve of the watershed vote by Congress to authorize the war, President Bush said it even more vividly. He said:

Iraq has attempted to purchase high strength aluminum tubes ... which are used to enrich uranium for nuclear weapons. If the Iraqi regime is able to produce, buy, or steal an amount of highly enriched uranium a little larger than a single softball, you can have a nuclear weapon in less than a year. And if we allow that to happen, a terrible line would be crossed ... Saddam would be in a position to pass nuclear technology to terrorists.

In fact, as we now know, the intelligence community was far from convinced of any such threat. The administration attempted to conceal that fact by classifying the information and the dissents within the intelligence community until after the war, even while making dramatic and excessive public statements about the immediacy of the danger.

In October of 2002, the intelligence agencies jointly issued a national intelligence estimate stating that "most agencies" believe that Iraq had restarted its nuclear program after inspectors left in 1998 and that if left unchecked, Iraq "probably will have a nuclear weapon during this decade."

The State Department's intelligence bureau, however, said the "available evidence" was inadequate to support that judgment. It refused to predict when "Iraq could acquire a nuclear device or weapon."

About the claims of purchases of nuclear material from Africa, the State Department's intelligence bureau said that claims of Iraq seeking to purchase nuclear material from Africa were "highly dubious." The CIA sent two memoranda to the White House stressing strong doubts about those claims. But the following January 2003, the President included the claims about Africa in his State of the Union Address and conspicuously cited the British Government as the source of that intelligence.

Information about nuclear weapons was not the only intelligence distorted by the administration. On the question of whether Iraq was pursuing a chemical weapons program, the Defense Intelligence Agency concluded in September 2002 that:

... there is no reliable information on whether Iraq is producing and stockpiling chemical weapons, or whether Iraq has—or will—establish its chemical warfare agent production facilities.

That same month, however, Secretary Rumsfeld told the Committee on

Armed Services that Saddam has chemical weapons stockpiles.

He said, "We do know that the Iraqi regime has chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction," that Saddam "has amassed large clandestine stocks of chemical weapons." He said that "he has stockpiles of chemical and biological weapons" and that Iraq has "active chemical, biological and nuclear programs." He was wrong on all counts.

Yet the October 2002 National Intelligence Estimate actually quantified the size of the stockpiles, stating that "although we have little specific information on Iraq's CW stockpile, Saddam probably has stocked at least 100 metric tons and possibly as much as 500 metric tons of CW agents—much of it added in the last year." In his address to the United Nations on February 5, 2003, Secretary of State Colin Powell went further, calling the 100 to 500 metric ton stockpile a "conservative estimate."

Secretary Rumsfeld made an even more explicit assertion in his interview on "This Week with George Stephanopoulos" on March 30, 2003. When asked about Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, he said:

We know where they are. They're in the area around Tikrit and Baghdad and east, west, south and north somewhat.

The administration's case for war based on the linkage between Saddam Hussein and al-Qaida was just as misguided.

Significantly, here as well, the Intelligence Estimate did not find a cooperative relationship between Saddam and al-Qaida. On the contrary, it stated only that such a relationship might develop in the future if Saddam was "sufficiently desperate"—in other words, if America went to war. But the estimate placed "low confidence" that, even in desperation, Saddam would give weapons of mass destruction to al-Qaida.

But President Bush was not deterred. He was relentless in playing to America's fears after the devastating tragedy of 9/11. He drew a clear link—and drew it repeatedly—between al-Qaida and Saddam.

On September 25, 2002, at the White House, President Bush flatly declared:

You can't distinguish between Al Qaeda and Saddam when you talk about the war on terror.

In his State of the Union Address in January 2003, President Bush said, "Evidence from intelligence sources, secret communications, and statements by people now in custody reveal that Saddam Hussein aids and protects terrorists, including members of Al Qaeda," and that he could provide "lethal viruses" to a "shadowy terrorist network."

Two weeks later, in his Saturday radio address to the Nation, a month before the war began, President Bush described the ties in detail, saying, "Saddam Hussein has longstanding, direct and continuing ties to terrorist networks. . . ."

He said:

Senior members of Iraqi intelligence and Al Qaeda have met at least eight times since the early 1990s. Iraq has sent bomb-making and document-forgery experts to work with Al Qaeda. Iraq has also provided Al Qaeda with chemical and biological weapons training. An Al Qaeda operative was sent to Iraq several times in the late 1990s for help in acquiring poisons and gases. We also know that Iraq is harboring a terrorist network headed by a senior Al Qaeda terrorist planner. This network runs a poison and explosive training camp in northeast Iraq, and many of its leaders are known to be in Baghdad.

Who gave the President this information? The NIE? Scooter Libby? Chalabi?

In fact, there was no operational link and no clear and persuasive pattern of ties between the Iraq Government and al-Qaida. A 9/11 Commission staff statement in June of 2004 put it plainly:

Two senior bin Laden associates have adamantly denied that any ties existed between Al Qaeda and Iraq. We have no credible evidence that Iraq and Al Qaeda cooperated on attacks against the United States.

The 9/11 Commission Report stated clearly that there was no "operational" connection between Saddam and al-Qaida. That fact should have been abundantly clear to the President.

The Pentagon's favorite Iraqi dissident, Ahmed Chalabi, is actually proud of what happened. "We are heroes in error," Chalabi said in February 2004. "As far as we're concerned, we've been entirely successful. That tyrant Saddam is gone and the Americans are in Baghdad. What was said before is not important. The Bush administration is looking for a scapegoat. We're ready to fall on our swords, if he wants."

What was said before does matter. The President's words matter. The Vice President's words matter. So do those of the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense and other high officials in the administration. And they did not square with the facts.

The Intelligence Committee agreed to investigate the clear discrepancies, and it is important that they get to the bottom of this and find out how and why President Bush took America to war in Iraq. Americans are dying. Already more than 2,000 have been killed and more than 15,000 have been wounded.

The American people deserve the truth. It is time for the President to stop passing the buck and for him to be held accountable.

I yield back the remainder of the time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

Mr. WARNER. Parliamentary inquiry, Madam President: We are in morning business?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Yes, for another 2 minutes.

EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. WARNER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the period

of morning business be extended another 5 or 6 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. KENNEDY. Madam President, reserving the right to object, could the time be evenly divided? I will not object if he wants to add time but that it be for both sides.

Mr. WARNER. Madam President, I am delighted to do that. We will have a 6-minute extension on each side in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. WARNER. Madam President, if the Senator will entertain a question, we will allocate my time on the question, as I propound it, and to the extent he responds will be on his time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. WARNER. Madam President, I was grievously concerned when the Senator said we are locked down in a quagmire in Iraq. I have made a number of trips there and completed a trip there several weeks ago with Senator STEVENS and Senator JOHN KERRY.

Our troops are not in a quagmire. They are fighting a very courageous war against international terrorism. The movement sparked by Osama bin Laden, Zarqawi, and others is a worldwide movement. It goes from Spain to Indonesia. And they have selected, in the last 6 or 8, maybe a year's time, Iraq as the focal point to where they will challenge the free nations of the world in this struggle against terrorism.

By no means, by no stretch of any measure of military analysis, can it be said that our troops are bogged down in a quagmire. They are fully mobile. They are working better than ever with the Iraqi security forces, largely trained by the coalition forces, who are now fighting side by side with coalition forces and engaging the enemy wherever they can find them.

Iraq is a nation with vast borders which are insecure. There is really no way to secure them to the point you can stop total infiltration. But these infiltrations of insurgents throughout the world are responding to a worldwide challenge to the free nations. We awakened in the last few days, or in just 24 hours or less, to an attack in Jordan, again sparked by the worldwide move in terrorism, against the Kingdom of Jordan.

So I say to my friend, I would hope that this comment about "in a quagmire" is not relative to the courageous performance of the men and women of the Armed Forces in this war on terrorism in Iraq. They are fully mobile. They are selecting their field of battle. They are assisted by the Iraqi forces. And they are taking a toll on the terrorists.

I ask my colleague, do you disagree with that analysis?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.