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## **A Stupid War**

**by Scott Mcpherson**

President Bush and his allies claimed emphatically during the months leading up to the invasion of Iraq that Saddam Hussein was an evil madman in possession of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), requiring an immediate preemptive invasion to topple his dictatorial regime and avert a nuclear, biological, or chemical (NBC) attack on the American people. An invasion of Iraq, we were told, would make us safer.

Far from providing meaningful conclusions on Iraq's actual intentions towards the United States, however, this war's swift conclusion simply raises more questions.

For instance, if Iraq did in fact have WMDs, why were they never used on the battlefield? Certainly, if we're to believe that Saddam Hussein was so unstable that given half a chance he would fire a chemical warhead at the United States — knowing he would be devastated by the inevitable counterstrike — then surely we could at least have expected a comparable attack on U.S. and allied forces who were trying to destroy him. This point by itself raises serious doubts about U.S. claims of the Iraqi "threat."

Now, a student of Soviet battle doctrine may counter that if Hussein was killed, seriously injured, or otherwise held indisposed in the first few days of fighting, his army would have been like a headless body awaiting orders.

Aside from being pure conjecture, this rebuttal doesn't address the likelihood that such orders would have been given in advance. Allegedly, Hussein had been preparing to carry out just such a cataclysmic attack for months or years anyway, long before U.S. soldiers started heading towards the Persian Gulf.

And on that note, why didn't he just order a preemptive NBC-type strike against the hundreds of thousands of troops massing in the Kuwaiti desert, before they had a chance to press forward across his border? It's not as if the names and locations of U.S. and allied camps were kept secret — they would have been sitting ducks in the sights of this unstable dictator supposedly with his finger on "the button."

Logically considered, the failure of Saddam Hussein to deploy WMDs of any type against invading American, British, and Australian forces makes the Bush administration look like Chicken Little with a cruise missile.

Which leads us to another, albeit most disconcerting, possibility: What if Iraq didn't have any WMDs? This may seem unlikely, given Hussein's past behavior, but if no smoking gun is ever found, the U.S. government will have a whole lot of explaining to do. President Bush, Colin Powell, and Donald Rumsfeld can insist all they want that the weapons just can't be found or were smuggled to a neighboring state ("Operation Syrian Freedom," anyone?), but millions around the world will seethe with anger and pray for America's demise more than they already are — not an altogether comforting thought.

Another explanation may be that Saddam Hussein hates the United States so much that, knowing he couldn't stand up to American tanks on a battlefield, he decided to hand over any WMDs he may have had to an organization like al-Qaeda. Pro-Bush types will claim that he probably had already done so, but this assertion has serious practical inconsistencies, the most pronounced being that it was box cutters and our own commercial airliners, not dirty bombs, that were the weapon of choice for the September 11 terrorists. Hussein had more than 10 years between the Gulf War and the September 11 attacks to launch a WMD attack on the United States, and it didn't happen.

Moreover, Hussein and Osama bin Laden are hardly a good fit. Hussein was a secularist dictator; bin Laden is a radical Muslim extremist. The Taliban government of Afghanistan was more to al-Qaeda's liking, which is precisely why they were hosted there and not in Iraq. Osama bin Laden armed with WMDs might have forced regime change in Baghdad even more quickly than the U.S. Marines did.

Ironically, Saddam Hussein would have feared this prospect before the United States started threatening his control, but with nothing left to lose ...? As Norman Mailer warned in *Why Are We at War?* published on the eve of the invasion, "We might vanquish Iraq and still suffer from the catastrophe we claimed to be going to war to avert. Iraq's weapons of mass destruction could yet belong to bin Laden."

The conclusion of this latest foreign-policy drama, cooked up by empire-driven hawks in the U.S. government, is still unfolding, but we do have certain facts available which allow us a highly principled condemnation of the invasion of Iraq. We know no WMDs have ever been used by Iraq against the United States. We have also yet to prove conclusively that Iraq even had such weapons. In the event none are ever found, what then will justify U.S. troops on Iraqi soil?

Yet, should WMD stashes eventually be located, rather than lend credibility to the president's warnings, it will actually make a mockery of them. How exactly do you explain a threat from weapons that have never been used, even under ideal circumstances?

And finally, we have to wonder at the probability that, facing his own inevitable downfall, Saddam Hussein simply threw caution to the wind and gave weapons capable of merciless devastation to Osama bin Laden, for use against their shared nemesis, the United States. When we consider that this most likely would not have taken place had our government minded its own business and stayed out of Iraq, then the grand total of the possible consequences and connotations of the U.S. government's invasion of Iraq makes this the stupidest and most unjustified war in our nation's history.

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