



11350 Random Hills Road, Suite 800, Fairfax, Virginia 22030 Phone (703) 934-6101 Fax (703) 352-3678

[fff@fff.org](mailto:fff@fff.org) [www.fff.org](http://www.fff.org)

## **What Did We Do to Deserve Condoleezza Rice?**

**by Sheldon Richman**

Is this a great country or what? Thanks to President George W. Bush, we will now have the first secretary of state who once had an oil tanker named after her. No kidding. Chevron put Condoleezza Rice's name on a tanker when she served on its board of directors, from which she resigned just before the 2001 inauguration. Chevron later changed the name, and President Bush appointed her national security adviser. (See it here: <http://aztlan.net/oiltanker.htm>.)

But that factoid is overshadowed by her career since moving from Chevron's board. Does she deserve this career move? Set aside her lack of experience as a diplomat. Except for some time spent as provost of Stanford University, before her government appointments she was an specialist in Russian studies. I presume one can learn diplomatic skills on the job. Also set aside her weak management skills, which were manifest during her tenure as national security advisor. One might pick up those skills as the head of the State Department.

But can she learn to tell the truth to the American people? Her record is not encouraging.

Rice was one of the key administration people in the massive deception campaign leading up to the invasion of Iraq, which continues to cost the lives of countless Iraqis. (The U.S. government refuses to keep count.) More than once Rice stood before the American people and blatantly lied to them. On at least one occasion the White House acknowledged that she fell down on a crucial job.

It was Rice who told us shortly after the 9/11 attacks that she and the rest of the national security apparatus never dreamed that al-Qaeda would ever fly airplanes into buildings. We learned later that the CIA had warned of this. She also said she was unaware that the CIA doubted that President Saddam Hussein of Iraq had tried to buy enriched uranium from the African country Niger. The CIA had made its doubts more than obvious and had even gotten Bush to remove the claim from a speech. That was before he used it in his state of the Union address, although the claim was no more solid then.

The Niger story, which was debunked by former diplomat Joseph Wilson, is related to Rice's malfeasance, which was acknowledged by the White House. In the summer of 2003, an

anonymous presidential aide held an official press briefing to discuss a key National Intelligence Estimate about Iraq's alleged weapons of mass destruction. The aide told reporters that neither the president nor Rice had read the entire document (which was fewer than 100 pages). The parts they failed to read contained, among other things, the CIA's and State Department's doubts about the uranium story. Either that was a lie or Rice failed to do her job.

Yet Rice played on the American people's fears of a nuclear attack from Iraq. It was she who said, "We don't want the smoking gun to be a mushroom cloud."

The lack of WMDs, of course, is hard to ignore. So the administration continues to claim that everyone believed they existed before the invasion. Well, not quite everyone. In early 2001 both Rice and Secretary of State Colin Powell said that Saddam had not rearmed and was no threat to anyone. Some of the footage of these statements can be seen in Michael Moore's *Fahrenheit 9/11*.

So now we have an interesting situation. The woman who played so important a role in deceiving the American people into war — a war that continues to take innocent life every day — has been nominated for the most prestigious job in the U.S. government. Some years ago Laurence Peter formulated the Peter Principle: "In a hierarchy every employee tends to rise to his level of incompetence." If Rice is confirmed as secretary of state, Dr. Peter's principle will have to be revised.

The question is not, "Does she deserve it?" No. The question is, "Do we?"

Sheldon Richman is senior fellow at The Future of Freedom Foundation in Fairfax, Va., author of *Tethered Citizens: Time to Repeal the Welfare State*, and editor of *The Freeman* magazine.

**This article was originally published in November 2004.**