

## Wanderings with Walt Brasch

### Playing Spin The Battle

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April 25, 2003



More than half of all Americans believe that Saddam Hussein was personally involved in the 9/11 terrorist attacks. According to an Associated Press poll conducted shortly after the conclusion of the successful invasion of Iraq, 53 percent of the nation pin the 9/11 murders on Saddam, something the CIA and most of the world intelligence gathering organizations have consistently discounted.

The fact that so many Americans believe this reveals the successful drum beating of the Bush administration along with a failure of both Congress and the media to adequately question the President's motives or to challenge the statements coming from the White House and Pentagon. President Bush and his horde of advisors have constantly said they never--ever--said that Saddam was the person behind the attacks. But, if the President could say "subliminal," that's what he, the vice-president, and their administration did to the Americans, with the complicity of the media who abrogated their responsibilities and made it seem that challenging anything the President said would be treason.

In message after message, the President referred to 9/11 and the war on terrorism. Then, as in the movies, he jump-cut to the evils of Saddam, letting the people think there was a smooth transition, while implanting those "hidden" meanings.

A month after 9/11, Americans believed Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda were responsible. Upon that basis, the President ordered an invasion of Afghanistan, one of several countries that harbored bin Laden and his terrorists, and overthrew the Taliban regime. At the time, finding anyone who thought Saddam was personally involved in 9/11 was as rare as finding a corporate executive who believed in unions.

Americans quickly learned that 15 of the 19 suicide/killers of 9/11 were Saudi. With a little more digging into buried news accounts, they might have also learned that 26 of al-Qaeda's top leadership at the time of 9/11, including bin Laden, were Egyptian, Saudi, or Yemeni. Only one, a third level administrator, was an Iraqi. They might also have learned that eight of the top 10 financial contributors to al-Qaeda are Saudi. They might also have learned that Saddam and al-Qaeda had never been close, that as ruthless as Saddam was, he was relatively moderate in the world of terrorism except, of course, against his own people.

A year of Presidential drum beating and brow-bashing led to about a third of

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Americans becoming believers. A month before the invasion of Iraq, about 45 percent of Americans, according to the AP, believed the Iraqi dictator was personally involved.

The eight percent increase in the month after the invasion could be attributed not only to war-mongering rhetoric, but to the nation trying to justify why it sent more than 200,000 of its sons and daughters, mothers and fathers, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, and cousins to war.

By the time war had begun, the message wasn't that Iraq was behind 9/11, but that it was a potential enemy because it had weapons of mass destruction.

In the most recent State of the Union, President Bush had forcefully declared that Iraq had a weapons program that included at least 500 tons of chemical weapons, 38,000 liters of botulism, 25,000 liters of anthrax, as well as uncountable numbers of SCUDs. But, as in the telephone rumor game when a simple fact spread person to person eventually becomes a bloated urban myth, America's people and their news media escalated even those unproven numbers until the average working person may have been led to believe that Iraq actually posed a greater danger to America than did North Korea and Iran, both of which had nuclear capability to hit American targets, something Iraq did not have.

However, Iraq once had weapons of mass destruction, although none were nuclear. Between 1983 and 1992--the Reagan/Bush and Bush/Quayle era--the U.S. gave Iraq innumerable weapons, and issued about \$2 billion in loans, most of which were used to buy even more weapons; the U.S. never expected full repayment. In addition, U.S. corporations provided Iraq with the means to manufacture chemical and biological weapons. The "point man" the Reagan administration sent to solidify U.S.-Iraqi relations—and who had personal knowledge that Iraq was using chemical weapons against Iran, and who helped remove the "terrorist" label against Iraq-- was . . . Donald Rumsfeld.

But, slowly and reluctantly under a U.N. mandate, Iraq began to destroy its weapons. So far, 300,000 American and British combat forces, aided by numerous infiltrators and the best spy satellite system ever known to mankind, have been unable to locate any weapons of mass destruction--other than ones used by the Coalition forces. Maybe the Bush administration should send in Monk and Colombo.

The fact that the two-nation "coalition" of 300,000 overwhelmed and destroyed a country of 24 million quickly, and that Iraq's armies used only bullets, light artillery, and short-range, but legal, missiles in its defense, suggests that the defeated nation probably didn't have the weapons the U.S. claimed.

President Bush and his supporters kept saying the war wasn't about oil. But, the first thing the Coalition troops protected once they entered Baghdad weren't the hospitals or museums but the Oil Ministry. Maybe the Ministry was in an "historical district."

At the time President Bush was telling the U.N. and the American people that he had no plans to go to war with Iraq, his administration officials were meeting in secret with several industry giants with financial and political ties to the Administration to develop a plan for a post-war Iraq.

One of those giants was Bechtel, a multi-nation conglomerate with close financial ties to the White House. Another was a subsidiary of Haliburton, the multi-billion dollar oil company that once had Dick Cheney as its CEO.

In a few months, Americans may be shocked that Iraq didn't help al-Qaeda and the 9/11 attacks, that it didn't have weapons of mass destruction, and that there may have been collusion between the Administration and major corporations to reap financial rewards for rebuilding a country that the U.S. destroyed. We should be shocked--but we should also be in awe of how well the President and his administration spun their messages of war, and how dizzy the major media must have been to have accepted the words unchallenged.

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