

Bush lies and manipulates public and Congress

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In a May 2003 article for *The American Prospect*, Drake Bennett and Heidi Pauken write "it is no exaggeration to say that lying has become Bush's signature as president . . . More distressing even than the president's lies, though, is the public's apparent passivity. Bush just seems to get away with it."

The Bush administration lied and deceived its way into the Iraq war. (See below list of links to articles that detail the Bush administration's lies.)

Bush has also misled the public with fallacy and deceptive rhetoric. In *The Progressive*, April 2003, editor Matthew Rothschild talks about Bush's manipulation of language. Rothschild quotes a line from Bush's February 10 speech to a conference of religious broadcasters: "Before September the 11th, 2001, we thought oceans would protect us forever."

Later that day at an informal press conference, Bush repeated the "ocean" catchword, saying: "The world changed on September 11 . . . In our country, it used to be that oceans could protect us -- at least we thought so." He used the "oceans" example again in his March 6 press conference.

Rothschild asked Mark Crispin Miller, author of *The Bush Dyslexicon*, what he makes of Bush's rhetoric. Miller replied: "This notion of unprecedented vulnerability is absolutely crucial to the Bush team's anti-constitutional program. The true meaning of anything Bush says is connotative. What that statement really means is, 'We were safe, now we're in danger, and the danger is so severe that you must give me all possible power. What the oceans once did now only I can do.'"

Rothschild notes the Bush description is irrational, because oceans haven't really served as a buffer since Pearl Harbor. In fact, says Rothschild, the Soviet Union's intercontinental ballistic missiles were aimed at the U.S. for years despite the oceans' barrier.

However, when words are used in ways that manipulate public fear, facts and rationality are beside the point. The aim of the corruption of language -- whether conscious or unconscious -- is to confuse rather than clarify, and to cause the listener to believe an illusion rather than the truth.

In his article, "Fallacies and War," Dave Koehler points out misleading public arguments the administration uses to justify war. For example, the Bush team often presents the false dilemma -- claiming there are only two possible options when, in fact, more choices are available.

Kohler refers to the statement Bush issued right after 9/11: "You're either with us or with the terrorists." As Kohler says "Countries can be both against terrorism and not an ally of the U.S . . . Many countries are showing they are both against a preemptive war and against the current Iraqi regime." Bush said the U.N. must vote for war or face irrelevance. As Kohler points out, the U.N. can simultaneously survive and disagree with Bush.

The Bush team also repeatedly uses the fallacy of exclusion, meaning they leave out important aspects of any given argument. For example, Colin Powell and George Bush spoke about aluminum tubes being used for uranium enrichment for nuclear weapons use. Kohler notes they failed to take into account the essential fact that U.N. inspectors said the tubes were conventional rocket artillery casings.

Kohler points to another fallacy, argument from ignorance -- the claim that what hasn't been disproved must be true. The Bush administration implies Iraq must have weapons of mass destruction because of Iraq's failure to prove it doesn't. As Kohler says, the burden of proof is on the party making the claim, therefore the U.S. "must prove that Iraq has WMD. It is impossible for Iraq to prove they don't."

In his article, "An Orwellian Pitch," John R. McArthur, publisher of *Harper's Magazine*, writes about the Bush team's manipulation of public opinion. He says, "Effective propaganda relies on half-truths and the conflation of disparate 'facts' (like Saddam's genuine human rights violations)." McArthur says the Bush team has managed to get away with this deceptive fact twisting because they use a tactic George Orwell described as "slovenliness" in the language.

Both Orwell and Aldous Huxley have written about dictatorial leaders and their methods of managing public opinion. In *Brave New World Revisited*, Huxley wrote that tyrants often use propaganda techniques that rely on the following. (1) Repetition of catchwords, (2) Suppression of facts the propagandist wants the public to ignore. (3) Inflaming mass fear or other strong emotional reaction for the purpose of controlling public opinion and behavior.

Huxley talks about Adolf Hitler's propaganda efforts to appeal to the emotions of the masses instead of reason. He notes that Hitler systematically exploited the German people's hidden fears and anxieties. The Bush administration has clearly exploited the American people's fears of terrorism since September 11.

According to Huxley, Hitler said the masses run on instinct and emotion rather than facts and are easy to manipulate, while society's intellectuals and independent thinkers insist on factual evidence and logic and easily see through fallacies. Huxley says Hitler encouraged the masses to attack or shout down intellectual dissenters rather than engage them in logical debate, because the rational dissenters would likely win any argument on the basis of fact.

Bush supporters have tried to silence dissent. Media bulldogs such as Bill O'Reilly, Rush Limbaugh and Michael Savage often use Hitler's suggested technique of attacking and shouting down antiwar voices.

Huxley quotes Hitler's statement that "all propaganda must be confined to a few bare necessities and then must be expressed in a few stereotyped formulas . . . Only constant

repetition will finally succeed in imprinting an idea upon the memory of a crowd." Bush has delivered the stereotyped formulas "You're either with us or with the terrorists;" "the oceans can't protect us;" and Saddam is connected with "al Qaeda," using constant repetition.

There can be little doubt the Bush administration has worked to coerce Congress, the public and the media into supporting Bush's Iraq policy. On *MSNBC*, reporter Jeff Greenfield discussed the administration's war propaganda with news anchor Paula Zahn. Greenfield said propaganda isn't necessarily a negative thing, because it can influence an enemy regime to behave in ways that help U.S. troops and government officials.

The problem is, Bush's propaganda has targeted average American citizens and Congress, using tactics that were once reserved to influence enemy governments abroad. Propaganda is negative when it promotes lies and encourages people to act against their own best interests, as the Bush administration's spin has done.

In the months before Congress gave Bush the authority to wage war on Iraq, Bush administration officials tried to influence members of Congress by briefing them with reports that alleged Iraq tried to buy uranium from Niger, a central African country. Later it was revealed the Niger documents had been forged.

Congressman Henry Waxman said the Bush administration likely hoodwinked members of Congress. According to a March 25 *Mother Jones* article, Waxman said he voted to give Bush authority to invade Iraq in large part because he believed the administration's claims about Iraq's effort to purchase nuclear weapons.

The *Mother Jones* article includes an excerpt from a reproachful letter Waxman sent to George W. Bush. Waxman wrote: "It appears that at the same time that you, Secretary Rumsfeld, and State Department officials were citing Iraq's efforts to obtain uranium from Africa as a crucial part of the case against Iraq, U.S. intelligence officials regarded this very same evidence as unreliable. If true, this is deeply disturbing: it would mean that your Administration asked the U.N. Security Council, the Congress, and the American people to rely on information that your own experts knew was not credible."

When Congress gave Bush virtually unlimited power to wage war, many legislators were unaware Bush officials had essentially planned the invasion of Iraq and "regime change" years before September 11. For more on this, see:

- The Plan - Were Neo-Conservatives' 1998 Memos a Blueprint for Iraq War?
- Practice to Deceive
- Just the Beginning

Bush sold the Iraq war by repeatedly (and falsely) linking September 11 with Saddam Hussein.

In a March 14 article for *The Christian Science Monitor*, Linda Feldmann writes, "In his prime-time press conference last week, which focused almost solely on Iraq, President Bush mentioned Sept. 11 eight times. He referred to Saddam Hussein many more times than that, often in the same breath with Sept. 11. Bush never pinned blame for the attacks directly on

the Iraqi president. Still, the overall effect was to reinforce an impression that persists among much of the American public: that the Iraqi dictator did play a direct role in the attacks. A *New York Times* / *CBS* poll this week shows that 45 percent of Americans believe Mr. Hussein was 'personally involved' in Sept. 11."

Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity, a group of former CIA officers, argues that the Bush administration's evidence on Iraq's alleged threat to the U.S. and purported ties to Al Qaeda are not credible. According to a March 14 *Associated Press* article, members of VIPS accused Bush administration officials of "cooking" the intelligence books and promoting "information that does not meet an intelligence professional's standards of proof."

In a speech in early February, Colin Powell told the nation he had a transcript of a new Osama bin Laden tape -- one that proved a "partnership" between Al Qaeda and Iraq. However, in a February 12 article for *Salon*, "War, lies and audiotape," reporter Joe Conason points out Powell misrepresented the transcript. The actual document, says Conason, "clearly contradicted the headlines [Powell] was trying to make."

The Bush administration also lied about Iraq's weapons capabilities. According to a March 10 *ABC* news website report: "Before Congress, and in public, President Bush and Secretary of State Colin Powell have repeatedly pointed to aluminum tubes imported by Iraq which they say are for use in making nuclear weapons. But on Friday, head United Nations nuclear inspector Mohammad ElBaradei told the Security Council that it wasn't likely that the tubes were for that use."

According to another article on the subject of Iraq's weapons capabilities: "On February 5, Colin Powell told the U.N. Security Council that the Iraqis possessed a drone plane that could fly 500 kilometers, violating U.N. rules that limit the range of Iraqi weapons to 150k." According to the article, *Jane's Defence Weekly*, one of the most respected publications on defense matters, reported it was "doubtful" the drone could have flown the distance claimed by Powell. Drones expert Ken Munson said on the *Jane's* web site there was no possibility the drone could fly "anywhere near 500 kilometers." Munson added, "The design looks very primitive, and the engines -- which have their pistons exposed -- appear to be low-powered."

Since September 11, the Bush administration and its various media mouthpieces have tried to intensify the public's fear of terrorism, using lies to build a case for war and other questionable policies. Members of Congress, with few exceptions, have abdicated their responsibility to the American people by giving Bush unprecedented freedom to make war at will with virtually no congressional oversight.

Fortunately, Representatives Henry Waxman, Dennis Kucinich and a handful of others in the House, and Senator Robert Byrd, Senator Edward Kennedy and a few others in the Senate have challenged some of the Bush policies. However, too many in Congress have acquiesced to Bush on almost every important legislative issue and failed to fully investigate the Bush administration's most egregious misdeeds.

U.S. diplomat John Brady Kiesling resigned from the State Department on February 27. In his letter of resignation, Kiesling said: "We have not seen such systematic distortion of intelligence, such systematic manipulation of American opinion, since the war in Vietnam.

We spread disproportionate terror and confusion in the public mind, arbitrarily linking the unrelated problems of terrorism and Iraq . . . The policies we are now asked to advance are incompatible not only with American values but also with American interests."

The American people should urge Congress to exercise its oversight role and check the Bush administration's power. The U.S. Constitution requires such checks and balances, and American democracy won't thrive without them. If high crimes and misdemeanors can be established, Congress shouldn't rule out impeachment.

The following are links to articles that describe the Bush administration's many lies:

1. Articles detailing a long list of Bush lies on a variety of issues.
 - "All the President's Lies - Bush's rhetoric bears no resemblance to his policies. How does he get away with it?" by Drake Bennett and Heidi Pauken, *The American Prospect*, 5/1/03
<http://www.prospect.org/print/V14/5/bennett-d.html>
 - [Start with] "Reap What You Sow", by Dwight Meredith, *P.L.A. - A Journal of Politics, Law and Autism*, 2/27/03
http://www.pla.blogspot.com/2003_02_23_pla_archive.html
2. Articles showing the Bush administration planned to invade Iraq and reshape the Middle East long before September 11 -- though they have portrayed the invasion as a response to the World Trade Center attacks.
 - "The Plan - Were Neo-Conservatives' 1998 Memos a Blueprint for Iraq War?" *Nightline*, 3/5/03
http://abcnews.go.com/sections/nightline/DailyNews/pnac_030310.html
 - "Practice to Deceive - Chaos in the Middle East is not the Bush hawks' nightmare scenario--it's their plan," by Joshua Marshall, *The Washington Monthly*, April 2003
<http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/2003/0304.marshall.html>
 - "Just the Beginning - Is Iraq the opening salvo in a war to remake the world?" by Robert Dreyfuss, *The American Prospect*, 4/1/03
<http://www.prospect.org/print/V14/4/dreyfuss-r.html>
3. Articles showing Bush administration used forged evidence to convince the public and U.N. that Iraq tried to obtain WMD from Niger.
 - "Who Lied to Whom? Why did the Administration endorse a forgery about Iraq's nuclear program?" by Seymour Hersh, *The New Yorker*, 3/31/03
http://www.newyorker.com/fact/content/?030331fa_fact1
 - "A Spurious 'Smoking Gun'," by Chris Smith, *Mother Jones*, 3/25/03
http://www.motherjones.com/news/update/2003/13/we_338_01.htm
 - "The Blame Game Between Bush and the Brits," by Richard Wolffe, Mark Hosenball and Tamara Lipper, *Newsweek*, 3/17/03
<http://www.msnbc.com/news/883164.asp?cp1=1>
 - "Fake Iraq documents 'embarrassing' for U.S.," from David Ensor, *CNN.com*, 3/14/03
<http://www.cnn.com/2003/US/03/14/sprj.irq.documents/index.html>
 - "Google Search: africa uranium forged documents"
<http://news.google.com/news?hl=en&q=africa+uranium+forged+documents>
including:
 - "Blix attacks 'shaky' intelligence on weapons," by Gary Younge, Richard Norton-Taylor and Patrick Wintour, *The Guardian*, 4/23/03
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/Print/0,3858,4653140,00.html>
 - "Missing in Action: Truth" by Nicholas Kristof, *New York Times*, 5/6/03
<http://www.nytimes.com/2003/05/06/opinion/06KRIS.html?pagewanted=print&position=>
 - "Integrity on line in U.S. hunt for arms - Case for Iraq war was built on alleged bioweapons; But little evidence discovered; Search shifts to records of Hussein's government," by Robert Little, *The Baltimore Sun*, 4/27/03
<http://www.sunspot.net/bal-te.weapons27apr27,0,1263306.story?coll=bal-home-headlines>
 - "Anti-war Crowd Demands Proof of WMDs," by Jamie Dettmer, *Insight on the News*, 4/28/03
<http://www.insightmag.com/news/426671.html>
4. Articles showing U.S. spied on friendly governments and/or doctored evidence to promote war with Iraq.
 - "Spies Like Us," by Joel Bleifuss, *In These Times*, 3/14/03
http://inthesetimes.com/comments.php?id=118_0_3_0_C
 - "Ex-CIA Officers Questioning Iraq Data," by John Lumpkin, *Associated Press*, 3/14/03
<http://www.ratical.org/ratville/CAH/linkscopy/IraqDataQ.html>

5. Articles on Bush's lying and/or using fallacious "reasoning" to gain support for war.
 - "The impact of Bush linking 9/11 and Iraq - American attitudes about a connection have changed, firming up the case for war," by Linda Feldmann *The Christian Science Monitor*, 3/14/03
<http://www.csmonitor.com/2003/0314/p02s01-woiq.htm>
 - "An unproven case, a spurious war - Sans evidence, polls show Americans rallying around the White House," by Joe Conason, *Working For Change*, 3/24/03
<http://www.workingforchange.com/article.cfm?itemid=14705&CFID=6125472&CFTOKEN=92732152>
 - "Fallacies and War - Misleading a nervous America to the wrong conclusion," by Dave Koehler, *phillyburbs.com*, 2/27/03
<http://www.phillyburbs.com/pb-dyn/news/50401.html>
 - "An Orwellian Pitch - The inner workings of the war-propaganda machine," by John R. McArthur, *LA Weekly*, 3/21/03
<http://www.laweekly.com/ink/printme.php?eid=42761>

6. Article showing Bush administration has exaggerated "smart bombs'" ability to avoid targeting civilians.
 - "Military Precision versus Moral Precision," by Robert Higgs, *The Independent Institute*, 3/24/03
<http://www.independent.org/tii/news/030323Higgs.html>

7. Articles showing the Bush effort to show an alliance between Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein was misleading.
 - "Bin There Before - But New Tape May Be Iraq Link U.S. Seeks," by William Bunch, *Philadelphia Daily News*, 2/12/03
<http://www.philly.com/mld/dailynews/5157847.htm>
 - "War, lies and audiotape - What Colin Powell failed to mention about the bin Laden tape," by Joe Conason, *salon*, 2/12/03
http://www.salon.com/opinion/conason/2003/02/12/osama/index_np.html

8. Articles related to Bush/Powell deception about Saddam's ability to deliver weapons of mass destruction.
 - "Iraqi drone 'very primitive': expert," from correspondents in London, *News.com.au*, 3/15/03
<http://www.news.com.au/common/printpage/0,6093,6130936,00.html>
 - "Questionable Evidence - Is Weapons Case Against Iraq Disintegrating?" Martha Raddatz, *ABCNEWS.com*, 3/10/03
http://abcnews.go.com/sections/GMA/2003/GMA030310Iraq_weap_ons_evidence.html

9. Article on Bush administration's choice of a convicted embezzler to oversee Iraq.
 - "Who will trust our man in Iraq? - White House prepares to install convicted embezzler to oversee Iraqi 'freedom'," by Joe Conason, *Working For Change*, 4/16/03
<http://www.workingforchange.com/article.cfm?itemid=14845&CFID=6668624&CFTOKEN=43382939>

10. Article detailing reasons Bush could be criminal in attacking Iraq.
 - "Attack on Iraq Could Turn Bush into Criminal," by Thomas Walkom, *Toronto Star*, 3/18/03
<http://www.commondreams.org/views03/0318-02.htm>

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