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Setting the Record Straight: *The New York Times* Editorial on Pre-War Intelligence

***The New York Times* Editorial Says Foreign Intelligence Services Did Not Support American Intelligence.** "Foreign intelligence services did not have full access to American intelligence. But some had dissenting opinions that were ignored or not shown to top American officials." (Editorial, "Decoding Mr. Bush's Denials," The New York Times, 11/15/05)

But Even Foreign Governments That Opposed The Removal Of Saddam Hussein Judged That Iraq Had Weapons Of Mass Destruction (WMD).

- **French Foreign Minister Dominique De Villepin: "Right Now, Our Attention Has To Be Focused As A Priority On The Biological And Chemical Domains. It Is There That Our Presumptions About Iraq Are The Most Significant. Regarding The Chemical Domain, We Have Evidence Of Its Capacity To Produce VX And Yperite. In The Biological Domain, The Evidence Suggests The Possible Possession Of Significant Stocks Of Anthrax And Botulism Toxin, And Possibly A Production Capability."** (United Nations Security Council, 4701st Meeting, New York, 2/5/03)

- **German Ambassador To The United States Wolfgang Ischinger: "I Think All Of Our Governments Believe That Iraq Has Produced Weapons Of Mass Destruction And That We Have To Assume That They Still Have That They Continue To Have Weapons Of Mass Destruction. We Have Not Yet Seen Evidence Produced By The Inspectors."** (NBC's "Today," 2/26/03)

***The New York Times* Editorial Implies That Congress Was Presented With Incomplete And Manipulated Intelligence.** "Congress had nothing close to the president's access to intelligence. The National Intelligence Estimate presented to Congress a few days before the vote on war was sanitized to remove dissent and make conjecture seem like fact." (Editorial, "Decoding Mr. Bush's Denials," The New York Times, 11/15/05)

But The Presidential Daily Brief (PDB) Was Judged Not To Have Different Intelligence Than The National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) Provided To Congress, Which Represented The Collective Opinion Of The Intelligence Community.

- **Then-CIA Director George Tenet Said The NIE Summarized The Intelligence Community's**

Assessment Of Iraq's WMD Programs. TENET: "Let's turn to Iraq. Much of the current controversy centers on our prewar intelligence, summarized in the national intelligence estimate of October of 2002. National estimates are publications where the intelligence community as a whole seeks to sum up what we know about a subject, what we don't know, what we suspect may be happening and where we differ on key issues. This estimate asked if Iraq had chemical, biological and nuclear weapons and the means to deliver them. We concluded that in some of these categories Iraq had weapons, and that in others where it did not have them, it was trying to develop them. Let me be clear: Analysts differed on several important aspects of these programs and those debates were spelled out in the estimate. They never said there was an imminent threat. Rather, they painted an objective assessment for our policy-makers of a brutal dictator who was continuing his efforts to deceive and build programs that might constantly surprise us and threaten our interests. No one told us what to say or how to say it." (CIA Director George Tenet, Remarks On Intelligence-Gathering And Iraq's WMD Programs, Washington, D.C., 2/5/04)

- **The Robb-Silberman Commission Reported That The Intelligence In The PDB Was Not "Markedly Different" Than The Intelligence Given To Congress In The NIE.** "It was not that the intelligence was markedly different. Rather, it was that the PDBs and SEIBs, with their attention-grabbing headlines and drumbeat of repetition, left an impression of many corroborating reports where in fact there were very few sources. And in other instances, intelligence suggesting the existence of weapons programs was conveyed to senior policymakers, but later information casting doubt upon the validity of that intelligence was not." (Charles S. Robb And Laurence H. Silberman, The Commission On The Intelligence Capabilities Of The United States Regarding Weapons Of Mass Destruction, 3/31/05, p. 14)

- **The Robb-Silberman Commission Found The PDB To Contain Similar Intelligence In "More Alarmist" And "Less Nuanced" Language.** "As problematic as the October 2002 NIE was, it was not the Community's biggest analytic failure on Iraq. Even more misleading was the river of intelligence that flowed from the CIA to top policymakers over long periods of time in the President's Daily Brief (PDB) and in its more widely distributed companion, the Senior Executive Intelligence Brief (SEIB). These daily reports were, if anything, more alarmist and less nuanced than the NIE." (Charles S. Robb And Laurence H. Silberman, The Commission On The Intelligence Capabilities Of The United States Regarding Weapons Of Mass Destruction, 3/31/05, p. 14)

***The New York Times* Editorial Implies That UN Sanctions Were Preventing Saddam Hussein From Pursuing WMD.** "It's hard to imagine what Mr. Bush means when he says everyone reached the same conclusion. There was indeed a widespread belief that Iraq had chemical and biological weapons. But Mr. Clinton looked at the data and concluded that inspections and pressure were working a view we now know was accurate." (Editorial, "Decoding Mr. Bush's Denials," The New York Times, 11/15/05)

But Former President Bill Clinton Warned After 9/11 That The United States Could Not Allow Saddam Hussein To Continue Defying Weapons Inspectors.

- **In June 2004, Bill Clinton Said President Bush Had The Responsibility To Make Sure Iraq's Chemical And Biological Weapons Did Not Get In The Hands Of Terrorists.** "After 9/11, let's be fair here, if you had been President, you'd think, Well, this fellow bin Laden just turned these three airplanes full of fuel into weapons of mass destruction, right? Arguably they were super-powerful chemical weapons. Think about it that way. So, you're sitting there as President, you're reeling in the aftermath of this, so, yeah, you want to go get bin Laden and do Afghanistan and all that. But you also have to say, Well, my first responsibility now is to try everything possible to make sure that this terrorist network and other terrorist networks cannot reach chemical and biological weapons or small amounts of fissile material. I've got to do that. That's why I supported the Iraq thing. There was a lot of stuff unaccounted for. So I thought the President had an absolute responsibility to go to the U.N. and say, 'Look, guys, after 9/11, you have got to demand that Saddam Hussein lets us finish the inspection process.' When you're the President, and your country has just been through what we had, you want everything to be accounted for." (Bill Clinton, "His Side of The Story," Time, 6/28/04)

- **The Duelfer Report Concluded That Saddam Hussein Sought To "Reconstitute His Weapons Of Mass Destruction (WMD) When Sanctions Were Lifted."** "Saddam [Hussein] so dominated the Iraqi regime that its strategic intent was his alone. He wanted to end sanctions while preserving the capability to reconstitute his weapons of mass destruction (WMD) when sanctions were lifted." (Comprehensive Report Of The Special Advisor To The DCI On Iraq's WMD, Key Findings Regime Strategic Intent, 9/30/04, p. 1)

***The New York Times* Editorial Says There Was Little Evidence Suggesting Iraq Was Pursuing A Nuclear Weapon.** "The administration had little company in saying that Iraq was actively trying to build a nuclear weapon. The evidence for this claim was a dubious report about an attempt in 1999 to buy uranium from Niger, later shown to be false, and the infamous aluminum tubes story. That was dismissed at the time by analysts with real expertise." (Editorial, "Decoding Mr. Bush's Denials," The New York Times, 11/15/05)

But The Weapons Inspectors Concluded That Saddam Hussein Sought A Nuclear Capability.

- **The Duelfer Report: "Saddam Aspired To Develop A Nuclear Capability."** "Saddam wanted to recreate Iraq's WMD capability which was essentially destroyed in 1991 after sanctions were removed and Iraq's economy stabilized, but probably with a different mix of capabilities to that which previously existed. Saddam aspired to develop a nuclear capability in an incremental fashion, irrespective of international pressure and the resulting economic risks but he intended to focus on ballistic missile and tactical chemical warfare (CW) capabilities." (Comprehensive Report Of The Special Advisor To The DCI On Iraq's WMD, Key Findings Regime Strategic Intent, 9/30/04, p. 1)

***The New York Times* Editorial Says The Claim That Iraq And Al Qaeda Were In League Was "Absurd" And Implies That The President Connected Saddam Hussein To The 9/11 Attacks.** "The Bush administration was also alone in making the absurd claim that Iraq was in league with Al Qaeda and somehow connected to the 9/11 terrorist attacks. That was based on two false tales. One was the supposed trip to Prague by Mohamed Atta, a report that was disputed before the war and came from an unreliable drunk. The other was that Iraq trained Qaeda members in the use of chemical and biological weapons. Before the war, the Defense Intelligence Agency concluded that this was a deliberate fabrication by an informer." (Editorial, "Decoding Mr. Bush's Denials," The New York Times, 11/15/05)

But The President Never Connected Iraq To The 9/11 Attacks While Other Politicians And Independent Commissions Judged That There Were Contacts Between Iraq, Al-Qaeda And Other Terrorist Groups.

- **President Bush Said There Is "No Evidence That Saddam Hussein Was Involved With" 9/11.** PRESIDENT BUSH: "We've had no evidence that Saddam Hussein was involved with the September 11th." (President Bush, Remarks After Meeting With Members Of The Congressional Conference Committee On Energy Legislation, Washington, D.C., 9/17/03)

- **Condoleezza Rice Said That Saddam Hussein Never "Had Either Direction Or Control Of 9/11."** RICE: "And we have never claimed that Saddam Hussein had either, that Saddam Hussein had either direction or control of 9/11. What we have said is that this was someone who supported terrorists, helped train them. But most importantly, that this is someone who, with his animus towards the United States, with his penchant for and capability to gain weapons of mass destruction, and his obvious willingness to use them, was a threat in this region that we were not prepared to tolerate." (ABC's "Nightline," 9/16/03)

- **Sen. Clinton (D-NY): "[Saddam] Has Also Given Aid, Comfort, And Sanctuary To Terrorists, Including Al-Qaida Members, Though There Is Apparently No Evidence Of His Involvement In The Terrible Events Of September 11, 2001. This Much Is Undisputed."** (Sen. Hillary Clinton, Congressional Record, 10/10/02, p. S10288)

- **In 1999, The Clinton Administration Issued A Report That Said Iraq Was Supporting Terrorists.** "[T]he Patterns of Global Terrorism report listed Iran, Libya, Cuba, Iraq, North Korea, Sudan and Syria and exiled Saudi millionaire Osama bin Laden as terrorist sponsors. The seven countries were on the same list last year. Secretary of State Dr Madeleine Albright said: 'Governments on the list that would like to see their names removed know exactly what they must do: stop planning, financing and supporting terrorist acts and stop sheltering or interfering with the apprehension and prosecution of those who commit them.'" ("No Reprieve

For Nations Of Terror," The [Perth, Australia] Sunday Times, 5/2/99)

- **The 9/11 Commission: "There Is Evidence That Around This Time [1997] Bin Ladin Sent Out A Number Of Feelers To The Iraqi Regime, Offering Some Cooperation."** ("Final Report Of The National Commission On Terrorist Attacks Upon The United States," The 9/11 Commission Report, 7/22/04)

- **The 9/11 Commission: "In March 1998, After Bin Ladin's Public Fatwa Against The United States, Two Al Qaeda Members Reportedly Went To Iraq To Meet With Iraqi Intelligence."** ("Final Report Of The National Commission On Terrorist Attacks Upon The United States," The 9/11 Commission Report, 7/22/04)

***The New York Times* Editorial Implies That There Was Political Pressure To Change Intelligence.** "Richard Kerr, a former deputy director of central intelligence, said in 2003 that there was 'significant pressure on the intelligence community to find evidence that supported a connection' between Iraq and Al Qaeda. The C.I.A. ombudsman told the Senate Intelligence Committee that the administration's 'hammering' on Iraq intelligence was harder than he had seen in his 32 years at the agency." (Editorial, "Decoding Mr. Bush's Denials," The New York Times, 11/15/05)

But Congressional And Independent Committees Have Repeatedly Found No Political Pressure To Change Intelligence.

- **The Bipartisan Senate Select Committee On Intelligence Report "Did Not Find Any Evidence" Of Attempts To Influence Analysts To Change Intelligence.** "Conclusion 83. The Committee did not find any evidence that Administration officials attempted to coerce, influence or pressure analysts to change their judgments related to Iraq's weapons of mass destruction capabilities. Conclusion 84. The Committee found no evidence that the Vice President's visits to the Central Intelligence Agency were attempts to pressure analysts, were perceived as intended to pressure analysts by those who participated in the briefings on Iraq's weapons of mass destruction programs, or did pressure analysts to change their assessments." ("Report On The U.S. Intelligence Community's Prewar Intelligence Assessments On Iraq," U.S. Senate Select Committee On Intelligence, 7/7/04, p. 284-285)

- **The Robb-Silberman Commission Found "No Evidence Of Political Pressure."** "These are errors serious errors. But these errors stem from poor tradecraft and poor management. The Commission found no evidence of political pressure to influence the Intelligence Community's pre-war assessments of Iraq's weapons programs. As we discuss in detail in the body of our report, analysts universally asserted that in no instance did political pressure cause them to skew or alter any of their analytical judgments. We conclude that it was the paucity of

intelligence and poor analytical tradecraft, rather than political pressure, that produced the inaccurate pre-war intelligence assessments." (Charles S. Robb And Laurence H. Silberman, The Commission On The Intelligence Capabilities Of The United States Regarding Weapons Of Mass Destruction, 3/31/05, p. 50-51)

- **The British Butler Report Found "No Evidence" Of Intelligence Distortion.** "In general, we found that the original intelligence material was correctly reported in [Joint Intelligence Committee] assessments. An exception was the '45 minute' report. But this sort of example was rare in the several hundred JIC assessments we read on Iraq. In general, we also found that the reliability of the original intelligence reports was fairly represented by the use of accompanying quali cations. We should record in particular that we have found no evidence of deliberate distortion or of culpable negligence. We examined JIC assessments to see whether there was evidence that the judgements inside them were systematically distorted by non-intelligence factors, in particular the in uence of the policy positions of departments. We found no evidence of JIC assessments and the judgements inside them being pulled in any particular direction to meet the policy concerns of senior of cials on the JIC." ("Review Of Intelligence On Weapons Of Mass Destruction," Report Of A Committee Of Privy Counsellors, 7/14/04, p. 110)

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