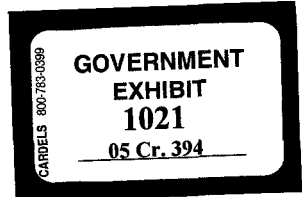


Cheney June, 23 2003



In 2000 during the presidential campaign, one person said the Vice President raised the issue internally that the connection between WMD and terrorism was the primary security threat to the country.

(Question: If so, when and where did that notion come from that early? To whom was it expressed?)

During the 2000 campaign Cheney generally supported the U.N. weapons inspection process for Iraq but developed the theme of Clinton's weak and erratic policies.

(At that point was there a sense of unfinished business with Iraq---that the Saddam Hussein matter would have to be confronted in some form if Bush and Cheney were elected?)

After the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, there was a spike in the intelligence about Iraq trying to get WMD.

(Do you recall any and what was your reaction?)

Several people have said that the Vice President believed the president decided before the end of 2001 that the Iraq problem was going to be solved one way or the other.

(Does this seem right and what other than 9/11 caused that?)

Others have said that the core discussion with the president about Iraq in late 2001 was as follows: If Saddam uses WMD on Israel and Israel retaliates, especially with nuclear, then you've lost the entire Middle East. If Saddam uses WMD in the U.S. and thousands or hundreds of thousands die, there will be no excuse if the administration says the evidence was not conclusive. So the weight of evidence required before 9/11 does not apply after 9/11. The standard of proof has to be lowered.

*DB: (D) to connect the dots*

(Can you locate when and where such discussion occurred?)

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... the Axis of Evil speech. The president wanted an ambitious speech to set out new rules. Started with a 7 page outline; first drafts mentioned axis of evil and initially only named Iraq. NSC added North Korea and Iran so as not to create the impression of imminent action. Strongly implied but did not directly say that one goal would be democracy in the Islamic world.

← way

← ?

(Recall the evolution of this speech and your reaction? How important is this speech? )

Others have said the president's intellectual framework for Iraq had four major parts: 1. 9/11, 2. the WMD > intelligence from late 2001, 3. the Axis of Evil speech, 4. the June 1, 2002 West Point speech about preemption.

(Is that about how you see it? What would you add or emphasize?)

April 2002, Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah met with Bush and pushed for a \$1 billion intelligence operation to overthrow Saddam rather than using the military.

(Reaction? Why would this not work?)

— May 29, 2002. George Shultz gave a speech calling for "hot preemption." Cheney privately says that is "George at his wisest and best."

(Did this play a role in the preemption doctrine? Did you talk with Shultz about his remarks? Was the President aware of them?)

— The President's June 1, 2002 West Point speech was possibly the most important and the clearest formulation that American values would be spread. "Our Nation's cause has always been larger than our Nation's defense." And, it is really good vs. evil, a conflict between right and wrong. The U.S. seeks not only an absence of war, but a "just peace"---a moral purpose, democracy, free markets and rights for women. "If we wait for threats to fully materialize, we will have waited too long."

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What you see as the strongest articulation of the President's vision? Was there a worry or discussion that this was too ambitious? Any recollections of the discussions about this speech?

July 2002, the president orders about 30 major construction projects in Gen. Franks' AOR---runway extensions, fueling facilities, port improvements etc., so-called "preparatory tasks" that cost hundreds of millions.

(Was this a significant step? What was the role of Congress in this?)

July 31 cabinet meeting. On Iraq, the President said, "The stated mission is regime change. But all this talk from level four people . . . [they] are talking about things they know nothing about. Our intent is serious. There are no war plans on my desk. I believe there is *causus belli* and that the doctrine of preemption applies. Will not do anything militarily unless confident we can succeed. Success is removal of Saddam." Rumsfeld said, "If it looks untidy in the press, it is. Preemption is an important discussion to have. Problem is that it gets particularized to Iraq." || ← ?

(Does this fully convey the state of play at this point? What was your sense of where decisions were heading? And on what timetable?)

Aug. 26, 2002. One person said the vice president mentioned to the president that he was going to give a speech on Iraq and the president simply said, Don't get me in trouble. The speech said that the weapons inspections ran the danger of providing "false comfort." The question of interpretation arose and eight paragraphs were dropped in a speech three days later, Aug. 29 to the Vets of the Korean War.

(What exactly happened here? What was Rice's role?)

Sept. 3, 2002. Andy Card starts the WHIG meetings---White House Iraq Group. "Gameplan is to ask Congress to vote

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before the election. The president, says, "wants to  
address Congress because he wants to be able to  
moving forward."

*2/8  
Pete would  
to work  
family: go  
it, look up it*

Your reaction and discussion about going to Congress?  
Especially in light of your initial ideas about Congress  
before the 1991 Gulf War?)

Sept. 12, 2002. The President's U.N. speech calling for a  
new Iraq resolution. Others have said this was the moment  
the president decided he would have to use force because he  
had promised that if the U.N. did not disarm Saddam, the  
U.S. would. This was the point of no return; needed  
credible threat of force for diplomacy to work.

(Recall any specific reaction? The president apparently  
had a different view of inspections than anyone else?  
Recall what it was?)

Sept. 18. The president and vice president have a  
breakfast meeting with Congressional leaders. In a meeting  
before or after, the President and Vice President are told  
about "Vitiating cloture," and both wonder what it means.  
Calio brings in a definition sheet---meaning to make it go  
away.

(Do you recall this? What was the key to getting the  
resolutions and avoiding cloture in the Senate?)

Oct. 2. At 1:15 p.m. the President appears with dozens of  
lawmakers including Gephardt in the Rose Garden to announce  
agreement on Congressional resolution language.

(What did you think of Daschle's absence and role?)

Around this time, the CIA made contact with the former head  
of the Iraqi UAV program who was living in Australia. He  
may have ordered topographical maps of the U.S. on-line.  
But he wanted some 20 members of his extended family in  
Iraq to be taken out of Iraq.

(Was this important? Your reaction?)

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... the president's inaugural speech about Iraq, that it gathered "the most serious dangers of our age in one place." Tenet personally got the reference to yellowcake removed from the speech.

(Your reaction?)

October 2002. CIA NIE on Iraq's WMD programs etc. It was later briefed to senators.

(What did you think of the NIE at the time?)

Oct. 10 and 11. House and Senate pass the resolution by a margin of about 3 to 1.

(What was the key to this? Recall what the President's reaction was? The decision, now more than ever, was on his shoulders. Did he talk about that?)

Oct/Nov 2002. One of the first detailed Iraq war plans called for: 5 days to establish the air bridge; 11 days for flow of forces; 16 day air campaign; 32<sup>nd</sup> day the ground forces in.

(Your reaction to this more or less traditional sequential war plan?)

In the period of the fall, when people wanted early military action, Powell at one point said to the president, "Ask the vice president. He was my boss when your father was the president, and even if we wanted to (attack Iraq) in August, September, October, November (1990) we were not ready." The argument was that we also were not ready in the fall of 2002.

(Is that correct? Were you asked?)

Nov. 8. The United Nations Security Council approves Resolution 1441 by a 15 to 0 vote.

(Your reaction? What did it mean? What did it not mean?)

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After 1441 passed it meant that the President had to start deploying forces credibly. But without a crest. Rumsfeld told the President, "We're going to dribble this out slowly, so that it's enough to keep the pressure on for the diplomacy, but not so much as to discredit the diplomacy so (critics) could say, 'Well, you have already made up your mind.'"

(Do you recall this? Your reaction?)

Several people have said that the President knew he was underestimated and he was able to use that conventional wisdom as he responded to 9/11 but there was a point when he could no longer count on that.

(Was there a realization of this in the Fall of 2002? Discussion of this?)

Did the diplomatic track run the risk of giving the President a diplomatic victory but a strategic loss? Or was diplomacy the equivalent of economic sanctions in the first Gulf crisis of 1990-91: The U.S. had to show that it had tried diplomacy and that it didn't and wouldn't work.

Dec. 21. Received the intercept of two Iraqi Republican Guard commanders discussing the removal of "nerve agents" in wireless communications. (Powell later used it in his U.N. presentation).

(Any particular reaction to that and its meaning?)

Another discussion involved the use of the poison ricin by terrorists connected to Iraq. They tested it on a donkey who dies and they laughed. It was quite chilling. But British intelligence asked that it not be used.

(Recall? Reaction? Someone else said release would scare the public. Correct?)

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January 2003. Synchronization meetings begin between the Special Operations Forces and CIA to make sure all their operations are known and coordinated with each other. Small scale sabotage. Later a train was attacked with an RPG. Anti-regime handbills in a historic theatre (for the Baath Party). An operation to make Saddam believe there was a senior defector inside the SSO who was feeding information to the CIA. This was all before the war.

(Did you get involved? How? What did you think? Several people have suggested that the U.S. essentially laid the groundwork with these secret efforts and made victory almost certain. Is that possible?)

President Bush apparently said at one point that if the war plan is good the only thing that can go wrong is if the country or the president loses his nerve.

(Reaction?)

Jan. 11, 2003. Rumsfeld and Myers brief Prince Bandar in Cheney's office on the war plan. Essentially said that everything that sounds natural and logical will NOT happen. Franks had ideas to make tactical surprise irrelevant. Plan then called for four days of massive bombing before the ground war---many more bombs and precision bombs than in the 38 days of the Gulf War.

(Your reaction?)

Jan. 25, 2003. Scooter Libby's presentation of the case document or intelligence on WMD and terrorist connections.

(Did you review this and have any reaction?)

Feb. 5. Powell's presentation to the U.N.

(What was he saying and not saying? Your reaction?)

Intelligence showed the Hans Blix was lying about lots.

*felt he was the decider of W' & P  
as opp'd to fact-finder*

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'Your reaction to Blix? The President believed that Blix was lying.'

The prevailing view at the CIA was that the war would take weeks, not more, but that conclusion was apparently never put on a piece of paper or conveyed to the president and Cheney.

(If true, why was that?)

(How was the CIA plan devised so it facilitated the military war plan? It was a corollary to the war plan? Why and how and when?)

In February 2003, the president told others it looked like war, though he would proceed with diplomacy. Asked people, are you with me?

(Any recollection of that?)

February---end of month, Franks proposed starting the war with 48 hours of Special Operations within Iraq (so-called S-Day), and the president was somewhat uncomfortable that it would leave the American public in the dark.

(What persuaded him to approve this?)

Feb. 22. At one point this was N-day or Notification Day or flow all the forces.

(What was this?)

The president has said privately (publicly??) that during the diplomatic phase the French stopped the momentum by breaking the solidarity and if they had not, peaceful disarmament had a chance?

(What was your assessment at the time?)

(What about the question of the sincerity of the diplomatic strategy?)

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In early March 2003, there was more intelligence and the expectation of a coup against Saddam increased. There was even talk of drafting a presidential speech addressing the new post-Saddam reality.

*[Handwritten: I/F went anywhere]*

(What did you think the chances of a coup were?)

Mar. 3 --- At one point this might have been the start day of the war. Delay because of: 1. Second U.N. resolution, 2. Franks was ready but not fully ready. 3. Still the question of Turkey (only to some.) The start day was apparently then moved to Mar. 10, then to Mar. 19.

(Do you recall this period, the state of readiness and the reasoning?)

Mar. 7, 2003. Ken Adelman, Cheney's friend, did a piece in USA Today arguing that the administration had "made a whopping mistake waiting too long already." Waiting to attack Iraq allowed the opposition to build, empowering France and domestic critics.

(Your reaction?)

March 10. Two presidential speeches are being prepared on the second U.N. resolution. One assumes a veto, the second on getting a reaffirmation of Resolution 1441. The president said that Blair was deeply worried, "But I don't think he's going to lose office." He obviously didn't want Blair's government to go down; it was one time the president was pulling on the reins to slow down. Cheney was to make some calls to Conservatives in Britain.

(What happened here?)

Mar. 12. Working on ultimatum speech. The President declared about the U.N. process, "This needs to end." Thought they might need the speech for as early as the next two days.

(Again, what was this?)

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Mar. 14, Friday. Saudi Ambassador Prince Bandar comes to meet with the President, Vice President, Rice and Card. Bandar's message from the Crown Prince is that the delay is too long; the President might be helping Blair but is hurting U.S. friends in the region. Bandar has not shaved, is sweating and says he won't shave until the war starts, and he might in the end have a beard as long as bin Laden's. Bush said that they had to trust him, that he was going. He asks Bandar to estimate how long after the ultimatum before the war would start. Bandar estimates 72 hours. "Wrong," Bush says.

*C: Bandar did war  
4/1/01  
7/22/01  
B.*

(Question: Do you recall this? What was going on?)

Mar. 16. Cheney on Meet the Press. He said, "I think we are still in the final stages of diplomacy, obviously," that there was not much Saddam could do to alter the outcome.

(Was it not just a matter of time now? Did you fear some last-minute stunt? With so many U.S. forces deployed, was the administration over the tipping point such that there had to be a war to conclusively end the regime?)

Azores summit. Blair and his staff suggest making Bush's ultimatum speech more conditional. "If we must begin a military campaign" for example was added.

(Your reaction?)

Mar. 17, about 9:45 a.m. Fleischer announces that there will not be a U.N. vote and the second resolution was being withdrawn; and the president would address the nation that night at 8 p.m. Half the press corps ran out to file. The president was to give his ultimatum speech. At a pre-brief in the Oval Office he said, "The hardest part was making the decision that force may need to be used. The decision today to use it was not the hardest."

(Do you recall this? Reaction?)

At 6:20 p.m. meeting with Congressional committee chairs in the Cabinet Room. The president leaves at 6:26 and the

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Vice President stayed. Would Saddam leave? Cheney said the odds were against it. He added, "I think we'll be greeted as liberators but there are scores to be settled. It's a tough neighborhood. We'll provide security."

(What were you trying to convey?)

Mar. 18. Debate in Parliament. Blair wins 412 to 149! The Vice President watched it on TV.

(Was there real worry about the vote? In the end, it was quite a majority, more than the Bush Administration's. Reaction?)

Mar. 19, 2003, Wednesday.

This was going to be tricky because the war would begin at 1 p.m. with Special Operations. Card said of the plan to fill in the next 48 hours: "A lot of briefings from the Pentagon, a lot of silence from the White House."

(Did you expect that Special Operations would have 48 hours without tipping off the Iraqis or the media?)

When Tenet and Rumsfeld arrived with the new intelligence, the president had two issues. 1. It could be a set up and you would wake up the next morning to dead children. 2. Would an early strike on the Dora Farm have an impact on General Franks' plan? Would it blow strategic or even tactical surprise?

(Your worry or concerns?)

Tenet said on the intelligence, "This is as good as it gets. I can't give you 100 percent assurance, but this is as good as it gets."

(Your reaction?)

Later it turned out there may have been no bunker; translation should not have necessarily been "bunker" but

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"place of refuge." The strike probably hit a building or buildings instead.

(Reaction?)

At one point the question of announcing the strike came up. Rumsfeld said if someone had to do it, it could be him or the president.

Cheney said, This is an ongoing operation. We didn't announce that Special Operations Forces were going in, or the Poles or the Australians. It was not necessary to announce it until you are ready.

(Do you recall this? Any other reasons?)

Issue was raised about what it would mean for Israel, Saudi Arabia and other Arab friends---and their defense.

(Could they have been more vulnerable?)

The president said that if lives were in danger he should announce it; and he said he had promised publicly that he would let people know when the war had started.

(Do you recall this?)

Someone said the vice president talked privately with the president during this period and the president wanted to make sure everyone agreed.

(Correct?)

After the strike the report came back that a bloodied Uday shouted, "We've been betrayed. We've been betrayed," and he then shot an IIS man.

(Do you recall this?)

Franks asked what were the chances of a stealth bomber getting through with no air defense suppression; answer was 50 percent. So he ordered two planes.

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Did such a discussion reach you? Your reaction?

Later during the war, General Franks one day became deeply worried about a bio or chemical weapon attack, that a small amount could become what he called a "strategic dislocator," upsetting the course of the war. Franks ordered that every known Iraqi plane or helicopter which would be a possible means of delivery be destroyed at once.

(Do you recall this?)

Do you recall the 22 high collateral damage targets and some medium collateral damage targets; they were presented to the president who asked, "Do you want me to pick targets?"

General Franks saw five fronts in the war plan: Western Iraq, Southern Iraq, Northern Iraq, Baghdad and Information operations.

(What did you see as the major fronts?)

General Franks talked in terms of "lines of action." This included so-called "operational fires" or major actions but also things like information operations, time-sensitive targets, support for opposition groups etc.

(I confess to being very confused about this and the relationship to specific targets. Can you explain? HELP!)

Mar. 20 at 8 a.m. Gen. Franks recommends moving the ground attack up 24 hours from Friday night to Thursday night. Or was this already decided?

(Someone said it was better to begin with a strategic success than with what could be seen as a massive, ugly air campaign. Was that part of the reasoning?)

(Was it risky to put the ground forces in first without a lot of air preparation?)

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Mar. 20, 10 p.m. Ground attack begins and meets little resistance.

(Your reaction to that?)

Mar. 21, Friday at 1 p.m. A-Day, air attack begins.

(Did you see this as "shock and awe" or something else?)

Mar. 22, Saturday. Gen. Franks publicly lays out the 8 war aims: regime change, eliminate WMD, drive out terrorists, collect intelligence, humanitarian aid, secure the oil fields, help create conditions for self-government.

(What was the origin of these? Was there ever concern that it was too ambitious, too long a list? Or is this just the practical and sweeping specifics that naturally result from the President's speeches? When I interviewed the President on Aug. 20, 2002, he said, "I will seize the opportunity to achieve big goals." Are the specific war aims an outgrowth of that?)

Mar. 24, Monday. Post front page story, "U.S. Losses Expose Risks, Raise Doubts About Strategy."  
The President was appalled.

(Your reaction???)

Mar. 25. Defense reports to the president, "The regime is perceived as being in control still." By April 5, the CIA says, "Iraqi command and control is disintegrating."

(By way of summary, in your view what happened in those 11 critical days, if a summary is possible?)

Mar. 25 (continuing) Franks' report, "We're almost startled by the progress."

The president has a series of questions: What's the condition of water treatment? What's the condition of the oil fields? Commando Solo? How is it operating? What is the status of the fedayeen? What's the morale of these young soldiers and their commanders?

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"Top of the stack," Franks replies to the morale question. On the following day, the President said, "they're cold blooded terrorists. It's important for you to characterize the nature of these bastards. They're thugs."

The president asked, "Are you confident Turkey will stay put?"

Franks, "Not a high degree."

The President said that was not satisfactory and they needed to make sure the Turks stay put.

(Recall? Reaction?)

Mar. 27, Thursday. Post front page story, "War Could Last Months, Officers say."

(Your reaction? What was going on here? How important was it?)

Mar. 27. Bush and Blair meet at Camp David.

(What was this about?)

Mar. 28. Defense reports that they have three Commando Solo aircraft in the area. The President asks, "How real does this look to the average Iraqi?" Answer the military is doing still pictures and voiceovers, covering Baghdad between 6 and 11 at night. The President, "You have to calibrate it, you have to market programs. People don't turn on television if there's nothing to watch."

(Do you recall? Were the NSC principals or deputies working this issue?)

Mar. 28 at 2 p.m. the President met with a group of veterans. The President said "I'm not paying attention to the press. . . . I get my information from Tommy Franks." The vets then applauded. "We don't second guess out of the White House, we don't adjust the plan based on editorials, we don't have timetables."

(Ever hear the president talk like this? Expand if you can on his view? )

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The President also has said that one of the lessons of Vietnam was that political leaders should not force timetables on generals to take pressure off themselves.

(Recall any discussions about Vietnam and that or other lessons?)

Mar. 29, Saturday SVTS. Rumsfeld gives some of the bad news: Shinseki story that should not have started until the 4<sup>th</sup> ID was ready; Wallace comments that it was not what they war gamed against. "Overall Tom Franks is very encouraged," Rumsfeld adds. Good news: nothing out of the Scud baskets, got the oil wells in the south, Patriots are highly successful, no massive refugees; they didn't mine the harbors, didn't blow the bridges etc.

The President says, "Only one thing matters, winning. There's a lot of second guessing regarding the post-Saddam world. Our job is to speak to the American people, tell them how proud we are of the soldiers; to the world to tell them that we will accomplish this mission; to our European allies, thanks for your help; to the Iraqi people, we will be coming to liberate the entire country. Don't worry about the carping and second guessing, rise above it, be confident, remember your constituencies . . . . It's not a matter of timetable, it's a matter of victory."

(Do you recall this? Your reaction and the reaction of others?)

March 31. Franks reports that 54 time-sensitive targets were hit in the last two days.

(Was this the chat room used by Centcom and the intelligence agencies that could accommodate some 2,000 people to coordinate real-time intelligence and ship it to the military units in the air or on the ground? What did you think of all this? Is it correct that nothing like this was available during the 1991 Gulf War?)

After the experiences in the southern Iraq cities, the commanders learned that the so-called "Thunder Run" of tanks into the cities led to the concentration of Baath Party officials in a panic so they could be attacked more easily. This informed what happened later in Baghdad.

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(Was this briefed to you? How important was it?)

April 1. At the NSC, the President asked Franks, "Are you pleased with our information ops?" Franks said, "I'm not pleased that Iraqi TV remains on the air." Apparently it was possible to take it out but that would have taken out all Arab satellite TV.

(Do you recall this discussion? What was going on here? Was it a difficult decision?)

April 2, 2:05 p.m. The President met with Wall Street economists. "We're not going to let the stock market drive the war, the Hill or focus groups or polls. Tommy Franks drives the war."

(Ever hear similar thoughts? Where and when?)

April 4. Andy Card reports on the four errors by the media and how this information ought to be put out and the corrections noted. He asked that these be put out to let the public see how bad the errors are. One was a New York Times correction; a news analysis had suggested or said that Cheney had called Saddam's government "a house of cards."

(Your reaction?)

April 8. The President and Blair meet in Northern Ireland.

(What were the origins of this? What happened?)

April 9. Cheney speech to editors. The key to the war plan, Cheney said, was fixed objectives and flexibility in meeting them.

(Did you have a sense that the war had been won militarily at that point? Your state of mind about the war was?)

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April 9. The Saddam statue is pulled down; the President remarked on the small size of the crowds.

(Your reaction, and did he discuss this?)

Franks reports 30,000 estimated casualties.

The president was insistent that the U.S. define the baseline against which things are going to be measured--- the conditions in Iraqi cities versus their pre-war status, not against American cities. "This guy's spent 20 to 30 years ruining this country," the President said. "It's going to take a while to rebuild it . . . We still have a lot of work to do. Don't let the celebrations fool you."

(Your reaction?)

#### GENERAL QUESTIONS:

On the question of Turkey, the president asked Franks if he could win without Turkey. Franks said it would be "an ugly baby." Can you win? "Yes, sir."

(Do you recall this? When was it?)

One person suggested that anyone's position on Iraq has to do with their willingness to tolerate uncertainty. And when all the assessments and reasoning were laid out, the President just felt there was too much uncertainty, too many dots about threats from Saddam. That in the end the only prudent course was to take him out.

(Is that correct?)

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