

THE IRAQ WAR -- PART I: *The U.S. Prepares for Conflict, 2001*

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Timeline

By Joyce Battle

1985 – Academic Albert Wohlstetter introduces Iraqi expatriate Ahmad Chalabi to Paul Wolfowitz and Richard Perle, neoconservatives later influential in the George W. Bush administration.¹

1989 -- Petra Bank of Amman, founded by Ahmad Chalabi and influential through its strategic lending to prominent Jordanians, including the king of Jordan's brother, is seized by the government for alleged irregularities. Chalabi flees the country in the trunk of a car. Two years later he is convicted in absentia for embezzlement and fraud and sentenced to 22 years in prison.²

1990 – Prominent neoconservative academic Bernard Lewis meets Ahmad Chalabi and becomes one of his leading advocates.³

August 2, 1990 -- Iraq invades Kuwait, accusing it of conspiring with the U.S. to both steal its oil and drive down oil prices.

August 2, 1990 -- Kuwait's ruling family hires Hill & Knowlton to lobby for a U.S. war against Iraq; the company coordinates the work of a number of public relations firms including the Rendon Group. Polls to identify themes most likely to win public support for war find that depicting Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein as a dangerous madman who commits atrocities against his own people is most effective.⁴

September 1990 -- Rep. Stephen Solarz (D-N.Y) sets up the Committee for Peace and Security in the Gulf to lobby for war against Iraq with support from conservatives and some hawkish Democratic activists, along with Saudi ambassador to the U.S. Prince Bandar. A

supporter, neoconservative Richard Perle, reportedly raises most of the group's funding from defense contractors and a right-wing foundation. Bandar attracts support from several Jewish organizations by telling them that if Saddam Hussein were eliminated other governments in the region would deal with the Arab-Israeli conflict on more "pragmatic terms."⁵

October 10, 1990 -- An informal association called the Congressional Human Rights Caucus holds a hearing on reported Iraqi atrocities. The association is chaired by Tom Lantos (D-CA) and John Porter (R-IL) who also head the Congressional Human Rights Foundation, which is headquartered in free office space at Hill & Knowlton's Washington, D.C. office. At the hearing a 15-year-old Kuwaiti girl says she witnessed Iraqi soldiers leaving babies on the floor to die in order to steal incubators; the story is widely repeated as fact. In reality the girl is the Kuwaiti ambassador's daughter and was coached by Hill & Knowlton in what was later shown to be false testimony.⁶

Late 1990 -- President George H.W. Bush decides to drive Iraq out of Kuwait with military force. As the heads of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Central Command, Colin Powell and Norman Schwarzkopf are in charge of war planning, but Defense Secretary Dick Cheney is displeased with their work. He has DOD official Paul Wolfowitz work with his aide Scooter Libby and Henry Rowen, also of DOD, to secretly draw up an alternative plan. While Powell is traveling abroad Cheney presents the alternative to Bush, who rejects it.⁷

February 2, 1991 – At the end of the Persian Gulf War U.S. propaganda outlets

in the region encourage Kurdish and Shi'ite insurrections in Iraq that are quickly suppressed. The Bush administration is criticized for not invading Iraq but its defenders, like Dick Cheney, say this would have left the U.S. entangled in a long-term occupation. The U.S. sets up no-fly zones over northern and southern Iraq and many in the administration expect, wrongly, that a coup will soon overthrow Saddam Hussein.⁸

April 3, 1991 -- U.N. Security Council resolutions impose sanctions on Iraq to force it to destroy its nonconventional weapons programs. The sanctions last until 2003 and devastate Iraq's economy, infrastructure, and society; this includes doubling its child mortality rate.⁹

Around May 1991 -- George H.W. Bush signs a top secret directive authorizing a CIA covert operation to overthrow Saddam Hussein, using any means necessary including lethal force. The agency concludes at the outset that there is no chance of success since it has no reliable assets in Iraq.¹⁰

Around May 11, 1991 -- The CIA hires the Rendon Group for propaganda operations against Iraq. Rendon assembles anti-government Iraqis under the rubric Iraqi National Congress, and helps install Ahmad Chalabi, recently convicted in Jordan for fraud and embezzlement, as INC chief.¹¹

February 1992 -- Defense Department policy under secretary Paul Wolfowitz has his deputy Zalmay Khalilzad secretly draft a paper, "Defense Planning Guidance", outlining military planning for the next century. It calls for the Pentagon to "establish and protect a new order" to deter any possible rivals from even trying to compete with a hegemonic U.S. and contemplates preemptive use of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons, "even in conflicts that do not directly engage U.S. interests." The draft is leaked to the *New*

York Times and causes the Bush administration major embarrassment.¹²

March 4, 1992 -- Future George W. Bush administration official Douglas Feith and his fellow neoconservative Frank Gaffney write a *Washington Times* commentary excoriating the George H.W. Bush administration for criticizing the right-wing Likud Party for expanding illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank.¹³

1993 -- When George H.W. Bush is defeated by Bill Clinton, Dick Cheney joins the American Enterprise Institute where he is increasingly influenced by neocon AEI members, including Richard Perle.¹⁴

May 1993 -- Laurie Mylroie, an Iraq policy advisor for the Clinton-for-president campaign, no longer in favor with the administration, meets with FBI agents to explain her theory that Iraq was behind the February 1993 World Trade Center bombing. Afterwards they do not return her calls.¹⁵

November 1993 -- Ahmad Chalabi promotes a plan he calls "The End Game" for overthrowing Saddam Hussein, envisioning a revolt by INC-led Shi'ites in southern Iraq and Kurds in the north that would inspire a military uprising and lead to the installation of an INC-dominated regime friendly to the U.S. and Israel. Chalabi uses some of his substantial CIA funding to start building an armed militia.¹⁶

1994 -- A CIA case officer accompanied by Ahmad Chalabi visits "a forgery shop" run by the INC in Kurdistan, where people scan Iraqi intelligence documents into computers to create disinformation.¹⁷

1994 -- Republican electoral gains in Congress lead to increasing neoconservative influence on Middle East policy debates.¹⁸

October 29, 1994 -- President Clinton signs a Memorandum of Amplification replacing Bush's 1991 finding authorizing

covert action to overthrow Saddam Hussein.¹⁹

March 5, 1995 -- An attempt by Ahmad Chalabi and the CIA to execute what is essentially Chalabi's "End Game" plan fails dismally. Over State Department objections NSC official Martin Indyk had authorized a clandestine CIA operation under which Chalabi's militia in alliance with tribal leaders won over by bribes would provoke urban disturbances in Iraq and sabotage government facilities. Shi'ite groups were to attack in the south and the Iraqi army was to then join the uprising. The scheme was discovered by Saddam Hussein's government but Chalabi refused to abort the operation; it failed, no Iraqi military officers rebelled, many INC members were executed. The CIA and DIA turned against Chalabi as ineffectual but the Defense Department continued funding the INC. Chalabi retreated to London and relied increasingly on neoconservative pundits and the U.S. Congress for support.²⁰

August 8, 1995 – Saddam Hussein's son-in-law, Gen. Hussein Kamel, defects. He tells U.N. inspectors they have been highly effective in Iraq and that all chemical, biological, missile, and nuclear related weapons have been destroyed. After this high-level defection the Iraqi government gives huge volumes of documentation on its former weapons programs to the U.N.²¹

1996 -- Chalabi and a dedicated supporter, Francis Brooke, set up shop in Georgetown to lobby for the INC. They study the methods of the African National Congress and various pro-Israel groups in order to refine their technique.²²

July 1996 – Future Bush administration officials Douglas Feith and David Wurmser (later an advisor to Dick Cheney) are among the authors of an advisory paper for newly elected right-wing prime minister Binyamin Netanyahu that calls for an Israeli "clean break" with the Oslo peace process and for the assertion that

Israel has the right to expropriate the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip. They also advise Israel to privatize its economy, to indirectly undermine Syria by overthrowing Iraqi president Saddam Hussein, and to work with the king of Jordan to restore a monarchy to Iraq. (Britain installed generally amenable monarchs in both Jordan and Iraq after World War I; Ahmad Chalabi's family was part of a wealthy elite during that era, which was ended by a 1958 revolution.)²³

Spring-Summer 1996 -- A CIA undercover operation attempting to organize an officers' coup against Saddam Hussein is discovered and routed by Iraq. Meanwhile, one faction among highly divided Iraqi Kurds invites forces loyal to Saddam Hussein into Kurdistan to crush its rivals; the Iraqi military captures and kills hundreds of Ahmad Chalabi's supporters and many others flee to the U.S.²⁴

September 27, 1996 – Paul Wolfowitz attributes Iraq's crushing of the recent CIA coup attempt to Clinton administration ineptitude and writes that Saddam Hussein still has "a loaded gun -- and it's pointed at us."²⁵

June 1997 – Ahmad Chalabi tells the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs that overthrowing Saddam Hussein and replacing him with a regime "at peace with its neighbors" would be easy if the U.S. supported an INC-led insurgency. Later he tells the *Jerusalem Post* that he would facilitate export of Iraqi oil to Israel.²⁶

October 1997 -- The International Atomic Energy Agency issues a definitive report declaring Iraq to be free of nuclear weapons; its main author later says it was "highly unlikely" that Iraq could conceal a nuclear weapons program from modern detection systems. **[Doc. 1]**²⁷

November 12, 1997 – David Wurmser publishes an article in the *Wall Street Journal* calling for a revolution in Iraq

through “an internationally supported insurgency” like “the Iraqi National Congress, led by Ahmad Chalabi.” He supplies a counter-narrative for the failed 1995 coup attempt asserting that INC troops invaded government-controlled territory in Iraq “with impunity, absorbing thousands of defecting Iraqi soldiers along the way....But the United States never recognized the INC as the provisional government of Iraq....The United States abandoned the INC at the pinnacle of its success....” He writes that Washington has no choice but to abandon CIA-organized coup attempts and to “resurrect the INC.”²⁸

November 18, 1997 -- Paul Wolfowitz and Zalmay Khalilzad in the *Washington Post* call for the U.S. to overthrow Saddam Hussein and to control the disposition of Iraq’s oil.²⁹

January 26, 1998 -- The neoconservative Project for the New American Century publishes an open letter to Bill Clinton signed by Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz, Zalmay Khalilzad, Richard Perle, Richard Armitage, John Bolton, and Elliott Abrams, among others, advising that U.S. military action to oust Saddam Hussein from power is “the only acceptable strategy” for Iraq.³⁰

February 19, 1998 – The Committee for Peace and Security in the Gulf publishes an open letter to Clinton, signed by Stephen Solarz, Richard Perle, Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz, Douglas Feith, David Wurmser, Douglas Feith, Richard Armitage, Elliot Abrams, John Bolton, and Bernard Lewis declaring that Iraq still has chemical and biological weapons and no intention of giving them up and that the U.S. must use military force to overthrow Saddam Hussein.³¹

Spring 1998 -- In a letter to the editor of *Foreign Affairs*, Paul Wolfowitz and Stephen Solarz write that the United States should be prepared to commit ground forces to protect a sanctuary in

southern Iraq where opposition groups could mobilize.”³²

March 19, 1998 -- Ahmad Chalabi and King Hussein of Jordan, each a present and/or former CIA asset, meet in Washington and agree that Saddam Hussein has to go. Hussein presents their joint letter to Bill Clinton the next day at the White House but it is rejected. According to David Wurmser, Hussein envisions a “Hashemite concept” -- a federated Iraqi entity with regional autonomy tied to a Jordanian-Iraqi confederation.³³

March 20, 1998 – Douglas Feith writes in the *Jerusalem Post* that the U.S. should recognize the INC as Iraq’s provisional government and give it some of \$800 million in Iraqi government assets frozen in the U.S., along with “virtually all the approximately three million barrels of oil that Iraq could produce daily.” He says that Saddam Hussein and other top Iraqi officials should be indicted as war criminals, and the U.S. should have a strategy ready to replace Iraq’s government with the INC.³⁴

April 1998 -- Senate majority leader Trent Lott (R-Miss.) summons a bipartisan group of senators to a closed-door briefing by retired general Wayne Downing on his “Iraq Liberation Strategy”. Downing and former CIA officer and Iran-Contra figure Duane “Dewey” Clarridge have become consultants for the INC, and Downing’s “strategy” is a variation of Chalabi’s “End Game” plan, calling for INC troops backed by former U.S. Special Forces to incite Iraqi military defections. The U.S. would recognize the INC as Iraq’s provisional government, give it Iraq’s U.N. seat; create INC-controlled “liberated zones” freed of sanctions, give the INC frozen Iraqi assets under U.S. control, launch air attacks, and have equipment prepositioned in the region in case U.S. ground forces were activated.³⁵

October 31, 1998 – Under pressure from neoconservatives and Congress, and over

the objections of skeptics in his administration, Clinton signs the Iraq Liberation Act, based on elements in the Committee for Peace and Security in the Gulf's February 19, 1998 open letter. Among other things it calls for pre-positioning equipment for possible use by U.S. ground forces in the region. It establishes regime change as official government policy and provides for assistance to Iraqi opposition groups, including the INC, encompassing funding for propaganda activities and for training paramilitary forces, as envisioned by the Chalabi/Downing plan. It does not authorize use of U.S. military force.³⁶

Around November 1998 -- Perle and Wolfowitz join a small group of advisors, self-styled the Vulcans, put together by former secretary of state George Shultz and Dick Cheney to advise George W. Bush as he prepares to run for president, "providing a crash course on world affairs and military policy."³⁷

Around December 1998 -- In his book *Tyranny's Ally*, Wurmser lauds the INC as a provisional government for Iraq, which he sees as a way to undermine Syria and militant Islamist groups and spread pro-American policies in the region.³⁸

September 2000 -- The Project for the New American Century issues a polemic, "Rebuilding America's Defenses: Strategies, Forces, and Resources for a New Century" calling for increased military spending, expansion of military bases in the Middle East and Central Asia, renunciation of international treaties, and continued U.S. "nuclear strategic superiority".³⁹

Around September 2000 -- Central Command head Gen. Anthony Zinni ridicules the Chalabi/Downing plan and says there are a multitude of Iraqi opposition groups, none of them with the viability to overthrow Saddam Hussein. Zinni believes that Iraqi efforts to maintain nuclear, biological, and chemical arms programs have been stymied and

Saddam Hussein has been reduced to a secondary threat, one that can be contained through sanctions, no-fly zones, and bombing, on occasion.⁴⁰

Early 2001 -- Vice president-elect Cheney asks outgoing defense secretary William Cohen to brief Bush with a serious "discussion about Iraq and different options," with Iraq topic A.⁴¹

January 2001 -- At Bush adviser Karl Rove's invitation conservative scholar Bernard Lewis gives a briefing at the White House on Islam. Lewis posits that Muslims who distrust the U.S. are motivated not by its policies but by their innate hostility to Western values.⁴²

January 20, 2001 -- Donald Rumsfeld, an ardent INC supporter, is sworn in as defense secretary. Ahmad Chalabi has cultivated close personal ties with both him and Vice President Cheney, during annual AEI retreats in Beaver Creek, Colorado.⁴³

January 30, 2001 -- Bush administration principals (agency heads) meet for the first time and discuss the Middle East, including Bush's intention to disengage from the Israel-Palestine peace process and "How Iraq is destabilizing the region." Bush directs Rumsfeld and JCS chairman Hugh Shelton to examine military options for Iraq; CIA director George Tenet is directed to improve intelligence on the country. Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill and counterterrorism coordinator Richard Clarke are both struck by the emphasis on confronting Iraq, an aim consistent with Rumsfeld's hiring of Wolfowitz and later Feith, well known for their bellicosity on the issue, for high-level Pentagon positions.⁴⁴

February 1, 2001 -- The NSC principals meet to discuss Iraq including its economy, a "Post-Saddam Iraq," and Defense and CIA plans for "possible regime change, war crimes initiatives, dealing with the Kurds, coalition military posture and redlines." Rumsfeld cuts

Secretary of State Colin Powell off when he tries to discuss a new sanctions strategy. To Paul O'Neill it appears that Iraq is seen as "useful as a demonstration model of America's new, unilateral resolve" – overthrowing Saddam Hussein would "dissuade" other actors from trying to stand up to U.S. power. Wolfowitz lobbies for arming the Iraqi opposition and for giving it direct U.S. military support.⁴⁵

February 3, 2001 -- A high-level NSC official writes a top secret document directing NSC staff to cooperate with Cheney's newly formed Energy Task Force as it considers "melding" two areas of policy: "operational policies towards rogue states," (such as Iraq), and "the capture of new and existing oil and gas fields." The Defense Intelligence Agency works on mapping Iraq's oil fields and exploration areas and listing companies that might exploit them. A document entitled "Foreign Suitors for Iraqi Oilfield Contracts" has an attachment showing areas of Iraq "earmarked for production sharing."⁴⁶

February 5, 2001 – At a principals committee meeting chaired by Condoleezza Rice the heads of agencies discuss Iraq options and are instructed to focus on increasing intelligence collection on Iraq's suspected weapons of mass destruction programs. Another meeting on the topic is held on February 7.⁴⁷

February 16, 2001 -- The U.S. and the U.K. bomb anti-aircraft facilities near Baghdad without informing Congress in advance. An observer tells *McClatchy* that the administration is making "it clear that they are going to do something to get rid of Saddam Hussein"; Bush meanwhile has told speechwriter David Frum that he is determined to oust Saddam from power.⁴⁸

February 27, 2001 -- Asked at his Senate confirmation hearing whether he supports a U.S. ground invasion of Iraq, Wolfowitz says "No one has proposed that." He says that the Bush administration is reviewing the focus of

regime change efforts, including how best to work with the Iraqi National Congress and other opposition groups.⁴⁹

April 2001 -- The report of the Cheney task force on American energy needs predicts that use of foreign oil will rise by 50 percent over the next few decades and says the main U.S. goal should be to protect "free oil markets." Saddam Hussein is the main obstacle to U.S. interests, because Iraq adjusts production levels "in its strategic interest....Iraq remains a destabilizing influence to U.S. allies in the Middle East, as well as to regional and global order, and to the flow of oil to international markets from the Middle East." The report calls for anti-Iraq policies, including a possible "need for military intervention."⁵⁰

April 2001 -- The NSC deputies committee meets for its first discussion of terrorism policy since Bush took office. When Richard Clarke briefs the group on Osama bin Laden and the Taliban, Wolfowitz tries to change the subject to Iraq. Clarke is incredulous that Wolfowitz is reviving "the totally discredited Laurie Mylroie theory that Iraq was behind the 1993 truck bomb at the World Trade Center, a theory that had been investigated for years and found to be totally untrue."⁵¹

Around April 2001 -- After the U.S. learns that Iraq is seeking to buy 60,000 aluminum tubes (advertisements are on the internet), CIA analyst Joe Turner, not a nuclear weapons specialist, becomes convinced that since they are made from a high-strength alloy they can only be used in uranium enrichment centrifuges to manufacture nuclear weapons. The CIA embraces this view and it is passed on to Bush in a highly classified President's Daily Brief (PDB). An April 10 follow-up report is circulated among top national security officials and Turner's analysis is immediately challenged by nuclear weapons experts.⁵²

April 11, 2001 -- The first report on the aluminum tubes issued by a team of scientists led by the chief of the Oak Ridge National Laboratory's advanced Technology Division on April 11, 2001 notes that their diameter is half that used for a gas centrifuge tested by Iraq in 1990, among other discrepancies. The Oak Ridge team concludes that the tubes are probably not intended for use in a centrifuge.⁵³

April 26, 2001 -- *McClatchy* reports that U.S. officials assert that Bush authorized February air strikes on Iraq because he and Rice did not understand that they would be perceived internationally as provocative. Civilian officials were not informed; the attack was seen as signaling a more confrontational Iraq policy, and "highlighted the president's lack of experience in national security affairs and the drawbacks of a management style that leaves details to subordinates;" there was "an incoherent and disjointed planning process for the raid, with planning and execution being handled almost solely by the Pentagon."⁵⁴

May 2001 -- Bush gives Cheney responsibility for protecting the country from weapons of mass destruction. Within Cheney's office Libby takes charge of the issue; Bush nicknames him "Germ Boy".⁵⁵

May 9, 2001 -- The Energy Department reports in a Daily Intelligence Highlight, published on a website used by the White House and the intelligence community, that intercepted aluminum tubes are very similar to ones Iraq has used to build conventional rocket launchers.⁵⁶

June 2001 -- The U.S. gets access to intercepted aluminum tubes destined for Iraq. After the CIA's Joe Turner, admitting that their dimensions are not right for most gas centrifuges, says they match those used for a centrifuge designed by a German scientist in the 1950s, the aforementioned scientist tells him they are not even close.⁵⁷

June 2001 -- Wolfowitz tries to get the CIA to "explore" the Mylroie theory that Iraq was behind the 1993 WTC bombing -- proven baseless during the 1990s by CIA and DIA investigators. (The 9/11 Commission concludes, "We have found no credible evidence to support" her speculations.)⁵⁸

Early Summer 2001 -- A career Pentagon planning official tries to evaluate the Wolfowitz/Feith position that the INC could play a major role in a coup to oust Saddam Hussein, and that Ahmad Chalabi would then be welcomed as a hero by Iraqis, by examining its premises: that is, what could go wrong, what if the INC couldn't execute a coup, what if Chalabi were not so popular? However, he learns that the Pentagon leadership wants to focus "not on what could go wrong but on what would go right."⁵⁹

June 1, 2001 -- The principals meet to review Iraq policy options but do not reach a decision and ask the full NSC to find a way to increase pressure on Iraq.⁶⁰

June 5, 2001 -- During his nomination hearing to be Defense Department policy under secretary, Douglas Feith says that the U.S. "has a strong interest ... in facilitating as best we can the liberation of Iraq." Sen. Max Cleland (D-GA.) says "with no particular strategy for winning and no particular exit strategy, your answer disturbs me greatly," noting he is speaking as a Vietnam veteran.⁶¹

June 22, 2001 -- The deputies meet to discuss Iraq and decide to include "lethal training" for the opposition among initial measures adopted for a new Iraq policy.⁶²

Summer 2001 -- Rocco Martino, a former member of the Italian national police (SISMI) and current paid informant, assembles a dossier of information including a letter purportedly from Niger's president approving the sale of 500 tons of uranium to Iraq. In reality the package consists of old material from SISMI files

and forged documents manufactured from papers stolen from Niger's embassy.⁶³

Summer 2001-Summer 2002 – Joe Turner and the CIA produce at least nine reports, given to Bush and other high-level officials, saying that Iraq's purchase of aluminum tubes proved that it had restarted its nuclear weapons program. Energy and INR analysts, assuming that the claim that the tubes were for centrifuges had long been discredited, do not see the reports.⁶⁴

July 13, 2001 -- The deputies committee discusses Iraq and Wolfowitz says that weakening Saddam Hussein could serve U.S. goals in regard to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Concerning regime change, Wolfowitz proposes more coordination between the U.S. and Iraqi opposition groups, and U.S. recognition of a provisional government. He suggests creating a second autonomous zone in the south that, along with the northern enclave, would be deemed "Free Iraq". The U.S. would give it frozen Iraqi assets and it would be expanded to expropriate Iraq's oil fields. Powell thinks the idea that U.S. seizure of the south would lead to Iraqi capitulation is ludicrous. Rumsfeld says he wants Bush's opinion and asks Rice to schedule a principals committee meeting leading to an NSC discussion with the president.⁶⁵

August 1, 2001 -- The deputies give a top secret paper on Iraq to the principals entitled "A Liberation Strategy," focusing on CIA and other U.S. support for Iraqi opposition groups; possible direct U.S. military action has also been discussed. Wolfowitz has pushed strenuously for his enclave strategy which he says would easily succeed but Powell, viewing the expectation that Iraqis would embrace a U.S.-supported opposition as "one of the most absurd, strategically unsound proposals he had ever heard," tells Bush "This is not as easy as it is being presented Don't let anybody push you into it." Bush says, "it's good contingency planning."⁶⁶

August 4, 2001 – With CIA awareness that "we're ramping up on Iraq", its Directorate of Operations-Iraq Counterproliferation Division has been renamed the Joint Task Force on Iraq, and Tenet makes it clear that he wants the chief of the Iraqi Operations Group (charged with running covert actions) to be "a hard-core, tough son-of-a-bitch." "Saul", son of a Cuban veteran of the Bay of Pigs fiasco, is selected as IOG chief. He evaluates U.S. plans and concludes that a coup would fail; instead, a full-scale military invasion of Iraq with CIA support would be necessary. (In April 2002 officials from the IOG tell a Rome conference of CIA case officers that Iraq was on the Bush agenda when he was elected, and that 9/11 only delayed action. They imply that 9/11 was a distraction from Iraq; Bush was already committed to a change of leadership in Iraq -- meaning war.)⁶⁷

Summer 2001 -- During a visit to the IAEA in Vienna the CIA's Joe Turner tentatively insists that Iraq is trying to enrich uranium.⁶⁸

August 17, 2001 -- A classified Energy Department report states, again, that rocket production rather than uranium enrichment "is the more likely end-use" for Iraq's aluminum tubes. The INR issues several later reports agreeing with this assessment.⁶⁹

Mid-August 2001 – According to incoming CIA Europe chief Tyler Drumheller after his first meetings with the Directorate of Operations leadership, "The scuttlebutt in the agency back then was that the Bush people were out to settle the score for the Gulf War, which ended with Saddam still in place But it was less Freudian and more banal than thatthey truly believed there was no solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict [through negotiations] and that if they could just knock out the dictatorship in Iraq and put in a favorable government, Iraq would become a bastion of democracy and a base for the United

States in the Middle East;" a view that "seemed to find a willing ear in the president."⁷⁰

September 4, 2001 – The principals meet to discuss al-Qaeda but Rumsfeld, in Richard Clarke's opinion, looks "distracted" and echoes "the Wolfowitz line that there were other terrorist concerns, like Iraq and whatever we did on this al Qaeda business, we had to deal with the other sources of terrorism."⁷¹

September 11, 2001 -- Al-Qaeda attacks the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Its leader Osama bin Laden later says he struck in retaliation for American and Israeli injustice towards the Palestinians and Lebanese, and for Israel's destruction of office towers in Beirut during its 1982 invasion of Lebanon.⁷²

September 11, 2001 -- As radio reports describe the attacks and the evacuation of the White House, CIA Iraq covert operations chief "Saul" and his aides are on their way to the Old Executive Office Building to brief senior NSC staffers.⁷³

September 11, 2001 -- Bush wonders immediately after the attacks whether "Saddam Hussein's regime might have had a hand in it" because of the acts' apparent sophistication and Iraq's support for Palestinian militants.⁷⁴

September 11, 2001 -- Bush speechwriter David Frum, at the American Enterprise Institute after being evacuated from the White House, calls Richard Perle at his home in the south of France; Perle says, "Whatever else the president says, he must make clear that he's holding responsible not just terrorists but whoever harbors those terrorists."⁷⁵

September 11, 2001 -- Rice tells British ambassador Christopher Meyer that the Bush administration is "looking to see" whether Iraq was connected to the attacks.⁷⁶

September 11, 2001 -- At the National Military Command Center at 2:40 p.m.

Rumsfeld directs incoming JCS chairman Richard Myers to look for evidence justifying attacking Iraq as well as Osama bin Laden, and instructs Pentagon lawyer Jim (William) Haynes to ask Wolfowitz for information about links between Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden.⁷⁷

September 11, 2001 -- In an evening speech Bush says "We will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them."⁷⁸

September 12, 2001 – When national security staff meet at the White House Rumsfeld raises the topic of Iraq, and Richard Clarke realizes "that Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz were going to try to take advantage of this national tragedy to promote their agenda about Iraq." He had heard before the attacks that the Pentagon expected an invasion of Iraq in 2002, and "DOD's focus was already beginning to shift from al Qaeda," although "CIA was explicit now that al Qaeda was guilty of the attacks." Wolfowitz, however, thinks there was a state sponsor; Rumsfeld calls for "getting Iraq"—it has better targets than Afghanistan, and Bush says the U.S. should change the Iraqi government. In the evening, according to Clarke, Bush takes a few people aside and asks them to see if Saddam Hussein was connected in any way. After Clarke says that al-Qaeda was responsible and that "we have looked several times" and not found any real links to Iraq, Bush seems irritated and his demeanor is "very intimidating."⁷⁹

September 12, 2001 -- At White House direction Tenet instructs the CIA Iraq Operations Group to plan a covert operation against Iraq. (The plan, codenamed Anabasis, involves CIA paramilitary operatives, a secret Nevada training site, recruitment of Iraqi collaborators, disinformation, economic disruption, sabotage, assassination, and provocation to initiate war; it is budgeted at around \$400 million over two years. Ultimately Central Command chief Tommy

Franks does not authorize an Anabasis provocation because he does not want it to interfere with his own war plan.)⁸⁰

Soon after 9/11 Attacks – Senior Joint Staff operations officer Gregory Newbold encounters Douglas Feith soon after the attacks in an “environment...of extreme tension” and says they are working hard on Afghanistan; Feith tells him they should be working on Iraq.⁸¹

September 13, 2001 -- At an NSC meeting to discuss responding to 9/11 Bush asks Tenet whether the CIA is looking into possible Iraqi involvement; Rumsfeld says attacking Iraq “could inflict the kind of costly damage that could cause terrorist-supporting regimes around the world to rethink their policies. And we could locate Iraq’s assets, including weapons of mass destruction.” Bush directs Rumsfeld and Shelton to give him a plan and cost estimate for attacking Iraq.⁸²

September 13, 2001 -- Rumsfeld sends a memo to Third Army headquarters; having divined the administration’s intentions toward Iraq contingency planning for war is already underway. The planners are given 72 hours to “sketch a plan to seize and hold Iraq’s southern oilfields.”⁸³

September 13, 2001 – At Bush’s direction, Richard Clarke launches a special project to look again for a link between Osama bin Laden and Iraq; all agencies and departments agree that there is no cooperation between the two. A memorandum reporting this is sent to Bush, but there is no indication that it reaches him.⁸⁴

September 13, 2001 -- A Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs press release calls for all necessary assistance to the Iraqi National Congress including direct U.S. military support in order to execute regime change in Baghdad, and for revocation of a Presidential Order that bans assassinations.⁸⁵

September 14, 2001 -- In a phone conversation Bush tells British Prime Minister Tony Blair that he thinks “there might be evidence that there was some connection between Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden and al-Qaida.”⁸⁶

September 15, 2001 -- The State Department’s inspector general issues an audit delineating the Iraqi National Congress’s misuse of funds allocated under the Iraqi Liberation Act.⁸⁷

September 15, 2001 -- Bush meets with high-level administration officials at Camp David to discuss a response to 9/11. Wolfowitz says that Iraq could be an easier target than Afghanistan, that there is “a 10 to 50 percent chance” it was involved in the 9/11 attacks, and that the U.S. will have to go after it at some point “if the war on terrorism [is] to be taken seriously.” Later, Powell says Wolfowitz did not justify his claim that Baghdad was behind the attacks -- he saw a “way of using this event as a way to deal with the Iraq problem.” Rumsfeld indicates that he thinks this might be a good time to attack Iraq, since there will be a large buildup of forces in the region and Afghanistan lacks “good targets”. Late in the day Bush says the military options he has seen for Iraq are not that imaginative, and Wolfowitz, with Cheney and Libby standing by, tells him that the U.S. could seize Basra and Iraq’s southern oil fields and set up an enclave for opposition groups. When the meeting resumes, Cheney says Iraq needs to be part of the discussion eventually but is now a distraction: “If we go after Saddam Hussein, we lose our rightful place as good guy.” Bush polls the group and most agree that the U.S. should focus first on al-Qaeda. Bush says “I believe Iraq was involved, but I’m not going to strike them now. I don’t have the evidence at this point.”

At the end of the meeting Hugh Shelton says that attacking Iraq would hinder U.S. coalition-building efforts, and that there is no reason to think that Baghdad was linked to 9/11. Bush calls Rice and says

the U.S. will focus at present on Afghanistan -- "we're putting Iraq off. But eventually we'll have to return to that question," and he wants war plans to be developed.⁸⁸

September 16, 2001 -- Cheney is asked whether the U.S. would hesitate to attack Saddam Hussein if he were "harboring terrorists" and if there were any evidence linking Iraq to 9/11. He says no.⁸⁹

September 17, 2001 -- At an NSC meeting that includes discussion of what might follow an Afghanistan campaign, Bush confirms "his decision that contingency plans should be drawn up to deal with Iraq, including a plan to seize Iraq's oilfields." According to "senior administration officials" he signs a 2 ½ page top secret directive that, along with a plan for war with Afghanistan, "directs the Pentagon to begin planning military options for an invasion of Iraq."⁹⁰

September 18, 2001 -- Bush signs a joint Congressional resolution authorizing use of all "necessary and appropriate force" against whomever he determines "planned, authorized, committed or aided" the 9/11 attacks.⁹¹

September 18, 2001 -- Richard Clarke's office sends a memo to Rice reporting the results of a survey of intelligence information prepared at Bush's direction on any Iraqi involvement in the 9/11 attacks. It cites the ideological chasm between Iraq's leadership and al-Qaeda and concludes that only weak anecdotal evidence links the two. Rice's chief aide on Afghanistan, Zalmay Khalilzad, accepts the memo's conclusions. Clarke later tells *60 Minutes* that the NSC sent back the first draft of the memo because it did not report a link between Iraq and al-Qaeda.⁹²

September 18, 2001 -- Envelopes containing anthrax powder begin to arrive at Senate and media offices.⁹³

After the September 11 Attacks --

After the attacks, Bush asks Cheney to assess America's vulnerability to chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons, and according to White House press secretary Ari Fleischer, Cheney becomes "the strongest advocate of the possibility of [a biological] attack and [the] need to prepare for it," including traveling with a full biohazard protective suit. Cheney also begins scheduling seminars on Islam and the Middle East, meeting with experts "to discuss how might a postwar Iraq take shape and what are the prospects for democracy in the region." Those he chooses to consult include conservative academics Bernard Lewis and Wolfowitz's former Johns Hopkins colleague, Fouad Ajami.⁹⁴

September 19, 2001 -- Ahmad Chalabi and Bernard Lewis speak before the Defense Policy Board, an advisory committee for the defense secretary chaired by Richard Perle. Wolfowitz and former House speaker Newt Gingrich attend. Lewis says that to avoid appearing weak the U.S. must respond to the 9/11 attacks with a show of force. He says the U.S. should support democratic reformers in the Middle East, such as "my friend here, Dr. Chalabi." Chalabi tells the group that Iraq has WMD, and proposes that the U.S. skip Afghanistan and instead attack Iraq immediately. He says that with help from U.S. airpower and Special Forces advisers, insurgents under his command could quickly prevail; there would be no postwar resistance and a new government could be quickly set up. The outcome "would turn Iraq into a good, stable, modern, pro-Western free market country." At the end of the meeting Rumsfeld says that defeating the Taliban will not be enough and that more needs to be done to show that attacking the U.S. has serious consequences.⁹⁵

Around September 19, 2001 --

Immediately after the Defense Policy Board meets, board member and former Clinton administration CIA director James Woolsey travels with a team of Justice and

Defense Department officials on a government plane to Britain to look for evidence that Iraq was behind both the September 11 attacks and the 1993 World Trade Center bombing; the trip was authorized by the Pentagon with support from Paul Wolfowitz and Douglas Feith. Like Wolfowitz, Woolsey believes in the Mylroie theory that Iraq masterminded the 1993 attack. His law firm represents and lobbies for the Iraqi National Congress.⁹⁶

September 19, 2001 -- Bush tells Tenet, "I want to know about links between Saddam and al Qaeda...The Vice President knows some things that might be helpful." Cheney says one of his staffers picked up a report that 9/11 hijacker Mohammed Atta met with an Iraqi intelligence officer in Prague five months before 9/11. Tenet is surprised; back at headquarters he tells Directorate of Operations head Jim Pavitt, "It's a direct request from Cheney and Bush....Let's get right on it."⁹⁷

September 20, 2001 -- A memo written by Feith in consultation with Rumsfeld says "The president has stressed that we are not defining our fight narrowly and are not focused only on those directly responsible for the September 11 attacks That is one of the reasons why I still favor an early focus on Iraq as well."⁹⁸

September 20, 2001 -- Tony Blair meets with Bush and asks about Iraq; Bush says it is not the immediate problem though some in his administration disagree. Bush addresses an evening joint session of Congress, saying, "Our enemy is a radical network of terrorists, and every government that supports them....Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make: either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists." (Several days later Blair tells some MPs that he urged Bush to show restraint. Subsequently British ambassador Christopher Meyer says that Bush was under intense Pentagon pressure to attack Iraq, but decided after Blair's intercession to "leave Iraq for another day." Later still Meyer reports that Bush asked Blair to

support overthrowing Saddam Hussein; Blair advised against getting distracted from the Taliban and al-Qaeda and Bush agreed, saying "But when we have dealt with Afghanistan, we must come back to Iraq.")⁹⁹

September 20, 2001 -- In a letter to Bush the Project for the New American Century says that the U.S. must capture or kill Osama bin Laden, attack Afghanistan, target Hezbollah, consider striking Iran and Syria, fully support Israel "in its fight against terrorism", end all assistance to the Palestinian Authority, and greatly increase military spending. And it should provide full military and financial support to the Iraqi opposition in order to overthrow Saddam Hussein, whether or not evidence links him to 9/11. Signers include William Kristol, Perle, Solarz, and a number of other conservative and neoconservative pundits.¹⁰⁰

September 21, 2001 -- A President's Daily Brief on Iraq prepared by the CIA at Bush's behest says the intelligence community has no evidence of an Iraq link to 9/11 or of any significant collaborative ties with al-Qaeda. It says that the few credible reports of Iraq/al-Qaeda contacts involve attempts by Iraq to monitor the group. Bush, Cheney, Rice, Stephen Hadley, Rumsfeld, Powell, under secretaries at the State and Defense Departments, and other senior administration officials receive the paper. Tenet tells Bush that the CIA's Czech office is skeptical of the report, promoted by Cheney, that hijacker Mohammed Atta met in Prague with Iraqi intelligence -- "It just doesn't add up." Credit card and phone records show that at the time Atta was in northern Virginia -- a few miles from CIA headquarters. (Several years later the Senate Intelligence Committee investigates the misuse of intelligence information prior to the Iraq invasion. The administration does not disclose the existence of this clearly relevant brief until the summer of 2004 -- and still refuses to turn it over.)¹⁰¹

September 22, 2001 -- *McClatchy* reports that "U.S. officials and terrorism experts say there is little evidence Saddam Hussein's regime played a role" in 9/11. Regarding reports of 1996 and 2000 meetings between Iraqis and bin Laden or hijacker Mohammed Atta, it notes that aside from a hostile relationship with the U.S., Iraq and al-Qaeda have little in common. It reports that a Congressional Research Service Iraq expert says that he has "never seen any evidence that Iraq is heavily involved in al-Qaida." Nevertheless, it notes, Wolfowitz and Perle are lobbying for targeting Iraq, over the opposition of Powell, who hopes to preserve international support for U.S. anti-terrorism policy.¹⁰²

September 23, 2001 -- Condoleezza Rice says on CNN that any attack on Iraq would not occur until "stage two" of U.S. military actions.¹⁰³

September 26, 2001 -- The *Sunday Telegraph* reports "mounting criticism of Colin Powell by prominent conservative hawks," including William Kristol, who wrote in the *Washington Post* that "Virtually every major political figure has gone out of his way to support the president. Except for his secretary of state..."¹⁰⁴

September 26, 2001 -- Reflecting domestic antiwar opinion, former senator Thomas Eagleton says of the "use of force" resolution just passed by Congress, it "names no country. It names no region. It authorizes the use of 'appropriate force' as if 'he (the president alone) determines' how to excise terrorism from the world." Recalling that John F. Kennedy saw the Vietnam War as a way to achieve unlimited gains for limited expenditure and as a proving ground for the theory of limited warfare; that he failed to carefully define American objectives, aside from "preserving freedom" in South Vietnam; that he did not realistically estimate the cost or the U.S.'s lack of intelligence information and language skills; that in

attacking Vietnam he attacked a country that had already driven out a Western occupier; Eagleton concludes with Santayana's saying, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."¹⁰⁵

September 29, 2001 -- Rumsfeld asks Gen. Myers to begin preparing Iraq war options with two objectives: finding and destroying WMD, and regime change. For the second goal Rumsfeld requests a plan taking one or two months and 250,000 troops.¹⁰⁶

September 30, 2001 -- An Iraqi nuclear physicist who recently defected tells the *Sunday Telegraph* that Saddam Hussein has ordered his scientists to work exclusively on "expanding his chemical and biological weapons arsenal," and that some 3,000 of them have been working "flat out on" secret programs to develop and deploy lethal toxins during the past six months. He says Iraqi engineers are working on expanding the range of pilotless aircraft that could be used for biological warfare to reach Israel, Iran, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia. (All of this information is false.)¹⁰⁷

October 2001 -- By October the U.S. Third Army is planning an operation code-named Vigilant Guardian—an invasion plan not to occupy all of Iraq but to establish an enclave and seize its southern oil fields. The plan is expected to be ready as early as January or February 2002. Supposedly, its focus is preparation for a preemptive strike should Iraq move against Kuwait or Saudi Arabia. Rather than the armed Iraqi opposition of the Chalabi/Downing plan, the Army estimates that 75,000-100,000 U.S. armed forces would be involved.¹⁰⁸

October 2001 – Since Rumsfeld and other neocons in the Defense Department discount CIA analysis on Iraq, the DOD policy office sets up an alternative intelligence unit. Former AEI affiliate David Wurmser, who since 9/11 has been working on a giant spider web of a chart

supposedly demonstrating links among terrorists, state supporters, and terrorist acts, is given a security clearance and access to an intelligence community website and raw data files. Wurmser updates members of Cheney's foreign policy team who are closely tied to Chalabi, who in turn provides them with a stream of reports from alleged Iraqi defectors about secret Iraqi WMD stockpiles.¹⁰⁹

October 4, 2001 -- Letters containing anthrax are discovered at several Senate and media offices and "Washington officials are scared out of their wits." Early reports seem to indicate, wrongly, that the anthrax was "weaponized." Laurie Mylroie announces that Saddam Hussein is behind the mailings; Bush counterterrorism advisor Gen. Wayne Downing excitedly phones Wolfowitz and Feith with the news; according to a White House aide: "I had the feeling they were high-fiving each other."¹¹⁰

October 7, 2001 -- The U.S. war with Afghanistan begins.

October 8, 2001 -- Ambassador John Negroponte writes to the U.N. Security Council that "We may find that our self-defense requires further actions with respect to other organizations and other states." European diplomats say that if Iraq is targeted the U.S. will alienate Arabs and Muslims and rupture the anti-terrorism coalition.¹¹¹

October 10, 2001 -- Iraqi Foreign Minister Naji Sabri says that Iraq sees Negroponte's letter to the UNSC as a direct threat.¹¹²

October 14, 2001 -- The *Observer* (London) reports that "U.S. intelligence sources, involved with both the CIA and the Defense Department" say that anthrax spores used in recent attacks were airborne and were carefully milled, which is a "giveaway" that a state sponsor was involved; that they were a strain that in the 1950s was distributed to countries

that included Iraq; and that al-Qaeda operatives have said that anthrax was obtained in the Czech Republic.¹¹³ (All information implying an Iraqi link to the anthrax attacks is false.)

October 14, 2001 -- *Frontline* interviews Iraqi exile Sabah Khodada al-Lami who says he worked at a Salman Pak, Iraq camp where people were trained to attack American targets and to hijack airplanes. (As *Frontline* later notes, no later information backed Khodada's claims and the U.S. concluded that the camp was used for Iraqi counterterrorism training in anti-hijacking techniques. The CIA and U.S. military intelligence had been aware since the 1980s that Iraq had an anti-hijacking program, based on U.S.-Iraq intelligence cooperation during the era when the two governments were quasi allies against Iran.)¹¹⁴

October 15, 2001 -- According to Ari Fleischer, "In mid-October, I told the press that no determinations had been made [linking U.S. anthrax attacks to Iraq or 9/11 or al-Qaeda.] Privately, I had been told that none of the anthrax appeared to be sourced to known stockpiles from a foreign government, but I wasn't going to say that publicly in case the information changed."¹¹⁵

October 15, 2001 -- Italy's military intelligence service (SISMI) gives the CIA a report about an alleged Iraq-Niger uranium deal. Without any apparent confirmable evidence SISMI suggests that an Iraqi diplomat who visited Niger in 1999 was seeking yellowcake, ore that could be processed into weapons-grade uranium. (The visit was reported in the press at the time and the U.S. ambassador and British intelligence filed routine reports, with no mention of uranium or of anything remarkable about the visit.)

The intelligence community dismisses the SISMI report as amateurish and unsubstantiated. However, it is quickly stovepiped to receptive administration

officials including Cheney, who asks about it at one of his daily CIA briefings. The agency tells him that the report is vague and that in any case Iraq already had uranium ore, obtained in the early 1980s, which had been secured by the IAEA. Dissatisfied, Cheney tells the CIA to revisit the issue.¹¹⁶

October 16, 2001 -- When Tenet and Drumheller visit London British officials seek confirmation that as they understand it there is no evidence of an Iraq-9/11 link, and according to Drumheller, "I heard Tenet say numerous times until some weeks before the war began that there was no link to Iraq and we had to focus on terrorism, and I was confident, as I told my counterpart, that Tenet had the president's ear."¹¹⁷

October 17, 2001 -- The Pentagon awards the Rendon Group a \$16 million contract to run propaganda operations with Iraq as one of its targets. "The events of 11 September 2001 changed everything, not least of which was the administration's outlook concerning strategic influence," according to an Army report; "Faced with direct evidence that many people around the world actively hated the United States, Bush began taking action to more effectively explain U.S. policy overseas."¹¹⁸

October 17, 2001 -- The *New York Times* reports that the Czech interior minister has confirmed that Iraqi intelligence met with hijacker Mohammed Atta in April 2001; that Iraqi exile Sabah Khodada al-Lami reported that Salman Pak was a terrorist training camp (noting that "Mr. Khodada's identity might never have been known, were it not for the Iraqi National Congress"), and that Iraq's ambassador to Turkey Farouk Hijazi, a former head of Iraqi intelligence, met with Osama bin Laden in 1998 to offer him and al-Qaeda a safe haven in Iraq (also based on "information provided by Mr. Chalabi's Iraqi National Congress.") On the other hand, "Turkish intelligence officials said this week that they had no information

that Mr. Hijazi had traveled to Afghanistan or anywhere else to meet with Mr. bin Laden." (None of the information in the *Times* report was confirmed by later evidence except for the attribution of the reporting to the INC.)¹¹⁹

October 19, 2001 -- Homeland security director Tom Ridge says that the FBI has determined that the mail-attack anthrax was not weaponized; earlier information attributed to Senate sources was wrong.¹²⁰

Late October 2001 -- At a dinner at Cheney's residence, with the Afghan war seemingly going well for the U.S., academic Bernard Lewis criticizes the George H.W. Bush administration's failure to overthrow Saddam Hussein during the 1991 Gulf War.¹²¹

October 22, 2001 -- Anthrax is found on a device used to open letters at a Secret Service facility. Bush, his wife, most of his staff, and executive office mail-handling workers begin taking the antibiotic Cipro as a precaution.¹²²

October 22, 2001 -- James Woolsey tells reporters "that he does not have evidence 'beyond a reasonable doubt' that Iraq was involved with U.S. anthrax scares or was behind the 9/11 attacks....But suspicions...are enough for him to go on."¹²³

October 26, 2001 -- ABC News reports that anthrax sent to a senator's office has characteristics that make "it a trademark of Saddam Hussein's biological weapons program." It had checked with Ari Fleischer beforehand, who passed on information from the NSC that there was no information linking Iraq to the attacks. ABC reports the story anyway, citing "three well-placed but separate sources." ABC backs off the story on October 31.¹²⁴

November 8, 2001 -- Rumsfeld asks Feith to evaluate possible actions to neutralize an Iraqi WMD or terrorist threat. Feith drafts a paper whose options

include the Chalabi/Downing plan: using Iraqi opposition groups to seek collaborators to rebel against the government, build up enclaves in the north and south, and support the Iraqi National Congress.¹²⁵

November 14, 2001 -- In a speech given as the Taliban are seemingly being routed in Afghanistan, Perle evokes the claim of Iraqi exile Khidhir Hamza (whose activities are promoted by the INC) that after Israel's 1981 bombing of an Iraqi nuclear reactor Saddam Hussein ordered future nuclear facilities to be dispersed at four hundred sites across the nation. Perle asks, "Do we wait for Saddam and hope for the best ... or do we take some preemptive action?"¹²⁶

November 17, 2001 -- An NSC meeting discusses a "phase two" of the war on terrorism, and Bush directs the Defense Department "to be ready to deal with Iraq if Baghdad acted against U.S. interests, with plans to include possibly occupying Iraqi oil fields." Wolfowitz writes to Rumsfeld saying that if there were even a 10 percent chance that Saddam Hussein was involved with the 9/11 attacks then taking action against it should have first priority, adding that the odds are far more than 10 percent and citing as evidence the baseless Mylroie theory that Iraq was behind the 1993 World Trade Center bombing.¹²⁷

November 18, 2001 -- After the Taliban are routed from Kabul, administration officials say they hope that this outcome will warn other regimes sponsoring terrorists. They cite Iraq, Syria, and Iran. Rice says, "We didn't need September 11 to tell us that Saddam Hussein is a very dangerous man. There could only be one reason that he has not wanted U.N. inspectors in Iraq, and that's so he can build weapons of mass destruction."¹²⁸

November 21, 2001 -- Bush tells Rice that he plans to get Rumsfeld to work on Iraq; he then asks Rumsfeld what kind of a war plan he has. Rumsfeld says he

doesn't think the plan is current or representative of his or Central Command head Tommy Franks' thinking. Bush tells him to start war planning but keep it secret. Rumsfeld has the Joint Staff draft a top secret message to Franks requesting an initial "commander's estimate" in about a week.¹²⁹

Around November 21, 2001 -- At Rumsfeld's request JCS director of operations Gregory Newbold briefs Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz, Myers, Pace, and DOD counsel William Haynes on the current Iraq war plan, which calls for a deployment taking some seven months and around 500,000 troops. Rumsfeld rejects the force level and timing.¹³⁰

November 21, 2001 -- Newbold calls his Central Command counterpart, Gene Renuart, who is working on Afghanistan operations, to warn him that a request is imminent from Rumsfeld for a commander's estimate on Iraq; Renuart passes on the news to Franks that a formal request is coming.¹³¹

November 27, 2001 -- Rumsfeld flies to Tampa to meet alone with Tommy Franks, tells him to challenge everything in the existing contingency plan for war with Iraq (Oplan 1003), and to produce an initial "rough concept". He brings talking points drafted with Wolfowitz and Feith that largely correspond to the Chalabi/Downing plan: finding a rationalization to start a war with Iraq (Saddam Hussein moves against the Kurds; U.S. discovers connection to 9/11 or anthrax attacks; dispute over WMD inspections – start now thinking about inspection demands); recognition of a provisional government ("Unlike in Afghanistan, important to have ideas in advance about who would rule afterwards"); giving said provisional government revenues from "liberated" oil fields; the concept of a running start: "Start military forces before all required for worst case – larger forces flow in behind"; and war crimes indictments for ousted officials. The paper also calls for an "Influence campaign" to prepare the

way for war. (An item on "radical ideas" has been redacted on national security grounds.)¹³²

November 27, 2001 -- After their meeting, Rumsfeld and Franks hold a press conference. Neither mentions Iraq nor are they questioned about it. According to Bob Woodward, Rumsfeld is "in a buoyant mood" because things are going so well in Afghanistan.¹³³

November 29, 2001 -- Having been told by Wolfowitz earlier in November that he thought that the Pentagon was incapable of developing strategy to deal with something as complex as 9/11, and then asked to create a group to report to Bush and other high-level officials, AEI president Christopher DeMuth has recruited a dozen people, including academics Bernard Lewis and Fouad Ajami and journalist Fareed Zakaria. They meet in secret, along with Rumsfeld's long-standing adviser Steve Herbits. DeMuth's summary memo after the meeting predicts a two-generation battle with radical Islamism, identifies Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Iran as problematic, and says Saddam Hussein is vulnerable -- "We agreed that Saddam would have to leave the scene before the problem would be addressed." This would "transform the region." Copies are hand-delivered to the administration: Cheney is pleased and the report has a strong impact on Bush, "causing him to focus on the 'malignancy' of the Middle East"; Rice finds it very persuasive. Rumsfeld later says he remembers the general plan but not the details. Herbits says the group concluded "We're facing a two-generation war. And start with Iraq."¹³⁴

November 30, 2001 -- Rumsfeld does not answer when asked if he agrees with Richard Perle's recent statement that now is the time to "get rid of" Saddam Hussein regardless of whether or not there is any Iraq-9/11 link except to say that Perle does not speak for Bush. Rumsfeld says that when weapons inspectors were in Iraq "We couldn't find beans. And it's

there. And we know it's there. And it was defectors who came out and told us where it was that helped us to find it he has biological activity going on in mobile vans. They're moving around. It is almost impossible to find what they're doing. We know with certain knowledge that Saddam Hussein has chemical and biological weapons."¹³⁵

Late 2001 -- What looks like a quick and easy Afghanistan victory for the U.S. encourages Iraq war advocates to ramp up their support for the Chalabi/Downing plan, which would provide Special Forces assistance to an Iraqi opposition-based uprising. The Joint Chiefs are skeptical and reportedly direct their staff to "come up with a counterproposal" -- the uniformed military have been especially dismissive of Chalabi's ideas. A former high-level Defense Department official says, "We looked at all these plans and always came to the conclusion that the external opposition did not have the armed ability to deal with Saddam's police state."¹³⁶

December 2001 -- INR staff provide Powell a major new review on Iraqi weapons of mass destruction. It verifies earlier IAEA findings and says there is no persuasive evidence that an Iraqi nuclear program is being reconstituted.¹³⁷

December 2001 -- By this time Czech officials who had earlier supported reports that hijacker Mohammed Atta met with Iraqi intelligence in Prague before 9/11 have backed away from the claim. During the month Czech president Vaclav Havel says there is only "a 70 percent" chance that the allegation is true. (In 2002, he tells U.S. officials that the meetings did not occur but keeps the matter quiet so as not to embarrass the White House.)¹³⁸

December 1, 2001 -- As part of "a steady drumbeat of bellicose comments toward Iraq" during the week, Armitage says on December 1 that Bush is "on, thus far, a roll in Afghanistan" and has been encouraged to pressure Baghdad to

readmit U.N. weapons inspectors: "I don't think there is any question that an Iraq with weapons of mass destruction is a threat to its neighbors and ultimately ourselves, and so we will do what we need to do to obviate that threat." Meanwhile, Arab commentators say that invading Iraq would be understood in the region as "a Western assault on Muslim countries."¹³⁹

December 1, 2001 -- Rumsfeld sends a top secret planning order to Franks through the JCS chairman directing him to come up with a commander's estimate leading to a new Iraq war plan. It instructs Franks to indicate how he would use the military to overthrow Saddam Hussein, eliminate any threat of the use of WMD, and stop Iraq's suspected support of terrorism. Franks is told to report in person in three days.¹⁴⁰

December 2, 2001 -- Asked whether Iraq continues to pursue weapons of mass destruction, Powell says, "We have no reason to believe that they have not." Asked about hijacker Atta's alleged Prague meetings with Iraqi intelligence, he says, "Certainly these meetings took place" but there is no evidence to link them to 9/11. James Woolsey disagrees with Powell's declaration that no smoking gun links Iraq with 9/11: "I think they may have had a hand in it." Woolsey says that multiple eyewitnesses say that Iraq provided training in hijacking with knives at Salman Pak; that he thinks "there is some circumstantial evidence" indicating that Iraq was behind anthrax attacks in the U.S., because only Iraq and the Soviets developed anthrax of the type used, and it is "highly implausible" that an American was responsible. He thinks an anthrax-9/11 connection is "the most logical link between al Qaeda and Iraq biological weapons programs, since we know al Qaeda and Iraqi intelligence had a lot of ties." (The claims about Salman Pak emanate from Sabah Khalifa Khodada al-Lami, produced for the press by the Iraqi National Congress. Al-Lami also says the training camp was contaminated by

anthrax.¹⁴¹ All of this information is false.)

December 2, 2001 -- Powell says that Bush has made no decision about Iraq.¹⁴²

December 4, 2001 -- In secret, Franks and his operations director Gene Renuart formally present the Iraq war plan for the first time. Franks says to date he has only been able to tinker with Oplan 1003 but has trimmed force levels by 100,000 to 400,000 troops, to be deployed over six months; Rumsfeld thinks the troop level is too high; and wants to know how quickly sufficient force could be deployed.¹⁴³

December 9, 2001 -- When Cheney is asked about the alleged Prague meetings and Woolsey's claim that Iraq trained hijackers at Salman Pak, in light of Cheney's September 16, 2001 statement indicating that there was no evidence linking Iraq to 9/11, Cheney says the Prague report is now "pretty well confirmed." His interviewer says "What we do know is that Iraqi is harboring terrorists Why not go in and get them?" Cheney changes the subject to Saddam Hussein's "aggressive pursuit of weapons of mass destruction ..."¹⁴⁴

December 12, 2001 -- Franks and Renuart return to the Pentagon with a second iteration of the Iraq commander's estimate. Rumsfeld wants to know how much of a military buildup in the region could be kept secret and if there are aspects that wouldn't cost much.¹⁴⁵

December 17, 2001 -- Former Iraqi engineer and exile Adnan Ihsan Saeed al-Haideri, who has said that Iraq secretly buried tons of biological, chemical and nuclear weapons in wells, villas, and a hospital fails a polygraph test and the CIA concludes that his entire story is a lie. Al-Haideri had been coached for days by the Iraqi National Congress prior to the test. Ahmad Chalabi then calls freelancer Paul Moran, who has worked for the INC and for the Rendon Group; and Judith Miller of the *New York Times*; she flies to Thailand

and interviews al-Haideri. Later she says she didn't know of the failed test and "government experts" said his information was "reliable".¹⁴⁶

December 19, 2001 -- Franks returns to the Pentagon with a third iteration of the Iraq war plan, having reduced the initial invasion force to 145,000 troops deployed over 90 days, to be reinforced to a force level of around 275,000. War would take 45 days while another 90 days would be necessary to destroy Iraq's government. Rumsfeld wants a smaller and faster invasion and tells Franks that Bush wants to see him at his Texas ranch.¹⁴⁷

December 20, 2001 -- Judith Miller's story on al-Haideri's false accounts appears on the front page of the *New York Times*; Moran interviews al-Haideri on Australian television. The story is picked up by the White House and repeated by the media around the world.¹⁴⁸

Late December 2001 -- As he works on Bush's January State of the Union speech, David Frum concludes that Iraq is analogous to a World War II axis power; thus Bush will soon identify Iraq, Iran, and North Korea as an "axis of evil".¹⁴⁹

December 28, 2001 -- Bush, Cheney, Rice, Powell, and Tenet meet with Franks and Renuart, and Franks presents a briefing classified top secret/Polo Step (compartmentalized military planning.) It includes plans for a potential preemptive strike and seizure of Iraq's southern oil fields by Special Forces. Rumsfeld is wary about a 275,000-strong force level, and says "We are still working through the number." Bush tells Rumsfeld that they need to get started; Franks says if so then the U.S. needs to start building up its forces in the region. Rumsfeld and Bush agree to increase the number of troops in Kuwait and Franks also wants to transfer in some equipment already pre-positioned in the region. At a news conference after the briefing Bush and Franks do not mention Iraq and are not asked about it.¹⁵⁰

Late 2001 -- Feith's office dispatches two of its officials, Wolfowitz colleague Abram Shulsky and former Newt Gingrich aide Bill Bruner to Tampa, Central Command headquarters. Some there view them as "Feith spies."¹⁵¹

January 1, 2002 -- "Saul" meets with Rumsfeld to outline a covert action plan to overthrow the Iraqi government. On January 3, "Saul", Tenet, and others from the CIA tell Cheney and Libby that a coup will not succeed in ousting Saddam Hussein; only a U.S. invasion with CIA support could achieve the desired result; later they tell Bush the same. Bush proceeds with U.N. diplomacy while secretly continuing preparations for war. In February, the CIA Directorate of Operations begins having weekly meetings on Iraq.¹⁵²

January 9, 2002 -- The *Washington Post* asks Rumsfeld about reports that he suggested after 9/11 that the administration needed to deal with Iraq as well as al-Qaeda. Rumsfeld says he has no recollection of this exchange (four months earlier), or of Bush's views on the matter.¹⁵³

January 27, 2002 -- Franks and Renuart present a fourth iteration of their Iraq war plan to Rumsfeld; Franks echoes the CIA conclusion that covert action cannot depose Saddam Hussein and says that the Iraqi opposition is incapable of overthrowing the regime; U.S. military involvement is necessary.¹⁵⁴

January 30, 2002 -- In his State of the Union speech Bush identifies Iraq, Iran, and North Korea as an "axis of evil" and says that Iraq is hostile towards the U.S. and supports terrorism. Later White House spokesmen say that this does not mean that U.S. military action is imminent.¹⁵⁵

February 1, 2002 -- Franks comes to the Pentagon with his fifth iteration of the Iraq commander's estimate, and tells Rumsfeld that the plan can now be executed as a

unilateral invasion. Rumsfeld still thinks it would take too long and says he'd like Franks to compress deployment from 60 to 30 days, which would require initiating military action with far fewer troops.¹⁵⁶

February 16, 2002 -- Bush signs a top secret NSC directive calling for regime change in Iraq. It directs the CIA to assist the U.S. military in overthrowing Saddam Hussein through support for opposition groups, sabotage, and disinformation and deception operations. The plan is budgeted at \$200 million a year for two years, later cut to \$189 million for the first year. Four days later, a CIA survey team secretly enters northern Iraq to prepare for the entry of CIA paramilitary teams.¹⁵⁷

February 19, 2002 -- Senate intelligence committee chairman Bob Graham (D-Fla.) visits Central Command to be briefed on the Afghanistan war. Command chief Tommy Franks tells him privately that crucial materiel is being diverted to prepare for an Iraq invasion.¹⁵⁸

February 28, 2002 -- Franks conveys two large books of Iraq targets to Rumsfeld's office.¹⁵⁹

March 23, 2002 -- The JCS begins a military exercise called Prominent Hammer to test Oplan 1003's feasibility. According to the *New York Times*, the exercise indicates that an Iraq war "would place severe strains on personnel and cause deep shortages of certain critical weapons."¹⁶⁰

April 2002 -- A team of covert Special Forces enter Iraqi Kurdistan from Turkey in what is clearly "a precursor to war, not a substitute," and brief Cheney upon their return.¹⁶¹

April 2002 -- Franks visits the Pentagon and for the first time shows the JCS a detailed war plan, calling for 200,000 to 250,000 troops and a two-front land war, with U.S. troops invading from Kuwait and Turkey.¹⁶²

Summer 2002 -- JCS chairman Myers issues detailed war plans to U.S. combatant commanders and sets up a special Iraq planning cell within the Joint Staff.¹⁶³

August 29, 2002 -- Bush approves an Iraq war plan, two weeks before going to the Security Council to ask for a resolution endorsing the use of force.¹⁶⁴

December 2002 -- Senior Feith deputy William Luti, who has been trying to create an armed Iraqi opposition force to assist a U.S. invasion, with support from Wolfowitz and Stephen Hadley, meets with opposition groups in London. Luti's effort gets few recruits, even after Wolfowitz tries to fly in Iraqi exiles from Iran. Opposition groups submit 6,000 names of potential recruits; 622 are vetted by the U.S.; 500 are invited to join a force; 95 show up in Hungary for training; 73 complete the four-week training program. The operation is budgeted at \$63.5 million.¹⁶⁵

2003 -- U.S. establishment of a post-invasion provisional government in Iraq is strongly supported by Wolfowitz but not by the State Department because it would give too much power to exiles with no recent experience of life in Iraq. Rumsfeld sees a provisional government as an obstacle to complete freedom of action for the U.S. military. The White House decides against immediately installing a government.¹⁶⁶

January 2003 -- By January 2003 Franks' war plan, Oplan 1003 Victor, is essentially complete, calling for a rapid drive to overthrow Iraq's government and then reduction of the U.S. troop presence as soon as possible. It predicts that large areas will not have to be occupied by foreign troops. Meanwhile, several CIA analyses warn of possible Ba'athist opposition, destruction of critical infrastructure, and the likelihood of armed opposition if the U.S. is perceived to be attempting to retain control of Iraq.¹⁶⁷

February 2003 – A poll shows that 72 percent of Americans believe it is likely that Saddam Hussein was personally involved in the September 11th attacks.¹⁶⁸

April 6, 2003 -- After the invasion of Iraq, the Pentagon flies Chalabi and some of his men to Kuwait and then transports them to Baghdad, where they are driven through the city in a widely ignored parade. In a television interview Chalabi says "a strategic alliance between Iraq and the United States is a good thing for both." Later Chalabi is named by the U.S. to the unelected 25-member Iraqi Governing Council.¹⁶⁹

Around December 2003 -- David Frum and Richard Perle write that it is not true that the president denied a link between Saddam Hussein and the 9/11 attacks (Bush said on September 17 that there is "no evidence" of any involvement.) Rather, they say, there's no proof, but there are "clues and hints" tying Iraqi intelligence to the hijackers that were discovered by "a small team of independent analysts inside the Office of the Secretary of Defense [who] found clues that had eluded the [intelligence] agencies." (In June 2004 the 9/11 Commission concluded that there was no evidence connecting Iraq to either al-Qaeda or the September 11 attacks.)¹⁷⁰

May 20, 2004 – Ahmad Chalabi's Baghdad home is raided at gunpoint by Iraqi police supported by American troops, and his offices are searched. The raid was authorized by the White House, as was the Defense Department's recent decision to eliminate its stipend to the INC of \$342,000 per month. Chalabi's Pentagon allies were not notified in advance though some knew it was under consideration. Chalabi and/or other INC members are alleged to have been involved with theft, embezzlement, and kidnapping; several of Chalabi's top aides have already fled the country.¹⁷¹

December 15, 2005 -- In Iraq's first elections for its Council of

Representatives, Ahmad Chalabi wins less than half of one percent of the vote.¹⁷²

June 2006 -- A poll of American soldiers in Iraq shows that 90 percent believe that Saddam Hussein was involved with the 9/11 attacks.¹⁷³

September 2006 -- A national CNN poll shows that 43 percent of Americans still believe that Saddam Hussein was involved with the 9/11 attacks.¹⁷⁴

January 14, 2010 -- Iraq's independent electoral commission disqualifies 499 candidates from running in March 2010 parliamentary elections, after receiving a list from the Accountability and Justice Commission headed by Ahmad Chalabi and one of his allies. The commission, with unclear legal authority, secretly vetted candidates for Ba'athist ties. (In 2003 Chalabi had been appointed by U.S. occupation authorities to head a De-Ba'athification Commission that operated during the era of the Coalition Provisional Authority. Its actions evicted tens of thousands of civil servants from their jobs.)¹⁷⁵

February 19, 2010 -- The Justice Department, FBI, and U.S. Postal Service announce the formal conclusion of their investigation into the 2001 anthrax attacks. As had been previously reported, "the Amerithrax investigation found that the late Dr. Bruce Ivins [a biologist at the U.S. Army's Fort Detrick biodefense lab] acted alone in planning and executing the attack."¹⁷⁶

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¹⁵ Laurie Mylroie, *Bush vs. The Beltway* (New York: ReganBooks, 2003), fn. 231.

¹⁶ Seymour Hersh, "The Iraq Hawks; Can Their War Plan Work?" *New Yorker*, December 24, 2001; W. Patrick Lang, op. cit.; Jane Mayer, "A Reporter at Large: The Manipulator," *New Yorker*, June 7, 2004; Richard Sale, op. cit., 196-198; 215-221.

¹⁷ Jane Mayer, op. cit.

¹⁸ Richard Sale, op. cit., 273.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 182.

²⁰ Seymour Hersh, op. cit.; Robert Baer, *See No Evil* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2002), 174-205; W. Patrick Lang, op. cit.; Jane Mayer, op. cit.; James Bamford, "The Man Who Sold the War," op. cit.; Richard Sale, op. cit., 196-198; 215-221.

²¹ Seymour Hersh, "Annals of National Security: Selective Intelligence," *New Yorker*, May 12, 2003; Richard Sale, op. cit., 251-253.

²² Jane Mayer, op. cit.

²³ Institute for Advanced Strategic and Political Studies' Study Group on a New Israeli Strategy toward 2000, "A Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing the Realm," July 1996; *Guardian (London)*, September 24, 2002.

²⁴ Jane Mayer, op. cit.; Michael Isikoff and David Corn, *Hubris* (New York: Crown Publishing Group, 2006), 153-154, 211-212; Richard Sale, op. cit., 196-198; 215-221.

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²⁶ Ahmad Chalabi, "Creating a Post-Saddam Iraq," Speech Presented at JINSA Spring Board Meeting, June 2, 1997; Jane Mayer, op. cit.

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⁴⁸ *McClatchy Washington Bureau*, February 17, 2001; February 18, 2001; Jacob Weisberg, op. cit., 184.

⁴⁹ United States. Congress. Senate. Armed Services Committee. "Nominations before the Senate Armed Services Committee, First Session, 107th Congress." January 11-December 4, 2001: 221-223, 226-227, 238-244, 283.

⁵⁰ Michael Mann, *Incoherent Empire* (New York: Verso, 2003), 208.

⁵¹ Richard A. Clarke, op. cit., 231-232.

⁵² *NYT*, October 3, 2004; Michael Isikoff and David Corn, op. cit., 37-39.

⁵³ Michael Isikoff and David Corn, op. cit., 37-39.

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⁵⁶ *NYT*, October 3, 2004; Michael Isikoff and David Corn, op. cit., 37-39.

⁵⁷ Michael Isikoff and David Corn, op. cit., 39.

⁵⁸ 9/11 Commission *Report*. July 22, 2004: 559.

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⁷⁸ *WP*, January 27, 2002; Jacob Weisberg, op. cit., 188.

⁷⁹ Bob Woodward, *Bush at War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002), 60; Richard A. Clarke, op. cit., 30-32 (In interviews with the 9/11 commission Bush said that Clarke "mischaracterized this exchange;"

he did not wander around the Situation Room, but acknowledged that he might well have asked Clarke about Iraq at some point. Clarke's deputy, Roger Cressey, recalled the exchange though not the "intimidating" tone conveyed by Clarke's account); 9/11 Commission Report, op. cit., 334, 559; Vincent Bugliosi, *The Prosecution of George W. Bush for Murder* (Cambridge, MA: Vanguard Press, 2008), 117; Cullen Murphy and Todd S. Purdum, "Farewell to All That: An Oral History of the Bush White House," *Vanity Fair*, February 2009.

⁸⁰ Michael Isikoff and David Corn, op. cit., 6-9, 153-154, 211-212.

⁸¹ Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, op. cit., 15 (Feith denied making the comment.) Tenet seems to relate the same account, saying that the conversation between Feith and "a senior military official" occurred as they shared a ride on an Air Force tanker returning from England to the U.S. See George Tenet, *At the Center of the Storm*, op. cit., 306.

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⁸⁴ Richard A. Clarke, op. cit., 33.

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<http://oig.state.gov/documents/organization/7508.pdf>

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