



United States Department of Defense

## Speech

On the web: <http://www.defenselink.mil/speeches/2004/sp20040204-secdef0843.html>

Media contact: +1 (703) 697-5131

Public contact: <http://www.dod.mil/faq/comment.html> or +1 (703) 428-0711

### Remarks on Intelligence

*Remarks as delivered by Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld, Senate Armed Services Committee, Wednesday, February 4, 2004.*

---

Before turning to questions, let me make some comments in response to your request on the subject of intelligence and weapons of mass destruction and the testimony that Dr. Kay presented to this committee.

During my confirmation hearing before this committee, I was asked what would keep me up at night. And I answered, "Intelligence." I said that because the challenge facing the intelligence community today is truly difficult. Their task is to penetrate closed societies -- (to staff) -- and you might want to put that picture of a closed society up -- and organizations and try and learn things our adversaries don't want them to know.

That's the Korean peninsula. The DMZ is the line in the middle. South Korea -- the same people as in North Korea -- South Korea has got light -- this is a satellite photo -- it has light and energy and opportunity and a vibrant democratic system. North Korea is a dark, dark country. The little dot of light to the left in the center of North Korea is Pyongyang.

So their task is to penetrate these closed societies and organizations to try and learn things that our adversaries don't want them to know, the intelligence community, often not knowing precisely what it is that we need to know, while our adversaries know precisely what it is that they don't want them to know. That is a tough assignment.

#### NEWS

[DoD News](#)  
[Advisories](#)  
[Contracts](#)  
[Live Briefings](#)  
[Photos](#)  
[Releases](#)  
[Slides](#)  
[Speeches](#)  
[Today in DoD](#)  
[Transcripts](#)

[American Forces](#)  
[News](#)  
[Articles](#)  
[Radio](#)  
[Television](#)  
[Special Reports](#)

[DoD Search](#)

[About News](#)  
[News Archive](#)  
[News by E-mail](#)

[Other News Sources](#)

Intelligence agencies are operating in an era of surprise when new threats can emerge suddenly with little or no warning, as happened on September 11th. And it's their task to try to connect the dots before the fact, not after the fact. It's hard enough after the fact, but they're trying to connect the dots before the fact so action can be taken to protect the American people. And they have to do this in an age when the margin for error is modest; when terrorist networks and terrorist states are pursuing weapons of mass destruction and the consequences of underestimating a threat could be the loss of potentially tens of thousands of lives.

The men and women in the intelligence community have a tough and often thankless job. If they fail, the world knows it. And when they succeed, as they often do, to our country's great benefit, their accomplishments often have to remain secret. Though we cannot discuss those successes always in open session, it would be worth the committee's time to hear of them, and I hope and trust that the director of Central Intelligence, George Tenet, will be able to make some of those recent examples of successes -- and there have been many -- public so that the impression that has and is being created of broad intelligence failures can be dispelled.

I can say that the intelligence community's support in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as the global war on terror overall, have contributed to the speed, the precision, the success of those operations, and saved countless lives. We're blessed that so many fine individuals have stepped forward to serve in the intelligence community and are willing to work under great pressure and, in more than a few cases, risk their lives.

They faced a difficult challenge in the case of Iraq. They knew the history of the Iraqi regime, its use of chemical weapons on its own people and its neighbors. They knew what had been discovered during the inspections after the Persian Gulf War, some of which was far more advanced, particularly the nuclear program, than the pre-Gulf War intelligence had indicated. They were keen observers of the reports of UNSCOM in the 1990s, and they and others did their best to penetrate the secrets of the regime of Saddam Hussein after the inspectors left in 1998. It was the consensus of the intelligence community, and of successive administrations of both political parties, and of the Congress, that reviewed the same intelligence, and much of the international community, I might add, that Saddam Hussein was pursuing weapons of mass destruction.

Saddam Hussein's behavior throughout that period reinforced that conclusion. He did not behave like someone who was disarming and wanted to prove he was doing so. He did not open up his country to the world, as did Kazakhstan, Ukraine, South Africa had previously done, and as Libya is doing today -- Libya. Instead, he continued to give up tens of billions of dollars in oil revenues under U.N. sanctions when he could have had the sanctions lifted and received those billions of dollars simply by demonstrating that he'd disarmed, if in fact he had. Why did he do this? His regime filed with the United Nations what almost everyone agreed was a fraudulent declaration, and ignored the final opportunity afforded him by U.N. Security Council Resolution 1441. Why?

The Congress, the national security teams of both the Clinton and the Bush administrations looked at essentially the same intelligence and they came to similar conclusions that the Iraqi regime posed a danger and should be changed. The Congress passed regime-change legislation in 1998.

In the end, the coalition of nations decided to enforce the U.N.'s resolutions. Dr. Kay served in Iraq for some six months directing the work of the Iraq Survey Group, the ISG, and reporting to Director Tenet.

He and the ISG have worked hard under difficult and dangerous conditions. They have brought forward important information. Dr. Kay is a scientist and an extremely well-experienced weapons inspector. He has outlined for this committee his hypothesis on the difference between prewar estimates of Iraq's WMD and what has been found thus far on the ground. While it's too early to come to final conclusions as he indicated, given the work that's still to be done, there are several alternative views that are currently being postulated.

First is the theory that WMD may not have existed at the start of the war. I suppose that's possible, but not likely. Second, is that it's possible that WMD did exist, but was transferred in whole or in part to one or more other countries. We see that theory put forward. Third, it's possible that the WMD existed, but was dispersed and hidden throughout Iraq. We see that possibility proposed by various people. Next, that it's possible that WMD existed, but was destroyed at some moment prior to the end of the -- beginning of the conflict, or that it's possible that Iraq had small quantities of biological or chemical agents and also a surge capability for a rapid buildup, and that we may eventually find it in the months ahead. Or finally there's the theory that some have put forward, that it could have been a charade by the Iraqis; that Saddam Hussein fooled his neighbors and fooled the world, or that Saddam Hussein fooled the members of his own regime, or that the idea that Saddam Hussein himself might have been fooled by his own people, who may have tricked him into believing he had capabilities that Iraq really didn't have. These are all theories that are being put forward today.

This much has been confirmed: The intelligence community got it essentially right on Iraq's missile programs. Iraq was exceeding the U.N.-imposed missile range limits, and documents found by the ISG show the evidence of high-level negotiations between Iraq and North Korea for the transfer of still longer-range missile technology. If we were to accept that Iraq had a surge capability for biological and chemical weapons, his missiles could have been armed with weapons of mass destruction and used to threaten neighboring countries.

It's the job of Dr. Kay's successor, as the chairman indicated, and the Iraq Survey Group to pursue these issues wherever the facts may take them. It's a difficult task. Think, it took us 10 months to find Saddam Hussein. The reality is that the hole he was found hiding in was large enough to hold enough

biological weapons to kill thousands of human beings. Our people had gone past that farm several times, had no idea he was there. And unlike Saddam Hussein, such objects, once buried, can stay buried. In a country the size of California, the chances of inspectors finding something buried in the ground without their being led to it by people knowledgeable about where it was is minimal.

As Dr. Kay has testified, what we have learned thus far has not proven Saddam Hussein had what intelligence indicated and what we believed he had, but it also has not proven the opposite. The ISG's work is some distance from completion. There are some 1,300 people in the ISG in Iraq, working hard to find ground truth. When that work is complete, we will know more.

Whatever the final outcome, it's important that we seize the opportunity to derive lessons learned to inform future decisions. In the Department of Defense, the Joint Forces Command has done an extensive review of Operation Iraqi Freedom. The intelligence community is also looking at lessons learned.

It's doing it at the -- under the leadership of Director Tenet, with Dr. Kerr. It's being done in other elements of the community as well.

It's important also that we step back and take a look at the bigger picture and see the -- that U.S. intelligence capabilities are strengthened sufficiently to meet the threats and challenges of this century. The president has announced that he will be forming a bipartisan commission on strengthening U.S. intelligence capabilities. The commission will review the past successes of the intelligence community, as well as the cases that have not been successes, to examine whether the intelligence community has the right skills, the proper resources, and the appropriate authorities to meet the challenges and the threats of the 21st century.

Intelligence will never be perfect. We do not, will not and cannot know everything that's going on in this world of ours. If at this important moment we mistake intelligence for irrefutable evidence, analysts might become hesitant to inform policymakers of what they think they know and what they know that they don't know, and even what they think. And policymakers bereft of intelligence will find themselves much less able to make prudential judgments -- the judgments necessary to protect our country.

I'm convinced that the president of the United States did the right thing in Iraq; let there be no doubt. I came to my conclusions based on the intelligence we all saw, just as each of you made your judgments and cast your votes based on the same information.

The president has sworn to preserve, protect and defend the nation. With respect to Iraq, he took the available evidence into account; he took into account September 11th; he took into account Saddam

Hussein's behavior of deception; he took into account Iraq's ongoing defiance of the U.N. and the fact that he was still shooting at U.S. and U.K. aircraft and the crews that were enforcing U.N. resolutions in northern and southern no-fly zones; and he took into account the fact that this was a vicious regime that had used weapons of mass destruction against its own people and its neighbors, and murdered and tortured the Iraqi people for decades.

The president went to the United Nations and the Security Council and passed a 17th resolution. And he came here to this Congress, and based on the same intelligence, you voted to support military action if the Iraqi regime failed to take that final opportunity to cooperate with the United Nations.

And when Saddam Hussein did pass up that final opportunity, the president nonetheless gave him a -- an ultimatum, a final final opportunity to leave the country. Only then, when all alternatives had been fully exhausted, did the coalition act to liberate Iraq. And ours is a safer world today, and the Iraqi people far better off, for that action.

Senator Warner asked in his opening statement if I know of any pressure or -- on intelligence people or manipulation of intelligence, and the answer is absolutely not. I believe that Senator Roberts has attested to that from the analysts and witnesses that he and his committee have interrogated over a period of many, many months. I believe that Dr. Kay answered exactly the same way, that he talked to analyst after analyst and knows no manipulation of the data and no indication of anyone expressing concern about pressure.



[Printer-friendly Version](#)



[Email A Copy](#)

---

[Site Map](#) | [Privacy & Security Notice](#) | [External Link Disclaimer](#) | [Web Policy](#) | [About DefenseLINK](#) | [Contact Us](#)