



Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE *108th* CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

House of Representatives

July 21, 2003

IRAQ WATCH

Mr. INSLEE. Madam Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. HOEFFEL. I yield to the gentleman from Washington.

Mr. INSLEE. Madam Speaker, I am glad to join my colleagues because I feel this message needs to be repeated, that Congress is going to get to the bottom of this intelligence fiasco, and the best way to do that is through a bipartisan public commission to really find out what happened with the American people not getting the straight scoop about Iraq before this war started.

I have heard certain people in the administration think that this is just going to kind of go away; it is going to kind of drift off and Americans will watch reality TV and forget this. I think the administration is very wrong on this; and we need them to embrace this idea of a bipartisan, led by a Republican, perhaps Warren Rudman, some esteemed Republican figure, to lead this bipartisan commission.

I have got four points why this is so important, and the first two come back to the gentleman from Massachusetts' (Mr. DELAHUNT) question, which is what should be the standard for starting the preemptive war. I would suggest two, at least two.

Number one, that the administration will not start a war unless the truth will convince the American people it is the proper thing to do, not the fudged intelligence, not the exaggerated intelligence, not the selective intelligence, but the whole intelligence. What clearly happened here is that this administration did not have confidence enough in their argument about freeing Iraqis, which might be a legitimate reason for a war, there are people who believe that, but they did not have confidence in that so they had to exaggerate intelligence and use selective intelligence and not tell us the whole thing. That is the first fundamental standard we have to meet before a preemptive war. The second fundamental standard we ought to insist on on a bipartisan basis is that we do the intelligence first and then we make the decision whether or not to go to war. We do not make the decision to go to war and then ask everybody to give the intelligence that fits that preconceived notion. The neutral evaluation of the scenario that occurred here is that some folks in this administration made an early decision to get rid of Saddam Hussein, and yes, there may be some legitimate reasons to do that; and some Americans believe even with no security threat to the United States, but we cannot start a preemp war on that basis, and that is what this bipartisan commission ought to say.

I will just say two other points.

I think some folks are so hung up on this uranium yellow cake they do not realize this is just the tip of the iceberg. This is the smallest tip of the iceberg of this selective intelligence failure.

I heard today a gentleman point out four things that I do not recall the President telling us. The two highest al Qaeda operatives, officers if you will, in our custody in Guantanamo before the war started, told us that they had no relationship with Saddam Hussein. I do not recall the President standing in the State of the Union and telling us that the two highest al Qaeda operatives said they had nothing to do with Saddam Hussein. Maybe I missed that, but I do not recall that.

I do not recall him telling us that a retired national security fellow named Beers has said that looking at the intelligence he could not find any evidence of an ongoing relationship between al Qaeda and Saddam Hussein.

I do not recall him telling us that the Central Intelligence Agency told The Washington Post that, although there might have been some communication, there was no outstanding relationship between these entities. I do not recall any of these facts.

What I recall is the administration trying to paint a picture, an implicit assumption of Americans that Saddam Hussein was behind September 11, and all this intelligence was excluded from public information and that was just wrong. This President said, and it is almost a quote, there is no doubt that Saddam Hussein has some of the most lethal weapons systems devised by man. It is almost a direct quote.

When we peel back these intelligence reports, we know there are lots of doubts about these issues.

Mr. DELAHUNT. My colleague is aware under the administration of his father, back in the late 1980s and almost to the inception of the 1990 war, invasion by Iraq against Kuwait, that that administration was actually transferring dual technologies to Iraq and that it was

under the Reagan-Bush administration that Saddam Hussein was taken off the terrorist list; that in 1986 it was the Reagan-Bush administration that installed an embassy in Baghdad; and that during the course of that war, during the course of that war, it was the Defense Intelligence Agency that was providing the Iraqi Army with intelligence; and that it was that administration that provided billions of dollars of agricultural credits to Iraq; and it was that administration that when this Congress, the Congress, a Democratic Congress back in 1989 and 1990 passed legislation which would have imposed sanctions on the Saddam Hussein regime for using chemical weapons against their own people, blocked the passage of those sanctions. Is my colleague aware of that?

Mr. INSLEE. Madam Speaker, I am certainly aware of it.

I tell my colleague what perhaps I was not aware of, and I was stunned when I heard our Secretary of Defense say this the other day. I was stunned. He said that we went to war not based on new intelligence, but by a new impression we had after September 11. We all had the new mindset after September 11. It is clear about that, but the impression this administration gave to the American people, consciously I believe, is that there is a new round of intelligence that necessitated this preemptive attack. Our Secretary of Defense came and told us there was no new intelligence that did not exist through the whole decade of the 1990s to justify the preemptive war. I was stunned when I

heard that, when we heard the administration for 4 months tell us that there was all this imminent threat that was going to occur.

I will mention another thing, perhaps unsolicited advice to this administration. They are on the cusp of making some bad decisions. I do not like to use the word "cover-up" because it is too weighted with emotion; but they are not helping figure out what happened here, and there is great danger. I will give my colleagues an example.

Ambassador Wilson, the ambassador who blew the whistle on the uranium yellow cake, the forgery that ended up in the State of the Union speech, I just heard on NBC News tonight, his wife, her sort-of security clearance was jeopardized at the CIA because somebody sort of outed her, if you will, about her CIA contact which essentially could devastate her career. That kind of shenanigans is not going to be helpful to this administration. That is why we need a clear, publicly oriented, bipartisan review, above the table, nobody playing games with this. This is what America needs.

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Mr. INSLEE. Madam Speaker, one thing that I think is important to say about this commission that we are urging is that it is not a commission to debate the Iraq war or the reasons for the war or the propriety of the war. I represent constituents who have divided opinion about that today. Some of my constituents believe that a removal of Saddam Hussein was justified even if he had toothpicks and that is all he had. Some of my constituents believe that was a legitimate exercise of military force by the United States.

Now, I do not agree with that, but some of my constituents feel like that sincerely. But those same constituents tell me that they did not appreciate being kept in the dark about the reams of intelligence which suggested that the President concluded that there was no doubt about Iraq's having these weapons, when, in fact, there was massive doubt; that he had no doubt there was a connection with al-Qaeda, when, in fact, there was massive doubt; that he made the decision after he had the intelligence; when, in fact, he made the decision before he had the intelligence. Those same people who believed the war may have been justified do not appreciate that because they recognize this is a threat to democracy.