



BRET FURTWANGLER | GRAPHIC ARTIST

■ Editorial

Iraq memo has serious implications about war

Earlier this month, a piece of documentation relating to the war in Iraq was uncovered: The Downing Street memo; it is the most convincing proof yet that military action in Iraq was based on faulty, possibly nonexistent intelligence. Worst of all, the memo makes it perfectly clear that the lack of concrete information pertaining to Saddam Hussein's possession of weapons of mass destruction was no secret to President Bush.

The memo details British Prime Minister Tony Blair's report on a political talk involving President Bush. The most poignant line of the memo, dated eight months prior to the United States' invasion of Iraq, reads:

"Bush wanted to remove Saddam, through military action, justified by the conjunction of terrorism and WMD. But the intelligence and facts were being fixed around the policy."

Intelligence and facts were being fixed. Remember how mad the American public became when former President Bill Clinton lied to his nation concerning an extra-marital affair? The Downing Street memo is concrete proof that Bush not only lied about his fears over WMDs, but also led his country blindly into war for the purpose of satisfying some kind of personal vendetta against Saddam Hussein. After thousands of casualties and billions of dollars, it seems that someone owes the world an apology.

If the memo is valid, then the significance of Bush's lie is huge. The Downing Street Memo means that when U.S. political organizations made their decision to support the war in Iraq, they were doing so under false pretenses. The use of a preemptive strike was authorized largely because of the belief (instilled heavily by Bush himself) that there was some sort of time frame; if those politicians had been aware that Bush created Iraq's WMDs out of thin air, the administration might have been pushed to find a long-term, diplomatic solution.

Besides the material ramifications of such a lie, it is also important to consider the paradigm that is set when a president feels he is correct in lying to the country he has been elected to serve. A democracy is based on serving the will of the people; if those people are receiving false information, their needs and desires can be neither heard nor met.

Of course, it must be kept in mind that the memo is nothing if not ambiguous, as Bush supporters are quick to point out. Bush and Blair have denied allegations that intelligence was fixed to prompt the war in Iraq, and the memo itself does not contain enough specifics to thoroughly indict anyone.

Then again, it didn't take much more than a blue dress with a stain on it to impeach Clinton. The Downing Street memo has hardly received the enormous media or public attention it deserves. At this point, the Bush administration owes this country a sound explanation, rather than just a vague denial. If Bush or Blair cannot provide such an explanation, then neither man deserves to hold his current public office.

■ In my opinion

The problem with the plutonium plan

On a scale of one to idiotic, the Bush administration just nabbed themselves a place at the top. It was revealed yesterday that the U.S. is planning produce plutonium 238 for the first time since the Cold War— as if any other evidence were needed to prove that developing nuclear weapons technology is a giant step backward. For about \$1.5 billion, our nation will be left with more than 50,000 drums of radioactive waste. Considering the budget deficit America is currently experiencing, it seems just a little strange to spend money creating lethal trash.

The plutonium project is currently being touted as a classified national security project. Plutonium could be used for nuclear weapons, nuclear space weapons (both of which the Energy Department has denied) or espionage equipment. All we know for sure is that the plutonium technology will be developed for the purpose of creating a safer America.

It is amusing that the United States still believes nuclear technology and security are in some way related. To begin with, even if the U.S. government is not planning to use plutonium 238 to create weapons, the raw material can easily be turned into a killing machine by someone else. The Bush administration is not shy about accusing rogue nations of stealing and harboring weapons of mass destruction; surely someone at the White House must realize that developing a weapon for the United States can be just as deadly as handing that same weapon over to the enemy on a silver platter.

In fact, in an obscenely hypocritical move, Bush recently expressed the following sentiment in response to an Iranian plan to develop plutonium technology:

"The development of a nuclear



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weapon is unacceptable and a process which would enable Iran to develop a nuclear weapon is unacceptable."

The United States government still believes that our nation is somehow a superior species to the rest of the world; technology in the hands of Iranians is unacceptable, but technology in the hands of Americans is necessary to our national security. It pains me to mention the fact that the United States has been a historic supplier of nuclear technology for Iran, including a research reactor capable of producing plutonium. Why does our nation fall prey to the ethnocentric assumption that nuclear technology is safer in hands of a lighter skin color, or that America's decisions regarding the economic or defense purposes of nuclear programs are always correct? The simple fact that the United States once supplied plutonium technology to Iran, but is now demanding that the Iranian nation refrain from developing such items, shows that the United States is hardly accountable when it comes to making global decisions.

The time has come for the leaders of the world to get their heads out of their arses and call for a change. With each nuclear development, the paradigm of mutually assured destruction comes closer and closer. Instead of building up arsenals of plutonium, the United States especially should be using its resources to foster some

kind of communication or plan of action toward the eventual goal of eradicating nuclear warfare. America can be neither the land of the free nor the home of the brave if protecting our nation means creating a substance so dangerous that a single speck will cause cancer. When was diplomacy replaced with the Cold War ethic of secrecy and a nuclear arsenal? It boggles one's mind that governmental communication and compromise have become the exception rather than the norm.

Nations of the world, especially those hosting nuclear technology, have given up on one another but not on the utopian promises of technology. Every country may believe that nuclear components are making them safer, but stockpiling weapons and technology will lead to nothing besides the parallel stockpiling of weapons and technology in the fists of opposing nations. The United States cannot expect to announce its own development of plutonium 238 without seeing similar production in countries who fear that the only way to deter America's technology is to delve into dangerous technology of their own.

As long as nuclear weapons exist, the threat of nuclear winter will exist as well. The only way to prevent nuclear war is to stop creating nuclear technology and concentrate upon dismantling the weapons already created. Maybe we'll have to look for new energy sources; maybe we'll have to search for a different way to secure our nation. But, for what it's worth (i.e. billions of dollars), I wouldn't mind seeing at least a glimpse of the pretense that world peace is possible.

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