

Report documents lies leading up to Iraq War

By Askia Muhammad
Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON (NNPA) - Lies. Lies. Lies. President George W. Bush and seven of his administration's top officials, including Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary of State Colin Powell, then-National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, made at least 935 false statements in the two years following September 11, 2001, to lead the United States into its invasion and occupation of Iraq, according to an exhaustive study by the Center for Public Integrity and the Fund for Independence in Journalism.

Now, nearly 4,000 U.S. men and women in military service are dead; billions of dollars have been spent; the domestic economy lurches toward recession, and the U.S. has suffered an astounding loss of credibility abroad.

It also appears that the Bush administration is using the same tactics to build support for a war against Iran. U.S. news media trumpeted a recent encounter between U.S. warships and Iranian army speed boats in the Gulf of Hormuz. Bush blasted Iran for acting dangerously and labeled the Islamic nation the world's leading sponsor of terror.

Within days the Hormuz story crumbled, as a Navy official admitted the so-called encounter was not a dangerous one. Doubt was cast over audio of threats aired in repeated media broadcasts and attributed to the Iranians. Analysis of the sound, which had no wind or water as background, raised questions about whether it came from Iranian speedboats.

Advance word about the president's Jan. 28 State of the Union address, scheduled after the *Final Call* went to press, was that the speech would be modest with no grandiose plans, and a significant focus on the economy, domestic surveillance for his war on terror and talk of progress in Iraq. It could be a tough sell; the war and the president remain unpopular in opinion polls.

Exploiting fears about national security?

When it came to the Iraq War falsehoods, Bush told the most untruths, logging 260 false statements. Powell made 254 false statements.

Their false statements about the national security threat posed by Saddam

Hussein's Iraq were exposed Jan. 23 in the exhaustive study. The untruths were "part of an orchestrated campaign that effectively galvanized public opinion and, in the process, led the nation to war under decidedly false pretenses," the report's authors Charles Lewis and Mark Reading-Smith wrote.

"The cumulative effect of these false statements — amplified by thousands of news stories and broadcasts — was massive, with the media coverage creating an almost impenetrable din for several critical months in the run-up to war," said the authors.

On October 7, 2002, for example, Bush spoke about Iraq in a primetime speech in Cincinnati.

"The Iraqi regime has violated all of those obligations. It possesses and produces chemical and biological weapons. It is seeking nuclear weapons. It has given shelter and support to terrorism and practices terror against its own people," he continued.

The report noted, "On January 28, 2003, in his annual State of the Union address, Bush asserted: 'The British government has learned that Saddam Hussein recently sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa. Our intelligence sources tell us that he has attempted to purchase high-strength aluminum tubes suitable for nuclear weapons production.' Two weeks earlier, an analyst with the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research sent an email to colleagues in the intelligence community laying out why he believed the uranium-purchase agreement 'probably is a hoax.'"

It continues, "It is now beyond dispute that Iraq did not possess any weapons of mass destruction or have meaningful ties to Al Qaeda. This was the conclusion of numerous bipartisan government investigations, including those by the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (2004 and 2006), the 9/11 Commission, and the multinational Iraq Survey Group, whose 'Duelfer Report' established that Saddam Hussein had terminated Iraq's nuclear program in 1991 and made little effort to restart it," it concluded.

According to the report: "On February 5, 2003, in an address to the United Nations Security Council, [Colin] Powell said: 'What we're

giving you are facts and conclusions based on solid intelligence. I will cite some examples, and these are from human sources.' As it turned out, however, two of the main human sources to which Powell referred had provided false information. One was an Iraqi con artist, code-named 'Curveball,' whom American intelligence officials were dubious about and in fact had never even spoken to. The other was an Al Qaeda detainee, Ibn al-

Sheikh al-Libi, who had reportedly been sent to Egypt by the CIA and tortured, and who later recanted the information he had provided.

Libi told the CIA in January 2004 that he had 'decided he would fabricate any information interrogators wanted in order to gain better treatment and avoid being handed over to (a foreign government).'"

Powell, who was secretary of state, tarnished his reputation by presenting ma-

major testimony, false testimony, a month before the invasion of Iraq.

The report analyzes public statements, speeches, briefings, as well as Senate Intelligence Committee reports, and compares that information with what has since been revealed by administration whistleblowers, such as former National Security adviser Richard Clarke, in order to compare what was being said publicly with what was known behind

the scenes.

The lies, however, persist and one was repeated by GOP presidential hopeful Mike Huckabee during a Jan. 24 debate in Florida.

"Everybody can look back and say, 'Oh well we didn't find the weapons.' Doesn't mean that they weren't there. Just because you didn't find every Easter egg didn't mean it wasn't planted," he said, in response to a question. The only prob-

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