

Iraq

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lem is no evidence points to the existence of the weapons of mass destruction.

Warnings against military action

"Most Black folks knew, almost instinctively, that the rationales that were being given by the Bush administration for this war were inadequate. I don't think the Black community is at all surprised about this report concerning the 900 lies told by Bush and members of his administration," said Lawrence Hamm, of the Newark-based Peoples' Organization for Progress, which had a King holiday protest against the Iraq war.

No voice has been more strident in repeated warnings against the war than Nation of Islam Min. Louis Farrakhan. A day after Bush laid out the case for striking Iraq in October 2002, Farrakhan held a press conference in Detroit, urging the America public to determine the truth of the president's words and not let soldiers march blindly into battle.

"For instance, 'Saddam Hussein is the greatest threat to world peace.' Truth or falsehood? What is the actual fact? Here is a man whose country is 6,000 miles from here or more. He has no rockets that can reach these shores, no bombs to reach these shores, but the president says: 'He has weapons of mass destruction.' What is the proof of that?" Farrakhan asked.

He condemned the Bush doctrine of pre-emptive military strikes, noted that only the U.S., Britain and Israel seemed eager to go to war, pointed out how Israel's former prime minister lobbied the U.S. Congress to war. Farrakhan blasted the hypocrisy of citing UN resolutions to attack Iraq and ignoring similar violations by Israel. He warned those who would die on the battlefield would be the Black, the Brown and the poor — not the children of administration neo-cons who saw taking Iraq as the first step to remaking the Middle East and ensuring Israel's safety. The soldiers "are patriotic, but their patriotism should not be manipulated by the president with half-truths and assumptions and maybes," Farrakhan said.

In two letters to Bush, he warned the war would not be a cakewalk with Iraqi liberation celebrations forecast by neo-cons, like then-Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. "Afghanistan is only a

preliminary to a much wider war, which is already planned, and this war also has a home front aspect as well," Farrakhan wrote in a letter to Bush on Dec. 1, 2001.

"Should you persist in this, you will do what no Islamic Leader is able to do. No leader of any Muslim nation can call for Jihad or Holy War and cause the Muslim world to obey that call... You will unite the Muslim world in hostility against America and Great Britain, and you will use your great position of power, inadvertently, to call for a Holy War against the West."

Months later, Farrakhan warned President Bush once again about his planned war.

"Mr. President, if you do this, you will bring down upon America an increase in the Divine Judgment of rain, hail, snow, wind, earthquakes, pestilence and famine that is already witnessed in the country. As you go about destroying other nations and cities, you will bring this kind of Divine wrath on the American people and on American cities," the Muslim leader said in an Oct. 30, 2002 letter.

While Farrakhan has spoken against the war in practically every public message since it began, in a recent *Final Call* interview, he warned the world community to act justly and reject Bush's efforts to make war with Iran. He also urged the Muslim world to unite to stop U.S. military aggression.

"If the international community would deal fairly, they could prevent a war that is triggered by an unprovoked attack on Iran," he said, in a Jan. 5 interview. "However, the Zionists have worked their way into control in America, Britain, France, Germany and other countries of the world, so

Europe will not favor a just solution to the problem presented by Iran's desire for atomic knowledge, and how to use that knowledge for peaceful purposes," Farrakhan said.

Framing public debate with false statements

Before the U.S. invaded Iraq in March 2003, in the hallways and offices of the White House, the Defense Department and the State Department, high level Bush appointees went about their work. When they spoke publicly, the script was the same and it was false.

"On at least 532 separate occasions, Bush and these three key officials [Cheney, Rice and Rumsfeld], along with [Powell], Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz and White House press secretaries Ari Fleischer and Scott McClellan, stated unequivocally that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction (or was trying to produce or obtain them), links to Al Qaeda, or both. This concerted effort was the underpinning of the Bush administration's case for war," the report states.

"Not surprisingly, the officials with the most opportunities to make speeches, grant media interviews, and otherwise frame the public debate also made the most false statements, according to this first-ever analysis of the entire body of prewar rhetoric," according to the Center for Public Integrity report.

"On September 8, 2002, Bush administration officials hit the national airwaves to advance the argument that Iraq had acquired aluminum tubes designed to enrich uranium. In an appearance on NBC's 'Meet the Press,' for example, Cheney flatly stated that Saddam Hussein 'now is trying through his illicit procurement network to acquire the equipment he

needs to be able to enrich uranium."

"Condoleezza Rice, who was then Bush's national security adviser, followed Cheney that night on CNN's Late Edition. In answer to a question from Wolf Blitzer on how close Saddam Hussein's government was to developing a nuclear capability, Rice said: 'We do know that he is actively pursuing a nuclear weapon. We do know there have been shipments going into... Iraq, for instance, of aluminum tubes that really are only suited to high-quality aluminum tools that [are] only really suited for nuclear weapons programs, centrifuge programs,'" the report noted.

The falsehoods came despite April 2001 Energy Department conclusions that the applications were likely for "conventional ordnance production," and September 2002 National Intelligence Estimate work by the Energy Department and the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research stated their belief that Iraq intended to use the tubes in a conventional rocket program, the report said.

"From the beginning, the polls showed that more than any other section of the American population Black people were opposed to this war and consistently have been opposed to the war," said activist Larry Hamm.

Askia Muhammad writes for the *Final Call*.

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