

TIME LINES

The time lines, seen here as they stood on May 22, 2006, may be accessed online at www.frankrich.com. They will be updated as events warrant, and readers are encouraged to send their own updates and additions for inclusion in the Web version.

SEPTEMBER 15, 2001

During a meeting at Camp David to discuss the war plan, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld and Deputy Defense Secretary Wolfowitz advocate an attack on Iraq, noting the scarcity of “good targets in Afghanistan.”

- First reported in Bob Woodward’s *Bush at War*, November 2002.

SEPTEMBER 16, 2001

Vice President Dick Cheney speaks with Tim Russert on Meet the Press:

TIM RUSSERT: Saddam Hussein, your old friend, his government had this to say: “The American cowboy is rearing the fruits of crime against humanity.” If we determine that Saddam Hussein is also harboring terrorists, and there’s a track record there, would we have any reluctance of going after Saddam Hussein?

VICE PRESIDENT CHENEY: No.

TIME LINES

MR. RUSSERT: Do we have evidence that he's harboring terrorists?

VICE PRESIDENT CHENEY: There is—in the past, there have been some activities related to terrorism by Saddam Hussein. But at this stage, you know, the focus is over here on Al Qaeda and the most recent events in New York. Saddam Hussein's bottled up, at this point, but clearly, we continue to have a fairly tough policy where the Iraqis are concerned.

MR. RUSSERT: Do we have any evidence linking Saddam Hussein or Iraqis to this operation?

VICE PRESIDENT CHENEY: No.

SEPTEMBER 19, 2001

At a meeting of the Defense Policy Board, Iraqi National Congress leader Ahmad Chalabi and the Mideast scholar Bernard Lewis address the group, arguing for U.S. action against Iraq.

- First reported in *USA Today*, September 11, 2002.

SEPTEMBER 21, 2001

In the President's Daily Brief (PDB), President Bush is told that there is no evidence of Iraqi participation in 9/11 and "scant credible evidence" of any "significant collaborative ties" between Iraq and Al Qaeda. The president is further told that Saddam regards Al Qaeda and "other theocratic radical Islamist organizations" as threats to his secular regime and that he even considered infiltrating the organization with Iraqi nationals or intelligence

TIME LINES

operatives. The CIA assessment is also distributed to Vice President Cheney, National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice and her deputy, Stephen Hadley, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld, Deputy Defense Secretary Wolfowitz, Secretary of State Colin Powell, and others.

- First reported in *National Journal*, November 22, 2005.

OCTOBER 15, 2001

“Reporting on a possible uranium yellow-cake sales agreement between Niger and Iraq first came to the attention of the U.S. Intelligence Community.”

- From the Senate Intelligence Committee’s “Report on the U.S. Intelligence Community’s Prewar Intelligence Assessments on Iraq,” July 7, 2004.

NOVEMBER 20, 2001

“U.S. Embassy Niamey disseminated a cable on a recent meeting between the am-

SEPTEMBER 28, 2001

According to a poll in The Washington Post, 87 percent say that capturing Osama bin Laden and breaking up his network is a “must do”; 39 percent say overthrowing Saddam, “even if he is not linked to the attacks,” is a “must do.”

OCTOBER 26, 2001

At a news conference in Prague, the Czech interior minister confirms that an Iraqi intelligence officer, Ahmed Khalil Ibrahim Samir al-Ani, met with the 9/11 ringleader, Mohamed Atta, in Prague in early 2001.

TIME LINES

bassador and the Director General of Niger's French-led consortium. The Director General said 'there was no possibility' that the government of Niger had diverted any of the 3,000 tons of yellowcake produced in its two uranium mines."

· From the Senate Intelligence Committee's "Report on the U.S. Intelligence Community's Prewar Intelligence Assessments on Iraq," July 7, 2004.

NOVEMBER 21, 2001

President Bush orders Defense Secretary Rumsfeld to "get Tommy Franks looking at what it would take to protect America by removing Saddam Hussein if we have to."

· From Bob Woodward's *Plan of Attack*, April 2004.

NOVEMBER 26, 2001

At a Rose Garden press conference, President Bush emphasizes that "Afghanistan is still just the beginning" and publicly suggests for the first time that Iraq may be the next target in the war on terrorism: "As for Mr. Saddam Hussein, he needs to let inspectors back in his country to show us that he is not developing weapons of mass destruction."

DECEMBER 1, 2001

A Fox News/Opinion Dynamics poll finds that 47 percent believe it is "very likely" that Saddam was "involved" in the 9/11 attacks.

DECEMBER 9, 2001

Appearing on Meet the Press, Dick Cheney advances the notion of an Iraq-Qaeda connection for the first time:

TIME LINES

DECEMBER 17, 2001

The results of a CIA-administered polygraph determine that Adnan Ihsan Saeed al-Haideri, a civil engineer who claimed to have helped Saddam's men secretly bury tons of biological, chemical, and nuclear weapons, was lying. Al-Haideri claimed the weapons were buried in subterranean wells, hidden in private villas, and stashed beneath the Saddam Hussein Hospital, the largest medical facility in Baghdad. Days later, Ahmad Chalabi arranges for Judith Miller of *The New York Times* to interview al-Haideri in a Bangkok hotel room under the supervision of the Iraqi National Congress.

- Reported by James Bamford in his book *Pretext for War*, June 2004, and in an article for *Rolling Stone*, December 1, 2005.

VICE PRESIDENT CHENEY: Well, what we now have that's developed since you and I last talked, Tim, of course, was that report that—it's been pretty well confirmed that [Atta] did go to Prague and he did meet with a senior official of the Iraqi intelligence service in Czechoslovakia last April, several months before the attack. Now, what the purpose of that was, what transpired between them, we simply don't know at this point, but that's clearly an avenue that we want to pursue.

MR. RUSSERT: What we do know is they—Iraq is harboring terrorists.

VICE PRESIDENT CHENEY: Correct.

DECEMBER 20, 2001

The New York Times publishes an article by Judith Miller, "Iraqi Tells of Renovations

TIME LINES

at Sites for Chemical and Nuclear Arms”:
“An Iraqi defector who described himself as a civil engineer said he personally worked on renovations of secret facilities for biological, chemical and nuclear weapons in underground wells, private villas and under the Saddam Hussein Hospital in Baghdad as recently as a year ago.”

DECEMBER 21, 2001

A Washington Post/ABC News poll finds that after the rapid collapse of the Taliban in Afghanistan, Americans, by a ratio of nearly two to one, believe that the war on terrorism will be a success only with the death or capture of Osama bin Laden and the removal of Saddam Hussein from power. By more than three to one, Americans favor broadening the war to other countries where terrorists are believed to operate, such as Somalia, Sudan, and Yemen. President Bush ends the year with an 86 percent approval rating.

FEBRUARY 2002

“Based on information from the C.I.A. report from the foreign service, on February 12, 2002, the [Defense Intelligence Agency] wrote a finished intelligence product titled ‘Niamey signed an agreement to sell 500 tons of uranium a year to Baghdad’ . . . The piece concluded that ‘Iraq probably is searching abroad for natural uranium to assist in its nuclear weapons program.’ The product did not include any judgments about the credibility of the reporting.”

· From the Senate Intelligence Committee’s “Report on the U.S. Intelligence Community’s Prewar Intelligence Assessments on Iraq,” July 7, 2004.

TIME LINES

Joseph P. Wilson IV, a former ambassador to Niger, travels to Niamey and determines the alleged sale to be unfounded.

The Defense Intelligence Agency issues a report that includes documents identifying Ibn al-Shaykh al-Libi, a top member of Al Qaeda in American custody, as a likely fabricator. Among his possible fabrications were claims that Iraq had provided biological and chemical weapons training to Qaeda members. The Defense Intelligence Terrorism Summary concludes that “it is more likely this individual is intentionally misleading the debriefers. Ibn al-Shaykh has been undergoing debriefs for several weeks and may be describing scenarios to the debriefers that he knows will retain their interest.”

- The documents are later declassified and made public by Senator Carl Levin (D-Mich.) in November 2005.

MARCH 4, 2002

A high-level intelligence assessment by the Bush administration concluded in early 2002 that the sale of uranium from Niger to Iraq was “unlikely” because of a host of economic, diplomatic, and logistical obstacles, according to a secret State Department memo.

- The memo was declassified in early 2006 through a Freedom of Information Act request filed by Judicial Watch and reported on in *The New York Times*, January 18, 2006.

MARCH 11, 2002

A Washington Post/ABC News poll finds that while 91 percent support the Afghanistan conflict, the percentage of “strong” support-

TIME LINES

ers has dipped from 79 percent in November to 69 percent in the latest poll. Also, since late November 2001, the proportion who say the war in Afghanistan is going “very well” dropped from 42 percent to 24 percent. An additional 61 percent say the conflict is going “fairly well,” up from 51 percent in November.

MARCH 24, 2002

On CNN’s Late Edition, Dick Cheney first makes reference to Saddam’s nuclear ambitions: “This is a man of great evil, as the President said. And he is actively pursuing nuclear weapons at this time.”

APRIL 17, 2002

The Washington Post reports that the Bush administration had concluded that bin Laden had been in Tora Bora in December 2001 but decided not to commit American ground troops then to hunt him, thereby allowing him to escape.

MAY 2002

A fabricator warning is posted in U.S. intelligence databases in reference to a former major in the Iraqi intelligence service, the most important of three CIA sources who claimed to corroborate claims about mobile labs made by the Iraqi defector known as Curveball. The CIA and DIA concluded that he was a liar. (Two of the three sources had ties to Ahmad Chalabi; all three were deemed frauds.)

- First reported in the *Los Angeles Times*, November 20, 2005.

TIME LINES

MAY 19, 2002

"[W]e know [Saddam is] working on nuclear."—Dick Cheney appearing on NBC's Meet the Press.

MAY 31, 2002

A USA Today/CNN/Gallup poll finds that Americans are increasingly pessimistic about the war on terrorism after weeks of revelations about missed clues and warnings of likely future attacks. Four in ten Americans believe that the United States and its allies are winning the war on terrorism. In January, when headlines focused on military successes in Afghanistan, two thirds of those polled felt the nation was winning. Now, 35 percent say neither side is winning the war, and 15 percent say the terrorists are winning.

JUNE 1, 2002

In a speech to graduating cadets at West Point, President Bush outlines the case for preemptive war: "If we wait for threats to fully materialize, we will have waited too long."

JUNE 21, 2002

A CIA report entitled "Iraq and Al Qaeda: Interpreting a Murky Relationship" notes the "many critical gaps" in knowledge of Iraqi links to Al Qaeda due to "limited reporting" and the "questionable reliability of many of our sources." It states that "Reporting is contradictory on hijacker Mohamed Atta's alleged trip to Prague and meeting with an Iraqi intelligence officer, and we have not verified his travels." Regarding reports of Iraq's providing chemical and biological weapons

training, the report states “the level and extent of this assistance is not clear.”

· First reported in *Newsweek*,
July 19, 2004.

JUNE 26, 2002

In a letter to the Senate Appropriations Committee, Iraqi National Congress lobbyist Entifadh Qanbar describes the INC’s Information Collection Program, which is “designed to collect, analyze, and disseminate” information from Iraq: “Defectors, reports, and raw intelligence are cultivated and analyzed and the results are reported through the INC newspaper [*Al Mutamar*], the Arabic and Western media, and to appropriate governmental, nongovernmental, and international agencies.” The memo identifies John Hannah, a senior national-security aide to Vice President Cheney, and William Luti, the deputy undersecretary of defense later in charge of the secret Iraq War–planning outfit, Office of Special Plans, as “U.S. governmental recipients” of these reports.

· First reported in *Newsweek*,
December 15, 2003. Full quote is
from Douglas McCollam, “The List:
How Chalabi Played the Press,”
Columbia Journalism Review,
July/August 2004.

JULY 23, 2002

Senior British officials meet with Prime Minister Tony Blair to discuss Iraq. The minutes of the meeting, known as the Downing Street memo, include the remarks of the head of Britain’s MI6 intel-

ligence agency, Sir Richard Dearlove. He reports

on his recent talks in Washington.

There was a perceptible shift in attitude. Military action was now seen as inevitable. 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. The NSC had no patience with the UN route, and no enthusiasm for publishing material on the Iraqi regime's record. There was little discussion in Washington of the aftermath after military action.

Foreign Secretary Jack Straw adds: "It seemed clear that Bush had made up his mind to take military action, even if the timing was not yet decided. But the case was thin. Saddam was not threatening his neighbours, and his WMD capability was less than that of Libya, North Korea or Iran."

· The memo is first revealed in *The Sunday Times* of London on May 1, 2005.

AUGUST 2002

Andrew Card forms the White House Iraq Group (WHIG), which begins to meet weekly in the Situation Room. Regular participants include: Karl Rove; communications strategists Karen Hughes, Mary Matalin, and James R. Wilkinson; legislative liaison Nicholas E. Calio; and policy advisers led by Condoleezza Rice

TIME LINES

and her deputy, Stephen J. Hadley, along with I. Lewis Libby, Cheney's chief of staff.

- First reported in *The Washington Post*, August 10, 2003.

AUGUST 7, 2002

In a speech to the California Commonwealth Club, Dick Cheney continues to warn of Saddam's pursuit of nuclear weapons: "What we know now, from various sources, is that he has continued to improve the, if you can put it in those terms, the capabilities of his nuclear . . . and he continues to pursue a nuclear weapon."

AUGUST 23, 2002

A Gallup poll finds that a thin majority of Americans still support sending ground troops to Iraq to oust Saddam Hussein, but the number has fallen to pre-9/11 levels, from a high of 74 percent in November to 53 percent. A total of 86 percent say Saddam is supporting terrorist groups planning to attack the U.S.; 53 percent believe he was involved in the 9/11 attacks; 94 percent say Saddam either has weapons of mass destruction or is developing them; 83 percent of those who say he has weapons of mass destruction say he would use them to attack the United States. The poll also finds that the president's job approval rating has fallen to 65 percent—its lowest level since before 9/11.

AUGUST 26, 2002

In a speech to the VFW 103rd National Convention, Dick Cheney returns to the subject of Saddam's nukes: "But we now know that Saddam has resumed his efforts to acquire nuclear weapons."

TIME LINES

SEPTEMBER 4, 2002

Meeting with congressional leaders, President Bush announces that he will seek congressional approval before ordering military action against Iraq.

SEPTEMBER 7, 2002

In an interview published in The New York Times, Andrew Card explains the White House's public relations strategy on preemptive war with Iraq: "From a marketing point of view, you don't introduce new products in August."

SEPTEMBER 8, 2002

The lead story in The New York Times, "U.S. Says Hussein Intensifies Quest for A-Bomb Parts," reports that Saddam has sought to acquire thousands of aluminum tubes believed to be intended as components for a centrifuge to enrich uranium for bomb material. The story, co-written by Michael R. Gordon and Judith Miller, cites "Bush administration officials." Dick Cheney, Condoleezza Rice, Donald Rumsfeld, and Colin Powell each appear on Sunday morning news shows to tout the story.

Appearing on Meet the Press, Cheney cites the aluminum tubes in describing Saddam's path to acquiring nuclear weapons:

VICE PRESIDENT CHENEY: Well, in the nuclear weapons arena, you've got sort of three key elements that you need to acquire. You need the technical expertise. You need to have a group of scientists and technicians, engineers, who know how to put together the infrastructure and to build a weapon. He's got that. He had it because of his program that was there previously, which I'll come back and talk about in a minute, but we know he's been

TIME LINES

working for 20 years trying to acquire this capability. He's got a well-established scientifically, technically competent crew to do it.

Secondly, you need a weapons design. One of the toughest parts about building a nuclear weapon is knowing how to do it. And they've got that. He had it back prior to the Gulf War. We know from things that were uncovered during the course of the inspections back in the early '90s that he did, in fact, have at least two designs for nuclear weapons.

The third thing you need is fissile material, weapons-grade material. Now, in the case of a nuclear weapon, that means either plutonium or highly enriched uranium. And what we've seen recently that has raised our level of concern to the current state of unrest, if you will, if I can put it in those terms, is that he now is trying, through his illicit procurement network, to acquire the equipment he needs to be able to enrich uranium to make the bombs.

TIM RUSSERT: Aluminum tubes.

VICE PRESIDENT CHENEY: Specifically aluminum tubes. There's a story in The New York Times this morning—this is—I don't—and I want to attribute the Times. I don't want to talk about, obviously, specific intelligence sources, but it's now public that, in fact, he has been seeking to acquire, and we have been able to intercept and prevent him from acquiring through this particular channel, the kinds of tubes that are necessary to build a centrifuge. And the centrifuge is required to take low-grade uranium and enhance it into highly enriched uranium, which is what you have to have in order to build a bomb. This is a technology he was working on back, say, before the Gulf War. And one of

TIME LINES

the reasons it's of concern, Tim, is, you know, we know about a particular shipment. We've intercepted that. We don't know what else—what other avenues he may be taking out there, what he may have already acquired. We do know he's had four years without any inspections at all in Iraq to develop that capability. . . . We know we have a part of the picture. And that part of the picture tells us that he is, in fact, actively and aggressively seeking to acquire nuclear weapons.

Appearing on CNN's Late Edition, Rice tells Wolf Blitzer, "The problem here is that there will always be some uncertainty about how quickly he can acquire nuclear weapons. But we don't want the smoking gun to be a mushroom cloud."

Appearing on CBS's Face the Nation, Rumsfeld echoes Rice:

BOB SCHIEFFER: Well, let me ask you, then, tell me about the seriousness of the problem. We—we read in The New York Times today a story that says that Saddam Hussein is closer to acquiring nuclear weapons. Does he have nuclear weapons? Is there a smoking gun here?

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: The smoking gun is an interesting phrase. It—it implies that what we're doing here is law enforcement; that what we're looking for is a case that we can take into a court of law and prove beyond a reasonable doubt. The problem with that is the way one gains absolute certainty as to whether a dictator like Saddam Hussein has a nuclear weapon is if he uses it, and that's a little late.

TIME LINES

Appearing on Fox News Sunday, Powell tells Tony Snow, “With respect to nuclear weapons, we are quite confident that he continues to try to pursue the technology that would allow him to develop a nuclear weapon. . . . And as we saw in reporting just this morning, he is still trying to acquire, for example, some of the specialized aluminum tubing one needs to develop centrifuges that would give you an enrichment capability.”

On Meet the Press, Cheney revisits his September 2001 remarks on the likelihood of an Iraq-Qaeda connection:

*VICE PRESIDENT CHENEY: Well, I want to be very careful about how I say this. I’m not here today to make a specific allegation that Iraq was somehow responsible for 9/11. I can’t say that. On the other hand, since we did that interview, new information has come to light. And we spent time looking at that relationship between Iraq, on the one hand, and the Al Qaeda organization on the other. And there has been reporting that suggests that there have been a number of contacts over the years. We’ve seen in connection with the hijackers, of course, Mohamed Atta, who was the lead hijacker, did apparently travel to Prague on a number of occasions. And on at least one occasion, we have reporting that places him in Prague with a senior Iraqi intelligence official a few months before the attack on the World Trade Center. The debates about, you know, was he there or wasn’t he there, again, it’s the intelligence business.**

*See entries for June 21, 2002, and October 21, 2002.

TIME LINES

MR. RUSSERT: What does the C.I.A. say about that? Is it credible?

VICE PRESIDENT CHENEY: It's credible. But, you know, I think a way to put it would be it's unconfirmed at this point. We've got . . .

MR. RUSSERT: Anything else?

*VICE PRESIDENT CHENEY: There is—again, I want to separate out 9/11, from the other relationships between Iraq and the Al Qaeda organization. But there is a pattern of relationships going back many years. . . .**

MR. RUSSERT: But no direct link?

VICE PRESIDENT CHENEY: I can't—I'll leave it right where it's at. I don't want to go beyond that. I've tried to be cautious and restrained in my comments, and I hope that everybody will recognize that.

A New York Times/CBS poll reports that 68 percent approve of the United States taking military action to try to remove Saddam Hussein from power, though only 27 percent believe the administration has explained the U.S. position regarding Iraq; 62 percent believe the president should seek congressional approval for an attack.

SEPTEMBER 11, 2002

President Bush commemorates the first anniversary of 9/11 with an elaborately staged speech from Ellis Island.

**See entry for September 21, 2001.*

TIME LINES

SEPTEMBER 12, 2002

President Bush outlines the Iraqi threat in a speech to the UN's General Assembly.

The White House posts to its Web site a document entitled "A Decade of Deception and Defiance," which includes a reference to the Iraqi defector al-Haideri's buried WMD claims and cites Judith Miller's December 2001 New York Times article. (The document remains at the White House Web site.)*

An NBC/Wall Street Journal poll finds that 53 percent believe that members of Al Qaeda are based in Iraq.

SEPTEMBER 14, 2002

In his weekly radio address, President Bush says that Saddam "has illicitly sought to purchase the equipment needed to enrich uranium for a nuclear weapon. Should his regime acquire fissile material, it would be able to build a nuclear weapon within a year."

MID-SEPTEMBER 2002

CIA director George Tenet informs President Bush that both the State and Energy departments have doubts about Saddam's aluminum tubes and that some within the CIA aren't certain that the tubes were meant for nuclear weapons.

· First reported in *National Journal*,
March 30, 2006.

At a meeting with Bush, Cheney, and Rice, CIA director Tenet says that a member of Saddam Hussein's inner circle, his foreign minister Naji Sabri, had made a deal to re-

*See entry for December 17, 2001.

TIME LINES

veal Iraq's military secrets to the CIA and reported that there was "no active weapons of mass destruction program."

· First reported by *60 Minutes*,
April 23, 2006.

SEPTEMBER 18, 2002

Testimony at a hearing of the Joint Intelligence Committees on pre-9/11 intelligence failures reveals for the first time that there was specific intelligence about terrorist plans to crash airplanes into the World Trade Center, including a warning in 1998.

SEPTEMBER 20, 2002

"We now have irrefutable evidence that [Saddam] has once again set up and reconstituted his program to take uranium, to enrich it to sufficiently high grade, so that it will function as the base material as a nuclear weapon. . . . There's no doubt about what he's attempting. And there's no doubt about the fact that the level of effort has escalated in recent months."—Dick Cheney at a GOP fund-raiser in Casper, Wyoming, as recorded by the Associated Press.*

SEPTEMBER 24, 2002

A British dossier provides the first public charge that Iraq sought to buy uranium from an unspecified African country.

SEPTEMBER 24, 2002

CIA director Tenet briefs a closed hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on Iraq's nuclear program, adding uranium to the aluminum tube story: "The suitability of the tubes for that purpose had

*See entry for Mid-September 2002.

TIME LINES

been disputed, but this time the argument that Iraq had a nuclear program under way was buttressed by a new and striking fact: the C.I.A. had recently received intelligence showing that, between 1999 and 2001, Iraq had attempted to buy five hundred tons of uranium oxide from Niger, one of the world's largest producers.”*

· First reported in *The New Yorker*,
March 31, 2003.

SEPTEMBER 24, 2002

A CNN/USA Today/Gallup poll finds that 50 percent believe that Al Qaeda is a bigger threat to the United States, while 28 percent say that Iraq is.

SEPTEMBER 25, 2002

A CBS News poll finds that 51 percent think Saddam was “personally involved” in 9/11; 70 percent say Qaeda members are based in Iraq.

SEPTEMBER 26, 2002

At a Defense Department briefing, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld discusses collaboration between Iraq and Al Qaeda:

We have what we believe to be credible information that Iraq and Al Qaeda have discussed safe haven opportunities in Iraq, reciprocal non-aggression discussions. We have what we consider to be credible evidence that Al Qaeda leaders have sought contacts in Iraq who could help them acquire weapon of—weapons of*

*See entries for November 20, 2001, and March 4, 2002.

*See entry for September 21, 2001.

TIME LINES

mass destruction capabilities. We do have—I believe it’s one report indicating that Iraq provided unspecified training relating to chemical and/or biological matters for Al Qaeda members. There is, I’m told, also some other information of varying degrees of reliability that supports that conclusion of their cooperation.*

SEPTEMBER 28, 2002

In his weekly radio address, President Bush says the Iraqi regime “has longstanding and continuing ties to terrorist groups, and there are Al Qaeda terrorists inside Iraq.”†

OCTOBER 2002

The Pentagon’s Northern Gulf Affairs office is renamed the Office of Special Plans, a more generic name meant to obscure its objective of gathering intelligence to build a case and prepare for the invasion of Iraq. The office reverts to its former name in July 2003.

· *Newsday*, August 12, 2003.

OCTOBER 1, 2002

The National Intelligence Communities (NIC) publish a National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) on “Iraq’s Continuing Programs for Weapons of Mass Destruction.” Due to a formatting problem in an earlier draft version, the dissenting view held by the State Department’s Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR) regarding Iraqi pursuit of African uranium—that

*See entry for February 2002 (regarding Ibn al-Shaykh al-Libi).

†See entry for September 21, 2001.

such claims were “highly dubious”—is confined to a text box, separated by some sixty pages from the discussion of the uranium issue.

On the matter of aluminum tubes, the NIE states:

In INR’s view Iraq’s efforts to acquire aluminum tubes is central to the argument that Baghdad is reconstituting its nuclear weapons program, but INR is not persuaded that the tubes in question are intended for use as centrifuge rotors. INR accepts the judgment of technical experts at the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) who have concluded that the tubes Iraq seeks to acquire are poorly suited for use in gas centrifuges to be used for uranium enrichment and finds unpersuasive the arguments advanced by others to make the case that they are intended for that purpose. INR considers it far more likely that the tubes are intended for another purpose, most likely the production of artillery rockets. The very large quantities being sought, the way the tubes were tested by the Iraqis, and the atypical lack of attention to operational security in the procurement efforts are among the factors, in addition to the DOE assessment, that lead INR to conclude that the tubes are not intended for use in Iraq’s nuclear weapon program.

· From the Senate Intelligence Committee’s “Report on the U.S. Intelligence Community’s Prewar Intelligence Assessments on Iraq,” July 7, 2004.

TIME LINES

A one-page summary of the NIE is prepared for President Bush, handed to him by CIA director George Tenet, and read in Tenet's presence. The President's Summary, as it is formally known, states that while "most agencies judge" that Iraq's procurement of aluminum tubes was "related to a uranium enrichment effort . . . INR and DOE believe that the tubes more likely are intended for conventional weapons uses."

· First revealed in *National Journal*,
March 2, 2006.

OCTOBER 2, 2002

"On October 2, 2002, the Deputy DCI testified before the SSCI. Senator Jon Kyl asked the Deputy DCI whether he had read the British white paper and whether he disagreed with anything in the report. The Deputy DCI testified that 'the one thing where I think they stretched a little bit beyond where we would stretch is on the points about Iraq seeking uranium from various African locations. We've looked at those reports and we don't think they are very credible. It doesn't diminish our conviction that he's going for nuclear weapons, but I think they reached a little bit on that one point. Otherwise I think it's very solid.'"

· From the Senate Intelligence Committee's "Report on the U.S.

OCTOBER 1, 2002

A Newsweek poll finds that 24 percent say removing Saddam would be better for national security; 37 percent say removing bin Laden/Al Qaeda would be better for security.

TIME LINES

Intelligence Community's Prewar Intelligence Assessments on Iraq," July 7, 2004.

OCTOBER 6, 2002

After recommending that a reference to the Iraqi pursuit of African uranium be stricken from a draft of a presidential speech set for October 7, the CIA faxes a fuller account of its reasoning: "Three points: (1) The evidence is weak. One of the two mines cited by the source as the location of the uranium oxide is flooded. The other mine cited by the source is under the control of the French authorities. (2) The procurement is not particularly significant to Iraq's nuclear ambitions because the Iraqis already have a large stock of uranium oxide in their inventory. And (3) we have shared points one and two with Congress, telling them that the Africa story is overblown and telling them this is one of the two issues where we differed with the British."

· From the Senate Intelligence Committee's "Report on the U.S. Intelligence Community's Prewar Intelligence Assessments on Iraq," July 7, 2004.

OCTOBER 7, 2002

In a televised address from Cincinnati, President Bush says:

*Iraq has attempted to purchase high-strength aluminum tubes and other equipment needed for gas centrifuges, which are used to enrich uranium for nuclear weapons.**

*See entry for October 1, 2002 (regarding the President's Summary).

TIME LINES

*We know that Iraq and Al Qaeda have had high-level contacts that go back a decade. Some Al Qaeda leaders who fled Afghanistan went to Iraq. These include one very senior Al Qaeda leader who received medical treatment in Baghdad this year, and who has been associated with planning for chemical and biological attacks. We've learned that Iraq has trained Al Qaeda members in bomb-making and poisons and deadly gases.**

Facing clear evidence of peril, we cannot wait for the final proof, the smoking gun that could come in the form of a mushroom cloud. . . .

OCTOBER 9, 2002

“On October 9, 2002, an Italian journalist from the magazine *Panorama* provided U.S. Embassy Rome with copies of documents pertaining to the alleged Iraq-Niger uranium transaction. The journalist had acquired the documents from a source who had requested 15,000 Euros in return for their publication, and wanted the embassy to authenticate the documents. Embassy officers provided copies of the documents to the C.I.A.'s [redacted] because the embassy . . . was sending copies of the documents back to State Department headquarters.”

· From the Senate Intelligence Committee's "Report on the U.S. Intelligence Community's Prewar Intelligence Assessments on Iraq," July 7, 2004.

*See entries for September 21, 2001, and February 2002 (regarding Ibn al-Shaykh al-Libi).

TIME LINES

OCTOBER 15, 2002

The U.S. embassy in Rome faxes copies of the Niger documents to the State Department, where an INR analyst immediately suspects their legitimacy. The analyst provides copies to other intelligence agencies, which apparently ignore the documents.

· From the Senate Intelligence Committee's "Report on the U.S. Intelligence Community's Prewar Intelligence Assessments on Iraq," July 7, 2004.

OCTOBER 10, 2002

The House of Representatives votes to pass a resolution on use of force in Iraq.

OCTOBER 11, 2002

The Senate passes the Iraq resolution.

A Pew poll reports that 66 percent believe that Saddam helped the 9/11 terrorists.

OCTOBER 16, 2002

President Bush signs the Iraq resolution, saying, "With this resolution, Congress has now authorized the use of force. I have not ordered the use of force. I hope the use of force will not become necessary."

OCTOBER 21, 2002

The New York Times reports that Czech President Václav Havel had called the White House in early 2002 to discreetly tell senior administration officials that there was no evidence that 9/11 hijacker Mohamed Atta had met with an Iraqi intelligence officer in Prague—a conclusion shared by the American intelligence community. (Later a

TIME LINES

Czech government spokesman said that Havel did not make the call but reaffirmed that there was no evidence of the Prague meeting.)

DECEMBER 2, 2002

*In remarks to the Air National Guard conference, Vice President Cheney posits a collaboration between Saddam and Al Qaeda: "His regime has had high-level contacts with Al Qaeda going back a decade and has provided training to Al Qaeda terrorists."**

DECEMBER 19, 2002

The official U.S. response to Iraq's declaration of disarmament notes Iraq's failure to account for African uranium, representing the first public accusation by the United States and the first time Niger is specified.†

DECEMBER 21, 2002

CIA director Tenet and his deputy, John McLaughlin, present "The Case" to President Bush, Vice President Cheney, National Security Advisor Rice, and Chief of Staff Card in the Oval Office. Responding to the president's skepticism about the marketability of the case, Tenet exclaims, "It's a slam dunk case!"

- First reported in Bob Woodward's *Plan of Attack*, April 2004.

*See entries for September 21, 2001, and February 2002 (regarding Ibn al-Shaykh al-Libi).

†See entries for November 20, 2001, March 4, 2002, October 1, 2002 (regarding the NIE), and October 6, 2002.

TIME LINES

DECEMBER 24, 2002

Niger's prime minister declares publicly that Iraq has neither purchased nor inquired about purchasing uranium from Niger since he took office in 2000.

JANUARY 2003

In an informal National Intelligence Estimate, intelligence agencies unanimously conclude that Saddam was unlikely to attack the United States unless attacked first. A one-page President's Summary, entitled "Nontraditional Threats to the U.S. Homeland through 2007," is delivered to President Bush, who reads it in the presence of then CIA director George Tenet. Vice President Cheney receives virtually the same intelligence.

· First reported in *National Journal*,
March 2, 2006.

Concerned about the effect on its ties with Niger, the Pentagon requested an authoritative judgment on whether or not Iraq attempted to procure uranium from Niger. The National Intelligence Council (NIC)—the coordinating body for the fifteen agencies that constituted the U.S. intelligence committee—drafted a memo stating unequivocally that the claim was baseless. According to four U.S. officials with firsthand knowledge later interviewed by *The Washington Post*, the NIC memo was delivered to the White House as the administration began to make the Niger claim the centerpiece of its case against Iraq.

· First reported in *The Washington Post*, April 9, 2006.

TIME LINES

JANUARY 10, 2003

A highly classified intelligence assessment, entitled “Questions on Why Iraq Is Procuring Aluminum Tubes and What the IAEA Has Found to Date,” states that INR, the Energy Department, and the International Atomic Energy Agency all believed that Iraq was using aluminum tubes for conventional weapons programs. The Senior Executive Memorandum, as it is known, is circulated among high-level administration officials, including Vice President Cheney and Condoleezza Rice.

- First reported in *National Journal*, March 2, 2006.

JANUARY 12, 2003

A Knight Ridder poll finds that half of those surveyed (51 percent) believe that one or more of the 9/11 hijackers were Iraqi citizens; 44 percent said “most” or “some” were Iraqis.

JANUARY 13, 2003

A State Department nuclear analyst sends an e-mail to several intelligence analysts “outlining his reasoning why, ‘the uranium purchase agreement probably is a hoax,’” indicating that “one of the documents that purported to be an agreement for a joint military campaign, including both Iraq and Iran, was so ridiculous that it was ‘clearly a forgery.’”

- From the Senate Intelligence Committee’s “Report on the U.S. Intelligence Community’s Prewar Intelligence Assessments on Iraq,” July 7, 2004.

TIME LINES

JANUARY 16, 2003

The CIA receives copies of the Niger documents.

· From the Senate Intelligence Committee's "Report on the U.S. Intelligence Community's Prewar Intelligence Assessments on Iraq," July 7, 2004.

JANUARY 23, 2003

*Condoleezza Rice publishes an Op-Ed in The New York Times, entitled "Why We Know Iraq Is Lying," which states that Iraq's weapons "declaration fails to account for or explain Iraq's efforts to get uranium from abroad."**

An NBC/Wall Street Journal poll finds that 48 percent say Al Qaeda is the greatest threat to the United States; 24 percent say that Iraq is the greater threat.

JANUARY 26, 2003

In an interview with European press, Secretary of State Powell claims that there is evidence of an Iraq-Qaeda connection:

QUESTION: You referred in your speech to the links between Al Qaeda and Iraq. Now, even some of our secret service chiefs say publicly there is no evidence of that.

SECRETARY POWELL: We do have evidence of it. We are not suggesting that there is

*See entries for November 20, 2001, March 4, 2002, October 1, 2002 (regarding the NIE), October 6, 2002, December 24, 2002, and January 2003 (regarding the NIC memo).

TIME LINES

a 9/11 link, but we are suggesting—we do have evidence—of connections over the years between Iraq and Al Qaeda and other terrorist organizations.

JANUARY 28, 2003

In his State of the Union address, President Bush completes the administration's portrait of the Iraqi threat, linking Saddam's search for uranium with his aluminum tubes for refining the nuclear fuel, his ties to Al Qaeda, and the specter of another 9/11:

*From three Iraqi defectors we know that Iraq, in the late 1990s, had several mobile biological weapons labs. These are designed to produce germ warfare agents, and can be moved from place to a place to evade inspectors. Saddam Hussein has not disclosed these facilities. He's given no evidence that he has destroyed them.**

The International Atomic Energy Agency confirmed in the 1990s that Saddam Hussein had an advanced nuclear weapons development program, had a design for a nuclear weapon and was working on five different methods of enriching uranium for a bomb. 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-

*See entry for May 2002.

†See entries for November 20, 2001, March 4, 2002, October 1, 2002 (regarding the NIE), October 6, 2002, *December 24, 2002*, January 2003 (regarding the NIC memo), and January 13, 2003.

TIME LINES

strength aluminum tubes suitable for nuclear weapons production. Saddam Hussein has not credibly explained these activities. He clearly has much to hide.*

JANUARY 29, 2003

An ABC poll finds that 42 percent think President Bush presented enough evidence of an Iraqi threat while 56 percent want more; 68 percent believe Iraq provided “direct support” to Al Qaeda.

JANUARY 29, 2003

Secretary of State Powell gives his chief of staff, Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson, a forty-eight-page dossier from the White House containing intelligence on Iraq’s WMDs and alleged ties to Al Qaeda gathered by the vice president’s office. Powell tells Wilkerson to go to CIA headquarters to begin examining the intelligence in preparation for Powell’s speech to the UN Security Council on February 5.

· First reported in *Vanity Fair*, May 2004.

JANUARY 30—

FEBRUARY 4, 2003

Over four days and nights, Powell and his staff meet at CIA headquarters to vet the Iraq intelligence. After scrapping the White House dossier and beginning from scratch, Powell and his team wrangle with the vice president’s office over which intelligence was sound enough to cite in

*See entries for Mid-September 2002, October 1, 2002 (regarding the President’s Summary of the NIE), and January 10, 2003.

Powell's speech. The vice president's office presses Powell to include the discredited account of 9/11 hijacker Mohamed Atta's meeting with an Iraqi intelligence officer in Prague. At the final rehearsal of the speech, Powell throws it out. In the early morning of February 5, hours before Powell is to deliver his speech, CIA director Tenet asks to see the text, apparently concerned that Powell had cut too much concerning Iraq's links to Al Qaeda.

· First reported in *Vanity Fair*,
May 2004.

JANUARY 31, 2003

During a private two-hour meeting among top aides in the Oval Office, President Bush tells British prime minister Tony Blair that while the United States would "put its full weight" behind efforts to secure a second UN resolution before invading Iraq and "would twist arms and even threaten," war was inevitable and had been "penciled in for 10 March" already.

Acknowledging that inspectors had not yet found WMDs, the president raised three possible ways of provoking war with Iraq should the U.S. case prove insufficient: flying a U-2 spy plane, painted in UN colors, over Iraq to draw fire, thereby making Saddam Hussein in breach of Resolution 1441; producing an Iraqi defector to give a public presentation on WMDs; and assassinating Hussein.

The president and prime minister discuss postwar Iraq. Bush expresses doubt that there will be internecine warfare in

TIME LINES

the aftermath; Condoleezza Rice says that a “planning cell” in the Defense Department had been preparing for postwar Iraq and that “a great deal of work was now in hand.”

- As reported by David Manning, then chief foreign policy adviser to Prime Minister Blair, in a memo. The memo was published in an updated edition of Philippe Sands’s *Lawless World* (February 2006) and first revealed during the February 2, 2006, broadcast of Britain’s *Channel 4 News*.

FEBRUARY 4, 2003

After repeated demands to see American and British evidence of Iraqi attempts to procure uranium from Niger, the International Atomic Energy Agency finally receives the Italian documents and immediately doubts their authenticity.

- From the Senate Intelligence Committee’s “Report on the U.S. Intelligence Community’s Prewar Intelligence Assessments on Iraq,” July 7, 2004.

FEBRUARY 5, 2003

In a final effort to persuade Secretary of State Powell to reinsert the Prague story into his speech, I. Lewis Libby calls Colonel Wilkerson. Wilkerson, already in the Security Council chamber, refuses to take the call. “‘Scooter,’ said one State Department aide, ‘wasn’t happy.’”

- First reported in *Vanity Fair*, May 2004.

TIME LINES

FEBRUARY 5, 2003

In his speech to the United Nations on the Iraqi threat, Secretary of State Powell discusses Saddam's biological and chemical weapons, his nuclear ambitions, and his ties to Al Qaeda. He makes no reference to attempts to procure uranium.

In his presentation on mobile biological weapons labs, Powell cites the "eyewitness account" of an Iraqi defector that "has been corroborated by other sources":

A second source, an Iraqi civil engineer in a position to know the details of the program, confirmed the existence of transportable facilities moving on trailers.

A third source, also in a position to know, reported in summer 2002 that Iraq had manufactured mobile production systems mounted on road trailer units and on rail cars.

*Finally, a fourth source, an Iraqi major, who defected, confirmed that Iraq has mobile biological research laboratories. . . .**

FEBRUARY 6, 2003

Following Secretary of State Powell's presentation, President Bush said, "The Iraqi regime has actively and secretly attempted to obtain equipment needed to produce chemical, biological and nuclear weapons. First-

*See entry for May 2002 ("Powell said he was never warned, during three days of intense briefings at C.I.A. headquarters before his U.N. speech, that he was using material that both the D.I.A. and C.I.A. had determined was false." *Los Angeles Times*, November 20, 2005).

TIME LINES

FEBRUARY 8, 2003

The UN's Team Bravo conducts the first search of Curveball's former work site, Djerf al Nadaf. "The raid by the American-led biological weapons experts lasted 3½ hours. It was long enough to prove Curveball had lied" about mobile biological and chemical weapons labs.

- First reported in the *Los Angeles Times*, November 20, 2005.

hand witnesses have informed us that Iraq has at least seven mobile factories for the production of biological agents, equipment mounted on trucks and rails to evade discovery. Using these factories, Iraq has produced within just months hundreds of pounds of biological poisons."*

A CNN/USA Today/Gallup poll reports that 79 percent think Secretary Powell made a "strong" case for invading Iraq; 66 percent think he made a "strong" case for Iraq's "ties" to Al Qaeda.

FEBRUARY 21, 2003

A Pew poll finds that 57 percent believe Saddam helped the 9/11 terrorists.

MARCH 6, 2003

During a prime-time press conference on Iraq, President Bush mentions 9/11 eight times.

MARCH 7, 2003

UN weapons inspector Hans Blix reports on progress of inspections, citing more cooperation and asking for more time. He tells the Se-

*See entry for May 2002.

TIME LINES

MARCH 7, 2003

The public announcement comes after the United States and Britain fail to respond to advance notice of the IAEA's conclusion.

- First reported in *The New Yorker*, October 27, 2003.

curity Council that a series of searches had found "no evidence" of mobile biological production facilities.

IAEA director Mohamed ElBaradei reports that the Niger documents are "not authentic."

MARCH 7, 2003

The United States, Britain, Spain, and Bulgaria put forth a new UN resolution calling for a March 17 deadline for Iraq to disarm.

None of the three evening newscasts mentions the forgeries or uranium intelligence.

MARCH 8, 2003

In an interview with CNN, former ambassador Joseph Wilson discusses the forgeries, noting a front-page story in The Washington Post and suggesting that the administration acknowledge the intelligence failure: "I think you probably just fess up and try to move on and say there's sufficient other evidence to convict Saddam of being involved in the nuclear arms trade. But Dr. ElBaradei yesterday was pretty clear. He doesn't see that this is happening."

MARCH 9, 2003

A New York Times report on the forgeries quotes ElBaradei as suggesting that "there's a lot of people who would be delighted to malign Iraq," adding, "It could range from Iraqi dissidents to all sorts of other sources."

TIME LINES

*Appearing on Face the Nation, Condoleezza Rice discusses Iraq-Qaeda collaboration: "We know from a detainee that—the head of training for Al Qaeda, that they sought help in developing chemical and biological weapons because they weren't doing very well on their own. They sought it in Iraq. They received the help."**

MARCH 11, 2003

A New York Times/CBS poll finds that 45 percent believe Saddam was involved in 9/11.

MARCH 14, 2003

At a White House press briefing, the fifth since the IAEA revelation, a member of the press corps poses the first question about the forgeries.

Senator Jay Rockefeller (D-W.Va.) asks the FBI to investigate the forgeries, writing to FBI director Mueller, "There is a possibility that the fabrication of these documents may be part of a larger deception campaign aimed at manipulating public opinion and foreign policy regarding Iraq."

MARCH 16, 2003

Vice President Cheney appears on Meet the Press: "We know he's reconstituted these programs since the Gulf War. We know he's out trying once again to produce nuclear weapons and we know that he has a long-standing relationship with various terrorist groups, including the Al Qaeda organization."

The Washington Post publishes a story on A17 entitled "U.S. Lacks Specifics on

*See entry for February 2002 (regarding Ibn al-Shaykh al-Libi).

TIME LINES

MARCH 16, 2003

The Washington Post story arose after “three separate sources” tell Woodward “confidentially that the intelligence on WMD was not as conclusive as the CIA and the administration had suggested.” Woodward drafts five paragraphs to this effect for Walter Pincus, which Pincus and the *Post*’s national security editor judged to be “a little strong.”

· From Bob Woodward’s
Plan of Attack, April 2004.

Banned Arms,” giving additional reporting credit to “staff writer” Bob Woodward.

MARCH 17, 2003

Representative Henry Waxman (D-Calif.) sends a letter to President Bush expressing doubts about the administration’s characterization of Iraq’s nuclear capability and the threat it poses.

MARCH 19, 2003

The Iraq War begins.

MARCH 23, 2003

The New York Times reports on CIA claims that the White House pressured the agency to provide intelligence that bolstered its case for war.

MARCH 24, 2003

The New Yorker publishes a report by Seymour Hersh on the forged Niger documents.

MAY 1, 2003

“Mission Accomplished”: Riding in a fighter jet emblazoned with the legend GEORGE W.

TIME LINES

BUSH, COMMANDER IN CHIEF, President Bush lands on the deck of the aircraft USS Abraham Lincoln and declares the end of “major combat operations” in a speech that evening.

A Gallup poll released today finds that 79 percent of Americans believe the war with Iraq was justified even without conclusive evidence of WMDs.

MAY 6, 2003

New York Times columnist Nicholas Kristof writes for the first time about a “former U.S. ambassador to Africa” who was dispatched on a CIA mission to Niger and found no evidence of Iraqi attempts to procure uranium.

MAY 27, 2003

In a field report submitted to Washington, a secret DIA-sponsored fact-finding mission, conducted by nine U.S. and British biological-weapons experts, concludes that “there was no connection to anything biological” in two trailers captured by U.S. and Kurdish troops. Three weeks later, the field report and a 122-page final report are stamped “secret” and shelved.

· First reported in *The Washington Post*, April 12, 2006.

MAY 27, 2003

A Fox News poll finds that 65 percent believe WMDs will be found; 25 percent don't.

MAY 28, 2003

The CIA and DIA publish a white paper declaring that two trucks loaded with lab equipment, found soon after the invasion, were part of Hussein's biological warfare program. The

TIME LINES

report dismissed as a “cover story” Iraq’s explanation that the equipment generated hydrogen.

MAY 29, 2003

Asked by a Polish interviewer about the failure thus far to find WMDs, President Bush responds:

*We found the weapons of mass destruction. We found biological laboratories. You remember when Colin Powell stood up in front of the world, and he said, Iraq has got laboratories, mobile labs to build biological weapons. They’re illegal. They’re against the United Nations resolutions, and we’ve so far discovered two. And we’ll find more weapons as time goes on. But for those who say we haven’t found the banned manufacturing devices or banned weapons, they’re wrong. We found them.**

Vanity Fair contributor Sam Tanenhaus talks with Matt Lauer on Today about his story for the July 2003 issue, in which he quotes Deputy Defense Secretary Wolfowitz as saying, “The truth is that for reasons that have a lot to do with the U.S. government bureaucracy we settled on the one issue that everyone could agree on which was weapons of mass destruction as the core reason.”†

*See entries for May 2002, February 8, 2003, and May 27, 2003.

†This is the Pentagon’s version of the quote, which differs slightly from the way it is worded in the *Vanity Fair* story.

TIME LINES

Senator Bob Graham challenges the White House on its prewar intelligence in various conversations with reporters cited by the Associated Press: "If we don't find those weapons, then the fundamental reason that this war was justified will have been undercut. . . . Either our intelligence community didn't know as much as they represented they knew, or the information that they presented had been politicized before it was made available to decision makers. . . . There has been a Nixonian stench to the continued practice of putting the American people in the dark."

Senator John McCain and others begin to talk of hearings on prewar intelligence.

JUNE 2, 2003

Representative Waxman writes a letter to the president inquiring why the uranium charge persisted despite contradictory evidence.

JUNE 3, 2003

*Condoleezza Rice appears on CNBC's Capital Report: "But let's remember what we've already found. Secretary Powell on February 5th talked about a mobile, biological weapons capability. That has now been found and this is a weapons laboratory trailers capable of making a lot of agent that—dry agent, dry biological agent that can kill a lot of people. So we are finding these pieces that were described."**

In a Gallup poll, 56 percent say the war was justified even if no WMDs are found.

*See entries for May 2002, February 8, 2003, and May 27, 2003.

TIME LINES

JUNE 5, 2003

The Washington Post reports that many CIA analysts felt pressured by Vice President Cheney and his chief of staff, I. Lewis “Scooter” Libby, who made “multiple trips” to the agency before the war to question analysts about intelligence on WMDs and Iraq’s alleged ties to Al Qaeda.

*While visiting Qatar, President Bush downgrades his rhetoric on WMDs, saying, “We recently found two mobile biological-weapons facilities which were capable of producing biological agents.”**

JUNE 8, 2003

Appearing on This Week and Meet the Press, Condoleezza Rice addresses the increasing attention to the uranium claims:

At the time that the State of the Union address was prepared, there were also other sources that said that they were, the Iraqis were seeking yellow cake, uranium oxide from Africa. (ABC’s This Week)

The president quoted a British paper. We did not know at the time—no one knew at the time, in our circles—maybe someone knew down in the bowels of the agency, but no one in our circles knew that there were doubts and suspicions that this might be a forgery. Of course, it was information that was mistaken. But the—it was a relatively small part of the case about nuclear weapons and nuclear reconstitution. It is also the case that the broad

*See entries for May 2002, February 8, 2003, and May 27, 2003.

TIME LINES

JUNE 10, 2003

The State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research drafts a three-page memo for Undersecretary of State Marc Grossman, who requested a summary of INR's opposition to the White House-endorsed uranium allegation. CIA officer Valerie Plame Wilson is mentioned and identified as Joe Wilson's wife in the second paragraph, which is marked *S* for secret, indicating her covert status.

· First reported in *The Washington Post*, July 21, 2005.

JUNE 12, 2003

Post reporter Walter Pincus's inquiries regarding the story in early June prompted

*picture about Iraq's programs was a picture that went very far back in time.**
(NBC's Meet the Press)

JUNE 11, 2003

The search for WMDs in Iraq so far fruitless, CIA director Tenet hires the former UN weapons inspector David Kay to lead the new Iraq Survey Group.

JUNE 12, 2003

The Washington Post reports that, according to "senior administration officials and a former government official," the CIA failed to pass on the findings of a "retired U.S. ambassador's" investigation into claims that Iraq was seeking uranium from Niger.

*See entries for November 20, 2001, March 4, 2002, October 1, 2002 (regarding the NIE), October 6, 2002, *December 24, 2002*, January 2003 (regarding the NIC memo), and January 13, 2003.

TIME LINES

internal CIA “fact gathering” on Wilson’s mission around the time that the State Department drafted its memo for Undersecretary Grossman.

- First reported in *Time*, August 8, 2005.

Vice President Cheney tells his chief of staff, I. Lewis “Scooter” Libby, that Valerie Plame Wilson worked for the CIA in the Counterproliferation Division.

- First disclosed in the grand jury indictment of Libby, October 28, 2005.

JUNE 12, 2003

A Gallup poll shows 31 percent think that the administration deliberately misled Americans on WMDs.

JUNE 13, 2003

In a New York Times column, Nicholas Kristof challenges the “senior administration officials and a former government official” cited in the previous day’s Washington Post story, writing that:

while Director of Central Intelligence George Tenet may not have told Mr. Bush that the Niger documents were forged, lower C.I.A. officials did tell both the vice president’s office and National Security Council staff members. Moreover, I hear from another source that the C.I.A.’s operations side and its counterterrorism center undertook their own investigations of the documents, poking around in Italy and Africa, and also concluded that they were false—a judgment that filtered to the top of the C.I.A.

TIME LINES

MID-JUNE 2003

Bob Woodward learns from an as-yet-unnamed administration official that Joe Wilson's wife "worked for the C.I.A. on weapons of mass destruction as a WMD analyst."

- From Woodward's deposition before Special Counsel Patrick Fitzgerald, first disclosed in *The Washington Post*, November 16, 2005.

JUNE 20, 2003

Bob Woodward interviews an administration official for *Plan of Attack*, bringing a list of questions that included the phrase "Joe Wilson's wife." There is no evidence that Woodward asked about her or that the subject came up.

- From Woodward's deposition before Special Counsel Patrick Fitzgerald, first disclosed in *The Washington Post*, November 16, 2005.

JUNE 22, 2003

The Washington Post reports that the still-classified *National Intelligence Estimate* "portrayed a far less clear picture about the link between Iraq and al Qaeda than the one presented by the president" in his October 2002 speech in Cincinnati.

JUNE 23, 2003

An ABC News poll finds 63 percent believe that the war can be justified without WMDs.

JUNE 23, 2003

New York Times reporter Judith Miller meets with I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby, who tells her that Vice President Cheney did not know about Joseph Wilson or his trip

and that the CIA never reported it to the vice president's office. Libby also tells Miller that Wilson's wife works in the Weapons Intelligence, Nonproliferation, and Arms Control (WINPAC) division of CIA. Miller writes, "Wife works in bureau?" in her notebook.

- First reported in Miller's account of her grand jury testimony on September 30 and October 12, 2005. The notes from the conversation were discovered in the *Times* newsroom after Miller's September 30 grand jury appearance. Libby had not previously disclosed the meeting to prosecutors or investigators.

Bob Woodward has a phone conversation with Scooter Libby:

I told him I was sending to him an 18-page list of questions I wanted to ask Vice President Cheney. On page 5 of that list there was a question about "yellowcake" and the October 2002 National Intelligence Estimate regarding Iraq's weapons programs. I testified that I believed I had both the 18-page question list and the question list from the June 20 interview with the phrase "Joe Wilson's wife" on my desk during this discussion. I testified that I have no recollection that Wilson or his wife was discussed, and I have no notes of the conversation.

- From Woodward's deposition before Special Counsel Patrick Fitzgerald, first disclosed in *The Washington Post*, November 16, 2005.

TIME LINES

JUNE 27, 2003

Woodward meets with Libby in his office:

I testified that on June 27, 2003, I met with Libby at 5:10 p.m. in his office adjacent to the White House. I took the 18-page list of questions with the Page-5 reference to “yellowcake” to this interview and I believe I also had the other question list from June 20, which had the “Joe Wilson’s wife” reference. I have four pages of typed notes from this interview, and I testified that there is no reference in them to Wilson or his wife. A portion of the typed notes shows that Libby discussed the October 2002 National Intelligence Estimate on Iraq’s alleged weapons of mass destruction, mentioned “yellowcake” and said there was an “effort by the Iraqis to get it from Africa. It goes back to February ’02.” This was the time of Wilson’s trip to Niger.

· From Woodward’s deposition before Special Counsel Patrick Fitzgerald, first disclosed in *The Washington Post*, November 16, 2005.

JUNE 30, 2003

*In a Today show interview, Secretary of State Powell says, “We have found the mobile biological weapons labs that I could only show cartoons of that day.”**

*See entries for May 2002, February 8, 2003, and May 27, 2003 (“Powell said he was never warned, during three days of intense briefings at C.I.A. headquarters before his U.N. speech, that he was using material that both the D.I.A. and C.I.A. had determined was false.” *Los Angeles Times*, November 20, 2005).

TIME LINES

JULY 6, 2003

Joseph Wilson publishes an Op-Ed in The New York Times titled, "What I Didn't Find in Africa," identifying himself as the retired ambassador who traveled to Niger and found no evidence of Iraqi attempts to procure uranium. A Washington Post story also identifies him by name, and Wilson himself appears on Meet the Press.

Appearing after Wilson on Meet the Press, Robert Novak dismisses the uranium story: "[The economy] is the issue that ought to scare President Bush much more than the weapons of mass destruction or uranium from Niger, which I think are little elitist issues that don't bother most of the people, but job loss does."

On Fox News Sunday, Tony Snow ignores the Wilson revelation and interviews General Myers:

SNOW: We have heard rumors that there may be some announcements indicating that they have, in fact, coalition forces, David Kay and others, come across evidence that would vindicate the arguments the president made before the war. True or false?

MYERS: As far as I know, they're—what I know is that they're gathering facts. I have not seen the facts, and we'll have to wait and see. I just don't know.

JULY 6, 2003

Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage arranges for the June 10 State Department memo detailing Wilson's trip to Niger and his wife's involvement to be sent to Secretary of State Powell before he leaves for Africa. Carl Ford,

TIME LINES

assistant secretary of state for intelligence and research, sends the memo to the White House marked “for transmission to Powell.”

- First reported in *The New York Times*, July 16, 2005.

JULY 7, 2003

Robert Novak calls Fleischer.

- Per White House phone logs turned over to Patrick Fitzgerald’s grand jury, first reported by Bloomberg News, July 18, 2005.

JULY 7, 2003

Secretary of State Powell is seen boarding Air Force One with the State Department memo in his hand.

- First reported in *The Washington Post*, July 21, 2005.

JULY 7, 2003

A British parliamentary report calls into question British intelligence on uranium.

At a press briefing, Ari Fleischer dismisses the Wilson revelation, saying, “Well, there is zero, nada, nothing new here. Ambassador Wilson, other than the fact that now people know his name, has said all this before.”

JULY 7, 2003

The president leaves for Africa in the evening.

JULY 8, 2003

A Washington Post report quotes a “senior administration official” as saying, “Knowing all that we know now, the reference to Iraq’s attempt to acquire uranium from Africa should not have been included in the State of the Union speech.”

JULY 8, 2003

Karl Rove speaks with Robert Novak, who tells Rove that Joseph Wilson's wife was a CIA officer named Valerie Plame and that she had recommended Wilson for the Niger investigation. Rove responds, "I heard that, too."

· First reported in *The New York Times*, July 15, 2005.

Judith Miller meets with Scooter Libby a second time, over breakfast at the St. Regis Hotel. Libby tells Miller that the vice president's office requested further intelligence from the CIA regarding Iraqi efforts to procure uranium but that the response "barely made it out of the bowels of the CIA" and that, further, CIA director George Tenet had never heard of Joseph Wilson. The conversation turns to Wilson's wife; Libby tells Miller that she works for the CIA, in the WINPAC division. Miller's notes contain the notation "wife works at Winpac" and the misnomer "Valerie Flame," though Miller later testifies to a grand jury that Libby did not reveal the name and that she does not recall who did.

· From Judith Miller's grand jury testimony, first reported in *The New York Times*, October 16, 2005.

With authorization from the president, through Vice President Cheney, to disclose classified information, Libby reveals portions of the October 2002 National Intelligence Estimate in an effort to counter Wilson's claims and show that Iraq had been "vigorously trying to procure uranium."

TIME LINES

· From an April 5, 2006, court filing in *U.S. v. I. Lewis Libby*, first disclosed on the Web site of *The New York Sun*, April 6, 2006.

JULY 10, 2003

*At a hearing of the Senate Armed Services committee, Senator Mark Pryor (D-Ark.) asks Defense Secretary Rumsfeld when he knew “that the reports about [Iraq seeking] uranium coming out of Africa were bogus?” Secretary Rumsfeld replied, “Oh, within recent days, since the information started becoming available.”**

“One item I showed was cartoons of the mobile biological van. They were cartoons, artist’s renderings, because we had never seen one of these things, but we had good sourcing on it, excellent sourcing on it. And we knew what it would look like when we found it, so we made those pictures. And I can assure you I didn’t just throw those pictures up without having quite a bit of confidence in the information that I had been provided and that Director Tenet had been provided and was now supporting me in the presentation on, sitting right behind me. And we waited. And it took a couple of months, and it took until after the war, until we found a van and another van that pretty much matched what we said it would look like. And I think that’s a pretty good indication that we were not cooking the books.”†—Secretary

*See entry for *March 7, 2003*.

†See entries for *May 2002*, *February 8, 2003*, and *May 27, 2003* (“Powell said he was never warned, during three days of intense briefings at C.I.A. headquarters before his U.N. speech, that he was using material that both the D.I.A. and C.I.A. had determined was false.” *Los Angeles Times*, November 20, 2005).

of State Colin Powell at State Department briefing

JULY 11, 2003

In a joint press gaggle with Ari Fleischer aboard Air Force One, Condoleezza Rice directs blame for the “16 words” at the CIA:

What we’ve said subsequently is, knowing what we now know, that some of the Niger documents were apparently forged, we wouldn’t have put this in the President’s speech—but that’s knowing what we know now.

*All that I can tell you is that if there were doubts about the underlying intelligence in the N.I.E., those doubts were not communicated to the President. The only thing that was there in the N.I.E. was a kind of a standard INR footnote, which is kind of 59 pages away from the bulk of the N.I.E. That’s the only thing that’s there. And you have footnotes all the time in C.I.A.—I mean, in N.I.E.s. So if there was a concern about the underlying intelligence there, the President was unaware of that concern and as was I.**

JULY 11, 2003

In a phone conversation with *Time* reporter Matthew Cooper on “deep background,” Karl Rove tells Cooper not to “get too far out” on Joseph Wilson’s charges about the uranium intelligence. Without naming her, Rove then tells

*See entries for November 20, 2001, March 4, 2002, October 1, 2002 (regarding the NIE), October 6, 2002, *December 24, 2002*, January 2003 (regarding the NIC memo), and January 13, 2003.

TIME LINES

Cooper that Wilson's wife worked at the CIA on issues related to weapons of mass destruction, and that she was responsible for Wilson's trip to Niger, before ending the call saying cryptically, "I've already said too much."

- First reported July 17, 2005, in Cooper's account of his grand jury testimony in *Time*'s July 25 issue.

After the conversation with Cooper, Rove e-mails Deputy National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley, telling him that he "didn't take the bait" when the *Time* reporter suggested that Wilson's revelation was damaging to the president.

- First reported by the Associated Press, July 15, 2005.

JULY 11, 2003

CIA director George Tenet releases a statement in the evening affirming that the "16 words should never have been included in the text written for the President." He goes on to recount all the instances in which the CIA either refrained from including the uranium intelligence in reports to Congress or expressed doubts about it to the British and in the NIE.

An ABC News poll finds that 74 percent support while 25 percent oppose the U.S. troop presence in Iraq; 57 percent say the war was worth fighting while 40 percent say it was not.

JULY 12, 2003

"The President sees this as much ado, that it's beside the point of the central threat that Saddam Hussein presented. . . . Yes, the President has moved on. And I think, frankly, much of the country has moved on, as well."—Ari Fleischer in the daily briefing

JULY 12, 2003

Scooter Libby tells Matt Cooper that the vice president's office was not responsible for Joseph Wilson's trip to Niger. Cooper asks Libby if he knows anything about Wilson's CIA officer wife having sent her husband on the mission, and Libby says, "Yeah, I've heard that too." Libby does not name her or indicate that her status is covert.

- First reported July 17, 2005, in Cooper's account of his grand jury testimony in *Time's* July 25 issue.

Washington Post reporter Walter Pincus is told by an "administration official" that the White House was not putting much stock in the Wilson trip to Africa because it was "set up as a boondoggle by his wife, an analyst with the agency working on weapons of mass destruction."

- *The Washington Post* first reported on October 12, 2003, that "a Post reporter" had been the recipient of the information about Wilson's wife.

Pincus later wrote an account of the conversation, without identifying the source, for the Summer 2005 Nieman Reports, published by the Nieman Foundation for Journalism, at Harvard University.

Judith Miller speaks with Scooter Libby a third time, by phone. Libby resumes his criticism of Joseph Wilson's report on Niger and says that the inclusion of the "16 words" in the president's State of the Union address was the result of "a simple

TIME LINES

miscommunication between the White House and the C.I.A.”

· From Judith Miller’s grand jury testimony, first reported in *The New York Times*, October 16, 2005.

JULY 13, 2003

“It turns out that it’s technically correct what the president said, that the U.K. does—did say that—and still says that. They haven’t changed their mind, the United Kingdom intelligence people.”—Donald Rumsfeld on NBC’s Meet the Press

JULY 14, 2003

Ari Fleischer gives his final press briefing after resigning, saying, “I think this remains an issue about did Iraq seek uranium in Africa, an issue that very well may be true. We don’t know if it’s true, but nobody but nobody can say it is wrong.”

In his syndicated column, Robert Novak names Joseph Wilson’s wife, Valerie Plame, as “an Agency operative on weapons of mass destruction,” and says that “two senior administration officials” told him that she had recommended her husband for the mission to Niger. There is no mention of the column in that day’s White House press briefing.

JULY 16, 2003

In his on-line column for The Nation, David Corn first raises the possibility that “two senior administration officials” broke the law when they identified Valerie Plame Wilson to Robert Novak, asking, “Did senior Bush officials blow the cover of a US intelligence officer working covertly in a field of vital importance to national security—and break the

TIME LINES

law—in order to strike at a Bush administration critic and intimidate others?”

JULY 20, 2003

In a New York Times article about the chaos enveloping the search for WMDs in Iraq, Judith Miller refers to 578 “suspect sites” to be searched.

JULY 21, 2003

*While visiting Iraq, Paul Wolfowitz tells reporters, “I’m not concerned about weapons of mass destruction,” adding that that was now the job of American intelligence agencies. “I’m not saying that getting to the bottom of this WMD issue isn’t important. It is important. But it is not of immediate consequence.”**

JULY 22, 2003

Telling reporters that he had received two memos from the C.I.A. and a phone call from Director George Tenet in October 2002 that raised concerns about claims that Iraq was seeking uranium from Africa, Deputy National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley takes responsibility for the inclusion of the sixteen words in the president’s State of the Union address.

At a White House press briefing, reporters raise the issue of Robert Novak’s July 14 column for the first time:

QUESTION: The Robert Novak column last week identified the wife of Ambassador Joseph Wilson as a C.I.A. operative who was working on WMD issues. Novak said that identification is based on information given to him by two administration sources. That col-

**See entry for May 29, 2003 (regarding Wolfowitz’s interview in *Vanity Fair*).*

TIME LINES

umn has now given rise to accusations that the administration deliberately blew the cover of an undercover C.I.A. operative, and in so doing, violated a federal law that prohibits revealing the identity of undercover C.I.A. operatives. Can you respond to that?

MR. McCLELLAN: Thank you for bringing that up. That is not the way this President or this White House operates. And there is absolutely no information that has come to my attention or that I have seen that suggests that there is any truth to that suggestion. And, certainly, no one in this White House would have given authority to take such a step.

QUESTION: So you're saying—

MR. McCLELLAN: I'm saying that that is not the way that this President or this White House operates, and I've seen no evidence to suggest there's any truth to it.

JULY 30, 2003

The CIA refers the Plame leak to the Justice Department for criminal prosecution.

AUGUST 10, 2003

A report by Barton Gellman and Walter Pincus in The Washington Post examines the administration's exaggeration of the Iraqi threat, from the mischaracterization of aluminum tubes to "the escalation of nuclear rhetoric" in August 2002. Gellman and Pincus also note that "the introduction of the term 'mushroom cloud'" into White House rhetoric "coincided with the formation of a White House Iraq Group, or WHIG, a task force assigned to 'educate the public'" about Iraq's WMDs. The story marks the first known public reference to WHIG.

TIME LINES

AUGUST 21, 2003

At a public forum in Seattle, Joseph Wilson names Karl Rove as a likely suspect behind the leaking of his wife's identity, saying, "At the end of the day, it's of keen interest to me to see whether or not we can get Karl Rove frog-marched out of the White House in handcuffs."

SEPTEMBER 14, 2003

Dick Cheney appears on NBC's Meet the Press:

*With respect to 9/11, of course, we've had the story that's been public out there. The Czechs alleged that Mohamed Atta, the lead attacker, met in Prague with a senior Iraqi intelligence official five months before the attack, but we've never been able to develop any more of that yet either in terms of confirming it or discrediting it. We just don't know.**

Same on biological weapons—we believe he'd developed the capacity to go mobile with his BW [biological weapons] production capability because, again, in reaction to what we had done to him in '91. We had intelligence reporting before the war that there were at least seven of these mobile labs that he had gone out and acquired. We've, since the war, found two of them. They're in our possession today, mobile biological facilities that can be used to produce anthrax or smallpox or whatever else you wanted to use during the course of developing the capacity for an attack.†

*See entry for June 21, 2002.

†See entries for May 2002, February 8, 2003, and May 27, 2003.

TIME LINES

SEPTEMBER 16, 2003

At the White House press briefing, reporters ask about Joseph Wilson's charges against Karl Rove:

QUESTION: Wilson now believes that the person who did this was Karl Rove. He's quoted from a speech last month as saying, "At the end of the day, it's of keen interest to me to see whether or not we can get Karl Rove frog-marched out of the White House in handcuffs."

Did Karl Rove tell—

MR. McCLELLAN: I haven't heard that. That's just totally ridiculous. But we've already addressed this issue.

QUESTION: But did Karl Rove—

MR. McCLELLAN: If I could find out who anonymous people were—I just said it's totally ridiculous.

QUESTION: But did Karl Rove do it?

MR. McCLELLAN: I said it's totally ridiculous.

SEPTEMBER 22, 2003

In an interview with Fox News anchor Brit Hume, President Bush explains what he believes happened to Saddam's WMDs:

I think he hid them, I think he dispersed them. I think he is so adapted at deceiving the civilized world for a long period of time that it's going to take a while for the troops to unravel. But I firmly believe he had weapons of mass destruction. I know he used them at one time, and I'm confi-

TIME LINES

dent he had programs that would enable him to have a weapon of mass destruction at his disposal.

A Newsweek poll finds that 47 percent believe that Saddam was “directly involved” in 9/11.

SEPTEMBER 25, 2003

The New York Times reports that an early draft of a report by Iraq Survey Group chief David Kay will likely say that Iraq had no WMDs.

SEPTEMBER 26, 2003

MSNBC.com reports that George Tenet recently sent the Justice Department a memo urging an investigation into whether the leak of Valerie Plame Wilson’s identity was illegal.

SEPTEMBER 28, 2003

“Saddam Hussein—no one has said that there is evidence that Saddam Hussein directed or controlled 9/11, but let’s be very clear, he had ties to Al Qaeda, he had Al Qaeda operatives who had operated out of Baghdad.”—Condoleezza Rice on NBC’s Meet the Press*

SEPTEMBER 29, 2003

ABC News producer Andrea Owen and a cameraman approach Karl Rove as he walks toward his car early in the morning:

OWEN: Did you have any knowledge or did you leak the name of the C.I.A. agent to the press?

*See entry for September 21, 2001.

TIME LINES

ROVE: No.

At which point, Rove shuts his car door.

At the daily press briefing, Scott McClellan again dismisses suggestions that Karl Rove was involved in the leak:

QUESTION: All right, let me just follow up. You said this morning, quote, “The president knows that Karl Rove wasn’t involved.” How does he know that?

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, I’ve made it very clear that it was a ridiculous suggestion in the first place. I saw some comments this morning from the person who made that suggestion backing away from that. And I said it is simply not true. So—I mean, it’s public knowledge I’ve said that it’s not true.

QUESTION: Well, how—

MR. McCLELLAN: And I have spoken with Karl Rove. I’m not going to get into conversations that the president has with advisers or staff, or anything of that nature. That’s not my practice.

QUESTION: But the president has a factual basis for knowing that Karl Rove—

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, I said it publicly. I said that—and so, I’ve made it very clear.

QUESTION: I’m not asking what you said, I’m asking if the president has a factual basis for saying—for your statement that he knows Karl Rove—

TIME LINES

MR. McCLELLAN: He's aware of what I said, that there is simply no truth to that suggestion. And I have—I have spoken with Karl about it.

Later in the briefing, McClellan describes the leak as "serious" for the first time:

QUESTION: But isn't the president concerned when there is a leak of this magnitude that could threaten someone's very life?

MR. McCLELLAN: I think I addressed that earlier. Absolutely, the president believes that this is a serious matter when you're talking about the leak of classified information. The leak of classified information, yes, you're absolutely right, can compromise sources and methods. That's why the president takes it very seriously, and we've always taken it very seriously. And if it happened in this case, it's a particularly serious matter and it should be looked into by the Department of Justice.

At 8:30 P.M., the Justice Department notifies White House counsel Alberto Gonzales that it has opened an investigation into the Plame leak and that Gonzales should direct staff to preserve all documents. Justice grants Gonzales's request to wait until the morning to distribute a memo notifying staff.

SEPTEMBER 29, 2003

Gonzales immediately tells Chief of Staff Andrew Card about the investigation.

- First disclosed by Gonzales in an interview with Bob Schieffer on CBS's *Face the Nation*, July 24, 2005.

TIME LINES

SEPTEMBER 30, 2003

The New York Times reports on an internal Defense Intelligence Agency assessment determining that most of the intelligence provided by Iraqi defectors who were made available by the Iraqi National Congress was of little or no value. Several defectors supplied by INC leader Ahmad Chalabi had invented or exaggerated their claims to have direct knowledge of Iraq's WMDs.

Alberto Gonzales informs President Bush of the leak investigation around 7:00 A.M. and reads a memo at the 7:30 senior staff meeting ordering all White House staff to "preserve all materials that might be relevant." He e-mails the memo to all staff and later issues a second, more detailed memo in the evening after receiving a letter from the Justice Department specifying the records that investigators would like to see, including any contacts with Robert Novak or two Newsday reporters, or anything related to Joseph Wilson.

*"Yes. Let me just say something about leaks in Washington. There are too many leaks of classified information in Washington. There's leaks at the executive branch; there's leaks in the legislative branch. There's just too many leaks. And if there is a leak out of my administration, I want to know who it is. And if the person has violated law, the person will be taken care of."**—President Bush during a Q&A on job creation in Chicago

*See entries for July 8, 2003 (regarding Scooter Libby's conversation with Judith Miller), and April 6, 2006.

TIME LINES

OCTOBER 1, 2003

Scott McClellan continues to defend Rove at the daily briefing:

MR. McCLELLAN: That's a serious issue. And I just made it—I made it clear earlier—you brought up Karl's name—let's be very clear, I said it was a ridiculous suggestion, I said it's simply not true that he was involved in leaking classified information, and nor did he condone that kind of activity. So, I mean, this has been answered. And now we're trying to get into a whole bunch of issues separate and apart from that.

QUESTION: Did your conversation with Rove include whether or not he had tried to highlight that story for reporters?

MR. McCLELLAN: I'm sorry?

QUESTION: Did your conversation with Rove include asking him whether or not he had tried to highlight that—

MR. McCLELLAN: I made it very clear, I have spoken with him—

QUESTION:—that story for reporters, the Novak story?

MR. McCLELLAN: I've spoken with him. I made it very clear that it is not true that he was involved in leaking classified information or that he condoned some of what you're suggesting.

OCTOBER 2, 2003

David Kay issues his interim report: "We have found substantial evidence of an intent of senior-level Iraqi officials, including Sad-

TIME LINES

dam, to continue production at some future point in time of weapons of mass destruction.” But Kay added: “We have not found at this point actual weapons. It does not mean we’ve concluded there are no actual weapons. It means at this point in time, and it’s a huge country with a lot to do, that we have not yet found weapons.”

OCTOBER 6, 2003

*“We’re talking about a criminal action, but also hopefully will help set a clear signal we expect other leaks to stop, as well. And so I look forward to finding the truth.”**
—President Bush in remarks with Kenyan President Kibaki

OCTOBER 7, 2003

Bush remarks on leak investigation:

QUESTION: Mr. President, how confident are you the investigation will find the leaker in the C.I.A. case?

THE PRESIDENT: Randy, you tell me, how many sources have you had that’s leaked information that you’ve exposed or have been exposed? Probably none. I mean this town is a—is a town full of people who like to leak information. And I don’t know if we’re going to find out the senior administration official. Now, this is a large administration, and there’s a lot of senior officials. I don’t have any idea. I’d like to. I want to know the truth.

*See entries for July 8, 2003 (regarding Scooter Libby’s conversation with Judith Miller), and April 6, 2006.

TIME LINES

*That's why I've instructed this staff of mine to cooperate fully with the investigators—full disclosure, everything we know the investigators will find out. I have no idea whether we'll find out who the leaker is—partially because, in all due respect to your profession, you do a very good job of protecting the leakers. But we'll find out.**

Andrew Card sends a memo to White House staff reminding them to comply with the Justice Department's document request: "The President has made clear how important it is to him that everyone should comply with this request."

Scott McClellan defends Rove, Scooter Libby, and Elliott Abrams at the daily briefing:

QUESTION: So you're saying—you're saying categorically those three individuals were not the leakers or did not authorize the leaks; is that what you're saying?

MR. McCLELLAN: That's correct. I've spoken with them.

OCTOBER 10, 2003

Scott McClellan again defends Rove, Libby, and Abrams at the daily press briefing:

QUESTION: Scott, earlier this week you told us that neither Karl Rove, Elliott Abrams, nor Lewis Libby disclosed any classified information with regard to the leak. I

**See entries for July 8, 2003 (regarding Scooter Libby's conversation with Judith Miller), and April 6, 2006.*

TIME LINES

wondered if you could tell us more specifically whether any of them told any reporter that Valerie Plame worked for the CIA?

MR. McCLELLAN: Those individuals—I talked—I spoke with those individuals, as I pointed out, and those individuals assured me they were not involved in this. And that's where it stands.

QUESTION: So none of them told any reporter that Valerie Plame worked for the CIA?

MR. McCLELLAN: They assured me that they were not involved in this.

QUESTION: Can I follow up on that?

QUESTION: They were not involved in what?

MR. McCLELLAN: The leaking of classified information.

QUESTION: Did you undertake that on your own volition, or were you instructed to go to these—

MR. McCLELLAN: I spoke to those individuals myself.

OCTOBER 31, 2003

The National Intelligence Council (NIC) distributes a National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) concluding that the insurgency is homegrown and thrives on Iraqi resentment of the U.S. occupation, and warning that the unrest could lead to civil

TIME LINES

war. The analysis, produced at the request of U.S. Central Command, is dismissed by the White House and the defense secretary's office as too negative.

- First reported by Knight Ridder, February 28, 2006.

NOVEMBER 1, 2003

"Some of the killers behind these attacks are loyalists of the Saddam regime who seek to regain power and who resent Iraq's new freedoms. Others are foreigners who have traveled to Iraq to spread fear and chaos, and prevent the emergence of a successful democracy in the heart of the Middle East."—President Bush in his weekly radio address*

NOVEMBER 11, 2003

An ABC News poll shows that 44 percent think President Bush was mostly telling the truth about WMDs while 53 percent think he was hiding things or mostly lying.

NOVEMBER 17, 2003

A report in The Weekly Standard November 24 issue, entitled "Case Closed," publishes excerpts from a secret memo dated October 27, 2003, and obtained by the magazine. The memo, written by Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Douglas Feith to Senators Pat Roberts and Jay Rockefeller of the Senate Intelligence Committee, contains intelligence gathered under the aegis of Feith's Office of Special Plans that purports to show a decade-long relationship between Iraq and Al Qaeda.

*See entry for October 31, 2003.

TIME LINES

NOVEMBER 21, 2003

A Los Angeles Times poll finds that 48 percent still think the “situation in Iraq was worth going to war over.”

DECEMBER 2003

David Kay flies back to CIA headquarters and tells George Tenet that the Iraqi defector known as Curveball was a liar. An Iraq Survey Group investigation turned up Curveball’s personnel file, stating that:

Curveball was last in his engineering class, not first, as he had claimed. He was a low-level trainee engineer, not a project chief or site manager, as the C.I.A. had insisted.

Most important, records showed Curveball had been fired in 1995, at the very time he said he had begun working on bio-warfare trucks. A former C.I.A. official said Curveball also apparently was jailed for a sex crime and then drove a Baghdad taxi. . . .

“The Iraqis were all laughing,” recalled a former member of the survey group. “They were saying, ‘This guy? You’ve got to be kidding.’”

Kay tells Tenet that he is convinced that Iraq had no mobile labs or other illicit weapons. By Kay’s account, he is soon assigned a windowless office without a working telephone.

· First reported in the *Los Angeles Times*, November 20, 2005.

DECEMBER 14, 2003

Saddam Hussein is captured.

TIME LINES

JANUARY 2004

Ibn al-Shaykh al-Libi, the “top member of Al Qaeda” whose statements became the basis for the administration’s assertions that Saddam’s regime provided biological and chemical weapons training to Qaeda members, recants his earlier claims.

- Reports of al-Libi’s reversal first appeared in the July 5, 2004, issue of *Newsweek*. *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* reported the date of his recantation on November 6, 2005.

DECEMBER 30, 2003

Attorney General John Ashcroft disqualifies himself from any involvement in the Plame investigation. Deputy Attorney General James Comey assumes control of the investigation and immediately appoints U.S. attorney Patrick Fitzgerald as special counsel. The news appears in the New Year’s Eve papers.

JANUARY 9, 2004

In an interview published in the Rocky Mountain News, Dick Cheney again cites long-discredited claims of an Iraqi-Qaeda meeting in Prague:

VICE PRESIDENT CHENEY: We did have reporting that was public, that came out shortly after the 9/11 attack, provided by the Czech government, suggesting there had been a meeting in Prague between Mohamed Atta, the lead hijacker, and a man named al-Ani [Ahmed Khalil Ibrahim Samir al-Ani], who was an Iraqi intelligence official in Prague, at the embassy there, in April of ’01, prior to the 9/11 attacks. It has never been—we’ve never been able to collect any more information on

TIME LINES

*that. That was the one that possibly tied the two together to 9/11.**

QUESTION: When I was in Iraq, some of the soldiers said they believed they were fighting because of the September 11 attacks and because they thought Saddam Hussein had ties to Al Qaeda. You've repeatedly cited such links. . . . I wanted to ask you what you'd say to those soldiers, and were those soldiers misled at all?

VICE PRESIDENT CHENEY: . . . With respect to . . . the general relationship. . . . One place you ought to go look is an article that Stephen Hayes did in The Weekly Standard . . . That goes through and lays out in some detail, based on an assessment that was done by the Department of Defense and forwarded to the Senate Intelligence Committee some weeks ago. That's your best source of information. . . .

. . .

QUESTION: So you stand by the statements?

VICE PRESIDENT CHENEY: Absolutely. Absolutely.

JANUARY 20, 2004

In his State of the Union address, the president again downgrades his rhetoric on WMDs in the wake of David Kay's failure to find Saddam's stockpiles:

Already the Kay report identified dozens of weapons of mass destruction—related

**See entry for June 21, 2002.*

TIME LINES

program activities and significant amounts of equipment that Iraq concealed from the United Nations. Had we failed to act, the dictator's weapons of mass destruction programs would continue to this day. Had we failed to act, Security Council resolutions on Iraq would have been revealed as empty threats, weakening the United Nations and encouraging defiance by dictators around the world. Iraq's torture chambers would still be filled with victims, terrified and innocent. The killing fields of Iraq, where hundreds of thousands of men and women and children vanished into the sands, would still be known only to the killers. For all who love freedom and peace, the world without Saddam Hussein's regime is a better and safer place.

JANUARY 22, 2004

*In an interview with Juan Williams on National Public Radio, Dick Cheney cites evidence of Saddam's mobile biological weapons labs: "In terms of the question what is there now, we know for example that prior to our going in that he had spent time and effort acquiring mobile biological weapons labs, and we're quite confident he did, in fact, have such a program. We've found a couple of semi trailers at this point which we believe were, in fact, part of that program."**

JANUARY 23, 2004

David Kay resigns after concluding that Iraq had no stockpiles of WMDs.

*See entries for May 2002, February 8, 2003, May 27, 2003, and December 2003.

TIME LINES

FEBRUARY 14, 2004

Ibn al-Shaykh al-Libi's reversal regarding his claims that Iraq provided biological and chemical weapons training to members of Al Qaeda is reported in an intelligence document circulated to senior administration officials.

- First reported in *The New York Times*, July 31, 2004.

MAY 2004

The CIA issues a belated notice to its international stations: "Discrepancies surfaced regarding the information provided by . . . Curveball in this stream of reporting, which indicate that he lost his claimed access in 1995. Our assessment, therefore, is that Curveball appears to be fabricating in this stream of reporting."

- From the *Los Angeles Times*, November 20, 2005.

Quoted in The New York Times, Scott McClellan holds out hope: "Yes, we believe he had them, and yes, we believe they will be found. We believe the truth will come out."

JUNE 3, 2004

The Los Angeles Times reports that President Bush has consulted with a lawyer, James E. Sharp, regarding the leak investigation.

JUNE 16, 2004

The 9/11 Commission concludes that the Atta-Ani meeting in Prague never took place.

JUNE 24, 2004

President Bush, accompanied by his lawyer, is interviewed for more than an hour by Special Counsel Patrick Fitzgerald, but not under oath.

TIME LINES

JUNE 25, 2004

According to a CNN/USA Today/Gallup poll, 44 percent believe Saddam was “personally involved” in 9/11.

JULY 10, 2004

The Senate Intelligence Committee report on prewar intelligence finds much of it unfounded and leaves reporting on African uranium inconclusive, stating that the CIA has “not published an assessment to clarify or correct its position on whether or not Iraq was trying to purchase uranium from Africa.” While it undermines Joseph Wilson’s credibility regarding his purported firsthand knowledge of the forgeries and his denial that his wife recommended him for the mission, it fails to vindicate the administration’s claims about uranium. Rather, it blames the CIA for incompetence and failing to inform the White House of its misgivings, and further marginalizes State Department dissent on the intelligence. Plans for a phase two, investigating charges that the administration politicized prewar intelligence, are shelved until after the election.

JULY 14, 2004

After faulting the CIA for its incompetence and overly cautious assessments of intelligence, the Bush administration embraces the findings of a British intelligence review, which says that “Britain had credible evidence that Iraq had sought uranium from Niger but inconclusive evidence that Iraq had actually purchased it. The evidence was established independent of documents, subsequently shown to be forgeries, that Iraq had procured uranium from Niger.”

TIME LINES

SEPTEMBER 16, 2004

The New York Times reports on a National Intelligence Estimate prepared for President Bush in late July to early August of 2004 that estimates three possible outcomes for Iraq through the end of 2005, with the worst case being civil war and the best case being a tenuous stability.

SEPTEMBER 21, 2004

In response to a question about the recent National Intelligence Estimate, President Bush says: “The CIA laid out a—several scenarios that said, life could be lousy, life could be okay, life could be better. And they were just guessing as to what the conditions might be like.”

MAY 1, 2005

The Sunday Times of London publishes a secret memo describing a July 23, 2002, meeting among Prime Minister Tony Blair and senior British officials. Known as the Downing Street memo, the document reveals that the head of Britain’s MI6 intelligence agency believed that the Bush administration had already decided to go to war and that “military action was now seen as inevitable.” Salon (on June 9, 2005) reports that in the 19 daily White House press briefings that followed, the memo was the subject of only 2 out of the approximately 940 questions asked by the White House press corps.

JULY 2, 2005

Lawrence O’Donnell, a former Democratic aide and executive producer for The West Wing, reveals in *The Huffington Post* that internal Time magazine e-mails show that Karl Rove was Matthew Cooper’s source.

TIME LINES

JULY 6, 2005

Two years to the day after Joseph Wilson published his Op-Ed accusing the Bush administration of “twisting” prewar intelligence, New York Times reporter Judith Miller is jailed for refusing to reveal a confidential source to a grand jury investigating the leak of his wife’s CIA identity. Time reporter Matthew Cooper secures an eleventh-hour waiver from his source to testify.

JULY 17, 2005

Time reporter Matthew Cooper publishes an account of his grand jury testimony, revealing that on July 11, 2003, Karl Rove told him that Joseph Wilson’s wife worked for the CIA on WMD issues before ending the call saying cryptically, “I’ve already said too much.” Cooper reveals also that on July 12, 2003, he spoke with Scooter Libby, who also told him about Wilson’s wife. Neither Rove nor Libby identified her by name or as a covert agent.

SEPTEMBER 30, 2005

After spending eighty-five days in jail, Judith Miller testifies to Patrick Fitzgerald’s grand jury that Scooter Libby was her source.

OCTOBER 12, 2005

After discovering notes from an earlier conversation with Scooter Libby following her first grand jury appearance, Judith Miller testifies again, revealing that she had met with Libby in June—two weeks earlier than the previously disclosed contacts.

OCTOBER 28, 2005

Patrick Fitzgerald announces the indictment of I. Lewis Libby on charges of lying to fed-

TIME LINES

eral investigators and obstructing justice in the Plame leak investigation.

FEBRUARY 2, 2006

*Excerpts of a memo written by David Manning, Tony Blair's former foreign policy adviser, that detail a January 31, 2003, meeting between Blair, President Bush, and their senior aides in the Oval Office, are revealed in a broadcast of Britain's Channel 4 News. The memo, which appears in an updated edition of Philippe Sand's *Lawless World*, shows the president already set on invading Iraq and proposing ways to provoke a war, including painting a U-2 spy plane in UN colors to draw Saddam into firing on it and falling into breach of Resolution 1441.*

FEBRUARY 9, 2006

National Journal reports on a January 23, 2006, letter from Patrick Fitzgerald to attorneys for Scooter Libby indicating that Libby had "testified in the grand jury that he had contact with reporters in which he disclosed the content of the National Intelligence Estimate ('N.I.E.') . . . in the course of his interaction with reporters in June and July 2003. . . . We also note that it is our understanding that Mr. Libby testified that he was authorized to disclose information about the N.I.E. to the press by his superiors."

MARCH 2, 2006

National Journal reports that on October 1, 2002, CIA director George Tenet handed a one-page digest of the National Intelligence Estimate to President Bush, who read it in Tenet's presence. The summary outlined intelligence community doubts that Iraq's aluminum tubes were intended for WMDs. The

TIME LINES

National Journal *story quotes a “senior official” who describes the President’s Summary of the NIE as the “one document which illustrates what the president knew and when he knew it,” and notes that the administration has refused either to declassify or provide copies of the NIE to congressional intelligence committees.*

APRIL 6, 2006

A story on The New York Sun’s Web site concerning a court filing submitted the previous day by Patrick Fitzgerald reveals that according to Scooter Libby’s grand jury testimony, President Bush authorized Libby (through Vice President Cheney) to leak classified information about prewar intelligence.