

Where are the WMDs?

CIA's Kay Report and statements by director George Tenet loom large over Bush

The race for the presidency is on. That means throughout the next 10 months, presidential candidates will be out in full force, kissing babies and relentlessly pounding the public with political rhetoric. While President George W. Bush has been favored to win by many political analysts, one issue has resurfaced that may change that: the elusive weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.



NICHOLAS DAVIS

Over the past few weeks, Bush suffered two tremendous blows. The first came from the infamous Kay Report, issued by former CIA Chief Weapons Inspector David Kay, which illuminated the glaring inaccuracies contained within the weapons of mass destruction intelligence that the Iraqi War was predicated on. CIA Director George Tenet delivered the second blow when he attempted to defend the CIA's pre-war intelligence, but nonetheless admitted, "analysts had never concluded that Saddam Hussein posed an imminent threat."

In light of these new events, the White House has begun backpedaling in a feeble attempt to sidestep admitting the president made a mistake. The Dallas Morning News reported that National Security Council spokesman Sean McCormick said, "While several high-level presidential aides used the phrase 'imminent threat,' the president had avoided the words." McCormick later set the record straight, saying, "The president often called Mr. Hussein a grave and gathering threat."

This is a cowardly attempt to address the Bush administration's mistake. While it may be true that Bush never specifically referred to Saddam as being an "imminent threat," it is undeniable that his administration framed the matter to appear so to create a sense of urgency.

Consider these examples. On Feb. 5, 2003, Secretary of State Colin Powell evoked the CIA's credibility when he testified to the United Nations regarding weapons of mass destruction.

"My colleagues, every statement I make today is backed up by sources, solid sources," he said.

"These are not assertions."

On March 17, 2003, Bush, in an address, said, "Intelligence gathered by this and other governments leaves no doubt that Iraq continues to possess and conceal some of the most lethal weapons ever devised." On March 30, 2003, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said, "We know where they (weapons of mass

destruction) are. They're in the area around Tikrit and Baghdad."

Remarkably, no weapons have been found despite all of the "solid evidence." As a result, our country's intelligence credibility has been severely undermined and Bush's integrity has come under attack.

Did legitimate reasons exist for going to war? Absolutely. Saddam massacred his own people for decades and his regime, and for 12 years, breached the obligations of 16 previous resolutions. One such resolution violated established the cease-fire agreement under the conditions that all weapons of mass destruction be destroyed and that weapons inspectors be allowed complete and unfettered access to weapons facilities. However, in 1998, Iraq officially broke the agreement by throwing out the inspectors, firing on U.S. aircrafts numerous times over the course of several years and breaching U.N. resolution 1441.

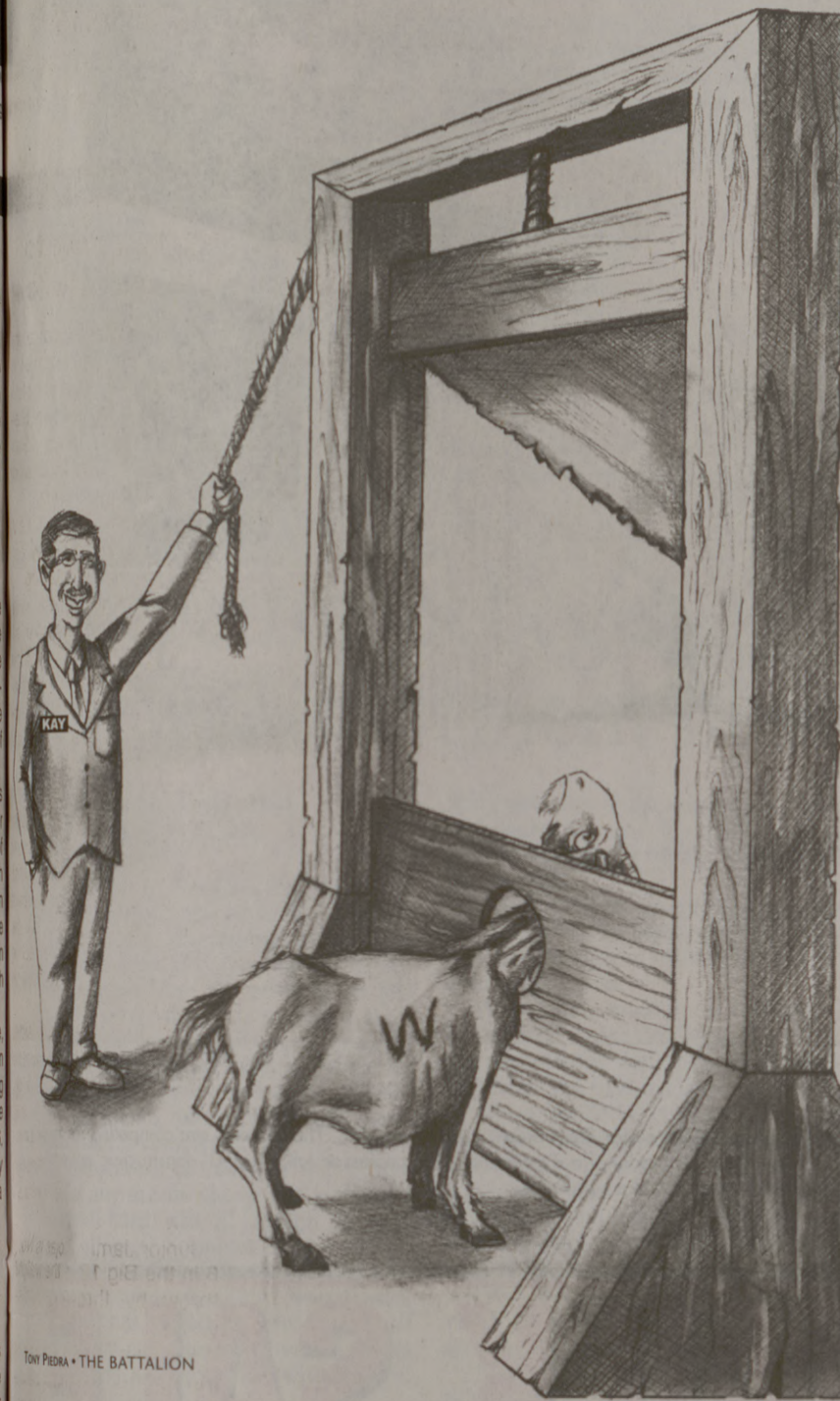
The problem is that Bush chose to focus his war call too narrowly around the weapons of mass destruction evidence to raise concerns. The other salient reasons were lobbed in as mere caveats. And now, since the key piece of evidence lacks confirmation, Bush's choice to operate outside the United Nations and immediately go to war appears to have been a hasty decision.

Surprisingly, Bush's current demeanor does not convey outrage over the intelligence mishap. After all, it took weeks of congressional pressure before Bush, begrudgingly, submitted to creating a panel to investigate the intelligence failures. Conveniently, though, the findings from this panel will not be disclosed until after the election. In the meantime, Bush and other partisans are justifying the war by saying, "Saddam Hussein was a weapon of mass destruction."

This rationalization won't cut it. The Bush administration is trying to change the rules of the game while it is still being played.

If Bush wants a chance come November, he better wise up, formally admit his mistake and take aggressive reformative action with the CIA. If that means firing Tenet, a mere figurehead, so be it. Something must signal to the international community that the United States is determined to have the best intelligence agencies in the world. Such actions will help mend the United States' shattered credibility. The public may even forgive Bush.

Nicholas Davis is a senior political science major.



Tom Petráš • THE BATTALION

Bush is isolating party with new liberal agenda

For the conservative voter, this November is shaping up to be an increasingly bleak season. While the president has done an admirable job executing the War On Terror, he has failed conservatives with his domestic agenda. Since President George W. Bush is the only candidate in the presidential race to the right of Che Guevara, there is nothing to keep the president from straying to the left — and he has. If Bush does not regain the trust of conservatives, the November elections could spell an end to his presidency and trouble for America.



MATTHEW MADDOX

United States. Bush also supported the restrictions Congress placed on free speech, deceptively called "campaign finance reform." More recently, Bush signed into law a half-trillion dollar socialized medicine program and has called on Congress to create legislation granting amnesty and Social Security benefits to illegal immigrants. Adding to the atypically bloated Republican program proposals are worthless manned spaceflights to Mars.

"If Bush does not regain the trust of conservatives, the November elections could spell an end to his presidency and trouble for America."

To top it all off, Bush has requested increasing the budget for the National Endowment for the Arts, the federal art subsidizing program made famous by funding "art" depicting Jesus on the cross submerged in urine. These shifts away from the conservative ideology and even the more moderate Republican platform could not be anything less than politically calculated moves. Without a third-party candidate in the race, there is literally nowhere for Bush's conservative base to go, except home. Since it is difficult for conservatives to get excited about a candidate who appears to have sold them out, home is exactly

where many of them may stay, meaning far fewer votes for Bush.

In 2000, conservatives were energized. They had dealt with eight years of Clinton in the White House, an individual who they considered a disgrace to the position. Also, though not viable, Green Party representative Ralph Nader was a contestant in the race and drew a number of crucial votes away from Al Gore. Bush was also facing a candidate widely considered as exciting as a piece of furniture. Despite all of that, it was still a close election. This time around, Bush has none of those advantages working in his favor. The left has built up a residual disdain for Bush, a president who many have claimed is "illegitimate" in the first place. There is no doubt that they will turnout in November. What is doubtful is that Bush's gamble to move center has won a single Democrat over to his side.

There are only two ways in which the conservative base that Bush needs to win the election is going to come to the polls: either a genuine excitement for voting Bush in another term, or a genuine fear of the Democrat opponent Bush will face. With Howard Dean and Al Sharpton only performing marginally in the primaries, it appears as if the most fear-invoking Democrats will not be in the running. This means Bush is going to have to motivate his base on his own. Perhaps larger than Bush's costly domestic policies would be the damage done to national security if one of the Democratic candidates were to win the presidency. This is all the more reason that Bush needs to do all he can to win. This means dancing with those who brought him to the presidency: conservatives.

Matthew Maddox is a senior management major.

MAIL CALL

Endangered species are protected for a reason

In response to Mike Walters' Feb. 12 column:

Thank you Mike Walters for finally pointing out that we're spending far too many resources protecting silly old nature, as if it were important.

I mean, the orca whales, who cares, right? And that's just the beginning. After all, isn't the entire endangered species list just a way to waste tax dollars protecting species that are simply too weak to survive on their own (the bald eagle, for instance).

Or hunting limits, if we'd stop wasting resources on protecting the rights of game and just set the hunters loose, we could get rid of those bothersome deer, moose, birds, etc. almost as fast as we wiped out those pesky bison.

And then there are all these regulations about clean air and water that industries have to meet. Don't the politicians understand that if we just let manufacturers pollute as much as they want, they could provide air filtration masks and water purifiers at a fraction of current costs, making clean air and water completely unnecessary.

Recycling is another issue that just continues to frustrate me. Sorting through garbage is for bums and crack-heads, not for decent Americans like you and me, who can easily just dig more up or chop more down, at least until it runs out (not in my lifetime, so who cares).

This country just spends way to much time worrying about the environment, I

mean, just because it sustains us and all doesn't mean we don't have the right to exploit it. And these orcas are just the icing on the cake, interrupting our fishing over some stupid whales.

I mean, I guess if you really thought about it, you might decide that if the orcas went extinct, the species that make up their food source would multiply uncontrollably. Then, I guess that would choke out other species and really screw up the ecosystem in that whole part of the ocean.

So if you really look ahead, I guess that would probably do far more damage to the fishing industry in the Puget Sound area than some new regulations to protect the orcas, but that's just too much thinking for me. Let's kill the whales now and we can worry about all that ecology mumbo-jumbo later.

Robert Deegan
Class of 2003

Correction

A Feb. 11 column and headline mistakenly referred to the "morning after pill" as the RU486 pill. These are two separate forms of birth control.

The Battalion encourages letters to the editor. Letters must be 200 words or less and include the author's name, class and phone number. The opinion editor reserves the right to edit letters for length, style and accuracy. Letters may be submitted in person at 014 Reed McDonald with a valid student ID. Letters also may be mailed to: 014 Reed McDonald, MS 1111, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843-1111. Fax: (979) 845-2647 Email: mail-call@thebattalion.net

