

## **The GOP Record: Weakening American Intelligence During Dangerous Times**

*The U.S. intelligence community is America's first line of defense against terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Over the past eight years, the Bush-Cheney Administration and their GOP allies in Congress have damaged American national security by: diverting intelligence resources away from the fight against Al Qaeda; undermining U.S. intelligence community professionals; and politicizing intelligence.*

### **Diverting intelligence resources away from the fight against Al Qaeda**

#### **The Iraq war drained precious intelligence resources away from the fight against Al Qaeda in Pakistan and Afghanistan.**

- *War in Iraq gave Bin Laden precious time to regroup.* “Officials with the CIA and the U.S. military said they began shifting resources out of Afghanistan in early 2002 and still haven't recovered from that mistake. ‘Iraq was a fundamental wrong turn. That was the most strategically negative action that was taken,’ said John O. Brennan, a former deputy executive director of the CIA and a former chief of the National Counterterrorism Center. ‘The collective effort in the government required to go after an individual like bin Laden -- the Iraq campaign consumed that.’ The Bush administration tried to reinvigorate the flagging hunt for bin Laden early last year by redeploying Predator drones, intelligence officers and Special Forces units to Pakistan and Afghanistan. But by then, U.S. counterterrorism officials said, **the war in Iraq had already given bin Laden and his core command precious time to regroup** and solidify their new base of operations in northwestern Pakistan. [Washington Post, 9/10/08]
- *Bush Administration took ‘eye off the ball.’* “Many analysts believe that the US invasion of Iraq diverted intelligence assets, resources and high level attention from Afghanistan at a time when Al-Qaeda was at its most vulnerable. ‘The short answer to that is they took the eye off the ball,’” said former CIA and NSC official Bruce Riedel. [AFP, 9/8/08] Terrorism expert Bruce Hoffman wrote: “In retrospect, it appears that Iraq blinded us to the possibility of an Al Qaeda renaissance. The United States’ entanglement there has consumed the attention and resources of our country’s military and intelligence communities — at precisely the time that Osama bin Laden and other senior Al Qaeda commanders were in their most desperate straits and stood to benefit most from this distraction.” [LA Times, oped, 2/20/07]
- *Al Qaeda remains a threat to the U.S., just as it did prior to 9/11/2001.* The Intelligence Community’s top counterterrorism analyst Ted Gistaro recently told an audience: “[A]l-Qaeda remains the most serious terrorist threat to the United States, and we remain in the heightened threat environment . . . In spite of successful US and allied operations against Al-Qaeda, especially the death of important Al-Qaeda figures since December, the group has maintained or strengthened key elements of its capability to attack the United States in the past year.” [Remarks of National Intelligence Officer for Transnational Threats Ted Gistaro to the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, ODNI website, 8/12/08].
- *Al Qaeda has regrouped in the tribal areas of western Pakistan.* Last year, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence concluded that Al Qaeda “has protected or regenerated key elements of its Homeland attack capability, including: a safehaven in the Pakistan Federally

Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), operational lieutenants, and its top leadership.” [Office of the Director of National Intelligence, NIE: The Terrorist Threat to the US Homeland, July 2007]

- *The situation in Afghanistan has been deteriorating.* As the Comptroller General of the United States reported to Congress in May 2007: “[A]fter more than 5 years of U.S. and international efforts, the overall security situation in this poor and ethnically diverse country has not improved and, moreover, has deteriorated significantly in the last year.” [GAO Report: Securing, Stabilizing, and Reconstructing Afghanistan: Key Issues for Congressional Oversight, GAO-07-801SP 5/24/07]

### **Undermining U.S. intelligence community professionals**

#### **Bush, GOP Congress opposed funding our brave intelligence professionals.**

- President Bush VETOED the FY2008 Intelligence Authorization Act, which provides critical funds and legal authorities to our intelligence professionals in the field. GOP Members voted to sustain President Bush’s veto. Bush’s veto was over a provision to require the CIA interrogations comply with the US Army Field Manual. [Roll call #117, 3/11/08]
- GOP Members of Congress voted AGAINST the FY2008 Intelligence Authorization Act, which authorized funds for counter-terrorism missions, covert action, espionage operations, and analysis of information about America’s adversaries. [Roll Call #341, 5/11/07]

#### **GOP Members of Congress blame intelligence professionals whenever anything goes wrong. It is never “President Bush’s fault.” The GOP policy of “blame CIA first” damages morale with the U.S. intelligence community.**

- Ranking Republican Pete Hoekstra told Fox News: “I think the [intelligence] community is incompetent. It is arrogant. And it has developed — it’s become political. You know, you take a look at WMD in Iraq. They were wrong. The two NIEs on Iran — they were wrong. The whole fiasco with Joe Wilson. And now the [destruction of the CIA] tapes ... I’m telling you I don’t have confidence in the community. You know, I have high confidence that the community continues to be broken and is not giving us, as policymakers, the information that we need to make good decisions.” [Fox News Sunday, 12/16/2007]

#### **Bush-Cheney Administration officials blew the cover of covert CIA officer Valerie Plame, ending her career. Cheney Chief of Staff Scooter Libby was convicted of lying under oath about the Plame outing, but President Bush commuted his sentence.**

- Plame told a House Committee that members of the Bush Administration “destroyed my cover,” and “I could no longer perform the work for which I had been highly trained . . . It was over in an instant . . . That career path was terminated.” [Washington Post, 12/16/07] President Bush said: “I have concluded that the prison sentence given to Mr. Libby is excessive. Therefore, I am commuting the portion of Mr. Libby’s sentence that required him to spend thirty months in prison.” Libby was convicted of lying to authorities and obstructing the

investigation into the 2003 leak of CIA operative's identity. He was the highest-ranking White House official ordered to prison since the Iran-Contra affair. [Time, 7/2/07]

### *Politicizing intelligence*

#### **Bush-Cheney Administration distorted and cherry-picked Iraq intelligence to lead us into war.**

- Paul R. Pillar, a senior CIA analyst who served as National Intelligence Officer for the Near East and South Asia from 2000-2005, wrote: “The administration used intelligence not to inform decision-making, but to justify a decision already made. It went to war without requesting -- and evidently without being influenced by -- any strategic-level intelligence assessments on any aspect of Iraq . . . The Bush administration deviated from the professional standard not only in using policy to drive intelligence, but also in aggressively using intelligence to win public support for its decision to go to war. This meant selectively adducing data – ‘cherry-picking’ -- rather than using the intelligence community’s own analytic judgments. [Paul R. Pillar, “Intelligence, Policy, and the War in Iraq,” Foreign Affairs, March/April 2006]
- Senator Jay Rockefeller, chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, concluded that “the Administration made significant claims that were not supported by the intelligence. In making the case for war, the Administration repeatedly presented intelligence as fact when in reality it was unsubstantiated, contradicted, or even non-existent. As a result, the American people were led to believe that the threat from Iraq was much greater than actually existed . . . Sadly, the Bush Administration led the nation into war under false pretenses.” [Release, Senate Intelligence Committee Unveils Final Phase II Reports on Prewar Iraq Intelligence, 6/5/08]

#### **Republicans and their Conservative allies attacked an intelligence community assessment on Iran and the professional analysts who wrote it because the document didn't tell the GOP what it wanted to hear.**

- After publication of the 2007 National Intelligence Estimate on Iran, Senate Republicans announced plans to call for a congressional commission to investigate the conclusions of the new NIE as well as the specific intelligence that went into it, according to the Washington Post, citing congressional sources. “The move is the first official challenge, but it comes amid growing backlash from conservatives and neoconservatives unhappy about the assessment that Iran halted a clandestine nuclear weapons program four years ago. It reflects how quickly the NIE has become politicized, with critics even going after the analysts who wrote it, and shows a split among Republicans.” [Washington Post, 12/7/09] Former GOP Speaker Newt Gingrich said the NIE was written by a “handful of highly partisan State Department bureaucrats,” and that “The NIE appears to be a deliberate attempt to undermine the policies of President Bush.” [Human Events website, 12/11/07]

#### **Bush-Cheney Administration went around the professional intelligence community and established their own amateur intelligence office to justify the Iraq war.**

- The Pentagon Inspector General concluded that Undersecretary of Defense Doug Feith's office “developed, produced and then disseminated alternative intelligence assessments on the Iraq and al-Qaeda relationship,” which included “conclusions that were inconsistent with the

consensus of the Intelligence Community.” The Inspector General concluded that these actions were “inappropriate.” [Declassified Report of the Pentagon Inspector General, released 2/9/07]