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## NYT: CIA bought, destroyed undeclared Iraqi chemical weapons demanded by UN

posted at 9:31 am on February 16, 2015 by Ed Morrissey

The topic of WMD in Iraq has been a hot potato for more than two decades, ever since the end of the first Gulf War and the procession of 17 UN Security Council resolutions demanding that Saddam Hussein verifiably destroy them. Hussein ignored those demands and committed numerous violations of the 1991 cease-fire agreement that suspended the war. In 2003, the US went back to war in part over the issue of WMD, deposing Hussein but coming up empty on the accusations of chemical and biological weapons, which prompted the “Bush lied” arguments that have echoed ever since. Occasionally, [caches of chemical weapons have been found in Iraq](#), reviving the debate, but they have been weapons that had already been declared and transferred to UN control before the 2003 invasion.

If the WMD existed in Iraq, what happened to it? Many suspected that it got transferred to Syria prior to the 2003 invasion, but the New York Times reports today that [the CIA actually \*did\* find at least some of the suspected and undeclared caches of chemical weapons — and destroyed them](#):

The Central Intelligence Agency, working with American troops during the occupation of Iraq, repeatedly purchased nerve-agent rockets from a secretive Iraqi seller, part of a previously undisclosed effort to ensure that old chemical weapons remaining in Iraq did not fall into the hands of terrorists or militant groups, according to current and former American officials.

The extraordinary arms purchase plan, known as Operation Avarice, began in 2005 and continued into 2006, and the American military deemed it a nonproliferation success. It led to the United States’ acquiring and destroying at least 400 Borak rockets, one of the internationally condemned chemical weapons that Saddam Hussein’s Baathist government manufactured in the 1980s but that were not accounted for by United Nations inspections mandated after the 1991 Persian Gulf war. ...

In confidential declarations in the 1990s to the United Nations, Iraq gave shifting production





numbers, up to 18,500. It also claimed to have destroyed its remaining stock before international inspectors arrived after the Persian Gulf war. ...

The handoffs varied in size, including one of more than 150 warheads. American ordnance disposal technicians promptly destroyed most of them by detonation, the officials said, but some were taken to Camp Slayer, by Baghdad's airport, for further testing.

This is the first time that there has been any media reporting on finds specific to the disputed munitions that Hussein refused to acknowledge. It sounds as though there were a large quantity of Borak rockets eventually procured, too, not just a few leftovers that might have been innocently overlooked by the previous dictatorship in Iraq. C.J. Chivers and Eric Schmitt also report that these were not the kind of exhausted and expired chemical weapons that the UN had been storing, but still potent enough to alarm the US when they were discovered.

Why this was kept quiet was anyone's guess, but the secret was tightly held. Perhaps the CIA and Pentagon wanted to keep it under wraps so that they could quietly buy as many of the weapons off the black market as they could, without tipping their hand to the insurgency. That might have been good strategy, but the Pentagon kept it so quiet that it never told veterans serving in Iraq or the VA physicians that treated them later about the possibility that they had contact with chemical weapons from any source. It seems unlikely that the insurgents didn't get their hands on *any* of the Boraks — and it's not entirely clear that the US got them all, either.

This *should* recast the WMD debate from the 2003 invasion, but it probably won't. At least so far, there's no indication that the US found the new chemical- and biological-weapons programs that their faulty intelligence showed Saddam Hussein restarting between the two wars, and that will overshadow even a large number of undeclared sarin-filled Boraks in any attempt to show that the issue of WMD intel was at least *nuanced*. On the other hand, we've waited almost a decade to find this out, so it's impossible to say what else may have been discovered and not declared by the Pentagon and CIA during that period. It may be another decade before we can safely assume anything.

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Imagine that? Iraq had WMD after all. s/off

erp on February 16, 2015 at [9:37 AM](#)

**At least so far**, there's no indication that the US found the new chemical- and biological-weapons programs that their faulty intelligence showed Saddam Hussein restarting between the two wars,

You know, W seems supremely confident that he made the correct decision going into Iraq. Who knows what tomorrow's news will bring. I wish the press was as skeptical of what The Won is up to but since it has little to do with war and everything to do with robbing the taxpayers and dismantling our Republic, they just don't care.

Cindy Munford on February 16, 2015 at [9:41 AM](#)

...Karl Rove did it!

JugEarsButtHurt on February 16, 2015 at [9:43 AM](#)

These Borak rockets were the leftovers that didn't get trucked into Syria by Saddam and his Russian accomplices, and there is still a lot of deadly stuff waiting to emerge from that witches brew.

sleepyhead on February 16, 2015 at [9:44 AM](#)

I wish the press was as skeptical of what The Won is up to but **since it has little to do with war** and everything to do with robbing the taxpayers and dismantling our Republic, they just don't care. Cindy Munford on February 16, 2015 at 9:41 AM

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Maybe the actual takeaway from this piece is, "Don't worry, the last war was actually justified after all, so just take the NYT's word for it and shut up about the next one."

Akzed on February 16, 2015 at [9:47 AM](#)

Who are they trying to protect? It's a known fact that Iraq was a paradise with rivers of chocolate and fields of flowers in which small children flew kites in the gentle breeze. It wasn't until the terrorist US invaded to protect the would from make believe WMD. Theses are know facts which most here would deny just as they deny that 9/11 was an inside job using drones and controlled demolition. I bet most here also think we landed on the Moon and that AGW is a sham. LOL.

The only reason I can come up with for the right wing controlled media to be claiming fictional WMDs in Iraq is that they are trying to protect someone. That Koch brothers perhaps?

[Dr. Frank Enstine](#) on February 16, 2015 at [9:47 AM](#)

NYT:

Lies

....yep!

JugEarsButtHurt on February 16, 2015 at [9:48 AM](#)

but the secret was tightly held. Perhaps the CIA and Pentagon wanted to keep it under wraps  
More likely it was *The New York Times* who wanted to keep the story a secret.

Emperor Norton on February 16, 2015 at [9:50 AM](#)

Bayam views this as a huge Obama success, and Bush still lied, of course.

Midas on February 16, 2015 at [9:51 AM](#)

Then Bush knew this, too, but he let the lie take permanent hold, instead of opting for a “good leak.”

Rational Thought on February 16, 2015 at [9:54 AM](#)

I wish the press was as skeptical of what The Won is up to but since it has little to do with war and everything to do with robbing the taxpayers and dismantling our Republic, they just don't care.

Cindy Munford on February 16, 2015 at 9:41 AM

They care about their sexual revolution and will lie about the rest to keep Republicans out of power – they're afraid that conservative Republicans want to take that sexual license away.

Or not promote and celebrate it – which is the same thing to them.

kcewa on February 16, 2015 at [9:56 AM](#)

Rational Thought on February 16, 2015 at 9:54 AM

I assume he never thought a “good leak” was safe.

Cindy Munford on February 16, 2015 at [9:58 AM](#)

Not possible. Jon Stewart said Bush lied.

ctmom on February 16, 2015 at [9:59 AM](#)

kcewa on February 16, 2015 at 9:56 AM

I don't know why they think that. Just watch the idiots here go into their stupid “Socon” routine, even when it isn't an social issue.

Cindy Munford on February 16, 2015 at [10:00 AM](#)

Then Bush knew this, too, but he let the lie take permanent hold, instead of opting for a “good leak.”

Rational Thought on February 16, 2015 at 9:54 AM

He was reliant for information on people in his administration and in the DOD and State Dept who opposed

the war.

kcewa on February 16, 2015 at [10:02 AM](#)

Whatever. Dog Eater promised to bring all the troops home and he did that, except for the thousands of troops being sent back to Iraq for imminent combat operations.

Lean forward!

[Bishop](#) on February 16, 2015 at [10:03 AM](#)

I don't know why they think that. Just watch the idiots here go into their stupid "Socon" routine, even when it isn't an social issue.

Cindy Munford on February 16, 2015 at 10:00 AM

Yeah, they don't read this though. And the idiots on this site who complain about socon's voted for Obama.

kcewa on February 16, 2015 at [10:04 AM](#)

This should recast the WMD debate from the 2003 invasion

Why? President Bush took America into war with Iraq because he said Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction, not black market dealers.

SoulGlo on February 16, 2015 at [10:05 AM](#)

...ask Brian Williams...he was there!

JugEarsButtHurt on February 16, 2015 at [10:07 AM](#)

Rove (aka Turdblossom) really screwed the pooch with the whole "Above It All" strategy. Because of it, the BUSH LIED meme is so entrenched the truth has no chance.

This news should finally get the anti-Bush/anti-war crowd to finally STFU, but instead it will just rev up the the old meme.

This is a prime example of the the GOP being The Party of Stupid (TM).

How these smart, business savvy GOP folks can be so incredibly dumb when it comes to branding and public relations in a mystery for the ages...

Bruno Strozek on February 16, 2015 at [10:07 AM](#)

This is the first time that there has been any media reporting on finds specific to the disputed munitions that Hussein refused to acknowledge.

Actually Ed, this was reported on, the majority of outlets though claimed that these were old declared and degraded weapons. Just like when it was reported that the US Army had found 10,000 55 gallon drums of sarin, the media claimed it was insecticide.

There were literally dozens of reports of Saddam's WMD being found, only to have those reports downplayed

by the media because they did not fit the media's agenda.

Why this was kept quiet was anyone's guess, but the secret was tightly held.

Again, not really. If you were paying attention back then, the rational was pretty damned obvious. First, those weapons were found in highly concentrated areas. Second, every time the US Army found a stockpile, various terrorists groups showed up and ransacked the adjacent facilities. The US Military was playing a whack-a-mole game with the terrorists trying to keep them from obtaining those weapons. And of course, thirdly, it was common knowledge in Iraq that the Russians had helped Saddam smuggle a massive amount of chemical weapons out of Iraq into Syria.

Yes, that particular event did include the killing of a Russian Embassy official and the shooting up of, but not the stopping of a massive Russian military convoy.

Most of this information has more or less been scrubbed from the internet by now, though were you to go back into the HotAir archives and search the WMD threads you will find references to all of this information. It was all pretty well documented here.

oscarwilde on February 16, 2015 at [10:10 AM](#)

Why? President Bush took America into war with Iraq because he said Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction, not black market dealers.

SoulGlo on February 16, 2015 at 10:05 AM

Agreed, and black market dealers produce such things on their own.

#whydidntIthinkofthat

[Bishop](#) on February 16, 2015 at [10:15 AM](#)

“ALL THE NEWS THAT FIT” for the bottom of my birdcage...

Pelosi Schmelosi on February 16, 2015 at [10:20 AM](#)

“THAT’S”

Pelosi Schmelosi on February 16, 2015 at [10:20 AM](#)

I was watching some stupid movie the other day and one of the characters had been in Iraq to find WMDs after the war – another character said “so, pretty boring then”. I find it funny how the lies about no WMDs being found are taken as fact now, since the defense department and UN admitted in 2006 that they found over 500 WMDs in Iraq.

<http://www.defense.gov/News/NewsArticle.aspx?ID=15918>

WASHINGTON, June 29, 2006 – The 500 munitions discovered throughout Iraq since 2003 and discussed in a National Ground Intelligence Center report meet the criteria of weapons of mass destruction, the center's commander said here today.

“These are chemical weapons as defined under the Chemical Weapons Convention, and yes ... they do constitute weapons of mass destruction,” Army Col. John Chu told the House Armed

Services Committee.

lymond on February 16, 2015 at [10:25 AM](#)

The GOP control the Senate intelligence committee now, and may have increased access to items that control the narrative. Sometimes you have to get all the info out there so someone else does not use it. Feinstein had a tantrum at the end of her term. She wanted to play her story her way. I think that you will find the Senate Republicans asking for a lot of things that the democrats were not interested in.

Fleuries on February 16, 2015 at [10:26 AM](#)

kcewa on February 16, 2015 at 10:04 AM

No, we have some of Gov. Romney devotees who specifically blame them for his loss.

Cindy Munford on February 16, 2015 at [10:26 AM](#)

The WMDs were a secondary reason for going to war with Saddam, but it was an easier to understand reason so it was overemphasized. That was a mistake. The real reason for war was that unanimity around sanctions was collapsing, and soon Saddam would be back in the regional intimidation business, just like Russia is now. The other big mistake was believing that Democrats would preserve any gains established in Iraq.

RBMN on February 16, 2015 at [10:26 AM](#)

Clinton 1998 SOTU:

Saddam Hussein has spent the better part of this decade and much of his nation's wealth not on providing for the Iraqi people but on developing nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and the missiles to deliver them. The United Nations weapons inspectors have done a truly remarkable job, finding and destroying more of Iraq's arsenal than was destroyed during the entire Gulf War. Now, Saddam Hussein wants to stop them from completing their mission.

I know I speak for everyone in this chamber, Republicans and Democrats, when I say to Saddam Hussein: You cannot defy the will of the world. *And when I say to him: You have used weapons of mass destruction before. We are determined to deny you the capacity to use them again.*

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/special/states/docs/sou98.htm>

Pelosi Schmelosi on February 16, 2015 at [10:27 AM](#)

Then Bush knew this, too, but he let the lie take permanent hold, instead of opting for a "good leak."

Rational Thought on February 16, 2015 at 9:54 AM

Bush never felt it necessary to spike the football.

tdarrington on February 16, 2015 at [10:27 AM](#)

Had Bush lied there is little doubt that we would have found plenty of WMDs to silence the critics.

CW on February 16, 2015 at [10:29 AM](#)



Pelosi Schmelosi on February 16, 2015 at 10:27 AM

Obama today would say that it is only fair that Hussein has NBC weapons. After all, we nuked nagasaki and had a chem weapons program for years.

tdarrington on February 16, 2015 at [10:30 AM](#)

Had Bush lied there is little doubt that we would have found plenty of WMDs to silence the critics.

CW on February 16, 2015 at 10:29 AM

Fake but Accurate!

tdarrington on February 16, 2015 at [10:31 AM](#)

The main thing I take out of this is that Bush allowed the left to get maximum political points with their “no wmd” lie. He did comedy routines looking under his desk for wmd while they were destroying massive amounts of wmd secretly.

All Bushes are comprised. There are plenty of embarrassing moves all presidents make that are never made public because it's more useful for the opposition to have the threat of making it public to hold over their head. Jeb would need to protect 2 other Bushes and would be compromised so bad he'd have even less fight in him than Dubya.

Buddahpundit on February 16, 2015 at [11:04 AM](#)

Thanks, Ed. Nice post!

Jayrae on February 16, 2015 at [11:05 AM](#)

Bush should have given a press conference for every WMD found. The Iraq War directly led to the Democrat wave in 2006 and paved the way for Obama. Why downplay the WMD discovery? So what if it took time to sort things out?

I'll never understand. But I will continue to say that regardless of how the war turned out, Saddam was indeed a direct threat to the USA.

Jack\_Burton on February 16, 2015 at [11:11 AM](#)

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Jack\_Burton on February 16, 2015 at 11:11 AM

My guess, his focus was getting the United States and our Iraqi allies to a place we could call victory. Anything that might take a way from that was simply a distraction to gain an edge in the headlines and not

worth it. Pretty much the exact opposite of team Obama.

[rob verdi](#) on February 16, 2015 at [11:20 AM](#)

Cui bono?

“Good morning, Madame President! “

Uncle Joe on February 16, 2015 at [11:39 AM](#)

Then Bush knew this, too, but he let the lie take permanent hold...

Rational Thought on February 16, 2015 at 9:54 AM

I wish someone could give a good explanation of why Bush never defended himself on anything and left the borders wide open after 9/11. \*smh\*

He brought Obama upon us, but why?

Fallon on February 16, 2015 at [11:39 AM](#)

Dr. Frank Enstine on February 16, 2015 at 9:47 AM

Thank you *Mister* Troll.

Hammie on February 16, 2015 at [11:49 AM](#)

Bush let his actions speak for themselves...and he was vindicated, time and time again.

thebrokenrattle on February 16, 2015 at [11:52 AM](#)

This should recast the WMD debate from the 2003 invasion

Why? President Bush took America into war with Iraq because he said Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction, not black market dealers.

SoulGlo on February 16, 2015 at 10:05 AM

Your statement “President Bush took America into war with Iraq because he said Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction” ignores the following:

1. Congress **gave** Bush that authority to go into war with Iraq.
2. The authorization Congress gave Bush the OK to go into war with Iraq had a dozen reasons **other** than WMDs for going into Iraq.
3. Bush was not the only one saying Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction. Most prominent Democrats in Congress had been saying the same thing since the mid 1990s, and Bill Clinton’s Department of Justice formally charged Saddam Hussein with working on such weapons in 1998, when they indicted bin Laden. Said indictment also formally charged bin Laden with being in cahoots with Iraq, specifically when it came to working on weapons development.

Del Dolemonte on February 16, 2015 at [11:53 AM](#)

In this case, it really was Bush's fault. Why the heck didn't he defend his actions, his party and his nation's honor by speaking about this, even after the fact? He led his party to a political slaughter in '06 without even trying to defend the case for war. Now it's too late, the truth doesn't matter, the narrative is set in granite.

jnelchef on February 16, 2015 at [11:56 AM](#)

He brought Obama upon us, but why?

Fallon on February 16, 2015 at 11:39 AM

Maybe he knew it would destroy the Dems.

trigon on February 16, 2015 at [12:05 PM](#)

3. Bush was not the only one saying Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction. Most prominent Democrats in Congress had been saying the same thing since the mid 1990s, and Bill Clinton's Department of Justice formally charged Saddam Hussein with working on such weapons in 1998, when they indicted bin Laden. Said indictment also formally charged bin Laden with being in cahoots with Iraq, specifically when it came to working on weapons development.

Del Dolemonte

The freaking UN said he had them. That's why the UN imposed sanctions on Iraq.

[xblade](#) on February 16, 2015 at [12:47 PM](#)

Maybe he knew it would destroy the Dems.

trigon on February 16, 2015 at 12:05 PM

Well, it looks like he overshot and destroyed the country. No, I don't miss him.

Fallon on February 16, 2015 at [12:53 PM](#)

On the other hand, we've waited almost a decade to find this out, so it's impossible to say what else may have been discovered and not declared by the Pentagon and CIA during that period. It may be another **decade** before we can safely assume anything.

Try centuries.

We cannot safely assume *anything* about what the government withholds.

AesopFan on February 16, 2015 at [1:04 PM](#)

SoulGlo on February 16, 2015 at 10:05 AM

You're really not very bright, are you?

Solaratov on February 16, 2015 at [1:14 PM](#)

If YOU think Hussein, told us about ALL of his WMDs ....YOU are part of the problem.

nonstopca1 on February 16, 2015 at [1:40 PM](#)

C.I.A. Is Said to

Well, that's convincing.

We didn't find any *stockpiles of weapons* in Iraq. That is what people remember.

Hell, we still don't know who really shot JFK. Don't count on learning anything concrete about WMD in Iraq anytime soon. Whatever happened.

Moesart on February 16, 2015 at [1:45 PM](#)

So Bush was willing to take the personal and political hit -for the good of the country -by permitting himself to be grotesquely lied about.

*While Obama lies about everything in order to disguise all of the incompetent and calamitous damage he is doing to to the country -while taking everything personally.*

[profitsbeard](#) on February 16, 2015 at [2:03 PM](#)

It wouldn't matter if they'd found a stockpile of weapons-grade plutonium. The conspiracy theorists, 911-truthers, and anti-war wackos would claim the CIA planted it.

Regardless, the fact that this story appears in the NYT casts doubt its veracity, regardless of one's political leanings.

In this case, it really was Bush's fault. Why the heck didn't he defend his actions, his party and his nation's honor by speaking about this, even after the fact? He led his party to a political slaughter in '06 without even trying to defend the case for war. Now it's too late, the truth doesn't matter, the narrative is set in granite.

jnelchef on February 16, 2015 at 11:56 AM

Assuming this was a classified operation, Bush was not a President who would announced the facts about about a classified operation's existence for political reasons. Even now it may be classified. The main thing that happens with the NYT outing it, is to ensure that it will be a heck of a lot harder and more expensive to do this sort of thing in the future.

s1im on February 16, 2015 at [2:07 PM](#)

You're really not very bright, are you?

Solaratov on February 16, 2015 at 1:14 PM

Really pal? You want to go there? Instead of being a jerk, how about you tell me how black market dealers selling weapons to the CIA validates President Bush's reason for going to war with Iraq?

SoulGlo on February 16, 2015 at [4:08 PM](#)

GW was correct. And remember, all the dems, the main European security services and the UN agreed with him. The only people that didn't listen were the liberals who put their hatred of GW ahead of the welfare of

the country. They can't stand the truth. Just wait until the truth comes out about that illegal blaaaaaach man in the WH!

ultracon on February 16, 2015 at [5:00 PM](#)

What Hot Air needs is a thread on Ned Pepper and hammers. We could all have a good ol' time. Relieve some of our frustrations. Maybe include libfree and a few others.

[Old Country Boy](#) on February 16, 2015 at [5:44 PM](#)

These agents and the tons of "yellowcake" we shipped to Canada for reprocessing, that's starting to mount up!

Khun Joe on February 16, 2015 at [7:58 PM](#)

One thing that rarely gets mentioned or questioned is what criteria were used to classify something as WMD or not. In Iraq in 2003, I saw with my own eyes thousands of barrels of chemicals which, if mixed together in the correct proportions, would constitute chemical weapons that are considered WMD. These were sometimes even in warehouses right next to Silkworm or other missiles, and could presumably have been mixed together and put into battle fairly quickly. I have no idea who made the decisions on what was or wasn't considered WMD, but I know for sure we found a lot of things that could have qualified. I guess the administration wanted a very strict interpretation of WMD, and I am sure they thought that would help rebut any charges that they were fudging the numbers. The expectation at the time of course was that we would find large quantities of WMD – I don't think anyone expected to find as little as we did, and certainly nobody would have thought that a strict interpretation of the definition might mean that "no" WMD was found. I think that ended up hurting the administration in the court of public opinion, especially as the anti-war left seized on it as a talking point, and it was too late to change the definition of WMD later.

tidemonster on February 16, 2015 at [8:48 PM](#)

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