

WHY DIDN'T JUDY FLOG THE PURPORTED IRAQ- AL QAEDA CONNECTION?

President Bush's claim the other day that no one ever claimed a connection between Iraq and 9/11 got me thinking. Judy Miller reported extensively on Al Qaeda before 9/11—both the previous World Trade Center bombing and on terrorist financing. We know she tried to report on imminent threats from Al Qaeda in summer 2001. She did some of the most celebrated reporting on Al Qaeda just after the attack. And even in fall 2002, she continued to report on Al Qaeda threats that had nothing to do with Iraq—the discovery of possible weapons lap in Kandahar and a report on Saudi financial ties to Al Qaeda. But she never made the claim of an Al Qaeda-Iraq link.

That's particularly remarkable considering her famous September 8, 2002 article on aluminum tubes (actually her article co-author Michael Gordon apparently got the aluminum tube leak first) included **every** other complaint the US had against Iraq. That article describes Iraq's purported nuclear program, chemical and biological weapons programs, and its missiles capabilities. In the article, she listed almost exactly the same things administration officials (Condi, Rummy, Dick, and Powell all appeared) did on the Sunday shows the morning her article appeared and almost exactly the same things that would appear in the NIE written a month later. Almost exactly ... except administration officials included claims about an Iraq-Al Qaeda connection. (I'll lay this all out in a future post, but for now, you'll have to take my word for it.)

The administration did have a shill to publish these claims for them—the Weekly Standard's Stephen Hayes. But it wasn't until November 2003 that he published the (classified) memo Dougie Feith had written alleging a whole range of Al

Qaeda-Iraq connections.

So I'm wondering—why didn't they launder the Al Qaeda claims through Judy as well?