

DOUGIE'S RANT

I'm less interested in the news that Dougie Feith is publishing a 900-page rant against his detractors in the Bush Administration and more interested in how a copy of that manuscript got liberated and delivered into the hands of Karen DeYoung, biographer of Feith detractor Colin Powell, and Thomas Ricks, all-around skeptic of Dougie's disastrous war. The book appears to be primarily a long whining complaint that Colin Powell has retained moderately more of his credibility than Dougie and his allies in the Pentagon.

Powell, Feith argues, allowed himself to be publicly portrayed as a dove, but while Powell "downplayed" the degree and urgency of Iraq's threat, he never expressed opposition to the invasion. Bremer, meanwhile, is said to have done more harm than good in Iraq. Feith also accuses Franks of being uninterested in postwar planning, and writes that Condoleezza Rice, Bush's national security adviser during most of Feith's time in office, failed in her primary task of coordinating policy on the war.

He describes Bush as having wrestled seriously with difficult problems but as being ill-served by subordinates including Powell and Rice. Feith depicts former defense secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld with almost complete admiration, questioning only his rough handling of subordinates.

How remarkable that two credible journalists with superb ties to Powell and Franks (and Bremer, whom Dougie also attacks) happened to obtain a copy of the manuscript in plenty of time to do interviews with all those Dougie attacks in the book, huh? DeYoung and Ricks seem barely able to contain their disdain for "the stupidest fucking guy on the planet."

Despite its bulk, the book does not address some of the basic facts of the war, such as the widespread skepticism inside the top of the U.S. military about invading Iraq, with some generals arguing that doing so would distract attention from the war against global terrorists. Nor does Feith touch on the assertion of his fellow war architect, then-Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul D. Wolfowitz, that Iraq would be able to pay for its reconstruction with oil revenue.

Feith says surprisingly little new about the conduct of the war on the ground, instead focusing on the policy battles in Washington and asserting that most accounts thus far have been written from the point of view of the State Department and the CIA. He attacks those criticisms as "fear-mongering" that serves the interests of certain officials and journalists.

DeYoung and Ricks must have had plenty of laughs writing this article.

That said, I can find just two noteworthy tidbits. First, Dougie reports that on December 18, 2002, Bush declared that war is inevitable.

Among the disclosures made by Feith in "War and Decision," scheduled for release next month by HarperCollins, is Bush's declaration, at a Dec. 18, 2002, National Security Council meeting, that "war is inevitable."

That's not really a surprise, but the date is notable, since it was the day when the Bush Administration was vetting their comments about Saddam's declaration regarding his WMD program. The following day, despite INR warnings that the intelligence was bunk, John Bolton would publish a document asserting that Iraq had sought

uranium in Niger.

Then there's the revelation that purports to show that General Myers was not as pliable as reports make out.

In contrast with the reputation of Gen. Richard B. Myers, then chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, for pliability, Feith reports that Myers grew irate at what he saw as administration attempts to get around the Geneva Conventions on the treatment of prisoners following the 2001 U.S. invasion of Afghanistan. Myers, he writes, threatened to bypass Rumsfeld and take his concerns directly to Bush, but calmed down after being told that the administration would distinguish between legitimate prisoners of war and al-Qaeda and Taliban detainees.

I'm not sure Dougie understands what it means for someone to not be pliable.

Anyway, something to look forward to next month: 900 pages of Dougie Feith insisting that if only Ahmad Chalabi had been given control of Iraq, all of Dougie's dreams of flourishing democracy would have succeeded.