

WHITEHOUSE: BUSH'S LIES "ROT THE VERY FIBER OF DEMOCRACY"

Updated with YouTube from Selise.

If you're reading the SSCI Phase II reports, go to this thread to discuss what you're finding.

But if you want to know what Senator Whitehouse thinks about it, you can see his speech here.

Or you can read it below:

Mr. President, five years ago, President Bush and this administration misled this country into a war that should never have been waged, a war that has cost our nation the lives of more than four thousand courageous men and women, squandered many hundreds of billions of our tax dollars, and diminished the world's faith in our country.

This morning, the Senate Intelligence Committee, led by our distinguished chairman, Senator Jay Rockefeller of West Virginia, released a report confirming what many have long feared: that the Bush Administration ignored or swept aside substantial, reliable intelligence that portrayed something other than what the President and his political allies wanted America to see.

Mr. President, the decision to take a nation to war, as Chairman Rockefeller indicated, is among the gravest and most momentous that a leader can make. In our democracy, we expect and deserve to be sure that when our troops are sent in harm's way, when their families are made to watch and wait through sleepless nights, when our security and national welfare is put on the line, that that decision has been taken for the right

reasons. This is a sacred compact, an article of faith, between our people and their government.

This Administration broke that compact, betrayed that faith.

For years, the evidence has mounted that this Administration's reasons for war were a sham. And just this week, the President's own former spokesman indicated that the White House ran a "political propaganda campaign" building the case for war.

This morning's report is a chilling reminder of the Bush Administration's willingness to overlook or set aside intelligence that did not conform to its pre-ordained view of the world. Over and over again, the Committee documented instances in which public statements by the President, the Vice President, and members of the Administration's national security team were at odds with available intelligence information.

By leading the American people to believe that the situation in Iraq was significantly more drastic than it actually was, the Bush Administration took this country into an unnecessary war – a war it still refuses to end.

In a speech in Cincinnati, a little over a year after al Qaeda attacked America on September 11th, President Bush said: "We know that Iraq and al Qaeda have had high-level contacts that go back a decade. ... We've learned that Iraq has trained al Qaeda members in bomb-making and poisons and deadly gases."

In his 2003 State of the Union Address, just a few short weeks before giving the order that began this war, the President said: "Evidence from intelligence sources, secret communications, and statements by people now in custody

reveal that Saddam Hussein aids and protects terrorists, including members of al Qaeda."

Mr. President, it was not true. The President of the United States told these things to our people and to the world, and they were false. According to the report released this morning by our Committee,

"Statements and implications by the President and Secretary of State suggesting that Iraq and al-Qa'ida had a partnership, or that Iraq had provided al-Qa'ida with weapons training, were not substantiated by the intelligence."

The Committee found that multiple CIA reports and a National Intelligence Estimate released in November 2002 – even as the Administration was in the drumbeat to war – "dismissed the claim that Iraq and al-Qa'ida were cooperating partners."

It was not true – and yet this President used this claim to convince the American public that there was a link between the Iraqi government and the terrorists that perpetrated the crimes of September 11, 2001.

Again in the October 2002 speech in Cincinnati, the President said: "We know that the regime has produced thousands of tons of chemical agents, including mustard gas, sarin nerve gas, VX nerve gas. Saddam Hussein also has experience in using chemical weapons. ... Every chemical and biological weapon that Iraq has or makes is a direct violation of the truce that ended the Persian Gulf War in 1991. Yet, Saddam Hussein has chosen to build and keep these weapons despite international sanctions, U.N. demands, and isolation from the civilized world."

Mr. President, the Committee's report concludes, and I quote:

"Statements by the President and Vice President prior to the October 2002 National Intelligence Estimate regarding Iraq's chemical weapons production capability and activities did not reflect the intelligence community's uncertainties as to whether such production was ongoing."

The intelligence community knew that Saddam Hussein wanted to be able to produce chemical weapons. It could not, however, confirm President Bush's claim of certainty that Hussein's regime was actually producing chemical weapons.

Yet the President made that argument, stirring up unfounded fears among the American people.

This Administration not only asserted that Saddam Hussein possessed chemical weapons, and intended to use them. The President also said this in his speech on October 2002: "We could wait and hope that Saddam does not give weapons to terrorists, or develop a nuclear weapon to blackmail the world. But I'm convinced," he said, "that is a hope against all evidence." A hope against all evidence.

He said: "we cannot wait for the final proof – the smoking gun – that could come in the form of a mushroom cloud."

Mr. President, again, it was not true. The Committee's report states:

"Statements by the President and the Vice President indicating that Saddam Hussein was prepared to give weapons of mass destruction to terrorist groups for attacks against the United States were contradicted by available intelligence information."

At the time of the President's speech, the intelligence community believed that Saddam Hussein did not possess nuclear weapons.

The President preyed on Americans' fears of a nuclear attack, perhaps the most terrible fears we could have, to bolster his case for an unwarranted war.

And finally, the President led the American people to believe that if it came to war in Iraq, America's military would easily help liberate a grateful nation. In Cincinnati in 2002, he said this: "If military action is necessary, the United States and our allies will help the Iraqi people rebuild their economy, and create the institutions of liberty in a unified Iraq at peace with its neighbors."

Mr. President, this was the hope against all evidence. Analysis by the Defense Intelligence Agency assessed that, and I quote, "the Iraqi populace will adopt an ambivalent attitude toward liberation." There's an understatement. The CIA wrote in August 2002 that "traditional Iraqi political culture has been inhospitable to democracy." According to the Committee's report, "Statements by President Bush and Vice President Cheney regarding the postwar situation in Iraq, in terms of the political, security, and economic [situations], did not reflect the concerns and uncertainties expressed in the intelligence products."

The view of the President and Vice President that American troops would be "greeted as liberators" did not take into account the complex social, political, and sectarian dynamics at work, about which the intelligence community was well aware. Yet this Administration still led the American people to believe that our troops would

be welcomed, that the war would be short, that the burden in lives and dollars would be light, and that victory would be absolute. This delusion, has cost our servicemen and women – and our nation – every day since.

Once again, it was not true, Mr. President. It just was not true. And if this Administration had made the least effort to give an honest review of the classified intelligence, it would have been known to be untrue.

All too often in these seven long years, we have seen this Administration cast aside facts and principles that did not conform with its political aims. We have seen it attempt to take the great institutions of this country, our intelligence community our Environmental Protection Agency, our Department of Justice, and twist them – twist them – to its own ends, without due regard to the welfare of the American people.

Mr. President, I believe the irresponsibility and mismanagement of this Administration will go down in our history as among the darkest moments our government has witnessed. It rots the very fiber of democracy when our government is put to these uses. We do not yet know all the damage that has been done. Yet we hope, through the efforts of this Committee and this body, to continue the long and difficult repair work we have begun.

We can look ahead to next January, when we and our nation can begin again with a new Administration – an Administration that will not break the essential compact of honesty with the American people. [my emphasis]

Well said, Senator.