



THE WHITE HOUSE
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GEORGE W. BUSH



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Afterword: Mr. Woodward's Reporting vs. Mr. Woodward's Editorializing

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Bob Woodward's Conclusions About Both Military And Presidential Involvement In The Iraq Strategy Review And The President's Portrayal Of The Iraq War To The American People Are Not Supported By The Information He Provides In His Own Book, "The War Within"

"This past week, Bob Woodward's publisher released his new book, 'The War Within.' A thorough and careful reading of the book leads us to conclude that Woodward's prologue and epilogue are not supported by his own reporting in the body of the manuscript. For a clear historical reading of the record we commend you to the following excerpts that support our view."

– White House Press Secretary Dana Perino, 9/12/08

The U.S. Military Provided Meaningful And Active Input At Every Stage Of The Review Process The President Directed To Determine A New Way Forward In Iraq

In "The War Within," Bob Woodward uses a prologue and epilogue, along with commentary scattered over a few other pages, to offer the opinion that that the military was marginalized and outmaneuvered in the decision-making process that led to the surge. Woodward's contentions are inaccurate. Woodward's more specific suggestion is that the military was left outside of the strategy review undertaken within the White House in the late summer and early fall of 2006, before the President directed the formal review in November 2006. However, the reporting contained in the body of Woodward's new book supports the opposite conclusion.

Woodward's book demonstrates that the military, often through interaction with National Security Advisor Steve Hadley, was fully aware that the President was probing whether the current strategy was the right strategy. Woodward's reporting also shows how Hadley informed Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Peter Pace of the internal White House review soon after it began.

- In July 2006, the President authorized Hadley to ask Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, Commander of the Multinational Forces in Iraq General George Casey, and U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad "a series of tough, detailed questions" about Iraq designed to "plant the seed for a full strategy review." (Bob

Woodward, "The War Within," pg.72)

- On August 17, 2006, "the president gathered his war council in the windowless Roosevelt Room." (pg. 88)
 - Sec. Rumsfeld and Gen. Pace attended, and "General Abizaid had joined the meeting through the secure video link, as had General Casey." (pg. 90)
 - The President asked his generals about the number of troops: "'Do we have enough manpower to do Baghdad and keep taking on al Qaeda and the Baathists?'" (pg. 93)
 - The President later characterized the meeting as "intentionally sending a message to Sec. Rumsfeld and Gen. Casey: 'If it's not working, let's do something different.'" (pg. 99)
- Before the President initiated a formal interagency Iraq strategy reevaluation process on November 10, 2006, several independent strategy reviews were taking place within the executive branch.
 - **State Department:** As early as June 2006, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice "had key staff members . . . examining the Iraq strategy and writing classified memos about their findings." (pg. 57)
 - **Department of Defense:** The "Council of Colonels": In late September, Gen. Pace "assembled the brightest military minds to study what had become of Iraq and to examine the United States' broader global challenges. . . . The group would report directly to Pace and the service chiefs every Friday afternoon." (pg. 158-59)
 - **National Security Council:** On October 1, 2006, Hadley charged a member of his staff with putting together an "operational concept" for "a new direction in Iraq." (pg. 161)
- By October 2006, Hadley had informed the military that the NSC was recommending a surge.
 - Hadley shared an NSC report with Gen. Pace: "'You're the military planners. You're running your own process. . . . All I'd ask is to consider this in your process.'" (pg. 171)

Woodward's reporting – contrary to his personal opinion – further demonstrates that during the critical stage of the decision making process – from early November 2006, when the interagency review began, until the President finally decided upon the surge – the military leadership was involved in the review process and had multiple opportunities to present views to the President through Chairman Pace and in a key meeting with the President at the Pentagon.

- The President directed the review team – which included representatives from the Department of Defense and the Joint Chiefs – to "devote themselves full-time to the assignment." The team was to meet "daily, including weekends" over a 16-day period. (pg. 207)

- In mid-November 2006, Gen. Abizaid informed Gen. Casey that, "the White House was thinking about a surge of more U.S. brigades to Iraq." Casey began to consider how he would use the additional troops. (pg. 231-32)
- During a November 18, 2006 review group meeting, Defense Department representatives presented a "strategy paper" representing the views of Sec. Rumsfeld, Gen. Abizaid, and Gen. Casey. (pg. 235)
- On November 20, 2006, Gen. Pace informed the Council of Colonels that "General Casey has been asked by the SecDef and White House for his views on a surge." (pg. 240)
- On November 22, 2006, Gen. Casey discussed "a possible surge" with the Joint Chiefs and the Council of Colonels. (pg. 241)
- On November 26, 2006, Deputy National Security Advisor J.D. Crouch presented the results of the review team's deliberations to the President. (pg. 244-45)
 - Sec. Rumsfeld and Sec. Gates attended, and Gen. Pace presented the military's opposition to the surge. (pg. 247)
 - The President concluded the meeting by saying "he would take input from everyone over the next three weeks and that he anticipated announcing a new direction by mid-December." (pg. 247)
- On November 27, 2006 Gen. Pace met with the chiefs and the Council of Colonels in the tank to brief them on his meeting at the White House. "'I walked out happy because I got my views on the table,' he said." (pg. 248)
- On December 7, 2006 in a meeting with Hadley discussing a possible surge of forces, "Pace said ... 'It can succeed.'" (pg. 265)
- At a December 8, 2006 NSC meeting including the President, Gen. Pace, Gen. Casey, and Sec. Rice, Gen. Pace rejected the idea of "intervening only in major actions. They couldn't sit and watch from the outside as sectarian violence raged." (pg. 267)
- On December 13, 2006, the President led a meeting with the Joint Chiefs at the Pentagon to get their views on the potential surge. (pg. 289)
 - At the end of the meeting, Army Chief of Staff Schoomaker "and the other chiefs left unsatisfied, but at least they had their say." (pg. 289)
 - "'The chiefs and I had reservations,' Pace later reported to Hadley. 'They have been addressed in the new strategy, and I am now comfortable with the new strategy.'" (pg. 289)

Accordingly, the evidence presented in the body of Woodward's new book does not support his own personal view that the military was left on the outside of the Iraq strategy review. To the contrary, and as demonstrated above, Woodward's record supports the opposite conclusion: the military had input at essentially every stage of the strategy review process.

President Bush Remained Engaged With Daily Events Of The Iraq War And Accurately Conveyed The Situation To The American People

Woodward's personal conclusions that the President "maintained an odd detachment from

[the] management [of the war]" and "handed off a war he was losing to his national security advisor" are not supported by Woodward's own evidence.

In fact, President Bush was engaged with his war cabinet in the process leading up to the decision to surge troops in Iraq.

Throughout the book, Woodward provides numerous examples demonstrating that the Iraq war was at the forefront of the President's daily activity:

- "Hadley spoke with the president every day about Iraq, and both felt increasingly uneasy." (pg. 72)
- Five days a week, the President received the Iraq Note from NSC staff, covering "casualties, bombings, military operations, and intelligence." (pg. 60)
- During meetings regarding Iraq, the President took a leading and active role, regularly asking pertinent, probing questions. (For examples, see pg. 40-41, 78, 90-99, 267-69, 270-74, 274-76, 283-84, and 286-89.)

It is evident from Woodward's own reporting that the President made the decision to surge, and he played an active role in the process leading up to that decision:

- In the spring and early summer 2006, the President asked Hadley, Sec. Rice, and others to tell him if the plan was "not working," explaining that, "I cannot in good faith send more people who might die in Iraq unless it is working." (pg. 9-10)
- In late July 2006, the President authorized Hadley to ask "Rumsfeld, Casey and Khalilzad a series of tough, detailed questions" that could "plant the seed for a full strategy review." "Go to it," the President told Hadley. In order for the session to occur, "it needed the blessing of the president." (pg. 72)
- In early December, "Hadley realized the president was going to go with the surge. It was the only option that seemed to offer a bold change. Talk of an exit seemed absurd to Bush." (pg. 264)
- During the December 9 NSC meeting, the President explained that, "I will be making the decisions, and the goal is radical action to achieve victory." (pg. 272)
- At a December 12 NSC meeting, the President explained, "'We have to do something different. . . . We have to demonstrate that we're doing something fundamentally different.' And he reminded his general, 'We've got to win.' He posed the question: 'Okay, what can you do that's fundamentally different?'" (pg. 283)
- At the December 12 NSC meeting, the President also explained that, "'U.S. presence helps to keep a lid on. . . . It buys time for the Maliki government and the Iraqi security forces. It gets the situation to a more manageable level in Baghdad. . . . A heavier presence will buy time for his government.'" (pg. 284)
- On January 6, 2007, "Bush wanted to give the new commander what he wanted and finally decided on the maximum available of five brigades." (pg. 313)

Woodward's conclusion that the President, as sectarian violence spiked in Iraq in 2006, "rarely

leveled with the public" and "rarely was the voice of realism on the Iraq War" is not supported by the public record.

In fact, President Bush remained upfront with the American people about the challenges and conditions in Iraq, while also taking care to reinforce our overall objectives and to support the men and women of our Armed Forces engaged in combat in Iraq.

The President's public statements show that he consistently recognized the difficulties of our mission in Iraq:

President Bush: "I wish I could tell you that the progress made in Tal Afar is the same in every single part of Iraq. It's not. Though most of the country has remained relatively peaceful, in some parts of Iraq the enemy is carrying out savage acts of violence, particularly in Baghdad and the surrounding areas of Baghdad." (President George W. Bush, Press Conference, Cleveland, OH, 3/20/06)

President Bush: "No question, the fighting is tough. No question, the enemy is violent and mean. But the enemy doesn't stand for anything. They have no message of hope. They have no positive philosophy. All they can do is kill and hope that the government splits up, or that the American people lose their will. And I keep reminding the American people that the stakes are worth it. It is worth it to help Iraq succeed." (President George W. Bush, Press Conference, Camp David, 6/12/06)

President Bush: "Iraq has seen a rise of terrorist and insurgent movements that use brutal and indiscriminate violence to frustrate the desire of the Iraqi people for freedom and peace. . . . Now these enemies have launched a new effort. They have embarked on a bloody campaign of sectarian violence, which they hope will plunge Iraq into a civil war." (President George W. Bush, Address at the American Legion National Convention, 08/31/06)

President Bush: "I know many Americans are not satisfied with the situation in Iraq. I'm not satisfied, either. And that is why we're taking new steps to help secure Baghdad, and constantly adjusting our tactics across the country to meet the changing threat. But we cannot allow our dissatisfaction to turn into disillusionment about our purpose in this war. We must not look at every success of the enemy as a mistake on our part, cause for an investigation, or a reason to call for our troops to come home. We must not fall prey to the sophisticated propaganda by the enemy, who is trying to undermine our confidence and make us believe that our presence in Iraq is the cause of all its problems. If I did not think our mission in Iraq was vital to America's security, I'd bring our troops home tomorrow. I met too many wives and husbands who have lost their partners in life, too many children who won't ever see their mom and dad again. I owe it to them and to the families who still have loved ones in harm's way to ensure that their sacrifices are not in vain." (President George W. Bush, Press Conference, The White House, 10/25/06)

President Bush: "Over the past three years I have often addressed the American people to explain developments in Iraq. Some of these developments were encouraging, such as the capture of Saddam Hussein, the elections in which 12 million Iraqis defied the terrorists and voted for a free future, and the demise of the brutal terrorist Zarqawi. Other developments were not encouraging, such as the bombing of the U.N. Headquarters in Baghdad, the fact that we did not find stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction, and the continued loss of some of America's finest sons and daughters." (President George W. Bush, Press Conference, The White House, 10/25/06)

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