

Ray McGovern Praises Consortiumnews

From Editor Robert Parry: Ex-CIA analyst Ray McGovern paid Consortiumnews a big compliment the other day, when he said he hoped our Web site could endure because it offers historians and citizens a solid record from which to understand what's happened in the United States over the past 16-plus years and even longer.

Ray's point was that our unique brand of investigative journalism doesn't just lay out the facts but includes the broader context, from the relevant history to the role of media. We also have never shied away from presenting the truth as our journalists find it. We have been willing to challenge the powers-that-be in government, business and the mainstream news media.

I share Ray's hope that this Web site can endure, but we need the help of our readers to do that. As tight-fisted as we are in our spending, we do need at least a modest budget to pay the bills, including some money for reporting and editing.

Right now, we are trying to complete our spring fund drive by getting at least halfway to our goal of \$25,000. Please help if you can.

You can make a donation by credit card at the Consortiumnews.com Web site or by check to Consortium for Independent Journalism (CIJ); 2200 Wilson Blvd.; Suite 102-231; Arlington VA 22201. Or you can use PayPal (our account is named after our e-mail address "consortnew@aol.com").

Since we are a 501-c-3 non-profit, your donation may be tax-deductible.

You also can choose whether you want your entire donation to go to support our work or if you'd like one of our thank-you gifts, which we are now offering to anyone who donates at least \$50 or who signs up for a monthly donation.

Those gifts include an autographed copy of one of my last three books: *Lost History, Secrecy & Privilege* or *Neck Deep*. Or a DVD of the 1991 PBS "Frontline" documentary "The Election Held Hostage," which I co-wrote. It explores Republican skullduggery with Iran prior to the pivotal 1980 election.

We also have a few DVDs left of war correspondent Don's North's documentary on the lives of former Salvadoran guerrillas, entitled "Yesterday's Enemies."

If you want one of the thank-you gifts, just follow-up your donation with an e-mail to consortnew@aol.com. Otherwise, we'll put your entire donation toward keeping Consortiumnews.com going through this election year and beyond.

As always, thanks for your support.

Robert Parry

Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories in the 1980s for the Associated Press and Newsweek. He founded Consortiumnews.com in 1995 as the Internet's first investigative magazine. He saw it as a way to combine modern technology and old-fashioned journalism to counter the increasing triviality of the mainstream U.S. news media.

Confronting the Big Empty

As the richest one percent consolidates its wealth and power, the 99 percent are fed junk food for the mind and the body, explaining the overwhelming sense of emptiness even amid the obesity of physical and mental over-consumption, a wrenching human dilemma that ultimately must be confronted, writes Phil Rockstroh.

By Phil Rockstroh

Due to the consolidation of wealth and privilege into fewer and fewer hands, thus requiring escalating amounts of officially mandated surveillance and brutality to maintain social order, the natural trajectory of unregulated capitalism tends towards hyper-authoritarian excess, even towards fascism.

Moreover, by the standards of capitalist ideology, and exacerbated by the rigged nature of economic and social arrangements – large segments of society are deemed “losers,” and, resultantly, will grow restive, if scapegoats aren't invented to mitigate a sense of humiliation and displaced rage.

Accordingly, rightist demagogic fictions can seize the psyches of large segments of the general public: immigrant interlopers wreck the economy; minority layabouts suck-up public funds; gays and women, possessed of dubious morality, destroy the nation's moral fabric; lefties are driven to challenge the system, but only because of their spite, born of jealousy.

The “purer” the form of capitalism the faster the rise of fascism. There is a dark and bitter grace to this: Fascism is the deranged agency that sends the capitalist machine into systemic runaway, thus the system crashes and burns – and out of its ashes and debris a more humane system can come into being.

Although the yearning for freedom is inborn, as is the case with the development

of any skill or talent, one must open oneself to its promise by discipline and practice. Otherwise, attempts at exercising freedom – free will's dance with resistant and changing circumstance – can be an ugly sight to behold.

Witness the following litany of the lost evinced by us, the denizens of late-stage capitalism: The dismal air haunted and minds distracted cluttered by the ceaseless chatter of those dim ghosts of human discourse known as text messages and tweets; the parade of preening narcissists and prattling sub-cretins that is celebrity culture and Reality Television; the joyless bacchanal termed the nation's epidemic of obesity.

Experiencing freedom involves risk, imagination, and discipline. In contrast, choosing between purchasing a bag of Cheetos or a bag of Doritos amounts to not quite the same thing. Resisting the call to freedom leaves an individual empty, and bag after bag of salted snack food will not sate the hollow ache within when one chooses the benumbing safety of culturally proffered palliatives over living out the truth of one's being.

A thousand text messages will never replace a single kiss because a kiss conjures both the soul's numinosity (or supernatural) and brings earthly complications – the stuff of freedom.

When your heart aches, you are experiencing or being beckoned towards your destiny. Depending on the choices that you make, you can become waylaid at a fast-food drive-thru or risk the road towards freedom that unfurls before you. Hint: The excessive heft acquired by your hindquarters will begin to shrink as you begin a long distance trek in the direction of freedom.

What forces unloose titanic appetites devoid of reason and restraint? Why is more than you can ever need never enough? How is it that a trillion dollars can be spent on military weaponry, but the collective psyche of this nation continues to be gripped by nebulous fear?

Expressed in mythopoeic lexicon: The appetite of a Titan (e.g., the limit-devoid greed and empty appetite of late capitalism) will grow so random and ravenous that he will devour his own young, while his presence will cause the young to construct Icarusian wings but an (infantilized by the internalization of consumerist impulsiveness) adult-child of the corporate state can never devour enough sky, thus put enough distance between himself and his own titanic need to escape earthly circumstance until his wings of wax are undone by the steadfast sun, and he is returned to the inhuman eternity of the sea's briny womb (e.g., languishing in the media hologram, avoiding the implications of personal destiny-denied and global-wide ecocide).

The appetite of the earth is insatiable. Life must live on death. To become fully human, one must make peace with this fact by an acceptance of limits, by drawing lines of demarcation between necessity and titanic want.

Storytellers, poets, novelists, i.e. myth makers have told this ageless tale of woe and warning for millennia. To ignore the admonition above amounts to insertion of your name into the following list: Tantalus, Midas, Lady Macbeth, George Babbitt, Captain Ahab, Gatsby, Cthulhu, Fred C. Dobbs, Marquise de Merteuil, Patrick Bateman, Mr. Burns, Golem, the denizens of both Goldman Sachs and your local mall's food court. Ignore the warning and insert your name here: ().

One needs one's emptiness every bit as much as one has the need to be "fulfilled." How so? Because room is required within so that new awareness can grow. Therefore, love your inner, empty places. It is the method that you live your way into the future.

From time to time, I have been asked, how does one cope with the ever-increasing "complexity" of our age. Short answer: It would be ill-advised to become adapted to a madhouse.

Instead, attempt to view complexity as future compost. At this stage, a song of grief is as resonate as a song of ebullience. ... Rot ensures renewal; the future is compost and compost is the future. Thus: Rejoice in the reek. Mortification restores our humanity, turning us away from the tyranny of unchecked proliferation. It bestows us with the ability to love our limits. In this, it is synonymous with grace.

In a nation defined by vast wealth disparity and the deprivation it causes others on the planet, by means of impoverished lives and ecological devastation, taking more than one's share contributes to the vast harm done. The corporate food industry wrought epidemic of obesity in the U.S. is a microcosmic representation of a global-wide system of macro-imperialism.

There is a need in both the besieged psyche of an individual and its societal analog – in our own case, in the collective psyche of a declining nation – to worship and fear phantoms and view flesh and blood as phantasmal.

As a culture, for example, we elevate celebrity culture to cultic status while ignoring the suffering of the poor; the teabagger crowd is accepted as a legitimate political movement, not as corporate state Astroturf; that there exist people known as "Islamofascists"; and the acceptance as fact by all too many the noxious corporate media fiction that the energies of the Occupy Wall Street movement have faded – but the outcomes of the overpriced theatrical

artifice of U.S. election cycles represents the democratic expression of the political will of a free people.

Phantoms arrive in the psyche when one refuses life's ongoing invitation to commune with flesh and blood beings; to engage the rigors of insightful thought; to know both the agony and the release of heart-opening engagement and falsity-cleaving insight.

Apropos: "The foundation of all mental illness is the unwillingness to experience legitimate suffering." –Carl Jung

As we are surrounded by gibbering, imploring media phantoms, our hunger to regain a resonate relationship with the world at large grows yet the corporate state proffers drive-thru window cuisine. We give them our life blood – and, in return, we settle for an evening at Applebees. And the plundering class insists we are privileged to be offered this that our plight could be worse we could spend our hours languishing in one of their foreign sweatshops.

As the one percent has acquired their grotesquely bloated assets, large segments of the American middle and laboring classes have acquired larger and larger amounts of excess body fat. As corporate executives have sweetened their salaries with limitless perks and multimillion dollar bonuses, their workforce has sucked down copious portions of high fructose-based soft drinks and obesity-engendered disease has increased accordingly.

"Soul enters only via symptoms, via outcast phenomena like the imagination of artists or alchemy or 'primitives,' or of course, disguised as psychopathology. That's what Jung meant when he said the Gods have become diseases: the only way back for them in a Christian world is via the outcast." – James Hillman

To the mind of a child, his/her parent's view of the world constitutes the very architecture of their psyche. The world carries the imprimatur of their parents' face. A child's character begins to develop when he/she begins to compare what they carry within, forged by paternal admonition and action, to their experiences outside the home. If the child remains in a passive position, then his/her personal destiny becomes arrested.

This is the poisoned apple proffered to the dormant beauty within us all. Conversely, we must accept the small, hidden aspects of our character (our helpful dwarves) that dwell in a deep forests within, far from the cold castles of paternal expectation, to be able to awaken to hidden potential.

Life in an authoritarian state, which is paternalistic by nature, arrests the psyche's drive to self-awareness; it puts one to sleep with infantilizing bribes – e.g., all the bright and shiny things of the consumer state – as it

manipulates by means of coercive fear – e.g., the looming dragons of poverty and police-state intimidation.

“In Freud’s time we felt oppressed in the family, in sexual situations, in our crazy hysterical conversion symptoms, and where we felt oppressed, there was the repressed. Where do we feel that thick kind of oppression today? In institutions – hospitals, universities, businesses; in public buildings, in filling out forms, in traffic” –James Hillman

There exist few viable alternatives within the present political set-up to address the degradations inflicted by the corporate state and the machinery of duopoly in place to maintain the systems reach and power – and there will not arrive a mainstream prince to confront the vain usurpers and slay the institutional dragons who cling to power in the present era.

This is an unpleasant truth, but it is true nevertheless. The sooner one faces this reality: the hopelessly corrupt nature of the present system – the closer we, collectively, move towards the creation of alternative arrangements when the current one collapses from its own corruption.

Poets of previous generations warned that one’s soul could be lost in blind pursuit of vaults of riches and limitless knowledge. It is difficult not to laugh in derision or weep in anguish for a people who sell their soul for access to the contents of a convenience store.

Addiction to fattening food speaks of our inner emptiness; so-called Reality Television relates to our hunger for social engagement and communion; the images that haunt the corporate-state media hologram attract us because we long for the images that rise from the soul.

In timeless stories, such as Sleeping Beauty and Snow White, the awakening kiss of a princely figure should not be misapprehended with gender-based overtones of exclusively male power and dominance. Instead, the symbolic prince should be read as – the possibility that unfolds as one’s true calling when one awakens to one’s circumstance.

In our time, this timeless tale plays out as: The ongoing challenge we have been given to face and struggle against the life-devouring, institutional dragons of corporate-state governance.

Of course, there will never arrive a tacked-on, Disneyesque “happily ever after” ending. There is no distant kingdom of the mind that exists beyond the reach of harm or corruption. If there were, new stories would cease to unfold. By this method, this world beckons us to live out our own unique tale.

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SuperPAC Reporting Rule in Jeopardy

As SuperPACs dominate U.S. elections with unlimited spending on attack ads, the broadcasting industry is resisting a proposed federal rule requiring real-time posting online about those expenditures. The vote of one FCC commissioner could decide the outcome, says Michael Winship.

By Michael Winship

With the Federal Communications Commission scheduled to vote this Friday on TV stations posting political advertising data online, we know pretty much for certain the final tally will be 2-1. What we don't know is on which side of the issue Democratic FCC Commissioner Mignon Clyburn will fall.

She's the swing vote and reportedly under enormous pressure from the broadcast industry to vote against Chairman Julius Genachowski's proposal for full online disclosure and instead support a watered-down version that some transparency advocates refer to as "fettered access."

National Journal reports, "While they are currently required to make such data available on paper at their stations, broadcasters are resisting having to post the rates they are charging political candidates online, saying it could pose competitive challenges." The *Journal* quoted Republican FCC Commissioner Robert McDowell:

"He said that if broadcasters are required to make such information easily available online for all to see, prices could go up 'because they're all gonna know' what each other is charging."

But according to Timothy Karr, senior director of strategy at the media reform group Free Press: "This would hamper our ability to see in detail how much Super PACs, campaigns and other third-party groups are spending, when they're spending it and on how many ads. It would also delay – by as much as a month – disclosure of this spending, as the broadcasters would ask for time to aggregate amounts."

The non-partisan Sunlight Foundation concurs, arguing that “broadcasters are not entitled to cherry pick the quality or type of information to be made public.” In an April 20 letter to Chairman Genachowski, Sunlight’s executive director Ellen Miller wrote that broadcasters want to omit “information about whether a station accepted or rejected a request to purchase time, the date and time a political advertising message aired, and the class of time purchased.

“The broadcasters also appear to suggest keeping offline – in effect hiding – information about ads purchased by non-profit organizations, including so-called ‘super PACs,’ that purchase ad time for electioneering communications or making independent expenditures.”

We’re not sure which way Commissioner Clyburn will vote in part because of two somewhat cryptic statements. During a recent Catholic University speech, Clyburn said disclosure had to be “handled carefully, and in a manner sensitive to the capacities of differently situated broadcasters.”

A few days later, speaking at the Las Vegas meeting of the National Association of Broadcasters, she remarked: “I would just affirm to you that this office is still open to engagement.”

It’s impossible to seek clarification because under the FCC’s Sunshine Rule, no further contact can be made with commissioners on the rule until the vote is taken. But watch this space we’ll report the Friday results as soon as we know them.

Michael Winship, senior writing fellow at the think tank Demos, is senior writer of the public television series “Moyers & Company.” Comment at BillMoyers.com.

The US Press Sell-out on Iraq War

As President George W. Bush rushed the nation to war in early 2003, some Americans took personal risks to warn the country about the misleading evidence on Iraq, but most U.S. news outlets turned a deaf ear, sometimes leaving the whistleblowers out in the cold, as former FBI agent Coleen Rowley recalls.

By Coleen Rowley

By late January-early February 2003, Americans were witnessing the Bush administration’s final and intense push to launch a pre-emptive war on Iraq, based largely on (what are now well known as) two completely false pretexts:

Iraq's possession of WMD and its connections to Al Qaeda terrorists.

My knowledge that Iraq's WMD was being exaggerated was merely what anyone could gain from close reading of public sources, including some in the mainstream press: the McClatchy news articles by Jonathan Landay and Warren Strobel (who later won Pulitzers for their reporting) as well as a few buried articles in the Washington Post and Newsweek debunking the "evidence" being presented by Bush-Cheney-Powell-Rice-Rumsfeld et al.

However, due to the Minneapolis FBI's pre 9/11 investigation of an Al Qaeda operative, I was in a better position to know more than J.Q. Average Citizen about the non-existence of ties between Iraq and Al Qaeda. Still, Bush administration officials knew how important it was to cleverly fabricate this connection.

So, Vice President Dick Cheney would lie about 9/11 hijacker Mohammed Atta meeting with an Iraqi intelligence agent in Prague while FBI Director Robert Mueller would look down at his shoes, knowing the FBI had documentary proof that Atta was in the U.S. at the time (and not meeting Iraqi agents in Prague).

I also knew the FBI director was under enormous pressure to keep his mouth shut and go along with whatever senior administration officials wanted, to keep them from splitting the FBI in half. The FBI's pre-9/11 lapses were becoming well-known and its round-up of a thousand immigrants after 9/11 touted for PR purposes had turned into a fiasco. They were not terrorists, while other actions that would have made sense, like interviewing terror suspects already in custody about second-wave plots, were declined.

The incompetence and dissembling from these prior failures and mistakes had first shocked me but then I grew desensitized. Still, the false info being sold to the American public that the 9/11 attacks were connected to Iraq was a whopper with potentially grave consequences. By February 2003, the Bush administration had succeeded in misleading 76 percent of Americans to believe Saddam Hussein provided assistance to Al Qaeda.

Media Turning Point

Secretary of State Colin Powell's presentation at the U.N. on Feb. 5, 2003, seemed to mark the point where the mainstream media fully succumbed to war fever and rallied behind Bush's invasion plans. What few knew was that, in addition to Powell's PR home-run, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's assistant Victoria Clarke had leaked her 300-page plan of "Embedding the Media in Iraq" to U.S. media chieftains. The Pentagon Pundit Program was also established to insert retired pro-war military officers as talking heads on the TV News programs.

I learned how badly biased the media already was when I tried to submit an Op-Ed to Time magazine, which had just featured me as one of its Persons of the Year for whistleblowing about the FBI's 9/11 failures.

However, in early February 2003, I quickly became *persona non grata* when I questioned the Bush administration's stated urgency for going to war. The word soon came back from the magazine's brass that the Iraq War was essentially a done deal. They had no interest in my Op-Ed.

A couple weeks later, I remembered a comment from the FBI director who expressed a willingness to accept critical information from me about problems and dangers. So on Feb. 26, 2003, I took a deep breath and sent an e-mail to FBI Director Robert Mueller. It contained all the points I could think of that the FBI director ought to be warning the President about. In a nutshell, I pointed out how wrong and counterproductive the launching of war on Iraq would be to our efforts to reduce terrorism.

A week passed without any response from Director Mueller. I was starting to panic as, according to news reports that first week of March, American troops were already in place, just waiting for orders from Bush to commence the attack.

I could not watch another calamity unfold without trying to do something. So, I called up reporters at two newspapers, Philip Shenon at the New York Times and Greg Gordon at the Minneapolis Star Tribune (who now writes for McClatchy). They were interested and both newspapers subsequently published front-page stories about my warning to the FBI director on March 6, 2003.

Although I had technically broken FBI policy by not seeking FBI "pre-publication review" and approval for sharing my letter with news outlets, nothing in my letter was classified or secret by law. It certainly was the kind of thing more suitable for a letter of resignation and way over my lowly (GS-14) pay grade but no one at the higher ranks was doing anything! They all seemed muzzled.

The morning the articles were published, the FBI's "Office of Professional Responsibility" (the internal discipline unit) as well as Headquarters Legal Counsel and Press Office quickly engaged with my field office boss (the "Special Agent in Charge") to let me know I'd be facing disciplinary action for the unapproved media contact and publication.

Of course, the reason I had not sought "pre-publication review" was due to time sensitivity. I was aware of the FBI using its "prepublication review" policy to delay releasing other agents' writings for years not due to legal reasons (secrecy of the info) but just as a way of controlling employees' speech when it could prove embarrassing to the FBI.

All of my colleagues in the Minneapolis FBI office were shocked at the news articles on March 6 and at what they thought was a totally crazy action on my part. Given the war fever and sense of futility, even the few who were against the Iraq War disapproved of my attempt to engage the media. Some agents joined pundits in publicly denouncing me.

Those in my office said they could no longer trust me and called on my boss to relieve me of my division legal counsel duties. (Only one, however, had the integrity to confront me directly and question me on the substantive facts and issues, the lack of justification for launching the new war on a country that had nothing to do with 9/11.)

Enter CBS *60 Minutes*

Among the media calls that ensued from my published warnings was a request for an exclusive interview from the celebrated CBS's *60 Minutes* investigative news show. One of correspondent Scott Pelley's producers at the time had worked on prior news reports exposing the Moussaoui investigation and I had previously met him a couple times.

Pelley and his producer flew in to the Twin Cities the next day. By then, the FBI had reviewed my e-mail letter to Mueller (which had resulted in the articles) and they knew there was nothing in it that was secret or legally protected. The FBI had initiated a potential disciplinary action against me, however, for failure to seek "pre-publication review."

At that point, I asked for the FBI's approval to accommodate the *60 Minutes* request. After taking an additional day to respond, FBI officials ended up saying they couldn't stop me from repeating the points in my letter but also basically read me the riot act in terms of warning me not to do it.

Before that happened, Pelley and his producer already tried to convince me to do the interview without worrying about FBI approval. On the morning of March 7, while their cameras were being set up and I was trading phone calls with my boss and FBI Headquarters, Pelley tried to convince me to just go ahead.

It was then that he divulged how Colin Powell's speech had been the thing that convinced him of the need for this new war on Iraq. He said he'd been very skeptical prior to hearing Powell but that Powell was persuasive and seemed to have swayed the bulk of the media. But Pelley continued if there were solid arguments and information that weighed against precipitously launching this new war the people of the country needed to hear it.

The FBI hadn't responded to my request by 11 a.m. and so I told the *60 Minutes* crew I couldn't do the interview. The camera team took down and packed the

equipment up and put our living room furniture back in place. It was almost noon and Pelley and his producer had given up and left when the FBI finally provided their weird response, half approval and half warning.

Pelley had already returned to the airport but when I called and said I could do the interview, they turned around and had their camera crew come back and set up again. I had a prior commitment to give a two-hour talk on "legal and law enforcement ethics" at a Twin Cities law school that afternoon but when I got home around 4 p.m., *60 Minutes* started filming the interview.

Interview from Hell

It was an interview from hell, quickly turning into an excruciatingly difficult and painful affair for everyone involved. Pelley asked the same or similar questions over and over, I suppose in an effort to get better or stronger responses. I was trying to be careful and not stray from the FBI's "permission," which was limited to what I'd already said in the letter to Mueller.

Canister after canister of film was loaded, used and wasted, capturing the repeated questioning which continued to almost midnight. With only a few short breaks, that made for almost eight hours worth of (thoroughly repetitive) interview tape! By the end, judging from their faces going out the door, it was obvious that most if not all of the tape was destined for the cutting-room floor.

Nothing aired that Sunday, March 9. Pelley's producer may have been in hot water over how much time and effort was wasted in the hours and hours of the interview, especially since it occurred on a Friday night, less than 48 hours before Sunday night's show time. I never heard from anyone at *60 Minutes* again.

Not surprisingly, my career at the FBI was destroyed as a result of my speaking out against the war. It's a much longer story but the group of agents with the worst case of war fever pressured my boss to make me step down from the GS-14 legal position I'd had for 13 years.

In a way they were right, since the attorney-client legal representation aspect of my division legal counsel position required the trust of all the employees. I made a quick decision that the better part of valor would be to give them their pound of flesh.

My stepping down – along with volunteering for various shifts, out-of-town and holiday assignments, all-night surveillances and odd jobs that no one wanted like "informant coordinator" – got me through the next 22 months to retirement eligibility albeit with a pension accordingly reduced for having given up one GS-level.

Nearly a decade later, I find it's still painful to remember and recount. I've blocked a lot of it out. In all fairness, there were probably many reasons that nothing from the canisters and canisters of film produced from that painful interview ever aired on *60 Minutes* at the start of that war-fevered week (which was about 10 days before Bush ordered the attacks to begin).

But there are also lots of unanswered questions for me. The significant investment of time and resources that Scott Pelley ended up wasting on my warnings about launching war on Iraq less than 48 hours from their Sunday night show time was itself evidence of the bit of open-mindedness the show's producers obviously retained even at that late date.

It would be interesting, if the tapes of the interview still exist somewhere at *60 Minutes*, to listen to them now. Maybe I just didn't sound authoritative enough. A guy like Cheney not only had all the power but he always spoke in the most authoritative way as if he knew everything for sure.

How much was due to the fact I was "a GS-14 nobody" on a straight path to "GS-13 nobody"? But credibility isn't exactly the same thing as status and power. I had been proven correct about the mistakes leading to 9/11 and the fact that 9/11 might have been prevented. My concerns about invading Iraq would all prove pretty much correct too (unfortunately).

It's impossible to overstate how powerful the deceptions by those in control of the government could be. Certainly much of what I observed and disclosed was available for many others to see and say but almost nobody did.

The 9/11 Experience

I probably wouldn't have gone to these lengths either had I not witnessed and suffered through what happened on 9/11. I reproached myself for not having done more then, even if it meant acting above my pay grade. Did the effort at "perception management" by those in power simply trump reality and substance?

The Iraq War lead-up presented an unusual situation because most of the mainstream media was duped, self-censoring or actively helping the Bush administration to sell the deception. The media had most of the facts or access to most of the facts themselves. But only a small segment, a really small segment of reporters, was reporting the facts.

Bill Moyers has since interviewed a number of national journalists involved, including the late Tim Russert, longtime anchor of NBC's "Meet the Press," for a program called "Buying the War." The stories by the small handful of news reporters who got it right were either buried or did not get wide circulation.

Only a few people with the credibility and the ability to get a bit of air time and/or get an Op-Ed published were speaking out, like former weapons inspector Scott Ritter, former U.S. Ambassador Joe Wilson and ex-President Jimmy Carter.

It was a classic “Emperor Has No Clothes” situation, but there was just no little boy who could yell loud enough. The 9/11 lapses had allowed Bush to wield more power over his government including the FBI, CIA and other national security agencies so they too were forced to applaud their naked emperor’s march.

What’s worse is that the trends toward perception dominating substance did not end with Bush (and Karl Rove’s) departure. Powerful neoconservative columnists, like William Kristol at the Weekly Standard (and formerly at the New York Times) and Charles Krauthammer at the Washington Post never looked back. The neocons still frame most of the leading national news coverage despite having been wrong on just about everything. In other words, they are still selling their invisible garments.

I think it would be good for *60 Minutes* to save the tapes of my interview (if they still exist) and give them to historians who may try at some future point to figure out how such a naked emperor was able to continue into a disastrous war despite some of us who tried to yell.

[Scott Pelley is now the anchor and managing editor of “CBS Evening News,” a seat formerly held by Walter Cronkite and Dan Rather.]

Coleen Rowley, a FBI special agent for almost 24 years, was legal counsel to the FBI Field Office in Minneapolis from 1990 to 2003. She wrote a “whistleblower” memo in May 2002 and testified to the Senate Judiciary on some of the FBI’s pre 9/11 failures. She retired at the end of 2004, and now writes and speaks on ethical decision-making and balancing civil liberties with the need for effective investigation.

Bush Did Lie About Iraq

From the Archive: Some loyalists still defend President George W. Bush’s honesty by insisting he really believed the bogus intelligence on Iraq’s WMD and, true, it is impossible to know what was in his mind. But Bush did lie about Iraq’s WMD in another way, as Robert Parry explained in 2010.

By Robert Parry (Originally published March 5, 2010)

George W. Bush's political adviser Karl Rove claims "one of the biggest mistakes" of that presidency was not aggressively challenging critics who charged that Bush "lied" to the American people about the reasons for the Iraq War, an accusation that Rove insists was false and unfair.

In his book, *Courage and Consequence*, Rove calls the "lie" charge "a poison-tipped dagger aimed at the heart of the Bush presidency" and blames himself for "a weak response" that underestimated "how damaging this assault was."

But the problem with Rove's account is that not only did Bush oversee the twisting of intelligence to justify invading Iraq in March 2003 but he subsequently lied and lied repeatedly about how Iraq had responded to United Nations inspection demands.

So, while it may be impossible to say for certain what Bush believed about Iraq possessing weapons of mass destruction, it can't be argued that Bush didn't know that Iraq declared that it had destroyed its WMD stockpiles and let U.N. inspectors in to see for themselves in the months before the invasion.

Nevertheless, Bush followed up his false pre-war claims about Iraq's WMD with a post-invasion insistence that Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein had barred U.N. inspectors from his country, a decision that Bush said left him no choice but to invade. Bush began reciting this faux history just months after the invasion and continued the tall tale until the end of his presidency more than five years later.

Tellingly, throughout that period, as Bush blithely lied about the Iraq War history, he was never challenged to his face by the mainstream U.S. journalists who politely listened to the lies. Indeed, some big-name journalists even adopted Bush's false narrative as their own.

Now, it appears Rove is intent on rehabilitating Bush's record by insisting that the ex-President never lied at all. The historical record, however, is clear: Hussein and other Iraqi officials did say they no longer possessed WMD and they did let UN arms inspectors into Iraq in the fall of 2002 to search any site of their choosing.

The inspectors in their white vans drove around Iraq for months, with their excursions covered daily by the international news media. In trip after trip, guided by the best available U.S. intelligence, the inspectors came up empty.

Hussein and his government also backed up their claims to be WMD-free by providing the United Nations a 12,000-page declaration on Dec. 7, 2002, explaining how Iraq's stocks of chemical and biological weapons had been destroyed in the 1990s.

Though the Bush administration mocked these Iraqi disclosures, U.S. intelligence had its own independent facts supporting the Iraqi statements, including information from Hussein's son-in-law Hussein Kamel al-Majid who defected and described his work destroying the stockpiles after the Persian Gulf War in the early 1990s. [When he returned to Iraq, he was killed.]

Top-Level Intelligence

With the help of French intelligence, the CIA also had "turned" Hussein's foreign minister, Naji Sabri, who conveyed real-time intelligence to the U.S. government, passing along information in September 2002 about the absence of Iraqi WMD. Here is how author Ron Suskind described that intelligence in his 2008 book, *The Way of the World*:

"The upshot of Sabri's account was that Saddam neither possessed WMD nor was trying very hard to procure or develop them. If Saddam was eager for a nuclear weapon, he was as far as ever from having one and was making no progress on that front; any vestige of a bio-weapons program was negligible; and if any chemical weapons remained in Iraq, they were no longer in the hands of either Saddam Hussein or his military.

"[CIA Paris station chief Bill] Murray flew down to Washington to deliver the news and briefed John McLaughlin, CIA's deputy director. McLaughlin was enthusiastic about the intelligence but pointed out that it was contradicted by information from Curveball, the best source on Iraqi WMD to that point. Sabri's account was relayed to [CIA Director George] Tenet, who delivered it personally to Bush the following day.

"But the administration quickly lost interest in Sabri when it heard what he had to say. Bush dismissed the intelligence as disinformation, and the White House said it would be interested in Sabri only if he chose to defect."

Though the CIA found additional information to corroborate Sabri's story and regarded Curveball as a highly unreliable source, Bush pressed forward on his course to war. Suskind further reported that the written report on Sabri's intelligence was distorted to lend greater credence to the WMD suspicions, "almost certainly altered under pressure from Washington."

Yet, it may never be fully known whether Bush didn't care about the truth or simply chose to believe the "stove-piped" intelligence that was coming from neoconservatives salted throughout the national security bureaucracy and who were determined to go to war with Iraq.

What can't be doubted is what happened next. Set on invading, Bush forced the U.N. inspectors to wrap up their work and to leave Iraq in March 2003, a

departure that was followed within days by his “shock and awe” attack on Iraq, beginning March 19.

Reinventing History

Several months later, with Hussein’s government ousted and with the U.S. military coming up empty in its search for WMD caches, Bush began his historical revisionism by insisting publicly that he had no choice but to invade because Hussein supposedly had barred U.N. inspectors.

On July 14, 2003, Bush told reporters: “We gave him [Saddam Hussein] a chance to allow the inspectors in, and he wouldn’t let them in. And, therefore, after a reasonable request, we decided to remove him from power.”

Facing no contradiction from the White House press corps, Bush continued repeating this lie again and again in varied forms.

On Jan. 27, 2004, for example, Bush said, “We went to the United Nations, of course, and got an overwhelming resolution 1441 unanimous resolution, that said to Saddam, you must disclose and destroy your weapons programs, which obviously meant the world felt he had such programs. He chose defiance. It was his choice to make, and he did not let us in.”

As the months and years went by, Bush’s lie and its unchallenged retelling took on the color of truth. At a March 21, 2006, news conference, Bush again blamed the war on Hussein’s defiance of U.N. demands for unfettered inspections.

“I was hoping to solve this [Iraq] problem diplomatically,” Bush said. “The world said, ‘Disarm, disclose or face serious consequences.’ We worked to make sure that Saddam Hussein heard the message of the world. And when he chose to deny the inspectors, when he chose not to disclose, then I had the difficult decision to make to remove him. And we did.”

At a press conference on May 24, 2007, Bush offered a short-hand version of the made-up tale, even inviting the journalists to remember the invented history.

“As you might remember back then, we tried the diplomatic route: [U.N. Resolution] 1441 was a unanimous vote in the Security Council that said disclose, disarm or face serious consequences. So the choice was his [Hussein’s] to make. And he made a choice that has subsequently caused him to lose his life.”

In one of his White House exit interviews on Dec. 1, 2008 Bush again revived his convenient version of history, that Hussein was responsible for the invasion because he wouldn’t let the U.N. inspectors in. ABC News anchor Charles Gibson

asked Bush, "If the [U.S.] intelligence had been right [and revealed no Iraq WMD], would there have been an Iraq War?"

Bush answered, "Yes, because Saddam Hussein was unwilling to let the inspectors go in to determine whether or not the U.N. resolutions were being upheld."

In his frequent repetition of this claim, Bush never acknowledged the fact that Hussein did comply with Resolution 1441 by declaring accurately that he had disposed of his WMD stockpiles and by permitting U.N. inspectors to examine any site of their choosing.

Media Complicity

And never did mainstream reporters contradict Bush's false history to his face. Indeed, some prominent Washington journalists even adopted Bush's lie as their own. For instance, in a July 2004 interview, ABC's veteran newsman Ted Koppel used it to explain why he Koppel thought the invasion of Iraq was justified.

"It did not make logical sense that Saddam Hussein, whose armies had been defeated once before by the United States and the Coalition, would be prepared to lose control over his country if all he had to do was say, 'All right, U.N., come on in, check it out,'" Koppel told Amy Goodman, host of "Democracy Now."

In the real history, Hussein did tell the U.N. to "come on in, check it out." But faux reality had become the trademark of the Bush presidency and of its many supporters in the press corps.

Washington's conventional wisdom eventually embraced another fake belief, that Hussein provoked the war by misleading people into believing that he still possessed WMD. The fact that Hussein and his government had declared they didn't possess WMD was forgotten.

In line with the bogus version of history, "60 Minutes" correspondent Scott Pelley asked FBI interrogator George Piro, who had debriefed Hussein in prison, why the dictator kept pretending that he had WMD even as U.S. troops massed on Iraq's borders, when a simple announcement that the WMD was gone would have prevented the war.

"For a man who drew America into two wars and countless military engagements, we never knew what Saddam Hussein was thinking," Pelley said in introducing the segment on the interrogation of Hussein about his WMD stockpiles, which aired Jan. 27, 2008. "Why did he choose war with the United States?"

This "60 Minutes" segment never mentioned the fact that Hussein and his government did disclose that the WMD had been eliminated. Instead Pelley pressed

Piro on the mystery of why Hussein supposedly was hiding that fact: “Why keep the secret? Why put your nation at risk, why put your own life at risk to maintain this charade?”

After Piro mentioned Hussein’s lingering fear of neighboring Iran, Pelley felt he was close to an answer to the mystery: “He believed that he couldn’t survive without the perception that he had weapons of mass destruction?”

But, still, Pelley puzzled over why Hussein’s continued in his miscalculation. Pelley asked: “As the U.S. marched toward war and we began massing troops on his border, why didn’t he stop it then? And say, ‘Look, I have no weapons of mass destruction,’ I mean, how could he have wanted his country to be invaded?”

Now, with the publication of Karl Rove’s memoir, the American public can expect a reprise of the argument that it was unfair for anyone to accuse President Bush of lying about Iraq, that he simply believed mistaken intelligence and did what he thought was best for America. In other words, Bush was the victim of mean critics, not a dishonest warmonger.

One also can expect that the mainstream U.S. news media will continue to forget its own role in perpetuating the lie that George W. Bush would never lie.

[To read more of Robert Parry’s writings, you can now order his last two books, *Secrecy & Privilege* and *Neck Deep*, at the discount price of only \$16 for both. For details on the special offer, [click here.](#)]

Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories in the 1980s for the Associated Press and Newsweek. His latest book, *Neck Deep: The Disastrous Presidency of George W. Bush*, was written with two of his sons, Sam and Nat, and can be ordered at neckdeepbook.com. His two previous books, *Secrecy & Privilege: The Rise of the Bush Dynasty from Watergate to Iraq* and *Lost History: Contras, Cocaine, the Press & ‘Project Truth’* are also available there.
