

Robert Parry's Legacy and the Future of Consortiumnews

Robert Parry, editor and publisher of Consortiumnews.com, died peacefully Saturday evening. In this tribute, his son Nat Parry describes Robert's unwavering commitment to independent journalism.

By Nat Parry

It is with a heavy heart that we inform Consortiumnews readers that Editor Robert Parry has passed away. As regular readers know, Robert (or Bob, as he was known to friends and family) suffered a stroke in December, which – despite his own speculation that it may have been brought on by the stress of covering Washington politics – was the result of undiagnosed pancreatic cancer that he had been unknowingly living with for the past 4-5 years.

He unfortunately suffered two more debilitating strokes in recent weeks and after the last one, was moved to hospice care on Tuesday. He passed away peacefully Saturday evening. He was 68.

Those of us close to him wish to sincerely thank readers for the kind comments and words of support posted on recent articles regarding Bob's health issues. We read aloud many of these comments to him during his final days to let him know how much his work has meant to so many people and how much concern there was for his well-being.

I am sure that these kindnesses meant a lot to him. They also mean a lot to us as family members, as we all know how devoted he was to the mission of independent journalism and this website which has been publishing articles since the earliest days of the internet, launching all the way back in 1995.

With my dad, professional work has always been deeply personal, and his career as a journalist was thoroughly intertwined with his family life. I can recall kitchen table conversations in my early childhood that focused on the U.S.-backed wars in Central America and complaints about how his editors at The Associated Press were too timid to run articles of his that – no matter how well-documented – cast the Reagan administration in a bad light.

One of my earliest memories in fact was of my dad about to leave on assignment in the early 1980s to the war zones of El Salvador, Nicaragua and Guatemala, and the heartfelt good-bye that he wished to me and my siblings. He warned us that he was going to a very dangerous place and that there was a possibility that he might not come back.

I remember asking him why he had to go, why he couldn't just stay at home with us. He replied that it was important to go to these places and tell the truth about what was happening there. He mentioned that children my age were being killed in these wars and that somebody had to tell their stories. I remember asking, "Kids like me?" He replied, "Yes, kids just like you."

Bob was deeply impacted by the dirty wars of Central America in the 1980s and in many ways these conflicts – and the U.S. involvement in them – came to define the rest of his life and career. With grisly stories emerging from Nicaragua (thanks partly to journalists like him), Congress passed the Boland Amendments from 1982 to 1984, which placed limits on U.S. military assistance to the contras who were attempting to overthrow the Sandinista government through a variety of terrorist tactics.

The Reagan administration immediately began exploring ways to circumvent those legal restrictions, which led to a scheme to send secret arms shipments to the revolutionary and vehemently anti-American government of Iran and divert the profits to the contras. In 1985, Bob wrote the first stories describing this operation, which later became known as the Iran-Contra Affair.

Contra-Cocaine and October Surprise

Parallel to the illegal arms shipments to Iran during those days was a cocaine trafficking operation by the Nicaraguan contras and a willingness by the Reagan administration and the CIA to turn a blind eye to these activities. This, despite the fact that cocaine was flooding into the United States while Ronald Reagan was proclaiming a "war on drugs," and a crack cocaine epidemic was devastating communities across the country.

Bob and his colleague Brian Barger were the first journalists to report on this story in late 1985, which became known as the contra-cocaine scandal, and became the subject of a congressional investigation led by then-Senator John Kerry (D-Mass.) in 1986.

Continuing to pursue leads relating to Iran-Contra during a period in the late 80s when most of Washington was moving on from the scandal, Bob discovered that there was more to the story than commonly understood. He learned that the roots of the illegal arm shipments to Iran stretched back further than previously known – all the way back to the 1980 presidential campaign.

That electoral contest between incumbent Jimmy Carter and challenger Ronald Reagan had come to be largely dominated by the hostage crisis in Iran, with 52 Americans being held at the U.S. embassy in Tehran since the 1979 Iranian Revolution. The Iranian hostage crisis, along with the ailing economy, came to

define a perception of an America in decline, with former Hollywood actor Ronald Reagan promising a new start for the country, a restoration of its status as a “shining city on a hill.”

The hostages were released in Tehran moments after Reagan was sworn in as president in Washington on January 20, 1981. Despite suspicions for years that there had been some sort of quid pro quo between the Reagan campaign and the Iranians, it wasn't until Bob uncovered a trove of documents in a House office building basement in 1994 that the evidence became overwhelming that the Reagan campaign had interfered with the Carter administration's efforts to free the hostages prior to the 1980 election. Their release sooner – what Carter hoped would be his “October Surprise” – could have given him the boost needed to win.

Examining these documents and being already well-versed on this story – having previously travelled three continents pursuing the investigation for a PBS *Frontline* documentary – Bob became increasingly convinced that the Reagan campaign had in fact sabotaged Carter's hostage negotiations, possibly committing an act of treason in an effort to make sure that 52 American citizens continued to be held in a harrowing hostage situation until after Reagan secured the election.

Needless to say, this was an inconvenient story at a time – in the mid-1990s – when the national media had long since moved on from the Reagan scandals and were obsessing over new scandals, mostly related to President Bill Clinton's sex life and failed real estate deals. Washington also wasn't particularly interested in challenging the Reagan legacy, which at that time was beginning to solidify into a kind of mythology, with campaigns underway to name buildings and airports after the former president.

At times, Bob had doubts about his career decisions and the stories he was pursuing. As he wrote in *Trick or Treason*, a book outlining his investigation into the October Surprise Mystery, this search for historical truth can be painful and seemingly thankless.

“Many times,” he wrote, “I had regretted accepting *Frontline*'s assignment in 1990. I faulted myself for risking my future in mainstream journalism. After all, that is where the decent-paying jobs are. I had jeopardized my ability to support my four children out of an old-fashioned sense of duty, a regard for an unwritten code that expects reporters to take almost any assignment.”

Nevertheless, Bob continued his efforts to tell the full story behind both the Iran-Contra scandal and the origins of the Reagan-Bush era, ultimately leading to two things: him being pushed out of the mainstream media, and the launching of Consortiumnews.com.

I remember when he started the website, together with my older brother Sam, back in 1995. At the time, in spite of talk we were all hearing about something called “the information superhighway” and “electronic mail,” I had never visited a website and didn’t even know how to get “on line.” My dad called me in Richmond, where I was a sophomore at Virginia Commonwealth University, and told me I should check out this new “Internet site” he and Sam had just launched.

He explained over the phone how to open a browser and instructed me how to type in the URL, starting, he said, with “http,” then a colon and two forward slashes, then “www,” then “dot,” then this long address with one or two more forward slashes if I recall. (It wasn’t until years later that the website got its own domain and a simpler address.)

I went to the computer lab at the university and asked for some assistance on how to get online, dutifully typed in the URL, and opened this website – the first one I had ever visited. It was interesting, but a bit hard to read on the computer screen, so I printed out some articles to read back in my dorm room.

I quickly became a fan of “The Consortium,” as it was called back then, and continued reading articles on the October Surprise Mystery as Bob and Sam posted them on this new and exciting tool called “the Internet.” Sam had to learn HTML coding from scratch to launch this online news service, billed as “the Internet’s First Investigative ‘Zine.” For his efforts, Sam was honored with the Consortium for Independent Journalism’s first Gary Webb Freedom of the Press Award in 2015.

X-Files and Contra-Crack

At some point along the way, Bob decided that in addition to the website, where he was not only posting original articles but also providing the source documents that he had uncovered in the House office building basement, he would also take a stab at traditional publishing. He compiled the “October Surprise X-Files” into a booklet and self-published it in January 1996.

He was also publishing a newsletter to complement the website, knowing that at that time, there were still plenty of people who didn’t know how to turn a computer on, much less navigate the World Wide Web. I transferred from Virginia Commonwealth University to George Mason University in the DC suburbs and started working part-time with my dad and Sam on the newsletter and website.

We worked together on the content, editing and laying it out with graphics often culled from books at our local library. We built a subscriber base through networking and purchasing mailing lists from progressive magazines. Every two weeks we would get a thousand copies printed from Sir Speedy and would spend

Friday evening collating these newsletters and sending them out to our subscribers.

The launching of the website and newsletter, and later an even-more ambitious project called *I.F. Magazine*, happened to coincide with the publication in 1996 of Gary Webb's "Dark Alliance" series at the *San Jose Mercury-News*. Webb's series reopened the contra-cocaine controversy with a detailed examination of the drug trafficking networks in Nicaragua and Los Angeles that had helped to spread highly addictive crack cocaine across the United States.

The African-American community, in particular, was rightly outraged over this story, which offered confirmation of many long-standing suspicions that the government was complicit in the drug trade devastating their communities. African Americans had been deeply and disproportionately affected by the crack epidemic, both in terms of the direct impact of the drug and the draconian drug laws and mandatory minimum sentences that came to define the government's approach to "the war on drugs."

For a moment in the summer of 1996, it appeared that the renewed interest in the contra-cocaine story might offer an opportunity to revisit the crimes and misdeeds of the Reagan-Bush era, but those hopes were dashed when the "the Big Media" decided to double down on its earlier failures to cover this story properly.

Big Papers Pile On

The *Los Angeles Times* launched the attack on Gary Webb and his reporting at the *San Jose Mercury-News*, followed by equally dismissive stories at the *Washington Post* and *New York Times*. The piling on from these newspapers eventually led *Mercury-News* editor Jerry Ceppos to denounce Webb's reporting and offer a mea culpa for publishing the articles.

The onslaught of hostile reporting from the big papers failed to address the basic premises of Webb's series and did not debunk the underlying allegations of contra-cocaine smuggling or the fact that much of this cocaine ended up on American streets in the form of crack. Instead, it raised doubts by poking holes in certain details and casting the story as a "conspiracy theory." Some of the reporting attempted to debunk claims that Webb never actually made – such as the idea that the contra-cocaine trafficking was part of a government plot to intentionally decimate the African-American community.

Gary Webb and Bob were in close contact during those days. Bob offered him professional and personal support, having spent his time also on the receiving end of attacks by journalistic colleagues and editors who rejected certain

stories – no matter how factual – as fanciful conspiracy theories. Articles at The Consortium website and newsletter, as well as *I.F. Magazine*, offered details on the historical context for the “Dark Alliance” series and pushed back against the mainstream media’s onslaught of hostile and disingenuous reporting.

Bob also published the book *Lost History* which provided extensive details on the background for the “Dark Alliance” series, explaining that far from a baseless “conspiracy theory,” the facts and evidence strongly supported the conclusion that the Reagan-Bush administrations had colluded with drug traffickers to fund their illegal war against Nicaragua.

But sadly, the damage to Gary Webb was done. With his professional and personal life in tatters because of his courageous reporting on the contra-cocaine story, he committed suicide in 2004 at the age of 49. Speaking about this suicide later on *Democracy Now*, Bob noted how painful it is to be ridiculed and unfairly criticized by colleagues, as his friend had experienced.

“There’s a special pain when your colleagues in your profession turn on you, especially when you’ve done something that they should admire and should understand,” he said. “To do all that work and then have the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* and the *Los Angeles Times* attack you and try to destroy your life, there’s a special pain in that.”

In consultation with his family, Bob and the Board of Directors for the Consortium for Independent Journalism launched the Gary Webb Freedom of the Press Award in 2015.

The Disastrous Presidency of George W. Bush

The presidency of George W. Bush was surreal for many of us, and no one more so than my dad.

In covering Washington politics for decades, Bob had traced many stories to “Dubya’s” father, George H.W. Bush, who had been implicated in a variety of questionable activities, including the October Surprise Mystery and Iran-Contra. He had also launched a war against Iraq in 1991 that seemed to be motivated, at least in part, to help kick “the Vietnam Syndrome,” i.e. the reluctance that the American people had felt since the Vietnam War to support military action abroad.

As Bob noted in his 1992 book *Fooling America*, after U.S. forces routed the Iraqi military in 1991, President Bush’s first public comment about the victory expressed his delight that it would finally put to rest the American reflex against committing troops to far-off conflicts. “By God, we’ve kicked the Vietnam Syndrome once and for all,” he exulted.

The fact that Bush-41's son could run for president largely on name recognition confirmed to Bob the failure of the mainstream media to cover important stories properly and the need to continue building an independent media infrastructure. This conviction solidified through Campaign 2000 and the election's ultimate outcome, when Bush assumed the White House as the first popular-vote loser in more than a century.

Despite the fact that the U.S. Supreme Court had halted the counting of votes in Florida, thus preventing an accurate determination of the rightful winner, most of the national media moved on from the story after Bush was sworn in on Jan. 20, 2001. Consortiumnews.com continued to examine the documentary record, however, and ultimately concluded that Al Gore would have been declared the winner of that election if all the legally cast ballots were counted.

At Consortiumnews, there was an unwritten editorial policy that the title "President" should never precede George W. Bush's name, based on our view that he was not legitimately elected. But beyond those editorial decisions, we also understood the gravity of the fact that had Election 2000 been allowed to play out with all votes counted, many of the disasters of the Bush years – notably the 9/11 tragedy and the Iraq War, as well as decisions to withdraw from international agreements on arms control and climate change – might have been averted.

As all of us who lived through the post-9/11 era will recall, it was a challenging time all around, especially if you were someone critical of George W. Bush. The atmosphere in that period did not allow for much dissent. Those who stood up against the juggernaut for war – such as Phil Donahue at MSNBC, Chris Hedges at the *New York Times*, or even the Dixie Chicks – had their careers damaged and found themselves on the receiving end of death threats and hate mail.

While Bob's magazine and newsletter projects had been discontinued, the website was still publishing articles, providing a home for dissenting voices that questioned the case for invading Iraq in late 2002 and early 2003. Around this time, former CIA analyst Ray McGovern and some of his colleagues founded Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity and a long-running relationship with Consortiumnews was established. Several former intelligence veterans began contributing to the website, motivated by the same independent spirit of truth-telling that compelled Bob to invest so much in this project.

At a time when almost the entire mainstream media was going along with the Bush administration's dubious case for war, this and a few other like-minded websites pushed back with well-researched articles calling into question the rationale. Although at times it might have felt as though we were just voices in the

wilderness, a major groundswell of opposition to war emerged in the country, with historic marches of hundreds of thousands taking place to reject Bush's push for war.

Of course, these antiwar voices were ultimately vindicated by the failure to find weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and the fact that the war and occupation proved to be a far costlier and deadlier enterprise than we had been told that it would be. Earlier assurances that it would be a "cakewalk" proved as false as the WMD claims, but as had been so often the case in Washington, there was little to no accountability from the mainstream media, the think tanks or government officials for being so spectacularly wrong.

In an effort to document the true history of that era, Bob, Sam and I co-wrote the book *Neck Deep: The Disastrous Presidency of George W. Bush*, which was published in late 2007. The book traced the work of Consortiumnews, juxtaposing it against the backdrop of mainstream media coverage during the Bush era, in an effort to not only correct the record, but also demonstrate that not all of us got things so wrong.

We felt it was important to remind readers – as well as future historians – that some of us knew and reported in real time the mistakes that were being made on everything from withdrawing from the Kyoto Protocol to invading Iraq to implementing a policy of torture to bungling the response to Hurricane Katrina.

Obama Era

By the Obama presidency, Consortiumnews.com had become a home to a growing number of writers who brought new perspectives to the website's content. While for years, the writing staff had been limited primarily to Bob, Sam and me, suddenly, Consortiumnews was receiving contributions from journalists, activists and former intelligence analysts who offered a wide range of expertise – on international law, economics, human rights, foreign policy, national security, and even religion and philosophy.

One recurring theme of articles at the website during the Obama era was the enduring effect of unchallenged narratives, how they shaped national politics and dictated government policy. Bob observed that even a supposedly left-of-center president like Obama seemed beholden to the false narratives and national mythologies dating back to the Reagan era. He pointed out that this could be at least partially attributed to the failure to establish a strong foundation for independent journalism.

In a 2010 piece called "Obama's Fear of the Reagan Narrative," Bob noted that Obama had defended his deal with Republicans on tax cuts for the rich because

there was such a strong lingering effect of Reagan's messaging from 30 years earlier. "He felt handcuffed by the Right's ability to rally Americans on behalf of Reagan's 'government-is-the-problem' message," Bob wrote.

He traced Obama's complaints about his powerlessness in the face of this dynamic to the reluctance of American progressives to invest sufficiently in media and think tanks, as conservatives had been doing for decades in waging their "the war of ideas." As he had been arguing since the early 1990s, Bob insisted that the limits that had been placed on Obama – whether real or perceived – continued to demonstrate the power of propaganda and the need for greater investment in alternative media.

He also observed that much of the nuttiness surrounding the so-called Tea Party movement resulted from fundamental misunderstandings of American history and constitutional principles. "Democrats and progressives should be under no illusion about the new flood of know-nothingism that is about to inundate the United States in the guise of a return to 'first principles' and a deep respect for the U.S. Constitution," Bob warned.

He pointed out that despite the Tea Partiers' claimed reverence for the Constitution, they actually had very little understanding of the document, as revealed by their ahistorical claims that federal taxes are unconstitutional. In fact, as Bob observed, the Constitution represented "a major power grab by the federal government, when compared to the loosely drawn Articles of Confederation, which lacked federal taxing authority and other national powers."

Motivated by a desire to correct falsified historical narratives spanning more than two centuries, Bob published his sixth and final book, *America's Stolen Narrative: From Washington and Madison to Nixon, Reagan and the Bushes to Obama*, in 2012.

Along with revenues from book sales, growing donations from readers enabled Bob to not only pay writers but also to hire an assistant, Chelsea Gilmour, who began working for Consortiumnews in 2014. In addition to providing invaluable administrative support, Chelsea also performed duties including research, writing and fact-checking.

Political Realignment and the New McCarthyism

Although at the beginning of the Obama era – and indeed since the 1980s – the name Robert Parry had been closely associated with exposing wrongdoing by Republicans, and hence had a strong following among Democratic Party loyalists, by the end of Obama's presidency there seemed to be a realignment taking place among some of Consortiumnews.com's readership, which reflected more generally

the shifting politics of the country.

In particular, the U.S. media's approach to Russia and related issues, such as the violent ouster in 2014 of Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich, became "virtually 100 percent propaganda," Bob said.

He noted that the full story was never told when it came to issues such as the Sergei Magnitsky case, which led to the first round of U.S. sanctions against Russia, nor the inconvenient facts related to the Euromaidan protests that led to Yanukovich's ouster – including the reality of strong neo-Nazi influence in those protests – nor the subsequent conflict in the Donbass region of Ukraine.

Bob's stories on Ukraine were widely cited and disseminated, and he became an important voice in presenting a fuller picture of the conflict than was possible by reading and watching only mainstream news outlets. Bob was featured prominently in Oliver Stone's 2016 documentary "Ukraine on Fire," where he explained how U.S.-funded political NGOs and media companies have worked with the CIA and foreign policy establishment since the 1980s to promote the U.S. geopolitical agenda.

Bob regretted that, increasingly, "the American people and the West in general are carefully shielded from hearing the 'other side of the story.'" Indeed, he said that to even suggest that there might be another side to the story is enough to get someone branded as an apologist for Vladimir Putin or a "Kremlin stooge."

This culminated in late 2016 in the blacklisting of Consortiumnews.com on a dubious website called "PropOrNot," which was claiming to serve as a watchdog against undue "Russian influence" in the United States. The PropOrNot blacklist, including Consortiumnews and about 200 other websites deemed "Russian propaganda," was elevated by the *Washington Post* as a credible source, despite the fact that the neo-McCarthyites who published the list hid behind a cloak of anonymity.

"The *Post's* article by Craig Timberg," Bob wrote on Nov. 27, 2016, "described PropOrNot simply as 'a nonpartisan collection of researchers with foreign policy, military and technology backgrounds [who] planned to release its own findings Friday showing the startling reach and effectiveness of Russian propaganda campaigns.'"

As Bob explained in an article called "Washington Post's Fake News Guilt," the paper granted PropOrNot anonymity "to smear journalists who don't march in lockstep with official pronouncements from the State Department or some other

impeccable fount of never-to-be-questioned truth.”

The *Post* even provided an unattributed quote from the head of the shadowy website. “The way that this propaganda apparatus supported [Donald] Trump was equivalent to some massive amount of a media buy,” the anonymous smear merchant said. The *Post* claimed that the PropOrNot “executive director” had spoken on the condition of anonymity “to avoid being targeted by Russia’s legions of skilled hackers.”

To be clear, neither Consortiumnews nor Robert Parry ever “supported Trump,” as the above anonymous quote claims. Something interesting, however, did seem to be happening in terms of Consortiumnews’ readership in the early days of the Trump presidency, as could be gleaned from some of the comments left on articles and social media activity.

It did appear for some time at least that a good number of Trump supporters were reading Consortiumnews, which could probably attributed to the fact that the website was one of the few outlets pushing back against both the “New Cold War” with Russia and the related story of “Russiagate,” which Bob didn’t even like referring to as a “scandal.” (As an editor, he preferred to use the word “controversy” on the website, because as far as he was concerned, the allegations against Trump and his supposed “collusion” with Russia did not rise to the level of actual scandals such as Watergate or Iran-Contra.)

In his view, the perhaps understandable hatred of Trump felt by many Americans – both inside and outside the Beltway – had led to an abandonment of old-fashioned rules of journalism and standards of fairness, which should be applied even to someone like Donald Trump.

“On a personal note, I faced harsh criticism even from friends of many years for refusing to enlist in the anti-Trump ‘Resistance,’” Bob wrote in his final article for Consortiumnews.

“The argument was that Trump was such a unique threat to America and the world that I should join in finding any justification for his ouster,” he said. “Some people saw my insistence on the same journalistic standards that I had always employed somehow a betrayal.”

He marveled that even senior editors in the mainstream media treated the unproven Russiagate allegations as flat fact.

“No skepticism was tolerated and mentioning the obvious bias among the never-Trumpers inside the FBI, Justice Department and intelligence community was decried as an attack on the integrity of the U.S. government’s institutions,” Bob wrote. “Anti-Trump ‘progressives’ were posturing as the true patriots

because of their now unquestioning acceptance of the evidence-free proclamations of the U.S. intelligence and law enforcement agencies.”

An Untimely End and the Future of Consortiumnews

My dad’s untimely passing has come as a shock to us all, especially since up until a month ago, there was no indication whatsoever that he was sick in any way. He took good care of himself, never smoked, got regular check-ups, exercised, and ate well. The unexpected health issues starting with a mild stroke Christmas Eve and culminating with his admission into hospice care several days ago offer a stark reminder that nothing should be taken for granted.

And as many Consortiumnews readers have eloquently pointed out in comments left on [recent articles](#) regarding Bob’s health, it also reminds us that his brand of journalism is needed today more than ever.

“We need free will thinkers like you who value the truth based on the evidence and look past the group think in Washington to report on the real reasons for our government’s and our media’s actions which attempt to deceive us all,” wrote, for example, “FreeThinker.”

“Common sense and integrity are the hallmarks of Robert Parry’s journalism. May you get better soon for you are needed more now than ever before,” wrote “T.J.”

“We need a new generation of reporters, journalists, writers, and someone always being tenacious to follow up on the story,” added “Tina.”

As someone who has been involved with this website since its inception – as a writer, an editor and a reader – I concur with these sentiments. Readers should rest assured that despite my dad’s death, every effort will be made to ensure that the website will continue going strong.

Indeed, I think that everyone involved with this project wants to uphold the same commitment to truth-telling without fear or favor that inspired Bob and his heroes like George Seldes, I.F. Stone, and Thomas Paine.

That commitment can be seen in my dad’s pursuit of stories such as those mentioned above, but also so many others – including his investigations into the financial relationship of the influential *Washington Times* with the Unification Church cult of Rev. Sun Myung Moon, the truth behind the Nixon campaign’s alleged efforts to sabotage President Lyndon Johnson’s Paris peace talks with Vietnamese leaders in 1968, the reality of the chemical attack in Syria in 2013, and even detailed examinations of the evidence behind the so-called “Deflategate” controversy that he felt unfairly branded his favorite football

team, the New England Patriots, as cheaters.

Reviewing these journalistic achievements, it becomes clear that there are few stories that have slipped under Consortiumnews.com's radar, and that the historical record is far more complete thanks to this website and Bob's old-fashioned approach to journalism.

But besides this deeply held commitment to independent journalism, it should also be recalled that, ultimately, Bob was motivated by a concern over the future of life on Earth. As someone who grew up at the height of the Cold War, he understood the dangers of allowing tensions and hysteria to spiral out of control, especially in a world such as ours with enough nuclear weapons to wipe out all life on the planet many times over.

As the United States continues down the path of a New Cold War, my dad would be pleased to know that he has such committed contributors who will enable the site to remain the indispensable home for independent journalism that it has become, and continue to push back on false narratives that threaten our very survival.

Thank you all for your support.

In lieu of flowers, Bob's family asks you to please consider making a tax-deductible donation to the Consortium for Independent Journalism.

George W. Bush: Dupe or Deceiver?

From the Archive: With six in ten Americans – including a majority of Democrats – now holding favorable views of George W. Bush, we republish an analysis by Robert Parry from 2010, when the revisionist history of Bush's presidency began with publication of his memoirs.

By Robert Parry (first published on November 20, 2010)

George W. Bush's memoir, *Decision Points*, is without doubt a self-serving defense of his presidency – and Bush's own words condemn him as a liar – but there is another nagging question that surrounds this curious book: Has the U.S. media/political system become so polluted with falsehoods that even people at the top now believe the propaganda?

It is not clear which is the more troubling answer: that Bush and his advisers were bald-faced liars confident that their elite status lets them deceive at will, or that they have wallowed so long in a Washington's hot tub of spin that

their brains can no longer separate fact from fiction.

In general, I assume that political leaders know the truth and just believe that the rest of us are easily manipulated by clever propaganda or can be readily bullied into line. As long as the leaders stick to their story (no matter how false it is), they can rely on their Establishment credentials to tough it out against the few skeptics who dare call out the lies.

But there were moments in reading Bush's memoir when I began wondering whether – at least for him – the other explanation was more plausible, that he was clinically delusional in the sense that he could no longer distinguish between what was real and what had been created by others to appeal to his preconceptions, biases and vanity.

Under this scenario, Bush was the amiable front man who was handled by those around him, by the neoconservatives who wanted to prove their mettle to the Israeli Right with a demonstration of American shock-and-awe against hostile Arabs in Iraq, or by the oil men who saw U.S. military domination of the Middle East as the ticket to trillions of dollars in energy reserves.

These groups grew skilled at baiting Bush with misinformation and exaggeration, knowing what would rile him up and push his buttons. The intellectually lazy but egotistical Bush would then come to think that the plans that they planted in his mind were his and that he was the true Decider.

However, there are other indications in the book that Bush was part of this lying clique and that the American people were the targets of the falsehoods. In this scenario, Bush grew so confident before an obsequious Washington press corps that he felt he could lie with impunity and that the capital's pundit class would simply nod in acceptance.

An example that supports the Bush-is-a-deceiver scenario emerged several months after the invasion of Iraq, when it became clear that there were no WMD stockpiles. So, Bush began insisting that Iraq's Saddam Hussein "chose war" by refusing to allow UN weapons inspectors back into his country – even though the public had seen the inspectors rushing around Iraq in their white vans for months in late 2002 and early 2003.

Nevertheless, at a White House press briefing 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 obsequious White House press corps, Bush repeated this lie in varied forms until the last days of his presidency.

Jarring Admission

The only possible defense of Bush's clear-cut lie was that he might have forgotten that Saddam Hussein had allowed the inspectors to return in fall 2002, giving them unfettered access to suspected WMD sites, and that it was Bush who forced them to leave in March 2003.

However, in his memoir, Bush jarringly acknowledges that he was aware that the UN inspectors were roaming around Iraq during the lead-up to the war.

"Some believed we could contain Saddam by keeping the inspectors in Iraq," Bush wrote. "But I didn't see how. If we were to tell Saddam he had another chance – after declaring this was his last chance – we would shatter our credibility and embolden him."

Bush also recounts the central role that the reintroduction of the UN inspectors had played in April 2002 when he was convincing British Prime Minister Tony Blair to support "coercive diplomacy" against Iraq. Bush wrote:

"Tony suggested that we seek a UN Security Council resolution that presented Saddam with a clear ultimatum: allow weapons inspectors back into Iraq, or face serious consequences. I didn't have a lot of faith in the UN. The Security Council had passed sixteen resolutions against Saddam to no avail. But I agreed to consider his idea."

Ultimately, the UN Security Council did approve Resolution 1441 demanding that Iraq reveal what it had done with its prior weapons programs and allow UN inspectors back in. In fall 2002, Iraq complied with both demands, letting inspectors return and turning over a 12,000-page declaration explaining how Iraq's WMD stockpiles had been eliminated.

Despite Iraq's submission of these records, leading neocons who were itching for war, the likes of Sen. Joe Lieberman of Connecticut, mocked Iraq's efforts, a disdain that Bush cited favorably in his memoir, recalling:

"Joe Lieberman was more succinct. He said the declaration was a 'twelve-thousand-page, one-hundred-pound lie.'"

Though Bush stayed on course for war, he portrays himself in his memoir as a reluctant warrior, forced to launch an aggressive war because of the Saddam Hussein's belligerence. Bush wrote:

"Whenever I heard someone claim that we had rushed to war, I thought back to this period. It had been more than a decade since the Gulf War resolutions had demanded that Saddam disarm, over four years since he had kicked out the weapons

inspectors, six months since I had issued my ultimatum at the UN, four months since Resolution 1441 had given Saddam his 'final opportunity,' and three months past the deadline to fully disclose his WMD. Diplomacy did not feel rushed. It felt like it was taking forever."

There is, of course, some madness in Bush's argument as well as contempt for the factual record. The truth was that Iraq had disarmed and had tried to comply with Resolution 1441; Saddam Hussein had responded to his "final opportunity" by letting the UN inspectors back in; and he couldn't "fully disclose his WMD" because he didn't have any to disclose.

Peace Lover

Bush devotes a large segment of his memoir to fabricating a false history so the American people will see him as a peace lover who was left with only one option: war.

"I remembered the shattering pain of 9/11, a surprise attack for which we had received no warning," Bush wrote. "This time we had a warning like a blaring siren. Years of intelligence pointed overwhelmingly to the conclusion that Saddam had WMD. He had used them in the past. He had not met his responsibility to prove their destruction.

"He had refused to cooperate with the inspectors, even with the threat of an invasion on his doorstep. The only logical conclusion was that he was hiding WMD. And given his support of terror and his sworn hatred of America, there was no way to know where those weapons would end up."

Yet, even amid these lies and rationalizations, there remains the possibility that Bush was more the duped dauphin than the wily prince. He surely had plenty of conniving counselors whispering in his ear from behind his throne.

Just days after the 9/11 attacks, Bush described a meeting of his national security team at which Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, an arch-neoconservative, "suggested that we consider confronting Iraq as well as the Taliban" in Afghanistan. So, the idea of invasion was planted early.

Bush, however, insisted that he was reluctant to go in that direction, writing:

"Unless I received definitive evidence tying Saddam Hussein to the 9/11 plot, I would work to resolve the Iraq problem diplomatically. I hoped unified pressure by the world might compel Saddam to meet his international obligations. The best way to show him we were serious was to succeed in Afghanistan."

Bungling Tora Bora

Despite Bush's protestations about not rushing to war with Iraq and needing to succeed first in Afghanistan, Bush notes in passing the key moment when he pivoted prematurely from finishing off Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda's leadership at Tora Bora in fall 2001 and instead focusing the U.S. military on Iraq war plans. Bush wrote:

"Two months after 9/11, I asked Don Rumsfeld to review the existing battle plans for Iraq. We needed to develop the coercive half of coercive diplomacy. Don tasked General Tommy Franks [then in charge of the Central Command covering the Middle East and Central Asia] with updating the plans. Just after Christmas 2001, Tommy came to Crawford to brief me on Iraq."

What Bush left out of that narrative was what was later revealed by a Senate Foreign Relations Committee investigation, that Franks was overseeing the military operation aimed at capturing or killing bin Laden when Rumsfeld relayed Bush's order to freshen up the invasion plan for Iraq.

According to the committee's analysis of the Tora Bora battle, the small team of American pursuers believed they had bin Laden trapped at his mountain stronghold at Tora Bora in eastern Afghanistan and called for reinforcements to seal off possible escape routes to Pakistan.

But Bush was already turning his attention to Iraq, as his neocon advisers wanted. The Senate report said:

"On November 21, 2001, President Bush put his arm on Defense Secretary [Donald] Rumsfeld as they were leaving a National Security Council meeting at the White House. 'I need to see you,' the president said. It was 72 days after the 9/11 attacks and just a week after the fall of Kabul. But Bush already had new plans" for freshening up the invasion plans for Iraq.

In his memoir, American General, Gen. Franks said he got a phone call from Rumsfeld on Nov. 21, after the Defense Secretary had met with the President, and was told about Bush's interest in an updated Iraq war plan.

At the time, Franks said he was in his office at MacDill Air Force Base in Florida working with one of his aides on arranging air support for the Afghan militia who were under the guidance of the U.S. Special Forces in charge of the assault on bin Laden's Tora Bora stronghold.

Franks told Rumsfeld that the Iraq war plan was out of date, prompting the Defense Secretary to instruct Franks to "dust it off and get back to me in a week."

"For critics of the Bush administration's commitment to Afghanistan," the Senate

report noted, “the shift in focus just as Franks and his senior aides were literally working on plans for the attacks on Tora Bora represents a dramatic turning point that allowed a sustained victory in Afghanistan to slip through our fingers. Almost immediately, intelligence and military planning resources were transferred to begin planning the next war in Iraq.”

Futile Appeals

The CIA and Special Forces teams, calling for reinforcements to finish off bin Laden and al-Qaeda, “did not know what was happening back at CentCom, the drain in resources and shift in attention would affect them and the future course of the U.S. campaign in Afghanistan,” the report said.

Henry Crumpton, who was in charge of the CIA’s Afghan strategy, made direct appeals to Franks to move more than 1,000 Marines to Tora Bora to block escape routes to Pakistan. But the CentCom commander rebuffed the request, citing logistical and time problems, the report said.

“At the end of November, Crumpton went to the White House to brief President Bush and Vice President [Dick] Cheney and repeated the message that he had delivered to Franks,” the report said. “Crumpton warned the president that the Afghan campaign’s primary goal of capturing bin Laden was in jeopardy because of the military’s reliance on Afghan militias at Tora Bora. ...

“Crumpton questioned whether the Pakistani forces would be able to seal off the escape routes and pointed out that the promised Pakistani troops had not arrived yet.”

Crumpton also told Bush that the Afghan militia were not up to the job of assaulting al-Qaeda’s bases at Tora Bora and warned the President, “we’re going to lose our prey if we’re not careful,” the report said, citing journalist Ron Suskind’s *The One Percent Doctrine*.



But the Iraq-obsessed Bush still didn’t act. Finally, in mid-December 2001, the small U.S. Special Forces team convinced the Afghan militia fighters to undertake a sweep of the mountainous terrain, but they found it largely deserted.

The Senate report said bin Laden and his bodyguards apparently departed Tora Bora on Dec. 16, 2001, adding: “With help from Afghans and Pakistanis who had

been paid in advance, the group made its way on foot and horseback across the mountain passes and into Pakistan without encountering any resistance.

“The Special Operations Command history (of the Afghan invasion) noted that there were not enough U.S. troops to prevent the escape, acknowledging that the failure to capture or kill ... bin Laden made Tora Bora a controversial battle.”

Though excluding those details from his memoir, Bush tries to rebut the criticism that he bungled the battle of Tora Bora. He wrote:

“Years later, critics charged that we allowed bin Laden to slip the noose at Tora Bora. I sure didn’t see it that way. I asked our commanders and CIA officials about bin Laden frequently. They were working around the clock to locate him, and they assured me they had the troop levels and resources they needed. If we had ever known for sure where he was, we would have moved heaven and earth to bring him to justice.”

The reality, however, was that the neocons, who saw Iraq as a more serious threat to Israel, and the oil men, who lusted after Iraq’s petroleum reserves, persuaded Bush to concentrate more on getting rid of Saddam Hussein than Osama bin Laden.

Macho Talk

To do that, some advisers played on Bush’s macho self-image. In his memoir, Bush recalled one of his weekly lunches with Vice President Cheney (the former head of the Halliburton oil-drilling company), who was urging him to get on with the business of eliminating Saddam Hussein.

“Dick asked me directly, ‘Are you going to take care of this guy, or not?’ That was his way of saying he thought we had given diplomacy enough time. I appreciated Dick’s blunt advice. I told him I wasn’t ready to move yet. ‘Okay, Mr. President, it’s your call,’ he said.”

However, even as he was being prodded by Cheney and the neocons to act, Bush was using similar macho rhetoric – about having “the balls” to go to war – to ensure that Prime Minister Blair would commit British forces when the time came. In one melodramatic passage in *Decision Points*, Bush recounts a discussion with Blair:

“We both understood what the decision meant. Once we laid out our position at the UN, we had to be willing to follow through with the consequences. If diplomacy failed, there would be only one option left. ‘I don’t want to go to war,’ I told Tony, ‘but I will do it.’

“Tony agreed. After the meeting, I told Alastair Campbell, one of Tony’s top

aides, 'Your man has got cojones.' I'm not sure how that translated to the refined ears of 10 Downing Street. But to anyone from Texas, its meaning was clear."

But Bush's memoir also has indications that he was not just swept up by the manly excitement of blasting apart some nearly defenseless nation, but he was carried along by intelligence reports which were themselves being manipulated by a combination of Cheney/neocon pressure and CIA analysts who cared more for their jobs than the truth. Bush wrote:

"One intelligence report summarized the problem: 'Since the end of inspections in 1998, Saddam has maintained the chemical weapons effort, energized the missile program, made a bigger investment in biological weapons, and has begun to try to move forward in the nuclear area.'"

The Zarqawi Myth

The memoir also contains references in which it's ambiguous whether Bush is the manipulator or the one being manipulated.

For instance, Bush cites the case of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, a brutal terrorist who was operating in an area of Iraq that was protected by the U.S. and British "no-fly zone," which prevented Saddam Hussein's ruthless counter-terror operations from targeting anti-government Islamic militants like Zarqawi.

Though U.S. intelligence knew that the secular Sunni Saddam Hussein was a bitter enemy of these Islamic fundamentalists, the Bush administration exploited for propaganda purposes the fact that Zarqawi was located inside Iraq and had slipped into Baghdad for some medical treatment.

In his memoir, Bush cites the Zarqawi case to defend his decision to invade, but it's unclear whether the existence of the known terrorist in Iraq was also used to bait Bush.

"In the summer of 2002, I received a startling piece of news. Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, an al Qaeda-affiliated terrorist who had experimented with biological weapons in Afghanistan, was operating a lab in northeastern Iraq.

"Suspect facility in this area may be producing poisons and toxins for terrorist use,' the briefing read. 'Al-Zarqawi is an active terrorist planner who has targeted U.S. and Israeli interests: Sensitive reporting from a [classified] service indicates that al-Zarqawi has been directing efforts to smuggle an unspecified chemical material originating in northern Iraq into the United States.'

"We couldn't say for sure whether Saddam knew Zarqawi was in Iraq. We did have intelligence indicating that Zarqawi had spent two months in Baghdad receiving medical treatment and that other al Qaeda operatives had moved to Iraq.

"The CIA had worked with a major Arab intelligence service to get Saddam to find and extradite Zarqawi. He refused." [It was later revealed that Saddam Hussein's police had searched for Zarqawi in Baghdad but failed to locate him.]

At another point in the memoir, Bush portrays himself as something of an innocent victim, deceived by erroneous intelligence in late 2002. He wrote:

"I asked George Tenet and his capable deputy, John McLaughlin, to brief me on what intelligence we could declassify to explain Iraq's WMD programs. A few days before Christmas, John walked me through their first effort. It was not very convincing.

"I thought back to CIA briefings I had received, the NIE that concluded Saddam had biological and chemical weapons, and the data the CIA had provided for my UN speech in September. 'Surely we can do a better job of explaining the evidence against Saddam,' I said. George Tenet agreed. 'It's a slam dunk,' he said.

"I believed him. I had been receiving intelligence briefings on Iraq for nearly two years."

No More Delays

By March 2003, Bush claims he had exhausted all peaceful efforts to resolve the issues regarding Iraq's WMD and was left with only one choice, to invade Iraq:

"For more than a year, I had tried to address the threat from Saddam Hussein without war. We had rallied an international coalition to pressure him to come clean about his weapons of mass destruction programs. We had obtained a unanimous United Nations Security Council resolution making clear there would be serious consequences for continued defiance.

"We had reached out to Arab nations about taking Saddam into exile. I had given Saddam and his sons a final forty-eight hours to avoid war. The dictator rejected every opportunity. The only logical conclusion was that he had something to hide, something so important that he was willing to go to war for it."

Of course, the other logical conclusion would be that Iraq had no WMD stockpiles, that it had done its best to convince the outside world of that fact, and that it trusted that the international community would uphold the principles enshrined at the post-World War II Nuremberg Tribunals and in the UN

Charter, making aggressive war the supreme international crime.

Instead, recognizing that the Security Council was overwhelmingly opposed to an invasion, Bush withdrew a second resolution seeking explicit authorization to use force, got the UN inspectors to flee Iraq, and turned to his “coalition of the willing.”.

In his memoir, Bush describes what happens next in the most heroic and melodramatic terms.

“On Wednesday, March 19, 2003, I walked into a meeting I had hoped would not be necessary,” he wrote. “I turned to [Defense Secretary] Don Rumsfeld. ‘Mr. Secretary,’ I said, ‘for the peace of the world and the benefit and freedom of the Iraqi people, I hereby give the order to execute Operation Iraqi Freedom. May God bless the troops.’”

“Tommy [Franks] snapped a salute. ‘Mr. President,’ he said, ‘may God bless America.’”

Within three weeks, the invasion had ousted Saddam Hussein’s government. A few weeks later, Bush flew onto the deck of the USS Abraham Lincoln and gave his infamous “Mission Accomplished” speech. Eventually, Bush even had the satisfaction of having U.S. troops deliver Hussein to the scaffold where he was hanged in late 2006. [See Consortiumnews.com’s [“Bush Silences a Dangerous Witness.”](#)]

But the war also drove Iraq into seven years (and counting) of a living hell, with the death toll now estimated in the hundreds of thousands, with many more maimed, and with millions of Iraqis displaced from their homes and living in degradation and squalor.

Losing Afghanistan

The consequences for Afghanistan – from Bush’s premature pivot away from that war to the one ardently desired by the neocons – were also devastating. Rather than stabilizing Afghanistan and ensuring that al-Qaeda and its allies could not reestablish bases there, Bush watched as the Taliban mounted a comeback and the U.S. military remained bogged down in Iraq. He wrote:

“My CIA and military briefings included increasingly dire reports about Taliban influence. The problem was crystallized by a series of color-coded maps I saw in November 2006. The darker the shading, the more attacks had occurred in that part of Afghanistan.

“The 2004 map was lightly shaded. The 2005 map had darker areas in the southern

and eastern parts of the country. By 2006, the entire southeastern quadrant was black. In just one year, the number of remotely detonated bombs had doubled. The number of armed attacks had tripled. The number of suicide bombings had more than quadrupled.”

The situation also was deteriorating in Iraq, with various Iraqi nationalist forces taking up arms against the U.S. military occupation and a sectarian civil war breaking out between the Sunnis, who represented the previous ruling elite, and the Shiites, who had risen to power since the invasion.

Though Bush had suggested before the war that the presence of Zarqawi and a few al-Qaeda operatives was a key justification for invading Iraq, he acknowledges in his memoir that it was only after the invasion that al-Qaeda began focusing on Iraq. He wrote:

“When al Qaeda lost its safe haven in Afghanistan, the terrorists went searching for a new one. After we removed Saddam in 2003, bin Laden exhorted his fighters to support the jihad in Iraq. In many ways, Iraq was more desirable for them than Afghanistan. It had oil riches and Arab roots.

“Over time, the number of extremists affiliated with al Qaeda in Afghanistan declined to the low hundreds, while the estimated number in Iraq topped ten thousand.”

Bush also confirms some key facts about his decision to beef up U.S. forces in 2007, the “surge.” His account demonstrates how wrong the U.S. press corps and the congressional Democrats were in their interpretation of events in late 2006, when – after the Democratic victory in congressional elections – Bush fired Defense Secretary Rumsfeld and replaced him with former CIA Director Robert Gates.

The immediate conventional wisdom was that the shakeup represented a victory for the realist doves over the ideological hawks, that the pragmatic Gates would oversee a rapid drawdown of U.S. forces and that Rumsfeld had remained an unrepentant hardliner on the war.

Consortiumnews.com was one of the few outlets that reported that the conventional wisdom was upside down, that the reality was that Rumsfeld was backing U.S. commanders who wanted to dramatically reduce the U.S. “footprint” in Iraq and that Gates was so eager to resume a prominent position in Washington that he had acquiesced to an escalation.

Neocons Push the Surge

That is essentially the account that Bush offers in his memoir, in the context

of presenting the “surge” as one of his finest hours as the Decider, albeit with the guidance of leading neocons.

In June 2006, Bush wrote, he received a special briefing from outside experts:

“Fred Kagan, a military scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, questioned whether we had enough troops to control the violence. Robert Kaplan, a distinguished journalist, recommended adopting a more aggressive counterinsurgency strategy.

“Michael Vickers, a former CIA operative who helped arm the Afghan Mujahideen in the 1980s, suggested a greater role for Special Operations. Eliot Cohen, the author of *Supreme Command*, a book about the relationship between presidents and their generals ..., told me I needed to hold my commanders accountable for results.”

In other words, the seeds of the “surge” came from neocons, including “journalist” Robert Kaplan, who took it upon themselves to advise the commander-in-chief on escalating the killing in Iraq.

This neocon advice clashed with the judgment of the commanders in the field, whose recommendations Bush famously pronounced he would follow.

By mid-2006, the commanders were seeing a turning point in the violence that was ripping Iraq apart. Sunni militants had begun rejecting al-Qaeda extremists; Zarqawi was killed in an air raid; the sectarian violence had caused a de facto ethnic cleansing with Sunni and Shiites retreating to safer enclaves; a classified program was targeting and killing insurgents in greater numbers.

The field commanders, including the senior general in Iraq, George Casey, favored an accelerated drawdown of U.S. forces and an exit plan for combat troops, rather than an expanded and open-ended stay. The commanders had Rumsfeld’s support.

Bush wrote: “General [George] Casey told me we could succeed by transferring responsibility to the Iraqis faster. We needed to ‘help them help themselves,’ Don Rumsfeld said. That was another way of saying that we needed to take our hand off the bicycle seat.

“I wanted to send a message to the team that I was thinking differently. ‘We must succeed,’ I said. ‘If they can’t do it, we will. If the bicycle teeters, we’re going to put the hand back on. We have to make damn sure we do not fail.’”

To impose this new strategy, Bush sought new leadership both in Iraq and at the Pentagon, sounding out Gates as a replacement for Rumsfeld.

“The weekend before the midterms, I met with Bob Gates in Crawford to ask him to become secretary of defense. Bob had served on the Baker-Hamilton Commission, a panel chartered by Congress to study the situation in Iraq. He told me he had supported a troop surge as one of the group’s recommendations.”

Sealing the Deal

Once Rumsfeld was dumped and Gates was appointed (to the misguided acclaim of Official Washington), Bush and the neocons pressed ahead with the escalation. Bush wrote:

“Over weeks of intense discussion in November and December, most of the national security team came to support the surge. Dick Cheney, Bob Gates, Josh Bolten, and Steve Hadley and his NSC warriors were behind the new approach.”

Though Bush credits his decision to order the “surge” as the turning point in Iraq, he also includes facts that support the opposite conclusion, that the tide was already turning against al-Qaeda extremists before the 30,000 extra U.S. troops arrived in 2007. He wrote:

“The people of Anbar [province] had a look at life under al Qaeda, and they didn’t like what they saw. Starting in mid-2006, tribal sheikhs banded together to take their province back from the extremists. The Awakening drew thousands of recruits.”

Nevertheless, the neocons – who remain extraordinarily influential in Washington to this day – spun the “surge” as the singular explanation for the gradual decline in violence in Iraq. This new conventional wisdom was enthusiastically pushed by the Bush administration and accepted by the Washington press corps. [For details, see Consortiumnews.com’s [“Gen. Petraeus and the Surge Myth.”](#)]

Not surprisingly, Bush’s memoir also embraces the “surge-did-it” conventional wisdom. After all, it finally made him out to be the great war-time Decider that he always envisioned, a self-image that the neocons and his other advisers carefully nurtured and exploited as the key to their own influence.

Yet, after finishing *Decision Points*, I still wasn’t sure where the line was between Bush being the one getting manipulated and the one manipulating the rest of us. Had he drunk his own Kool-Aid or had he cynically instructed his ghost writer to fashion some old talking points into a memoir designed to rehabilitate himself and his powerful family?

The only certainty is that within the many miscalculations of his presidency, many people died unnecessary deaths, many more faced severe personal hardships that didn’t need to happen, and the United States was left in a fiscal, economic

and strategic mess.

Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories in the 1980s for the Associated Press and *Newsweek*, and since 1995 has published Consortiumnews.com. His books, including *Neck Deep: The Disastrous Presidency of George W. Bush*, [can be purchased here](#).

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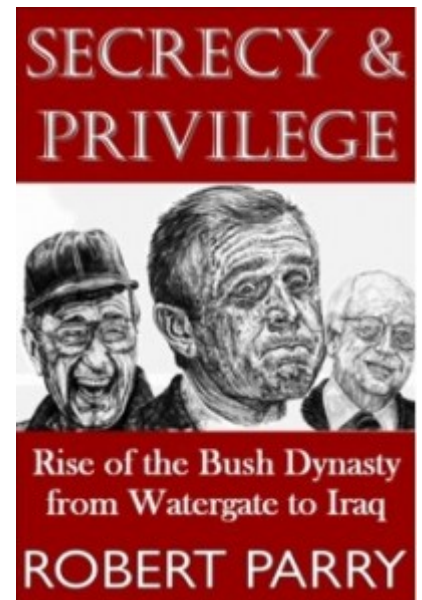
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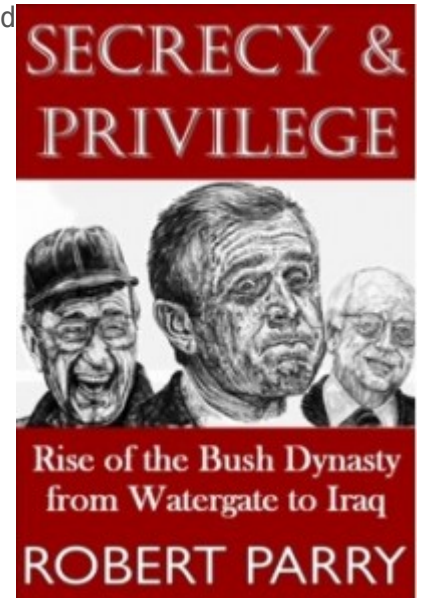
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Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories in the 1980s for the Associated Press and Newsweek. He founded Consortiumnews.com in 1995 as the Internet's first investigative magazine. He saw it as a way to combine modern technology and old-fashioned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

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