



# Common Sense



## Issue XII

### *Special Edition: WMD and the Vice President's Office News Round-Up*

[All summaries are written by Common Sense, links to source material can be found at [Opednews.com](http://Opednews.com)]

#### **Chief Inspector Kay Confirms no WMD in Iraq for Last Decade**

In testimony before Congress, the chief weapons inspector for the US in Iraq confirmed that there had been no significant weapons development in Iraq since the early 1990's. The findings undercut nearly two years' worth of administration statements expressing with certainty that there were large stockpiles of chemical and biological weapons, as well as a large and accelerating nuclear program. Anonymous administration sources also now tell the Observer that, in truth, the administration had concluded there were no weapons even while the war was going on. Kay attempted to argue that the fault lay with the intelligence community, and not the administration, but Kay has been known as a highly loyal, partisan figure throughout his tenure, and his investigation provided him with no knowledge on the forces behind this intelligence.

See *The Observer (UK)*, February 1, 2004 Andrews

#### **Administration Argues It Never Claimed and Imminent Threat; Record Undermines Assertion**

Faced with the truth that the WMD it cited as the primary cause for war appear not to have existed, the administration and their supporters have gone on the offensive claiming that they never argued an "imminent threat". Indeed, President Bush did not ever use the word "imminent," but as Republican Senator Chuck Hagel pointed out on CNN' Late Edition, the entire administration case, "from top to bottom," was based on the premise that Hussein represented a threat that could not wait another day.

"Absolutely." - White House spokesman Ari Fleischer answering whether Iraq was an "imminent threat," 5/7/03  
See *CNN Late Edition*, 2/1/04

#### **Falsehoods Escalate in Vice President Cheney's Statements**

Many media outlets are now raising the question of why our intelligence was so flawed, with many commentators describing as "nutty" any implication that the administration deliberately misled the American people. The following statements demonstrate that if the Vice President is not doing exactly that, then he is abhorrently ill-informed, probably to an extent that his competency should be in question:

#### **David Kay, recently retired head of the US inspections team (1/23/04):**

*"I don't think [the stockpiles] existed. What everyone was talking about is stockpiles produced after the end of the [1991] gulf war, and I don't think there was a large-scale production program in the '90s."*

#### **Dick Cheney (1/22/04):**

*"I think the jury is still out...We still don't know the whole extent of what they did have. It's going to take some additional considerable period of time in order to look in all the cubbyholes and ammo dumps and all the places in Iraq where you'd expect to find something like that."*

#### **David Kay (1/23/04):**

*"The consensus opinion is that [the trailers'] actual intended use was not for the production of biological weapons."*

#### **Dick Cheney (1/21/04):**

*"We know, for example, that prior to our going in that [Hussein] had spent time and effort acquiring mobile biological weapons labs, and we're quite confident he did, in fact, have such a program. We've found a couple of semi trailers at this point which we believe were, in fact, part of that program."*

#### **Colin Powell (1/8/04):**

*"I have not seen smoking-gun, concrete evidence about the connection [between Saddam Hussein and Al Qaeda]."*

#### **Dick Cheney (1/21/04):**

*"I continue to believe, I think there's overwhelming evidence that there was a connection between al-Qaida and the Iraqi government. I'm very confident that there was an established relationship there."*

#### **Dick Cheney (1/9/04):**

*"With respect to the other question, the general relationship [between Saddam Hussein and Al Qaeda]...there are several places you can go. One place you ought to go look is an article that Stephen Hayes did in the Weekly Standard here a few weeks ago, that goes through and lays out in some detail, based on an assessment that was done by the Department of Defense and forwarded to the Senate Intelligence Committee some weeks ago. That's your best source of information."*

The *Weekly Standard* story, "Case Closed", was based on the leak of a highly classified memo written by Douglas Feith, one of the chief administration neoconservatives who are under suspicion for distorting information. The memo and story were completely debunked last year by the Department of Defense itself, costing the *Weekly Standard* much of its credibility.

#### **Department of Defense (11/15/03):**

*"News reports that the Defense Department recently confirmed new information with respect to contacts between al Qaeda and Iraq in a letter to the Senate Intelligence Committee are inaccurate...Individuals who leak or purport to leak classified information are doing serious harm to national security; such activity is deplorable and may be illegal."*

In fact, one non-profit has already sent President Bush a letter requesting that he investigate whether Cheney broke the law by confirming leaked classified information (a federal crime). Figures in the Vice President's office also continue to be at the center of speculation in Washington in the case of Valerie Plame, the CIA agent who was outed for political revenge on her husband. Time Magazine quotes an administration source as saying the administration is "terrified" at what the results of the investigation will be. The Vice President's role in the administration's foreign policy and intelligence gathering now stands as the central question in devising the scope of an independent investigation.

## Opinion

### **The Great Medicare Sham**

*These figures were released by Sherrod Brown, Democratic Representative from Ohio, and were printed in the New York Times (1/28/04)*

- Estimated cost of the Medicare drug bill over 10 years: **\$400 billion**
- Estimated increase in drug industry profits: **\$139 billion**
- Additional government payments to the insurance industry to participate in Medicare: **\$14.2 billion**
  
- Members of the United States Senate: **100**
- Members of the House of Representatives: **435**
- Washington lobbyists who work for the drug industry: **675**
- Political contributions from the drug industry to Republicans in 2002: **\$21.7 million** (74% of total)
- Political contributions from the drug industry to Democrats in 2002: **\$7.6 million** (26% of total)
  
- Average elderly American's drug costs in 2002: **\$2,400**
- Portion of his drug costs covered by the new Medicare drug benefit: **45%**
- Average markup on United States drug prices relative to Canadian drug prices: **45%**
  
- Average profit margin of Fortune 500 firms in 2002: **3.1%**
- Average profit margin of the top 10 drug companies in 2002: **17%**
- Increase in elderly Americans' Social Security checks in 2002: **2.6%**
- Average price increase in the 50 prescription drugs elderly Americans used most in 2002: **6%**
  
- Retirees with health insurance before Medicare was signed into law: **50%**
- Retirees with health insurance today: **96%**
- Medicare administrative costs: **2%**
- Average administrative costs for H.M.O.'s: **15%**
- Compensation package, including stock options, for the chief executive of one Medicare H.M.O. in 2002: **\$529 million**
- Number of elderly Americans dropped by an H.M.O. (1999 to 2003): **2.4 million**
- Political contributions from the insurance industry to Republicans in 2002: **\$25.9 million** (69% of total)
- Political contributions from the insurance industry to Democrats in 2002: **\$11.7 million** (31% of total)
  
- Number of months after President Bush signed the Medicare bill that it will take for H.M.O.'s to receive more government payments to participate in the program: **3**
- Number of months after President Bush signed the bill that it will take for elderly Americans to receive a drug benefit: **25**