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## FACULTY OPINIONS...

### Iraq's WMDs: At Least We Have an Answer

By [Dr. Paul Kengor](#)

JANUARY 29, 2004 -- The chief U.S. weapons inspector in Iraq, David Kay, has announced that there appear to be no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. [Dr. Paul Kengor download photo](#)

If that is indeed the case—and Kay, an apolitical man of high integrity, would know—then one of the four primary rationales for the Bush invasion of Iraq is a failure.

Recall the other three reasons: 1) Saddam's past and potential future use of WMDs; 2) his support of terrorism; and 3) the liberation of Iraqis from the human-rights atrocities they endured for decades.

These three other objectives were achieved. Among them, Kay acknowledged that Saddam did in fact retain the capability (and the interest) to reconstitute his WMD programs. Saddam still had WMD infrastructure, but not the weapons themselves.

There was an added motivation for George W. Bush going to war, which—though rooted in the first months of the Bush administration—has been publicly articulated more often after the war than before: the notion that a democratic Iraq might serve as a catalyst to spark a broader democratic Middle East. Such would be an incredible development (some say utopian) that could produce enormously positive change in the most hostile region of the world. The achievement of this ambitious goal remains to be seen.

But, again, no WMDs have been found. Is there a bright side to this? Sure, Saddam and his sons no longer terrorize Iraq's people and neighbors. The world is a safer place.

Yet, there's another big plus that, to my knowledge, has not been mentioned: Because Saddam is gone, we now finally have an answer on his WMDs—an answer we would have never received if Saddam were still in power. The implications of that are quite significant.

Think carefully about this: If the Bush invasion of Iraq had not happened, we would still be pursuing the French option for disarming Saddam. Remember that the split in the world prior to the war was not over whether Saddam had WMDs—everyone believed he did—but how to disarm him.

The Bush approach, which was joined by Britain, Spain, and a coalition of 30-40 other nations, argued that the only way to truly disarm Saddam was to remove him by military force. The French approach, which was supported by the Germans, Russians, Chinese, and others, favored continued U.N. inspections in Iraq and sanctions. If the Bush option had not been followed, the world would still be pursuing the French approach.

What would that mean? It would mean that U.N. inspectors would continue to search for Iraq's WMDs. That cat-and-mouse game would go on for years. Assuming that Kay is correct, U.N. inspectors would have continued to search for weapons that didn't exist. And the assumption of the international community would not be that inspectors were coming

up empty handed because WMDs didn't exist.

Rather, the assumption would be that Saddam was doing a marvelous job of hiding his weapons. That would indeed be the thinking, since everyone—the Bush and Clinton administrations, George W. Bush and Al Gore, Republicans and Democrats, liberals and conservatives, the French, the Germans, the Russian, the Chinese, the United Nations, Kofi Annan, all intelligence agencies, Muslims, Christians, Jews, the Middle East, Europe, America, cats and dogs, birds and trees—believed that Iraq had WMDs.

This would also mean that the United States, as it did throughout the Clinton years, would continue to occasionally bomb suspect Iraqi WMD sites, each time Saddam kicked out weapons inspectors—each time also again dividing the world community. It would mean that Iran could argue for its own nuclear deterrent, since it had a madman next door who had used WMDs against Iran in the past.

Finally, not only would inspections have continued but so would the sanctions—vicious sanctions that killed far more Iraqis than American missiles ever did. Walter Russell Mead of the Council on Foreign Relations, citing U.N. figures, notes that sanctions against Iraq monthly killed 5,000 Iraqi children under the age of 5.

This death toll of 60,000 kids per year continued throughout the 12-year sanctions period. At that rate, containing Saddam for another ten years would kill hundreds of thousands of additional Iraqi children. This sanctions route enabled the slaughter of the innocent, while Saddam relaxed in his palaces.

At this point, it appears that the Bush administration was wrong in one of its core reasons for going to war. However, at least we seem to have an answer on the WMDs, and at least the madness and the killing—by Saddam, by our missile strikes, and by the world's sanctions—is over.

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