

JANUARY 5, 2004

**SCHAKOWSKY: BUSH ADMINISTRATION'S MISSTATEMENT OF THE DAY -  
IRAQ AND WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION**

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) issued today's "Bush Administration's Misstatement of the Day" on Iraq and weapons of mass destruction.

President Bush and members of his Administration justified the war as necessary to protect the American people against Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction. So far, none has been found. (Bush Administration Misstatement of the Day, December 17, 2003)

Now, it seems that that Bush Administration is deliberately attempting to change the reasons given by the Administration for going to war in Iraq. The following was reported in the *Financial Times* (12/29/03):

*History, he [Paul Bremer, head of the Coalition Provisional Authority] said, would record that the US and UK had done a "great thing relieving these [Iraqi] people of an evil tyranny" rather than judge them on "details" such as weapons of mass destruction.*

**Blair faces fresh attack over weapons**

*Financial Times*

By Jean Eaglesham, Political Correspondent

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Tony Blair faced fresh accusations last night that he had exaggerated claims about Iraqi arms after the US official running Iraq dismissed his assertion that hidden weapons laboratories had been discovered.

The claim and counter-claim set the stage for the serious political row that is expected to erupt when the Hutton inquiry reports next month. At issue again is the threat posed by Iraq - the main rationale given by the government for the war.

Paul Bremer, head of the Coalition Provisional Authority, appeared yesterday to cast

doubt on a claim made by Mr Blair earlier this month. He was asked about the assertion that the Iraq Survey Group had uncovered "massive evidence of a huge system of clandestine laboratories", but was not told that it had been made by the prime minister. Mr Bremer said the claim was "not what David Kay [head of the ISG] has said" - contradicting Downing Street's statement, repeated yesterday, that the prime minister was "referring to already published material in the interim report by the ISG".

The embarrassment for the government was compounded when Mr Bremer said the person who made the assertion "sounds like someone who doesn't agree with the policy sets up a red herring then knocks it down". When told in an interview on ITV1's Jonathan Dimbleby programme that the statement originated from the prime minister, however, the US official appeared to backtrack. "There is actually a lot of evidence that has been made public," he said.

Mr Bremer dismissed claims by Hans Blix, the former chief United Nations weapons inspector, that it was "innuendo" to suggest the laboratories had been used for chemical and biological weapons. "You might conclude that Dr Blix is out of touch," Mr Bremer said.

History, he said, would record that the US and UK had done a "great thing relieving these [Iraqi] people of an evil tyranny" rather than judge them on "details" such as weapons of mass destruction.

But regime-change justification is unlikely to relieve the pressure on Mr Blair, who used the threat of attack by Iraq as the main justification for the war. The Tories linked the latest row to the earlier claims - expected to be adjudicated on by Lord Hutton - that the government "sexed up" its September 2002 dossier on Saddam Hussein's weapons. Liam Fox, the Tory co-chairman, said Mr Bremer's red herring comment was a "huge embarrassment for a prime minister who is in a deep political hole. But he is unable to stop digging. Once again, he seems to have been willing to sex up a piece of information purely to defend his own political position."

The Liberal Democrats joined the attack, warning they would press Mr Blair on the issue when MPs return next week. "It is high time the prime minister cleared this matter up once and for all," said Menzies Campbell, foreign affairs spokesman.