

How did the U.S. government lead its people to war?

Bush Administration Claims vs. The Facts

The aluminum tubes were not suitable for nuclear weapons development



Pre-War Claims:

Senior members of the Bush administration claimed that Iraq had made repeated attempts to acquire high-strength aluminum tubes for the purpose of enriching uranium to use in nuclear weapons, stating that the tubes "are only really suited for nuclear weapons programs."

Facts:

These tubes constituted the only piece of physical, pre-war evidence presented by the administration concerning Iraq's alleged nuclear weapons programs. Prior to making these claims public, the administration ignored strong dissent in 2001 and 2002 from U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) experts as well as from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), both of whom had vigorously contested these claims. Among several arguments, these experts contended that the tubes were the wrong size – too long, too narrow, too heavy – to be efficiently used as rotors in nuclear centrifuges to enrich uranium. They asserted that the more likely use for the tubes was in a conventional artillery rocket program, as Iraq had been using tubes of this exact size in rocket production in the 1980's and 1990's.

After the fall of Baghdad, extensive investigations found no sites of centrifuge program activity. Iraq's nuclear program had been dormant for more than a decade, and the aluminum tubes had indeed been intended only for conventional rocket production.

Overview:

Despite the conclusions of the DOE – which possessed the most knowledge and experience about nuclear centrifuges of any U.S. intelligence agency – that the aluminum tubes were intended for use in conventional rocket launcher production and could not be used successfully for nuclear applications, the Bush administration chose to publicly promote the assessment that the tubes were intended for use solely in uranium enrichment.

A Mechanism for War

Rhetoric and Spin

War Through Rose-Colored Glasses

Abuses and Misuses of Intelligence

A Mythic Reality

Items of Note

Bush Administration Claims vs. The Facts

No weapons of mass destruction found

No mobile biological weapons labs

Iraq did not seek to acquire yellowcake uranium

● Aluminum tubes not for nuclear weapons

Mohamed Atta did not meet with Iraqis

Iraq did not provide training to al-Qaeda

No collaboration between Iraq and al-Qaeda

Iraq was not involved in the attacks of 9/11

The Costs of War

April 2001– September 2002 [reported at a later date]

The intelligence community, including the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Department of Energy (DOE), and U.S. State Department’s Bureau of Intelligence and Research, learns that Iraq has been trying to procure high-strength, 7075-T4 aluminum tubes. There is a lengthy debate about the intended use of these tubes, primarily between the CIA and DOE.

(from Pages 84–142, Senate Select Committee on Intelligence’s Report on the U.S. Intelligence Community’s Prewar Intelligence Assessments on Iraq, released July 9, 2004). [link to source]

The CIA states that the tubes “have little use other than for a uranium enrichment program,” based on assessments that:



- The tubes “exceed any known conventional weapons application, including rocket motor casings for 81-mm multiple rocket launchers.”
- “The dimensions of the tubes match those of a publicly available gas centrifuge design from the 1950s, known as the Zippe centrifuge.”

The DOE states that the tubes “are not consistent with a gas centrifuge end use,” based on assessments that:



- “Iraq has purchased similar aluminum tubes previously to manufacture chambers (tubes) for a multiple rocket launcher.”
- After reviewing Zippe designs and consulting with Dr. Gernot Zippe, the scientist who developed this centrifuge, DOE experts found that the tubes did NOT match those used in a Zippe centrifuge.
- No successful centrifuge cascade has ever been built using rotor tubes of the size and material that Iraq was attempting to procure, because the tube walls (3.3mm) were three times too thick and the tube diameter (81mm) was too small for favorable use.
- The tubes were anodized, which is a standard practice in missile construction to protect the tubes from corrosion during outdoor storage. Anodized tubes are "not consistent" with a uranium centrifuge because the coating can produce adverse reactions with uranium gas.

DOE concludes that “a rocket production application is the more likely end-use for these tubes.”

September 8, 2002

The New York Times publishes an exclusive report by Judith Miller and Michael Gordon, citing anonymous U.S. officials [link to source]

“More than a decade after Saddam Hussein agreed to give up weapons of mass destruction, Iraq has stepped up its quest for nuclear weapons and has embarked on a worldwide hunt for materials to make an atomic bomb, Bush administration officials said today.

“In the last 14 months, Iraq has sought to buy thousands of specially designed aluminum tubes, which American officials believe were intended as components of centrifuges to enrich uranium...”

“The first sign of a ‘smoking gun,’ [Bush officials] argue, may be a mushroom cloud.”

Vice President Dick Cheney on NBC News’ Meet the Press [link to source]

“[Hussein] now is trying, through his illicit procurement network, to acquire the equipment he needs to be able to enrich uranium to make the bombs – specifically aluminum tubes. There was a story in the *New York Times* this morning... and I want to attribute the *Times*... It’s now public that, in fact, he has been seeking to acquire... the kinds of tubes that are necessary to build a centrifuge.”

Secretary of State Colin Powell on Fox News Sunday with Tony Snow and Brit Hume [link to source]

“...As we saw in reporting just this morning, [Hussein] is still trying to acquire, for example, some of the specialized aluminum tubing one needs to develop centrifuges that would give you an enrichment capability.”

National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice on CNN [link to source]

“We do know that he is actively pursuing a nuclear weapon. We do know that there have been shipments going ... into Iraq, for instance, of aluminum tubes... that are only really suited for nuclear weapons programs, centrifuge program.”

"...we don't want the smoking gun to be a mushroom cloud."

September 12, 2002

President George W. Bush in an address to the U.N. General Assembly

[\[link to source\]](#)

"Iraq has made several attempts to buy high-strength aluminum tubes used to enrich uranium for a nuclear weapon."



October 1, 2002 [\[reported at a later date\]](#)

The classified, 93-page **National Intelligence Estimate (NIE)** entitled *Iraq's Continuing Programs For Weapons of Mass Destruction* is published, stating (from page 86, **Senate Select Committee on Intelligence's Report on the U.S. Intelligence Community's Prewar Intelligence Assessments on Iraq**, published on July 9, 2004)

[\[link to source\]](#)

"Most agencies believe that Saddam's personal interest in and Iraq's aggressive attempts to obtain high-strength aluminum tubes for centrifuge rotors ... provide compelling evidence that Saddam is reconstituting a uranium enrichment effort for Baghdad's nuclear weapons program."

However, the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR) states a dissenting view in the same NIE: [\[link to source\]](#)

"Iraq's efforts to acquire aluminum tubes is central to the argument that Baghdad is reconstituting its nuclear weapons, but INR is not persuaded that the tubes in question are intended for use as centrifuge rotors. INR accepts the judgment of technical experts at the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) who have concluded that the tubes Iraq seeks to acquire are poorly suited for use in gas centrifuges to be used for uranium enrichment and finds unpersuasive the arguments advanced by others to make the case that they are intended for that purpose. INR considers it far more likely that the tubes are intended for another purpose, most likely the production of artillery rockets."

Early October 2002 [\[reported at a later date\]](#)

From the *National Journal* (reported on March 2, 2006) [\[link to source\]](#)



"Delivered to Bush in early October 2002, was a one-page summary of a National Intelligence Estimate ...[which] specifically told Bush that although 'most agencies judge' that the use of the aluminum tubes was 'related to a uranium enrichment effort... INR and DOE believe that the tubes more likely are intended for conventional weapons uses.'

"The one-page summary, several senior government officials said in interviews, was written specifically for Bush, was handed to the president by then-CIA Director George Tenet, and was read in Tenet's presence."

October 4, 2002

Journalist Jonathan Landay reports for Knight Ridder newspapers [\[link to source\]](#)

"Several senior administration and intelligence officials, all of whom spoke only on the condition of anonymity, charged that **the decision to publicize one analysis of the aluminum tubes and ignore the contrary one is typical of the way the administration has been handling intelligence about Iraq.**

"The White House and the Pentagon, these officials said, are pressuring intelligence analysts to highlight information that supports Bush's Iraq policy and suppress information and analysis that might undercut congressional, public or international support for war."

October 7, 2002

Remarks by President George W. Bush at the Cincinnati Museum Center, Cincinnati, Ohio:

[\[link to source\]](#)

"Iraq has attempted to purchase high-strength aluminum tubes and other equipment needed for gas centrifuges, which are used to enrich uranium for nuclear weapons."



December 2002 [\[reported at a later date\]](#)

From the *Washington Post* (reported on August 10, 2003) [\[link to source\]](#)

"According to knowledgeable U.S. and overseas sources, experts from U.S. national laboratories reported in December [2002] to the Energy Department and U.S. intelligence analysts that **Iraq was manufacturing copies of the Italian-made Medusa 81 [multiple rocket launcher]. Not only the Medusa's alloy, but also its dimensions, to the fraction of a millimeter, matched the disputed aluminum tubes.**"

January 10, 2003 [\[reported at a later date\]](#)

From the *National Journal* (reported March 2, 2006) [\[link to source\]](#)

"... Rice, Cheney, and dozens of other high-level Bush administration policy makers received a highly classified intelligence assessment, known as a Senior Executive Memorandum, on the aluminum tubes issue. Circulated on January 10, 2003... the paper included discussion regarding the fact that the INR, Energy, and the United Nations atomic energy watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency, all believed that Iraq was using the aluminum tubes for conventional weapons programs."

January 24, 2003

The *Washington Post* reports [\[link to source\]](#)

"... there were clues from the beginning that should have raised doubts about claims that the tubes were part of a secret Iraqi nuclear weapons program, according to U.S. and international experts on uranium enrichment. The quantity and specifications of the tubes – narrow, silver cylinders measuring 81 millimeters in diameter and about a meter in length – made them ill-suited to enrich uranium without extensive modification, the experts said. But they are a perfect fit for a well-documented 81mm conventional rocket program in place for two decades. Iraq imported the same aluminum tubes for rockets in the 1980s. The new tubes it tried to purchase actually bear an inscription that includes the word 'rocket,' according to one official who examined them.

January 28, 2003

President George W. Bush, in his State of the Union Address [\[link to source\]](#)

"Our intelligence sources tell us that [Hussein] has attempted to purchase high-strength aluminum tubes suitable for nuclear weapons production."

February 5, 2003

Secretary of State Colin Powell addresses the United Nations Security Council [\[link to source\]](#)

"Saddam Hussein is determined to get his hands on a nuclear bomb. He is so determined, that he has made repeated covert attempts to acquire high specification aluminum tubes from 11 different countries, even after inspections resumed.

"... It strikes me as quite odd that these tubes are manufactured to a tolerance that far exceeds U.S. requirements for comparable rockets. Maybe Iraqis just manufacture their conventional weapons to a higher standard than we do, but I don't think so."



From the *New York Times* (reported on October 3, 2004) [\[reported at a later date\]](#)
[\[link to source\]](#)

"Yet in a memo written two days earlier, Mr. Powell's intelligence experts had specifically cautioned him about those very same words. 'In fact,' they explained, 'the most comparable U.S. system is a tactical rocket – the U.S. Mark 66 air-launched 70-millimeter rocket – that uses the same, high-grade (7075-T6) aluminum, and that has specifications with similar tolerances.'"

March 7, 2003

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director General Mohamed ElBaradei delivers a report to the U.N.
[\[link to source\]](#)



"The IAEA has conducted a thorough investigation of Iraq's attempt to purchase large quantities of high-strength aluminum tubes.

"Extensive field investigation and document analysis have failed to uncover any evidence that Iraq intended to use these 81-millimeter tubes for any project other than the reverse engineering



of [conventional] rockets.”

March 19, 2003

The U.S. launches military strikes, commencing the Iraq War.

July 9, 2003

Greg Thielmann, former Director of the Strategic, Proliferation, and Military Affairs Office in the U.S. State Department’s Bureau of Intelligence and Research, speaks at a press conference hosted by the Arms Control Association

[\[link to source\]](#)



“After three months of intensive searches on the ground, no weapons of mass destruction have yet been found.

“...As of March 2003, when we began military operations, Iraq posed no imminent threat to either its neighbors or to the United States... Its nuclear weapons program, largely dismantled by U.N. inspectors in the 1990s, was dormant.

“In the case of the aluminum tubes, there was a genuine controversy, and yet that genuine controversy was not honestly described when you had senior administration officials talking about it. Condoleezza Rice said the aluminum could only really be used for centrifuges. No one party to the debates would have ever made a statement like that. ... There were doubts by serious people who had serious knowledge of the issue.”

December 5, 2003

David Albright, a physicist who investigated Iraq's nuclear weapons program following the 1991 Persian Gulf War as a member of the International Atomic Energy Agency's inspection team, issues a report for the Institute for Science and International Security [\[link to source\]](#)



“...Extensive evidence collected during recent International Atomic Energy Agency inspections and after the fall of Baghdad shows that Iraq did not plan to use the tubes in gas centrifuges. U.S. investigators in Iraq have not produced any evidence to contradict these ... statements, despite months of investigations.”

January 28, 2004

Created in June 2003, the Iraq Survey Group (ISG) was a fact-finding mission organized by the Pentagon and the CIA, consisting of 1,400 Americans, Britons and Australians charged to find weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.



David Kay, head of the ISG and Chief U.N. Weapons Inspector in Iraq from 1991 to 1992, testifies under oath before the Senate Armed Services Committee: [\[link to source\]](#)

“It is my judgment, based on the evidence that was collected... that it's more than probable that those tubes were intended for use in a conventional missile program, rather than in a centrifuge program.”

July 9, 2004

Senate Select Committee on Intelligence issues its Report on the U.S. Intelligence Community’s Prewar Intelligence Assessments on Iraq [\[link to source\]](#)

“The Committee believes that the information available to the Intelligence Community indicated that these tubes were intended to be used for an Iraqi conventional rocket program and not a nuclear program.

“The Central Intelligence Agency’s (CIA) intelligence assessment on July 2, 2001 that the dimensions of the aluminum tubes “match those of a publicly available gas centrifuge design from the 1950, known as the Zippe centrifuge” is incorrect.

“The Intelligence Community’s position in the National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) that the composition and dimensions of the aluminum tubes exceeded the requirements for non nuclear applications, is incorrect.

September 30, 2004

After 18 months of exhaustive investigations, the CIA-appointed Iraq Survey Group issues its final report

[\[link to source\]](#) [\[link to source\]](#)



"ISG investigations of sites related to the pre-1991 centrifuge program did not uncover any attempt to utilize these facilities to support a renewed centrifuge effort.

"Baghdad's interest in high-strength, high-specification aluminum tubes is best explained by its efforts to produce 81-mm rockets."

March 2, 2006

The *National Journal* reports [\[link to source\]](#)

"When U.S. inspectors entered Iraq after the fall of Saddam's regime, they determined that Iraq's nuclear program had been dormant for more than a decade and that the aluminum tubes had been used only for artillery shells."

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