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**Sidney Blumenthal: How Bush Rules**

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# The Hunt for WMD

FEBRUARY 5, 2004

BEFORE HE DEPARTED on his quest for Saddam Hussein's fabled weapons of mass destruction last June, David Kay, chief of the Iraq Survey Group, told friends that he expected promptly to locate the cause of the preemptive war. On January 28, Kay appeared before the Senate to testify that there were no WMDs. "It turns out that we were all wrong," he said. President Bush, he added helpfully, was misinformed by the whole intelligence community, which, like Kay, made assumptions that turned out to be false.

Within days, Bush declared that he would, after all, appoint a commission to investigate; significantly, it would report its findings only after the presidential election.

Kay's testimony was the catalyst for this U-turn, but only one of his claims is correct: that he was wrong. The truth is that much of the intelligence community did not fail but presented correct assessments and warnings that were overridden and suppressed. On virtually every single important claim made by the Bush administration in its case for war, there was serious dissension. Discordant views—not from individual analysts but from several intelligence agencies as a whole—were kept from the public as momentum was built for a congressional vote on the war resolution.

Precisely because of the qualms the administration encountered, it created a rogue intelligence operation, the Office of Special Plans, located within the Pentagon and under the control of neoconservatives. The OSP roamed outside the ordinary interagency process, stamping its approval on stories from Iraqi exiles that the other agencies dismissed as lacking credibility and feeding them to the president.

At the same time, constant pressure was applied to the intelligence agencies to force their compliance. In one case, a senior intelligence officer who refused to knuckle under was removed.

Bruce Hardcastle was a senior officer for the Middle East for the Defense Intelligence Agency. When Bush insisted that Saddam was actively and urgently engaged in a nuclear weapons program and had renewed



