

# The WMD Farrago

The Bush administration's rationale for war has collapsed with a thud heard round the world.

By Eric S. Margolis

A PLUCKY IRAQI SHEPHERD has launched a \$300 million suit against the U.S. government for killing 17 of his relatives and 20 of his sheep. What, one wonders, would happen if Saddam hired Johnnie Cochran and launched a class action suit on behalf of all Iraqis against the U.S. for conspiracy to commit aggression, slander, libel, \$250 billion in property damages, the death of thousands of its citizens and soldiers, theft of oil and national bank funds, and so on?

After all, if Germany had to pay war reparations to the nations it occupied during World War II, why can't Iraq sue for an invasion, billed as a pre-emptive attack of self-defense, that violated the UN Charter and international law, inflicted massive destruction and social chaos, and was based on faked information?

The high-minded moral crusade against Iraq has turned into a tawdry scandal. The circumstantial house of cards justifying an unprovoked war against Iraq has collapsed with a thud heard round the world.

Each week brings embarrassing new revelations that Washington's and London's "conclusive evidence" of the urgent dangers posed by Iraq was either fraudulent or absurdly exaggerated. Saddam Hussein's nefarious weapons of mass destruction and his purported links to al-Qaeda—the *casus belli* for the invasion of Iraq—were canards.

Intelligence officials in the U.S. and

Britain say there was no "urgent threat" against America, as President Bush repeated; nor any capability by Iraq to strike Britain "within 45-minutes," the claims used to stampede fearful Americans and Britons to war. The war's chief architect, Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, now lamely explains such lurid claims were made for "bureaucratic" harmony.

Call the roll on the administration's claims:

- Iraq's "drones of death" that President Bush warned might be launched from lurking Iraqi vessels in the Atlantic, then shower fiendish germs on sleeping America, turned out to be two rickety model airplanes.
- There were no Scuds carrying bio-warfare warheads. Aluminum tubes for "uranium enrichment" turned out to be for 9.6-mile-range conventional artillery rockets. In a farce worthy of "Ernest Goes to Iraq," so-called evidence of covert uranium shipments from Niger to Iraq cited by Bush in his State of the Union address was exposed as a crude forgery well known to the U.S. national security establishment long before the president's speech.
- The supposedly damning photos of Iraqi "decontamination vehicles" showed by Secretary Colin Powell in his UN show trial against Baghdad as proof positive of the Iraqi world

threat, turned out, on inspection, to be fire trucks.

- "Chemical munitions" bunkers were empty. Iraq's notorious "mobile bio-weapons labs" were for inflating weather balloons for Iraqi artillery—and were supplied by Britain. CIA officials leaked that senior al-Qaeda prisoners flatly denied any links to Iraq.

If the Bush administration truly believed its claims about Iraq, then the U.S. has suffered another massive intelligence failure every bit as grave as its catastrophic failure on 9/11. The Iraq weapons fiasco, in the words of Rep. Jane Harmon (D-Calif.), the ranking member on the House Intelligence Committee, could be "the greatest intelligence hoax of all time."

So-called weapons of mass destruction may yet turn up in Iraq, or be planted there. After all, the U.S., Britain, and Europe supplied Iraq with a cornucopia of chemical and biological weapons in the 1980s for use against Iran. But a few rusty shells filled with mustard gas, some phials of stale-dated anthrax, or yellowed documents, will not corroborate White House claims that Iraq posed an imminent and deadly threat to America and the world.

To justify this apocalyptic allegation, U.S. forces will have to uncover underground installations worthy of a James-Bond villain, complete with long-range ICBMs carrying nuclear or biological

warheads with aerosol dispensing systems.

In actuality, neither poison gas nor germs are true weapons of mass destruction; only high-yield nuclear weapons fit that emotionally charged description. Poison gas is a battlefield weapon that is inefficient, undependable, and difficult to employ. At Verdun, in 1916, the Germans fired one million poison gas shells at French troops along a four-kilometer sector. The French had no gas masks but held. The Soviets used poison gas and toxins in Afghanistan yet lost the war.

Biological weapons, such as anthrax, plague, and Q-fever are, in theory, more deadly. But their use requires cumbersome equipment and highly specialized technicians. Delivering toxins beyond artillery range requires aircraft or missiles with complex aerosol dispensing systems. Most toxins have a limited shelf life from days to three years.

Iraq had a primitive nuclear program in the mid-1980s run by a cadre of some 2,500 nuclear scientists and technicians. Efforts were made to enrich uranium by centrifuges and electromagnetic separa-

its ally Israel, in exchange for yellowcake uranium ore that the Israelis used to produce their own nuclear weapons. Israel's nuclear technology came initially from France, then, later, via espionage and diversion, from the United States.

Iraq's rudimentary nuclear program, created to counter Israel's large nuclear arsenal and to menace Iran, was eradicated by U.S. attacks 1991 and by post-war UN inspectors. Crushing U.S. sanctions and UN inspections made any renewed nuclear effort impossible. But even if Iraq had been left alone to develop a new nuclear weapons program, it would have required at least a decade to produce one or two crude nuclear devices that would have been too heavy to be carried atop a missile. Claims that Iraq was "only six months away from producing a nuclear weapon" in 1991 were totally false.

Even if Iraq had possessed medium-range, nuclear-armed missiles, such weapons would have threatened only Israel, not the United States. This remote challenge to Israel, and preserving Israel's Mideast monopoly on weapons of

Yes, Saddam was a bloody tyrant, as this writer, whom the Iraqi secret police threatened to hang, knows firsthand. But the Bush administration's latest excuse for war ignores the fact that the United States and Britain were accomplices in many of Saddam's crimes.

During the 1970s, the U.S., Israel, and Iran armed Iraq's Kurds and stirred them to revolt. During the 1980s Iran-Iraq War, Kurds and Shi'ites again revolted against Baghdad just as Iranian forces were driving into Iraq. Saddam crushed the revolts, in some cases using mustard gas. At the time, the U.S. and Britain were secretly allied to Iraq, covertly supplying Saddam's forces with intelligence data, heavy weapons, and financial support. Iraq's chemical and biological weapons programs were entirely supplied by the U.S., Britain, Germany, and Italy. British technicians, seconded by the Ministry of Defense and MI6, were producing anthrax and botulism for Iraq. The U.S. government remained silent about Saddam's killing of Kurdish and Shi'ite insurgents and his use of chemical weapons against Iran.

At the end of the 1991 Gulf War, President George H. W. Bush called on Iraq's Kurds and Shi'ites to rebel. When they did, U.S. forces impassively watched them be massacred by Saddam's troops. One was reminded of Stalin's encircling Red Army watching the Germans crush the Warsaw uprising. In both cases, potential troublemakers—pro-Iranian Shi'ite militants, Polish nationalists—were conveniently destroyed.

Now, the Bush administration is employing the same fronts that were so successful against Iraq to whip up war fever against Iran. Why tamper with a winning formula? ■

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## TO JUSTIFY THIS APOCALYPTIC ALLEGATION, U.S. FORCES WILL HAVE TO UNCOVER UNDERGROUND INSTALLATIONS WORTHY OF A JAMES-BOND VILLAIN.

tion, but these tests proved unsuccessful. Saudi Arabia, then Iraq's ally in the war against Iran, very likely financed the bulk of Iraq's nuclear program.

The director general of West Asia's leading intelligence agency revealed to this writer that his service had solid proof Iraq had obtained its uranium separation technology from South Africa's apartheid regime in exchange for oil. At that time, South Africa had built six nuclear weapons.

South Africa obtained uranium enrichment technology, as well as assistance in fusing and warhead design, from

mass destruction, was one reason driving American neocons to clamor for war on Iraq. Israel demanded a Carthaginian solution for Iraq: razing its industrial base and killing its cadre of nuclear scientists.

Faced with the embarrassment of Iraq's missing weapons, the Bush administration has quickly shifted gears, claiming its invasion was really about freeing Iraqis from a bloody, tyrannical regime. On cue, neocon commentators raised a hue and cry about Saddam's slaughter of Kurds and Shi'ites. Americans readily accepted this new *ex post facto* reason for the war.

# Arts & Letters

## FILM

[*Terminator 3*]

### *A Cyborg in Sacramento?*

By Steve Sailer

THE FAST AND FUNNY "Terminator 3: The Rise of the Machines" demonstrates a surprising advantage to being a sequel. An original film with T3's purported budget of \$170 million would have needed a script dumbed down for the broadest possible audience. Fortunately, the "Terminator" series is by now so embedded in world popular culture that screenwriters John D. Brancato and Michael Ferris can simply assume that you're familiar with—and take an intelligent interest in—James Cameron's epic of killer robots from the future.

Cameron is merely collecting royalties this time, but Arnold Schwarzenegger is once again a nice Terminator sent back to protect humanity's eventual savior John Connor from a blond Terminator played by model Kristanna Loken. Like the Nordic god Loki, Loken's villainess is a trickster and shape-changer.

T3 doesn't morph into anything too original. Despite the price tag, in style it's more of a sequel to the low-budget 1984 original than the majestic 1991 T2, which seemingly brought the series to a satisfying close. Still, the screenwriters show an affectionate respect for this American classic, giving Schwarzenegger lots of moments that are witty but not campy. The competent director Jonathan Mostow pays loving tribute to Cameron's massive machine mania with

a gleeful chase between a fire truck and a monstrous crane.

The 1984 "Terminator" was a generational landmark. Having been born in 1958, during the second half of the baby boom, I grew up resenting the easily won prestige of the older baby boomers. The Bill and Hillary cohort born in the late 1940s and early 1950s had been fussed over like no generation ever. Coming right after the Birth Dearth of 1930-1945, they suffered little competition from the sparsely populated previous generation.

By the time we late baby boomers came along, though, there were tens of millions of smug older boomers clogging the pipelines to the top. Further, the youth pop-culture template—JFK-idolization, long hair, and Woodstock nostalgia—had been established, seemingly for all time. Not surprisingly, a lot of us rebelled, turning to Ronald Reagan, short hair, and the Sex Pistols.

As our interests evolved from music to movies, "Terminator" was a galvanizing discovery. The plot featured some

Arnold Schwarzenegger—with his spiky haircut, Teutonic squareness, hyper-ambitiousness, and absurd musculature—was the ultimate anti-hippie. The former Mr. Olympia bodybuilder had been a bad joke out on the geekier fringes of popular culture for a decade, but, suddenly, he was cool.

In the 1980s, muscles came back in fashion after a quarter of a century as a taste found only in trailer parks. The androgyny of male style-setters like the Rolling Stones and David Bowie was relegated to the low-rent neighborhood of the hair-metal bands.

In "Pirates of the Caribbean," by the way, Johnny Depp tries to revive the glamour rock mode. He plays a drunken, mincing, mascara-wearing fop of a buccaneer, supposedly modeled on Stones' guitarist Keith Richards, but more reminiscent of Mike Myers' parody of their other guitarist, Ronnie Wood.

In T3, Arnold's back in awesome shape, perhaps suspiciously Michelangeloesque for a 55-year old man who might run for governor of California this

IN T3 WE GET TO WATCH A **POTENTIAL GOVERNOR OF CALIFORNIA** PILE-DRIVE A **PRETTY GIRL HEADFIRST** THROUGH A CERAMIC URINAL. MOST WOMEN, HOWEVER, AREN'T MADE OUT OF **INSTANT-HEALING LIQUID METAL**.

1960s message about machines threatening humanity, but Cameron's inordinate fondness for technology, the mightier the merrier, shone through the tired moralizing, helping launch the boom in nerd films that is with us still.

Cameron's "Terminator" also unleashed one of the hallmarks of 1980s cinema: relentlessness. In "Aliens" and his script for Sylvester Stallone's "Rambo," he brought to the movies the headlong rush of a Clash concert.

fall. Did he go back on the juice to prepare for his nude arrival scene? Beats me, but it's a question Republicans should ask him before they fall in line behind the man who was the Timothy Leary of steroids. Admittedly, as Schwarzenegger frequently points out, his years of steroid use didn't damage him. But, then, he's obviously a man of superior resilience, while most of the boys who tried steroids to be like him were not.