

## TEN LIES TO BE CONSIDERED BY THE IRAQ INQUIRY

a submission by Stan Rosenthal

The inquiry will no doubt be asked to investigate a number of "lies" allegedly told by the government in respect of the Iraq war. In the interests of balance I set out here answers to ten of the most commonly accepted lies spread by the anti-war lobby.

LIE 1: The war was fought to rid Iraq of weapons of mass destruction which proved to be non-existent.

THE REALITY: The actual casus bellum of the war was Iraq's serial non-compliance with UN resolutions which were formulated after the first Gulf war to ensure that Saddam would never again threaten the region with WMD. After being given every opportunity to meet the terms of these resolutions (over several years) Saddam rejected the final demand under Resolution 1441 (unanimously agreed) which called for "an accurate, full and final disclosure of Iraq's WMDs and all aspects of its WMD programme". Hans Blix, the UN chief weapons inspector, confirmed that "Iraq had not fully accepted its obligation to disarm". At this point the actual existence of WMD was immaterial since this could only be determined by the proper inspection arrangements and disclosure which Saddam had failed to provide. In the event the post-war Iraq Survey Group discovered that Saddam had retained a WMD capability which could have produced weapons of mass destruction at a time of his choosing.

LIE 2: The war was illegal.

THE REALITY: The legal justification for the war was set out in the Attorney-General's written answer to a Parliamentary question on March 17, 2003. Essentially this argued that non-compliance with UN Resolution 1441 and previous related UN resolutions provided sufficient grounds for military action without a further resolution. Certainly there were differences of opinion on the need for a second resolution. However such differences are quite common in this fairly new and "rag-bag" area of the law and a challenge to the Attorney-General's advice does not constitute proof of illegality, whether it comes from another lawyer or the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

LIE 3: Coalition troops were responsible for the deaths of over 500,000 innocent civilians in Iraq.

THE REALITY: To support their case the anti-war lobby always quote the highest possible number of civilian casualties. In fact, estimates quoted in Wikipedia range from the 50,000 of the Iraq Body Count project to the 655,000 of the second Lancet survey of mortality. As Wikipedia points out the differences reflect differing methodologies as well as differing definitions of the types of deaths counted. In particular the Lancet study from which the higher estimates are taken includes non-civilians and deaths due to degraded infra-structure and poor health care. There is also the difficulty of distinguishing between civilian and insurgent deaths since it is in the nature of this type of warfare for the combatants to melt into the civilian population during and in between battles. And in the case of genuine civilian deaths, who is to say who is responsible when insurgents operated from densely built-up areas, in effect using civilians as human shields?

LIE 4: Coalition troops are responsible for the violence in Iraq.

THE REALITY: The violence is being perpetrated mainly by Iraqi and other Middle Eastern groups. This is being done to settle sectarian scores, to gain power or to prevent the elected Iraqi government from doing its job. The biggest mistake made by the coalition in this respect was to under-estimate the ruthlessness and depravity of an enemy directing its fire at the softest of targets (mosques, market-places, hospitals etc) which are almost impossible to defend. Of course the presence of coalition troops will attract fire in certain areas in the way that any peace-keeping force will be resisted by those who oppose peace but such actions are very much in the minority at the present time..

LIE 5: The war is responsible for acts of terror elsewhere in the world.

THE REALITY: Acts of terror preceded the Iraq war and have taken place in countries that were not involved in the war (like the Bali massacre) or have been thwarted in countries that actively opposed the war (like the foiled plots in France). Terrorists will always exploit any grievance to justify their actions, especially where they relate to countries that are resisting them. From this standpoint it can be argued that the main recruiting sergeant for terrorism is not the war but those who continually dwell on its negativities.

LIE 6: Iraq is an Occupied Territory.

THE REALITY: The occupation was ended in 2004 under UN Resolution 1546 when the interim Iraqi government took power. Coalition troops were then mandated by the United Nations to keep the peace. The U.S. government has pledged itself to comply with a UN resolution requiring American troops to leave if requested by the Iraqi government.

LIE 7: Iraq has a puppet government.

THE REALITY: Millions of Iraqis (representing well over 60% of the population) risked death to choose their government in the two elections of 2005. International monitors concluded that the elections generally met international standards. On this basis their government has a greater claim to legitimacy than any other government in the world.

LIE 8: The Iraq war was a war against Islam.

THE REALITY: Islamic Shias, Sunnis and Kurds rejoiced at being liberated from Saddam's oppression. Even now, despite the post-war carnage, polls have shown that over 60% of the Islamic population believe that overthrowing Saddam was worth the hardships that followed.

LIE 9: Tony Blair took us to war on lies about the related Iraqi intelligence.

THE REALITY: Two independent investigations, the Hutton and Butler inquiries have cleared Tony Blair of this charge. A lie is a known untruth. At the time of Blair's decision to go to war the UN inspectors, every intelligence agency in the world, most governments, and even Saddam's own generals were convinced that Saddam was concealing WMD stocks and a WMD programme. In a post-war interview with the Iraq Survey Group Saddam actually admitted that he was trying to give the impression that he still had WMD, for deterrent purposes. Tony Blair can hardly be blamed for acting on that impression.

LIE 10: Tony Blair was George Bush's poodle on all things to do with the war.

THE REALITY: Since at the last the Americans were bent on war regardless of the British position, Blair's choice was to resist them and to be thereby excluded from the decision making process or to support them and thus gain some influence regarding those decisions. By taking the course that he did, Blair can be regarded as being more of a guide-dog than a poodle.