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## **Bush Pushes the Big Lie Toward the Brink:**

Even some in government can no longer be silent in the face of falsehood.  
by Robert Scheer

So the truth is out: George W. Bush lied when he claimed to be worried about Iraq's alleged weapons of mass destruction. Otherwise, Iraq's stepped-up cooperation with the U.N. on disarmament would be stunningly good news, obviating the need to rush to war.

Instead, the U.N. weapons inspectors' verification of Iraq's destruction of missiles, private meetings with Iraqi weapons scientists, visits to locations where biological and chemical weapons were destroyed in 1991 and a series of unfettered flights by U2 spy planes have been met with a shrug and sneer in Washington. The White House line is that even if the Iraqis destroy all their slingshots, Goliath is still bringing his tanks and instituting "regime change." The arrogance is breathtaking. We have demanded that a country disarm -- and even as it is doing so, we say it doesn't matter: it's too late; we're coming in. Put down your guns and await the slaughter.

Abraham Lincoln once observed that even a free people can be fooled for a time -- and this, mind you, was long before Fox News existed -- and in his chaotic two-year presidency, Bush has pushed the Big Lie approach so far that we are seeing dramatic signs of its cracking: an international backlash, a domestic peace movement and whistle-blowing from inside our own intelligence and diplomatic corps.

"We have not seen such systematic distortion of intelligence, such systematic manipulation of the American people, since the war in Vietnam," wrote John Brady Kiesling, a 20-year veteran of the U.S. Foreign Service in his letter of resignation last week to Secretary of State Colin Powell. Kiesling, who was political counselor in U.S. embassies throughout the Mideast, added that "until this administration, it had been possible to believe that by upholding the policies of my president, I was also upholding the interests of the American people and the world. I believe it no longer."

And this brave man is not the only one who has caught on. The entire world is astonished that our president is lying not about a personal indiscretion but about the most sacred duty of the leader of the most powerful nation in human history not to recklessly endanger the lives of his own or the world's people. Yet lie he has.

The first lie, claimed outright, was that Iraq aided and abetted the Sept. 11 terrorists. There is no evidence at all for this claim. It is also interesting to note that not a single leading Al Qaeda operative has turned out to be Iraqi. The latest to be nabbed, Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, was living in Pakistan, was raised in Kuwait and studied engineering -- and presumably the physics of explosives -- at a college in North Carolina.

The second lie was that Iraq's alleged weapons of mass destruction represent an imminent threat to U.S. security. Despite the most hugely expensive but secret high-tech spy operation in human history -- estimated by most at well over \$100 billion a year -- and a vast network of defectors and spies, we have not been able to find their supposed weapons.

The third and most dangerous lie is that our mission now is to bring lasting peace to the Mideast by a devastating invasion of Iraq, which will end, as the president outlined last week, in U.S. dominance over the structure of government and politics throughout the region. After abandoning promising efforts by the previous administration to create peace between Israel and the Palestinians, the Bush team now claims that changing Muslim governments around the world will end the downward spiral of violence there. Which leads us to another lie: that this is all good for our ally, Israel -- the claim of the cabal of neoconservative ideologues running our Mideast policy. In fact, however, Israel will be placed in a terribly dangerous position, serving as a fig leaf for U.S. ambitions, further ensuring that it remain forever an isolated military garrison.

This construction of a new world order comes from a naive and untraveled president, emboldened in his ignorance by advisors who have been plotting an aggressive Pax Americana ever since the Soviet bloc's collapse. Bush insiders Richard Perle, Elliott Abrams, Dick Cheney, Paul Wolfowitz and Donald Rumsfeld are all members of something called the Project for a New American Century that has been pushing for a U.S. redesign of the Mideast since 1997. After Sept. 11, they seized on our national tragedy as a way to enlist George W. in support of their grand design. Not only was this reckless scheme never mentioned by Bush during the election campaign, it was the sort of thing renounced as "nation-building," something he would never support. Yet another lie.