

Congressmen Seek Answers

This open letter to President Bush, dated May 5, requests immediate information concerning a leaked document in Britain, which indicated the existence of a secret Bush/Blair pre-war deal. It was signed by 88 members of Congress, led by Rep. John Conyers, Jr. (D-Mich.), Ranking Member of the House Judiciary Committee and Dean of the Congressional Black Caucus. The leak has essentially been acknowledged by the Blair government.

We write because of troubling revelations in the Sunday London *Times* apparently confirming that the United States and Great Britain had secretly agreed to attack Iraq in the summer of 2002, well before the invasion and before you even sought Congressional authority to engage in military action. While various individuals have asserted this to be the case before, including Paul O'Neill, former U.S. Treasury Secretary, and

Richard Clarke, a former National Security Council official, they have been previously dismissed by your Administration. However, when this story was divulged last weekend, Prime Minister Blair's representative claimed the document contained "nothing new." If the disclosure is accurate, it raises troubling new questions regarding the legal justifications for the war as well as the integrity of your own Administration.

The *Sunday Times* obtained a leaked document with the minutes of a secret meeting from highly placed sources inside the British Government. [See previous article.] Among other things, the document revealed:

- Prime Minister Tony Blair chaired a July 2002 meeting, at which he discussed military options, having already committed himself to supporting President Bush's plans for invading Iraq.
- British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw acknowledged that the case for war was "thin" as "Saddam was not threatening his neighbours and his WMD capability was less than that of Libya, North Korea, or Iran."
- A separate secret briefing for the meeting said that Britain and America had to "create" conditions to justify a war.
- A British official "reported on his recent talks in Washington. There was a perceptible shift in attitude. Military action was now seen as inevitable. Bush wanted to remove Saddam, through military action, justified by the conjunction of terrorism and WMD. But the intelligence and facts were being fixed around the policy."

As a result of this recent disclosure, we would like to know the following:

1. Do you or anyone in your Administration dispute the accuracy of the leaked document?
2. Were arrangements being made, including the recruitment of allies, before you sought Congressional authorization go to war? Did you or anyone in your Administration obtain Britain's commitment to invade prior to this time?
3. Was there an effort to create an ultimatum about weapons inspectors in order to help with the justification for the war as the minutes indicate?
4. At what point in time did you and Prime Minister Blair first agree it was necessary to invade Iraq?
5. Was there a coordinated effort with the U.S. intelligence community and/or British officials to "fix" the intelligence and facts around the policy as the leaked document states?

We have of course known for some time that subsequent to the invasion there have been a variety of reasons proffered to justify the invasion, particularly since the time it became evident that weapons of mass destruction would not be found. This leaked document—essentially acknowledged by the Blair government—is the first confirmation that the rationales were shifting well before the invasion as well.

Given the importance of this matter, we would ask that you respond to this inquiry as promptly as possible. Thank you.