

Bush people have cranked up the ol' fog machine



BARB GUY

The Bush team has been taking potshots at anyone who dares to note the overwhelming evidence that the administration manipulated - if not downright manufactured - pre-war intelligence in order to sell the American people on the Iraq war.

People have pointed these things out for years, for all the good it's done. So what has brought on the recent nasty counterattacks? Sidney Blumenthal said in Salon.com Thursday: "The Senate's decision last week to launch an investigation into the administration's role in prewar disinformation, after the Democrats forced the issue in a rare secret session, has provoked a furious presidential reaction."

He went on to say, "The Senate Intelligence Committee, under Republican leadership, connived with the White House to prevent

a promised investigation into the administration's involvement in prewar intelligence. Its revival by Democrats is precisely the proximate cause that has triggered Bush's paroxysm of revenge."

Seems like as good an explanation as any. Clearly, more and more Americans who supported the president have become disillusioned.

Like the manager of a sagging rock band, Karl Rove must have decided it's time for a fog machine. As campaigns to shift blame go, this one is only slightly more sophisticated than "I know you are but what am I?" and "who smelt it dealt it."

It's interesting that, in the face of approval ratings dropping to unprecedented lows, the Bush team has chosen to defame Americans with legitimate questions. Vice President Cheney, who on another occasion replied to a valid criticism with the super-classy "Go f- yourself," has been called in by the president to help turn the pointed finger around.

At least Cheney's manners are better now. Without even employing the f-bomb, he says allegations the Bush team lied us into war are "the most dishonest and reprehensible charges ever aired."

Wow.

Let's see. The most dishonest and reprehensible. What about Cheney's quote in March 2003? Tim Russert asked him on "Meet the Press," "Even though the International Atomic Energy Program says [Saddam Hussein] doesn't have a nuclear program, we disagree?" Cheney replied, "I disagree, yes. And you'll find the CIA, for example, and other key parts of our intelligence community, disagree. And we believe he has, in fact, reconstituted nuclear weapons."

Later that year, Cheney returned to the program. Russert played a clip of the previous conversation and said to Cheney, "Reconstituted nuclear weapons. You misspoke." Cheney replied, "Yeah. I did misspeak . . . We never had any evidence that he had acquired a nuclear weapon."

In 2004, in a unanimous decision, the bipartisan 9/11 commission, selected by President Bush, confirmed what a lot of people knew all along - there is no connection between al-Qaida and Saddam Hussein.

Then there's Colin Powell. He gave a speech to the U.N. in February 2003 that laid out the rationale for war. This pivotal speech, given by arguably the most respected person in the Bush administration, has been cited by many moderates,

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Democrats and Republicans, as the most persuasive argument they heard for supporting the war. It certainly gave me pause.

But now, as reported by ABC News: "Colin Powell says his speech making the case for the U.S.-led war on Iraq is 'a blot' on his record. Powell has also said that he had 'never seen evidence to suggest' a connection between the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks in the United States and the Saddam regime." Said Powell: "It may not have turned out to be such a mess if we had done some things differently."

Now the Defense Intelligence Agency has declassified a report, DITSUM 044-02. According to Robert Scheer in *The Nation*, "This smoking-gun document proves the Bush administration's key evidence for the apocryphal Osama bin Laden-Saddam Hussein alliance, said by Bush to involve training in the use of weapons of mass destruction, was built upon the testimony of a prisoner who, according to the DIA, was probably 'intentionally misleading the debriefers.'"

There's so much more. Remember Donald Rumsfeld assuring us that U.S. troops would be greeted with flowers and victory parades in Baghdad? Remember "Mission Accomplished"? The Downing Street memo? The shame and disgrace of Abu Ghraib?

And Bush's people say it's Americans with questions who are dishonest and reprehensible?

Killer fog machine, man.

Barb Guy is a regular contributor to these pages. © Salt Lake Tribune.