

Saddam's Weapons Of Mass Destruction – The Issue Won't Go Away

In the acrimonious controversy between supporters of the liberation of Iraq (currently somewhat on the defensive because no WMD stockpiles have been found there) and the 'Bush Lied' faction (currently engaged mainly in mindless crowing), the central issue of understanding what happened is being largely overlooked. For if there really were no stocks of WMD, as David Kay now considers most likely, there is no getting away from the question: did Saddam know this, or was he being deceived? *Both possibilities are, on the face of it, extraordinarily implausible.*

In **Case Not Closed: Iraq's WMD Stockpiles** (via **Solomon**), Douglas Hanson, WMD expert and recently Chief of Staff of the post-liberation Iraqi Ministry of Science and Technology, puts it like this:

[Was Saddam] really fooled by scientists scared to death of him and the Baath Party, or [did he run] one of military history's most successful deception operations. If he did the latter, we must also ask why he would risk the toppling of his regime, and his death or capture, over non-existent WMDs. The only alternative explanation to these two questionable scenarios is that WMD stockpiles did in fact exist, but that they have been hidden, and/or spirited out of the country.

The anti-liberation faction are trying their best not to let this issue go away. They needn't worry. There is no prospect of its going away until the truth – and that now means, principally, the true explanation of Saddam's and Iraq's pre-war behaviour – is discovered.

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Your argument is incomplete

For if there really were no stocks of WMD, as David Kay now considers most likely, there is no getting away from the question: did Saddam know this, or was he being deceived? Both possibilities are, on the face of it, extraordinarily implausible.

You have not argued why both these possibilities are implausible.

You are right it is very unlikely Iraqi scientists deceived Saddam into believing in non-existent weapons. But you also disregard the other option that Saddam did know there were no WMDs, on these grounds: *Why he would risk the toppling of his regime, and his death or capture, over non-existent WMDs?*

There is something missing in your argument, because you are implicitly assuming something without giving reasons for those assumptions. Namely: you are assuming (1) that Saddam put himself at risk of war on purpose, plus (2) that if he did provoke the war on purpose he would only have done that if he believed he had WMDs. You have failed to give reasons for both of these two conclusions. Without that the obvious possibility remains that Saddam was simply telling the truth when he said Iraq had no WMDs.

Another note: The case for war was NOT that there were WMDs. The case for war was that Iraq was not complying with the inspections, and hence Saddam MIGHT have had WMDs. The fact that the allies also had a positive belief that Saddam DID have WMDs is besides the point. The fact that Saddam MIGHT have had them and was not complying with inspections is good enough reason for the war. (And even if we knew Saddam had no WMDs, anybody still would have been justified in liberating Iraq for humanitarian reasons.)

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