

## An Uncanny Resemblance?

The case of the house broken into by armed police officers in London on Friday, resulting in the shooting of one of the occupants, is beginning to bear an uncanny resemblance to that of the invasion of Iraq:

### **Intelligence behind raid was wrong, officials say**

Senior counter-terrorism officials now believe that the intelligence that led to the raid on a family house last Friday in a search for a chemical device about to be used to attack Britain was wrong, the Guardian has learned.

[...]

"There is no viable device at that house. There is no device being constructed, or chemicals. There does not appear to be anything there or anywhere else."

Soon we'll be hearing from our holy men that the raid was **illegal, immoral and unwise**, from the legal profession that it was a war crime, from the press that Blair lied, and so on. They'll make up stuff as needed – you know the sort of thing.

No doubt they'll all be very very angry with the Government for having raided a house that contained no weapons of mass destruction. Would they have been any less angry, we wonder, if the men arrested had nevertheless been mass murderers with 300,000 bodies buried in their cellar? And an entire nation held hostage in the attic? Presumably not.

Tue, 06/06/2006 - 01:25 | [digg](#) | [del.icio.us](#) | [permalink](#)

## Would bodies be listed on the

Would bodies be listed on the warrant?

by a reader on Tue, 06/06/2006 - 08:56 | [reply](#)

## Re: Would bodies be listed

*Would bodies be listed on the warrant?*

No.

Are you referring, by analogy, to the failure of Blair and the Bush Administration, prior to the invasion, to cite Saddam's murders as justifications for it?

by **Editor** on Tue, 06/06/2006 - 17:52 | [reply](#)

## Uncanny Resemblance?

I think the police acted prudently in the circumstances and should not be faulted. It appears that the decision to raid the house was taken not only because there was intelligence regarding a bomb device and the like, but also because the intelligence indicated an immediate threat.

As the linked article stated: "It is understood that attempts to corroborate the information were not made because of the perceived need to act quickly. '[i]f there was an immediate risk to public safety, there would not have been time to bug the house,' an intelligence source said. A counter-terrorism official said: "If the intelligence was right there was a serious risk to the public. We did not know if it was right or not until we went in."

Iraq, on the other hand, while looking similar on the surface, is a different case. In the house raid situation, there should never be any disagreement that it's always proper to carry out such a raid if intelligence indicates an immediate threat to the public safety. The same holds true for situations like Iraq. However, even the most ardent supporters of the Iraq action did not really try and make the strong case that Saddam's WMDs were an immediate threat. And, in any event, little would have been lost if a bit more "bugging" had been carried out.

As I have stated in previous posts, I think the war on terror would have been better served by focusing on the near far-east, including in particular Afghanistan, to consolidate influence in the region, to provide a base for the projection of force, and to put pressure directly on the Iranian regime from a more easily defended (militarily and politically) base of operations. Nevertheless, we are where we are and I recognize the need to try and achieve the most favorable possible outcome.

In any event, I don't necessarily think that there is an uncanny resemblance between the two situations. Rather, there is a superficial resemblance.

by **Michael Bacon** on Wed, 06/07/2006 - 14:47 | [reply](#)

## Iraq

*However, even the most ardent supporters of the Iraq action did not really try and make the strong case that Saddam's WMDs were an immediate threat. And, in any event, little would have been lost if a bit more "bugging" had been carried out.*

Can you think of any people on earth that Saddam was an

immediate threat to? (nvm whether he was threatening them with WMD or another way). I believe there was something important to be lost by waiting. And besides, we had already waited a long time, and that wasn't improving matters.

-- Elliot Temple

[My Blog](#)

by [Elliot Temple](#) on Wed, 06/07/2006 - 20:58 | [reply](#)

## Saddam was a Terror Sponsor

Saddam worked with terrorist groups, including [Al Qaeda](#) (Bush knew of links [before the war](#) BTW) and [Palestinian suicide bombers](#). So Bush removed a major terror sponsor by removing Saddam. Nor is it likely that effective resistance to Saddam could have been fomented in a Stalinist state like Iraq. Iraq was certainly a valid target and it was very unlikely that anything but an invasion would have got rid of the threat.

by [Alan Forrester](#) on Wed, 06/07/2006 - 21:08 | [reply](#)

## Time Lost?

Elliot,

He was an immediate threat to his own people of course, and to a lesser extent the region. However, assuming one can not always do multiple things at once (particularly where war is concerned), I still do not think that the Iraq action was the best strategic move for the United States to make in the circumstances. I have posted about this before and nothing has occurred that would lead me to change my mind. Moreover, everything else being equal, I don't think the situation that we now face in Iraq would have been materially different if we had waited -- the initial military action, I believe, would not have been materially more difficult, and the insurgency that we now face would not have been materially more deadly. Of course, this is only my opinion, and I can understand how reasonable people could reach a different conclusion from the set of same facts. In any event, I don't think there is an uncanny resemblance between the two situations, and I don't think the police should be faulted for the raid.

by [Michael Bacon](#) on Wed, 06/07/2006 - 21:24 | [reply](#)

## waiting

i agree that as far as i know delaying wouldn't have had huge effects on the difficulty of invading. i don't see that it would have had any good benefits though. i agree this constitutes a flaw in the parallelism btwn the war and the raid.

-- Elliot Temple

[My Blog](#)

by [Elliot Temple](#) on Wed, 06/07/2006 - 22:28 | [reply](#)

## **Yes, I was making that analog**

Yes, I was making that analogy.

I'm guessing that you think the war itself is a Good Thing (positive virtue or utility, or good for liberty, or whatever).

My question is: is starting wars with no sufficient justification not a bad thing, or at least a bad policy, even if the outcome in this particular case be positive?

Also, I mentioned a while ago that your site won't let my browser select the text for cutting and pasting. You (Editor) went all snooty, listing the many browsers you've tested it on. This list did not include Microsoft Internet Explorer, which I'm using, which I'm sure is the most popular, and which you probably knew I was using. I really enjoy your site, so maybe you could have a look at the problem?

by a reader on Thu, 06/08/2006 - 19:23 | [reply](#)

## **Re: Yes I was making that analogy**

We wrote:

Are you referring, by analogy, to the failure of Blair and the Bush Administration, prior to the invasion, to cite Saddam's murders as justifications for it?

a reader replied:

Yes, I was making that analogy.

Thanks. Just so we're on the same page, could you provide a link to a speech by Blair or Bush, attempting to justify the proposed invasion, in which they failed to cite Saddam's murders?

by [Editor](#) on Thu, 06/08/2006 - 21:34 | [reply](#)

## **Nope. You win!, now go and**

Nope.

You win!, now go and fix your website.

by a reader on Thu, 06/08/2006 - 21:41 | [reply](#)

**(please)**

(please)

by a reader on Thu, 06/08/2006 - 21:45 | [reply](#)

## **Analogy**

Reader,

I too can not cut and paste on this blog. Don't know why, and it would be much more convenient if I could, but don't take it personally.

Whether the war has been a "Good Thing" depends on how you define the term. As Alan pointed out, Saddam was certainly more than worthy of removal: countless murders, mayhem and more are attributable to him. If he could have developed WMDs he would have. Removing him from power has certainly been a good thing in a very real, concrete sense.

I, however, simply make the utilitarian argument that there were better things to do, and that since you can't do everything, it makes sense to do the things that help to more directly achieve strategic objectives. I don't believe that the Iraq action served this purpose nearly as well as others things we could have done.

This is an argument that reasonable people can disagree with -- but it seems right to me. However, in no event should we downplay the seriousness of the threat we face -- nor pretend that military force is some abstract "last resort" in our battle to combat these threats.

by [Michael Bacon](#) on Fri, 06/09/2006 - 01:07 | [reply](#)

## Copying

The site uses only standard HTML and CSS, and we don't do anything to prevent copying. Unfortunately, we have no idea what triggers Internet Explorer's behaviour; if anyone can tell us, we will try to work around it.

by [Editor](#) on Fri, 06/09/2006 - 01:36 | [reply](#)

## I've checked, and it appears

I've checked, and it appears to be this bug:

<http://lists.xml.org/archives/dita-fa-edboard/200602/msg00053.html>

IE will let you select if you put after the base tag at the top of the page.

The discussion there mentions using selective commenting so that only IE looks at the closing tag. This would preserve XHTML well-formedness, but I don't know if it really matters to you.

by a reader on Fri, 06/09/2006 - 08:02 | [reply](#)

## Thank you, reader

Thank you, reader; we have applied the suggested workaround, and assume Internet Explorer users will now be able to copy text.

by [Editor](#) on Sat, 06/10/2006 - 00:48 | [reply](#)

## Workaround

It works fine now. Thanks much.

by **Michael Bacon** on Sat, 06/10/2006 - 14:08 | [reply](#)

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