

CONDOLEEZZA RICE'S CREDIBILITY GAP: Pre-9/11 Intelligence

A point-by-point analysis of how one of America's top national security officials has a severe problem with the truth

- **CLAIM:** "I don't think anybody could have predicted that they would try to use an airplane as a missile, a hijacked airplane as a missile." – National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice, [5/16/02](#)
- **FACT:** On August 6, 2001, the President personally “received a one-and-a-half page briefing advising him that Osama bin Laden was capable of a major strike against the US, and that the plot could include the hijacking of an American airplane.” In July 2001, the Administration was also told that terrorists had explored using airplanes as missiles. [Source: NBC, 9/10/02; LA Times, [9/27/01](#)]
- **CLAIM:** In May 2002, Rice held a press conference to defend the Administration from new revelations that the President had been explicitly warned about an al Qaeda threat to airlines in August 2001. She “suggested that Bush had requested the briefing because of his keen concern about elevated terrorist threat levels that summer.” [Source: Washington Post, [3/25/04](#)]
- **FACT:** According to the CIA, the briefing “was not requested by President Bush.” As commissioner Richard Ben-Veniste disclosed, “the CIA informed the panel that the author of the briefing does not recall such a request from Bush and that the idea to compile the briefing came from within the CIA.” [Source: Washington Post, [3/25/04](#)]
- **CLAIM:** “In June and July when the threat spikes were so high...we were at battle stations.” – National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice, 3/22/04
- **FACT:** “Documents indicate that before Sept. 11, Ashcroft did not give terrorism top billing in his strategic plans for the Justice Department, which includes the FBI. A draft of Ashcroft's 'Strategic Plan' from Aug. 9, 2001, does not put fighting terrorism as one of the department's seven goals, ranking it as a sub-goal beneath gun violence and drugs. By contrast, in April 2000, Ashcroft's predecessor, Janet Reno, called terrorism 'the most challenging threat in the criminal justice area.'" Meanwhile, the Bush Administration decided to terminate "a highly classified program to monitor Al Qaeda suspects in the United States." [Source: Washington Post, [3/22/04](#); Newsweek, [3/21/04](#)]
- **CLAIM:** “The fact of the matter is [that] the administration focused on this before 9/11.” – National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice, 3/22/04
- **FACT:** President Bush and Vice President Cheney’s counterterrorism task force, which was created in May, never convened one single meeting. The President himself admitted that “I didn't feel the sense of urgency” about terrorism before 9/11. [Source: Washington Post, [1/20/02](#); Bob Woodward’s “Bush at War”]
- **CLAIM:** “Our [pre-9/11 NSPD] plan called for military options to attack al Qaeda and Taliban leadership, ground forces and other targets -- taking the fight to the enemy where he lived.” – National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice, [3/22/04](#)
- **FACT:** 9/11 Commissioner Gorelick: “There is nothing in the NSPD that came out that we could find that had an invasion plan, a military plan.” Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage: “Right.” Gorelick: “Is it true, as Dr. Rice said, ‘Our plan called for military options to attack Al Qaida and Taliban leadership?’” Armitage: “No, I think that was amended after the horror of 9/11.” [Source: 9/11 Commission testimony, [3/24/04](#)]

CONDOLEEZZA RICE'S CREDIBILITY GAP: Fighting Terrorism

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CONDI RICE ON PRE-9/11 COUNTER TERRORISM FUNDING

- **CLAIM:** "The president increased counterterrorism funding several-fold" before 9/11. – National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice, 3/24/04
- **FACT:** According to internal government documents, the first full Bush budget for FY2003 "did not endorse F.B.I. requests for \$58 million for 149 new counterterrorism field agents, 200 intelligence analysts and 54 additional translators" and "proposed a \$65 million cut for the program that gives state and local counterterrorism grants." Newsweek noted the Administration "vetoed a request to divert \$800 million from missile defense into counterterrorism." [Source: New York Times, [2/28/04](#); Newsweek, [5/27/02](#)]

RICHARD CLARKE'S CONCERNS

- **CLAIM:** "Richard Clarke had plenty of opportunities to tell us in the administration that he thought the war on terrorism was moving in the wrong direction and he chose not to." – National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice, 3/22/04
- **FACT:** Clarke sent a memo to Rice principals on 1/24/01 marked "urgent" asking for a Cabinet-level meeting to deal with an impending al Qaeda attack. The White House acknowledges this, but says "principals did not need to have a formal meeting to discuss the threat." No meeting occurred until one week before 9/11. [Source: CBS 60 Minutes, [3/24/04](#); White House Press Release, [3/21/04](#)]
- **CLAIM:** "No al Qaeda plan was turned over to the new administration." – National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice, [3/22/04](#)
- **FACT:** "On January 25th, 2001, Clarke forwarded his December 2000 strategy paper and a copy of his 1998 Delenda plan to the new national security adviser, Condoleezza Rice." – 9/11 Commission staff report, [3/24/04](#)

RESPONSE TO 9/11

- **CLAIM:** "The president launched an aggressive response after 9/11." – National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice, 3/22/04
- **FACT:** "In the early days after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, the Bush White House cut by nearly two-thirds an emergency request for counterterrorism funds by the FBI, an internal administration budget document shows. The papers show that Ashcroft ranked counterterrorism efforts as a lower priority than his predecessor did, and that he resisted FBI requests for more counterterrorism funding before and immediately after the attacks." [Source: Washington Post, [3/22/04](#)]

CONDOLEEZZA RICE'S CREDIBILITY GAP: Iraq

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9/11 AND IRAQ INVASION PLANS

- **CLAIM:** "Not a single National Security Council principal at that meeting recommended to the president going after Iraq. The president thought about it. The next day he told me Iraq is to the side." – National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice, [3/22/04](#)
- **FACT:** According to the Washington Post, "six days after the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, President Bush signed a 2-and-a-half-page document marked 'TOP SECRET'" that "directed the Pentagon to begin planning military options for an invasion of Iraq." This is corroborated by a CBS News, which reported on 9/4/02 that five hours after the 9/11 attacks, "Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld was telling his aides to come up with plans for striking Iraq." [Source: Washington Post, [1/12/03](#). CBS News, [9/4/02](#)]

IRAQ AND WMD

- **CLAIM:** "It's not as if anybody believes that Saddam Hussein was without weapons of mass destruction." – National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice, [3/18/04](#)
- **FACT:** The Bush Administration's top weapons inspector David Kay "resigned his post in January, saying he did not believe banned stockpiles existed before the invasion" and has urged the Bush Administration to "come clean" about misleading America about the WMD threat. [Source: Chicago Tribune, [3/24/04](#); UK Guardian, 3/3/04]

9/11-AL QAEDA-IRAQ LINK

- **CLAIM:** "The president returned to the White House and called me in and said, I've learned from George Tenet that there is no evidence of a link between Saddam Hussein and 9/11." – National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice, 3/22/04
- **FACT:** If this is true, then why did the President and Vice President repeatedly claim Saddam Hussein was directly connected to 9/11? President Bush sent a letter to Congress on 3/19/03 saying that the Iraq war was permitted specifically under legislation that authorized force against "nations, organizations, or persons who planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11." Similarly, Vice President Cheney said on 9/14/03 that "It is not surprising that people make that connection" between Iraq and the 9/11 attacks, and said "we don't know" if there is a connection. [Source: BBC, 9/14/03]