



George W. Bush



Tony Blair

# The two rocketeers

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**T**he day before the derring-do duo of Messrs Bush and Blair held their unintentionally comical media conference at Camp David last week, their aircraft attacked Iraq in "the biggest single operation... for four years." There is no point in either of them trying to claim that there is no plan by America and Britain to attack Iraq, because Iraq has been under attack for years, this last being the 37th rocket/bombing strike since January. Neither Mr Bush nor Mr Blair referred to the attack, and the media representatives at the gathering were good enough not to mention it, either. Reporters at the jovial love-fest eight days ago asked six questions, none of which was penetrating, to put it mildly.



No editors picked up the story, but an organisation called eMedia Mill Works produced a transcript of this insight to the minds of the leader of the world and his greatest foreign supporter. Mr Bush began by saying the "the world faces some serious threats and threats and we're going to talk about it", which set the tone for the flow of soul which then took place.

Mr Blair, who is usually articulate, chimed in with a strange observation. He said "Now, of course, as we've showed before in relation to Afghanistan, we want the broadest possible international support. But it's got to be on the basis of actually making sure that the threat we've outlined is properly adhered to." What does this mean?

pleted his answer by saying that "And we've got to make sure we work out a way forward that of course mobilises the maximum support but does so on the basis of removing a threat that the United Nations itself has determined is a threat to the whole of the world."

The UN has not "determined" that Iraq is a "threat to the whole world". Is China threatened by Iraq? Is India? How on earth could Iraq pose a threat to either of these nations? Well that's a couple of billion people, so far, who can rest easy in their beds at night. Then perhaps Brazil, Argentina, Chile and all the rest of South America might not be quaking in their boots for fear of Iraqi missiles, stuffed with Anthrax, flying their way. And as for Japan, Australia, New Zealand and the rest of us over here in the Asia/Pacific region - well, we are not completely petrified about Mr Saddam Hussein's possible acquisition of nuclear weapons.

After all, the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London stated last week that Iraq could make a nuclear bomb "in a matter of months, if" - IF - "it obtained high-grade radioactive material". Now who is going to provide Iraq with high-grade radioactive material? How could it get there?

Who could fly it in? Or might a North Korean submarine travel round the world, down through the South China Sea, turn north into the Malacca Straits, up through the Indian Ocean, then to the Gulf where, at its Iraqi port, it would surface and disembark some "high-grade radioactive material"? Then of course there are the little green men from Mars who would jump down from their

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Can I have it both ways.

Then Mr Bush told a majestic whopper. A real lulu of a lie, that everyone knows is a lie. But there hasn't been a word of criticism about it in any responsible newspaper. He was asked "Do you have any support from any other countries in the world apart from Britain?" (This was the only quasi-real question of the love-in, but it was phrased very gently.) In answer to this question Mr Bush said to the world "Yes. A lot of people understand that this man has defied every UN resolution - sixteen US [sic] resolutions he's ignored. A lot of people understand he holds weapons of mass destruction. A lot of people understand he has invaded two countries. A lot of people understand he's gassed his own people. A lot of people understand he is unstable. So we've got a lot of support. A lot of people understand the danger."

This is bizarre and fatuous stuff. Of course "a lot of people" understand that Mr Hussein has ignored UN resolutions. (And what a revelation Mr Bush provided when he said "US" resolutions. And did the US media pounce on that Freudian slip? Nary a one, folks.) But nuclear-armed Israel has ignored UN resolutions with impunity for longer than has Mr Saddam Hussein. And "a lot of people" understand that Mr Hussein invaded two countries, just as America has done. "A lot of people" have not forgotten that America invaded Panama and Grenada, which violent and illegal actions set precedents for invasions by others around the world. And we understand that Mr Hussein gassed Kurds and is probably unstable.

But the question was "Do you have any support from any other countries apart from Britain?" It was not about people "understanding" that Mr Hussein did these things. The question, sloppily put as it was, and befitting such a sycophantic gathering, concerned a specific point in regard to possible world support for Mr Bush and Mr Blair in their decision to remove Mr Saddam Hussein by force. (And there is no other way to remove him.) The questioner asked if there was any support from any other countries than Britain. Of course there is: Israel supports the United States in its intent to kill Mr Saddam Hussein.

But what the questioner was after was recognition by Mr Bush that there is no support by any major country for an attack on Iraq that does not have specific UN Security Council approval. Mr Bush would not admit that, amongst others, China, Egypt, France, Germany, India, Kuwait, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia and Turkey are opposed to his planned attack on Iraq. So Mr Bush com-

be tackled." Disregarding the jet-lag syntax, the statement by Mr Bush, specifically endorsed by Mr Blair, that there was an IAEA report stating that Iraq is "six months away from developing a [nuclear] weapon" is a lie. The IAEA said nothing of the sort.

Then Mr Bush tried to end the press conference, such as it was. He said "Thank you all for coming. I appreciate you. Thanks." But there came another question. It began "Let me ask you, sir, when you asked the American people for support..." and Mr Bush interrupted and made it clear that he didn't mind this particular questioner asking a question. He said that he would answer it: "The only reason why. He's a fine fella. Go ahead."

So the question, by the "fine fella", when all these supposedly hard-nosed reporters had the president of the United States of America and the prime minister of Britain in front of them to answer any queries they put about the future of the world, was one of the meekest, most lenient, feeble, obsequious, fawning and gutless queries ever put to a political leader at any press conference in recent years. This so-called reporter went on "When you asked the American people for support two years ago, there was no way, sir, anyone could imagine the grim nature of the job you would take on. Had you known then what the job would entail, would you still have asked for it, sir, and would you have had any compunction ..."

Thereupon he was again interrupted by the President of the United States who said, majestically and with fantastic inconsistency that "when a tyrant like Saddam Hussein possesses weapons of mass destruction it not only threatens the neighbourhood in which he lives, it not only threatens the region, it can threaten the United States of America or Great Britain for that matter. The battlefield has changed. [What battlefield were we engaged in, for Pete's sake?]. We are in a new kind of war. (Who is? Mr Bush might be, but who the hell else of us is engaged in a "new kind of war"?) And we've got to recognise that."

This extraordinary press conference told us much more than Mr Bush's banal speech at the UN on Thursday. These two musketeers - rocketeers - are not only tongue twisted, they are twisters. They have not made a case for killing Mr Hussein, but are intent on doing so, and in the process of planning the war, they tell us lie after lie. E-mail queries and comments to [beecluff@nation.com.pk](mailto:beecluff@nation.com.pk)