

# Colin Powell Lied to the UN: Following Orders Is No Excuse

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*"A hoax on the American people, the international community, and the United Nations Security Council."*

That is how Secretary of State General Colin Powell's February 2003 Iraq WMD speech to the UN was described last Friday (Feb. 3) on PBS by one who ought to know, Col. Lawrence Wilkerson, chief of staff to Secretary Powell.

In a February 2005 interview with Barbara Walters on ABC News "20/20" program, Powell himself declared his UN Iraq speech to be a blot on his reputation.

Since departing the Bush administration, both Wilkerson and Powell have made it completely clear that they had serious doubts about the "evidence" of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction and malevolent Iraqi intentions that was loaded by the White House into Powell's UN speech, a speech designed by neoconservatives to initiate the invasion of Iraq. Both Powell and Wilkerson knew that the "evidence" was greatly overstated if not an outright fabrication.

What if Secretary Powell had shared his doubts with the UN? What if instead of reading the Speech of Lies Powell had addressed the UN as follows:

"As a loyal soldier following orders I came here today intending to deliver the Bush administration's evidence against Saddam Hussein. Now that I am standing here before you, I find myself caught in conflict between following orders and doing the right thing. I should have resolved this conflict before I arrived. I do so now by delivering the speech to you in its written form – here it is – but I refuse to deliver it out of my mouth. I cannot participate in an act of deception against the United Nations Security Council, the international community, and the American people. I have no confidence in the evidence in the speech. Under the Nuremberg Standard established by the United States in the trials of Nazi war criminals, following orders is no excuse. I will not participate in the war crime of naked aggression against another state. I hereby resign as Secretary of State of the United States."

Powell would have saved the world from a strategic blunder, the disastrous consequences of which are only beginning to unfold. The maelstrom set in motion by the treachery of the neoconservatives, people who Powell has described as "crazy," has already cost tens of thousands of dead and wounded and hundreds of billions of dollars, destroyed America's reputation, and radicalized Middle East politics.

If Powell had refused three years ago to deliver the Speech of Lies, we would not now be watching an identical duplicity being rolled out against Iran. The ultimate cost of the deception being practiced on the American people will dwarf the terrible price that has already been paid.

Why didn't Powell do the right thing? His own reputation would have been forever secure as a man of integrity. Why did he sacrifice his integrity to the crooked scheme of his commander in chief?

Alas, that is the way our generals are bred. In the politicized US military, no officer can advance beyond the rank of Lt. Col. unless he toes the political line. The game is played to advance in rank as high as possible, collect the pension, and be rewarded for compliant behavior with consultancies. Real leadership means making waves, and that is not tolerated.

Even in rare instances of a real man, concerned with the honor of his country and the safety of his troops, reaching the top, he is powerless to prevent disastrous mistakes of the ignorant civilian authorities. Consider the fate of US Army Chief of Staff General Eric Shinseki, who correctly informed Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld that the US invasion force was not sufficiently numerous to successfully occupy and subdue Iraq once the pitched battles were over. Shinseki was fired for telling the truth – as was Secretary of the Army Thomas White, Lt. Gen. John Riggs, and four-star general Kevin P. Byrnes. Riggs was framed, demoted, and retired for saying that the US army was overstretched in Iraq and Afghanistan and needed more troops. Byrnes, who was in charge of Army training, was framed on adultery charges for objecting to bottom of the barrel recruitment policies that accepted criminals and immigrants with a lack of English proficiency. Nothing like having an army that can't understand orders.

The only way a military can constrain their civilian masters from cooking up a war is to resign in mass. If every general and colonel had resigned, there would have been no invasion of Iraq. But this would require a military with leadership and a tradition of sticking together. A military in which promotion is the highest virtue is powerless to prevent disastrous mistakes, such as the invasion of Iraq.

The Bush administration went to war on the basis of its fantasy that if merely a few US troops marched into Iraq, the regime would collapse and the population would welcome Americans as liberators with flowers and kisses. It was to be a “cakewalk war.”

No general officer in the US military believed that. Yet few spoke out (Marine General Anthony Zinni was a notable exception). The entire US military command could only produce a handful of men to warn of the looming catastrophe. Who can forget the orchestrated media dismissals of “over-cautious generals” that greeted these few? The reason Colin Powell disgraced himself is that he could not free himself of the conditioning that breeds success in the US military.

Who today will stand up to stop the potential Armageddon of a US attack on Iran?

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