

The CIA Just Declassified the Document That Supposedly Justified the Iraq Invasion

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Thirteen years ago, the intelligence community concluded in a 93-page classified document used to justify the invasion of Iraq that it lacked “specific information” on “many key aspects” of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein’s weapons of mass destruction (WMD) programs.

But that’s not what top Bush administration officials said during their campaign to sell the war to the American public. Those officials, citing the same classified document, asserted with no uncertainty that Iraq was actively pursuing nuclear weapons, concealing a vast chemical and biological weapons arsenal, and posing an immediate and grave threat to US national security.

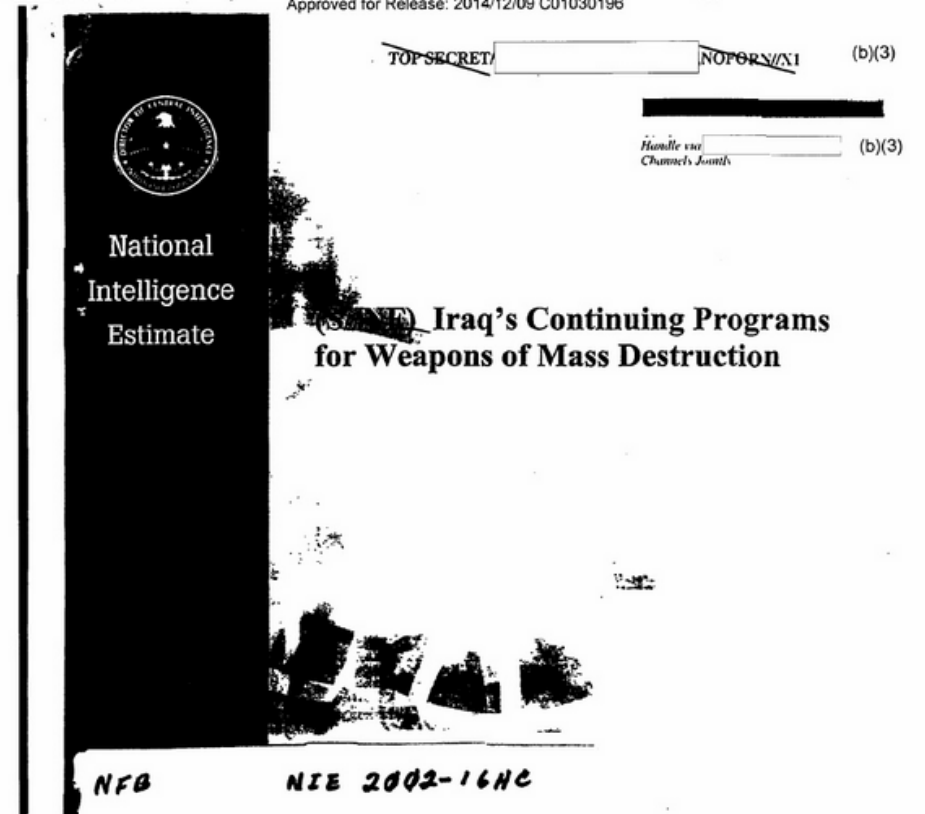
Congress [eventually concluded](#) that the Bush administration had “overstated” its dire warnings about the Iraqi threat, and that the administration’s claims about Iraq’s WMD program were “not supported by the underlying intelligence reporting.” But that underlying intelligence reporting — contained in the so-called National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) that was used to justify the invasion — has remained shrouded in mystery until now.

The CIA released a copy of the NIE in 2004 [in response to a Freedom of Information Act \(FOIA\) request](#), but redacted virtually all of it, citing a threat to national security. Then last year, John Greenwald, who operates [The Black Vault](#), a clearinghouse for declassified government documents, asked the CIA to take another look at the October 2002 NIE to determine whether any additional portions of it could be declassified.

The agency responded to Greenwald this past January and provided him with a new version of the NIE, which he shared exclusively with VICE News, that restores the majority of the prewar Iraq intelligence that has eluded historians, journalists, and war critics for more than a decade. (Some previously redacted portions of the NIE had previously been disclosed in congressional reports.)

‘The fact that the NIE concluded that there was no operational tie between Saddam and al Qaeda did not offset this alarming assessment.’

For the first time, the public can now read the hastily drafted CIA document [pdf below] that led Congress to pass a joint resolution authorizing the use of military force in Iraq, a costly war launched March 20, 2003 that was predicated on “disarming” Iraq of its (non-existent) WMD, overthrowing Saddam Hussein, and “freeing” the Iraqi people.



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