

COLIN POWELL FACT SHEET

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There are still a remarkable number of people who maintain illusions in Gen. Colin Powell, and believe he was really a "good guy" who tried his best to moderate the evil nature of the Bush administration but failed. Powell may have played the "good cop" in the Bush game of softening up the world for the invasion, but he was no good guy - he played an integral part in enabling the invasion of Iraq, and the blood of more than 2000 Americans, and tens of thousands of Iraqis, is on his hands. Ask yourself this: if Powell really wanted to stop the war, why didn't he resign in protest like former British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook? His resignation, and going public with what he knew, would have almost without question brought a good part of the American "establishment" - members of Congress, the editorial boards of major newspapers, etc. - to oppose the war. That, coupled with the millions of people in the streets around the world protesting the coming invasion, and the war almost certainly could have been stopped. Colin Powell clearly didn't want to stop the war. The evidence shows he was perfectly willing to be an integral part of government policies that he knew were both illegal and immoral. And, when you look at his record, that is no surprise.

There isn't enough space here to review his entire record, so let's start with a web reference where you can read detailed analyses of Powell's entire career: www.consortiumnews.com/archive/colin.html. This is a series of twelve articles written by independent investigative journalists Robert Parry and Norman Solomon, which cover Powell's career from Vietnam to his role in the Iran-Contra scandal, his behind-the-scenes role in missile shipments to Iran, and his role in the invasion of Panama and the Gulf War.

FACT: Colin Powell played a key role in covering up the My Lai massacre, in which 347 Vietnamese, including babies, were butchered by American forces. Colin Powell, assigned to investigate a soldier's letter reporting atrocities, performed his "investigation" by talking to the soldier's superior officer, never even talked to the soldier who wrote the letter, and wrote a report in which he "rebutted" the charges by announcing that "relations between American soldiers and the Vietnamese people are excellent," admitting only that there might be "isolated cases of mistreatment of civilians and POWs" (sound familiar in the context of Abu Ghraib, *et al.*?).

FACT: It was Colin Powell, then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who recommended to President George H.W. Bush that the U.S. invade Panama to apprehend Panamanian President Manuel Noriega, even though the assault would almost certainly result in many civilian casualties and be against international law. Hundreds or thousands of Panamanian civilians perished in that attack. As with the invasion of Iraq, no one bothered to count them, because their lives meant nothing.

There's lots more in Powell's history you can read about, but today, with war in Iraq raging, the key question is this:

WHAT ROLE DID COLIN POWELL PLAY IN STARTING THE WAR AGAINST IRAQ?

Colin Powell's speech to the United Nations on February 5, 2003 was one of the key events in the prelude to the invasion. It was Powell's speech more than anything else which turned the tide in support for the invasion not among the American public, who in their majority opposed the invasion, but among the "establishment," which was the final obstacle Bush had to overcome. With Powell's help, he did. Politician after politician, newspaper after newspaper gushed about Powell's convincing case, and the invasion was a done deal.

Before turning to the speech, one thing to remember is why Powell was at the U.N. He was there to get a second vote, a U.N. endorsement of the invasion. *That vote never happened*, because the U.S. knew it was going to lose the vote, and took the vote off the table. And Powell, who had been sent to the U.N. to get the U.N.'s support for the invasion, did nothing. Did he protest? No. Resign? No. He stood by and did nothing while the U.S. violated international law and illegally invaded another country, a war crime.

WHAT DID POWELL SAY AT THE U.N.?

The entire speech is online here: edition.cnn.com/2003/US/02/05/sprj.irq.powell.transcript/index.html. He covered a lot of ground - alleged Iraqi biological, chemical, and nuclear weapons, alleged ties to al Qaeda, and lots more. There was a lot, but if you listened closely, there was no "there" there. For example, Powell showed pictures of trucks outside a building, which he alleged had been observed 30 times "emptying out" the stocks of chemical weapons inside. But, curiously, there wasn't a *single* picture of the trucks delivering their load anywhere, and more tellingly, the U.N. inspectors, despite this allegedly accurate U.S. intelligence, hadn't been able to find a *single* chemical weapon (of course this is referring to 2002-2003, not to the inspections of the early 90's when weapons had been found and destroyed).

It might seem like this is all hindsight, and, as noted above, all the major newspapers and columnists gushed over Powell's speech. But in the independent media, it was a different story. Here are four lengthy articles, written within 24 hours of Powell's speech, in which four knowledgeable authors completely demolished Powell's arguments.

Ali Abunimah (The Electronic Intifada): electronicintifada.net/cgi-bin/artman/exec/view.cgi/7/1140

Stephen Zunes (Professor, USF): www.commondreams.org/views03/0206-07.htm

Phyllis Bennis (Inst. for Policy Studies): www.zmag.org/content/showarticle.cfm?SectionID=40&ItemID=2976

Rahul Mahajan (author): www.zmag.org/content/showarticle.cfm?SectionID=40&ItemID=2980

All of these articles were published at the time. None of the authors, however, was invited on CNN or "Hardball" or any other mainstream media show to discuss their analyses. The die was cast and the mainstream media didn't want you to hear a dissenting word.

DID COLIN POWELL LIE AT THE U.N.?

Colin Powell says that his speech was "painful" to him (not nearly as painful as it has been to Cindy Sheehan, just to name one victim), and a "blot" on his record, but still maintains he was "misled." The facts on this question were laid out recently on the blog *Left I on the News*: lefti.blogspot.com/2005_11_01_lefti_archive.html#113130270897728782. Start by asking yourself this: if someone handed you a 48-page speech, and you had to throw dozens of pages away and said, "I'm not reading this. This is bullshit," would you really have enough confidence in what was left to make the following statement with complete honesty?

"My colleagues, every statement I make today is backed up by sources, solid sources. These are not assertions. What we're giving you are facts and conclusions based on solid intelligence."

Consider some of the statements made by Powell in his speech (emphasis added):

*"We **know** that Iraq has at least seven of these mobile biological agent factories."*

*"There can be **no doubt** that Saddam Hussein has biological weapons and the capability to rapidly produce more, many more."*

*"Saddam Hussein **has** chemical weapons."*

If Powell had said "Evidence points to..." or "We think it's highly likely that...", it might be a different story. But there can be *no doubt* that what Powell did say were lies. And this is no minor matter of semantics. These were *deliberate* lies, told for a reason. The reason the invasion had to happen immediately, in March 2003, we were told, is that Iraq was so dangerous that there was an imminent threat to our national security if we allowed the inspectors to continue their work. Just "thinking" that Iraq had WMD wasn't enough; the American people had to think it was *certain*. Only statements of certainty - lies - could accomplish that task. Lies that were told by Colin Powell.

Here's something to contemplate. Gen. Amer al Saadi was the Iraqi who was the liaison to the weapons inspectors. In his speech, Powell denounced al Saadi as a liar. But it was al Saadi who was telling the truth, and Powell who was lying; not a single substantive charge made by Powell was true. And today? Colin Powell is here speaking to you tonight, boasting about his new Corvette. Gen. al Saadi is rotting in an Iraqi prison, neither convicted nor even charged with any crime. After surrendering voluntarily, he has spent most of the last two and a half years in solitary confinement. His real crime? Speaking the truth to Colin Powell's lies.

THE WAR COLIN POWELL HELPED START IS STILL NOT OVER

PEOPLE CONTINUE TO DIE, AND BE PERMANENTLY INJURED, EVERY DAY TROOPS REMAIN IN IRAQ

Tens of thousands, probably well over a hundred thousand Iraqis have been killed to date. Every day brings news of 20, 30, or 50 Iraqis killed. 2062 Americans have been killed so far, and every week brings another 20 or 30 dead Americans. Thousands upon thousands of additional Iraqis and Americans have lost legs, arms, eyes, and/or have been psychologically damaged by the war. Far too many soldiers come home and end up committing suicide or killing their spouses. And just imagine the effect of this war on Iraqi children.

WHAT HAS THIS WAR COST YOU?

If you're Cindy Sheehan or Karen Meredith, the war has cost you your son. For other mothers, fathers, and spouses, it may have "only" cost you the arm or a leg of a family member. But all of us have paid the price in dollars. The invasion of Iraq has cost the U.S. more than **\$300 billion** so far, *with no end in sight*. Even if the war ended today, which doesn't seem likely, we'll be paying the medical bills for tens of thousands of injured American soldiers for decades to come, not to mention the reparations we owe Iraq for destroying their country.

\$300 billion means that every single person has already paid more than \$1000 for this illegal war and occupation. That's per person, not per family; if there are four people in your family, that's \$4000. Together, the people of Santa Clara County have paid more than **\$1.5 billion** for this war. Can you think of a better use for the money here in Santa Clara County? I'm sure you won't have to think too hard.

NOT ONE MORE DEATH, NOT ONE MORE DOLLAR!

GET INVOLVED! STOP THE WAR!

Here are some organizations you might want to work with (*note: this flyer not endorsed by any of these organizations*). This is by no means an exhaustive list; there are many groups, large and small, working against the war. Pick one, any one, and get involved!

South Bay Mobilization: www.southbaymobilization.org

Peninsula Peace & Justice Center: www.peaceandjustice.org

DeAnza Students for Justice: powelldeanza.blogspot.com

Mountain View Voices for Peace: www.mvvp.org

ANSWER Coalition: www.answercoalition.org