

MEET THE TRUTH

Responding to Bush on NBC's "Meet The Press"

WAR ON TERROR

BUSH: White House Cooperating With 9/11 Commission

Bush: We have given extraordinary cooperation with Chairmen Kean and Hamilton. As you know, we made an agreement on what's called "Presidential Daily Briefs," and they could see the information the CIA provided me that is unique... know, we're going to second guess that which you told the President. I need good, honest information, but we have shared this information with both those gentlemen, gentlemen I trust, so they could get a better picture of what took place prior to September the 11th. And again, we want... I want the truth to be known. ["Meet the Press", 2/8/04, emphasis added]

FACT: White House Stonewalled 9/11 Commission Every Step Of The Way

From The Outset, Bush Strongly Opposed Independent Inquiry Into 9/11 Attacks. In July 2002, the Bush administration issued a "statement of policy" that read "...the Administration would oppose an amendment that would create a new commission to conduct a similar review [to Congress's investigation]. Such an amendment is duplicative and would cause a further diversion of essential personnel from their duties fighting the war." Members of Congress "and relatives of victims of the attacks pushed for the independent commission, arguing that it would not be as limited as the congressional inquiry." [Statement of Administration Policy, Executive Office of the President, 7/24/02, emphasis added; Los Angeles Times, 11/28/02]

White House Fought Independent Investigators To Hide Briefings Bush Received On 9/11. In November 2003, the White House reached a deal with the independent commission to release some of Bush's Presidential Daily Briefings (PDB), which provided potential information on the attacks. Administration officials admitted that they feared "information in the reports might be construed to suggest that the White House had clues before Sept. 11, 2001, that Al Qaeda was planning a catastrophic attack," and Bush had argued that executive privilege allowed him to keep the reports hidden. [NY Times, 11/13/03; Wash. Post, 11/16/03]

- **White House Fought To Deny Commission Members Access To Their Own Notes.** The 9/11 commission had to threaten a subpoena in the face of the "White House's refusal to let...three members share their notes on the [PDB] information with the seven others. The White House has cited executive privilege." Thomas Kean, the panel's chairman, said, "'Angry' is not the right word... 'Frustrated' might be a better word. We feel as a commission -- unanimously, I think -- that all commissioners are equal, that they should all have the same information.'" [New York Times, 2/5/04]
- **Republican Commission Chairman Said Limiting White House Documents Would "Leave Questions Unanswered."** Kean called on Bush to provide access to the requested documents, saying, "Any document that has to do with this investigation cannot be beyond our reach. I will

not stand for it... There are a lot of theories about 9/11, and as long as there is any document out there that bears on any of those theories, we're going to leave questions unanswered. And we cannot leave questions unanswered.” [New York Times, 10/26/03]

BUSH: Iraq Commission Needs Time To Work

Russert: Shouldn't the American people have the benefit of the commission before the election?

Bush: Well, the reason why we gave it time is because we didn't want it to be hurried. This is a strategic look, kind of a big picture look about the intelligence gathering capacities of the United States of America, whether it be the capacity to gather intelligence in North Korea or how we've used our intelligence to, for example, learn more information about AQ Kahn. And it's important that this investigation take its time. [“Meet the Press”, 2/8/04, emphasis added]

FACT: White House Stonewalling Slowed 9/11 Commission—White House Said Commission Should Hurry Up

Commission Ran Out Of Time Due To Bush Stonewalling On Evidence. Members of the 9/11 commission “said there was no way to finish their work on time, a situation they attribute in part to delays by the Bush administration in turning over documents and other evidence.” On February 4, 2004, the White House reversed its position and announced support for a two-month extension of the commission’s deadline from May until July 2004. [New York Times, 1/28/04, 2/5/04]

White House Said Commission’s Report Should Be Rushed To Prevent Future Attacks. White House spokesman Scott McClellan defended the White House’s opposition to extending the commission’s deadline by saying “we continue to believe that they ought to move forward as quickly as possible to gather the information that they can that can help us prevent something like September 11th from ever happening again.” [White House Press Briefing, 1/27/04]

BUSH: We Don’t Know What Happened To WMDs

Bush: “...when David Kay goes in and says we haven't found stockpiles yet, and there's theories as to where the weapons went. They could have been destroyed during the war. Saddam and his henchmen could have destroyed them as we entered into Iraq. They could be hidden. They could have been transported to another country, and we'll find out.” [“Meet the Press”, 2/8/04, emphasis added]

FACT: David Kay Said No Weapons Existed Before The War.

Kay: No Weapons Were There. David Kay told the Senate Armed Services Committee that “I believe that the effort that has been directed to this point has been sufficiently intense that it is highly unlikely that there were large stockpiles of deployed militarized chemical and biological weapons there.” [Kay Testimony, 1/28/04]

ECONOMY

BUSH: Spending Higher Under Clinton

Bush: "If you look at the appropriations bills that were passed under my watch, in the last year of President Clinton, discretionary spending was up 15 percent, and ours have steadily declined." ["Meet the Press", 2/8/04]

FACT: Accounting Gimmicks Created Illusion of Clinton Spending.

Clinton Spending Artificially Increased. After the Bush administration took over, Congress hid FY 2001 spending in the FY 2000 budget in order to abide by spending caps that applied to 2001. These moves made the increase in spending negotiated in Clinton's final budget artificially high. [Washington Post, 12/16/03]

Majority of Spending Increases Under Bush Not for Defense and Homeland Security. Despite Bush's claims that the recession and war are responsible for the budget deficit, only 45 percent of all new federal spending since 2001 has been related to defense and the 9/11 attacks. The remaining 55 percent was spent on programs unrelated to homeland security and the war on terrorism. These unrelated programs have grown by 11 percent, by \$51 billion, since 2001, the fastest rates since before President Clinton came to office. [Backgrounder, Heritage Foundation, 11/13/03]

BUSH: Momentum in Job Growth

Russert: But when you proposed your first tax cut in 2001, you said this was going to generate 800,000 new jobs. Your tax cut of 2003, create a million new jobs. That has not happened.

Bush: Well, it's happening. It's happening. And there is good momentum when it comes to the creation of new jobs. ["Meet the Press", 2/8/04]

FACT: Job Growth Is Weak

Job Growth Weak; Manufacturing Continues to be Hard Hit. In January 2004, payrolls grew by 112,000 jobs, compared with an upwardly revised gain of 16,000 in December. The unemployment rate fell to 5.6 percent from 5.7 percent in December. "Two and a half years into this recovery, and the economy can only muster up 112,000 new jobs?" said Richard Yamarone, chief economist at Argus Research. "That's a bad number, not a good number." The manufacturing sector lost 11,000 jobs, the 42nd straight month of falling factory payrolls; manufacturing losses now account for 95 percent of all jobs lost under Bush. [CNN.com, 2/6/04]

Unemployment Dropped Only Because People Quit Looking for Work. According to new Labor Department statistics, the slight drop in unemployment is attributed to the 300,000 American workers who quit looking for work in December and "dropped out of the pool of available workers." [AP, 1/9/04]

BUSH: Concerned About Job Creation

Bush: See, I'm more worried about the fellow looking for the job. That's what I'm worried about. [“Meet the Press”, 2/8/04]

FACT: Administration Won't Extend Unemployment Benefits

Bush Administration Won't Tap Its \$20 Billion Trust Fund To Extend Federal Unemployment Insurance. While extending unemployment benefits costs \$1 billion a month, there is a \$20 billion trust that has been set aside to extend benefits while the job market is weak. The Bush Administration refuses to access these funds while millions remain unemployed for long periods of time. [[New York Times](#), 1/30/04; Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, 1/29/04]

BUSH: Will Cut Deficit in Half in 5 Years

Bush: "The budget I just proposed to the Congress cuts the deficit in half in five years. Now, I don't know what the assumptions are in the GAO report, but I do know that if Congress is wise with the people's money, we can cut the deficit in half. [Bush, Meet the Press, 2/8/04]

FACT: Deficit Will Be Significantly Higher Than Bush Claims

Bush Spending Projections Ignore \$200 Billion in Costs In 2009: Bush's projection excludes about \$200 billion in costs in 2009. Specifically, OMB figures are not likely to account for costs such as the Pentagon's "Future Year Defense Plan," continued spending for operations in Iraq, relief for the Alternative Minimum Tax after 2005, \$1 trillion in transition costs for privatizing Social Security, making the Bush tax cuts permanent, extending popular tax credits that are regularly renewed every couple years, and the off-budget spending for the war on terrorism. [Center on Budget & Policy Priorities, 1/21/04]

Bush Is Also Likely To Propose Spending Increases For 2005 Budget: Bush is pushing for a variety of spending increases that would add to the deficit, including small programs-like the financing of high-school drug testing-in addition to larger expenses like the space exploration and off-budget defense spending. [[Wall Street Journal Online](#), 1/26/04]

Bush: War, Corporate Scandals Responsible for Deficits

Bush: The attacks on our country affected our economy. Corporate scandals affected the confidence of people and therefore affected the economy. My decision on Iraq, this kind of march to war, affected the economy, but we have been through a lot. And what those numbers show is the fact we have been through a lot. But what the people must understand is that instead of wondering what to do, I acted, and I acted by cutting the taxes on individuals and small businesses, primarily. And that, itself, has led to this recovery. [“Meet the Press”, 2/8/04]

FACT: Bush Tax Cuts Large Cause of Deficits

Bush Tax Cuts Largely Responsible For Existing Deficits. In 2002, due largely to Bush's tax cuts, the federal government posted its first budget deficit since 1997. Bush's tax cuts have had approximately twice as much impact on the deficit as spending increases. In 2003, the deficit reached an all-time high of \$375 billion, dwarfing the previous record of \$290 billion posted by Bush's father in 1992. In addition, the \$5.6 trillion surplus projected in January 2001 is gone, supplanted with at least \$5.0 trillion in deficits over the next ten years. [Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 10/27/03]

Cost of Tax Cuts Three Times Greater Than Cost Of War On Terrorism. In July 2003, the Congressional Budget Office projected "that the federal government is likely to end fiscal year 2003 with a deficit of more than \$450 billion, or close to 4 percent of gross domestic product." OMB projected a 2003 deficit of \$455 billion. CBO data indicates that in 2003 and 2004, the costs of enacted tax cuts is nearly three times as great as the cost of the war on terrorism, including Iraq, homeland security, and Afghanistan. [Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, 1/6/03, 7/8/03, 9/16/03]

AMERICA'S TROOPS

Bush: We Owe Our Troops The Best

Bush: And the other thing that I think it's important for people who watch the expenditure side of the equation is to understand we are at war, Tim, and any time you commit your troops into harm's way, they must have the best equipment, the best training, and the best possible pay. That's where we owe it to their loved ones. ["Meet the Press", 2/8/04, emphasis added]

FACT: Under Bush, Military Suffering Resource Shortages

National Guard Still Waiting for Equipment. As it prepares to deploy to Iraq in the coming weeks, the Washington National Guard's 81st Armor Brigade still lacks such critical equipment as body armor, desert camouflage and insect repellent. "As of today, no, they are not ready to go," said Lt. Col. Stephen Barger, a Fort Lewis spokesman. Since Sen. Patty Murray (D-WA) met with members of the brigade nearly a month ago, her office said it has received phone calls from anonymous soldiers saying they've been told to buy their own flashlight batteries, bug spray and web gear to carry ammunition magazines. [[The News Tribune](#), 2/7/04]

Pentagon Delays With Body Armor, Supplies; Troops Forced to Pay Own Airfare Home. "Only time can tell whether Bush's promises in the [State of the Union] will be kept. But the context in which he made them Tuesday was missing on occasion. For example, he thanked troops and the families for their service and said: 'And my Administration, and this Congress, will give you the resources you need to fight and win the war on terror.' To date, troops have lacked some key resources. The Pentagon has struggled with delays in the production and distribution of the latest body armor to troops in Iraq, among other supply problems. Troops reuniting with their families have had to pay for their own airfare home and other travel costs once they are flown free to a small selection of cities while on leave." [[AP](#), 1/20/04]