
OSINT Report: PNAC, 9/11, and the Path to War in Iraq

Executive Summary

The **Project for the New American Century (PNAC)** was a neoconservative think tank established in 1997. Its members, many of whom ascended to high-level positions in the George W. Bush administration, advocated for aggressive U.S. military dominance and regime change in Iraq long before 9/11 [1]. The "new Pearl Harbor" concept was a pre-existing theoretical framework used to describe the difficulty of rapidly

transforming the U.S. military without a catastrophic catalyst. Following the 9/11 attacks, these individuals immediately utilized the tragedy as the anticipated catalyst to implement their pre-planned agenda against Iraq, manipulating intelligence to justify a war unrelated to the terror attacks [2].

1. Pre-9/11: The Blueprint for War

The "New Pearl Harbor" Context

- **Source:** *Rebuilding America's Defenses: Strategies, Forces and Resources for a New Century* (September 2000).
- **The Quote:** "Further, the

process of transformation, even if it brings revolutionary change, is likely to be a long one, absent some catastrophic and catalyzing event – **like a new Pearl Harbor.**" [3]

- **Significance:** This document, authored chiefly by PNAC's Thomas Donnelly, outlined a strategy for U.S. global military dominance. It did not "predict" 9/11 but acknowledged that the American public and Congress would resist the massive military spending and aggressive foreign policy they desired without a terrifying external threat [3][4].

Key PNAC Members in the Bush Administration

By January 2001, key PNAC

founders and signatories assumed control of the U.S. national security apparatus:

- **Dick Cheney:** Vice President (PNAC Founder/Statement of Principles Signatory) [1]
- **Donald Rumsfeld:** Secretary of Defense (PNAC Founder/Letter Signatory) [5]
- **Paul Wolfowitz:** Deputy Secretary of Defense (PNAC Founder/Letter Signatory) [5]
- **John Bolton:** Under Secretary of State for Arms Control (PNAC Director) [6]
- **Richard Perle:** Chairman, Defense Policy Board (PNAC Signatory) [5]
- **Douglas Feith:** Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (PNAC Associate)

Action: The Open Letter to Clinton (January 26, 1998)

Years before Bush took office, PNAC members including **Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz, Bolton, and Perle** signed an open letter to President Bill Clinton urging him to "aim, above all, at the removal of Saddam Hussein's regime from power." [5] They argued that containment was failing and that the U.S. should utilize military force unilaterally if necessary.

2. The Day of 9/11: Immediate Opportunism

On the very day of the attacks, while the Pentagon was still burning, key PNAC members immediately pivoted

focus from Al-Qaeda (the actual perpetrators) to Iraq.

Donald Rumsfeld (Secretary of Defense)

- **Time:** September 11, 2001, approx. 2:40 PM.
- **Action:** Rumsfeld dictated notes to his aides regarding the U.S. response.
- **The Note:** The declassified notes read: "**Best info fast. Judge whether good enough hit S.H. [Saddam Hussein] @ same time. Not only UBL [Usama Bin Laden].**" [7]
- **Directive:** "**Go massive. Sweep it all up. Things related and not.**" [7][8]
- **Analysis:** This proves that within hours of the attack, Rumsfeld

was already planning to use the event to target Iraq, explicitly acknowledging that the target might be "not related" to 9/11.

Paul Wolfowitz (Deputy Secretary of Defense)

- **Action:** In the immediate days following 9/11, Wolfowitz was the most vocal advocate for attacking Iraq. At the Camp David strategy meetings (Sept 15, 2001), he argued that there was a 10-50% chance Saddam was involved and that the U.S. should view Iraq as a primary target [9].
- **Quote:** He pushed the theory that Al-Qaeda could not have executed such a complex attack without state sponsorship,

pointing immediately to Iraq despite having no intelligence to support the claim [10].

3. Post-9/11: The "Warmongering Lies" & Intelligence Manipulation

After 9/11, the PNAC clique mobilized to manufacture the consent they lacked prior to the attacks.

The PNAC Letter to Bush (September 20, 2001)

Nine days after the attacks, PNAC sent a letter to President Bush stating:

"But even if evidence does not link Iraq directly to the attack, any strategy aiming at the eradication of terrorism and its sponsors must include a determined effort to remove Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq." [11] This document essentially became the Bush Doctrine.

The Mechanism of Lies: The Office of Special Plans (OSP)

To bypass the CIA and professional intelligence analysts who found no link between Iraq and 9/11, **Paul Wolfowitz** and **Douglas Feith** created a rogue intelligence unit inside the Pentagon called the **Office of Special Plans (OSP)** [12].

- **Mission:** To "stovepipe" raw, unvetted intelligence (often from unreliable sources like Ahmed Chalabi) directly to the White House [12][13].
- **The Lie:** The OSP was the primary source of the false claim that 9/11 hijacker Mohammed Atta met with Iraqi intelligence in Prague—a claim the CIA and FBI had already debunked but which Cheney and the administration continued to cite as "evidence" [13][14].

Specific Actions by Members:

- **Dick Cheney (Vice President):**
 - **Action:** Made unprecedented personal

visits to CIA headquarters to pressure analysts into finding a link between Iraq and 9/11 [15].

- **The Lie:** In August 2002, he stated: *"Simply stated, there is no doubt that Saddam Hussein now has weapons of mass destruction. There is no doubt he is amassing them to use against our friends... and against us."* [16] (Intelligence at the time was highly divided and doubtful).
- **The Nexus:** He repeatedly cited a "nexus" between terrorists and WMDs to terrify the public, conflating Al-Qaeda (9/11) with Saddam (Secular dictator) to

suggest a mushroom cloud was imminent.

- **John Bolton (Under Secretary of State):**

- **Action:** Bolton actively blocked the dismissal of the head of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), Jose Bustani, to prevent effective inspections that might disprove the WMD narrative [17].
- **The Lie:** He claimed in 2002: "*We are confident that Saddam Hussein has hidden weapons of mass destruction.*" He also made unsubstantiated claims about Cuba and Syria

having WMD programs to broaden the "Axis of Evil" narrative [18].

- **Richard Perle (Defense Policy Board Chairman):**
 - **Action:** Used his position to validate the OSP's false intelligence in the media.
 - **The Lie:** He publicly claimed that Mohammed Atta had met Saddam's agents in Prague, a claim he maintained even after it was disproven. He famously stated that the UN inspection process was a "trap" and that the U.S. should invade regardless of what inspectors found [19].

Summary of Tactics

1. **Wait for the Event:** PNAC theory (2000) posited that a "Pearl Harbor" event was needed to galvanize the public [3].
2. **Seize the Moment:** Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz moved to include Iraq in the target list on the afternoon of 9/11 [7].
3. **Manufacture Intelligence:** When the CIA wouldn't provide the necessary links, Wolfowitz and Feith created the OSP to manufacture them [12].
4. **Sell the War:** Cheney, Perle, and Bolton used this manufactured intelligence to sell a narrative of "imminent threat" to the American public, falsely linking

the secular Iraqi regime to the fundamentalist Al-Qaeda attackers.

References

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- **[18]** Bolton, J. R. (2002, May 6). "Beyond the Axis of Evil." *Heritage Foundation Lecture*.
- **[19]** Perle, R. (2002, September

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