

# Newspaper Editorials Question U.S. Government's Credibility on WMD

American editorial pages are crackling with comments about alleged weapons of mass destruction, the United States' primary justification for its Iraqi invasion.

Some editorials have openly speculated that the Bush administration lied to the public. Others have encouraged public congressional hearings. A few continue to urge patience, contending that WMD will still be found.

"If those weapons don't turn up, the American people were at best badly misled, and at worst lied to. Congress needs to begin asking the tough questions—now," said the Memphis [Commercial Appeal](#).

"'Little White Lies' about Waging War" was the headline on Greensboro's [News & Record](#) Wednesday editorial.

"America won the fight in Iraq, but post-war backtracking on two sensitive issues indicates we may have lost the credibility battle," said the editorial.

The first sensitive issue, the North Carolina paper said, was the overstated threat of chemical weapons. The second was the "troubling reports that the dramatic rescue of prisoner of war Jessica Lynch from an Iraqi hospital was staged."

The Des Moines [Register](#) editorialized: "Americans should recall that President Bush persuaded the nation to conduct its first-ever pre-emptive war on the basis of Iraq's alleged weapons of mass destruction. The threat was so great that the invasion couldn't be delayed for even another month or so to let the United Nations arms inspectors finish their work."

The consequences of the increased likelihood that WMD will not be found "means

either that this country has suffered a monumental failure of its intelligence-gathering capabilities or the Bush administration was so eager to get rid of Saddam Hussein that it selectively chose only that intelligence data that supported a predetermined course of action,” said the editorial.

“The third and darkest possibility is that the president knowingly overstated the threat from Iraq—that he and the highest officials of his administration lied,” said the *Register*.

Cleveland’s [\*Plain Dealer\*](#) said: “If no such weapons are found, the reasons stated by Bush and accepted by Congress for the pre-emptive attack and overthrow—that Saddam presented an immediate threat to his neighbors and the world, that he had to be disarmed before he handed off those weapons to other terrorists—is false at its core. And that unacceptable charge—that America lied to instigate the war—is being made loudly around the world, and not only by our enemies.”

The editorial said that America’s credibility “will be shattered,” if it cannot produce the WMD.

“Going to war is a process in America, one that requires the administration and the Congress to build the case completely, clearly and honestly. It’s the standard Americans have come to expect of their leaders and their government,” said the [\*Oregonian\*](#).

“A government that leads its people into war must have a decent respect for the opinions of its citizens,” said the editorial. “That means it must have decent respect for the truth.”

The [\*Sacramento Bee\*](#) said: “It hardly needs stating that in the life-and-death context of war, credibility is paramount. Yet Bush and others—by claiming a direct threat to this country that nothing yet uncovered substantiates, by exaggerating the importance of the little evidence found since the war and by belaboring their anger with opponents of the war—have invited the suspicion that bedevils them now.”

“Hearings are worth holding,” said the editorial.

The [Los Angeles Times](#) opined, “The United States’ failure to uncover evidence of chemical and biological weapons in Iraq puts its credibility at risk.”

“Hearings should start soon and, to the greatest extent possible, be public. Closed hearings would only compound doubts about what advice the administration followed,” urged the Times editorial.

“Was the American public misled on—or manipulated into—going to war against Iraq?” asked the [Clarion-Ledger](#) in Jackson, Miss.

“The accuracy and motives of our intelligence agencies are in question. The Congress should seek answers,” concluded the Jackson editorial.

Other editorial voices were more restrained.

“People should hold their harsh judgments in reserve,” said the [Dallas Morning News](#). “The evidence may yet become manifest, and the doubters humbled.”

The [Washington Post](#), which took a pro-war stance on its editorial page, said: “What’s needed is careful and patient investigation, open to audit by Congress and U.N. inspectors. Hasty conclusions, either by the president or his critics, won’t serve.”

See also “[Magazines Tackle U.S. Credibility About Weapons of Mass Destruction.](#)”