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The Washington Post

George W. Bush and the G-Word; [FINAL Edition]

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Abstract (Document Summary)

In July 2004, he stopped to campaign with some Amish folks at Lapp Electric Service in Smoketown, Pa. Just as the meeting ended, [George W. **Bush**], according to Mennonite Weekly Review columnist Jack Brubaker, told the group: "I trust **God speaks** through me. Without that I couldn't do my job." This also produced White House denials that **Bush** used those words.

"President **Bush** said to all of us: 'I'm driven with a mission from **God**. **God** would tell me, George, go and fight those terrorists in Afghanistan. And I did, and then **God** would tell me, George, go and end the tyranny in Iraq. . . . And I did.'" This sounds much like the original Haaretz version. **Bush** then allegedly said **God** had now told him to "go get the Palestinians their state."

Brubaker, in a follow-up column, said he checked with his source, an Amish reporter, who rechecked with attendees and had gotten different wording from several of them. "But **Bush** has said similar things on other occasions," Brubaker noted, citing Bob Woodward's "Plan of Attack," where **Bush** says he's "surely not going to justify the war based on **God** . . . Nevertheless . . . I pray I be as good a messenger of his will as possible."

Full Text (879 words)

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The reemergence of the controversy that President Bush allegedly told Palestinian leaders that God told him to invade Afghanistan and then Iraq is not the only time that his comments regarding God have sparked confusion.

In July 2004, he stopped to campaign with some Amish folks at Lapp Electric Service in Smoketown, Pa. Just as the meeting ended, Bush, according to Mennonite Weekly Review columnist Jack Brubaker, told the group: "I trust God speaks through me. Without that I couldn't do my job." This also produced White House denials that Bush used those words.

Loop Fans will recall that the Palestinian kerfuffle began in June 2003, when an Israeli paper reported that former Palestinian prime minister Mahmoud Abbas said Bush told the Palestinian leaders: "God told me to strike at al Qaeda and I struck them, and then he instructed me to strike at Saddam Hussein, which I did."

The White House declined to clarify, but the Israeli reporter at the time read what he said were the Palestinians' minutes of the meeting to an Arabic-speaking colleague here. Our colleague's translation was different: "God inspired me to hit al Qaeda, and so I hit it. And I had the inspiration to hit Saddam, and so I hit him."

Substantially different, we felt. Moreover, this is Abbas's account in Arabic of what Bush said in English, written down by a note-taker in Arabic and then put back into English.

The newest uproar was sparked by a [BBC](#) documentary airing this week in which Palestinian negotiator Nabil Shaath says Bush said during that meeting that he was "driven with a mission from God."

"President Bush said to all of us: 'I'm driven with a mission from God. God would tell me, George, go and fight those terrorists in Afghanistan. And I did, and then God would tell me, George, go and end the tyranny in Iraq. . . . And I did.'" This sounds much like the original Haaretz version. Bush then allegedly said God had now told him to "go get the Palestinians their state."

This time there is a response: "We checked contemporaneous notes from the meeting with President Abbas and did not find a single reference to God," a senior administration official told us. "The closest thing we could find that the president said is: 'My government and I personally are committed to the vision of a Palestinian state.' "

Back in 2004, a White House spokesman told Mennonite Weekly columnist Brubaker that Bush "likely talked about his own faith," as he often does, but did not say God speaks through him.

Brubaker, in a follow-up column, said he checked with his source, an Amish reporter, who rechecked with attendees and had gotten different wording from several of them. "But Bush has said similar things on other occasions," Brubaker noted, citing Bob Woodward's "Plan of Attack," where Bush says he's "surely not going to justify the war based on God . . . Nevertheless . . . I pray I be as good a messenger of his will as possible."

" 'Messenger of his will [or] God speaks through me,' " Brubaker wrote. "The difference seems rather fine."

The question is, how is it that Bush so confuses groups as diverse as the Palestinians and the Amish? Is it the Andover-Texas accent?

It often takes former senior administration officials -- no matter what administration -- a bit of time to settle some scores. A bit of distance also helps.

So it was no surprise that it took former deputy secretary of state Richard L. Armitage about eight months and a visit to Australia for him to reflect on life here in River City and unload on his pals.

Armitage mentions no names -- not Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld, former Iraq viceroy L. Paul Bremer and others. "Those who argued at the time that the acceptance of democracy in Iraq would be easy, and who drew on our experience with Japan and Germany, were wrong," Armitage told Australian reporter Maxine McKew in a recent issue of Diplomat magazine. "They were dead wrong."

For one thing, he said, those countries were flattened and willing to do as the United States wished. "The U.S. is dealing with an Iraqi population that is un-shocked and un-awed."

Speaking of Iraq, this e-mail came in Tuesday from the conservative Heritage Foundation:

HL 900 - Lawrence of Arabia and the Perils of State Building Dear Colleagues:

The following Heritage Lecture is now available on line:

"Lawrence of Arabia and the Perils of State Building"

by John Hulsman, Ph.D.

The experience of T. E. Lawrence in the early 20th century teaches that state building should always be approached from the bottom up, never from the top down; local elites must be stakeholders in the process, far more than people in faraway Washington, and policymakers must understand the history and culture of the region.

Why didn't anyone mention this before?

Joshua Filler, director of the Office of State and Local Coordination for the Department of Homeland Security and before that a member of Rudolph W. Giuliani's cabinet when he was New York mayor, is heading off to the private sector, entertaining offers from consulting firms here and in New York.

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