

possible. The notes indicate that he also told Myers that he was not simply interested in striking empty training sites. He thought the U.S. response should consider a wide range of options and possibilities. The secretary said his instinct was to hit Saddam Hussein at the same time—not only Bin Ladin. Secretary Rumsfeld later explained that at the time, he had been considering either one of them, or perhaps someone else, as the responsible party.⁶³

According to Rice, the issue of what, if anything, to do about Iraq was really engaged at Camp David. Briefing papers on Iraq, along with many others, were in briefing materials for the participants. Rice told us the administration was concerned that Iraq would take advantage of the 9/11 attacks. She recalled that in the first Camp David session chaired by the President, Rumsfeld asked what the administration should do about Iraq. Deputy Secretary Wolfowitz made the case for striking Iraq during “this round” of the war on terrorism.⁶⁴

A Defense Department paper for the Camp David briefing book on the strategic concept for the war on terrorism specified three priority targets for initial action: al Qaeda, the Taliban, and Iraq. It argued that of the three, al Qaeda and Iraq posed a strategic threat to the United States. Iraq’s long-standing involvement in terrorism was cited, along with its interest in weapons of mass destruction.⁶⁵

Secretary Powell recalled that Wolfowitz—not Rumsfeld—argued that Iraq was ultimately the source of the terrorist problem and should therefore be attacked.⁶⁶ Powell said that Wolfowitz was not able to justify his belief that Iraq was behind 9/11. “Paul was always of the view that Iraq was a problem that had to be dealt with,” Powell told us. “And he saw this as one way of using this event as a way to deal with the Iraq problem.” Powell said that President Bush did not give Wolfowitz’s argument “much weight.”⁶⁷ Though continuing to worry about Iraq in the following week, Powell said, President Bush saw Afghanistan as the priority.⁶⁸

President Bush told Bob Woodward that the decision not to invade Iraq was made at the morning session on September 15. Iraq was not even on the table during the September 15 afternoon session, which dealt solely with Afghanistan.⁶⁹ Rice said that when President Bush called her on Sunday, September 16, he said the focus would be on Afghanistan, although he still wanted plans for Iraq should the country take some action or the administration eventually determine that it had been involved in the 9/11 attacks.⁷⁰

At the September 17 NSC meeting, there was some further discussion of “phase two” of the war on terrorism.⁷¹ President Bush ordered the Defense Department to be ready to deal with Iraq if Baghdad acted against U.S. interests, with plans to include possibly occupying Iraqi oil fields.⁷²

Within the Pentagon, Deputy Secretary Wolfowitz continued to press the case for dealing with Iraq. Writing to Rumsfeld on September 17 in a memo headlined “Preventing More Events,” he argued that if there was even a 10 percent chance that Saddam Hussein was behind the 9/11 attack, maximum pri-