

Pakistan army

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general strike throughout Bangladesh for March 27 as a mark of protest against heavy firing upon the civilian population in Saidpur, Rangpur and Joydevpur.

"Only way out is to accept Awami League's demands", read a statement issued by Sheikh Mujib.

In a press conference in Dhaka, ZA Bhutto said that the quantum of autonomy sought by the Awami League was something which could be termed as "more than autonomy".

"It was bordering on sovereignty," Bhutto said.

At 1:00am on March 26, troops from 22nd Beluch Regiment headed out as ordered and attacked Pilkhana EPR. Even though there were 18 Bangladeshi guards, they were powerless in the face of such atrocities.

As soon as Pilkhana was attacked, entire Dhaka, including Rajarbagh, Dhaka University and Shankhari Bazar, came under attacks.

Throughout the night, this massacre continued: women were raped, houses burned and looted and countless people killed.

By midnight of March 25, Dhaka was literally burning; especially the Hindu dominated eastern part of the city. Although the violence focused on the provincial capital, Dhaka, the process of ethnic elimination was also carried out all around Bangladesh.

Hindu areas all over Bangladesh suffered heavy blows.

After midnight, one group of Pakistani occupation forces came across a barricade in Shukrabaad near Bangabandhu's residence. Breaking the barriers, they reached his house and kept firing shots until they captured him at 1:30am on March 26 and took him to the Sher-e-Bangla military office premises.

Source: Liberation War Museum and Bangladesh Genocide Archive

Tribute with

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Anwar Hossain Kalu, commander of the freedom fighters in the upazila, said, "We are all humbled by his gesture."

"Not only the 33 freedom fighters of the union, but war heroes from different parts of the upazila and beyond come to visit my tea stall," said 58 year-old Ali.

"One day, about three years ago, a group of 48 freedom fighters of the upazila came to my tea stall at a time. It was such an honour for me to serve them," he reminisced.

"The tea stall runs quite well; the income from the stall is enough to support us, even the education of our three children," said Ajufa Begum, his wife.

"We locals are very fond of him. It is his warm mentality that draws us," said Shafiqul Islam Shofi, chairman of Birtara Union Parishad.

Ershad slams govt

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at the city's Suhrawardy Udyan yesterday.

The United National Alliance, formed in May 2017 and comprised of 58 political parties, counting mainly on name-only Islamist parties, organised the rally to drum up public support ahead of the upcoming parliamentary election.

JP's yesterday's rally coincided with the former military dictator's takeover 34 years ago.

Before Ershad came to the dais, he held the hand of his wife Raushan Ershad, also the leader of the opposition, as she requested him to come beside her at the end of her speech.

The JP chief at that time sang the first two lines of his party's anthem -- "Notun Bangladesh gorbo mora, notun kore aaj sopoth nilam [We will build a new Bangladesh, we have taken the oath afresh]" -- holding the hand of Raushan, also the senior co-chair of JP.

Leaders and activists also sang the party's anthem amid clapping and celebrated the cordial moment between Ershad and his wife.

Later the chairman of JP, which has one minister and two state ministers in the Sheikh Hasina-led cabinet, said the two big political parties failed to deliver in the last 25 to 30 years when his party was not in power.

Portraying a sorry state of the country in terms of deterioration of law and order and good governance, Ershad said harrowing tales of murders, rapes and child killings are hitting the newspapers.

"There is no peace anywhere in the country except Dhaka. There is no security of public life. Money was looted from the banks and stock market. Corruption is everywhere," Ershad said, adding, "We will ensure good governance, punishment of the corrupt and peace in every union and village if we come to power."

Pointing to the gathering, Ershad claimed it proved that his party has gained strength to go to power.

On the polls-time government, he said, "The polls-time cabinet will be formed comprising those political parties having representation in the current parliament only to carry out routine work. The Election Commission will remain neutral and they will conduct the polls."

Earlier on January 31, the premier in parliament outlined a framework of the next election-time government that would be smaller in size with limited jurisdiction and would carry out only routine work. The PM also rejected the BNP's demand for an election-time supportive government

terming it "unconstitutional".

At the end of his speech yesterday, Ershad raised an 18-point programme including introducing provincial government, amending the electoral system, curbing corruption, banning hartal, ensuring gas supply throughout the country and upgrading the education system.

He said JP would implement the 18-point programme if his party came to power.

In her speech, Raushan said they would not become the ladder for any party to help them go to power.

"Today's huge rally proves that Jatiya Party is a strong party. Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman has liberated the country and Ershad has given people the taste of freedom. People now want a change. Jatiya Party will have to come to power for that," she said.

Senior leaders of JP and UNA also spoke at the rally.

NY man

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the verdict "will bring some closure to the family and many friends of the two men killed."

Morel, of Brooklyn, was convicted following a nearly three-week-long trial. Jurors deliberated for about a day and found Morel guilty of one count of first-degree murder, two counts of second-degree murder and one count of second-degree criminal possession of a weapon.

He faces life in prison without the possibility of parole when he is sentenced April 18.

Some in New York City's Muslim community claimed the attack on the two Bangladeshi immigrants a hate crime, but prosecutors said the killer's motive was unclear.

Afaf Nasher, the executive director of the New York chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, released a statement on behalf of the victims' families expressing gratitude for the conviction.

"Maulana and Thara came to this country in search of a better life, instead they found Mr. Morel's hatred," the statement said. "Nothing can ever replace what Mr. Morel took from us, but this verdict helps show that this city will never accept this sort of heartbreaking violence."

Prosecutors said Morel approached 55-year-old Akonjee and 64-year-old Uddin from behind as they left the Al-Furqan Jame mosque and shot them both in the head. The victims were rushed to a hospital, where they died.

Clinic holds

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well and the clinic authorities advised Abdul to take his newborn to M Abdur Rahim Medical College Hospital. He then hired an ambulance and rushed there. Abdul stayed alongside his baby where she was being treated, while Mukta remained in Modern Clinic.

The doctors declared the baby dead at around 12:30am on Thursday.

"The doctors of M Abdur Rahim Medical College Hospital were furious and asking who conducted the surgery and said the treatment was wrong," said the father quoting the doctors from Dinajpur.

After burying his baby early Thursday, Abdul returned home while Mukta was being treated at the clinic.

On Friday morning, Abdul went to the clinic and was handed Mukta's release order, but the clinic staff prevented him from seeing her and demanded Tk 8,500 in fees for the C-section.

"They did not even allow me to go to my wife," said Abdul.

Abdul could not arrange the money to pay the fees and so Mukta was held at the clinic for 15 hours after being given the release order.

Unable to do anything, he shared his plight with locals near the clinic that evening and they immediately informed police.

By the time the police arrived at the clinic, all the staff members including the doctor had fled.

Police rescued Mukta and sent her and Shahed home, Akkas Ali, officer-in-charge of Birganj Police Station said.

The Daily Star tried to reach the clinic staff members, nurses and Sadekul Islam for their comment, but could not reach them over the phone.

South Africa let me down, says Mugabe

AFP, Harare

Former Zimbabwean president Robert Mugabe says South Africa should have sent troops instead of a team of negotiators to prevent his ouster by the military last year.

Mugabe said his regional neighbours betrayed him "in a sense", in an interview with the privately-owned Zimbabwe Independent newspaper and other regional and international media.

FB lost \$58b after

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Cambridge Analytica, which worked on US President Donald Trump's election campaign, has been accused of illegally mining 50 million Facebook users' data and using it to target potential voters.

The row has sparked a major crisis for Facebook, prompting investigations on both sides of the Atlantic and sending its share price plunging amid fears of additional regulation that could affect its business model.

Zuckerberg on Wednesday, five days after the news broke out, issued the public apology, admitting there had been a "major breach of trust".

But the apology did not stop investors from selling shares in Facebook, with many wondering just how bad the damage would be for the social network.

The breach was called a "light bulb" moment for users, spawning the social media trend #deletefacebook.

With all the negative headlines, shares in the social media company fell from \$176.80 on Monday to around \$159.30 by Friday night.

Hargreaves Lansdown senior analyst Laith Khalaf said the week had been a "damaging episode" in Facebook's history.

"One of the secrets of Facebook's success has been that the more people who use Facebook, the more integral it becomes to its customers. Unfortunately for Facebook, the same dynamic cuts in the opposite direction if it loses a meaningful number of users as a result of this scandal."

Advertising firm M&C Saatchi's founding director David Kershaw said the revelations that a 2014 Facebook quiz essentially harvested data from users and their connected friends without consent have led to a backlash from advertisers.

"Clients have come to the point, quite rightly, where enough is enough," Kershaw said.

Advertisers Mozilla and Commerzbank on Wednesday suspended ads on the social media platform.

On Friday tech entrepreneur Elon Musk had the official Facebook pages for his companies Telsa and Space X deleted, reported Reuters.

"Make no mistake Facebook is an amazing medium from the advertiser's point of view because of the accuracy of its targeting - which comes from data. But I think those large companies are very nervous to be associated with a medium where the data is

being abused, particularly in a political context," Kershaw said.

Kershaw told the BBC any change in Facebook's data protection policy was more likely to come from the threat of a withdrawal of "hard money from advertisers rather than consumers running hashtag [campaigns] on Twitter," referring to the #DeleteFacebook and #BoycottFacebook hashtags that have become popular.

It will take some time before it becomes clear if the advertising industry's dissatisfaction with Facebook leads to them actually pulling their money out of the social network, or whether the howls of condemnation amount to mere posturing from a group of concerned clients.

Fresh allegations also emerged Friday night about Cambridge Analytica's involvement in the 2016 Brexit referendum campaign, reported AFP.

Brittany Kaiser, CA's business development director until two weeks ago, revealed it conducted data research for Leave.EU, one of the leading campaign groups, via the UK Independence Party (UKIP), according to The Guardian.

Technology writer Kate Bevan said the week's events have woken Facebook's users up to the fact that the platform's games, quizzes and apps could harvest their data for more serious intents.

"This week feels to me like a real light bulb moment where people are understanding that it's not just clicking 'like' on Facebook, it's giving your data away."

The sentiment was echoed by the European Union's commissioner for justice, consumers and gender equality Vera Jourova who said the Cambridge Analytica allegations had been "a huge wake-up call" for Facebook users about the demand for their data.

"The tiger has gotten out of the cage".

Two college

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into the vehicle. It left the area immediately.

"They kept interrogating me in the microbus. At one point, they gave me Tk 200 and left me near Dasuria of Pabna," Bazrul told reporters.

He could not say anything further.

A general diary was being filed by the relatives of Shafiq, the OC said, adding that they were investigating the matter and trying to rescue Shafiq.

A war built on falsehood

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lie ultimately appears to be the truth in public mind. Bush and his administration had taken the same route of planting the idea of Saddam's WMD in the public mind to persuade the Senate and the Congress to accede to invade Iraq.

The Centre for Public Integrity has shown that Bush and seven of his administration's top brass including vice president Dick Cheney, national security adviser Condoleezza Rice and defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld made at least 935 false statements in two years following the 9/11 attack on the Twin Towers.

On at least 532 occasions, Bush, these three officials along with secretary of state Colin Powell, deputy defence secretary Paul Wolfowitz and two White House press secretaries specifically claimed that Saddam had WMD and links to Al-Qaeda.

Bush himself made 232 false claims on WMD and 28 false statements on Al-Qaeda link. Some of his statements were so assertive that these led people to believe such authoritative voices cannot be false.

Powel made the second highest numbers of false statements. About WMD, he made 244 false statements and about Al-Qaeda, he made 10 false statements.

White House press secretary during the invasion, Scott McClellan, in a memoir in 2008 wrote that in the fall of 2002, Bush and his White House were engaging in a "carefully orchestrated campaign to shift and manipulate sources of public approval to our advantage."

For example, on August 28, 2002, Dick Cheney declared at the national convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars: "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, against our allies, and against us."

In September 2002, Bush, in his weekly radio address, said: "The Iraqi regime possesses biological and chemical weapons, is rebuilding the facilities to make more."

Then he referred to the infamous sexed-up British report 45-minutes to doom and said, "According to the British government, (Iraq) could launch a biological or chemical attack in as little as 45 minutes after the order is given."

Soon after the war was over, the

Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, in June 2003, began a formal review of US intelligence on Iraq's WMD, its ties with terrorist groups and Saddam's threat to stability in the region.

It went through 65,000 pages of intelligence assessment and source reporting on WMD and interviewed more than 200 individuals including senior intelligence officials, defence officials, diplomats and former UN inspectors.

In conclusion, the committee said

Democratic senator Jay Rockefeller, went a step further to tell reporters a year later: "We in Congress would not have authorised that war, we would not have authorised that war with 75 votes, if we knew what we know now."

Republican senator Pat Roberts who headed the committee said in 2004, "In the end what the president and the Congress used to send the country to war was information that was provided by the intelligence community and that information was flawed. Today we know these assessments were wrong."

coincidence demonstrates that "the Bush administration and the Tony Blair government began acting in concert to build support for an invasion of Iraq two to three months earlier than previously understood."

Declassified Pentagon documents demonstrate that the CIA white paper was modified in ways that conformed to the desires of the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy and his office, in much the same way that British documents indicate that country's white paper was changed to conform to the

cally that there was a high level source in Saddam's government that was saying, 'We don't have WMD,' " Johnson said. "George Tenet's hands are just as bloody as everybody else in this administration in helping gin up what was an unfounded case for war."

The aforementioned "high level source" was no other than the Iraqi foreign minister Naji Sabri.

In 2007, Johnson and five other CIA senior officials issued an open letter that said: "CIA field operatives produced solid intelligence in September 2002 that stated clearly there was no stockpile of any kind of WMD in Iraq. This intelligence was ignored and later misused."

Tenet, however, as a reward for his producing lies for the White House, later received the Presidential Medal of Freedom from George Bush.

The National Security Archives also makes it clear that there were two streams of data flowing into the CIA office -- one from reliable sources like Iraqi foreign minister who worked as a spy and Iraqi scientists who said there was no WMD, and the other from unreliable sources and sources with self-interest such as Iraqi exiles and fabricated documents that said Saddam had a deal with Niger to buy uranium for his nuclear programme. As it transpires now, US intelligence used information from the second kind of unreliable sources than the more reliable sources like scientists and Sabri.

CIA, on the other hand, was under pressure of and closely watched by the White House to include fake information on Saddam. For example, vice president Dick Cheney and his most senior aide made multiple visits to CIA to question analysts on WMD and al-Qaeda links.

There were also a lot of assumptions involved in intelligence assessment -- assumptions that Saddam was hiding his WMD programme which is why nobody could find his weapons. Such blind assumptions also shaped intelligence on Iraq.

The National Security Archive after reviewing declassified documents said in 2008 that Cheney questioned his CIA briefers aggressively, "pressing them to the wall when he saw intelligence from other agencies that portrayed a more somber picture than that in CIA's reporting."

He sent briefers back for more information and when the CIA came back

with same kind of information, Cheney would become aggressive on CIA's rejection of claims that one of the 9/11 terrorists had met with Iraqi intelligence officers in Prague.

"On a number of occasions, Cheney sent his chief of staff, I. Lewis Libby, to CIA headquarters to follow up on his concerns. Mr. Cheney went there himself, not just once but on almost a dozen occasions," the National Security Archive mentioned.

Defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld's Pentagon office worked closely with Dick Cheney's office to gather claims from Dubious Iraqi sources about WMD and pressed the intelligence agencies to include them in their reports.

"Under Paul Wolfowitz, the Deputy Secretary of Defense, and the undersecretary for policy, Douglas Feith, the Pentagon formed a special group to review reports on Saddam's links to Al Qaeda. This unit, the Policy Counterterrorism Evaluation Group (PCTEG) has been represented by Feith as merely charged with assembling a briefing on terrorism, but its real function was to bring additional pressure to bear on the CIA," the national archive reveals.

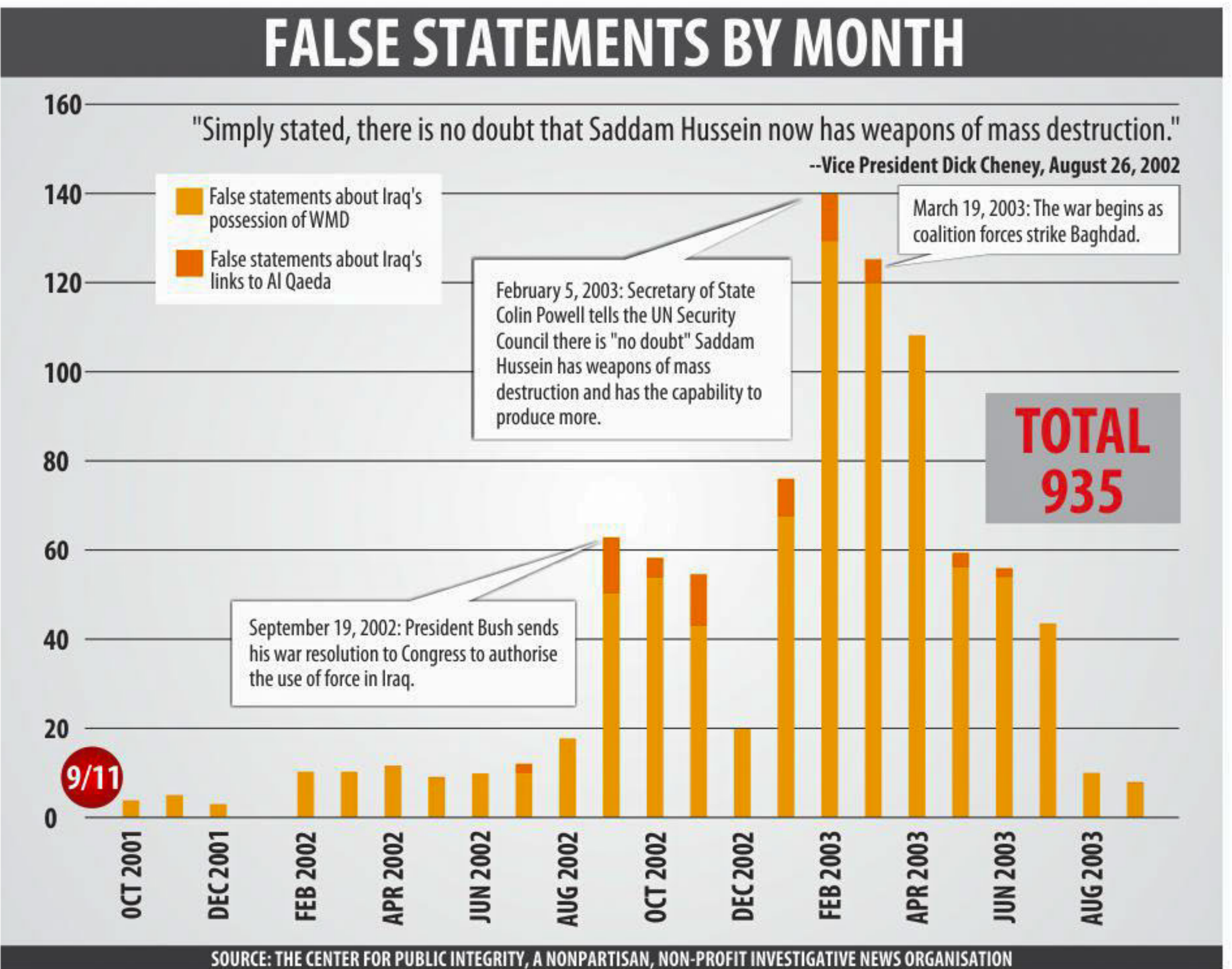
What we have talked about so far is direct and visible manipulation of intelligence. There had been behind the scene operation as well to tailor reports to the White House's desire. These include firing of CIA officials who refused to clear texts in officials' speeches that contained unsubstantiated extreme allegations against different countries.

Such operation continued when the Iraq invasion was in full preparation and aimed at offices which played a central role in producing Iraq intelligence.

The Bureau of Intelligence and Research at the Department of State, the National Intelligence Council (NIC) and the Weapons Intelligence, Proliferation and Arms Control (WINPAC) center at CIA were the main targets of such intimidation.

"Analysts working on Iraq intelligence could not be blamed for concluding that their own careers might be in jeopardy if they supplied answers other than what the Bush administration wanted to hear," the National Security Archive said.

Not only did the White House manipulate intelligence report, it also tried to manipulate investigation into intelligence failure after the war.



most of the intelligence claims of WMD were false. They were "either overstated, or were not supported by the underlying intelligence reporting."

"The assessment that Iraq 'is reconstituting its nuclear program' was not supported by the intelligence provided to the Committee," the report said.

Claims of Iraq's chemical weapon programme were also false. Moreover, the intelligence agencies did not properly brief the policymakers about the weaknesses of the claims.

The committee's vice chairman,

In fact, just as in Britain Downing Street sexed up the documents, so did the White House in America. The UK released its infamous doctored "45-minute dossier" in September 2002 and just a month later in October, CIA released its white paper on Iraqi WMD programmes. Both these reports were used to sway the public opinion in favour of Iraq invasion.

The timing of the CIA's draft white paper coincides with the British government's dossier on Iraqi WMD. The National Security Archive feels this

desires of the Blair government, the Archive maintained.

CIA director of that time, George Tenet, had later said intelligence was under pressure from the Bush administration to skew reports.

But an ex-CIA intelligence officer Larry Johnson, in an interview with CNN in 2007, said, although Tenet knew intelligence about WMD "was a problem," he still went along with the Bush administration's message to the American people that Iraq was a threat.

"In fall of 2002, he was told specif-