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TELEVISION PROGRAM TO "CBS NEWS' FACE THE NATION. "**

CBS News

FACE THE NATION

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GUESTS: DAN BARTLETT
White House Communications Director

JOE LOCKHART
Senior Adviser to Kerry-Edwards 2004

THOMAS FRIEDMAN
The New York Times

MODERATOR: BOB SCHIEFFER - CBS News

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FACE THE NATION - CBS NEWS
202-457-4481

BOB SCHIEFFER, host:

Today on FACE THE NATION, the presidential race tightens and The New York Times charges that US nuclear experts doubted Saddam Hussein was trying to build nuclear weapons as administration officials were arguing just the opposite in public.

Senator John Kerry's performance in last week's debate has helped him get back into the race. Polls show that both candidates are close to even now. Will this race be decided by the coming debates?

And did the Bush administration ignore US nuclear experts to build its case against Iraq? We'll ask the advisers to both candidates. For President Bush, White House communications director Dan Bartlett, for Senator Kerry, Joe Lockhart.

Then we'll talk with foreign affairs columnist for The New York Times Tom Friedman.

I'll have a final word on 50 years of FACE THE NATION. But first, the 2004 presidential race.

Announcer: FACE THE NATION with CBS News chief Washington correspondent Bob Schieffer. And now from CBS News in Washington, Bob Schieffer.

SCHIEFFER: And good morning again. We're delighted that White House communications director Dan Bartlett is here in the studio with us this morning. Sitting beside him, from the Kerry-Edwards campaign, senior adviser Joe Lockhart.

Gentlemen, thank you for coming.

Let's get right to this story that's in The New York Times this morning that must run 10,000 to 12,000 words. It takes up three full pages inside The New York Times and the gist of it is, Mr. Bartlett, that in 2002, the administration totally ignored the advice from its own nuclear scientists about whether or not Saddam Hussein was making nuclear weapons. In fact, in 2002, September, Condoleezza Rice said of some of the equipment, aluminum tubes that Saddam Hussein was buying, that they were 'only really suited for nuclear weapons programs.' And then she went on to say, on television, on CNN, 'We don't want the smoking gun to be a mushroom cloud.'

Now as she was saying that, we are told that a year before that, foremost nuclear experts, the Times says, seriously doubted that the tubes were for nuclear weapons and that is according, the Times says, to four officials at the Central Intelligence Agency and two senior administration officials. I guess I would ask you first, did the president know of this debate that was apparently going on because that debate wasn't reflected in public comment from the administration?

Mr. DAN BARTLETT (White House Communications Director): Well, the way the intelligence is gathered and assessments are made by the intelligence community is that all different opinions, all different points of view are brought together and the director of the CIA, who's also the director of all intelligence, makes an assessment. They took in these accounts. They took in all the accounts. We had to take in to the history of Saddam Hussein. Remember 10 years ago when they made assessments about his nuclear capabilities, they found out that they were far underestimating his capabilities and how close he was to developing a nuclear weapon.

And in this particular case, when you're talking about the aluminum tubes, Secretary Powell, before he went before the United Nations and gave his presentation, looked very hard at these very issues, made sure that the Central Intelligence Agency was comfortable, that the overall intelligence community was comfortable with the conclusions. And, despite the fact that some had different agreement--different opinions about the technical use of these, it was the director of the Central Intelligence and others who said, 'We believe this to be the case.' So at every step of the way, comments by Dr. Rice, by Secretary Powell were cleared by the intelligence community.

And it's important to know that because...

SCHIEFFER: Well...

Mr. BARTLETT: ...there are a lot of different people who make opinions but the bottom line is that a conclusion has to be drawn by the intelligence agency. In this case they did that. And in fact, when Secretary Powell went before the United Nations Security Council, he even said on the aluminum tubes--he said there's differences of opinion, but we believe this to be the case and...

SCHIEFFER: But if I could just interrupt you.

Mr. BARTLETT: Sure.

SCHIEFFER: Condoleezza Rice was saying this is a smoking gun. And clearly, at that point, there was argument. There was disagreement. Now you're saying that the administration came to a conclusion.

Mr. BARTLETT: The intelligence community.

SCHIEFFER: But we saw...

Mr. BARTLETT: The intelligence community came to a conclusion. It's not just the aluminum tubes. He kept his scientists in place. His ambitions were known and found through intelligence. It was a complete picture to say, 'This is what Saddam Hussein was going after. This is what he was wanting to do.' And it was the conclusion of the intelligence community, despite disagreements about the tubes, that he was seeking...

SCHIEFFER: Do...

Mr. BARTLETT: ...to acquire a nuclear weapon. He made that very clear.

SCHIEFFER: Did the president know of this disagreement that was going on ab--these different points of view that were being expressed?

Mr. BARTLETT: When the president was briefed on the National Intelligence Estimate that discussed these issues, in that intelligence estimate, there were difference of opinions that were given. But what he relies upon is the intelligence community coming to him and saying, 'These are what we found.' And that was represented in Secretary Powell's presentation to the Security Council. It was vetted very carefully, and that was what we believed at the time.

SCHIEFFER: All right. Mr. Lockhart, do you have any reaction to this report in The Times this morning?

Mr. JOE LOCKHART (Senior Adviser to Kerry-Edwards 2004): Well, I think it raises some serious questions, and I think they're questions that should be answered now. I mean, the problem with the president's desire to look at the intelligence review is he set it up in a way where we don't get the answers till after the election. The public has a right to know. Secretary Powell went up and based most of his assessment on Saddam's nuclear threat on these aluminum tubes to the United Nations. That he did in public. Condoleezza Rice raised the specter of a mushroom cloud. That is sobering to all Americans. Vice President Cheney said this was a fact. He didn't say there was debate. He said this was a fact. And I think it fits into an overall pattern of--you know, when you look at all the different rationales, some two dozen that the president used, as far as going to war with Iraq, it fits into a pattern where their candidness--whether they're really leveling with us is open to question. And I think the president needs to come forward, tell us what he knew, tell us about what he knew about the debate and how he came to this assessment in order to make the decisions he made.

Mr. BARTLETT: Well, it's interesting we talk about conclusions that are drawn. Senator Kerry drew very similar conclusions as the president did in the--before the war, calling Saddam Hussein an 'imminent threat,' saying he was a part of the war on terror. So at the same time the president was making conclusions about the intelligence, Senator Kerry was making very similar conclusions about the intelligence.

Mr. LOCKHART: But let me make one correction on what the president said during the debate, and this is something that is widely known in Washington. United States senators don't have access to the same intelligence that the president does. The United States Senate does oversight of intelligence. The president directs the intelligence community. So it's not like it's some other group of people reaching a conclusion. He's the boss.

Mr. BARTLETT: Right. Well, as people will remember and what was being reported at the time, before Congress made their vote to authorize war, every senator had access to the information: the National Intelligence Estimate, others. Senator Kerry was a member of that Intelligence Committee himself, at time--throughout his career. He understands how it works. He understood that Saddam Hussein was a threat. It was only when the heat got on in his Democratic primary, when Howard Dean took the lead, that he decided to change his position and become an anti-war candidate.

Mr. LOCKHART: And I think...

Mr. BARTLETT: And that's...

Mr. LOCKHART: The second part of this pattern is whenever it comes to a decision the president made and whether he was straight or not, they try to make this about Senator Kerry. This is about what the president knew, what he withheld from the American public, if anything. These are questions he should answer now.

SCHIEFFER: All right. Let's talk about the debate last week. It does appear that Senator Kerry is back in the game, at least if--what we read in the polls. There's a Newsweek poll out today that shows Senator Kerry now in a very slight lead. I would point out that's in the margin of error. But in any case, he was behind going into it. Mr. Bartlett, most accounts are that Senator Kerry had a very good night and that maybe the president was a little off his game. Was he?

Mr. BARTLETT: Well, first of all, he was--Senator Kerry was never out of the game. Everybody has said from the start that this was going to be a very close race and that, as we got closer to the--Election Day, that it was going to narrow. Everybody--we were saying that; the Kerry campaign was saying that. On Thursday night, we saw what we had said--described, was Senator Kerry has been somebody who's debated all his life and is a good debater. But there's a difference between having style and having rhetorical points. But what we also saw on that night was a debate conversion. I mean, he literally is a walking contradiction when it comes to the issue of Iraq. And President Bush, I think, effectively pointed out the differences they have in this campaign. And when you look at the polls and you look at who trusts--who the American people trust when it comes to winning the war on terror, pursuing the enemy in Iraq and prevailing in Iraq, they still trust President Bush.

So style points aside, President Bush made clear differences on the issues that matter to the American people. We have two more debates. These issues will continue to be debated. But at the end of the day, we're very confident and we're--that we will prevail on November 2nd, because the American people trust this president in a time of war to prevail in this war on terror.

Mr. LOCKHART: Well, let me make two points. One is an essential challenge for a challenger is to stand next to the president and look like you can make the decisions that a commander in chief makes--the president--that you have the judgment, you have the experience, you have the strength. John Kerry did that Thursday night. That's a very important thing.

The second thing--and I think there is an explanation for the president's weak performance in the debate. You know, for the last six months, the Republicans have been very effective in creating this caricature of John Kerry and running against this caricature, creating these straw men. John Kerry wants to do this, John Kerry wants to do that. None of it's true. And George Bush went in and expected to debate the person that, you know, \$100 million in negative advertising had created. And John Kerry showed up. And he didn't know how to handle that. And it was a guy who was clear, who was consistent, and the president didn't have an answer.

SCHIEFFER: Well, Senator Kerry was very clear and consistent on criticism of what the president has done wrong, but I must say he was less detailed and, in fact, was almost vague about what ought to be done from here on in. And by that, I mean, that he said that we should have a summit.

Mr. LOCKHART: Right.

SCHIEFFER: And I would ask you, Joe Lockhart, why does Senator Kerry think he'd be more successful in getting other countries to come and help the United States in Iraq than the president has been? I don't see anybody out there waiting to volunteer. There's a lot of people out there who want to hold our coat, give us advice, but I don't see any countries out there willing to send troops into Iraq.

Mr. LOCKHART: Well, it would be hard to be less successful than this president. This president pushed our allies away, decided to go it alone. We're now bearing 90 percent of the cost, 90 percent of the casualties in Iraq. So it would be hard to be less successful. I think John Kerry looks forward to the next debate to laying out very specifically what he would do differently, but one is bring our allies along. The other is, 'Let's do real training.' Eighteen

months have gone by since Baghdad fell and we have 20,000 Iraqi troops trained. That's unacceptable. These people need to start protecting themselves in order to get to a position where we're not there permanently. Why Defense Secretary Rumsfeld said it was 200,000, why the president in the debate said it's 100,000, the fact is it's only 20,000? That's not acceptable. These things need to be done. It needs to be a priority and that's what John Kerry will do.

Mr. BARTLETT: Well, I think he said something pretty interesting. Unfortunately, his talking points don't match the reality of what's happening on the ground. We've seen the headlines in the papers and on TV in the last 48 hours is a joint operation in Samarra to go after the terrorists and the insurgents in which two Iraqi battalions are performing quite well in restoring order to that part of the country, showing and demonstrating that the president's strategy is actually working on the ground.

But to back up a bit and I think this is critically important. Joe and I and the senator and the president are going to have differences of opinion on tactics: What's going to happen here? What's going to happen there? Was this tactic the right tactic? But when it comes to your core convictions, when it comes to what you believe, what we have seen with Senator Kerry and he demonstrated in the debate on Thursday night is that he's willing to change these core convictions when things get tough. He's for the war when things were good, and then when things get hard, he's not for the war. And I think what you saw in there is when Jim Lehrer asked him, Senator Kerry said the war was a mistake. So the logical response by Jim Lehrer was, 'Well, are these soldiers dying for a mistake?' And he said, 'No.' A complete contradiction.

So this is why it's very difficult for the public to know where Senator Kerry stands on these issues. And the first part about having a successful plan is to believe in the mission--Senator Kerry said this was the wrong war at the wrong place at the wrong time. How can somebody prevail on a mission he doesn't believe in, and I think that's a critical difference. President Bush believes in the mission, believes in our troops, believes in our coalition and believes in the Iraqi people and that's why we're going to prevail.

SCHIEFFER: A quick response and then I'll go back to it, Dan.

Mr. LOCKHART: Very quickly. President Bush, Mr. Bartlett, want us to believe that things are going well in Iraq. Things are--the CIA, the own report of the president, says that the best possible future right now is continued violence. The worse is out-right civil war. John Kerry has been very clear and very consistent. What hasn't been consistent is what we've gotten from the president. I mean, they've created this sort of straw man that tries to this down. We've been clear and consistent and 70 percent of the public believes John Kerry in this debate and the public doesn't get fooled.

SCHIEFFER: Is it going well?

Mr. BARTLETT: Well, as the president said Thursday night, 'You can be realistic about what's happening on the ground and be optimistic about its future.' Those aren't competing values. And the bottom line is that this is difficult work. Nobody has said otherwise, and President Bush is determined to see it through. Again, he's not going to fluctuate. He's not going to change his positions based on headlines. He has belief in the strategy. He has belief in the commanders on the ground. He has belief in the coalition. And he has belief in the Iraqi people. And it's vital for our security interest to get it right. President Bush is the one to prevail, not Senator Kerry.

SCHIEFFER: Gentlemen, thank you very much.

Mr. BARTLETT: Thank you.

SCHIEFFER: Very enlightening this morning.

In a minute, we're going to talk to Tom Friedman of The New York Times.

(Announcements)

SCHIEFFER: And we're back now with Tom Friedman, the foreign affairs columnist at The New York Times. He's been away for the last three weeks--or three months, I should say, finishing up a new book. It'll soon be out and is called "The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the 21st Century."

Tom, always good to have you back and to hear your voice.

Mr. THOMAS FRIEDMAN (The New York Times): Thanks very much.

SCHIEFFER: And I must say, you came back with a scorching column this morning in The New York Times, and I'll just quote from the bottom of it. You say about Iraq, "We are in trouble in Iraq. We have to immediately get the Democratic and Republican politics out of this policy and start honestly reassessing what is the maximum we can still achieve there and what every American is going to have to do to make it happen." What is the maximum we can achieve?

Mr. FRIEDMAN: Well, Bob, we don't even know that yet, for a very simple reason. What we're involved in right now in Iraq is finishing the war. Yes, 17 months after Saddam's statue came down we are still this morning trying to finish the war, in Samarra, in the Sunni triangle.

Once, and if, we can finish the war, and then organize elections in January with the kind of parliamentary elections that they're proposing for Iraq, and we get an Iraqi government established and some kind of Iraqi army, then we're going to have two more hurdles that we've got to pass. We're either going to have a small civil war in Iraq or a big civil war. This is the honest analysis. How would we have a small civil war? If we get an elected Iraqi government, and an army established, then that government and that army will take on the remnants of Saddam's regime. I think there's a good chance that a legitimate Iraqi government and army could do that. That's the small civil war.

If we can't get that government and army on its feet and if we even get it on its feet but it doesn't hold together under the pressure, then we're going to have a large civil war, and we're going to have to fight our way out of it. We will be part of that civil war. That's our real situation in Iraq today.

SCHIEFFER: What do you think the chances are that we can get that small civil war and what does a large civil war mean? Does that mean the country may wind up split in three different countries?

Mr. FRIEDMAN: Well, one of the things I've really never understood about the administration's approach to Iraq is that, if I had undertaken this war, and my whole

historical legacy rode on winning this war, I would be emptying out every American Army base from Korea, OK, to Europe, to San Diego. I would be putting as many troops as I could on the ground to win that war and establish the kind of security you need which is the basis for everything, the basis for getting the economy back and the basis for getting elections going. This kind of parsimonious approach to deploying troops there I've just never understood. Why would you gamble? Why would you have just a little less? Why would you have just enough to lose rather than overwhelming force on the ground? That's, I think, going to be the first issue that we're really going to face here.

Secondly, you know, if we do get enough troops there, we're down to the really core question. This has always been my question and the question of others about Iraq, Bob. Is there a country there? Are there just Iraqis, you know, of Kurdish, Shiite and Sunni origin, or is there really an Iraqi nationality? We're going to find out. But that is what everything rides on. What we're trying to do is establish enough security there to find out, to let Iraqis decide are we one nation, or are we three nations?

SCHIEFFER: So what you're saying is that we may be looking at something like a Yugoslavia there, which wasn't really a country, but Tito held it together with the iron fist, and once he went, it really came apart.

Mr. FRIEDMAN: What we're gonna find out, Bob, in the next six to nine months is whether we have liberated a country or uncorked a civil war.

SCHIEFFER: And what did you mean in your column today when you said we've got to get the Republican and the Democratic politics out of there?

Mr. FRIEDMAN: Well, I believe that the weakness of this administration's approach from the very beginning is that when it--every time they had a choice between doing the really right thing in Iraq and choosing their own ideology of politics, they've opted for their own ideology in politics. You can't fight a war on taxes and a war on terrorism at the same time. It's too expensive, OK.

Look at the energy question, Bob. We so desperately need a different approach to energy to that part of the world. We have got to reduce our consumption and global consumption of energy, bring the oil price down so these countries will be forced to reform their politics. We can't come to Saudi Arabia and say, 'We think you should reform because it would be good for you.' People don't change when you tell them they should. They change when you tell--when they tell themselves that they must.

SCHIEFFER: Does John Kerry have a realistic approach?

Mr. FRIEDMAN: I'm afraid the plan that Kerry has laid out really isn't something that you could take to the bank right now. The idea of bringing in more allies is wonderful, but there are no allies that are gonna come and replace American troops on the ground. The only legitimate criticism, I think, of Bush right now in terms of the tactics is actually from the right, not from the left. It's to say to the president, 'You didn't do enough. We need more troops, more spending, more money.' But there is no bunch of allies just waiting for a nicer American president to come to our rescue.

SCHIEFFER: Tom Friedman, we always learn something when you come to visit with us.

Mr. FRIEDMAN: Thanks so much.

SCHIEFFER: Back with a final word in just a minute.

(Announcements)

SCHIEFFER: As you know by now, next month FACE THE NATION celebrates its 50th anniversary. And to mark the occasion, I've written a book. It's called--What else?--"Face the Nation." We've included a DVD, which will take you back to some of the most memorable broadcasts of the past half-century. And we begin with that first one on November 7th, 1954, when the Senate was about to debate whether one of its most controversial members should be punished.

Announcer: (From November 7, 1954) Today on the CBS public affairs program FACE THE NATION, through the eyes of this television camera, Senator Joseph R. McCarthy, Republican of Wisconsin, with correspondents across the country questioning him.

SCHIEFFER: McCarthy was in a defiant mood and accused the senators of organizing a lynching bee.

(Excerpt from November 7, 1954)

Senator JOSEPH R. McCARTHY (Republican, Wisconsin): I've been so busy being investigated and preparing for this lynch bee starting tomorrow that I haven't had an opportunity...

Unidentified Man: You call a meeting with the United States Senate a lynch bee?

(End of excerpt)

SCHIEFFER: McCarthy never caught a Communist but FACE THE NATION went to Moscow and snared a big one, the first ever TV interview with Nikita Khrushchev.

In a Havana studio crowded with armed guards, FACE THE NATION aired the first interview after he came to power with Fidel Castro, who said he has not a Communist.

(Excerpt from previous program)

SCHIEFFER: Very good.

Mr. FIDEL CASTRO: I'm not Communist, Bob. But I will never be...

(End of excerpt)

SCHIEFFER: Like virtually everything else Castro said, that proved to be a lie.

Through Vietnam and the civil rights movement to 9/11 and then the war in Iraq, opinion makers, leaders, politicians have come to FACE THE NATION to tell their stories and FACE THE NATION has become more than a venerable television program. It has become a window on history.

And for all of you who have watched for so many years, we thank you, and I think you'll enjoy this book, but then, I am biased. I wrote it.

That's it for us. We'll see you next week right here on FACE THE NATION.