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SUNDAY, JUNE 12, 2005

## Downing Street Memo: The Best Breakdown Of What It Means

by Michael in New York on [6/12/2005 12:10:00 PM](#)

(Thanks to Sarah B. for directing us to this.) I'm not a big fan of just pointing people towards an article. I like to link two or three articles together to make a larger point, or analyze why I think an article missed the important issue or otherwise provide value-added blogging. But some articles just have to be read.

So read Mark Danner's "The Secret Way To War" for the New York Review of Books. Unlike the Washington Post story on A-1 linked to below (way to stay on the ball guys, with an article that could have been written a month ago), this is an excellent analysis of what it means, why it's important and the real purpose of going to the UN (which both Bush and Blair offered up as "evidence" the DSM got it wrong). And though Bush implied the timing of the DSM's release was political, neither he nor Blair questioned its authenticity. One of many highlights:

At this point in the meeting Prime Minister Tony Blair weighed in. He had heard his foreign minister's suggestion about drafting an ultimatum demanding that Saddam let back in the United Nations inspectors. Such an ultimatum could be politically critical, said Blair—but only if the Iraqi leader turned it down:

The Prime Minister said that it would make a big difference politically and legally if Saddam refused to allow in the UN inspectors. Regime change and WMD were linked in the sense that it was the regime that was producing the WMD.... If the political context were right, people would support regime change. The two key issues were whether the military plan worked and whether we had the political strategy to give the military plan the space to work.

Here the inspectors were introduced, but as a means to create the missing *casus belli*. If the UN could be made to agree on an ultimatum that Saddam accept inspectors, and if Saddam then refused to accept them, the Americans and the British would be well on their way to having a legal justification to go to war (the attorney general's third alternative of UN Security Council authorization).

Thus, ***the idea of UN inspectors was introduced not as a means to avoid war, as President Bush repeatedly assured Americans, but as a means to make war possible.***



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