

Handout 2 - From 9/11 to Invading Iraq

In response to the September 11th attacks, the U.S. launched military airstrikes in Afghanistan on October 7, 2001. Known as Operation Enduring Freedom, the mission was to oust Al-Qaeda terrorist groups from the country and remove the Taliban-led Afghanistan government from power. Al-Qaeda had claimed responsibility for the attacks in the U.S. and the Taliban was an Islamic fundamentalist political organization that had gained control of the Af-



Photo: U.S. Department of Defense

ghanistan government and provided safe harbor for Al-Qaeda within the nation's borders. A large majority of Americans supported the U.S. government's military response. The war with Afghanistan has become the longest war in United States history, spanning 19 years. It continues to this day.

By September 2002, the Taliban government in Afghanistan had been driven from power and Al-Qaeda had been displaced in the region. U.S. President George W. Bush's administration then moved to invade Iraq and overthrow the government led by President Saddam Hussein. On the unsubstantiated premise that the Iraqi regime had a clandestine relationship with Al-Qaeda and was stockpiling various types of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), the Bush administration vociferously argued that the Iraqi government was an imminent threat to U.S. national security, American allies in the region, and peace around the world. This argument, and the evidence to support it, was heavily criticized by numerous organizations and foreign governments, including the U.S. Congress' 9/11 Commission, the United Nations, and many U.S. allies abroad. Additionally, no WMD were ever found in Iraq.