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## today's papers A summary of what's in the major U.S. newspapers.

**Sixteen Little Words**  
By Benjamin Healy  
Posted Saturday, July 12, 2003, at 5:35 AM PT

The [New York Times](#), [Washington Post](#), and [Los Angeles Times](#) all lead with CIA Director George Tenet's assumption of responsibility for the unsubstantiated claim in President Bush's State of the Union address that Iraq had attempted to acquire uranium from Africa for use in developing nuclear weapons. Tenet's *mea culpa* (which the *WP* says had been in the works for a couple of days and which seems to be but one component of a carefully orchestrated effort aimed at bringing days of escalating finger-pointing to a head), was released as [a written statement](#) a few hours after President Bush first focused blame on the CIA, telling reporters that his speech had been "cleared by the intelligence services" before he delivered it.

National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice echoed the president in more direct language, telling reporters aboard *Air Force One* that any deletions requested by the CIA would have been made before the speech was given. Though Tenet did not acknowledge personally reviewing the speech himself, he wrote in his statement of the uranium charge, "These 16 words should never have been included in the text written for the president."

The *NYT* offers the fullest accounting of events leading up to the speech, although the precise sequence of the editorial back-and-forth between the CIA and the White House remains somewhat unclear. All of the papers reveal that references to the central piece of intel the claim was based on—that Saddam was seeking uranium from Niger—had been previously scrubbed by the CIA from a speech Bush delivered Oct. 7. And by Jan. 31, three days after the State of the Union, Secretary of State Colin Powell had already decided to omit the charge from his Feb. 5 speech at the United Nations, after his staff decided that it was "not credible."

Despite Tenet's admission, Rice averred that President Bush "absolutely" remains confident in the CIA director, and the *LAT* quotes a CIA spokesman who says he has heard "no discussions" about the possibility of Tenet's resignation.

The *WP* fronts a new [poll](#) that found that President Bush's overall approval rating has fallen nine points over the last 18 days to 59 percent. Fifty-eight percent of respondents said they approved of Bush's handling of the situation in Iraq, while 52 percent deemed the level of American casualties "unacceptable," the first time a majority has said so, according to the paper.

The *NYT* fronts intelligence agencies' worries that a handful of [historically significant dates](#) in the week to come could spark a surge in attacks on U.S. forces in Iraq. The anniversaries of the 1958 overthrow of the British-backed monarchy, Saddam Hussein's 1979 seizure of control, and the 1968 coup that brought the Baath Party to power will all fall within the next five days.

The *WP* fronts an impressionistic [update](#) on intensified efforts to track down Saddam in an area northwest of Baghdad where members of the deposed Iraqi leader's circle are thought to be regrouping. U.S. officials report that while phone intercepts and a recent spike in human intelligence have been guiding the search, three-dimensional results remain somewhat at large. Many of the farms and homes searched, however, have turned up piles of snapshots of people posing with Saddam.

The papers all note the [U.S. military's decision](#) to further reduce its presence in the town of Falluja, the site of some of the most intense clashes between Iraqi civilians and American troops in recent weeks. As the U.S. pulls back from 22 locations around the city, patrol duties will increasingly fall to the newly trained Iraqi police force, some of whose members recently threatened to quit unless the Americans lowered their profile in town. An armed Iraqi quick-reaction force will also help to keep the peace, a group described in the *WP* by an American officer as "a cross between meter maids and a SWAT team."


The *NYT* fronts a [report](#) finding that nearly 90 percent of the 2.8 million jobs lost in the last 28 months have come from the manufacturing sector, a trend which has disproportionately affected African-Americans. The national unemployment rate has risen 2.2 percentage points to 6.4 percent over the same period, up 3.5 percent among blacks, and 1.7 percent among whites.

The *NYT* fronts, and the *LAT* and the *WP* go inside with comments from the chairman of the investigative board looking into the loss of the space shuttle *Columbia*, who said in a press conference that "systemic failure" by NASA management to evaluate problems was [as much to blame](#) for the disaster as the piece of foam that struck the orbiter's wing on takeoff.

The papers keep up with President Bush's travels across Africa, going inside with his praise for Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni's successful efforts to reduce the [spread of HIV](#) in his country through promoting abstinence and condom use. Although Uganda's infection rate has fallen in recent years, the *WP* notes, the situation is still dire: Only 4,500 of the 1.5 million people infected have access to retroviral drugs.


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The *WP* fronts and the *LAT* reefer word that a [blue-ribbon presidential commission](#) charged with revamping the Title IX rules regarding gender equity in school sports has wrapped up its inquiry, deciding that the guidelines should remain essentially unchanged after all.

The papers' business sections all mention a [bankruptcy reorganization](#) plan filed by Enron, which will parcel out \$12 billion in assets among 20,000 of the fallen energy giant's remaining creditors. Amounts disbursed will vary, but the largest number of those owed will receive about 14 cents on the dollar for their trouble.

And, speaking of inflated books, the *NYT*'s "Arts & Ideas" section runs an [intriguing piece](#) about the architect and theorist Christopher Alexander, who after 27 years has just completed his latest work, a four-volume treatise outlining the "first principles" that underpin life and architecture alike. The finished product, unprepossessingly titled *The Nature of Order: An Essay on the Art of Building and the Nature of the Universe*, weighs in at a lean 2,150 pages.

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