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## Bush to pick panel for WMD inquiry

### Sources say UK to hold its own inquiry

From John King  
CNN Washington Bureau

**WASHINGTON (CNN) --President Bush said Monday he would appoint a presidential commission to review U.S. intelligence on the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.**

Responding to political pressure, Bush told reporters at a Cabinet meeting he wanted to look at prewar intelligence and the findings of the Iraq Survey Group -- the U.S. team hunting for weapons programs in the country.

"We also want to look at our war against proliferation and weapons of mass destruction in a broader context," Bush said. "So I'm putting together an independent, bipartisan commission to analyze where we stand, what we can do better as we fight this war against terror."

Britain, a strong U.S. ally in the war on Iraq, will conduct its own probe into the apparently flawed intelligence on Iraqi WMD, European news agencies reported Monday.

Under mounting pressure, Prime Minister Tony Blair formally announced the inquiry to a parliamentary committee Tuesday. ([Full story](#))

A senior Bush administration official said Monday that the president will name the members of the commission. The official said the president had consulted some "appropriate" members of Congress about the appointments.

The panel also will be charged with exploring the quality of intelligence gathering relating to the challenges of weapons proliferation and "outlaw regimes" that preside over closed societies, administration sources said.

"[The president] wants it to be more broad than Iraq," an official said. "The president's view is there are a number of challenges for our intelligence community on the issues of weapons of mass destruction, and we need to look at the broader issue of closed societies and outlaw regimes and our capabilities to gather necessary intelligence."

Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle, D-South Dakota, questioned the president's

description of the commission.

"I think that it is important for us to have an independent commission, as I've said now on several occasions, but it truly should be independent," Daschle said.

"It sounds as if the president is going to call for one where he gets to appoint each of the members and dictate the design and ultimately the circumstances under which they do their work."

Bush told reporters he wanted to talk to David Kay, the former head of the Iraq Survey Group, before moving forward with the commission.

The two men lunched at the White House later Monday, said White House spokesman Scott McClellan, calling the meeting "constructive."

Kay told a Senate panel last week that his group hasn't found weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and said he didn't believe significant stockpiles of banned weapons would be found.

"It turns out we were all wrong, and that is most disturbing," Kay said at a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing during which he called for an independent probe of the apparent intelligence failure.

Bush announced the decision Monday after a reporter asked whether Americans were "owed an explanation about the intelligence failure before the election."

The president said, "First of all, I want to know all the facts. ... We know he [Saddam Hussein] was a danger. ... He slaughtered thousands of people, imprisoned people. What we don't know yet is what we thought and what the Iraqi Survey Group has found."

McClellan also defended the decision to go to war but said a broad look at U.S. intelligence was required to address the threat of weapons of mass destruction.

"We got it right that Saddam Hussein was a grave and gathering threat," McClellan said. "We got it right that he had the intention and capability. He was a threat. We got it right, and it was the right decision to remove him from power."

McClellan would not give a timetable for the commission to issue its findings.

"It is important that the commission's work is done in a way where it doesn't become embroiled in partisan politics," he said.

The president is expected to sign an executive order creating the new commission.

Senior administration officials said earlier that Bush would set a deadline of early to mid-2005 in an effort to defuse the controversy as an election-year issue.

Many previous panels -- including the one looking into possible intelligence lapses leading up to the September 11, 2001, attacks -- have been appointed through a compromise in which the president names some members and congressional leaders pick others.

Initially, the White House rejected calls from Kay and lawmakers for an independent review of prewar intelligence on Iraq. But with political pressure mounting, Vice President Dick Cheney began making calls last week to key members of Congress to explore potential compromises.

Bush began considering such a review last week and made his final decision over the weekend, the senior official said.

White House staff members have been instructed to review procedures for staffing and sharing information with the panel -- an issue that has caused conflict with the 9/11 commission.

"The [new] group will have access to everything it needs," a senior official said Sunday. "We are working to find a way to make it work properly."

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