After the Persian Gulf War, Saddam Hussein was watched closely by many world leaders because of his past violence.

*Complete each sentence using your own words.*

**1. WMDs are**

**2. President Bush**

**3. Germany and France thought**

**4. On March 17, 2003**

**5. Some countries thought**

**6. By early April**

**7. Iraq has a democratic government now, but**

**8. By December, 2011**

In the early 2000s, it was rumored that Hussein was developing WMDs (weapons of mass destruction). These are weapons that can kill large numbers of people and include chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons.

Because of pressure from the rest of the world, Hussein allowed inspectors from the United Nations to search for these weapons. Some inspectors however, insisted that Iraq was not fully cooperating with the inspections.

As a result, U.S. and British officials threatened to disarm Iraq by force. President George W. Bush declared Hussein a great threat in an age of increased terrorism. In the following months, the UN debated on how to handle Iraq’s weapons inspections. Some countries like Germany and France, thought that the UN should just keep looking for weapons, but other countries believed that the Iraqis were hiding something.

No WMDs for Terrorists

On March 17, 2003 President Bush gave Saddam Hussein and his top aides 48 hours to leave the country or face a military strike. The Iraqi leader refused so on March 19th, a coalition led by the U.S. and Britain launched air strikes in and around Baghdad. The next day, coalition forces invaded Iraq through Kuwait.  
 Many countries thought that the invasion of Iraq was not justified. Some thought that attacking a nation because they might do bad things in the future was not appropriate. Britain, however, argued that they would not wait for Hussein to strike first.

By early April, Baghdad had fallen and the regime of Saddam Hussein had collapsed after less than four weeks of fighting. But, no WMDs were ever found.

Despite the coalition victory, much work remained in Iraq. U.S. forces remained in Iraq to oversee the rebuilding of the nation and keep peace between the country’s religious and ethnic groups. Eventually, Iraq held elections and now has a democratic government. Violence continues, though, between Iraq’s Sunnis, Shias, and Kurds, threatening to undermine the new democracy.

Though Saddam Hussein went missing during Operation Iraqi Freedom, he was eventually captured and the new government of Iraq executed him for his crimes in December 2006.

In August 2010, the U.S. declared an end to combat operations in Iraq. American forces were completely withdrawn from the country by December 2011.

**August 2010**

**Early 2000s**

Timeline of Important Events

**Early April, 2003**

**Many countries disagreed about**

**December 2006**

**March 19, 2003**