

Australia Dossier by Lydia Cherry

Iraqi diplomat expelled in frameup

The dirty tricks of the Australian intelligence service may be a paradigm for anti-Arab operations elsewhere.

The wartime campaign to label all Arabs as terrorists and to expel Iraqi diplomats from countries around the world went into high gear at the end of January, and Australia was no exception. There is widespread Australian concern about the divisions that are being created within the country, as a result of Prime Minister Bob Hawke's decision to embrace the Anglo-American war.

High-level Iraqi diplomats had not been perceived as terrorists prior to a Jan. 19 explosion in Manila, the Philippines, in which one Iraqi was killed. A subsequent investigation, the press claims, showed a high level of diplomatic involvement, which "shattered the earlier impression," according to the *Washington Post*. Within a few days, Britain and Australia kicked out Iraqi ambassadors and other diplomats for alleged involvement in terrorist incidents.

In the case of the expulsion of Australia's most senior diplomat on Jan. 26, it was a rigged deck, which leads one to wonder about the validity of the "investigations" elsewhere.

The Australian Security Intelligence Organization (ASIO)—run by the CIA, Britain's MI-6, with a dash of Israel's Mossad—"played a major role" in the Iraqi diplomat's expulsion, the *Herald Sun* of Jan. 28 acknowledged. The paper noted that ASIO had been monitoring the Iraqi embassy in Canberra closely and was instrumental in the move. However, there are strong indications that the intelligence agency was doing more than that.

The envoy, Saad Omran, was given 72 hours to leave the country, after Australian police uncovered a plot by Hamid Taoube, a Lebanese-born Muslim, to take a bomb aboard an America-bound plane and hijack it to Iraq. Police prosecutor Sgt. Raff Del Vecchio told the court that Taoube had telephoned the Iraqi embassy in Canberra and offered his services. It was this call that resulted in the expulsion.

Taoube, who circulated on the fringes of the Arab community in Sydney, is known to have been under psychiatric care. In court it was revealed that he had discussed hijacking a plane with "an undercover policeman." Taoube then set up the Iraqi embassy by calling in and describing his intentions on the tapped line. Is it possible that Taoube was a programmed *agent provocateur*, and the embassy set up by Australia's CIA? One wonders if a similar scenario may have been behind the incident in the Philippines.

Sources in Manila had a few things to say about the investigation in the Philippines that followed the Jan. 19 incident, in which a bomb exploded prematurely, killing one Iraqi man and wounding another. The incident resulted in the expulsion of Iraqi Consul General Muwafak al-Ani on Jan. 24. Although the investigations resulted in the claim that Iraqi embassy officials and Iraqi nationals in Manila were involved in the bombing, those individuals were not given any chance to prove their innocence. Military intelligence agents said that al-Ani was in the car that drove the two

Iraqis to the scene of the explosion, the U.S.-owned Thomas Jefferson Library in Makati. Denials by the consul general were blacked out by the press.

Our sources note that a large Muslim organization in Mindanao denounced the shabby legal treatment, but that, too, was given no press coverage.

The wartime anti-Arab propaganda, which has been accompanied by fire-bombings of Arab cultural facilities, has created a climate in which some Arab-Australians are afraid to leave their homes. The *Herald Sun* on Jan. 31 quoted a leader from that community, Joe Wakim, noting that people who had contributed to Australian society for decades have now been forced to "resume a life underground," to ensure their safety.

MPs from Prime Minister Bob Hawke's ruling Labor Party and several MPs from the opposition Australian Democrats think that Australia will suffer if it does not break ranks with the United States and Britain and get out of the Gulf. "We must get a majority within the Labor Party saying that they disagree with Mr. Hawke's policy in the Gulf," MP George Crawford explained, in an interview with *The Age* published Jan. 29. Crawford noted that Labor Party MPs from the Australian state of Victoria have formed a group called Labor for Peace in the Middle East.

Leader of the Australian Democrats, Sen. Janet Powell, and seven other senators from her party argued in a parliamentary debate the third week of January that the "death and destruction now being wrought was avoidable."

"It is possible at any time for our commitment in this obscene war to be reversed, and for the Australian government to begin working for an immediate ceasefire and a just resolution of the conflict," Powell said.