

Al-Qaeda Dossier Comes From New Yorker Magazine

by Michele Steinberg

Colin Powell's testimony at the UN on Feb. 5 has unleashed a flood of well-aimed critiques, that counter, in great detail, and with great competence, the dossier presented against Iraq by the Bush Administration. War is not an option, say these reports, many of which are prepared by intelligence and military veterans, who are trying to avert another Vietnam War disaster.

On Feb. 13, Ray McGovern, a CIA analyst for 27 years and a co-founder of Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS), wrote a commentary entitled "CIA Director Caves In." He said, "Wanted: gas masks for CIA's analysis directorate. Not because of Code Orange, but to stanch the stench and give analysts' arms some rest. They have been holding their noses ever since CIA Director George Tenet's testimony to the Senate Select Committee on Feb. 11. Tenet caved in to political pressure to establish a link between Iraq and al-Qaeda. . . . In briefing the Senators, Tenet demonstrated high tolerance for cooking intelligence to the recipe of policy."

McGovern compares this cooking of intelligence to the Vietnam-era spinning of intelligence that led to "filling the entire left half of the Vietnam Memorial in Washington with the names of those killed or missing in action."

Tenet was just following the example set by Powell at the UN on Feb. 5. But the dossier is quickly shredding.

No Hard Evidence

A report entitled "Still No Hard Evidence of Link Between Hussein and Al-Qaeda," issued by the Fourth Freedom Forum in Washington in mid-February, goes to the heart of the Powell dossier: the figure of Abu Musaab al-Zarqawi. Powell claimed, that al-Zarqawi masterminded the assassination of U.S. diplomat Lawrence Foley in Amman, Jordan in October 2002; and that al-Zarqawi is a collaborator of Osama bin Laden who created a terror training camp in Iraq and runs a terrorist cell in Baghdad. With all these allegations, ask the authors, why is al-Zarqawi *not listed* in the FBI's current roster of "most wanted terrorists"?

The report also says, citing a Feb. 7 story in Agence France-Presse, that "Powell displayed a diagram linking Zarqawi to two Islamic militants previously arrested in Paris," but French intelligence sources said that " 'interrogations of the suspects did not establish a link between the two men and al-Zarqawi. . . . Al-Zarqawi's name never once appeared in our different investigations.' " They also note, "A senior Ger-

man official told the *New York Times* . . . 'as of yet we have seen no indication of a direct link between Zarqawi and Baghdad.' " The German intelligence services had spent 18 months rounding up the group that Zarqawi created, but it is *not* al-Qaeda.

The Fourth Freedom report also challenged the claim that the Islamist Ansar al-Islam group in northern Iraq is run by Baghdad. On that point, the most extensive refutation of the al-Zarqawi-Ansar-Baghdad tale came from the International Crisis Group, headquartered in Brussels, and also based in Washington, which issued a lengthy report from Brussels and Amman.

Both organizations site the case of Najmeddin Faraj Ahmad, known as "Mullah Krekar," now living in Norway, who founded the Ansar al-Islam group. Krekar was arrested in the Netherlands in December 2002, held for nearly a month, interrogated by the FBI, and released in mid-January. Krekar told the BBC on Jan. 31 that his group aims to bring down the Saddam Hussein regime "and replace it with an Islamic regime." An Arab source with extensive knowledge of Islamic fundamentalism told *EIR* that Krekar had also revealed that during the interrogations, the United States had offered to pay him a large amount of money to *say* that he is supported by Saddam Hussein. When Krekar refused, the United States offered him money to work against Saddam Hussein. He refused again. *EIR's* source asked, "If this group is so dangerous, why did the U.S. release its leader?"

Then, on Feb. 11, another key assertion by Powell—that al-Qaeda, through Ansar al-Islam, has an active base in northern Iraq, producing chemical weapons—was shown to be false. Powell had shown satellite photos, pinpointing the location of the Ansar al-Islam camp. But three days later, 20 reporters from various publications, including the *New York Times*, visited the site in northern Iraq, and found *nothing*. According to the *Los Angeles Times*, the reporters saw "a dilapidated collection of shacks without indoor plumbing or the electrical capacity to produce the weapons" that Powell had described.

So, from what hat did the Bush Administration pull its Baghdad/Ansar/al-Qaeda rabbit? From all indications, the major, if not sole source of the "connectos" is *New Yorker* magazine—available on newsstands for \$3.95, quite a saving for the U.S. government. Author Jeffrey Goldberg—a freelancer and favorite of the neo-conservative chicken-hawks, who once worked for the *New York Times Magazine* and is the former New York bureau chief for *Forward*, the national Jewish newspaper—has all the details, published in two articles in February 2002 and 2003. Goldberg indicates one of his main sources is Barham Alih, the so-called prime minister of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, which is fighting a war against Ansar. Alih, however, doesn't have a country, unless the United States wins the war against Iraq and gives him Kurdistan. Like Iraqi exile and Presidential wannabe Ahmed Chalabi, Alih might say just about anything to get the war in which he is promised a piece of the pie.