

Committee Finds No Saddam-al-Qaeda Link

Following are excerpts from the conclusions of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence report dealing with allegations of Iraqi links to al-Qaeda. This section of the SSCI report was approved by a 14:1 vote in the Committee.

1. "Saddam Hussein was distrustful of al-Qa'ida, and viewed Islamic extremists as a threat to his regime, refusing all requests from al-Qa'ida to provide material or operational support."

2. "Postwar findings have identified only one meeting between representatives of al-Qa'ida and Saddam Hussein's regime. . . . Postwar findings have identified two occasions . . . in which Saddam Hussein rebuffed meeting requests from an al-Qa'ida operative. The Intelligence Community has not found evidence of any other meetings between al-Qa'ida and Iraq." The one meeting identified, was a 1995 meeting between an Iraqi Intelligence (IIS) officer and bin Laden in Sudan; the Iraqi officer was instructed to "only listen" and not to negotiate or promise anything to bin Laden, and Saddam Hussein immediately rejected all of bin Laden's requests.

3. Regarding allegations that Saddam Hussein provided CBW (chemical-biological weapons) training to al-Qaeda: "No postwar information has been found that indicated CBW training occurred and the detainee who provided key prewar reporting about this training recanted his claims after the war." The cited detainee was Ibn al-Shaykh al-Libi, who says he made up false claims under abusive treatment and threats of torture.

4. "Postwar findings support the April 2002 DIA assessment that there was no credible reporting on al-Qa'ida training at Salman Pak or anywhere else in Iraq. . . . [T]he DIA told the Committee that it has no 'credible reports that non-Iraqis were trained to conduct or support transnational terrorist operations at Salman Pak after 1991.' "

5. While post-war information supports the Intelligence Community's assessment that al-Zarqawi, using an alias, was in Baghdad in 2002, "Postwar information indicates that Saddam Hussein attempted, unsuccessfully, to locate and capture al-Zarqawi and that the regime did not have a relationship with, harbor, or turn a blind eye toward Zarqawi." Post-war information indicates that Saddam Hussein "considered al-Zarqawi an outlaw."

6. "Ansar al-Islam operated in Kurdish-controlled northeastern Iraq, an area that Baghdad had not controlled since 1991. . . . Postwar information reveals that Baghdad viewed Ansar al-Islam as a threat to the regime and that the IIS at-

tempted to collect intelligence on the group."

7. "Postwar information supports prewar Intelligence Community assessments that there was no credible information that Iraq was complicit in the September 11 attacks or any other al-Qa'ida strike." No meeting in Prague between Iraqi intelligence officer Ahmed al-Ani and Muhammed Atta occurred. "Postwar debriefings of al-Ani indicate he had never seen nor heard of Atta until after September 11, 2001, when Atta's face appeared in the news."

8. "No postwar information indicates that Iraq intended to use al-Qa'ida or any other terrorist group to strike the United States homeland before or during Operation Iraqi Freedom" (the U.S. invasion).

9. "While document exploitation continues, additional reviews of documents recovered in Iraq are unlikely to provide additional information that would contradict the Committee's finding or conclusions."

Documentation

'A Devastating Indictment'

Sen. Carl Levin (D-Mich.) told the U.S. Senate that the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence's partial "Phase II" report "is a devastating indictment of the Bush Administration's unrelenting, and deceptive attempts to convince the American people that Saddam Hussein was linked with al-Qaeda. . . ." Twice, during his 28-minute floor statement of Sept. 8, Levin used the term "indictment" when referring to the Bush Administration's misuse of intelligence. Levin took the floor after an opening statement by SSCI Ranking Member **Jay Rockefeller** (D-W.V.) who detailed how the Republican chairman of the committee, Sen. Pat Roberts (R-Kan.) had shut down the Intelligence Committee, rather than allow an investigation into the White House role in spreading, or organizing fabricated intelligence.

The SSCI report that was released to the public is unclassified, and was substantially *rewritten* to protect the White House. Levin charged that a massive "coverup" is underway, and that the public must see the full report:

"The intelligence assessments contained in the Intelligence Committee's unclassified report are an indictment of the administration's unrelenting and misleading attempts to link Saddam Hussein to 9/11. But portions of the report which the intelligence community leaders have determined to keep from public view provide some of the most damaging evidence of this administration's falsehoods and distortions.

". . . Among what remains classified, and therefore covered up, includes deeply disturbing information. Much of the information redacted from the public report does not jeopard-



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Senators Jay Rockefeller (D-W.Va.) and Carl Levin (D-Mich.) denounced the Bush Administration's deceptive claims that Saddam Hussein was linked with al-Qaeda.

dize any intelligence source or method but serves effectively to cover up certain highly offensive activities.”

Levin continued: “While the battle is waged” to declassify the full report for the public, “every Senator should read the classified version of the report.”

The combined Rockefeller/Levin floor statement, releasing the report, has been poorly reported to the American public, with very few quotes. To get a flavor of what occurred on the Senate floor, we are providing some key excerpts.

The White House's 'Deceptive Strategy'

Senator Rockefeller opened the discussion with an announcement of the release of the SSCI's “Phase II” reports, and their purpose:

“Fundamentally, these reports are about accountability. They are about identifying the mistakes that led us to war and making sure those mistakes never happen again, so far as we can do so.

“Let me share some important excerpts from the report which reflect both my own views and the views of all of my Democratic colleagues on the committee.

“The committee's investigation into pre-war intelligence on Iraq has revealed that the Bush Administration's case for war in Iraq was fundamentally misleading. . . .

“Most disturbingly, the administration, in its zeal to promote public opinion in the United States before toppling Saddam Hussein, pursued a deceptive strategy prior to the war of using intelligence reporting that the intelligence community warned was uncorroborated, unreliable, and, in critical instances, fabricated. . . .

“Some of the false information used to support the invasion of Iraq was provided by the Iraqi National Congress, the

INC. . . .

“The committee also found the July 2002 decision by the National Security Council directing that the renewed funding of the INC contract—the Iraqi National Congress, the Chalabi operation—be put under Pentagon management was ill advised given the counterintelligence concerns of the CIA and warnings of financial mismanagement from the State Department. . . .

“The administration's—this is key—the administration's repeated allegations of the past, present, and future relationship between al-Qaeda and Iraq exploited the deep sense of insecurity among Americans in the immediate aftermath of the Sept. 11 attacks, leading a large majority of Americans to believe, contrary to the intelligence assessments at the time, that Iraq had a role in the 9/11 terrorist attacks [emphasis added].

“The administration sought and succeeded in creating the impression that al-Qaeda and Iraq worked in concert and presented a single unified threat to the United States of America. The committee's investigation revealed something completely different.

“The committee found that there was no credible information that Iraq was complicit or had foreknowledge of the Sept. 11 attacks or any other al-Qaeda strike anywhere. The committee also found that Iraq did not provide chemical or biological weapons training or any material or operational support to al-Qaeda prior to the war.

“Furthermore, no evidence was found of any meeting between al-Qaeda and the Iraq regime before the war, other than a single meeting that took place years earlier in 1995, in fact, in the Sudan. That meeting was at a fairly low level, and that meeting did not lead to any operational cooperation at all.