

## Chalabi Hammers Final Nail: Cheney War Fraud Fully Exposed

by Jeffrey Steinberg

Since the Feb. 20 arrogant boast by Iraqi National Congress head and neo-conservative darling Ahmed Chalabi, about his organization's lying to U.S. agencies to get the invasion of Iraq started, the lid has blown off the criminal disinformation campaign run by Vice President Dick Cheney to get his dirty little war in Iraq. The resulting attacks on the Vice President's office promise the biggest scandal yet in the whole sordid "Cheneygate" affair.

Over 500 American GIs are dead, another 3,000 are wounded, many with life-altering permanent injuries. At minimum, officially, 15,000 Iraqis are dead, along with scores of Italian, Polish, British, Spanish, and other occupation troops. And the whole war was built on a pile of disinformation.

### Beans Are Spilled

Here are the essentials of the story, and how the pieces came together in late February. On Friday, Feb. 20, both the London *Daily Telegraph* and the *Washington Times* published the same article, quoting Ahmed Chalabi admitting, in effect, that his Iraqi National Congress (INC) had funnelled disinformation to the United States, to induce an American invasion and ouster of Saddam Hussein.

The article began with the blunt statement: "An Iraqi leader accused of feeding faulty pre-war intelligence to Washington said his information about Saddam Hussein's weapons—even if discredited—achieved the aim of persuading the United States to topple the dictator." Chalabi himself was quoted gloating, "As far as we're concerned, we've been entirely successful. Our objective has been achieved. That tyrant Saddam is gone, and the Americans are in Baghdad. What was said before is not important." He went one step further, taunting, "The Bush Administration is looking for a scapegoat. We're ready to fall on our swords if [President Bush] wants."

The *Telegraph/Times* article reviewed several examples of disinformation provided by the INC, including the most famous case, that of the alleged Iraqi mobile biological weapons labs, which turned out to be mobile units producing hydrogen for weather balloons. The source of the later-discredited claims was a major in the Iraqi intelligence service, who had been made available to U.S. intelligence agencies by the INC.

"U.S. officials at first found the information credible, and the defector passed a lie-detector test," the story noted. "But in later interviews it became apparent that he was stretching the truth and had been 'coached by the INC.' He failed a second polygraph test and in May 2002, intelligence agencies were warned that the information was unreliable. But analysts missed the warning, and the mobile laboratory story remained firmly established in the catalogue of alleged Iraqi violations until months after the overthrow of Saddam."

The reality is, as Chalabi hinted in his comments offering to "fall on the sword" for Cheney/Bush: The disinformation campaign was "Made in Washington," not in Baghdad, nor in Chalabi's upscale London headquarters. And this can now be proven.

### Pentagon Eyewitness Account

In a discussion with *EIRNS* after Chalabi's outburst, retired Air Force Lt. Col. Karen Kwiatkowski, who served for 10 months in the Near East South Asia (NESA) policy shop at the Pentagon which housed the Office of Special Plans (OSP), described how OSP personnel, including Col. William Brunner—a former military aide to then-Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich—had regularly arranged debriefings of Iraqi defectors, set up through Chalabi and the INC. While CIA and DIA personnel participated in the debriefings, and sent the information to analysts for cross-checking and evaluation, the OSP unit, led by former Cheney Vice Presidential



*This view of Cheney “going, going” was published in Arkansas at about the time the Little Rock, Arkansas NBC-TV station called Presidential candidate Lyndon LaRouche for an interview focussed on his 18-month drive to force Cheney out of office.*

staffer William Luti, funnelled the undigested and unverified information to Cheney’s Chief of Staff, Lewis “Scooter” Libby—as if it were fully-vetted intelligence.

Cheney and Rumsfeld used this faked intelligence, still fresh from the defector sources who now virtually admit that they made it up, to bludgeon President Bush, Secretary of State Powell, and the entire Congress into going to war.

Lt. Col. Kwiatkowski provided her own eyewitness accounts of NESA staff meetings where Luti boasted that he was taking his marching orders directly from “Scooter”—an unprecedented violation of the usually sternly-enforced Pentagon chain of command. Cheney’s office was tasking Luti and OSP to go out and dig up whatever disinformation could be found, to sell the war to the President, the Congress, and a duped American public.

Further tightening the noose around Cheney, in June 2002, a Washington representative of the INC sent a letter to the staff of the Senate Appropriations Committee, identifying Luti, and Cheney’s deputy chief of staff John Hannah, as people who directly received the intelligence generated by the INC, under the Information Collection Program. The Information Collection Program, established under the Iraq Liberation Act of 1998, funnelled millions of dollars to Chalabi and the INC, to provide defectors and other sources of intelligence to the U.S. government respecting goings-on inside Saddam’s Iraq.

The Information Collection Program was launched in January 2001—in the first days of the Bush Presidency, at the point that the neo-conservative apparatus moved, wholesale, into the Pentagon civilian bureaucracy and the Vice President’s office.

But by September 2001, the State Department, which administered the funding of the INC and seven other Iraqi dissident groups under the Iraq Liberation Act, had completed an Inspector General’s audit of the INC, and recommended that its funds be cut off, due to failure to account for how U.S. government funds were being spent. One of the problem areas cited in the audit was the Information Collection Program, which failed to identify sources, or account for payments.

### **Taxpayers’ Funds Still Pay for Disinformation**

The June 2002 INC letter to the Senate Appropriations Committee, citing Hannah and Luti as recipients of raw intelligence flows from the Information Collection Program, pitched for the project to be transferred from the State Department to the Pentagon. In fact, the program was indeed transferred to Pentagon control in August 2002—at precisely the point that the Office of Special Plans was being created out of the Iraq desk at NESA.

So, it was American taxpayers’ money that bankrolled the disinformation scheme.

In fact, the latest Pentagon budget *still* includes between \$3 million and \$4 million in payments to the INC for the Intelligence Collection Program, according to a Knight-Ridder story by Jonathan Landay on Feb. 21. Landay wrote, “The Department of Defense is continuing to pay millions of dollars for information from the former Iraqi opposition group that produced some of the exaggerated and fabricated intelligence President Bush used to argue his case for war.”

According to one source, the renewed funding involves INC personnel being placed in charge of the effort to reconstitute units of Saddam Hussein’s notorious secret police appa-

ratus, the Mukhabarat.

On Feb. 20, a high-level Washington intelligence source further filled out the picture to *EIR*, confirming that the INC-linked defectors had been prepped to provide specific pieces of tailored disinformation, often in the form of bogus “eyewitness” accounts, purporting to identify locations where they had seen canisters of chemical weapons, and other components of Saddam’s phantom WMD programs. These precise pieces of eyewitness information not only gave Luti the “sexed up” intelligence to feed to Cheney et al., to argue for war. It gummed up the “official” intelligence process with bogus information that had to be chased down, and which became part of the data base from which analysts made judgments about Saddam’s weapons.

Senator Carl Levin (D-Mich) reported, over the weekend of Feb. 21-22, what he had recently learned from the CIA: When UN weapons inspectors under Hans Blix and Mohamed ElBaradei went to the sites where American intelligence said Saddam had stockpiled weapons of mass destruction, they found *nothing* at all. How much of that bogus information came from the taxpayer-funded Cheney-Chalabi defectors’ scam?

There is good reason to believe that some of the Congressional investigators are aware of at least a portion of this story. When, last month, Senate intelligence panel leaders Pat Roberts (R-Kans) and Jay Rockefeller (D-W.Va.) reached an agreement to expand the official probe of the pre-war intelligence, three areas that were added to the investigation were: intelligence provided by the INC; the role of the OSP and a second Pentagon neo-con propaganda shop, the Counterterror Evaluations Group (made up, at one time, of David Wurmser and Michael Maloof); and the uses/abuses of intelligence by senior Bush Administration policymakers.

## **DIA Reveals Fraud**

One document that Senate investigators will certainly wish to review is a September 2003 DIA “internal assessment.” That analysis, according to *New York Times* reporter Douglas Jehl, “has concluded that most of the information provided by Iraqi defectors who were made available by the Iraqi National Congress was of little or no value, according to Federal officials briefed on the arrangement.”

Writing in the Sept. 29, 2003 issue of the *Times*, Jehl revealed, “In addition, several Iraqi defectors introduced to American intelligence agents by the exile organization and its leader, Ahmed Chalabi, invented or exaggerated their credentials as people with direct knowledge of the Iraqi government and its suspected unconventional weapons program, the officials said. . . . One Defense Department official said that some of the people were not who they said they were, and that the money for the program could have been better spent.”

A serious probe into this nexus of INC-tutored liars, the OSP, and the Office of Vice President Cheney, *will* bring Dick Cheney down.