

Senate Intelligence Report: No Basis for Cheney's Iraq War

by Jeffrey Steinberg

The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (SSCI) on July 9 released its 551-page Part I report on the pre-Iraq war intelligence fiasco. Contrary to virtually all of the U.S. media coverage of the document, it represents a damning indictment, not of the CIA and the rest of the intelligence community, but of the Bush-Cheney White House, which manipulated the Congress and the American people into a war against Iraq, on the basis of lies.

While the most damning evidence against Vice President Dick Cheney, and the illegal "private" intelligence cell at the Pentagon run by Undersecretary of Defense Douglas Feith and Deputy Undersecretary of Defense William Luti, will be withheld until a later SSCI report is produced *after the November Presidential elections*, the initial report proves that U.S. intelligence community analysts had assembled more than 30,000 pages of documentation, the bulk of which showed that Iraq posed no imminent threat to the United States, U.S. allies, or neighboring countries. Where there were suspicions that Saddam Hussein might possess or aggressively be seeking weapons of mass destruction, the evidence was incomplete, contradicted by other intelligence, or based on source reports from discredited individuals and organizations.

Much of this evidence was either ignored or misrepresented in the infamous Oct. 1, 2002 National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) on Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, a fact the SSCI report documented thoroughly. But more to the point, as Committee Democrats emphasized in their "Additional Views," Bush Administration officials, led by Cheney, were already fully committed to war on Iraq, long before the NIE was even drafted, and repeatedly made public statements that were wild lies, when held up against the massive dossier of analytical reports produced by the intelligence community.

These "Additional Views" by Democrats foreshadow the Part II report, zeroing in on what Committee Vice Chairman Sen. John D. Rockefeller IV (D-W.Va.) labeled a renegade "private intelligence failure" run out of the Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, Douglas Feith, which passed "stovepiped" intelligence to the Vice President, bypassing the intelligence community, and violating the National Security Act of 1947.

At the July 9 press conference releasing the report, Rockefeller singled out Feith, saying that the Committee had already looked into "part of his alleged efforts to run intelligence past

the intelligence community altogether; his relationship with the INC [Iraqi National Congress] and [Ahmed] Chalabi . . . and [whether] he was running a private intelligence failure, which is not lawful."

Assistant Secretary of Defense for Legislative Affairs Powell A. Moore sent an hysterical letter in reply to Rockefeller, demanding, "if you have any evidence supporting the serious charge you floated during your press conference, you provide it to the department," or issue a public apology to Feith. In fact, the Democrats' "Additional Views" itemized Feith's efforts to bypass the intelligence community (see *Documentation*).

On July 13, Rockefeller shot back in response to the Moore letter, reporting that the SSCI is investigating whether "Feith was running a private intelligence operation not authorized in law," explaining that the National Security Act of 1947 requires that all heads of agencies involved in intelligence activities "keep the congressional oversight committees informed. . . . When the Committee finishes its review of these activities, we will be able to determine if, in fact, Undersecretary Feith was running an unauthorized intelligence activity in contravention of this and perhaps other legal requirements."

The Baby-Boomer Syndrome

A retired military intelligence officer, with decades of experience in Southwest Asia, recounted recently that, as a junior Defense Intelligence officer, he had been schooled that a good intelligence analyst goes to work every day prepared to resign, if pressured to "spin" or falsify intelligence. If there is a collective indictment against the intelligence community to be found in the SSCI report, it is the failure of the various intelligence agencies to publicly raise the roof, every time a high Administration official made a public assertion about Iraq's WMD or terrorist links that was either a lie or a gross exaggeration of the best intelligence available.

As Lyndon LaRouche has emphasized, the problem is that the intelligence community, like every other institution of government and civil society, is dominated today by Baby Boomers, who are not willing to "fall on the sword" to defend the truth.

With that universal, generational flaw stated, the overwhelming picture presented in the SSCI document, is that tens of thousands of pages of analytical work, provided by



Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Douglas Feith was responsible for “stovepiping” selected raw intelligence reports to the Vice President, bypassing the intelligence community.



Sen. Jay Rockefeller (D-W.Va.), vice chairman of the Senate committee, drew a furious response from the Pentagon, for his incisive public attack on Doug Feith.

the intelligence community to the Senate panel, *proved* that Iraq posed no threat, and the Bush/Blair invasion of March 2003 was totally unwarranted.

It is LaRouche’s further assessment that senior intelligence analysts, as well as SSCI staffers, aware of the constraints under which they were operating, nevertheless insured that the Part I report, while criticizing the intelligence community, would provide devastating ammunition against the Bush-Cheney Administration, proving that they lied to the American people to get their “dirty little war.”

The NIE

A good deal of the Senate panel report centered on the October 2002 NIE. The intelligence community assessment of the threat of Iraq’s WMD was produced only after pressure from Senate Democrats, who demanded some official assessment of the threat, prior to the Congressional debate and vote on granting President Bush the authority to go to war. No such study had been undertaken by the intelligence community for years, even though Vice President Cheney and other Administration officials had been ranting for months about “proof” of Saddam’s vast arsenal of WMD, his ties to al-Qaeda, and the reconstituting of Saddam’s secret nuclear weapons program, which threatened the world with “nuclear mushroom clouds.”

The NIE was prepared in just three weeks, and did not go through the normal multiple review process. Its principal author, Robert Walpole, is widely described as an ambitious careerist, who would bend to the wishes of the White House, and who was already in the neo-conservative ideological camp.

To get to the bottom of the intelligence community’s assessment of the Saddam WMD threat, the Senate panel staff, according to their report, asked the intelligence community (IC) for all evidence that contradicted the findings of the NIE. As a result, “In early November 2003, the IC wrote to the Committee that it was working to provide the contradictory

intelligence requested by Committee staff. In the same letter, the IC said it had uncovered an additional six volumes of intelligence material that supported the IC’s assessments on Iraq’s WMD programs.” The Committee received an additional 30,000 pages of IC documentation, in response to 100 supplemental requests.

The only data request that was refused to the Committee was the President’s Daily Briefing citations of Iraq’s WMD, which the White House refused to provide. “Without examining these documents,” the Committee report concluded, “the Committee is unable to determine fully whether Intelligence Community judgments were properly disseminated to policy-makers in the executive branch, one of the tasks outlined for review.”

The Committee report found, up and down the line, that the underlying IC analyses disputing the WMD threat and terror links of Saddam Hussein’s regime, were not reflected in the NIE, and certainly not reflected in the statements of top Administration officials.

Unwarranted Conclusions

The SSCI report provides 15 pages of conclusions, based on a comparison of the Oct. 1, 2002 NIE and the 30,000-plus pages of intelligence community analyses. The key overall conclusion was that the underlying intelligence provided no clear case for war:

“Conclusion 1. Most of the major key judgments in the Intelligence Community’s October 2002 National Intelligence Estimate (NIE), *Iraq’s Continuing Programs for Weapons of Mass Destruction*, either overstated, or were not supported by, the underlying intelligence reporting. A series of failures, particularly in analytic trade craft, led to the mischaracterization of the intelligence.

“The major key judgments in the NIE, particularly that Iraq ‘is reconstituting its nuclear program,’ ‘has chemical and biological weapons,’ was developing an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) ‘probably intended to deliver biological warfare agents,’ and that ‘all key aspects—research and development, production, and weaponization—of Iraq’s offensive

biological weapons (BW) program are active and that most elements are larger and more advanced than they were before the Gulf War,' either overstated, or were not supported by, the underlying intelligence reporting provided to the Committee. The assessments regarding Iraq's continued development of prohibited ballistic missiles were reasonable and did accurately describe the underlying intelligence.

"The assessment that Iraq 'is reconstituting its nuclear program' was not supported by the intelligence provided to the Committee. The intelligence reporting did show that Iraq was procuring dual-use equipment that had potential nuclear applications, but all of the equipment had conventional military or industrial applications. In addition, none of the intelligence reporting indicated that the equipment was being procured for suspect nuclear facilities. Intelligence reporting also showed that former Iraqi nuclear scientists continued to work at former nuclear facilities and organizations, but the reporting did not show that this cadre of nuclear personnel had recently been regrouped or enhanced as stated in the NIE, nor did it suggest that they were engaged in work related to a nuclear weapons program.

"The statement in the key judgments of the NIE that 'Baghdad has chemical and biological weapons' overstated both what was known and what intelligence analysts judged about Iraq's chemical and biological weapons holdings. The intelligence reporting did support the conclusion that chemical and biological weapons were within Iraq's technological capability, that Iraq was trying to procure dual-use materials that could have been used to produce these weapons, and that uncertainties existed about whether Iraq had fully destroyed its pre-Gulf War stocks of weapons and precursors. Iraq's efforts to deceive and evade United Nations weapons inspectors and its inability or unwillingness to fully account for pre-Gulf War chemical and biological weapons and precursors could have led analysts to the reasonable conclusion that Iraq may have retained those materials, but intelligence analysts did not have enough information to state with certainty that Iraq 'has' these weapons.

"Similarly, the assessment that 'all key aspects—R and D, production, and weaponization—of Iraq's offensive BW program are active and that most elements are larger and more advanced than they were before the Gulf War' was not supported by the underlying intelligence provided to the Committee. Intelligence showed that Iraq was renovating or expanding facilities that had been associated with Iraq's past BW program and was engaged in research that had BW applications, but few reports suggested specifically that the activity was related to BW. Intelligence reports did indicate that Iraq may have had a mobile biological weapons program, but most of the reporting was from a single human intelligence (HUMINT) source to whom the Intelligence Community (IC) never had direct access. It was reasonable for intelligence analysts to be concerned about the potential weapons applications of Iraq's dual use activities and capabilities. The intelligence reporting did not substantiate an assessment that all aspects

of Iraq's BW program 'are' larger and more advanced than before the Gulf War, however.

"The key judgment in the NIE that Iraq was developing a UAV 'probably intended to deliver biological warfare agents' also overstated what the intelligence reporting indicated about the mission of Iraq's small UAVs. Numerous intelligence reports confirmed that Iraq was developing a small UAV program [BLACKED OUT], but none of the reports provided to the Committee said that Iraq intended to use the small UAVs to deliver chemical or biological weapons. The Air Force footnote, which stated that biological weapons delivery was a possible mission for the small UAVs, though other missions were more likely, more accurately reflected the body of intelligence reporting."

A Fallacy of Composition

Senators Jay Rockefeller, Carl Levin (D-Mich.), and Richard Durbin (D-Ill.) jointly wrote "Additional Views" at the end of the SSCI report, which summarized the incompleteness and fallacies of the panel's report:

"Regrettably, the report paints an incomplete picture of what occurred during this period of time. . . . The central issue of how intelligence on Iraq was used or misused by Administration officials in public statements and reports was relegated to the second phase of the Committee's investigation, along with other issues related to the intelligence activities of Pentagon policy officials, pre-war intelligence assessments about postwar Iraq, and the role played by the Iraqi National Congress, led by Ahmed Chalabi, which claims to have passed 'raw intelligence' and defector information directly to the Pentagon and the Office of the Vice President.

"As a result," the Senators concluded, "the Committee's phase one report fails to fully explain the environment of intense pressure in which Intelligence Community officials were asked to render judgments on matters relating to Iraq when policy officials had already forcefully stated their own conclusions in public."

Documentation

'Additional Views' of Democratic Senators

Here are excerpts from the "Additional Views of Vice Chairman John D. Rockefeller IV, Senator Carl Levin, and Senator Richard Durbin," appended to the report of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence.

When the analytical judgments of the Intelligence Community did not conform to the more conclusive and dire Adminis-

tration view on Iraqi links to al-Qaeda, and specifically the notion that Iraq may have been involved in the September terrorist plot, policy makers within the Pentagon denigrated the Intelligence Community's analysis and sought to trump it by circumventing the CIA and briefing their own analysis directly to the White House.

Beginning in early 2002, a group of individuals under the direction of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Douglas Feith were tasked by him to look at intelligence information related to all terrorist groups, the links between them, and the roles of state sponsors. This effort eventually focused on al-Qaeda's ties to Iraq and the CIA's reporting on the subject, including its June 2002 report, "Iraq and al-Qaida: Interpreting a Murky Relationship."

Even though the CIA's June 2002 report was "purposefully aggressive" in seeking to draw connections between Iraq and al-Qaeda, the intelligence analysis did not find the relationship sought by Pentagon policy officials. One of the individuals working for the self-named "Iraqi intelligence cell" at the Pentagon stated [that] the June report, "... should be read for content only—and CIA's interpretation ought to be ignored." This criticism of the CIA's analysis was sent by Under Secretary for Policy Feith to Deputy Secretary Paul Wolfowitz and Secretary Rumsfeld.

This critique turned into an alternative analysis of the relationship between Iraq and al-Qaeda. The analysis was briefed to Secretary Rumsfeld and Deputy Secretary Wolfowitz in early August 2002. Prominent in the briefing was a slide entitled "Fundamental Problems with How Intelligence Community is Assessing Information." It faulted the Intelligence Community for requiring "juridical evidence" for findings. It also criticized the Intelligence Community for "consistent underestimation" of efforts by Iraq and al-Qaeda to hide their relationship, contending that "absence of evidence is not evidence of absence."

On August 15, 2002, Pentagon analysts presented the alternative analysis to Director Tenet. In attendance at the briefing were Under Secretary Feith and the Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency. But the briefing given to Director Tenet was different than the one presented to Secretary Rumsfeld days earlier. Gone from the terrorism briefing was the highly-critical slide, "Fundamental Problems with How Intelligence Community is Assessing Information." The Pentagon wanted to avoid challenging directly the Intelligence Community while it sought to shape the Iraq terrorism analysis nearing completion.

When asked about his reactions about the Pentagon's alternative terrorism analysis, Director Tenet told the Committee that he "didn't think much of it" and that he "... didn't see anything that broke any new ground for me." Still, according to one staffer's account of the briefing, Director Tenet took the unusual action of agreeing to postpone the publication of the CIA's assessment of Iraq's links to terrorism, entitled "Iraqi Support for Terrorism," until Intelligence Community analysts could meet with Pentagon policy officials and "at-

tempt to come to some consensus."

The meeting between analysts and the Pentagon briefers took place on August 20, 2002. In a memorandum submitted to the Committee by the two Pentagon staffers who attended the meeting, they stated "We raised numerous objections to the paper." One was that the draft "makes no reference to the key issue of Atta."

The August 20th meeting is clear evidence of the Administration politicizing an analytical process that should be protected from the meddlesome reach of policy officials. The Pentagon's policy office had delayed the publication of an important Intelligence Community assessment on Iraq and terrorism, and insinuated themselves into a coordination meeting in the hopes of molding the judgments to establish a link between Iraq and the attacks carried out by al-Qaeda terrorists on September 11th. The Pentagon officials "raised numerous objections to the paper" as if they believed it was the policy office's role to object to an Intelligence Community assessment prior to its publication. The "key issue of Atta" was at the center of the Pentagon's case. The problem is that the Intelligence Community did not find the report alleging a meeting between al-Qaeda hijacker Atta and an Iraqi intelligence official in the Czech Republic to be credible, a meeting Vice President Cheney had already said publicly was "pretty well confirmed."

The Intelligence Community's findings did not support the link between Iraq and the 9/11 plot. Administration policy officials wanted to help galvanize public support for military action in Iraq. As a result, officials under the direction of Under Secretary Feith took it upon themselves to push for a change in the intelligence analysis so that it bolstered Administration policy statements and goals.

But the Intelligence Community analysts did not buckle under the pressure brought to bear by Pentagon policy officials on August 20th. While some changes were made to the "Iraq Support for Terrorism" report, published in September 2002, the efforts of the Pentagon staffers did not convince the analysts to change their analytical judgments.

This did not dissuade the Pentagon policy shop, however. They simply took their case directly to the White House. On September 16, 2002, two days before the Intelligence Community disseminated its terrorism assessment, Pentagon policy officials presented their alternative analysis to the Deputy National Security Advisor and the Vice President's Chief of Staff. This time the staffers re-inserted the slide critical of the Intelligence Community's analytical approach to the issue and included additional information on the alleged meeting in Prague between Atta and the Iraqi intelligence service not in the version briefed to Director Tenet. Furthermore, the CIA was kept in the dark about the Pentagon's intentions. Director Tenet was not told by the Pentagon that this alternative analysis would be subsequently briefed to the White House and remained ignorant of that fact until March 4, 2004, when it was revealed to him at an Intelligence Committee hearing.