

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.

Osama was there, but the Iraqi representative was at a low level. . . .

“During the buildup to war, the intelligence community was placed under pressure to support the administration’s position that there was a link between Iraq and al-Qaeda. This is particularly distressing. This pressure took the form of policymakers repetitively tasking analysts to review, to reconsider, to revise their analytical judgments, or simply asking the same question again and again.

“The committee investigation revealed evidence that this pre-war pressure to conform to administration policy demands may have led to the co-option of the intelligence community.

“The committee’s two-phased investigation has been significantly limited, I must say, by the majority’s refusal to examine issues and documents relative to our inquiry when the issues and documents came close to the White House.

“While a quarter of the committee’s INC report is devoted to a lengthy examination of the CIA’s relationship with the INC in the early and mid-1990s, the committee majority voted down requests by the minority to investigate the flow of intelligence information from the INC that circumvented the intelligence community and went directly to the White House and to Pentagon policy officials in the lead-up to the war.

“Finally, the committee’s inquiry has been hampered by the decision to deal with five Phase II tasks as separate inquiries, which they are not, and complete the report on a piecemeal basis rather than a unified whole. This has been distressing to those of us in the minority. . . . It should not have taken nearly three years to reach the point where we are now. . . .”

‘Flat-Out False’

After the above remarks, Rockefeller turned the floor over to Levin (the next ranking Democrat), who then cited statements from Bush, Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, former Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, and former Secretary of State Colin Powell, in which they made public claims about Iraq’s WMD, and ties to al-Qaeda *long after* intelligence community reports had said the information was false. In fact, Levin charged, with great irony, the President is *still insisting* that Iraq and al-Qaeda were linked before 9/11.

After his opening statement that the SCCI report is a “devastating indictment” of the Bush Administration, Levin said: “The President said Wednesday, just this week, that, ‘One of the hardest parts of my job is to connect Iraq to the war on terror.’

“Well, that shouldn’t surprise anybody. The President’s decision to ignore intelligence community assessments prior to the Iraq war and to make repeated public statements that gave the misleading impression that Saddam Hussein’s regime was connected to the terrorists who attacked us on 9/11, cost him any credibility he may have had on this issue.

“President Bush said Saddam and al-Qaeda were ‘ali-
lies’—his words. And that: ‘You can’t distinguish between al-Qaeda and Saddam when you talk about the war on terror.’

“The bipartisan report released today directly contradicts that linkage which the President has consistently made in his effort to build public support for his Iraq policy. . . .

“Just two weeks ago, the President said in a press conference that Saddam Hussein ‘had relations with Zarqawi.’ Our Intelligence Committee report demonstrates that statement made two weeks ago by the President was false. The committee report discloses, for the first time, the CIA’s October 2005 assessment that Saddam’s regime: ‘Did not have a relationship, harbor, or turn a blind eye towards Zarqawi and his associates.’

“The President’s statement made just two weeks ago is flat-out false.

“The drumbeat of misleading administration statements alleging Saddam’s links to al-Qaeda was unrelenting in the lead-up to the Iraq war, which began in March 2003.

“On Sept. 25, 2002, the President said: “ ‘Al-Qaeda hides. Saddam doesn’t, but the danger is that they work in concert. The danger is that al-Qaeda becomes an extension of Saddam’s madness and his hatred and his capacity to extend weapons of mass destruction around the world.’

“On Oct. 14, 2002, the President said: ‘This is a man—Saddam is a man that we know has had connections with al-Qaeda. This is a man who, in my judgment, would like to use al-Qaeda as a forward army.’

“On Jan. 30, 2003, Vice President Cheney said: ‘Saddam’s regime aids and protects terrorists, including members of al-Qaeda. He could decide secretly to provide weapons of mass destruction to terrorists for use against us. And as the President said on Tuesday, it would just take one vial, one canister, one crate to bring a day of horror to our nation unlike any we have ever known.’

“On Feb. 6, 2003, Deputy Secretary of Defense Wolfowitz said: ‘And, worst of all, his connections with terrorists which go back decades and which started some ten years ago with al-Qaeda are growing every day.’

“What . . . the President and other administration officials did not say was what the intelligence community was saying about this crucial issue because it would have undermined their march to war and it would have refuted their main argument for attacking Iraq: that Iraq was linked to the terrorists who attacked us on 9/11. . . .”

Cheney ‘Didn’t Stop There’

Levin provided the most damning evidence against Cheney:

“The misleading statements by administration officials didn’t stop there. The Intelligence Committee report recounts the story of the alleged meeting between Mohammed Atta and the Iraqi intelligence officer in Prague. In the Fall of 2001, the Czech intelligence service provided the CIA with

reporting based on a single source who stated that Atta met with an Iraqi intelligence officer in Prague in April of 2001.

“On Dec. 9, 2001, Vice President Cheney was asked about the report on ‘Meet the Press.’ The Vice President said: ‘It has been pretty well confirmed that he—the 9/11 hijacker Mohammed Atta—did go to Prague and he did meet with a senior official with the Iraqi intelligence service in Czechoslovakia [the Czech Republic—ed.] last April, several months before the attack.’

“On March 24, 2002, the Vice President told ‘Meet the Press’: ‘We discovered, and it has since been public, the allegation that one of the lead hijackers, Mohammed Atta, had, in fact, met with Iraqi intelligence in Prague.’

“But the Intelligence Committee report released today cites a June 2002 CIA paper that said: ‘Reporting is contradictory on hijacker Mohammed Atta’s alleged trip to Prague and meeting with an Iraqi intelligence officer and we have not verified his travels.’

“The Intelligence Committee report released today declassifies, for the first time, a July 2002 Defense Intelligence Agency paper that said: ‘Mohammed Atta reportedly was identified by an asset, not an officer, of a Czech service, only after Atta’s picture was widely circulated in the media after the attacks, approximately five months after the alleged meeting occurred.’

“And that: ‘There is no photographic, immigration, or other documentary evidence indicating that Atta was in the Czech Republic during the time frame of the meeting.’

“Two months later, in September 2002, the CIA published its assessment that ‘evidence casts doubt’ on the possibility that the meeting had occurred and that: ‘The CIA and FBI have reviewed the reporting available so far and they are unable to confirm that Atta met al-Ani in Prague.’

“None of those assessments stopped the Vice President from continuing to suggest that the report of the meeting was evidence that Saddam’s regime was linked to the 9/11 attack.

“On Sept. 8, 2002, in a ‘Meet the Press’ interview, the Vice President said that the CIA considered the report of the meeting credible, although again, that same month, the CIA said there was evidence that cast doubt on it having occurred.

“In January 2003, the CIA published an assessment stating that: ‘A CIA and FBI review of intelligence and open-source reporting *leads us to question* the information provided by the Czech service source who claimed that Atta met al-Ani’ [emphasis added].

“The January 2003 paper stated that the CIA was ‘increasingly skeptical’—increasingly skeptical—‘that Atta travelled to Prague in 2001 or met with the IIS officer al-Ani,’ and that, ‘the most reliable reporting to date casts doubt on this possibility.’

“But the Vice President was undeterred by the CIA’s skepticism. On Sept. 14, 2003, eight months after the CIA said

that the most reliable reporting cast doubt on the possibility of a meeting between Atta and the Iraqi intelligence officer, Vice President Cheney was still citing as this having possibly occurred.

“On Jan. 14, 2004, a full year after the CIA expressed serious doubts about the meeting and the fact that not a shred of evidence had been found to support the claim of a meeting, the Vice President told the *Rocky Mountain News* that the Atta meeting was ‘the one that possibly tied the two together to 9/11.’

“Six months later, on June 17, 2004, the Vice President was asked whether Iraq was involved in 9/11. The Vice President said, ‘We don’t know. . . . We had one report, this was the famous report on the Czech intelligence service, and we’ve never been able to confirm it or knock it down. We just don’t know.’

“The Vice President may not have ‘known,’ but the intelligence community sure as heck did not believe, and did not believe for a long time before the Vice President’s statement, that the meeting took place [emphasis added].

“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.”

LaRouche: The Evidence Is There

Senator Levin concludes with the revelation that, in an interview with the SSCI on July 26, 2006, former CIA director George Tenet confessed that “it was wrong” for him to succumb to White House pressure to issue a statement—which he did on Oct. 8, 2002—backing up Bush’s lunatic statement of Oct. 7, 2002 asserting an al-Qaeda-Saddam Hussein link.

Thus, the SSCI report is able to establish that deliberate manipulation—including soliciting (if not ordering) a false statement by Tenet—was used just before the Congressional vote authorizing force in Iraq.

As LaRouche said at his Sept. 6 webcast—just days before the SSCI report came out—the evidence is *already there* to impeach Cheney and Bush. It should be done now.

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