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OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT
WASHINGTON

June 9, 2003

MEMORANDUM FOR THE VICE PRESIDENT

FROM: JOHN HANNAH, ACTING PRINCIPAL DEPUTY ASSISTANT

SUBJECT: Information: CIA Paper on Purported Iraq-Niger Uranium Deal

Attached please find a CIA paper on the Iraq-Niger deal that was sent to us today. It is dated April 3, 2003. The paper was drafted as part of a Congressional Notification. We have also attached a New Yorker article by Sy Hersh on the issue, which we are reviewing.

Some of the highlights from the CIA paper include the following:

- On February 14, 2002, CIA wrote that "Information on the alleged uranium contract between Iraq and Niger comes exclusively from a foreign government service report that lacks crucial details, and we are working to clarify the information and to determine whether it can be corroborated." (Para 4)
- [REDACTED]
- According to the CIA paper, the first real indication that the CIA had serious concerns about the stream of reporting on Iraq-Niger does not occur until September 2002. According to the CIA paper, in the run-up to the September 24th publication of the British White Paper, CIA had "expressed concerns about the credibility of the reporting to the British [REDACTED] The paper claims that [REDACTED] "the British countered CIA concerns . . . by claiming they had corroborating evidence that Iraq sought uranium from Africa." According to the CIA, "This alleged corroborating information, however, was not shared with us." (Para 8)
- On the day the British White Paper was released, a "senior IC official" told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee "that his analysts rejected the idea that Iraq could obtain uranium from Niger, indicating they had concerns about the reporting." On October 4th, CIA officers told the Senate Intelligence Committee that the Iraq-Niger deal was one of two points on which the U.S. differed from the British assessment of Iraq's WMD. (Para 9)
- Nevertheless, the October 1st NIE on Iraq's WMD stated that "Iraq also began vigorously trying to procure uranium ore and yellowcake A foreign government service reported that as of early 2001, Niger planned to send several tons of 'pure uranium' to Iraq." The CIA

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paper explains that the reference to the Iraq-Niger deal was made in the NIE as part of "an effort to include all information related to Iraq's nuclear-weapon program." The paper points out that State/INR later in the NIE noted that "the claims of Iraqi pursuit of natural uranium in Africa are, in INR's assessment, highly dubious." (Para 10)

- On November 13, 2002, CIA told [REDACTED] "reporting on Iraqi attempts to procure uranium from Africa are fragmentary, at best . . . but it shows that Iraq is probably trying to acquire uranium ore abroad." (Para 13)
- On January 17, 2003 the CIA published a Senior Power Executive Intelligence Brief (SPWR). It is the last CIA analytical product referenced by the paper before the President's State of the Union address. The SPWR concludes that "Fragmentary reporting on Iraqi attempts to procure uranium from various countries in Africa in the past several years is another sign of reconstitution." (Para 19)
- On January 27, 2003 (2 days before the State of the Union), CIA issued a report [REDACTED] that [REDACTED] information related to discussions between Iraq and Niger dating from 1999 on a proposal to ship uranium." (Para 21)

Documents Pertaining to the Iraq-Niger Deal

Of special interest is the CIA's history in relation to the papers purporting to document the Iraq-Niger deal:

- On October 10th, 2002, U.S. Embassy Rome received from a journalist documents purporting to be copies of the Iraq-Niger [REDACTED] for uranium. CIA concluded that these were the documents that formed the basis for the February 2002 report [REDACTED] on the issue. (Para 11)
- Embassy Rome shared copies of the documents with the CIA [REDACTED] the Embassy forwarded the documents through State Department channels to its Bureau of Non-Proliferation." The CIA paper states that "the DI did not request or place a high-priority on obtaining the actual documents at this time, [REDACTED]"
- On October 15th, State/INR sent a message offering to provide CIA with copies of the documents at a meeting the following day. According to the CIA paper, "The delivery did not occur nor did CIA press State/INR for the documents". (Para 12)
- On January 12th and 13th, 2003 State/INR sent two messages to the CIA expressing concerns "that the documents pertaining to the Iraq-Niger deal were forgeries." Only at that point did a CIA officer conducting a review of the issue discover that the CIA did not have a copy of the documents. According to the paper, "The officer took steps to obtain the original [REDACTED] documents from State/INR, which occurred within days." (Para 18)

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- On February 4th, 2003, CIA sent a note to the U.S. Mission to the IAEA in Vienna and UNMOVIC in New York. The note contained copies of the original language documents of the Iraq-Niger deal. The note indicated that the information could be passed to the IAEA. Oddly, CIA states that this "was interpreted as permission to pass the original documents," which were in fact passed. (Para 24)
- On February 4-5, the U.S. briefed the IAEA on the Iraq-Niger deal. [REDACTED] briefing [REDACTED] claimed that "Two streams of reporting suggest Iraq has attempted to acquire uranium from Niger. We cannot confirm these reports . . . Nonetheless, we are concerned that these reports may indicate Baghdad has attempted to secure an unreported source of uranium yellowcake". (Para 25)
- Not until February 7, 2003 did CIA receive the translated documents from State. According to the CIA paper, "Key forensic clues-errors in format and grammar contained in the original documents-were not conveyed in the translation process." (Para 27)
- On March 3, 2003, IAEA provided its analysis of the documents [REDACTED] concluding that they were forgeries. (Para 29) CIA analysis of the documents had not yet been completed. (Para 27)

Attachments

Tab A -- CIA Paper on Iraq-Niger Deal

Tab B -- New Yorker Article by Sy Hersh "Who Lied to Whom"

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