



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

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June 10, 2003

INFORMATION MEMORANDUM

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TO: P - Under Secretary Grossman
FROM: INR - Carl W. Ford, Jr. *CF*
SUBJECT: Niger/Iraq Uranium Story and Joe Wilson ([REDACTED])

[REDACTED] This memo summarizes what we have been able to discover about the role that Ambassador Joe Wilson played in the Niger/Iraq uranium story, especially the allegations that INR played a role in his early 2002 trip to Niger and the (non) dissemination of reporting on what he learned. What follows is based on our paper and electronic files; we are confident that these records and the recollections of persons involved at the margin are basically accurate but the two INR staff members who were most involved are not here (one has been reassigned to Pakistan, the other is on leave) to guide us through the files and emails. What is clear, however, is that INR was not Ambassador Wilson's point of contact in either the Department or the Intelligence Community. INR did not meet with Wilson after his trip and did not receive any information on his trip and what he learned except what appears to be his reporting cable (his name is not mentioned) disseminated throughout the intelligence and policy communities by CIA. The reporting we have from his trip makes no mention of documents, fraudulent or otherwise.

[REDACTED] From what we can find in our records, Joe Wilson played only a walk-on part in the Niger/Iraq uranium story. In a February 19, 2002, meeting convened by Valerie Wilson, a CIA WMD manager and the wife of Joe Wilson, he previewed his plans and rationale for going to Niger but said he would only go if the Department thought his trip made sense (Tab 1). Both the memo of this meeting prepared by INR's West Africa analyst (now

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in Pakistan) and other material indicate that the CIA believed the Ambassador and the Embassy were unlikely to ferret out the truth from their Nigerien contacts. INR strongly demurred from this view at the February 19 meeting. We have no record of any other INR written or personal contact with Wilson regarding Nigerien uranium.

to [REDACTED] The impetus for the Ambassador's demarches in this period (Tabs 2 and 3), and the investigative trip by Joe Wilson (Tab 4 is the CIA account of his trip findings) was a "report of questionable credibility from a foreign service." This was INR's conclusion in an assessment of March 1, 2002, entitled "Niger: Sale of Uranium to Iraq is Unlikely" (Tab 5). In a May 8, 2002 INR assessment of Iraq's WMD and missile programs, we noted "There have been provocative allegations of Iraqi nuclear activities, such as an alleged contract for the provision of uranium from Niger, but we regard such information as questionable."

to [REDACTED] The Niger allegations were included but did not figure prominently in the 90-page October 2002 NIE on "Iraq's Continuing Programs for Weapons of Mass Destruction." The major point of contention in differing judgments about the likelihood of Iraqi nuclear weapons program reconstitution efforts centered on the CIA's assessment that Iraq was bent on acquiring aluminum tubes to produce parts for a gas centrifuge uranium enrichment plant. In a lengthy dissent entitled "INR's Alternative View: Iraq's Attempts to Acquire Aluminum Tubes," INR noted "... the claims of Iraqi pursuit of natural uranium in Africa are, in INR's assessment, highly dubious." The main text of the NIE related a foreign intelligence service report "that, as of early 2001, Niger planned to send several tons of 'pure uranium' (probably yellowcake) to Iraq." The NIE later noted laconically that "We cannot confirm whether Iraq succeeded in acquiring uranium ore and/or yellowcake" from Niger and other alleged African sources.

to [REDACTED] In October 2002, an Italian journalist passed purported copies of a Niger-Iraq agreement of July 2000 for the purchase of uranium to Embassy Rome. These documents, which were sent to Washington via both CIA and Department channels, were not adequately analyzed until much later and were judged to be fraudulent. However, they appear to have added new life to the Niger/Iraq uranium story. These documents appear to be related to, if not the actual basis of, the February 2002 foreign liaison service report that sparked original concerns about a Niger/Iraq deal.

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(S [REDACTED] In November 2002, WINPAC briefed the [REDACTED] that fragmentary reports indicated Iraq was trying to acquire uranium ore in Africa; however, WINPAC pointed to other potential African sources, not Niger. In mid-December 2002, the Department (NP) released a fact sheet that pointed "to efforts to procure uranium ore from Niger," this despite the alleged objections of WINPAC. The WINPAC caution was reportedly "not obtained in time to correct the listing on the State Department web site," but "was acted on in time, however, to remove it from Ambassador Negroponte's statement. On January 12, 2003, INR "expressed concerns to the CIA that the documents pertaining to the Iraq-Niger deal were forgeries." The conclusion may, however, have been reached and communicated for the first time somewhat earlier; the record is not clear on this point. After considerable back and forth between the CIA, the Department, the IAEA, and the British, Secretary Powell's briefing to the UN Security Council did not mention attempted Iraqi procurement of uranium "due to CIA concerns raised during the coordination regarding the veracity of the information on the alleged Iraq-Niger agreement." (Citations here from Tab 6, an April 7, 2003, CIA retrospective on "Purported Iraqi Attempt to Get Uranium from Niger").

(S [REDACTED] Our records contain an extensive paper and electronic trail on the Niger/Iraq allegations, including other retrospective accounts differing somewhat from the CIA retrospective mentioned above. There is no indication, however, that anyone in INR met with Ambassador Wilson except at the February 19, 2002 meeting hosted by CIA, or discussed his trip and what he learned with anyone in the Department or at CIA.

ATTACHMENTS:

- Tab 1: Notes - Niger/Iraq uranium Meeting CIA, 2/19/02
- Tab 2: Cable from Embassy Niamey "Niger: Taking Another Hard Look at GON Uranium Sales"
- Tab 3: Cable from Embassy Niamey: "Niger: President Tandja Tells DCINC Niger's Uranium is Secure; Slams Terrorism"
- Tab 4: CIA Account of Ambassador Wilson's Trip Findings: "WP/Nuclear Weapons: Nigerian Denial of Uranium Yellowcake Sales to Rogue States"
- Tab 5: INR Assessment: "Niger--Sale of Uranium to Iraq is Unlikely"
- Tab 6: CIA retrospective on "Purported Iraqi Attempt to Get Uranium from Niger"

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TAB 1

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Notes - Niger/Iraq uranium Meeting CIA, 2/19/02

Meeting apparently convened by Valerie Wilson, a CIA WMD managerial type and the wife of Amb. Joe Wilson, with the idea that the agency and the larger USG could dispatch Joe to Niger to use his contacts there to sort out the Niger/Iraq uranium sale question. Joe went to Niger in late 1999 in regard to Niger's uranium program, apparently with CIA support.

Two CIA WMD analysts seem to be leading the charge on the issue, [REDACTED] the other guy's name not available. They appear to believe that the Embassy will be unable to ferret out the truth on the Niger/Iraq matter. INR made it a point to, gently, tell them that the Embassy has very good contacts and the Ambassador is a Tandja confidante. Later when the WMD guys failed to get the hint they were informed, a little less gently, that the Embassy was a reliable interlocutor and could be trusted to protect US interests.

If Wilson goes [REDACTED]

stressing again that the Embassy, however, does have a wide range of high-level contacts.

The alleged contract between Niger and Iraq says that Niger will sell Iraq 500 tons of Uranium in two tranches per year. INR explained that would mean somewhere between one sixth and one eighth of the total output of the two mines and that twice a year 25 semi tractor trailers loads of yellow cake would have to be driven down roads where one seldom sees even a bush taxi. In other words, it would be very hard to hide such a shipment.

When the idea of moving the stuff across the desert to Sudan (???) was broached INR responded that while it is not difficult to drive across much of the hard packed, flat desert terrain, there are many problems including heat up to 130 degrees F, wear and tear on the vehicles, water, fuel and drifting sand that would make such a trip difficult in the extreme.

INR also explained that the French appear to have complete control of the entire mining, milling and transportation process, and would seem to have little interest in selling uranium to the Iraqis. INR suggested that perhaps the most cost-effective way of handling the problem would be talking to the French. They have a much thicker presence on the ground in Niger, and even if they for some unknown reason were conspiring with a rogue state to on WMD sales, our contacting them would let them know that we know and probably thereby disrupt the operation.

Amb. Wilson mentioned two guys he would talk to in Niamey, former Prime Minister Myaki and somebody named Mai Manga. The only Mai Manga known to the Embassy

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✓ during the 1999 - 2001 period was a colonel in the Army. The Amb. said that it was not the same Mai Manga. Wilson believed that the Nigeriens, understanding that he had worked at the NSC, would believe that he represented "national command authority" and that word of his presence would stir things up to such an extent that information would tumble out and/or the Nigeriens, if they were indeed planning on selling uranium to Iraq, would get scared and discontinue the sales project.

✓ Wilson, not wanting to get too far ahead of State or the Embassy, backed INR up in regard to Ambassador Owens-Kirkpatrick's prerogatives and said he would only go if we thought that it made sense.

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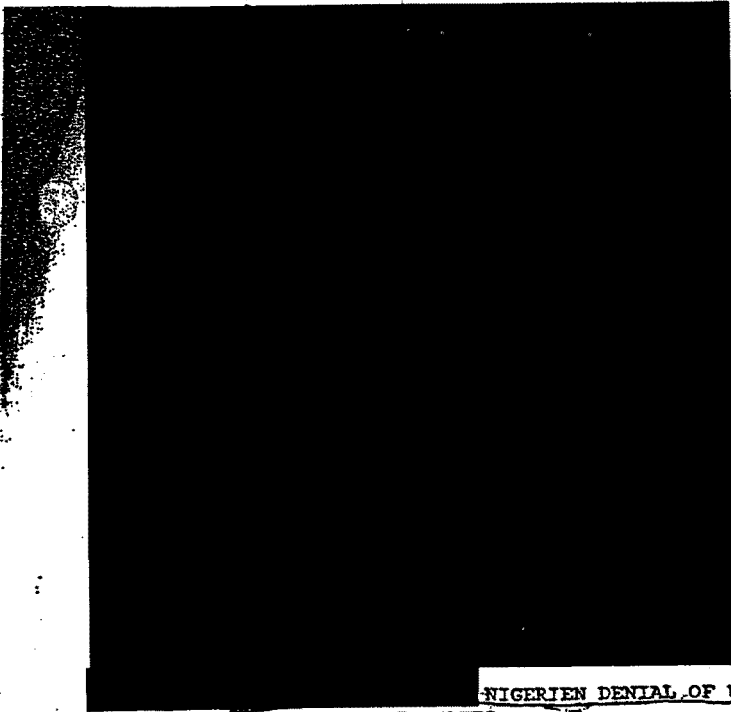
TAB 4

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NIGERIEN DENIAL OF URANIUM YELLOWCAKE

SALES TO ROGUE STATES

SOURCE: A CONTACT WITH EXCELLENT ACCESS WHO DOES NOT HAVE AN ESTABLISHED REPORTING RECORD. (SENSITIVE CONTACT)

TEXT: 1. (HEADQUARTERS COMMENT: THE SUBSOURCES OF THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION KNEW THEIR REMARKS COULD REACH THE U.S. GOVERNMENT AND MAY HAVE INTENDED TO INFLUENCE AS WELL AS INFORM.) FORMER NIGERIEN GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS CLAIMED THAT SINCE 1997 THERE HAD BEEN NO CONTRACTS SIGNED BETWEEN NIGER AND ANY ROGUE STATES FOR THE SALE OF URANIUM IN THE FORM OF YELLOWCAKE. THE FORMER OFFICIALS ALSO ASSERTED THERE HAD BEEN NO TRANSFERS OF YELLOWCAKE TO ROGUE STATES.

2. FORMER NIGERIEN PRIME MINISTER IBRAHIM ((MAYAKI)), WHO WAS NIGER'S FOREIGN MINISTER FROM 1996-1997 AND NIGER'S PRIME MINISTER FROM 1997-1999 AND WHO MAINTAINED CLOSE TIES TO THE CURRENT NIGERIEN GOVERNMENT, STATED HE WAS UNAWARE OF ANY CONTRACTS BEING SIGNED BETWEEN NIGER AND ROGUE STATES FOR THE SALE OF YELLOWCAKE DURING HIS

TENURE AS BOTH FOREIGN MINISTER AND PRIME MINISTER. MAYAKI, HOWEVER, DID RELATE THAT IN JUNE 1999 BARKA ((TEFRIDJ)), A NIGERIEN/ALGERIAN BUSINESSMAN, APPROACHED HIM AND INSISTED THAT MAYAKI MEET WITH AN IRAQI DELEGATION TO DISCUSS "EXPANDING COMMERCIAL RELATIONS" BETWEEN

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NIGER AND IRAQ. ALTHOUGH THE MATTER DROPPED DUE TO THE UNITED NATIONS (UN) SANCTIONS AGAINST IRAQ AND THE FACT THAT HE OPPOSED DOING BUSINESS WITH IRAQ. MAYAKI SAID THAT HE INTERPRETED THE PHRASE "EXPANDING COMMERCIAL RELATIONS" TO MEAN THAT IRAQ WANTED TO DISCUSS URANIUM YELLOWCAKE SALES. MAYAKI SAID HE UNDERSTOOD ROGUE STATES WOULD LIKE TO EXPLOIT NIGER'S RESOURCES, SPECIFICALLY URANIUM, BUT HE BELIEVED THE NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT'S REGARD FOR THE UNITED STATES (U.S.) AS A CLOSE ALLY WOULD PREVENT SALES TO THESE STATES FROM TAKING PLACE DESPITE NIGER'S ECONOMIC WOES. MAYAKI CLAIMED THAT IF THERE HAD BEEN ANY CONTRACTS FOR

YELLOWCAKE BETWEEN NIGER AND ANY ROGUE STATE DURING HIS TENURE, HE WOULD HAVE SEEN THE CONTRACT.

3. BOUCAR ((MAI MANGA)), NIGER'S FORMER MINISTER OF ENERGY AND MINES UNTIL 9 APRIL 1999, A FORMER DIRECTOR OF THE NIGERIAN-COMENAC MINE AND CURRENTLY HONORARY PRESIDENT OF COMENAC, STATED THAT THERE WERE NO SALES OUTSIDE OF INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY (IAEA) CHANNELS SINCE THE MID-1980S. MAI MANGA SAID THAT HE KNEW OF NO CONTRACTS SIGNED BETWEEN NIGER AND ANY ROGUE STATE FOR THE SALE OF URANIUM. HE ADMITTED THAT YEARS AGO A PAKISTANI DELEGATION VISITED NIGER AND OFFERED TO PURCHASE URANIUM BUT THAT NO SALES RESULTED FROM THESE TALKS. MAI MANGA ALSO SAID THAT (FNU) ((BLASCHER)), THE FORMER DIRECTOR GENERAL OF SOMAIR AND CURRENTLY A DIRECTOR AT COGEMA, CAME

TO HIM IN 1998 WITH AN IRANIAN DELEGATION TO DISCUSS BUYING 400 TONS OF YELLOWCAKE FROM NIGER; HOWEVER, THE ONLY RESULT WAS A MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION, WITH NO CONTRACT BEING SIGNED AND NO YELLOWCAKE TRANSFERRED TO IRAN. MAI MANGA THEORIZED THAT NIGER'S MINES COULD HAVE INCREASED PRODUCTION TO SUPPLY IRAN WITH THIS AMOUNT OF YELLOWCAKE BUT THIS WOULD HAVE REQUIRED OPENING ADDITIONAL MINING FACILITIES THAT HAVE BEEN MOTHALLED FOR SEVERAL YEARS. MAI MANGA

THEREFORE CONCLUDED THAT A SALE TO A ROGUE STATE SUCH AS IRAN WOULD HAVE BEEN DIFFICULT GIVEN THE NEED OPEN MORE FACILITIES. (SOURCE COMMENT: MAI MANGA APPEARED TO REGRET THAT NIGER EVEN DISCUSSED URANIUM SALES WITH IRAN IN LIGHT OF THE INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE THAT RESULTED.)

4. MAI MANGA STATED THAT URANIUM FROM NIGER'S MINES IS VERY TIGHTLY CONTROLLED AND ACCOUNTED FOR FROM THE TIME IT IS MINED UNTIL THE TIME IS LOADED ONTO SHIPS AT THE PORT OF COTONOU, BENIN. ACCORDING TO MAI MANGA, EVEN A KILOGRAM OF URANIUM WOULD BE NOTICED MISSING AT THE MINES. ON-SITE STORAGE IS LIMITED AND HE SAID THAT EACH SHIPMENT OF URANIUM IS UNDER NIGERIAN ARMED MILITARY ESCORT FROM THE TIME IT LEAVES ONE OF THE TWO NIGERIAN MINES UNTIL IT IS LOADED ON TO A SHIP IN COTONOU. AIR TRANSPORT IS TOO EXPENSIVE TO SHIP YELLOWCAKE AND TRUCKING BARRELS OF YELLOWCAKE NORTHWARD WOULD REQUIRE AN EXPERIENCED GUIDE AND MANY ARMED GUARDS, DUE TO THE SHIFTING DUNES AND BANDITS IN THAT REGION. MAI MANGA THEREFORE BELIEVED THAT IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT, IF NOT IMPOSSIBLE, TO ARRANGE A SPECIAL SHIPMENT OF URANIUM TO A PARIAS STATE GIVEN THESE STRICT CONTROLS AND THE CLOSE MONITORING BY THE NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT AND THE TWO MINING Companies.

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