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WMD IN IRAQ - THE DAVID KAY REPORT

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On 2 October 2003, David Kay, the Head of the U.S. Iraq Survey Group (ISG), presented to a Joint Committee of the US Congress a statement on his group's Interim Progress Report to Congress. Although the report itself was not made public, the statement alone is highly revealing. What it reveals, however, is very much a matter of perspective. Some view it as confirmation that Iraq did have WMD capabilities at the onset of Operation Iraqi Freedom; others see the statement as a proof that the intelligence assessments prior to the war were greatly exaggerated and that Iraq, in fact, had no such capabilities. From reading the statement, one thing should be obvious: neither claim is as yet firmly established. There is a lot of ground to be covered before any solid conclusions can be drawn.

Among the many facts noted in the report are the following:

- "A clandestine network of laboratories and safehouses within the Iraqi Intelligence Service that contained equipment subject to UN monitoring and suitable for continuing CBW (chemical biological weapons) research";
- Facilities, equipment and some materials for chemical and biological warfare research;
- Undeclared research on biological warfare-capable agents;

- "Continuing covert capability to manufacture fuel propellant useful only for prohibited SCUD variant missiles, a capability that was maintained at least until the end of 2001 and that... scientists... were told to conceal from the UN".

In addition, the report, basing itself on judgments by Iraqi scientists, states that "Saddam had not given up his aspirations and intentions to continue to acquire weapons of mass destruction."

Is the job nearing completion? Not at all. As Kay states, when discussing the search for chemical weapons: "...there are approximately 130 known Iraqi Ammunition Storage Points (ASP), many of which exceed 50 square miles in size and hold an estimated 600,000 tons of artillery shells, rockets, aviation bombs and other ordinance. Of these 130 ASPs, approximately 120 still remain unexamined. As Iraqi practice was not to mark much of their chemical ordinance and to store it at the same ASPs that held conventional rounds, the size of the required search effort is enormous."

One issue of principle which should be discussed is the role of intelligence in the decision making process. This is important for the lessons that are to be learned from the Iraq experience.



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There are three layers in this process: the gathering of raw data, its analysis, and the decision-making based on the analysis. There can be no doubt that in the case of Iraq, the raw data was greatly lacking. Had it not been so, Mr. Kay's teams would have known where to go, what to search for there, and who to apprehend and interrogate in order to confirm the information previously gathered. According to Kay's statement to Congress, his group "discovered dozens of WMD-related program activities and significant amounts of equipment that Iraq concealed from the United Nations during the inspections that began in late 2002." This is but one of the many statements in his report attesting to the fact that pre-war intelligence was much lacking.

The work of analysis is obviously easier if the raw data are both reliable and abundant. Although there is always a need to be wary of mistaken interpretations, reliable facts should be the basis for any further evaluation. The neglect or misinterpretation of these facts is a pitfall that has been known to lead to very wrong conclusions. This is very obvious in historical cases of intentional deception.

In the case of Iraq, the analysts evaluating the data prior to the war therefore had to ask themselves the following questions:

1. Is there any substantial *evidence* that unconventional weapons (including proscribed missiles) are present in Iraq?
2. If the answer to the first question is positive, where are these weapons? Are they deployable?
3. If the answer to the first question is negative, are there at least strong *indications* that such weapons are present in Iraq?
4. If there are such indications, should the existence of WMD in Iraq be an operational premise?
5. Even if there are no such indications, can the existence of such weapons be ruled out?

In a statement on 27 January 2003, Dr. Hans Blix, the head of the UN inspectorate in Iraq, told the Security Council: "There are also indications that the [nerve] agent [VX] was weaponized. ... there is a discrepancy of 6,500 bombs... Iraq has declared that it produced about 8,500 liters of [the anthrax] biological warfare agent, which it states it unilaterally destroyed in the summer of 1991. Iraq has provided little evidence for this production and no convincing evidence for its destruction. There are strong indications that Iraq produced more anthrax than it declared and that at least some of this was retained over the declared destruction date. It might still exist."

Even taking into account Kay's statement, the answer to the first question still remains negative. However, based on Blix's statement alone, the analysts' answer to the third question should have been positive, and any additional information (such as that presented to the Security Council by Secretary of State Powell) could have been corroborative. The present-day Kay statement only enhances the validity of such a conclusion.

Finally, the analysts' conclusions that there were indications of the existence of non-conventional weapons in Iraq virtually obliged the decision-makers to conclude that the answer to the fourth question was positive.

Did the decision-makers make the right decision? Given the known brutality of the Ba'ath regime, the mass executions, the total abuse of human rights and Saddam's constant quest for WMD the answer is almost certainly positive, and those factors are neglected or underemphasized by critics who are looking at but one dimension of a larger picture.

Despite the political axes being ground and the technically knowledgeable discussions of the information that has come to light, it is therefore essential to let David Kay get on with his task and to wait for well-founded conclusions rather than pressing for premature ones which could subsequently prove to be wrong.