The State Department's intelligence division is disputing the Central Intelligence Agency's conclusion that mysterious trailers found in Iraq were for making biological weapons, United States government officials said today.

In a classified June 2 memorandum, the officials said, the department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research said it was premature to conclude that the trailers were evidence of an Iraqi biological weapons

(Continued on page 2)
Iraq: The Human Toll
UK Guardian Observer, July 07, 2003
by Ed Vuillamy

The southern Iraqi town of Nasiriyah, where the American ground offensive began in earnest during the last days of March, will before long be known not because Nasiriyah was once the cradle of the Sumer dynasty and thus of civilisation; not because here, 6,000 years ago, the first syllabic alphabet was devised and first mathematical schema developed (around the figure 60, still the measurement of time). Or because the first legal code - including laws governing the conduct of war - was written and enforced.

No, Nasiriyah's fame will be enshrined in Hollywood lore because it was here that US special forces rescued Jessica Lynch, who went astray and was captured by the Iraqis. None of the major American television networks that covered the fantasy version of the dramatic rescue (Doctors and staff recall the episode differently: as the Americans blasted and kicked their way in, they were welcomed and shown to Private Lynch's ward, with no resistance offered) bothered to visit a few doors down from Jessica's. In there lie Daham Kassim, aged 46, and his 37-year-old wife Gufran ibed Kassim. Daham has his arms bound, and a stump where his right leg used to be. Gufran will probably never again move her arms, wounded by gunshots.

Kassim speaks in English, an educated man and, until a few months ago, director of the Southeastern electricity board. His torment began 24 March, when - after heavy US bombing in his neighbourhood - Kassim decided the family would leave Nasiriyah for the safety of his parents' farm 70 miles away.

Shortly after noon in Kassim's new car, they reached the American checkpoint at the northern gate to the city. (Significantly, the suicide bomb which killed four US soldiers at a road block and was credited with inflaming American behaviour at check points, occurred a full four days later on 29 March at Najaf. This was the incident described by the Washington Post as, 'The first such attack of the war.') 'I could see two tanks,' recalls Kassim. 'They were sand-coloured. I was afraid and stopped my car 60m away. Less than a minute passed.' [The American tanks kept their hatches down. The Marines inside would have been looking through their green-tinted rectangular window, at a civilian car carrying a couple and four children.] 'I was frozen with fear, watching their guns moving down. Then there was a terrible noise, and my car was buried in shooting.'

Kassim's voice begins to crack. 'I saw my eldest daughter, Mawra, die. She was nine; she took the first shot, opened her eyes, and closed them again.' Gufran, his second daughter, was killed immediately. 'But my son Mohammed, six, was still breathing. And my Zainab, five, was also still alive, although she had been shot in the head.'

Two Americans approached the car. 'They took out my two dead children, then tried to give my son oxygen, but it was no use. He died there, at that moment. There, the Americans had established a field hospital, where they bandaged up the surviving child, father and mother. On the third night, that of 27 March, there were some Americans wounded that night, in the fighting. Maybe they needed the beds. I heard the order - "put them out" - and they carried us like dogs, out into the cold, without shelter, or a blanket. It was the days of the sandstorms and freezing at night. I heard Zainab crying: 'Papa, Papa, I am cold.' His wife continues the story of the night. 'What could we do? She kept saying she was cold. My arms were broken, I could not lift or hold her. If they had given us even a blanket, we might have put it over her. We had to listen to her die.'

'What for? For oil and a strategic place for America? Why did they put my Zainab out into the cold? I tell you Mister, she died of cold, she died of cold.' He asks us to have her buried 'with her brother and sisters. Please, Mister, I cannot move; you must go and ask how we can take my Zainab to Najaf.'

White House dismisses...

(Continued from page 1)
program, as President Bush has done. The disclosure of the memorandum is the clearest sign yet of disagreement between intelligence agencies over the assertion, which was produced jointly by the C.I.A. and the Defense Intelligence Agency and made public on May 28 on the C.I.A. Web site. Officials said the C.I.A. and D.I.A. did not consult with other intelligence agencies before issuing the report.

The report on the trailers was initially prepared for the White House, and Mr. Bush has cited it as proof that Iraq indeed had a biological weapons program, as the United States has repeatedly alleged, although it has yet to produce any other conclusive evidence.

In an interview with Polish television on May 30, Mr. Bush cited the trailers as evidence that the United States had "found the weapons of mass destruction" it was looking for. Secretary of State Colin L. Powell echoed that assessment in a public statement the next day, saying that the accuracy of prewar assessments linking Iraqi trailers to a biological weapons program had been borne out by the discovery.

Some intelligence analysts had previously disputed the C.I.A. report, but it had not been known that the C.I.A. report did not reflect an interagency consensus or that any intelligence agency had later objected to its finding.

The exclusion of the State Department's intelligence bureau and other agencies seemed unusual, several government officials said, because of the high-profile subject. Administration officials said the State Department agency was given no warning that the C.I.A. report was being produced, or made public.

Administration officials sympathetic to the State Department said that the department's intelligence bureau felt it had been deliberately shut out of the process. The intelligence bureau has been more skeptical than the C.I.A. and D.I.A. on matters related to Iraq's suspected illicit weapons program and its ties to terrorism.

An intelligence official sympathetic to the C.I.A. view said the State Department intelligence bureau's skepticism had been well known and that seeking its input on the report would have served no useful purpose.
The great modern empires have never been held together only by military power. Britain ruled the vast territories of India with only a few thousand colonial officers and a few more thousand troops, many of them Indian. France did the same in North Africa and Indochina, the Dutch in Indonesia, the Portuguese and Belgians in Africa. The key element was imperial perspective, that way of looking at a distant foreign reality by subordinating it in one's gaze, constructing its history from one's own point of view, seeing its people as subjects whose fate can be decided by what distant administrators think is best for them. From such wilful perspectives ideas develop, including the theory that imperialism is a benign and necessary thing.

For a while this worked, as many local leaders believed - mistakenly - that cooperating with the imperial authority was the only way. But because the dialectic between the imperial perspective and the local one is adversarial and impermanent, at some point the conflict between ruler and ruled becomes uncontainable and breaks out into colonial war, as happened in Algeria and India. We are still a long way from that moment in American rule over the Arab and Muslim world because, over the last century, pacification through unpopular local rulers has so far worked.

At least since World War II, American strategic interests in the Middle East have been, first, to ensure supplies of oil and, second, to guarantee at enormous cost the strength and domination of Israel over its neighbors.

Every empire, however, tells itself and the world that it is unlike all other empires, that its mission is not to plunder and control but to educate and liberate. These ideas are by no means shared by the people who inhabit that empire, but that hasn't prevented the U.S. propaganda and policy apparatus from imposing its imperial perspective on Americans, whose sources of information about Arabs and Islam are woefully inadequate.

Several generations of Americans have come to see the Arab world mainly as a dangerous place, where terrorism and religious fanaticism are spawned and where a gratuitous anti-Americanism is inculcated in the young by evil clerics who are anti-democratic and virulently anti-Semitic. [...] Americans are sufficiently blind that when a Middle Eastern leader emerges whom our leaders like - the shah of Iran or Anwar Sadat - it is assumed that he is a visionary who does things our way not because he understands the game of imperial power (which is to survive by humoring the regnant authority) but because he is moved by principles that we share.

Almost a quarter of a century after his assassination, Sadat is a forgotten and unpopular man in his own country because most Egyptians regard him as having served the U.S. first, not Egypt. The same is true of the shah in Iran. That Sadat and the shah were followed in power by rulers who are less palatable to the U.S. indicates not that Arabs are fanatics, but that the distortions of imperialism produce further distortions, inducing extreme forms of resistance and political self-assertion.

The Palestinians are considered to have reformed themselves by allowing Mahmoud Abbas, rather than the terrible Yasser Arafat, to be their leader. But "reform" is a matter of imperial interpretation. Israel and the U.S. regard Arafat as an obstacle to the settlement they wish to impose on the Palestinians, a settlement that would obliterate Palestinian demands and allow Israel to claim, falsely, that it has atoned for its "original sin."

Never mind that Arafat - whom I have criticized for years in the Arabic and Western media - is still universally regarded as the legitimate Palestinian leader. [...] And never mind that there is now a coherent Palestinian opposition, the Independent National Initiative; it gets no attention because the U.S. and the Israeli establishment wish for a compliant interlocutor who is in no position to make trouble. [...] This is shortsightedness indeed - the blind arrogance of the imperial gaze. The same pattern is repeated in the official U.S. view of Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the other Arab states.

Underlying this perspective is a long-standing view - the Orientalist view - that denies Arabs their right to national self-determination because they are considered incapable of logic, unable to tell the truth and fundamentally murderous.

Since Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798, there has been an uninterrupted imperial presence based on these premises throughout the Arab world, producing untold misery - and some benefits, it is true. But so accustomed have Americans become to their own ignorance and the blandishments of U.S. advisors like Bernard Lewis and Fouad Ajami, who have directed their venom against the Arabs in every possible way, that we somehow think that what we do is correct because "that's the way the Arabs are." That this happens also to be an Israeli dogma shared uncritically by the neo-conservatives who are at the heart of the Bush administration simply adds fuel to the fire.

We are in for many more years of turmoil and misery in the Middle East, where one of the main problems is, to put it as plainly as possible, U.S. power. What the U.S. refuses to see clearly it can hardly hope to remedy.

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The Iraq War, or America Betrayed

Newsday, July 15, 2003
by James P. Pinkerton

The book-fed brainiacs who helped talk George W. Bush into the Iraq War are commonly known as neoconservatives, "necons" for short, but they are anything but conservative. After the Cold War ended, they had a vision of America's exerting "benevolent global hegemony," in the words of William Kristol and Robert Kagan.

After 9/11, Bush wisely chose to move against the Afghan attackers, but apparently, at about the same time, the decision was made to move against Iraq, too. "National greatness," "spreading democracy" and, most portentously, "regime change," were heard from a thousand Beltway tongues. It all sounded stirring in the abstract, in the web of words that cloaks the realities of warfare.

Meanwhile, neocon word-creations, such as "moral clarity," "axis of evil" and "Bush Doctrine," spread far and wide. These word-weavings were repeated over and over again, in magazines, books and cable news shows. Bush became Winston Churchill, Saddam Hussein became Hitler, the Arabs were ripe for Americanization, and the U.S. military became the sword not only of vengeance, but also of do-gooding and nation-building.

But, in a world that's mostly gray, "moral clarity" becomes a synonym for tunnel vision. To see something complicated as simple requires that the seer leave out critical details. In their Quixotic madness for war, the Bush people exaggerated, and maybe even fabricated, their "evidence." Words had gotten them into positions of power, and now more words, even fictional words, would get them into war. A lionized, neocon-ized Bush didn't worry about such variables as the world reaction to America's plan, not to mention the Iraqi reaction.

Few in the Bush Brigade have actually worn their country's uniform. Their service, even in the Pentagon, consists of sitting in carpeted corner offices. And this is where the Iraq mission passes, in my mind, into the realm of outrage. In my trip there, I met lots of uniformed Americans who had obviously read or heard a lot of neocon propaganda. They believed they were there to help the Iraqi people. To believe that, they had to look past the fact that the United States had to bomb and shoot its way in. But even after "peace" was established, the well-meaning Americans were unprepared for the mission at hand.

First and most obviously, they didn't have non-lethal weapons for crowd control, and so many confrontations became deadly incidents, starting up a cycle of violence that spirals further every day. Second, few of them had been taught the language of the people they were supposedly going to be working with; I did not meet a single American who knew more than a few words of Arabic. Finally, the Pentagon was heavy on tanks for intimidation, but light on techniques for winning hearts and minds, such as immediate plans for rebuilding infrastructure.

Thus the ultimate irony: The war that was schemed and dreamed by eggheads turned out to be just another cracked example of poor planning. The Pentagon may have omnipotence in war, but it lacks common sense in peace.

Have guns...

(Continued from page 1)

they provide the service side of war rather than weapons. They range from small consulting firms that offer the advice of retired generals to transnational corporations that lease out battalions of commandoes. There are hundreds of them, with a global revenue of more than $100 billion a year, operating in at least 50 countries.

Even the world's most dominant military has increasingly become reliant on them. From 1994 to 2002, the Pentagon entered into more than 3,000 contracts with private military firms. Companies like Halliburton, Vice President Dick Cheney's former employer, now provide the logistics for every major American military deployment. Corporations have even taken over much of military training and recruiting. [...] Perhaps nothing better illustrates the industry's growing role than the campaign against Iraq. Private employees worked on everything from feeding and housing coalition troops to maintaining weapons systems like the B-2 bomber. Indeed, there was roughly one private military worker in the region for every 10 soldiers fighting the war (as opposed to one for every 100 troops in the 1991 gulf war). [...] In many cases, privatizing war has allowed for greater military capacities and cost efficiency. A problem, however, is that while the industry has developed at a breakneck pace, governments and global bodies have responded at a bureaucratic crawl. There are almost no international laws or national regulations that have significant bearing on the industry.

This mix of profit motive with the fog of war raises several concerns. First, the good of private companies may not always be to the public good. All the normal worries one has with contractors (overcharging, overbilling hours, poorly trained workers, quality assurance) raise their ugly head; but in this case one is not dealing with a new plumber - lives are at stake. [...] Second, just like lawyers, some military contractors work only for ethical clients while others choose to make money from less savory types. As a result, some companies have helped save democratic regimes and aided humanitarian groups while others have supported dictators, rebel groups, drug cartels and terrorists. [...] International and national laws must be updated so that governments gain some control over whom military firms are allowed to work with and can be certain the companies can be held accountable when things go wrong. Likewise, as governments come to rely more on private help, they must become more business-savvy, establishing good competition and oversight in their outsourcing. This is the only way to ensure that the public, not just the industry, enjoys the benefits of military privatization.

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