

# t r u t h o u t • i s s u e s

t  
truthout

 [Print This Story](#)

 [E-mail This Story](#)

[XML](#)

## **Pentagon Officer Created Phony Intel on Iraq/al-Qaeda Link**

By Matt Renner  
t r u t h o u t | Report

Friday 06 April 2007

Newly released documents confirm that a Pentagon unit knowingly cooked up intelligence claiming a direct link between Iraq and al-Qaeda in order to win support for a preemptive strike against the country.

A report prepared by the Defense Department's Inspector General for Carl Levin, the Democratic Chairman of the Armed Services Committee, explicitly shows how former Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Douglas Feith used his defense department position to cook intelligence claiming a connection between the terrorist organization and Saddam Hussein's regime.

The Inspector General's report, "Review of the Pre-Iraqi War Activities of the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy," focuses specifically on Feith's intelligence gathering operations in the months prior to the March 2003 invasion. An executive summary of the report was declassified in February. The full report was declassified and released Thursday at Levin's request.

"It is important for the public to see why the Pentagon's inspector general concluded that Secretary Feith's office 'developed, produced and then disseminated alternative intelligence assessments on the Iraq and al-Qaeda relationship,' which included 'conclusions that were inconsistent with the consensus of the Intelligence Community,' and why the Inspector General concluded that these actions were 'inappropriate,'" Levin said. "Until today, those details were classified and outside the public's view."

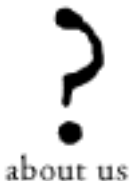
Documents released in conjunction with the inspector general's

m  
multimedia



findings include a July 25, 2002 memorandum and briefing from Feith's Office of Special Plans titled "Iraq and al-Qaida: Making the Case" that claimed a "mature, symbiotic relationship [between Iraq and al-Qaida]" existed.

But according to the IG's declassified report, "a Senior Intelligence Analyst working in the Joint Intelligence Task Force-Combating Terrorism (JITF-CT) countered point-by-point, each instance of an alleged tie between Iraq and al-Qaida ..."



According to the IG report, both the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) had thoroughly examined the possibility of an active relationship between Iraq and al-Qaida and determined there were "no conclusive signs [of a relationship]," and "direct cooperation ... has not been established."

Feith's Office of Special Plans, however, created a briefing based on a previous report, "Assessing the Relationship Between Iraq and al Qaida." The presentation was aimed at discrediting the conclusions of the CIA and the DIA.

"The very title of the Feith briefing slides [Assessing the Relationship Between Iraq and al Qaida] contradicts his claim on February 16, 2007 that 'we didn't do intelligence assessments,' as well as his claim on February 14, 2007 that the briefing was simply 'a critique of the CIA's work on the Iraq-al-Qaeda relationship,' and no more than an effort to 'raise questions about CIA work,'" Levin said Thursday.

Specifically, one slide titled "Fundamental Problems with How Intelligence Community is Assessing Information," called the expertise of the Intelligence Community into question. According to the report, the Office of Special Plans, a policy shop with no official role in intelligence collection or vetting, "accuse[d] the Intelligence Community of applying a standard requiring juridical evidence for reports, underestimating the importance for both Iraq and al-Qaida to keep their relationship hidden, and assuming that the two would not cooperate because of religious differences." This particular slide was omitted from the presentation when it was given to the directors of the CIA and the DIA.

In a statement released in February, Senator Jay Rockefeller (D-W. Va.), Chairman of the Senate Committee on Intelligence, said, "the Senate intelligence committee was never informed of these activities. Whether these actions were authorized or not, it appears that they were not in compliance with the law."

The last slide of the presentation concludes with a hypothetical assertion that an Iraq/al-Qaida "relationship would be compartmented by both sides; closely guarded secret; indications of excellent operational security by both parties," implying that this relationship existed but was so secret that it would be impossible for the CIA or DIA to discover it.

On August 15, 2002, a briefing on Feith's findings was held by former Director of Central Intelligence George Tenent. However, left out of the presentation was the slide titled "Fundamental Problems With How the Intelligence Community is Assessing Information," because according to the IG report, Feith thought "it had a critical tone."

After this briefing was presented to the DIA and CIA, Tenent told Feith, "get this back into analytical channels and out of policy channels."

Despite being rebuked, Feith fast-tracked the information and presented the findings to then Deputy National Security Director Steven Hadley and I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby, former chief of staff to Vice President Cheney

According to Thursday's IG report, the briefing was altered to include not only the slide that was critical of the work done by the Intelligence Community, but also a new slide entitled "Facilitation: Atta Meeting in Prague." According to the IG report, this new slide "discussed the alleged meeting between [al-Qaida hijacker] Mohammad Atta and [Iraqi intelligence officer Ahmad] al-Ani in April 2001 in Prague without caveats regarding Intelligence Community consensus."

But the IG states that the CIA "called the reporting on the alleged meeting between Atta and al-Ani as 'inconclusive,'" yet Feith's Office of Special Plans presented it to these top officials of the Bush administration as fact and it was subsequently used by President Bush and Vice President Cheney in speeches prior to the March 2003 invasion.

Long after the relationship between Iraq and al-Qaida was debunked, Bush continued to insist it existed. On June 17, 2004, in response to the 9/11 Commission report, Bush said "The reason I keep insisting that there was a relationship between Iraq and Saddam and al-Qaeda [is] because there was a relationship between Iraq and al-Qaeda."

---

*Matt Renner is a reporter for Truthout.*

-----

***Jump to today's Truthout Features:***



[\*Print This Story\*](#)



[\*E-mail This Story\*](#)

© : *t r u t h o u t 2 0 0 6*

| [t r u t h o u t](#) | [issues](#) | [environment](#) | [labor](#) | [women](#) | [health](#) | [voter rights](#) | [multimedia](#) | [donate](#)  
| [contact](#) | [subscribe](#) | [about us](#) | [rss feed](#) | [archive](#) |