

What Intelligence Officials Knew about the Forged Iraq Nuclear Evidence

Mar. 13, 2003 | Washington Post

FBI Probes Fake Evidence of Iraqi Nuclear Plans

The CIA, which had also obtained the documents, had questions about “**whether they were accurate**,” said one intelligence official, and it decided not to include them in its file on Iraq’s program to procure weapons of mass destruction.

Mar. 15, 2003 | Los Angeles Times

Italy May Have Been Misled by Fake Iraq Arms Papers, U.S. Says

Initially, the existence of the documents “was reported to us second- or third- hand,” the official said. “We included that in some of our reporting, although it was all caveated because **we had concerns about the accuracy** of that information.”

May 6, 2003 | New York Times

Nicholas D. Kristof, *Missing in Action: Truth*

I’m told by a person involved in the Niger caper that more than a year ago the vice president’s office asked for an investigation of the uranium deal, so a former U.S. ambassador to Africa was dispatched to Niger. In February 2002, according to someone present at the meetings, that **envoy reported to the C.I.A. and State Department that the information was unequivocally wrong and that the documents had been forged.**

The envoy reported, for example, that a Niger minister whose signature was on one of the documents had in fact been out of office for more than a decade. In addition, the Niger mining program was structured so that the uranium diversion had been impossible. The envoy’s debunking of the forgery was passed around the administration and seemed to be accepted -- except that President Bush and the State Department kept citing it anyway.

“It’s disingenuous for the State Department people to say they were bamboozled because they knew about this for a year,” one insider said.

Mar. 22, 2003 | Washington Post

CIA Questioned Documents Linking Iraq, Uranium Ore

CIA officials now say **they communicated significant doubts** to the administration about the evidence backing up charges that Iraq tried to purchase uranium from Africa for nuclear weapons, charges that found their way into President Bush's State of the Union address, a State Department "fact sheet" and public remarks by numerous senior officials.

According to several officials, decisions about what information to declassify and use to make the administration's public case have been made by a small group that includes top CIA and National Security Council officials. "The policy guys make decisions about things like this," said one official, referring to the uranium evidence. When the State Department "fact sheet" was issued, the official said, **"people winced and thought, 'Why are you repeating this trash?'"**

June 9, 2003 | Newsweek

Where are Iraq's WMDs?

On the morning after Bush's State of the Union address in January, Greg Thielmann, who had recently resigned from the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR)—whose duties included tracking Iraq's WMD program—read the text in the newspaper. Bush had cited British intelligence reports that Saddam was trying to purchase "significant quantities of uranium from Africa."

Thielmann was floored. "When I saw that, it really blew me away," Thielmann told NEWSWEEK. Thielmann knew about the source of the allegation. The CIA had come up with some documents purporting to show Saddam had attempted to buy up to 500 tons of uranium oxide from the African country of Niger. INR had concluded that the purchases were implausible—and made that point clear to Powell's office. As Thielmann read that the president had relied on these documents to report to the nation, he thought, **"Not that stupid piece of garbage. My thought was, how did that get into the speech?"** It later turned out that the documents were a forgery, and a crude one at that, peddled to the Italians by an entrepreneurial African diplomat. The Niger minister of Foreign Affairs whose name was on the letterhead had been out of office for more than 10 years. The most cursory checks would have exposed the fraud.