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Tricks of the terror trade

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The present feeding frenzy in the press, trying to discredit President Bush, stems from the revelation that some documents on the Iraqi nuclear program are forgeries. Demagogues on Capitol Hill and in the press have accused Mr. Bush of lying in his State of the Union speech when he cited a British intelligence report that the Iraqi dictator was attempting to get nuclear materials from Africa.

The forgeries, which detailed an Iraqi attempt to buy uranium from Niger, had nothing to do with the British conclusion. There had been a public Iraqi attempt to increase trade with Niger, whose main export is uranium.

Other evidence including defector reports, satellite photos of new construction at old Iraqi nuclear facilities and a variety of intelligence reports made it clear that Saddam Hussein was trying to obtain nuclear weapons. Despite the present press hysteria, the British government continues to stand behind the story. The truth about the forgeries was known in early March and reported in the *Washington Post* of March 8.

Intelligence information comes in bits and pieces. Communication intercepts, photographs and agents on the scene are the most valuable sources. The least valuable is the diplomatic cocktail party chitchat that may add a snippet of information to the story.

When the CIA received the British report, their sources having been degraded in the eight dark years of Bill Clinton, they tried to check it the easiest way. They sent a retired State Department bureaucrat, Joseph C. Wilson IV, to Niger to try to check the story. As he explained it later in a *New York Times* op-ed piece, after arriving in Niger's capital "I spent the next eight days drinking sweet mint tea and meeting with dozens of people. ... It did not take long to conclude that it was highly doubtful that any such transaction had taken place."

Mr. Wilson, who has done much to promote the anti-Bush frenzy, worked as a congressional fellow in the offices of Sen. Albert Gore and Rep. Thomas Foley, both Democrats, in 1985 and 1986. Most of the Democrats, hoping to run for President, and the *New York Times*, whose reputation for bias and phony stories has been the butt of jokes of late night comics for months, have attacked the president on this issue.

The crude forgeries were designed to be exposed to discredit the truth about Saddam's nuclear program. We don't know the source of the forgeries. But we do know that the Iraqi intelligence service was trained by the KGB. The use of forgeries containing truthful information was an old KGB trick to discredit the truth.

In 1918, information surfaced in Russia that the Bolsheviks, even before World War I, had been subsidized by the German General Staff to undermine the czarist government. A collection of documents was passed to U.S. representatives in Petrograd that showed this. Although after World War II, when the German archives were opened, it became clear that the Bolsheviks had been on the German payroll, the documents the Americans received had first passed through the hands of two Bolshevik agents, the American Red Cross representative Raymond Robbins and his assistant, an old Bolshevik named Abraham Gomberg. They were forgeries and were soon exposed. Generations of historians doubted the truth about the German-Bolshevik connection.

Over the years, there were similar cases of Soviet-created forgeries designed to be exposed, to discredit truths that the Soviets wanted to suppress. Unlike today, the KGB was never lucky enough to get so many corrupt politicians and biased journalists to fall for their ploy.

Another new set of Iraqi forgeries has gotten considerable play in the British press. They are also being used to try to discredit authentic documents. On April 22, the London *Telegraph* reported that their correspondent in Baghdad had discovered a collection of documents in the abandoned Iraqi Foreign Ministry building. These authentic documents show that a British ultra-left Labor member of Parliament, George Galloway, had secretly received at least 375,000 British pounds a year from the Saddam Hussein regime. Mr. Galloway screamed forgery and claimed that the documents might be related to those showing Iraqi purchase of Uranium from Niger.

It was no surprise to anyone that Mr. Galloway should be the Parliament member in question. Last September, he called upon the Arab states to fight the British and American "Crusaders" if they attacked Iraq. Mr. Galloway's wife is the niece of Yasser Arafat, and he has been a longtime supporter of the PLO and other extremist organizations in the Middle East.

A few days after the *Telegraph* reported the documents, the *Christian Science Monitor* came up with a batch of documents of their own showing Iraqi payments to Mr. Galloway. On June 20, the *Christian Science Monitor* apologized; their documents were forgeries. After publishing them, they showed them to expert document examiners who found that they were "inconsistent" with real Iraqi documents. "Inconsistent" is document-examiner jargon for forgeries. However, the same experts examined the *Telegraph* documents and found them to be "consistent," that is authentic.

Mr. Galloway and his friends are now using the exposure of the *Christian Science Monitor* forgeries to try to discredit the authentic *Telegraph* documents.

The recent forged e-mail letter to the *Washington Times*, supposedly from Stephan M. Minikes, the U.S. ambassador to the Organization for Security Cooperation in Europe, was designed to embarrass an effective American diplomat. An investigation is now going on to identify the source of that forgery. The CIA should be investigating the source of the Niger and *Christian Science Monitor* forgeries. As an educated guess, they will be traced back to Saddam's KGB-trained intelligence service.

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