XIV. PRESSURE ON INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY ANALYSTS REGARDING IRAQ'S LINKS TO TERRORISM

(U) An essential component of the Committee's review of the intelligence on Iraq's weapons of mass destruction (WMD) capabilities has been examining the objectivity and independence of the judgments reached by the Intelligence Community (IC) and whether any influence was brought to bear on IC analysts to shape their assessments to support policy objectives.

(U) On June 11, 2003, Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (SSCI) Chairman Pat Roberts held a press conference with Senator John Warner, Chairman of the Armed Services Committee, and Representative Porter Goss, Chairman of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence. Chairman Roberts announced that the Committee had been conducting a thorough and bipartisan review of intelligence on Iraq's weapons of mass destruction programs and ties to terrorists, and made a public call for officials to come forward and contact the Committee if they had information about intelligence analysts having been pressured to alter their assessments. Following the press conference, Chairman Roberts reissued this call in a press release which said,

> I am concerned by the number of anonymous officials that have been speaking to the press alleging that they were pressured by Administration officials to skew their analysis, a most serious charge and allegation that must be cleared up. I can tell you the Committee has yet to hear from any intelligence official expressing such concerns. If any officials believe, however, that they have been pressured to alter their assessment, they have an obligation and I encourage them to contact the Committee for confidential discussions.

(U) Chairman Roberts issued this call a third time at a closed Committee hearing on June 19, 2003 at which senior representatives of the Intelligence Community were present. Chairman Roberts asked,

> Did any of you ever feel pressure or influence to make your judgment in the 2002 National Intelligence Estimate **or any other intelligence product** conform to the policies of this or previous Administrations? The second part of that is, has any analyst come to you or expressed to you that he or she felt pressure to alter any assessment of intelligence? And finally, if you did feel pressure or were informed

that someone else felt pressure, were any intelligence assessments changed as a result of that pressure? (emphasis added)

(U) Chairman Roberts issued the same call for analysts or officials to come forward to the Committee at least six more times in the summer of 2003.

(U) In addition to these calls, throughout the Committee's review, Committee staff asked whether any analysts had been pressured to change their analysis or assessments and about how they had developed their assessments. Committee staff also made efforts to contact individuals mentioned in press articles or who, through other means, had come to the Committee's attention as possibly having information about analysts who had been pressured.

(U) The Committee was not presented with any evidence that intelligence analysts changed their judgments as a result of political pressure, altered or produced intelligence products to conform with Administration policy, or that anyone even attempted to coerce, influence or pressure analysts to do so. When asked whether analysts were pressured in any way to alter their assessments or make their judgments conform with Administration policies, not a single analyst answered yes. Most analysts simply answered, "no" or "never," but some provided more extensive responses. Some of their responses are below:

- The Deputy Director of the Office of Terrorism Analysis (OTA) in the Director of Central Intelligence's (DCI) Counterterrorist Center (CTC) commented that "I think there was intense pressure in the prewar period, and I felt the pressure was on the trade craft side to ensure we got this one right. We couldn't afford not to get it right. We had questions intensively about this connection, that connection, this report, that report. How does this all work together? And rarely do you work in an intelligence environment, especially in an environment where everything you write has a potential to lead to conflict where American people are killed . . . the pressure was intense. It's as intense as I ever saw it. My sense of that intensity was that we were under pressure to get it right, not to make a mistake, not to miss something, not to mischaracterize something."
- An OTA analyst responsible for Iraq and terrorism stated, " . . . the most pressure I felt was put upon myself to ensure that every single product that I produced could be backed up in a hearing just like this . . . we knew that the stakes were high and that this story would be examined later."
- A Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) analyst responsible for Iraq Political Leadership stated, "I never felt pressure from outside to change my views on Iraq. I think the lion's share of the pressure that I felt – and I'm talking personally as an analyst and as a leader

of a team – had to do with internal analytic disagreements . . . I think it was the pressure of having to wrestle with tough questions and how do you deal with conflicting evidence that we felt."

- A Senior Intelligence Officer from the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) stated, "On the issue of support for terrorism, there was a preconceived notion by some within the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) that Saddam was behind World Trade Center bombing one back in the early nineties and also were working with al-Qaida and may even have been behind 9/11. That was a predisposition by some people in OSD. As a result, they did not tell us what they expected us to say. There wasn't pressure in that sense. But you certainly had to make sure that your analysis was on target and that you were very precise in the words that you used. So in many ways they forced us to be better analysts because you couldn't walk in and say something that was not well grounded. That might be interpreted as pressure, but in some ways I thought they actually made us do our jobs better. I had many discussions with some of these folks in OSD about this issue and they thought I was wrong . . . but they never said change your position or don't say this."

A. Allegations of Influence

(U) Committee staff interviewed several individuals in response to allegations of influence.

1. CIA Ombudsman for Politicization

(U) Committee staff received a briefing from and questioned the CIA Ombudsman for Politicization regarding a complaint made by a CIA analyst about an intelligence product, *Iraq and al-Qaida: Interpreting a Murky Relationship*. The CIA created the position of Ombudsman for Politicization in 1992 to respond to alleged issues of politicization and analytic distortion. According to the Ombudsman's Charter, the position serves as an "independent, informal, and confidential counselor for those who have complaints about politicization, biased reporting, or the lack of objective analysis." The Ombudsman reports directly to the Director of Central Intelligence.

(U) The CIA Ombudsman for Politicization received a confidential complaint five days after the publication of *Iraq and al-Qaida: Interpreting a Murky Relationship*, which claimed that the Office of Terrorism Analysis (OTA) product did not reflect the Office of Analysis for the Near East and South Asia's (NESA) views. According to the Ombudsman, the complainant expressed concern that the product was misleading and did not make it clear that it was an

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uncoordinated product that did not reflect the NESA's views and assessments. The complaint was made verbally to the Ombudsman and no written report was created. Therefore, Committee staff interviewed the Ombudsman about the incident. Committee staff later interviewed CIA analysts and their managers regarding this product and whether or not the issue in question had been resolved. Committee staff also discussed this product with the Deputy Director for Intelligence (DDI).

(U) In response to the complaint, the Ombudsman launched a formal investigation. In a briefing to Committee staff, the Ombudsman stated that "the operational role maintained by OTA reasonably resulted in a different and less cautious approach than that employed by NESA analysts." Thus, the Ombudsman believed complaints about the document reflected differences inherent in the operational exploitation of intelligence information versus traditional analysis employed by regional intelligence divisions. Following the investigation, the Ombudsman concluded that the OTA analysis was not incorrect or flawed, and that it "did not compromise, politicize, and/or alter intelligence reporting." The NESA has since stated that it agrees with the Ombudsman's assessment noted earlier that complaints about the document reflected differences inherent in the operational exploitation of intelligence information versus traditional analysis employed by regional intelligence analysts.

(U) The Committee questioned the Ombudsman as to whether the analysts he had interviewed during his investigation had indicated that they were pressured to change their analysis. He stated that he spoke with approximately 24 individuals with regard to this issue, and "about half a dozen mentioned 'pressure' from the Administration; several others did not use that word, but spoke in a context that implied it." Furthermore, "Only one or two specified the repeated questions, but [he] believe[d] that was often the general implication."

(U) In responses to questions submitted subsequent to the Ombudsman's first briefing to Committee staff, the Ombudsman stated that several analysts felt that the constant questions and requests to reexamine the issue of Iraq's links to terrorism was unreasonable and took away from their valuable analytic time. Other analysts the Ombudsman spoke with disagreed and believed the questioning was reasonable, especially since the questions led the analysts to find information they had initially missed. The Ombudsman also spoke with policy support staff, who are responsible for delivering the CIA's analysis to policymakers. Several of the policy support staff that were interviewed by the Ombudsman indicated that they thought the questioning was reasonable, and said that the CIA's initial answers to the questions on Iraq's links to al-Qaida seemed "reflexive, pat and inadequate, with little sense of serious digging to examine all aspects of the issue."

(U) The Ombudsman indicated that he tried to ask everyone he interviewed whether they felt pressured to take their analysis to a place they were not comfortable with, and that in every case, the answer was an emphatic negative. The Ombudsman stated that he believed most interpreted his question to mean internal pressure, but that regarding his responsibility, this was the critical question he needed answered.

(U) Committee staff also spoke with the CIA's DDI about her views on the production of *Iraq and al-Qaida: Interpreting a Murky Relationship* and how the Ombudsman handled its investigation. She expanded on the Ombudsman's findings, describing a shift in the office primarily responsible for terrorism analysis as a factor in the complaint. She stated,

> . . . what we had was an office that had traditionally made all of the calls on terrorism, NESA, because there was a very small presence of analysts in CTC prior to 9/11. When I became DDI[,] I thought there was too much back and forth on who was ultimately responsible for making definitive calls. Since we had 240 analysts in the Office of Terrorism Analysis, I thought the primacy on making a call relevant to terrorism was theirs. The differences that developed between the two offices were partially because I was in the process of shifting primacy of the call. It was an issue of not taking a scope note in its totality and hurt feelings that resulted as a result of that – not good issues, regardless, but not politicization.

2. Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy and "Alternative Analysis"

(U) Committee staff also conducted interviews with IC analysts regarding their interaction with staffers from the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (OUSDP), particularly in the coordination of the September 2002 version of *Iraqi Support for Terrorism*. Committee staff interviewed two managers from the CIA who were present at a briefing to the DCI by the two OUSDP staffers, and at the coordination meeting the staff participated in 5 days later. Committee staff also interviewed a CIA analyst, two National Security Agency (NSA) analysts and two DIA analysts who participated in the coordination meeting, and submitted written questions to a third DIA analyst.

(U) Independent of the IC review of potential Iraqi links to terrorism, the OUSDP established a team (some of whom were intelligence analysts loaned to OUSDP from DIA) responsible for studying "the policy implications of relationships among terrorist groups and their sources of support." Over the next several months, the team reviewed the CTC's *Iraq and al-Qaida: Interpreting a Murky Relationship* and other intelligence reporting. As the Under

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Secretary of Defense for Policy stated, "in the course of reviewing old stuff [the team] found some things that looked very interesting in the year 2002 that apparently didn't register with people or were not given great prominence either at the time or in the more recent work." The OUSDP staffers created a set of briefing slides in the summer of 2002 that criticized the IC for missing links between Iraq and al-Qaida. After reviewing the briefing slides, the Committee submitted questions to the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy. In response, OUSDP provided answers to the questions including a list of cited intelligence reports and a list of suggested additions to *Iraqi Support for Terrorism*.

(U) The OUSDP staffers presented their briefing to the Secretary of Defense in early August 2002. The Secretary asked them to provide the same briefing to the DCI. On August 15, 2002, the DCI received the briefing with little discussion. However, the DCI requested that the OUSDP staffers to speak with the CTC and NESA experts on Iraq and terrorism. The OUSDP staffers also presented their briefing to members of the National Security Council and staffers from the Office of the Vice President in October 2002.

(U) To continue ongoing work on a new, broader assessment of Iraq's links to terrorism, analysts from the CTC, NESA, National Security Agency (NSA), and DIA met on August 20, 2002.[55] Based on the DCI's previous invitation the OSD-P staffers also participated in the coordination meeting. While the DCI invited the staffers to speak to his experts, the Director of NESA (who chaired the August 20, 2002 meeting) could not recall who specifically invited the OUSDP staffers to participate in the coordination meeting. Although IC analysts considered the attendance of OUSDP staffers at the meeting unusual, all of the meeting attendees interviewed by the Committee staff (eight of the twelve individuals) agreed that the OUSDP staffers were not given special treatment and their attendance contributed to a frank exchange of opinions. Analysts explained to Committee staff that members of an intelligence consumer organization such as OUSDP normally do not participate in the creation of intelligence products. The Committee asked for a draft of the September 2002 version of Iraqi Support for Terrorism intending to determine what OUSDP changes were incorporated into it. The DCI declined to provide such a draft to the Committee " . . . as we regard such documents as internal working papers." The Committee subsequently submitted a formal request that the CIA explain which items suggested by OUSDP were incorporated into the assessment. CIA personnel explained that

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[55]In the Summer of 2002, the CTC and NESA analysts had already begun to draft *Iraqi Support for Terrorism*.

the meeting was not recorded, and there is no clear record of what was changed and at whose suggestion, so they could not provide the Committee with the information it was seeking.

(U) Each of the analysts interviewed by Committee staff specified that they were aware of the OSD staffers' presence at the August 20 meeting, thought that it was unusual, and that this was the only such coordination meeting they had attended at which policy staffers were present and participated as members of the IC would. The analysts interviewed indicated that most of the OSD staffers' concerns had to do with the use of too many caveats to the reporting, and the "tone" of the document. Each analyst, as well as the meeting's chairman, indicated the OUSDP staffer "played by IC rules" in terms of their participation. In other words, each point that was raised was discussed, debated, and incorporated only if there was agreement around the table.

B. Terrorism Pressure Conclusion

(U) **Conclusion 102. The Committee found that none of the analysts or other people interviewed by the Committee said that they were pressured to change their conclusions related to Iraq's links to terrorism. After 9/11, however, analysts were under tremendous pressure to make correct assessments, to avoid missing a credible threat, and to avoid an intelligence failure on the scale of 9/11. As a result, the Intelligence Community's assessments were bold and assertive in pointing out potential terrorist links. For instance, the June 2002 Central Intelligence Agency assessment *Iraq and al-Qaida: Interpreting a Murky Relationship* was, according to its Scope Note, "purposefully aggressive" in drawing connections between Iraq and al-Qaida in an effort to inform policymakers of the potential that such a relationship existed. All of the participants in the August 2002 coordination meeting on the September 2002 version of *Iraqi Support for Terrorism* interviewed by the Committee agreed that while some changes were made to the paper as a result of the participation of two Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy staffers, their presence did not result in changes to their analytical judgments.**

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