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Defense Agency Issues Excerpt on Iraqi Chemical Warfare Program (DIA director Jacoby clarifies press reports on agency assessment) (1290)

The Defense Department released on June 7 an unclassified excerpt of an earlier Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) study on Iraq's chemical warfare (CW) program in which it stated that there is "no reliable information on whether Iraq is producing and stockpiling chemical weapons, or where Iraq has -- or will -- establish its chemical warfare agent production facilities."

But the excerpt, drawn from a classified DIA study published in September 2002, also stated that "Iraq will develop various elements of its chemical industry to achieve self-sufficiency in producing the chemical precursors required for CW agent production." The full excerpt is based on the DIA's analysis titled: "Iraq -- Key WMD Facilities -- An Operational Support Study."

The official unclassified excerpt was leaked to the media on June 6. Navy Admiral Lowell Jacoby, director of the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), stepped forward the same day to clarify his agency's 2002 assessment of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, saying "DIA joined in the intelligence community assessment ... that they had a weapons of mass destruction program in place."

Jacoby made his remarks during a media availability on Capitol Hill at the invitation of Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) Chairman John Warner (Republican, Virginia) following a closed hearing on the missions of the 75th Exploitation Task Force and the Iraq Survey Group -- both of which are involved in the search for information relating to Iraq's WMD. Warner said Jacoby's clarification -- first made during the closed committee session -- had interest to the public at large.

Jacoby was responding to questions raised after the June 6 press reports suggesting that in the lead-up to policy decisions about Iraqi weapons capabilities, the DIA found there was no reliable information that Iraq was producing and stockpiling chemical weapons. The DIA director said the quote appearing in media reporting was actually a single sentence lifted out of a much longer planning document.

"It talks about the fact that at the time, in September 2002, we could not specifically pin down individual facilities operating as part of the weapons of mass destruction programs, specifically, the chemical

warfare portion," he said, according to an unofficial transcript of the exchange with reporters. "It is not, in any way, intended to portray the fact that we had doubts that such a program existed ... was active, or ... was part of the Iraqi WMD infrastructure" Jacoby added.

"We did not have doubts about the existence of the program," the director said. As of September 2002, he continued, "we could not reliably pin down, for somebody who was doing contingency planning, specific facilities, locations or production that was underway at a specific location at that point in time."

Asked if additional information surfaced about Iraq after September, Jacoby said: "there was (a) continuing flow of information coming in to us for analysis and assessment during that whole period."

Prior to Jacoby's clarification, media reporting about the DIA study fueled a brewing controversy by suggesting that elements of the Bush administration may have shaded or exaggerated existing intelligence about Iraq's WMD programs to gain support for the war in 2003.

Warner urged people to trust the administration "as we go forward to search out" answers about Iraq's WMD capabilities. "I would hope we would have the opportunity to have public hearings to dispel whatever doubts remain," he said.

Warner went on to emphasize that committee members will draw their conclusions about the reliability of the intelligence "only after a very careful and methodical review of material, evidence of all types, and testimony from a wide range of individuals.

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman General Richard Myers made remarks to reporters on June 5 during a media stakeout following a meeting with House Intelligence Committee members. Rumsfeld endorsed existing intelligence about Iraq and said that he believes "that the presentation (to the United Nations) made by Secretary Powell (February 5) was accurate and will be proved to be accurate."

Following is the unclassified excerpt of the 2002 DIA study:

(begin excerpt)

A substantial amount of Iraq's chemical warfare agents, precursors, munitions, and production equipment were destroyed between 1991 and 1998 as a result of Operation Desert Storm and UNSCOM (United Nations Special Commission) actions. Nevertheless, we believe Iraq retained production equipment, expertise and chemical precursors and can reconstitute a chemical warfare program in the absence of an

international inspection regime. Iraq's successful use of chemical weapons in the past against Iranian troops and Kurdish civilians increases the likelihood of a chemical warfare reconstitution. Iraq has not signed the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).

There is no reliable information on whether Iraq is producing and stockpiling chemical weapons, or where Iraq has -- or will -- establish its chemical warfare agent production facilities. Unusual munitions transfer activity in mid-2002 suggests that Iraq is distributing CW munitions in preparation for an anticipated U.S. attack. Iraq retains all the chemicals and equipment to produce the blister agent mustard but its ability for sustained production of G-series nerve agents and VX is constrained by its stockpile of key chemical precursors and by the destruction of all known CW production facilities during Operation Desert Storm and during subsequent UNSCOM inspections. In the absence of external aid, Iraq will likely experience difficulties in producing nerve agents at the rate executed before Operation Desert Storm.

Iraq is steadily establishing a dual use industrial chemical infrastructure that provides some of the building blocks necessary for production of chemical agents. In addition, Iraq has renovated and added production lines at two facilities formerly associated with Baghdad's chemical warfare program -- Habbaniyah I and Habbaniyah II. Activities include building reconstruction, salvage operations, and equipment movement and deliveries in the months that followed the 1998 expulsion of United Nations inspectors. Baghdad is rebuilding portions of its chemical production infrastructure under the guise of a civilian need for pesticides, chlorine, and other legitimate chemical products, giving Iraq the potential for a small "breakout" production capability.

Although we lack any direction information, Iraq probably possesses CW agent in chemical munitions, possibly including artillery rockets, artillery shells, aerial bombs, and ballistic missile warheads. Baghdad also probably possesses bulk chemical stockpiles, primarily containing precursors, but that also could consist of some mustard agent or stabilized VX.

Iraqi doctrine for the use of chemical weapons evolved during the Iran-Iraq war, and was fully incorporated into Iraqi offensive operations by the end of the war in 1988. Iraq demonstrated its ability to use chemical weapons during that conflict in the following roles: in a defensive role to disrupt or halt an overwhelming enemy offensive; as a preemptive weapon to disrupt staging areas before an offensive attack; and as an offensive weapon during well-staged attacks to regain territory. Authority for use of chemical weapons during that war eventually became delegated to corps commanders. The Iraqis delivered chemical agents with artillery, multiple rocket

launchers, mortars, and aerial bombs dropped by fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters. Iraq also used chemical agents against Kurdish civilians in 1988. Historical precedent suggests Saddam already may have deployed chemical weapons to western Iraq, as he did during Operation Desert Storm to be used against Israel in the event of coalition military action that threatens the regime.

Iraq will develop various elements of its chemical industry to achieve self-sufficiency in producing the chemical precursors required for CW agent production. Iraq might construct a new dedicated CW facility or facilities at remote sites to avoid detection or, alternatively, upgrade the production capabilities at its Habbaniyah I and II facilities to produce the agent mustard and binary components necessary for the production of nerve agents.

(end excerpt)

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