

INTELLIGENCE

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II. NIGER

A. The Original Niger Reporting

() Reporting on a possible uranium yellowcakes⁵ sales agreement between Niger and Iraq first came to the attention of the U.S. Intelligence Community (IC) on October 15, 2001. The Central Intelligence Agency's (CIA) Directorate of Operations (DO) issued an intelligence report DELETED from a foreign government service indicating that Niger planned to ship several tons of uranium to Iraq DELETED. The intelligence report said the uranium sales agreement had been in negotiation between the two countries since at least early 1999, and was approved by the State Court of Niger in late 2000. According to the cable, Nigerien President Mamadou Tandja gave his stamp of approval for the agreement and communicated his decision to Iraqi President Saddam Hussein. The report also indicated that in October 2000 Nigerien Minister of Foreign Affairs Nassirou Sabo informed one of his ambassadors in Europe that Niger had concluded an accord to provide several tons of uranium to Iraq.

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(U) At the time, all IC analysts interviewed by Committee staff considered this initial report to be very limited and lacking needed detail. CIA, Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) and Department of Energy (DOE) analysts considered the reporting to be "possible" while the Department of State's Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR) regarded the report as "highly suspect," primarily because INR analysts did not believe that Niger would be likely to engage in such a transaction and did not believe Niger would be able to transfer uranium to Iraq because a French consortium maintained control of the Nigerien uranium industry.

(U) Only the CIA wrote a finished intelligence product on the report (Senior Executive Intelligence Brief [SEIB], *Iraq: Nuclear-Related Procurement Efforts*, October 18, 2001). Regarding the Niger reporting the SEIB said:

According to a foreign government service, Niger as of early this year planned to send several tons of uranium to Iraq under an agreement concluded late last year. Iraq and Niger had been negotiating the shipment since at least early 1999, but the state court of Niger only this year approved it, according to the service.

- There is no corroboration from other sources that such an agreement was reached or that uranium was transferred.
- United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 687 prohibits Iraq from purchasing uranium, although the transfer would not require the application of safeguards.

In view of the origin, the uranium probably is in the form of yellowcake and will need further processing to be used in an uranium enrichment plant. Iraq has no known facilities for processing or enriching the material.

- The quantity of yellowcake to be transferred could support the enrichment of enough uranium for at least one nuclear weapon.

() On November 20, 2001, U.S. Embassy Niamey disseminated a cable on a recent meeting between the ambassador and the Director General of Niger's French-led consortium. The Director General said "there was no possibility" that the government of Niger had diverted any of the 3,000 tons of yellowcake produced in its two uranium mines.

() Reporting on the uranium transaction did not surface again until February 5, 2002 when the CIA's DO issued a second intelligence report DELETED which again cited the source as a "[foreign] government service." Although not identified in the report, this source was also from the foreign service. The second report provided more details about the previously reported Iraq-Niger uranium agreement and provided what was said to be "verbatim text" of the accord.

() SENTENCE DELETED Subsequently, the governments of Niger and Iraq signed an agreement regarding the sale of uranium during meetings held July 5-6, 2000. The report indicated that 500 tons of uranium per year SENTENCE DELETED

() IC analysts at the CIA and the DIA were more impressed with the detail and substance of the second report. One analyst noted that the report provided much more information than they had seen previously in similar reporting about alleged uranium transactions to other countries. INR analysts continued to doubt the accuracy of the reporting, again because they thought Niger would be unwilling and unable to sell uranium to Iraq and because they thought Iraq would be unlikely to risk such a transaction when they were "bound to be caught." Because of these doubts, an INR analyst asked the CIA whether the source of the report could submit to a polygraph. SENTENCE DELETED A CIA analyst also inquired about the source and says he was told by the CIA's DO that the report was from a "very credible source."

() Several analysts interviewed by Committee staff also pointed out that information in the second intelligence report matched v reporting from 1999 which showed that an Algerian businessman, Baraka, was arranging a trip for the Iraqi Ambassador to the Vatican, Wissam al-Zahawi, to visit Niger and other African countries in early February 1999. SENTENCE DELETED

() Based on information from the CIA report from the foreign service, on February 12, 2002, the DIA wrote a finished intelligence product titled *Niamey signed an agreement to sell 500 tons of uranium a year to Baghdad* (NMJIC [National Military Joint Intelligence Center] Executive Highlight, Vol 028-02, February 12, 2002). The product outlined the details in the DO intelligence report, namely, that Niger had agreed to deliver 500 tons of yellowcake uranium to Iraq . The piece concluded that "Iraq probably is searching abroad for natural uranium to assist in its nuclear weapons program." The product did not include any judgments about the credibility of the reporting.

() After reading the DIA report, the Vice President asked his morning briefer for the CIA's analysis of the issue. In response, the Director of Central Intelligence's (DCI) Center for Weapons Intelligence, Nonproliferation, and Arms Control (WINPAC) published a Senior Publish When Ready (SPWR021402-05), an intelligence assessment with limited distribution, which said, "information on the alleged uranium contract between Iraq and Niger comes exclusively from a foreign government service report that lacks crucial details, and we are working to clarify the information and to determine whether it can be corroborated." The piece discussed the details of the DO intelligence report and indicated that "some of the information in the report contradicts reporting from the U.S. Embassy in Niamey. U.S. diplomats say the French Government-led consortium that operates Niger's two uranium mines maintains complete control over uranium mining and yellowcake production." The CIA sent a separate version of the assessment to the Vice President which differed only in that it named the foreign government service

footnotes

⁵ Yellowcake is extracted from uranium ore through a milling and solvent extraction process. Yellowcake requires further processing before it can be used as reactor fuel or in a nuclear weapon.

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