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INTELLIGENCE

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B. Former Ambassador

() Officials from the CIA's DO Counterproliferation Division (CPD) told Committee staff that in response to questions from the Vice President's Office and the Departments of State and Defense on the alleged Iraq-Niger uranium deal, CPD officials discussed ways to obtain additional information. who could make immediate inquiries into the reporting, CPD decided to contact a former ambassador to Gabon who had a posting early in his career in Niger.

() Some CPD officials could not recall how the office decided to contact the former ambassador, however, interviews and documents provided to the Committee indicate that his wife, a CPD employee, suggested his name for the trip. The CPD reports officer told Committee staff that the former ambassador's wife "offered up his name" and a memorandum to the Deputy Chief of the CPD on February 12, 2002, from the former ambassador's wife says, "my husband has good relations with both the PM [prime minister] and the former Minister of Mines (not to mention lots of French contacts), both of whom could possibly shed light on this sort of activity." This was just one day before CPD sent a cable DELETED requesting concurrence with CPD's idea to send the former ambassador to Niger and requesting any additional information from the foreign government service on their uranium reports. The former ambassador's wife told Committee staff that when CPD decided it would like to send the former ambassador to Niger, she approached her husband on behalf of the CIA and told him "there's this crazy report" on a purported deal for Niger to sell uranium to Iraq.

() The former ambassador had traveled previously to Niger on the CIA's behalf . The former ambassador was selected for the 1999 trip after his wife mentioned to her supervisors that her husband was planning a business trip to Niger in the near future and might be willing to use his contacts in the region . Because the former ambassador did not uncover any information about DELETED during this visit to Niger, CPD did not distribute an intelligence report on the visit.

(U) On February 18, 2002, the embassy in Niger disseminated a cable which reported that the alleged Iraq-Niger uranium deal "provides sufficient detail to warrant another hard look at Niger's uranium sales. The names of GON [government of Niger] officials cited in the report track closely with those we know to be in those, or closely-related positions. However, the purported 4,000-ton annual production listed is fully 1,000 tons more than the mining companies claim to have produced in 2001." The report indicated that the ambassador had met with the Nigerien Foreign Minister to ask for an unequivocal assurance that Niger had stuck to its commitment not to sell uranium to rogue states. The cable also noted that in September 2001 the Nigerien Prime Minister had told embassy personnel that there were buyers like Iraq who would pay more for Niger's uranium than France, but the Prime Minister added, "of course Niger cannot sell to them." The cable concluded that despite previous assurances from Nigerien officials that no uranium would be sold to rogue nations, "we should not dismiss out of hand the possibility that some scheme could be, or has been, underway to supply Iraq with yellowcake from here." The cable also suggested raising the issue with the French, who control the uranium mines in Niger, despite France's solid assurances that no uranium could be diverted to rogue states.

(U) On February 19, 2002, CPD hosted a meeting with the former ambassador, intelligence analysts from both the CIA and INR, and several individuals from the DO's Africa and CPD divisions. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the merits of the former ambassador traveling to Niger. An INR analyst's notes indicate that the meeting was "apparently convened by [the former ambassador's] wife who had the idea to dispatch [him] to use his contacts to sort out the Iraq-Niger uranium issue." The former ambassador's wife told Committee staff that she only attended the meeting to introduce her husband and left after about three minutes.

(U) The INR analyst's meeting notes and electronic mail (e-mail) from other participants indicate that INR explained its skepticism that the alleged uranium contract could possibly be carried out due to the fact that it would be very difficult to hide such a large shipment of yellowcake and because "the French appear to have control of the uranium mining, milling and transport process, and would seem to have little interest in selling uranium to the Iraqis." The notes also indicate that INR believed that the embassy in Niger had good contacts and would be able to get to the truth on the uranium issue, suggesting a visit from the former ambassador would be redundant. Other meeting participants argued that the trip would do little to clarify the story on the alleged uranium deal because the Nigeriens would be unlikely to admit to a uranium sales agreement with Iraq, even if one had been negotiated. An e-mail from a WINPAC analyst to CPD following the meeting noted "it appears that the results from this source will be suspect at best, and not believable under most scenarios." CPD concluded that with no other options, sending the former ambassador to Niger was worth a try.

(U) The INR analyst's notes also indicate that specific details of the classified report on the Iraq-Niger uranium deal were discussed at the meeting, as well as whether analysts believed it was plausible that Niger would be capable of delivering such a large quantity of uranium to Iraq. The CIA has told Committee staff that the former ambassador did not have a "formal" security clearance but had been given an "operational clearance" up to the Secret level for the purposes of his potential visit to Niger.

() On February 20, 2002, CPD provided the former ambassador with talking points for his use with contacts in Niger. The talking points were general, asking officials if Niger had been approached, conducted discussions, or entered into any agreements concerning uranium transfers with any "countries of concern" . The talking points also focused on whether any uranium might be missing from Niger or might have been transferred and asked how Niger accounts for all of its uranium each year. The talking points did not refer to the specific reporting on the alleged Iraq-Niger uranium deal, did not mention names or dates from the reporting, and did not mention that there was any such deal being reported in intelligence channels. DO officials told Committee staff that they promised the former ambassador that they would keep his relationship with CIA confidential, but did not ask the former ambassador to do the same and did not ask him to sign a confidentiality or non-disclosure agreement. The former ambassador left for Niger on February 21, 2002.

(U) On February 24, 2002, the U.S. Embassy in Niamey disseminated a cable (NIAMEY 000262) describing a meeting between the U.S. Ambassador to Niger, Barbro Owens-Kirkpatrick, Deputy Commander, European Command, General Carlton Fulford, Niger's President, Mamadou Tandja and Foreign Minister Aichatou Mindaoudou. General Fulford had previously scheduled a routine refueling stop and brief meeting with Nigerien officials at the request of Ambassador Owens-Kirkpatrick. Ambassador Owens-Kirkpatrick told Committee staff that she routinely encouraged visitors to Western Africa to make refueling stops in Niger. She said "when you are assigned to a place like Niger, which is not exactly the center of the universe . . . you take everything you can get. And I worked very hard to make Niger the best refueling stop in Africa." When the Iraq-Niger uranium reporting surfaced in early February, Ambassador Owens-Kirkpatrick decided to ask General Fulford to use the previously scheduled meeting to raise the uranium issue with Nigerien officials. Ambassador Owens-Kirkpatrick prepared talking points for General Fulford to use during his visit and the CIA coordinated on the talking points.

() At the meeting, Nigerien President Tandja assured the ambassador and General Fulford that Niger's goal was to keep its uranium "in safe hands" He . In the comment section of the cable, the embassy noted that in the past, "previous Nigerien governments have suggested that the best way the [U.S. government] could keep Niger's uranium from the wrong hands" was for the U.S. to purchase it. Ambassador Owens-Kirkpatrick told Committee staff that during her meetings with Nigerien officials, she never asked whether the officials had been approached by any countries to purchase uranium. She said, "we raised the issue in more general terms rather than specifics."

(U) On February 26, 2002, the former ambassador arrived in Niger. He told Committee staff that he first met with Ambassador Owens-Kirkpatrick to discuss his upcoming meetings. Ambassador Owens-Kirkpatrick asked him not to meet with current Nigerien officials because she believed it might complicate her continuing diplomatic efforts with them on the uranium issue. The former ambassador agreed to restrict his meetings to former officials and the private sector.

() The former ambassador told Committee staff that he met with the former Nigerien Prime Minister, the former Minister of Mines and Energy, and other business contacts. At the end of his visit, he debriefed Ambassador Owens-Kirkpatrick , Chad. He told Committee staff that he had told both U.S. officials he thought there was "nothing to the story." Ambassador Owens-Kirkpatrick told Committee staff she recalled the former ambassador saying "he had reached the same conclusions that the embassy had reached, that it was highly unlikely that anything was going on."

(U) On March 1, 2002, INR published an intelligence assessment, *Niger: Sale of Uranium to Iraq Is Unlikely*. The INR analyst who drafted the assessment told Committee staff that he had been told that the piece was in response to interest from the Vice President's office in the alleged Iraq-Niger uranium deal. The assessment reiterated INR's view that France controlled the uranium industry and "would take action to block a sale of the kind alleged in a CIA report of questionable credibility from a foreign government service." The assessment added that "some officials may have conspired for individual gain to arrange a uranium sale," but considered President Tandja's government unlikely to risk relations with the U.S. and other key aid donors. In

a written response to a question from Committee staff on this matter, the Department of State said the assessment was distributed through the routine distribution process in which intelligence documents are delivered to the White House situation room, but State did not provide the assessment directly to the Vice President in a special delivery.

() In early March 2002, the Vice President asked his morning briefer for an update on the Niger uranium issue. In response, on March 5, 2002, WINPAC analysts sent an analytic update to the briefer which noted that the government of Niger said it was making all efforts to ensure that its uranium would be used for only peaceful purposes. The update said the foreign government service that provided the original report "was unable to provide new information, but continues to assess that its source is reliable." The update also noted that the CIA would "be debriefing a source who may have information related to the alleged sale on March 5."

(U) Later that day, two CIA DO officers debriefed the former ambassador who had returned from Niger the previous day. The debriefing took place in the former ambassador's home and although his wife was there, according to the reports officer, she acted as a hostess and did not participate in the debrief. Based on information provided verbally by the former ambassador, the DO case officer wrote a draft intelligence report and sent it to the DO reports officer who added additional relevant information from his notes.

(U) The intelligence report based on the former ambassador's trip was disseminated on March 8, 2002. The report did not identify the former ambassador by name or as a former ambassador, but described him as "a contact with excellent access who does not have an established reporting record." The report also indicted that the "subsources of the following information knew their remarks could reach the U.S. government and may have intended to influence as well as inform." DO officials told Committee staff that this type of description was routine and was done in order to protect the former ambassador as the source of the information, which they had told him they would do. DO officials also said they alerted WINPAC analysts when the report was being disseminated because they knew the "high priority of the issue." The report was widely distributed in routine channels.

() The intelligence report indicated that former Nigerien Prime Minister Ibrahim Mayaki was unaware of any contracts that had been signed between Niger and any rogue states for the sale of yellowcake while he was Prime Minister (1997-1999) or Foreign Minister (1996-1997). Mayaki said that if there had been any such contract during his tenure, he would have been aware of it. Mayaki said, however, that in June 1999, () businessman, approached him and insisted that Mayaki meet with an Iraqi delegation to discuss "expanding commercial relations" between Niger and Iraq. The intelligence report said that Mayaki interpreted "expanding commercial relations" to mean that the delegation wanted to discuss uranium yellowcake sales. The intelligence report also said that "although the meeting took place, Mayaki let the matter drop due to the UN sanctions on Iraq."

() The intelligence report also said that Nicer's former Minister for Energy and Mines (), Mai Manga, stated that there were no sales outside of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) channels since the mid-1980s. He knew of no contracts signed between Niger and any rogue states for the sale of uranium. He said that an Iranian delegation was interested in purchasing 400 tons of yellowcake from Niger in 1998, but said that no contract was ever signed with Iran. Mai Manga also described how the French mining consortium controls Nigerien uranium mining and keeps the uranium very tightly controlled from the time it is mined until the time it is loaded onto ships in Benin for transport overseas. Mai Manga believed it would be difficult, if not impossible, to arrange a special shipment of uranium to a pariah state given these controls.

(U) In an interview with Committee staff, the former ambassador was able to provide more information about the meeting between former Prime Minister Mayaki and the Iraqi delegation. The former ambassador said that Mayaki did meet with the Iraqi delegation but never discussed what was meant by "expanding commercial relations." The former ambassador said that because Mayaki was wary of discussing any trade issues with a country under United Nations (UN) sanctions, he made a successful effort to steer the conversation away from a discussion of trade with the Iraqi delegation.

() When the former ambassador spoke to Committee staff, his description of his findings differed from the DO intelligence report and his account of information provided to him by the CIA differed from the CIA officials' accounts in some respects. First, the former ambassador described his findings to Committee staff as more directly related to Iraq and, specifically, as refuting both the possibility that Niger could have sold uranium to Iraq and that Iraq approached Niger to purchase uranium. The intelligence report described how the structure of Niger's uranium mines would make it difficult, if not impossible, for Niger to sell uranium to rouge nations, and noted that Nigerien officials denied knowledge of any deals to sell uranium to any rogue states, but did not refute the possibility that Iraq had approached Niger to purchase uranium. Second, the former ambassador said that he discussed with his CIA contacts which names and signatures should have appeared on any documentation of a legitimate uranium transaction. In fact, the intelligence report made no mention of the alleged Iraq-Niger uranium deal or signatures that should have appeared on any documentation of such a deal. The only mention of Iraq in the report pertained to the meeting between the Iraqi delegation and former Prime Minister Mayaki. Third, the former ambassador noted that his CIA contacts told him there were documents pertaining to the alleged Iraq-Niger uranium transaction and that the source of the information was the intelligence service. The DO reports officer told Committee staff that he did not provide the former ambassador with any information about the source or details of the original reporting as it would have required sharing classified information and,

noted that there were no "documents" circulating in the IC at the time of the former ambassador's trip, only intelligence reports from intelligence regarding an alleged Iraq-Niger uranium deal. Meeting notes and other correspondence show that details of the reporting were discussed at the February 19, 2002 meeting, but none of the meeting participants recall telling the former ambassador the source of the report

(U) The former ambassador also told Committee staff that he was the source of a *Washington Post* article ("CIA Did Not Share Doubt on Iraq Data; Bush Used Report of Uranium Bid," June 12, 2003) which said, "among the Envoy's conclusions was that the documents may have been forged because `the dates were wrong and the names were wrong.'" Committee staff asked how the former ambassador could have come to the conclusion that the "dates were wrong and the names were wrong" when he had never seen the CIA reports and had no knowledge of what names and dates were in the reports. The former ambassador said that he may have "misspoken" to the reporter when he said he concluded the documents were "forged." He also said he may have become confused about his own recollection after the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) reported in March 2003 that the names and dates on the documents were not correct and may have thought he had seen the names himself. The former ambassador reiterated that he had been able to collect the names of the government officials which should have been on the documents.

(U) The former ambassador told Committee staff that he had no direct knowledge of how the information he provided was handled by the CIA, but, based on his previous government experience, he believed that the report would have been distributed to the White House and that the Vice President received a direct response to his question about the possible uranium deal. He said,

"Whether or not there was a specific response to the specific question the Vice President asked I don't know for a fact, other than to know, having checked with my own memory when I was in the White House at the National Security Council . . . any time an official who is senior enough to ask that question, that official was, senior enough to have a very specific response. The question then becomes whether the response came back as a telephone call, a non-paper - in other words, talking points - or orally briefed, or a specific cable in addition to the more general report that is circulated."

() The CIA's DO gave the former ambassador's information a grade of "good," which means that it added to the IC's body of understanding on the issue, (). The possible grades are unsatisfactory, satisfactory, good, excellent, and outstanding, which, according to the Deputy Chief of CPD, are very subjective. SENTENCE DELETED The reports officer said that a "good" grade was merited because the information responded to at least some of the outstanding questions in the Intelligence Community, but did not provide substantial new information. He said he judged that the most important fact in the report was that the Nigerien officials admitted that the Iraqi delegation had traveled there in 1999, and that the Nigerien Prime Minister believed the Iraqis were interested in purchasing uranium, because this provided some confirmation of foreign government service reporting.

(U) IC analysts had a fairly consistent response to the intelligence report based on the former ambassador's trip in that no one believed it added a great deal of new information to the Iraq-Niger uranium story. An INR analyst said when he saw the report he believed that it corroborated the INR's position, but said that the "report could be read in different ways." He said the report was credible, but did not give it a lot of attention because he was busy with other things.

(U) DIA and CIA analysts said that when they saw the intelligence report they did not believe that it supplied much new information and did not think that it clarified the story on the alleged Iraq-Niger uranium deal. They did not find Nigerien denials that they had discussed uranium sales with Iraq as very surprising because they had no expectation that Niger would admit to such an agreement if it did exist. The analysts did, however, find it interesting that the former Nigerien Prime Minister said an Iraqi delegation had visited Niger for what he believed was to discuss uranium sales.

(U) Because CIA analysts did not believe that the report added any new information to clarify the issue, they did not use the report to produce any further analytical products or highlight the report for policymakers. For the same reason, CIA's briefer did not brief the Vice President on the report, despite the Vice President's previous questions about the issue.

() On March 25, 2002, the DO issued a third and final intelligence report from the same "[foreign] government service." The report said that the 2000 agreement by Niger to provide uranium to Iraq specified that 500 tons of uranium per year would be delivered in

() As in the two previous reports, the government service was not identified as the foreign government service. The foreign government service did not provide the DO with information about its source and the DO, to date, remains uncertain as to how the foreign government service collected the information in the three intelligence reports. There were no obvious inconsistencies in the names of officials mentioned or the dates of the transactions in any of the three reports. Of the seven names mentioned in the reporting, two were former high ranking officials who were the individuals in the positions described in the reports at the time

described and five were lower ranking officials. Of the five lower ranking, two were not the individuals in the positions described in the reports, however, these do not appear to be names or positions with which intelligence analysts would have been familiar. For example, an INR analyst who had recently returned from a position as Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy in Niger told Committee staff that he did not notice any inconsistencies with the names of the officials mentioned. The only mistake in any of the reports regarding dates, is that one date, July 7, 2000, is said to be a Wednesday in the report, but was actually a Friday.

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