

Investigative Report

Saddam's WMD Have Been Found

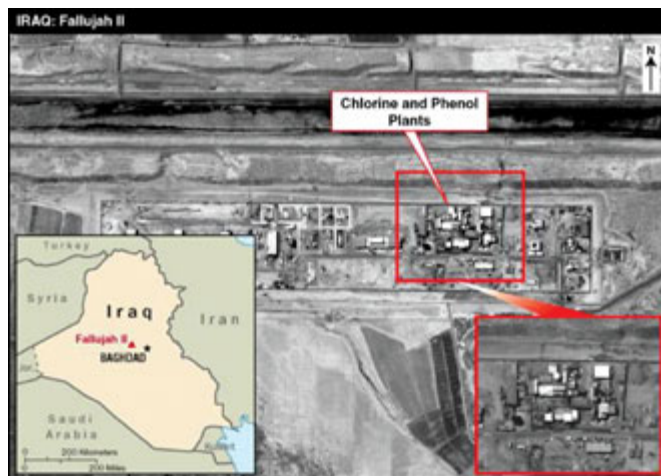
Post April 26, 2004

[By Kenneth R. Timmerman](#)

New evidence out of Iraq suggests that the U.S. effort to track down Saddam Hussein's missing weapons of mass destruction (WMD) is having better success than is being reported. Key assertions by the intelligence community that were widely judged in the media and by critics of President George W. Bush as having been false are turning out to have been true after all. But this stunning news has received little attention from the major media, and the president's critics continue to insist that "no weapons" have been found.

In virtually every case - chemical, biological, nuclear and ballistic missiles - the United States has found the weapons and the programs that the Iraqi dictator successfully concealed for 12 years from U.N. weapons inspectors.

The Iraq Survey Group (ISG), whose intelligence analysts are managed by Charles Duelfer, a former State Department official and deputy chief of the U.N.-led arms-inspection teams, has found "hundreds of cases of activities that were prohibited" under U.N. Security Council resolutions, a senior administration official tells Insight. "There is a long list of charges made by the U.S. that have been confirmed, but none of this seems to mean anything because the weapons that were unaccounted for by the United Nations remain unaccounted for."



Both Duelfer and his predecessor, David Kay, reported to Congress that the evidence they had found on the ground in Iraq showed Saddam's regime was in "material violation" of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1441, the last of 17 resolutions that promised "serious consequences" if Iraq did not make a complete disclosure of its weapons programs and dismantle them in a verifiable manner. The United States cited Iraq's refusal to comply with these demands as one justification for going to war.

Both Duelfer and Kay found that Iraq had "a clandestine network of laboratories and safe houses with equipment that was suitable to continuing its prohibited chemical- and biological-weapons [BW] programs," the official said. "They found a prison laboratory where we suspect they tested biological weapons on human subjects." They found equipment for "uranium-enrichment centrifuges" whose only plausible

use was as part of a clandestine nuclear-weapons program. In all these cases, "Iraqi scientists had been told before the war not to declare their activities to the U.N. inspectors," the official said.

But while the president's critics and the media might plausibly hide behind ambiguity and a lack of sensational-

looking finds for not reporting some discoveries, in the case of Saddam's ballistic-missile programs they have no excuse for their silence. "Where were the missiles? We found them," another senior administration official told Insight.

"Saddam Hussein's prohibited missile programs are as close to a slam dunk as you will ever find for violating United Nations resolutions," the first official said. Both senior administration officials spoke to Insight on condition that neither their name nor their agency be identified, but their accounts of what the United States has found in Iraq coincided in every major area.

When former weapons inspector Kay reported to Congress in January that the United States had found "no stockpiles" of forbidden weapons in Iraq, his conclusions made front-page news. But when he detailed what the ISG had found in testimony before the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence last October, few took notice. Among Kay's revelations, which officials tell Insight have been amplified in subsequent inspections in recent weeks:

- A prison laboratory complex that may have been used for human testing of BW agents and "that Iraqi officials working to prepare the U.N. inspections were explicitly ordered not to declare to the U.N." Why was Saddam interested in testing biological-warfare agents on humans if he didn't have a biological-weapons program?
- "Reference strains" of a wide variety of biological-weapons agents were found beneath the sink in the home of a prominent Iraqi BW scientist. "We thought it was a big deal," a senior administration official said. "But it has been written off [by the press] as a sort of 'starter set.'"
- New research on BW-applicable agents, brucella and Congo-Crimean hemorrhagic fever, and continuing work on ricin and aflatoxin that were not declared to the United Nations.
- A line of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), or drones, "not fully declared at an undeclared production facility and an admission that they had tested one of their declared UAVs out to a range of 500 kilometers [311 miles], 350 kilometers [217 miles] beyond the permissible limit."
- "Continuing covert capability to manufacture fuel propellant useful only for prohibited Scud-variant missiles, a capability that was maintained at least until the end of 2001 and that cooperating Iraqi scientists have said they were told to conceal from the U.N."

□ "Plans and advanced design work for new long-range missiles with ranges up to at least 1,000 kilometers [621 miles] - well beyond the 150-kilometer-range limit [93 miles] imposed by the U.N. Missiles of a 1,000-kilometer range would have allowed Iraq to threaten targets throughout the Middle East, including Ankara [Turkey], Cairo [Egypt] and Abu Dhabi [United Arab Emirates]."

□ In addition, through interviews with Iraqi scientists, seized documents and other evidence, the ISG learned the Iraqi government had made "clandestine attempts between late 1999 and 2002 to obtain from North Korea technology related to 1,300-kilometer-range [807 miles] ballistic missiles - probably the No Dong - 300-kilometer-range [186 miles] antiship cruise missiles and other prohibited military equipment," Kay reported.

In testimony before Congress on March 30, Duelfer, revealed that the ISG had found evidence of a "crash program" to construct new plants capable of making chemical- and biological-warfare agents. The ISG also found a previously undeclared program to build a "high-speed rail gun," a device apparently designed for testing nuclear-weapons materials. That came in addition to 500 tons of natural uranium stockpiled at Iraq's main declared nuclear site south of Baghdad, which International Atomic Energy Agency spokesman Mark Gwozdecky acknowledged to Insight had been intended for "a clandestine nuclear-weapons program."

In taking apart Iraq's clandestine procurement network, Duelfer said his investigators had discovered that "the primary source of illicit financing for this system was oil smuggling conducted through government-to-government protocols negotiated with neighboring countries [and] from kickback payments made on contracts set up through the U.N. oil-for-food program" [[see "Documents Prove U.N. Oil Corruption,"](#) April 27-May 10].

What the president's critics and the media widely have portrayed as the most dramatic failure of the U.S. case against Saddam has been the claimed failure to find "stockpiles" of chemical and biological weapons. But in a June 2003 Washington Post op-ed, former chief U.N. weapons inspector Rolf Ekeus called such criticism "a distortion and a trivialization of a major threat to international peace and security."



KENNETH R. TIMMERMAN/INSIGHT

Lt. Gen. Amer Rashid al-Obeidi (left) and Lt. Gen. Amer Hamoodi al-Saddi (right) speak to an unidentified French intelligence officer at the Baghdad International Arms Fair in April 1989, and another French officer listens in (behind al-Saddi, facing camera)

The October 2002 National Intelligence Estimate on Iraqi Weapons of Mass Destruction concluded that Saddam "probably has stocked at least 100 metric tons (MT) and possibly as much as 500 MT of CW [chemical warfare] agents - much of it added in the last year." That assessment was based, in part, on conclusions contained in the final report from U.N. weapons inspectors in 1999, which highlighted discrepancies in

what the Iraqis reported to the United Nations and the amount of precursor chemicals U.N. arms inspectors could document Iraq had imported but for which it no longer could account. Until now, Bush's critics say, no stockpiles of CW agents made with those precursors have been found. The snap conclusion they draw is that the administration "lied" to the American people to create a pretext for invading Iraq.

But what are "stockpiles" of CW agents supposed to look like? Was anyone seriously expecting Saddam to have left behind freshly painted warehouses packed with chemical munitions, all neatly laid out in serried rows, with labels written in English? Or did they think that a captured Saddam would guide U.S. troops to smoking vats full of nerve gas in an abandoned factory? In fact, as recent evidence made public by a former operations officer for the Coalition Provisional Authority's (CPA's) intelligence unit in Iraq shows, some of those stockpiles have been found - not all at once, and not all in nice working order - but found all the same.

Douglas Hanson was a U.S. Army cavalry reconnaissance officer for 20 years, and a veteran of Gulf War I. He was an atomic demolitions munitions security officer and a nuclear, biological and chemical defense officer. As a civilian analyst in Iraq last summer, he worked for an operations intelligence unit of the CPA in Iraq, and later, with the newly formed Ministry of Science and Technology, which was responsible for finding new, nonlethal employment for Iraqi WMD scientists.

In an interview with Insight and in an article he wrote for the online magazine AmericanThinker.com, Hanson examines reports from U.S. combat units and public information confirming that many of Iraq's CW stockpiles have indeed been found. Until now, however, journalists have devoted scant attention to this evidence, in part because it contradicts the story line they have been putting forward since the U.S.-led inspections began after the war.

But another reason for the media silence may stem from the seemingly undramatic nature of the "finds" Hanson and others have described. The materials that constitute Saddam's chemical-weapons "stockpiles" look an awful lot like pesticides, which they indeed resemble. "Pesticides are the key elements in the chemical-agent arena," Hanson says. "In fact, the general pesticide chemical formula (organophosphate) is the 'grandfather' of modern-day nerve agents."

The United Nations was fully aware that Saddam had established his chemical-weapons plants under the guise of a permitted civilian chemical-industry infrastructure. Plants inspected in the early 1990s as CW production facilities had been set up to appear as if they were producing pesticides - or in the case of a giant plant near Fallujah, chlorine, which is used to produce mustard gas.

When coalition forces entered Iraq, "huge warehouses and caches of 'commercial and agricultural' chemicals were seized and painstakingly tested by Army and Marine chemical specialists," Hanson writes. "What was surprising was how quickly the ISG refuted the findings of our ground forces and how silent they have been on the significance of these caches."

Caches of "commercial and agricultural" chemicals don't match the expectation of "stockpiles" of chemical weapons. But, in fact, that is precisely what they are. "At a very minimum," Hanson tells Insight, "they were storing the precursors to restart a chemical-warfare program very quickly." Kay and Duelfer came to a similar conclusion, telling Congress under oath that Saddam had built new facilities and stockpiled the materials to relaunch production of chemical and biological weapons at a moment's notice.

At Karbala, U.S. troops stumbled upon 55-gallon drums of pesticides at what appeared to be a very large "agricultural supply" area, Hanson says. Some of the drums were stored in a "camouflaged bunker complex" that was shown to reporters - with unpleasant results. "More than a dozen soldiers, a Knight-Ridder reporter, a CNN cameraman, and two Iraqi POWs came down with symptoms consistent with exposure to a nerve agent," Hanson says. "But later ISG tests resulted in a proclamation of negative, end of story, nothing to see here, etc., and the earlier findings and injuries dissolved into nonexistence. Left unexplained is the small matter of the obvious pains taken to disguise the cache of ostensibly legitimate pesticides. One wonders about the advantage an agricultural-commodities business gains by securing drums of pesticide in camouflaged bunkers 6 feet underground. The 'agricultural site' was also colocated with a military ammunition dump - evidently nothing more than a coincidence in the eyes of the ISG."

That wasn't the only significant find by coalition troops of probable CW stockpiles, Hanson believes. Near the northern Iraqi town of Bai'ji, where Saddam had built a chemical-weapons plant known to the United States from nearly 12 years of inspections, elements of the 4th Infantry Division found 55-gallon drums containing a substance identified through mass spectrometry analysis as cyclosarin - a nerve agent. Nearby were surface-to-surface and surface-to-air missiles, gas masks and a mobile laboratory that could have been used to mix chemicals at the site. "Of course, later tests by the experts revealed that these were only the ubiquitous pesticides that everybody was turning up," Hanson says. "It seems Iraqi soldiers were obsessed with keeping ammo dumps insect-free, according to the reading of the evidence now enshrined by the conventional wisdom that 'no WMD stockpiles have been discovered.'"

At Taji - an Iraqi weapons complex as large as the District of Columbia - U.S. combat units discovered more "pesticides" stockpiled in specially built containers, smaller in diameter but much longer than the standard 55-gallon drum. Hanson says he still recalls the military sending digital images of the canisters to his office, where his boss at the Ministry of Science and Technology translated the Arabic-language markings. "They were labeled as pesticides," he says. "Gee, you sure have got a lot of pesticides stored in ammo dumps."

Again, this January, Danish forces found 120-millimeter mortar shells filled with a mysterious liquid that initially tested positive for blister agents. But subsequent tests by the United States disputed that finding. "If it wasn't a chemical agent, what was it?" Hanson asks. "More pesticides? Dish-washing detergent? From this old soldier's perspective, I gain nothing from putting a liquid in my mortar rounds unless that stuff

will do bad things to the enemy."

The discoveries Hanson describes are not dramatic. And that's the problem: Finding real stockpiles in grubby ammo dumps doesn't fit the image the media and the president's critics carefully have fed to the public of what Iraq's weapons ought to look like.

A senior administration official who has gone through the intelligence reporting from Iraq as well as the earlier reports from U.N. arms inspectors refers to another well-documented allegation. "The Iraqis admitted they had made 3.9 tons of VX," a powerful nerve gas, but claimed they had never weaponized it. The U.N. inspectors "felt they had more. But where did it go?" The Iraqis never provided any explanation of what had happened to their VX stockpiles.

What does 3.9 tons of VX look like? "It could fit in one large garage," the official says. Assuming, of course, that Saddam would assemble every bit of VX gas his scientists had produced at a single site, that still amounts to one large garage in an area the size of the state of California.

Senior administration officials stress that the investigation will continue as inspectors comb through millions of pages of documents in Iraq and attempt to interview Iraqi weapons scientists who have been trained all their professional lives to conceal their activities from the outside world.

"The conditions under which the ISG is working are not very conducive," one official said. "But this president wants the truth to come out. This is not an exercise in spinning or censoring."

For more on WMD, read ["Iraqi Weapons in Syria"](#)

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