

CIA and MI6 plot to assassinate Hussein revealed

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The US and British intelligence agencies, the CIA and MI6, plotted together to assassinate Iraqi President Saddam Hussein in 1995. Senior US intelligence officers confirmed to the Los Angeles Times that the CIA and MI6 worked through opposition groups in northern and southern Iraq — providing them with intelligence, finance and arms — in preparing several attempted coups and bombing campaigns.

Since the 1991 Gulf war, a US presidential finding has authorized “lethal” covert operations against Iraq. By 1994 the CIA was working with two umbrella dissident groups — the Iraqi National Congress (INC) and the Iraqi National Alliance (INA).

The INC is led by Ahmad Chalabi, an American-educated Iraqi and a leader in the Shiite community. In early 1995 the INC launched a botched military offensive against the Iraqi army on the instructions of the CIA.

The INC was protected by the US-enforced “no-fly” zone in northern Iraq. The Los Angeles Times commented that this “allowed the United States to claim that it was supporting a democratic alternative to Hussein’s regime.”

In Autumn 1994 two senior staff members from the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence visited the INC and urged the Clinton administration to give it its full backing. As a result, CIA officers were sent to northern Iraq to direct Chalabi’s group.

Under CIA pressure the INC planned a military campaign against the Iraqi army for March 1995. Chalabi was able to secure the cooperation of two major Kurdish groups in the INC — the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) — after implying that the US would provide air cover for the offensive.

Chalabi also tried to persuade Iranian-backed

dissident groups in southern Iraq to attack the Iraqi army. Later he met two Iranian intelligence officers. Under the directions of the CIA, he told them that “the United States would not oppose Iranian support for an attack by Iranian-backed groups in southern Iraq.”

At the same time, the CIA was working with MI6 in a covert operation with the INA. According to a report in the British Independent newspaper, the INA was recruited “from Iraqi army, party and intelligence officers, as the instrument through which to organize a military coup in Baghdad.” It is led by Dr. Iyad Mohammed Alawi, a former member of Iraq’s ruling Baath party, who has lived in London since 1971.

This is the first time that MI6 involvement in covert operations within Iraq has been confirmed. Both intelligence agencies financed the INA as a favored means for engineering a military coup against Hussein. The CIA was authorized by the White House to “distribute explosives to agents inside Iraq to blow up power pylons and other elements of Iraq’s infrastructure.”

Both operations failed as a result of internal wrangling within the dissident groups and security leaks, at a cost of hundreds of deaths. In early March 1995 Chalabi and the PUK sent 15,000 troops into combat, but they were defeated within months. The INA’s attempted military coup in Baghdad was crushed before it started. It was followed by wave of repression — including mass arrests and executions.

These revelations have come to light because the operation’s failure prompted a probe by the FBI. Five CIA officers were the subject of the investigation. Though all proceedings were quietly dropped in 1996, the US government’s spies and assassins are complaining that even this limited scrutiny, “had a chilling effect on the CIA’s ability to conduct covert

operations against Iraq.” Military intelligence has complained that the inquiry is a “strong indication that the Clinton administration is not committed to a determined effort against Hussein.”

By blaming past failures on a lack of determination on the part of Clinton, the CIA is seeking to force a revival of its agenda for deposing Hussein in the present conflict. This week Chalabi is meeting with senior US administration officials and members of Congress to push them to adopt a strategy of overthrowing Hussein.

Chalabi also recently met with Iraqi opposition figures in London. He is counterposing to a military strike the lifting of US sanctions in northern and southern Iraq in order to foster a rebellion by “supporters of a provisional democratic government”—i.e., a puppet US regime. This would be accompanied by the imposition of “no-drive” zones to back up the no-fly zones and the freeing of frozen Iraqi assets in the US and Europe to support a new government.



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