

UNSCOM-CIA revelations show how the American people were lied to about Iraq

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Press reports over the past week have confirmed that the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM), the agency charged with carrying out weapons inspections in Iraq, has functioned as an instrument of US intelligence operations aimed at overthrowing or assassinating Saddam Hussein.

Articles in the *Boston Globe*, the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Wall Street Journal* and other publications have provided many details about the spying activities carried out by US agents working under UNSCOM cover. These agents installed electronic equipment at UNSCOM's facilities in Baghdad, which allowed them to monitor secret communications by Iraq's Special Republican Guards and Special Security Organization. These encrypted communications were relayed by satellite to the US National Security Agency at Fort Meade, Maryland, which analyzed the conversations to collect information on the movements of Saddam Hussein and other top Iraqi officials. Some of this information was used in the targeting for last month's US-British bombing raids on Iraq.

These revelations completely contradict the picture of US-Iraq relations which has been presented by successive US governments and by the daily newspapers and television networks in the eight years since the Persian Gulf war. The American people have been lied to, not once or twice, but repeatedly and on a grand scale.

The American public was told that Iraq was a "rogue state" threatening the world, which had to be subjected to an unprecedented regime of weapons inspection to insure that it carried out the demands of the United Nations that it dismantle its stockpiles of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and its facilities for building such "weapons of mass destruction." In reality,

most such weapons and facilities were destroyed in the gulf war and the remnants were disposed of within a few months. Subsequent years of inspections have not produced any evidence that Iraq either possesses more such weapons or is in the process of producing them.

Iraqi officials bitterly protested the activities of UNSCOM, declaring that its personnel were intelligence agents working for the United States, Britain and Israel and that its activities were aimed, not at weapons monitoring, but at overthrowing the government of Iraq. These charges have now been confirmed, not only in the American press, but in the statements of Clinton administration officials, who have conceded that US intelligence agents worked undercover at UNSCOM and that data collected by UNSCOM was passed on to the intelligence services of--the United States, Britain and Israel!

Iraq's alleged refusal to cooperate fully with UNSCOM was used repeatedly by the Clinton administration as the pretext to justify continuing the trade embargo, enforced by US and British military forces, which has wrecked the Iraqi economy and caused the premature deaths of as many as a million people, the majority of them children. The latest revelations demonstrate that the Iraqi government was resisting, not demands for weapons inspections, but demands that it expose the innermost workings of its military and intelligence commands to agents of its bitterest enemies, to which no sovereign state could agree.

The exposure of American spying under UN cover is an indictment, not merely of the US intelligence services, but of the entire media and political establishment in the United States, which has uncritically parroted the lies and propaganda of the CIA and NSA. The daily newspapers and television

networks played the role of cheerleaders for a confrontation with Iraq, criticizing the Clinton administration only for being insufficiently bellicose and postponing the much desired bombing of Baghdad.

In specific cases the role of the press went beyond even that of echoing war propaganda. The *Washington Post* has admitted that it was in possession of key details of the US spy operation in Baghdad last October, but deliberately withheld them at the request of the CIA. This was not in order to keep the operation secret from the Iraqis--they were shouting about the CIA's role in UNSCOM from the rooftops. It was to keep the operation secret from the American people, so that they could continue to be deluded by Pentagon and CIA propaganda.

The UNSCOM-CIA revelations are a powerful vindication of the analysis made by the *World Socialist Web Site* throughout 1998. During the February crisis, when US military action was only forestalled by Kofi Annan's trip to Baghdad, the *WSWS* denounced the provocative role of UNSCOM. One item posted February 17 carried the headline "Inspectors or spies--is there a difference?" and noted press reports about the "unpublicized assistance" to UNSCOM from the American CIA and NSA.

In August, when UNSCOM inspector and ex-Marine Scott Ritter resigned, denouncing Clinton's Iraq policy as insufficiently aggressive, the *WSWS* commented: "His revelations have, unwittingly, shattered the pretense that UNSCOM is a purely technical and purely neutral body of arms control experts, answerable only to the UN Security Council. By Ritter's own account, UNSCOM is an intensely political body that functions as an instrument of imperialist foreign policy, first and foremost, that of the United States."

In December, in the midst of the four-day US-British air war on Iraq, the *WSWS* commented on criticism of UNSCOM's role by French, Russian and Chinese representatives at the UN Security Council, and noted that UNSCOM's activities were widely credited in the American press with making the bomb and cruise missile attacks more accurate and effective. We wrote:

"These reports cast a new and sinister light on the activities of UNSCOM during the past year, when the agency's inspectors have focused their attention on surprise visits to so-called presidential sites within Iraq--that is, the various public buildings and

residences set aside for the personal use of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein. The question is posed: were UNSCOM's operations dictated by the need of the Pentagon to gather intelligence on the movements of the Iraqi leader, so that he could be targeted for US attack?"

It is a matter of record that the *World Socialist Web Site* told the truth to our American and international audience, while the American media, with all its vast resources, served as an accommodating stooge of the Pentagon and CIA.



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