

MI6 and CIA: the new enemy within

By Paul Lashmar and Raymond Whitaker

Tony Blair and George Bush are encountering an unexpected obstacle in their campaign for war against Iraq - their own intelligence agencies. Britain and America's spies believe that they are being deceived, that the intelligence they provide is being selectively applied to lead to the opposite conclusion from the one they have drawn, which is that Iraq is much less of a threat than their political masters claim. Worse, when the intelligence agencies fail

leak - against him. The BBC received a Defence Intelligence Staff (DIS) document which showed that British intelligence believes there are no current links between the Iraqi regime and the al-Qaida network. The document, written last month, said there had been contact between the two, but it assessed that any fledgling relationship founded due to mistrust and incompatible ideologies. That conclusion contradicts one of the main charges laid against Saddam Hussein by the United States and Britain, most notably in Wednesday's speech by the Secretary of State, Colin Powell, to the UN Security Council, that he has cultivated contacts with the group blamed for the 11 September attacks.

Such a leak of sensitive material reveals the depth of anger within Britain's spy community over the misuse of intelligence by Downing Street. A DIS document like this is highly secret. Whoever leaked it must have been quite senior and had unofficial approval from within the highest levels of British intelligence," said one insider. In response the Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, tried to play down the importance of the DIS, which he repeatedly called the Defence Intelligence Services.

No sooner had that embarrassment passed, however, than it emerged that large chunks of the Government's latest dossier on Iraq which claimed to draw on "intelligence material", were taken from published academic articles, some several years old. It was this recycled material that General Powell held up in front of a worldwide audience, saying "I would call my colleagues' attention to the fine paper that the United Kingdom distributed which describes in exquisite detail Iraqi deception activities."

Now Glen Bangwana, the Cambridge University analyst who blew the whistle on the plagiarism, has pointed out the deception did not end there

He showed that the young Downing Street team led by Alison Blackshaw, Alastair Campbell's personal assistant, which put the document together had "hardened" the language in several places (see box).

How selectively the work of the intelligence agencies is being used on both sides of the Atlantic is shown by a revealing clash between Senator Bob Graham and the Bush administration's top intelligence advisers Mr Graham, a Democrat, is chair of the Senate Intelligence Committee. Last July, baffled by the

apparently contradictory assessments on Iraq by America's 13 intelligence agencies, he asked for a report to be drawn up by the CIA that estimated the likelihood of Saddam Hussein using weapons of mass destruction.

The CIA procrastinated but finally produced a report after Senator Graham threatened to accuse them of obstruction. The conclusions were so significant that he immediately asked for it to be declassified. The CIA concluded that the likelihood of Saddam Hussein using such weapons was "very low" for the "fore-

seeable future". The only circumstances in which Iraq would be more likely to use chemical weapons or encourage terrorist attacks would be if it was attacked. After more arguments the CIA partly declassified the report. Senator Graham noted that the parts released were those that made the case for

wait with Iraq. Those that did not were withheld. He appealed, and the extra material was eventually released. Yet the report has largely been ignored by the US media.

And reports last night called into doubt General Powell's description last week of a camp in northern Iraq as a terrorist, poison and

explosives training center that linked Baghdad to al-Qaida. Western journalists who visited the site yesterday found a half-built timber block compound filled with heavily armed Kurdish men, video equipment and children - but no obvious sign of chemical weapons manufacturing.

Ansar al-Islam, the Islamic militant group that controls the camp which is believed to have ties to al-Qaida, said the camp serves as its administrative office, living quarters and a propaganda studio. The visit was arranged by a moderate Muslim organization which has good relations with



Jack Straw: tried to play down intelligence agency's leak

to do the job, the politicians will not stop at plagiarism to make their case, even "tweaking" the plagiarised material to ensure a better fit.

"You cannot just cherry-pick evidence that suits your case and ignore the rest. It is a cardinal rule of intelligence," said one aggrieved officer. "Yet that is what the PM is doing." Not since Harold Wilson has a Prime Minister been so unpopular with his top spies.

The mounting tension is mirrored in Washington. "We've gone from a zero position, where presidents refused to cite detailed intel as a source, to the point now a partisan material is officially attributed to these agencies," said one US intelligence source.

Mr Blair is facing an unprecedented, if covert, rebellion by his top spies who last week used the politicians on a weapon - the strategic

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The doctored dossier

A British government dossier, "Iraq - its infrastructure of concealment, deception and intimidation" was largely copied - complete with poor punctuation and grammar - from an article in last September's *Middle East Review of International Affairs* and two articles in *Jane's Intelligence Review*.

But the Downing Street compilers also rounded up the numbers and inserted stronger language than in the original. In a section on a movement called Fedayean Saddam, members are according to the original "recruited from regions loyal to Saddam". The Government dossier says they are "press-ganged from regions known to be loyal to Saddam".

On Fedayean Saddam's total membership the original says 18,000 to 40,000. The dossier says 30,000 to 40,000.

A similar bumping-up of figures occurs with the description of the Directorate of Military Intelligence.

Included among the duties of the secret police, the Mukhabarat, says the original are "monitoring foreign embassies in Iraq" and "a strong opposition groups in hostile regimes". The dossier says the duties include "spying on foreign embassies in Iraq" and supporting terrorist organisations in hostile regimes.

The plagiarists cannot even copy correctly, confusing two organisations called General Security and Military Security. This means that the dossier says Military Security was created in 1992, then refers to it moving to new headquarters in 1990. The head of Military Security in 1997 is named as Taha al-Ahbab, when he was actually in charge of General Security.

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