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UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
HOUSE PERMANENT SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

Statement of John Deutch - July 24, 2003

U.S. Intelligence Collection in Iraq

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Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, during President Clinton's first term, I served successively as Undersecretary of Defense for Acquisition & Technology, Deputy Secretary of Defense, and Director of Central Intelligence. As Undersecretary of the Department of Energy in the Carter Administration my responsibilities included our nuclear weapons program and the Department's nonproliferation efforts. During 1997 to 1999, I was chairman of the *Commission to Assess the Organization of the Federal Government to Combat the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction*; our report was submitted to Congress on July 14, 1999. So the subject of this hearing is of interest to me and I thank you for the opportunity to participate.

I shall focus my comments on intelligence concerning weapons of mass destruction (WMD) rather than terrorism, although both are subjects of utmost importance. I want to make three points:

- Intelligence on WMD was a high priority concern of the Clinton administration, just as it was in the George H.W. Bush administration.
- The apparent misestimate of the presence and readiness of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction is serious, because intelligence bearing on a decision to take military action must be reliable.

- It is too early to arrive at concrete recommendations for changes that will strengthen intelligence on WMD in the future, but determining practical and effective recommendations for change are more important than placing blame.

In the years 1993-1997, the Clinton administration placed the highest priority on obtaining intelligence on weapons of mass destruction (WMD). For example, we paid close attention to:

- North Korea's nuclear program;
- "loose nukes" in Russia and states of the former Soviet Union;
- the nuclear weapons programs of India and Pakistan;
- transfer of military and dual-use technology to nations that had the intent and/or capability to produce WMD; and
- Iraqi capability in chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons.

All component agencies of the Intelligence Community understood the seriousness of the WMD threat and devoted considerable collection and analytic resources to produce intelligence for the president and members of the National Security Council. The Intelligence Community had some very impressive proliferation intelligence successes during this period. This effort built on, and continued, the emphasis of WMD intelligence in the prior administration that I had the opportunity to observe as a member of President George H.W. Bush's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board (for the period 1991-1993).

Iraqi's WMD capability received priority attention from all elements of the Intelligence Community, when I was Director of Central Intelligence. We considered all sources of information including human intelligence, signals intelligence, defectors, and beneficial liaison relationships with foreign

intelligence services. I then believed the evidence indicated that Saddam Hussein had accumulated significant stocks of chemical agents (for example VX, SARIN nerve agent) and biological agents (for example anthrax, botulinum toxin), had filled 155mm artillery shells, 122mm rockets, bombs, and spray tanks with chemical agents, and that these weapons were deployable with Iraq military units. I testified to Congress on several occasions and informed my foreign policy colleagues of our estimate of Iraqi chemical and biological capability. This estimate reflected not only my judgment; it reflected a consensus within the Intelligence Community; I recall no dissent.

Moreover, I believed Saddam Hussein had the intention to develop actively Iraq's WMD program. The pace of his effort was restrained only by his concern about the military and economic sanctions that would result, if U.S. intelligence or U.N. inspections discovered any active clandestine effort to develop or produce WMD. Intelligence Community attention focused on biological and chemical weapons, because the record was clear that Saddam had produced, tested, and weaponized significant amounts of these agents and there was insufficient evidence of their destruction. The discoveries of CW agents and weapons by U.S. forces after the 1991 Gulf War formed a reasonable basis for estimating the extent of possible deployment of CW weapons with Iraqi forces in the mid-nineties. Certainly the Joint Chiefs and Central Command were advised and, in my opinion, well advised, to plan CW and BW protection for any U.S. troops or units that might see action in Iraq.

I do not recall any information that Iraq was actively working on any aspect of a nuclear weapons program during the period 1993-1997, although there was little doubt that Saddam would revitalize his dormant nuclear weapons program, at the first opportunity.

Saddam Hussein's possession of chemical and biological weapons and what he might do with them was a matter of great concern in 1995-1996 was a principal consideration in the policies adopted by the Clinton Administration. More recently, I believe Saddam Hussein's possession of WMD was the most widely accepted justification among Americans for military action against his tyrannical regime.

I am therefore concerned and surprised that U.S. forces have yet to find convincing evidence of chemical and biological weapons in Iraq. Possibly, these stocks and weapons are so well hidden that our forces have as yet been unable to find them, despite the certainty that Iraqi informants would be eager to cough up their locations

A second, less likely possibility is that chemical and biological stocks and weapons have been covertly exported to Syria or Iran. These countries have little incentive to cover for Saddam or to acquire capability from Iraq that they may well already possess or could easily develop. Moreover, by now, the Intelligence Community might well have found evidence that such a transfer had occurred.

The third possibility, which seems increasingly more likely, is that after the 1991 Gulf War, Iraq did not continue to develop chemical and biological weapons. Also, it is possible that Iraq may have destroyed a considerable amount of its capability in response to international pressure and U.N. inspections, but then the question is why then were Iraqis so unwilling or too inept to demonstrate compliance with U.N. resolutions?

If however, we find no weapons of mass destruction or only a residual capability, then the principal justification enunciated by the U.S. government for launching this war is not credible. If so, it is an intelligence failure of massive proportions,

because it means that our leaders and the American public based its support for the most serious of foreign policy judgments – the decision to go to war – on an incorrect intelligence judgment. The next time military intervention is judged necessary to combat the spread of WMD, for example in North Korea, there will be skepticism about the quality of our intelligence. When the United States undertakes military intervention, with or without a United Nations resolution, the policy decision must be based in large part on intelligence which we must be confident, is accurate.

Intelligence failures occur for three reasons: failure to collect information, failure analyze or connect available information, and, as Roberta Wholstetter so convincingly demonstrated in her classic study of the attack on Pearl Harbor, because policy makers hear only the message that fits their world view. In the case of Iraqi WMD, any of these errors could have occurred. Press reports suggest that Bush administration policy leaders were keen to receive intelligence that supported their view of Iraq and truculent when it was not forthcoming. I do not know if this is so.

I do believe that the direct discussion between high level policy makers, such as the Vice President, the Secretary of State, and the Secretary of Defense with intelligence analysts is desirable because the interaction will contribute to more informed decisions. Moreover, I expect that CIA analysts should be sufficiently competent and confident not to find this interaction intimidating and they should welcome the interaction because it confirms the importance of their work. Intelligence analysts should respond to the interests of policy makers but not bend to their policy preferences or predilections.

If the U.S. intelligence community failed to track the degradation of the capability that we know was there after the 1991 war, it would then have formed an inaccurate picture of the status of Iraqi chemical and biological capability during

the past decade. The beginning of such an intelligence misestimate may have been in the mid-nineties, or even earlier; I do not know. But the importance of complete and accurate intelligence on Iraqi WMD became much greater in 2001 or 2003, when it became clear that Iraqi WMD would be a major factor in deciding on the need and timing of military action.

U.N. inspections under UNSCOM (1991-1998) and UNMOVIC (2001-2002) have not been helpful in this regard. The tone of the inspection reports is legalistic and the reports stress unresolved questions. The inspectors have not offered a net assessment of their view of likely Iraqi capability perhaps because their political masters on the U.N Security Council were divided over what they wanted to hear.

I would like to offer concrete suggestion about what might be done to improve collection and analysis to assure that the mistakes, which appear to have occurred in the intelligence on Iraqi WMD, do not happen in the future. This cannot be done, however, until there is a clear and detailed understanding of what happened to Iraq's WMD capability since 1991 and what the U.S. Intelligence Community has been saying over the same time period. My preference is that the responsibility for producing such a study be assigned, in the first instance, to the Director of Central Intelligence. If the Director produces findings and recommendations that are convincing to the President, Congress, high policy level consumers of intelligence, and the public, then much will have been done to restore confidence in the quality of our WMD, intelligence.

The resulting recommendations are unlikely to identify a single solution. More likely there will be a confirmation of the fundamentals we know to be the basis of excellent intelligence:

- reliance on a talented and dedicated workforce;

- collection and integration of information from all sources – human and signals intelligence are vastly leveraged when combined;
- all source analysis based on evidence and supported by unconventional thinking.

When these elements are executed together, our country is possesses the best intelligence in the world. But, understandably, we worry more about shortcomings than we celebrate intelligence successes.

For the committee's consideration, I enclose a summary of the recommendations concerning the Intelligence Community made by the Commission on Combating the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass destruction. I believe these recommendations still have merit but I do not know the status of the implementation of these recommendations.

The future national security of this country depends upon both the reality and the perception that we have excellent and accurate intelligence about WMD around the world. Going forward, our aim should be to achieve this goal.

**Combating Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction –  
Excerpts from the Commission report - July 14, 1999  
Recommendations concerning the Intelligence Community – pp 66 -71**

**Recommendation 5.11:** The Director of Central Intelligence should ensure that intelligence is responsive to the needs of policy makers and that regular conferences between policy agencies and the Intelligence Community continue, with a sharpened focus on presenting usable intelligence.

**Recommendation 5.12:** The National Director should work with the Director of Central Intelligence to promulgate guidance to ensure that clear standards of evidence are applied to current intelligence and warning assessments, as well as longer term analyses and estimates, and that these standards are distributed throughout the Intelligence Community, to relevant policy makers, and to the relevant committees of Congress.

**Recommendation 5.13:** The President should direct the Director of Central Intelligence to create a single proliferation-related intelligence program plan, pursuant to policy guidance and priorities established by the National Director for Combating Proliferation and the Combating Proliferation Council, for adoption by the President and review by the appropriate congressional committees.

**Recommendation 5.14:** The Director of Central Intelligence should ensure that there is integrated collection planning against priority proliferation targets.

**Recommendation 5.16:** The Director of Central Intelligence should task the Nonproliferation Center, working with the ADCI/Collection, to prepare a multi-year plan to enhance the technical capability for proliferation-related intelligence collection and to develop new technology for sampling and analysis that will provide faster and more accurate information on activities at suspect facilities.

**Recommendation 5.17:** The National Director for Combating Proliferation and the Director of Central Intelligence should develop a process for resolving disputes regarding the use of proliferation-related intelligence.