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B6, B5, B1, 1.4(D), B2

United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

July 7, 2003

INFORMATION MEMORANDUM
S/ES

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DECL: 1.6X1

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: ARCHIE M BOLSTER
DATE/CASE ID: 20 OCT 2006 200601796

TO: The Secretary

FROM: INR - Carl W. Ford, Jr.

SUBJECT: Niger/Iraq Uranium Story and Joe Wilson (S//NF)

(S//NF) This memo summarizes what we have been able to discover about the role that Ambassador Joe Wilson played in the Niger/Iraq uranium story, especially the allegations that INR played a role in his early 2002 trip to Niger and the (non) dissemination of reporting on what he learned. What follows is based on our paper and electronic files; we are confident that these records and the recollections of persons involved at the margin are basically accurate but one INR staff member who was most involved is not here (he has been reassigned to [redacted] to guide us through the files and emails. What is clear, however, is that INR was not Ambassador Wilson's point of contact in either the Department or the Intelligence Community. INR did not meet with Wilson after his trip and did not receive any information on his trip and what he learned except what appears to be his reporting cable (his name is not mentioned) disseminated throughout the intelligence and policy communities by CIA. The reporting we have from his trip makes no mention of documents, fraudulent or otherwise. B6

(S//NF) [redacted] In a February 19, 2002, meeting convened by Valerie Wilson, a CIA WMD manager and the wife of Joe Wilson, he previewed his plans and rationale for going to Niger [redacted] Both the memo of this meeting prepared by INR's West Africa analyst (now [redacted] and other material indicate that the CIA believed B5 B5 B6

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the Ambassador and the Embassy were unlikely to ferret out the truth from their Nigerien contacts. INR strongly demurred from this view at the February 19 meeting. We have no record of any other INR written or personal contact with Wilson regarding Nigerien uranium.

(S//NF// [redacted] The impetus for the Ambassador's demarches in this period (Tabs 2 and 3), and the investigative trip by Joe Wilson (Tab 4 is the CIA account of his trip findings) was a "report of questionable credibility from a foreign service." This was INR's conclusion in an assessment of March 1, 2002, entitled "Niger: Sale of Uranium to Iraq is Unlikely" (Tab 5). B1 B2

[redacted] B1 B5

(S// ORCON, NF) The Niger allegations were included but did not figure prominently in the 90-page October 2002 NIE on "Iraq's Continuing Programs for Weapons of Mass Destruction." The major point of contention in differing judgments about the likelihood of Iraqi nuclear weapons program reconstitution efforts centered on the CIA's assessment that Iraq was bent on acquiring aluminum tubes to produce parts for a gas centrifuge uranium enrichment plant. In a lengthy dissent entitled "INR's Alternative View: Iraq's Attempts to Acquire Aluminum Tubes," INR noted "... the claims of Iraqi pursuit of natural uranium in Africa are, in INR's assessment, highly dubious." The main text of the NIE related a foreign intelligence service report "that as of early 2001, Niger planned to send several tons of "pure uranium" (probably yellowcake) to Iraq." The NIE later noted laconically that "We cannot confirm whether Iraq succeeded in acquiring uranium ore and/or yellowcake" from Niger and other alleged African sources.

(S//NF) In October 2002, an Italian journalist passed purported copies of a Niger-Iraq agreement of July 2000 for the purchase of uranium to Embassy Rome. These documents, which were sent to Washington via [redacted] Department channels, were not adequately analyzed until much later and were judged to be fraudulent. However, they appear to have added new life to the Niger/Iraq uranium story. These documents appear to be related to, if not the actual basis of, the February 2002 foreign liaison service report that sparked original concerns about a Niger/Iraq deal. B1

(S//NF) [redacted] In mid-December 2002, the Department (NP) released a fact sheet that pointed "to efforts to procure uranium ore from Niger," this despite the alleged objections of WINPAC. The WINPAC caution was reportedly "not obtained in time to correct the listing on the State Department web site," but "was acted on in time, however, to remove it from Ambassador Negroponte's statement. On January 12, 2003, INR "expressed concerns to the CIA that the documents pertaining to the Iraq-Niger deal were forgeries." The conclusion may, however, have been reached and communicated for the first time somewhat earlier; the record is not clear on this point. After considerable back and forth between the CIA, the Department, the IAEA, and the British, Secretary Powell's briefing to the UN Security Council did not mention attempted Iraqi procurement of uranium "due to CIA concerns raised during the coordination regarding the veracity of the information on the alleged Iraq-Niger agreement." (Citations here from Tab 6, an April 7, 2003, CIA retrospective on "Purported Iraqi Attempt to Get Uranium from Niger").

(C//NF) Our records contain an extensive paper and electronic trail on the Niger/Iraq allegations, including other retrospective accounts differing somewhat from the CIA retrospective mentioned above. There is no indication, however, that anyone in INR met with Ambassador Wilson except at the February 19, 2002 meeting hosted by CIA, or discussed his trip and what he learned with anyone in the Department or at CIA.

ATTACHMENTS:

Tab 1: Notes - Niger/Iraq uranium Meeting CIA, 2/19/02

Tab 2: Cable from Embassy Niamey "Niger: Taking Another Hard Look at GON Uranium Sales"

Tab 3: Cable from Embassy Niamey: "Niger: President Tandja Tells DCINC Niger's Uranium is Secure; [redacted]

Tab 4: CIA Account of Ambassador Wilson's Trip Findings: "WP/Nuclear Weapons: Nigerian Denial of Uranium Yellowcake Sales to Rogue States"

Tab 5: INR Assessment: "Niger--Sale of Uranium to Iraq is Unlikely"

Tab 6: CIA retrospective on "Purported Iraqi Attempt to Get Uranium from Niger"

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