

OCTOBER 24, 2003

SCHAKOWSKY: BUSH ADMINISTRATION'S MISSTATEMENT OF THE DAY -
PREWAR INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) issued today's ["Bush Administration's Misstatement of the Day"](#) on prewar intelligence.

According to the *Washington Post* ("Inquiry Faults Intelligence on Iraq; Threat From Saddam Hussein Was Overstated, Senate Committee Report Finds," 10/24/03):

The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence is preparing a blistering report on prewar intelligence on Iraq that is critical of CIA Director George J. Tenet and other intelligence officials for overstating the weapons and terrorism case against Saddam Hussein, according to congressional officials.

The committee staff was surprised by the amount of circumstantial evidence and single-source or disputed information used to write key intelligence documents -- in particular the October 2002 National Intelligence Estimate -- summarizing Iraq's capabilities and intentions, according to Republican and Democratic sources.

However, prior to the invasion of Iraq, Bush Administration officials pointed to US intelligence reports as evidence that Iraq presented an imminent threat to the United States:

- *"We know where the [WMD] are."* - Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, (ABC "This Week with George Stephanopoulos," 3/30/03)

- *"We believe Saddam has, in fact, reconstituted nuclear weapons."* - Vice President Cheney (NBC "Meet the Press," 3/16/03)

- *"There can be no doubt that Saddam Hussein has biological weapons and the capability to rapidly produce more, many more. Our conservative estimate is that Iraq today has a stockpile of between 100 and 500 tons of chemical weapons agent. That is enough agent to fill 16,000 battlefield rockets."* - Secretary of State Colin Powell

(Address before UN Security Council, 2/5/03)□

- *"Our intelligence officials estimate that Saddam Hussein had the materials to produce as much as 500 tons of sarin, mustard and VX nerve agent."* - President Bush (State of the Union Address, 1/28/03)

- *"Simply stated, there is no doubt that Saddam Hussein now has weapons of mass destruction.□ There is no doubt that he is amassing them to use against our friends, against our allies, and against us."* -Vice President Cheney (Speech to VFW 103rd National Convention, 8/26/02)

Schakowsky said, "Did the Bush Administration knowingly deceive us and manufacture intelligence in order to build public support for the invasion of Iraq?□ The answer to that question is becoming clearer everyday."□

The Washington Post

October 24, 2003

Inquiry Faults Intelligence on Iraq; Threat From Saddam Hussein Was Overstated, Senate Committee Report Finds

BYLINE: Dana Priest, Washington Post Staff Writer

The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence is preparing a blistering report on prewar intelligence on Iraq that is critical of CIA Director George J. Tenet and other intelligence officials for overstating the weapons and terrorism case against Saddam Hussein, according to congressional officials.

The committee staff was surprised by the amount of circumstantial evidence and single-source or disputed information used to write key intelligence documents -- in particular the October 2002 National Intelligence Estimate -- summarizing Iraq's capabilities and intentions, according to Republican and Democratic sources. Staff members interviewed more than 100 people who collected and analyzed the intelligence used to back up statements about Iraq's chemical, biological and nuclear weapons capabilities, and its possible links to terrorist groups.

Like a similar but less exhaustive inquiry being completed by the House intelligence committee, the Senate report shifts attention toward the intelligence community and away from White House officials, who have been criticized for exaggerating the Iraqi

threat. At stake as the presidential political season approaches, said committee sources and intelligence figures, is who gets blamed for misleading the American public if weapons of mass destruction are never found in Iraq -- the president or his intelligence chief.□

Asked about the upcoming report, Sen. Pat Roberts (R-Kan.), chairman of the committee, said "the executive was ill-served by the intelligence community." The intelligence was sometimes "sloppy" and inconclusive, he said. "That's a concern I have with the total report" on Iraq.

"I worry about the credibility of the intelligence community," said Roberts, who added that he is concerned about demoralizing the intelligence agencies when intensive counterterrorism operations are going on overseas. Still, he insisted, "If there's stuff on the fan, we have to get the fan cleaned."

Despite the progress it has made since June in poring over 19 volumes of classified material, the committee is deeply divided over investigating how the Bush administration used intelligence in its public statements about Iraq.

Sen. John "Jay" Rockefeller IV (D-W. Va.) said yesterday he had secured a promise from Roberts to ask one executive agency, the Defense Department and, in particular, its Office of Special Plans, for information about the intelligence it collected or analyzed on Iraq.

The office has been accused by some congressional Democrats and administration critics of gathering unreliable intelligence on Iraq that bolstered the administration's case for war. Those allegations have not been substantiated, and the director of the office, William Luti, has denied them.

Rockefeller is under considerable pressure from the Senate Democratic leadership not to allow Roberts to focus only on intelligence bureaucrats while avoiding questions about whether Bush, Vice President Cheney, Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld and others exaggerated the threat from Iraq.

But it is unclear whether the committee has jurisdiction on this topic. Also, the administration could cite executive privilege and refuse to give the committee information related to internal White House discussions, as it did when a congressional inquiry tried to find out what Bush had been told about al Qaeda and the possibility of civilian aircraft used as weapons before the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks.

"We're going to get this one way or the other," Rockefeller said yesterday. "If the majority declines to put the executive branch at risk, then they are going to have a very difficult minority to deal with."

He said that if that turned out to be the case, he has the five votes necessary, under Rule 6 of the committee's rules of procedure, to launch an inquiry into the administration's use

of intelligence.

The House and Senate intelligence committees have traditionally worked in a more bipartisan fashion than other congressional committees.

CIA spokesman Bill Harlow defended the intelligence community's performance. "The NIE reflects 10 years of work regarding Iraq's WMD [weapons of mass destruction] programs. It is based on many sources and disciplines, both ours and those of partners around the world," he said.

Harlow said that "the committee has yet to take the opportunity to hear a comprehensive explanation of how and why we reached our conclusions," nor has it accepted an offer made Wednesday by Tenet to hear from him and senior intelligence officials.

The Senate panel's report, congressional sources said, will be harsher and better substantiated than the inquiry near completion by the House counterpart. Last month, leaders of the House panel sent Tenet a letter criticizing him for having relied too heavily on "past assessments" dating to 1998 and on "some new 'piecemeal' intelligence," both of which "were not challenged as a routine matter."

Tenet shot back an angry letter criticizing the committee for not interviewing enough people.

Among the more than 100 people interviewed by the Senate are analysts, scientists, operators and supervisory officials from the CIA, the departments of Energy and State, the National Security Agency and the Defense Intelligence Agency, as well as officials at the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Roberts said none of those questioned have said they were pressured to change their work to fit the administration's point of view. Other committee members pointed out, however, that some analysts may not have felt free to speak candidly because there were supervisors in the room during their interviews.

Several sources said the committee report is also critical "of the substantiation the intelligence community gave the administration" on many of its assessments of weapons of mass destruction. They said caveats by agencies other than the CIA often were played down.

The committee also has not found underlying intelligence that would support some changes in the intelligence community's public conclusions about Iraq in the months leading up to the war. For example, the declassified version of the October 2002 NIE declares in the first paragraph that "Baghdad has chemical and biological weapons . . . "

In all other documents, the intelligence community used more qualified language.

A CIA spokesman said the statement, like the entire NIE, was written under extreme time pressure, and that the information was qualified in supporting material later in the report.

The committee is also looking at why some exculpatory information contained in the raw intelligence reports "seems to not have filtered up" to finished intelligence reports.

Roberts described the report as "95 percent done." But others on the committee, including Rockefeller, want to broaden the inquiry. They insist the report is in the preliminary stage and will not be finished until the end of the year, or later.