

TAKING OUT IRAQ'S FUTURE LEADERS

Laura linked to this story on Charles Duelfer's new book. And boy did my hackles rise up when I read this passage:

After he left the United Nations in 2000, Duelfer went to a Washington think tank, the Center for Strategic and International Studies, where he began working informally with a unit in the CIA's Near East division, the Iraq Operations Group, which was tasked with regime change.

Duelfer assembled a list of more than 40 high-level officials who could help run Iraq following an invasion. He cultivated old contacts in the oil industry and the Iraqi government, meeting secretly with a top Iraqi official at New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art. He traveled to Vienna for OPEC meetings that included key Iraqi oil officials. But the plan to put together a team that would form the basis of a future government was shelved.

"Once U.S. forces were in Iraq, they used the lists as targets," he writes. "Those named would find their homes raided, and they would be thrown in jail. . . . We continued to make more enemies." [my emphasis]

Basically, the CIA worked with Duelfer to pull together a list of top Iraqis who could take over the country. And—this story doesn't say directly, but suggests—once DOD took over in Iraq, those on the list were targeted for harassment and arrest.

I couldn't help but think of something I noted when reporting on Judy Miller's work in Iraq. She was writing, recall, at a time when DOD was undercutting State's efforts to set up a broad-based Iraqi government, incorporating representatives of all constituencies in Iraq. DOD did so by carting Ahmed Chalabi and his band of would-be warriors around Iraq, always preempting State's efforts. At precisely that time, Judy may have outed her first CIA spy, revealed in the name of de-Baathification, just 6 weeks before Valerie Wilson would be outed as a spy.

First, Judy writes an article for Chalabi that **tries to discredit Saad Janabi by highlighting his ties to the CIA**. As I mentioned in Part Three, as part of Judy's coverage of Chalabi's case for de-Baathification, Judy included the following passage:

Mr. Chalabi declined to name names, but other representatives of the Iraqi National Congress, said that the **Central Intelligence Agency had retained Saad Janabi as a key adviser. The opposition members identified Mr. Janabi as a former assistant to Hussein Kamel**, Mr. Hussein's son-in-law who oversaw weapons programs, defected to Jordan in 1995, and was killed by Mr. Hussein's government when he later returned to Iraq.

A C.I.A. spokesman in Washington said he had no comment on whether Mr. Janabi was advising the agency. [emphasis mine]

Now, before we get to the relationship between CIA and Janabi, a little background. Janabi, it seems, is a direct rival to Chalabi's position as a top returned-exile-businessman. From a **June 2, 2003 profile** on Janabi we learn Janabi has returned at about the same time as the Chalabi profile appears—and that Janabi is already critical of Chalabi for the same reasons the State Department was:

Janabi returned a month ago from eight years of exile in California and has quickly emerged as a quiet but harsh critic of the well-funded exile opposition groups like Ahmed Chalabi's Iraqi National Congress, which enjoys the support of key Bush administration officials. Though Janabi insists that he does not want to run for office himself, he often speaks like a budding politician (even mentioning his connections to California Republicans and Arnold Schwarzenegger). He says the INC and the two largest Kurdish parties have limited constituencies. "The Iraqi people need their own choices," says Janabi. "They are educated, but they have no education in democracy."

In spite of his denials, Janabi ends up being a worthy enough candidate that he was briefly floated to be President of interim government.

At the very least, Janabi was almost certainly involved in Duelfer's efforts to draw up a list of future leaders of Iraq, as he had reached out to various Iraqi generals before the war started

to attempt to gain their assistance. But he, too, was floated to take on a leadership role in Iraq. And in return for that, the INC branded him as a Baathist.

These efforts could, of course, be totally separate, one officially undertaken by the US government (I look forward to figuring out whether this was done by DOD or what), and one undertaken by Janabi's rival, Ahmed Chalabi.

But I do wonder whether there was a more concerted effort undertaken by those close to Cheney to not just hoist Ahmed Chalabi on the Iraqi people, but to make way for him by undercutting all natural Iraqi leaders, conveniently identified on one centralized list put together by the CIA.