



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

APR 29 2003

Dear Mr. Waxman:

This is in response to your March 17 letter to the President outlining your concerns about the reliability of evidence purporting that Iraq attempted to procure uranium from Africa. The White House has asked the Department of State to respond on behalf of the President.

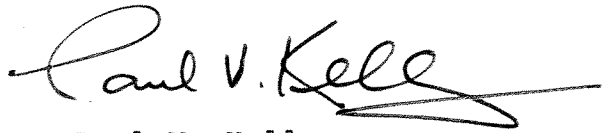
Beginning in late 2001, the United States obtained information through several channels, including U.S. intelligence sources and overt sources, reporting that Iraq had attempted to procure uranium from Africa. In addition, two Western European allies informed us of similar reporting from their own intelligence services. As you know, the UK made this information public in its September 2002 dossier on "Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction." The other Western European ally relayed the information to us privately and said, while it did not believe any uranium had been shipped to Iraq, it believed Iraq had sought to purchase uranium from Niger. We sought several times to determine the basis for the latter assessment, and whether it was based on independent evidence not otherwise available to the U.S. Not until March 4 did we learn that in fact the second Western European government had based its assessment on the evidence already available to the U.S. that was subsequently discredited.

Based on what appeared at the time to be multiple sources for the information in question, we acted in good faith in providing the information earlier this year to the International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors responsible for verifying Iraq's claims regarding its nuclear program. In similar good faith, the December 19 State Department fact sheet that illustrated omissions from the December 7 Iraqi declaration to the UN Security Council included a summary reference to the reported uranium procurement attempt. The December 19 fact sheet was a product developed jointly by the CIA and the State Department.

The Honorable
Henry A. Waxman,
Committee on Government Reform,
House of Representatives.

We hope this information is helpful. Please let us know if we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul V. Kelly". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Paul V. Kelly
Assistant Secretary
Legislative Affairs