

Central Intelligence Agency  
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## PRESS RELEASES AND STATEMENTS

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Statement by Director of Central Intelligence George J. Tenet on the  
2002 National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) on  
Iraq's Continuing Programs for Weapons of Mass Destruction**

A great deal has been said and written about the 2002 National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) on Iraq's Continuing Programs for Weapons of Mass Destruction. Much of this commentary has been misinformed, misleading, and just plain wrong. It is important to set the record straight. Let me make three points.

- We stand by the judgments in the NIE.
- The NIE demonstrates consistency in our judgments over many years and are based on a decade's worth of work. Intelligence is an iterative process and as new evidence becomes available we constantly reevaluate.
- We encourage dissent and reflect it in alternative views.

We stand behind the judgments of the NIE as well as our analyses on Iraq's programs over the past decade. Those outside the process over the past ten years and many of those commenting today do not know, or are misrepresenting, the facts. We have a solid, well-analyzed and carefully written account in the NIE and the numerous products before it.

After David Kay and others finish their efforts—after we have exploited all the documents, people and sites in Iraq—we should and will stand back to professionally review where we are—but not before.

The history of our judgments on Iraq's weapons programs is clear and consistent. On biological weapons and missiles our data got stronger in recent years. We have had a solid historical

foundation and new data that have allowed us to make judgments and attribute high confidence in specific areas. And we had numerous credible sources, including many who provided information after 1998. When inspectors were pushed out in 1998, we did not sit back. Rather, we significantly increased our collection efforts throughout the Intelligence Community. In other words, despite what many read in the media that the NIE is based on nothing—no sources, no understanding of complicated procurement networks, etc.—the fact is we made significant professional progress.

The National Intelligence Estimate remains the Intelligence Community's most authoritative product. The process by which we produce NIEs—including the one on Iraqi weapons of mass destruction—has been honed over nearly 30 years. It is a process that is designed to provide policymakers in both the executive and the legislative branches with our best judgments on the most crucial national security issues. This process is designed to produce coordinated judgments—but not to the exclusion of differing views or without exposing uncertainties. During coordination, agencies send representatives who are actively engaged and change NIE drafts to reflect better the views of the experts in their respective agencies. It is an open and vigorous process that allows for dissent to be registered by individual agencies in the final product. Indeed, alternative views are encouraged. Finally, the NIE is reviewed by the directors of US intelligence agencies composing the DCI-chaired National Foreign Intelligence Board, including in this case, CIA, DIA, INR, NSA, DoE, and NIMA. This rigorous NIE process has served this nation well.

Building upon ten years of analysis, intelligence reporting, and inspections that had to fight through Iraq's aggressive denial and deception efforts, including phony and incomplete data declarations to the UN and programs explicitly designed with built-in cover stories, the Intelligence Community prepared the NIE on Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. In it we judged that the entire body of information over that ten years made clear that Saddam had never abandoned his pursuit of weapons of mass destruction.

**Nuclear program.** Shortly after the Gulf war of 1990-91 the International Atomic Energy Agency and the US Intelligence Community were surprised at how much more advanced Iraq's program was prior to the war than had been judged previously. In fact, the IAEA's 1996 report indicated that Iraq could have completed its first nuclear device by as early as late 1992 had the program not been derailed by the Gulf war. Intelligence analysts reevaluated Iraq's nuclear program in 1994 and 1997 in light of the body of inspection revelations and seized documents and concluded that Iraq could have a nuclear weapon within a year of obtaining sufficient material and, if *unconstrained*, would take five to seven years with foreign assistance to produce enough fissile material. Those judgments, to which all agencies agreed, have remained consistent for years.

The NIE points out that by 2002, all agencies assessed that Saddam did not yet have nuclear weapons or sufficient fissile material to make any, but never abandoned his nuclear weapons ambitions. Moreover, most agencies believed that Iraq's attempts to obtain high-strength aluminum tubes for centrifuge rotors, magnets, high-speed balancing machines, and machine tools, as well as Iraq's efforts to enhance its cadre of weapons personnel and activities at several suspect nuclear sites indicated that Iraq was reconstituting its nuclear weapons program.

Saddam's personal interest in some of these efforts was also considered. DOE agreed that reconstitution was underway, but assessed that the tubes probably were not part of the program. INR assessed that Baghdad was pursuing at least a limited effort to acquire nuclear weapon-related capabilities, but not an integrated and comprehensive approach to acquire nuclear weapons; INR was not persuaded that the tubes were intended for the nuclear program. All other agencies, including DOE, assessed that Iraq probably would not have a weapon until 2007 to 2009, consistent with the decade-old judgment of Iraq needing five to seven years to develop a weapons-grade uranium enrichment capability if freed from constraints. These judgments and the six elements upon which the reconstitution judgment was based were agreed to by those agencies during coordination of the NIE and at the meeting of the heads of all the intelligence agencies before publication.

- We note yet again that uranium acquisition was not part of this judgment. Despite all the focus in the media, it was *not* one of the six elements upon which the judgment was based. Why not? Because Iraq already had significant quantities of uranium.
- Also it is noteworthy that although DOE assessed that the tubes probably were not part of Iraq's nuclear program, DOE *agreed* that reconstitution was underway. Obviously, the tubes were not central to DOE's view on reconstitution.

Even though the tubes constituted only one of the six elements underpinning the other agencies' judgment on reconstitution, I will discuss it briefly. We need to point out that DOE is not the only agency that has experts on the issue. CIA has centrifuge and rocket experts. The National Ground Intelligence Center (NGIC)—the US military's center for analysis of foreign conventional weaponry—has battlefield rocket experts. These experts, along with those from DOE, were involved in the NIE process and their views were recorded. All agencies agreed that the tubes *could be used* to build gas centrifuges for a uranium enrichment program, so we are talking about differences in agency views about *intent*.

- CIA, DIA, and NSA believed the tubes were intended for that purpose.
- DOE believed they probably were not part of the nuclear program and that conventional military uses were more plausible
- INR was not persuaded that the tubes were intended for use as centrifuge rotors and considered artillery rockets as the most likely purpose.
- NGIC believed that these tubes were poor choices for rocket motor bodies.

Not surprisingly, the Iraqis went to great lengths to mask their intentions across the board, including in their efforts to acquire tubes with increasingly higher sets of specifications. Thus, the fact that we had alternative views on the issue would be expected. But the NIE went to great lengths to spell out those views. Many reading these alternative views, however, almost certainly recalled how far Iraq had come in the early 1990s toward a nuclear weapon without our knowledge, making all the factors leading us to the reconstitution judgment more important.

**Biological Weapons.** All agencies of the Intelligence Community since 1995 have judged that Iraq retained biological weapons and that the BW program continued. In 1999 we assessed Iraq had revitalized its program. New intelligence acquired in 2000 provided compelling information about Iraq's ongoing offensive BW activities, describing construction of mobile BW agent production plants—reportedly designed to evade detection—with the potential to turn out several hundred tons of unconcentrated BW agent per year. Thus, it was not a new story in 2002 when all agencies judged in the NIE that Iraq had biological weapons—that it had some lethal and incapacitating BW agents—and was capable of quickly producing and weaponizing a variety of such agents, including anthrax. We judged that most of the key aspects of Iraq's offensive BW program were more advanced than before the Gulf war.

**Chemical Weapons.** As early as 1994, all agencies assessed that Iraq could begin limited production of chemical agents almost immediately after UN sanctions, inspections and monitoring efforts were ended. By 1997, the Intelligence Community judged that Iraq was protecting a breakout capability to produce more weapons and agent quickly. We further assessed in 1997, that within months Iraq could restart full-scale production of sarin and that pre-Desert Storm agent production levels—including production of VX—could be achieved in two to three years. And so it was not a surprising story when all agencies judged in the NIE in 2002 that Baghdad possessed chemical weapons, had begun renewed production of mustard, sarin, cyclosarin, and VX and probably had at least 100 metric tons (MT) and possibly as much as 500 MT of CW agents, much of it added in the last year.

**Delivery Systems.** The Intelligence Community's assessment on the possibility of Iraq having a few covert Scuds has been consistent since at least 1995. As Iraq continued to develop its short-range missiles, we collected more data and by 1999 were able to begin determining that both missiles were capable of flying over 150 km. Also by 1999 we had noted that according to multiple sources, Iraq was conducting a high-priority program to convert jet trainer aircraft to lethal UAVs, likely intended for delivering biological agents. Again, not a new story for the NIE to judge that Iraq maintained a small missile force and several development programs, including an UAV that could deliver a biological warfare agent.

In sum, the NIE on Iraqi weapons of mass destruction was the product of years of reporting and intelligence collection, analyzed by numerous experts in several different agencies. Our judgments have been consistent on this subject because the evidence has repeatedly pointed to continued Iraqi pursuit of WMD and efforts to conceal that pursuit from international scrutiny. Modifications of our judgments have reflected new evidence, much of which was acquired because of our intensified collection efforts. Thus, noting that Saddam had continued to pursue weapons of mass destruction was not startling. That he probably was hiding weapons was not new. That he would seek means to improve his capabilities using alternative-use cover stories would have been expected. That we would have alternative views is respected as part of the process. We stand by the soundness and integrity of our process, and no one outside the Intelligence Community told us what to say or not to say in this Estimate.

As with any other topic addressed in an NIE, the acquisition of further evidence may confirm

some of our judgments while calling others into question. Operation Iraqi Freedom obviously has opened a major new opportunity for learning about the WMD activities of Saddam Husayn's regime. We have no doubt, however, that the NIE was the most reasonable, well-grounded, and objective assessment of Iraq's WMD programs that was possible at the time it was produced.

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