

SECRET/NOFORN

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

Meeting apparently convened by Valerie Wilson, a CIA WMD managerial type and the wife of Amb. Joe Wilson, with the idea that the agency and the larger USG could dispatch Joe to Niger to use his contacts there to sort out the Niger/Iraq uranium sale question. Joe went to Niger in late 1999 in regard to Niger's uranium program, apparently with CIA support.

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INR made it a point to, gently, tell them that the Embassy has very good contacts and the Ambassador is a Tandja confidante. Later [Redacted] they were informed, a little less gently, that the Embassy was a reliable interlocutor and could be trusted to protect US interests.

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stressing again that the Embassy, however, does have a wide range of high-level contacts.

The alleged contract between Niger and Iraq says that Niger will sell Iraq 500 tons of Uranium in two tranches per year. INR explained that would mean somewhere between one sixth and one eighth of the total output of the two mines and that twice a year 25 semi tractor trailers loads of yellow cake would have to be driven down roads where one seldom sees even a bush taxi. In other words, it would be very hard to hide such a shipment.

When the idea of moving the stuff across the desert to Sudan (???) was broached INR responded that while it is not difficult to drive across much of the hard packed, flat desert terrain, there are many problems including heat up to 130 degrees F, wear and tear on the vehicles, water, fuel and drifting sand that would make such a trip difficult in the extreme.

INR also explained that the French appear to have complete control of the entire mining, milling and transportation process, and would seem to have little interest in selling uranium to the Iraqis.

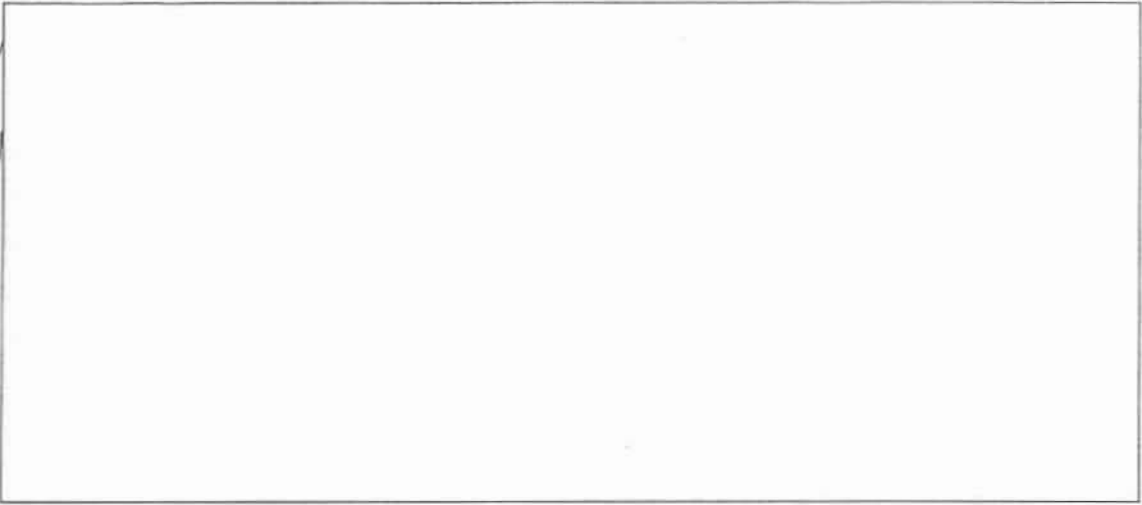
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