

# For Scary Halloween Reading, Dig Deeper into the Duelfer Report

Michael Roston | October 29, 2004

America received a frightening jolt when the International Atomic Energy Agency announced that heavy-duty explosives perfectly suited for terrorist bombing attacks had gone missing from critical sites in Iraq. But a far more terrifying revelation was made in the Central Intelligence Agency's publicly released Duelfer Report on October 6. It took some effort, but anyone who dug deep enough into this document submitted by Charles Duelfer, fully titled the *Comprehensive Report of the Special Adviser to the Director of Central Intelligence on Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction*, found reading far more scary than any of the ghost stories you might hear this Halloween.

If you thought the missing explosives were bad, just turn to the annex labeled "Al-Abud Network" buried in the report's third volume. In plain language, the Iraq Survey Group reports on the activities of insurgents who worked with a civilian Iraqi chemist to build chemical weapons to use against Coalition forces. Fortunately, these insurgents foundered before they were caught by U.S.-led troops. But, the report menacingly warns that al-Abud is "not the only group planning or attempting to produce or acquire CBW agents ... availability of chemicals and materials dispersed throughout the country, and intellectual capital from the former WMD programs increases the future threat to Coalition Forces."

So, since we toppled Saddam Hussein for threatening us with WMD that weren't there, terrorists in Iraq have started working with Saddam's intellectual dream team to build new WMD to use against American forces?

This point escaped scrutiny when President George W. Bush and Senator John Kerry grappled over the meaning of the Duelfer Report in the second of this year's presidential debates. In that debate, President Bush rolled out a familiar argument—Iraq's scientists, technicians, and engineers, capable of building nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons, were a sufficient reason to go to war against Iraq. Someday, the president argued, Saddam would use this gifted intellectual capability to reconstitute Iraq's mass destruction armaments, and this "gathering storm" was enough of a danger to require America's invasion.

The employment of this particular *casus belli* to justify the invasion of Iraq is an unbelievable instance of hypocrisy. While President Bush has failed to secure deadly explosives in Iraq, his administration has also failed to take serious action to make sure that Iraq's intellectual resources, possessing in-depth knowledge for making WMD, do not employ their knowledge against Coalition forces, or sell them out to the highest bidder among neighboring countries developing their own WMD capacity.

Knowledge of this danger is nothing new, but reaches back to shortly after the President declared "Mission Accomplished" in 2003. Undersecretary of State John Bolton told the House International Relations Committee on June 4, 2003, that "The biggest threat that we now face from Iraq's defunct WMD program is ... that other rogue states or terrorist organizations will hire and offer refuge to these WMD experts." So why does this threat continue to menace America and international security more than a year after the invasion?

Criminally awful planning is one major culprit. While responsible officials at the State and Energy Departments worked early on to bring the considerable toolbox of WMD brain drain prevention programs successfully deployed in the former Soviet Union to bear in Iraq, they were blocked during war planning. In an address before the U.S. Institute of Peace on February 10, 2004, Duelfer's predecessor David Kay declared that early efforts to give incentives to Iraqi



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weapons scientists not to flee the country or collaborate with terrorists had fallen victim to “some of the worst ... most pointless inter-agency wrangling I’ve ever seen.”

The situation has not improved much. The State Department is still getting by on crumbs, and has only been able to scrape together \$2 million in funds after the administration’s nonproliferation budget request for this year failed to include any funding to put Iraqi weapons scientists to work.

Even more unfortunately, Iraq’s endlessly deteriorating security situation makes it difficult to tell if funding these programs could do much good at this stage. With constant news media reports confirming the kidnapping and assassination of Iraqi intellectuals, including scientists, Duelfer confessed that “individuals related to Iraqi WMD tried to avoid being found. Even long after the war, many Iraqi scientists and engineers find little incentive to speak candidly about the WMD efforts of the previous regime.”

In the midst of the cacophony of electioneering, it is unlikely that many Americans will be able to get

beyond the spin of the Duelfer Report’s almost one thousand pages by the various parties to this year’s political fracas. But this critical point must not be forgotten. As President Bush and his advisers have used Iraq’s WMD specialists as a political tool in this season’s election, his administration has failed to do anything about the threat those scientists could become now. The shortsightedness of this policy is only making it more likely that the worst of America’s fears about WMD in Iraq will finally come true.

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## FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Duelfer Report  
[http://www.cia.gov/cia/reports/iraq\\_wmd\\_2004/](http://www.cia.gov/cia/reports/iraq_wmd_2004/)

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