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IRAQI NATIONAL CONGRESS

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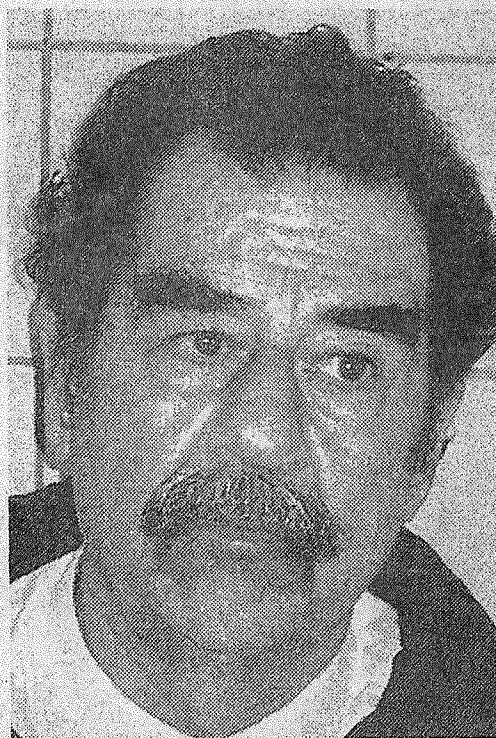
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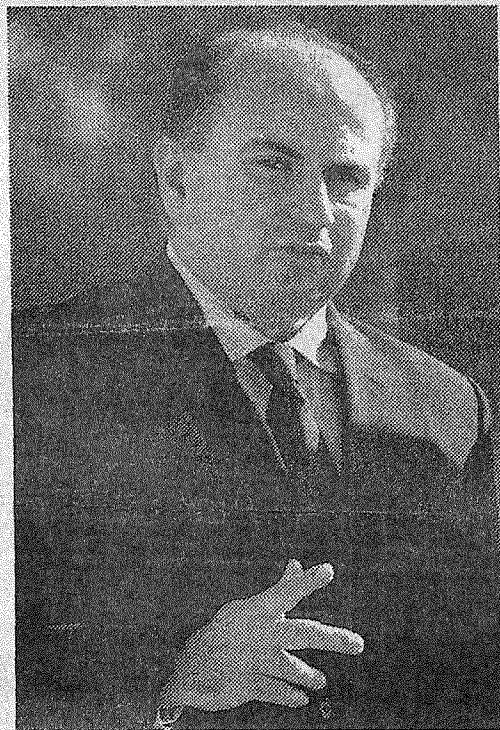
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# ith War Crimes Trial Experts



Reuters

The trial of Saddam Hussein, above, has raised concerns being addressed by a group of Iraqis led by Salem Chalabi, below.



The American involvement will intensify shortly. A small team from the Justice Department has already gone to Iraq. Investigators and prosecutors will follow this month to establish the tribunal, work out procedural rules, organize evidence and charges against Mr. Hussein and his aides, administration officials said.

Mr. Chalabi cited two main reasons Mr. Hussein will not be tried first: wrinkles need to be ironed out before the tribunal "gets put under the scrutiny of a trial like Saddam's" and as many as 12 charges may be brought against him, for which evidence must be ready for trial.

United States officials have repeatedly cited the Sierra Leone court as a model for future war crimes prosecutions, rather than the costly and large Rwandan and Yugoslav tribunals created by the United Nations a decade ago. Its budget is controlled by the United States and other donor countries; it has a three-year mandate; and it aims to try only the 15 to 20 defendants deemed most responsible for atrocities during the latter part of Sierra Leone civil war.

But the Iraqis may not be satisfied with a small number of trials. "The U.S. government was suggesting trying the 20 top cases, and Iraqis are talking of hundreds, even thousands," Mr. Chalabi said. "I rather think it will be closer to 200 people, a good portion of which can be dealt with through plea-bargaining."

A primary concern will be security. At the time of their creation, the Yugoslav and Rwandan conflicts were continuing, so the tribunals were set up outside the country. But the Iraqi tribunal will remain in Iraq, and continuing violence may hamper its operation.

In the former Yugoslavia and in Rwanda, for example, numerous witnesses were threatened and refused to appear before the tribunals. At

under himself, he is able to hold the floor for long periods as he cross-examines witnesses. He often makes statements disguised as questions and uses the court as a political podium from which to encourage nationalist Serbs.

"There was a discussion what effect a Saddam trial could have on the Arab street," one participant said.

The Iraqis are determined to keep Mr. Hussein on a far tighter leash, participants in the meetings said.

Mr. Chalabi said that under Iraqi law, no one, not even Mr. Hussein, could defend himself unless he is a lawyer.

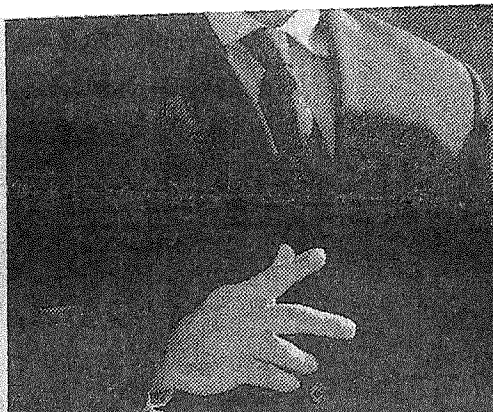
In Amsterdam, the Iraqis met with members of the international courts dealing with Rwanda, the former Yugoslavia, East Timor and Sierra Leone. In The Hague, they visited the new International Criminal Court, which Washington opposes, and the Yugoslav tribunal.

"It was all extremely useful," said Mr. Chalabi, who has practiced law in a London firm.

"Seeing the software and the monitors recording testimony in the courtrooms was an extremely powerful message for our judges," he said of the Yugoslav tribunal. "It showed them how Iraq is lagging behind."

The meetings, which lasted three days, also underlined the complexities and contradictions of finding international help to organize the Iraqi tribunal, when the process so far has been mainly controlled by the United States.

"Iraqis feel quite strongly that they want the international input to be broad-based, not just American," said Neil Kritz, a director of the United States Institute of Peace in Washington. "We want to ensure that happens." But it was his federally financed group that organized and paid for the trip, and he accompanied the Iraqis.



Ashley Gilbertson/Aurora

## Signs of concern in preparing to try Saddam Hussein.

In contrast to the United Nations, which has been cautious about being drawn into a process in which it has no say, Washington has been deeply involved in creating the tribunal, helping to draft statutes and providing staff, funds and expertise.

But the United States has not held or encouraged the kind of open, international meetings that accompanied the creation of other tribunals. "It's all happening behind closed doors," said Richard Dicker, a director of Human Rights Watch. "It's almost clandestine."

Meanwhile, some governments in Europe, including Britain, where there is no death penalty, have said they will have problems cooperating in trials that could lead to capital punishment.

Further, Mr. Chalabi said that unlike other international tribunals, judges will not be from a variety of nations. "We will have only Iraqi judges; that's a big political issue in Iraq," he said, speaking by telephone after returning to Baghdad. "The judges will get special training to meet international standards."



with through plea-bargaining."

A primary concern will be security. At the time of their creation, the Yugoslav and Rwandan conflicts were continuing, so the tribunals were set up outside the country. But the Iraqi tribunal will remain in Iraq, and continuing violence may hamper its operation.

In the former Yugoslavia and in Rwanda, for example, numerous witnesses were threatened and refused to appear before the tribunals. At times, defense lawyers have leaked the names of some witnesses who testified secretly or under assumed names.

The unstable and polarized climate in Iraq may also cause deeper problems. Antonio Cassese, the first president of the Yugoslav tribunal, said he feared that the climate for a fair trial may not yet exist. But both Iraqi and American officials have said early trials inside Iraq must be part of the transition and stabilization process.

Defense is another serious concern. The Yugoslav and Rwandan tribunals have seen their work affected by poorly trained and sometimes corrupt defense lawyers whose practices included slowing the proceedings in order to bill the United Nations for more work or splitting their fees with defendants.

Like the courts of Rwanda and Yugoslavia, Iraq's will face vast amounts of evidence, stretching over many years. Iraqis were told that the evidence was stored was crucial. The Yugoslav tribunal had to reorganize its databases and catalogs three times as new evidence and new technology became available.

"Criminal trials and justice after armed conflict have now almost become a given," said Sam Muller, a senior official at the newly created International Criminal Court in The Hague who attended the talks. "The practice of it is much more difficult than is often believed."

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## Reports: Chalabi Told Iran U.S. Broke Its Codes

Wednesday, June 02, 2004

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — **Ahmad Chalabi** ([search](#)), the former Iraqi exile once regarded as a friend of the Bush administration, revealed to **Iran** ([search](#)) that the United States had broken the code of its intelligence service, according to broadcast and published reports.

CBS News reported Tuesday that Chalabi had told an Iranian intelligence official that the United States had cracked its codes, allowing U.S. agents to read Iran's secret communications. By revealing such information, Chalabi would have exposed one of the United States' most important sources of information about Iran.

The New York Times, quoting anonymous U.S. intelligence officials, reported on its Web site Tuesday that Chalabi told the **Baghdad** ([search](#)) chief of the Iranian spy service that the United States was reading its communications. The Iranian spy described the conversation in a message to Tehran, which was intercepted by U.S. intelligence.

A CIA official declined to comment on the reports Tuesday night.

The American officials quoted by the Times said the Iranian spy, in the message to Tehran, reported that Chalabi had said he had gotten the information from an American who had been drunk.

CBS reported that FBI agents are questioning Defense Department officials in an effort to find out who gave such information to Chalabi. The Times reported that the FBI expects to interview civilians at the Pentagon who were strong supporters of Chalabi.

Chalabi, a member of the Shiite Islamic sect to which the majority of Iranians and Iraqis belong, once was a favorite of Pentagon officials. He recently came under suspicion that he might have handed over sensitive information to Iran about the U.S. occupation.

He had provided intelligence to the Bush administration about weapons of mass destruction, which was used to justify the U.S. war against Iraq, but his information came under major criticism after no weapons were found.

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## Chalabi Tipped Iran To Code Break

NEW YORK, June 2, 2004

**CBS News** has learned Iraqi leader Ahmad Chalabi recently told an Iranian intelligence official that the U.S. has cracked Iranian codes, allowing it to read communications on everything from Iran's sponsorship of terrorists to its covert operations inside Iraq.

CBS has also been told FBI agents are questioning Defense Department officials about who gave such top secret U.S. information to Chalabi in the first place.

Chalabi has denied passing any classified information to Iran, and Chalabi supporters have asserted that the CIA is out to destroy the former exile.

Chalabi was once touted as a strong candidate to lead postwar Iraq by some White House and Pentagon officials, but he has suffered a rapid fall from the grace, in no small measure because the U.S. learned he was giving secret information to Iran.

On May 20, Iraqi police backed by American soldiers raided Chalabi's Baghdad home and offices. Chalabi is a controversial figure who provided the Bush administration with prewar intelligence on supposed weapons of mass destruction in Iraq -- including the now-discredited information about mobile weapons labs.

After the raid on his home and offices, **60 Minutes Correspondent Lesley Stahl** reported that the U.S. had evidence Chalabi has been passing highly classified U.S. intelligence to Iran.

The New York Times, citing U.S. intelligence officials, said the U.S. learned of Chalabi's activities when an Iranian intelligence agent in Baghdad sent a coded message to Tehran reporting that Chalabi had told him the U.S. had broken the codes.

According to the message, which was read by the U.S., Chalabi claimed to have gotten the information from an unnamed American who was drunk, the Times said.

Chalabi is still active and visible on the scene in Iraq where he is a member of the Iraqi Governing Council. He has repeatedly denied

Over the Memorial Day weekend, Chalabi was reportedly involved in negotiations to maintain a falter cease fire in the city of Kufa between U.S. military and radical Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr.

Chalabi and other Shiite leaders met with al-Sadr representatives and declared there was "a momentum for peace."





June 2, 2004

## Chalabi Reportedly Told Iran That U.S. Had Code

By JAMES RISEN and DAVID JOHNSTON

**W**ASHINGTON, June 1 — Ahmad Chalabi, the Iraqi leader and former ally of the Bush administration, disclosed to an Iranian official that the United States had broken the secret communications code of Iran's intelligence service, betraying one of Washington's most valuable sources of information about Iran, according to United States intelligence officials.

The general charge that Mr. Chalabi provided Iran with critical American intelligence secrets was widely reported last month after the Bush administration cut off financial aid to Mr. Chalabi's organization, the Iraqi National Congress, and American and Iraqi security forces raided his Baghdad headquarters.

The Bush administration, citing national security concerns, asked The New York Times and other news organizations not to publish details of the case. The Times agreed to hold off publication of some specific information that top intelligence officials said would compromise a vital, continuing intelligence operation. The administration withdrew its request on Tuesday, saying information about the code-breaking was starting to appear in news accounts.

Mr. Chalabi and his aides have said he knew of no secret information related to Iran and therefore could not have communicated any intelligence to Tehran.

American officials said that about six weeks ago, Mr. Chalabi told the Baghdad station chief of Iran's Ministry of Intelligence and Security that the United States was reading the communications traffic of the Iranian spy service, one of the most sophisticated in the Middle East.

According to American officials, the Iranian official in Baghdad, possibly not believing Mr. Chalabi's account, sent a cable to Tehran detailing his conversation with Mr. Chalabi, using the broken code. That encrypted cable, intercepted and read by the United States, tipped off American officials to the fact that Mr. Chalabi had betrayed the code-breaking operation, the American officials said.

American officials reported that in the cable to Tehran, the Iranian official recounted how Mr. Chalabi had said that one of "them" — a reference to an American — had revealed the code-breaking operation, the officials said. The Iranian reported that Mr. Chalabi said the American was drunk.

The Iranians sent what American intelligence regarded as a test message, which mentioned a cache of weapons inside Iraq, believing that if the code had been broken, United States military forces would be quickly dispatched to the specified site. But there was no such action.

The account of Mr. Chalabi's actions has been confirmed by several senior American officials, who said the leak contributed to the White House decision to break with him.

It could not be learned exactly how the United States broke the code. But intelligence sources said that in the past, the United States has broken into the embassies of foreign governments, including those of Iran, to steal information, including codes.

The F.B.I. has opened an espionage investigation seeking to determine exactly what information Mr. Chalabi turned

over to the Iranians as well as who told Mr. Chalabi that the Iranian code had been broken, government officials said. The inquiry, still in an early phase, is focused on a very small number of people who were close to Mr. Chalabi and also had access to the highly restricted information about the Iran code.

Some of the people the F.B.I. expects to interview are civilians at the Pentagon who were among Mr. Chalabi's strongest supporters and served as his main point of contact with the government, the officials said. So far, no one has been accused of any wrongdoing.

In a television interview on May 23, Mr. Chalabi said on CNN's "Late Edition" that he met in Tehran in December with the Iranian supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, and the Iranian president, Mohammad Khatami. He also said he had met with Iran's minister of information.

Mr. Chalabi attacked the C.I.A. and the director of central intelligence, George J. Tenet, saying the agency was behind what Mr. Chalabi asserted was an effort to smear him.

"I have never passed any classified information to Iran or have done anything — participated in any scheme of intelligence against the United States," Mr. Chalabi said on "Fox News Sunday." "This charge is false. I have never seen a U.S. classified document, and I have never seen — had a U.S. classified briefing."

Mr. Chalabi, a member of the Iraqi Governing Council, said, "We meet people from the Iranian Embassy in Baghdad regularly," but said that was to be expected of Iraqi officials like himself.

Some defenders of Mr. Chalabi in the United States say American officials had encouraged him in his dealings with Iran, urging him to open an office in Tehran in hopes of improving relations between Iran and Washington. Those defenders also say they do not believe that his relationship with Iran involved any exchange of intelligence.

Mr. Chalabi's allies in Washington also saw the Bush administration's decision to sever its ties with Mr. Chalabi and his group as a cynical effort instigated by the C.I.A. and longtime Chalabi critics at the State Department. They believe those agencies want to blame him for mistaken estimates and incorrect information about Iraq before the war, like whether Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction.

One of those who has defended Mr. Chalabi is Richard N. Perle, the former chairman of the Defense Policy Board. "The C.I.A. has disliked him passionately for a long time and has mounted a campaign against him with some considerable success," Mr. Perle said Tuesday. "I've seen no evidence of improper behavior on his part. No evidence whatsoever."

Mr. Perle said he thought the C.I.A. had turned against Mr. Chalabi because he refused to be the agency's "puppet." Mr. Chalabi "has a mind of his own," Mr. Perle said.

American intelligence officials said the F.B.I. investigation into the intelligence leak to Iran did not extend to any charges that Mr. Chalabi provided the United States with incorrect information, or any allegations of corruption.

American officials said the leak about the Iranian codes was a serious loss because the Iranian intelligence service's highly encrypted cable traffic was a crucial source of information, supplying Washington with information about Iranian operations inside Iraq, where Tehran's agents have become increasingly active. It also helped the United States keep track of Iranian intelligence operations around the world.

Until last month, the Iraqi National Congress had a lucrative contract with the Defense Intelligence Agency to provide information about Iraq. Before the United States invasion last year, the group arranged for Iraqi defectors to provide the Pentagon with information about Saddam Hussein's government, particularly evidence purporting to show that Baghdad had active programs to develop weapons of mass destruction. Today, the American intelligence community believes that much of the information passed by the defectors was either wrong or fabricated.

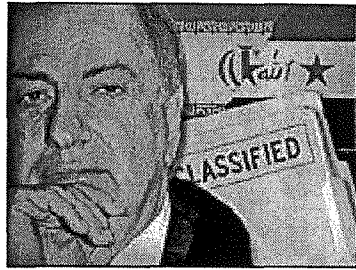


# Chalabi Tipped Iran To Code Break

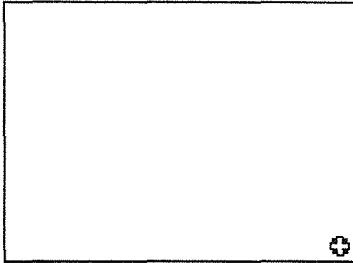
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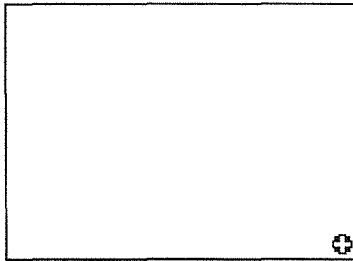
U.S. Intel Passed To Iran?



(Photo: CBS/AP)



Ahmad Chalabi displays a family photo he says was smashed during the May 20 raid on his home. (Photo: AP)



U.S. troops outside Chalabi's home during May 20 raid. (Photo: AP)

(CBS/AP) CBS News has learned new details involving the Iran espionage allegations against Ahmad Chalabi, the Iraqi exile leader who was one touted as a possible president to lead Iraq in the post-Saddam transition.

On May 20, Iraqi police backed by American soldiers raided the Baghdad home and offices of Chalabi. Chalabi is a controversial figure who provided the Bush administration with prewar intelligence on supposed weapons of mass destruction in Iraq -- including the now-discredited information about mobile labs whose true use is still a matter of debate.

After the raid, **60 Minutes** Correspondent **Lesley Stahl** reported that the U.S. had evidence Chalabi has been passing highly-classified U.S. intelligence to Iran.

CBS News has since learned that Chalabi recently told an Iranian intelligence official the U.S. has cracked Iranian codes, allowing it to read communications on everything from Iran's sponsorship of terrorists to its covert operations inside Iraq

CBS has also been told FBI agents are questioning Defense Department officials about who gave such top secret U.S. information to Chalabi in the first place.

Chalabi is still active and visible on the scene in Iraq where he is a member of the handpicked Iraqi Governing Council.

Over the Memorial Day weekend, Chalabi was reportedly involved in negotiations to maintain a falter cease fire in the city of Kufa between U.S. military and radical Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr. Chalabi and other Shiite leaders met with al-Sadr representatives and declared there was "a momentum for peace."

But Chalabi's star has definitely fallen in U.S. eyes. Despite his seat on the Iraqi Governing Council, it seems the Bush administration is going out of its way to ensure that the man who made a career lobbying to get rid of former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein has no American-backed political future in Iraq.

Other tense situations in recent months between the Bush administration and Chalabi include:

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- American officials have complained privately that Chalabi was interfering with an inquiry into money skimmed from the U.N. oil-for-food program.

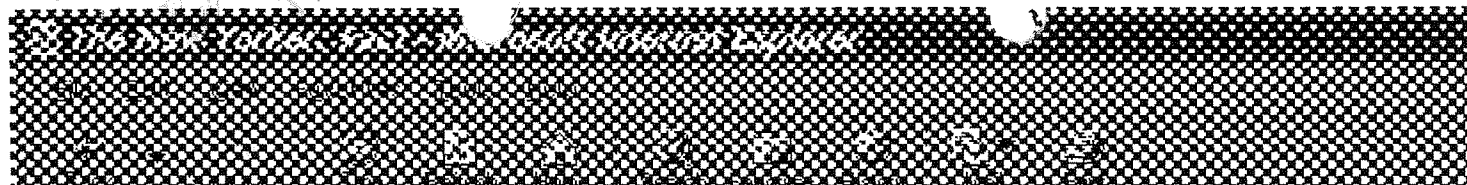
- Chalabi has recently accused the U.S.-led coalition of not going far enough to give Iraqis sovereignty. He

also fiercely resisted U.S. military commanders' recent decision to soften rules blocking former members of Saddam's ruling party from government jobs.

Chalabi still has strong supporters in Washington, and the Pentagon continued to pay for intelligence provided by his organization until recently.

Danielle Pletka, a vice president at the conservative American Enterprise Institute, after the May 20 raid that she believed the raid was likely "political manipulation in order to disable somebody who has been a thorn in the side of the CPA."

"We need the United Nations right now, and Chalabi is the prime mover behind the investigation in the oil-for-food program," Pletka said.



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### A REPORTER AT LARGE

## THE MANIPULATOR

by JANE MAYER

Ahmad Chalabi pushed a tainted case for war. Can he survive the occupation?

Issue of 2004-06-07

Posted 2004-05-29

Ahmad Chalabi, the wealthy Iraqi Shiite who spent more than a decade working for the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, prides himself on his understanding of the United States and its history. "I know quite a lot about it," he told me not long ago. It was after midnight in Baghdad, but he was still in his office in the new headquarters of the Iraqi National Congress, the exile opposition group that Chalabi helped found in 1992. As a young man, he said, he spent several years in America, earning an undergraduate and a master's degree in mathematics from M.I.T., and a Ph.D. in mathematics from the University of Chicago. Chalabi began studying the uses of power in American politics, and the subject developed into a lifelong interest. One episode in American history particularly fascinated him, he said. "I followed very closely how Roosevelt, who abhorred the Nazis, at a time when isolationist sentiment was paramount in the United States, managed adroitly to persuade the American people to go to war. I studied it with a great deal of respect; we learned a lot from it. The Lend-Lease program committed Roosevelt to enter on Britain's side—so we had the Iraq Liberation Act, which committed the American people for the liberation against Saddam." The act, which Congress passed in 1998, made "regime change" in Iraq an official priority of the U.S. government; Chalabi had lobbied tirelessly for the



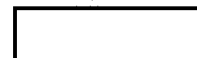
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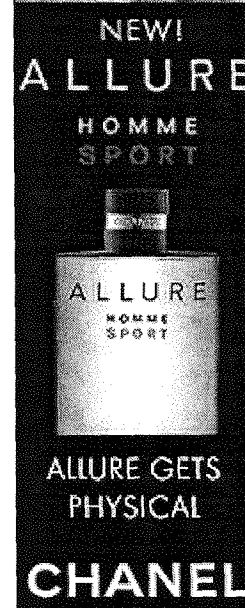
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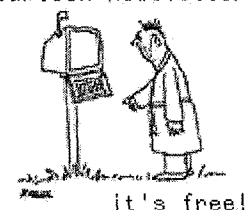
legislatio

Three days after our conversation, Chalabi's Baghdad home was raided at gunpoint by Iraqi police, who were supported by American troops. His offices were also searched. Chalabi had sensed that a confrontation with the Bush Administration was imminent. As he put it, "It's customary when great events happen that the U.S. punishes its friends and rewards its enemies." For years, he had been America's staunchest Iraqi ally, and he had helped the Bush Administration make its case against Saddam, in part by disseminating the notion that the Baathist regime had maintained stockpiles of biological and chemical weapons, and was poised to become a nuclear power. Although Chalabi developed enemies at the C.I.A. who disputed his intelligence data and questioned his ethics, he forged a close bond with Vice-President Dick Cheney and many of the top civilians at the Pentagon, such as Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, Under-Secretary of Defense Douglas Feith, and Under-Secretary of Defense William J. Luti. Yet now that the occupation of Iraq appeared to be headed toward disaster, he said, many in the Administration had united in making him the scapegoat. As Chalabi saw it, he had understood America too well, and had been too successful in influencing its foreign policy. "There is a smear campaign that says I am responsible for the liberation of Iraq," he said. Then he added with a chuckle, "But how bad is that?"

Between 1992 and the raid on Chalabi's home, the U.S. government funnelled more than a hundred million dollars to the Iraqi National Congress. The current Bush Administration gave Chalabi's group at least thirty-nine million dollars. Exactly what the I.N.C. provided in exchange for these sums has yet to be fully explained. Chalabi defined his role simply. "I clarified the picture," he said. His many critics, however, believe that he distorted it. Diplomatic and intelligence officials accuse him of exaggerating the security threat that Iraq posed to the U.S.; supplying defectors who offered misleading or bogus testimony about Saddam's efforts to acquire nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons; promoting questionable stories connecting Saddam to Al Qaeda; and



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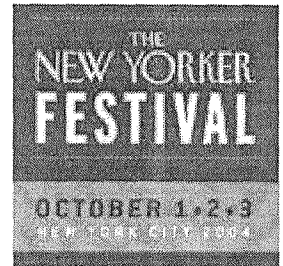
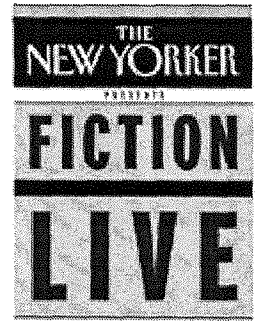
overestimating the ease with which Saddam could be replaced with a Western-style democracy.

Vincent Cannistraro, a former C.I.A. counter-terrorism specialist who now consults for the government, told me, "With Chalabi, we paid to fool ourselves. It's horrible. In other times, it might be funny. But a lot of people are dead as a result of this. It's reprehensible."

The humiliating raid on Chalabi's home was authorized by the White House, as was a recent decision, by the Defense Department, to eliminate an I.N.C. stipend of three hundred and forty-two thousand dollars per month. Chalabi's allies at the Pentagon were not notified of the raid in advance, although some knew that it was under consideration. The raid took place amid allegations that Chalabi or other members of the I.N.C. had engaged in numerous misdeeds, including embezzlement, theft, and kidnapping. After Baghdad police began investigating these charges, several of Chalabi's top lieutenants fled Iraq.

One of them, Aras Karim Habib, the I.N.C.'s intelligence chief, escaped just before the serving of an arrest warrant. He is under investigation for passing classified U.S. government information to Iran—a member of what President Bush calls "the axis of evil." According to a Chalabi aide, the I.N.C. has heard that it will be accused of telling Iran's intelligence service that the U.S. had cracked one of its internal codes. Chalabi has denied any wrongdoing, and claims that the spying charge is politically motivated. "They are charges put out by George Tenet and his C.I.A. to discredit us," he told Tim Russert, on "Meet the Press," referring to the C.I.A.'s director. Meanwhile, according to Cannistraro, two Pentagon officials connected to Chalabi are being investigated by the F.B.I., to determine whether an American official gave Chalabi classified intelligence on Iran.

The spying charges have forced Chalabi's patrons at the Pentagon to distance themselves from him. Paul Wolfowitz, who was one of the earliest and most outspoken proponents of an invasion of Iraq, and who has been friends with Chalabi for years, spoke of him with studied detachment at a recent congressional hearing. He praised the I.N.C.'s effectiveness



in providing battlefield intelligence since the war began, but he said, "I think there's quite a bit of street legend out there that somehow he is the favorite of the Defense Department, and we had some idea of installing him as the leader of Iraq."

But a prominent State Department official told me that he saw numerous documents that had been prepared by the Pentagon's Office of Special Plans, which devoted considerable effort to planning the war. The office was overseen by Douglas Feith. "Every list of Iraqis they wanted to work with for positions in the government of postwar Iraq included Chalabi and all of the members of his organization," the State Department official said.

Chalabi has consistently denied having any personal political ambitions, or any desire to lead Iraq. As early as 1994, he told the *Los Angeles Times*, "Anyone who wants to take power in Baghdad is crazy. I'm just in this to get rid of Saddam." In our conversation, however, Chalabi said that he could no longer uphold his promise that he would never seek office in Iraq. "Never is a very long time," he said. Scott Ritter, a former weapons inspector for the United Nations, who has known Chalabi for seven years, said that Chalabi had confided to him his plans to run Iraq once America had liberated it. Ritter, who strongly opposed the war and produced a controversial documentary in 2001 asserting that Iraq had no weapons of mass destruction, also said that Chalabi spoke of benefitting financially from Iraq's oil reserves, which are the second largest in the world. (Chalabi's office denies this.)

Chalabi's admirers claim that he has been demonized by his political enemies. Jim Hoagland, a columnist at the *Washington Post*, argued that the raid on Chalabi's home was in retaliation for his candid criticism of the occupation. "By coming out in open, bitter opposition to the latest U.S. transition plan and its rehabilitation of senior Baathists, Chalabi seems to have crossed a final red line," he wrote.

Peter Galbraith, a former Ambassador to Croatia and a human-rights activist, who has long supported Chalabi's efforts to depose

Saddam, suggested that if the Administration was unhappy with the outcome in Iraq it had only itself to blame. "Chalabi is one of the smartest people I know," he told me. As Galbraith put it, Chalabi "figured out in the eighties that the road to Baghdad ran through Washington. He cultivated whom he needed to know. If he didn't get what he wanted from State, he went to Capitol Hill. It's a sign of being effective. It's not his fault that his strategy succeeded. It's not his fault that the Bush Administration believed everything he said. Should they have? Of course not. They should have looked critically. He's not a liar; he believed the information he was purveying, and part of it was valuable. But his goal was to get the U.S. to invade Iraq."

### THE WASHINGTON FRONT

Since 1996, the Washington headquarters of the I.N.C. has been situated in a million-dollar brick row house in Georgetown. The house looks as stately and manicured as its neighbors, but, inside, the carpets on the front stairs are filthy. The day I visited, piles of newspapers were strewn alongside half-empty coffee mugs, and ants carried cookie crumbs across a leather couch, giving the place the atmosphere of a frat house. Padding around in socks and an untucked T-shirt was a sandy-haired, boyish-looking man named Francis Brooke.

For most of the past decade, Brooke has functioned as Chalabi's unofficial lobbyist in Washington. Brooke, his wife, Sharon, and their children live for free in the town house, which is owned by Levantine Holdings, a Chalabi family corporation based in Luxembourg. Part home, part office, with a succession of Iraqi exiles camping out in the basement, this was the place from which Chalabi spearheaded a sophisticated marketing operation that Brooke described proudly as "an amazing success." As he put it, "This war would not have been fought if it had not been for Ahmad."

Brooke, who is a devout Christian, has brought an evangelical ardor to the cause of defeating Saddam. "I do have a religious motivation for doing what I do," Brooke said. "I see Iraq as our neighbor. And the Bible

says, "When your neighbor is in a ditch, God means for you to help him."

After graduating from Duke University, in 1983, Brooke worked briefly for the unsuccessful Georgia senatorial campaign of Hamilton Jordan, who had been Jimmy Carter's chief of staff. Brooke then became a representative for the beer industry. ("If you want to understand constituent politics, you should try mobilizing opinion against a beer tax," he said.) But in 1991 he took a public-relations job with an American firm in London called the Rendon Group, which described its specialty as "perception management." The company had been founded by John Rendon, a former executive director of the Democratic National Committee. It didn't take long for Brooke to realize that the project he was assigned at Rendon was funded by the C.I.A. Brooke, who at the time was thirty years old, said that he was paid twenty-two thousand dollars a month.

The genesis of Brooke's assignment was the decision not to unseat Saddam Hussein at the end of the first Gulf War. In May, 1991, President George H. W. Bush signed a covert "lethal finding" that authorized the C.I.A. to spend a hundred million dollars to "create the conditions for removal of Saddam Hussein from power." Robert Baer, a former C.I.A. officer who was assigned to Iraq at the time, said that the policy was all show, "like an ape beating its chest. No one had any expectation of marching into Baghdad and killing Saddam. It was an impossibility." Nonetheless, the C.I.A. had received an influx of cash, and it decided to create an external opposition movement to Saddam.

The C.I.A. had been forced to abolish domestic operations after a series of scandals in the nineteen-seventies, and it had folded many of its overseas programs when the Cold War ended. So it outsourced the Iraq project to the Rendon Group. According to Brooke, the company signed a secret contract with the C.I.A. which guaranteed that it would receive a ten-per-cent "management fee" on top of whatever money it spent. The arrangement was an incentive to spend millions. "We tried to burn through forty million dollars a year," Brooke said. "It was a very nice job."

From an office near Victoria Station, the Rendon Group set out to influence global political opinion against Saddam. Given Saddam's record of atrocities against his own people, it wasn't a hard sell. "It was a campaign environment, with a lot of young people, and no set hierarchy," Brooke recalled. "It was great. We had a real competitive advantage. We knew something about the twenty-four-hour media cycle, and how to manage a media campaign. CNN was new at that point. No one else knew how to do these things, but Rendon was great at issue campaigns." The group began offering information to British journalists, and many articles subsequently appeared in the London press. Occasionally, he said, the company would be reprimanded by project managers in Washington when too many of those stories were picked up by the American press, thereby transgressing laws that prohibited domestic propaganda. But, for the most part, Brooke said, "It was amazing how well it worked. It was like magic."

In addition to generating anti-Saddam news stories and creating a travelling "atrocities exhibit," which documented the human-rights abuses of Saddam's regime, the Rendon Group was charged with the delicate task of helping to create a viable and unified opposition movement against Saddam. "That is when I first met Dr. Chalabi," Brooke said.

Chalabi, who had become an international banker and financier, had surfaced almost immediately as the C.I.A.'s favored opposition figure. As Frank Anderson, a former agency official, said, "Chalabi had rare administrative competence." A secular Shiite who was passionately dedicated to overthrowing Saddam, he spoke excellent English, dressed elegantly, and was well organized and impressively connected. He also displayed a facility for backroom political maneuvering. He wasn't popular with other exiles, however. According to a former I.N.C. member, in June, 1992, the Iraqi National Congress held one of its first organizational meetings, in Vienna; Chalabi didn't win enough backing to qualify for a seat on the fifteen-member board. By the time attendees returned from the meeting, however, Chalabi's name had somehow been added to the list of



members. Chalabi claims that support for him was unanimous.) His management of the group, other exiles complained, was similarly impervious to the democratic will.

The C.I.A.'s sponsorship of Chalabi came at an opportune moment. He had recently been convicted, in absentia, by a military court in Jordan for his part in a spectacular bank fraud that imperilled the country's fragile economy. With the help of the U.S. government, Chalabi was able to recast himself from an accused swindler to a charismatic political leader and a champion of liberal democratic values.

## THE JORDAN AFFAIR

Ahmad Chalabi was born on October 30, 1944, into one of Iraq's wealthiest and most influential Shi'ite families. When the 1958 revolution forced his family into exile, it lost much of its fortune, including what Chalabi said were "a million-plus square metres of land" of prime property in central Baghdad, which he now intends to reclaim. He told an American friend that his father, before going into exile, had had more land and industrial power than anyone else in Iraq. His forebears leveraged their fortune into political clout by performing favors for the powerful, such as paying off the personal debts of the royal family. In his lifetime, Chalabi's grandfather held posts in nine Cabinets. Chalabi's father was president of the senate and an adviser to the king.

Imad Khadduri, an Iraqi exile who now lives in Canada, and who was a schoolmate of Chalabi's at a Jesuit academy in Baghdad, told me that Chalabi's grandfather kept his own personal prison, in which he incarcerated serfs who failed to pay taxes or produce wheat. (Chalabi's office denies this assertion.) Chalabi, he recalled, was a "very bright" young man, but also a sore loser. "He threw a tantrum when he didn't get the highest grades." When Chalabi was thirteen, the Iraqi Communist Party and the Army overthrew the royal family, and he was sent to Jordan for safety. Thus began thirty-four years of exile. Khadduri, who severed his friendship with Chalabi after he learned of his ties to the C.I.A., said, "Ahmad wanted to avenge his father's ouster and the deprivation of his

lands. No one's trying to fit in his father's shoes, like your little Bush."

After attending boarding school in England, Chalabi went to America to study math. Upon finishing his Ph.D., which was in the rarefied branch of geometry known as knot theory, Chalabi moved to Lebanon, to teach math at the American University in Beirut. In 1977, however, Crown Prince Hassan of Jordan invited him to found a new bank in the country, whose financial sector was largely dominated by Palestinians. With the help of royal patronage and of innovations previously unavailable in Jordan, such as consumer credit cards, computerized banking, and A.T.M.s, the company created by Chalabi, Petra Bank, grew impressively. Within a decade, it had become the second-largest bank in Jordan, and Chalabi became a rich and well-connected man in Amman. Like his father and grandfather, he extended easy credit to important benefactors. He boasted to an American friend that he had personally made Prince Hassan, the King's brother, "a wealthy man." (Prince Hassan, who continues to regard Chalabi as a friend, declined to be interviewed.) Chalabi lived with his family in the suburban hills outside Amman, in a house of his own design, surrounded by a collection of modern art. His children rode horses with the royal family. In his spare time, he pursued a variety of intellectual passions. Judith Kipper, the director of the Middle East Forum at the Council on Foreign Relations, remembers bumping into him in Cairo; he had come with his math books, he told her, to try to figure out how the pyramids had been built.

In 1989, however, Chalabi's comfortable life collapsed amid allegations of criminality. Jordan's Central Bank, facing a liquidity crisis, demanded that the country's banks place thirty per cent of their foreign currency in its accounts. Petra balked, prompting an emergency audit. Chalabi betrayed little outward concern about this sudden turn. Patrick Theros, a former Ambassador to Qatar, who was then stationed in Jordan, had dinner at Chalabi's home during this period. "He was completely charming, particularly to the ladies—he could talk about any subject," Theros recalled. Two days later, Chalabi, who had apparently been tipped off about his impending arrest, fled. He forfeited many of

his family assets, and resettled with his wife, Leila, and their four children in London.

On April 9, 1992, a military tribunal in Jordan delivered a two-hundred-and-twenty-three-page verdict, which concluded that Chalabi was guilty of thirty-one charges, including embezzlement, theft, forgery, currency speculation, making false statements, and making bad loans to himself, to his friends, and to his family's other financial enterprises, in Lebanon and Switzerland. The Jordanian docket shows that Chalabi was sentenced to serve twenty-two years of hard labor, and to pay back two hundred and thirty million dollars in embezzled funds. An Arthur Andersen audit commissioned by Jordanian authorities found that the bank had overstated its assets by more than three hundred million dollars. In addition, a hundred and fifty-eight million dollars had disappeared from its accounts, apparently as a result of transactions involving people linked to the former management. (Swiss documents obtained by the *Newsweek* correspondent Mark Hosenball show that Socofi, an investment firm in Switzerland run by the Chalabi family, also collapsed under suspicious circumstances, leading to pleas of no contest by two of Chalabi's brothers, Jawad and Hazam, in 2000.)

After Chalabi arrived in England, he claimed that the Petra affair had been a political frameup. He said that he was targeted because he had been an outspoken critic of Saddam (an assertion that is not unlike his recent defense in Baghdad), and claimed that he was indicted because the Jordanians were beholden to Saddam for oil and other economic aid. Chalabi, like many Iraqi exiles living in Jordan, had indeed opposed Saddam openly. However, a well-informed American friend of Chalabi's could not recall other instances of Saddam forcing Jordan to clamp down on his critics there.

John Markham, a lawyer representing Chalabi, recently forwarded to me a previously undisclosed letter, which Chalabi claims is "the smoking gun" that proves his accusers are lying. During the trial proceedings, the Jordanian military prosecutor wrote to the country's authorities that "the method of dealing with the Petra Bank and its liquidation

was the result of personal hatred and envy.” The prosecutor blamed Said Nabulsi, the head of Jordan’s Central Bank. According to Markham, Nabulsi was complicit with Saddam.

In Jordan, banking officials scoff at Chalabi’s claims of innocence. Petra had opened a subsidiary in Washington, D.C., in 1983, and after the bank’s collapse, according to a top Jordanian finance official, investigators combed America for forty-five days, trying to locate the bank’s hidden assets. Almost all the assets listed on the books, the official said, were worthless, except for an auxiliary office that was listed as a repository for valuable bank records. The investigators soon discovered that the “office” was a country estate with a swimming pool, in Middleburg, Virginia. It belonged to the Chalabi family, which was charging the bank a monthly rent. “There was not one business record in the whole place,” the official said. “This man is a vicious liar. There is no end to it. It’s like you find someone killing with a gun in his hand, and he says he’s innocent. He just wears you down.” The official declined to be named, because he feared Chalabi’s influence. “He has more powerful friends in Washington than you or me,” he said, adding, “Really, some of your people are such suckers.”

By 1993, with the C.I.A.’s support, Chalabi had solidified his role as the leader of the Iraqi National Congress. Before long, however, financial questions arose. A former I.N.C. associate said, “The agency didn’t know how he spent his money. All transactions were cash.” Kurds who had joined the I.N.C. complained that Chalabi wouldn’t tell them anything about the group’s finances. A Kurdish leader said that Chalabi “snapped” when asked about debts that were still owed to Kurds, and argued that he couldn’t disclose funding details because his financing was “covert.” A former C.I.A. officer said that successive audits identified no wrongdoing. But the I.N.C.’s finances weren’t easy to inspect. At one point, he said, I.N.C. officials “refused to cooperate with an audit because they argued that it would breach the secrecy of the operation.” On one occasion, a team of government auditors was spirited into the

offices of I.N.C. at night. "It was a real headache," he recalled. The auditors found that the books were in order, but that many expenditures were wasteful.

Some observers of the I.N.C. wondered what return the U.S. government was getting for its multimillion-dollar investment. In 1994 and 1995, Robert Baer, the former C.I.A. officer, met Chalabi several times in Kurdistan, in northern Iraq, an autonomous area protected from Saddam by the United States. Chalabi had established an outpost in Kurdistan. "He was like the American Ambassador to Iraq," Baer recalled. "He could get to the White House and the C.I.A. He would move around Iraq with five or six Land Cruisers." But Baer added that Chalabi's long absence from Iraq diminished his power there, and his ineffectiveness made him a useful foil for Saddam. "If he was dangerous, they could have killed him at any time. He was the perfect opposition leader," he said.

Hundreds of thousands of dollars were flowing each month "to this shadowy operator—in cars, salaries—and it was just a Potemkin village," Baer said. "He was reporting no intel; it was total trash. The I.N.C.'s intelligence was so bad, we weren't even sending it in." Chalabi's agenda, he said, was to convince the United States that Saddam's regime was "a leaking warehouse of gas, and all we had to do was light a match." But when the agency tried to check Chalabi's assertions about troop movement or palace plans, Baer said, "there was no detail, no sourcing—you couldn't see it on a satellite."

In retrospect, one detail of Chalabi's operation seems particularly noteworthy. In 1994, Baer said, he went with Chalabi to visit "a forgery shop" that the I.N.C. had set up inside an abandoned schoolhouse in Salahuddin, a town in Kurdistan. "It was something like a spy novel," Baer said. "It was a room where people were scanning Iraqi intelligence documents into computers, and doing disinformation. There was a whole wing of it that he did forgeries in." Baer had no evidence that Chalabi forged any of the disputed intelligence documents that were used to foment alarm in the run-up to the war. But, he said, "he was forging back then, in order to bring down Saddam." In the Los Angeles

*Times*, H. R. H. Pope wrote of one harmless-seeming prank that emerged from Chalabi's specialty shop: a precise mockup of an Iraqi newspaper that was filled with stories about Saddam's human-rights abuses. Another faked document ended up directly affecting Baer. It was a copy of a forged letter to Chalabi, made to look as if it were written on the stationery of President Clinton's National Security Council. The letter asked for Chalabi's help in an American-led assassination plot against Saddam. "It was a complete fake," Baer said, adding that he believed it was an effort to hoodwink the Iranians into joining a plot against Saddam; an indication of American involvement, Chalabi hoped, would convince them that the effort was serious. Brooke acknowledged that the I.N.C. had run a forgery shop, but denied that Chalabi had created the phony assassination letter. "That would be illegal," he said. To Baer's dismay, the letter eventually made its way to Langley, Virginia, and the C.I.A. accused him of being involved in the scheme. Baer said he had to pass a polygraph test in order to prove otherwise.

#### CHALABI VS. THE C.I.A.

In 1995, Chalabi began spending some of his C.I.A. funding to create an armed militia in Kurdistan. With Washington's approval, he hatched a quixotic plan to use his militia, along with tribal leaders he had bribed, to mount a simultaneous three-city strike against Saddam's forces. Just before the attack began, it became clear that Baathist officials had learned of the plot. Baer was told to tell Chalabi that "any decision to proceed will be on your own." Chalabi, who had no military experience, refused to abort the operation. By then, many of the insurgents had deserted, and the revolt quickly foundered. The C.I.A. was furious that it had funded such a folly.

A year later, in August, 1996, a second disaster befell Chalabi. One of the Kurdish factions within the I.N.C. invited Saddam Hussein into Kurdistan, to crush a rival faction that was allied with Chalabi. Forty thousand Iraqi soldiers and three hundred tanks crossed into Kurdish territory—a flagrant violation of U.S. strictures against Saddam's entering



Kurdistan. The Clinton Administration failed to react immediately, and Saddam's forces captured, tortured, and slaughtered hundreds of Chalabi's supporters. The U.S. government eventually evacuated seven thousand supporters.

Francis Brooke told me that, when he heard the news, "I was sick for a week, just throwing up." He had been involved in an exchange of letters between Chalabi and Vice-President Al Gore, in which Gore promised to protect the democratic resistance in northern Iraq. Brooke felt responsible for the carnage. "I couldn't believe it," he said. "I'm not interested in getting a whole lot of people killed and being morally wrong. I was stunned." He called Chalabi, who was in London at the time, and asked, "What are we going to do?"

Chalabi and Brooke decided to seek revenge through the press. Using the skills he had honed while working for the C.I.A., Brooke helped ABC News put together a documentary that was highly critical of the C.I.A.'s missteps in northern Iraq. "It pissed them off in the biggest way," Brooke said. Afterward, a close associate recalled, "The agency stopped supplying him."

Chalabi's desire to bring about an invasion of Iraq was undiminished, but, with the loss of covert support, he had to find benefactors in Congress. "We needed a new campaign," Brooke said, and "Chalabi was a great candidate. He'd spent his whole life getting ready for this."

In 1996, Chalabi and Brooke set up shop in Georgetown, and mapped out a strategy. They studied how the African National Congress had won mainstream support, by portraying apartheid as tantamount to slavery. They also examined how various American Jewish groups organized themselves to support Israel. "We knew we had to create a domestic constituency with some electoral clout, so we decided to use the AIPAC model," Brooke said, referring to the American Israel Political Action Committee.

In June, 1997, Chalabi gave a speech at the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs, in Washington. He told the audience that it would be easy to topple Saddam and replace him with a government that was friendly to

Israel, if the U.S. would provide minimal support to an armed insurgency organized by the I.N.C. Although Chalabi later denied that oil had played a role in his campaign, he gave an interview to the *Jerusalem Post* in 1998 in which he spoke of restoring the oil pipeline from Kirkuk to Haifa, which had been inoperative since the creation of Israel, in 1948.

Chalabi's pitch stirred enthusiasm and curiosity among a group of American neoconservatives who had played crucial roles in the first Bush Administration but were now scattered among Washington think tanks. After the fall of Communism, the neoconservatives were eager for a new cause, and Chalabi—an educated, secular Shiite who was accepting of Israel and talked about spreading democracy throughout the Middle East—capitalized on their enthusiasm. Judith Kipper, the Council on Foreign Relations director, said that, around this time, Chalabi made “a deliberate decision to turn to the right,” having realized that conservatives were more likely than liberals to back the use of force against Saddam.

As Brooke put it, “We thought very carefully about this, and realized there were only a couple of hundred people” in Washington who were influential in shaping policy toward Iraq. He and Chalabi set out to win these people over. Before long, Chalabi was on a first-name basis with thirty members of Congress, such as Trent Lott and Newt Gingrich, and was attending social functions with Richard Perle, a former Assistant Secretary of Defense, who was now a fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, and Dick Cheney, who was the C.E.O. of Halliburton. According to Brooke, “From the beginning, Cheney was in philosophical agreement with this plan. Cheney has said, ‘Very seldom in life do you get a chance to fix something that went wrong.’”

Wolfowitz was particularly taken with Chalabi, an American friend of Chalabi's said. “Chalabi really charmed him. He told me they are both intellectuals. Paul is a bit of a dreamer.” To Wolfowitz, Chalabi must have seemed an ideal opposition figure. “He just thought, This is cool—he says all the right stuff about democracy and human rights. I

wonder if we can't roll Saddam, just the way we did the Soviets," the friend said.

Chalabi was running out of money, however, and he needed new patrons. Brooke said that he and Chalabi hit upon a notion that, he admitted, was "naked politics": the I.N.C.'s disastrous history of foiled C.I.A. operations under the Clinton Administration could be turned into a partisan weapon for the Republicans. "Clinton gave us a huge opportunity," Brooke said. "We took a Republican Congress and pitted it against a Democratic White House. We really hurt and embarrassed the President." The Republican leadership in Congress, he conceded, "didn't care that much about the ammunition. They just wanted to beat up the President." Nonetheless, he said, senior Republican senators, including Trent Lott and Jesse Helms, "were very receptive, right away."

Congressional hearings on the C.I.A.'s failures in Iraq were held in 1998, and Chalabi's think-tank allies, such as Richard Perle, gave testimony that excoriated the Clinton Administration. Meanwhile, Chalabi continued to gather intelligence from Iraq that would further his cause. He found an opportunity in the U.N.'s weapons-inspection program, which had been set up in 1991 to prevent Saddam from developing weapons of mass destruction. On January 27, 1998, Chalabi met in London with Scott Ritter, who was then working as a liaison for the U.N. program. At the time, the U.N. had been unable to account for a number of weapons—including nearly nine thousand litres of anthrax—that Saddam's regime said it had dismantled. U.N. inspectors had exhausted other sources of intelligence. Chalabi claimed to have operatives who had penetrated Saddam's circle, and offered to help.

The meeting took place in Chalabi's apartment, on Conduit Street in Mayfair. Half a dozen Arab servants served tea, Ritter recalled. Chalabi sat on a couch, taking notes, "playing the overlord." (Ahmed Alawi, an I.N.C. official, also attended the meeting.)

"I should have asked him what he could give me," Ritter said. "Instead, I let him ask me, 'What do you need?'" The result, he said, was that "we made the biggest mistake in the

intelligence business: we identified all of our gaps.” Over the next several hours, Ritter said, he outlined most of the U.N. inspectors’ capabilities and theories, telling Chalabi how they had searched for underground bunkers with ground-penetrating radar. He also told Chalabi of his suspicion that Saddam may have had mobile chemical- or biological-weapons laboratories, which would explain why investigators hadn’t been able to find them. “*We made that up!*” Ritter said. “*We* told Chalabi, and, lo and behold, he’s fabricated a source for the mobile labs.” (The I.N.C. has been accused of sponsoring a source who claimed knowledge of mobile labs.) When Ritter left the U.N., in August, 1998, there was still no evidence of mobile weapons laboratories. Chalabi’s people, Ritter said, eventually supplied detailed intelligence on Saddam’s alleged W.M.D. programs, but “it was all crap.”

Ritter had one other memorable encounter with Chalabi. Six months after the London meeting, Ritter was feeling dispirited. U.N. investigators had discovered trace evidence of VX nerve gas on warheads in Iraq; he was concerned that Saddam was still hiding something. Chalabi invited him to the town house in Georgetown, and they discussed the VX discovery. Chalabi then talked to Ritter about doing intelligence work for the I.N.C. In a demonstration of his seriousness, he showed Ritter two studies advocating Saddam’s overthrow. One was a military plan, written, in part, by a conservative friend, retired General Wayne Downing, who had commanded the Special Forces in the first Gulf War. The study suggested that Iraqi insurgents would be able to topple Saddam almost by themselves. Since the plan required few American troops, it could be easily sold to Congress. Ritter, a former marine, told me that he wasn’t impressed. He recalled, “I said, ‘I don’t think the small units could do the jobs you’re saying. It’s a ploy’” to get the Americans involved. Chalabi, he said, did not deny it. “So how come the fact that you’d need more American assistance is not in the plan?” Ritter asked. “Because it’s too sensitive,” Chalabi replied.

According to Ritter, Chalabi went on to describe a clear vision of Iraq’s future—with himself in charge. Ritter said, “He told me

that, if I played ball, when he became President he'd control all of the oil concessions, and he'd make sure I was well taken care of. I guess it was supposed to be a sweetener." Chalabi's office denied Ritter's account, calling him a "liar." Ritter left without agreeing to work for Chalabi.

## A DISINFORMATION CAMPAIGN

On October 7, 1998, the Iraq Liberation Act, which had been drafted by Trent Lott and other Republicans, passed in Congress almost unanimously. Chalabi, Brooke, and their allies in Congress crafted the legislation together. The act's call for "regime change" in Iraq was radical, yet it created remarkably little controversy, because Chalabi had once again shrewdly pitched the removal of Saddam as a project by and for Iraqis, requiring minimal air support from the U.S. At this time, Congress also passed bills giving overt support of ninety-seven million dollars to the I.N.C.

Shortly after the act's passage, General Anthony Zinni, who was then the commander of CENTCOM, which is assigned operational control of U.S. combat forces in the Middle East, saw a copy of Chalabi's military plan. "It got me pretty angry," he told me. Zinni knew Iraq's terrain well, and testified before Congress that Chalabi's plan was "pie in the sky, a fairy tale." He said, "They were saying if you put a thousand troops on the ground Saddam's regime will collapse, they won't fight. I said, 'I fly over them every day, and they shoot at us. We hit them, and they shoot at us again. No way a thousand forces would end it.' The exile group was giving them inaccurate intelligence. Their scheme was ridiculous."

When the Bush Administration took office, in 2001, neoconservatives such as Wolfowitz and Perle were restored to power. Brooke told me that in February of that year Wolfowitz called him late one night and promised that this time Saddam would be deposed. Brooke said that Wolfowitz told him he was so committed to this goal that he would resign if he couldn't accomplish it. (Wolfowitz called this account "nonsense.")

After the attacks of September 11th, many in

the Administration began to consider a preemptive strike against Saddam's regime, and they eagerly received Chalabi's intelligence briefings. In 2002, an Information Collection Program for I.N.C. intelligence, which had been funded by the State Department, was transferred to the Defense Intelligence Agency, a division of the Pentagon. "Chalabi was the crutch the neocons leaned on to justify their intervention," Zinni said. "He twisted the intelligence that they based it on, and provided a picture so rosy and unrealistic they thought it would be easy."

The C.I.A. remained skeptical of the defectors that the I.N.C. was promoting, and insisted on examining them independently. President Bush was informed of the C.I.A.'s view of Chalabi soon after taking office, but he ultimately sided with Vice-President Cheney and the neocons. In the months before the invasion of Iraq, Bush and Cheney both referred in public addresses to Saddam's mobile weapons laboratories. Six weeks before the U.S. invasion, in a February 5, 2003, address to the United Nations, Secretary of State Colin Powell—who had initially found the intelligence on W.M.D.s inconclusive—spoke of unnamed eyewitnesses, one of whom had supplied "firsthand descriptions of biological weapons factories on wheels and rails." It was, he testified, "one of the most worrisome things that emerges from the thick intelligence file we have on Iraq."

Bob Drogin and Greg Miller, of the Los Angeles *Times*, recently reported that the source of this intelligence was an Iraqi defector code-named Curveball, who is allegedly the brother of one of Chalabi's aides. (Chalabi says that the defector is not related to anyone in his organization.) Curveball is said to have approached German intelligence officials and provided them with detailed maps and descriptions of mobile weapons labs. Curveball neglected to tell German officials that before fleeing Iraq he had been jailed for embezzlement. Moreover, U.S. and U.N. experts searched every corner of Iraq for the mobile labs; all they found were two trucks, whose function is still in dispute. Last January, Cheney cited those trucks as conclusive proof that Iraq had mobile



weapons . . . , but experts have said that they more likely contained equipment for weather balloons.

By the time I asked Chalabi about Curveball, the defector had become a sore subject. "These are the sorts of reports we are expected to deny?" he asked, his voice rising. "Anonymous reports about anonymous people? No one even knows who this person is! How are *we* supposed to know?" Chalabi questioned why he was being blamed for defectors' inaccuracies, when it was the U.S. intelligence community's job "to check these people out." He asked, "What would you want us to do? Hush it up when these people tell us these things?"

Others at the I.N.C. were emphatic that the organization had no ties to German intelligence. But Vincent Cannistraro, the former counter-terrorism specialist, told me that the C.I.A. now believes that Aras Habib, the I.N.C. intelligence chief suspected of giving U.S. secrets to Iran, "arranged for Curveball to be presented to the Germans." He added, "The C.I.A. is positive of it."

After the war, even Chalabi's sponsors at the Defense Intelligence Agency concluded that most of the information they had received from his defectors was "of little or no value." According to the *Times*, in early 2003, an official agency report concluded that several Iraqi defectors introduced to American intelligence by the I.N.C. had falsely claimed to have direct knowledge of illicit weapons programs in Iraq.

Chalabi and his supporters have argued that critics like Zinni have inflated the exiles' role in offering misleading intelligence about W.M.D.s. "How can we be blamed for the failure of the entire world's intelligence?" Chalabi asked me. Certainly, there is blame to share, most notably among the war's civilian planners in the Department of Defense and the White House, who flouted intelligence protocol by accepting the I.N.C.'s information without rigorous vetting. As Robert Baer, the former C.I.A. official, put it, "Chalabi was scamming the U.S. because the U.S. wanted to be scammed."

An internal I.N.C. document reveals how influential the Information Collection Program was. On June 26, 2002, Entifadh Qanbar, an I.N.C. official, sent a memo to the Senate Appropriations Committee, in which he gave the I.N.C. credit for “product” cited in a hundred and eight English-language news stories that appeared between October, 2001, and May, 2002. These articles, the letter said, relayed I.N.C. information collected from “defectors, reports, and raw intelligence” about Iraq. In addition, Qanbar wrote, the I.N.C. provided its raw information directly to “U.S. government recipients,” including William Luti, at the Pentagon, and John Hannah, the special assistant for national security in the Office of the Vice-President.

The news stories in which the I.N.C. claimed to have placed its “product” include some of the most disputed journalism to appear in the prelude to the war. On December 20, 2001, Judith Miller published a front-page story in the *Times* about an Iraqi engineer who claimed to have direct knowledge of twenty secret chemical-, biological-, and nuclear-weapons sites in Iraq. One site, he said, was hidden under a hospital. He also described tests of these prohibited weapons on live Kurdish and Shiite prisoners. Miller disclosed in her story that the I.N.C. had helped the engineer to leave Iraq, and had arranged the interview, and that the I.N.C.’s agenda was to overthrow Saddam Hussein. She also noted that U.S. officials were “trying to verify” the defector’s claims. Despite these caveats, Miller reported that “experts said the information seemed reliable and significant.” In a subsequent piece, she wrote that the same defector had given U.S. intelligence officials “dozens of highly credible reports on Iraqi weapons-related activity and purchases.”

The defector’s name is Adnan Ihsan Saheed al-Haideri. Since the war, neither U.N. weapons inspectors nor David Kay, a top U.S. weapons inspector, have found evidence to confirm his accounts. According to a recent Knight Ridder report, American officials escorted Haideri back to Iraq after the war, but he failed to locate any prohibited-weapons facilities. The I.N.C. reportedly provided Miller with the exclusive Haideri story three days after he had shown deception in a

polygraph test administered by the C.I.A. at the request of the Defense Intelligence Agency.

When asked about Haideri's credibility problems, a Chalabi aide who declined to be named disputed the polygraph story, saying that D.I.A. officials had told him that Haideri "was a gold mine" of information, and that "even if only three per cent of it was true" it was worthwhile.

Miller declined to comment on her Iraq coverage, as did other officials at the *Times*. For months, the *Times* has been criticized for its prewar coverage of the W.M.D. debate. On May 26th, the paper published an editor's note acknowledging that it had been improperly influenced by Chalabi. "Accounts of Iraqi defectors were not always weighed against their strong desire to have Saddam Hussein ousted," the note said. "It looks as if we, along with the administration, were taken in."

In an unusual arrangement, two months before the invasion began, the chief correspondent for the *Times*, Patrick E. Tyler, who was in charge of overseeing the paper's war coverage, hired Chalabi's niece, Sarah Khalil, to be the paper's office manager in Kuwait. Chalabi had long been a source for Tyler. Chalabi's daughter Tamara, who was in Kuwait at the time, told me that Khalil helped her father's efforts while she was working for the *Times*.

In early April, 2003, Chalabi was stranded in the desert shortly after U.S. forces airlifted him and several hundred followers into southern Iraq, leaving them without adequate water, food, or transportation. Once again, the assistance of the U.S. military had backfired. Chalabi used a satellite phone to call Khalil for help. According to Tamara, Khalil commandeered money from I.N.C. funds and rounded up a convoy of S.U.V.s, which she herself led across the border into Iraq.

Tyler told me that he hadn't known that Khalil had helped Chalabi get into southern Iraq. He added that Khalil had a background in journalism, and that Chalabi hadn't been a factor in the war when he hired her. "We were covering a war, not Chalabi," he said. The *Times* dismissed Khalil on May 20, 2003, when word of her employment reached editors

in New York. During the five months that Khalil was employed, Tyler published nine pieces that mentioned Chalabi. When asked about Khalil's rescue of Chalabi, William Schmidt, an associate managing editor of the *Times*, said, "The *Times* is not aware of any such story, or whether it happened. If so, it was out of bounds."

Another story promoted by Chalabi's organization offered an unsubstantiated link between Iraq and Al Qaeda. The I.N.C. disseminated a story that Mohamed Atta, the mastermind of the September 11th attacks, had met in Prague in April, 2001, with an Iraqi intelligence agent. In February, 2002, David Rose wrote in *Vanity Fair* that a defector named Abu Zeinab al-Qurairy said that he had worked at a terrorist camp in Iraq called Salman Pak, where non-Iraqi fundamentalist Arabs were trained to hijack planes and land helicopters on moving trains. He also asserted that Atta had met with an Iraqi agent in Prague. Rose noted the I.N.C. had sponsored Qurairy, and wrote that an aide of Chalabi's served as the translator for the defector.

On November 12, 2001, the I.N.C. provided another defector, Sabah Khalifa Khodada al-Lami, to the press through a video feed from London. Lami, who was described as a former colonel in Saddam's Army, claimed that Islamic militants were training at Salman Pak. He also said that the training camp was contaminated by anthrax, an accusation that was made soon after the U.S. began investigating incidents of anthrax poisoning in New York, Florida, and elsewhere. Stories about Lami subsequently appeared in the *Washington Times*, the *Seattle Times*, and other papers. Since the overthrow of Saddam, no foreign terrorist-training camps have been found in Iraq.

The I.N.C. was equally successful in disseminating its stories to U.S. government officials. Haideri's tale found its way into an official White House study, called "A Decade of Deception and Defiance," which was released as supporting material for an address on Iraq that President Bush delivered before the U.N. on September 12, 2002. Haideri "supported his claims with stacks of Iraqi

government contacts, complete with technical specifications,” the study said.

Chalabi denied that he or his aides, in order to build their case, coached witnesses or in other ways twisted information. “We didn’t mislead anyone,” he said. “We said we had information. We didn’t say the information was great. We thought it would be useful.” He stopped short of saying that he believed the defectors’ stories. “I believed they were who they said they were,” he said. No defector has come forward to say that Chalabi knowingly spread false stories.

The case of Khidhir Hamza, however, illuminates how information can become propaganda. Hamza is a nuclear scientist who served as a senior administrator in Saddam’s nuclear-weapons program during the nineteen-eighties. He defected from Iraq in 1994. He was at first spurned by the C.I.A., which thought he knew little of interest. In 1997, he was asked to join the Institute for Science and International Security, an organization in Washington run by David Albright, a former nuclear-weapons inspector. When Hamza first started working with him, Albright told me, his information seemed reliable. In 1998, Hamza even helped debunk an inflated story offered by another defector, just as Chalabi was trying to drum up support for the Iraq Liberation Act. “We saw the claws of Chalabi then,” Albright said. Someone from the I.N.C., he said, called to upbraid Hamza, telling him that he had undercut the cause of liberating Iraq. “Hamza was shaken, and said he’d never do that again,” Albright told me.

In 1999, Hamza left Albright’s institute to write a memoir, “Saddam’s Bombmaker,” with Jeff Stein, a Washington-based author. According to Albright, many of the claims in the book, including those about the importance of Hamza’s role, “were just ridiculous.” Hamza, who had not been involved in Iraq’s nuclear program for nearly a decade, asserted that Saddam was within years, and possibly months, of developing a nuclear bomb.

Hamza’s claim was startling. After the first Gulf War, the U.S. learned that Saddam had attempted to build a nuclear weapon. But his nuclear program was later dismantled, and by

the mid-nineties most experts believed that this threat had subsided. According to Albright, Francis Brooke “was involved” in promoting Hamza’s book. “It was clear he had a part in it,” he said.

Chalabi’s people helped Hamza to promote his story to the media, and the tale became widely known. Cheney began giving alarmist speeches about the imminent Iraqi nuclear threat. On August 26, 2002, he declared that Saddam had “resumed his efforts to acquire nuclear weapons,” and might soon be able to engage in “nuclear blackmail” with his enemies.

Hamza, who had been managing a gas station in Virginia prior to his association with Albright, began taking high-paying speaking engagements. A former Chalabi aide said that many of the defectors who had given hyperbolic accounts were “desperate” people; the I.N.C. offered them a financial lifeline, and, to grab it, “many bent their ethical standards.”

Since the war, no evidence of an active Iraqi nuclear program has been found. Albright said that Hamza has “been told not to talk about this W.M.D. stuff.” Last spring, Hamza returned to Iraq. The Coalition Provisional Authority, the American occupation government, had offered him a top post in the Ministry of Science and Technology, which gave him partial control of Iraq’s nuclear industry. According to the London *Independent*, Hamza failed at the job; he fought with his colleagues and was frequently absent. This spring, the C.P.A. did not renew his contract.

Nine days after the attacks of September 11th, Chalabi addressed a meeting of the Defense Policy Board, an honorary committee of experts that advises Donald Rumsfeld, the Secretary of Defense. At the time, Richard Perle was the group’s chairman. Francis Brooke, who attended the session, said that the Pentagon still smelled of smoke from Al Qaeda’s attack, and that it was “a very emotional meeting.”

Chalabi’s message, which Brooke said the group endorsed, was to skip any intervention

in Afghanistan, where the Taliban had harbored Al Qaeda, and to proceed immediately with targeting Iraq. A participant at the meeting, who asked not to be named, recalled that Chalabi made a compelling case that the Americans would have an easy victory there: "He said there'd be no resistance, no guerrilla warfare from the Baathists, and a quick matter of establishing a government."

Soon afterward, however, Chalabi began to clash with the Administration. Chalabi told me that he would have preferred to sell the war to the American people on philosophical grounds, as a fight against genocidal tyranny and in favor of bringing democracy to the Arab world, but that this approach was rejected by the Bush Administration. "Look, our focus was on Saddam's crimes, moral crimes, genocide," Chalabi said. "We were not focussed on W.M.D. The U.S. *asked* us. We didn't bring these people up; they asked us! They requested this help from us." (He refused to name who made the request.) Francis Brooke said that nobody had ordered the I.N.C. to focus solely on W.M.D.s. "I'm a smart man," he said. "I saw what they wanted, and I adapted my strategy." Last year, in an interview with Sam Tanenhaus for *Vanity Fair*, Paul Wolfowitz admitted that the W.M.D. evidence was not the best argument for the war, but that for bureaucratic reasons "we settled on the one issue that everyone could agree on, which was weapons of mass destruction."

As a result, the war was largely marketed domestically as a scare campaign, and the I.N.C. was enlisted to promote the danger posed by Saddam's regime. Brooke said, "I sent out an all-points bulletin to our network, saying, 'Look, guys, get me a terrorist, or someone who works with terrorists. And, if you can get stuff on W.M.D., send it!'"

In Washington, many of the war's supporters, including Jim Hoagland and Fouad Ajami, a professor of Middle East Studies at Johns Hopkins, have worried about the triumph of political expediency over idealism. These critics claim that a war waged in the name of liberation has become a political damage-control operation. Chalabi himself has attacked the Administration's plan to transfer sovereignty to an interim government on June

30th as a plan, crafted for Bush's reelection campaign and not for the Iraqi people. Considering the nature of the campaign that he and his aides waged to prompt an invasion, however, it's a bit late for Chalabi to express such qualms. Jack Blum, a former lawyer for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, told me that the Administration compromised its vision from the start, by relying on dubious partners such as Chalabi. He said, "We ruined what could have had some promise by dealing with all the wrong people."

### **CORRUPTION IN BAGHDAD**

Soon after Chalabi returned to his homeland, in January, 2003, allegations of corruption and criminal behavior began to emerge. A former member of the I.N.C. said that some of Chalabi's militia, the Free Iraqi Fighters, had been accused of looting and robbing their way into Baghdad. He also said that some members of the militia had stolen a fleet of S.U.V.s that belonged to Saddam's regime, then sold them abroad. According to police officers in Baghdad, several of Chalabi's men were taken to the Al Baya station and arrested for stealing cars and having false I.D.s. A C.P.A. official confirmed the incident, and said that more charges might be added. Chalabi didn't deny that his troops had engaged in some misconduct, but he asked, "What war doesn't have this? Can you guarantee that no Coalition soldiers looted anything?"

Similar allegations have been made about Chalabi's "de-Baathification" program, a policy he says he devised to bring justice to those in the Sunni ruling class who had been complicit in Saddam's crimes. The Defense Intelligence Agency credits Chalabi's forces with rounding up more than half of the fifty-five Baathists placed on a Most Wanted list by the Pentagon. However, two reliable sources—a former American diplomat and a former member of Chalabi's militia—said that de-Baathification had devolved into the confiscation of Sunni assets, including houses that were expropriated by Chalabi's aides. *Newsweek* reported that an Iraqi official claimed that half a million dollars allocated for de-Baathification had disappeared. Chalabi



denied there was any corruption in the program.

Chalabi told me that he had no business interests in Iraq. "I am in politics now," he said. But several American businessmen involved in ventures in Iraq said that Chalabi had gained a substantial foothold in the country's financial sector, by insuring that relatives and longtime loyalists held key positions. Chalabi heads the finance committee of the Iraqi Governing Council, a U.S.-appointed group of twenty-five people representing Iraq's religious and ethnic factions; as a result, he was able to install the oil, finance, and trade ministers, as well as the governor of Iraq's Central Bank. Ali Allawi, the Minister of Trade and Defense, is Chalabi's nephew. Nabeel Musawi, a former I.N.C. spokesman, is a deputy on the Governing Council. The Central Bank is run by Sinan Shabibi, another close ally. Chalabi had wanted to nominate Mudar Shawkat, his deputy at the I.N.C., as Minister of Finance, but a former associate of Chalabi's told me that the Iraqi Governing Council had objected. Subsequently, the *Los Angeles Times* reported, Shawkat was awarded a large stake in a mobile-phone contract.

Several of Chalabi's friends have been awarded lucrative contracts. Abdul Huda Farouki, a Jordanian-American businessman who lives outside Washington, D.C., has obtained big stakes in two companies, Nour USA and Erinys Iraq, that will be paid millions of dollars to supply the Iraqi Army and to secure the country's oil infrastructure. Farouki became a friend of Chalabi's when he took out twelve million dollars in loans from Petra Bank.

An adviser to the Bush Administration in Iraq said that Chalabi had encountered little resistance to his cronyism: "People are scared to death. He may become Prime Minister still, and he has some very fancy friends."

Peter Galbraith, the former ambassador, has observed that, historically, "the lines drawn between politics and business are different in the Middle East." Indeed, allegations of cronyism have been made about many other prominent players in Baghdad. Chalabi himself accused the C.P.A. of corruption,

telling me “There are so many bribes and kickbacks!”

For months, Chalabi’s friends in Washington dismissed the allegations against him as petty and unfair. Danielle Pletka, an executive at the American Enterprise Institute, who helped draft the Iraq Liberation Act, said of the corruption charges, “I don’t know and I’m not sure it matters. No one said you have to be a saint to be a patriot.” But Lakhdar Brahimi, the U.N. envoy to Iraq, took seriously the criticisms of Chalabi. Brahimi, an Algerian Sunni, is close to the Jordanian leadership who have questioned Chalabi’s honesty since Petra Bank failed. This spring, Brahimi was asked by the White House to form an interim government, and he refused to recruit Chalabi, or any other members of the I.N.C. The White House acquiesced in Brahimi’s refusal, infuriating Chalabi, whose aides refer to the current U.S. strategy as “ABC,” or Anybody But Chalabi. A top State Department official said that, with the Presidential election looming, the White House was so eager to turn the Iraq mess over to the U.N. that Brahimi “could hand us a Safeway list, and we’d give it to him.”

Chalabi lashed out at the U.N. and his American sponsors. He obtained documents related to the U.N.’s Oil for Food program, which has been accused of extensive corruption, and he is now holding an investigation into the allegations. Meanwhile, in an effort to win more street credibility and to forge a new power base, Chalabi has turned his considerable backroom skills to trying to organize a potentially explosive coalition of powerful Shiites, called the Shiite Political Council. Chalabi, who is not religious, spoke to several hundred Shiite leaders in a packed meeting recently. One observer described his reception as “rapturous.” On May 27th, Chalabi participated in a sit-in outside a mosque in Najaf, insisting that the U.S. end its crackdown against Moqtada al-Sadr, the radical Shiite cleric. (That afternoon, the U.S. agreed to pull back from Najaf.)

When Chalabi was asked by CNN about his reinvention of himself as a religious leader, he said, “Why is this a concern?” But a former admirer of Chalabi’s was alarmed by his turn

toward Sunni nationalism, and said that his actions risked unleashing sectarian political strife that could pitch the country into civil war. He said, "There's an irresponsibility in how he's approaching this. It's reckless. Iraq needs a stable government. But Ahmad's pushing his private agenda at the cost of the country's needs." In Jordan, a former financial official who dealt with Chalabi on Petra Bank said, "He'll become an imam if he has to!"

Chalabi's embrace of the Shiite faction of Iraq has fed the speculation that he gave intelligence secrets to Iran, a Shiite theocracy. Aras Habib, the I.N.C. intelligence chief, has long been suspected of spying for Iran. Chalabi and his aides dismissed these rumors, claiming that in 2002 Habib had passed a C.I.A. polygraph test about his relationship with Iran, and that neither he nor Chalabi had access to U.S. classified materials. For many years, Chalabi has been openly collegial with reformist leaders in Iran, such as President Mohammad Khatami, with whom he met last November, in Tehran. He has also admitted to meeting with the head of Iran's Ministry of Intelligence and Security. Immediately before the invasion of Iraq, Chalabi was living in a gated villa in Tehran that he had persuaded the U.S. to purchase as a satellite branch of the I.N.C.

Chalabi claimed that his relationship with Tehran was purely expedient. "There are geopolitical reasons to be friendly with Iran," he said. "Iran has the longest border with Iraq. Also, Iran is a much stronger state than Iraq, with three times the population. So strategically it's not a good idea to be on bad terms. My good relations were not a secret from the U.S."

But, at a moment when President Bush was struggling with multiple political burdens, Chalabi had become an inconvenient friend. "We got between a President and his reelection," Brooke, who was in Baghdad last week with Chalabi, said. Tamara Chalabi told me that her father's problems could be traced to the fact that "a foreigner, and an Arab, had beaten the Administration at their own game, in their own back yard."

Chalabi's political future is unclear. Iraqis have long seen him as an American puppet

with no constituency at home; in polls, they have given Chalabi approval ratings lower than those for Saddam Hussein. Peter Galbraith said, "Most likely, his legacy is that he is the Moses of Iraq: he got to see the Promised Land, but not to taste the fruit." Yet the raid on his home may have given him an opportunity to recast himself once again, now as a dissenting voice on American policy in Iraq. "He's extremely shrewd politically," Danielle Pletka said. "His obit has been written many times before, and he keeps clawing his way out of the grave and coming back." One of his I.N.C. confidants told me that Chalabi might spend the summer repositioning himself as a fierce critic of Brahimi's interim government, with an eye toward the coming election. Chalabi himself was less specific when I asked him about his plans. He said simply, "I think I have more of a future than the C.P.A."✦

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**Chronicle of a war foretold: on the move with Ahmad Chalabi, the man who would be king - Dispatch**

Charles Glass

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2002,

LONDON

A headline on a newspaper outside the Metropole Hotel, where factions of the Iraqi opposition are convening this week, declares: "Troops Start Countdown to War." One can feel the expectation among the exiles, hundreds strong, in the hotel's lobbies and cafes. War is coming, and on its winds they will be carried back to Iraq, where they imagine they'll govern. But among the turbaned mullahs and dark-suited Arabs and Kurds are the men from Washington: State Department, Defense, White House, and CIA are all here, conspiring in corridors. On the fourteenth floor, George W. Bush's special envoy to the Iraqi opposition, Zalmay Khalilzad—fresh from his king-making exercise in Afghanistan—pulls the strings of the Iraqi marionettes below.

This, a sign says, is "The Iraqi Opposition Conference, London, 14-16 December 2002. For Democracy and Salvation of Iraq." It's a bit of the Middle East in England, so the conference begins late and with a recitation from the Koran. On a dais before the 320 delegates are the principal figures of the Iraqi opposition: Jalal Talabani, Massoud Barzani, Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, and Ahmad Chalabi. Talabani and Barzani, who represent the two main Kurdish parties, are the only Iraqis here who can be said to govern any part of their country. They fought a civil war from 1993 to 1996 and divided Iraqi Kurdistan into two, Barzani running the northwest, Talabani the southeast. Abdul Aziz al-Hakim and his older brother, Ayatollah Mohammed Baqir al-Hakim, head the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI). Supported by Iran, they represent much of Shiite Muslim religious sentiment in Iraq. The fourth, Ahmad Chalabi, runs the Iraqi National Congress (INC). He represents ... what he represents is not clear. He is a Shiite Muslim exile, a brilliant mathematician, a banker who was convicted in absentia of fraud in Jordan, a secular democrat, and the Iraqi whom most of the new crowd at the Pentagon like. He is also the best-dressed man here, smooth-faced and short, in a tie that is pure silk and a suit that looks Savile Row. His record of opposing Saddam Hussein, going back to when Saddam exercised power through the nominal president, Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr, is more consistent than that of any other politician. The State Department and the CIA have their own man, Iyad al-Allawi, and disparage Chalabi.

Outside, some fifty demonstrators chant and hold signs: "Bush and Blair Will Murder Thousands for Oil" and "We Demand an End to Western Interference in the Islamic World."

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2002

A young Kurdish journalist takes me aside to tell me what happened during the night. At three in the morning a delegate stormed out of one of the working committees saying, "I cannot work with these people." Then, he says, "Khalilzad sat between Talabani and Barzani all day, hearing the words 'federalism' and 'Kurds' from every speaker. But Khalilzad never said 'federalism' or 'Kurds.' It is worrying." The Kurds fear that the United States will sell them out by taking away their autonomy and letting a new pro-American regime in Baghdad restore direct rule.

Khalilzad addresses the assembly. My friend is right. He mentions neither the Kurds nor the federal structure they demand. "Today," he says to the delegates, "the free Iraqis are here to liberate their country from a brutal dictatorship." He pauses to allow an Arabic translation. "I see many old friends, committed Iraqi patriots." This goes on and on, until he concludes in the new White House style, "God bless the people of Iraq."

When an Assyrian Christian addresses the conference, the Chaldean Christians walk out. Their dispute dates to A.D. 1550, when the Chaldeans went with Rome and the Assyrians remained with the Orthodox Church. They tend to hate each other more than they do the Muslims. All of the Iraqis are fractious, and they take their differences to Bush's man, Khalilzad, for mediation.

The delegates are going to choose a smaller group to meet next month in Salahuddin, northern Iraq. They cannot agree on the number of delegates, who they should be, or the percentage of seats that should be given to each party. SCIRI is demanding 40 percent of the seats. Talks continue all night. And the leader of this new body? One delegate says, "Whoever he is, he should be decent. So that lets Chalabi out." Another tells me that the Iraqi opposition are in accord on only one thing: they do not like Ahmad Chalabi. This, he says, gives Chalabi the advantage over them all.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 30, 2003,

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7/2/2004

## NORTHERN IRAQ VIA TEHERAN, IRAN

At 3:00 A.M. I am up for a rendezvous with the INC in the Shohreh Palace Hotel in north Teheran. Chalabi and his young daughter Tamara, who has just finished her Ph.D. in history at Harvard, are staying in a government guest palace with their bodyguards. They meet us at Teheran's domestic airport. Chalabi is wearing brown tweeds and snow boots that he bought in Teheran. His daughter is uncomfortable in her chador. When we pass a sign that reads, "Hijab is like shell for a pearl," she is not convinced.

The 6:00 A.M. flight to Urumieh takes an hour. At the clean, provincial airport, Iranian officials greet Chalabi as if he were a head of state. Flunkies carry the luggage to vans outside, and local dignitaries invite the Chalabi entourage to drink tea.

I assume we will head straight to the border, but I am mistaken. Chalabi's Revolutionary Guard hosts drive to their headquarters, where we remove our shoes and sit amid armed guardsmen to have tea, bread, sweet water-buffalo cheese, and honey. One of the INC people complains that, the night before, Zalmay Khalilzad called Abdul Aziz al-Hakim of the SCIRI but not Chalabi.

Back in the cars, we head through town and up the snowy mountain. Climbing for over an hour, we reach the last Iranian town, Piranshahr, where we stop for lunch at a local restaurant. I have yet to digest breakfast. When the Iranians like you, as they seem to like Chalabi, they kill you with hospitality. It is not pleasant for Ahmad, whose dieting in the last few years has seen him drop about forty pounds that he does not want back. Chalabi's chief of operations, a young Kurd named Aras Karim, tells us what the border protocol will be. It is, he says, as if for a head of state, not that many ever cross this border. The Revolutionary Guards will stand to attention for Chalabi, salute, and hand him over to the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) on the Iraqi side.

We drive on icy roads out of the rough breeze-block border town and into open country, past smugglers leading cigarette-laden donkeys up winding trails. The Land Cruisers ascend a desert of snow, where you can drive all day without seeing a tree. At the border we see nine Iranian soldiers standing at attention, shivering in their flimsy camouflage fatigues, white tunics, and white spats. They salute Ahmad, who shakes the hands of Iranian dignitaries and poses for photographers. The last pictures we see are of Ayatollah Khomeini and his successor, Khamenei.

We drive on the Hamilton Road, built by British army engineers to control the Kurds, winding along the banks of coursing rivers through gorges that shoot up to the sky and onto soft meadows of late-winter earth awaiting wildflowers. Our first stop is the village of Harir. Last night Chalabi said that the United States had landed 300 Special Forces troops at Harir's airstrip to prepare the way for 3,000 more. In the valley below, beside a stretch of tarmac, are white tents and a Humvee. "Come here," Chalabi calls to me, standing on the front steps of the local KDP office. "There are your compatriots." If American troops are present, they are not visible from the village. I walk down to the end of town to get closer but, without binoculars, cannot see who is there.

Near sunset our convoy reaches its destination, the mountain resort of Salahuddin. It is headquarters to Massoud Barzani, his tribe, and his KDP, members of which usher Chalabi and his delegation into a dingy reception room. There we sit, backs to the wall, facing coffee tables laden with bananas, sodas, apples, and tea. We wait. We wait a little longer. If Ahmad Chalabi has left Iran like a king, he is entering Massoud Barzani's Iraqi Kurdistan like a pauper. No one is here to welcome him: no Barzani, no semi-dignitary, no deranged cousin. Chalabi sits, quiet and restrained, but his friend Mudhar Shawkat is furious. He shouts at the KDP guards. They cannot treat Ahmad Chalabi like this! He must be received by Barzani in his home at once. A KDP official pulls out a telephone and leaves the room. Later he returns to announce that our group of twenty-six is to be separated, some to guesthouses in Salahuddin, some to a hotel in Salahuddin, and two—Zaab Sethna, the INC spokesman, and me, the only journalist—down the hill to the city of Erbil. It is a hierarchical plan, like seating at a queen's banquet, and the journalist is as far down table as possible without finding himself in the kitchen. Actually, I suppose Erbil is the kitchen.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 31, 2003.

## SALAHUDDIN, NORTHERN IRAQ

At Massoud Barzani's guesthouse, Chalabi and the INC's inner circle are enjoying the luxury of KDP hospitality. The Kurdish chief is attempting to make up for the insult of their arrival. I stand around until Mudhar Shawkat takes me outside, away from indoor recording devices.

A Sunni Muslim and once head of an INC rival, the Iraqi National Movement, Shawkat is now a devoted Chalabi loyalist. He says the opposition is going to declare a provisional government. This is precisely what the United States has told them not to do. There will be a leadership council, Majlis as-Siadi, with seven to eleven members. The provisional government will have twenty-one ministers with Ahmad as prime minister. Ahmad will discuss the idea with Barzani at seven o'clock this evening. Tomorrow he will seek the agreement of Jalal Talabani, head of the other Kurdish movement, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), and Barzani's rival. The Hakims of SCIRI already support the idea. Bush's man, Zalmay Khalilzad, is coming in four days, and the opposition groups hope to present the Americans with a fait accompli. The problem, Shawkat believes, is over federalism for the Kurds. Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United States do not want a federal Iraq. "Don't use this, Charlie," he asks. "It's too delicate. Keep it off the record." While we talk outside, Ahmad is inside telling an AP reporter the same thing, albeit in less detail, on the record. I suspect the Americans do not much care what these Iraqis do.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2003,

ASHUR HOTEL, LAKE DOKAN,

NORTHERN IRAQ

If Barzani's welcome left a bitter taste, Jalal Talabani's is a wedding feast. He seems to be making a point of treating the INC better. The PUK caravan of unmatched cars meets us on the barren hills before Khoi and takes our party—Chalabi's delegates, advisers, bodyguards, et al.—along the rough road through magnificent mountain passes and over the plain to the Dokan Dam. At Lake Dokan, Talabani kisses and hugs Ahmad and some of the entourage. In a reception room above the lake, the PUK serve tea. The two parties, Talabani's and Chalabi's, sit in a rectangle of chairs to listen to Talabani laugh and tell jokes. Always smiling, he is a large, good-natured man who eats too much and lacks pretension. Massoud Barzani is more or less his opposite. Quiet, withdrawn, ascetic, almost shy, he is younger than Talabani. Barzani leads the movement and the tribe he inherited from his father. Talabani left the KDP to form what he called a more modern, non-tribal party. He tends to attract the middle classes, the educated, and those who have lived overseas. The Barzanis depend on feudalists, farmers, and herders.

After lunch a few of us drive up the mountain to see the holiday lair of Ali Hassan al-Majid, who conducted the genocide operation against the Kurds in the late 1980s and earned the name Chemical Ali. From the front porch of a vulgar and small round house, he must have watched the Kurds then like some Roman proconsul at Carthage. His view was all the better for the trees he removed and the houses he destroyed. "They made a desert and called it peace," Tacitus wrote. Zaab says it is like Berchtesgaden. The PUK's military chief, Kosrat Rasul, owns the house now, and he is going to lend it to Ahmad if he wants it.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2003,

PALACE HOTEL, SULAIMANIYAH,

NORTHERN IRAQ

Ahmad has vanished for "secret" talks with Massoud Barzani, Jalal Talabani, and Abdul Aziz al-Hakim somewhere on the KDP side of Kurdistan. This gives his family and colleagues a respite from banquets. He hopes to return with an agreement on the transitional government with seven or eleven elders and a cabinet of twenty-one.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 2003

Today, Mudhar Shawkat tells me he is in touch with Sunni officers of the Iraqi army, who say they want contact with Ahmad. We discuss his war plans, and he says the INC is building an armed force to go into Baghdad. "We must be in Baghdad," he says. He assures me that when the advance begins my ABC crew and I can come with them.

At dinner I sit next to the bearded Nibros Kazimi, an American-raised Iraqi who works for the INC in Washington. He says, "I've spent five years in Washington fighting the American administration. There is no institutional difference between Clinton and Bush. They do not want Iraqis involved in Iraq. They do not listen. They will be defeated by Muslim fanatics."

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2003

The BBC World Service reports a Pentagon announcement that 110,000 U.S. troops are now in position. Khalilzad has invited Chalabi to see him in Turkey. He also invited Barzani (who is sending his son), Talabani, and the Turkish foreign minister. So while Baghdad and Washington exchange insults, the discussion on Iraq's future will continue in Turkey. Khalilzad has told the Kurds and the SCIRI that the United States will not accept a provisional/transitional government, a federal Iraq, or Iraqi interference in America's coming military administration. In the evening Zaab tells me that Ahmad will not meet Khalilzad in Turkey. He does not want to receive the message the Americans gave the others. Instead, he will visit Iran. The Iranians, he says, will oppose the deployment of Turkish troops and America's rejection of an Iraqi provisional government. He has to find support somewhere.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2003

Lunch at the house of a local politician, Omar Fattah, with most of the INC group. No one likes the deal the United States has made with Turkey to allow a Turkish occupation of the border areas. The snows are melting, laying bare the dull brown of the mountains. The Iraqis' desire for liberation from tyranny blocks their view of what they should see beyond: American occupation, the exclusion of Iraqis from decisions on their fate, and Bush-Cheney-Rumsfeld's long-term plans for the Middle East. Ahmad still favors an American invasion, because he believes he can outsmart them. "We are using the Americans," he says. "One hundred and fifty thousand American soldiers are going to get rid of Saddam for



us." When I remind him that Amin Gemayel, who was president of Lebanon, thought he was using the Americans in 1983, he says, "We are not a minority of Maronites. Look at us. We are on excellent terms with Iran and the people of Iraq." Gemayel expected the United States to protect him from Iran and most of the people of Lebanon, but it didn't.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2003

The INC people say that the KDP and PUK, who were the only Iraqis there, briefed them on the Turkey meetings. Khalilzad is said to have proposed an American military government with an Iraqi board of advisers, a judicial commission chosen by the United States to write a constitution, a constitutional convention with elected delegates to ratify the constitution, and American advisers in each ministry. "Maybe they'll design the flag," Kanan Makiya says. He's an academic and author whose book *Republic of Fear* (written under the pseudonym Samir al-Khalil) exposed Saddam's crimes to the Western world before the United States cut its support for him. "It is an unmitigated disaster from the point of view of the United States itself," he goes on. "Here you had an Iraqi opposition, doing something no Arab opposition group had ever done. It worked hand in glove with the U.S. It openly took money. It isolated itself in the region."

"We broke the language," Makiya continues. "We said Palestine is not the be-all and end-all. We said dictatorship is. The INC's declared position is for democracy and federalism, and has been for many years. It worked closely as part of an opposition of Kurds, Assyrians, and others. It has its failings, sure. It sits on 20 percent of Iraqi territory. The whole of this legacy is being tossed aside. And these people"—he means all of the INC people around us—"are going to have to oppose the United States the day after." The day after means after Saddam. "And the U.S. is driving us to use that old crappy language of anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism." Makiya's distress is visible, as if a lover had discarded him. "So, I think they've decided to lose the opposition."

If not to these Iraqi opponents of Saddam, where will the Americans look for Iraqis to govern Iraq?

"The U.S. is going to use the existing structures of power. The regime will remain intact: the institutions, the organizing structures. They're back to the politics of '91 with the exception that they know now a coup doesn't work. And it's the same people who wanted a coup in '91." He coins a phrase for what the Americans may be seeking: "Saddamism without Saddam." The United States, he believes, does not really care. "I told the president and Condi Rice, 'Let the Iraqis make their own mistakes. The Americans should not run the streets.'"

Mudhar Shawkat interrupts, "They will be surprised at how much support we have."

With Mudhar and Zaab, I ride over to Ahmad's new safe house in town. He is having a late breakfast. Workmen are buzzing about to make the concrete bungalow cozy. Ahmad, dressed in a gray jacket and blue tie, is relaxed and, as ever, buoyant. It is as if he is immune to Makiya's pessimism. "I haven't heard the plan directly. In fact, I haven't heard from the Americans since the middle of last month."

SUNDAY, MARCH 9, 2003

The Voice of America announces that Bush is pushing for a U.N. resolution setting a March 17 deadline for war. In Dokan, Jalal Talabani and Massoud Barzani meet for most of the day at the Ashur Hotel. Chalabi is not part of their internal Kurdish machinations. By late afternoon, they give a long-awaited press conference to announce they are combining their forces to meet any Turkish threat. They are also opening more party offices in each other's territory. Talabani ends the conference, "See you in Baghdad."

Meanwhile, Francis Brooke, an INC representative in Washington, has arrived. A Virginian and a Christian fundamentalist, he is a fountain of glowing quotes. When we meet, I tell him the Kurds just said they were combining their two forces to face Turkey. "Great," he says. "They can run away together." A few minutes later he says, "As far as I'm concerned, Syria's next. When they say Perle and these guys like Wolfowitz want to get Syria, they're right. These guys are my friends, and I know." Fair-haired, tall, nearing forty, all he wants is a cold beer.

THURSDAY, MARCH 20, 2003

Five forty-five A.M. local time. The ondon desk calls to inform me that the bombing of Baghdad has begun: "Ari Fleischer is about to go to the podium." I play with the idea of returning to sleep. My source had said the war would not begin until tomorrow at 6:00 P.M. While dressing, I watch the BBC: static shot of a quiet Baghdad morning. Fleischer says that the opening stages have begun.

SUNDAY, MARCH 23, 2003

For the first time since I came to Iraq, I suspect that there will be no northern front. The United States never needed it for military purposes, any more than it needs the British army.

It wanted to involve Turkey, and thus NATO, for political reasons. NATO refuses to "protect" Turkey from Iraq, not that Turkey needs protecting from its militarily inferior neighbor, and Turkey won't let the Americans come overland into northern Iraq. So American forces will not conquer Kirkuk and Mosul and drive south to smite Tikrit on their way to connect with the southern offensive in Baghdad. When Baghdad falls, it will be easier to let the Iraqis in the north surrender. What else will they be able to do when their president is gone? Despite Kurdish assurances, no planeloads of U.S. Special Forces or infantry arrived last night. The Kirkuk front is quiet.

FRIDAY, MARCH 28, 2003

The war, such as it is, goes on elsewhere, and there is not much for me to do. With the photographer Don McCullin, I drive up to the INC house in Dokan. We end up having dinner in the Ashur Hotel bar with an American colonel, Ted Seel; Francis Brooke; and some of the other INC people.

McCullin and Seel talk about Vietnam, where McCullin took some of his most memorable photographs and Seel was in what he called, or the army called, helicopter observation. He flew as close to the ground as this—his hand sways a foot above a bowl of pistachios on the table. "And I could see them, just like I see you," he says. "Observation? It was assassination. You get used to it. We just shot them at close range. I didn't care anymore. Then I asked myself, was there anyone I would not kill?" He stops speaking, and we wait for the answer. I think he will swallow more whiskey—he is already through half a bottle of Teacher's—but he doesn't. He says, "No."

Francis Brooke says he would support the elimination of Saddam, even if every single Iraqi were killed in the process. He means it. "I'm coming from a place different from you," he says in the soft southern drawl one hears from preachers and con men. "I believe in good and evil. That man is absolute evil and must be destroyed." That Virginian voice honed itself for twelve years in Decatur, an Atlanta suburb, and mellowed in the corridors of Washington. But I don't know where the ideas come from. He says he believes in Jesus and in resurrection and in eternity. If all the Iraqis die, he says, they will live in eternity. But the "human Satan" must go, no matter what. Seel tells Brooke he cannot go that far. Seel knows more about killing than Brooke does.

TUESDAY, APRIL 1, 2003

A week has gone by with only small-scale, sporadic activity in the north. The BBC World Service reports this morning that U.S. troops at a checkpoint in the south shot a car carrying thirteen women and children. Seven are dead and two are wounded. ABC has no interest in the north now. It has too much combat footage from the south to bother with us.

The Special Forces and PUK give a joint press conference in Halabja to advertise their victory over a few hundred Islamic irregulars. They believe the Ansar operation is a model for joint attacks on Kirkuk and Mosul. Zaab says the Americans are getting ready to fly nearly 700 INC volunteers to the south. This means that the INC may finally see the war. They will let us know within twenty-four hours whether we can accompany them. I suspect an April Fools' Day connection.

The INC, meanwhile, are not the only volunteers in Iraq. Several hundred are coming from Palestine, Yemen, Sudan, and Jordan to fight for Saddam.

THURSDAY, APRIL 3, 2003

At 7:00 P.M., Barham Saleh, the PUK prime minister, gives a press conference on the hotel mezzanine. Hacks who have nothing else to do jam into the small reception room to listen to a bald politician in a blue suit and red tie. Saleh says the "environment is one of flux.... We had a meeting yesterday with Chalabi and the United States. We are working from the same sheet of music." It is no surprise that he lived for years in Washington. "The PUK will not move against Kirkuk as Kurdish fighters [but] as the Iraqi opposition and in tandem with the U.S. We and the KDP have decided not to wage any unilateral military action. It must be in the context of the drive to Baghdad. It requires consultation between the Iraqi opposition and the U.S.... We don't have representatives in Doha, but we have American officers here. We need to operate as the Iraqi opposition. Baghdad's fate cannot be settled by the Kurds alone. We have a deliberate policy decision to act as Iraqis, to move to overthrow the dictatorship. ... We have one single objective: Baghdad. We might as well claim our part of this country, and to do that we need to be in Baghdad."

Most Kurds, I know, want an independent Kurdistan. Because Turkey, Iran, and the Arabs will not allow them to have what they want, they'll take a Kurdish state within an Iraqi republic. So they say. But how will they get to Baghdad? Will the Arabs of the capital welcome the baggy-trousered warriors who have fought against Iraq since its birth?

FRIDAY, APRIL 4, 2003

Baghdad is falling, and we are stuck here north of the war. American forces are all over Saddam International Airport, as the television pictures are showing. Just when I fear we have missed the war, Zaab calls. "Come to Dokan," he says. "We're leaving. You can go tomorrow." If Barham Saleh is right about cooperation between the Iraqi opposition and the United States, the deployment of Chalabi's volunteers could be a replica of the Kurdish-American cooperation against Ansar, the Kurds' own Taliban-style Islamicist militia, whom they wiped out a few days ago.

At the INC safe house, enthusiasm for battle is uncontained. A new checkpoint of armed men and oil drums guards the entrance to the driveway. Men in uniforms, carrying AK-47s, parade about the concrete yard. A few American officers are among them. Inside, the usual INC tea drinkers slouch on stuffed chairs watching Al Jazeera.

Zaab says that the airport we are flying to is near Nasiriyah and is now called George W. Bush Jr. International Airport. The INC is taking seven hundred men south to join the Americans. Shades of Davy Crockett heading to the Alamo with his Tennessee volunteers.

SATURDAY, APRIL 5, 2003,

SULAIMANIYAH TO TALLIL AIR BASE,

SOUTHERN IRAQ

At the INC house at Lake Dokan, Zaab issues me and a few of my colleagues jungle camouflage uniforms and badges with numbers that he says we must wear in order to get on the plane. (In the event, we don't put on the uniforms, and no one notices.) He tells us that the INC's "troops" are at a "muster point" just outside town. They are assembling to board buses to take them to the airport at Harir. We drive there to find them fighting among themselves. They wear identical fatigues, but they are not singing from the same sheet of music. Northerners and southerners, Kurds and Arabs, exiles and those who stayed, veterans of Saddam's army and veterans of no army, they have their differences.

They are standing around on a big field, while buses stand empty waiting for a few of them to stop beating each other up. Just before we arrived, an officer tells us, one of them took a shot at another. U.S. Army Colonel Grosso says that there must not be any more problems. He cannot allow men onto American transport planes with weapons. The planes are expensive. One more incident and he will recommend to his chain of command the cancellation of the flights. One of the INC men orders the "troops" to stand in queues, where U.S. Army soldiers frisk them and guide them onto the buses.

We drive up to Chalabi's lair, where the last sunlight of our stay in Kurdistan struggles to reach the lake through the mist. A guard in a sharp new uniform opens a gate, smiles, and salutes us. The first person I see in front of the house is Mudhar Shawkat. He is wearing khaki and carrying a weapon. "I left Baghdad on June 24, 1986," he says. "I'm going to Baghdad. We'll go straight there."

When Ahmad comes outside, the "troops" do a war dance around their new flag and cheer him. Ahmad bids farewell to the tribal chiefs, who have come to see him off. At dusk, we head west, with Ahmad's Land Cruiser in the lead.

The road moves up and down the hills, and headlights bring lone trees and bare villages into focus. After an hour, we reach the border. It is the point where the last PUK checkpoint faces the first KDP checkpoint. We stop in the town of Shaqlawa, where breezy kabob smoke flavors the air. Someone has just told Ahmad about an article in the Washington Post saying that the State Department opposes the interim Iraqi authority. At meetings, Rumsfeld and Bush apparently supported it. But, the report said, the Americans would not crown Chalabi as head of the authority. "Good," Ahmad says. "I don't want them to. It would be the kiss of death." So who will it be? He smiles. "They're still saying ABC: Anyone But Chalabi."

It is nearly midnight, and I wonder why we haven't left Shaqlawa for the air base. Beside the main road, the INC guards and officials are agitated. Ahmad and others are on their sat phones. Someone takes me aside. "Washington does not want Ahmad to go to Nasiriyah. The rest of us can go, but he must wait another twenty-four hours." He does not tell me who in Washington issued the diktat or why Chalabi shouldn't go. A half hour passes. Chalabi and Washington reach a compromise: the INC, including Chalabi, will fly to Nasiriyah as planned; but Chalabi should go on to Qatar for a quick meeting with General Tommy Franks before returning to Nasiriyah.

Our convoy resumes its journey. It is a half hour from Shaqlawa to the new U.S. checkpoint at Harir, where we wait for fifteen minutes at the barbed-wire entrance. An American officer with our convoy speaks to the sentries, and we start up again, now in the zigzag pattern through dirt obstacles that have become a feature of U.S. overseas bases since the destruction by suicide bomber of the Beirut Marine H.Q. in 1983. We rumble onto the tarmac. What was a bare strip of asphalt when I arrived here in January is now a massive American Air Force base, with tents, equipment stores, vehicles, and medical facilities. So many cars and Humvees are driving around the base that a woman soldier is directing traffic. This is at 2:00 in the morning.

There are two planes for the 280 INC troops. They are now officially the EIF, Free Iraqi Forces. The Americans have issued them shoulder patches and made them part of the coalition of the willing. It is as dark inside the plane as out when we take off at 3:35 A.M.

Ahmad's men gradually stretch out along the floor, as they would in their villages where whole families sleep on the floor of one room. The flight is two hours, during which Ahmad listens to classical music on his headphones, removing himself as always from uncomfortable realities. For us this is the end of the northern front, of waiting, of Kurdistan. We land at a conquered airfield, the Tallil Air Base, 190 miles south of Baghdad.

SUNDAY, APRIL 6, 2003,

TALLIL AIR DEFENSE BASE,

SOUTHERN IRAQ

We unload our equipment and pile it onto a pallet. We stand in the hot sun, waiting. The INC party should be joyous, but they are bewildered in this desolation. Is this what they have come home to?

After a short trip we arrive at what was, until the United States Air Force destroyed it in 1991, the Tallil Air Defense Base, about four miles away. At the gate, a young Iraqi in a FIF uniform waves us through. Inside, the base is not a base so much as a section of wasteland. Its single-story brown buildings have collapsed under the heavy bombs. Wind is scattering sand through its glassless windows. Rubble lies everywhere, rubble and rubbish. Our trucks stop in the middle of it, and we unload the luggage. Our boxes of water are missing.

In our five-room compound, a half dozen FIF troops are already camped. The only decoration is filth. Chalabi and his group have a large warehouse a few hundred yards away. They are already sleeping when we walk down to see them. They must be dreaming of palaces in Baghdad. We go back to our motor-pool barracks, where the FIF troops are grumbling about conditions.

Colonel Ted Seel comes over and explains that CENTCOM does not care for this mission. That is why it is providing no logistical support. It is then that I realize why our water was taken. There isn't any on the base. Seel says that there are shortages of cars, trucks, and armored personnel carriers for the American forces, and they are a higher priority than the Free Iraqis. The supply of transport for U.S. forces is at least two weeks behind schedule, he says.

FIF volunteers ask us for water, "may-ah," if they are Arabs, "av," if they are Kurds. Some come with empty plastic bottles and hold them out forlornly. The pathos would be unbearable but for the fact that we have no water ourselves. Some of them have scavenged a bag of flour, but without water they cannot make bread. The ones who arrived yesterday have repaired some abandoned Iraqi army trucks, but they dare not drive them off the base. If they do, the U.S. Marines on the roads will shoot them. Seel says the Marines have already shot one Special Forces soldier in the neck at a checkpoint, and he was in a U.S. Army Humvee. Imagine how they would react to a bunch of uniformed Iraqis in an Iraqi army truck. "They," Seel says of the Marines, "are scared and are killing people."

Mudhar Shawkat and some of the other INC people are angry about the conditions. Colonel Seel tries to calm them. He tells Ahmad and Mudhar that CENTCOM has a plan for them but it needs two days. "I talked to Wolfowitz today," he says. "The CIA was convinced that we'd never get here, but we got here. Before we can be integrated into the war plan, those guys over there" (he means a Special Forces A-Team who are stationed with us) "have to tell the Combined Forces Land Component commander—" Mudhar, the most vocal of the Chalabi crew, interrupts him. Seel, sounding more like a New Age psychologist than an army colonel, tells him, "I'm trying to help you get your frustration into focus."

It is dark, and someone has found some fuel to get a generator going. They have hooked up an arc light, and it shines from the front door of the warehouse where the senior INC people are living. Mudhar takes me outside the perimeter of light to confide that he wants to go with fifty armed men and "take" Nasiriyah.

MONDAY, APRIL 7, 2003

In the morning, Chalabi takes a power walk with his permanent companions, his Thoraya phone and his bodyguards. When he is finished, he sits outside and drinks tea. The water has finally arrived, during the night, thanks to a returned Iraqi exile who has a vast family and tribal network in the south.

"They've got enough supplies for 10,000 people on the base," Chalabi says, referring to the U.S. forces, "and this is all we have." He points at the generator. "They said we wouldn't come." He sits on a concrete plinth sticking out from the warehouse. In the heat, he wears a black Hugo Boss T-shirt. I ask him about reports from Washington of Condoleezza Rice saying that the Iraqi Interim Authority will exclude him. "Condi Rice said it? The interim authority is irrelevant. Only the constituent assembly matters. It's not a big deal. There will be elections in two years. The interim authority cannot influence elections. The important thing is to make the constitution go right." He thinks again about Condi Rice. "She thinks I'm waiting to be crowned? I don't want to be crowned by her."

The sun is hiding behind a relentless sheet of windblown sand. The horizon is a permanent beige, and it makes people nervous. On this, our second day, visitors begin coming to the court of Chalabi. First an Iraqi soldier who has deserted. Then a tribal chief in a light robe. While he meets his potential supporters, U.S. troops arrive from Tallil in full battle dress, with flak jackets, helmets, and rifles. Five of them march up to us and announce that they intend to do DNA tests on all the FIF volunteers. No one will say why.

TUESDAY, APRIL 8, 2003

Ted Seel says he could not sleep all night in the warehouse, where twenty men were snoring. When he sees another officer, he says, "I got about an hour's sleep last night, because these motherfuckers were moving around all night shouting at each other. So if you want to move over there"—with his fellow Americans in the Special Forces—"you should."

The Free Iraqi Forces begin training this morning. Two platoons of thirty-six men—aged from nineteen to fifty—stand at ease on a dirt road between the Special Forces house and ours. Ten U.S. soldiers are talking with Hamid Shraeder, a former Republican Guardsman who has joined Chalabi's army. More sheikhs, all in desert robes and kaffiyehs, gather to see Ahmad. They seem glum. Perhaps liberation is not what they had hoped. Ahmad tries to assure them, but no one on the American side assures him of anything.

FRIDAY, APRIL 11, 2003,

TALLIL AIR DEFENSE BASE TO

UMM QASR, SOUTHERN IRAQ

In all Ahmad's time up north and down here he has yet to address a crowd. Today, he will. He expects about a thousand people for a speech he is delivering at the governorate in Nasiriyah. We leave at 10:20 in a long convoy of passenger vans and Special Forces Humvees. We arrive in Nasiriyah before noon. On the wide boulevards, a few children wave at our convoy. Most of the adults ignore us. The Humvees are obviously American, but people may wonder who the Free Iraqi Forces are. As we go closer to the center, the roads narrow and more people crowd the streets. Most of the shops are open now, and people are smiling. Some wave at the convoy, including adults. "That's right," Francis Brooke says from the front seat. "Wave. These are my friends." He does not know them, their language, their beliefs, their worries, their names. People approach our car and demand the same thing: electricity.

A crowd masses around the convoy. Men are standing ten and twenty deep on the sidewalks. This is the governor's headquarters, still charred from the war. The guards rush Ahmad around some eucalyptus trees to the back of the building, clearing a path through the mass of people. A religious sheikh, who had driven with Ahmad from the base, addresses the crowd in back. A few hundred young men, most of whom seem to know him, are cheering.

Ahmad may have expected a thousand, but there are two or three times that many. They are shouting and waving their arms. Ahmad is addressing them through a bullhorn from the apex of an outside staircase. I hear the words in Arabic, "Your government. Your country. Your Iraq." These are the phrases they want to hear. The megaphone carries his voice all the way back, hundreds of yards to the river and the edge of the crowd of men. They chant, "By our blood, by our souls, we will die for you, O Iraq!" Until now in Iraq, that traditional Arabic mantra ended with, "O Saddam."

Ahmad is still speaking when suddenly there are two loud explosions from the other side of the Euphrates. The crowd ignores them and goes on cheering and listening. Then it stops for a moment. I see, coming from the left, another group of men, perhaps another thousand of them. They look much like those already here, but their chant is different. Some are beating their chests. I listen and hear the words, "Ya Husayn. Ya Husayn!" Among them are turbans, looking as if they have come from the mosque with the name of their ancient Shiite martyr on their lips. The two crowds melt into one without conflict.

Concentrating on the crowd, I do not realize that Ahmad has stopped speaking. I go back into the building and see him pressed against a wall by his guards. They are holding his new supporters back and trying to make a way out for him. Mudhar pulls out a pistol, and the guards hold up their AK-47s. No one fires. The crowd is not threatening Ahmad, but the guards rush him down the stairs at a run. Ahmad tries to stop, to greet some of his admirers, but they won't let him. At the door, they push through the young men still massed at the back. They force Ahmad into his car and tell the driver to leave. But the religious crowd that came late was not threatening him or his supporters. This was the first time most of them had ever been to a rally that had not been organized by the Baath Party or Saddam's security services. They were in a receptive mood, and most looked like they were enjoying the gathering. This is when, I think, Ahmad should have taken control of his guards and of the crowd. But he and the crowds are finding their way in the new Iraq, and no one is sure yet quite how to behave. It is hard for him, no doubt, after a lifetime in exile, hard for them after a lifetime during which one man controlled every part of their lives.

THURSDAY, APRIL 10, 2003,

UMM QASR, SOUTHERN IRAQ

A fresh ABC crew arrives from Kuwait. The cameraman is Johnny Saunderson, a Northern Irish Protestant. We covered the war in Bosnia together. In 1993 he risked his life to drive me through a battle in Kiseljak to get me home in time for my daughter's First Communion. Standing on the roof of his Jeep, Johnny hands me down a camera case. He complains that he has been waiting for weeks in Kuwait to get into Iraq. "Story's over," he says. "Now they want me to do this guy who's gonna run Iraq."

"Ahmad Chalabi?"

"No."

"General Garner?"

"That's the one."

WEDNESDAY, MAY 14, 2003,

THE LONDON LIBRARY

For a few weeks, Garner is the one. Then it's an ambassador, Paul Bremer. And they may need someone after him, the way they kept changing generals to run Saigon. But give them time. They are getting the hang of it. They may yet look around State or Defense or the White House for someone to run Syria, then Iran. In fact, it might be a good idea to build a Colonial Service to run the world. You cannot trust the locals.

Friends call from Iraq to say that the Americans, as I saw around Nasiriyah, are relying on ex-Baathists to be their native administration—under American guidance. Here in the library I have come across a book by Thomas Lyell, *The Ins and Outs of Mesopotamia*, published in 1923. Lyell, one of the Garners or Bremers of his day, served in the civil administration that the British established in Iraq after their invasion in 1917. He wrote that a mullah in Karbala told the British civil commissioner, "When a man pulls down a public latrine because it smells too bad, it is a mistake to build the new one with the same bricks!" Lyell called the sheikh's observation "trite." The civil commissioner ignored his advice.

Charles Glass's review "The First Lies Club" appeared in the January issue of Harper's Magazine.

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## FBI Investigates Possible Leak to Iran

**NewsMax.com Wires**

**Thursday, June 3, 2004**

WASHINGTON – The FBI is examining whether Pentagon officials who had frequent contacts with Iraqi exile Ahmad Chalabi might have leaked sensitive information that American intelligence had broken Iran's secret communications codes, a law enforcement official said.

Chalabi, a longtime favorite of some in the Pentagon, is at the center of a controversy over whether he then shared with Iranian officials the closely guarded information about methods used by the United States to spy on the Iranian regime.

Government officials said there is evidence that Chalabi or his followers told Iran the United States had cracked some of its codes for transmitting sensitive information.

The officials said the FBI was investigating whether anyone in the U.S. government might have provided Chalabi the information, a potential criminal offense that may have hurt American efforts to monitor Tehran's activities.

The law enforcement official said the Pentagon officials were a logical first place to start, but the investigation wouldn't be limited until the FBI determined how the information was compromised. The government and law enforcement officials spoke only on condition of anonymity, in many cases, because the information is sensitive and part of a continuing investigation.

The New York Times reported Thursday that federal investigators had started giving polygraph tests to civilian Pentagon employees in attempt to determine who might have disclosed the highly classified intelligence.

During a news conference with reporters as he flew to Singapore Thursday, Rumsfeld said he did not know whether officials in the Pentagon had been questioned by the FBI in connection with Chalabi.

"The press is reporting that there is an investigation going on. I do not have personal knowledge of that," he said, adding he was not sure whether anyone in the Pentagon had been questioned.

In Najaf, Iraq, Chalabi told The Associated Press that reports saying he leaked the highly classified information are "false" and "stupid."

"Where would I get this from?" Chalabi asked. "I have no such information. How would I know anything about that? That's stupid from every aspect."

In a letter Wednesday to Attorney General John Ashcroft and FBI Director Robert Mueller, two attorneys for Chalabi reiterated his denials, saying he would never endanger U.S. national security. They asked Ashcroft and Mueller to order an investigation into the sources who disclosed the information to the media.

Chalabi's defenders have used the unattributed nature of the alleged leak to Iran to suggest they are part of a baseless smear campaign.

Richard Perle, a former Pentagon adviser now with the conservative American Enterprise Institute think tank, said he finds it inconceivable that Iran's top intelligence official in Baghdad would have used a compromised channel to tell Tehran that the United States was reading its communications, as has been reported.

U.S. intelligence reportedly intercepted that message, which indicated Chalabi had provided the information.

"The idea that the Iranians, having been informed that their codes were broken, would then use their broken codes back to Iran is absurd," Perle said. "It is so basic of a mistake. ... It is comparable to a math teacher instructing a student that two and two is five."

Congressional aides said members of the Senate Intelligence Committee received a briefing Wednesday on Chalabi. The aides also spoke on condition of anonymity because the session was classified.

House Intelligence Chairman Porter Goss, R-Fla., said he had never had a great deal of confidence in Chalabi. He wouldn't comment directly on whether his committee was inquiring into Chalabi's actions, but said, "I would say that the oversight has worked well in matters relating to Mr. Chalabi."

The CIA and some in the State Department have been suspicious of Chalabi's information and allegiances for some time. He provided intelligence sources to the Bush administration about weapons of mass destruction, used to justify the U.S. war against Iraq, but his information came under major criticism after no weapons were found.

Chalabi, a member of the hand-picked Iraqi Governing Council, has also been accused of meddling in an investigation into Iraq's oil-for-food program during the regime of former President Saddam Hussein.

Allegations that Chalabi passed highly sensitive information to Iran have lingered for weeks, and some news organizations were asked by U.S. officials not to report the details about the code-breaking because it would endanger an investigation.

Entifadh Qanbar, a spokesman for Chalabi's Iraqi National Congress, said the group welcomed any congressional investigations because it had nothing to hide.

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# Hall of Mirrors

LAURA ROZEN

For a nondescript, middle-aged former Defense Intelligence Agency analyst, Pentagon Iran desk officer Larry had the habit of showing up at critical and murky junctures of recent history. He was part of the Pentagon's O Special Plans, which provided much-disputed intelligence on Iraq; he courted controversial Iraqi exile politician Ahmad Chalabi, who contributed much of that hyped and misleading Iraq intelligence; and he participated with Pentagon colleague and former Iran/*contra* arms dealer Manucher Ghorbanifar in a controversial December meeting in Rome--which, in a clear violation of US government protocol, was kept secret from the CIA and the Department.

In all these endeavors, Franklin, 58, was hardly acting as a lone wolf. Rather, he was wired into a small network lobbied fiercely inside and outside the Bush Administration for their policy positions, often in furious opposition to the State Department and the CIA. Because of their connections and status, the hawks were often successful in short-circuiting and getting the attention of the White House. When the news first broke last summer that the FBI was investigating the Pentagon--inaccurate, as it turned out--the chief suspect, Franklin, was portrayed as just one of 1,300 employees of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Douglas Feith. In fact, Franklin was the Pentagon's top Iran desk officer.

The media has focused its spotlight even more sharply on Franklin since his arrest earlier this month. He was charged with leaking classified information to unauthorized recipients, including "a foreign official and members of the media." (Franklin will face a pretrial hearing on May 27.) Two recipients of the information are reported to be recently dismissed members of AIPAC, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee. For close observers of the Franklin/AIPAC case, the question is how to make public the mysterious machinations of Franklin's network in the Pentagon and the Bush Administration without a diversion, obscuring graver failures in judgment by Administration policy-makers. Even more disturbing, the Plame leak case, the Franklin affair may turn into an excuse to hound journalists.

It's useful to examine Franklin's alleged crime against the policy backdrop that drove it, in particular the raging interagency debate during Bush's first term concerning US policy on Iran. Fearing the Islamic Republic's growing strength in post-Saddam Iraq and the Persian Gulf generally, the Pentagon neocons thought they had found a creative solution: using the US presence in Iraq and the cultivation of key opposition groups in Iran to destabilize the Tehran regime. Advocating a plan modeled on the Reagan Administration's covert support of anti-Soviet rebels in Afghanistan, the *contras* in Nicaragua and the Solidarity movement in Poland, the Pentagon neocons urged the Bush White House to sign a presidential directive that would permit covert measures against Iran. They were opposed by State Department

moderates, who argued that Iran was playing a quietly helpful role in Iraq. One argument the hawks used in their favor was the existence of US intelligence reports alleging hostile Iranian activities threatening the stability of post-Saddam Iraq. And one group they tried to recruit in support of their proposed directive was AIPAC--a natural ally, since the powerful pro-Israel lobby group has long wielded great influence in shaping the hard-line US policy against Iran.

On June 26, 2003, according to an FBI affidavit accompanying the criminal charges filed against Franklin, he met in an Arlington, Virginia, restaurant with "US Persons 1 and 2," widely reported to be Steve Rosen, the former director of policy for AIPAC, and Keith Weissman, a former Iran specialist for the lobby group. (After months of insisting that none of its employees had done anything improper, AIPAC dismissed both Rosen and Weissman last month.) Over the course of that meeting, Franklin was observed by the FBI discussing with his companions the contents of a "Top Secret" US government document dated from the day before that contained information on threats to US forces in Iraq. It is apparent from reading the FBI affidavit accompanying the Franklin charges that the bureau was already monitoring one or both of the AIPAC officials when Franklin stumbled into the picture that June. According to reporting by the *Jewish Telegraphic Agency* (JTA), the FBI investigation of AIPAC began at least as early as 2001, perhaps in response to complaints from then-National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice about leaks concerning Administration deliberations over whether to meet Palestinian leader Yasir Arafat.

It was not until a year after that lunch, in June 2004, that the FBI got a criminal warrant to search Franklin's Pentagon office space, where the bureau discovered the 2003 document on which Franklin had briefed the AIPAC officials. A search of Franklin's home in West Virginia the same day found eighty-three more classified documents, almost half of them Top Secret (removing classified government documents to an unauthorized location, as Franklin's home was, is a federal offense potentially punishable by a prison term). The affidavit says that shortly after that search Franklin admitted to the FBI that he had shared information from the classified 2003 document with his lunch companions.

According to reports by the *JTA*, at some point in 2004 the FBI used the evidence it had on Franklin to persuade him to cooperate in its investigation--one that had him playing his more or less usual role of whistleblower on hostile Iranian activities in Iraq to other people of interest to the FBI, to see how they would behave. Among those reportedly called by Franklin were allies of Ahmad Chalabi, to find out who might have leaked to him the highly classified information that the United States had broken Iran's communications codes in Iraq--a fact

Chalabi allegedly shared with the Iranians; a former CIA attorney who had sued the agency claiming he was the subject of an anti-Israel witch hunt; and Weissman, the AIPAC Iran hand.

It is Franklin's July 2004 conversation with Weissman that seems to be the primary focus of the government's case. According to a May 17 JTA report by Ron Kampeas and Matthew Berger:

Franklin allegedly warned Weissman that Iranian agents in predominantly Kurdish northern Iraq planned to kidnap, torture and kill American and Israeli agents in the region.... Weissman immediately informed Rosen and the information was relayed to the White House, sources close to the defense said.

Rosen and Weissman then called Naor Gilon, who heads the political desk at the Israeli Embassy in Washington, and Glenn Kessler, the State Department correspondent for the Washington Post, the sources said.

It is on the basis of Rosen and Weissman's actions after being set up by the FBI and Franklin that the FBI apparently intends to pursue its case against the two former AIPAC officials. Why is this problematic? After all, it's hard to argue that Franklin was acting within the normal parameters of his work. Indeed, as a two-decade veteran of the Defense Intelligence Agency, Franklin certainly knew the rules about leaking classified information and keeping classified documents at home. If convicted on the charges he currently faces, he could serve up to ten years in jail. (Franklin's attorney, John Richards, has been cited in numerous press reports as saying his client intends to plead innocent.)

It's the AIPAC part of the case that is more troubling. While it's no secret that some people in town, particularly East policy shows undue favoritism to Israel, have long thought the lobbying group to be too powerful and we it's hard to see why the government would pursue charges in *this* case, which doesn't appear to be particularly showing anything like a pattern of AIPAC officials serving as a vehicle for passing classified US information to does not have more evidence against the officials than the interaction with Franklin, it's hard to see why the F case with so many mitigating circumstances. Those include the fact that, so far, there's no evidence the AIPAC information from Franklin, nor that they ever received actual classified documents from him. A second mitig according to reports in the *JTA* and the *Jerusalem Post*, the substance of the planted information concerned immediate threat to Israeli and American lives in northern Iraq--in other words, an exceptional case, in which notify the embassy of the citizens of an allied country they thought to be in imminent danger. Finally, it appea Israelis with the information but to a senior US official who would appear to be authorized to see it: the Natio

adviser, Elliott Abrams. It's hard to argue that it's the normal practice of spies to take the classified information

But all of those are just mitigating factors, says former FBI attorney Harvey Rishikoff. "The case turns on whether receiving was improperly being provided," Rishikoff told *The Nation*. "Once you receive that classified information provided, the next question is, what do you do with that information? You have a variety of things you can do if there has been a breach of security. You can use the information to pass on to a foreign power. You can approach government officials based on the new information you receive." Since the AIPAC officials seem to have proceeded with the latter, what is the appropriate action for the government to take? Rishikoff argues that the goal of the government's case may be more than a warning to those who might see leaking to the lobby group as perhaps not officially allowed but unofficial. "What I really want to prosecute is not AIPAC," says Rishikoff. "I want to start prosecuting anyone who thinks that they want to use this as a test case, to stop people feeling the US has a special relationship with this group."

Indeed, the special relationship between the US executive branch and AIPAC was the triumph of twenty years ago. Steve Rosen, who looks set to become a victim of it. "Rosen invented executive branch lobbying," says one source familiar with his background. "The tyranny of fear that AIPAC has in this town was built by Steve Rosen. AIPAC would never have been working the halls of Congress. The fact is, Hill staffers don't know very much that's not open. When you start working at the State Department, that is not traditional lobbying. Steve Rosen sold that to AIPAC when he came [to the organization]. The Pentagon and State, but apparently the White House itself. Rosen and Weissman's consultation with the administration is a power dynamic, which may fall outside the focus of the FBI's criminal jurisdiction but which adds to the case."

The case is now poised to take an even more unfortunate twist. News reports indicate that the FBI hopes to be setting up an echo of the Valerie Plame leak case, in which an investigation into government malfeasance turned into a political scandal. At this point, the FBI will move forward on the Franklin case, with indictments of the former AIPAC officials like Franklin and his Pentagon colleagues to pursue unconventional channels, including secret meetings with the administration. The tougher White House action on Iranian activities in Iraq--and indeed the larger policy goal of getting the White House to destabilize Tehran--may be lost in the shuffle. (In this regard, it's curious that the promised Senate Intelligence Committee hearing on the Ghorbanifar meeting and the Administration's faulty pre-Iraq War intelligence, including an investigation of the CIA's Douglas Feith, seems to have fallen by the wayside.)

It's also worth noting that, even though the FBI's original interest seems to have centered on AIPAC, the organization is not the only one involved in the investigation with just a few bruises. The lobby group's massive annual policy conference takes place this year in Washington, and many of the Washington power brokers, including perhaps half of Congress, will be in attendance. Slated to address the conference are Vice President Dick Cheney, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and other political heavyweights from Washington and Tel Aviv. The conference, as in past years, will be in heightening its elite American audience's perception of the Iranian nuclear issue. The fate of the players concerned, such as Franklin and the dismissed AIPAC officials, could be a mere footnote.

Ahmad Chalabi, leader of the Iraqi National Congress, was among the nine Iraqi opposition figures seated with Gore around a circular conference table at the State Department. Other groups represented at the session, which was open to reporters only for a quick photo and the vice president's introductory remarks, included the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, the Kurdish Democratic Party and the Constitutional Monarchist Movement.

The United States "will not flag in supporting your efforts," Gore said, and will continue to enforce the "no-fly" zones over southern and northern Iraq that Americans and their allies have patrolled in order to prevent Hussein from threatening citizens — particularly the Kurds — in these regions.

"In the interests of regional peace and for the sake of human decency, (Hussein) must be removed from power. That is the policy of this administration. It is the policy I support. It is the policy I am personally committed to," Gore said.

The meeting made good on Gore's promise to American Jewish activists on May 23 that he would encourage Iraqi opposition leaders to unite in their efforts.

Immediately after his meeting with the Iraqis, Gore was shifting gears for talks with Armenian President Robert Kocharyan.

## Remove Hussein, Gore says

Associated Press

Washington — Vice President Al Gore told Iraqi opposition leaders in a meeting Monday that Saddam Hussein stands in the way of Middle East peace and "must be removed from power."

"I believe that there can be no peace for the Iraqi people and a genuine peace for the people of the Middle East so long as Saddam is in a position to brutalize his people and threaten his neighbors," Gore told representatives of forces trying to topple the Iraqi president.

Gore, the Democratic presidential candidate, was showcasing his foreign policy responsibilities as vice president Monday — experience that his campaign says makes him better prepared to be president than his Republican opponent, Texas Gov. George W. Bush.

ALTHOUGH NOT SPECIFICALLY MENTIONED IN THIS ARTICLE, ACCORDING TO [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] OUT SHORT HIS VISIT TO THE MIDWEST TO ATTEND THIS MEETING.

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## U.S. Considers Building Transmitter

By GEORGE GEDDA  
.c The Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) - A leading Iraqi opposition group is looking at a 5,000-foot mountain just inside Iraq's border with Iran as a potential site for a U.S.-backed radio transmitter to beam anti-Saddam Hussein broadcasts.

<sup>misc.</sup>  
Ahmad Chalabi, leader of the opposition Iraqi National Congress, said Thursday the mountain is in the largely autonomous Kurdish area of Iraq, about 100 miles northeast of Baghdad. Part of the mountain is in Iran.

The State Department said it is open to the concept of opposition broadcasts into either Iraqi Kurd territory or neighboring Iran. It said no decisions have been made.

Chalabi said he was optimistic the Bush administration will pay for the project, which he put at \$178,000. He said the station could be on the air in 45 days, broadcasting news and commentary on human rights abuses and other aspects of what he called "the plight of the Iraqi people."

The project is just one small aspect of a broader U.S. campaign to weaken Saddam. Officials are optimistic about the prospects for U.N. Security Council approval of a plan to tighten sanctions against Iraq that will limit Saddam's access to materials needed for weapons of mass destruction.

While military action against Iraq is possible, officials say no such step is imminent. President Bush has included Iraq as part of an "axis of evil," with Iran and North Korea, that he described in his State of the Union address.

The area favored by the Iraqi opposition for the transmitter is under the control of the Kurdistan Socialist Party, which supports the installation of the transmitter at the site, Chalabi said. The Kurdish region is dominated by two other parties whose backing would be helpful for the project to become operational, he said.

He said these parties are wary about any action against Saddam if there are no assurances of U.S. protection

The Kurdish area of northern Iraq has been beyond Saddam's control for years. U.S. and British flights over the area are intended to prevent Saddam from using his air force to recapture sovereignty over the area.

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*NY Times*  
**Iraq Opposition  
Is Pursuing Ties  
With Iranians**

**Factions Warning U.S.  
Not to Expect Control**

By JUDITH MILLER  
and LOWELL BERGMAN

LONDON, Dec. 12 — In advance of the expected war against Iraq, the American-backed Iraqi opposition is solidifying ties to Iran, part of what President Bush has called the "axis of evil," and opposing the possibility of an American-installed government in a postwar Iraq.

Leaders of all the major opposition groups, including an Iranian-backed group that represents Shiite Muslims and two Kurdish groups that have tens of thousands of troops on the ground, warned that while they welcomed American help in overthrowing President Saddam Hussein, Iraqis would not tolerate an American military occupation afterward or an American "viceroy" to govern Iraq, as some administration officials have contemplated.

"If we don't accept an Iraqi general, how are we going to accept an American general?" said Jalal Talabani, the leader of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, expressing a view echoed by his historic and equally well-armed Kurdish rivals, the Kurdish Democratic Party.

In interviews as they prepared for an American-sponsored unity conference in London that begins on Saturday, the dissidents said they would not be bound by American recommendations that they refrain from establishing either a provisional government or a national assembly. The exiles' declaration prepared for the conference specifically recommends establishing a constituent assembly on their own timetable.

Several Iraqi representatives said they agreed with Washington that it might be premature to create a provisional government when Mr. Hussein is still in power. Many others, however, resisted what they called the administration's effort to dictate ground rules to the opposition in written instructions signed by officials including Deputy Defense Secretary Paul D. Wolfowitz, Deputy Secretary of State Richard L. Armitage and L. Lewis Libby, Vice President Dick Cheney's chief of staff.

Kanan Makiya, a professor at Brandeis University and a leading Iraqi intellectual who helped draft the declaration for the conference, said the exile groups did not want an American military ruler.

"There is an Iraqi need here that's at least as great as the American

## THE IRAQ OPPOSITION

# Anti-Baghdad Groups in Iraq Are Seeking Ties With Iran

Continued From Page A1

need to have an event that shows that the Iraqis consider this a celebration and not an occupation or a purely military operation," he said.

Professor Makiya was part of a group that briefed Condoleezza Rice, the president's national security adviser, on the opposition agenda twice in the last three weeks.

A State Department official confirmed in a telephone interview from Washington that the administration did not want the opposition groups to form a provisional government or create a national assembly now.

"We want an advisory committee work with the coalition, and a red opposition message that the opposition is committed to a democratic, multiethnic Iraq that maintains its territorial integrity, rejects weapons of mass destruction, lives in peace with its neighbors and complies with United Nations Security Council resolutions," the official said.

The official said the administration was not concerned about Iraqi exiles' contact with Iran. He said the conversations filled a gap because the administration was not talking directly to Tehran. He also said Iraqi exiles and other sources had told the administration that Iran intended to play a passive role in any

military conflict in Iraq.

The talks between exile leaders and Iran this week were featured on the front pages of Tehran's leading newspaper. Among those present was Massoud Barzani, leader of the Kurdish Democratic Party, who had been estranged from Iran for years.

Also attending was Ahmad Chalabi, leader of the Iraqi National Congress, the umbrella opposition group. The conference has raised Mr. Chalabi's political profile and influence. At times a polarizing force both among opposition groups as well as in Washington, Mr. Chalabi has enjoyed strong support from senior civilian officials at the Pentagon and the White House, but has been viewed with skepticism by the Central Intelligence Agency.

"Our alliance with Iran is not temporary," he said, echoing the views of many exile leaders interviewed here in recent days.

Even before the conference opening, there are questions about how long the opposition's new unity will last.

Professor Makiya, one of the exile leaders, said that President Bush decided it was necessary to change Iraq's government and try to build a coalition through the United Nations, but that he had not chosen an Iraqi partner.

"You need an Iraqi partner for a whole host of different reasons," he

### MORE FROM THE TIMES, ON TV

A television report based on this article will be broadcast Monday evening, Dec. 16, on the PBS program "The NewsHour." (Broadcast times vary locally.)

said.

Administration officials said they had not decided what role they wanted the Iraqi opposition to play, but the State Department official said the White House was drafting plans for a post-Hussein Iraq that would cover 30 days, 60 days and 90 days after the end of a war.

"We're looking to the transition to a democratic civilian government, hopefully within six months," he said.

Several of the 316 delegates to the conference expressed both gratitude toward and frustration with the United States. While they were clearly pleased by the administration's apparent willingness to change the Iraqi government and back democracy in a Muslim country, several said they wanted to emphasize that they were not American puppets.

Some also questioned the sincerity of what they called Washington's permanent bureaucracy to the idea of democracy in a Muslim country.

"There are some people who claim to love Arabs, but all they prescribe

for them is tyranny," Mr. Chalabi said.

He also acknowledged a long-standing tension involving him, his political allies who have long championed democratic rule in Iraq, and the C.I.A. and State Department.

Mr. Chalabi and Ayad Alawi, the head of the Iraqi National Accord, a rival exile group, said their embrace of democracy and human rights prevented them from obtaining support from Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Chalabi and another exile leader said a representative of Prince Turki al-Faisal, then the head of Saudi intelligence, said in Riyadh in 1993: "Our leadership wants to help you. The condition: abandon democracy, human rights, then we will help."

A spokesman for the Saudi Embassy in Washington would not comment on 1993 events, but said the Saudi government believed that the Iraqi people must "choose what kind of government they will have, be it a monarchy or a democracy."

There is an undercurrent of fear among exiles that the United States will play off one group against another and abandon the proponents of a democratic Iraq. There is also concern that the administration will find it easier to support a military coup.

"That's frankly my greatest fear," Professor Makiya said.

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## FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Date of transcription 04/02/2003

[redacted] a white male born on [redacted]  
[redacted] Social Security Account Number [redacted] home address [redacted]  
[redacted] home telephone number [redacted]  
[redacted] was interviewed at his residence. Also present  
during the interview and translating for [redacted] was [redacted]  
[redacted]. Assisting in the interview was Special Agent  
[redacted] U.S. Border Patrol, [redacted], who was  
already aware of the identities of the interviewing Agents from a  
previous interview. was advised that the purpose of this interview  
was [redacted]

b6  
b7C  
b7Db6  
b7C  
b7D  
b7Eb6  
b7C  
b7Db6  
b7C  
b7D  
b7E

(U) All Information contained herein is unclassified except where  
shown otherwise.

~~Derived From : G-3~~  
~~Declassify On: X1~~

~~SECRET~~

Investigation on [redacted] at [redacted]

(U) File # ~~(S)~~ [redacted] Date dictated 04/02/2003by ~~JRW~~ SA [redacted]:jrwb3  
b7E  
b6  
b7C