

Punishing the French

May 8

Charleston Post Courier
"France is rumored to have issued passports of Iraqi officials in Syria."

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House Judiciary Chairman James Senesbrenner wrote Tom Ridge: "If the Department of Homeland Security receives or uncovers any information suggesting that this allegation is true...France should be suspended...from a visa waiver program."

May 9

Rumsfeld, DOD Briefing:
"France has historically had a very close relationship with Iraq. My understanding is that it continued right up until the outbreak of the war. What took place after that, we'll find out. I've read these reports, but I don't have anything to add to them."

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When Rumsfeld was questioned, he followed pattern. When something is on the street that is part of the strategic influence campaign, let it linger. He said when asked about the reports, "I have nothing to add to them." Clearly, the implication of that kind of answer is that he wanted people to believe the stories. He had nothing to add.

Even the White House got into this strategic influence effort. One has to believe the Administration knew by mid-May that the stories were not true, but at the White House press briefing, it was not stopped.

Punishing the French

May 14

Washington Post
French deny...

May 15 & 16

France accuses the United States of a smear campaign, using this as one example.

White House Press Brief:

Q Going back to France, the French have denied selling arms to Iraq and issuing passports to Syria to fleeing Iraqi officials. Are those charges valid?

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, I think that those are questions you can address to France.

Q On that point, Scott, do you have any information that the French did, in fact, issue passports to people so that --

MR. McCLELLAN: I think -- no, I think that's a question you need to address to France.

Q Well, no, it's information the U.S. claims to have.

MR. McCLELLAN: I don't have anything for you.

Punishing the French: Assessment

- **Technique made effective use of the concept of “echo.”**
 - Less than professional journalism repeated in 100's of newspapers and on television reporting on the story as a story.
 - *Washington Times* repeated the story with small bits of information so it lingered.
- **Seems most likely that this was part of the strategic influence campaign that can be traced at least circumstantially to the Special Plans Office in the Pentagon.**

I've been told from sources in the press that most of the leaks during the “armed conflict” that appeared in the *Washington Times* came from the Special Plans Office in the Pentagon. Using the kind of methods Admiral Poindexter was going to do on information operations, there would appear to be validity in what I was told.

The Secretary of Defense told us before the war he was going to do strategic influence. It appears as if the French were a target.

I'm confident from my research the white flag story was engineered. Even more, it is beginning to appear as if it were fabricated to cover a very serious friendly fire event.

Details of two incidents involving white flags have surfaced. The first was reported on March 23rd. General Abizaig, the Deputy Commander of Central Command, said that right after some Iraqi soldiers surrendered artillery fire came in on a Marine unit. He called it a ruse. On the surface the explanation seems strange. The Iraqi Army had trouble coordinating artillery fire at all. It is a stretch of the imagination to believe they could put together a plan in which a part of their force would surrender then they would start firing artillery.

White Flag Incident(s)

March 23

March 24

“There were several incidents reported today in which there were types of behavior that I can only describe as ruses...In one incident, a flag of surrender was displayed, and it was followed up by artillery.” CENTCOM briefing, General Aibzaig

“The Iraqi regime is engaged in other deadly deceptions. They are sending forces out carrying white surrender flags...the most serious violations of the laws of war.” DOD Press Briefing, Clarke

Extremely difficult
Military operation
To coordinate.

After this incident, however, it seems to have become a matter of policy to talk about white flag killing. It began the next day.

(The other white flag incident was when Iraqi soldiers shot civilians that were trying to surrender with a white flag. Both the civilians and the Iraqi soldiers were killed. Stories also have two sides. A memorable picture of the war was of British troops standing over two dead Iraqi in a foxhole; they had been holding up a white flag.)

White Flag Incident(s)

March 25

March 27

“The regime has committed has Committed acts of treachery...sending soldiers out Waving white flags and feigning surrender, with the goal of drawing coalition forces into ambush.”

“Some of the biggest losses we have taken are due to Iraqis committing violations of the law of armed conflict...by luring us into surrender situation then opening fire on our troops. So this is the plan that is very well thought out, and that will pay out, I think, as we expect.” DOD Press Briefing, Rumsfeld.

“With each passing day and everyday an increasingly violated desperate Iraqi regime violated many international laws...As you know, enemy soldiers have pretended to surrender, to give up, and then brought fire in on our forces.” DOD Press Briefing, Clarke

Rumsfeld really got into the story on March 25th. It continued on the 27th.

White Flag Incident(s)

April 5

April 18

“They have executed prisoners of war, waged attacks under the white flag or truce...” Bush

“Nixon, who served with the 1st Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Expeditionary Brigade from Camp LeJuene, North Caroline, died in battle March 23 when his unit was ambushed by Iraqi soldiers as the pretended to surrender near Nasiriyah in southern Iraq” Arlington National Cemetery Web Site

<u>Intended to Influence</u>	<u>False</u>	<u>Engineered</u>
Yes	X	X

The President came in and picked it up on April 5th. The story had so much legs (many legs) that it was even told as the reason for the death of a Marine at his funeral at Arlington Cemetery.

A disheartening aspect of the white flag story is what is beginning to surface about what might have been the real cause of the Marine casualties near An Nasiriyah on March 23rd. Marines are saying that nine of those killed may have been killed by an A-10 that made repeated passes attacking their position.

We know from a lessons learned report released early in October that the death of nine Marines is under investigation as a friendly fire accident. From individual reports, we know that at least one of the Marines killed on the March 23rd, reported as having been caught in the ruse, was hit directly in the chest with a round from an A-10 gun. We know at least one of the wives of a Marine killed that day is asking for the truth of her husband's death.

We need more truth on the white flag story.

The most significant seemingly fabricated story was the execution of prisoners. Tony Blair was in the United States meeting with the President at Camp David. He came out of the meeting and announced that two British prisoners had been executed. That same day, March 27th, General Pace said almost the same thing on CNN.

Execution of Prisoners

March 27

March 28

Iraq has executed two British prisoners. "If anyone needs any further evidence of the depravity..." Tony Blair at Joint News Conference with Bush at Camp David

"They have executed prisoners of war." Gen Pace, CNN, *Larry King Show*

March 27th, UK Briefing; no mention made of executions by Air Marshal Burridge.

Daily Mirror: Sapper Allsopp's sister Nina said: "His Colonel told us he was not executed we just can't understand why people are lying."

March 27th: Victoria Clarke had told reporters the U.S. had at least one unconfirmed report that Iraqi forces had shot Americans who had either surrendered or were attempting to surrender.

March 27th *Daily Telegraph*: "Intelligence officials have received one uncorroborated report indicating that at least some of the dead soldiers had been captured alive...a senior Pentagon official said today on the condition of anonymity. The information...is of undetermined reliability, the official said."

That day (March 27th) we began seeing statements attributing the story to one report. By the next day, the UK press began attacking the story as not true. One of the soldier's sisters reported his colonel had said he was not executed.

Execution of Prisoners

April 3	April 5	April 7
“They have executed prisoners of war...Bush, American Forces Press Service.	“They have executed prisoners of war...” Bush	“They have executed prisoners of war...” Rumsfeld
The British prime minister’s spokesman said there was no “absolute evidence” that UK servicemen had been executed.		

The UK finally pulled away from the story. The US side stayed with it through April 7th.

When Rumsfeld was questioned on the 7th, the story began to change; the pattern of non-answer surfaced.

Execution of Prisoners

April 7 Press Briefing

- Q: Mr. Secretary, you stated flatly that American POWs have been executed. On what basis do you make that statement? And now that there are at least nine remains that have come back from the ambush in Nasiriyah, how many of those do you believe were American soldiers that were executed?
- Rumsfeld: Let me just see precisely what I said. (Looks through briefing materials.) I think I said they have executed prisoners of war. Did I say American prisoners of war?
- Q: That was my -- that's been the understanding here.
- Rumsfeld: I didn't -- you just said I said American prisoners of war, and I'm not sure I said that. (To General Myers.) Do you know?
- Myers: I don't know.
- Q: Are you saying that there have not been American prisoners executed then?

Execution of Prisoners

April 7 Press Briefing

- Rumsfeld: I'm not saying either. There may very well have been, but I'm not announcing that, if that's what you're asking. Would you check and see if I said that right now? You've got a copy of it; I'd be curious. If I did, I'd want to make it right.
- Q: Well --
- Rumsfeld: Just a minute. If I did say precisely American prisoners of war, I'd want to correct it, because I don't have the names of anyone who has -- any American prisoners of war who we know of certain knowledge has been executed. We do know they executed a lot of prisoners of war over the years. And that's what I --
- Q: Do you know if any of the nine sets of remains that have been returned, if the forensics -- preliminary forensics have shown any of those to have been executed?
- Rumsfeld: I have not heard the report on that. Have you?
- Myers: I have not seen any of that.
(Later in the briefing)
- Rumsfeld: Let me correct this. Your question was inaccurate. I had said, "They have executed POWs," and I did not say from what country.

By the end of the questioning, he implied they were not Americans.

I've talked to people who have seen the picture taken when the individuals from the 507th were found. They described head wounds and fresh blood that could have been consistent with execution. Again, the pattern was that the story was more important than the facts.

What is wrong with the truth? Why didn't these guys level with us? That frustrated me at the time, and it continues to frustrate me.

Shula District Bombing

- **March 29 - Explosion kills more than 50 civilians: Central Command spokesman suggests the likely cause was Iraqi fire.**
- **April 2 - The British *Independent* newspaper reports that it reporter, Robert Fisk, found a 30-centimeter piece of shrapnel at the site of the Shula bombing showing the serial number of the bomb, identifying it as a HARM built by Raytheon.**
- **April 3rd - Jim Wilkinson, a Central Command spokesman, said American forces have received "reliable information" that the Iraqi regime may be planning to bomb some Shiite Muslim neighborhoods of Baghdad, then blame the U.S.-led coalition for the destruction. AP**
- **April 3 - UK Defense Chief Geoff Hoon says there is no evidence the market bombings were caused by coalition missiles.**

On March 29th, 50 civilians were killed in a neighborhood in Baghdad. A British reporter found parts of a US anti-radiation missile (HARM).

The CENTCOM cover story came from Jim Wilkinson. He said Iraq had planned this kind of thing. It was part of the pattern. The UK side continued the "not us" line.

This is another one of those stories that is particularly painful. One keeps wanting

to say, “Why did you do this?” Iraq had place surface to air missiles in the area. That was justification enough.

General Pace did not seem to have had a very good day on March 27th while on the *Larry King Show* on CNN. He said troops from the 507th were shot when they attempted to surrender.

Capture of the 507th

- “Intelligence reports indicate when the troops attempted to surrender, they were shot.” Gen Pace CNN, March 27th
- Official Army Report: “...with no means to continue to resist, SGT Riley made the decision to surrender the two Soldiers (Hernandez, and Johnson) and himself. PFC Miller moved beyond the crash-site, engaged the enemy, and was captured after being surrounded. ... Hudson, also wounded, was immediately surrounded after the shooting stopped, and was pulled from the vehicle by Iraqis and captured.”

It does not seem to have been true, according to the Army report.

There was something about the “Red Zone” that caught a lot of people’s imaginations. Maybe it was because it was easy to understand the football metaphor.

Red Zone

March 21st – Rumsfeld, DOD Press Briefing, “There have been a variety of views offered on that subject (WMD use), and a lot of them tend to cluster around the idea that the most serious period would be if the Iraqi regime did not flee, and the forces got close to where they likely are in Baghdad or Tikrit, and the closer they got, the greater the danger of that. But we don’t -- that’s been more a theory on the part of outsiders rather than a theory on the part of insiders through interrogation or communication.”

March 24th – David Martin, CBS News, “Iraqis have drawn a red line on the map around Baghdad, and once American troops cross it, the Republican Guards are authorized to use chemical weapons.”

March 24th - GEN. FRANKS: I think -- I actually think we don’t know. There is a school of thought that says as the compression becomes tighter and tighter and tighter, the pressure will be greater and greater to use these weapons. So we don’t know

The discussion began with a question to Rumsfeld on March 21st. He provided a fairly good answer; it would not have stimulated much of a story. It was probably close to truth. Three days later someone got to CBS with more, although that same day Franks tended to put it back in the box.

Red Zone

March 25th – Rumsfeld, DOD Press Briefing: “There has been intelligence scraps-- who knows how accurate they are-- chatter in the system that suggest that the closer that coalition forces get to Baghdad and Tikrit, the greater the likelihood, and that some command-and-control arrangements have been put in place. But whether it will happen or not remains to be seen.”

Marc 28th - GEN. BROOKS: “We’re really referring to the earlier reports that it remains consistent as there might be trigger lines that are out there or places that which the regime would be threatened enough that they would use it. And as we add the additional evidence we found on the battlefield, again, we begin to take that very seriously that in fact there is a linkage between the two.”

April 2nd - GEN BROOKS: “First, the red zone or the red lines that we describe is simply a term that characterizes that there may be a trigger line where the regime deems sufficient threat to use weapons of mass destruction, weapons that we know are available to them, weapons that we’ve seen the regime use on their own people in the past, weapons we believe are in the possession of some of their forces now.

By March 25th, Rumsfeld began to pick up the theme. One can be alerted to strategic influence stuff when he talks about “scraps of intelligence.” By April 2nd, the Red Zone had taken on a life.

Red Zone

April 2nd – Military Official at U.S. Central Command, ...said the imaginary red line, the conceptual trip wire for the danger zone, runs east from Karbala, about 50 miles south of Baghdad on the Euphrates River, to Kut on the Tigris River southeast of Baghdad.

...after April 2nd, there were more than 1500 articles using the “Red Zone.”

April 16th – USA Today, A salt desert strip west of the town of Karbala, the gap is only a little more than a mile wide. It also lies inside what the Army commanders came to call the “red line” — turf so close to Baghdad that Iraqi troops might defend it with chemical weapons. U.S. commanders feared that the Iraqis would sucker advance units through the gap, only to “slime” them from behind with chemical weapons, cutting them off to be killed.

By the middle of April, thousands of stories appeared in the written press about the Red Zone.

Even if one grants the Administration some room for not knowing Iraq didn’t have chemical weapons it was immediately prepared to use against us at the beginning of the war, by April 16th, it did know. Joint Task Force 20 whose mission it was to go to the WMD sites first would have been to the majority of them. The coalition air forces had even stopped flying sorties against WMD areas. The evidence would have been coming back to Washington. But, they kept the story alive.

It continued into April:

The WMD and Scud Stories

- **April 10 – NYT, “The Iraqi forces in the area, along the Euphrates River, have been defending a large compound that includes phosphate fertilizer and water treatment plants. American officials say the sheer tenacity of the Iraqi fight has led them to suspect that the Iraqis might be defending Scud missiles or other weapons.” (Reference is to Al Qa’im.)**

No scuds or WMD were found at Al Qa’im.

An Even Darker Side

One element of the darker side was psychological operations. Strategic influence is aimed at international audiences (and maybe domestic audience). PSYOPS, on the other hand, are targeted at the bad guys. The problem is that during this war PSYOPS became a major part of the relationship between the governments of the US and the UK and the free press.

Psychological Operation

- **March 19: “The days of Saddam Hussein are numbered.”**
- **March 21: “...regime is starting to lose control of their country.”**
- **March 23: “The outcome is clear. The regime of Saddam Hussein is gone. It’s over.”**
- **Rumsfeld**
- **Assessment: Most likely part of of the Strategic PSYOPS. U.S. press used to communicate the message.**

At the lower end of the scale, when Rumsfeld and officials in London kept saying the days of the “regime” were numbered, they were talking to people in Iraq who might have been thinking of fighting.

Psychological Operation

- Air Marshall Brian Burridge, March 24th, "It's probably unnecessary at this stage in the campaign to focus on him as one man. The key aspect is the regime itself. Once the regime recognizes that its days are up, then they will crumble. And while they are crumbling, others who for some years maybe have had designs on overthrowing the regime, will probably develop greater levels of courage themselves. So we'll see a crumble and Saddam's place in that is largely becoming immaterial."
- Assessment: Most likely part of of the Strategic PSYOPS.

When the British commander gave a presentation to the international press on March 24th and talked about uprising, he was not giving an assessment as a professional about likely outcomes, he was broadcasting to see if he could inspire that to happen. It was psychological operations. We can see where psychological operations begin to color the free press. It would have been wrong to conclude from his remarks that he was predicting overthrow. His target audience was inside Iraq.

A major example of PSYOPS distorting the free press with false information was the case of the 51st Division. On the 21st and 22nd of March, their surrender was a major story. It was told as if it were a truth. It was told on both sides of the Atlantic. It had been coordinated. It was not true.

Psychological Operation?

51st Division

- **WASHINGTON, March 21 (Reuters) -"The commander of Iraq's regular 51st Division on Friday surrendered to American Marines advancing through the desert toward Baghdad in southern Iraq, U.S. defense officials said. ...The defense officials, who asked not to be identified, did not provide details but told Reuters that both the commander and vice-commander of the division had surrendered...the unit had been peppered in recent weeks with tens of thousands of air-dropped leaflets calling on the Iraqi military to give up."**
- **March 22, CBS News - "An entire division of the Iraqi army, numbering 8,000 soldiers, surrendered to coalition forces in southern Iraq Friday, Pentagon officials said. The move marked the largest single unit to surrender en masse."**