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The Pentagon's latest Big Lie

Preserving the myth of a "war on terror"

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Theme: Media Disinformation, US NATO War Agenda

The quality of Pentagon propaganda is really deteriorating. The War Dept.'s latest fraud appeared in this week's newspapers under the ominous-sounding headline:

"US Kills Mastermind of Iraq Shrine"

The article is similar to hundreds of other stories we've seen in the passed few years boasting of the murder of an "alleged" terrorist kingpin whose evil deeds have prevented democracy from flourishing in Iraq .

Oh, please.

According to CNN: "Coalition troops killed the al Qaeda terrorist who masterminded the February 2006 attack on Samarra 's al-Askariya mosque and set off continuing violence and reprisal killings between Sunnis and Shiites, the U.S. military said Sunday." Snip "Haitham Sabah al-Baderi, the al Qaeda emir of greater Samarra, was killed Thursday east of Samarra, said Rear Adm. Mark Fox during a news conference". snip "Eliminating al-Baderi is another step in breaking the cycle of violence instigated by the attack on the holy shrine in Samarra ," Fox said. "We will continue to hunt down the brutal terrorists who are intent on creating a Taliban-like state in Iraq ." (CNN)

In truth, CNN has no idea who al-Baderi really was or whether he belonged to Al Qaida or not. They just jot down whatever the Pentagon spokesman tells them and then pass it off later as news. It's the same with the rest of the media. They don't care. They build their stories on statements from government officials and don't bother looking for evidence. All they know is that al-Baderi is another unlucky victim in Bush's war on terror who has been subsumed into the Pentagon's propaganda war against the American people. That's it.

So why bother publishing a crazy story like this? It doesn't change public opinion on the war or convince people that al Qaida is the main enemy in Iraq . So what good is it? It's just an attempt to show progress in a losing cause by holding up another enemy scalp.

But, that's not public relations— it's barbarism. Don't the Pentagon big-wigs know that? They think the American people relish the idea of assassinating enemy "suspects" without any proof of wrongdoing or judicial oversight. But they're wrong. People are sickened by it. Can't they see that?

What is gained by fabricating another goofy story before the dust has even settled on the Tillman fiasco? Why not let the public fully-digest the last "Big Lie" before moving on to the next one?

Remember Tillman—the outspoken NFL star who figured out the war was a fake and started blasting the Bush administration's lies?

Well, he took three bullets to the head—"gangland style"—in what the Pentagon dubbed "friendly fire".

What a joke. Is the Pentagon trying to destroy what little credibility it has left?

Apparently.

THIS WEEK'S BIG LIE

I've done a lot of research on both bombings of the Golden Dome Mosque and I can tell you that THE MILITARY HAS NEVER CONDUCTED AN INVESTIGATION OF WHAT REALLY HAPPENED. Never. That means the CNN headline is just more empty blather. The few eyewitness accounts that appeared in Iraqi blogs and web sites strongly suggest that US Intelligence agencies and Iraqi troops from the Interior Ministry may have been involved. The theories connecting Al Qaida to the incident are pure speculation with no factual basis.

And yet, here's what Bush said in a speech just days after the first bombing:

"Al Qaida terrorists and Sunni insurgents... blew up one of the holiest shrines in Shia Islam—the Golden Mosque of Samarra—in a calculated effort to provoke Iraq 's Shia population to retaliate. Their strategy worked. Radical Shia elements; some supported by Iran , formed death squads. And the result was a vicious cycle of sectarian violence that continues today."

How does Bush know who it was? He never ordered an investigation and he doesn't have a crystal ball. If there's proof—show us! Otherwise we should assume that he is just trying to blame someone else for his part in turning Iraq into a charnel house.

Those aren't Al Qaida's B-1 Bombers dropping cluster bombs and Daisy Cutters on Iraqi cities. And, that isn't al-Baderi kicking down doors and dragging off civilians to be tortured in some god-forsaken hell-hole. Those are Bush's planes and Bush's troops! He's the one who's responsible.

Here's an excerpt from an article I wrote just a few months ago after the last bombing in Samarra :

"Less than 4 hours after the explosion, the Bush public relations team cobbled together a statement that the bombing was the work of Sunni extremists or al Qaida terrorists. But, they've never produced a scintilla of evidence to support their claims. It may be that the administration simply saw the bombing as an opportunity to twist the facts to suit their own purposes.

After all, the incident has been a propaganda-bonanza for the Bush team. They've used it to support their theory that Iraq is "the central battle in the war on terror" and that "we must fight them there if we don't want to fight them over here". It's been used as one of the main justifications for the occupation; implying that the US military is needed as a referee to keep the warring factions from killing each other. It's all just nonsense that's designed to advance the administration's political agenda.

If there had been an investigation, it would have shown whether or not the perpetrators were experts by the placement of the explosives. They might have found bomb-residue which could have determined the composition of the material used. Forensics experts could have easily ascertained whether the explosives came from Iraqi munitions-dumps (as suggested) or from outside the country (like the USA , perhaps?)

The incident may well have been a "false flag" operation carried out by US intelligence agencies to provoke sectarian violence and, thus, reduce the number of attacks on American troops. (That is what the vast number of Sunnis and Shiites believe)

In any event, as soon as the mosque was destroyed the media swung into action focusing all of its attention on sectarian violence and the prospect of civil war. The media's incessant "cheerleading" for civil war was suspicious, to say the least.

In the first 30 hours after the blast, more than 1,500 articles appeared on Google News providing the government version of events without deviation and without any corroborating evidence; just fluff that reiterated the Pentagon's account verbatim and without challenge.

1500! Now that's a well-oiled propaganda system!

Most of the articles were "cookie cutter-type" stories which used the same buzzwords and talking points as all the others; no interviews, no facts, no second opinions; simple, straightforward stenography – nothing more.

The story was repeated for weeks on end never veering from the same speculative theory. Clearly, there was a push to convince the American people that this was a significant event that would reshape the whole context of the war in Iraq . In fact, the media blitz that followed was bigger than anything since 9-11; a spectacular display of the media's power to manipulate public opinion.

There were a few articles that didn't follow the party-line, but they quickly disappeared into a cyber-"black hole" or were dismissed as conspiracy theories. One report in AFP said that the bombing "was the work of specialists" and the "placing of explosives must have taken at least 12 hours".

Ah-ha!

The article said: "Construction Minister Mohammed Jaafar said, 'Holes were dug into the mausoleum's four main pillars and packed with explosives. Then charges were connected together and linked to another charge placed just under the dome. The wires were then linked to another charge placed just under the dome. The wires were then linked to a detonator which was triggered at a distance."

Of course, what does that prove? Perhaps, al Qaida has skilled explosives experts? But why not investigate? After all, if this was the "catalyzing event" which thrust the country towards civil war; why not have the FBI come in and take a look-around?

A professional team of investigators could have quickly determined whether highly-trained saboteurs were operating in the area. (which meant that American troops would be at greater risk) Isn't that worth checking out?

Nope. The Pentagon did nothing. There was no effort at all to find out who might have been involved. It was an open and shut case; wrapped up before the dust had even settled in Samarra .

Very strange.

Apparently, there was at least one witness who was interviewed shortly after the bombing. He said that he heard cars running outside the mosque "the whole night until morning" but, he was warned "to stay in your shop and don't leave until morning".

At 6:30 AM the next morning, the vehicles outside the mosque left. 10 minutes later the bombs exploded.

None of the people living in the vicinity of the mosque were ever questioned. Likewise, the Construction Minister Mohammed Jaafar has never resurfaced in the news again. I expect that his comments in the newspaper may have had something to do with his sudden disappearance, but then maybe not. (Bush's War on Perception; the bombing of the Golden Mosque, Mike Whitney)

Here's an excerpt from another article titled "Information Warfare, Psy-ops and the Power of Myth" http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article17078.htm

New Clues in the Bombing

New clues have surfaced in the case of the bombing of the Golden Mosque which suggests that the claims of the Bush administration are false. An article by Marc Santora, ("One Year Later, Golden Mosque still in Ruins", New York Times) provides eyewitness testimony of what really took place one year ago:

"A caretaker at the shrine described what happened on the day of the attack, insisting on anonymity because he was afraid that talking to an American could get him killed. The general outline of his account was confirmed by American and Iraqi officials.

The night before the explosion, he said, just before the 8 p.m. curfew on Feb. 21, 2006, on the Western calendar, men dressed in commando uniforms like those issued by the Interior Ministry entered the shrine.

The caretaker said he had been beaten, tied up and locked in a room.

Throughout the night, he said, he could hear the sound of drilling as the attackers positioned the explosives, apparently in such a way as to inflict maximum damage on the dome". (NY Times)

Clearly, if the men were men dressed in "commando uniforms like those issued by the Interior Ministry", then the logical place to begin an investigation would be the Interior Ministry. But there's never been an investigation and the caretaker has never been asked to testify about what he saw on the night of the bombing. However, if he is telling the truth, we cannot exclude the possibility that paramilitary contractors (mercenaries) or special-ops (intelligence) agents working out of the Interior Ministry may have destroyed the mosque to create the appearance of a nascent civil war.

Isn't that what Bush wants—-to divert attention from the occupation and to show that the

real conflict is between Shiites and Sunnis?

It's unlikely that the mosque was destroyed by "Sunni insurgents or Al Qaida" as Bush claims. Samarra is predominantly a Sunni city and the Sunnis have nearly as much respect for the mosque as a cultural icon and sacred shrine as the Shiites.

The Times also adds, "What is clear is that the attack was carefully planned and calculated".

True again. We can see from the extent of the damage that the job was carried out by demolition experts and not merely "insurgents or terrorists" with explosives. Simple forensic tests and soil samples could easily determine the composition of the explosives and point out the real perpetrators.

The Times even provides a motive for the attack: "Bad people used this incident to divide Iraq on a detestable sectarian basis."

Bingo! The administration has repeatedly used the incident to highlight divisions, incite hostilities, and prolong the occupation.

The Times also notes the similarities between 9-11 and the bombing of the Golden Mosque: "I can describe what was done as exactly like what happened to the World Trade Center ."(NY Times)

In fact, the bombing of the Golden Mosque is a reenactment of September 11. In both cases an independent investigation was intentionally quashed and carefully-prepared narrative was immediately provided. The administration's version of events has been critical in creating the rationale for an extended US military occupation of Iraq , but is it true.

Probably not. The so-called "deeply ingrained sectarian animosity between Sunnis and Shiites" has no historical precedent. It is an invention of propagandists in the intelligence services who intend to fragment the Iraqi state so that precious resources can be more easily controlled. "Divide and rule" continues to be the driving force behind America 's aggressive counterinsurgency strategy.

THE SECOND BOMBING OF THE GOLDEN DOME MOSQUE

Here's excerpt from another article which outlines some of what we know about the second bombing of the Golden Dome Mosque a year later: (The Battle of Gaza, http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article17894.htm)

Graham Bowley ("Minarets on Shiites Shrine in Iraq Destroyed in Attack" NY Times) clarifies some of the important details of what took place at the site of the Mosque just prior to the second bombing. He says:

> "Since the attack in 2006, the shrine had been under the protection of local — predominantly Sunni — guards. But American military and Iraqi security officials had recently become concerned that the local unit had been infiltrated by Al Qaeda forces in Iraq . A move by the Ministry of Interior in Baghdad over the last few days to bring in a new guard unit — predominantly Shiite — may have been linked to the attack today."

No reference is made to the sudden and unexplained changing of the guards at the mosque

in future accounts in the mainstream press. And, yet, that is the most important point. The minarets were blown up just days after the new guards took charge. They cordoned off the area, placed snipers on the surrounding rooftops, and then blew up the minarets in broad daylight.

The first explosion took place at 9:30 AM. Ten minutes later the second bomb was detonated.

Al Qaeda?

Not likely.

The Golden Dome mosque has been heavily guarded ever since it was blown up in 2006. The four main doors have been bolted shut and not a tile has been moved in over a year. The reason for this is that the Shiites consider it a "crime scene" which they intend to investigate more thoroughly when the violence subsides.

The Shiites never accepted the official US-version of events that "al Qaeda did it". Many believe that US Special Forces were directly involved and that it was a planned demolition carried out by experts. There is considerable proof to support this theory including eye witness accounts from the scene of the crime as well as holes that were drilled in the floor of the mosque to maximize destruction. This was not a simple al Qaeda-type car-bombing but a technically-demanding demolition operation.

The damning information in the New York Times article has been corroborated in many other publications including an official statement from the Association of Muslim Scholars in Iraq (AMSI). According to the AMSI, Prime Minister Nouri al Mailiki replaced the Sunnis who had been guarding the site for over a year with Shiite government forces from the Interior Ministry. Their statement reads:

"Security forces arrived yesterday afternoon from Baghdad Tuesday for the receipt of the task of protecting two tombs instead of the existing force there. Somehow they obtained a scuffle followed by gunfire lasted two hours over control of security forces coming from Baghdad ."

So, the Sunni guards were replaced (after a scuffle) with goons from the Interior Ministry. The next day the minarets blow up.

Coincidence?

Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al Maliki immediately issued statement where he claimed that the al Qaeda was responsible for the attack. At the same time, however, he arrested all 12 of the guards he sent from the Interior Ministry.

Why? Was he afraid they would talk to the media?

The Association of Muslim Scholars said that "last year's explosion happened after a severe political crisis between blocs involved in the political process to the occupation. After the elections, the establishment of the government was blocked at that time. It is quite similar to the political crisis faced by the government and parliament today".

The AMSI is right. The destruction of the Golden Dome Mosque took place soon after the

Iraqi parliament rejected the US-plan for dividing Iraq . ("Federalism") This time, the parliament has voted-down the US-plan to transfer control of Iraq 's vast petroleum reserves to the American oil giants via the "oil laws".

The AMSI sees the bombing as a desperate attempt by the US occupation to break the logjam in Parliament over the oil laws and to conceal the failures of the "surge" by inciting sectarian violence. The only difference this time is that the Shiite militias have been less responsive to US manipulation. In fact, Shiite cleric Muqtada al Sadr has tried to stop his Mahdi Army from attacking Sunni areas and he has decried the bombing as another plot by US-Israeli intelligence agents operating in Iraq . He said that the incident reveals "the hidden hand of the occupier."

He added, "This is what the occupiers brought to Iraq : a disintegration plot and fanning the flames of sectarian violence. Destroying the Askariya shrine goes exactly with the insurgents' beliefs."

Among Shiites, there's nearly unanimous agreement that the US was behind the bombing. Middle East expert Juan Cole reports on his blog-site "Informed Comment, that protests have broken out in India, Pakistan, the Caucasus, Bahrain, Iran and other locations where there are high concentrations of Shiites. The consensus view is that the minarets were blown up as part of a larger US-Israeli strategy for controlling the Middle East .

But why would the Bush administration want to unleash a fresh wave of sectarian violence when they can't even establish security in Baghdad ?

Here's what the AMSI says:

"Sectarian violence is an effective means to enable the militias to fully impose their control on (Sunni) neighborhoods and cities as it did after the bombings of Samarra….The government is also trying to control the capital of Baghdad; seeking to extend its power over other cities that reject the occupation, especially the cities of Baquba and Samarra".

This is what is gained by the bombings—further ethnic cleansing of the Sunni neighborhoods and greater control over the public through a campaign of terror. It's all part of a broader neocon strategy that centers on "creative destruction" rather than the traditional US policy of "regional stability

Final Comment

The bombing of the Golden Dome Mosque is a psychological operation (psy-ops) that evolved from the theories of former Counselor at the State Dept, Philip Zelikow, (Zelikow was also executive director of the 9-11 Commission and author of the National Security Strategy NSS) Zelikow "is an expert in "the creation and maintenance of 'public myths' or 'public presumptions', which he defines as beliefs thought to be true although not necessarily known to be true with certainty, shared in common with the relevant political community. He has taken a special interest in 'searing' or 'molding' events that take on 'transcendent' importance and, therefore, retain there power even as the experiencing generation passes from the scene". ("Thinking about Political History" Miller Center report; winter 1999)

"In the Nov-Dec 1998 issue of Foreign Affairs he co-authored an article called 'Catastrophic Terrorism' in which he speculated that if the 1993 bombing of the World Trade center had

succeeded ‘the resulting horror and chaos would have exceeded our ability to describe it. Such an act of catastrophic terrorism would be a watershed event in American history. ‘It could involve loss of life and property unprecedented in peacetime and undermine America ’s fundamental sense of security, as did the Soviet bomb test in 1949. The US might respond with draconian measures scaling back civil liberties, allowing wider surveillance of citizens, detention of suspects and use of deadly force. More violence could follow, either future terrorist attacks or US counterattacks. Belatedly, Americans would judge their leaders negligent for not addressing terrorism more urgently”. (Wikipedia)

Zelikow’s theories help us understand how “catastrophic events” are being used to shape public consciousness and create a narrative that advances the political objectives of the people in power. The actual facts about the bombing of the shrine have been intentionally suppressed while the prevailing theory—that we are fighting Al Qaida in Iraq—has been meticulously maintained with a solid wall of disinformation. The media has played a central role in this process by disseminating the official storyline from every outlet and newspaper without challenging the government’s “uncorroborated” assertions. This has had a deeply corrosive effect on American democracy.

The extraordinary expansion of state power has been legitimized by the deliberate misreading of “catastrophic events”. History, legal precedent and even cultural tradition have been brushed aside in an effort to rationalize a new order in which state repression, autocratic rule and aggressive war are deemed the requisite components of national security. The entire human experiment—dating back tens of thousands of years–is now conveniently divided into two parts: pre-9-11 and post 9-11.

The bombing of the Golden Dome Mosque has been used the same way as 9-11. A “unifying myth” has been build around a “catastrophic event” in a way that serves the overall goals of the political establishment. As we have seen, the facts don’t really matter as long as the illusion that we are fighting terrorists is maintained. (According to Anthony H. Cordesman, an Iraqi specialist at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies in Washington , al Qaida’s attacks make up only 15 per cent of the total in Iraq though they launch 80-90 per cent of the suicide bombings”. Patrick Cockburn).In reality, the US is engaged in a brutal colonial war that has destroyed a sovereign nation that posed no threat to American national security. That obvious fact never finds its way into America ’s “free press”.

The Bush administration and their enablers at the Pentagon’s “Dept. of Strategic Information” will continue to promote their threadbare narrative of “foreign fighters and terrorists” until the Iraq mission collapses and the troops are withdrawn.

Until then, many more lives will be sacrificed to preserve the myth of a war on terror. Haitham Sabah al-Baderi is just the latest victim. There will be others. His assassination has helped to divert attention from the 700,000 Iraqis have been butchered without cause in their own country by Bush’s army.

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