

Tom Ridge's Mea Culpa:

The Code Orange Terror Alerts were based on Fake Intelligence

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Global Research, May 12, 2005
16 June 2005

Region: [USA](#)
Theme: [Police State & Civil Rights](#)
In-depth Report: [FAKE INTELLIGENCE](#)

"If we simply go to red ... it basically shuts down the country," (Tom Ridge)
[meaning that civilian government bodies would be closed down and taken over by an Emergency Administration.]

"What a lot of Americans suspected all along turns out to be true. The color-coded alert system for terrorist attacks was a fraud." (www.NorthJersey.com)

Mea Culpa

After leaving his position at Homeland Security, Tom Ridge acknowledged that the post 9/11 terror alerts were often based on "flimsy evidence" and that he had been pressured by the CIA to raise the threat level:

The Bush administration periodically put the USA on high alert for terrorist attacks even though then-Homeland Security chief Tom Ridge argued there was only flimsy evidence to justify raising the threat level... Ridge [said] .he often disagreed with administration officials who wanted to elevate the threat level to orange, or "high" risk of terrorist attack, but was overruled.

"More often than not we were the least inclined to raise it...Sometimes we disagreed with the intelligence assessment. Sometimes we thought even if the intelligence was good, you don't necessarily put the country on (alert). ... There were times when some people were really aggressive about raising it, and we said, 'For that?' " (USA Today , 10 May 2005)

A review of the three high profile code orange terror alerts confirms in all three cases that the intelligence had been fabricated.

1. February 7, 2003, Two days after Colin Powell's Feb 5 presentation to the UN Security Council, in the month prior to the invasion of Iraq,

2. December 21, Christmas 2003

July 29th 2004, on the same day as John Kerry's acceptance speech at the Democratic Convention. The code orange alert served to galvanize US public opinion in favor of Bush's "war on terrorism" in the months leading up to the November 2004 elections.

In all three cases, Tom Ridge's warnings on the nature of the threat were categorical. The official announcements by the Homeland Security Department had dispelled any lingering doubts regarding the threat level:

"the risk [during the Christmas period] is perhaps greater now than at any point since September 11, 2001;"

"indications that [the] near-term attacks ... will either rival or exceed the [9/11] attacks".

"And it's pretty clear that the nation's capital and New York city would be on any list..."

Compare these pronouncements to Ridge's May 10 statement where he admits that the evidence was flimsy.

1. The February 7, 2003 Code Orange Alert

An Orange Code Alert had been ordered on **7 February 2003, two days after Colin Powell's flopped presentation on Iraq's alleged weapons of mass destruction to the UN Security Council**. It was applied specifically to galvanize US public opinion in favor of the invasion of Iraq.

Media attention was immediately shifted from Colin Powell's blunders at the UN Security Council to an (alleged) impending terrorist attack on America. Anti-aircraft missiles were immediately deployed around Washington. The media became inundated with stories on Iraqi support to an impending Al Qaeda attack on America.

The objective was to present Iraq as the aggressor. According to the New York Post, (11 February 2003):

"The nation is now on Orange Alert because intelligence intercepts and simple logic both suggest that our Islamic enemies know the best way to strike at us is through terrorism on U.S. soil."

Another story allegedly emanating from the CIA on so-called 'radioactive dirty bombs' had been planted in the news chain.⁴ Secretary Powell warned that "it would be easy for terrorists to cook up radioactive 'dirty' bombs to explode inside the U.S. ... 'How likely it is, I can't say... But I think it is wise for us to at least let the American people know of this possibility.'" ⁵ Meanwhile, network TV had warned that "American hotels, shopping malls or apartment buildings could be al Qaeda's targets as soon as next week..."

The hidden agenda in the weeks leading up to the invasion of Iraq was to link Baghdad to Al Qaeda, muster unbending support for President Bush and weaken the anti-war protest movement. Following the announcement, tens of thousands of Americans rushed to purchase duct tape, plastic sheets and gas-masks.

It later transpired that the terrorist alert was fabricated by the CIA, in all likelihood in consultation with the upper echelons of the State Department. ⁶

The FBI, for the first time had pointed its finger at the CIA.

"This piece of that puzzle turns out to be fabricated and therefore the reason for a lot of the alarm, particularly in Washington this week, has been dissipated after they found out that this information was not true," said Vince Cannistraro, former CIA counter-terrorism chief and ABCNEWS consultant.

(...)

According to officials, the FBI and the CIA are pointing fingers at each other. An FBI spokesperson told ABCNEWS today he was "not familiar with the scenario," but did not think it was accurate. "7

2. December 21, Christmas 2003

On December 21st, 2003 four days before Christmas, the Homeland Security Department, again raised the national threat level from "elevated" to "high risk" of terrorist attack. 11

In his pre-Christmas Press Conference, Homeland Security department Secretary Tom Ridge confirmed in much the same way as on February 7, 2003, that: "the U.S. intelligence community has received a substantial increase in the volume of threat-related intelligence reports". According to Tom Ridge, these "credible [intelligence] sources" raise "the possibility of attacks against the homeland, around the holiday season..."12

Terrorists still threaten our country and we remain engaged in a dangerous – to be sure – difficult war and it will not be over soon," warned Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld. "They can attack at any time and at any place."

With America on high terror alert for the Christmas holiday season, intelligence officials fear al-Qaeda is eager to stage a spectacular attack – possibly hijacking a foreign airliner or cargo jet and crashing it into a high-profile target inside the United States." 14

The official Christmas announcement by the Homeland Security Department dispelled any lingering doubts regarding the threat level:

"the risk [during the Christmas period] is perhaps greater now than at any point since September 11, 2001;"

It also warned Americans, in no uncertain terms, but without supporting evidence, that there are:

"indications that [the] near-term attacks ... will either rival or exceed the [9/11] attacks".

"And it's pretty clear that the nation's capital and New York city would be on any list..."

Following Secretary Ridge's announcement, anti-aircraft missile batteries were set up in Washington:

. "And the Pentagon said today, more combat air patrols will now be flying over select cities and facilities, with some airbases placed on higher alert." Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld: "You ask, 'Is it serious?' Yes, you bet your life. People don't do that unless it's a serious situation." 15

According to an official statement: "intelligence indicates that Al Qaeda-trained pilots may be working for overseas airlines and ready to carry out suicide attacks." 16

More specifically, Al Qaeda and Taliban terrorists were, according to Homeland Security, planning to hijack an Air France plane and "crash it on US soil in a suicide terror strike similar to those carried out on September 11, 2001."

Air France Christmas flights out of Paris were grounded. F-16 fighters were patrolling the skies.

Yet it turned out that the stand down orders on Air France's Christmas flights from Paris to Los Angeles, which were used to justify the Code Orange Alert during the Christmas holiday, were based on fabricated information.

Needless to say these fabricated media reports served to create a tense atmosphere during the Christmas holiday. Los Angeles International airport was on "maximum deployment" with counter-terrorism and FBI officials working around the clock.

Yet following the French investigation, it turned out that the terror alert was a hoax. The information was not "very very precise" as claimed by US intelligence.

The six Al Qaeda men turned out to be a five year old boy, an elderly Chinese lady who used to run a restaurant in Paris, a Welsh insurance salesman and three French nationals.¹⁹

The decision to cancel the six Air France flights was taken after 2 days of intense negotiations between French and American officials. They were cancelled on the orders of the French Prime minister following consultations with Sec. Colin Powell. This decision was taken following the completion of the French investigation. Despite the fact that the information had been refuted, Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge insisted on maintaining the stand-down order. If Air France had not complied, it would have been prevented from using US air space, namely banned from flying to the US.

It was only on January 2nd, once the holiday season was over that the US authorities admitted that they were in error, claiming that it was a unavoidable case of "mistaken identity." While tacitly acknowledging their error, Homeland Security insisted that "the cancellations were based on solid information."

3. July 29, 2003, coinciding with John Kerry's Acceptance Speech at the Democratic Convention

The decision to launch the code orange terror alert in New York City, Washington DC and northern New Jersey was taken on the night of July 29th, within hours of John Kerry's acceptance speech at the Democratic convention.

No "specific" intelligence out of Pakistan was available at that Thursday evening meeting at CIA Headquarters at Langley.

According to a unnamed senior intelligence official, the decision to launch the high risk (code orange) terror alert was taken on that same Thursday evening (July 29 2004) in the absence of "specific" and detailed intelligence:

"At the daily CIA's 5 p.m. counterterrorism meeting on Thursday, the first information about the detailed al Qaeda surveillance of the five financial buildings was discussed among senior CIA, FBI and military officials. They decided to launch a number of worldwide operations, including the deployment of increased law enforcement around the five [financial] buildings." [World Bank, IMF, NYSE, Citigroup, Prudential] (WP, 3 August 2004, <http://msnbc.msn.com/id/5581230/%20>)

On Thursday July 29, when the decision was taken to increase the threat level, the "precise" and "specific" information out of Pakistan including *"the trove of hundreds of photos and written documents"*, was not yet available.

The information from the mysterious Pakistani computer engineer, Mohammad Naeem Noor Khan, was only made available *ex post facto* on the Friday, once the decision has already been taken:

"A senior intelligence official said translations of the computer documents and other intelligence started arriving on Friday [one day after the decision was taken to launch the operation]. (WP, 3 August 2004)

President Bush was "informed of the potential threat on Friday morning [July 30] aboard Air Force One". (WP, 2 August 2004). On that same morning, President Bush approved the decision of the CIA to raise "the threat level" in the absence of "specific" supporting intelligence.

In other words, the supporting intelligence used to justify the terror warning, not only turned out to be "outdated", as confirmed on August 2nd, it was only made available to counterterrorism officials *ex post facto*, once the decision to increase the "threat level" had already been endorsed by President Bush.

Former Secretary Tom Ridge knew that the intelligence was fake.

Tom Ridge's mea culpa suggests that the Bush administration was fabricating intelligence for political gain and that the various agencies involved including the CIA and Homeland Security were involved in a fear and disinformation campaign.

His statements deliberately misled Americans with a view to supporting the "war on terrorism" agenda. More specifically, the terror alerts were triggered at two critical periods:

- 1) in the month prior to the invasion of Iraq following Powell's Feb 5, 2003 UN Security Council presentation,
- 2) at the height of the US presidential campaign.

Fabricating intelligence for political gain is a criminal act –specifically in the case of providing a pretext for war or for influencing the outcome of an election.

When we patch the various pieces together, it would appear that the code orange terror alerts were part of the broader process of fabricating intelligence concerning Al Qaeda and weapons of mass destruction which was led in close coordination with Washington's indefectible British ally.

Excerpts were taken from the following articles which reviewed in detail the circumstances of the code orange alerts:

Fabricating Intelligence for Political Gain, by Michel Chossudovsky, 3 August 2004
<http://globalresearch.ca/articles/CHO408A.html>

The Criminalization of the State, by Michel Chossudovsky, 3 February 2004,
<http://globalresearch.ca/articles/CHO402A.html>

Related Articles

FBI points finger at the CIA: Terror Alert based on Fabricated Information, 14 February 2003, <http://globalresearch.ca/articles/CRG302A.html>

Bush's Christmas Terror Alert, by Michel Chossudovsky, 24 December 2003,
<http://globalresearch.ca/articles/CHO312D.html>

Manufacturing Hysteria: Bogus Terror Threats and Bush's Police State, by Kurt Nimmo, 31 December 2003, <http://globalresearch.ca/articles/NIM312A.html>

Orange Code Terror Alert based on Fabricated Intelligence, by Michel Chossudovsky 3 January 2004. <http://globalresearch.ca/articles/CHO401A.html>

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