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The End Justifies the Means

by Scott McPherson

There, someone finally said it. Well, to be exact, a newspaper, the *Washington Times*, said it, in this February 20 front-page headline: “For Iraqi, the end justifies means.”

The report began, “An Iraqi leader accused of feeding faulty prewar intelligence to Washington said his information about Saddam Hussein’s weapons — even if discredited — achieved the aim of persuading the United States to topple the dictator.”

The Iraqi mentioned is Ahmed Chalabi, leader of the Iraqi National Congress (INC), a London-based exile group.

The report continues, “For years [the INC] provided a conduit for Iraqi defectors who were debriefed by U.S. intelligence agents.” That is, Chalabi, who has a 22-year jail sentence for fraud and embezzlement hanging over his head in Jordan, provided some of the “evidence” that Saddam was manufacturing WMDs, including claims about Saddam’s alleged “mobile biological-weapons laboratories.”

Now it appears there may be fallout over these disclosures. American officials are blaming Chalabi “for providing what turned out to be false or wildly exaggerated intelligence about Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction.” The *Times* piece concluded with this statement from “a senior State Department official” : “What Chalabi told us, we accepted in good faith. Now there are going to be a lot of question marks over his motives.”

Were the current heads at the State Department actually born yesterday? Before the war, Chalabi was considered a top candidate to lead the new Iraqi government. This was no secret — his biggest cheerleaders came from ... the State Department! The very people who are now surprised that Chalabi’s motives very likely corrupted the intelligence he was feeding them. Could they really be that naive? Not likely.

Is Chalabi sorry for his role in this charade?

On the contrary, he has “shrugged off” claims that he misled intelligence agencies. “We are heroes in error. As far as we’re concerned, we’ve been entirely successful,” Chalabi said, with

incredible frankness. “Our objective has been achieved. That tyrant Saddam is gone, and the Americans are in Baghdad. What was said before is not important.”

In short, the end justifies the means.

Really, Chalabi deserves commendation for displaying a level of honesty typically unheard of in U.S. halls of power. Echoing Chalabi’s moral code, President Bush himself, facing tough criticism for “intelligence failures,” has repeatedly relied on a “The world is a safer place without Saddam Hussein” argument to rationalize his irrational war. It is just one more tool in an arsenal of deception employed by this president from the beginning — he just doesn’t have the courage to be so blunt about it.

That’s okay, though. The end justifies the means.

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