

# Iraq a 'Phantom Threat' Says UN Arms Inspector

by Michele Steinberg

Former United Nations chief arms inspector and retired U.S. Marine Corps officer Scott Ritter has the "Clash of Civilizations" cabal inside the George W. Bush Administration scrambling to cover up what Ritter uniquely can demonstrate: that in targetting Iraq, the United States is chasing a "phantom threat," and that the leading "witness" for allegations of Iraq's role in terrorism and weapons proliferation, is a *fraud*.

In an article entitled "Iraq: The Phantom Threat"—which has been published internationally, from the U.S.-based *Christian Science Monitor*, to the London *Independent*, to the Saudi-owned daily *Arab News*—Ritter provides extremely damning information about the so-called "evidence" of Iraq's links to al-Qaeda and terrorism of any kind. He blames the disinformation on Ahmed Chalabi, the notorious Iraqi opposition con-man who founded the Iraqi National Congress (INC) in London, and lobbies in Washington to put himself forward as the front-runner to become the head of a "new regime" that would replace Saddam Hussein. Chalabi stands to lose about \$1 million per month in operating funds if he does not succeed in defeating efforts in the United Nations to normalize Iraq's relations with the world.



*Scott Ritter proves that the "evidence" purporting to link Iraq to al-Qaeda, or any other terrorists, is a concoction of the notorious con-man Ahmed Chalabi.*

Since mid-January, Chalabi and the INC have been putting themselves forward as the Iraqi equivalent of the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan, promoting themselves as the "Afghanistan model" for a quick victory against Baghdad. Ritter warns that not only is Chalabi a fraud, but that any unilateral move by the United States to remove Saddam Hussein from power would be "unacceptable and unjustifiable," and that the "international community will not accept the broadening of the definition of terror" to suit the purposes of the pro-war faction inside the United States.

Ritter asks, where is "the flood of evidence" confirming a link between Iraq and the Sept. 11 attacks, given the flood of articles that assert such a link? Even the much-touted "Prague" connection, of an alleged meeting between an Iraqi intelligence officer and a Sept. 11 hijacker, has been denied by Czech government officials.

## Tainted Information

Ritter says that "the lack of documentation of an Iraq/al-Qaeda connection . . . should lead to the questioning of the original source of such speculation, as well as the motivations of those who continue to peddle the 'Iraqi connection' theory. Foremost among them are Ahmed Chalabi . . . and his American sponsors, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, former CIA director James Woolsey, and former Undersecretary of State Richard Perle."

After the Czech tale was proven to be false, says Ritter, "when Deputy Secretary of State Paul Wolfowitz needed a link between Iraq and Sept. 11 . . . Chalabi dutifully trotted out a series of heretofore 'undiscovered' defectors who knew of the training of 'Arab' hijackers at a facility near the Iraqi town of Salman Park." Ritter says the site does exist, but "its use as an al-Qaeda training camp has never been substantiated."

Ritter demonstrates that Chalabi, a wealthy Iraqi who was once convicted for defrauding his bank, knows how to "hustle" intelligence agencies, making up spurious sources, and even worse information as he goes along. Ritter recounts also that when he was with the UN Special Commission (UNSCOM), he was ordered to "liaise" with Chalabi to get information, but it was based on "tenuous . . . sources" and "dubious motivations." One disastrous incident involved information that there were "tunnels beneath Saddam's palaces . . . packed with documents on weapons of mass destruction." When the UNSCOM team barged in, they found only "a drainage tunnel and no documents."

Although "the UN stopped using