

**STATEMENT BY
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ON
RELEASE OF DEFENSE DEPARTMENT INSPECTOR GENERAL
REPORT
ON
PRE-IRAQI WAR ACTIVITIES OF THE OFFICE OF THE UNDER
SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR POLICY
February 9, 2007**

It is good but not surprising that the Inspector General ("IG") found that the Pentagon Policy office's activities were all legal and authorized and that Policy officials did not mislead Congress.

The Policy office has been smeared for years by allegations that its pre-Iraq-War work was somehow "unlawful" or "unauthorized" and that some information it gave to congressional committees was deceptive or misleading. The office's accusers always couched the charges in vague language, making them difficult to refute with precision. The charges have been repeated persistently despite the lack of any substantiation. The IG report has now thoroughly repudiated the smears.

In faulting Pentagon policy officials for "inappropriately" criticizing the CIA's pre-Iraq-war intelligence, however, the IG report takes an absurd position. The report says that written criticism of the CIA's work is an "intelligence activity" inappropriate for policy officials. But professional criticism of intelligence by policy officials is a good thing. The Pentagon briefing at the heart of this matter was a good thing and our government is better off when policy officials challenge speculative intelligence. Both the Senate Intelligence Committee and the Silberman-Robb WMD Commission said we need more, not less, criticism of intelligence work by policy officials.

The Silberman-Robb WMD Commission said:

While policymakers must be prepared to credit intelligence that doesn't fit their preferences, no important intelligence assessment should be accepted without sharp questioning that forces the community to explain exactly how it came to that assessment and

what alternatives might also be true. This is not "politicization;" it is a necessary part of the intelligence process. [March 31, 2005 Transmittal Letter]

The Pentagon critics of the CIA created a briefing specifically for the purpose of criticizing poor intelligence work. The IG report attacks the briefing's quality not on the basis of an examination of the underlying intelligence but because the briefing varied from the consensus of the intelligence community. It, of course, varied from that consensus - it was a criticism of that consensus. That is why it was written. It makes no sense to say it was unreliable for that reason.

The briefing activity was the very same work that the Senate Intelligence Committee praised in its July 2004 report, which was endorsed by all the Democrats as well as all the Republicans on the committee. That report concluded that the Policy officials involved acted professionally, "played by [intelligence community] rules" and asked questions that "actually improved the [CIA's] products."

It is bizarre for the Inspector General to disapprove of policy officials' doing work that they were directed to do by the Secretary or Deputy Secretary of Defense, given that those tasks were lawful and authorized and the Inspector General found nothing at all wrong with the Secretary and Deputy Secretary directing that the work be done.

If the Inspector General's opinions about appropriate criticism were followed, they would discourage policy officials from asking tough questions about the quality of CIA work. Pentagon policy officials asked good, honest, critical questions, challenging the CIA, whose work (as everyone now knows) was by no means flawless and above challenge. That the CIA did not agree with the criticism from the Pentagon does not mean that the criticism was unreliable or inappropriate and it is illogical for the IG to say it does.

Clearly, the Inspector General's office was willing to challenge the Policy office and even stretch some points to be able to criticize it. So it is all the more impressive that the Inspector General's report so thoroughly and categorically rejects the persistent smears of the Policy office regarding unlawful or deceptive activity.