

British Uncover Operation in Basra: Agents Provocateurs?

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Fascinating. No really, the 'evolution' of state disinformation has probably never been better displayed than in the case of the two (more than likely) SAS soldiers who were 'liberated' after being arrested by the Iraqi police on 19 September by a phalanx of tanks and helicopter gunships that stormed

the police station where the two undercover soldiers were being held after they allegedly failed to stop at an Iraqi police roadblock and subsequently opened fire on the Iraqi police, killing one and wounding another.



The car they were travelling in was loaded with weapons including allegedly, assault rifles, a light machine gun, an anti-tank weapon, radio gear and a medical kit ('standard' SAS issue according to the BBC). According to at least two reports, the car they were traveling in (A Toyota Cressida) was "booby-trapped".

Subsequent accounts vary according to the source but according to the initial story broadcast on the BBC (19/9/05), the two men wore traditional Arab dress but then this changed to "civilian dress" (BBC TV News).



As more information trickled out, a BBC story reported that the men were freed after the police station had been attacked by British tanks, a report that the British government initially denied saying that "the release of the soldiers had been negotiated" (BBC Website 20/0/05).

Britain's Ministry of Defence says the release of the two soldiers had been negotiated and it did not believe the prison had been stormed.

"We've heard nothing to suggest we stormed the prison," a ministry spokesman said.

"We understand there were negotiations."

Lisa Glover, spokeswoman for the British embassy in Baghdad, says three people have been wounded in the operation to free the soldiers.

She did not give further details of how the soldiers were freed.

Then the story changed yet again, only now the 'official' story, dutifully reported by the British State Broadcasting Company (BSBC), was that "negotiations broke down" and that the two men were in the hands of the Mehdi Army in another building, in which case, why was the police station stormed?

Then yet another version was issued by the British government only now the police station was indeed attacked but only after "negotiations broke down". So were the two SAS men in

the police station or not?

According to yet another BSBC report, after breaking into the police station, the Brits discovered that they had been moved to a Mehdi Army house for “interrogation”. Yet subsequent accounts revealed that they had in fact, been in the police station all along and, according to a CNN report, were being questioned by an Iraqi judge, not, as the British government alleged, by the ‘insurgents’.

By now, in a classic disinformation campaign, so many stories were being circulated that sorting out the truth from fiction was virtually impossible unless one is prepared to dig and dig deep.

What is clear is that the two SAS “undercover operatives” had been caught red-handed by the British government’s alleged allies, the Iraqi police, dressed as Arabs, replete with wigs and armed to the teeth and in a car which according to one report, was packed with explosives (the car by the way, has been taken away by the British occupation forces).

The question the BSBC was not and still is not asking, is what were they up to, creeping around dressed up as Iraqis in what is meant to be a relatively peaceful Basra?

Once more the BSBC answered the question, sort of, courtesy yet another ‘official’ story, one that was to emerge only after a very angry crowd attacked two British armoured vehicles, setting at least one on fire. The “mob”, as the BSBC described them, were according to the report, angry over the arrest of two Mehdi Army members, also on 19 September, and that it had nothing to do with the freeing of the two SAS. In reality of course, the ‘mob’ had already been informed about the two SAS undercover guys and were understandably upset.

So now, the two undercover SAS men were, it is imputed, searching for ‘insurgents’ as part of a counter-insurgency operation, which if true, what were they doing dressed as Iraqis?

Were they on some kind of provocative operation? According to one report, this is exactly what they were up to. Fattah al-Shaykh, a member of the Iraqi National Assembly told this account to al-Jazeera

If you really want to look for truth, then we should resort to the Iraqi justice away from the British provocations against the sons of Basra, particularly what happened today when the sons of Basra caught two non-Iraqis, who seem to be Britons and were in a car of the Cressida type. It was a booby-trapped car laden with ammunition and was meant to explode in the centre of the city of Basra in the popular market. However, the sons of the city of Basra arrested them. They [the two non-Iraqis] then fired at the people there and killed some of them. The two arrested persons are now at the Intelligence Department in Basra, and they were held by the National Guard force, but the British occupation forces are still surrounding this department in an attempt to absolve them of the crime.

And in yet another report from Syrian TV we read

[Al-Munajjid] In fact, Nidal, this incident gave answers to questions and suspicions that were lacking evidence about the participation of the occupation

in some armed operations in Iraq. Many analysts and observers here had suspicions that the occupation was involved in some armed operations against civilians and places of worship and in the killing of scientists. But those were only suspicions that lacked proof. The proof came today through the arrest of the two British soldiers while they were planting explosives in one of the Basra streets. This proves, according to observers, that the occupation is not far from many operations that seek to sow sedition and maintain disorder, as this would give the occupation the justification to stay in Iraq for a longer period.

When viewed in the context of all the stories that have been circulating about the mythical 'al-Zarqawi' and the alleged role of al-Queda, the events in Basra are the first real evidence that we have of the role of occupation forces in destabilising Iraq through the use of agents provocateurs masquerading as 'insurgents'.

And, as I have long alleged here, it is now almost certain that 'al-Zarqawi' is probably long dead. An AFP story tells us

[The] Imam of Baghdad's al-Kazimeya mosque, Jawad al-Kalesi said, that "al-Zarqawi is dead but Washington continues to use him as a bogeyman to justify a prolonged military occupation...He's simply an invention by the occupiers to divide the people." Al-Kalesi added that al-Zarqawi was killed in the beginning of the war in the Kurdish north and that "His family in Jordan even held a ceremony after his death."

And indeed, last year, in a piece I wrote about 'al-Zarqawi', I referred to a report about 'al-Zarqawi' being killed when the US flattened the 'base' of his group Ansar al-Islam in northern Iraq in early 2003, a report that actually originated with the US government.

Yet the BSBC, along with the rest of the Western media continues to put out endless reams of disinformation about 'al-Zarqawi' and his connection to the fictitious 'al-Queda in Iraq'. Given the long-held assertion by the West that goes back to 2003, that Iraq was on the verge of 'civil war', it's instructive to note that as the military situation of the occupation forces has deteriorated, so too has the level of so-called al-Queda operations increased, in a transparent attempt to divide the Iraqi national resistance, thus the increasing stories about impending civil war and the wave of 'suicide' bombings.

The exposure of the undercover SAS operations will only add to the resolve of Iraqi resistance forces to step up their campaign to expel the occupiers regardless of what kind of blatant propaganda line the UK government puts out.

It furthermore exposes the untenable position of the Iraqi 'government' which is now being squeezed by both sides, thus we get contradictory positions from the Iraqi 'government', with one denying that the SAS operatives had been handed over to 'Shiite militia' and the other trying desperately to tread an almost invisible line between condemning the actions of the British government whilst blaming the actions of the Iraqi police in Basra on 'insurgents' who have 'infiltrated' the police force. Yet it is a fact that at best, perhaps only 25% of the Iraqi military can be relied upon to serve their colonial masters.

Continuing to call them insurgents is itself an admission that the majority of Iraqis are opposed to the occupation and indeed, the bulk of the fighting is being carried out by the Kurdish Peshmerga as Iraqi forces simply cannot be relied on. It's a classic situation that the US and UK military top brass know only too well having 'been there and done that' before.

Thus the occupiers become more desperate to destabilise the situation and no doubt we'll see more SAS and US provocations revealed over the coming weeks as the situation continues to deteriorate.

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