

Media Disinformation: Iran's Link to Iraqi Insurgents

New York Times vs McClatchy

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Michael Gordon, the military writer for The New York Times who contributed several false stories about Iraqi WMD in the runup to the U.S. attack on Iraq in 2002, has written several articles in the past year about Iran's alleged training of Iraqi insurgents — or supplying them with weapons to kill Americans. He produced another major report on this subject for today's Times — based solely on unnamed sources — which is at odds with an account from McClatchy's Baghdad bureau.

Gordon asserts that "Militants from the Lebanese group Hezbollah have been training Iraqi militia fighters at a camp near Tehran...An American official said the account of Hezbollah's role was provided by four Shiite militia members who were captured in Iraq late last year and questioned separately.

"The United States has long charged that the Iranians were training Iraqi militia fighters in Iran, which Iran has consistently denied, and there have been previous reports about Hezbollah operatives in Iraq.

"But the Americans say the reports of Hezbollah's role at the Iranian camp offer important details about Iranian assistance to the militias, including efforts Iran appears to be making to train the fighters in unobtrusive ways."

But McClatchy has a quite different take.

Leila Fadel, the bureau chief, and Shashank Bengali report: "The Iraqi Government seemed to distance itself from U.S. accusations towards Iran Sunday saying it would not be forced into conflict with its Shiite neighbor. And Prime Minister Nouri al Maliki ordered the formation of a committee to look into foreign intervention in Iraq.

"As the government appeared to back down from its hardening stance against Iran, four marines were killed in Anbar in the deadliest attack in the Sunni province in months.

"The government spokesman, Ali al Dabbagh, told reporters Sunday that a committee was formed to find 'tangible information' about foreign intervention, specifically Iran's role in Iraq rather than 'information based on speculation.'

"'We don't want to be pushed into any conflict with any neighboring countries, especially Iran. What happened before is enough. We paid a lot,' Dabbagh said, referring to the eight

years war between the two nations in which an estimated 1 million people died.”

Also today from Agence France-Press: “Iraq said on Sunday it has no evidence that Iran was supplying militias engaged in fierce street fighting with security forces in Baghdad.

“Government spokesman Ali al-Dabbagh said there was no ‘hard evidence’ of involvement by the neighbouring Shiite government of Iran in backing Shiite militiamen in the embattled country. Asked about reports that weapons captured from Shiite fighters bore 2008 markings suggesting Iranian involvement, Dabbagh said: ‘We don’t have that kind of evidence... If there is hard evidence we will defend the country.’”

Here is a list of Gordon’s sources in his Times article:

- “An American official”
- “But the Americans say”
- “American officials”
- “American officials”
- “The Americans “
- “American officials”
- “An American official”
- ditto, and so on

Greg Mitchell’s new book explores Gordon’s and McClatchy’s past reporting on Iraq and Iraq. It is titled, “So Wrong for So Long: How the Press, the Pundits — and the President — Failed on Iraq.”

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