



When Security Policies are based on Lies

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Now, an Iraqi defector who was the primary source of so-called intelligence reports that were used to make a case for Bush’s Operation Iraqi Freedom, launched on March 19, 2003, has confessed that he made the whole story up.

Rafid Ahmed Alwan al-Janabi, an Iraqi chemical engineer, defected from Iraq to Germany in 1995 and later worked for several years as a paid informant for Germany’s Federal Intelligence Service (Bundesnachrichtendienst, BND). Known to U.S. and European spy agencies as “Curveball,” al-Janabi claimed he helped build mobile germ-warfare labs at a facility hidden inside a birdseed purification plant south of Baghdad. To prop up his story, al-Janabi also said that 12 bio-weapons technicians died in a 1998 accident.

In his book *American Armageddon* (2007), Craig Unger cites a meeting with the CIA in Washington, DC where the BND station chief thought al-Janabi “is a fabricator. We also think he has psychological problems. We could never validate his reports.” The British intelligence service M16 had also told

the CIA that his behavior was “typical of...fabricators.”

Despite doubts by German and British agents on al-Janabi, his unsubstantiated information was passed on by the CIA and the Pentagon’s Defense Intelligence Agency to the White House and was used by the Bush regime to build a case in the U.S. Congress and the United Nations for a total war on Iraq. Al-Janabi’s tale was the only information U.S. intelligence had to justify a war in Iraq amid revelations by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and UN weapons inspectors that they found no evidence of WMD inside that country. Meanwhile, Vice President Dick Cheney leaked to *The New York Times*, other dailies, and powerful TV networks similar forged stories including an alleged purchase of uranium by Saddam from Nigeria. Bush followed this up accusing Saddam of building a nuclear program with plans to bomb the U.S. In other words, false information was given credibility to fit a policy objective – destroy Saddam. The drums of war against Iraq spread like a wildfire in America.

Within three years, 2003-2006, the war in Iraq would leave 654,965 persons dead, according to the *Lancet* report (Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, 2006), with a higher estimate of 1.03 million by *Opinion Research Survey* in 2007. Some 4.5 million Iraqis were also displaced; the U.S. spent \$3 trillion of taxpayers’ money for the war effort. Aside from Iraq, the war on terror destroyed countless lives in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia, and other countries and also threatened the Americans’ bill of rights.

People died

The Iraqi defector, now a German citizen, said he made up the bio-weapons program so that the U.S. would oust Saddam from power. Tyler Drumheller, CIA's former European operations chief, believes otherwise: "People died because of this...All off this one little guy who all he wanted to do was stay in Germany." German intelligence agents had paid al-Janabi 150,000 pounds (about PhP10.7 million) for his story.

Al-Janabi's fabricated story also led to the Philippines' being declared the "second front of the war on terror" allowing the entry beginning 2002 of tens of thousands of U.S. soldiers and special forces on the pretext of war exercises and operations against the Abu Sayaff group and other "terrorist cells" in Mindanao. The war bolstered Macapagal-Arroyo's anti-terrorist campaigns against the leftist revolutionary movement and its alleged front organizations, resulting in the extra-judicial killing of more than 1,000 activists and the disappearance of countless others.

In support of the U.S. war on terror that was founded on lies, the Macapagal-Arroyo administration not only promoted the increase of the U.S. military presence in the country but also enacted the anti-terrorism law that would undermine civil liberties, used terrorist tags on anti-government organizations, and came close to declaring emergency rule. More militarist options were entertained including the use of private armed groups to fight rebels, intimidate political foes, and sow terror in communities. Encouraged by U.S. support, national security and anti-terrorism were invoked to thwart calls for the president's resignation or ouster on the heels of electoral fraud, plunder, and corruption.

The Philippine government's dependent ties with the U.S. particularly in the economy and security areas have spawned a blind acceptance of American doctrines and intelligence no matter that these are based on subjective U.S. security and economic objectives and have nothing to do with promoting Philippine interests. The thread of this reverence to America takes its roots in the colonial period, in the anti-communist Cold War (1947-1991), and now the post-cold war anti-terrorism period with the Philippines playing second fiddle to the U.S.'s wars of aggression all over the world. Through decades, U.S. military interventionism has been instrumentalized by ideological disinformation portraying socialism and now, "terrorism", as threats to global security, freedom and democracy – dividing the world into "good" and

"evil" with the latter represented by "rogue regimes" and peripheral or unstable states. Well-funded "think tanks," academic gurus, the American Christian Right, and media monopolies spread these ideological constructs throughout the world.

U.S. security doctrines

U.S. security doctrines and defense policies find reflection in the Philippine government through its repressive executive policies and legislations, the use of civilian and legal agencies for anti-terrorism and, most of all, in counter-insurgency patterned after U.S. military strategies. U.S. military officials occupy offices at the Department of National Defense (DND) and headquarters at a number of AFP camps particularly in Zamboanga and Sulu so they can directly oversee combat and psywar operations. Under the two countries' defense relationship, the U.S. shares intelligence at the DND level. Whether such "intelligence" undergoes verification by Philippine authorities before it reaches the critical point of policy-making and appropriate action nobody can tell.

The strong influence exerted by U.S. security doctrines and defense policies prevents state policy makers from developing their own lens of independence, objectivity, and criticalness that are so vital in protecting the country's sovereign and national interests. It thus became inevitable that when the WMD theory was whipped up by Bush to bolster his war on terror, the Macapagal-Arroyo regime echoed it without fail as it joined forces with the U.S. in waging the second front of the war in the Philippines and Southeast Asia.

Unfortunately, even most of the Philippine media played up the WMD theory allowing itself consciously or not to be a propaganda tool in the anti-terrorist war. In the long run, the Philippines gained nothing from its partnership with the U.S. war on terror except victims of rape and violence, political killings, transgression of national territory, and an indefinite foreign military presence.

All these make it more imperative for independent people's organizations, various watch groups, the academe, and even the media to be vigilant in the scrutiny of public policies especially those that pertain to foreign affairs and national security. The Congress can be made as a forum for fiscalizing and investigation in aid of legislation of past and current security and foreign policies including the Visiting

Forces Agreement (VFA), the new counter-insurgency strategy Oplan Bayanihan which is modeled after the new U.S. counterinsurgency guide, and related issues. Government should disclose for the sake of legislative and public enlightenment its “national security” program, counter-insurgency strategy, and its own reading of the international situation. The review of past and current state policies especially in these critical areas can be made more meaningful when non-state stakeholders are able to come up with their own independent and critical studies even as the transparency and accountability of state institutions should be demanded.

Moves for the enactment of a freedom of information (FOI) law deserve greater support. The free access to public information is one effective step against disinformation and deception and in ensuring that public policies are based on truth and the people's interests.

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