

Executive Summary

In December 1998, when U.N weapons inspector Dr. Richard Spertzel became exasperated by Iraqi evasions and misrepresentations, he confronted Dr. Rihab Taha, the woman the Iraqis identified as the head of their biological weapons program and asked her directly, “You know that we know you are lying. So why do you do it?” She straightened herself up and replied, “Dr. Spertzel, it’s not a lie when you are ordered to lie.”¹

Dr. Taha’s brief reply is one symbol of a highly developed, well disciplined, and expertly organized program designed to win support for the Iraqi regime through outright deceit. This elaborate program is one of the regime’s most potent weapons for advancing its political, military, and diplomatic objectives. In their disinformation and propaganda campaigns, the Iraqis use elaborate ruses and obvious falsehoods, covert actions and false on-the-record statements, and sophisticated preparation and spontaneous exploitation of opportunities. Many of the techniques are not new, but this regime exploits them more aggressively and effectively – and to more harmful effect – than any other regime in power today.

In the weeks ahead, as the international community seeks to enforce UN Security Council resolutions and disarm the Iraqi regime, governments, the media, and the public are urged to consider the regime’s words, deeds, and images in light of this brutal record of deceit.

Apparatus of Lies discusses the lies that Iraq has used to promote its propaganda and disinformation in four broad categories:

- **Crafting Tragedy:** To craft tragedy, the regime places civilians close to military equipment, facilities, and troops, which are legitimate targets in an armed conflict. The Iraqi regime openly used both Iraqis and foreigners as human shields during the Gulf War, eventually bowing to international pressure and releasing them. It has also placed military equipment next to or inside mosques and ancient cultural treasures. Finally, it has deliberately damaged facilities and attributed the damage to coalition bombing and has attempted to pass off damage from natural catastrophes, such as earthquakes, as the result of bombing.
- **Exploiting Suffering:** To exploit suffering, Saddam blames starvation and medical crises – often of his own making – on the United Nations or the United States and its allies. This is such an effective ruse that the Iraqi regime actually causes or actively ignores hardship and then aggressively exploits the Iraqi people’s suffering. For the last few years, the Iraqis have aggressively promoted the false notion that depleted uranium – a substance that is relatively harmless and was used for armor-piercing munitions during the Gulf War – has caused cancers and birth defects among Iraqis. Scientific evidence indicates that any elevated rates of cancer and birth defects are most likely due to Iraqi use of chemical weapons.
- **Exploiting Islam:** Experts know that Saddam Hussein is a non-religious man from a secular – even atheistic – party. But to exploit Islamic sentiments, he adopts expressions of faith in his public pronouncements, and the Iraqi propaganda apparatus erects billboards and distributes images showing him praying or in other acts of piety – all while the regime