

THE LAST IRAQI WMD PRISONER: THE SCIENTIST WHO TRIED TO REVEAL ON MARCH 2, 2003 HE DESTROYED THE CW/BW

The 10th anniversary of the Iraq War has refocused attention on the Iraqis who warned America before the war that Iraq had no WMD.

Naji Sabri, Saddam's foreign minister, told the CIA's station chief in Paris at the time, Bill Murray, through an intermediary that Iraq had "virtually nothing" in terms of WMD.

[snip]

Panorama confirms that three months before the war an MI6 officer met Iraq's head of intelligence, Tahir Habbush al-Tikriti, who also said that Saddam had no active WMD. The meeting in the Jordanian capital, Amman, took place days before the British government published its now widely discredited Iraqi weapons dossier in September 2002.

But as far as I can tell, there has been no significant media discussion of what happened with Mahmud Faraj Bilal al Samarrai, the Iraqi who, in 1991, destroyed Iraq's chemical and biological weapons.

Following a particularly invasive IAEA inspection in late-June 1991, Saddam ordered Dr. Mahmud Faraj Bilal, former deputy of the CW program, to destroy all hidden CW and BW materials, according to an interview with Bilal after OIF.

[snip]

ISG interviewed Dr. Mahmud Firaj Bilal, the Iraqi scientist who supervised the destruction of Iraq's undeclared chemical munitions, along with a number of Iraqi higher officials who were knowledgeable of the weapons destruction. Although other sources have corroborated parts of Dr. Bilal's account, ISG's understanding of Iraq's chemical and biological warfare agent unilateral destruction is heavily dependent on Dr. Bilal's information, which is a weakness in our analysis. Nevertheless, as with Iraq's long range missiles, we obtained a reasonably coherent account of the disposition of the CW munitions, though we were not able physically to verify the story. The UN has, however, verified some of it.

When Bilal was finally released last year (according to his lawyer, the very last scientist in custody to be released) Charles Duelfer reported his statements—the statements describing the destruction of the CW/BW we started a war to find—were mostly credible.

Bilal was interviewed at length by UN inspectors and Iraq Survey Group inspectors. His statements have not been found to be in great error. Yet he spent 9 years in jail. His superior in the Iraq CW program, General Faiz Abdullah Shahine (head of the infamous CW research and production facility known as the al Muthanna State Establishment) was never even detained and has reportedly lived a very successful business life—as he did during the Saddam regime.

Yet Duelfer, who has a piece today insisting the intelligence wasn't cooked, professed last year to have no idea why Bilal was held so long.

Why? Bilal, must have been asking

himself this question for a long time. I suspect "Why?" is a question many Iraqis ask themselves every day...

Maybe this is why:

In a letter to the CIA in 2006, made public by his lawyer, the former head of research and development at the military industries ministry recalled that he had given himself up to the CIA on March 2, 2003.

The guy who destroyed Saddam's CW/BW stocks 12 years before Bush started a war because of those WMD tried to turn himself in to the CIA more than two weeks before Bush started the Iraq War. And yet that guy – who has never been anything but cooperative, even according to Charles Duelfer, but who tried to avert the war – is the guy our allies in Iraq kept locked up for 9 years.