

# AIR STRIKES AND ALLIES



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## INTELLIGENCE COOPERATION IN IRAQ



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AT 3 P.M. LOCAL BAGHDAD TIME ON APRIL 7, 2003, AN AIR FORCE B-1 BOMBER DROPPED four 2,000-pound bunker buster bombs on a group of houses in the city's Mansour neighborhood. The attack obliterated several buildings, killed at least nine people and wounded over a dozen others. It quickly became clear, however, that the intended target, Saddam Hussein, had left the area just before the bombing.

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The strike was ordered after U.S. officials received a tip about Saddam's and other top Iraqi officials' alleged presence in one of the buildings. The source of this intelligence has been the subject of considerable speculation. Initially, observers credited a CIA spy, but an unidentified former Pentagon employee recently contended that German intelligence (BND) officers on the ground played a critical role in providing the information — a delicate claim in view of Berlin's staunch public opposition to the war. An official German report on the subject refutes the allegation but confirms that the BND did provide the United States with valuable intelligence for the war ranging from reports on Iraqi security forces and civilian morale to the possible location of a missing American pilot.

The German parliament has requested an investigation that promises to shed more light on the subject, but the Mansour incident already teaches students of military history important lessons regarding the value of tactical intelligence and the importance of intelligence cooperation between allies.

The controversy over the extent of prewar intelligence on Iraq's "WMD" (weapons of mass destruction) is often discussed and well-documented, but tactical intelligence support for military operations deserves more attention than it has hitherto received.

Clearly, accurate and timely intelligence on Saddam's whereabouts could have hastened the dictator's capture or death and dealt an important early blow to the nascent insurgency. Why did the CIA not have more spies collecting "human intelligence" on the ground for this purpose? Reasons may have included the U.S. intelligence community's over-reliance on technology and difficulties or neglect in penetrating the Iraqi leadership. However, because wars are human-driven and unpredictable, spies on the ground can be a useful tool for anticipating unexpected developments — such as a relentless insurgency, simmering sectarian strife, and third party interference.

The United States can partially make up for a lack of strategically-placed spies by cooperation with friendly services. The BND's assistance in Iraq, in spite of German opposition to the war, is a case in point. The Europeans — not only the British — possess well-developed and highly-functional services that have proven their value and reliability over many decades. They also share a world view similar to America's. Therefore, the U.S. intelligence community should not lose sight of the strong ties it has built with its European counterparts, despite current transatlantic tensions and a recent tendency in Washington to look for partners beyond Europe. ☛