

No Saddam-al-Qaida link, report finds

by UPI

WASHINGTON - A U.S. government report released without much fanfare found no "smoking gun" linking Iraq under Saddam Hussein and al-Qaida. "This study found no 'smoking gun' (i.e., direct connection) between Saddam's Iraq and al-Qaida," the Institute for Defense Analysis executive summary said. "Saddam's interest in, and support for, non-state actors was spread across a variety of revolutionary, liberation, nationalist, and Islamic terrorist organizations." Analysts reviewed 600,000 official Iraqi documents seized by U.S. forces after the invasion and thousands of hours of interrogations of one-time officials in Saddam's government in U.S. custody, ABC News said. It is the first official U.S. military acknowledgment that no evidence linked Saddam to al-Qaida. The report was to be posted on the Joint Forces Command Web site, ABC said. A check Thursday could not locate the report on the site; it's available upon request. Other findings in the 94-page report include:-- The Iraqi regime was involved in regional and international terrorist operations before Operation Iraqi Freedom, mainly targeting Iraqi citizens in and outside of Iraq.-- Occasionally, Iraqi intelligence services targeted the regime's perceived enemies, including non-Iraqis.-- Saddam's regime often cooperated directly with terrorist groups when the regime thought could help.

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