

How CIA's Secret War On Saddam Collapsed

*A Retired Intelligence Operative Surfaces
With Details and Critique of U.S. Campaign*

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By Jim Hoagland
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In his three-year struggle to overthrow President Saddam Hussein and bring democracy to Iraq, Warren Marik of the CIA says he did everything he could think of—and was permitted to do.

He helped organize flights of unmanned aircraft over Baghdad to drop leaflets ridiculing the Iraqi dictator on his birthday. He organized military training and some small arms supplies to Kurdish guerrillas in northern Iraq. And he oversaw spending millions of dollars that went to a Washington-based public relations firm to produce radio scripts and videotapes denouncing the regime.

None of it worked. The anti-Saddam campaign that Marik helped run was broken apart by the Iraqi dictator last year with relative ease. And now, partly in frustration, Marik has come in from the cold to tell the story of the CIA's war on Saddam as he saw it.

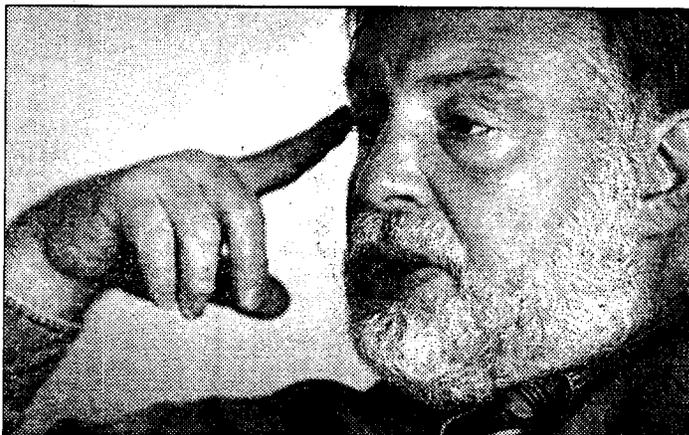
Marik says he does so partly with the hope of getting the agency to

reconsider what he views as a misguided shift of strategy. He criticizes a past shift toward fomenting a quick coup against Saddam, and away from the plan that he tried to carry out aimed at gradually strengthening a "liberated" zone in the country's Kurdish north.

The decision of the 25-year CIA veteran to go public with details of an operation that is still technically ongoing has been strongly influenced by a similar decision by a leading Iraqi opposition figure, Ahmed Chalabi, and his colleagues in the Iraqi National Congress to make a clean break with the agency and start a new political phase in their efforts to bring change to Iraq. Marik and the CIA worked closely in the north with Chalabi and the National Congress, an umbrella group of anti-Saddam activists made up mostly of ethnic Kurds.

"We have learned the hard way that covert action that is not part of a large strategic political program is of no value," Chalabi said here yesterday. "We want to work with the State Department, the National Security

See CIA, A28, Col. 1



BY FRANK JOHNSTON—THE WASHINGTON POST

Retired CIA agent Warren Marik on three-year operation: "I still feel good about what I did in northern Iraq. . . . But we tied ourselves in knots."