

Das Erste<sup>®</sup>

Press release regarding *Panorama* broadcast on 2 December 2010 (ARD, 9:45 pm) and the ARD documentary *Die Lügen vom Dienst, Der BND und der Irakkrieg* (Serving up Lies: The German Federal Intelligence Service BND and the Iraq War) (ARD 2 December 2010, 10:45 pm)

## **BND informant: Years of pay-offs despite being a proven liar Bundestag member Ströbele demands clarification**

The German Federal Intelligence Service BND (Bundesnachrichtendienst) provided informant Rafid al-J., code-named Curveball, with money and other benefits years after it was disclosed that he had lied. According to investigative reporters at the news magazine *Panorama*, this included a monthly payment of 3000 euros. In 2008, “Curveball” was given a German passport for helping the BND.

The BND informant had falsely reported that Iraq had a biological weapons programme, an accusation that served as justification for the US-led invasion in 2003. *Panorama* met and spoke with the 43-year-old Iraqi exile several times in Karlsruhe. The reporters failed in their attempt to get an on-camera interview, as Curveball would only do so if paid.

According to *Panorama*'s investigation, the BND paid him a net monthly income of 3000 euros until the end of 2008, disguising it as a salary payment from a front company in Munich called Thiele und Friedrichs. His employment contract gives no description of what services he actually rendered in return for the payments. Evidently, Curveball promised the BND that in return he would not speak to the media about his case. At the end of 2008, the BND terminated the employment contract, which was apparently an over ten-year employment agreement. As *Panorama* learnt, Curveball filed a lawsuit with the Munich employment tribunal contesting the termination of his contract and won a supplementary payment of just under 2000 euros. Since then Curveball has been receiving state benefits, most recently in the amount of 1590.82 euros.

MP Hans-Christian Ströbele, a member of the Parliamentary Control Panel on Federal Intelligence (PKG) is outraged about the state benefits paid out to this deceitful informant. “If the BND is making benefit payments, is providing benefits to Mr Curveball, then I find that absolutely unjustifiable. That is not what German taxpayers’ money is for. And there must be (...) a parliamentary investigation of this matter.”

Furthermore, *Panorama* reveals how the BND helped its former informant – a man who epitomises the biggest intelligence botch-up in recent decades – attain German citizenship. According to the report, two BND officers presented Curveball to officials in the City of Karlsruhe as an applicant for German citizenship. Research indicates that the BND accompanied the application process until the very end and helped furnish the necessary documentation. PKG member Ströbele questions the legality of the BND's methods and goes on to say, “We will also have to review how he was able to attain German citizenship

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(...). At the very latest from the point in time when the BND became aware of the reports from America that the information Curveball had provided was fabricated, then, at the latest, they should have said enough is enough." BND declined to comment on this when asked about this by *Panorama* reporters.

Curveball fled Iraq for Germany in 1999 under his real name, Rafid Ahmed Alwan, and came into contact with German intelligence officers at a refugee camp in Zindorf in Franconia. In dozens of interviews with German intelligence agents he reported that he had witnessed activities related to Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein's biochemical weapons programme while working as a chemical engineer at a company in Iraq. Among other things, he told them of mobile biological weapons labs that were housed in trucks and could purportedly evade weapons inspectors with ease. US President George Bush and his Secretary of State Colin Powell then directly cited the information provided by the BND informant to publicly justify going to war. The BND had forwarded transcripts of their interviews to the CIA, yet did not provide them with direct access to Curveball. Shortly after the invasion of Iraq in 2003 it became clear that the claim that Iraq possessed biological weapons of mass destruction was a complete fabrication.

The *Panorama* investigation sheds new light on the question of the extent to which German decision makers warned the Americans of the possibility that Curveball's revelations were unreliable. With regard to the US Secretary of State's speech at the UN Security Council on 5 February 2003, in which Powell referred to Curveball, former CDU Bundestag member Friedbert Pflüger told ARD this: "Many of the key statements made by Powell were based on information provided by our intelligence service. In a secret briefing the BND told us it was highly probable that Iraq once again had weapons of mass destruction at its disposal. We were shown charts of germ labs." Prior to the war, Pflüger was a member of the Bundestag Committee on Foreign Affairs, which was repeatedly briefed on the information Curveball was providing, by August Hanning, president of the BND at the time.

In an interview with *Panorama*, Friedbert Pflüger calls for full disclosure regarding this intelligence failure and for the publication of the secret transcripts from the meetings of the Committee on Foreign Affairs in 2002 and 2003. "The tapes are there. I assume that the relevant charts still exist as well. I demand that we make these things public so we can clarify this whole matter."

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*Fotos: www.ard-foto.de*

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