

Special Report

Was Bolton behind death of State Department official?

By Wayne Madsen

Online Journal Contributing Writer

First reported on November 20, 2003, updated April 20, 2005, WASHINGTON, DC—In a case eerily reminiscent of the death of British Ministry of Defense bio-weapons expert, Dr. David Kelly, an official of the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research Near East and South Asian division (INR/NESA), John J. Kokal, 58, was found dead in the late afternoon of November 7, 2003.

Police indicated he may have jumped from the roof of the State Department. Kokal's body was found at the bottom of a 20-foot window well, eight floors below the roof of the State Department headquarters, near the 23rd and D Street location. Kokal's death was briefly mentioned in a *FOX News* website story on November 8 but has been virtually overlooked by the major media. In light of recent revelations concerning UN ambassador nominee John Bolton's bizarre and physically abusive behavior, a re-examination of the Kokal death is in order.

Kokal's INR bureau was at the forefront of confronting claims that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction. Washington police have not ruled out homicide as the cause of his death. Kokal was not wearing either a jacket or shoes when his body was found. He lived with his wife in Arlington, Virginia.

However, a colleague of Kokal's told this writer that the Iraq analyst was despondent over "problems" with his security clearance. Kokal reportedly climbed out of a window and threw himself off in such a manner so that he would "land on his head." At the time Kokal fell from either the roof or a window, his wife Pamela, a public affairs specialist in the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, was waiting for him in the parking garage. Mrs. Kokal had previously worked in Consular Affairs where she was involved in the stricter vetting of visa applicants from mainly Muslim countries after the Sept. 11 attacks.

State Department officials dispute official department communiqués that said Kokal was not an analyst at INR. People who know Kokal told the French publication *Geopolitique* that Kokal was involved in the analysis of intelligence about Iraq prior to and during the war against Saddam Hussein. According to State Department sources, Kokal briefed Secretary of State Colin Powell at least once a week on Iraq, adding that Kokal was a skeptic on the Iraqi weapons of mass destruction.

Another INR official, weapons expert Greg Thielmann, said he and INR were largely ignored by Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security John Bolton and his deputy, David Wurmser, a pro-Likud neoconservative who recently became Vice President Dick Cheney's Middle East adviser. Kokal's former boss, the recently retired chief of INR, Carl W. Ford, later said that Bolton often exaggerated information to steer people in the wrong directions.

Now that Bolton has been nominated for U.S. ambassador to the United Nations and we have learned through Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearings that Bolton was verbally and physically abusive to his colleagues over the past several years, it is time to take a close look at some violent deaths of State Department and CIA officials who tangled with the Bush administration over Iraq policy.

It is noteworthy that Bolton's ideological soul mate at the National Security Council (NSC), ex-Iran-Contra felon Elliot Abrams, has also been psychologically and physically abusive to his subordinates. Bolton and

Abrams are long-time friends, having both helped devise the neoconservative game plan for U.S. global domination through their activities with the Project for a New American Century (PNAC).

According to a UPI report, Abrams once led CIA officer Ben Miller (who was on loan to the NSC from the agency) to an open window at the NSC and told him to *jump*. Abrams and Bolton share a mercurial and maniacal management style that includes physical threats against subordinates. While Bolton was demanding the firing of State Department and CIA personnel, including State Department analyst Christian Westermann and CIA officer Fulton Armstrong, Abrams fired Miller and two of his NSC colleagues, Flynt Leverett and Hillary Mann.

Ford testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that Bolton was a "quintessential kiss-up and kick-down sort of guy." A lingering question is whether Bolton is a "kick out" (as in window) sort of guy. Since Abrams's position at the NSC does not require Senate approval, the testimonies of Miller, Leverett, and Mann against Abrams were never heard by Congress.

A former INR employee revealed that some one-third to one-half of INR officials are either former CIA intelligence agents or are detailed from the agency. He also revealed it would have been impossible for Kokal to have gained entry to the roof on his own. INR occupies both a Sensitive Compartmented Information Facility (SCIF) on the sixth floor that has no windows and a windowless structure on the roof that has neither windows nor access to the roof, according to the former official. The other windows at the State Department have been engineered to be shatter proof from terrorist bomb attacks and cannot be opened.

The suspicious fatal fall from the Watergate complex of ex-CIA and NSC official Dr. Gus Weiss a few weeks after Kokal's similar death at the nearby State Department also merits investigation. Weiss, like Kokal, was adamantly opposed to the Iraq war and Weiss, uncharacteristically, went public with his protests.

Weiss worked in the office of Senator Henry "Scoop" Jackson in the 1970s, along with Iraqi war architects Richard Perle and Paul Wolfowitz. He also served on the U.S. Intelligence Board under President Jimmy Carter and was considered a hawk during the Carter and Reagan administrations. However, in later years, Weiss broke ranks with his old neoconservative colleagues and came out against the Iraq misadventure.

INR and other State Department officials reported that a "chill" set in at the State Department following Kokal's defenestration. A number of employees were afraid to talk about the suspicious death. It also is unusual that *The Northern Virginia Journal*, a local Arlington newspaper, has not published an obituary notice on Kokal.

Wayne Madsen is a Washington, DC-based journalist and syndicated columnist. His forthcoming book is "Jaded Tasks: Big Oil, Black Ops & Brass Plates."