

Iraq's Yellowcake

Editorial of The New York Sun | July 7, 2008

<http://www.nysun.com/editorials/iraqs-yellowcake/81328/>

HERE'S A STORY YOU MAY HAVE MISSED OVER THE LONG HOLIDAY WEEKEND: 550 METRIC TONS OF YELLOWCAKE uranium worth tens of millions of dollars were shipped out of Iraq to Canada. The material was transported in 37 military flights in 3,500 secure barrels, according to the Associated Press.



Jacob Silberberg/AP

SADDAM HUSSEIN

There hasn't been much of a fuss about this material because it had been discovered already by United Nations inspectors after the first Gulf War. But it took a second American war in Iraq to move the material out of the Middle East. For all the talk about America's failure to discover Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, this is a big deal. We've reported on claims by top Israeli officials speaking on the record that Iraq smuggled its chemical weapons to Syria before America invaded in 2003.

The uranium issue is not a trivial one, because Iraq, sitting on vast oil reserves, has no peaceful need for nuclear power. Saddam Hussein had already invaded Kuwait, launched missiles into Israeli cities, and harbored a terrorist group,

the PKK, hostile to America's NATO ally, Turkey. To leave this nuclear material sitting around the Middle East in the hands of Saddam and the same corrupt United Nations that failed to stop the genocide in Darfur and was guilty of the oil-for-food scandal would have been too big a risk.

From the beginning we have called for making the Iraq War a case study in democratization rather than disarmament, realizing that nuclear weapons, like any other weapons, are only dangerous in the hands of outlaws. Iraq's government is no longer hostile to America. It is grateful to us for freeing them from Saddam, who would rather spend money on palaces and yellowcake than on feeding the Iraqi people. But should America retreat prematurely from Iraq and a hostile regime again take hold there, we all will be safer for the act that 550 tons of nuclear fuel are now being put to peaceful use in Canada rather than being stored a few miles from Baghdad.