

For Iraq, however, it was the perfect method, not because it was slow, but because foreign analysts disregarded it. The method allowed Iraq to procure materials that were more difficult to associate with a nuclear weapons program, to mask its status. A program of this sort was also more difficult for Western analysts to spot because they largely dismissed the approach out of hand, assuming that Iraq would want—just as the United States and others had—to find the fastest way to produce fissionable material.

In the course of U.S. military action in Iraq that commenced in 2003, expected Iraq WMD programs were not found. Some wondered if analysts had compensated for their earlier error by overinterpreting evidence of a possible program without considering alternative interpretations. The analysts themselves denied this assessment, and none of the postwar investigations of the intelligence community's performance found overinterpretation to have been a factor.