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Dodgy dossiers, honourable deceptions, half-truths and the like

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WHEN the President of South Africa disputed the link between HIV and AIDS as purported by the so-called HIV "denialists", he was accused by some quarters of trying to "re-write" science to suit his inclinations.

Those who opposed this view were denounced as being in the pay of drug companies and the CIA. As a result, initially, the South African government refused to distribute anti-AIDS drugs and the epidemic spread rapidly. Since then the government's stance has changed. Truth, as they say, finally prevailed.

Of late, a similar accusation emerged. This time it was against the US administration. The White House allegedly directed a major re-write of an assessment of climate change, according to internal draft documents made public last week (NST, June 21).

References to health and environmental risks posed by rising global temperature were deleted from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) report to suit the President's views about global warming.

According to EPA officials, supported by internal documents, most of the original section on climate change was scrapped after being directed to do so.

Among them was deletion of a National Research Council finding based on various studies suggesting that recent warming was unusual and likely due to human activities. Ironically, it is the White House that commissioned the report.

Another was the removal of a reference and a graphic to a 1999 study showing global temperatures had risen sharply in the past decade compared with a thousand years previously. Instead it cited a study, partly sponsored by a private institute that disputed those findings.

More specifically, the sentence "climate change has global consequences for human health and the environment" was deleted from a summary under the heading "global issues".

According to some, if these changes are accepted, EPA "will take severe criticism from the science and environmental communities for poorly representing the science" of climate change.

Others dubbed it as embarrassing, since the change is so extensive that the section on climate "no longer accurately represents the scientific consensus on climate change", according to EPA memo of April 29.

It is therefore not difficult to see why honest citizens are now accusing the administration of "doctoring" the EPA report, due to be released soon.

Many are joining the ranks urging stern action to be taken against "those responsible for doctoring this EPA report". Truth will again prevail in the end.

What is worrying though, as articulated by the US National Wildlife Federation president, the matter "will provide disturbing evidence of the administration's readiness to reject or spin scientific findings on crucial environmental issues that do not suit the White House's political agenda".

In 2001, the US administration had already abandoned the 1997 Kyoto environmental treaty against global warming.

But of late, not only science is being falsified but also history, where documents are being doctored and manipulated to influence major world events. A current hotly debated topic centres on the so-called "dodgy

dossier" upon which the fate of Iraq depended.

Now that the director of communications to the British prime minister reportedly sent a letter of apology to the head of British intelligence service, M16, for misusing the intelligence reports in the dossier Iraq: Its Infrastructure of Concealment, Deception and Intimidation, the "dodgy" theory is fast gaining credence.

This includes claims that the dossier was "spiced" with a plagiarised article from a doctorate thesis more than a decade old, thus compromising the required quality and standards of accuracy of such a vital document.

Another dubious dossier entitled Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction, was also cited where it claimed "Saddam could launch a chemical attack in 45 minutes".

Rumour has it that this came from an unreliable defector, some pointing to sources in the Saddam's regime which could be a hoax.

Naturally all these angered not only the public, but also intelligence personnel, some of whom disowned it, saying "We are not responsible for this bastard offspring" - referring to the randomly assembled material combined with intelligence report.

Meanwhile a senior British official described it "a monumental cockup" (Sunday Telegraph, June 8), while two prominent cabinet ministers resigned in protest charging a deliberate attempt mislead the public (Sun, June 19).

What is more worrying is the comment in the Sunday Telegraph editorial, noting that this is not the first time such "abuse" took place.

It proves that decisions and acts taken by leaders of the so-called civilised nations can no longer be taken in good faith.

Perhaps this is consistent with what Dato Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad was trying to warn us during his address at the Umno assembly recently, about future threats facing the nation.

Especially so, after the authority of the United Nations has been annihilated in the interest of narrow partisan politics, putting the entire world at the mercy of the competing powers.

What started as a war cry against weapons of mass destruction is fast turning into a call against the weapons of mass distrust, which includes plagiarism, ruses, doctoring of documents, or as what the former International Secretary of Britain described as "honourable deception" and "half-truths, ex-aggerations and reassurances" (Sun, June 16).

In a nutshell, democracy has given way to "dupe-mocracy" which allows the public to be duped using the weapon of distrust to instill fear and hatred.

As testified by Terence Fernandez, a member of the Malaysian media team covering the events in Iraq: "Since the war started, the jaundiced coverage by most Western-based media gave the average viewer a clear indication of what the Americans wanted the world to see."

Fortunately, the world is keeping up the pressure to resist such "dupemocratic" acts.

It is a matter of time that the truth prevails as long as we remain resolute and do not let others re-write our future.

\* Recommended site: [www.spiked-on-line.com/Articles/00000006DA63.htm](http://www.spiked-on-line.com/Articles/00000006DA63.htm)