

absence of credible evidence of a link between al-Qaeda and the former regime of Saddam Hussein.

On June 26, The Associated Press reported, "The U.N. terrorism committee has found no evidence to support Bush administration claims of a link between Iraq and al-Qaeda, and the United States has provided the committee with no proof."

This should not be surprising, since the secular Saddam Hussein was notorious for brutally crushing any and all Islamist elements in Iraq. As a result, the Islamists and the Baathists had nothing but pure disdain and mistrust for one another.

One of the most respected authorities on terrorism and defense issues, the International Institute for Strategic Studies, reported Oct. 15 that the invasion and occupation of Iraq has had the effect of "swelling its [al-Qaeda's] ranks and galvanizing its will."

Beyond that, the administration's mismanagement of post-war Iraq has created ripe conditions for terrorism to thrive, to the point where it is now feared Iraq is exporting terrorism to its neighbors.

The White House and others also continue to insist that the security situation in Iraq—upon which everything depends, especially reconstruction—is improving. Yet, the facts reveal that the insurgency is spreading.

Part of the reason for the spread of the insurgency is the resentment we've generated among ordinary Iraqis, the very people we said we came to liberate. Dr. Rajaa Habib Khuzai, handpicked by the Bush administration to sit on the Iraqi Governing Council, said in September, "There is considerable discontent with the coalition forces, the majority of whom treat the Iraqi people with violence and contempt."

This analysis is shared by Marco Calamai, a special counselor to the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) in Iraq, who resigned his position in November because he said the U.S.-led CPA has created "delusion, social discontent, and anger" among Iraqis and allowed terrorism to "easily take root."

Calamai's view was confirmed by a classified CIA report leaked in November, which found that more Iraqis are "flooding to the ranks of the guerrillas" and predicted the security situation in Iraq would continue to get worse as the insurgency spreads across the country.

We invaded Iraq on the premise that the Baathist regime possessed stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction and would share them with al-Qaeda. Not invading, we were told, could likely result in "mushroom clouds" over American cities.

However, not only was the supposed link to al-Qaeda grossly absent, so are the alleged WMDs. The failure to find Iraq's alleged WMDs is entirely consistent with Secretary of State Colin Powell's statement on Feb. 24, 2001, in Cairo: "He [Saddam Hussein] has not developed any significant capability with respect to weapons of mass destruction. He is unable to project conventional power against his neighbors."

Powell's statement reflects the statements of Iraqi scientists and Saddam Hussein's son-in-law, Hussein Kamel, who defected to the West in 1995 and was later murdered by his father-in-law for defecting. He told U.N., U.S. and British experts debriefing him in August 1995, "I ordered destruction of all chemical weapons. All weapons—biological, chemical, missile, nuclear—were destroyed."

The invasion and occupation of Iraq has not only distracted us from the war against al-Qaeda and diverted billions of dollars from homeland security to operations in Iraq, it has actually increased al-Qaeda's recruiting and created more sympathizers for the organization among the world's 1.2 billion Muslims.

As long as the White House arrogantly continues to mislead the public with fabricated intelligence and sugar-coated assessments, we cannot possibly expect to win the war on terror.

REMEMBERING JUDGE HARRY LOFTIS

HON. RALPH M. HALL

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 21, 2004

Mr. HALL. Mr. Speaker, I am honored today to pay tribute to an outstanding public servant, a wonderful family man, and good friend who devoted so much time and energy to the community of Tyler, Texas—Judge Harry Loftis, who died on December 9, 2003.

Judge Loftis spent thirteen years as a district attorney and county judge. Raised in Tyler, Texas, he earned degrees at Tyler Junior College and the University of Texas at Austin. He joined the Army Air Corps during World War II, and flew glider missions in France, England, and Italy. His bravery earned him several medals and citations. The Library of Congress is privileged to have his wartime accounts on file as part of the World War II veterans project.

Judge Loftis was also a longtime supporter of area institutions of higher education. He was a devoted trustee of Tyler Junior College, and was recognized throughout his term in office with several accolades including the T.B. Butler Award, the Outstanding Ex-Student Award, and the Earl Story Award. He was also a leading advocate for the creation of Texas Eastern University (now the University of Texas at Tyler).

While Judge Loftis's work in higher education was impressive, he was also a tireless community booster. He was a president or board member of the Tyler Jaycees, Texas Junior Bar Association, Smith County Red Cross, Tyler YMCA, Kiwanis Club, Strutters, Mother Francis Advisory Board, Tuberculosis Association, Chamber of Commerce, and the Texas Rose Festival Association. He was also a lieutenant governor of Kiwanis International and served on the Board of Stewards at Marvin United Methodist Church.

Judge Loftis is survived by his wife of 57 years, Margaret Ann Loftis; sons and daughters-in-law, Harry Lee and Charisa Loftis, Michael George and Jenny Loftis; daughter and son-in-law Mollie Ann and Robert Halpin; and ten grandchildren.

Judge Loftis will be long remembered as a devoted public servant, and the community of Tyler will miss his unwavering commitment to serve others. On behalf of his many friends and fans, I want to take this opportunity in the House of Representatives to pay our last respects to this dedicated public servant and outstanding American—Judge Harry Loftis.

HONORING THE BRAVE SOLDIERS OF THE NEW YORK AIR NATIONAL GUARD'S 106TH AIR RESCUE WING

HON. TIMOTHY H. BISHOP

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 21, 2004

Mr. BISHOP of New York. Mr. Speaker, I rise to express my deep admiration and respect for the brave soldiers of the New York Air National Guard's 106th Air Rescue Wing who recently returned home from service in Operation Enduring Freedom. The brave men and women of the 106th Air Rescue Wing are among the most talented and best-trained rescue specialists in the world.

Of course, while I am pleased these heroes are out of the line of fire, the 106th is never out of harm's way. Most Americans first heard about the 106th because of a heroic rescue effort, which was recounted in the book and movie "The Perfect Storm." They deserve our deepest gratitude for putting themselves on the front lines in war and peace.

The 106th Air Rescue Wing's extraordinary service in Iraq is the latest chapter in the storied history of this unit. During its time overseas, the unit was involved in numerous rescues, including from the October 12, 2003 bombing of the Baghdad Hotel and after a Chinook helicopter went down on November 2, 2003, a deplorable terrorist act that took the lives of 16 American soldiers. After this incident, members of the 106th Rescue Wing recovered two soldiers from the downed helicopter and brought them to safety where they received treatment. There is no more noble service than risking one's own life to save the life of a fellow soldier.

Mr. Speaker, as the representative of Gabreski Airport in Westhampton, Long Island, home of the 106th Air Rescue Wing, I could not be more proud of our soldiers returning home. I am truly privileged to represent this distinguished unit, which is not only a blessing to the people of Long Island, but to all Americans who benefit from its service.

A PROCLAMATION HONORING MR. AND MRS. HAVER

HON. ROBERT W. NEY

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 21, 2004

Mr. NEY. Mr. Speaker:

Whereas, Charles and Lillian Haver were united in marriage November 4, 1933 and are celebrating their 70th wedding anniversary; and

Whereas, Charles and Lillian Haver have demonstrated a firm commitment to each other; and

Whereas, Charles and Lillian Haver must be commended for their loyalty and dedication to their family; and

Whereas, Charles and Lillian Haver have proven, by their example, to be a model for all married couples;

Therefore, I join with the residents of the entire 18th Congressional District in congratulating Mr. and Mrs. Haver as they celebrate their 70th wedding anniversary.

HONORING THE CAROLINA
PANTHERS**HON. SUE WILKINS MYRICK**

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 21, 2004

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, I would like to honor and congratulate the Carolina Panthers. Last Sunday they defeated the Philadelphia Eagles to become the 2003 National Football Conference Champions. This is the first NFC title since they began in 1995, but it will not be their last.

At the beginning of the season, no one outside the Carolinas gave the Panthers any chance of even going to the playoffs. However, the "Cardiac Cats" played hard every game and never gave up. As a result, the Panthers have defied the odds and will be playing in Super Bowl XXXVIII.

As a season ticket owner, and an avid fan, I want to express how much the Carolinas appreciate the hard work of Panthers' owner Jerry Richardson, its head coach John Fox, the assistant coaches, and Carolina's wonderful players. I also want to commend the Carolina fans who have embraced the team, and have supported them through all the ups and downs.

It has been a joy to watch the Panthers play this year, and I along with thousands of fans across the Carolinas want to wish them the best of luck in the Super Bowl. I hope that in February I can again congratulate them on winning another title: National Football League Champions.

HONORING SALEM BAPTIST
CHURCH OF JENKINTOWN, PENN-
SYLVANIA**HON. JOSEPH M. HOFFEL**

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 21, 2004

Mr. HOFFEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and honor the Salem Baptist Church of Jenkintown for its 120 years of worship and community development.

Founded in 1884, the Salem Baptist Church emerged from its modest, singleroom origins and flourished into a thriving church community. Through the immense effort of its congregation and the esteemed leadership of its pastors, Salem has grown consistently in both size and impact. Outgrowing each new building in which it resided, Salem expanded its presence in the community. Throughout its history, Salem has welcomed into its ministries such esteemed guests as Martin Luther King, Jr., Samuel Proctor, Rosa Parks, Jesse Jackson, and Pricilla Evans.

Today Salem includes the Church, a parsonage, Section 8 housing facilities for low-income residents and the elderly, and the Robert Johnson Smith Educational Center. In addition, there are plans to build a Family Life Center and nursing home facility. From its inception, the Salem Baptist Church has been committed to community development through the faith and determination of its congregation and pastors. I congratulate the members of the Salem Baptist Church on their 120th anniversary.

HONORING MARIE O'BRIEN

HON. GINNY BROWN-WAITE

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 21, 2004

Mrs. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Marie O'Brien, a resident of my Fifth Congressional District of Florida and a woman who has become something very few of us ever will. Mrs. O'Brien is a centenarian and at 102 she is a shining example of how to enjoy and appreciate life.

Mrs. O'Brien was born in Philadelphia and went to school at St. Gabriel. Following school, she worked as a telephone operator. She describes her happiest moments as family gatherings growing up and receiving the sacraments. Some of her favorite activities today are reading and praying the rosary.

After 102 years, Mrs. O'Brien says she is satisfied with her life and that it has been a pleasure. When asked what advice she'd give to young people she said, "Stay away from drugs and be kind." She says the best thing about growing older is having time to relax and appreciate the gifts God has given her.

Mr. Speaker, and my colleagues, I ask that you join me in honoring Marie O'Brien today. I hope we all have the good fortune to live as long as she has. She is truly a great lady and someone with an appreciation for the importance of kindness and kinship.

TRIBUTE TO ROBERT LEWIS SOTO

HON. JOE BACA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 21, 2004

Mr. BACA. Mr. Speaker, it is with deep affection that I pay tribute to the life of Robert Lewis Soto, beloved son of my dear colleague California State Senator Nell Soto. Robert, affectionately called "Bud" by his friends and family, passed away last week at the age of 52. He was a man of great honor, and I join today with family and friends in honoring his memory and remarkable life.

Bud graduated from Pasadena Community College where he was a classically trained musician and soon developed a reputation as being one of the most skilled keyboard players in the area. Despite his avid love for music, he took his immense talent into the business world.

An award-winning construction executive, Bud was best known for his restoration efforts of the San Gabriel Valley and San Fernando Valley Missions. He exhibited tremendous passion, pride, and an immense dedication to his work. He was a beloved part of his family and respected member of his community. His kind and passionate spirit was an incredible resource and blessing to those who knew him.

I join today with family and friends in paying our respects to a man who was a devoted and supportive husband, father, and friend. He is survived by his wife Alice, their three children Nellie, Sally, and Molly; his mother, Senator Nell Soto; his sister Anna; his brothers Phil Jr., Mike, Patrick, and Tom. He will be dearly missed.

SEMINAR ON KHALISTAN HELD IN
PUNJAB—STEP FORWARD FOR
SIKH FREEDOM MOVEMENT**HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 21, 2004

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, last month in Punjab, a seminar was held on the topic of Khalistan. Given the oppression that Sikhs have faced at the hands of the Indian government for attempting to secure their independence, this was a very courageous act. All of those who organized the event and who participated are to be commended for their courage. Freedom is the birthright of every people.

The seminar was organized by former Member of Parliament Atinder Pal Singh. Speakers included Professor Gurdarshan Singh Dhillon, who reportedly made an extremely strong argument for the Sikh Nation's right to self-determination.

The Indian government claims that there is no support for Sikh independence, Mr. Speaker, but this seminar and other events show otherwise. Perhaps this answers the obvious question: If India is a democracy and if there is no support for an independent Khalistan, then why not simply hold a free and fair plebiscite on the issue, as democratic countries do, and settle it once and for all? Wouldn't that be the fair and democratic way to take care of this issue?

America can support this just cause and we have a moral obligation to do so. We can stop our aid to India until all people there enjoy full freedom and we can officially call on India to hold a free and fair, democratic vote to determine the political future of the Sikhs of Khalistan and all the other minority nations seeking their freedom, such as predominantly Christian Nagaland and predominantly Muslim Kashmir.

The Council of Khalistan issued a press release on the Khalistan seminar, which I would like to put in the RECORD at this time to show that the cause of freedom is universal and that it still has strong support in Punjab, Khalistan.

SEMINAR ON KHALISTAN HELD IN PUNJAB

INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT IS ALIVE AND WELL
IN PUNJAB, KHALISTAN

WASHINGTON, D.C., December 17, 2003—Former Member of Parliament Atinder Pal Singh organized a seminar on Khalistan last month at Baba Makhana Shah Labana Hall, Sector 30, Chandigarh. Speakers included Professor Gurdarshan Singh Dhillon and others. Dr. Dhillon made a very strong argument for the right of the Sikh Nation to rule itself in a sovereign, independent Khalistan. General Narinder Singh was invited, but unable to attend. This seminar shows that the cause of Khalistan is alive and well in Punjab, despite the claims of the Indian government that there is no support for Khalistan and that only outside Sikhs are supporting independence.

"The outside Sikhs have an important role to play," said Dr. Gurmit Singh Aulakh, President of the Council of Khalistan. "They have exposed the human rights against the Sikhs to the international community and internationalized the cause of independence for Khalistan," he said. "They have also preserved Sikh history in the Congressional Record from 1984 to date, defeating the Indian government's attempts to alter it. However, it is the Sikhs in Punjab, Khalistan who are keeping the cause alive and liberating Khalistan," he said. "It is very good to