

"Warmest regards to you, your family and staff.

"Out of the 50-plus emails you've received so far from me, here's one you'll genuinely enjoy reading, I suspect.

"Gratitude is the subject of my email to you today. Today, I was approved by Medicare for the \$600-per-year low-income credit with relation to the Medicare prescription drug bill. Thank you, the President, and the Republicans for assisting America's poor and disabled in this way.

"Others merely want your attention. We, however, need your attention. We thank you for your hard work and long hours assisting us."

Mr. Speaker, I want to point out that over 21,000 low-income seniors qualify for this \$600 exemption in my district alone. This constituent's correspondence is one example of the seniors who are celebrating nationwide the ability to have this program in effect this week.

SUPPORT THE CRANE-RANGEL BILL

(Mr. BROWN of Ohio asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, President Bush came to northeast Ohio to Youngstown last week again to try to defend his economic program and argue that it is working for Ohio.

Ohio, since President Bush took office, has lost one out of six manufacturing jobs and has lost 165,000 manufacturing jobs overall. In fact, during the Bush administration, there have been 200 jobs lost in Ohio every single day of the Bush administration.

The President's answer: more tax cuts for the wealthy, hoping some of it will trickle down to the Ohio community that is not working, and more trade agreements, like NAFTA, that continue to ship jobs overseas.

Mr. Speaker, the answer is not the failed Bush economic policies, but instead, the Crane-Rangel bill, which will give incentives to those Ohio and American companies that do their manufacturing in this country instead of giving big companies incentives to ship jobs overseas.

CELEBRATING THE OAK TREE

(Mr. GOODE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GOODE. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to announce that the National Register of Big Trees from the conservation group American Forests has formally given the crown of the Nation's largest white oak tree, a quercus alba, to the oak tree in front of Bothwick Hall in Brunswick County, Virginia. The national champion oak is 86 feet high, with a circumference of 26 feet, and a crown spread of 116 feet.

The great white oak belongs to George and Mary Robinson from Brun-

wick County, which I am proud to represent. Beautiful and historic Brunswick County is the birthplace of the world-famous Brunswick stew and is now home to the Nation's largest white oak tree.

I am also proud to support H.R. 1775, legislation sponsored by the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. GOODLATTE), my friend and fellow Virginian, which would designate the oak tree as the national tree of the United States.

The meaningful history of the oak and magnificent trees such as that of Mr. and Mrs. Robinson make the oak the logical choice for the national tree. Long may the great Brunswick County white oak stand.

IT IS IMPORTANT FOR CONGRESS TO WORK TOGETHER

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, today, June 1, causes me to reflect on two distinct and different occurrences.

First of all, we notice across the Nation senior citizens confused, not understanding and certainly not enrolling in the so-called prescription drug cards. We welcome our pharmaceuticals to really work with this Congress to produce a guaranteed Medicare prescription drug benefit, what the seniors have actually wanted for almost 10 years, in order for the seniors to truly get what they deserve, something they can count on and something that works.

It also causes me to reflect on the wonderful opportunity I had to visit with the troops in Bagram Air Force Base in Afghanistan and on the USS George Washington. It says that the political collapse that seems to be occurring in Iraq is not the fault of our soldiers, but bad political policies.

It is important for Congress to work together, to demand full investigations of the ills that are occurring in Afghanistan and Iraq in order to pay tribute to these hard-working soldiers every day on the front line. Let us not have the ills and the incompleteness of our political process undermine the tribute and the work that has been done by these fine outstanding United States military.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. OSBORNE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. OSBORNE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that I take my Special Order at this time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Indiana?

There was no objection.

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN SADDAM HUSSEIN AND OSAMA BIN LADEN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, there has been a lot of concern over the past year or so about whether or not Saddam Hussein was tied in with Osama bin Laden and the terrorist network and al Qaeda.

There is an article in The Weekly Standard this week called "The Connection," and I would urge all of my colleagues to read this article. It shows a picture of Saddam Hussein, Osama bin Laden, and some other terrorists on the front page of the magazine. The article is written by a gentleman named Stephen Hayes, and it follows an article that was written in the Wall Street Journal last week, and I would like to read some information from the two articles that I think verifies without much doubt that Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden, al Qaeda and other terrorist organizations were working together to try to destroy the United States and Western Civilization.

Let me read from the Wall Street Journal of May 27, 2004:

"One striking bit of new evidence is that the name of Ahmed Hikmat Shakir appears on three captured rosters of officers in Saddam Fedayeen, the elite paramilitary group run by Saddam's son Uday and entrusted with doing much of the regime's dirty work. Our government sources, who have seen translations of the documents, say Shakir is listed with the rank of lieutenant colonel. This matters because if Shakir was an officer in the Fedayeen, it would establish a direct link between Iraq and the al Qaeda operatives who planned" the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

"Shakir was present at the January 2000 al Qaeda 'summit' in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, at which the 9/11 attacks were planned. The U.S. has never been sure whether he was there on behalf of the Iraqi regime or whether he was an Iraqi Islamicist who hooked up with al Qaeda on his own."

The fact is he was an officer in the elite military of Saddam. He worked with his son Uday, and he was there when they planned the attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

Further, the article goes on to say: "The CIA has confirmed that al Qaeda's number 2, Ayman al-Zawahiri, met with Iraqi intelligence in Baghdad

in 1992 and 1998. There is irrefutable evidence that the Iraqi regime paid Zawahiri \$300,000 in 1998, around the time his Islamic jihad was merging with al Qaeda. Four sources have confirmed the payment."

So here again is another connection. "Since Operating Enduring Freedom, we have solid evidence Iraq and al Qaeda discussed safe haven and reciprocal non-aggression. We have solid evidence of the presence in Iraq of al Qaeda members. Through interrogations of high-level Iraqi detainees, we have evidence that al Qaeda members visited Baghdad, sought weapons and training in areas such as poisons, gases, and conventional bomb making."

Another item: "Farouk Hijazi, former Iraqi ambassador to Turkey, has admitted meeting senior al Qaeda leaders at Saddam's behest in 1994. It is believed Hijazi met with Osama bin Laden and offered him safe haven in Iraq in 1998." That is another example.

"Al Qaeda operatives held in Guantanamo have corroborated reports of a series of meetings in Khartoum, Sudan, home to al Qaeda during the mid-1990s. Abu Abdullah al-Iraqi," an al Qaeda weapons of mass destruction specialist, "was sent by Osama bin Laden to seek WMD training, and possibly weapons, from the Iraqi regime. His associates held meetings in Baghdad with Uday," Saddam's son, "in April 1998." Another example.

"Secretary of State Colin Powell's presentation to the U.N. in December 2002 detailed intelligence showing that Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi, a Jordanian jihadist and known al Qaeda associate, traveled to Baghdad for medical treatment. Among al-Zarqawi's many crimes, he is a key suspect" we just saw recently on television "in the abduction and beheading of American Nicholas Berg."

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It is believed Saddam Hussein's nephew, Yasser al-Sabawi, and their Fedeyeen Saddam paramilitary cronies worked with Al Zarqawi and his accomplices in the abduction, transfer, and execution of Mr. Berg. That investigation is still in progress, but the linkage between Saddam and al Qaeda is reinforced by video and other evidence collected thus far. There is a high probability that Zarqawi was the masked man who beheaded Berg. Saddam's nephew is described as the ringleader of suspects in the case.

Another item: Statements by Iraqi defectors have been corroborated by new evidence seized by Coalition troops that Saddam's regime trained non-Iraqi Arab terrorists at a camp in Salman Pak, South of Baghdad. The existence of this training camp was verified by U.N. inspectors. A Boeing 707 was used at the camp to simulate terrorist hijackings.

Another item: In February, 2003, the government of the Philippines asked a senior Iraqi diplomat, Hisham al Hus-

sein, to leave the country after establishing frequent contact with leaders of Abu Sayyaf, an al Qaeda affiliate in Southeast Asia. This Iraqi official had contact with Abu Sayyaf immediately before and after they detonated a bomb in Zamboanga city that killed two Filipinos and an American Special Forces soldier.

High ranking Czech officials have confirmed that Mohammed Atta, the lead 911 hijacker, met with Ahmed Khalil Ibrahim al Ani, an Iraqi intelligence officer, 5 months before the hijacking.

Ansar al-Islam, the Al Qaeda cell formed in Northern Iraq in June 2001, has expanded its attacks against Kurds and has joined with remnants of Saddam's regime in their insurgency against Coalition forces. It is believed that the bombing of the U.N. headquarters was a result of a joint operation between Baathists and the Al Qaeda affiliate, Ansar al-Islam.

When Osama bin Laden issued a fatwa against America in February 1998 there is evidence Saddam Hussein paid \$300,000 to bin Laden's deputy Ayman al-Zawahiri.

Mr. Speaker, I submit herewith for the RECORD the article by Stephen Hayes I referred to earlier:

[From the Weekly Standard, June 7, 2004]

THE CONNECTION

(By Stephen F. Hayes)

"The president convinced the country with a mixture of documents that turned out to be forged and blatant false assertions that Saddam was in league with al Qaeda," claimed former Vice President Al Gore last Wednesday.

"There's absolutely no evidence that Iraq was supporting al Qaeda, ever," declared Richard Clarke, former counterterrorism official under George W. Bush and Bill Clinton, in an interview on March 21, 2004.

The editor of the Los Angeles Times labeled as "myth" the claim that links between Iraq and al Qaeda had been proved. A recent dispatch from Reuters simply asserted, "There is no link between Saddam Hussein and al Qaeda." 60 Minutes anchor Lesley Stahl was equally certain: "There was no connection."

And on it goes. This conventional wisdom—that our two most determined enemies were not in league, now or ever—is comforting. It is also wrong.

In late February 2004, Christopher Carney made an astonishing discovery. Carney, a political science professor from Pennsylvania on leave to work at the Pentagon, was poring over a list of officers in Saddam Hussein's much-feared security force, the Fedayeen Saddam. One name stood out: Lieutenant Colonel Ahmed Hikmat Shakir. The name was not spelled exactly as Carney has seen it before, but such discrepancies are common. Having studied the relationship between Iraq and al Qaeda for 18 months, he immediately recognized the potential significance of his find. According to a report last week in the Wall Street Journal, Shakir appears on three different lists of Fedayeen officers.

An Iraqi of that name, Carney knew, had been present at an al Qaeda summit in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on January 5-8, 2000. U.S. intelligence officials believe this was a chief planning meeting for the September 11 attacks. Shakir had been nominally employed as a "greeter" by Malaysian Airlines, a job he told associates he had gotten through a contact at the Iraqi embassy. More curious, Shakir's Iraqi embassy contact controlled his schedule, telling him when to show up for work and when to take a day off.

A greeter typically meets VIPs upon arrival and accompanies them through the sometimes onerous procedures of foreign travel. Shakir was instructed to work on January 5, 2000, and on that day, he escorted one Khalid al Mihdhar from his plane to a waiting car. Rather than bid his guest farewell at that point, as a greeter typically would have, Shakir climbed into the car with al Mihdhar and accompanied him to the Kuala Lumpur condominium of Yazid Sufaat, the American-born al Qaeda terrorist who hosted the planning meeting.

The meeting lasted for three days. Khalid al Mihdhar departed Kuala Lumpur for Bangkok and eventually Los Angeles. Twenty months later, he was aboard American Airlines Flight 77 when it plunged into the Pentagon at 9:38 a.m. on September 11. So were Nawaf al Hazmi and his younger brother, Salem, both of whom were also present at the Kuala Lumpur meeting.

Six days after September 11, Shakir was captured in Doha, Qatar. He had in his possession contact information for several senior al Qaeda terrorists: Zahid Sheikh Mohammed, brother of September 11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed; Musab Yasin, brother of Abdul Rahman Yasin, the Iraqi who helped mix the chemicals for the first World Trade Center attack and was given safe haven upon his return to Baghdad; and Mamdouh Mahmoud Salim, otherwise known as Abu Hajer al Iraqi, described by one top al Qaeda detainee as Osama bin Laden's "best friend."

Despite all of this, Shakir was released. On October 21, 2001, he boarded a plane for Baghdad, via Amman, Jordan. He never made the connection. Shakir was detained by Jordanian intelligence. Immediately following his capture, according to U.S. officials familiar with the intelligence of Shakir, the Iraqi government began exerting pressure on the Jordanians to release him. Some U.S. intelligence officials—primarily at the CIA—believed that Iraq's demand for Shakir's release was pro forma, no different from the requests governments regularly make on behalf of citizens detained by foreign governments. But others, pointing to the flurry of phone calls and personal appeals from the Iraqi government to the Jordanians, disagreed. This panicked reaction, they said, reflected an interest in Shakir at the highest levels of Saddam Hussein's regime.

CIA officials who interviewed Shakir in Jordan reported that he was generally uncooperative. But even in refusing to talk, he provided some important information: The interrogators concluded that his evasive answers reflected counterinterrogation techniques so sophisticated that he had probably learned them from a government intelligence service. Shakir's Iraqi nationality, his contacts with the Iraqi embassy in Malaysia, the keen interest of Baghdad in his case, and now the appearance of his name on the rolls of Fedayeen officers—all this makes the Iraqi intelligence service the most likely source of his training.

The Jordanians, convinced that Shakir worked for Iraqi intelligence, went to the CIA with a bold proposal: Let's flip him. That is, the Jordanians would allow Shakir to return to Iraq on condition that he agree to report back on the activities of Iraqi intelligence. And, in one of the most egregious mistakes by U.S. intelligence after September 11, the CIA agreed to Shakir's release. He posted a modest bail and returned to Iraq.

He hasn't been heard from since.

The Shakir story is perhaps the government's strongest indication that Saddam and al Qaeda may have worked together on September 11. It is far from conclusive; conceivably there were two Ahmed Hikmat Shakirs.

And in itself, the evidence does not show that Saddam Hussein personally had foreknowledge of the attacks. Still—like the long, on-again-off-again relationship between Iraq and al Qaeda—it cannot be dismissed.

There was a time not long ago when the conventional wisdom skewed heavily toward a Saddam-al Qaeda links. In 1998 and early 1999, the Iraq-al Qaeda connection was widely reported in the American and international media. Former intelligence officers and government officials speculated about the relationship and its dangerous implications for the world. The information in the news reports came from foreign and domestic intelligence services. It was featured in mainstream media outlets including international wire services, prominent newsmagazines, and network radio and television broadcasts.

Newsweek magazine ran an article in its January 11, 1999, issue headed "Saddam + Bin Laden?" "Here's what is known so far," it read:

Saddam Hussein, who has a long record of supporting terrorism, is trying to rebuild his intelligence network overseas—assets that would allow him to establish a terrorism network. U.S. sources say he is reaching out to Islamic terrorists, including some who may be linked to Osama bin Laden, the wealthy Saudi exile accused of masterminding the bombing of two U.S. embassies in Africa last summer.

Four days later, on January 15, 1999, ABC News reported that three intelligence agencies believed that Saddam had offered asylum to bin Laden:

Intelligence sources say bin Laden's long relationship with the Iraqis began as he helped Sudan's fundamentalist government in their efforts to acquire weapons of mass destruction. . . . ABC News has learned that in December, an Iraqi intelligence chief named Faruq Hijazi, now Iraq's ambassador to Turkey, made a secret trip to Afghanistan to meet with bin Laden. Three intelligence agencies tell ABC News they cannot be certain what was discussed, but almost certainly, they say, bin Laden has been told he would be welcome in Baghdad.

NPR reporter Mike Shuster interviewed Vincent Cannistraro, former head of the CIA's counterterrorism center, and offered this report:

Iraq's contacts with bin Laden go back some years, to at least 1994, when, according to one U.S. government source, Hijazi met him when bin Laden lived in Sudan. According to Cannistraro, Iraq invited bin Laden to live in Baghdad to be nearer to potential targets of terrorist attack in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. . . . Some experts believe bin Laden might be tempted to live in Iraq because of his reported desire to obtain chemical or biological weapons. CIA Director George Tenet referred to that in recent testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee when he said bin Laden was planning additional attacks on American targets.

By mid-February 1999, journalists did not even feel the need to qualify these claims of an Iraq-al Qaeda relationship. An Associated Press dispatch that ran in the Washington Post ended this way: "The Iraqi President Saddam Hussein has offered asylum to bin Laden, who openly supports Iraq against Western powers."

Where did journalists get the idea that Saddam and bin Laden might be coordinating efforts? Among other places, from high-ranking Clinton administration officials.

In the spring of 1998—well before the U.S. embassy bombings in East Africa—the Clinton administration indicted Osama bin Laden. The indictment, unsealed a few

months later, prominently cited al Qaeda's agreement to collaborate with Iraq on weapons of mass destruction. The Clinton Justice Department had been concerned about negative public reaction to its potentially capturing bin Laden without "a vehicle for extradition," official paperwork charging him with a crime. It was "not an afterthought" to include the al Qaeda-Iraq connection in the indictment, says an official familiar with the deliberations. "It couldn't have gotten into the indictment unless someone was willing to testify to it under oath." The Clinton administration's indictment read unequivocally:

"Al Qaeda reached an understanding with the government of Iraq that al Qaeda would not work against that government and that on particular projects, specifically including weapons development, al Qaeda would work cooperatively with the Government of Iraq."

On August 7, 1998, al Qaeda terrorists struck almost simultaneously at U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. The blasts killed 257 people—including 12 Americans—and wounded nearly 5,000. The Clinton administration determined within five days that al Qaeda was responsible for the attacks and moved swiftly to retaliate. One of the targets would be in Afghanistan. But the Clinton national security team wanted to strike hard simultaneously, much as the terrorists had. "The decision to go to [Sudan] was an add-on," says a senior intelligence officer involved in the targeting. "They wanted a dual strike."

A small group of Clinton administration officials, led by CIA director George Tenet and national security adviser Sandy Berger, reviewed a number of al Qaeda-linked targets in Sudan. Although bin Laden had left the African nation two years earlier, U.S. officials believed that he was still deeply involved in the Sudanese government-run Military Industrial Corporation (MIC).

The United States retaliated on August 20, 1998, striking al Qaeda training camps in Afghanistan and the al Shifa pharmaceutical plant outside Khartoum. "Let me be very clear about this," said President Bill Clinton, addressing the nation after the strikes. "There is no question in my mind that the Sudanese factory was producing chemicals that are used—and can be used—in VX gas. This was a plant that was producing chemical warfare-related weapons, and we have physical evidence of that."

The physical evidence was a soil sample containing EMPTA, a precursor for VX nerve gas. Almost immediately, the decision to strike at al Shifa aroused controversy. U.S. officials expressed skepticism that the plant produced pharmaceuticals at all, but reporters on the ground in Sudan found aspirin bottles and a variety of other indications that the plant had, in fact, manufactured drugs. For journalists and many at the CIA, the case was hardly clear-cut. For one thing, the soil sample was collected from outside the plant's front gate, not within the grounds, and an internal CIA memo issued a month before the attacks had recommended gathering additional soil samples from the site before reaching any conclusions. "It caused a lot of heartburn at the agency," recalls a former top intelligence official.

The Clinton administration sought to dispel doubts about the targeting and, on August 24, 1998, made available a "senior intelligence official" to brief reporters on background. The briefer cited "strong ties between the plant and Iraq" as one of the justifications for attacking it. The next day, undersecretary of state for political affairs Thomas Pickering briefed reporters at the National Press Club. Pickering explained that the intelligence community had been monitoring the plant for "at least two

years," and that the evidence was "quite clear on contacts between Sudan and Iraq." In all, at least six top Clinton administration officials have defended on the record the strikes in Sudan by citing a link to Iraq.

The Iraqis, of course denied any involvement. "The Clinton government has fabricated yet another lie to the effect that Iraq had helped Sudan produce this chemical weapon," declared the political editor of Radio Iraq. Still, even as Iraq denied helping Sudan and al Qaeda with weapons of mass destruction, the regime lauded Osama bin Laden. On August 27, 1998, 20 days after al Qaeda attacked the U.S. embassies in Africa, Babel, the government newspaper run by Saddam's son Uday Hussein, published an editorial proclaiming bin Laden "an Arab and Islamic hero."

Five months later, the same Richard Clarke who would one day claim that there was "absolutely no evidence that Iraq was supporting al Qaeda, ever," told the Washington Post that the U.S. government was "sure" that Iraq was behind the production of the chemical weapons precursor at the al Shifa plant. "Clarke said U.S. intelligence does not know how much of the substance was produced at al Shifa or what happened to it," wrote Post reporter Vernon Lieb, in an article published January 23, 1999. "But he said that intelligence exists linking bin Laden to al Shifa's current and past operators, the Iraqi nerve gas experts, and the National Islamic Front in Sudan."

Later in 1999, the Congressional Research Service published a report on the psychology of terrorism. The report created a stir in May 2002 when critics of President Bush cited it to suggest that his administration should have given more thought to suicide hijackings. On page 7 of the 178-page document was a passage about a possible al Qaeda attack on Washington, D.C., that "could take several forms." In one scenario, "suicide bombers belonging to al Qaeda's Martyrdom Battalion could crash-land an aircraft packed with high explosives (C-4 and semtex) into the Pentagon, the headquarters of the Central Intelligence Agency, or the White House."

A network anchor wondered if it was possible that the White House had somehow missed the report. A senator cited it in calling for an investigation into the 9/11 attacks. A journalist read excerpts to the secretary of defense and raised a familiar question: "What did you know and when did you know?"

But another passage of the same report has gone largely unnoticed. Two paragraphs before, also on page 7, is this: "If Iraq's Saddam Hussein decide[s] to use terrorists to attack the continental United States [he] would likely turn to bin Laden's al Qaeda. Al Qaeda is among the Islamic groups recruiting increasingly skilled professionals," including "Iraqi chemical weapons experts and others capable of helping to develop WMD. Al Qaeda poses the most serious terrorist threat to U.S. security interests, for al Qaeda's well-trained terrorists are engaged in a terrorist jihad against U.S. interests worldwide."

CIA director George Tenet echoed these sentiments in a letter to Congress on October 7, 2002:

—Our understanding of the relationship between Iraq and Al Qaeda is evolving and is based on sources of varying reliability. Some of the information we have received comes from detainees, including some of high rank.

—We have solid reporting of senior level contacts between Iraq and Al Qaeda going back a decade.

—Credible information indicates that Iraq and Al Qaeda have discussed safe haven and reciprocal nonaggression.

—Since Operation Enduring Freedom, we have solid evidence of the presence in Iraq of Al Qaeda members, including some that have been in Baghdad.

—We have credible reporting that Al Qaeda leaders sought contacts in Iraq who could help them acquire W.M.D. capabilities. The reporting also stated that Iraq has provided training to Al Qaeda members in the areas of poisons and gases and making conventional bombs.

—Iraq's increasing support to extremist Palestinians coupled with growing indications of relationship with Al Qaeda suggest that Baghdad's links to terrorists will increase, even absent U.S. military action.

Tenet has never backed away from these assessments. Senator Mark Dayton, a Democrat from Minnesota, challenged him on the Iraq-al Qaeda connection in an exchange before the Senate Armed Services Committee on March 9, 2004. Tenet reiterated his judgment that there had been numerous "contacts" between Iraq and al Qaeda, and that in the days before the war the Iraqi regime had provided "training and safe haven" to al Qaeda associates, including Abu Musab al Zarqawi. What the U.S. intelligence community could not claim was that the Iraqi regime has "command and control" over al Qaeda terrorists. Still, said Tenet, "it was inconceivable to me that Zarqawi and two dozen [Egyptian Islamic Jihad] operatives could be operating in Baghdad without Iraq knowing."

So what should Washington do now? The first thing the Bush administration should do is create a team of intelligence experts—or preferably competing teams, each composed of terrorism experts and forensic investigators—to explore the connection between Iraq and al Qaeda. For more than a year, the 1,400-member Iraq Survey Group has investigated the nature and scope of Iraq's program to manufacture weapons of mass destruction. At various times in its brief history, a small subgroup of ISG investigators (never more than 15 people) has looked into Iraqi connections with al Qaeda. This is not enough.

Despite the lack of resources devoted to Iraq-al Qaeda connections, the Iraq Survey Group has obtained some interesting new information. In the spring of 1992, according to Iraqi Intelligence documents obtained by the ISG after the war, Osama bin Laden met with Iraqi Intelligence officials in Syria. A second document, this one captured by the Iraqi National Congress and authenticated by the Defense Intelligence Agency, then listed bin Laden as an Iraqi Intelligence "asset" who "is in good relationship with our section in Syria." A third Iraqi Intelligence document, this one an undated internal memo, discusses strategy for an upcoming meeting between Iraqi Intelligence, bin Laden, and a representative of the Taliban. On the agenda: "attacking American targets." This seems significant.

A second critical step would be to declassify as much of the Iraq-al Qaeda intelligence as possible. Those skeptical of any connection claim that any evidence of a relationship must have been "cherry picked" from much larger piles of existing intelligence that makes these Iraq-al Qaeda links less compelling. Let's see it all, or as much of it as can be disclosed without compromising sources and methods.

Among the most important items to be declassified: the Iraq Survey Group documents discussed above; any and all reporting and documentation—including photographs—pertaining to Ahmed Hikmat Shakir, the Iraqi and alleged Saddam Fedayeen officer present at the September 11 planning meeting; interview transcripts with top Iraqi intelligence officers, al Qaeda terrorists, and leaders of al

Qaeda affiliate Ansar al Islam; documents recovered in postwar Iraq indicating that Abdul Rahman Yasin, the Iraqi who has admitted mixing the chemicals for the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, was given safe haven and financial support by the Iraqi regime upon returning to Baghdad two weeks after the attack; any and all reporting and documentation—including photographs—related to Mohammed Atta's visits to Prague; portions of the debriefings of Faruq Hijazi, former deputy director of Iraqi intelligence, who met personally with bin Laden at least twice, and an evaluation of his credibility.

It is of course important for the Bush administration and CIA director George Tenet to back up their assertions of an Iraq-al Qaeda connection. Similarly, declassifying intelligence from the 1990s might shed light on why top Clinton officials were adamant about an Iraq-al Qaeda connection in Sudan and why the Clinton Justice Department included the Iraq-al Qaeda relationship in its 1998 indictment of Osama bin Laden. More specifically, what intelligence did Richard Clarke see that allowed him to tell the Washington Post that the U.S. government was "sure" Iraq had provided a chemical weapons precursor to the al Qaeda-linked al Shifa facility in Sudan? What would compel former secretary of defense William Cohen to tell the September 11 Commission, under oath, that an executive from the al Qaeda-linked plant "traveled to Baghdad to meet with the father of the VX [nerve gas] program? And why did Thomas Pickering, the undersecretary of state for political affairs, tell reporters, "We see evidence that we think is quite clear on contacts between Sudan and Iraq. In fact, al Shifa officials, early in the company's history, we believe were in touch with Iraqi individuals associated with Iraq's VX program"? Other Clinton administration figures, including a "senior intelligence official" who briefed reporters on background, cited telephone intercepts between a plant manager and Emad al Ani, the father of Iraq's chemical weapons program.

We have seen important elements of the pre-September 11 intelligence available to the Bush administration; it's time for the American public to see more of the intelligence on Iraq and al Qaeda from the 1990s, especially the reporting about the August 1998 attacks in Kenya and Tanzania and the U.S. counter-strikes two weeks later.

Until this material is declassified, there will be gaps in our knowledge. Indeed, even after the full record is made public, some uncertainties will no doubt remain.

The connection between Saddam and al Qaeda isn't one of them.

100 DAYS BEFORE ASSAULT WEAPONS BAN EXPIRES

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MCCARTHY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York. Mr. Speaker, as we come back from our Memorial Day break, there are less than 100 days before the assault weapons ban will expire here in this Congress. We have just 100 days to save a law that has saved so many lives. We only have 100 days before we can make sure our police officers are not put at risk. We only have 100 days before we make sure that our communities are not faced once again with assault weapons in their midst.

As we draw close to September 13, when the ban expires, law enforcement officers from all over the country are getting together to make sure that their voices are heard, to make sure that the assault weapons ban stays in place. Just last week, the Police Chief in Raleigh, North Carolina, Jane Perlov, demanded renewal of the ban. She was participating in a Million Mom March event that is going around the country and said, "Clearly a continued ban on assault weapons will make us safer without affecting our rights to possess other rifles, pistols, and shotguns for legitimate purposes."

This week, the Million Mom March's "Halt the Assault Tour" will be in St. Louis, Missouri, and rolling on to Texas. I think it is appropriate that this Saturday the tour will be in Texas, the adopted home State of President Bush. In 2000, then Governor Bush said he would sign an assault weapons ban.

During the President's first 100 days, here in Congress everybody does everything they can to make sure that they are pushing through his agenda. Well, here we are coming down to the last 100 days before the assault weapons ban expires, and I think it would be very nice if the President kept his word and actually put it into his agenda for the last 100 days before it expires.

Ten years ago, we fought very hard here in these halls to make sure the assault weapons ban was passed. Ten years ago, I sat up there as a citizen and was down here lobbying to make sure the assault weapons ban was passed. I find it so hard to believe that now I am standing here as a Congressperson again fighting to make sure assault weapons are not put back on to our streets.

These are the guns we see every single night that our men and women in the service in Iraq are using to fight for the democracy of the Iraqi people, but, unfortunately, we may be opening up the floodgates to allow criminals, drug lords, and gangs to be able to walk into any gun store and to be able to buy assault weapons and the large capacity clips. People keep forgetting about the large capacity clips, that they will be allowed back on the streets.

I am asking for the involvement of the American people. I hear constantly that they feel they are not part of the government. They have an opportunity to be part of the government, but we have to hear their voices. Are you out there? Do you actually want assault weapons back on the streets in 100 days? Your Members of Congress, your Members of the Senate, the White House needs to hear your voices. Today you can e-mail. Today you can make a phone call. Let your Member know how you feel about this. You have an opportunity to do something.

When we talk about terrorists possibly being in this Nation, and we are spending so much money on homeland security, which we should be doing, when we talk about the safety on