

—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

trains, the safety on planes, we should not make it easier for the terrorists to be able to get these guns, whether it is at a gun show or a gun store. They can get false I.D. We know that. Why would we give them this opportunity to make it easier for them?

Again, it comes down to this. Why did we pass an assault weapons ban 10 years ago? Because these guns were used rampantly to kill so many of our police officers. That is why we passed the bill. Why should we go back 10 years? We know it works. I happen to think we should make the bill stronger. I think it should be made permanent so we are not having this debate every 10 years.

I happen to think that gun manufacturers have a responsibility to not make copycats of these assault weapons, which they have been doing. Think about the D.C. snipers. That was a knock-off of that type of gun. I ask the American people, Mr. Speaker, to have their voices heard. We can do this, but we need your help.

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

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

FALLEN FIREFIGHTER, 14-YEAR OLD CHRISTOPHER KANGAS, DENIED BENEFITS

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

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, sometimes the bureaucrats in this city just do not get it. Before coming to Congress, Mr. Speaker, I was an educator, but I was also a volunteer firefighter and a fire chief in my home State of Pennsylvania. There are 32,000 fire departments across this country, and 85 percent of them are volunteers. There are 1.2 million men and women each year who risk their lives to protect the properties in their towns and that of their neighbors from the ravages of fire. Each year, 100 of them are killed in the line of duty, most of them volunteers.

Mr. Speaker, the Congress established a Public Safety Officers' Benefits Act for these brave heroes years ago. In establishing this program, the Federal Government did not set any age limitations. Rather, the Federal Government said where a firefighter is recognized by his or her State, that firefighter is eligible for public safety officer benefits.

In some States, the age for firefighters is 18. In other States, it is 16. In others, it is 14. In my State of Pennsylvania, where we have 2,600 fire departments, you can be 14 years of age to be a firefighter, a recognized firefighter in a local fire department.

There are certain rules on what kind of work you can perform at the scene of a fire, but you are a legitimate firefighter, and, therefore, you are eligible for Federal public safety officer benefits.

On May 4, 2002, Mr. Speaker, 14-year-old Christopher Kangas was killed responding to a fire in Brookhaven Borough, Delaware County, Pennsylvania. His bicycle was run over by a vehicle, and he was killed at the scene, one block from the firehouse. He was a regular firefighter. He had trained, he knew what he could do and what he could not do at the scene, and he was recognized by the Borough of Brookhaven and by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania as a firefighter.

When he passed away, and they gave full honors to him, the Borough of Brookhaven provided the full benefits to his family as a fallen firefighter. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania recognized Chris Kangas as a fallen firefighter and gave him full honors.

Mr. Speaker, the representative of the President of the United States to the Fire Service, the U.S. Fire Administrator Dave Paulison, sent a letter of condolence to the family, recognizing Chris Kangas as a firefighter. But the bureaucrats over at the Department of Justice who administer a program that Congress enacted ruled now for the second time that Chris Kangas was not a firefighter. The bureaucrats in Washington determined that he could not be a firefighter, even though the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the Brookhaven Fire Department legally maintained Chris Kangas on their rolls.

Mr. Speaker, this is outrageous. Regardless of age, Chris Kangas was a firefighter; and he was killed in the line of duty. No bureaucracy, no bureaucrat in the Department of Justice should be able to determine who is a firefighter. We have had firefighters who were in their 60s and 70s directing traffic at a fire scene and were killed and were recognized by the Federal Government's Department of Justice as a fallen firefighter. So a 70-year-old can be a firefighter but a 14-year-old recognized by a legitimate State authority cannot.

Mr. Speaker, this is outrageous. It is appalling. It is a disservice to every volunteer in America. Those one million volunteers out there are joining with me in demanding that Congress change this terrible action by the Department of Justice.

Therefore, today I have introduced legislation, H.R. 4472, cosponsored by all the coauthors of the Congressional Fire and EMS Caucus, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER), the gentleman from New York (Mr. BOEHLERT), the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. ANDREWS), the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PASCRELL), and the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. SMITH). We are calling for the immediate definitional change so that everyone understands a firefighter in a State, determined by that State's laws, is a fire-

fighter under the guidance of Federal regulations for death benefits.

No bureaucrat in Washington should be allowed to make that decision. It is a slap in the face to the Kangas family and to every firefighter across America. I urge the White House to join with us in asking for the courts to move in on this in an appeal, but I ask my colleagues to cosponsor H.R. 4472 to correct this gross action so that Chris Kangas' name can be added to the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial at Emmitsburg, to be recognized for the American hero that he was and that he is.

Mr. Speaker, I submit herewith for the RECORD an op-ed that I produced on this story.

On May 4, 2002, Christopher Kangas, a 14-year-old junior firefighter with the Brookhaven Fire Department, was struck by a car and killed while riding his bicycle in response to a fire emergency. Christopher's death struck a devastating blow to the Kangas family, the Brookhaven Fire Department and the local community. His death was a horrendous tragedy and marked the loss of a true local hero.

Make no mistake—regardless of his age Christopher Kangas was a firefighter killed in the line of duty. As a member of Congress with direct legislative oversight on homeland security and first responder issues for 18 years, founder of the Congressional Fire and EMS Caucus, a former junior member of my local department and former volunteer fire chief, it is my professional and expert opinion that Christopher Kangas met every conceivable definition of a firefighter. I am not alone in that opinion—The Brookhaven Fire Department, Brookhaven Fire Chief Rob Montella, Brookhaven Borough and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania all agree. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the Borough of Brookhaven awarded the deceased public safety officer benefits to the Kangas family, recognizing his death as occurring in the line of duty as an official member of the fire department.

This week, the Kangas family, the Brookhaven Fire Department, the local community and firefighters across the country suffered a second devastating blow when the Department of Justice (DOJ) announced its ruling denying Christopher Kangas full firefighter status under the Public Safety Officers' Benefits Act (PSOB). As a result, his family will not receive a \$267,000 line-of-duty benefit. Even more damaging than the loss of monetary benefit is the fact that Christopher will not take his rightful place at the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial in Emmitsburg, Maryland, along side his fellow fallen heroes. Inexplicably, the DOJ determined that Christopher was not a "public safety officer" under the PSOB Act. In so ruling, the DOJ not only ignored the facts, but also the letter and spirit of the law.

When Congress passed the PSOB Act, it intended to provide benefits to any firefighter serving as an officially recognized member of a legally organized fire department. There is no question that the Brookhaven Fire Department is a legally organized department and that they officially recognized Christopher as a firefighter. With its ruling, the DOJ is inappropriately rewriting the law and narrowing the definition of firefighter to exclude individuals based on age.

The Act does not contain a single requirement based on age or the type of activities that must be met to entitle an individual to benefits. The Act clearly and simply states that an officially recognized firefighter