

official had told *Insight*: “It is a politically sensitive matter. I can’t comment on it beyond telling you that anything involving Israel on this particular matter is off-limits. It’s that hot.”

Now, in the wake of Sept. 11 and the arrests and detentions that followed, the story is back. And hopefully this time, with the stakes much higher, it will be pursued to a just conclusion.

Skunks Wanted Mideast War From Day One

by Edward Spannaus

While the general line was emerging on Sept. 11, that Osama bin Laden was responsible for the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, a well-known group of U.S. “neo-conservative” skunks was already blaming Saddam Hussein and calling for U.S. retaliation against Iraq. While there were many calls for retaliation against the bin Laden and al-Qaeda networks, there was a particular group which was reflexively calling for a wider war against Iraq and other countries, and even against the Palestinian Authority—in a quest to set the Middle East on fire, and give us a clash of civilizations.

The following grid shows a number of these kinds of statements, which were *all made on Sept. 11* and reported either in the electronic news media that day, or in newspaper reports the morning of Sept. 12:

Blaming Arab governments and the Palestinians for Sept. 11:

- Alexander Haig: We’re at war. “We know who the obvious culprits are—Osama bin Laden, Iraq, the Palestinians.” Haig added that Iran and Libya should not be excluded from the suspects list.

- Former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called for the “formation of an international front against terrorism,” and said the time has come to “destroy terrorist regimes starting with the Palestinian Authority.”

- WorldTribune.com reported that Israeli officials and intelligence analysts said the attacks were financed by Iraq; intelligence sources briefed Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon’s cabinet on Sept. 11 that a Middle East government was probably the sponsor of the attack. The cabinet was informed that the United States might launch a massive assault on Iraq and Afghanistan over the coming days.

- Arnaud de Borchgrave (UPI Editor at Large): called for “massive retaliation. The possible targets stretch all the way from terrorist training facilities in Afghanistan to Hezbollah bases in southern Lebanon to Hamas hideouts in Gaza and the West Bank. Israel may get a wink and a nod from the U.S. to drive the Palestinian Authority into exile. . . . Osama bin Laden . . . does not have the sophistication and U.S.-based organization to synchronize [this complex operation]. . . A

more plausible suspect is a state player, like Saddam Hussein’s Iraqi intelligence service. . . . Massive U.S. and Israeli retaliation against terrorist suspects could conceivably trigger a much wider conflict. . . . A regional war in the Middle East appears closer than ever tonight. . . .”

- *Wall Street Journal* editorial: “Just as Munich led to World War II, so attempts to buy peace in the Middle East are surely behind this attack. . . . We are entitled to assume that this is the work of the usual suspects—Saddam Hussein, the Taliban, the Iranian mullahs. . . .”

- *Wall Street Journal* contributing editor Mark Helprin: “Today’s enemy . . . is neither faceless nor without a place in which we can address him. . . . If he is Osama bin Laden, he lives in Afghanistan; . . . if he is Saddam Hussein, he lives in Baghdad; if he is Yasser Arafat, he lives in Gaza,” and so on.

- Charles Krauthammer in the *Washington Post*: This enemy is not nameless or faceless. “Our delicate sensibilities have prevented us from pronouncing its name. Its name is radical Islam. . . . And the enemy has many branches: Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas and Islamic Jihad in Israel, the Osama bin Laden organization headquartered in Afghanistan, and various Arab ‘liberation fronts’ based in Damascus. And then there are the governments: Iran, Iraq, Syria and Libya among them. . . .”

- Former CIA director James Woolsey: An amalgam of terrorists and governments may be behind the attack, such as Iran or Iraq.

- Jim Hoagland in the *Washington Post*, traced the attacks back to the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, and cites “expert” Laurie Mylroie as blaming Saddam Hussein for being behind the 1993 bombing.

Calling for war:

- Henry Kissinger: We don’t know yet if bin Laden did it, but any government that shelters groups capable of this type of attack must pay an exorbitant price; we must destroy the networks behind this attack.

- Richard Perle: This will cause a change in our policy, so that we hold governments responsible, not just individuals. This could not have been done without the assistance of large governments.

- Robert Kagan: “We must go to war against those who have launched this awful war against us.” Only a few terrorist organizations are capable of this, and they cannot operate without the assistance of some governments. Congress should immediately declare war.

- *New York Post* editorial: “Radical Islam’s War On The West”—“Who’s responsible? Radical Islamic fundamentalism, which breeds and festers in place like Afghanistan, Yemen, Sudan, Saudi Arabia. . . . Now American understands better what Israel . . . had been suffering for so long now. . . . the United States and Israel are in this together. . . .”

- Richard Cohen (*Washington Post* columnist): “We are at war, the kind of war that Samuel Huntington would call a Clash of Civilizations.”