

The Forgotten Clinton Report

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The Bush administration's twin pillars for going to war in Iraq were weapons of mass destruction and terrorism. Critics have seized upon the lack of WMD stockpiles as a means to de-legitimize the war. Yet, in their zealotry to discredit the entire Bush effort, they've also claimed that Iraq didn't sponsor terrorism. This is a wild assertion; the reality is that there's no question whatsoever that terrorists were harbored in Iraq and operated there openly, usually with support from Saddam's regime, and did so prior to the coalition invasion in 2003, prior to September 11, and throughout the 1990s.

An extraordinary catalogue of evidence—one that liberals especially ought to view as authoritative and trustworthy—has been ignored by all sides, including both Democrats and Republicans: I'm speaking of the final report on terrorism issued by the Clinton administration. For some strange reason, amid all the heated debate, this official statement has gone completely ignored. In 2000, President Clinton's State Department, headed by Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, listed Iraq among the two leading sponsors of terrorism, as it had regularly in its [Patterns of Global Terrorism](#) report.

What was this report? Congress was so worried about terrorism that in 1979 it passed the Export Administration Act, which required that the State Department submit "detailed assessments of foreign countries where significant terrorist acts occurred" and a list of countries "that have repeatedly provided state support for international terrorism." This annual assessment lists the top terrorism-sponsoring states. To quote **the 2000 report**: "Iran, Iraq, Syria, Libya, Cuba, North Korea, and Sudan continue to be the seven governments that the U.S. Secretary of State [Albright] has designated as state sponsors of international terrorism." These were the same seven nations **identified in 1999** and in previous years; among them, Iraq and Iran were singled out as **the worst offenders**.

The 2000 report didn't rank the seven. Nonetheless, some terrorist nations received considerably more attention than others. The report devoted 78 words to Cuba, 112 to North Korea, 187 to Sudan, 199 to Syria, 390 to Iran, 537 to Libya, and 638 to Iraq. Yes, the winner was Iraq, which received literally more attention than any other country in the final terrorism report issued by the Clinton State Department.

The Iraq section of the report began categorically: "Iraq planned and sponsored international terrorism in 2000." It then listed where and how "the regime continued to support various terrorist groups." These included activities in London, Prague, Berlin, and other Western cities, as well as various activities in northern Iraq and even in neighboring Iran. The mode of attack ranged from shootings to car bombs.

The report detailed Iraqi attacks on U.N. workers—i.e., assaults not unique to today's post-war Iraq: "Baghdad continued to denounce and de-legitimize UN personnel working in Iraq, particularly UN de-mining teams, in the wake of the killing in 1999 of an expatriate UN de-mining worker in northern Iraq under circumstances suggesting regime involvement. An Iraqi who opened fire at the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) office in Baghdad, killing two persons and wounding six, was permitted to hold a heavily publicized press conference at which he contended that his action had been motivated by the harshness of UN sanctions, which the regime regularly excoriates."

Most remarkable, the Clinton State Department reported: "The Iraqi regime rebuffed a request from Riyadh for the extradition of two Saudis who had hijacked a Saudi Arabian Airlines flight to Baghdad.... Disregarding its obligations under international law, the regime granted political asylum to the hijackers and gave them ample opportunity to ventilate in the Iraqi Government-controlled and international media their criticisms of alleged abuses by the Saudi Arabian Government, echoing an

Iraqi propaganda theme. While the origins of the FAO attack and the hijacking were unclear, the Iraqi regime readily exploited these terrorist acts to further its policy objectives."

This is an utterly fascinating finding, reported one year before the September 11 hijackings, which were orchestrated by radical Saudi citizens expelled from Saudi Arabia. The report is very short on details and provides no names. Nonetheless, the statement is extremely intriguing. How has it escaped our notice over the last few years?

Likewise significant, the 2000 assessment listed the various thugs that found safe haven under Saddam's Baathist-fascist regime: "Several expatriate terrorist groups continued to maintain offices in Baghdad, including the Arab Liberation Front, the inactive 15 May Organization, the Palestine Liberation Front (PLF), and the Abu Nidal organization (ANO). PLF leader Abu Abbas appeared on state-controlled television in the fall to praise Iraq's leadership in rallying Arab opposition to Israeli violence against Palestinians. The ANO threatened to attack Austrian interests unless several million dollars in a frozen ANO account in a Vienna bank were turned over to the group."

The report said more, but still only glimpsed the tip of the iceberg. There was no mention of Mr. Al-Zarqawi, of the April 1993 assassination attempt on an American president traveling to Kuwait, or of the chilling clandestine facility south of Baghdad called Salman Pak, a terrorist training camp which drew attention after September 11 when it was reported that terrorists there—of Saudi and Egyptian origin—had conducted training missions on an actual 707 fuselage, where they practiced the art of hijacking an aircraft without guns, using only knives and utensils, all before September 11. Also, the report didn't note that Saddam had publicly offered payment of \$10,000 to the families of Palestinian suicide bombers who blew themselves up in the service of killing Israel's Jews, a total that he upped to \$25,000 in April 2002. The report could not have known of the thousands of suicide-bomber vests that American and British troops would find in Iraq in April 2003.

The facts are painfully obvious: Saddam Hussein's Iraq was one of the world's leading terrorist states. If it didn't top the list, it was second. That was literally the conclusion of the final report on terrorism by the Clinton-Albright State Department.

To borrow from the language applied to George W. Bush by Madeleine Albright and Al Gore, was the 2000 report just a bunch of lies? Of course, not. It was the awful truth. And yet, liberal Democrats now say there was no pre- or post-9/11 terror threat coming from Iraq. How can they so willingly disregard this lengthy record of Iraqi crimes, denying the undeniable? And how can journalists join them in lock-step after dutifully reporting many of these facts for a decade? Can they all put aside Bush hatred for a moment and consider this crucial 2000 report produced by their very own? Please?