

U.s. Says Iraq Sheltered Suspect In '93 Wtc Attack

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WASHINGTON -- U.S. authorities in Iraq say they have new evidence that Saddam Hussein's regime gave money and housing to Abdul Rahman Yasin, a suspect in the World Trade Center bombing in 1993, according to U.S. intelligence and law enforcement officials.

The Bush administration is using the evidence to strengthen its disputed prewar assertion that Iraq had ties to terrorists, including the al-Qaeda group responsible for the Sept. 11 attack. But President Bush, in contrast with comments Sunday by Vice President Cheney, said Wednesday, "We've had no evidence that Saddam Hussein was involved."

Cheney had said on NBC's **Meet the Press** Sunday that "we don't know" if Iraq was involved but said some suggestive evidence had surfaced. He asserted that the campaign in Iraq is striking at terrorists involved in the attacks. Cheney also disclosed the new evidence about the 1993 suspect on the program, but he did not name Yasin.

Military, intelligence and law enforcement officials reported finding a large cache of Arabic-language documents in Tikrit, Saddam's political stronghold. A U.S. intelligence official who spoke on condition of anonymity said translators and analysts are busy "separating the gems from the junk." The official said some of the analysts have concluded that the documents show that Saddam's government provided monthly payments and a home for Yasin.

Yasin is on the FBI's list of 22 most-wanted terrorist fugitives; there is a \$ 25 million reward for his capture. The bureau questioned and released him in New York shortly after the bombing in 1993. After Yasin had fled to Iraq, the FBI said it found evidence that he helped make the bomb, which killed six people and injured 1,000. Yasin is still at large.

Even if the new information holds up -- and intelligence and law enforcement officials disagree on its conclusiveness -- the links tying Yasin, Saddam and al-Qaeda are tentative.

The World Trade Center bombing was carried out by a group headed by Ramzi Yousef, who is serving a 240-year prison term. Federal authorities say Yousef's group received financial support from al-Qaeda via Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, the alleged mastermind of the Sept. 11 attacks. But a direct al-Qaeda role in the 1993 attack hasn't been established.

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