

LexisNexis® will no longer offer LexisNexis AlaCarte effective December 3rd, 2007.

To learn about other LexisNexis products and solutions for corporate professional, please visit our website at <http://www.lexisnexis.com/corporate/> or call us at 1-800-227-4908.

[Research](#) [Business Intelligence](#) [Search by Source\(s\)](#)

[Return to results](#)

 [Print View](#)

THREATS AND RESPONSES: TERRORISM; U.S. Focuses On Iraqi Links To Group Allied To Al Qaeda

The New York Times, Section A; Column 1; Foreign Desk; Pg. 9
January, 30 2003
By DAVID JOHNSTON and DON VAN NATTA Jr.
998 words

After months of scouring for hard evidence of a connection between **Iraq** and Al Qaeda, the Bush administration is focusing on possible links between Saddam Hussein and Islamic extremists who may have produced poisons in northern **Iraq** and a Qaeda terrorist leader who spent time in Baghdad last year.

Those suspected ties are at the heart of the administration's latest attempt to demonstrate an Iraqi-Qaeda connection as it tries to persuade the American public and the world that Mr. Hussein's government must be ousted. Secretary of State Colin L. Powell is expected to present the evidence of the connection to the United Nations Security Council next Wednesday.

Administration officials, relying on largely dated and previously disclosed information, have said they believe there may be a link between Ansar al-Islam, an Islamic extremist group operating in a remote section of northern **Iraq**, and the Baghdad government. The organization has been fighting Kurdish groups that oppose the Iraqi regime.

Members of the group, once led by Mullah Krekar, were trained in Qaeda camps in Afghanistan before the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks on the United States, and American officials believe the organization can be described as affiliated with Al Qaeda.

Some administration officials have described Mullah Krekar as a link between Mr. Hussein and Al Qaeda. Mullah Krekar, who was detained by Dutch officials last year, has dismissed the assertions as lies.

The Bush administration's most compelling evidence may center on possible ties between Baghdad and terrorist figures like Abu Mussab al-**Zarqawi**, a leading Qaeda chemical weapons expert. Mr. **Zarqawi** has come under increased scrutiny in recent months by British and American intelligence officials.

British investigators are said to be trying to determine whether Mr. **Zarqawi** had any connection to the deadly poison ricin that was found in a London apartment on Jan. 5.

Mr. Powell, in interviews with European television reporters, repeated President Bush's contention that the United States has information showing links between **Iraq** and Al Qaeda. But Mr. Powell said the administration had no evidence of a link with the Sept. 11 attacks -- though he would not rule out that there was such a connection.

Recently, there have been possible signs of links between Ansar al-Islam and attempts by extremists in Europe to use poisons in terrorist attacks. Officials said the United States has received reports that Ansar al-Islam may have tried to produce poisons in its sanctuary in northern **Iraq**.

There has been a long-running debate within the intelligence community about group's links to the Iraqi government, and officials said there is still no consensus. Some intelligence officials say that they believe the Iraqi government has tolerated the existence of the extremist group, which has fought Mr. Hussein's opponents, the ethnic Kurds, in northern **Iraq**.

American analysts also suspect that the Iraqi government may have provided some support for Ansar al-Islam over the years. But officials say there is no agreement over whether the Baghdad regime

controls the group or whether it uses it as a channel to Al Qaeda.

Most of the evidence is ambiguous, like the information in the case of the Mr. **Zarqawi**, a Jordanian who received medical treatment in Baghdad last year after he lost a leg fighting in Afghanistan.

American officials said they believe the Iraqi government found out Mr. **Zarqawi** was in their country. Jordanian officials told the Iraqis that they knew that the Qaeda leader was in a Baghdad hospital and asked that he be turned over to them. Mr. **Zarqawi** left Baghdad and disappeared. American officials say they do not know his whereabouts but believe he has played a role in several recent terrorist strikes in the Middle East and Europe.

Some officials said that he may have been behind the recent shooting of an American diplomat in Jordan and appears to have links to groups in Britain, Spain and elsewhere that have attempted to use poisons to attack Western targets. There have been some reports that he has a connection to Ansar al-Islam and to their efforts to develop poisons.

"If you believe that **Zarqawi** was in and out of Baghdad with the acquiescence of the regime, and that he has played a role in poison plots both with Ansar and others, that could provide a link," an American official said.

The question of an Iraqi connection with Al Qaeda has created tension between the White House and some senior intelligence officials, who are said by some subordinates to be under intense pressure to find evidence, which the administration believes exists, that Mr. Hussein has sought to forge a significant relationship with the terror group.

Intelligence officials have looked for contacts between senior Iraqi officials, senior Qaeda members and detainees at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and elsewhere.

In addition, the United States has employed some of its most advanced surveillance techniques against **Iraq**, using satellites, airborne monitoring gear and ground-based eavesdropping equipment. But intelligence officials said the operation has yielded little concrete information.

"I'm not sure what we have is demonstrative of a link, but we have developed more information than we had late last year," the official said. He said he was not convinced that the information developed would be persuasive or conclusive.

In his State of the Union address, Mr. Bush said the United States has received information from Qaeda operatives in custody that **Iraq** was continuing to support and fund terrorists, including Al Qaeda.

American intelligence officials said they were not aware of any new information from Qaeda operatives in custody. The officials said that the most compelling information from detainees concerning **Iraq** came early last year, when one or more Qaeda operatives in custody talked about a possible effort by **Iraq** to train Qaeda members in the use of chemical and biological weapons.

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Editor's Note: Newspaper

By DAVID JOHNSTON and DON VAN NATTA Jr.

[Return to results](#)

 [Print View](#)



[About LexisNexis](#) | [Terms & Conditions](#)

Copyright © 2006 LexisNexis, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.