

Iraq Study Group Co-Chairman James Baker has Links to Bin Laden Family

FBI has been "remarkably sensitive, tactful and protective" of the [bin Laden] family"

By [Global Research](#)

Global Research, December 25, 2006

Wall Street Journal 22 December 2006

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Terrorism](#)

The following article, which appeared in the WSJ in September 2001 (posted on Global Research on October 5, 2001) suggests that James Baker III, who co-chairs the Iraq Study Group (ISG), has over the years established close business ties to the bin Laden Family.

"A U.S. inquiry into bin Laden family business dealings could brush against some big names associated with the U.S. government. Former President Bush said through his chief of staff, Jean Becker, that he recalled only one meeting with the bin Laden family, which took place in November 1998. Ms. Becker confirmed that there was a second meeting in January 2000, after being read the ex-president's subsequent thank-you note. "President Bush does not have a relationship with the bin Laden family," says Ms. Becker. "He's met them twice."

Mr. Baker visited the bin Laden family in both 1998 and 1999, according to people close to the family. In the second trip, he traveled on a family plane. Mr. Baker declined comment, as did Mr. Carlucci, a past chairman of Nortel Networks Corp., which has partnered with Saudi Binladin Group on telecommunications ventures"

Michel Chossudovsky, Global Research, 25 December 2006

Editorial note

The evidence increasingly suggests that throughout the entire post-cold War period, agencies of the US government have harboured international terrorists. The Islamic jihad has been abetted by the US government, and conversely the Islamic jihad has financed the flow of arms and mercenaries in US sponsored insurgencies in the Balkans and the former Soviet Union. And behind this process is a multibillion dollar Golden Crescent drug trade including the laundering of large amounts of narco-dollars in the Western banking system.

"[T]he bin Laden family has become acquainted with some of the biggest names in the Republican Party..."

The following article published in the Wall Street Journal confirms the links of the Bush family to the bin Laden business empire.

M. C. 27 September 2001

Bin Laden Family Could Profit From a Jump

In Defense Spending Due to Ties to U.S. Bank

by Daniel Golden, James Bandler and Marcus Walker
Wall Street Journal, 27 September 2001
Posted at globalresearch.ca 5 Octobre 2001

If the U.S. boosts defense spending in its quest to stop Osama bin Laden's alleged terrorist activities, there may be one unexpected beneficiary: Mr. bin Laden's family.

Among its far-flung business interests, the well-heeled Saudi Arabian clan — which says it is estranged from Osama — is an investor in a fund established by Carlyle Group, a well-connected Washington merchant bank specializing in buyouts of defense and aerospace companies.

Through this investment and its ties to Saudi royalty, the bin Laden family has become acquainted with some of the biggest names in the Republican Party. In recent years, former President Bush, ex-Secretary of State James Baker and ex-Secretary of Defense Frank Carlucci have made the pilgrimage to the bin Laden family's headquarters in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Mr. Bush makes speeches on behalf of Carlyle Group and is senior adviser to its Asian Partners fund, while Mr. Baker is its senior counselor. Mr. Carlucci is the group's chairman.

Osama is one of more than 50 children of Mohammed bin Laden, who built the family's \$5 billion business, Saudi Binladin Group, largely with construction contracts from the Saudi government. Osama worked briefly in the business and is believed to have inherited as much as \$50 million from his father in cash and stock, although he doesn't have access to the shares, a family spokesman says. Because his Saudi citizenship was revoked in 1994, Mr. bin Laden is ineligible to own assets in the kingdom, the spokesman added.

The bin Laden family has long disavowed Osama, and has cooperated fully with several federal investigations into his activities. The family business, headed by Osama's half-brother Bakr, epitomizes the U.S.-Saudi alliance that the suspected terrorist often rails against. After the 1996 truck bombing in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, that killed 19 U.S. servicemen, Saudi Binladin Group built military barracks and airfields for U.S. troops.

But the Federal Bureau of Investigation has issued subpoenas to banks used by the bin Laden family seeking records of family dealings, a person familiar with the matter said. This person said the subpoenas weren't an indication the FBI had found any suspicious behavior by the family. A family spokesman said he had no knowledge of the subpoenas but that the family welcomes them and has nothing to hide.

People familiar with the family's finances say the bin Ladens do much of their banking with National Commercial Bank in Saudi Arabia and with the London branch of Deutsche Bank AG. They also use Citigroup Inc. and ABN Amro, the people said.

"If there were ever any company closely connected to the U.S. and its presence in Saudi Arabia, it's the Saudi Binladin Group," says Charles Freeman, president of the Middle East Policy Council, a Washington nonprofit concern that receives tens of thousands of dollars a

year from the bin Laden family. "They're the establishment that Osama's trying to overthrow."

Mr. Freeman, who served as U.S. ambassador to Saudi Arabia during the Gulf War, says he has spoken to two of Osama's brothers since hijacked airplanes rammed the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on Sept. 11. They told him, he says, that the FBI has been "remarkably sensitive, tactful and protective" of the family during the current crisis, recognizing its longstanding friendship with the U.S.

A Carlyle executive said the bin Laden family committed \$2 million through a London investment arm in 1995 in Carlyle Partners II Fund, which raised \$1.3 billion overall. The fund has purchased several aerospace companies among 29 deals. So far, the family has received \$1.3 million back in completed investments and should ultimately realize a 40% annualized rate of return, the Carlyle executive said.

But a foreign financier with ties to the bin Laden family says the family's overall investment with Carlyle is considerably larger. He called the \$2 million merely an initial contribution. "It's like plowing a field," this person said. "You seed it once. You plow it, and then you reseed it again."

The Carlyle executive added that he would think twice before accepting any future investments by the bin Ladens. "The situation's changed now," he said. "I don't want to spend my life talking to reporters."

A U.S. inquiry into bin Laden family business dealings could brush against some big names associated with the U.S. government. Former President Bush said through his chief of staff, Jean Becker, that he recalled only one meeting with the bin Laden family, which took place in November 1998. Ms. Becker confirmed that there was a second meeting in January 2000, after being read the ex-president's subsequent thank-you note. "President Bush does not have a relationship with the bin Laden family," says Ms. Becker. "He's met them twice."

Mr. Baker visited the bin Laden family in both 1998 and 1999, according to people close to the family. In the second trip, he traveled on a family plane. Mr. Baker declined comment, as did Mr. Carlucci, a past chairman of Nortel Networks Corp., which has partnered with Saudi Binladin Group on telecommunications ventures.

Former President Carter met with 10 of Osama's brothers early in 2000 on a fund-raising trip for the Carter Center in Atlanta. According to John Hardman, executive director of the center, the brothers told Mr. Carter that Osama was completely removed from the family. After Mr. Carter and his wife followed up with breakfast with Bakr bin Laden in New York in September 2000, the bin Laden family gave \$200,000 to the center. "We don't have any reason to think there's a connection" between Osama and the rest of the family, Mr. Hardman says.

During the past several years, the family's close ties to the Saudi royal family prompted executives and staff from closely held New York publisher Forbes Inc. to make two trips to the family headquarters, according to Forbes Chairman Caspar Weinberger, a former U.S. secretary of defense in the Reagan administration. "We would call on them to get their view of the country and what would be of interest to investors."

Mr. Weinberger said no trips to Saudi Arabia were planned. "If we went," he said, "we may

or may not call upon them. I don't think the sins of the son should be visited on the father or the brother and the cousins and the aunts."

There is no indication President George W. Bush has met any of the bin Ladens, but he was indirectly linked to one of them two decades ago. His longtime friend James W. Bath, who met Mr. Bush when they were both pilots in the Air National Guard, acted as a Texas business representative for Osama's older brother, Salem bin Laden, from 1976 to 1988, when Salem died in a plane crash. Mr. Bath brought real-estate acquisitions and other deals to Salem bin Laden, an ebullient man who headed the family construction business. Mr. Bath generally received a 5% interest as his fee, and was sometimes listed as a trustee in related corporate documents. Mr. Bath acknowledged that during the same period he invested \$50,000 in two funds controlled by Mr. Bush but said that stake was unrelated to his dealings with Mr. bin Laden.

Among the properties that Salem bin Laden bought on Mr. Bath's recommendation was the Houston Gulf Airport, a lightly used airfield in League City, Texas, 25 miles east of Houston. But Mr. bin Laden's hope that it would develop a major overflow airport for Houston never materialized, in part due to concern over wetlands. Ever since his death, his estate has sought to sell the airfield — without success. Today, it is still on the market.

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