

## A Portion of CHAPTER 4. PLO INTERNATIONAL CONNECTIONS

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### Iraq

The recent capture of Saddam Hussein—while it impinges directly on Arafat’s continuing ability to *relate* to Saddam Hussein any longer—in no way changes Arafat’s historical attitude towards Saddam, which is worthy of note. As Israeli journalist Caroline Glick wrote in 2002:

*In the shifting sands of Arab alliances, it is hard to find instances of enduring relationships. But in a world where raw power struggles and dictatorial jealousies reign sovereign, one alliance stands out for its vitality, durability, and the mutual benefit it accrues to both sides. This rare relationship is Yasser Arafat's partnership with Saddam Hussein.*<sup>1</sup>

From the time of the Ba’athist coup in 1968, Iraq advocated a full military take-over of Israel and opposed all negotiations. Iraqi support for the PLO was forthcoming with the advent of the first Intifada in 1987. Saddam—who had taken over Iraqi leadership some eight years earlier— provided the PLO with \$40 million in aid to help sustain the uprising; several PLO offices were moved from Tunis to Baghdad.<sup>2</sup>

Forces from Arafat's Palestine Liberation Army fought with Iraq in the Iraq-Iran war in the 1980s.<sup>3</sup> In the lead-up to the Gulf War of 1991, Arafat proved himself to be Saddam’s staunchest ally: Intelligence provided by the PLO, garnered from the Palestinian enclave in Kuwait, was critical for Saddam’s invasion of Kuwait.<sup>4</sup> (Which explains why the Palestinian enclave in Kuwait was expelled after the war.) Once again PLA forces, now calling themselves the Bader Brigade, participated in an action with Iraqi forces—this time to achieve the invasion and occupation of Kuwait.

Following the invasion into Kuwait, the PLO—breaking with most of the Arab states and incurring the ire of the US—denounced American opposition to it.<sup>5</sup> When Iraqi Scud missiles were aimed at Israel, Palestinian Arabs in the West Bank stood on their roofs and cheered.<sup>6</sup> There are, additionally, reports that Arafat’s forces ruthlessly assisted Saddam in putting down a Shi’ite revolution in Iraq after the Gulf War.<sup>7</sup>

Arafat visited Baghdad in 1993, and hailed Saddam a great leader.<sup>8</sup> In the years following, he courted Saddam in order to foster closer ties.<sup>9</sup> According to PA official Azzam al-Ahmed, since the forming of the PA, “contacts between Arafat and Saddam Hussein have not ceased, not even for a moment.”<sup>10</sup> Arafat himself had three villas in Baghdad.

By 1997, reports surfaced of assistance once again being provided to Iraq by the PA: The PA embassy, which was situated in one of Arafat's private residences in Baghdad, “a heavily guarded palatial structure well inside a compound,” was being used as “a repository for secret documents...”<sup>11</sup>

From the start of the second Intifada, in late September 2000, Saddam was generous in providing funds to Palestinians in a variety of contexts and was apparently besieged with requests for assistance. One of those who requested funds was ostensible moderate Sari Nusseibeh, PLO representative in Jerusalem and president of Al-Kuds University, who wrote a letter to Saddam seeking assistance in defraying a university deficit.<sup>12</sup> In October 2002, Arafat adviser and member of the PLO's executive committee Rakad Salim admitted to having dispensed some \$15 million in direct assistance from Saddam.<sup>13</sup>

From 2000 through the spring of 2002, Fuad Shubaki, a confidant of Arafat, visited Baghdad numerous times, apparently in order to cement a strategic relationship with Saddam's regime.<sup>14</sup> In early 2002, Saddam, following a decision of the Revolutionary Command Council, offered refuge to Arafat, should Israel decide to exile him.<sup>15</sup> At roughly the same time, Saddam increased payments he was making to families of Palestinian suicide bombers from \$10,000 to \$25,000.<sup>16</sup> When the IDF raided Arafat's headquarters in April 2002, they uncovered twelve liters of poisonous bromine that had been hidden in a sandbox, as well as Iraqi-modified Soviet weapons.<sup>17</sup>

As recently as June 2002, Palestinian terror operatives were trained in Saddam's hometown of Tikrit, at an elite Republican Guard base. They were taught use of firearms, anti-tank rockets, and shoulder-launched anti-aircraft missiles, as well as how to manufacture explosives and bombs.<sup>18</sup>

Yossef Bodansky,<sup>19</sup> a top terrorist expert in the US, revealed that Saddam Hussein was coordinating terrorist operations with Yasser Arafat and Osama bin Laden. Joint preparations by Hussein, Arafat and al-Qaida for a new wave of anti-US terror began in the spring of 2002, using Arafat's Black September Organization of the 1970s as its model:

*A group calling itself the bin Laden Brigades-Palestine issued a statement formally integrating the Islamist and Fatah wave of anti-Israel terrorism into bin Laden's global jihad. The bin Laden Brigades announced that their forces were now at the disposal of Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades and fighter commander Marwan al-Barghouti...The statement emphasized that numerous Palestinian factions, specifically including al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, "[had] become part of the International Front for Fighting Jews and Christians, led by Osama bin Laden."*

Other reports have surfaced regarding Saddam's strategic cooperation with Arafat: The *Times of London* on August 3, 2002, cited a British intelligence report indicating that Saddam planned to use Palestinian terrorists as his proxy force against Israel and the US.

Bodansky, speaking at a Jerusalem Conference in October 2003,<sup>20</sup> outlined Arafat's clear intention to be part of a scheme to retake Baghdad. It remains worthy of particular note that Bodansky sees Arafat as consciously and eagerly playing a role in the worldwide Jihad, and seeking to take over Israel so that the area might serve as a bastion for delivering an historic Islamic global victory.

Said Bodansky:

*...the threat of a Palestinian state goes way above and beyond its being a source of X number of would-be suicide bombers...Because there is a profound change in the nature of the Palestinian...entity...the Palestinian entity plays a tremendous role that is...profoundly changing in the context of the greater dynamics of the Arab world...<sup>21</sup>*

Once the invasion of Iraq by US and allied forces was imminent in late 2002 and early 2003, protests rose from PA areas in defense of Iraq: The Palestinian Authority held an official "Iraq Solidarity Week" in January 2003 and from PA authorized mosques came sermons condemning the US.<sup>22</sup> PA media sources echoed the same sentiments and encouraged the killing of American and British soldiers once the war began.<sup>23</sup> Following the capture of Saddam, official Palestinian response was muted and regretful.<sup>24</sup> Certainly Palestinian support for Saddam's insurgents had remained clear and vociferous until that point—and may yet continue in that direction.

There is substantial evidence that many of the suicide bombers that have been attacking in Iraq are Palestinians. In late March 2003, the Palestinian weekly *Assennara* quoted Colonel Mounir Maqdash, a commander of Arafat's Fatah movement, as stating that "hundreds" of volunteer Palestinian fighters in the Ain al-Hilweh UNRWA refugee camp in Lebanon had been sent to Iraq to carry out suicide bombings against US and British coalition forces. "Resisting the American aggression on Iraq supports the Palestinian people and the Intifada," he said "What is happening in Iraq is the battle of the Palestinian people first and the Arab and Muslim nation second."<sup>25</sup>

As recently as November 4, 2003, Jabril Rajoub, a national security advisor to Arafat, gave an interview in which he called for increased "Iraqi resistance to the American occupation."<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Caroline Glick, "The Baghdad-Ramallah Axis," *The Jerusalem Post*, October 11, 2002.

<sup>2</sup> Said Aburish, *Arafat: From Defender to Dictator*, Bloombury, London, 1998.

<sup>3</sup> Caroline Glick, op. cit.

<sup>4</sup> *The Jerusalem Post*, August 8, 1990 and Yoram Ettinger, Jerusalem Cloakroom #130, Ariel Center for Policy Research.

<sup>5</sup> *The Jerusalem Post*, August 14, 1990.

<sup>6</sup> Khaled Abu Toameh, *The Jerusalem Post*, December 15, 2003.

<sup>7</sup> Herb Zweibon, "Did Arafat's Troops Crush Iraqi Dissidents?" *OUTPOST*, April 1998.

<sup>8</sup> *The Jerusalem Post*, February 3, 1993.

<sup>9</sup> Jay Bushinsky, "Arafat-Iraq overtures condemned," *The Jerusalem Post*, April 12, 1997.

<sup>10</sup> Caroline Glick, op. cit., cited this comment by al-Ahmed, made in December 1997.

<sup>11</sup> *The Jerusalem Post*, November 6, 1997.

<sup>12</sup> Khaled Abu Toameh, *The Jerusalem Post*, August 13, 2002.

<sup>13</sup> Caroline Glick, op. cit.

<sup>14</sup> This information was secured during Operation Defensive Shield, and is cited by Caroline Glick, op. cit.

<sup>15</sup> Con Coglein, [www.telegraph.co.uk/news](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news), May 12, 2002.

<sup>16</sup> AP, September 11, 2002.

<sup>17</sup> Caroline Glick, op. cit.

<sup>18</sup> This was revealed in an interview with IDF intelligence officer Ido Hecht on CBS's 60 Minutes, and is cited by Caroline Glick, op. cit.

<sup>19</sup> Bodansky, who heads the US Congressional Taskforce on Terrorism, made his revelations in his book, *The High Cost of Peace*, as cited by WorldNetDaily, October 28, 2002.

<sup>20</sup> The First Jerusalem Summit, which Yossef Bodansky addressed on October 13, 2003.

<sup>21</sup> Quote drawn from transcript of Bodansky's talk.

<sup>22</sup> IDF, [www.idf.il/newsite/english/0117-2.stm](http://www.idf.il/newsite/english/0117-2.stm), January 17, 2003.

<sup>23</sup> See Palestinian Media Watch: [www.pmw.org/new](http://www.pmw.org/new).

<sup>24</sup> Khaled Abu Toameh, *The Jerusalem Post*, December 15, 2003.

<sup>25</sup> *The Jerusalem Post*, March 30, 2003.

<sup>26</sup> The interview was given to the Saudi newspaper *al-Jazirah*, and cited by Reuters on November 12, 2003.