

Gee, If Only We'd Known!

by Robert Crisman

As soon as those planes hit the buildings on September 11, it was pretty much all systems go for Cheney's long-planned Iraqi invasion.

But first he had to shitcan an aide who showed him in detail how Iraq would eventually punt him and Bush into the shitter. Cheney'd set the aide on it so he could plug up holes in the planning, but still, given that the whole plan was a hole, what the guy had come up with was too fucking much.

The aide's name was Herbie, a dork, but a dork who had the facts nailed. A whole sheaf of facts. The report must have weighed 20 pounds.

Cheney pulled Herbie into his office and didn't waste time. "You got the thing done?"

"Yes, sir, I did."

"About fucking time. You kept the thing under wraps like I told you?"

"Oh yes, sir."

"Good, let's have it."

Herbie nervously licked his lips. "Well, sir, uh, we may have some problems, you know, down the road."

"Problems? What fucking problems?"

Herbie was already sweating bullets. "Well, sir... I'm not sure that the story we've given FOX News and the public can stand for too long."

"You're not, huh? Why not?"

"Well, sir, I mean, there are bound to be questions about Osama bin Laden's role in the 9-11 attacks, especially given his equivocal historic relationship with both this government and the Bush family."

Cheney sneered. "Equivocal historic relations' huh? Well, sonny, why don't you just give me some of the highlights."

"Yes, sir. There is, of course, the rather well-known circumstance that Osama is virtually a creation of the CIA through its cutouts, the Saudi and Pakistani intelligence agencies. Also, that he was trained

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and funded by those agencies to foment *jihad* against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan back in the '80s. Additionally that, in the wake of that war and the subsequent disintegration of the USSR, he and his *jihadis* were ferried up into the breakaway Soviet republic Azerbaijan, via arrangements put together by former Iran-contras scandal figure Richard Secord to combat pro-Russian forces under the guise of fighting for the formation of Muslim republics in Azerbaijan and Chechnya, all with the real aim of securing the untold oil wealth of the Caspian Basin for Chevron and Exxon and those folks."

"What the fuck's wrong with that?"

"Oh nothing, sir. I didn't mean to imply--"

"Skip it. What else?"

"Well, sir, there's the somewhat lesser-known fact that Osama has continued this work, effectively on behalf of the western oil companies, in the Caucasus and the Balkans, specifically Kosovo, virtually to the present day, this despite his various anti-West pronouncements and actions that began in the immediate wake of the Gulf War when--"

"Skip that stuff too. Just get to the rest. The parts I don't know."

"Yes, sir. I'll just add in this connection the virtually unknown circumstance that Osama and his *mujahadin* have financed their wars in these regions through the transport of heroin from Afghanistan into Chechnya and Kosovo and from there on up through Russia or on into western Europe, also apparently under the tutelage of old CIA confreres such as Secord, and that the Kosovo Liberation Army, backed by both Osama's forces and the U.S., now accounts for some 70% of the heroin entering Europe and a full 20% of the heroin seizures in the United States, which is almost double the percentage recorded five years ago and--"

"Hey, kid, you got that all down in one sentence! Not bad! As for, you know, the dope..." Cheney shrugged. "It's the same goddamn thing every time. Vietnam, Nicaragua, Afghanistan--if fucking Congress'd get up off more money, our guys wouldn't have to scuffle so hard in the field. Freedom wars, man. It's a tough fucking job, you

know what I'm saying?"

"Yes, sir," Herbie said. "Anyway, I must stress here that Osama's ongoing relationship with American intelligence might additionally be used to explain why the State Department refused a Sudanese government offer to hand over Osama in 1995, after his attacks on U.S. bases in Saudi Arabia. It might likewise be used to probe the efforts of the U.S. Ambassador in Yemen to hamstring the FBI's investigation of Qaeda's role in the bombing of the USS Cole there in 2000. All this, sir, could spell big trouble."

Cheney stared off at something unseen. He blinked. "What else?"

"Sir, there is also the matter of the bin Laden family, who've been, if you'll forgive the vulgarity, asshole buddies with both the Saudi royals and the Bush family since Jesus went out for cigarettes and never came back. They have also, until recently, been partners in Bush Senior's arms brokerage consortium, the Carlyle Group. It's well known also that they bailed the current president out of a number of embarrassing financial difficulties when he was head of Harkin Energy in Texas."

"Kid, Dub can't find his butt with his hands on a good day. He zips his fly and sings in soprano for weeks. He needed help."

"Yes, sir, I realize that. What's risky about this is, the bin Ladens, though disclaiming any relationship with Osama these days, are prime financiers of Qaeda activities. And they continue to maintain *sub rosa*

contact with Osama, the last known instance being in July of this year when family members visited him at the American Hospital in Dubai where he was undergoing dialysis treatment. I might add that the CIA chief-of-station there also paid him a call and--"

"You can leave that one alone, kid."

"Yes, sir. Just this final *caveat*, however. The media is at some point going to speculate how funny it looked that bin Laden family members who were here in this country on 9-11 were allowed to fly out the following day when *no* other flights, in or out of the country, were permitted. The media will ask, what the fuck's up with that?"

"Kid, look. It was a birthday party in Jeddah for one of the

grandkids. They all had to be there. I mean, who wants the wives all pissed off, am I right? We all know how that goes. And besides, George's dad was there. He was the one in the clown suit doing tricks for the rug rats. And then he gets up and sings the old Eli fight song, you know, *Boola Boola*, like the birthday party's for one of his old Skull & Bones buddies or something. Really went over with the folks in Jeddah, you know? And they're looking at him like he lost his fucking mind and--anyway, somebody comes up with questions, we'll send 'em through him, how's that sound?"

"Uh, yes, sir."

"Okay. So much for bin Laden. Now, what about Saddam?"

"Well, sir, our intelligence agencies haven't been able to unearth an iota of evidence that any relation between Saddam and Qaeda exists, other than enmity. And, re the public's perception that, as Mr. Rumsfeld so trenchantly put it last week, that 'A raghead's a raghead, so who gives a shit?'--that's not likely to stand once their initial shock over 9-11 wears off."

Cheney snickered. He sounded exactly like Snidely Whiplash! "It will in Texas, bucko, believe me. The rest, well, we'll see. Anyway, what else? And spare me the details, okay? Just give me the summary of what you think's gonna happen after we blow into Baghdad."

"Well, ah, sir," Herbie said, "in short, we're, uh, fucked."

Cheney went *gargoyle*. "Whattya mean 'fucked' you greasy little cocksucker?"

Herbie blanched but continued on. "Well, sir, again, it's a matter of variance between game plan assumptions and on-the-ground realities. I've heard Mr. Rumsfeld say that the invasion will be a 'cakewalk' and--"

"*Well?*"

"Quite possibly, sir, the invasion itself will be a cakewalk. But any extended American presence will become an unmitigated nightmare for us."

"You little shit! How do you figure? The Shi-ites'll love us for getting Saddam off their back, and they're the majority there, and so

fuck the Sunnis and--"

"Sir, if I may, the Shias will be glad Saddam's gone--and just as happy to see us clear out the day after."

"Sez you. Look--"

"Sir! Let me spell it out for you! if we invade, in too short a time Iraq is going to blow up in our face. The Shias, Sunnis, and Kurds will be at each other's throats and they'll all be shooting at Americans as well. Thousands and tens of thousands of people, most of them Iraqi civilians, will die. Qaeda will enter the country in force for the very first time. The entire Mideast will face increasing seismic disturbances. The enterprise will quickly sap us, militarily, morally, and financially to the tune of hundreds of billions of dollars.

"Meanwhile, the whole Muslim world will begin to boil, in Asia, Africa, and Europe. Most Europeans will denounce us. Latin America will swing to the left. Virtually the entire world will line up against us and, sure as shit stinks, sir, *we will lose this war!* And then, in the wake of the failed pacification of Iraq, financial ruin, and effective consignment to pariah status among nations, well, sir, what then?"

"Kid, you worry too much. Yeah, this is gonna cost bucks, and the liberals will squawk, right along with the rest of the assholes, but so? We run outta money, China will float us some more."

"China? But, sir! The Chinese and the Russians are our pre-eminent rivals in Asia! The war is in fact a pre-emptive strike against them! What if China calls in its markers?"

"We'll bomb them too." Cheney chuckled, providing grist for four more Stephen King novels. "Just kidding, kid. Look, the money that's got your shorts all knotted up? Don't sweat it. We'll make all that up on the back end. We flatten Iraq, we rebuild, simple as that. Halliburton and Bechtel have the contracts sewed up and--"

"Sir--"

"Kid, calm the fuck down, you're making my ears bleed. Look, just one more thing. You sure that nobody's had a peek at this report?"

"Yes, sir, I--"

"Good, good." Cheney actually smiled. It looked like corpse

rictus. Birds in three states fell out of the sky.

Clapping the kid on the back, Cheney said, "Let's step back here for a minute. I want you to see some things that might give you a different perspective on all this. Back here, c'mon."

He led Herbie through a door at the back of the room.

Rummy came over to Cheney's for dinner that night. He asked him, "What's cooking, my man?"

"Roast dork," Cheney said.

