

Money connections between Bush Republicans and Osama bin Laden go way back and the political and economic connections have remained unbroken for 20 years. And what appears to be a "new" alliance with Pakistan is merely a new manifestation of a decades-long partnership in the heroin trade. Conveniently ignored in all of the press coverage since the tragic events of Sept. 11 is the fact that on May 17 Secretary of State Colin Powell announced a gift of \$43 million to the Taliban as a purported reward for its eradication of Afghanistan's opium crop this February. That, in effect, made the U.S. the Taliban's largest financial benefactor according to syndicated columnist Robert Scheer writing in The Los Angeles times on May 22. But -- as we described in FTW's March 2001 issue -- the Taliban's destruction of that crop was apparently the single most important act of economic warfare against U.S. economic interests that the Taliban had ever committed.

So why the gift? Critics of the Gulf War well recall how, just prior to Saddam's invasion of Kuwait, President Bush (Sr.) dispatched Ambassador April Glaspie to visit Saddam with a letter and a "wink and a nod" telling the Iraqi leader that it was OK to invade his smaller neighbor. The May gift from Uncle Sam could well have been sending the same kind of message, along with necessary funds to complete the attacks. Drugs and terrorism go hand in hand. Until February, Afghanistan had been the world's largest producer of opium/heroin, claiming close to 70% of the world's total production. That opium, consumed largely in Western Europe and smuggled through the Balkans, was a direct source of cash deposits in Western financial institutions and markets.

I specifically commented on this at an economic crisis conference in Moscow, Russia on March 7. In my formal statement to the Russian conference I said, "Just before coming to this conference I read in the Associated Press, Agence France Press and other reliable sources that the Taliban has recently eradicated most of its 3000 ton opium crop in Afghanistan. If true, I view this as a form of economic warfare against Russia [and the U.S.] because it would drive opium production more into Southeast Asia and Colombia. However, I now suspect that this will result in a shift of opium production to the Caucasus under the Kurds which will see an increase in smuggling through Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan. I should note that both Vice President Richard Cheney and the designated Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage are members of the US-Azerbaijan Chamber of Commerce. Such a move would have the effect of drastically shortening smuggling routes and costs into Western Europe and of bypassing unstable areas of the Balkans.

I have received additional reports that Uzbekistan is now awash in the opium poppy and, as in the US with the CIA, that Russian military and intelligence agencies facilitate the trade as a means of protecting access to hard currency. The point here is not that the US is totally evil or the only country doing these things. But the US is far and away the most advanced nation when it comes to the use of such methods to achieve superiority. As [Russian economist Michael] Khazin has noted, the US and Britain and Germany started the conflict in Kosovo in 1999 to stave off a collapse of western markets following the Asian collapse of 1997-8. Now Colombia is a last-ditch effort to protect the US markets and European opposition is jeopardizing that plan." The Taliban's actions this year severed the ruling military junta in Pakistan from its primary source of foreign revenues and made bin Laden and the Taliban completely expendable in the eyes of the Pakistani government. It also cut off billions of dollars in revenues that had been previously laundered through western banks and Russian financial institutions connected to them.

Now as US military action will replace the Taliban government and fresh crops will be planted in Afghanistan, the slack in cash flow will assuredly be replaced by dramatically increased opium production in Colombia; the revenues from that effort being needed to maintain the revenue streams into Wall Street. Prior to the WTC attacks, credible sources, including the U.S. government, the IMF, Le Monde and the U.S. Senate placed the amount of drug cash flowing into Wall Street and U.S. banks at around \$250-\$300 billion a year. In that context, the real history of Osama bin Laden, as America's useful terrorist-du-jour reveals a long and continuous history, interwoven with the drug trade and the Bush family, of supporting conflicts that have benefited U.S. military and economic interests. bin Laden

There are direct historical links between Osama bin Laden's business interests and those of the Bush family. On September 15 I received the following message from FTW subscriber, Professor John Metzger of Michigan State University: "We should revisit the history of BCCI, a bank used by the legendary Palestinian terrorist known as Abu Nidal. BCCI was closely tied to American and Pakistan intelligence. Its clients included the Afghan rebels, and the father of Osama bin Laden. The father of bin Laden named Houston investment broker James R. Bath as his business representative in Texas, right after George W. Bush's father became CIA director in 1976. By 1977, Bath invested \$50,000 into junior's first business, Arbusto Energy, while Osama bin Laden would soon become a CIA asset. George W. Bush's FBI director Robert Mueller was part of the Justice Department's questionable investigation of BCCI. (On BCCI, the bin Ladens, and the Bushes, see the books, The Outlaw Bank, A Full Service Bank, and Fortunate Son)."

Further details of the business and financial relationships between the Bush and bin Laden family are found in Peter Brewton's 1992 book The Mafia, CIA and George Bush. BCCI, incidentally, was founded by a Pakistani. Economics Professor Michel Chossudovsky of the University of Ottawa has just completed a detailed history of bin Laden's career detailing his secret funding and logistical support to terrorist organizations beginning from his early CIA-supported roots in the 1980s as a "freedom fighter" through to the present day. Chossudovsky's compelling and well documented article, Who Is Osama Bin Laden? dated Sept 12, 2001 can be found on the Internet at: <http://globalresearch.ca/articles/CHO109C.html>. Bin Laden's role has not just been as a practitioner of

terrorist acts but as a trainer and supplier of terrorist organizations around the world. Included in bin Laden's coterie are terrorist groups linked to the Balkans, Albania, the KLA (a U.S. ally), and rebel groups leading the insurrection against Russia in Chechnya. As FTW described in 1998, and as confirmed by Chossudovsky, the key to understanding U.S. support of bin Laden is to grasp that he has always been controlled by a cutout, the Pakistani government and its intelligence service the ISI. In this manner there has been virtually no direct contact between bin Laden and the CIA. This has served the dual purpose of maintaining his apparent "purity" with his followers and providing plausible deniability for the CIA. The whole underlying pretext for this relationship evaporated with the Taliban's destruction of the opium crop in February. Chossudovsky writes: "The history of the drug trade in Central Asia is intimately related to the CIA's covert operations. Prior to the Soviet-Afghan war, opium production in Afghanistan and Pakistan was directed to small regional markets. There was no local production of heroin."

In this regard [Professor] Alfred McCoy's study confirms that within two years of the onslaught of the CIA operation in Afghanistan, 'the Pakistan-Afghanistan borderlands became the world's top heroin producer, supplying 60 per cent of the U.S. demand. "With the disintegration of the Soviet Union, a new surge in opium production has unfolded. (According to UN estimates, the production of opium in Afghanistan in 1998-99 -- coinciding with the build up of armed insurgencies in the former Soviet republics -- reached a record high of 4600 metric tons. Powerful business syndicates in the former Soviet Union allied with organized crime are competing for the strategic control over the heroin routes. "The ISI's extensive intelligence military-network was not dismantled in the wake of the Cold War. The CIA continued to support the Islamic "jihad" out of Pakistan." ". The Golden Crescent drug trade was also being used to finance and equip the Bosnian Muslim Army (starting in the early 1990s) and the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA). In the last few months there is evidence that Mujhideen mercenaries are fighting in the ranks of the KLA-NLA terrorists in their assaults into Macedonia. ". With regard to Chechnya, the main rebel leaders Shamil Basayev and Al Khattab were trained and indoctrinated in CIA sponsored camps in Afghanistan and Pakistan. In this regard, the involvement of Pakistan's ISI and its radical Islamic proxies are actually calling the shots in this war. "Russia's main pipeline route transits through Chechnya and Dagestan. Despite Washington's perfunctory condemnation of Islamic terrorism, the indirect beneficiaries of the Chechen war are the Anglo-American oil conglomerates which are vying for control over oil resources and pipeline corridors out of the Caspian Sea basin."

The oil and drug connections were the subject of FTW's story, The Bush-Cheney drug Empire in October, 2000. That story is online at <http://www.copvcia.com/stories/previous/bush-cheney-drugs.html>. Both Bush and Cheney are oil men. George Bush, Sr. was Vice President and, by virtue of executive Order 12333, in charge of all U.S. intelligence and narcotics operations from 1981 through 1989. As President from 1989 through 1993, he continued and expanded his control in these areas. Thus, it was Bush (the elder) who directly nourished and nurtured bin Laden's evolution. Dramatic Confirmation From Indian Government The web site of the Indian Embassy in Washington contains dramatic confirmation for these positions. On September 4, 2000, B. Raman, Director of India's Institute for Topical Studies wrote an open letter to the U.S. Congress entitled Pakistan's Noriega's. That eight-page article exposed the depth of Pakistani government involvement in the drug trade. It may be viewed at:

www.indianembassy.org/int_media/saag_september_04_2000.html. The letter said, in part: "For more than a decade, the people of India have been living in a state of half-war and half-peace due to the depredations of a large number of terrorists, outrageously called jihadists, who have been trained, armed and funded and infiltrated into the State of Jammu & Kashmir and other parts of India by Pakistan in order to make the people of India and its security forces bleed in the name of religion. "More people belonging to different religions -- Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists and others -- have been killed in India by these mercenary-terrorists sponsored by the State of Pakistan than by any other terrorist groups anywhere else in the world." "

Many other States have suffered and have been suffering due to the depredations of terrorists, made in and exported from Pakistan and the Taliban-controlled Afghanistan -- [these include] Algeria, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the Central Asian Republics, the Chechnya and Dagestan areas of Russia, the Xinjiang province of China, Bangladesh, the Arakan area of Burma and the southern Philippines..." "After his [1993] removal, [as official head of Pakistani intelligence, trusted advisor to Pakistani leader Gen. Pervez Musharraf] Lt. Gen. Nasir traveled to Somalia, Chechnya, Dagestan, the Central Asian Republics, .China, and the Southern Philippines as a preacher. and helped Islamic organizations, including the group which killed U.S. troops. in Somalia." ".It was he, who, during his tenure as the DG [Director General] of the ISI. has entered into an agreement with the LTTE of Sri Lanka [which secured] LTTE's assistance in smuggling Afghanistan produced heroin in its ships to West Europe, the USA and Canada." ".Another reason for the ISI's helping the LTTE, despite its anti-Muslim policies, was to use it for smuggling heroin to West Europe, the U.S. and Canada. During Zia-ul-Haq's regime in the 1980s, heroin had become a major source of extra revenue not only for the State of Pakistan, especially the ISI and Pakistan's nuclear and missile establishment, but also to many senior officers of the Pakistan Army, including [Musharraf et al]." "The way Mr. Sharif before October 1999 and Gen. Musharraf since then have been using the heroin money to prevent the Pakistani economy from collapsing has not received due attention in the U.S. ..." "If one goes purely by economic indicators, Pakistan's must be in as bad a shape as that of Russia, or even worse, since Russia has been in receipt of Western and IMF assistance." "Where does the money come from? From the smuggling of heroin to West Europe, the U.S. and Canada. The U.S. Government might have stopped economic assistance. from the taxpayers' money. But why should the Noriegas of Pakistan be worried when they get billions of dollars from the heroin sale in the U.S.?. " Vice President Dick Cheney's recent comment that the CIA needs to get in bed with "unsavory characters" is a joke. That's a bed that the CIA has never left. And it's a marriage vow that President Bush has just reaffirmed for all the world to see.