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## Bush Intentionally Let Osama bin Laden Escape

Kathleen Wells

12/17/2009

Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) is a progressive Democrat serving his ninth term in the U.S. House of Representatives. He is a member of the powerful Appropriations Committee and a member on the Subcommittee on Defense.

In 1999 Hinchey wrote an amendment to intelligence reauthorization legislation that forced the declassification of documents that revealed the active role the Nixon Administration -- especially Henry Kissinger-- played in the illegal overthrow of Salvador Allende, the democratically elected president of Chile, in 1973.

He has consistently been one of the most outspoken opponents of the 2003 war in Iraq. And has consistently maintained since 2002, that the Bush Administration intentionally let Osama bin Laden escape capture.

**Kathleen Wells:** You stated recently that the Bush Administration intentionally let Osama Bin Laden escape capture. Can you elaborate on this?

**Congressman Maurice Hinchey:** Well, I think, if you look back at the situation there, you see that there was a set of circumstances that showed clearly that there was no intention to capture [Osama] bin Laden.

And I think the main reason obviously for that was to be able to justify the attack against Iraq. If [Osama] bin Laden had been captured -- the person who initiated and organized the attack of September 11, 2001, against the United States -- then it would have been difficult to say, that in spite of the fact that we have captured the person who initiated that attack, now

we have to attack another country that had nothing to do with that attack.

So, that was the main reason why he wasn't captured. And this isn't anything new. I've been saying this for years - many, many years. It's so interesting to me that now all of a sudden, what I've been saying for years is getting a lot of interesting attention.

It's also true that there have been others who have been saying this as well. And who are saying it more openly, more recently. It's nothing that is revolutionary here or terribly unusual.

**Kathleen Wells:** It is unusual because I hadn't heard it and I was following CSPAN closely, at that time, and I hadn't heard reports that the Bush Administration intentionally let Osama bin Laden escape capture.

However, I did hear you recently on MSNBC and when you say others are saying this do you mean others in Congress?

**Congressman Hinchey:** Me saying this before hadn't gotten a lot of attention. I began saying this back in 2002 - and, I had been saying it quite a bit.

I've been saying it on the bases that there was no justification for attacking Iraq. And that this Congress [the Congress that voted in favor of the Iraq war authorization] should not justify an attack against Iraq, because there was no connection between Iraq and the attack of September 11, 2001.

There was no al-Qaeda in Iraq.

There were a lot of things that had to do with the situation in Iraq and that previous [Bush] Administration and the way in which members of that previous [Bush] Administration had behaved and engaged the government of Iraq, including Donald Rumsfeld, who went to Iraq some time ago, before he was the Defense Secretary in that [Bush] Administration.

I had conversations with him [Donald Rumsfeld] and knew about how military equipment flowed into Iraq, directly from the United States and indirectly from other countries, as a result of the initiation that he [Donald Rumsfeld] was providing. He [Donald Rumsfeld] was doing that on the bases of the request of the then-existing administration [George H.W. Bush Administration], before the election of 1992. So, this is a situation that is very interesting and it hasn't been looked at completely and carefully enough.

One thing that's interesting is a report that came out in 2007 from the United States Special Operations Command. It's called: [2007] History [of The Tora, Bora Episode by The Military Special Operations Command.]

In the context of that report, they talk about the kinds of things that were not done. Things which should have been done, in order to obtain, the capture of [Osama] bin Laden.

**Kathleen Wells:** Are you relying on this report to make your assertion?

**Congressman Hinchey:** Oh, no. I've been asserting this long before this report came out -- as I said I began talking about this back in 2002 and this report came out in 2007.

**Kathleen Wells:** Exactly. So what evidence and/or documentation are you relying on to make this assertion?

**Congressman Hinchey:** What I used to make this assertion back then, was information that I was able to see -- able to have -- that talked about and showed how this situation was not adequately dealt with.

For example, Donald Rumsfeld, the Secretary of Defense, pulled back the military from going after the capture of [Osama] bin Laden. Some [of the documentation was] information that I couldn't specifically identify because of classification issues - things of that nature. But nevertheless, it was very clear what was going on. Now you are seeing a whole host of things coming out.

For example, The Senate Foreign Relations Committee has just put out a report and in the context of that report, they say, "The decisions that opened the door for [Osama] bin Laden's escape to Pakistan -- those decisions -- allowed [Osama] bin Laden to emerge as a potent symbolic figure who continues to attract a steady flow of money and inspire fanatics worldwide."

The other report that I mentioned (the report from 2007) [is the,] 2007 History of The Tora, Bora Episode by The Military Special Operations Command. [This report] asserts that the consequences of not sending troops into Afghanistan to capture [Osama] bin Laden resulted in his escape.

So, that's the situation that we have and if you take a look at some of these things now that are out, you can see the real evidence.

I can quote you as an example, from the executive summary of the [Senate] Foreign Relations Report, it says, "Failure to finish the job represents a lost opportunity that forever altered the course of the conflict in Afghanistan and the future of international terrorism, leaving the American people more vulnerable to terrorism, laying the foundation for today's protracted Afghan insurgency and inflaming the internal strife now endangering Pakistan."

The danger to Pakistan is a critical issue because any danger to Pakistan that succeeds, particularly if it succeeds in the context of the Taliban gaining influence there or even taking it over, means that they are going to be taking over a country that has nuclear weaponry. Allowing this would create a situation that is much, much more dangerous.

The [Senate Foreign Relations] report goes on to say, "Fewer than 100 American commandoes were on the scene with their Afghan allies and calls for reinforcements (they called for reinforcements) to launch an assault were rejected. Requests were also turned down, for U.S. troops to block the mountain paths leading to sanctuary a few miles away in Pakistan. The vast array of American military power, from sniper teams through the most mobile divisions of the Marine Core and the Army -- all of that was kept on the sidelines."

All of that was kept on the sidelines intentionally, in order to make sure that [Osama] bin Laden was not captured. As I said, if he had been captured it would have been very difficult and probably impossible for any justification of an invasion of Iraq.

**Kathleen Wells:** Yes, however, intentionally is different from negligently or recklessly. These reports don't specifically say that these acts constituted an intentional act or omission.

Can you give me a specific document that gave you the knowledge that it was intentional?

**Congressman Hinchey:** It was a whole host of things. I can't give you a specific document that gave me that knowledge, no.

**Kathleen Wells:** If the reason for invading Iraq had no relation to 9-11, what was the motivation?

**Congressman Hinchey:** It's based upon a whole host of things. If you go back to the relationship of the Reagan Administration and the George H.W. Bush Administration, with Iraq, you see a whole different set of circumstances -- you see a direct relationship there. There is a strongly supported assertion that when the American Ambassador was asked by Saddam Hussein what we thought about his going into Kuwait (a military invasion), she came back to him allegedly, which is partly documented, with the assertion of, "no." That whatever he [Saddam Hussein] did, whatever the countries around there did with each other, was there business and it wasn't anything that we were engaged in.

Then, there was the time when Iraq and Iran, prior to the invasion of Kuwait, were at war and during this time, in both the Reagan Administration and the George H.W. Bush Administration, military equipment was supplied to Iraq, directly from the United States and indirectly from China, Chile and South Africa, to give Iraq military equipment by which they could bang the hell out of Iran. A lot of that military equipment was chemical and biological, in addition to other materials.

That's what we need to understand with regards to this interaction. The 1991 invasion by the United States into Iraq and as a result of that, the alleged assertion that Saddam Hussein was intending to try to assassinate George H.W. Bush when he came into Kuwait to get the recognition and crediting for reasserting the freedom of Kuwait against Iraq [provide additional motivation for invading Iraq.] It's that whole set of circumstances there that in all likelihood (I haven't had a conversation with George W. Bush, I haven't heard him say these things and he wouldn't say these things, except if he is talking to [Dick] Cheney or [Donald] Rumsfeld.) When I was talking about the military equipment that went into Iraq, prior to that military equipment going in there, [Donald] Rumsfeld, who then headed a private corporation was asked to go and talk to Saddam Hussein, about how they were going to give him [Saddam Hussein] military weapons to carry out [the things he intended to do with regards to war with Iran] -- he [Donald Rumsfeld] had two visits with him [Saddam Hussein] on two separate occasions.

**Kathleen Wells:** OK, we have the history, but what was the specific motivation to invade Iraq in 2002?

**Congressman Hinchey:** The motivation to specifically invade Iraq was based upon all the things I just said. The interactions that we had with Saddam Hussein, the interactions that the two previous administrations had with Saddam Hussein, the stimulation of the military action between Iraq and Iran and the providing of military weapons to Iraq, through Saddam Hussein -- all of these things.

**Kathleen Wells:** You are speaking to a breakdown in communication. I'm thinking of something specific like: money, a desire to control the region, etc..., do you see?

**Congressman Hinchey:** Well, that came in later. That was part of the motivation. Part of the motivation was the desire to control the region. Part of the motivation was the ability to bring oil companies into Iraq and to obtain the ability to harvest that oil and market it -- that was part of it, too.

And we know that the [Bush] Administration had a lot of close alliances with oil companies.

**Kathleen Wells:** What is your position today on the whereabouts of Osama Bin Laden?

**Congressman Hinchey:** I'm not sure - I'm not even sure that [Osama] bin Laden is still alive. I've been suspecting for the last couple of years, that he is not alive . I do know the physical issues that he had to deal with and he may have succumbed as a result of those physical issues. So, he may not be alive.