

Bessie Wetsell
U of O Newspaper Library
Eugene, OR 97403

HEPPNER

50¢



VOL. 120 NO. 52 10 Pages Wednesday, December 26, 2001 Morrow County, Heppner, Oregon

"Osama Files" include Ione woman

INVESTIGATION

Ibrahim also recalls seeing Arafat with Osama in Afghanistan, by his side when he delivers his messages on TV.

How useful might the files on Arafat have been? Sitting by the pool at the Khartoum Hilton, I asked a senior officer from Egyptian intelligence, who has worked closely with the Mukhabarat, and who also asked not to be named. He said: "They knew all about them, who they were, where they came from. They had copies of their passports, their tickets, they knew where they went. Of course that information could have helped enormously if it's the history of those people."

There are also some inconceivable specifics. During the New York trial of the four men recently convicted of the 1998 bombings, the court heard a lot about a man called Farid Abdullah Mohammed, who set the embassy plot rolling by making two journeys to Nairobi in the spring of 1998. From Khartoum, where the Mukhabarat believed he was working for al-Qaeda, if F.B.I. officials had accepted the offer made by al-Mahdi that February, they would have known this, and at some point during his subsequent murderous odyssey, when he rented a villa in Kerisa,



In response to a request from the Beacon, we started to monitor the media, believe Kenya and then Sudan to trace any infiltration by suspected elements after the Nairobi bombings. I called the embassy and 2 travelers with Pakistani passports. We closed the under surveillance. I managed to meet an appointment involving the American Embassy. They were

"If [the F.B.I.] had taken up my offer in February 1998, they could have prevented the bombings," says Gutbi al-Mahdi.

THE ACCIDENTAL EMBASSY
Lobbyist Janet McElligott couldn't bridge the chasm between the U.S. and Sudan. Above, a note written by Gutbi al-Mahdi and delivered by McElligott to F.B.I. director Louis Freeh relating the arrest of two suspects in the embassy bombings.

Events suggest that by then it was too late. There are uncomfortable historical parallels. By the spring of 1944 the Soviets

Janet McElligott of Ione was featured in an article in January Vanity Fair about efforts to turn over files on Osama bin Laden to the US before the Sept. 11 terror attacks.

According to the January issue of Vanity Fair magazine, former Ione resident Janet McElligott was involved with failed efforts by the Sudanese government to turn over intelligence information to the US that may have helped prevent the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

The six-page article by reporter David Rose lays out a compelling story of how the Sudanese intelligence agency, Mukhabarat, tried on many occasions to turn over files and information on Osama bin Laden and the al-Qaeda terrorist network which, the magazine says, may have prevented the terror attacks.

McElligott was cited as a go-between taking messages and attempting to arrange meetings between the FBI and state department officials and the Mukhabarat.

Because of her contacts in the middle east, and her background as a Washington lobbyist who had worked at the White House under George H. W. Bush, McElligott became a central figure in attempts to turn over the intelligence material, efforts which to her, and the magazine reporter's dismay, failed.

"...she assumed that rational statecraft would, in the end, prevail," the magazine says. "In this she was mistaken. On February 5, 1998, her efforts helped produce perhaps the smokiest of all the smoking guns in this story; a letter direct from Gutbi al-Mahdi of the Mukhabarat to David Williams, chief of the F.B.I.'s Middle East and Africa desk. It read, 'I would like to express my sincere desire to start contacts and cooperation between our service and the F.B.I. I would like to take this opportunity with pleasure to

invite you to visit our country. Otherwise, we could meet somewhere else. Till then I remain, yours truly.'

"Eighteen days later, (the article says on February 23, 1998, Osama bin Laden issued his bloodcurdling fatwa from his hideout in Afghanistan, calling on all Muslims to kill Americans and Jews, adding that civilians were now to be regarded as targets. McElligott followed up the letter with a personal appeal: 'I told them, 'You do realize bin Laden lived there (in Sudan) and they (Mukhabarat) have files on his main people?' There is simply no doubt the F.B.I. knew what was available. The guy I dealt with said, 'I'd give anything to go in there, but they' - meaning the State Department- 'won't let us.'" McElligott quoted the F.B.I. as saying.

The article went on to detail how McElligott tried on other occasions to set up the transfer of bin Laden and al-Qaeda intelligence information from the Sudanese to the US government, each time being rebuffed. On one occasion she arranged for the outgoing Sudan ambassador to meet with a senior FBI official at her home, at which time the official "expressed his deep regret for what had happened and said he hoped that in time the politicians would allow his agency to examine the Sudanese intelligence."

How useful might the files have been to the US? "They knew all about them: (the al-Qaeda)" the magazine quoted a senior Egyptian intelligence officer who worked closely with the Mukhabarat as saying. "who they were, where they came from. They had copies of their

passports, their tickets; they knew where they went. Of course that information could have helped enormously."

Vanity Fair's investigation into what it calls "The Osama Files" caused the magazine to say: "September 11 might have been prevented if the U.S. had accepted Sudan's offers to share its intelligence files on Osama bin Laden and the growing al-Qaeda threat."

WCEDG annual meeting Jan 23

The Willow Creek Valley Economic Development Group will hold its annual meeting Wednesday, Jan 23 at 12 noon at John's Other Place in Heppner. The public is invited to attend.

Last meeting

At its last meeting Dec. 19, the group voted to write a letter of support to the Heppner City Council in favor of the City Hall/Library project. It also voted to endorse the ATV project put forth by the county, and send a letter of support to the county court. The group also agreed to send a letter of support to the Morrow County Planning Commission in favor of land use approval for the proposed race tract project at Boardman.

Correction

A public meeting will be held to gather input from Heppner residents on the proposed library/city hall joint project on Thursday, Jan. 3 at St. Patrick's Senior Center in Heppner, not Jan. 5 as stated in last week's Gazette.

News deadline
5p.m. Friday

Ione School receives excellence award



Tass Morrison from the Oregon Department of Education presents the state school excellence award flag to (left to right) Ione Elementary School Representative Beth Morter, Ione Middle School Student Body President Jennifer Griffith and Ione High School Student Body President Salli McElligott.

The Ione School was honored Thursday as the recipient of the coveted "excellence" award from the Oregon Department of Education.

Tass Morrison, representing the Oregon State Department of Education and herself an Ione graduate and the first female IHS student body president at Ione (class of 1963), was on hand to present the award and a flag to the school.

Oregon State Representative Greg Smith, Heppner, delivered an address commending the school and community. "It's truly an honor to be here," said Smith. "Your school, your community are truly exceptional. You can see you have pride in your community and your school. Of 1028 schools, only 44 received this award and for that you ought to be commended."

Smith went on to note a "correlation between small town living, community pride and academic success." "It's because you folks step up to the plate and make sure every child has access to an equal education," he said.

"You folks are standing up and fighting for your community and your school," continued Smith. "You folks have your priorities right."

Smith also took the opportunity to criticize the state school funding program. "There is something wrong with our state school funding program when our teachers have to use their own money for their classrooms," he said to applause from the assembly.

Current Ione Principal Mike Stuart commended the Ione students, saying, "You are by far the hardest working students I've ever encountered in my 24 years in education," and noted their "work ethic, diligence and perseverance." He also



The Oregon Department of Education excellence award flag was raised at the Ione School in a ceremony Thursday.

recognized the students, the staff, the community and former Principal Dick Allen for the achievements made under his leadership.

"I've never considered myself a leader, but a partner with the students, the staff and the community," replied Allen.

John Rietmann, representing the Morrow County School Board, read a letter of congratulations from school board chair Julie Weikel, who

said, "All of Morrow County is proud of you and your accomplishments."

Letters of congratulations were received from U.S. Representative Greg Walden and U.S. Senator Gordon Smith.

After Morrison presented the "excellence" flag to student body representatives, the assembly adjourned to the flag pole for the raising of the flag.

Public meeting set on library/city hall project

A public meeting will be held to gather input from Heppner residents on the proposed library/city hall joint project on Thursday, Jan. 3 at St. Patrick's Senior Center in Heppner.

Mary Nixon, who works for Rural Development Initiatives and has been hired to facilitate the public meeting, explained that the audience at the public town meeting will be asked to recommend names of individuals to serve on a working committee. The working committee will be comprised of a member from the city council and the Oregon Trail Library Board, an individual who supports the project, an individual who opposes the project and a citizen at large.

This group will address the issues/concerns from the public meeting. It will also develop an objective survey and compile the results of the survey. Nixon said that officials hope that the survey and the public meeting comments will provide the city council and library board with a clear message as to how the community feels about the

project. The committee meetings will be convened and facilitated by Nixon.

When asked why a community resident would attend the town meeting when there will also be a survey, Nixon replied, "The public town meeting is an opportunity for community members to hear both sides of the issues as well as the background information. Participants at the public meeting will also be invited to submit names of people for the working committee. A survey, while another valid tool for gathering input, does not allow participants filling out the survey to express their opinions in a detailed fashion or to hear what other community members are feeling and thinking."

Nixon is a community development coordinator for Rural Development Initiatives Inc. (RDI). She lives in Pendleton and serves small rural communities in Morrow, Umatilla, Union, Wallowa, Baker, Malheur, Harney and Grant counties.

RDI is a private non-profit organization, which since its incorporation 10 years ago, has

helped over 200 communities in Oregon with leadership development, project assistance, facilitation and mediation, planning and regional initiatives, said Nixon. Nixon and other RDI staff members see themselves as "facilitators, teachers, project managers and most importantly as advocates for the success of rural communities".

Funding for Nixon's facilitation services are provided by the Oregon Economic and Community Development Department.

G-T deadline Friday

The deadline for news and advertising for the Wednesday, January 2, Gazette-Times will be Friday, December 28, at 5 p.m. The G-T office will be closed Monday, December 31, and Tuesday, January 1.

The newspaper will be published as usual on January 2.

WE WILL BE OPEN ALL DAY MONDAY, DEC. 31 HAVE A HAPPY NEW YEAR! Morrow County Grain Growers
Lexington 989-8221 • 1-800-452-7396 For farm equipment, visit our web site at www.mcgz.net