



Iran rounded up hundreds of Arabs to help the United States counter al Qaeda after the Sept. 11 attack after they crossed the border from Afghanistan, a former Bush administration official said Tuesday. Many were expelled, Hillary Mann Leverett said, and the Iranians made copies of almost 300 of their passports.

The copies were sent to Kofi Annan, then the secretary-general of the United Nations, who passed them to the United States, and U.S. interrogators were given a chance by Iran to question some of the detainees, Leverett said in an Associated Press interview.

Leverett, a Middle East expert who was a career U.S. Foreign Service officer, said she negotiated with Iran for the Bush administration in the 2001-3 period, and Iran sought a broader relationship with the United States. "They thought they had been helpful on al Qaeda, and they were," she said.

For one thing, she said, Iran denied sanctuary to suspected al Qaeda operatives.

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