

Bin Laden at 1986 arms deal, book says

by UPI

WASHINGTON -- Osama bin Laden and his half-brother went to London in 1986 to discuss buying several surface-to-air missiles for the mujahedin in Afghanistan, a book says. "The Bin Ladens," a newly released book by former Washington Post correspondent and noted bin Laden expert, Steve Coll, says bin Laden and his half brother, Salem, met with "contacts" at the Dorchester hotel in London to negotiate the sale of Russian SA-7 missiles from German arms manufacturer Heckler & Koch. The book alleges the government of Saudi Arabia paid for the weapons and set up the actual sale in South America, The Washington Post said Tuesday. The U.S. and Saudi governments in 1986 supported the mujahedin in their resistance to the occupation of the Afghanistan by the Soviet Union. Though the United States arranged to supply the mujahedin with Stinger missiles to shoot down Russian aircraft, Coll says in the book the Afghans were wary of having too strong a link with the Americans. The book makes several claims, including allegations the former mujahedin and current Taliban leader, Jalauddin Haqqani, got "unilateral" funding from the CIA in the late 1980s. Coll's 2005 Pulitzer Prize-winning "Ghost Wars" examines the rise of the al-Qaida network following the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989.

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