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The day one man infected a community with hatred

Cameron Stewart
IT was the day that changed the life of accused terrorist ringleader Abdul Nacer Benbrika.

INSIDE STORY
mentalists, including Benbrika, a bearded cleric in flowing robes was giving a sermon which many now believe gave birth to radical Islam in Australia.



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mesmerised the group — and Benbrika.
“He spoke out against Arab governments for not being Islamic enough, for not adhering to pure sharia law,” recalls one senior Muslim who asked not to be named.
“He was radical and politicised — we had never heard this stuff

before. His impact was enormous and that is where it all began. This is how the ideology of Abu Bakr (Benbrika) entered Australia. Prior to Abu Qatada's visit, most radicals were just normal guys.”
One of these “normal guys” was Benbrika, an Algerian-born aircraft engineer who had arrived in Australia five years earlier.
He had recently married a young Lebanese woman and was interested in learning more about Islam and making a permanent home in Melbourne's northern

suburbs. But those close to him say Benbrika was both energised and transformed by Abu Qatada's radical and pure doctrinal approach to Islam.
He was also in awe of Qatada, who was the spiritual leader of the Islamic resistance movement in Benbrika's native Algeria.
Despite having no formal religious qualifications, Benbrika determined that he would become a cleric and teach only the purest form of Islam, just like Qatada.
Abu Qatada's visit had also

radicalised many of Benbrika's colleagues, who began to agitate at Preston mosque, Melbourne's largest, for a more radical interpretation of Islam.
“We did not see eye to eye with him (Benbrika),” recalls the imam of the Preston mosque, Sheikh Fehmi. “He took a hardline opinion on religion.”
Sheik Fouad an-Nachar from Preston mosque says that shortly after Abu Qatada's visit, Benbrika provoked a row with the moderates and stormed out, tak-

ing with him a group of hardliners.
Yasser Soliman, former president of the Islamic Council of Victoria, recalls that Benbrika also stopped attending the council's moderate prayer sessions.
Instead, Benbrika rented a house near the Preston mosque where he and a group of fellow Algerians held their prayers.
By this stage, Benbrika's religious teachings were too radical
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Iraq halts trade over AWB deals

Caroline Overington
THE Iraqi Government has suspended all future orders for Australian wheat — deals worth up to \$800 million a year — until the monopoly wheat exporter repays the hundreds of millions of dollars of its money used as kickbacks to prop up the regime of Saddam Hussein.
Controversial Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Ahmed Chalabi told *The Weekend Australian* yesterday that he expected AWB, the former Australian Wheat Board, to pay the new Iraqi Government compensation for the \$290 million AWB sent to a Jordanian trucking group, Alia, that later turned out to be a front company for the dictator.
Mr Chalabi also said he and the new Government believed that AWB must have known that money it paid to Alia under the corrupt oil-for-food program was, in fact, being funnelled to Saddam's regime. “The justifications they are making are lame.”
Iraq's decision to halt purchases of Australian wheat — which Mr Chalabi said was made by the Iraqi Grains Board — has enormous ramifications for the Howard Government.
The wheat contracts are among Australia's most important export deals, and it was the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade that gave AWB permission to start making payments to Alia.
Those payments rocketed into the hundreds of millions, and



AWB made most of them just as John Howard was making plans to send Australian troops to Iraq to depose Saddam.
The newly appointed head of the Howard Government's inquiry into the scandal, former NSW Supreme Court judge Terence Cole, yesterday would not rule out calling government witnesses to explain their role in the kickback scheme, despite the Prime Minister saying there was no reason to suspect his Government of wrongdoing.
AWB, which sold \$2.3 billion worth of wheat to Iraq under the oil-for-food program, admits making the payments to Alia. However, it insists it thought they were for transport costs and that it did not know they were going straight to Saddam.
A UN investigation found the payments from AWB totalled 14 per cent of all kickbacks received by the regime under the program, with the Australian company paying five times more than any other company in the world.
Mr Chalabi said Australia

should be prepared to compensate Iraq for the money that found its way to Saddam and officials of his regime.
“I don't want to be specific but they should organise compensation, because that money — the \$US220 million (that Saddam skimmed from Australian wheat contracts) — belonged to Iraq and to the Iraqi people,” he said from Washington DC.
Mr Chalabi is a highly controversial figure. He supplied the Bush administration with much of the flawed intelligence that enabled the US to make a case for war against Saddam. Most of the information was later found to be false and, after the war, the US announced a criminal inquiry into allegations that Mr Chalabi was passing secret information to Iran, a US enemy.
He is seeking to rehabilitate his image, and yesterday was meeting US Vice-President Dick Cheney and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.
Last month, he announced that US farmers — long shut out of the Iraqi wheat market — had won a contract to supply 1 million tons of wheat to Iraq. It was the first time in almost two decades that US farmers had beaten Australian farmers to such a lucrative Iraqi contract.
AWB signed a \$US147 million contract in August for the delivery of 650,000 tonnes of wheat to Iraq, which is in the process of being shipped. AWB spokesman Peter McBride said the company had received no official signal from Iraq on future wheat sales.

Stop navel-gazing, Labor told

Dennis Shanahan
Political editor
LABOR'S leadership has called for ALP MPs to drop side issues such as terrorists' rights and to stop “navel-gazing” and having “unnecessary blues” in a new strategy to become a credible alternative to the Howard Government.
Kim Beazley has warned his caucus colleagues that John Howard's fourth-term agenda has raised the stakes so high that the next election was a “must

win” for Labor. He has told them to stick to the “main game” because some of them appear more interested in the rights of terrorists than ordinary workers.
The Opposition Leader has been buoyed by Labor's parliamentary success last week on industrial relations and told *The Weekend Australian* he doesn't want the party to lose its blue-collar support over side issues.
“This means to win the next election we are going to require a level of teamwork which we have not been able to achieve in the

last 10 years,” Mr Beazley said. “It is an absolute must for us at the next two years.”
Research on Labor candidates at the last election shows there is a complete inversion of ALP candidates' views and the public's, with two-thirds of Labor candidates saying they were on the far left while they thought the electorates were overwhelmingly to their “right”.
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Socceroos' dreams go on the line again



2005: Harry Kewell, Australia's highest-profile player, prepares for tomorrow's first-leg qualifier in Montevideo



1974: Australians in Germany



1997: Against Iran in Melbourne



2001: Despair in Uruguay

Robert Luseticich
Montevideo, Uruguay
FOUR years since phlegm flew in Uruguay, eight years since Iranian heartbreak at the MCG and 32 years since they were last allowed to play with the big boys, another chapter in the tortured history of the Socceroos is about to be written.
The Australians have touched down in Montevideo, each knowing in their hearts that if they come out of the clash against Uruguay unscathed, or even victorious, they will have taken a giant step towards next year's World Cup finals in Germany.
But if the game does not go to plan, it will not only be the end of a dream, but also the end of their coach, Australia's contract with master tactician Guus Hiddink expires at the end of Wednesday



Mastermind: Guus Hiddink
night's return match with Uruguay at Sydney's Telstra Stadium. Should Australia not qualify for the finals, the Dutchman will certainly be gone.
His agent, Cees van Nieuwenhuizen, confirmed other teams were circling like vultures.
The Socceroos' last and only

appearance at the World Cup finals came in 1974, in West Germany, but a litany of close calls have since served to unite a country previously indifferent to the code. Now they return to Montevideo's intimidating Estadio Centenario, the stadium in which their dreams were buried by Uruguay four years ago.
There is unlikely to be a repeat of the ugly scenes that marred Australia's arrival in Montevideo then. A handful of agitators spat at the players as they boarded the team bus as part of a co-ordinated attempt to intimidate them. It worked. The Socceroos played woefully, losing 3-0 after winning 1-0 in the first leg in Melbourne.
Montevideo police have promised presidential-level security for the Australians this time. But tomorrow morning, Australian time, the skulduggery of four

years ago will be forgotten, as will the last-minute draw to Iran that ended the Australian dream in Melbourne in 1997.
“I think we're a lot more confident this time,” said defender Tony Vidmar, who, at 35, will play his Australian record fourth World Cup final qualifier.
Despite an impressive list of coaching credentials — including taking The Netherlands and South Korea to World Cup semi-finals — Hiddink plays down his own contribution. “I'm not thinking, ‘If we win, I'm a miracle man,’” he said. Come Wednesday's return leg in Sydney, if the planets align correctly, he might be the only person in Australia with that view.
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