

Originally published 10:47 p.m., December 3, 2004, updated 12:00 a.m., December 4, 2004

Kerik has long history of confronting danger

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Bernard B. Kerik, as New York's police commissioner, became known after the September 11 attacks as the fierce, sorrowful face of his reeling department. But the former undercover cop has been confronting danger for decades.

Now President Bush, who yesterday nominated Mr. Kerik to replace Tom Ridge as secretary of the Homeland Security Department, is counting on him to help defend the nation's borders from terrorist attacks.

Mr. Kerik's expertise as a crime fighter and his oversight of the NYPD's heroic efforts during the 2001 terrorist attacks earned him international fame and a role as a special adviser to the Iraqi government. In that job, he helped establish a fledgling police force after the toppling of Saddam Hussein.

When former Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani began searching in 2000 for someone to lead the NYPD, he selected Mr. Kerik -- a fiercely loyal lieutenant who still spoke with the low grumble of a street cop.

About a year after his appointment, Mr. Kerik found himself racing to the World Trade Center in Lower Manhattan amid reports that a plane had struck one of the towers. Soon afterward, as the second plane hit the south tower, sending a shower of rubble and burning debris toward him, Mr. Kerik found himself running for his life.

More recently in Iraq, Mr. Kerik was dubbed the "Baghdad Terminator" after summarily dismissing a newly reinstated Iraqi official who turned out to be a member of Saddam's Ba'ath

Party.

Mr. Kerik, 49, grew up without knowing his mother, a tough youth in Paterson, N.J., where he usually cut classes from Eastside High School. He learned years later that his mother was a convicted prostitute, possibly killed by a pimp.

Mr. Kerik dropped out of high school, and after getting an equivalency degree he joined the Army, where he became a military policeman stationed in South Korea.

Within a few years, he left the military to work private security in Saudi Arabia. There, he got an introduction to the type of security measures used to protect VIPs from terrorists.

After a stint supervising a jail in New Jersey, he became a New York police officer, starting out walking a beat in Times Square when it was still largely the domain of seedy characters and street hustlers. He was promoted to detective and worked undercover arresting drug dealers. He grew a long ponytail to look the part.

In the 1990s, he was tapped to clean up New York's long-troubled jail system. On his watch as the city's corrections chief, stabbings and fights at the notorious Riker's Island dropped precipitously.

After leaving the department, Mr. Kerik joined Giuliani Partners, becoming a security consultant and then signing on to help form the Iraqi police force.

During the Republican National Convention this past summer, he vociferously backed Mr. Bush as the right man to lead the war on terror.

Mr. Kerik has two young daughters with his second wife, Halah, and a grown son. He fathered another daughter while stationed in South Korea.

[Ads by Google](#) 

[CNN USA News](#)

[La Daily News](#)

[Britney Spears News](#)

[Cuba News](#)

[News 4](#)