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AT THE
CENTER
OF THE
STORM

THE CIA DURING AMERICA'S TIME OF CRISIS



WITH A NEW POSTSCRIPT BY THE AUTHOR

GEORGE TENET

WITH BILL HARLOW

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of the **STORM**

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A hardcover edition of this book was published in 2007 by HarperCollins Publishers.

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FIRST HARPER PERENNIAL EDITION PUBLISHED 2008.

Designed by Leah Carlson-Stanisc

The Library of Congress has catalogued the hardcover edition as follows:
Tenet, George.

At the center of the storm : my years at the CIA / George Tenet with Bill Harlow.—1st ed.

xxii, 549 p., [16] p. of plates : ill. ; 24 cm.

Includes index.

ISBN: 978-0-06-114778-4

ISBN-10: 0-06-114778-8

1. Tenet, George, 1953—. 2. United States, Central Intelligence Agency—Officials and employees—Biography. 3. Intelligence officers—United States—Biography. 4. Intelligence service—United States. 4. United States—Foreign relations—1993–2001. 5. United States—Foreign relations—2001—. I. Harlow, Bill. II. Title.

JK468.L6 T42 2007
327.12730092B 22

2007280315

ISBN 978-0-06-114779-1 (pbk.)

08 09 10 11 12 DIX/RRD 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

For Stephanie and John Michael, my wife and son,
who accepted and shared the privilege and challenge of public service,
and reminded me each day that the sacrifices were worth it.
Their love and understanding are my greatest reward.

MI-5; and David Manning, Prime Minister Blair's foreign policy advisor. I still don't know how they got flight clearance into the country, but they came on a private plane, just for the night, to express their condolences and to be with us. We had dinner that night at Langley, an affirmation of the special relationship between our two nations and as touching an event as I experienced during my seven years as DCI.

Signs of support kept pouring in. King Abdullah and Queen Rania of Jordan called to express their condolences. Gen. Mohamed Mediene, the Algerian intelligence chief, was in Washington when al-Qa'ida struck. Like Avi Dichter, he knew up close the pain and challenge of terrorism, and he, too, could not have conducted himself in a more dignified manner or been more sympathetic to our suffering.

All of these people knew how much 9/11 had struck at the core of each of us at CIA. They'd been there; they'd shared our same fears; they knew that each of the thousands of dead was a personal defeat for us. And I'm sure they would have understood as well as anyone outside CIA the reaction so many of us—at the leadership level and in the ranks—had in the hours and days immediately after the attack. We're going to run these bastards down no matter where they are, we told ourselves. We're going to lead, and everybody else is going to follow. And that's what we set out to do.

CHAPTER 10

"We're at War"

On September 12, the president chaired an NSC meeting and stressed in stronger terms what he had said on television the evening before: he wanted not just to punish those behind the previous day's attacks but to go after terrorists and those around the globe who harbored them.

The next day, in the White House Situation Room, I briefed the president and War Cabinet for the first time on our war plan. "We're prepared to launch in short order an aggressive covert-action program that will carry the fight to the enemy, particularly al-Qa'ida and its Taliban protectors," I said. "To do that, we will deploy a CIA paramilitary team inside Afghanistan to work with opposition forces, most notably the Northern Alliance, and to prepare the way for the introduction of U.S. Special Forces." There were challenges, I told the Cabinet. Ahmed Masood's assassination on September 9 had left the Northern Alliance without a powerful and widely respected central figure, but we had technology on our side and an extensive network of sources already in country, and we would succeed.

Cofer Black followed me with a PowerPoint presentation that detailed our covert action capability, projected deployments, and the like. As I had, Cofer made it clear that we would be taking on not just al-Qa'ida but the Taliban as well. The two were inseparable unless the Taliban chose to make the separation itself, and that seemed unlikely, despite our best efforts to drive a wedge between them. We would be undertaking war, in short, not just a search-and-destroy mission for Bin Ladin and his lieutenants—war against an enemy that for the most part would rather blow

itself up than be captured. That meant casualties on their side and on ours. Cofer made no effort to predict how many Americans might be killed, but he did make certain the president understood that the mission wouldn't be bloodless. Bush assured him that he did.

"How quickly could we deploy the CIA teams?" the president asked.

"In short order," Cofer answered.

"How quickly, then, could we defeat the Taliban and al-Qa'ida?"

"A matter of weeks," Cofer told him.

I didn't think that was possible; and in fact it wasn't. The president had been disappointed to learn that the Pentagon had no contingency plan in place for going after al-Qa'ida and the Taliban. George Bush was going a hundred miles an hour by then, completely engaged. If you couldn't keep up, he wasn't interested in you.

The point Cofer and I both wanted to make was that this war would be driven by intelligence, not the pure projection of power. The challenge wasn't to defeat the enemy militarily. The challenge was to find the enemy. Once that was done, defeating him would be easy.

On Friday, September 14, we refined our plan further so that Afghanistan was only the opening act of a comprehensive strategy for combating international terrorism. Then we did a dry run in preparation for my presenting the plan the next day at Camp David. That evening, the NSC sent us stacks of papers to review before we arrived at Camp David, input from what must have been every stakeholder in the intelligence and military sectors of government. I remember thinking as I waded through them that hundreds of trees had been killed for no good reason. The papers were irrelevant, as near as I could tell, to anything I was going to say, and by then I was so confident in the rightness of our approach that I had little use for the half measures and unformed strategies that other agencies were beginning to trot out.

Saturday, September 15, accompanied by John McLaughlin and Cofer Black, I briefed the War Cabinet at Camp David. The president was sitting directly opposite me across the big square table in the rustic Camp David conference room, with the vice president and Colin Powell on either side of him. Others present included Don Rumsfeld and Paul Wolfowitz, sitting side by side, Condi Rice, Steve Hadley, Rich Armitage, Attorney General John Ashcroft, and the new FBI director, Robert Mueller.

The title of the briefing was "Destroying International Terrorism." The heading on the first page read: "The 'Initial Hook': Destroying al-Qa'ida and Closing the Safe Haven." Cofer Black and I launched into the distinct pieces of the plan.

We had to close off Afghanistan by providing immediate assistance to the Northern Alliance and their remaining leaders, and accelerate our contacts with southern Pashtun leaders, including six senior Taliban military commanders, who appeared willing to remove Mullah Omar from power. This built on work we had begun in early 2001 to engineer a split between the Taliban leadership and Bin Ladin and his Arab fighters. We had to seal off Afghanistan's borders by directly engaging the Iranians, Turks, Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Pakistanis.

We told the president that our only real ally on the Afghan border thus far had been Uzbekistan, where we had established important intelligence-collection capabilities and had trained a special team to launch operations inside Afghanistan. We knew that Uzbekistan would be our most important jumping-off point in aiding the Northern Alliance.

We raised the importance of being able to detain unilaterally al-Qa'ida operatives around the world. We understood that to succeed both inside and outside Afghanistan we would have to use the large infusion of money coming our way to take the activities of our foreign partners to new levels in operating against al-Qa'ida.

Some of our most important regional allies could create a cadre of officers who could blend seamlessly into environments where

it would be difficult for us to operate on our own. We told the president that we would be relentless in maximizing the number of human agents reporting on terrorist organizations. We also proposed immediate engagement with the Libyans and Syrians to target Islamic extremists.

We suggested using armed Predator UAVs to kill Bin Ladin's key lieutenants, and using our contacts around the world to pursue al-Qa'ida's sources of funding, through identifying non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and individuals who funded terrorist operations.

We were going to strangle their safe haven in Afghanistan, seal the borders, go after the leadership, shut off their money, and pursue al-Qa'ida terrorists in ninety-two countries around the world. *We were ready to carry out all these actions immediately, because we had been preparing for this moment for years.* We were ready because our plan allowed us to be. With the right authorities, policy determination, and great officers, we were confident we could get it done. Others may have seen it as a roll of the dice. But we were ready, and the president was going to take the chance.

Sure, it was a risky proposition when you looked at it from a policy maker's point of view. We were asking for and we would be given as many authorities as CIA had ever had. Things could blow up. People, me among them, could end up spending some of the worst days of our lives justifying before congressional overseers our new freedom to act. But everything we asked for that day at Camp David and in subsequent days was based on the solid knowledge of what we needed. Nobody knew this target like we knew it. Others hadn't been paying attention to this for years as we had been doing. And nobody else had a coordinated plan for expanding out of Afghanistan to combat terrorism across the globe. Operationally, as far as we were concerned, the risk was acceptable. That didn't mean we weren't going to lose people—Cofer had made that crystal clear—but this was the right way to go, and we were the right people to do it.

The morning session at Camp David was freewheeling, all over the place. Sometime around noon, the president suggested we take a break. When we reassembled that afternoon, the discussion was much more directed, and the president was in full agreement with just about everything we had said during the day. "That's great," he said about our war plan. The whole mood was one of growing optimism.

The next day, September 16, I fired off a memo titled "We're at War" to top officials at my own shop and throughout the intelligence community, which said in part:

There can be no bureaucratic impediments to success. All the rules have changed. There must be an absolute and full sharing of information, ideas, and capabilities. We do not have time to hold meetings to fix problems—fix them—quickly and smartly. Each person must assume an unprecedented degree of personal responsibility.

Four days later, on September 20, in an address to the nation before a joint session of Congress, the president said, "Our war on terror begins with al-Qa'ida, but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped, and defeated." By then, as I remember, the president had already granted us the broad operational authority I had asked for.

Now that we had been thrown on to a war footing, issues that had seemed intractable just days earlier suddenly seemed far less set in concrete. The Pakistan problem is one such example. On September 13, Rich Armitage invited Pakistani ambassador Maleeha Lodhi and Mahmood Ahmed, the Pakistan intelligence chief, who was still in Washington, over to the State Department and dropped the hammer on them. The time for fence-sitting was over. There would be no more games. George Bush had said in his 9/11 address to the nation that the United States would make no distinction between terrorists and the nations that protected them.

Pakistan was either with us or against us. Specifically, Armitage demanded that Pakistan begin stopping al-Qa'ida agents at its border, grant the United States blanket overflight and landing rights for all necessary military and intelligence operations, provide territorial access to American and allied intelligence agencies, and cut off all fuel shipments to the Taliban. Armitage is a bull of a man. Mahmood must have felt like he had been run over by a stampede by the time he left Rich's office. I seriously doubt, however, that Rich actually threatened to "bomb Pakistan back to the stone age," as General Mahmood reportedly later told President Musharraf. Meanwhile, I was playing the good cop—or at least a better one—in my meetings with Mahmood. Couldn't he at least meet with Mullah Omar and make it crystal clear to him that the Taliban was going to pay a terrible price if it insisted on continuing to protect al-Qa'ida and Bin Ladin?

The president, too, became engaged in the matter in a way he had never been before the attacks. At the September 13 morning briefing, he asked me for a country-by-country review of the fight against Islamic extremism and Bin Ladin. What had their liaison services done in the past year to help us? What more could we ask of them? Would a call from the president or some other senior government official be useful? As always, Pakistan was at or near the top of the list.

All those factors played a role in edging Mahmood toward our position, but the simple fact that he was in Washington when the attacks occurred probably had the greatest influence. He saw the plume of smoke rising from the Pentagon. He watched the reaction all around him, and he understood as he never could have if he had been following events from Islamabad how deep and viscerally Americans felt the attacks. "It was like a wounded animal," is how he put it to us. That didn't stop him from continuing to throw up lots of cautions—even after the attacks, Mahmood was still trying to save the Taliban—but now he knew that if we did not get satisfaction, we were still coming after al-Qa'ida no matter who objected or who tried to stand in the way.

That, I'm sure, is why Mahmood finally did agree to meet with Mullah Omar after he returned home. As a result, Omar called a two-day ulama—a kind of national religious council—to decide what to do about al-Qa'ida and our demand that the Taliban stop sheltering terrorists. Ultimately, of course, that availed us nothing, despite some initial optimism on our part. Bin Ladin wasn't handed over, which assured that the full might of the U.S. military would come crashing down on the Taliban's head. But across the border in Pakistan, Pervez Musharraf clearly got the message we were sending him and, I can only assume, the message Mahmood sent back to Pakistan immediately after the attacks. Within hours of Armitage's delivering his ultimatums, and despite some violent internal opposition, Musharraf agreed to them. In this period, Pakistan had done a complete about-face and become one of our most valuable allies in the war on terrorism. On October 8, as a final measure of his determination to aid America in rooting out al-Qa'ida, Musharraf replaced Mahmood Ahmed as head of the ISI, even though he had been instrumental in Musharraf's rise to power. Like us, Musharraf must have concluded that in the new global reality, his intel chief was just too close to the enemy. Whatever the reason, I've always considered Musharraf's reversal to be the most important post-9/11 strategic development after the takedown of the Afghan sanctuary itself.

Hard on the heels of 9/11, we also ramped up our own intelligence collection procedures. In normal times, principal agents gather information via runners who have penetrated into or near the heart of an organization of interest. Episodically, runners and the agents who control them meet, information gets exchanged, and whatever qualifies even marginally as "intelligence" is passed up the chain, either directly to the analysts back at Langley or via the remote chain of command that the principal agents report to. Like all bureaucratic models, this one has its drawbacks, principally of time—working even fast channels creates enough friction to sometimes turn fresh news stale—but it does provide maximum security for all involved.

If 9/11 had taught us anything, however, it was that we couldn't let the people who were dedicated to our destruction sit comfortably in their safe havens while we followed the usual routines and employed the normal safeguards. We needed real-time reporting from the field, and to get it we threw out the book.

We were beefing up our contingent in Pakistan by the hour. Carpenters hammered and sawed through the middle of the night to create new offices, including one room where we had phones lined up to receive calls, each one marked with an index card so the duty officer would know who was checking in and what language—Farsi, Dari, whatever it was—would be needed to take the message.

We made our own pass at coopting the Taliban. As Mahmood was preparing for his meeting with Mullah Omar, Bob Grenier, a senior CIA officer in the region, traveled to a hotel in the mountains of Baluchistan, in Pakistan, to meet with Mullah Osmani, the commander of the Taliban's Khandahar Corps, a man then widely acknowledged to be the second-most powerful figure in the movement, next to Mullah Omar. The general and his small entourage had traveled overland from Khandahar. Surrounded by the luxuries of a five-star hotel, and with one of the general's aides taking painstaking notes so that the proceedings could be carried back to Omar, Grenier first explained the obvious: al-Qa'ida was going to pay dearly for what had been done to the United States, and if the Taliban stood in the way, it would suffer equally. Then he proposed multiple solutions. The Taliban could turn Bin Ladin over to the United States for prosecution. If that violated their religious obligation to be good hosts, they could administer justice themselves, in a way that clearly took him off the table. Or if they wanted to save face altogether, they could stand aside and let the Americans find Bin Ladin and extricate him on their own. That night, Bob slept fitfully in a hotel room directly across the hall from Osmani—"a stone-cold killer," as he describes him—and the next morning he departed and filed a report that reads like a chapter from a spy novel.

When I carried it to the White House, President Bush read the report with rapt attention.

Not surprisingly, Omar spurned our suggestions, so in a subsequent October 2 meeting with Osmani at a villa in Baluchistan, Grenier proposed an alternative solution: overthrowing Omar. Osmani could secure Khandahar with his corps, seize the radio station there, and put out a message that the al-Qa'ida Arabs were no friends of the Afghans and had brought nothing but harm to the country and that Bin Ladin must be seized and turned over immediately. That, too, came to nothing, but just to make the proposal to a killer such as Osmani took considerable guts on Grenier's part.

While we were accelerating intelligence-gathering and doing our best to turn the screws on al-Qa'ida and the Taliban, we were also loosening constraints on our own people and their imaginations. In less than a century, warfare had evolved from massed armies and trench-to-trench battles to guerrilla confrontations and mutually assured destruction to the jihadist-terrorist model that dominates our own time. To keep up, we had to toss out old systems and shake loose from outdated stereotypes.

We had worked hard prior to 9/11 to break down the old protocols, to make ourselves less of a top-down organization. CIA has one of the deepest and most varied pools of talent in the world; our field officers have done things that you will not read about in spy novels. To me, it made no sense to bring a deputy director or associate director to a meeting with, say, the president, just because rank seemed to demand it. I wanted to take the person closest to the action, the one with hands-on experience, to tell the commander in chief what was really happening. Sometimes I had to drag them along, especially if they had just flown in from some hot spot on the far side of the world and wanted a good shower and a day to sleep, but for the most part, I think, they took it as a sign of respect for what they had done and sacrificed, and for the knowledge they had gained as a result.

Post-9/11, we redoubled that effort. I'd show up at the White

House or at Camp David with people with dirt under their nails and in rumpled clothes, their having just gotten off an airplane returning from the war zone. No government bureaucracy can ever be entirely flat, but those of us in the top positions at CIA worked hard to make our bureaucracy as horizontal as it could be.

We did essentially the same thing with our officers in the field—we gave them the go-ahead to make calls on their own at the point of contact with the enemy. Flattening the authority pyramid gave us real-time decision making. In part, we had no choice. Terrorism wasn't just al-Qa'ida. If there was to be war—and that seemed inevitable—it wouldn't be fought only in Afghanistan. We were facing a worldwide threat matrix, and we had to respond globally with a labor pool that was already stretched perilously thin.

As the fall of 2001 went on, we would meet daily at headquarters to review the threat reporting—what we'd heard about over the last day, whether we'd notified those who were threatened, what we were doing about the threats. It was amazing how often we would pick up a lead in, say, South America about someone in Yemen we wanted to take off the street. Terrorists are as interconnected as the rest of us in the borderless cyber world. If the operation was high risk, John McLaughlin or I would have to make the call to go ahead. Far more often than not, though, the call would be made at a lower level or out in the field. We gave our people plenty of running room because they needed it, because we made sure they were fully briefed about what the Agency was trying to achieve and because they were, in the overwhelming majority, incredibly competent. The war in Afghanistan only accelerated that trend. If we had tried to micromanage that roll across the desert from the seventh floor of headquarters, we would still be on the road to Kabul today.

Around midnight on September 12, after a late dinner with the British intelligence chiefs who'd flown over to express their condolences, I was sitting in my office kicking ideas around with Jami Miscik, our second-most senior analyst at the time. I told her

that I wanted to create a group within CIA whose sole purpose in life would be to think contrarian thoughts. The cliché in Washington is to "think outside the box," but I didn't want us to get just beyond the edge of the ordinary. I wanted people so far out of the box they would be in a different zip code. Jami loved the idea, and within fifteen minutes or so, we had dubbed the group the "Red Cell."

We picked out participants as we sat there, called them that night despite the late hour, and told them to be in Jami's office at eight the next morning. One of the leaders was Paul Frandano, a Harvard-trained senior analyst with a goatee and a liking for colorful bow ties. Not your typical academic, Paul has a mischievous sense of humor and delights in contrarian thinking. Our goal was to free some of our best people from purely objective considerations. These were men and women steeped in analysis. Their intellectual foundation was built solidly on fact, or as close to "fact" as intelligence work often gets. Now we asked them to take an imaginative leap from that, to try to get inside the mind and imagination of our enemy. Over the months ahead, we gave them a variety of specific topics to write about. Among them: "How Usama Might Try to Sink the U.S. Economy," "Deconstructing the Plots—An Approach to Stopping the Next Attack," and everyone's favorite, "The View from Usama's Cave." The latter—issued on October 27 and number twenty-two in the series—gave Red Cell participants a chance to speculate on what was going through Usama bin Ladin's mind and what he might be saying to his key lieutenants three weeks into the U.S. attacks on Afghanistan. Among the quotes it imagined for UBL were these: "I see no need to rush out with new strikes against America" and "I will give more operational scope to my lieutenants. I will instruct them to hold to my standards, but they will make their own decisions about when to strike."

Every Red Cell report was accompanied by a statement on the left-hand side of the front page: "In response to the events of 11 September, the Director of Central Intelligence commissioned

CIA's Deputy Director for Intelligence to create a 'red cell' that would think unconventionally about the full range of relevant analytic issues. The DCI Red Cell is thus charged with taking a pronounced 'out-of-the-box' approach and will periodically produce memoranda and reports intended to provoke thought rather than to provide authoritative assessment." For all I know the other government agencies who received the reports thought we'd gone round the bend, but I believe the reports worked extraordinarily well, in terms of both their imaginative content and the insight they offered into the real world. The events of September 11 weren't business as usual; we couldn't begin to shape our response in the usual way. To my mind, at least, that spirit had a domino effect throughout CIA in the days and weeks after 9/11.

Our December 2000 Blue Sky memo was the template for the war plan against al-Qa'ida that we would set out to follow within hours of the first plane hitting the World Trade Center. Ever since that template had first been laid out, a group of specialists from our Counterterrorism Center had been massaging and refining the plan, and by 9/11 they had it as right as anything can be in an undefined and constantly changing war theater. I'll never forget what one of our top Afghan strategists, a much-decorated veteran of the Agency, told me after the war there had been fought and won, because it encapsulates everything I feel about the campaign and the great pride I take in having the opportunity to serve with such people: "What I thought was really remarkable about the Bin Ladin program," he said, "wasn't just the hard work, the people going around the clock, but their intellectual development. They were able to coordinate all these different pieces and work with liaisons and send teams out. It was remarkably complex, and I think they paved the way for the successes we're having today. No one else in the U.S. government had ever done that—this is really the beginning of the evolving global battlefield—and a little team down in CTC basically figured this out and set the

course for how we wage counter CIA-centric focus terrorism war on the global battlefield."

I couldn't agree more. Maybe it's my own obsession, but I can't stress this enough. We—CIA, the intelligence community, investigative bodies, the government at large—missed the exact "when and where" of 9/11. We didn't have enough dots to connect, and we'll always have to live with that. But at CIA we knew al-Qa'ida was coming, and afterward we took the fight to them in a way that I feel certain Usama bin Ladin and his lieutenants and protectors never expected in their worst-case scenarios.

On September 27, sixteen days after the World Trade Center and the Pentagon had been hit, we inserted our first covert teams into Afghanistan. Less than two and a half months later, a core group of ninety CIA paramilitary officers, along with a small number of Special Forces units, in combination with Afghan militias and supported by a massive aerial bombardment by the U.S. military, had defeated the Taliban and killed or captured one quarter of Usama bin Ladin's top lieutenants, including his military commander, Mohammed Atef, a key player in the 9/11 attacks. Kabul had been liberated, and Hamid Karzai named president by a national council. Afghanistan would be CIA's finest hour.

For years I had been trying to convince two administrations that the terrorist threat was seamless—that what had happened overseas to our East African embassies and the USS *Cole* could happen here. Now the seamlessness could no longer be ignored. "There" and "here" had become the same place. The world was one single war theater.

John McLaughlin remembers my calling him from the White House sometime shortly after the attacks and saying, "We have to put down on paper what we think al-Qa'ida's targets are. I know we don't know—but place your bets." We got all our top people around the table, ran through all the possibilities, and came up with a potential hit list. High on it were symbols of

American culture such as movie studios, amusement parks, and sports stadiums, and transportation hubs such as airports, harbors, and bridges. Corporate headquarters and other elements of the economic system were also listed along with military sites; the energy infrastructure, especially targets that would make a visible statement about energy dependence; icons of our national identity (the Washington Monument, the Statue of Liberty, even Mount Rushmore); and the nodes of the global telecommunications central nervous system, including the Internet and electronic bank transactions. We also noted that Bin Ladin often took years to plan his attacks and liked to return to the same targets, as witnessed by the World Trade Center. It would be reckless to provide more details—the last thing I want is to do the terrorists' work for them—but the effect of seeing so many prime targets in one four- or five-page report was galvanizing.

Based on our assessment, I called Jack Valenti, then head of the Motion Picture Association of America, and told him to make sure his industry was buttoned down. I also met with people such as Michael Eisner from Disney; Gary Bettman, the commissioner of the National Hockey League; and National Basketball Association commissioner David Stern; to urge them to step up security at their venues.

Our stark assessment, I believe, played a large part in the president's conclusion that somebody needed to be paying attention full time to protecting Americans inside our own borders, and in the subsequent decision to establish a Department of Homeland Security. For years, we at CIA had been playing offense against the terrorists overseas, but no one had been playing defense against them at home. It's an old axiom among football coaches: offense alone never wins.

The president asked John McLaughlin in late September, "Why do you think nothing else has happened?" To me, there's no mystery. We'd done what the president had asked: we all were up on our toes. It's hard to prove a proposition by the absence, in this case, of follow-up attacks on American soil, but I can't help

but think that somewhere along the way in those first weeks after 9/11, someone who was supposed to do something crucial—buy forged passports, say, for a second team of terrorists, or sneak some kind of weapon or explosive over the border—was discouraged or disrupted or otherwise thwarted by what we and the FBI and the border patrol and city police forces and lots of other newly alert Americans were doing. In the battle against terrorism, I truly believe that heroes are everywhere.

Into the Sanctuary

We need to go in fast, hard and light," we told the president. "Everyone, including al-Qa'ida and the Taliban, are expecting us to invade Afghanistan the same way the Soviets did in the 1980s. Bin Ladin and his followers expect a massive invasion. They believe we will withdraw in the face of casualties and never engage them in hand-to-hand combat. They are going to get the surprise of their lives." Ours was a strategy unlike any other in recent American history. The plan CIA laid out for the president on September 13 and expanded at Camp David two days later stressed one thing: we would be the insurgents. Working closely with military Special Forces, CIA teams would be the ones using speed and agility to dislodge an emplaced foe. Our plan was to build on relationships that had been carefully forged with regional factions over recent years to give us allies who might help oust the Taliban. This war would never be "Americans against Afghans," we told the president. Rather, it would always be about helping Afghans rid their own country of a foreign menace, al-Qa'ida, and of the Taliban, who had allowed terrorists to hijack their country.

Five times in the two years *prior* to 9/11, CIA teams deployed to the Panjshir Valley of northern Afghanistan to meet with various tribal warlords, and particularly with Ahmed Shah Masood, the head of the Northern Alliance—a loose network of competitive tribal forces made up largely of ethnic Tajiks, Uzbeks, and others who fought against the Taliban rulers of Afghanistan. We bolstered Masood's intelligence capability against Bin Ladin and al-Qa'ida. Masood's brutal murder by al-Qa'ida on the eve of the

9/11 attacks might have undone our plan before it got under way if we hadn't maintained contact with other warlords in the north. And we also had long-standing, if much weaker, relationships with Pashtun tribes in the south. We knew who the players and who the pretenders were. By September 10, 2001, CIA had more than one hundred sources and subsources, and relationships with eight tribal networks spread across Afghanistan. Although these sources proved insufficient to steal the secret that would have predicted and prevented the attacks of 9/11, we were confident that, with the right authorities, we could get those responsible for the tragedy.

The president approved our recommendations on Monday, September 17, and provided us broad authorities to engage al-Qa'ida. As Cofer Black later told Congress, "the gloves came off" that day.

At the White House meeting that same day, the president declared, "I want the CIA to be first on the ground." I sent a memorandum to CIA senior officers stressing that "There can be no bureaucratic impediments to success. All the rules have changed. There must be an absolute and full sharing of information, ideas, and capabilities. We do not have time to hold meetings to fix problems—fix them quickly and smartly. Each person must assume an unprecedented degree of personal responsibility."

There has been a lot written about how Don Rumsfeld was supposedly unhappy that CIA was playing such a prominent role at the time. I never had that sense. We had a good plan. I was seeing my boss, the president of the United States, every day, and he was telling us "Go, go, go." It never occurred to me that we should do anything else.

Speed was everything. We needed to get a team into northern Afghanistan as soon as possible, to engage the various anti-Taliban leaders there and to measure the effect that the assassination of Masood had had on the Northern Alliance. Our bench of Afghan experts was strong but not deep, so we moved quickly to enhance it. To lead the mission, we found the perfect person,

attending a pre-retirement seminar. Gary Schroen, deeply knowledgeable about the region, was friendly with many of the senior Afghan warlords and fluent in the local languages of Dari and Farsi. Instead of leaving government service as he had been planning before 9/11, Gary arrived in northern Afghanistan within two weeks of the attacks, at the head of a small team that would be the forerunner of Agency operations there for the next several years.

Sending a senior officer like Gary illustrates the way the Agency operates. Gary was equivalent to a three-star general in rank, and he was first in with a squad of eight men who averaged forty-five years of age and twenty-five years of professional experience. Empowered to speak on behalf of the Agency, Gary was able to enter into agreements, make demands, and, not inconsequentially, dole out some of the millions of dollars in cash that he flew in with.

The CIA Northern Alliance Liaison Team, led by Gary Schroen, traveled to Afghanistan on an old Russian helicopter that we had purchased a year before 9/11 to facilitate our movements in the region. The NALT, as the team was known, set up shop in the village of Barak, at an elevation of 6,700 feet and surrounded by mountains as high as 9,000 feet. Living conditions in Barak were spartan to say the least. The NALT reported that sanitation conditions were "circa mid-12th century" but that the team was "healthy, motivated, and working hard." To remind themselves why they were there, they repainted the tail number on their MI-17 helicopter shortly after arriving, giving it the designation "091101."

Gary quickly established contact with Fahim Khan, one of the Northern Alliance leaders who figured prominently after the assassination of Masood, while also reaching out to other tribal leaders to learn who was with us and who was against us. Simultaneously, NALT team members sent back intelligence that would form the basis of targeting decisions in the military air campaign that was to follow.

Threat Matrix

The attacks of 9/11 were not the end of anything. They were the beginning. That was the message I was getting from my Counterterrorism Center. As far as al-Qa'ida was concerned, 9/11 was just the opening shot.

As traumatic as the attacks were, however, we knew what actions we could take. We knew what needed to be done, and there was a tremendous sense of urgency about it. Over the next several years we were able to achieve remarkable success against the terrorist threat for three strategic reasons.

First was the loss of al-Qa'ida's safe haven in Afghanistan. Because we were able to get into the sanctuary, we suddenly had access to people and documents that laid bare the future plans and intentions of al-Qa'ida. The key to success was rapidly to collect, fuse, and analyze the data in real time and to use it to drive operations.

The second strategic reason for success was Pakistani president Musharraf's decision to join the fight on our side. Pakistan switched sides—from aiding the Taliban to fighting al-Qa'ida. Pakistani intelligence chief Ehsan Ulhaq became a pivotal figure. With the arrest of well over five hundred al-Qa'ida operatives, Pakistan, in concert with U.S. intelligence, denied al-Qa'ida the luxury of a safe haven within the country's settled areas. (For his efforts, al-Qa'ida twice tried to assassinate President Musharraf.)

The third reason was the decisive action on the part of the Saudi leadership following the Riyadh bombings in May 2003. Saudi authorities have detained or killed many of the top known al-Qa'ida cell leaders in the kingdom and hundreds of foot sol-

diers. They have captured thousands of pounds of explosives. They have also reduced the financial resources at al-Qa'ida's disposal.

Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia were just part of the puzzle. With the new authorities, money, and confidence that the U.S. president gave to us, we were able to leverage the rest of the world's counterterrorism efforts.

There were a few countries that "got it" long before 9/11. The Jordanians, Egyptians, Uzbeks, Moroccans, and Algerians always understood what we were talking about. It was ironic that, pre-9/11, we had more success in getting help within the Islamic world than elsewhere. The British and French were also always helpful. Both had lived through their own terrorist threats. But until September 11, it was hard to convince most of the world of the legitimacy of our concerns.

In addition to the strategic reasons for our success, there were several tactical steps that were important. One of the most significant keys to our accomplishments against the terrorists came from something that sounds quite mundane: a daily meeting. This meeting would be repeated at 5:00 P.M. every weekday for the three years after 9/11. At these sessions we would try to get a handle on the flood of information about terrorism pouring in from around the world. Virtually every day you would hear something about a possible impending threat that would scare you to death. But you would also hear about opportunities to work with allies, new and old, against this threat. These sessions grew out of biweekly terrorism update meetings I started when I was deputy DCI in 1996. In 1998, after the embassy bombings, the meetings became weekly. Initially we called it "the small group." That title quickly became a joke, because the number of participants expanded until they packed the large wood-paneled conference room down the hall from my office.

The point of the meeting was to pull together in one place everyone who needed to take action in the next twenty-four hours in both our war in Afghanistan and the broader war on terror-

ism. My intent was to cut short the time it took for information to flow from the people in the field to me and to slash the time between orders being issued in Washington and executed half a world away.

This wasn't CIA talking to itself; we had FBI, NSA, and military officers there as well. The windowless room features a long, highly polished wooden conference table with about twenty chairs around it. The conference room needed its long table because briefers would occasionally roll out charts the size of bedsheets showing analysis that connected terrorists around the world through family, phone, and/or financial contacts. Just before the session started, any maps, charts, or documents to be used in the presentations would be passed out, and at the end they would be just as efficiently collected to keep control of the information. Always there was a palpable fear in the room that the United States was about to be hit again—either here or our interests abroad. No one present thought there was a minute to waste.

Five or six Agency components would lead off the meeting every afternoon. The first briefer was usually from the Office of Terrorism Analysis, initially Pattie Kindsvater, Phil Mudd, and other analysts. Later it was Mark Rossini from the FBI, whom we affectionately called "The Voice," because his deep baritone imparted a special sense of urgency. These briefers would run down the latest threat information. The terrorist acts of 9/11 unleashed a torrent of information from around the world. Suddenly friend and foe alike started reporting information that a day or two earlier they might have withheld or ignored. Some of it would later prove to be questionable, but at the time, we could not afford to dismiss any potential threat—and there were thousands of them.

To help senior administration officials visualize the range of possible plots we were tracking, we developed, in coordination with the FBI, what we called the "threat matrix." A multipage document, the matrix was given to the president each morning as part of his PDB session. Copies of it were also provided to other

top officials. In it were the newest threats that had emerged over the past twenty-four hours.

The matrix soon became an important part of the five o'clock meeting. At each session, we went over the next day's matrix, recognizing that many, perhaps most, of the threats contained in it were bogus. We just didn't know which ones. In a typical matrix you might see tales of impending doom picked up from people walking into U.S. embassies overseas, cryptic comments gathered through intercepted foreign communications, anonymous correspondence received by major media outlets, and leads given to us by human assets.

We recognized that the matrix was a blunt instrument. You could drive yourself crazy believing all or even half of what was in it. It was exceptionally useful, however, and an unprecedented mechanism for systematically organizing, tracking, validating, cross-checking, and debunking the voluminous amount of threat data flowing into the intelligence community. The very massiveness of it prompted officials to think through vulnerabilities. Have we done enough to secure major landmarks, theme parks, or water supplies? Are our watchlists tight enough? Sometimes the threats mentioned would strike you as absurd, and then al-Qa'ida would do something to convince you that nothing was out of the range of possibility. Who, for example, would have thought that exploding footwear could be a major air travel problem—until, that is, December 21, 2001, when Richard Reid was subdued on an American Airlines flight from Paris to Miami trying to light explosives hidden in his shoes?

After the discussion of the threat matrix, Hank Crumpton, chief of the CTC Special Operations Group, would come next. He'd be followed by the chief of Alec Station's Bin Ladin Unit, initially Hendrik V., and later Marty M.; then Rolf Mowatt-Larsen, head of CTC's WMD branch, would brief. On occasion we would hear from Phil R., who was in charge of CTC's efforts involving international financial operations. Charlie Allen would carefully listen to our operational requirements and translate

them into information requirements, which our intelligence communities, both foreign and domestic, would have to pursue. This was both to meet imminent operational needs and to position us to stay one step ahead of the terrorists.

Also at my side at the five o'clock meetings were John McLaughlin; the heads of the Directorates of Operations, Intelligence, and Science and Technology; the senior leadership of CTC; and others whose goal was to help clear obstacles for those who were on the front lines. Attendance at the five o'clock meetings became a critical part of each person's day. If, for some reason, you missed a meeting, you'd have to struggle the next day to follow the plot lines—so much interconnected information flowed each time.

November 6, 2001, was a typical five o'clock session. On that day I was briefed on a wide variety of freshly collected intelligence: A report had been collected about an Arab, of Persian Gulf origin, who reportedly knew of a planned second strike against the United States that was imminent and who claimed that the operatives were already in place. Additionally, he claimed to know of a third and final attack after which he would be free to come home. Similarly there was information on someone apparently in Jordan who had posted on a website a prediction that another attack on the United States was imminent. You might ask, so what? Until you learned that this same person had posted a note saying they were close to "zero hour" on September 10, 2001.

Another snippet of intelligence that day told us that a known al-Qa'ida associate who had been in the United States from 1999 to the fall of 2001 was aware of big events expected on November 5 and 6. We also learned that an Egyptian who worked for the embassy in Saudi Arabia had suddenly, without explanation, faxed in his resignation. Subsequent investigation showed that the man had ties to al-Qa'ida's partner, Egyptian Islamic Jihad, and was wanted by authorities in his home country. Could his disappearance presage some new attack? We had to try to find him fast.

That same evening, I heard about intelligence gleaned from a senior UBL operative that provided the name of an al-Qa'ida associate determined to conduct a suicide operation. We had the name, biographical data, but no idea where the man was.

Nearly two months after the attacks of 9/11 there was still great skepticism in Saudi Arabia that any of their countrymen had been involved. My staff came to me that night with a proposal that we share the chilling cockpit audio recordings made from United Airlines Flight 93 before it crashed in Pennsylvania. The Saudi-accented voices heard on the tape might remove any doubts.

We had intelligence of three al-Qa'ida-associated people, possibly connected to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, traveling for unknown reasons; we passed along the intelligence to three countries, all mentioned as possible transit points.

We heard from Russian intelligence about increased concerns over terrorist actions in Chechnya.

A Middle Eastern country captured a terrorist wanted in a third country. Could we help get him there? We could.

The FBI had conducted a polygraph on a source of the U.S. Customs Service who said he knew of a possible nuclear threat to the United States; that source flunked the test, which showed "deception indicated."

The intelligence we heard that night, and every night, were just tiny threads. They had to be woven into a tapestry before we could make sense of what we were seeing. And this was just one day; it is difficult to put in words the number of reports, and the intensity of those reports, that came in every day. As one officer said to me, "I never want to live that again. The pace was furious. The constant refrain was: It must be done tonight, it must be done tomorrow. We have to have that for the president tomorrow. That pace wasn't kept up for days or weeks; it was years."

The five o'clock meetings were decision-making sessions, not briefings. If someone told me he was having trouble getting needed information out of an allied government, I'd often grab

the phone right after leaving the meeting, call the head of the intelligence service involved, and light a fire under him. Other times I would order up talking points to be in my hands by six the next morning.

Other governments weren't the only concern. Sometimes we would hear of potential threats that weren't being internalized quickly enough within our *own* government. Countless times someone in the room was directed to get up that second, find a phone, and call the Pentagon, the FBI, the State Department, or some other entity, to make absolutely sure that the right people knew everything we knew and that they were going to get on top of that particular threat. The key was imparting information and context quickly; we had no time for more briefings.

On many occasions, I would be briefed on matters that were, as they say in Washington, "outside my lane." When that happened, I would tell, say, the FBI representative to call Director Bob Mueller and bring him up to speed on a domestic issue, because we intended to mention it in the next day's PDB session in the Oval Office. Without doubt, the president was going to turn to Bob and ask what he was doing about this; it was in everyone's interest that he had a good answer.

Our morning sessions with the president were also intense. He quickly became steeped in our strategy, with regard to activities not only in Afghanistan but also in the rest of the world. He was focused on results yet at the same time did not seek to micromanage our operations. He spent time with the substantive experts we brought to daily meetings and to longer sessions at Camp David on Saturdays. The president never became the action officer, but there was no doubt the leader was in the trenches with us. If you told him about an imminent operation on Monday, you could be certain after a few days he would ask about it, if we had not provided the necessary follow-up.

A PDB session would lead to a broader meeting with Bob Mueller, Tom Ridge, later Fran Townsend, and their staffs, to review the threat matrix, the actions that were being taken, the

gaps in our knowledge, and the interventions the president or vice president could undertake to help. Over time, at Andy Card's insistence, we modified the items in the matrix the president would see, to ensure that only those with the necessary weight and quality consumed his attention. When you have been accused of failing to connect the dots, your initial reaction is to ensure that all the dots are briefed. Until our knowledge became more refined, our inclination was to overbrief.

At the core of our effort was the Counterterrorism Center. It was the hub around which all of our efforts revolved. From there CIA stations worldwide were tapped to work both unilaterally and with host government intelligence services to improve the information sharing we relied upon. The long-standing relationships that Agency officers had with counterparts around the world became essential to our success. Even former adversaries seemed more willing to work with us.

As we made progress overseas, we found ourselves struggling domestically. It was stunning how little reliable information was immediately available inside our own borders. There was no good data on how many foreigners had overstayed their visas and no tracking system to see if young men who came into this country to attend university had actually shown up for classes—or if they had changed their major from music to nuclear physics. Nor was there any way for a police department in one part of the country to share suspicious activity data with counterparts across the state or the nation. There was no seamless way to communicate from Beirut to Seattle; there was no communications backbone. And while there were mountains of data within the United States, no one knew how to access it all, and little had been done to train people to put it together and report it, much less analyze it. In the early days, what we did not know about what was going on in the United States haunted us. We had to make judgments based on instinct.

Few understand the palpable sense of uncertainty and even fear that gripped those in the storm's center in the immediate after-

math of 9/11. One particular concern was the fact that, although there wasn't any tracking system in place, there were thousands of foreigners in the United States whose visas had expired. The most important thing we needed to do was to prove the negative: that there were not more al-Qa'ida cells within the country poised to conduct a second wave of attacks. At the time, I remember reflecting on testimony Gen. Mike Hayden, then the director of NSA, had given to a public hearing of the House Intelligence Committee in 2000. Mike created quite a stir when he said that if Usama bin Ladin had crossed the bridge from Niagara Falls, Ontario, to Niagara Falls, New York, there were provisions of U.S. law that would offer him protections with regard to how NSA could cover him. Mike would later say that he was using this as a stark hypothetical. On September 12, 2001, it became real.

After the 9/11 attacks, using his existing authorities, Hayden implemented a program to monitor communications to and from Afghanistan, where the 9/11 attacks were planned. With regard to NSA's policy of minimization, balancing U.S. privacy and inherent intelligence value, Mike moved from a peacetime to a wartime standard. He briefed me on this, and I approved. By early October 2001, Hayden had briefed the full House Intelligence Committee and the leadership of the Senate Intelligence Committee.

Soon thereafter, the vice president asked me if NSA could do more. Our ability to monitor al-Qa'ida's planning was limited because of constraints we had imposed on ourselves through the passing of certain U.S. laws in the late 1970s. I called Mike to relay the vice president's inquiry. Mike made it clear that he could do no more within the existing authorities. We went to see the vice president together. Mike laid out what could be done that would be feasible, prudent, and effective.

Within a week new authorities were granted to allow NSA to pursue what is now known as the "terrorist surveillance program." The rules required that at least one side of the phone call

being surveilled be outside the United States and that there be probable cause to believe that at least one end of the communication was with someone associated with al-Qa'ida. Elaborate protocols were set up to ensure that the program was carried out in accordance with these regulations. Within weeks of the program's inception, senior congressional leaders were called to the White House and briefed on it. Prior to its disclosure, twelve such briefings were hosted by the vice president for the leaders of the House and Senate Intelligence Committees. The briefings were thorough and disciplined. From my perspective, Mike gave the members full insight into how the program was being managed, the care that was being taken to ensure that it lived up to its intent, and offered the best analysis he could provide with regard to its results. The program was reauthorized by the president about every forty-five days prior to its disclosure. Each reauthorization was accompanied by an intelligence review, each of which I signed prior to my retirement. This included a comprehensive assessment of the value of continuing the program.

At one point in 2004 there was even a discussion with the congressional leadership in the White House Situation Room with regard to whether new legislation should be introduced to amend the FISA statute, to put the program on a broader legal foundation. The view that day on the part of members of Congress was that this could not be done without jeopardizing the program.

Mike Hayden has persuasively argued that the FISA statute enacted in 1978 could not have contemplated the technology available for terrorist use today, nor provided for the speed needed to deter today's terrorist acts. A bipartisan effort to amend the statute would be wise, so long as it is done in a manner that does not jeopardize critical operational equities. The trauma of 9/11 led, in the words of Mike Hayden, to a program to protect our liberty by making us all feel safer. It was never about violating the privacy of our citizens.

Had this program existed prior to 9/11, Mike Hayden has said that, in his professional judgment, we would have detected some

of the al-Qa'ida operatives in the United States and we would have identified them as such. I agree.

As we were coming up with the new terrorist surveillance program, our working assumption had always been that the attacks of 9/11 were simply the first wave. Al-Qa'ida had declared its intention to destroy our country. Why then would it be satisfied with just three thousand deaths? It was inconceivable to us that Bin Ladin had not already positioned people to conduct second, and possibly third and fourth waves of attacks inside the United States. Getting people into this country—legally or illegally—was no challenge before 9/11. Al-Qa'ida had to have known that things would tighten up after the attacks, so logic suggested that they would have acted in advance to prepare for that inevitability. We considered the possibility that in addition to carrying out the September 11 attacks, the nineteen hijackers might also have done casing and provided surveillance for whatever attack would come next. Nothing that I learned in the ensuing three years ever led me to believe that our initial working assumption that al-Qa'ida had cells here was wrong.

Increasingly, we began to concentrate on the possible connections between the domestic front and the data we were collecting overseas. We would identify al-Qa'ida members and other terrorists overseas and often discover that they had relatives, acquaintances, or business ties with people in the United States. Each rock overturned abroad led to ants scurrying every which way, including many toward the United States. These concerns, in part, led to the establishment of the NSA program wrongly described by the media as "domestic spying." The program grew out of concrete evidence that foreign terrorists planning new attacks on America were in communication with colleagues in this country. Oddly, the farther terrorists were from our shores, the more vulnerable they were to our intelligence-collection efforts. In some ways, the safest place for an al-Qa'ida member to hide was inside the United States.

As much as our government would have liked to capture or

kill Usama bin Ladin and Ayman al-Zawahiri, we recognized that the key to crippling al-Qa'ida would be to take down the next tier of leadership, the facilitators, planners, financiers, document forgers, and the like. These were the people who would have the actual links to the terrorist operatives. If we could disrupt or destroy the efforts of these individuals, we might prevent the follow-on attack that we feared so much. Our strategy was clear: to weaken al-Qa'ida's ability to plan and execute attacks, by forcing them to move less capable individuals into positions of leadership. In particular, our focus was on the individuals in charge of planning operations against the United States. Once Khalid Sheikh Mohammed was captured, Abu Faraj al-Libi took over. He was captured in Pakistan in May 2005 and replaced by Hamza Rabi'a, who was reportedly killed in the North Waziristan province of Pakistan seven months later.

One of the first dominoes to fall was Abu Zubaydah. Before 9/11, his name had been all over our threat reporting. After the attacks, he gained an even more prominent role in al-Qa'ida, especially once the United States killed the group's number three man, Mohammed Atef, in a November 2001 air strike in Afghanistan. Time and again in our five o'clock meeting we discussed how to run Abu Zubaydah to the ground.

By March 2002 we had identified a large number of sites in Pakistan that appeared to be al-Qa'ida safe houses. We got the increasingly helpful Pakistani authorities to raid thirteen of them simultaneously; they captured more than two dozen al-Qa'ida members. We were hopeful that a big fish like Abu Zubaydah would be in one of the safe houses, and we were not disappointed. In Pakistan's third largest city, Faisalabad, a gunfight broke out when Pakistani security officials stormed a second-floor apartment. Abu Zubaydah, who was inside, was shot three times and critically wounded.

Ironically, we found ourselves suddenly concerned with trying to save a terrorist's life. Not that we had any sympathy for Zubaydah; we just didn't want him dying before we could learn what

he might have to tell us about plans for future attacks. Fortunately, Buzzy Krongard, our executive director, was also on the board of directors of Johns Hopkins Medical Center. Using his contacts there, he arranged for a world-class medical expert to jump aboard an aircraft we had chartered so he could be flown to Pakistan and save a killer's life. Once Abu Zubaydah was stabilized, the Pakistanis turned him over to CIA custody. It was at this point that we got into holding and interrogating high-value detainees—"HVDs," as we called them—in a serious way.

Detainees, in general, had become a critical issue. By this time, many Taliban and al-Qa'ida prisoners were in military custody. Yet the quantity and quality of intelligence produced from their interrogation was disappointing. The detainees were either too low ranking to know much or too disciplined to reveal useful information.

Abu Zubaydah's capture altered that equation. Now that we had an undoubted resource in our hands—the highest-ranking al-Qa'ida official captured to date—we opened discussions within the National Security Council as to how to handle him, since holding and interrogating large numbers of al-Qa'ida operatives had never been part of our plan. But Zubaydah and a small number of other extremely highly placed terrorists potentially had information that might save thousands of lives. We wondered what we could legitimately do to get that information. Despite what Hollywood might have you believe, in situations like this you don't call in the tough guys; you call in the lawyers. It took until August to get clear guidance on what Agency officers could legally do. Without such legal determinations from the Department of Justice, our officers would have been at risk for future second-guessing. We knew that, like almost everything else in Washington, the program would eventually be leaked and our Agency and its people would be inaccurately portrayed in the worst possible light. Out of those conversations came a decision that CIA would hold and interrogate a small number of HVDs.

CIA officers came up with a series of interrogation techniques

that would be carefully monitored at all times to ensure the safety of the prisoner. The administration and the Department of Justice were fully briefed and approved the use of these tactics. After we received written Department of Justice guidance on the interrogation issue, we briefed the chairmen and ranking members of our oversight committees. While they were not asked to formally approve the program, as it was conducted under the president's unilateral authorities, I can recall no objections being raised.

The most aggressive interrogation techniques conducted by CIA personnel were applied to only a handful of the worst terrorists on the planet, including people who had planned the 9/11 attacks and who, among other things, were responsible for journalist Daniel Pearl's death. The interrogation of these few individuals was conducted in a precisely monitored, measured way intended to try to prevent what we believed to be an imminent follow-on attack. Information from these interrogations helped disrupt plots aimed at locations in the United States, the United Kingdom, the Middle East, South Asia, and Central Asia.

The president confirmed the existence of the interrogation program on September 6, 2006, when he announced that fourteen HVDs who had been held under CIA control would be transferred to Guantánamo Bay.

Like many of the al-Qa'ida detainees, Abu Zubaydah originally thought that he could outsmart his questioners. He would offer up bits and pieces of information that he thought would give the impression of his providing useful material, without really compromising operational security.

But Abu Zubaydah ultimately provided a motherlode of information, and not just from his interrogation. We were able to exploit data found on his cell phone, computer, and documents in his possession that greatly added to our understanding of his contacts and involvement in terrorism plotting.

Interrogating Abu Zubaydah led us to Ramzi bin al-Shibh. A Yemeni by birth, Bin al-Shibh had studied in Germany with three of the eventual 9/11 hijackers. He had intended to be one of

them and was deterred only after four attempts to obtain a U.S. visa failed. Instead, he served as the primary communication link between the hijackers and al-Qa'ida central, meeting with the plot's ringleader, Mohammed Atta, in Germany and Spain, and staying in touch with the terrorists via phone and e-mail. With Zubaydah's unintentional help, Bin al-Shibh was captured by Pakistani authorities on the first anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, after a gun battle in Karachi.

But no success story lasts long in Washington before someone tries to minimize it. A published report in 2006 contended that Abu-Zubaydah was mentally unstable and that the administration had overstated his importance. Baloney. Abu Zubaydah had been at the crossroads of many al-Qa'ida operations and was in position to—and did—share critical information with his interrogators. Apparently, the source of the rumor that Abu Zubaydah was unbalanced was his personal diary, in which he adopted various personas. From that shaky perch, some junior Freudians leapt to the conclusion that Zubaydah had multiple personalities. In fact, Agency psychiatrists eventually determined that in his diary he was using a sophisticated literary device to express himself. And, boy, did he express himself.

Abu Zubaydah's diary was hundreds of pages long. Agency linguists translated enough of it to determine there was nothing of operational use in it, yet some Pentagon officials, including Paul Wolfowitz, seemed fascinated with the subject and kept bugging us to translate the whole document. We kept resisting. One day Wolfowitz hounded his CIA briefer. "Why wouldn't we devote the resources to convert the book to English?" he demanded. "We know enough about the diary," the briefer explained, "to know that it simply contains a young man's thoughts about life—and especially about what he wanted to do with women." "Well, what have you learned from that?" Wolfowitz asked. Without missing a beat, the briefer responded, "That men are pigs!" Wolfowitz's military assistant laughed so hard he fell off his chair.

But in Afghanistan there was no time for laughter. As we

achieved success in driving al-Qa'ida out of Afghanistan, they began to search for other sanctuaries for their leadership. The organization sought places where they could plan future attacks against the United States with impunity from law enforcement, intelligence, and military operations. First, al-Qa'ida established itself in the settled areas of Pakistan. Later they moved into the ungoverned tribal areas of South Waziristan. Later still, Pakistani military operations drove them farther north, to areas where I believe their senior leaders continue to operate.

In mid-2002 we learned that portions of al-Qa'ida's leadership structure had relocated to Iran. This became much more problematic, leading to overtures to Iran and eventually face-to-face discussions with Iranian officials in December 2002 and early 2003. Ultimately, the al-Qa'ida leaders in Iran were placed under some form of house arrest, although the Iranians refused to deport them to their countries of origin, as we had requested.

In the spring of 2002, computers, phone records, and other data from al-Qa'ida takedowns in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and elsewhere started to suggest troubling connections to individuals in the United States, particularly in the Buffalo, New York, area. As with so much else in those hectic days, I first learned about all this at one of our five o'clock meetings. I told the lead analyst on the matter to share her concerns immediately with the FBI. We had her take all her data to the regional FBI office, where, initially, she got a skeptical reception. Even in the aftermath of 9/11, there was a reluctance to believe that sleeper cells could be operating in the United States, particularly cells made up of American citizens. But as the FBI dug into the matter, the Bureau became believers. Six Yemeni Americans, all of whom had received training at an al-Qa'ida camp in Afghanistan prior to 9/11, were arrested in September 2002. The group, which became known as the Lackawanna Six, later pled guilty to terrorism-related charges and received prison terms ranging from eight to ten years each.

The five o'clock meetings did more than coordinate the take-

down of individual terrorists and unravel future plots. We also used them to track the ebb and flow of overall threat concerns. Throughout the three years after 9/11 there was a lot more "flow" than there was "ebb."

These times of heightened concern would often translate into increasing the terrorist threat warning levels from yellow to orange. We did so on four occasions. In each instance there was a credible intelligence basis for doing so. Initially, there was no choice but to burden the entire country. Over time, we became more sophisticated and surgical in focusing on specific geographical locations and sectors of the economy. In developing the system of protection, the initial option was imprecise. Some pundits alleged that the administration was only elevating the threat level for political purposes, but I can assure you that in each case we believed that the threat was real and imminent and that we had no other reasonable option.

While we raised the threat level on four occasions during my tenure, one period stands out in my mind: the spring and summer of 2004. There were several streams of concern. First, we came into the possession of casing and surveillance reports focused on financial institutions in New York, New Jersey, and Washington. What was noteworthy about the reports was their specificity and attention to detail regarding the buildings themselves, perceived structural deficiencies, the location of security, and the types of alarms in specific locations within the buildings. The reports were written as though produced by an engineering consulting firm and were of a quality consistent with what a sophisticated intelligence service might produce. Only one dot to connect, perhaps, but there were more.

The strategic context for concern was compelling. We were approaching national political conventions and an election. Al-Qa'ida had paid attention to the fact that the March 11 attack in Madrid had brought down the Aznar government in Spain. We believed that Bin Ladin himself had assessed that a logical time to

attack the United States was just before the U.S. election, when he perceived the uncertainty created by a potential transition of government would make a response more difficult.

There was the fear that the arrests of operatives in Canada, Pakistan, and New York suspected of planning attacks in London might force al-Qa'ida to accelerate the timing of attacks inside the United States. Because of military operations conducted by Pakistan in the southern tribal areas of Waziristan, al-Qa'ida was under enormous pressure, stimulating the need for a high-stakes showdown with the United States. The plotting against Musharraf's life continued.

The intelligence that we received was more frightening. By July 2004 we believed that the major elements of the plot were in place and moving toward execution and that the plot had been sanctioned by the al-Qa'ida leadership. We believed that al-Qa'ida facilitators were already inside the United States, in an organized group—which to the best of my knowledge has never been found—and that they had selected non-Arab operatives to carry out the attacks.

A separate stream of reporting told us of al-Qa'ida plans to smuggle operatives through Mexico to conduct suicide operations inside the United States. This was linked directly back to direction being provided by al-Qa'ida's leaders. All of this was consistent with the intelligence dating back to 2001 of either the presence of, or attempts to infiltrate, operatives inside the United States.

There was strategic warning, further arrests, and disruption activities overseas and in the United States by CIA, our foreign partners, and the FBI. NSA was operating at a fever pitch attempting to determine linkages from dirty numbers overseas to numbers inside the United States. Detainees were questioned and financial data mined for operational activity, all in real time. We posited likely targets and methods of attack. It was a period of furious activity.

The attacks—based on very credible reporting—didn't happen.

Why? Had the effectiveness of law enforcement and intelligence disrupted the planning? Quite possibly. Was it a conscious decision on the part of al-Qa'ida to delay for its own reasons, out of concern for its weaknesses and the rally-round-the-flag impact an attack would have in the United States? Equally plausible. It was yet another period of high threat that had not come to much, other than exhaustion. I do not know why attacks didn't occur. But I do know one thing in my gut: al-Qa'ida is here and waiting.

The threat was not just within the United States. Often information I heard at the five o'clock meeting would cause me to schedule abrupt overseas trips to key Middle East capitals. At one such meeting, I learned of intelligence that al-Qa'ida operatives were planning to assassinate members of the Saudi royal family and overthrow the Saudi government. I quickly scheduled a meeting with the Crown Prince.

Then—Crown Prince Abdullah is an incredibly impressive man, a billionaire like many Saudi princes, yet one who has never allowed himself to forget his roots. Alone among the top royals, he'll go off and live in the desert for weeks on end to reconnect with the Saud family's past. As cooperative as he could be in our pursuit of intelligence on terrorists, from our perspective, Saudi cooperation against al-Qa'ida could be slow and frustrating.

The Saudis were equally frustrated with us for not sharing enough information, but the speed with which we needed Saudi action came only after the kingdom itself was attacked in May of 2003. Thirty-five people, including ten Americans and seven Saudis, died, and more than two hundred were injured in the al-Qa'ida attack on a Western housing compound in Riyadh. That brought the message home to the royal family in a way nothing else had.

When I first heard about the Riyadh attacks, I knew I had to go see the Crown Prince, to offer condolences and to make a point while the wound was still fresh. I cleared the trip with the president and the national security advisor and gave them a rough idea of what I was going to say. But I wrote out my own

talking points for use with the Crown Prince, and I didn't clear them with anyone. There was no reason to do so. I knew what had to be said. I doubt if I've ever had a more direct conversation with anyone in my life.

First, I started with an intelligence briefing on what had just occurred:

- The debate within al-Qa'ida over conducting attacks in Saudi Arabia dates back to the fall of 2002. It was never about whether to strike, but about when and how.
- The loss of sanctuary in Afghanistan, the settled areas of Pakistan, and northeastern Iraq raised an important question: Could the group afford to lose its position in the kingdom and, with it, its chief source of funds?
- Bin Ladin, who prior to 9/11 had imposed a ban on attacks in Saudi Arabia, made his position clear when he urged a key Saudi-based operative, Abu Hazim al-Sha'ir, to move forward with the attacks at any price.
- Khalid Sheikh Mohammed told us later that Bin Ladin's highest priority is to spur a revolution in Saudi Arabia and overthrow the government and that al-Qa'ida operatives in the kingdom had blanket autonomy to conduct attacks on their own.

"Your Royal Highness," I said, "your family and the end of its rule is the objective now. Al-Qa'ida operatives are prepared to assassinate members of the royal family and to attack key economic targets."

I told the Crown Prince that a Saudi-based contact of Saad al-Faqih, a London-based dissident, responded to Faqih's call for the overthrow of the Saudi royal family in February by saying, "The assassination phase has already begun."

I said, "We know that senior al-Qa'ida operatives inside the kingdom are planning attacks against American interests, both

in the United States and in Europe. Your Royal Highness, we are exactly where we were before September 11, but with some important differences. We have great specificity with regard to the planning. It's directed against your family and religious leadership. It is directed from within the kingdom against the United States with the same apocalyptic language I saw before the attacks on September 11. Our relationship cannot sustain another attack. So what do we do about this? We either declare war, and act like we mean it, or we accept the catastrophic consequences."

It was a long meeting and an emotional one. Prince Bandar, the longtime Saudi ambassador to the United States, who had ridden with me to the palace, had encouraged me to lay everything on the line, and I did, chapter and verse.

I have rarely been more direct in my life. By the time I was through with my presentation, the room was energized—by my words and by the attacks of a few days earlier—and virtually that very day, the Crown Prince began to implement a plan we'd helped create.

The world is still not a safe place, but it is a safer place now because of the aggressive steps that the Saudis began to take. They arrested, captured, or killed many (if not all) of the senior al-Qa'ida operatives involved in the plotting. One major capture involved Abu Bakr al-Azdi, who confirmed that indeed plotting against the United States was occurring from within the kingdom. They began to clamp down on al-Qa'ida's finances, and engaged with their clerical establishment to overturn fatwas urging mass violence as a tactic. Al-Qa'ida made an important strategic miscalculation, never counting on the Crown Prince's reaction. The anger of this honest man at what had happened to his country was palpable that day. As frustrating as the U.S.-Saudi relationship had been over the years, our patience had paid off.

Particularly important at that time, and from then on, were the efforts of Prince Mohammad bin Naif, interior minister Prince Naif's son, who worked for his father as deputy interior minis-

ter for security affairs. MBN, as we called him, became my most important interlocutor. A relatively young man, he is someone in whom we developed a great deal of trust and respect. Many of the successes in rolling up al-Qa'ida in the kingdom are a result of his courageous efforts.

Let's be clear: the Saudis acted out of self-interest. At stake were not only plots against the United States but the stability of Saudi Arabia as well. While sustained Saudi action had been a long time coming, the Crown Prince's sense of urgency was matched by our determination to deny al-Qa'ida the key elements of their political strategy. Al-Qa'ida wanted the destruction of the House of Saud and the creation of a Bin Ladin-inspired caliphate, with the economic muscle that oil would confer. The accommodation that the House of Saud had made with the Wahabi branch of Islam had turned the kingdom into a ready source of finance, recruitment, and inspiration for al-Qa'ida. We now had the beginning of a sustained counterterrorism partnership that has carried on since. It has been vital to eliminating an al-Qa'ida safe haven that had operated within Saudi Arabia.

As important as our relationship with the Saudis was, we depended on foreign partners all over the world. Of all the terrorist takedowns, none was more important or memorable than the capture in Pakistan of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, whom everyone in our business referred to simply as KSM. No person, other than perhaps Usama bin Ladin, was more responsible for the attacks of 9/11 than KSM, and none, other than UBL, more deserved to be brought to justice.

Although KSM grew up in Kuwait, his family comes from the Baluchistan region, which straddles the Iran-Pakistan border. During the mid-1980s, he attended college in North Carolina.

The future Most Wanted list all-star first came to the attention of U.S. intelligence about the time it was learned that his nephew, Ramzi Yousef, had been involved in planning the 1993 World Trade Center attack. Yousef was arrested in Islamabad, Pakistan, in 1995 and later tried and convicted in U.S. courts for his part in

planning "Operation Bojinka," which envisioned simultaneously blowing up twelve airliners over the Pacific. Yousef had also been involved in plots to assassinate Pope John Paul II during an official visit to the Philippines and in a plan to have a suicide pilot fly a small plane loaded with explosives into CIA headquarters. Clearly, he and KSM came from the same gene pool.

During the mid-1990s, CIA chased KSM around three continents. We attempted to bring him to justice in Qatar, the Philippines, and even Brazil. He eluded us and ended up in Afghanistan, where he first met Usama bin Ladin. Through the late 1990s, we knew that KSM was taking on an increasingly important role with al-Qa'ida. It was only after the capture of Abu Zubaydah that we learned how significant that role had become. From our interrogations of Abu Zubaydah and later KSM himself, we would learn that it was KSM who first proposed the idea of flying aircraft into the World Trade Center. Initially he suggested stealing small private aircraft and filling them with explosives. Usama bin Ladin reportedly asked, "Why do you use an axe when you can use a bulldozer?" and altered the plan to use commercial airliners full of passengers.

By early 2002, we believed that KSM, like much of the al-Qa'ida leadership, was in hiding in the teeming cities of Pakistan. To find him, CIA ran elaborate human intelligence operations.

I vividly remember Marty M., the then chief of the Sunni Extremist Group of CTC, asking me at the end of one of our Friday five o'clock meetings, "Boss, where are you going to be this weekend? Stay in touch. I just might get some good news."

Later that evening, Pakistani security officials surrounded a house in Rawalpindi where they suspected KSM was hiding. The Pakistanis stormed the residence and were wrestling KSM to the ground when he grabbed for a rifle. In the melee, the weapon went off, shooting one of the Pakistanis in the foot, before KSM was subdued for good.

Marty woke me with the good news. "Boss," he said. "We got KSM." You don't take down a major terrorist in the middle of

a large city and have it go unnoticed. Before sunrise, Pakistani media were reporting that KSM had been taken into custody.

By the next morning, Sunday, March 2, U.S. media outlets were carrying news of the capture as well. Some of the stories described the worldly KSM as an al-Qa'ida James Bond. To illustrate the point, they showed photos of him with a full dark beard wearing what were supposedly his traditional robes. It didn't take long for Marty to phone me and relay his disgust at some of the coverage. A native of Louisiana, Marty speaks with a Cajun patois that is sometimes hard to decipher. We used to joke that he speaks "level 5" (fluent) Arabic but only "level 2" English.

"Boss," he said, "this ain't right. The media are making this bum look like a hero. That ain't right. You should see the way this bird looked when we took him down. I want to show the world what terrorists look like!"

Turns out, our officers on the scene in Rawalpindi had snapped and sent back some digital photos of KSM just after his capture, so I suggested that Marty call the Agency spokesman, Bill Harlow, and work something out. Within an hour, Harlow was in CTC looking over a selection of photos that made KSM look nothing like James Bond. Together they picked out the most evocative photo. Then Harlow, armed with a digital copy, called up a reporter at the Associated Press and told him, "I'm about to make your day." Asking only that the AP not reveal where they got the picture, he released the image of a stunned, disheveled, scroungy KSM wearing a ratty T-shirt. The photo became one of the iconic images of the war on terrorism. If we could have copyrighted it, we might have funded CTC for a year on the profits. Foreign intelligence services later told us that the single best thing we ever did was release that picture. It sent a message more eloquently than ten thousand words ever could that the life of a terrorist on the run is anything but glamorous.

Just after KSM's capture, I left on a trip to a half-dozen Middle Eastern countries. Among my stops was Islamabad. I wanted to personally thank the courageous Pakistani security officials

who had captured KSM, and indeed I gave several of them CIA medals. I particularly remember the man who had been shot in the foot during the takedown painfully limping forward to receive his medal. From their side, the Pakistanis presented me with the rifle they had seized from KSM.

There have been published reports that CIA paid millions of dollars in "prize money" for capturing al-Qa'ida figures. That is absolutely right. It seemed to us entirely appropriate to tell countries around the world that there is both a price to pay if they cooperate with terrorists, and an appropriate reward to be earned for bringing them to justice. While we could, and sometimes did, simply present a check to the intelligence service responsible for helping us capture a major terrorist, we would occasionally opt for a more dramatic approach. We would show up in someone's office, offer our thanks, and we would leave behind a briefcase full of crisp one-hundred-dollar bills, sometimes totaling more than a million in a single transaction. Post-September 11, the influx of cash in our hands made a huge difference. We were able to fund training, support technology upgrades of our key partners, and generally reward good performance.

I also had the opportunity at one of our stops to meet the foreign agent who had led us to KSM. The man bought his first suit to wear to our meeting. I thanked him for his courage and expressed our gratitude for what he had done. He embraced me, looked me in the eye, and asked just one question: "Do you think President Bush knows of my role in this capture?" I smiled. "Yes, he does," I said, "because I told him." The fellow beamed with pride. "Does he know my name?" he asked. "No. Because that is a secret that he doesn't need to know," I replied. I asked the man why he had agreed to help us and to place his life at risk. His answer goes to the heart of the struggle we're involved in against terrorists worldwide: "I want my children free of these madmen who distort our religion and kill innocent people," he told me.

The benefits of capturing someone like KSM went far beyond simply taking a killer off the street. Through hard work, each

success cascaded into others. It was amazing to watch. For example, the same day that KSM was captured, a senior al-Qa'ida financial operator by the name of Majid Khan was also taken into custody.

In interrogation, KSM told us that Majid Khan had recently provided fifty thousand dollars to operatives working for a major al-Qa'ida figure in Southeast Asia known as "Hambali." When confronted with this allegation, Khan confirmed it and said he gave the money to someone named Zubair, and he provided the man's phone number. Before long, Zubair was in custody and provided fragmentary information that led us to capture another senior Hambali associate named Bashir bin Lap, aka "Lilie." That person provided information that led to the capture of Hambali, in Thailand.

The importance of Hambali's capture cannot be overestimated. He was the leader of the Jemaah Islamiya, a Sunni extremist organization that has established an operational infrastructure in Southeast Asia. Hambali swore allegiance to Bin Ladin in the late 1990s, offering him a critical operational advantage: a non-Arab face to attack the United States and our allies. While moderate Islam thrives in Southeast Asia, its geographic expanse offers the opportunity to create dispersed sanctuaries throughout the continent.

What Hambali's arrest demonstrated is that our campaign was targeted not just against al-Qa'ida but also against Sunni extremism around the world. What we are fighting today is bigger than the al-Qa'ida central management structure and more diverse than Arab males between the ages of eighteen and forty. What we have to contend with has an Arab, Asian, European, African, and perhaps even a homegrown American face.

After Hambali was arrested, we went back to KSM and asked him to speculate on who might fill Hambali's shoes. KSM suggested that the likely candidate would be Hambali's brother, Rusman "Gun Gun" Gunawan. So we went back to Hambali, and while being debriefed, he inadvertently provided informa-

tion that led to the detention of his brother, in Karachi, in September 2003.

In custody, "Gun Gun" identified a cell of Jemaah Islamiya members hidden in Karachi that his brother planned to use for future al-Qa'ida operations. Hambali confirmed that the non-Arab men were being groomed for future attacks in the United States, at the behest of KSM, and were probably intended to conduct a future airborne attack on America's West Coast.

I believe none of these successes would have happened if we had had to treat KSM like a white-collar criminal—read him his Miranda rights and get him a lawyer who surely would have insisted that his client simply shut up. In his initial interrogation by CIA officers, KSM was defiant. "I'll talk to you guys," he said, "after I get to New York and see my lawyer." Apparently he thought he would be immediately shipped to the United States and indicted in the Southern District of New York. Had that happened, I am confident that we would have obtained none of the information he had in his head about imminent threats against the American people.

From our interrogation of KSM and other senior al-Qa'ida members, and our examination of documents found on them, we learned many things—not just tactical information leading to the next capture. For example, more than twenty plots had been put in motion by al-Qa'ida against U.S. infrastructure targets, including communications nodes, nuclear power plants, dams, bridges, and tunnels. All these plots were in various stages of planning when we captured or killed the pre-9/11 al-Qa'ida leaders behind them.

In my view, it wasn't one single thing that hindered a major follow-on attack, but rather a combination of three things. We were successful with information gained from NSA's terrorist surveillance program, CIA's interrogation of a handful of high-value detainees, and leads provided by another highly classified program that tracked terrorist financial transactions. Each of these programs informed and enabled the others. And each

was carefully monitored to ensure that it was appropriately conducted.

As much as some things change, many things remain the same. Al-Qa'ida's fixation on the use of airplanes as weapons did not end on 9/11. In the ensuing years, plots to use airliners as weapons were broken in Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. What started in 1995 as the Manila air conspiracy was taken forward to London in April 2006, when British intelligence broke the back of a plot to use liquid explosives on aircraft transiting the Atlantic in the same way that was attempted in 1995. In the years in between, airline plots were directed against Heathrow airport, and there were four separate operations to target both coasts of the United States.

During the Millennium threat, actions in Amman by the Jordanians uncovered the intent to use hydrogen cyanide in a movie theater. Today al-Qa'ida disseminates instructions on how to acquire simple materials that can be purchased in hardware stores to disperse lethal gasses in enclosed facilities, using a simple but effective device they called the "mobtaker." What this tells you about al-Qa'ida is that history matters. They will return to plots previously attempted whether they succeeded or failed.

What the detainees gave us was insight into people, strategy, thinking, individuals, and how they would all be used against us. What they gave us was worth more than CIA, NSA, the FBI, and our military operations had achieved collectively. We were able to corroborate what they told us with other data we had collected. What we now have is an exhaustive menu and knowledge about how al-Qa'ida thinks, operates, and trains its members to conduct operations against us. What we have in our possession is a road map to put in place a systematic program of protection, to deny al-Qa'ida the operational latitude it once enjoyed. The questions are: How effective will we be in relentlessly closing the seams of our vulnerability? How urgently will we pursue the sacrifices required to avert the next attack?

One thing is certain: the United States remains the crown jewel

in al-Qa'ida's planning. Its desire to pull off multiple spectacular attacks in the United States that inflict economic and psychological damage is undiminished.

We have learned that al-Qa'ida is a very adaptive organization. Prior to 9/11 they understood the security weaknesses of the United States. They understood our laws, our banking regulations, and the large gaps in our domestic security preparations. They also recognize that we are prone to "fighting the last war." So after the 9/11 attacks, while the United States and our allies have focused on a threat posed by certain young Arab males, al-Qa'ida has shifted its recruitment to bring in jihadists with different backgrounds. I am convinced the next major attack against the United States may well be conducted by people with Asian or African faces, not the ones that many Americans are alert to.

It would be easy for al-Qa'ida or another terrorist group to send suicide bombers to cause chaos in a half-dozen American shopping malls on any given day. Why haven't they? The real answer is that we do not know. (It would be easy to do and would spread the kind of fear and economic damage they desire.) I believe it is because they have set for themselves a bigger goal. They want to hurt us in a measure commensurate with our status as a superpower. To date, the techniques the terrorists gladly employ in places like Iraq and Israel have not been used in the United States.

Our successes against al-Qa'ida have not come without a price. As time passes since 9/11, I fear that Americans will once again begin to think of terrorism as something that happens "over there." That is exactly the mind-set our enemy wants us to have. The lessons of the past and the attacks in England, Spain, Morocco, Bali, Turkey, and elsewhere tell us how they are going to attack, the targets they are interested in attacking, and, most important, that they are intent on coming here again. We will rarely know the "when," but there is no longer any excuse for not understanding the "how" and not doing our best to protect against it. History matters.