

## **CHAPTER ELEVEN**

### **The Assault on America**

The catastrophic attacks on New York's World Trade Center and the Pentagon in Washington, DC by suicidal airplane hijackers on September 11, 2001, were the horrendous climax of a series of assaults on America in the 1990s. These were planned, engineered and in some cases carried out by CIA-trained veterans of the 1979-89 Afghanistan war, or those schooled or influenced by them

Few Americans seemed to comprehend what was happening around them in the decade of the 90s, nor did most inquire about causes. Those directly involved noted the effects, but with the lack of causal understanding or historical thinking which often characterizes even senior members of the US governing and intelligence communities. Background relationships were not perceived or appreciated. Some thoughtful investigators, such as New York City's FBI director, Robert Fox, correctly identified the suspects after the February 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center—the unsuccessful, though lethal and damaging prelude to destruction of the twin towers in lower Manhattan's holocaust of September 2001. In 1993, Fox told newsmen in New York, that “those guys” were trained by the CIA. This unpopular but true statement, helped to get Fox transferred far away from his New York post a few weeks later.

Four months later, in June 1993, a new series of terrorist spectaculars, also in New York, and comparable or even greater in scale to Sept. 11, 2001 in the casualties they would have caused and the material mayhem they would have wreaked, was thwarted. What prevented them were the actions of an Egyptian “mole” or penetration agent working for the FBI, who had infiltrated the gang, a kind of prototype Al-Qaida group operating in New York and New Jersey, and some very effective (and lucky) police work, which caught the conspirators red-handed. What made the identification and capture of the terrorists who had prepared and then provided logistical back-up for the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks in New York and Washington more difficult was that none of the thousands of law-enforcement agents of all services, from local police to the FBI, had penetrated the terrorist network ahead of time.

Preparation for the attacks against the United States in 1993 and later, including their roots and their planning in South Asia, have to be viewed as part of a

kind of giant prologue to the September 11, 2001 assault on America, which in turn triggered America's new war in South Asia during the fall and winter of 2001-2002.

Similar, in some ways, to my own premonition in Washington in January 1980 of misfortunes and disasters which would result from the Christmas 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, was a brief but chilling glimpse of the future in New York in the spring of 1995.

I was speeding in a microbus taxi van from Manhattan across to Kennedy Airport on Long Island. Suddenly, Mahmoud, the bearded Pakistani driver, raised his voice. "By God," my friend, he said, "write in your newspapers, say on your television: we Muslims have suffered! I tell you, when Allah took our General Zia al-Haq from us, that was the start of the evil. My father grieved until he died."

He was talking about the still publicly unsolved plane crash which killed Zia and senior US and Pakistani officials in August 1988 in Pakistan. After describing how he had emigrated to America and had managed to get a taxi license, so that his Pakistani girl friend in New York wouldn't have to work before they married—women, he made it clear in Taliban-like terms, should not work—he added portentously: "The jihad died in Pakistan. Zia led us in a great jihad in Afghanistan. But the jihad will spread anyhow."

As we pulled up at the Kennedy airport terminal, I asked him, "What about here? Is there jihad in America?"

Mahmoud seemed to brake his van rather more suddenly than needed at the terminal building. "Yes," he snapped, "there is jihad in America. We are many Muslims. Here in New York, in New Jersey, everywhere. Jihad is our duty." As I collected my bags and paid him, Mahmoud handed me a folded pamphlet which I read in the check-in queue. "ISLAM ON TRIAL" it proclaimed, above a portrait of Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman, sunglasses covering his blind eyes, his whiskers rampant. The sheikh would soon be tried for his role in allegedly instigating the February 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center; later convicted and jailed for life in a maximum-security Federal prison hospital facility in Missouri. The pamphlet Mahmoud gave me at Kennedy Airport quoted defense lawyers calling for his acquittal. He was guilty, contended attorney Ronald Kuby, of no more than "his interpretation of scripture—a profound dilemma for religion in an ostensibly free society."

Truly, I reflected during my flight back to the Middle East, “jihad in America” had already begun. For some members of the intelligence community, who chose not to discuss these matters publicly, it had begun in January 1993, a month before the World Trade Center bombing, with the case of Mir Aimal Kainsi. A veteran of the Afghanistan training and probably of combat, Kainsi ambushed, shot and killed two CIA employees and wounded several other people outside the main gate of CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia. The FBI and other US services tracked him down, and with the help of the ISI—one of the occasions where Pakistani intelligence wholeheartedly cooperated with American law-enforcement—he was seized in Pakistan. He was flown to the US for trial on June 17, 1995, a few weeks after my encounter with Mahmoud. <sup>1</sup>This touched off reprisal killings of several Americans in Karachi a short time after his capture. He was sentenced to death in Virginia, the scene of his crime. Legal appeals delayed his execution, and he dropped out of the sight and certainly out of the mind, of the American public.

The spirit of jihad against America lived on. It flamed up spectacularly once again in the summer of 1998, in East Africa. On the morning of August 7, 1998, truck bombs devastated the area around the American embassies in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The Nairobi bomb killed 247 people, including 12 Americans in a portion of the embassy which collapsed and wounded thousands. Ten people died in the nearly simultaneous bombing in Dar es Salaam, and upwards of a hundred were wounded in the far less congested streets of the Tanzanian capital. The injured people lay, traumatized by shock, in pools of blood. Soon Nairobi’s hospitals were crammed beyond capacity with emergency cases: men, women, children with severed limbs, blinded mutilated. A total of over 5,000 people were injured in both cities.

The attacks, perceived almost immediately to bear the signature of Usama bin Laden and his al-Qaida organization formed years before in Afghanistan, should have been far less of a surprise to the US intelligence establishment than the twin towers and Pentagon disasters of September 11, 2001 (though, there had been vague advance warnings of those also).

A few insiders and some journalists had noted a warning broadcast only about 24 hours before the East African attacks. The warning was not signed by Usama bin Laden, al-Qaida, or even by the “International Islamic Front’ of eight different Islamist organizations which had announced its creation for purposes of an anti-American jihad in May. Egypt’s *Al-Gihad*, the terrorist organization responsible for

President Sadat's murder in October 1981 and for much violence inside Egypt since, warned it was about to take reprisals against the United States—because, it said, the CIA had assisted the Albanians to arrest and extradite to Egypt several Egyptian Islamist militants, some of whom had been condemned to death in absentia. One week earlier, an exiled chief of *Al-Gihad's* partner and sometime rival in terrorism, Egypt's *Gama'a al-Islamiya* or Islamic Group, which was behind the Luxor massacre of foreign tourists in November 1997, suddenly denied on his Internet web site that his organization was part of the "International Islamic Front," though his signature had been one of the eight announcing the Front's creation in February 1998. It sounded to expert Egyptian analysts of terrorism as though the Islamic Group leaders, or at least this one, knew of the horrific attacks being planned in East Africa and wanted to distance themselves from them.<sup>2</sup>

Washington, where President Clinton was under heavy fire because of his sexual scandal and the perjury accusations against him by independent prosecutor Kenneth Starr over his affair with former White House intern Monica Lewinsky, was galvanized by the attacks. Over 200 FBI agents and other intelligence teams and military units, including medical rescue teams, and even Israeli troops from Israel, were airborne for East Africa within hours.

The combined rescue and investigative efforts were, in retrospect, a kind of mini-rehearsal for the huge mobilization of humanitarian and law-enforcement resources in New York and Washington following the September 11, 2001 suicide attacks.

Soon, reports were coming in of threats to other US embassies, including those in Kampala, Uganda and Tirana, Albania. Later, these and a number of other US diplomatic missions throughout the world were temporarily evacuated, so seriously was the threat taken in Washington.

Within a few days, two suspects, a naturalized Kenyan of Palestinian birth named Muhammad Saddek Odeh and Muhammad Rashid al'Owhali, a Yemeni, had been apprehended. Odeh was arrested in Pakistan after flying out of Nairobi and returned quickly to Nairobi after confessions to the Pakistanis. Owhali was seized in Kenya. Both were packed off in handcuffs in military aircraft to New York. There they were charged with murder, complicity in murder, use of munitions of massive power, and conspiracy.

Another accomplice from the Comores Islands, a former French colony in the Indian Ocean, named Abdallah Muhammad Fadhul, like the others (who admitted belonging to bin Laden's organization and some degree of guilt in the attacks) was a presumed member of Al-Qaida.<sup>3</sup>

Within a very short time, it was clear to those who follow these events, that a total and deadly conflict was breaking out between the United States and its former ally and proxy (through Saudi Arabia) protégé, Usma bin Laden. From this time on, the progression to the climactic assaults of September 2001 became even clearer than it had been after the conspiracies and attacks of 1993, which now look like preludes to the main drama.

Just as they did in September 2001, the Washington policy-makers in August 1998 decided on swift retribution. President Clinton and his advisors resolved to strike back at two places regarded as bases or strongholds of Usama bin Laden, whom the suspect Muhammed Odeh had implicated as the originator of the embassy attacks. President Clinton summoned his National Security Advisor, Sandy Berger. He called back from Italy Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, who had been attending a gala wedding of the CNN network's Christiane Amanpour and former State Department spokesman James Rubin. Defense Secretary William Cohen, Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman General Hugh Shelton, and the latest of a long series of rapidly changing CIA directors, George Tenet, were called to join the crisis meetings.

Within hours, Clinton decided to hit Afghanistan, where bin Laden had his main operational bases, and the Sudan, believed to harbor a factory for chemical weapons components associated with bin Laden. It was decided not to risk any American personnel or aircraft—unlike the 2001-2002 war against bin Laden and his Taliban hosts—but to use the weapon already used to hit Iraq's Saddam Hussein during the Gulf War and to punish him on several occasions after it: the remotely-guided Tomahawk cruise missile, which had done little damage to Saddam's cohorts, but had killed and wounded Iraqi civilians. About 20 Tomahawks would be fired, in this case, by US Navy ships in the Red Sea or the Indian Ocean, at several of bin Laden's camps, mostly near the village of Khost, not far from the Pakistan border. The camps had been planned and designed by the CIA, Pakistan's ISI, and constructed in the early 1980s with the human and engineering resources of Usama bin Laden and his associates. The second target was the Al Chifa pharmaceutical plant in Khartoum, Sudan. After all, reasoned Clinton and his aides, the Sudan, under Islamist Sheikh

Hassan al-Turabi's influence, had cooperated closely with bin Laden during his stay there in the early 1990s. Western and Egyptian intelligence suspected him of complicity in many terrorist acts and conspiracies, including the attempted murder of President Mubarak in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and the New York bombing conspiracies of 1993. The Al Chifa plant, reported the *New York Times* of August 25, was presumed to be cooperating with the Iraqi chemical weapons program and producing an important ingredient of VX nerve gas, ethyl methylphosphothionate.

In the cruise missile attack, codenamed "Infinite Reach," launched August 20, Taliban accounts said about 20 guerilla fighters were killed in the camps, not including bin Laden himself, who was absent. Some Washington sources said that through its electronic monitoring of bin Laden's radiotelephone traffic and overhead satellite surveillance, the United States was aware of its absence. If it deliberately chose not to try to kill him, this was because a dead bin Laden would greatly enhance his already legendary charisma among violent Islamists everywhere. He would become a historic martyr whose death would stir his supporters to more frenzied acts of vengeance against the United States. His, of course, became a consideration which President George W. Bush's planners had to keep in mind, as they tried to hunt down bin Laden and his cronies during the winter war of 2001-02 in Afghanistan, and earlier than that, when, as reported in the *New York Times*, they financed a special Pakistani commando unit intended to track down bin Laden but which Pakistan's ISI never really intended to use, as ISI cultivated its comfortable relations with the Taliban.<sup>4</sup>

As for the Khartoum plant, which National Security Advisor Sandy Berger assured CNN audiences on August 23 was "indisputably" used to manufacture VX, A British engineers who had acted as Al Chifa's technical manager categorically rejected in a BBC interview any idea that the plant produced anything other than prescription medicines, vitamins and other pharmaceuticals badly needed in Sudan's impoverished society. A few days later, the Clinton administration through news leaks began to back off the story. They acknowledged that a dreadful error might have been made in the attack on Khartoum, although the US stoutly resisted Sudan's demand for an on-the-spot investigation by impartial United Nations investigators.<sup>5</sup> In July 2000, the plant's Saudi Arabian owner began a series of legal actions against the US to recover \$50 million in damages.

The manhunt for the bin Laden bombers produced the arrest in Munich, Germany in late September of another suspect, Mahmoud Salim, 40 and later

extradited to the United States. An Egyptian-born US Army sergeant Muhammad Salem, who worked for bin Laden, also admitted guilty knowledge. Eventually, in September 2001, the four main conspirators were sentenced to life imprisonment, after a long deliberations by a jury which had been unable to agree on inflicting the death penalty.

The earlier investigations of Mahmoud Salim, said by prosecution documents and court testimony to be a close associate of bin Laden, revealed and even more sinister aspect, a nuclear one. US investigators were still pursuing this aspect after new, publicized warnings in the fall of 2001, after the September 11 hijack attacks. They warned that bin Laden had sought, and perhaps found, nuclear material which might be used in some way as a weapon, even if only as radioactive waste in a “garbage bomb,” or high-explosive device designed to scatter radioactive contamination.

By the time of his arrest at a car dealership outside Munich on a tip from Interpol, Salim was identified as a financial advisor and weapons procurer for bin Laden. As early as 1990, Salim, along with other Al-Qaida members in Sudan, Afghanistan, Malaysia, the Philippines and elsewhere, began “financial transactions for the benefit of Al-Qaida and its affiliated groups.” In 1992, the New York court documents said, the group had tried to obtain components for nuclear weapons, including enriched uranium, to attack US forces in Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Somalia. No concrete details about the supposed nuclear quest were released. <sup>6</sup>

A remarkably prescient preview of bin Laden’s later escalating terrorist assault on America was provided for anyone who carefully read and digested Congressional testimony on September 3, 1998, by FBI director Louis J. Freeh. Neither Freeh nor anyone else foresaw that hijacked airliners, after years of careful planning which had probably already begun by 1998, would be turned into deadly missiles to destroy nerve centers of southern Manhattan in September 2001. However, the 1993 World Trade Center bombings, the aborted June 1993 plots to destroy Manhattan’s main tunnels, bridges and other targets, followed by the US embassy bombings in East Africa in August 1998, had sufficiently awakened the FBI to begin comprehensive efforts to track the terrorists. Freeh’s FBI agents had spread around the world and had (said its spokesmen and those of the CIA) buried its old rivalries with the CIA. As lead US anti-terrorist agency since 1995, the FBI was now actively working with the Agency’s Counterterrorism Center and with a number of other intelligence and

security agencies, military and civilian, in a new permanent consultative committee under security wraps in Washington.

In his testimony, Freeh cited the trend in anti-American terrorist attacks “toward large-scale incidents designed for maximum destruction, terror and impact.” He recalled how the threat of what my Pakistani taxi driver in New York had called “jihad in America” had been brought home by the New York events of 1993, Next on Freeh’s list came the attack with Sarin gas in the Tokyo subway system two years later, killing 12 commuters and, like the 1993 World Trade Center bombing injuring well over a thousand people. Although there were no American victims in the Luxor attack in Egypt on foreign tourists in November 1997, Freeh confirmed that there were signs that the Luxor assault (like the kidnappings and murders perpetrated by the bin Laden-influenced Abu Sayyaf group in the Philippines) was meant to force the release of Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman from his prison in Missouri. Freeh recalled that Sheikh Omar and his associates were convicted in 1995 for plotting (aside from the World Trade Center bombing to murder President Mubarak while Mubarak visited New York in 1994. The same group was caught red-handed in a Queens, Long Island garage mixing fertilizer and fuel oil (one of the old, reliable CIA recipes in the Afghanistan training manuals, a recipe also used by Timothy McVeigh to blow up the federal building in Oklahoma City in 1997) for a lethal, do-it-yourself, home-grown bomb of great power). Their purpose, Freeh recalled, was to destroy if they could United Nations buildings, the Lincoln and Holland Tunnels and police and FBI headquarters, among other targets in New York. (Freeh might have added, but didn’t, that they also discussed assassinating some leading pro-Israel congressmen.)

Freeh didn’t mention the CIA-Afghanistan connection, a subject generally taboo since New York’s regional FBI director, Robert Fox, mentioned the CIA training of several of the World Trade Center bombers on a 1993 television broadcast—and was transferred, “by coincidence,” several weeks later. After rapidly reviewing how “Iran, Iraq, Sudan, Libya, Cuba and North Korea” were held to be guilty of state-sponsored terrorism, Freeh dealt with a second category: “autonomous, generally trans-national” organizations. These have their own personnel, financing and training facilities and are able to plan and mount operations around the world, including, Freeh said, in the United States. Hizbollah, he said, had been behind the 1983 truck bombings of the US Embassy and the US Marine barracks in Lebanon, as well as the bombing of the

second US Embassy in East Beirut in 1984, as well as detention of US hostages in Lebanon.

Freeh's third category of terrorists were "locally affiliated," though global in scope, including those following Usama bin Laden. Prophetically, Freeh said such terrorists may pose the most urgent threat because "groups are often organized on an ad hoc, temporary basis, making them difficult for law enforcement to infiltrate or track. They can also exploit the mobility that technology and the lack of a rigorous base structure offers." This in effect analyzed, in advance, the trans-Atlantic mobility shown by Muhammad Atta, the suicide pilot of the first hi-jacked airliner to hit the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, and his colleagues, who had carefully pursued their studies and their networking in Europe, before moving to the United States to brush up on flying and navigating airlines in local US flying schools, and to prepare the complex logistics of their well-coordinated operation.

For years, Freeh recalled, the FBI had investigated leading "extra-territorial cases. These included the June 25, 1996 bombing of the Khobar Towers American servicemen's housing complex in Saudi Arabia and finally the East African bombings of August 1998. The Khobar Towers truck bombing followed a smaller bomb attack several months earlier against joint US-Saudi military installations in Riyadh, killing three US civilians and two soldiers. The Khobar blast killed 19 American servicemen and wounded about 400 people. It forced the US to move the US Air Force personnel living there, and serving overflights of Iraq and other air operations from nearby Dhahran Air Base, to distant al-Kharj. This is a Saudi air base deep in the Nejd desert, far from inhabited towns. Freeh failed to mention in this speech the single factor which almost certainly led to his resignation in 2000: the total lack of cooperation received from the Saudi authorities, who refused to allow the FBI or CIA to interview suspects, and who had several of them beheaded before there was much opportunity for any thorough investigation. US justice and law-enforcement officials at various senior levels continuously expressed their frustration with the Saudi authorities. Some analysts concluded that the Saudis wished to cover the strongly suspected (though probably unproven) involvement of Iran's intelligence services with "Saudi" hizbollah, members of the aggrieved Saudi Shi'ite Muslim minority in the kingdom's Eastern Province. Later, the United States, without consulting Saudi Arabia, indicted in absentia its own suspects in the Khobar affair.

Freeh referred to terrorist “renditions,” by which he meant terrorists captured abroad and sent to the United States for trial (enemies of the US preferred to call them “kidnappings”), under a US presidential directive of the early nineties setting out conditions for “rendition.” He cited the case of Ramzi Ahmed Youssef, convicted mastermind of the World Trade Center bombing, whose real identity has always been in question and whom some US experts suspect of working for Iraqi intelligence, in liaison with bin Laden. Youssef was seized in a bin Laden-owned hostel, or safe house, in Pakistan by US and Pakistani ISI agents and extradited to New York on February 7, 1995, for later trial and conviction to life in prison. And, of course there had been the case of Mir Aimal Kainsi, the murderer of two CIA employees at the main gate of CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia, in January 1993; also tracked by US and Pakistani agents and shipped to the US for trial.

The Clinton administration, finally recognizing the threat of the “Afghanis” for what it is, appointed another anti-terrorism “czar” in Washington. In early September of 1998, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright swore in former ambassador to Britain and one-time Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, as chairman of two Accountability Review Boards, loaded with senior specialists in anti-terrorism, to investigate the East African embassy bombings. <sup>6</sup> Admiral Crowe, as this author knew him at our first meeting, when Crowe commanded the US naval force in the Arab Gulf at Bahrain in 1968, is a rare combination of soldier, diplomat and intellectual. He is a man who has certainly gone beyond combating the post-Afghanistan terrorism phenomenon to take a long, hard look at its roots, especially the past judgement errors by US policy-makers which helped to bring it on.

Shortly after the August 20, 1998 cruise missile attacks on his camps and on Khartoum, Usama bin Laden threatened new retaliation against the United States. An Albanian gunman was shot at on August 23 by a security guard when trying to force his way into the US Embassy in Tirana. That embassy, and others elsewhere, had just been evacuated for security reasons. Bin Laden’s hand, rightly or wrongly, was seen in this incident. It seems fairly certain, according to NATO intelligence sources, that bin Laden had visited Tirana at least once in disguise in 1994, as part of a “charitable” Saudi delegation, and had sought to recruit Muslim volunteers for Al Qaida in the Balkans, especially in Albania, Kosovo and Bosnia. In Bosnia, several hundred Afghan war veterans had fought as “volunteers” with the Bosnian Muslim regular army against the Serbs and Croats during the Balkan wars signaling Yugoslavia’s

breakup in the early nineties. The presumed presence of bin Laden operatives in Albania had caused more than one security alert for the American embassy and military mission in Tirana, and had caused postponement of several visits by senior Clinton administration officials to the Albanian capital.

Following the US cruise missile strike of August 1998, the Taliban authorities, faced with a massive military mobilization on Afghan borders by Iran, some of whose nationals, including diplomats, the Taliban and kidnapped or killed during their summer 1998 conquest of northern Afghanistan, said they intended to restrain bin Laden. The senior Taliban leader, Mullah Muhammad Omar (who was to prove highly elusive when the US military and their Afghan allies of the Northern Alliance tried to pursue and trap him during the winter war of 2001-2002), said in several interviews with local journalists that while bin Laden was still the militia's welcome guest, he had sent an envoy to that guest to remind him that it was Afghan territory which the Americans had attacked. The Taliban themselves reserved the right to respond. There could not be, Mullah Omar added, two parallel authorities in Afghanistan, and bin Laden was not there "to conduct political or military activities." Meanwhile, the government of Pakistan, through whose airspace the attacking missiles had struck, fired its civilian intelligence chief Manzoor Ahmed (not directly connected with the powerful military ISI). Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's government had lost face by having to retract a false report that at least one of the American missiles had landed in Pakistan. The chief secretary of Pakistan's Northwest Frontier Province, Rustam Shah Momand, was removed over the same issue.<sup>7</sup>

The tangled and tortuous relationships between Pakistan, the Taliban and bin Laden's Al-Qaida guerillas, culminating in the American reprisal war in Afghanistan in 2001-2002 following the airborne assaults on New York and Washington in September 2001, could be traced to an arbitrary starting point. In a sense, it had been identified by my Pakistani taxi driver in New York, when he bemoaned the mysterious death of General Zia al-Haq in August 1988. That occurrence upset Zia's many Islamist devotees. It began a slow-motion progression toward more internal troubles in Pakistan. The end of that trail was the multiple assault on America, beginning in early 1993 and continuing past the turn of the century. Along the way, Pakistan's ubiquitous and powerful ISI managed to use the American aid it had received for the Afghanistan jihad, aid which continued even after the jihad had ended and the Soviets had left, against Pakistan's main regional adversary, India.

To understand the phenomenon of bin Laden and his international network, one has to examine his relationships with the Pakistan of Zia al-Haq and with that of Zia's successors. These relationships were also linked to the place of the bin Laden family dynasty in Saudi Arabia, especially with Prince Turki bin Faisal. He was chief of Saudi intelligence during most of the Afghan war and the post-jihad period. It was almost certainly this close association with sama bin Laden, his companies and his family, that led to Turki's firing and replacement by Crown Prince Abdallah, in the name of King Fahd, in September 2001, probably under heavy but hidden United States pressure. (At almost the same time, General Perviz Musharaf, Pakistan's military president, found it necessary to fire and replace General Mahmoud Ahmed, the ISI's chief and several other senior officers, all associated with the continued coddling of the Taliban, which the ISI had originally created in the early nineties. General Musharaf had to make a 180-degree turn; stop supporting the Taliban and be seen, at least by the Americans, to be combating them instead, just as the Saudis did.)

Usama bin Laden was 23 years old as he finished his economics studies and courses in marketing at Jeddah University. (Later, he also received a degree in engineering at Riyadh University). Bin Laden began his friendship with Prince Turki when they discovered that they shared the same ideas about what they considered to be the decline and decadence of Islam and Islamic political dynamism. Usama also appreciated Prince Turki's honesty and antipathy to corruption, qualities not always found in the Arab world's royalty or secular rulers. Turki seems to have regarded Usama as a young man who burned with a pure, hard flame of devotion to religious principles. When the Soviets invaded Afghanistan in December 1979, Prince Turki sent bin Laden to Peshawar to scout out the possibilities of raising an Arab volunteer army.

In Pakistan, bin Laden quickly became acquainted with a tall, green-eyed and charismatic Palestinian, Abdallah Azzam, who had made a name for himself with fiery mosque sermons in Zarqa, Jordan, to Palestinians fleeing the Jordan army's crackdown on the PLO during and following Black September of 1970. Azzam later became one of the inspirers of the HAMAS movement. He rejected Yassir Arafat's mainstream PLO organization and the smaller Palestinian groups as too secular, in some cases too Marxist and not Islamic enough. He also felt that these movements were too dependent on the Soviet Great Satan, the usurper of Muslim Afghanistan. Azzam, in liaison with the generals running Pakistan's ISI, who were in turn under

direct command of President Zia al-Haq, outlined to bin Laden the need for weapons, transport and incomes for the families of the fighters. Bin Laden promised to be generous with financing.

Back in Riyad, other members of the bin Laden construction firm and Prince Turki offered their blessings. They enabled Usama to begin fund-raising and organizational journeys throughout the Arab world. The bin Laden family further cemented their ties with the Saudi royal family and with Zia al-Haq beginning in 1983. The group won the “contract of the century” in Saudi Arabia, worth \$3 billion; the full restoration and where necessary, reconstruction of the holy places of Mecca and Medina. Delighted by his impeccable credentials, the CIA gave Usama free rein in Afghanistan, as did Pakistan’s intelligence generals. They looked with a benign eye on a buildup of Sunni Muslim sectarian power in South Asia to counter the influence of Iranian Shi’ism of the Khomeiny variety. Bin Laden, according to the persistent legend which may well be true, proved himself a brave foot soldier by joining in the guerilla fighting, in which he was wounded, against the Soviets near Jalalabad. Always under the approving eye of Pakistan’s ISI officers, he cultivated and guarded his good relations with the two main Afghan ethnic warlords, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, a Pushtun and Ahmed Shah Massoud, a Tajik. Massoud later turned against both the Pushtun Taliban and bin Laden. He became the redoubtable commander of the Northern Alliance. He was finally murdered by Arab agents of the Taliban posing as television journalists in September 2001, striking the first of many heavy blows at the US attempt to use the Northern Alliance in its anti-Taliban campaign.

Even more crucial for his later alliance with the Taliban and his global enterprise in private terrorism, bin Laden used as a regional power base in Pakistan the Binoori mosque in Karachi’s Newton district. The prayer leader there was a certain Mullah Muhammad Omar, then an unknown young cleric who had lost an eye in the war, and who by the late nineties had risen to be the paramount leader of the Taliban, the most powerful man in Afghanistan. Later, bin Laden married Mullah Omar’s daughter, cementing family ties, which are all-important in the Muslim world.

Operating from Karachi at first and later from his strongholds in Afghanistan, bin Laden’s financial and construction empire set about building the base and training camps and landing strips in Afghanistan—under attack by the United States, which had then encouraged their building, in the winter of 2001-2002—for private jets of warlords of the anti-Soviet jihad, and for visiting Muslim and Arab dignitaries.

Deeply buried bunkers and tunnels for command posts and telecommunications centers, the nightmare of the Pentagon planners trying to target them with huge penetration bombs in 2001, were carved out of the Afghan mountains. They were meant to make telecommunications of the mujahiddin fighters proof against the radio traffic analysts and codebreakers of the Red Army, as well as to secure the munitions, weapons and fuel stores against attack by Soviet land and air forces.

Long before the war ended, bin Laden and his acolytes were preparing for the larger jihads to come against the impious Arab governments which, he felt, were beholden to the corrupt and Satanic United States, with which, as an objective ally, he had been working to expel the Soviets. At the same time, Pakistan's growingly powerful ISI was already diverting some of the resources intended by the United States for the anti-Soviet war to the secular conflict with India over Kashmir, and the sectarian enmity of the ISI-supported militant Islamist groups against India's majority Hindu religion.

The bin Laden organizations prepared for the unholy wars to come by diversifying their financial investments. They bought into trucking, shipping and airline companies, especially among the oil states of the Arabian Peninsula and Gulf. The unexplained car bomb murder in 1989 of Abdallah Azzam, who had earlier recruited Muslim volunteers for the CIA's jihad in the United States, deeply shocked bin Laden. He moved close to his Algerian son-in-law, Bounoua Boudjema, who, as we saw earlier in this book, was a key leader of the Algerian armed Islamist rebels. French intelligence believes bin Laden helped to finance the Islamist bombings of the Paris metro and other targets in 1995. Ben Laden also hired mainly Algerian Afghan veterans as personal bodyguards.

Algerian-born Ahmed Ressay, another adherent of Al-Qaida, was intended to be a key figure in bringing bin Laden's brand of jihad to the United States during the Christmas-New Year holidays of December 1999 and January 2000. In this period, Jordan intelligence, working with the US services, succeeded in thwarting major terrorist attacks planned against the Marriot Hotel in Amman and several touristic and pilgrimage sites in Jordan, frequented by American and Israeli visitors. Ressay, convicted in the summer of 2001 of planning to blow up Los Angeles International Airport, a project he confessed to, was seized by US Customs officers while trying to smuggle explosives in his car aboard a ferryboat from Vancouver, Canada, in December 1999. Anti-terrorist French judge Jean-Louis Brugiere, who had worked on most of the high-profile terrorism cases in France, traveled in January 2000 to the

United States to join the investigation. Agence-France Presse reported on January 27, 2000 that French investigators linked Ressam to Fateh Kamel. A suspect held in France, Kamel had lived in Montreal and was “close” to Ressam, also based there. Kamel, with both Algerian and Canadian nationality, had been arrested by Jordan’s vigilant intelligence operatives and extradited to France in April 1999. Kamel was a logistics specialist who had fought against the Russians in Afghanistan. A third Algerian, believed like Ressam and Kamel to have belonged to Algeria’s radical Islamist *Groupe Islamique Armee* (GIA), affiliated with Al-Qaida, shared an apartment with Ressam in Montreal. He was wanted in several countries for complicity in terrorism. Several other Algerians in the United States and Canada were suspected or proved to belong to the network supporting Ressam’s intended mission.

Once the Soviets had departed Afghanistan in 1989, bin Laden also left the Afghan scene, without being drawn into the fratricidal struggles which began among the different Afghan political and ethnic clans. Back in Riyadh, Prince Turki apparently insisted that bin Laden maintain his training of mercenary volunteers centered on Peshawar. This would have been in line with the continuous and expanding training of Islamist militants by Pakistan’s ISI for the struggle with India in Kashmir. However, while bin Laden seems to have wholeheartedly cooperated with the ISI in its Kashmir efforts, and may have also helped to finance them, bin Laden’s purposes probably already differed from Turki’s Saudi agenda.

In an interview with the Saudi-owned satellite TV channel MBC in November 2001, Prince Turki, after leaving his post as intelligence chief, described for the first time what he said was a failed attempt to get Mullah Omar, the Taliban’s leader, to extradite bin Laden in 1998.

Turki became the first senior Saudi to say he was certain that bin Laden and Al-Qaida were behind the attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001. He claimed that he had discussed bin Laden’s handover to Saudi Arabia at a meeting in Kandahar, Afghanistan, in June 1998, two months before the embassy bombings in East Africa. Turki said he briefed Mullah Omar “on what bin Laden had done against the kingdom’s interests and asked him to stop him and hand him over to us.” At the time, bin Laden was already on a “wanted” list in his native Saudi Arabia for agitation against the royal family and the presence of US troops, whom he accused of “defiling” Islam’s two holiest cities, Mecca and Medina. Omar agreed but then sidetracked the issue by advocating creation of a committee to study it. The embassy bombings in

Nairobi and Dar es Salaam and the US counter-attack against Afghanistan and Khartoum followed this inconclusive meeting. When he returned to Afghanistan later in 1998, Mullah Omar, said Turki, had changed his mind. He flatly rejected the request to extradite bin Laden. Turki said he then told Omar, “You will regret it and the Afghan people will pay a high price for that.”

Turki added that Mullah Omar and his former friend, bin Laden share the same ideology and that “the evil in them is the same.”<sup>7</sup>

Bin Laden began to reorient the training of his troops in the Al-Qaida organization. He moved away from more or less conventional anti-aircraft and anti-tank tactics used against the Soviets to urban guerilla warfare, sabotage and terrorism—also skills imparted by the CIA, as we have seen, to the Pakistani and Afghan trainers of the mujahiddin—aimed at destabilizing the societies and governments which were soon to become his targets, mainly but not exclusively in North Africa, Checheniya, the Philippines and the United States.

A change of command in Pakistan’s ISI which followed the death of President Zia al-Haq in 1988 seems to have somewhat relaxed the ISI’s direct hold on bin Laden’s legions. Nevertheless, the ISI continued to rely on bin Laden’s camp training system. This came to light with the American cruise missile attacks on the camps in the Khost area on August 20, 1998. The ISI turned to emphasizing support to the Kashmiri insurgents, and other operations aimed against the central power of India in New Delhi.

In the wake of the September 2001 attacks on the United States, the Bush administration, as it exerted great pressure and persuasion on Pakistan’s General Musharref to switch sides and support the US against the Taliban, rediscovered what journalists and intelligence operatives in the area had long known: Not only had the ISI maintained a long relationship with bin Laden’s people. It had used Al-Qaida camps to train terrorists and underground fighters for battle with India in Kashmir and elsewhere. This reliance of the ISI on the bin Laden camps became evident in August 1998. The US cruise missile attacks on the camps near Khost killed or wounded several members of a Kashmiri group supported by Pakistan and believed to be training in the camps.

As Shamshad Ahmad, Pakistan's ambassador to the United Nations reminded two *New York Times* correspondents in October 2001, "Aft'r the Sovioets were forced out of Afghanistan, you (the United States) left us in the lurch with all the problems stemming from the war: an influx of refugees, the drug and gun running, a Kalashnikov culture." The relative indifference of the Clinton administration to Pakistan's continued support for violent Kashmiri insurgent groups, as well as Pakistan's nuclear weapons program and its human rights program was shown in a "ho hum" attitude of indifference to a secret memorandum written by Michael A. Sheehan, the State Department's counter-terrorism coordinator. It urged tougher efforts to cut financing to bin Laden and end the sanctuary and support offered to Al-Qaida. Listing actions the US could take toward Pakistan, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen to persuade them to isolate Al-Qaida, the memo called Pakistan the key. It urged that the administration make terrorism the main issue in relations with Islamabad.

As *The New York Times* put it, the Sheehan memo "landed with a resounding thud" and met general indifference. As the bin Laden threat grew—and, as became evident later—his planners began methodically preparing the next attacks on the US—and US pressure on Pakistan increased, the Pakistanis pretended to cooperate, but actually did very little. The CIA supplied and financed a special commando unit that Pakistan offered to create to capture bin Laden in Afghanistan as Ramzi Yousef and Mir Aimal Kainsi had been captured in the much easier environment of Pakistan. The idea went "nowhere," a former US official said, because "the ISI never intended to go after bin Laden. We got completely snookered."<sup>8</sup>

The United States almost "got snookered" again, following the September 2001 attacks in New York and Washington. At the end of September, according to the very authoritative intelligence column in the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, at least three Pakistani military intelligence officers, including a brigadier general and a colonel, crossed into Afghanistan. Although General Musharaf had already decreed that Pakistan would reverse its policies and support the United States instead of the Taliban, the officers' purpose was to help the Taliban prepare their defenses against the coming American onslaught and advise them on strategy. Moving without permission from Musharaf, the officers took with them several truckloads of ammunition, although the ISI and the army were under orders to stop military supplies to the Taliban..

When General Musharaf learned what had happened, ISI chief General Mahmoud Ahmed resigned, almost certainly at Musharaf's demand. His replacement, General Ehansul Haq, was ordered to overhaul the service and rid it of mid-level Islamist officers who had worked with the Taliban. On September 27, 2001, all ISI officers operating with the Taliban—and there were many—were ordered out of Afghanistan. On presidential orders there was a massive reshuffle in the senior army command on October 7, aimed at eliminating the hardline Islamist officers who had up to then devoted their careers to supporting the Taliban.<sup>9</sup> According an Indian research and intelligence report, the Kashmiri militant groups “could not have grown to their current [in the year 2000] size without the help of the ISI.”

Among those causing India the most trouble are several which have been on and off the US State Department's list of terrorist groups: Lashkar-e-Taiba, which proclaims that its own brand of jihad is directed “strictly against non-Muslims, and particularly Hindus and Jews, the two main enemies of Muslims.” Other important ones are the Harkatul Mujahiddeen, the Lashkar-e-Taiba, the Hizbul Mujahideen, the Sipah-Sahaba-Pakistan and the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, which receive training from the ISI and enjoy support from Islamist political parties in Pakistan.<sup>10</sup>

Cooperation between bin Laden and Iraq's dictator Saddam Hussein, the object of reporting and speculation about possible targeting of Iraq during the winter Afghanistan war of 2001-2002, came to light only long after the allied “Operation Desert Storm” to expel Iraqi forces from Kuwait in 1991. When Saddam's forces invaded Kuwait in August 1990, Usama bin Laden expressed shock at Saudi King Fahd's decision, not only to invite the Americans to defend his kingdom but to agree to finance the Americans' defense efforts. He qualified this as “treason.” Prince Turki, then still on excellent terms with bin Laden, reassured him that Americans would not be stationed near the Muslim holy places, and that they would leave Saudi Arabia once Saddam Hussein had been defeated. When in 1991 the US expeditionary force of over 400,000 departed but left several thousand permanently-stationed troops in the kingdom, bin Laden turned against the royal family, and began financing its Saudi opponents based in London. When King Fahd, at President Mubarak's request, deprived him of his Saudi nationality in 1994, bin Laden, as we saw earlier, moved to Khartoum. There he moved into a kind of business and commercial partnership with Sheikh Hassan al-Turabi and a Sudanese veteran of Afghanistan, Ghazi Salaheddine, Sudan's Minister of Information.

Until forced to leave the Sudan under American and Saudi pressure in 1996, bin Laden expanded his wealth and his global network of political, banking and terrorist contacts. He acquired a monopoly over Sudan's gum Arabic, a colloidal substance used in resinous manufactures. The CIA seems to have definitively turned against its former partner bin Laden during this period, after the attacks on American personnel at Riyadh and Khobar.

Bin Laden flew back to Afghanistan in the summer of 1996, with baggage, wives and retainers. His friends, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and Ahmed Shah Massoud, had been chased out of Kabul by the new Taliban rulers, probably with the blessings of the CIA. The fighters loyal to those two warlords were in many senses ideological forebears of the Taliban. But the followers of Mullah Muhammad Omar, whom bin Laden had befriended in the 1980s at the Binoori mosque in Karachi, had no use for them. On the contrary, they befriended bin Laden himself, perhaps believing, rightly or wrongly that he still enjoyed the favors of some of their Saudi protectors and financiers. The Saudis were still betting heavily on the Taliban to eliminate all traces of Iranian influence, mainly in the form of the Shi'ite factions which the Saudis, as well as General Zia al-Haq and his successors in Islamabad, had always opposed.

In vain, the Saudis tried to persuade bin Laden not to support the royal family's opponents. One of these was Muhammad Massari, a dissident in London who sent thousands of faxes to sympathizers and others in the kingdom, spreading tales of corruption, oppression and police and prison abuse of political prisoners.

In February 1998, as preparations were already under way for the Nairobi and Dar es Salaam attacks, bin Laden met with at least four senior Islamist leaders. One was Ayman Zawahri, an Egyptian surgeon who left his lucrative practice in Cairo around 1995 to operate full-time as a founder and leader of Egypt's *Al-Gihad*. Since then, he has become bin Laden's most senior deputy. He frequently appeared in videos of bin Laden's communiqués and interviews, just prior to the September 11, 2001 attacks in the US. He is universally considered to have become the right arm, if not the logistical brains of bin Laden and the Al-Qaida operations. Others at the February 1998 meeting included Abdel Salam Muhammed, chief of a radical Islamist group in Bangladesh; Fadi Errahmane Khalil, emir of the radical Pakistani Ansar movement; and the Egyptian Islamist exile Abu Yassir Ahmed Taha, representing Islamist groups in western North Africa. These men and some aides set up an "Islamic Struggle Front"

dedicated to fighting “the Jews” (i.e., Israel and all its friends and allies). They issued a fatwa declaring it to be legitimate to kill any American, civil or military.

Though few world media noticed this, Washington did. The CIA, FBI and the Pentagon, even before bin Laden’s outspoken and aggressive ABC News interview of June 1998 by John Miller, realized that bin Laden had in fact declared a worldwide jihad against. It was then that Prince Turki had to return to Saudi Arabia, empty-handed, after his futile mission to try to persuade Mullah Omar to hand over bin Laden.

Islamic extremism flourished in Pakistan after Zia al-Haq’s mysterious death in August 1988 in the crash of his plane. That crash also killed General Akhtar Abdel Rahman Khan, former ISI chief and at the time of his death chairman of the Pakistani joint chiefs of staff and Zia’s probable successor. Another victim, as we saw, was Arnold Raphel, US ambassador to Pakistan. His divorced wife, Mrs. Robin Raphel, later served as assistant US Secretary of State for South Asia. She was US ambassador to Tunisia when I discussed the crash with her in Tunis in March 1998. Arnold Raphel had been friends with President Zia for 12 years. Also lost were Brigadier General Herbert Wassom, the US defense attaché in Islamabad and eight Pakistani generals with their aides, as well as the aircrew. The presidential Pakistan Air Force C-130 suddenly dived and hit the ground shortly after takeoff a few miles north of Bahawalpur, Pakistan. The passengers had been watching a test demonstration of a US tank the Pentagon wanted to sell to Pakistan. The demonstration had been a failure.

A Pakistan board of inquiry eliminated normal accidents and mechanical failures, or an external attack by a missile. In a secret, unpublished finding, the board concluded that the pilot had been knocked out by a chemical agent, such as a quick-working nerve gas. Mrs. Raphel and other senior US sources dismiss this, and say that a later US Air Force inquiry pointed to a fault in the plane’s hydraulic system.<sup>11</sup>

Some US media commentators mourned Zia’s passing as that of one of America’s best friends. However, Brigadier Muhammad Yousef, the lately retired chief of the ISI’s Afghanistan bureau, surmised that US policy-makers were actually not sorry to see Zia go. He felt that elements in the US administration were already trying to put the brakes on the Afghan Islamists and especially the Arab and other foreign volunteers helping them—not wanting it to be them, rather than the US-favored

émigré Afghan “Transition Government” the CIA favored and which sat in exile in Peshawar, to enter Kabul and take power.

Youssaf’s analysis was that as the holy war turned against the Communists, the jihad’s patrons in Washington viewed the prospect of a total mujahidin victory and seizure of Kabul with alarm. They feared, he suggested, that an Islamist takeover in Kabul would see the jihad’s paramount leaders, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, Younis Khalis, Abdel Rasul Sayyaf and Hekmatyar’s (and later the Taliban’s) opponent, Burhaneddin Rabbani “establishing an Iranian-type religious dictatorship.” In Youssaf’s view, the American game was to curb the power of the Islamists, and to play on differences between the various factions and their commanders. General Akhtar, according to Youssaf, understood what was happening and opposed what he considered the CIA’s maneuvering. Until Zia’s sudden death, he supported the Pakistani intelligence chiefs’ opposition to the CIA desire to issue arms and supplies directly to the fighters, without using the ISI as intermediary. The Americans partially achieved this in 1990, after the holy war had ended and the Russians were gone—but not until after major shifts on the Pakistani scene.<sup>12</sup>

Following the fatal plane crash, there was no power struggle. The handover to power of the new president, as provided in the constitution, was smooth. He was Ghulam Ishaq Khan, 73 who had been chairman of the Pakistani Senate. In May 1988, Zia had dismissed his prime minister, Muhammad Khan Juenjo and his cabinet for “incompetence, corruption and lack of attention to the Muslim faith.” He formed a caretaker government in their place and he wanted the next election to be non-partisan. The Pakistani supreme court ruled differently on October 2, 1988. Parties were permitted to put up party candidates. Main contenders were the arch-conservative and Islamist party called the Islamic Democratic Alliance and the Pakistan People’s Party (PPP). The latter was led by Miss Benazir Bhutto, the Radcliffe College and Oxford University-educated daughter of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, executed by Zia’s regime. The PPP won the biggest block of seats. But the conservative Islamist establishment in the army and the ISI opposed Benazir. This was partly because she was less than enthusiastic about continuance of the jihad-related activities, led by Usama bin Laden and others, now that the Russians had left Afghanistan and the Soviet Union was beginning to collapse. President Ishaq Khan named Bhutto prime minister in December 1988. She won a vote of confidence in the national assembly.

At 35, Benazir Bhutto was the first woman leader in the modern history of any Muslim nation. Had she enjoyed the army's support, she might have had a chance to phase out the growing influence of the holy warriors who stayed on, and were now, as we saw, operating flourishing drugs and arms businesses to help finance their continuing operations, many of which—as in Kashmir and India's Punjab—had ISI support. Meanwhile Pakistan was being torn by the cult of arms and drugs resulting from the holy war; such as the inroads of heroin addiction in Pakistani society; friction among more than three million Afghan refugees; the mohajirs or Muslim refugees from India, and rising sectarian animosity inside Pakistan.

Benazir Bhutto was forced from power by a combination of the army and Nawaz Sharif, a power-broker who became prime minister. On April 15, 1999, a court in Rawalpindi convicted Bhutto and her businessman husband, Asif Ali Zardari, of corruption. Two judges ruled that they had taken kickbacks from a Swiss company which Bhutto had selected to monitor the collection of Pakistan's import duties. They sentenced them both to five years' prison and fined them \$8.6 million. Mrs. Bhutto, in London at the time, said she would not return to Pakistan until the appeal had been heard.

After growing Islamist violence and sectarian fighting which served further to destroy an already crumbling economy, the army high command staged another coup on October 12, 1999. This time it was against the elected government of Nawaz Sharif, who had tried to dismiss General Pervez Musharaf, army commander-in-chief. Sharif tried to prevent Musharaf's plane from landing as it returned from a visit to Sri Lanka. General Musharaf sent troops to peacefully oust and arrest the Nawaz Sharif government. He declared martial law on October 15, suspending the constitution and dismissing parliament. In 2000 Sharif was tried and sentenced to life imprisonment for hijacking, attempted murder and other offenses. The government prosecutor, who had sought the death penalty, appealed; so did Sharif's defense lawyers, one of whom was murdered during the proceedings. Eventually, Sharif was allowed to depart for exile abroad.

By the summer of 2000, tension and fighting between India and Pakistan over Kashmir increased the danger of an Indo-Pakistan war, which US analysts feared might eventually be fought with nuclear weapons, which both countries had tested recently. An offensive, coordinated by the Pakistani army and the ISI, of Kashmiri militants ended in their withdrawal under pressure from US President Bill Clinton.

Clinton visited South Asia in March 2000. He spent nearly five days in India, initiating a new “tilt toward India” and so reversing the policy of favoring Pakistan which Henry Kissinger had initiated during the 1971 Indo-Pakistan war. Indian commentators said this new wooing of India was giving way to the old US Pakistan-first policy in the fall of 2001, as a result of the renewed need of the US for Pakistan as a military base for its new war in Afghanistan. was evaporating.

During his trip in 2000, Clinton made only cursory stops in Bangladesh and Pakistan, On both stopovers, grave security threats curtailed his program. Washington’s fears over the ISI’s support for the militant Kashmiri groups and for the Taliban had become so great that the US Secret Service, which always sends agents in advance to countries initiating a US presidential visit, strongly opposed any visit at all by Clinton to Pakistan, out of concern for his safety. A least one of the Kashmiri groups had kidnapped and held Americans and others for ransom, and Islamists openly threatened and sometimes attacked Americans, especially in Karachi. President Clinton overruled the Secret Service and made the trip, but with extraordinary security precautions. The White House had an empty Air Force One, normally the presidential plane, flown to Pakistan. Clinton actually arrived in a small, unmarked plane. His motorcade into Islamabad halted under an overpass and Mr. Clinton changed cars.<sup>12</sup> Clinton succeeded neither in inducing India and Pakistan to embrace nuclear disarmament, nor did General Musharaf hold out real hope of a Pakistani effort to induce the Taliban to surrender bin Laden, who was reported by some Western media , without any confirmation, to be suffering from a kidney or liver ailment, requiring treatment by an unnamed visiting Iraqi doctor—giving rise to more rumors about the Saddam Hussein connection.

It was in Pakistan that the real prelude to the climactic attacks in the United States in September 2001 occurred. For Ahmed Rashid, the seasoned and well-informed author of many articles and an outstanding book on the Taliban, the scene in 1995 demonstrated how events were linked in cities as widely separated as Karachi, Manila and New York. What happened in Islamabad on February 7, 1995, Rashid reported, “was a scene from a Hollywood thriller. Nine agents of the CIA and FBI teamed up with ISI officers. Acting on a tip from a South African Muslim informer named Mustaq Parker, who won a two million dollar reward and a new identity in the US as [a further] reward, the US-Pakistani team burst into a room in the Su Casa, a guesthouse in Islamabad owned by Usama bin Laden, their guns drawn and ready.

Supine on the bed was the man then considered the world's most hunted terrorist, 27 year-old Ramzi Ahmed Yousef." <sup>13</sup> As we saw, he was wanted as he mastermind of the World Trade Center bombing of February 1993, and for his role in the plot to bomb strategic targets throughout New York City in June 1993.

Pakistan waived its ponderous extradition procedures, as Egypt had already done 18 months earlier for Mahmoud Abuhhalima, an Egyptian veteran of the Afghan holy war wanted in the World Trade Center case. Some 36 hours after his seizure, Yousef was flown to New York, as Abuhhalima had been flown from Egypt. President Bill Clinton publicly thanked Pakistan Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. Many of the local Islamists condemned her as a stooge for Washington. Two days after Yousef was captured, a Pakistani court in Lahore sentenced two Christians, a boy of 14 and his uncle, to death for blasphemy against Islam—allegedly they had tossed scraps of paper with insults against the faith into a mosque. (Pakistani Christians often suffer the wrath of Islamists at Western actions. In late October 2001, over 20 Pakistani Roman Catholics paid with their lives when gunmen massacred them during mass in their church; an apparent reprisal for the US bombing of Afghanistan. An appeals court acquitted the boy and his uncle. However, to save their lives from angry Islamist mobs demanding their murder, they were flown to asylum in Germany, a faraway country of which the two hapless Pakistanis knew little.

Worse was to come. Constant battles between Sunni and Shi'a Muslims in Karachi had already killed hundreds, Their feuding had been rendered lehal by huge stockpiles of weapons left over from the Afghanistan war. What was happening in Karachi was a smaller replica of Sunni-Shi'a strife in ruined Kabul. There, the Shi'a Minority was being outgunned and out-slaughtered by Sunni majority forces of Burhanedin Rabbani, the nominal Afghan president. Later, when the Taliban took control, they continued the job, nearly provoking war with Iran.

Benzir Bhutto's voice was one of those which, nearly unheeded in the United States, could have awakened Americans to the enormous terrorist threats facing the world from South Asia. Shortly before visiting the US in April 1995, she told Western newsmen and diplomats in Islamabad that Pakistan's very existence was threatened by the Afghan terrorist training camps and the spreading drug operations resulting from the 1979-89 war. Ramzi Ahmed Yousef, she disclosed, had intended to kill her. His own explosives wounded him while driving a booby-trapped car which was supposed to blow up her residence in Islamabad Five weeks after Yousef's capture, a legion of

50 FBI agents flew to Pakistan and with local police, seized several more suspects. All were discovered through telephone taps and were linked to Ramzi Ahmed Yousef. Their nationalities read like a mini-catalogue of the foreign “Afghanis” still operating from the Peshawar area: an Iranian, a Sudanese, two Egyptians, two Pakistanis and a Syrian who operated the Islamic Relief Agency in Peshawar, financed by Kuwait.<sup>14</sup>

North of Peshawar, *New York Times* correspondent John F. Burns discovered, and was warned away from, the “university” of Dawal al-Jihad. It stood behind red clay walls and was shunned by taxi drivers and other locals. It was a school for terrorists. After talking with senior police officials, Burns described its reputation as a training place for terrorists who had operated in the Philippines, the Middle East, North Africa and New York City, in the 1993 plots. Its founder was Professor Abdel Rasul Sayyaf, an Afghani academic who claimed to be a graduate of Cairo’s famed old Al-Azhar Islamic university. A senior Pakistani military officer acknowledged that 20,000 volunteers were trained there by the ISI. Those who remained after the 1979-89 war stayed in the region, “looking for other wars to fight.” Like leaders of the holy warriors, Ramzi Ahmed Yousef commuted back and forth across the frontier to Afghanistan between 1990 and his arrest in 1993.<sup>15</sup> Much of the finance for the Abu Sayyaf-ISI terrorist “university” most likely came first from Saudi government funds, and later, from Usama bin Laden. As we saw in the last chapter, Abu Sayyaf’s own mujahidin movement had by 1990, moved a nucleus of its fighters to the Philippines and were operating there as terrorists and bandits under that name.

Another way station in the terrorists’ long march from South Asia to New York in September 2001 was Jordan, under King Hussein until his death from cancer in February 1999, and then under his son, King Abdallah. The New Years Eve plots, coinciding with the 1999-2000 millennium celebrations in Jordan and the Western US, had a long prelude in Jordan. Jordan’s Islamists, who had a long history of benign attention, in the form of providing them, including Muslim Brotherhood members with cabinet and other senior government posts, had long prospered in the strongly anti-socialist, anti-Communist and (towards the Islamists) benign atmosphere in Jordan. One of them, Abdallah Azzam, as we saw, had been a principal recruiter for the CIA’s Afghanistan jihad. Another, Muhammad Salameh, the first Jordanian arrested and one of those convicted in the February 1993 World Trade Center bombing, had like Azzam bitterly opposed King Hussein’s peace treaty signed with Israel in October 1994. The treaty was achieved only after weary years of constant

effort; secret and less-secret contacts between Hussein and Israeli leaders, and the opposition of many of the Palestinians, comprising close to one-half of Jordan's five million people. In 1993, as part of the preliminaries for the settlement with Israel, Jordan security forces rounded up many and imprisoned a few Islamists: members or alumni of the strong and legal Muslim Brotherhood, and some members of the shadowy and far more radical Islamic Liberation Party. In the 1989 elections, just as some of the Jordanian and Palestinian Afghan war veterans began to return to Jordan, Islamists won in national elections fully 30 out of 80 parliamentary seats.

Meanwhile Muhammed Salameh had decided in 1987 to travel to the United States. As his family was poor and had no connections in the US, and Muhammad had only religious but no vocational or professional training, it was unlikely that he could get a visa through normal channels. His mother even ruled it out. Then one day he came home with a brand new Jordanian isa and a fresh US visa stamped into it. Jordanian officials said later that an "Afghan international network"—probably a predecessor of today's Al-Qaida—procured US visas for young men with Islamist leanings. The mystery of how Muhammad Salameh got his visa was not cleared up in the New York trial records. Once he arrived in New York, he reported his passport lost. The US Embassy in Amman insisted they had never issued a visa to the future bomber and had no record of it.<sup>16</sup>

On May 24, 1993, a young Jordanian named Murad, an Afghan war veteran who had returned from Afghanistan only two months earlier, left by plane from Amman to report for new training and assignments in Afghanistan. He wouldn't meet an American journalist, so a senior Arab journalist in Amman, the author's friend, interviewed him. He disclosed that as of spring 1993, over three years after the Afghanistan war's end, young fighters were still being recruited in Jordan. Palestinians, Jordanians or others interested were steered to the Pakistani Embassy in Amman. If found acceptable, they were issued tickets to Islamabad. On arrival they called a number in Peshawar. Transport was sent to the airport to take them to a processing center. They were immediately given Afghan-type clothes and assigned to training camps. Murad's patron was Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. Each group, Murad said, had its own camps. Many were inside Afghanistan, and so beyond the reach of Pakistani, Egyptian and Algerian government agents sent to track them down. The least "pro-American," said Murad, were the Hekmatyar camps. The most pro-American were those of Burhaneddin Rabbani, the Tajik leader, and former acting

president of Afghanistan. He opposed Hekmatyar and the Taliban, leading an armed struggle with the Northern Alliance against Hekmatyar in which much of Kabul and other Afghan cities had been destroyed since 1992.

Murad claimed proudly to have taken part in the tracking, trial and execution of a senior chief of KHAD, the former Afghan Communist secret police. In the Sudan, he said, there were many bases at secret locations. The “big man” financing them was Usama bin Laden. Overall political responsibility In the Sudan, Murad said, was in the hands of Sheikh Hassan al-Turabi. Murad confirmed that most Afghan veterans returning to Sudan, including himself, were routinely questioned by Jordanian intelligence. However, only members of a specific group, called *Jeish Muhammad* or Muhammad’s Army (which was later placed on the US State Department’s terrorist list), who tried to destabilize Jordan through acts of terrorism (mostly explosions in public places like cinemas and some government buildings) were held. Many of them were pardoned or amnestied.

Unlike Murad, Muhammad Salameh chose to go to the US and stay there. In New York he soon fell in with the circle of Islamist followers of the blind Egyptian Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman, who had arrived in Brooklyn in July 1990. He had a US tourist visa, even though his name was on a list of terrorist suspects because of his record of militancy in Egypt. The US Embassy in Khartoum issued the visa. There, US diplomats claimed, a computer error in the English-language transliteration of the Sheikh’s name caused the error of issuing the Sheikh’s visa. Later, it transpired that CIA officers, at Khartoum or elsewhere, had consciously assisted his entry. His initial hosts in New York were members of the Islamic Brotherhood, Inc., of 552-554 Atlantic Avenue, Brooklyn (Brooklyn’s Arab quarter). The organization had successfully requested his entry as a guest preacher. Eventually the sheikh obtained a Green Card or Alien’s Residence Permit. He used a multiple entry visa later stamped in his Egyptian passport to leave and enter the United States several times.<sup>17</sup>

Sheikh Omar began fund-raising and recruiting volunteers in the US for the anti-Soviet jihad. The mosques where he preached, first in Brooklyn, then in Jersey City, attracted first-generation Muslim immigrants. There were also Islamist recruits among Jordanians, Palestinians and others expelled from Kuwait and other Gulf emirates after the Gulf war, as a result of PLO leader Yassir Arafat’s foolish embrace of Saddam Hussein during that war against Iraq. In March 1991, Mustafa Shalaby, a 39-year-old Egyptian immigrant and electrical contractor, was found murdered in his Brooklyn

apartment. Police told New York investigative reporter Robert Friedman that he had been handling weapons supplies for Afghan guerillas. He had also raised money for the legal defense of a man named El Sayyad Nossair, another Islamist who had been acquitted of murdering the radical Jewish Defense League chief, Rabbi Meier Kahane, but was jailed on weapons charges in the same case. Shalaby's killing was never solved. Sheikh Omar or someone working with him was suspected, because Shalaby had serious disagreements with the sheikh over money.

Directors of the Al Farouq Masjid mosque, in a storefront building on Atlantic Avenue, Brooklyn, expelled Sheikh Omar as preacher shortly after Kahane's murder. Sheikh Omar moved to the El Salaam mosque in Jersey City, New Jersey. Its founder was Sultan Ibrahim al-Gawli, a wealthy, 55-year old Egyptian businessman who had been convicted in 1986 by a Federal jury of conspiring to ship 150 pounds of C-4 plastic explosive to Israel for use by Palestinians in a planned Christmas bombing. Al-Gawli served 18 months in prison, then returned to Jersey City.<sup>18</sup>

The facts about the World Trade Center bombing in February 1993 and the second, aborted plot to destroy major targets in New York City in June of that year, were perhaps more widely reported and commented upon than any other terrorist case in the United States, until the final destruction of the Twin Towers by the suicide hijackers on September 11, 2001.<sup>19</sup>

Both the accomplished assault and the later, unaccomplished plans had the earmarks of the Afghan veterans' network, soon to be known as Al-Qaida, all over them. The World Trade Center bombing in the Center's underground parking garage left a crater 200 feet wide and several storeys deep, a small pre-replica of the gaping abyss left in lower Manhattan by the September 2001 attack. The bomb was found to be of ammonium nitrate and fuel oil. This formula was taught in CIA manuals. Versions of these manuals were found in the possession of some of the conspirators, especially Ahmed Ajaj, a Palestinian who had first entered the US on September 9, 1991 and applied for political asylum from Israeli persecution, residing in Houston, Texas. In April 1992 he hastily left the country under an assumed name. In Peshawar and Afghanistan he came into contact with the bin Laden network and Ramzi Ahmed Yousef. He trained in weapons and explosives. Ajaj and Yousef flew together from Peshawar and arrived at New York's Kennedy airport on September 1, 1992. Ajaj carried the bomb manuals and other incriminating materials which were found by US Customs. He escaped with only six months' imprisonment. Yousef, who claimed to be

traveling alone, succeeded in entering the US and immediately began preparations with his co-conspirators for the February bombing. When he entered the US he claimed he had been beaten by Iraqi soldiers in Kuwait during the Gulf War, and asked for political asylum.<sup>20</sup>

Muhammad Salameh was arrested March 4, 1993. A day later, Egyptian immigrant Ibrahim Elgabrownny was arrested in Brooklyn for assaulting officers who searched his apartment. Chemical engineer Nidal Ayyad, who assembled the bomb, was arrested on March 10 at his Maplewood, New Jersey, apartment. The three suspects were indicted in Manhattan on March 17. A fourth Egyptian, an Afghan veteran named Mahmoud Abuhlima, was seized at his village in Egypt, turned over to US FBI agents on March 24, and flown to New York. Another suspect, Bilal Alkaisy, who had frequented an Afghan “refugee” facility, the Alkifah Refugee Center in Brooklyn (better known among the Arab community of Brooklyn as the “Jihad Office”) was arrested in New Jersey on March 25. An explosives timer was later found in his apartment. Ramzi Ahmed Yousef, then still at large abroad, was indicted in absentia on March 31. He had boarded a plane out of New York for Pakistan on the day of the attack, after sharing an apartment with Salameh. Ahmed Ajaj was also taken into custody again at about the same time.

Long maneuvering followed between the US and Egypt over Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman’s status and whether Egypt would insist on his extradition (it didn’t). Sheikh Omar was arrested and on August 25, he was indicted for conspiracy in the Trade Center attack, the June bomb conspiracy and the 1990 murder of Rabbi Meier Kahane. The charges said Sheikh Omar had instructed and advised other conspirators. El Sayyad Nossair was indicted on a charge of murder (Kahane’s) to promote a larger and ongoing conspiracy. Fifteen men in all were named in the indictment. The main evidence used by the prosecution was 150 hours of taped, transcribed and translated conversations among the main conspirators, recorded by Imad Salem. He was an Egyptian working as a paid informer for the FBI. He claimed falsely to have been one of President Sadat’s bodyguards, present at his murder in 1981. His bogus claims enabled the defense to cast doubt on his testimony, but in the end this made no difference to the outcome. The trial ended on March 4, 1994, in the US District Court in Manhattan. Salameh, Ajaj, Nidal Ayad and Mahmoud Abuhlima were found guilty.

Ramzi Ahmed Yousef was then still at large, and so was an Iraqi, Ahmed Rahman Yasin, a former science student at Indiana University, so those two could not be tried. Yasin was still missing and wanted by the FBI in 2001, almost certainly in Iraq. This and an Iraqi passport with another identity, that of an Abdel Bassit, often used by Yousef, raised questions by analysts who see the hand of Saddam Hussein in this attack and in others, including the climactic hijackings of September 2001. Bilal Alkai's case was separated from the others. He was supposed to be tried later, but dropped out of sight. Judge Kevin Duffy passed sentence on May 24, 1994. He called the defendants "cowards," an epithet that would also be applied to the successful suicide hijackers of 2001 by some commentators. The judge explained that 180 years of the sentences he passed were based on the cumulative life expectancy of the six people killed in the World Trade Center. The balance was for charges related to assault on a Federal officer. There was no possibility of parole.

In January 1995 another conspiracy trial opened in Federal Court in New York, amid unprecedented security precautions against a possible terrorist attack. After a long and exhaustive choice of jurors from a pool of thousands, who were asked about their attitudes towards Arabs and Muslims, the trial proceeded. This time, one defendant was Clement Rodney Hampton-El, an Afro-American Muslim. He too had trained and served in a capacity, never clarified in public, in the Afghanistan war. His co-defendants rated him as a weapons expert.<sup>21</sup> The trial dragged through the summer of 1995. On October 1, 1995, Sheikh Omar and nine co-defendants were convicted of conspiracy to destroy American targets and also of planning the assassination of Egyptian President Mubarak during his New York visit earlier in the year. They were sentenced to long prison terms, against which their lawyers appealed, without success.

In January 1996 came a further trial on these and other offenses, including the 1990 murder of Rabbi Meier Kahane (the accused here was El Sayed Nossair, earlier acquitted of the same offense.) In one long marathon session on January 17, in a courthouse surrounded by armed police and barricades and searched by bomb-sniffing dogs, Sheikh Omar and nine co-defendants, were tried together and sentenced, following individual pleas of each defendant's innocence. Once again, the main basis was Imad Salem's tape recordings. Sheikh Omar again got life in prison, this time for conspiring to murder President Mubarak. El Sayed Nossair was sentenced to life without parole for the 1990 murder of Rabbi Kahane.<sup>22</sup> As in the 1995 trial, court records made public revealed none of the references to the Afghanistan jihad and the

defendants' backgrounds, with the exception of a brief mention of the Afro-American defendant from Philadelphia, Rodney Hampton-El. The CIA, belatedly, was trying to cover its tracks.

The sentencing of Ramzi Ahmed Yousef on January 8, 1998 for his multiple assaults on American targets was, until then, the highest watermark of the blowback on America from the Afghanistan war. Yousef was condemned to 240 years in prison, plus life, for the February World Trade Center bombing. In earlier trials in Federal Court in New York in September and November 1996 Federal jurors convicted Yousef and Eyad Ismoil, a Palestinian, for murder and conspiracy. Ismoil had been in touch with Yousef and the other Trade Center plotters for months before the attack. Ismoil had driven te rented Ryder delivery van containing the 1,200 pound ammonium nitrate bomb into the Cener's undergroun garage. Both Yousef and Ismoil had then immediately fled the US on airline flights. Ismoil wa captured later in Jordan and flown to the US, in one of the many measures helpful to the United States taken by Jordan's ubiquitous intelligence service.

In retrospect, as this is written in late 2001, it is easy to read portents of the September 2001 attacks in the words of Yousef and his judges. Brian Parr, the FBI agent who had escorted a handcuffed Yousef on the flight to New York after his capture in Pakistan, had told the jury that Yousef hoped he explosion at the Trade Cener would topple one of the two 110-foot towers into the other, killing tens of thousands of people, to let Americans know they were "at war," words similar to those in the communiqués and interviews of Yousef's presumed (though never proven) patron, Usama bin Laden. He is also said to have boasted to Parr that he had narrowly missed several opportunities to bomb all 12 airliners on a single day over the Pacific; to order a kamikaze-type suicide attack on CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia (this was to actually happen on September 11, 2001, with the target the Pentagon instead of the CIA)—and to assassinate President Bill Clinton during an upcoming visit to the Philippines. Just before his sentencing, Yousef declared to the judge, "Yes, I am a terrorist and I am proud of it." America had invented terrorism, he added. He supported it "as long as it is used against the United States and Israel... You are more than terrorists. You are butchers, liars and hypocrites."

Judge Duffy rose to the occasion with equally theatrical language. He recommended that Yousef remain in solitary confinement for his entire life,; treatment, he added, historically reserved for those "who spread plague and pestilence

throughout the world.” Probably with the sensational murder trial of the Afro-American football star and Hollywood celebrity O.J. Simpson in mind—a number of those involved in the Simpson trial had cashed in with fat book, television and cinema contracts—Judge Duffy acknowledged that “someone might be perverse enough to buy your story.” Accordingly, he fined Yousef \$4.5 million and order him to pay \$250 million in restitution., so that any money from cinema, television or book deals would go to the survivors of the six victims he had killed, and to the thousand people the Center’s bombing had wounded in New York. <sup>23</sup>

What was different about the terrible events of September 2001 was not the objectives of the terrorists, which were essentially the same, on a far grander scale. Quite different, on the other hand, were their backgrounds, motivations and indeed their *modus operandi*.

From what is known at this writing in early winter of 2001-02, it was a different breed of conspirators who hijacked the four United Airlines and American Airlines planes on September 11, 2001. Three of the planes (one attempt was thwarted by passengers and crew who fought the hijackers and brought about the fourth plane’s crash in open country in Pennsylvania, before it could head for its presumed target of either the White House or the Capitol building in Washington), became guided missiles. They toppled the Twin Towers, breached the Pentagon seriously and killed between 4,000 and 5,000 people, leaving many thousands of others with serious or mortal wounds, and with bereaved family member. The kamikaze pilots and those supporting them were mostly quiet young men of “good families” displaying no outward sign of religious zeal or fanaticism, unlike the Muhammad Salamehs and Mahmoud Abuhalmis of modest backgrounds and often openly-declared Islamist sentiments.

That they were obviously supported by an Al-Qaida network at least as sophisticated, and probably more so, than that behind the suicide bombing of the US Navy destroyer *Cole* in the big Yemeni port of Aden on October 12, 2000. In a sense, the *Cole* attack in Yemen was another step up the ladder of escalation. It proved that Usama bin Laden or his disciples or sympathizers could make good bin Laden’s threats against the US military in the Arabian Peninsula and Persian Gulf—bin Laden’s originally-declared target when he began operations in the early 1990s—and at the same time, carefully plan a coordinated operation in Asia, as one of the preliminaries to the major assault on the United States in September 2001.

On October 12, 2000, the US Navy Arleigh Burke class destroyer *Cole*, commissioned in 1991 and worth, in 2001 funds, nearly one billion dollars, eased slowly into the big harbor of Aden, at the southern tip of Yemen to refuel. Minutes after it anchored, a small Zodiac-type boat with two men in it moved toward the *Cole*, whose crew was preparing to relax on deck during what was scheduled to be only a brief port call. Seconds before the small craft pulled alongside the destroyer, one of the two men in it stood up and, according to witnesses aboard, seemed to stand at attention. Then a horrendous explosion tore a house-size hole in the warship's side, killing 17 members of the ship's crew, wounding 39 others and, of course, killing the suicide bombers and virtually pulverizing their remains. The injured were first sent to Yemeni clinics ashore for treatment. They were subsequently evacuated by air, under arrangements quickly made by Mrs. Barbara Bodine, the US Ambassador to Yemen and her staff, to the US air base at Ramstein, Germany and a French military hospital in the nearby republic and former French colony of Djibouti, on the northeast African coast.

Admiral Vern Clark, the Chief of US Naval Operations in Washington, DC, declared, with classic understatement, "...this was clearly a terrorist act." No group or individual claimed responsibility. However, very soon, analysts like Vincent Cannistraro, the CIA's former anti-terrorist chief, were pointing the finger at Usama bin Laden and possible links between bin Laden's Al-Qaida and Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq. Within weeks, Yemeni investigators, offering limited help to a swarm of arriving FBI and US Navy security agents, found evidence linked to the blast, including the house ashore where the explosives had apparently been prepared, and had picked up a number of Arab suspects, many of whom were Afghan war veterans and most of whom were eventually released, but at least six of whom were eventually held for inconclusive trials. . Richard Clarke, the Clinton administration's National Security Council adviser coordinating counter-terrorism efforts, said the huge explosion showed " a great deal of sophistication with explosives. There are some similarities that we see," he added, with the August 1998 US embassy bombings in East Africa. "There are similarities in the sophistication of the attack, the pre-planning of the attack. This is something that began long before the recent violence in the Middle East [meaning the Palestinian-Israeli fighting which began with a new Palestinian *intifada*, the second since the 1990s, in September, just before the attack].

This took months to plan, and there are indications of safe houses, and planning, and moving of personnel in. That's a sophisticated attack."<sup>24</sup>

On October 30, 2000, a Norwegian heavy-lift ship, the *Blue Marlin*, picked up the stricken ship, whose crew of about 300, with reinforcements from the United States, had successfully battled to keep from foundering and sinking, from tugboats and carried it home to the US for the costly repairs, estimated at \$150 million at least. "She left with some help from her friends, but she still left very proudly," Ambassador Bodine commented.

The investigation dragged slowly on through the year 2001. The US government in January announced a reward of up to \$5 million for information leading to the arrest of those responsible. The US Navy conducted a Judge Advocate General investigation, aimed at determining "lessons learned" to help prevent future such attacks, and assess accountability of those involved. In February, Yemen President Ali Abdallah Saleh announced arrest of two more Yemenis on their return from Afghanistan in connection with the bombing. In June, FBI and State Department investigators working in Aden moved their operation to the Yemeni capital, Sanaa, aboard a US C-130 which flew about 50 US investigators and their equipment from Aden to Sanaa. Members of the US Marine Corps' Fleet Antiterrorism Security Team, sent to Aden to protect investigators, also moved to the Yemeni capital.

During the torrid summer months, the 100-degree plus Fahrenheit temperatures in Yemen and some intramural bickering in the US intelligence community apparently combined to slow the inquiries. Washington offered verbal carrots to Yemen when, on July 9, a special US Middle East envoy, William Burns, praised Yemen for helping the FBI probe the suicide bombing, offering some economic aid to Yemen in appreciation for its help. Soon, however, as the *New York Times* and other American media reported on August 21, despite arrival of six fresh FBI investigators from the US to resume the investigation, it had virtually ground to a halt, mainly because Yemen had refused repeated US requests to widen the probe to include militant Islamist groups operating in the country. After the September 11 attacks in New York and Washington, the Bush administration, in presenting its case against Usama bin Laden to allied and friendly governments, said some of the same terrorists involved in the September 11 kamikaze assaults also had been linked to the East Africa embassy bombings and the attack on the *Cole*. On October 28, 2001, about two weeks after the start of the air war against the Taliban in Afghanistan, General Musharraf's Pakistani

government arrested and turned over to American custody a Yemeni microbiology student wanted in connection with the bombing of the US destroyer.<sup>25</sup> Clearly, the most serious damage done by an enemy to an American warship since the Japanese Empire's surprise attack on the US Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941, would remain an open, unsolved case for many months or years; perhaps forever.

It was still too early, in the early winter of 2001-02, to tell whether this would also be true of the worst attack that ever occurred on United States soil, on September 11, 2001.

For many Americans, especially for the families and loved ones of the over 4,000 Americans dead or missing in the ruins of the collapsed World Trade Center Towers, the Pentagon, or in the scattered debris of the crash of the fourth hijacked plane in Pennsylvania, it was a nightmare from which there could be only the most gradual awakening, if indeed there could be one at all. Alistair Cook, the venerable octogenarian BBC commentator who had been broadcasting his "Letter from America" on BBC radio's World Service since before World War II, described how he had switched on his TV set just before 9.00AM on the morning of September 11, to see the horrifying image of the first hijacked airliner striking one of the twin towers, a few moments earlier..

Oh no, not another *Towering Inferno* film from Hollywood, he reflected. He quickly switched to another channel—where a well-known news commentator confirmed that it was really happening, and not a cinematographic event. Moments later, the second plane struck the other tower, eventually bringing both down, as the superheated steel skeletons of the buildings melted—a collapse which Ramzi Ahmed Yousef and his fellow-conspirators had dreamt of in 1993, but had been unable to achieve.

Within a few more minutes, the third airliner, turned missile, had, like the others, with all of their passengers and crews sharing the fiery death of the triumphant hijackers, slammed into a wing of the Pentagon, annihilating large sections of the US Defense Department and well over a hundred of its personnel. This author, frozen with dread as he watched the television pictures at home in Athens, Greece, after a few moments of wondering whether the first crash might not have been due to a monumental pilot or mechanical error, realized after the second strike this was the worst enemy assault on the United States mainland since a British expeditionary force

vengefully burned Washington, including the Capitol Building and the then residence of the US president, during the war of 1812.

President George W. Bush, informed as he visited a school in Florida, was hastily flown on Air Force One out of harm's way to two different US Air Force bases in the southern and Western US, before returning to Washington to take command, together with Vice-President Dick Cheney. In the meantime, US airspace was closed to all flights, as were all US airports, large and small. The nation was paralyzed for nearly 48 hours, wondering what next to expect. A massive salvage and rescue effort began almost at once in New York and Washington. Eventually it claimed the lives of nearly 400 New York firemen and policemen, many of whom had escaped from the twin towers before they crashed to the ground in an apocalyptic cloud of dust and smoke, only to race back into the building, scaling innumerable stairways of the 110-storey buildings to save lives, and often losing their own in the process.

As the toll of the dead and missing forever mounted into the thousands, the Americans and the rest of the Western world began to search for how to respond to what was swiftly being called, by a chorus of commentators, "the new terrorism," universally believed to be perpetrated by Usama bin Laden and his collaborators. President Bush spoke of the first war of the new century. He and his closest counselors, Secretary of State Colin Powell, National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and all of the Pentagon's and CIA's senior staff began preparing for the inevitable riposte, which by October 7 became the start of a new air war. This time it was the bombing of Afghanistan, intended to destroy, if possible, the Taliban government and militias, and to root out Usama bin Laden and his followers, presumed to be hiding in the caves and underground bunkers which the CIA had helped them meticulously to prepare during the 1979-89 war against the Russians.

During the first days and weeks of heated emotion in the United States, the outpouring of dismayed grief mingled with patriotism—the sale of American flags, in all of their permutations from tee shirts to giant banners raised over homes and schools—gave rise to comparatively little real reflection. Where was the enemy, and how should he be struck? One commentator abroad summed up the questions: "The terrorist peril"—soon perceived by Americans to be augmented by an outbreak of apparent bio-warfare; mail-borne anthrax bacteria, which by November 2001 had sickened a score of Americans and killed several, raising fears of a new terrorist

onslaught in the form of biological terrorism—needed a patient, daily response. Did it require a war?

The verdict of American opinion was yes, it did. The result of this verdict was the autumn and winter air and ground campaign launched against the Taliban, which was claiming civilian victims and once again, forcing the displacement of literally millions of Afghan refugees.

But much wider and more sweeping questions remained to trouble the anguished American psyche, and to stir the collective fears of Europeans, Asians, Africans and others around the world. Should the war be fought only against bin Laden's cohorts and their Taliban protectors? What about Pakistan's military and intelligence establishment, which had created the Taliban and at least, turned a blind eye to bin Laden's activities for so long? Should Iraq and its master, President Saddam Hussein, who almost daily mocked the United States, its leaders and its policies, and swore to even the score with Israel, as quickly as he could secure bases in neighboring Jordan or Syria to attack the Jewish state? What other Muslim countries, even such allies as Saudi Arabia, which had also supported the Afghan war veterans, who now had to be hunted down and destroyed? Could such a war eventually boil over into a "crusade"—President Bush used the word, arousing the ferment of Muslims from Morocco to Indonesia with its atavistic overtones of the medieval Christian conquerors of Jerusalem, and soon had to retract it—against all of the world's billion Muslims?

Some of the reactions of American Christian fundamentalists, closely allied with America's extreme political Right, carried almost chiliastic overtones. "God," declared on television two influential "born again" Christian evangelists, Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson, "has permitted the enemies of America to inflict on us what we probably deserved." Falwell added, enunciating all of the dark doctrines of the American Right: "It is the heathen, the abortionists, the feminists, the gays, the lesbians and the ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union, a liberal group lobbying for civil rights and freedom of expression] who, in trying to secularize America, supported this event." Falwell publicly apologized on September 18, after strong pressure from the White House.<sup>26</sup> However, across the United States, the insistent, and very understandable clamor for retribution, persisted and grew. This eased the tasks of President Bush's administration, as they mapped the possibilities and charted the Herculean diplomatic and military tasks facing them in building a "global

coalition” for what CNN and other Western media baptized first the “strike against terrorism,” and which came soon to be called simply the “new war.”

The author, like hundreds if not thousands of other journalists the world over, instead of departing for Islamabad or northern Afghanistan with the armchair war correspondents or the frontline ones in Northern Alliance territory, joined the quest for information about the terrorists who had planned and perpetrated the September attacks. This quest took me to London, Paris, Hamburg, Munich, Rome and Milan. It further confirmed for me the thesis of this book; that the heightened violence and the new conflict were both, in effect, direct descendants of the policy decisions taken by the Soviet Union and the United States during the Cold War: by Moscow, to invade Afghanistan in 1979; by the United States and a set of allies, each with their own separate agendas and reasons, to counter that invasion with a proxy war, fought by the Afghans themselves, and the many thousands of volunteer Muslim mercenaries recruited around the world to come to their aid, but soon taken effectively in hand, more by Pakistan for its own ends than by the CIA which had conceived and planned the operation.

This war, however, had been triggered more by a new breed of quiet, discreet, well-educated and sometimes even affluent young men—than by the often ill-educated youths, mainly alumni of the religious schools of Pakistan, the guerilla training of the CIA-managed ISI training schools, or the ubiquitous camps of Usama bin Laden’s network. Investigation showed traces of the plotters, who before they traveled to the United States to join others already living there, in almost the entire European continent. However, there were two main centers: Germany and Italy.

Intelligence experts in Germany acknowledged that in continental Europe, Al-Qaida had its strongest support network in Germany. Five Arab students, living and working together, mostly in Hamburg, for at least portions of nearly a decade, formed a hard-core terrorist planning cell. This was transplanted to the United States for advanced training in the flying techniques they needed to perform their September 2001 suicide missions. The leader was probably: Muhammad Atta, 33, born in Cairo, Egypt, whose academic speciality was city planning, believed to be the pilot of the first aircraft which hit the north tower of the World Trade Center. Marwan al-Shehi, 23, a national of the United Arab Emirates, studied shipbuilding in Hamburg and was in the second aircraft, which struck the south tower of the Trade Center. Ziad Jarrah, 26, from Lebanon, studied aircraft engineering, and was apparently the

hijacker-pilot of the aircraft that crashed in Pennsylvania. Said Bahaji, 26, with German nationality acquired from a German mother who had married a Moroccan man, was believed by German investigators in late 2001 to have been the possible main logistics planner of the group, fled to Pakistan September 3 and was the object of an international arrest warrant. Finally, 29-year-old Ramzi Binalshibh, from Yemen, had registered in Hamburg for university courses, but disappeared in August 2001. He was also put on an international wanted list.

One of the key business contacts in Germany seems to have been Mamoun Darkazanli, owner of a Hamburg company listed by the US Treasury and the FBI as connected with the bin Laden network. Under questioning he denied involvement with terrorism, but apparently did not deny knowing bin Laden. One or more of the five-man Hamburg cell, German police and counter-intelligence officials said, spent some time in 2000 with a group of four men arrested on December 26 of that year for planning a terror attack in Strasbourg, France, and found with explosives and weapons. The German authorities and American FBI agents working with them discovered that the Al-Qaida network in the 1980s, while the Afghan jihad was still raging, built up a loose organization composed of autonomous cells in Germany, Italy and elsewhere. Most of the members were Arabs. Fritz Behrens, interior minister of the German state of North Rhine-Westphalia, and another German official the author interviewed in Hamburg, estimated that there were 100 "sleepers;" inactive bin Laden operatives waiting to be activated for attacks in Western Europe, living in Germany by September 2001.

The Munich branch of the German federal counter-intelligence service reported that "these 'Afghanistan warriors' have no connection with extremist organizations as far as organizational structures are concerned. Rather, they represent a loose network of small...groups not under any common leadership but which keep contact with one another...Al-Qaida operates [internationally] as a service point for Islamic terrorism. Regional groups act autonomously, but with support from Al-Qaida. Germany has been a safe haven [for them] in recent years." The German service's Stuttgart office said earlier that Al-Qaida members use Germany as a transit base for activities elsewhere inside and outside Europe. Reinhard Wagner, German counter-intelligence official in Hamburg, said Al-Qaida members "use amateur videos of wars, for instance in Chechnya, to recruit young men, mainly students. German investigators discovered what those in the US found out more belatedly: the terrorist networks,

realizing the Western intelligence snoops regularly on normal telephone and radio communications, makes extensive use of personal couriers who, like Atta and his comrades in Hamburg, travel frequently in this capacity.

Students and university staff in Hamburg unanimously described the group as quiet, discreet, intelligent, clever and not disposed to display their political or extreme religious views in public—unlike many of the plotters in the earlier American terrorist conspiracies of the older group of Afghan war veterans. Muhammad Atta, during his eight year stay at the Hamburg technical university, traveled a great deal between 1995 and 1997, saying he was visiting his family in Cairo, but probably traveling at least once to Afghanistan. (His father in Cairo, in European TV interviews, steadfastly denied that his well-bred, family-loving son, could have been remotely involved with terrorism; but could not explain his disappearance after September 11, ). However, other students who knew Atta in Hamburg said he returned from his trips abroad, more inclined to say his prayers regularly at the mosque, near the university, and wearing a beard.

Atta's colleague Said Bahaji, whose German mother indignantly refused to believe in her son's involvement in the conspiracy and who insisted on believing his story that his September 3 trip to Pakistan was for an "internship" there, was seen, it seems, more often at the mosque than the others. His Turkish-German wife or girlfriend of many years followed Muslim dress codes, but told investigators, when she finally informed them that Bahaji was up to no good (she was later granted permanent asylum and a new identity), that she had suspected nothing bad for years. Neither had his fellow students on campus, where he wore Western clothes, like the other cell members, and never talked politics or religion.<sup>27</sup>

The Italian dimension of the pre-September 2001 bin Laden network in Europe was disclosed by a series of investigations in Milan and Rome, by the ABC News Rome office and by reporters working for Italian radio stations. In January 2001, an Italian police wiretap in Milan intercepted a call between two suspected bin Laden operatives. "They've arrested our brothers...half of the group. They found the arms warehouse," one caller said. The intercept led to the arrest, three months later, Essid Sami ben Khemais, a 33-year-old Tunisian and five others in Italy. At this writing, Milan prosecuting judge Stefano Dambroso was completing a case against those arrested and against a Tunisian-born Belgian national and an Iraqi living in Germany. Italian authorities said they had evidence of links between Al-Qaida

adherents in Italy, Britain, Germany, Belgium, Switzerland, Spain and France. Dozens of suspects were detained in those countries. Wiretapped conversations by members of the group—who did not use the communications precautions observed by bin Laden operatives elsewhere—discussed bombing an incendiary techniques used successfully in Chechnya. Ben Khemais, who sued the nom de guerre “Saber” before his extradition from Germany to Italy, in another conversation mentioned a “drug” which when concealed in tomato cans could be used to “knock out” people at the scene of a bomb explosion.

One of the suspects, Tareq Maaroufi, the naturalized Belgian of Tunisian descent, was convicted in Belgium in the 1990s for involvement in the Algerian GIA terrorist group. US intelligence officials believe he was involved in a planned attack on the US Embassy in Rome, leading to temporary evacuation of the mission on January 5, 2001. Italian authorities closely monitored Milan’s Islamic Cultural Institute, whose former director was Anwar Shaaban, an Egyptian investigated by Milan prosecutors before being killed in 1995 as one of the Afghan war veterans in the Bosnian Muslim army. An Italian report called the Institute “a substantial crossroads” for Egyptian terrorists. None of this group of suspects seemed to have any links to the September 2001 attacks in the United States. Many, however, were believed to be plotting grandiose terror attacks, supposed to coincide roughly with the 199-2000 millennium celebrations in France (Strasbourg and the US Embassy in Paris); Italy (the Rome Embassy in January 2001) and Belgium. Significantly, these European suspects were far less prudent or discreet than the Hamburg cell members had been.<sup>28</sup>

This narrative, incomplete as it is, has to close somewhere, and for now, it will be here. The United States, in its “war against terror,” seems to be drawn deeper and deeper into a perhaps unwinnable new war in Asia. Since 1979, when the Brezhnev Kremlin and the Carter administration in Washington made their fateful decisions, resulting in the invasion of Afghanistan and the means of resistance to that invasion, the world has been, and still is, suffering the consequences. From Peshawar, Islamabad and Kabul to Cairo, Khartoum Algiers, Moscow, Central Asia, East Africa, the Philippines, and finally, New York in September 2001, the trail of the Afghan war veterans has been long and bloodstained. Arguably, the Soviet Union of Leonid Brezhnev and his politburo cronies, had, by invading Afghanistan in December 1979, doomed itself. Historians may decide that this was not the original

sin, but rather the final sin, and the terminal error, of a dying Soviet Union—the predecessor of a revived Russia, aspiring to some form of capitalism and democracy. Now, at the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is at least temporarily the ally of the United States in a common battle against radical Islamists, whom the United States had made its earlier allies against the Communist adversary. What the Soviet invasion of 1979 did do was give America an opening for a crusade, conducted by Afghans and foreign Muslim mercenaries, who then turned on their benefactors and employers. In the new century, the world will continue to experience this blowback, which reached a crescendo in the events in New York, Washington and South Asia in the winter of 2001-2002.

Perhaps future governments, whether in the United States, the United Kingdom, Russia or less powerful and influential nations, will take to heart this important lesson of late twentieth-century history: When you decide to go to war against your current main enemy, take a good, long look at the people behind you whom you chose as your friends, allies or mercenary fighters. Look well to see whether these allies already have unsheathed their daggers—and are pointing them at your back.

(end of Chapter Eleven)

- <sup>1</sup> “Counter-Terrorism Policy: Louis J. Freeh,” testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee, September 3, 1998, in *Congressional Testimony*, Federal Documents Clearing House, internet edition, pp.4-5.
- <sup>2</sup> AFP, Cairo, quoting Diah Rashwar of the Al-Ahram Center for Strategic Studies.
- <sup>3</sup> Most of the world’s media reported these developments, August 7 to 12, 1998.
- <sup>4</sup> James Risen and Judith Miller, “Pakistani Intelligence Had Links to Al Qaeda, US Officials Say,” *The New York Times*, October 29, 2001.
- <sup>5</sup> Private communications to author in Washington, DC, September 10-12, 1998.
- <sup>7</sup> Associated Press dispatch, Cairo, Nov. 3, 2001.
- <sup>8</sup> James Risen and Judith Miller, “Pakistani Intelligence Had Links to Al Qaeda, US Officials Say,” *The New York Times*, October 29, 2001.
- <sup>9</sup> *Far Eastern Economic Review*, October 18, 2001.
- <sup>10</sup> “Pakistan’s Jehadi Apparatus: Goals and Methods,” by Sumita Kumar, Research Officer, IDSA-India, undated but posted online sometime in late 2000.
- <sup>11</sup> Personal communications in Tunis in March 1998 and Washington, DC in 1999.
- <sup>12</sup> Mohammed Youssaf and Mark Adkin, *The Bear Trap*, pp.208-210.
- <sup>12</sup> “Pakistani Intelligence...” James Risen and Judith Miller, *New York Times*, October 29, 2001.
- <sup>13</sup> Quoted in Roger Faligot and Remi Kauffer, *Les Maitres Espions*, p. 231.
- <sup>14</sup> Reuter, Islamabad, March 17, 1995.
- <sup>15</sup> John F. Burns, *New York Times*, March 13, 1995.
- <sup>16</sup> *Jordan Times*, Amman, July 9, 1994.
- <sup>17</sup> Conversation with US Ambassador Robert Pelletreau in Cairo, July 1993, and a file of about 30 documents released to Karen Burnes of ABC News under the Freedom of Information Act by the US State Department (letter of January 31, 1994).
- <sup>18</sup> Robert I. Friedman, *The Village Voice*, March 20, 1993 and all major newspapers of the dates indicated.
- <sup>19</sup> Official accounts are well summarized in “Foreign Terrorists in America,” Congressional Testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee’s subcommittee on Technology, Terrorism and Information, February 24, 1998, *passim*.
- <sup>20</sup> All major newspapers and ABC News reports, January 9-10 and March 1-15, 1995.
- <sup>21</sup> *New York Times*, October 2, 1985.
- <sup>22</sup> Melissa Block, reporter, on Morning Edition, National Public Radio, Washington, DC, January 18, 1996.
- <sup>23</sup> *The New York Times*, September 6, 1996.
- <sup>24</sup> CNN.com, October 23, 2000.
- <sup>25</sup> Combined media reports, summarized online by [intellnet.org](http://intellnet.org), November 5, 2001.
- <sup>26</sup> “Etats-Unis, excès de puissance,” by Steven C. Clemons, vice-president of the New America Foundation, Washington, DC, in *Le Monde Diplomatique*, Paris, October 2001, p. 1.
- <sup>27</sup> Personal interviews by the author in Hamburg, September 2001, and two articles by Hugh Williamson in the *Financial Times*, September 27, 2001.
- <sup>28</sup> ABC News memoranda, personal interviews in Milan, Italy in October 2001 and an ICIJ Investigative Report, by Leo Sisti and Maud Beelman, October 3, 2001 (online).