

Statement of
William S. Cohen
to
The National Commission On Terrorist Attacks
Upon the United States

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Mr. Chairman, Mr. Vice Chairman, and Members of the Commission,

I appreciate the opportunity to appear before the Commission to discuss counter-terrorism efforts of the Defense Department and the Interagency during my tenure as Secretary of Defense.

You have posed several questions, which I will address to the best of my ability, although I should note that in preparing this statement I have not had access to any non-public records with regard to events that took place during this period three to eight years ago and not all public records are easily accessible despite the internet. I have also organized your questions and my responses in a manner that seems to be most responsive to your objective and that reduces redundancies. You asked that my written testimony be “comprehensive.” A truly comprehensive account would be book length, at least, and require access to materials that are not available to me. This written testimony is already longer than I anticipated, and while a few matters are discussed in detail, in most instances, I find it possible only to summarize matters addressed by your questions.

U.S. Counter-Terrorism Strategy

Your first question asked about the U.S. counter-terrorism strategy and the role of the Defense Department in that strategy during the second Clinton Administration.

While the second Clinton Administration’s approach built on the first Administration’s efforts, just as my approach derived from my work on the Senate Intelligence and Armed Services committees, I would point to President Clinton’s December 5, 1996, announcement of the formation of his national security team for his second term. During that Oval Office event, President Clinton listed the challenges on which we were to focus. The very first item on the President’s list was terrorism, followed by the spread of weapons of mass destruction.

A week into the new Administration, President Clinton came to the Pentagon to meet with me, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and the ten unified combatant commands, our top military commanders. Terrorism and the Quadrennial Defense Review of the defense strategy and program were the top two topics on the agenda, which I highlighted at our subsequent press conference by announcing that “We should plan on terrorism being not the wave of the future, but the wave of the present.”

In May 1997, I released the Quadrennial Defense Review, DOD’s first effort to define a long-term (15-year) strategy and accompanying defense program to meet post-Cold War challenges and opportunities. In the QDR, I stated:

Increasingly capable and violent terrorists will continue to directly threaten the lives of American citizens and try to undermine U.S. policies and alliances. (W)hile we are dramatically safer than during the Cold War, the U.S. homeland is

not free from external threats.... unconventional means of attack, such as terrorism, are no longer just threats to our diplomats, military forces, and private Americans overseas, but will threaten Americans at home in the years to come.

The QDR formed the basis for all DOD strategy, programs and operations, including the Defense Strategy that I submitted to the President and Congress in my first annual report in January 1998, which identified four trends threatening US security. One of these four trends was the increased threat from violent, religiously-motivated terrorist groups:

Violent, religiously-motivated terrorist organizations have eclipsed more traditional, politically-motivated movements. The latter often refrained from mass casualty operations for fear of alienating their constituencies and actors who could advance their agendas or for lack of material and technical skill. Religious zealots rarely exhibit such restraint and actively seek to maximize carnage. Also of concern are entrenched ethnic- and nationalist motivated terrorist organizations, as well as the relatively new phenomenon of ad hoc terrorist groups domestically and abroad. Over the next 15 years (the QDR's mandated horizon), terrorists will become even more sophisticated in their targeting, propaganda, and political action operations. Terrorist state sponsors like Iran will continue to provide vital support to a disparate mix of terrorist groups and movements.

Two of the other four trends also bear on terrorism, "failed states" and the "flow of potentially dangerous technologies," about which the Defense Strategy stated:

In particular, the nexus of such lethal knowledge with the emergence of terrorist movements dedicated to massive casualties represent a new paradigm for national security. Zealotry creates the will to carry out mass casualty terrorist attacks; proliferation provides the means.

The new Defense Strategy led to significant efforts across DOD and its component Military Departments and Defense Agencies, and between DOD and other agencies, to address what we believed to be a growing terrorist threat against U.S. personnel and interests abroad and U.S. citizens at home.

This increased focus within DOD was part of a broader effort in the interagency. Building on Presidential Decision Directive 39 of 1995, the President announced major new counter-terrorism initiatives and signed Presidential Decision Directives 62 and 63 in May 1998, which addressed combating terrorism and critical infrastructure protection. These presidential decisions create new structures within the government; generated a very significant interagency effort, much expanded in scope and participation beyond prior interagency efforts; and provided significant increases in funding for these efforts, many of which had already had their funding substantially increased. Other Presidential actions included a series of memoranda of notification (MONs) specifically authorizing the killing or capturing an ever widening circle of al Qaeda leadership and overt, covert and clandestine programs to keep nuclear and other dangerous materials and weapons out of the hands of terrorists and to address the large numbers of shoulder-fired anti-aircraft

missiles circulating in the world, including the many Stinger missiles the Reagan Administration provided to Islamic fighters in Afghanistan during the 1980s.

We were especially concerned with terrorists gaining access to and using weapons of mass destruction: nuclear, radiological, biological, or chemical weapons, possibly combined with attacks on information networks that could disrupt our ability to prevent or respond to an attack, as well as attacks against aircraft and vehicle bombs. While, historically, the vast majority of deaths caused by terrorists resulted from car/truck bombs, intelligence indicated that various terrorist elements were seeking WMD to be able to inflict even larger casualties. We needed to protect against both “traditional” terrorist methods and what the intelligence indicated could be their new methods. Aum Shinrikyo had demonstrated that a small but committed group could make chemical weapons and use them against a civilian population (more Japanese died in Aum’s two chemical attacks than did Americans in the two East Africa embassy bombings), and Aum had also made significant efforts to acquire biological and nuclear capability. But other groups, particularly those motivated by an anti-American Islamic extremism, also were reported by the intelligence community to be seeking such capabilities and were of particular concern.

Beyond making counter-terrorism a top priority for the U.S., we actively worked to make it a priority for other governments. Beginning with my first meetings with foreign officials, I emphasized the need for cooperation in addressing terrorist threats and new forms of terrorism. Given the global nature of the threat, this effort to gain international cooperation was done not just with senior officials from the Middle East and Europe, but with most foreign officials, including those from Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia, Latin America, Africa, and Canada, throughout my tenure.

A counter-terrorism strategy had to deal with the threat comprehensively, including:

- improving protection for our forces, diplomats and other Americans abroad;
- improving protection for Americans at home;
- securing nuclear, biological, chemical and other dangerous materials and technical knowledge about them in the former Soviet Union and elsewhere;
- enhancing cooperation with countries where terrorists might be operating, transiting or conducting financial activities so that their security and intelligence services can help us counter the threat; enhancing our intelligence on the threat so as to be better able to defeat it; and
- preparing to take military actions against terrorists when it was feasible to do so.

The Clinton Administration undertook substantial effort on all of these fronts, sometimes with congressional support and sometimes over congressional resistance. DOD was an active participant in these efforts, in some cases taking the lead role and in other cases providing support to other elements of the government when they were the Lead Federal Agency.

Role of DOD in Countering Terrorism at Home

There are many complex issues involved in enabling DOD effectively and legally to participate in prevention of, preparation for, and response to terrorist acts in the U.S. These issues range from doctrinal, organizational, training, equipping, personnel and other technical issues to sensitive legal, policy, and public communications issues, since DOD is not the Lead Federal Agency for these matters within the U.S. and Congress has long imposed legal limitations on what the Defense Department and the military can do within the U.S.

While there are legal limitations on what the Department of Defense and the military can do within U.S. borders to address the threat of terrorism against Americans at home, there are measures that DOD can and did undertake. These include:

- raising awareness among the public and government officials of the threat;
- organizing and conducting exercises for the Interagency;
- providing training to other agencies at the Federal, State and local level; and
- assisting those agencies that are the Lead Federal Authorities for countering terrorism and consequence management within the U.S. by helping them do planning, seconding personnel to them, and providing logistical and materiel support.

A limited list of examples of such efforts undertaken by DOD from 1997 to 2000 to enhance protection of Americans at home terrorist attacks include:

- In March 1997, I announced that the National Guard, with its unique federal and State dual function, would be given new responsibilities and capabilities for assisting State and local authorities in preparing for and responding to terrorist attacks in the U.S. This was implemented through a series of actions from 1997 through 2000.
- In April 1997, DOD began training local first responders (e.g., police, fire, and emergency medical personnel) in how to prepare for and respond to terrorist attacks. DOD provided initial training and equipment, and in some cases follow-on training, to first responders in approximately 100 cities before turning the program over to the Justice Department in 2000.
- During the course of 1997 and 1998, DOD trained FEMA and FBI officials in the use of US Transportation Command assets so that these Lead Federal Agencies for crisis response would be capable of rapid deployment of personnel and materiel in responding to terrorist incidents or other disasters.
- During 1999, DOD undertook actions to improve its ability to respond immediately to certain high consequence terrorist threats in the National Capital Region.

- During 1999 and 2000, DOD and the Department of Energy undertook efforts to assist the FBI to acquire certain specialized skills to be able to respond to certain high consequence terrorist threats.
- From 1997 to 2000, DOD organized and conducted numerous interagency exercises to improve the effectiveness of the Federal Government, from field operatives to mid-level officials to the Principals, in responding to a wide variety of threatened terrorist attacks and the effects of such terrorist attacks. Some exercises also included State and local government officials to improve the effectiveness of Federal-State-local coordination in a crisis.
- From 1998 through 2000, DOD worked closely with the Department of Health and Human Services and others in addressing the threat of terrorists using biological agents against the American people. This included research and development of improved preventative and treatment measures, production and stockpiling of vaccines, and other measures.
- From 1997 to 2000, DOD provided significant assistance to Federal agencies leading efforts to protect critical infrastructure and defend against attacks on U.S. public and private sector computer networks, including seconding much of the personnel at the National Information Protection Center and the Critical Infrastructure Assurance Office.
- During 1999, DOD requested but Congress rejected legislative authority to expand the types of logistical and other support DOD can provide to US domestic agencies when the Attorney General declares a National Security Special Event (i.e., an event or situation the AG determines at risk from terrorist attack).
- In October 1999, the President signed the Unified Command Plan (UCP-99), which formalized the creation of subordinate commands to provide capabilities to prepare for and respond to various types of terrorist attacks in the US, including attacks that might involve high-explosive, chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear weapons and information network attacks. This included the creation of Joint Task Force-Civil Support (JTF-CS), responsible for preparing for and responding to attacks in the US and assisting Lead Federal Agencies (FEMA and FBI) and States in their preparations and response. It also included expansion of the Joint Task Force- Computer Network Defense & Attack. UCP-99 also created a roadmap to build these subordinate commands into a Homeland Security Command by the time of the UCP-2001.
- In January 2001, I held my last press conference as Secretary for the purpose of releasing an updated version of my report, Proliferation: Threat & Response, which was intended to educate and energize Congress, other officials and the public to this very real threat and which began with my message that:

At the dawn of the 21st Century, the United States now faces what could be called a Superpower Paradox. Our unrivaled supremacy in the conventional military arena is prompting adversaries to seek unconventional, asymmetric means to strike what they perceive as our Achilles heel.

(L)ooming on the horizon is the prospect that these terror weapons will increasingly find their way into the hands of individuals and groups of fanatical terrorists or self-proclaimed apocalyptic prophets. The followers of Usama bin Laden have, in fact, already trained with toxic chemicals.

Fears for the future are not hyperbole. Indeed, past may be prologue. Iraq has used chemical weapons against Iran and its own people. Those behind the 1993 World Trade Center bombing also were gathering the ingredients for a chemical weapon that could have killed thousands here in the United States.

The race is on between our preparations and those of our adversaries. There is not a moment to lose.

Force Protection

You asked about the role of force protection in DOD's counter-terrorism efforts. Force protection clearly was an imperative as we addressed the threat posed by terrorists. DOD has an obligation to protect our men and women in uniform to the extent possible. Our military personnel expect to go into harm's way, and we send them into harm's way on a regular basis. But to the extent that threats can be anticipated and countered, DOD is obligated to do so. I reject any viewpoint that force protection is a diversion from genuine counter-terrorism efforts.

As you know, in 1995 and 1996, attacks had been conducted against a Saudi National Guard facility where U.S. military personnel were located and against U.S. Air Force barracks at Khobar Towers. In addition to our obligation to protect our people, U.S. national interests required us to deny these terrorists their objective of driving the U.S. out of Arabia, which they believed was possible based on the 1983 Beirut barracks bombing that killed 241 Marines and led President Reagan to abandon the Lebanon mission and withdraw U.S. forces.

The Iraq war has allowed a reconfiguration of U.S. forces in Southwest and Central Asia, including relocation of U.S. forces from Saudi Arabia, but U.S. forces remain at risk. This is partly due to the symbolic significance of attacks on U.S. forces, and partly due to the belief of terrorists that such attacks can cause the U.S. to alter its policy and abandon its interests.

Following Khobar, numerous measures to enhance force protection were undertaken. A few examples include:

- DOD created a focal point within the Joint Staff for counter-terrorism, the deputy director of operations for combating terrorism (J-34). This office's responsibilities included force protection, development of anti-terrorism tactics, techniques and procedures, oversight of anti-terrorism plans for every military base, and conduct of integrated vulnerability assessments of military facilities. (The J-33, deputy director for current operations, retained responsibility within the Joint Staff for military operations, including against terrorists.)
- DOD implemented some six dozen recommendations for changes that were made by a post-Khobar assessment team headed by a retired four-star general.
- Measures to standardize force protection measures across DOD and with other departments were implemented, this having been identified as a problem that contributed to Khobar. Related to this, DOD and the State Department drafted and signed a global MOU in December 1997, clarifying roles and responsibilities for each department in protecting US personnel overseas and addressing deficiencies identified following Khobar.
- DOD measures taken to protect deployed forces against chemical and biological attacks by enemy nations also provided protection against terrorist wielding such weapons.

These and other force protection measures are primarily defensive in nature.

Military Options, Plans, and Operations

With regard to offensive efforts, you asked a series of overlapping questions regarding military options, plans and operations to target Bin Laden and al Qaeda; factors affecting decisions on using force against Bin Laden and al Qaeda; planning for the use of special operations forces; and military actions considered or taken following the East Africa and USS Cole attacks and the Millennium plots.

Afghanistan as a focal point for both policy and military thinking had become a back burner matter beginning in the 1980s. I cannot address what occurred before my arrival at DOD, but early in 1998 DOD did undertake military planning activities related to Afghanistan and to al Qaeda-related targets outside of Afghanistan. Over the course of the next three years, this planning continued, developing more refined plans against a better defined target set. These plans were developed against the task given us that related to countering al Qaeda and capturing or killing Bin Laden and his senior leadership.

Following the August 1998 East Africa bombings, the ongoing flurry of non-specific threat warnings was supplemented by more specific information, partly due to unilateral U.S. collection of an increased level of communications among al Qaeda-affiliated elements and partly due to increased cooperation from foreign intelligence services.

During this time, U.S. intelligence community obtained actionable intelligence on a leadership conference that al Qaeda and other terrorist groups planned to hold on a specific date at a specific location near Khost, Afghanistan. We believed one purpose of the conference was to advance plans to conduct additional attacks against U.S. interests. While we did not have a roster of who would attend this conference, the intelligence reports indicated it would include senior leaders, quite possibly including Bin Laden.

Concurrently, the U.S. intelligence community obtained physical evidence from outside the al-Shifa facility in Sudan that supported long-standing concerns regarding its potential role in Sudanese chemical weapon efforts that could be exploited by al Qaeda. The al-Shifa facility had been under surveillance for some time because of a variety of intelligence reports, including HUMINT reports identifying it as a WMD-related facility, indirect links between the facility and Bin Laden and the Iraqi chemical weapons program, and extraordinary security – including surface-to-air missiles – used to protect it during its construction. The direct physical evidence from the scene obtained at that time convinced the U.S. intelligence community that their suspicions were correct about the facility's chemical weapons role and that there was a risk of chemical agents getting into the hands of al Qaeda, whose interest in obtaining such weapons was clear.

With actionable intelligence in hand, President Clinton made the decision to attack the al Qaeda leadership conference with the intent to kill as many participants as possible. Simultaneously with the attack on the al Qaeda leadership conference, we would attack and destroy the al-Shifa facility. Because of the need for tactical surprise and because of the geographical realities of Afghanistan and Sudan being remote from U.S. operating bases, professional military advice was to use sea-launched cruise missiles to attack the al Qaeda leadership conference and the al-Shifa facility in Operation Infinite Reach.

The attacks killed dozens of terrorists at the destroyed training facilities, destroyed the al-Shifa facility, and demonstrated that the terrorists were not immune to surprise attack regardless of their location. Intelligence and public reports following Operation Infinite Reach showed considerable confusion among the terrorists as to how they had been struck and from what direction. Some, for example, were convinced that we had launched B-1 bombers out of Central Asia. While Western media reports did develop a generally accurate picture of the operation (although I have never seen a fully accurate report in the media), we never publicly released operational details of the attack, preferring to leave the terrorists to their confusion and the need to look over both shoulders at all times.

The intelligence community reported afterward that Bin Laden had been at the conference, but departed several hours before our weapons struck their target. This did not come as a complete surprise given Bin Laden's strict operational security practices, including by some accounts, that he remained in any given location only for a few hours

at a time. The fact that he slipped away before the missiles arrived did not diminish my belief that the mission was well worth having undertaken.

From that point onward, the U.S. actively sought to capture or kill Bin Laden and other al Qaeda leaders. The President signed a series of six memoranda of notification (MONs), which are the legally required authorizations for covert actions. This series of MONs steadily expanded the circle of al Qaeda leaders authorized to be killed or captured, starting initially with Bin Laden and his inner circle and growing to include many others as we increased our understanding of al Qaeda's organization and hierarchy.

For its part al Qaeda and affiliated groups were actively working to attack Americans and American interests. In the weeks after the East Africa bombings, Egyptian Islamic Jihad – Ayman al-Zawahiri's group that cooperated with al Qaeda in the late 1990s and, according to the State Department, merged with al Qaeda in June 2001 – conducted an operation to blow up the U.S. Embassy in Tirana, but was thwarted by U.S. at the embassy gate.

Other planned attacks were very likely stymied as operatives were rolled up and other actions by U.S. and foreign authorities disrupted terrorist plans. In the autumn of 1999, the intelligence community reported that anywhere from five to fifteen attacks against U.S. interests were planned to occur during the Millennium celebrations, leading to the most extensive U.S. counter-terrorism initiative ever conducted prior to September 11 to disrupt these planned terrorist attacks.

We know that major attacks in both the U.S. and the Middle East were prevented. This includes capturing terrorists in December 1999 who planned to attack the Los Angeles International Airport and planned to destroy the Raddison Hotel in Amman, Jordan, largely occupied by American and Israeli tourists for the Millennium, using a bomb nearly seven times larger than the one that destroyed the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City. In addition, the terrorists captured in Jordan confessed to a plan to use chemical weapons in a crowded movie theater.

And in October 2000, the USS Cole was attacked while it was being serviced in port at Aden, Yemen, by explosives loaded onto a service boat.

The U.S. was already pursuing Bin Laden and al Qaeda operatives in Afghanistan and around the world. The President had authorized lethal force to be used if we ever had the opportunity to get Bin Laden or other al Qaeda leaders. This was equally before and after the Millennium, before and after the USS Cole. We already had far more than sufficient justification to eliminate Bin Laden and his leadership structure. We did not need the Millennium plots or the attack on the USS Cole to undertake military action – we needed actionable intelligence that would give us a reasonable chance of getting al Qaeda leaders. The President and the Principals determined that attacking al Qaeda's primitive facilities rather than attacking al Qaeda leaders would have little value in setting back al Qaeda and would be counter-productive, both by enhancing Bin Laden's position among anti-American Islamic elements and by undermining foreign intelligence and other

international support for our counter-terrorism effort – all of which had proved to be so crucial in averting hundreds of American and other deaths from the Millennium and other terrorist plots.

It is my understanding that General Hugh Shelton, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, has already discussed with the Commission the existence of more than a dozen military plans that were prepared for putting U.S. troops on the ground to go after Bin Laden and other senior al Qaeda conspirators.

All military options for putting troops into Afghanistan had to address the serious challenges posed by what military planners often refer to as the tyranny of distance. Having to operate from staging facilities nearly a thousand miles away from their targets posed serious operational and logistical challenges, requiring a larger footprint of forces to execute any ground mission in Afghanistan. More support assets would be required, as would aerial refueling. Even if actionable intelligence ever became available, the quality and reliability of the intelligence would affect the size of the force required, because less reliable information, as had been characteristic of reporting out of Afghanistan, would dictate a larger force to help ensure mission success. There would also be a significant probability of detection when conducting such an operation, further complicating planning and execution. DOD was fully prepared to conduct a ground operation in Afghanistan if actionable intelligence ever became available, and we had assets forward deployed that could support such a mission. But the operation had to be planned so that it had a realistic chance of successfully accomplishing the mission, not merely to “do something.”

Some have suggested that with actionable intelligence, a small special forces unit could have been dropped into Afghanistan and have successfully carried out their mission with only a small military footprint. Merely “dropping” them into Afghanistan would require substantial assets, as would getting them out – especially if they were detected before reaching the target or encountered trouble while engaging the target.

Others have suggested that a small special forces unit could have been inserted without actionable intelligence into Taliban-controlled Afghanistan in order to search for, find and capture or kill Bin Laden. The futility of this proposal has been amply demonstrated by the fact that for well over two years the U.S. has had many thousands of troops (13,500 at present) backed by significant intelligence assets in Afghanistan (where hostile forces are marginalized, not in control of the country) and yet we have been unable to locate much less capture Bin Laden.

We also had real experience with such matters. To a far greater extent than has ever been discussed publicly, from 1997 to 2000, we had special forces operating in the Serb section of Bosnia, Serbia proper and elsewhere actively hunting for war criminals. We had some successes. But a number of high profile PIFWCs (persons indicted for war crimes) eluded us. The simple fact is that someone who exercises good tradecraft is very difficult to locate and capture in enemy territory. And this is particularly true when, as in Afghanistan, U.S. forces would be required to operate from nearly a thousand miles

away rather than, as in the Balkans, they operated mere tens of miles away and had the support of an enormous intelligence apparatus in country. Bin Laden exercised very good operational security on par with or better than senior Serb war criminals.

General Hugh Shelton, the senior military adviser to the President, me and other Principals, was serving as Commander in Chief of the US Special Operations Command when I recommended that the President name him Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He had enormous experience in planning and carrying out special operations missions during a special forces career that started in Vietnam. During the efforts to seize war criminals in the Balkans, on many occasions I witnessed him quickly analyze the strengths and weaknesses of “snatch” plans presented to him by the relevant commander, who was not a special operations officer, and give guidance for fixing weaknesses, developing alternative approaches or simply dropping ill-conceived plans destined to fail. I found General Shelton’s military advice to be focused on military success, not risk aversion.

Let me also note for the record that few public officials have been more supportive of special forces than have I. I wrote and pushed through to enactment the legislation creating the US Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) and giving it extraordinary authority, including special budget and procurement authority possessed by no other military command and that in many respects made it a fifth service beside the Army, Navy, Marine Corps and the Air Force. Rep. Dan Daniels and Senator Sam Nunn participated in that effort, along with later efforts to increase resources devoted to USSOCOM. My legislation also created the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations & Low Intensity Conflict (ASD SOLIC) and his organization to ensure that USSOCOM had an advocate in the Pentagon. All of this was done in 1986 over the strenuous objections of the civilian and military DOD leadership of the day. When the DOD leadership of the day balked at filling the ASD SOLIC position, not unlike 2001-2003, I and some colleagues stopped confirmation of other Pentagon positions until a nominee was named. When it became clear that the Secretary of Defense’s first candidate to be ASD SOLIC viewed his mandate from his superiors to be to strangle rather than support the new organizations, I and others blocked his confirmation. DOD’s response was to leave the position vacant, again not unlike 2001-2003, and so we passed legislation mandating that the Secretary of the Army, John Marsh, who supported my efforts, would also serve as Acting ASD SOLIC until the position was filled. After becoming Secretary of Defense, I selected the Commander of the USSOCOM to be the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and the principal military adviser to the President and to me, ensuring that a deep knowledge and appreciation of special forces, their capabilities and how best to use them were in place at the very top of the Defense Department and informing all decisions on military planning and operations.

At the other end of the spectrum, it has also been suggested that we should have waged war in Afghanistan and militarily toppled the Taliban. Prior to September 11, it is my judgment that no President could have won U.S. public or congressional support for invading Afghanistan, much less support from Afghanistan’s neighbors whose active cooperation would have been required for us to conduct such a war. After September 11,

Pakistan, Uzbekistan and other neighboring countries allowed us to stage large military forces on their soil and provided other support that enabled us to wage war on Afghanistan and drive the Taliban from power. But before September 11, they clearly were not willing to provide such support, as evidenced by the refusal of some of them to cooperate against al Qaeda despite repeated and presidential-level pressure, or in other cases with their insistence that such cooperation remain covert.

Congressional action made securing Pakistan's cooperation even more difficult when sanctions were imposed, following its nuclear test and military coup. These sanctions served to restrain the Administration's hands and reduce our leverage with Pakistani authorities. Similarly, our military cooperative efforts with Uzbekistan and other countries were congressionally constrained.

As I have mentioned, President Clinton and his entire national security team devoted an extraordinary amount of time and effort to coping with the threat. We were able to achieve significant, albeit unheralded, successes in preventing the loss of lives here and abroad. In addition, I would note that the Hart-Rudman Commission, on which Congressman Hamilton served, issued a clarion call to action. Congress also created a number of subcommittees with jurisdiction to focus upon the threat of domestic and international terrorism. Yet, it is my judgment that at no time was there any realistic prospect that Congress or the American people would have supported a decision to invade Afghanistan or that our allies or countries in the region would have supported such a decision.

The Lack of Actionable Intelligence.

The lack of actionable intelligence was the missing element in our comprehensive effort to capture or kill Bin Laden and al Qaeda leadership.

The war against Iraq has highlighted the challenge of obtaining reliable intelligence against a so-called "hard target." While some charge that the Bush Administration exaggerated or manipulated the available intelligence, the fact is that all responsible officials from the Clinton and Bush administrations and, I believe, most Members of Congress genuinely believed that Saddam Hussein had active WMD programs. While it is too early to declare that belief to be entirely wrong, I think we all have been surprised by the inability to find meaningful evidence of such active WMD programs.

As difficult an intelligence target as Saddam's Iraq was, Islamic terrorist groups present a much harder target. No U.N. inspectors were walking into terrorist offices, interrogating terrorist officials or collecting hundreds of thousands of pages of terrorist documents, as they did with in Iraq. In ways that we cannot discuss here, the fact that Iraq was far less isolated internationally than the Taliban allowed us to exploit opportunities in Iraq that did not exist in Afghanistan to collect information.

To give you a sense of the difficulty of developing intelligence against terrorist targets, consider the al-Shifa facility in Sudan that we destroyed in 1998 because of the intelligence community's assessment that it was associated with terrorist efforts to obtain chemical weapons. At the time, the intelligence community at the highest level repeatedly assured us that "it never gets better than this" in terms of confidence in an intelligence conclusion regarding a hard target. There was a good reason for this confidence, including multiple, reinforcing elements of information ranging from links that the organization that built the facility had both with Bin Laden and with the leadership of the Iraqi chemical weapons program; extraordinary security when the facility was constructed; physical evidence from the site; and other information from HUMINT and technical sources. Given what we knew regarding terrorists' interest in acquiring and using chemical weapons against Americans, and given the intelligence assessment provided us regarding the al-Shifa facility, I continue to believe that destroying it was the right decision. But perfection is not to be attained in this world, and nowhere is this more true than in the field of intelligence collection and analysis.

Now consider that information about the whereabouts of Bin Laden and other al Qaeda leaders never came close to the reliability and confidence of the information we had on al-Shifa. The information on Bin Laden and other al Qaeda leaders was often from sources of questionable credibility, frequently fragmentary and packaged in inference, and ultimately of dubious reliability. It is unlikely that anyone who questioned the decision to destroy the al-Shifa facility would ever have supported military action based on the intelligence that was available regarding Bin Laden and other al Qaeda leaders.

In assessing intelligence on Bin Laden and other al Qaeda leaders, Principals also had to factor in their experience with the quality of intelligence on similar matters. To cite just one example, in April 1999, the intelligence community reported that Imad Mugniyah (wanted for numerous terrorist attacks dating back to the Beirut bombings, killing more Americans than any other terrorist prior to September 11) would transit through a certain foreign airport on a specific flight. When the individual de-planed, however, U.S. personnel on the scene determined that he was not Mugniyah nor any other person of interest. This is one of several instances in which action, sometimes lethal action with significant collateral damage, was considered based on dubious intelligence regarding the identity of the targeted individuals. The military gun was cocked for an extended period, but only once was the intelligence adequate to pull the trigger and launch strikes in an attempt to kill Bin Laden or any other al Qaeda leader.

In the summer of 2000, field activities brought forward a demonstration project for land-based wide-area surveillance in Afghanistan and a concept for combining this with UAV surveillance. These offered the possibility of obtaining actionable intelligence, which continued to be the missing element in efforts to capture or kill Bin Laden and other al Qaeda leadership. DOD and interagency addressed and resolved technical and other issues for the UAV program, and the program moved forward with trial operations over Afghanistan conducted over several weeks in the fall of 2000 to determine if the modified Predator UAV could be successfully flown from an austere operating base over

mountains into hostile Afghan airspace while it was remotely controlled via satellite by operators thousands of miles away on another continent and provide useful information. Some of these test flights produced unexpectedly good results before seasonal weather forced suspension of flights. This success led in late 2000 to plans to begin operational deployments in spring 2001 when weather permitted and to use the intervening months to integrate lethal missile capability onto the UAV. Despite the technical and other challenges involved, Hellfire-C missiles were integrated onto the Predator UAV and a successful series of in-flight missile firings from the Predator against a static target were conducted near Nellis Air Force Base on February 16 and 21, 2001, a few weeks after the change in Administration. It was my expectation that the reconnaissance UAV would be airborne again over Afghanistan as soon as weather conditions permitted in the spring of 2001, followed by the armed UAV as soon as it was mission ready. This turned out not to be the case, reportedly for a combination of operational and policy reasons, but I am not in a position to address the reasons for this.

Capture versus Kill; “Law Enforcement versus War”

Some seek to portray counter-terrorism as a choice between law enforcement and the exercise of military power. Likewise, some argue that a preference to capture terrorists alive reflects a law enforcement preference rather than a military approach to counter-terrorism. Both of these views are fallacious.

Effective counter-terrorism requires effective use of all national capabilities – law enforcement, diplomatic, intelligence, military and other capabilities – which are not alternatives, one to be chosen to the exclusion of the others. This was the basis for President Clinton’s counter-terrorism campaign in both the first and second administrations. It is the basis of President Bush’s counter-terrorism campaign, as he articulated it on September 11. No counter-terrorism effort will be 100% effective, but an effort premised on a false dichotomy of law enforcement versus war will be far less effective than an integrated effort. Yet for reasons that are inexplicable, this false choice continues to be expressed by certain critics on both left and right.

Fundamental to all aspects of counter-terrorism is acquiring adequate and timely intelligence; therefore, it is generally more advantageous to capture than kill. Intelligence, sometimes critically important intelligence, can be obtained from a living detainee while, as the saying goes, dead men tell no tales. There is a reason we have over 600 detainees at Guantanamo and elsewhere. According to the Bush Administration, intelligence is a substantial part of the mission at Guantanamo, and important information is being obtained from detainees that gives us a better understanding of the al Qaeda network and helps us to counter them.

According to a *New York Times* article this past weekend interviewing the chief U.S. interrogator, information acquired from detainees has resulted in terrorist cells being broken, a better understanding of al Qaeda’s efforts to obtain chemical and biological weapons, and al Qaeda fundraising and recruitment methods. Surely, no one would advocate that Khalid Sheik Mohammed and others should have been killed rather than

captured, given the information that has been obtained from them. The reason reports last week about the possible impending capture of Aymad al-Zawahiri generated excitement was not only because he would be removed from involvement in any further terrorist actions but equally, if not more importantly, because of the information he might yield if captured.

Why would terrorists provide us with intelligence about their operations? Experience demonstrates that such individuals often do so unintentionally, whether through bravado, threats, or simple ignorance of what information might be important to us. Repeatedly, detained terrorists have given us critical information that has enabled us to disrupt terrorist plans, capture other terrorists, and better combat terrorist networks.

Accordingly, when there is a choice between capturing and interrogating or killing and interring, the former is clearly more advantageous to us. But if circumstances arise where we are able to kill known terrorists but are unable to capture them, then we should not hesitate to use lethal force out of self defense. President Clinton's series of MONs to kill al Qaeda and other terrorist leaders made this clear. It was clear in our military strikes to kill as many as possible at what the intelligence community reported was a conference of senior leaders of al Qaeda and other terrorist groups occurring at a specific place and time in August 1998. And it was precisely what we were prepared to do on the few other occasions when the intelligence community had preliminary indications that it might be able to provide actionable intelligence to support a military strike. US military forces were "spun up" to be ready to strike, but in each of those instances, the intelligence community concluded that it lacked actionable intelligence, much to the disappointment of Administration leaders and to our forces in the field, who often did not know what information had caused them to be "spun up" nor that the information proved to be inadequate on those occasions.

The decision to use force against a site at which Bin Laden might be located required weighing the probability of successfully getting Bin Laden because he was at the site against the probability that we would undermine our Bin Laden effort because he was not at the site.

Had we destroyed a compound and its inhabitants based on flawed or inadequate intelligence, international cooperation in tracking and seizing al Qaeda operatives would have very likely diminished significantly. Such cooperation proved essential in rolling up al Qaeda cells and preventing planned terrorist attacks following the August 1998 East Africa bombings. Such cooperation also provided the potential for acquiring information that would facilitate the capturing or killing of Bin Laden and al Qaeda leadership.

DOD Priorities in Addressing Multiple Threats to America

You asked about the priority of counter-terrorism efforts against Usama Bin Laden and al Qaeda in Defense Department military planning, relative to other threats confronting the U.S.

DOD is responsible for military preparations and operations to address the full range of threats to and pursuit of American national interests. By law, Congress has added other responsibilities to these, such as drug interdiction.

During my tenure at DOD, no matter had a higher priority than countering the threat posed to America, our people and our interests by international terrorists. No issue consumed more personal attention by me, many other senior colleagues in DOD, and I believe other Principals. I personally made sure that it also was front and center for defence ministers, foreign ministers, prime ministers and presidents of the nearly 100 countries with which I dealt and whose cooperation could help in countering this threat.

As your question implies, it is important to understand that the U.S. faced then and faces today numerous threats to our national interests and to our national territory that DOD and other agencies must also address. Some of these other threats put at risk the lives of thousands to millions of Americans and millions of persons in allied countries. It would not have been responsible to have given less attention than we did to these other critical security issues. Likewise, DOD must ensure the capabilities and readiness of our Armed Forces are effective to meet both current and future threats. During my time in office, DOD:

- conducted numerous military operations;
- reversed a decade of decline in the defense budget that started in the first Bush Administration;
- ended the procurement holiday by restructuring the defense program to produce a 47% increase in the defense procurement budget, which had steadily declined from the middle of the Reagan Administration to 1996;
- accelerated the transformation of our Armed Forces, providing for dramatically enhanced military capabilities as demonstrated in the wars against Serbia and Afghanistan;
- developed a national missile defense system, elements of which will be deployed later this year, capable of defending the U.S. homeland against the kind of nuclear missile threat that North Korea can pose.
- undertook military activities to gain military support from more countries, reduce threats, and improve our ability to respond to threats, including enlarging NATO, building cooperative military programs with countries in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and South America;
- eliminated vast stockpiles of Russian nuclear, chemical and biological weapons that risked diversion to terrorists or enemy states;
- wrote and revised numerous deliberative war plans;
- transformed the business operations of the Department of Defense, to the extent permitted by Congress.

Significant Military Operations.

In January 1997, U.S. and allied forces had just entered their second year in Bosnia in an environment that remained extremely challenging and dangerous, both to U.S. political objectives and to our troops. The Bosnian Serb regime headquartered in Pale, closely aligned with the Serb authorities in Belgrade and Serb paramilitary groups, aggressively committed and incited violence against Bosniak Muslims, Croats and NATO forces; displaced Bosniak Muslims; and pursued a strategic plan to undermine the Dayton Accords and effectively to gain control of Bosnia.

A number of factors led Belgrade and Pale Serbs to conclude that they had a realistic chance to succeed in their objectives based on: the geography of the situation, in which Bosnia Serb territory wrapped itself around much of Bosniak Muslim territory; the close links between the Pale Serbs and organized crime, which provided both economic and violent influence; and the lethargy of European-led civil reconstruction efforts, which some Europeans seemed to view as lifetime appointments rather than urgent requirements. During the course of the succeeding few years, through considerable effort and attention, an alternative Bosnian Serb regime, independent of Belgrade, was established in Banja Luka and largely displaced the influence of the Pale Serbs. This enabled political progress under the Dayton Accords, which – notwithstanding the sclerotic reconstruction efforts, the leadership deficiencies of the Bosniak Muslims, the continued tensions between the three Bosnian parties, and other issues – enabled Bosnia to become a muddling but stable success. Because U.S. forces and policy were in the line of fire when the second Administration started, Bosnia did command the attention of Principals and Deputies, as well as interagency groups specifically focused on the Balkans.

As Bosnia attained stability, Belgrade turned its attention to Kosovo, unleashing Serb paramilitaries and Serb forces on an ethnic cleansing campaign that displaced a million Albanian Kosovars and created refugee crisis for neighboring countries. One of Milosevic's objectives was to destabilize the fragile government in multi-ethnic Macedonia and possibly cause Greece to enter the fray, which in turn would have created pressure on Turkey and Bulgaria to do the same. It was for these reasons that President George H.W. Bush first warned Milosevic that a military move against Kosovo would result in war with the U.S. At the same time, violent Islamic terrorists sought to use the chaotic situation to establish a foothold in the region and, having been thwarted in Bosnia, found opportunity with the collapse of order in Albania. Egyptian Islamic Jihad and possibly others operated in Albania, and the U.S. successfully thwarted an attempted truck bombing of our embassy in Tirana.

Adhering to an allied approach to the war against Serbia did compel Principals to devote significant attention maintaining alliance cohesion, but it was necessary for two practical reasons. First, allied territory was needed to fight the largest air campaign since World War II. And secondly, looking to the long term, full allied support was necessary if we were to adhere to our plan of the U.S. carrying the vast majority of the war effort (over 80% by most measures) and the allies carrying the vast majority of the post-war effort.

During the war, we determined that the U.S. would contribute no more than 15% of the post-war stabilization force, while coalition partners would be required to contribute at least 85%; the U.S. would exercise strategic and ultimate control over the occupation, but coalition partners would bear the burden at subordinate levels for most of Kosovo; and coalition partners would bear the bulk of reconstruction costs. After the war, we successfully adhered to this plan, but only because we had maintained allied cohesion during the war. The wisdom of this is apparent in hindsight, looking both at the recent flare-up in violence in Kosovo and at the events in Iraq. But during the war it did require focused attention from Principals who continually worked foreign counterparts, although the Deputies and interagency Balkan specialists carried most of the weight for post-war occupation issues once the Helsinki negotiations with Russia were completed.

Following the war against Serbia over Kosovo, Milosevic prepared for a possible blitzkrieg military action against Montenegro, which while federated with Serbia in a rump Yugoslavia was exercising increasing independence from Belgrade. The US European Command developed plans to defeat a Serb military move against Montenegro, which Milosevic would have used to reignite conflict in Bosnia. Concurrent with this, Milosevic sought to stage manage an election process to bolster his political position after his failure in Kosovo. But the process became a real contest, and effective support to the democratic opposition led to Milosevic's ouster and then to his imprisonment in The Hague. This action prevented the fifth Balkan war of the decade, bringing to an end a series of wars that had killed hundreds of thousands, flooded Europe with millions of refugees, and threatened European stability and security at the very time that the collapse of the Soviet Union had created the opportunity to build (to quote President Bush Sr.) "a Europe whole and free" – an opportunity that we seized by supporting the enlargement of NATO and the European Union. Principals and Deputies actively guided this closing phase of the Balkan wars.

At the same time as the war against Serbia was being conducted, skirmishes broke out at sea between North Korea and South Korea, with dozens killed and ships destroyed. Tensions and the risk of war that could produce millions of Korean and tens of thousands of American casualties spiked above their normal hair-trigger levels.

I would note that there were very few instances in which I met with NATO counterparts, including during the many meetings held during the operations in Bosnia and Kosovo, that I did not focus their attention on the threat posed by terrorists and the spread of weapons of mass destruction. Likewise with Russia. While I was in Moscow, an apartment block was bombed reportedly by terrorists. I directed that a bilateral military intelligence dialogue be initiated, with a primary focus on extremist Islamic terrorists who posed a threat to both countries. Our policy dialogue with Russia sought to turn their attention from their false security concern of NATO enlargement to the real security concern of how best to address the terrorist threat, as well as the long-term threat they were creating for themselves and for us by allowing nuclear and missile technology to go to Iran and others.

The U.S. war in Afghanistan could not have been fought as it has been without the cooperation of formerly Soviet Central Asian states, which was based partly on U.S. military engagement, training and support conducted during the late 1990s, despite congressional limitations. Moreover, Central Asian support for the war in Afghanistan was dependent on Russian acquiescence, which also was based in part on the close cooperation with the Russian military during the 1990s, including American and Russian troops and commanders working side by side in military operations in Bosnia and Kosovo.

The U.S. also conducted ongoing military operations in Iraq throughout my tenure. Iraq was effectively contained during this period through the combination of:

- enforcement of the Northern and Southern No-Fly Zones and the Southern No-Drive Zone,
- use of the no-fly/no-drive enforcement operations to continually attrit Iraqi air defenses and related command and control and other military capabilities through regular air strikes, ranging in size from one to over 80 targets per strike;
- maritime interdiction operations;
- international sanctions;
- Operation Desert Fox in December 1998, which destroyed missile production and WMD facilities, killed key leadership of Iraq's missile program, killed 1400 Special Republican Guard and Republican Guard forces, destroyed Special Republican Guard and Republican Guard headquarters and other assets, and destroyed command and control and intelligence facilities;
- establishment of a near continuous deployments of U.S. ground forces in Kuwait, which continually improved and demonstrated U.S. ability to rapidly deploy ground forces from the U.S. to Iraq's border;
- significant enhancement of U.S. military facilities and capabilities in Kuwait, Qatar and other GCC countries, increasing U.S. capabilities against Iraq;
- re-write of war plans.

The effort to enhance U.S. military capabilities in the Gulf region and to develop and maintain support within GCC countries for ongoing U.S. operations against Iraq and for capabilities enhancement did require my regular personal attention. Other Principals, too, devoted considerable attention to Iraq-related issues to ensure that Iraq remained contained and to manage issues related to our military operations against Iraq.

Other Priority International Matters

Several other dangerous situations arose during these years that also warranted Principals' attention. Among others, these included the Kargil crisis that threatened to escalate into a general war between Pakistan and India, with the very real possibility of a nuclear war that could kill hundreds of thousands or more; the escalation of cross-Straits tensions that also threatened to erupt into warfare between China and Taiwan; hostilities between North and South Korea that had the potential to escalate, as discussed below;

and North Korea development and testing of long-range missiles, capable of delivering nuclear weapons not only to allied territory but also to U.S. territory. All of these put at risk vital U.S. security interests and most of them directly threatened U.S. lives, necessitating attention by the President and the Principals.

Numerous other non-operational matters, but having operational consequences, also merited my and other Principals' attention during this period, among them:

- Negotiations to remake NATO to meet the new security challenges, including the Alliance's new strategic concept and command structures, led not only to NATO allies bearing the vast majority of post-war responsibilities in Kosovo but laid the basis for them to undertake significant responsibilities in post-war Afghanistan and Iraq.
- Engaging Russia over its place in the new security architecture.
- Adoption of essentially a new defense treaty with Japan through the new Defense Guidelines, dropping the Cold War orientation of the alliance and remaking it to meet security requirements of the new century;
- Bringing China into the WTO and other international institutions that will mutually benefit both our countries and help to constrain unconstructive or dangerous Chinese behavior.

Deliberative Military Planning

Numerous deliberative war plans were also written or re-written. This included major plans regarding the nuclear SIOP and associated plans, China, Iraq, Iran, and Korea and other plans regarding such matters as Cuba. Some of these plans were revised multiple times. In addition, significant planning was done for withdrawal of U.S. forces from the Balkans and their dispatch to other theaters should that ever be required.

Also, presidential decision directives and presidentially approved contingency planning guidance were written requiring non-DOD agencies develop capabilities and deliberative plans for their roles in post-conflict situations, such as we see in Iraq, although my understanding is that these directives did not survive the Clinton Administration.

To discuss one in more detail, we re-wrote the war plan for the Korean Peninsula and instituted many changes to be able to execute it, as well as developed additional military plans for contingencies such as the collapse of the North Korean government. Previous operational plans had failed to properly address the likelihood of North Korean use of chemical weapons and possibly other WMD. Properly addressing this aspect of the threat required intensive and wide-ranging efforts by DOD. The operational plan revision also needed to take advantage of the transformation of U.S. military capabilities during the 1990s, as well as the need to ensure decisive action at the opening of a conflict and conflict termination on decisive terms rather than restoration of the status quo ante.

This effort was made more urgent by Kim Jong Il's reconfiguration of the North Korean military, moving forces forward to the area adjacent the DMZ, from which North Korean

artillery could rain up to 500,000 shells per hour on half of South Korea's population and economy, including Seoul, and on tens of thousands of US forces and dependents; deploying hundreds of missiles capable of delivery conventional, chemical or other weapons to southernmost South Korea or to Japan; exercising more coordinated air and ground operations; and enhancing North Korea's large special operations forces for insertion in rear areas in South Korea and Japan.

North Korea's military realignment appeared designed to support a strategy for launching war with little to no warning; rapidly seize northern areas of South Korea; disrupt the US ability to fight from rear areas and to flow forces into the peninsula; and, when its advance on the peninsula slowed, to sue for peace under the threat of nuclear attack on South Korea or Japan.

In 1999-2000, North Korean training exercises were at record high levels and, learning from U.S. combat operations in the Balkans and Iraq, North Korean military modified facilities, dispersed forces and expanded camouflage, concealment and deception efforts. In June 1999, following several known North Korean submarine raids into South Korean waters, the first hostilities since the Korean War broke out, with North Korean and South Korean naval vessels firing on each other, resulting in two North Korean vessels destroyed and several dozen North Korean forces killed.

In short, the threat of war in Northeast Asia was very real during this period and remains so today. Such a war would put at risk vital American interests, tens of thousands of American lives, and millions of Korean lives, among others, assuming North Korea did not use nuclear weapons; the death toll would be much higher if it did. This risk of war justifiably warranted significant attention of myself and other Principals, just as it does Secretary Rumsfeld and his colleagues.

Conclusion

I have attempted to set forth some of the major initiatives under taken by the Department of Defense to counter the threat of terrorism during the time I was privileged to serve at the Pentagon.

As I noted, many of those initiatives proved successful in saving the lives of many of our citizens both here and abroad.

On many occasions the Administration was able to secure the cooperation of Congress and others in the pursuit of its goals. In a number of cases, it did not.

For example, some in Congress, the media and "policy community" accused those of us focused on the terrorist threat of being alarmist and of exaggerating the threat in order to boost our budgets. Countering the threat of terrorism was "the latest gravy train," according to one expert quoted by *US News & World Report*. The belief that we were indulging in cynical hyperbole resulted in several legislative actions.

- We found tens to hundreds of millions of dollars cut from the Cooperative Threat Reduction program, forcing Administration officials to spend significant time and energy to restore funds to secure and eliminate dangerous materials that terrorists were seeking in order to inflict attack Americans.
- Congress blocked cooperation with countries whose support was critical in counter-terrorism efforts, such as banning military cooperation with Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim country that is a key battleground in the campaign against Islamic extremists, and banning any meaningful cooperation with Pakistan, the front-line state in the global war on terrorism.
- Congressional committees rejected requests for legislative authority for DOD to provide certain support to domestic agencies to prevent or respond to a terrorist attack in the U.S.

In an effort to help remove doubt and complacency about the growing threat, working with congressional leadership, I appointed a panel in 1998 led by former Senators Rudman and Hart and including Vice Chairman Hamilton, former Speaker Gingrich, retired senior military commanders and others. The Commission on National Security in the 21st Century, on its own and without direction from the Administration, validated the reality of the threat to the American homeland from terrorism, including terrorists armed with WMD. In releasing the Commission's first report, long before September 11, Vice Chairman Hamilton stated well the fundamental issue:

What comes across to me in this report more than any other single fact is that the commission believes that Americans are going to be less secure than they believe themselves to be. So I think what we're trying to say in this report is that we've lived in a very secure time. We're very fortunate for that, but we are going to be confronted with a lot of challenges to our national security that Americans do not believe we're going to be subjected to, and that's really what comes out of this report for me more than any other single thing. (Emphasis added.)

Vice Chairman Hamilton's remarks resonated with me because I recalled that at my very first press conference as Secretary of Defense, I was asked "what is your greatest concern as you look toward to the future?" and my response was essentially the same as Lee Hamilton's:

My greatest concern is that we be able to persuade the American people that having a viable, sustainable national security policy is important, even when there is no clearly identifiable enemy on the horizon. We still live in a very dangerous, disorderly world. And in many cases, we face dangers that are comparable to those we faced in the past; namely, the proliferation of missile technology, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and the spread of terrorism.

I believe that we have been complacent as a society. We have failed to fully comprehend the gathering storm. Even now after September 11, it is far from clear that our society truly appreciates the gravity of the threat we face or is yet willing to do what is necessary to counter it. Even after September 11, and after anthrax and ricin attacks in the U.S., I remain concerned that the controversy over not finding Iraq's weapons of mass destruction will lead to the erroneous assumption that all the talk about the dangers of WMD is just another exercise in the cynical exploitation of fear. After all, it is commonly noted, there have been no attacks since 9/11. This is a dangerous delusion. The enemy is not only coming, he has been here. He is already amongst us. He will continue to try to examine our weaknesses, exploit the crevices in our security, and destroy our way of living as well as our lives.

As you can deduce from my statement, I believe that the Clinton Administration far more than any Administration prior to September 11 understood the threat that terrorists pose to our country and took far greater and more comprehensive action to counter it than any previous administration. But notwithstanding all this, the U.S. was hit in a devastating way. Clearly neither the first Bush Administration, nor the two Clinton Administrations, nor the current Bush Administration did all that we and they needed to do to prevent the rise and spread of violent Islamic extremists and to prevent them from reaching our shores with instruments of mass death.

Nor do I believe that even today, with a global war on terrorism being waged, are we doing all we need to do to prevent the further spread of violent Islamic extremists and to prevent them from reaching our shores with mass death.

I don't pretend to hold the keys to the kingdom of wisdom on what needs to be done in the future. All of us who have held high office must remain accountable for our actions while holding the public trust. It is my hope that the Commission through its work will focus as well on the fault lines that run through our democratic system as we struggle to cope with a challenge of unprecedented proportions.

At a minimum, I think it important to:

- Develop a meaningful, in-depth public discussion – among our citizens not just our elected officials – regarding what compromises on privacy are we willing to accept in order to remain safe and free. The current debate over access to personal data for aviation security purposes is not encouraging. We must elevate public discussion on these matters, and do our best to remove them from electoral manipulation at least until we truly understand the issues and choices. We need to reconcile the role technology will play in our lives for good and ill and try to insure that we remain its master and not its slave. This balance will not be easily struck or eagerly embraced, but it must be done;
- Consider establishing a domestic intelligence organization, distinct from law enforcement and subject to appropriate control, regulation and oversight;

- Secure and eliminate on an accelerated basis fissile nuclear material and chemical and biological weapon agents that pose a risk of diversion. This will require a more cooperative approach with Russia than the U.S. currently has achieved;
- Re-energize America's engagement in Middle East. I believe that if the road to peace in the Middle East runs through Baghdad, then success in Baghdad may very well run through Jerusalem. The unabated violence there can only serve to remain a breeding ground for even more savagery and nihilism in the future. This effort should not await the counting of ballots in November;
- Finally, we need to persuade free people the world over that the war on terror cannot be waged by America alone. As recent events demonstrate, religious extremists and fanatics do not recognize geographical boundaries. There are no rear lines, no pockets of tranquility, no safe harbors for innocent civilians. We are all on the front lines today. A virus or a bomb born in a distant laboratory or factory is but a plane ride away from any place on the planet.

It's a time for sober reflection and the charting of a responsible course of action. There's very little time to lose.