

Log Entry Date: 06/22/2001
 Log Entry Time: 14:44
 Shift: 2ND Shift (Day)
 Entry Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
 Watch Officer: [Redacted]
 ICF# Referenced: [Redacted]
 Info Circular Referenced: [Redacted]

Entry: IMMINENT THREAT: NATIONAL MEDIA REPORTING THREAT ALERT AND MILITARY REACTION IN MIDDLE EAST. ADDITIONALLY, CNN REPORTS ON WORLDWIDE CAUTION IN PROCESS AT STATE. BEGIN DRAFTING IC 2001 [Redacted]

Log Entry Date: 06/22/2001
 Log Entry Time: 16:00
 Shift: 2ND Shift (Day)
 Entry Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
 Watch Officer: [Redacted]
 ICF# Referenced: 200 [Redacted]
 Info Circular Referenced: [Redacted]

Entry: FINALIZE IC DRAFT. START COORDINATION.

Log Entry Date: 06/22/2001
 Log Entry Time: 17:31
 Shift: 2ND Shift (Day)
 Entry Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
 Watch Officer: [Redacted]
 ICF# Referenced: 200 [Redacted]
 Info Circular Referenced: [Redacted]

Entry: FINALIZE ALL ACTIONS ON IC-2001 [Redacted]

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reporting came in June 2001 when Islamic extremists, including Bin Ladin and al-Qa'ida, were referred to in eighteen of the 298 articles that appeared in the SEIBs that month.

The rise in threat reporting concerning Bin Ladin in 2001, though lacking in detail, did generate government terrorist advisories and warnings, including:

- An FAA Circular on June 22, 2001, referring to a possible hijacking plot by Islamic terrorists to secure the release of fourteen persons incarcerated in the United States in connection with the 1996 bombing of Khobar Towers.

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- A public, worldwide caution issued by the State Department on June 22, warning Americans traveling abroad of the increased risk of a terrorist action.
- Four terrorism warning reports or warning report extensions issued by the Department of Defense on June 22 and 26, and July 6 and 20, primarily to alert U.S. military forces and the Department of Defense to signs that Bin Ladin's network was planning a near-term, anti-U.S. terrorist operation.
- A State Department démarche to Taliban representatives in Pakistan on June 26, 2001, declaring that the Taliban would be held responsible for terrorist attacks carried out by Bin Ladin or al-Qa'ida.
- An FBI communication on July 2, advising federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies of increased threat reporting about groups aligned with or sympathetic to Bin Ladin. The communication noted that the majority of the reports suggested a potential for attacks against U.S. targets abroad and that the FBI had no information suggesting a credible threat of terrorist attack in the United States, although the possibility could not be discounted.

Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage described the situation to the Joint Inquiry:

In fact, [the intelligence] was good enough for us to take several steps. We issued between January and September nine warnings, five of them global, because of the threat information we were receiving from the intelligence agencies in the

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that a phone call to a U.S. embassy had warned that Bin Ladin supporters were planning an attack in the United States using "high explosives." On May 17, based on the previous day's report, the first item on the CSG's agenda was "UBL: Operation Planned in U.S." The anonymous caller's tip could not be corroborated.

Late May brought reports of a possible hostage plot against Americans abroad to force the release of prisoners, including Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman, the "Blind Sheikh," who was serving a life sentence for his role in the 1993 plot to blow up sites in New York City. The reporting noted that operatives might opt to hijack an aircraft or storm a U.S. embassy. This report led to a Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) information circular to airlines noting the potential for "an airline hijacking to free terrorists incarcerated in the United States." Other reporting mentioned that Abu Zubaydah was planning an attack, possibly against Israel, and expected to carry out several more if things went well. On May 24 alone, counterterrorism officials grappled with reports alleging plots in Yemen and Italy, as well as a report about a cell in Canada that an anonymous caller had claimed might be planning an attack against the United States.¹⁰

Reports similar to many of these were made available to President Bush in morning intelligence briefings with DCI Tenet, usually attended by Vice President Dick Cheney and National Security Advisor Rice. While these briefings discussed general threats to attack America and American interests, the specific threats mentioned in these briefings were all overseas.

On May 29, Clarke suggested that Rice ask DCI Tenet what more the United States could do to stop Abu Zubaydah from launching "a series of major terrorist attacks," probably on Israeli targets, but possibly on U.S. facilities. Clarke wrote to Rice and her deputy, Stephen Hadley, "When these attacks occur, as they likely will, we will wonder what more we could have done to stop them." In May, CIA Counterterrorist Center (CTC) Chief Cofer Black told Rice that the current threat level was a 7 on a scale of 1 to 10, as compared to an 8 during the millennium.¹¹

High Probability of Near-Term "Spectacular" Attacks

Threat reports surged in June and July, reaching an even higher peak of urgency. The summer threats seemed to be focused on Saudi Arabia, Israel, Bahrain, Kuwait, Yemen, and possibly Rome, but the danger could be anywhere—including a possible attack on the G-8 summit in Genoa. A June 12 CIA report passing along biographical background information on several terrorists mentioned, in commenting on Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, that he was recruiting people to travel to the United States to meet with colleagues already there so that they might conduct terrorist attacks on Bin Ladin's behalf. On June 22, the CIA notified all its station chiefs about intelligence suggesting a possible al Qaeda suicide attack on a U.S. target over the next few days. DCI Tenet asked that all U.S. ambassadors be briefed.¹²

8 "The System Was Blinking Red"

1. Beginning in December 1999, these briefings were conducted based on slides created by the CIA's Bin Ladin unit. See Richard interview (Dec. 11, 2003). We were able to review the slides to identify the subjects of the respective briefings.

2. The exact number of persons who receive the PDB varies by administration. In the Clinton administration, up to 25 people received the PDB. In the Bush administration, distribution in the pre-9/11 time period was limited to six people. The Commission received access to about four years of articles from the PDB related to Bin/Ladin, al Qaeda, the Taliban, and key countries such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia, including all the Commission requested. The White House declined to permit all commissioners to review these sensitive documents. The Commission selected four representatives—the Chair, the Vice Chair, Commissioner Gorelick, and the Executive Director—as its review team. All four reviewed all of the more than 300 relevant articles. Commissioner Gorelick and the Executive Director prepared a detailed summary, reviewed by the White House for constitutional and especially sensitive classification concerns, that was then made available to all Commissioners and designated staff. Except for the August 6, 2001, PDB article, the summary could not include verbatim quotations, for example the titles of the articles, but could paraphrase the substance. Two of the articles—the December 4, 1998, hijacking article (in chapter 4) and the August 6, 2001, article discussing Bin Ladin's plans to attack in the United States (in this chapter)—were eventually declassified.

3. The CIA produced to the Commission all SEIB articles relating to al Qaeda, Bin Ladin, and other subjects identified by the Commission as being relevant to its mission from January 1998 through September 20, 2001.

4. See CIA, SEIB, "Sunni Terrorist Threat Growing," Feb. 6, 2001; CIA cable, "Intelligence Community Terrorist Threat Advisory," Mar. 30, 2001.

5. See NSC email, Clarke to Rice, Briefing on Pennsylvania Avenue, Mar. 23, 2001.

6. See NSC email, Clarke to Rice and Hadley, Terrorism Update, Mar. 30, 2001; NSC email, Clarke to Rice, Terrorist Threat Warning, Apr. 10, 2001.

7. See FBI electronic communication, heightened threat advisory, Apr. 13, 2001.

8. See NSC email, Cressey to Rice and Hadley, Threat Update, Apr. 19, 2001; CIA, SEIB, "Bin Ladin Planning Multiple Operations," Apr. 20, 2001; NSC memo, Clarke for Hadley, "Briefing Notes for al Qida Meeting," undated (appears to be from April 2001).

9. For threats, see CIA, SEIB, "Bin Ladin Public Profile May Presage Attack," May 3, 2001; CIA, SEIB, "Bin Ladin Network's Plans Advancing," May 26, 2001; FBI report, Daily UBL/Radical Fundamentalist Threat Update, ITOS Threat Update Webpage, May 7, 2001 (the walk-in's claim was later discredited). For Attorney General briefing, see CIA briefing materials, "Briefing for the Attorney General, 15 May 2001, Al-Qa'ida," undated. For more threats and CSG discussion, see Intelligence report, Threat Report, May 16, 2001; NSC memo, CSG agenda, May 17, 2001.

10. See CIA, SEIB, "Terrorist Groups Said Cooperating on US Hostage Plot," May 23, 2001; FAA information circular, "Possible Terrorist Threat Against American Citizens," IC-2001-08, June 22, 2001 (this IC expired on August 22, 2001); CIA, SEIB, "Bin Ladin Network's Plans Advancing," May 26, 2001; NSC email, Clarke to Rice and Hadley, "A day in the life of Terrorism Intelligence," May 24, 2001.

11. See NSC email, Clarke to Rice and Hadley, Stopping Abu Zubaydah's attacks, May 29, 2001. For threat level, see White House document, "Selected Summer 2001 Threat Response Activities," undated, pp. 1-2 (provided to the Commission by President Bush on Apr. 29, 2004).

12. The information regarding KSM was not captioned as a threat. It was part of a longer cable whose subject line was "Terrorism: Biographical Information on Bin Ladin Associates in Afghanistan." The cable reported further that KSM himself was regularly traveling to the United States. See Intelligence report, June 12, 2001. This was doubted by the CIA's Renditions Branch, which had been looking for KSM since 1997. It noted, however, that if the source was talking about the "real" KSM, the CIA had both "a significant threat and opportunity to pick him up." See CIA cable, request additional