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INVESTIGATING OSAMA BIN LADEN, HIS NETWORK, AND HIS ROLE IN TERRORIST ATTACKS ON AMERICA

HUNTING BIN LADEN

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WHO IS BIN LADEN & WHAT DOES HE WANT?
life story, video interview, his fatwahs & terrorist organization

THE TRAIL OF EVIDENCE AND THE WARNINGS
the 1998 embassy bombings, the 2000 uss cole attack, & the terrorist bombings sept. 11, 2001

TWO TERRORISTS IN BIN LADEN'S NETWORK
a video profile, the computer letter

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WATCH A VIDEO INTERVIEW WITH OSAMA BIN LADEN

A FRONTLINE Co-Production with **The New York Times** and Rain Media, Inc.

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INTRODUCTION

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The United States has determined that Osama bin Laden is the orchestrator of the 1998 bombings of two U.S. embassies in East Africa, the October 2000 attack on the USS Cole in the Yemeni port of Aden, and finally, the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the Pentagon and World Trade Center which killed over 3000 people. In FRONTLINE's "Hunting bin Laden," a Pulitzer Prize-nominated team of New York Times reporters and FRONTLINE correspondent Lowell Bergman investigates the man who has declared holy war on the U.S. -- a wealthy Saudi Arabian exile believed to be hiding in the mountains of Afghanistan with a $5 million bounty on his head.

Who is bin Laden? This newly updated report and companion Web site offer background and insight into his life and motives, from his formative experience in the Afghan jihad against the Soviets, to his scathing criticism of the Saudi royal family and his campaign to drive American "infidel" troops out of Saudi Arabia, to his statements and fatwahs calling for the murder of Americans.

In tracing the trail of evidence linking bin Laden to terrorist attacks, this report includes interviews with New York Times reporters Judith Miller and James Risen, and a new interview with former CIA official Larry Johnson. They discuss the attacks which are suspected to be tied to bin Laden's complex terrorism network, outline the elements of his international organization (with new details of its alliances and its tactics), and explain the challenges confronting U.S. intelligence and counterterrorism efforts.

This report also raises tough questions about the evidence used to justify Washington's retaliatory missile strikes in Sudan against bin Laden following the U.S. embassy bombings in 1998. Drawing on interviews and official documents, "Hunting bin Laden" shows how U.S. officials have backed away from their original statements that the targeted Sudanese factory was linked to chemical weapons production.

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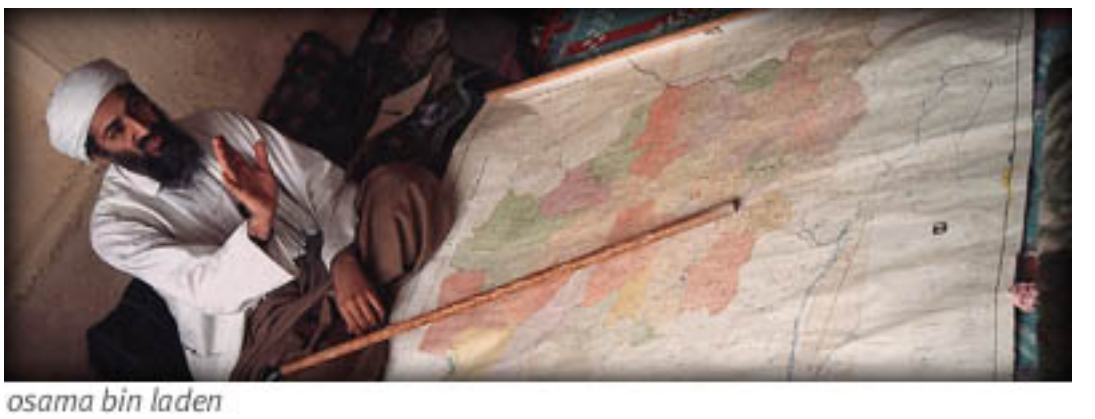
Who is Osama bin Laden and What Does He Want?



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Bin Laden's May 1998 Interview (Video & Text)

This interview, conducted by ABC's John Miller, was held at bin Laden's remote mountaintop camp in southern Afghanistan two months before the truck bombings of the U.S. embassies in East Africa. (Bin Laden had the interview recorded by his own camera and an associate gave a copy of the tape to FRONTLINE.)

A Chronology of bin Laden's Political Life

This timeline charts the major events and turning points.

A Biography of Osama bin Laden

A source close to bin Laden (who would like to remain anonymous) gave this document to FRONTLINE and we could not verify independently all of the information contained in it. While some of it is true, other parts run contrary to accounts given by other reliable sources. That said, this document does provide important details about bin Laden and his family life.

A Background Report on the bin Laden Family

This information is from a report dealing with prominent Saudi families of Yemeni origin. Although FRONTLINE cannot vouch for its accuracy, it does come from French intelligence sources.

"Greetings, America. My name is Osama bin Laden..."

ABC reporter John Miller recounts his hour-long interview with Osama bin Laden at his camp on a mountaintop in southern Afghanistan in May of 1998. It took place a little more than two months before the truckbombings of the two U.S. embassies in East Africa.

Osama bin Laden v. the U.S.: His Edicts and Statements

This selection is culled from various communiques, edicts and U.S., European and Middle East press interviews that he's given from 1995 through 1998. It includes excerpts from bin Laden's February 1998 press conference in which he called for attacks against all Americans and announced al Qaeda was merging with 11 other militant Islamic groups to form the World Islamic Front for Jihad Against Crusaders and Jews.

"Al Qaeda"

The U.S. government charges that Osama bin Laden heads an international terrorist network called "Al Qaeda," an Arabic word meaning 'the base.' Here is a summary of the U.S. allegations about this network.

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the remains of the world trade center

The Trail of Evidence & The Warnings

Examining the links, or suspected links between Bin Laden's international terrorist network and attacks on the U.S. during the 1990s and, most recently, the September 11, 2001 bombings of the World Trade Center and Pentagon

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Interview with Judith Miller

A correspondent for The New York Times since 1977, she has covered Osama bin Laden since 1993. In this interview, conducted September 12, 2001, Miller discusses what was learned about bin Laden's network from the trials of the 1998 U.S. embassy terrorists and from the failed series of terrorist attacks planned to coincide with the millennium celebrations. She also discusses the warnings prior to the September 11, 2001, attack on the Pentagon and destruction of the World Trade Center.

Interview with Larry C. Johnson

A former CIA officer, Johnson was deputy director of the U.S. State Department Office of Counterterrorism from 1989 to 1993. In this interview, conducted September 12, 2001, he explains why our perception of Osama bin Laden and his organization may be wrong, what we know about bin Laden's involvement in the 1998 embassy bombings and the 2000 USS Cole attack, and the degree of warnings leading up to the September 11, 2001, terrorist attack on the U.S.

Interview with James Risen

Risen is a New York Times reporter who covers U.S. intelligence. In this interview, conducted September 12, 2001, he discusses what's been learned about bin Laden's organization, the strategy it used in attacking the USS Cole in October 2000, and what has been learned from the September 11, 2001, terrorist attack on the U.S.

The U.S. Embassy Bombing Trials - A Summary

This trial, which began in January 2001 and concluded in May 2001, offers a revealing glimpse into bin Laden's Al Qaeda terrorist network and how it operated in planning the 1998 U.S. embassy bombings. Included here are excerpts from the testimony of key U.S. government witnesses who provided crucial information about the workings of bin Laden's network.

The FBI's Declassified Summary on the 1998 Embassy Bombings

This outlines the FBI's early theories about the bombings and who was responsible. Intelligence sources say the theories have changed somewhat since this document was written in November 1998, but the key facts remain the same. The document clearly outlines the basis for the U.S. government's case against bin Laden and the other suspects in the 1998 bombings.

Notes on the Interrogation of One Suspect

On the day the U.S. embassies were bombed (August 7, 1998), Mohammed Saddiq Odeh was arrested trying to enter Pakistan with a fake Yemeni passport. Interrogated by Pakistani officials, he eventually admitted being part of the bomb plot. These Pakistani authorities' notes on Odeh's interrogation were used by the FBI to develop their early theories on the bombings. Odeh clearly makes the connection to Osama bin Laden and admits being a member of a bin Laden group in East Africa.

Warnings to the FBI: Could the Bombings Have Been Prevented?

The FRONTLINE and New York Times investigation into Osama bin Laden uncovered a series of warnings about bin Laden's network in Africa. These warnings were received by U.S. officials in the year prior to the embassy bombings.

Admiral William J. Crowe's Report

Admiral Crowe chaired the Accountability Review Boards appointed by the State Department to investigate facts surrounding the 1998 bombing of the U.S. embassies at Nairobi and Dar es Salaam. Portions of the report were declassified and published on the Web. Crowe concluded that while no U.S. employee or department was at fault, there was "a collective failure by several Administrations and Congresses" to allocate sufficient resources to the security of U.S. diplomatic missions overseas, and he offers a number of recommendations to improve security policies and procedures.

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Two Terrorists in bin Laden's Network

haroun fazul

wadih el hage

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Video Report: What Turns a Boy Into a Terrorist?

Video Clip (click to start) RealVideo g2
Low Bandwidth (56k) High Bandwidth (cable/dsl)

Haroun Fazul was a significant operative in Osama bin Laden's network in East Africa (see letter below). It's believed he drove the lead truck in the Nairobi embassy bombing of August 1998. As of September 2003, Fazul is still at large. Martin Smith (producer of "Hunting Bin Laden") traveled to Fazul's homeland, the impoverished, volatile Comoros Islands just off the coast of East Africa, to explore what shaped Fazul's young life in the Comoros and led him, eventually, into the terrorist world of Osama bin Laden.

The Story of Wadih El Hage

In May 2001, El Hage, a U.S. citizen, was convicted of conspiracy and perjury in the East Africa embassy bombings case. Prosecutors believed that he was a top member of Osama bin Laden's terrorist network. Before the trial, FRONTLINE wanted to know more about El Hage's life and motives, and sought out his family, neighbors and friends. All were shocked by his arrest; most proclaimed his innocence.

The Letter from El Hage's Computer

During a raid on El Hage's house in Nairobi, Kenya, the FBI recovered this letter from his personal computer. They believe it was written by Haroun Fazul, one of the suspects in the Nairobi bombing. He had stayed in El Hage's house. In the letter, Haroun expresses concern that "the cell members in East Africa are in great danger" from American intelligence forces, and asks, "Are we ready for that big clandestine battle?"

Read the New York Times article on El Hage and Fazul.

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INTERVIEWS

osama bin laden & followers

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INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED SEPTEMBER 12, 2001 FOLLOWING THE TERRORIST ATTACK ON THE WORLD TRADE CENTER AND PENTAGON

JUDITH MILLER

A correspondent for The New York Times since 1977, she has covered Osama bin Laden since 1993. In this interview, conducted September 12, 2001, Miller discusses what was learned about bin Laden's network from the trials of the 1998 U.S. embassy terrorists and from the failed series of terrorist attacks planned to coincide with the millennium celebrations. She also discusses the warnings prior to the September 11, 2001, attack on the Pentagon and destruction of the World Trade Center.

LARRY C. JOHNSON

A former CIA officer, Johnson was deputy director of the U.S. State Department Office of Counterterrorism from 1989 to 1993. In this interview, conducted September 12, 2001, he explains why our perception of Osama bin Laden and his organization may be wrong, what we know about bin Laden's involvement in the 1998 embassy bombings and the 2000 USS Cole attack, and the degree of warnings leading up to the September 11, 2001, terrorist attack on the U.S.

JAMES RISEN

Risen is a New York Times reporter who covers U.S. intelligence. In this interview, conducted September 12, 2001, he discusses what's been learned about bin Laden's organization, the strategy it used in attacking the USS Cole in October 2000, and what has been learned from the September 11, 2001, terrorist attack on the U.S.

INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED IN LATE 1998 AND EARLY 1999 FOLLOWING THE BOMBINGS OF TWO U.S. EMBASSIES IN EAST AFRICA.

SAID K. ABURISH

He is a Palestinian-born journalist and author of many books on the Middle East, including The Rise, Corruption, and Coming Fall of the House of Saud. He talks about Osama bin Laden's roots in Saudi Arabia's dissident movement--a movement which seeks to drive 'infidel' U.S. forces out of the Saudi kingdom, the land of the two holy mosques of Mecca and Medina.

DR. SAAD AL-FAGIH

A Saudi Arabian dissident living in exile in London, he heads the Movement for Islamic Reform in Arabia. As a physician, he took part in the Afghan rebels' war against the Soviet invasion and explains the significance of that war for Muslims throughout the world. As a fellow Saudi dissident, he knows about bin Laden and his views.

AHMED SATTAR

An Egyptian-born U.S.citizen, Sattar acted as a paralegal and spokesman for the "Blind Sheik" Omar Abdel Al Rahman, convicted of conspiring to blow up New York City landmarks. In April 2002, the U.S. indicted Sattar and three others for providing material support for a terrorist organization called the Islamic Group. In this interview (conducted for FRONTLINE's report on Osama bin Laden),Sattar explains why many in the Islam world agree with bin Laden and oppose the United States. He also answers questions about bin Laden's Egyptian supporters and their alleged connections to terrorist events.

MILTON BEARDEN

He was with the Central Intelligence Agency from 1964-1994. As its field officer in Afghanistan, he oversaw the CIA's $3 billion covert aid program for Afghan rebels fighting the Soviets. During the 1980's, he was CIA station chief in the Sudan. He evaluates the Afghan war's importance to the Muslim world and bin Laden's role in it. He also questions classifying the Sudan as a 'terrorist state' and criticizes America's retaliatory missile strike in the Sudan against bin Laden.

SAMUEL R. BERGER

As U.S. National Security Advisor, he was part of a small group advising on the U.S. response to the 1998 East Africa embassy bombings. President Clinton eventually decided to bomb a terrorist training camp in Afghanistan thought to be used by bin Laden and, a pharmaceutical plant in the Sudan.

LARRY C. JOHNSON

A former CIA officer, he was deputy director of the U.S. State Department Office of Counterterrorism, 1989-1993, and now heads the consulting firm Berg Associates. He explains why he believes the U.S. has often exaggerated the terrorist threat and analyzes the danger posed by Osama bin Laden.

THOMAS PICKERING

He is U.S. Under-Secretary of State for Political Affairs. In this interview he discusses how Osama bin Laden is a real threat, and why Muslim anger against the U.S. is misdirected.

OMAR HASSAN AHMED AL-BASHIR

He is President of the Republic of the Sudan and led an Islamic fundamentalist revolution in the Sudan which created an Islamic state. Bashir knew and respected bin Laden when he lived in the Sudan, but eventually asked bin Laden to leave because of U. S. and Saudi pressure. Bashir has called for an international investigation into the U.S. strike against the Sudan pharmaceutical plant following the 1998 bombings of the U.S. embassies in East Africa.

MOTHER-IN-LAW OF WADIH EL HAGE

An American Muslim nurse, she asked to be interviewed anonymously fearing harassment due to her son-in-law's connection to the Nairobi embassy bombing. She gives her reasons for believing her son-in-law was not involved in the Nairobi bombing.

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Osama bin Laden v. the U.S.: Edicts and Statements

April 1995

In a never-published interview with a French journalist, Osama bin Laden says that his decision to fight alongside Afghan mujahedeen dated from "the time when the Americans decided to help the Afghans fight the Russians."

> "To counter these atheist Russians, the Saudis chose me as their representative in Afghanistan... I did not fight against the communist threat while forgetting the peril from the West."
>
> "For us, the idea was not to get involved more than necessary in the fight against the Russians, which was the business of the Americans, but rather to show our solidarity with our Islamist brothers. I discovered that it was not enough to fight in Afghanistan, but that we had to fight on all fronts against communist or Western oppression. The urgent thing was communism, but the next target was America... This is an open war up to the end, until victory."

August 3, 1995

Bin Laden issues a communiqué called "an Open Letter to King Fahd." He outlines major grievances against the Saudi regime: lack of commitment to Sunni Islam, inability to conduct viable defense policy, the squandering of public funds and oil money, and the dependence on non-Muslims for protection. He calls for a campaign of guerilla attacks to drive U.S. forces out of the Saudi Kingdom.

July 10, 1996

The British newspaper The Independent quotes bin Laden as saying:

> "The ordinary man knows that [Saudi Arabia] is the largest oil producer in the world, yet at the same time he is suffering from taxes and bad services. Now the people understand the speeches of the ulemas in the mosques--that our country has become an American colony. They act decisively with every action to kick the Americans out of Saudi Arabia. What happened in Riyadh and [Dhahran] when 24 Americans were killed in two bombings is clear evidence of the huge anger of Saudi people against America. The Saudis now know their real enemy is America." [From The Washington Post 8/23/98]

August 23, 1996

Several months after being expelled from the Sudan, bin Laden issues his "Declaration of War Against the Americans Who Occupy the Land of the Two Holy Mosques." It reads, in part:

> "Muslims burn with anger at America. For its own good, America should leave [Saudi Arabia.] ... There is no more important duty than pushing the American enemy out of the holy land. ... The presence of the USA Crusader military forces on land, sea and air of the states of the Islamic Gulf is the greatest danger threatening the largest oil reserve in the world. The existence of these forces in the area will provoke the people of the country and induces aggression on their religion, feelings and prides and pushes them to take up armed struggle against the invaders occupying the land, ... Due to the imbalance of power between our armed forces and the enemy forces, a suitable means of fighting must be adopted, i.e. using fast-moving, light forces that work under complete secrecy. In other words, to initiate a guerrilla war, where the sons of the nation, and not the military forces, take part in it."

October - November 1996

Bin Laden is quoted in October/November issue of Nida'ul Islam magazine as saying:

> "As for their accusations of terrorizing the innocent, the children, and the women, these are in the category of 'accusing others with their own affliction in order to fool the masses.' The evidence overwhelmingly shows America and Israel killing the weaker men, women and children in the Muslim world and elsewhere. A few examples of this are seen in the recent Qana massacre in Lebanon, and the deaths of more than 600,000 Iraqi children because of the shortage of food and medicine which resulted from the boycotts and sanctions against the Muslim Iraqi people, also their withholding of arms from the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina leaving them prey to the Christian Serbians who massacred and raped in a manner not seen in contemporary history. Not to forget the dropping of the H-bombs on cities with their entire populations of children, elderly, and women, on purpose, and in a premediated manner as was the case with Hiroshima and Nagasaki. "[From The Washington Post 8/23/98]

March 1997

In a CNN interview with Osama bin Laden, he says:

> "We declared jihad against the US government, because the US government is unjust, criminal and tyrannical. It has committed acts that are extremely unjust, hideous and criminal whether directly or through its support of the Israeli occupation."
>
> "For this and other acts of aggression and injustice, we have declared jihad against the US, because in our religion it is our duty to make jihad so that God's word is the one exalted to the heights and so that we drive the Americans away from all Muslim countries.As for what you asked whether jihad is directed against US soldiers, the civilians in the land of the Two Holy Places (Saudi Arabia, Mecca and Medina) or against the civilians in America, we have focused our declaration on striking at the soldiers in the country of The Two Holy Places."
>
> "The country of the Two Holy Places has in our religion a peculiarity of its own over the other Muslim countries. In our religion, it is not permissible for any non-Muslim to stay in our country. Therefore, even though American civilians are not targeted in our plan, they must leave. We do not guarantee their safety, because we are in a society of more than a billion Muslims."
>
> "I have benefited so greatly from the jihad in Afghanistan that it would have been impossible for me to gain such a benefit from any other chance and this cannot be measured by tens of years but rather more than that. ... Our experience in this jihad was great, by the grace of God, praise and glory be to Him, and the most of what we benefited from was that the myth of the superpower was destroyed not only in my mind but also in the minds of all Muslims. Slumber and fatigue vanished and so was the terror which the U. S. would use in its media by attributing itself superpower status or which the Soviet Union used by attributing itself as a superpower."
>
> [As quoted in The Washington Post 8/23/98]

February 22, 1998

Bin Laden issues an edict calling for attacks on all Americans, including civilians, and announces the creation of the International Islamic Front for Jihad Against the Jews and Crusaders, in association with extremist groups from Egypt, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

The following quotations are taken from the edict, as translated by the Federation of American Scientists. (FAS). The edict's full text is available on their web site.

> "For over seven years the United States has been occupying the lands of Islam in the holiest of places, the Arabian Peninsula, plundering its riches, dictating to its rulers, humiliating its people, terrorizing its neighbors, and turning its bases in the Peninsula into a spearhead through which to fight the neighboring Muslim peoples."
>
> "Despite the great devastation inflicted on the Iraqi people by the crusader-Zionist alliance, and despite the huge number of those killed, which has exceeded 1 million... despite all this, the Americans are once again trying to repeat the horrific massacres, as though they are not content with the protracted blockade imposed after the ferocious war or the fragmentation and devastation."
>
> "We--with God's help--call on every Muslim who believes in God and wishes to be rewarded to comply with God's order to kill the Americans and plunder their money wherever and whenever they find it. We also call on Muslim ulema, leaders, youths, and soldiers to launch the raid on Satan's U. S. troops and the devil's supporters allying with them, and to displace those who are behind them so that they may learn a lesson."
>
> "The ruling to kill the Americans and their allies -- civilians and military -- is an individual duty for every Muslim who can do it in any country in which it is possible to do it, in order to liberate the al-Aqsa Mosque and the holy mosque [Mecca] from their grip, and in order for their armies to move out of all the lands of Islam, defeated and unable to threaten any Muslim."

December 23, 1998

This interview with Time Magazine includes the following question-answer excerpts:

TIME: Are you responsible for the bomb attacks on the two American embassies in Africa?

Osama bin Laden: The International Islamic Front for Jihad against the U.S. and Israel has, by the grace of God, issued a crystal-clear fatwah calling on the Islamic nation to carry on jihad [holy war] aimed at liberating holy sites. The nation of Muhammad has responded to this appeal. If the instigation for jihad against the Jews and the Americans in order to liberate al-Aksa Mosque and the Holy Ka'aba [Islamic shrines in Jerusalem and Saudi Arabia] is considered a crime, then let history be a witness that I am a criminal. Our job is to instigate and, by the grace of God, we did that, and certain people responded to this instigation.

What can the U.S. expect from you now?

Any thief or criminal or robber who enters another country in order to steal should expect to be exposed to murder at any time. For the American forces to expect anything from me personally reflects a very narrow perception. Thousands of millions of Muslims are angry. The Americans should expect reactions from the Muslim world that are proportionate to the injustice they inflict.

The U.S. says you are trying to acquire chemical and nuclear weapons.

Acquiring weapons for the defense of Muslims is a religious duty. If I have indeed acquired these weapons, then I thank God for enabling me to do so. And if I seek to acquire these weapons, I am carrying out a duty. It would be a sin for Muslims not to try to possess the weapons that would prevent the infidels from inflicting harm on Muslims.

America, the world's only superpower, has called you Public Enemy Number One. Are you worried?

Hostility toward America is a religious duty, and we hope to be rewarded for it by God. To call us Enemy No. 1 or 2 does not hurt us. Osama bin Laden is confident that the Islamic nation will carry out its duty. I am confident that Muslims will be able to end the legend of the so-called superpower that is America.

December 24, 1998

In a second interview with reporter John Miller, which is televised on ABC News, bin Laden says he wants to "put to rest" speculation that he was hurt or killed in the U.S. retaliatory missile strikes in Afghanistan and the Sudan.

He denies that he was behind the bombings of the U.S. embassies in East Africa but describes two of the suspects, whom he said he knew, as "two men whom we respect and hold in the highest esteem."

Renewing his fatwah, bin Laden states, "We are confident that the Muslim nation would rid Islamic countries of the Americans and the Jews." He also does not deny charges that he tried to develop chemical and nuclear weapons, "If I seek to acquire such weapons, this is a religious duty. How we use them is up to us."

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INTERVIEW JUDITH MILLER

A correspondent for The New York Times since 1977, she has covered Osama bin Laden since 1993. In this interview, conducted September 12, 2001, Miller discusses what was learned about bin Laden's network from the trials of the 1998 U.S. embassy terrorists and from the failed series of terrorist attacks planned to coincide with the millennium celebrations. She also discusses the warnings prior to the September 11, 2001, attack on the Pentagon and destruction of the World Trade Center.

Why should we think that this attack of September 11, 2001, was an attack directed by Osama bin Laden?

I think it has a lot of his earmarks. I think the enormity of the strike, a strike designed to amaze the world, to astonish the world, that's always one of his goals, to outdo his last effort. I think the fact that there was no claim of credit, no one claimed credit for this attack, that's a typical bin Laden network trait. There, the fact that it was very sophisticated. I think we're beginning to see signs that it may have been compartmentalized the way the other operations have been. Four, the statement that he did make recently, apparently -- we will verifying it -- that while he did not claim credit for it, in fact suggested that he did not do it, he was pleased with the outcome. That tends to be what they have normally said.

That's what he said after the 1998 Africa bombings.

After the Africa bombings, after the USS Cole. Always that same, "I cannot take credit, but I am delighted and the Arab world should be and Muslims everywhere should be."

Can you remind us what happened with the USS Cole warship?

Well, I think you have to go back before the Cole, to the USS The Sullivans, and I think the lesson of the Cole is that these guys don't give up. They learn from their mistakes. It seems that the Cole was actually a second attempt at the series of attacks that were planned to coincide with the millennium celebrations. The Islamists were going to ring in the century, in their own inimitable fashion, by setting off explosions in several capitals, on the border of Israel, Jordan, Seattle, probably New York, Chicago perhaps, and in Yemen with a U.S. warship -- not the Cole -- but another ship that was visiting the area at that time, the USS The Sullivans. And in what seemed to us a kind of comic presentation of what happened, the would-be martyrs loaded up their boat with explosives and set the little dingy out to meet The Sullivans and the [dingy] was overloaded and sank. And they were scuttled to shore. They left nine explosives. They used off. They abandoned the place. One of them went scurrying back to Afghanistan from whence he had come and they disappeared and no one ever made the connection. Had the Yemeni authorities--

No one ever made which connection?

The connection of the group that had tried to send a dingy out to The Sullivans with the effort to bring down an American warship, which is what happened only a few months later [in October 2000].

The lesson being that in 1993, they failed to topple the World Trade Center and they came back on February 26, 2001, and succeeded. And so, like The Sullivans, they came back and hit the Cole.

Well, we're not absolutely certain, I believe, that the same people who did the World Trade Center bombing I were the same people who came back and did the World Trade bombing 2 this time. There are indications that there were links between the original group and the Osama bin Laden network. We know that there were some operatives from the World Trade Center group was connected to Osama bin Laden and whether or not in fact Osama bin Laden had given the order for that operation. I don't think we know that firmly yet.

What happened in the USS Cole attack?

In the attack on the Cole, 17 sailors were killed and a U.S. warship was severely damaged, so much so that it took years of repair and work to get the ship to sea again, to make it sea-worthy. And it was done by a small group, once again a suicide operation, of in some cases very experienced people from the bin Laden organization. And they filled a dingy up with explosives, unmoraled dingy, sailed out to the Cole, waved at the people on the deck of the Cole, sailed right up to the ship and blew it apart.

And what did the investigation teach us about bin Laden?

That he is relentless, that he learns from his mistakes, that he is patient, and that he doesn't give up.

There was frustration on the part of our intelligence agencies in terms of really getting to the bottom of that investigation?

I think the U.S. intelligence agencies and law enforcement people were hugely frustrated by their experience with working with the Yemenis. Yemeni law enforcement has its own set of ethics and standards and ways of operating and even in the best of times, it was always a very difficult relationship between Yemen, which we must recall supported Saddam Hussein during the Gulf War. They're newfound American allies and friends. This was bound to be a relationship fraught with tension because of the very strong Islamist movement that controls a lot of very important activities and sectors of Yemeni society. It was fraught with tension and peril.

The trial starts off a few months later, in January. What do we learn in the trial of the 1998 embassy bombers about the bin Laden organization that's significant?

I think what I've learned about the way in which they operate is how good they were, how resourceful they are, and how the image that we have of kind of wild eyed, bearded, Kalashnikov-waving militants is not this bin Laden organization or his networks. Many of the people who have been indicted and who are being tried in New York are middle class, rather well-connected young men -- and they're almost always men, by the way -- whom one would have never thought of as potential terrorists, suicide candidates.

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What happened in the USS Cole attack?

In the attack on the Cole, 17 sailors were killed and a U.S. warship was severely damaged, so much so that it took years of repair and work to get the ship to sea again, to make it sea-worthy. And it was done by a small group, once again a suicide operation, of in some cases very experienced people from the bin Laden organization. And they filled a dingy up with explosives, unmoraled dingy, sailed out to the Cole, waved at the people on the deck of the Cole, sailed right up to the ship and blew it apart.

And what did the investigation teach us about bin Laden?

That he is relentless, that he learns from his mistakes, that he is patient, and that he doesn't give up.

There was frustration on the part of our intelligence agencies in terms of really getting to the bottom of that investigation?

I think the U.S. intelligence agencies and law enforcement people were hugely frustrated by their experience with working with the Yemenis. Yemeni law enforcement has its own set of ethics and standards and ways of operating and even in the best of times, it was always a very difficult relationship between Yemen, which we must recall supported Saddam Hussein during the Gulf War. They're newfound American allies and friends. This was bound to be a relationship fraught with tension because of the very strong Islamist movement that controls a lot of very important activities and sectors of Yemeni society. It was fraught with tension and peril.

The trial starts off a few months later, in January. What do we learn in the trial of the 1998 embassy bombers about the bin Laden organization that's significant?

I think what I've learned about the way in which they operate is how good they were, how resourceful they are, and how the image that we have of kind of wild eyed, bearded, Kalashnikov-waving militants is not this bin Laden organization or his networks. Many of the people who have been indicted and who are being tried in New York are middle class, rather well-connected young men -- and they're almost always men, by the way -- whom one would have never thought of as potential terrorists, suicide candidates.

The lesson being that in 1993, they failed to topple the World Trade Center and they came back on February 26, 2001, and succeeded. And so, like The Sullivans, they came back and hit the Cole.

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Even before the most recent horrific attacks, and not of the U.S. government's intent every eye Afghanistan, these networks... This is the tough kind of intelligence to get, because these oughest whose sole aim in life is to defeat such efforts people.

These were people who usually had a college education. One of them, Ihab Ali, who has now turned state's witness and is going to cooperate with the U.S. government in its prosecution, was actually an airline pilot. And he was trained at [a] flight school in Norman, Oklahoma. He was Osama bin Laden's personal pilot. He spoke of training others, of helping to protect bin Laden in Sudan. And he paints a portrait of an organization which is highly disciplined, very compartmented, fraught with the kind of normal rivalries that make life in any bureaucracy, if you will, stressful at times, an organization in which people were often asked to pay for themselves or carry their own weight. And an organization which is kind of well-conceived and effective.

Do you want to highlight anybody else that emerges in that trial as really advancing our understanding of the bin Laden network?

See, I didn't cover the trial. I think what I know, I really know from the millennium cases. Those are the guys who really just knock my socks off. The millennium bombing case, you've got two Americans, Palestinian origin, once again, one a product of Islamic school in California, well-connected Palestinian family, educated in Saudi Arabia and Jordan, college, everything to look forward to. And then a fellow student in northern California convinces him that he can't really experience life as a Muslim without going to Afghanistan. He does and he comes back an absolutely changed man.

I think people don't realize how much of an operation the millennium bombing plot really was, and how close it came to pulling off a major terrorist attack.

Oh, absolutely ... The millennium bombing [attacks] failed. And we completely forgot about them. So people didn't really study the lessons of them, study what it told us about their organizations, showed us what we needed to know about the importance of intelligence cooperation between Arab governments, which know these people much better than Americans ever will, and U.S. intelligence, which in this case helped prevent a terrible tragedy from occurring. And yet the moment it's over, it was forgotten about. And my efforts, and the efforts of my newspaper to pursue it, ran into a lot of indifference, even in U.S. government circles, except for a small group of FBI and White House officials in the Clinton administration who were absolutely convinced that what they were seeing in the millennium bombing attempts would be a prescription for the future. They were the ones who helped me and helped tell the story.

How do we grade the intelligence community in the United States?

You know, it's so easy in retrospect to look back and say, "Would've, could've, should've." I can't say that, because I think we're spending now over $10 billion a year on counterterrorism. Even before the most recent horrific attacks, even before that, every eye and ear of the U.S. government was trained on this part of the world -- Afghanistan, on these networks, in Europe, in the Middle East. This is really hard work. It's hard as a journalist and it's even hard when you're a government official armed with electronic eyes and ears and search warrants. This is the toughest kind of reporting and the toughest kind of intelligence to get because these are people whose sole aim in life is to defeat such efforts. They are experts at protecting themselves. Let me give you an example.

In the Jordan-American part of the millennium bombing case, this was the effort to blow up holy sites, bridge crossings into Israel, and the Radisson Hotel in Amman over the millennium. Each cell was highly compartmentalized. In most cases, the people who were members of the cell had no idea what the real names were of other people in their own cell. There was also no communication between members of the two different cells. They did not know what their missions were, who was financing them, what their activities were, or the other names and identities and even addresses. So you had an enormous degree of discipline and of organization and of decentralization.

The criticism that is being made of our intelligence services is that we have a lot of eavesdropping equipment, we have a lot of technology at work, but we have failed on the level of human intelligence, basically, spies.

Probably true. And do you know how hard it would be to get an American spy into these camps? I think that our Arab allies in this instance are much better placed than is American intelligence to accomplish that mission. And I think what the experience of the most recent attacks shows us is that what is absolutely essential in preventing such attacks is close cooperation between the human intelligence that the Arab governments have and the American enormous prowess and ability and electronic and signal intelligence.

Why have we not had more human intelligence coordination and cooperation?

I think in the millennium bombing plots you saw such cooperation and that was what was partly responsible for the failure of those attacks. Jordan warned the United States and without that warning, I'm not sure we would've ever caught that young man as he crossed into our border from Canada. Ahmed Ressam, who fortunately did not speak English and panicked at just the right moment. But I would point out that there was an alert on that border, and the reason for that alert was the Jordanian warning to us that something, somewhere was threatening us. They didn't know where it would come from. They believed it might come from Canada. Apparently, there was some very vague guidance from Jordan, which helped trigger the alert, which I think saved us from a terrible catastrophe.

But the $10 billion to $11 billion that we're spending a year, why aren't we getting better cooperation? Is it a valid criticism that's being made by former CIA officers that we've failed on the human intelligence side?

I think, given what happened in the last couple of days, in the last week here in New York, it's going to be very hard for intelligence agencies, to defend themselves, but as for me, I'm keeping an open mind because I do not yet know what we knew. What I do know is that there were indications that something big was coming. I've been told this reliably. And I've also been told that this is what triggered the alert last June. All Americans and Israelis around the globe, but particularly those in the Middle East, were on alert in a heightened state of alert, in some cases what they call Delta State of Readiness and Security, because the American intelligence community was hearing.

You know, with a group as disparate and as decentralized as these networks, as the Osama bin Laden networks, you can be listening and monitoring one cell and one group of the network, one part of the network that seems to be very active and seems to be preparing something, and that could actually be disinformation or a cover for another part of the network that is not being monitored. One of the hallmarks of Osama bin Laden is that he picks and chooses from the enormous range of militant groups that are affiliated with him. And if he thinks the Americans are watching, say, a cell in Italy, as we were this past year, he doesn't use or rely on a cell in Italy. He'll call on a Malaysian cell or a cell operating in Canada. And that's why this is the toughest kind of reporting to do. I don't think it serves anybody's interest at this point to start playing the blame game. It's only going to be a waste of time and energy that we desperately need focused on what is going to be a long-term effort to root out these networks, which are even in our country, and to really fight terrorism.

What indications were there that bin Laden was up to something?

... I think we've had plenty of warnings from Osama bin Laden recently that something was up. One of the most recent was a supposedly 90-minute video-tape in which he not only repeated the call he had made, initially in February of '98, calling on all good Muslims to kill American soldiers and civilians wherever they are in any part of the world. He also said that he was specifically going to bring the battle to the United States.

This was the MBC [Middle East Broadcasting Center] tape?

This was the MBC tape, only portions of which were broadcast in the Arab world, and only some of which have been seen here. I think the American reaction, or at least some of the American news media, was, "There he goes again." Actually, these warnings from bin Laden himself have been very serious. They are authentic to me and to-between. And I think the people in intelligence and law enforcement that I know were rattled by this warning, but they didn't quite know what to do about it. Once again, you have to know where to look.

They took these warnings--this was a specific--

Yes, they took these warnings seriously .... I know people at the White House last July 4 who didn't sleep for days. They were so worried about what might be coming our way and at the end of the holiday, people were talking about dodging bullets, about how lucky we were this time. I think that the difficulty in a democracy of stopping an attack like this cannot and should not be underestimated. It's really not fair to the government.

Are we expecting too much from our intelligence agencies and too much from our enforcement people and not enough from our policy makers?

Well, I think after the '98 embassy bombings, there were calls for retribution and that retribution was not long in coming. It took the form of the cruise missile attacks in Afghanistan and it made people temporarily feel very good. And when I went to Afghanistan myself after the cruise missile revenge attacks as they were called in the Middle East, I saw that they had done virtually nothing to stop bin Laden or his networks. These are people who are used to, so to speak, folding up their tents and moving on. They travel light.

They made a martyr of him to some to degree, or at least a symbol of him to the--

Every time he survives one of these bombings, every time he survives what is described as an American-inspired attack against him, he becomes stronger. He becomes more of a symbol and he becomes harder to defeat.

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In '98 when the U.S. embassies were bombed, people in America immediately think of the West Bank and Gaza. But indeed it was not because of that so much as because of U.S. troops in Saudi Arabia. We've had a simmering problem in Palestine, Israel. What are we to think? Is that related to this?

Well I think Osama bin Laden and his networks are very fond of wrapping themselves in the Palestinian cause, and that they say that they're doing this in part to help liberate Palestine from Israeli oppression. My last book looked at the causes of Islamic militancy and I found as I studied militant Islam in 10 different countries that Palestine was very marginal in the thinking of most of these groups and the bin Laden groups. Palestine is a convenient justification for their hatred of the United States, but it is not the cause of their hatred. And I think that if we look to the Middle East and say, "Oh, if we could only solve the Palestinian problem, we would end these kinds of suicide attacks against America," I think that's naive and I think it's dangerous.

In his case -- and in each of these countries, I think the roots are slightly different -- but in his case, I think it traces back to his hatred of America for what he considered and defiling sacred Saudi soil by sending our troops to defend his country, paradoxically. This was a wealthy man of privilege, well educated, but who really believed that Muslims could defend themselves and should defend themselves. And when his king had to humiliate the Arab and the Muslim peoples by asking infidels to come to their holy land, their holy soil and fight for them, he was humiliated, and he felt his people ought to be. And I think when we study his early speeches and writing, that's what you get, this kind of brewing resentment based on humiliation.

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HUNTING BIN LADEN

INTERVIEW JAMES RISEN

He is a New York Times reporter who reports on U.S. intelligence. In his interview, conducted September 11, 2001, Risen talks about what's been learned about bin Laden's organization, the strategy it used in attacking the USS Cole warship in October 2000, why other attacks have become recently to fix cause, the challenges confronting the U.S. intelligence community, and why it has been learned from the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on America.

Is there a question in your mind, in the minds of the people you talk to in the intelligence community that this – the September 11, 2001, attack – was a bin Laden operation?

They're not definitive about it yet. They say it's still not conclusive. They say there are strong indications pointing at him. But they're not willing to be entirely conclusive about it yet.

Bin Laden in 2000. What did we know about him then, a year ago? What were we learning even at that moment?

I think the U.S. intelligence community has very gradually learned a lot more about him. With each attack, with each threat, they've been able to kind of put flesh on the bones of what they know about Al Qaeda, his network, and about the people involved and about their modus operandi. Each time, however, he uses a slightly different approach. And that's why he's been fairly successful against the United States.

What they now know is that Al Qaeda is a very loose organization of Islamic radicals, based in Afghanistan, but with people from Egypt, Yemen, and other countries, who kind of form shifting alliances using bin Laden and his organization as kind of an umbrella to perform operations. So it's always difficult to penetrate exactly what they're doing for the United States because there is not a hard and fast organizational chart to Al Qaeda. He uses different lieutenants for different operations.

And in the past, they have been now some of his lieutenants will kind of come out of Afghanistan, he is large of one operation, and then go back into Afghanistan and never be seen again in the West. It's clear to the United States that bin Laden has learned from each operation. He's improved his communications over time. So that ... he has learned how the East African bombings that the United States could penetrate some of his satellite phone and other communications. Since then, his communications have gotten more secure. And it's gotten more difficult for the United States to penetrate with great accuracy communications between bin Ladenand his lieutenants overseas.

So this business of Al Qaeda, it's different than the Corleone family, say, the typical mafia family.

Right. It's a group largely based on the Afghan mujahedin of like-minded radicals and extremists who have come together. It's not clear to the United States how they were put together by a shared anti-Americanism and a shared Islamic brand. And he has reached out to various Islamic nations and Islamic groups, partly because he has become seen in the Arab world as the prominent opponent of the United States. And so in a sense, our own publicity of him has hurt us. Because it's served essentially as a recruiting tool for bin Laden.

And it's made him a major figure in the Arab world by making it clear to desperate young Arabs who don't have anyplace ... who feel they don't have anything else to do, frustrated with their hatred of the West, that he's the man to turn to. And so essentially ... our attacks on him in some sense have made him a bigger deal than he was before.

The USS Cole, describe briefly what happened. And how did that put bin Laden again at center stage?

Well, his organization has typically attacked soft targets around the world where the United States has interests that are not heavily secured. Or he has found ways of penetrating secured facilities around the world. He has attacked American interests around the world. In the East African bombing case, he found weaknesses in out of the way places in Africa where the buildings had not been modernized with more modern security measures that are in place at other embassies around the world.

> *His organization is difficult to penetrate. It is difficult to know what he's planning. He's obsessed. And it's difficult to buy an informant with money, who is driven not by money but by ideology, say.*

In the Cole, he found a United States warship that was anchored in a harbor, in a country that has traditionally been a haven for Islamic terrorists. The decisions to allow American ships to transit and harbor in Yemen may put those ships in an exposed position. Because we know going in that Yemen had a history of being unable to stop Islamic terrorists, and that they operated through Yemen as a major transit point between Afghanistan and other parts of the Middle East.

So, the United States knew going in that Yemen was a dangerous place. The United States made a political and diplomatic decision to place ships there in part to try and shore up the Yemeni support for the West. But bin Laden saw that as yet another weak spot, as he's hidden here. They had suicide bombers on small little skiffs loaded with explosives.

And when they approached the ship, pretending to be men bringing out supplies from the harbor, they blew up. So it is yet another example of using suicide bombers against a target that was in an exposed position. And that has become his MO. He has gotten enough recruits of people who are willing to kill themselves in the name of Al Qaeda and the name of an attack on American interests. And if you have a combination of suicide bombers and the patience and the resources to find weak spots in American security around the world, it's a dangerous combination.

Have we become complacent about his abilities? Or had he become all the more crafty about ...

Clearly with each attack he's gotten better. And he's become more sophisticated. The latest attacks against the World Trade Center and the Pentagon show a dramatic increase in his capabilities. And he's gotten very, very familiar in the sense that they were exposed targets, that he found a weakness in the security system. And he was able to exploit that with suicide bombers or suicide attackers.

And in the case of the Cole investigation, the fact that it was in Yemen, how did that effect the ability to really penetrate, investigate it?

It's made it very difficult. The investigation has stalled in the Cole investigation, largely because the FBI has found it difficult to operate in Yemen. The government there has arrested some people. But it's been difficult so far to trace these people back to Al Qaeda through the local investigation. So there's a great frustration or has been in the United States about the progress on that investigation.

The trials that were ongoing in relation to the embassy bombings, what did we learn in those trials about the man and his organization?

Well ... there was one very valuable witness who agreed to cooperate with the United States who provided real insight into the organization and layout of Al Qaeda. And that was probably the most significant thing to come out of the trial, was to have an insider who was willing to talk about the organization and how it was put together and layout. Not of that but already been known to the CIA and the FBI because this man and others have been cooperating over the last couple of years. But this was the first time it was publicly revealed in open court. And it provided greater ammunition for those who make the case that bin Laden does have the motive and the resources to carry out these kind of operations.

What did we learn about the organization?

Just the intensity with which the organization continues to exist solely for the reason of killing Americans and Israelis, Americans more than any other group. And that it's well thought out campaign of terror.

But you're describing an organization whose sole ideology is death to Americans?

Bin Ladenwas the heir to the largest construction company, one of the sons of the owner of the largest construction company in Saudi Arabia. So he grew up wealthy and privileged in Saudi Arabia. He went to school in Saudi Arabia. He came to Afghanistan during the Soviet occupation. And then he returned to Saudi Arabia and he saw American troops in Saudi Arabia during the Gulf War, he believed that they Americans were desecrating the sacred sites of Islam in Saudi Arabia.

And so he has been on what he calls a jihad ever since against the United States. And the real importance and significance of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, I believe, to bin Ladenis not that it has spurred him on personally ... because I think he was already onto this jihad. But I think the last year or so, the problems in the Middle East have made it easier for him to recruit others. And so his brand of anti-Americanism fits in with a larger anger and frustration among other Arabs.

I don't think that many of the people around him are driven by the same anger over American troops in Saudi Arabia. I think it's more about Israel and Palestine. But that it's fed into the same thing.

And jihad is what, exactly?

Well, he has said in the past he wants American troops out of Saudi Arabia. And it's unclear ... even if we pulled our troops out what he would do after that. But he is committed to a campaign against the United States.

Prior to the most recent tragedy, September 11, were there any inklings, any intelligence that indicated that bin Ladenwas on the move again?

What we've found so far is that there was not any significant warnings in the days or weeks leading up to the September 11 attacks. And that while there had been threat warnings earlier this year that were significant and which were ... talked about publicly, there were the threats related to the 4th of July holiday period earlier this year that were announced, those warnings seemed to have receded after the 4th of July. And officially say they saw very little that would have indicated a heightened threat level by bin Laden's organization or any threat, immediate threats, of a major attack against the United States.

Now, prior to the 1998 U.S. embassy bombings in East Africa, bin Ladenhad made some very strong statements.

Yes. Several months earlier ... [in 1998] it was one of his, I think, first public statements of his jihad where he went on videotape and announced his jihad against the United States. He had made what they call a fatwah. A fatwah is a religious statement claiming religious support of an edict of war or an attack, and he had issued those in the past. But this was his most public one. ... And then that was followed by the embassy bombings in August.

He did not do that this year. There were some statements he had made in the past years ago, reported statements. But it's unclear exactly how significant those statements were. It's safe to say, I think, that the United States was caught completely by surprise.

What's the extent of what the intelligence community might know about this man's organizational chart .

It's not that cut and dried. It's shifting and free floating. And just think about the fact that all these people are willing to kill themselves to do this. It's not like a regular army or a regular organization. These are people driven by passion and ideology. So you don't need a strict organizational chart. They have camps in Afghanistan where they train. They have networks and communications through informal relationships to get people involved. But there's an inner circle of people around bin Laden. And then outside that, it's much more free floating and shifting alliances among radicals.

How much control does even bin Laden have over those?

Well, it's unclear. That's one of the greatest mysteries of this over the last few years. ... There are some other leading terrorists, for instance, from Egypt who have gone to Afghanistan. This one guy named al Savari who was originally part of a group called the Islamic Jihad which grew back to Sheik Omar Rahman and the first World Trade Center bombing. There's been people speculating that maybe it was people like him around bin Laden who helped bring in the suicide bombers and recruit people. But it's unclear. I don't think the United States has ever thoroughly penetrated bin Laden's organization. So we don't really understand all of the inner workings of it.

And even understand his capabilities intellectually?

He's clearly smart. And he's got money and resources. But the question is, how operational is he versus some of the other people around him? Is he a figurehead? Or is he deeply involved in the day-to-day running of these, you know, planning of these operations? That's not clear at all.

Would you call him the shot caller?

I don't know. That's what I'm saying, we're not sure. He is clearly the name that everybody knows. But at this point, I think the U.S. government probably knows more ... obviously, than I do about this. But to me it's still not clear whether he runs everything or whether it's even more loose than just him. He may just provide his own blessing on operations that other people want to run. So I'm not sure.

Well, that raises the question obviously of what we do know and our capabilities to find out what we want to.

Well, I think this last attack shows that they're not good enough. Our intelligence wasn't good on this. And law enforcement investigation of bin Ladenwasn't good enough. And we got beat badly by him this time. And that shows the weaknesses, both of our intelligence and our investigative skills.

And what are those weaknesses?

I don't think we know, the CIA and the FBI. I think if they knew what their weaknesses were, they'd be able to fix them. But one of the key things obviously is ... whether we have any informants in his organization who are well enough placed to provide us with adequate warning of what he plans to do.

So this idea of human intelligence is so central to be able to penetrate.

Right. For instance, what the CIA did against the KGB and the Soviet Union during the Cold War was we recruited Russian spies inside the KGB to tell us what the KGB was doing. We have not done that enough with Al Qaeda and bin Laden. We don't have enough spies telling us what they're doing. And the CIA has to do better about that. They know they have to do better. That's clearly one of their major priorities.

Well, why wouldn't we have more spies in there if he's the face of terrorism, he's the face of our biggest threat?

Because his organization is difficult to penetrate. I think largely because it's based on both ethnic and religious ties. And it is based on shared passion and emotion and an ideology. And it's difficult to buy an informant with money who is driven not by money but by ideology. These are the hardest people to turn into informants. And that's different from a KGB officer in 1985 in Moscow who is desperate for more money and who didn't care much about the Soviet Union. And so that makes it a much harder target.

Were we expecting too much from the intelligence community?

No. I mean, this is what they have to do. This is the new target. If they don't do this, then they're not doing their job.

The most recent attack, what did we learn? What does that tell us about his capabilities, his mindset at this moment?

I think it shows that he's patient or that his organization has great patience. When we ramp up and we have a warning or a threat and the U.S. announces that they've heard a warning, he lies low. He only does one or two operations a year. And he clearly compares the United States to the Soviet Union and he knows that the Soviet Union was in fact true that people in our part of the operation don't know about the other parts. And so he's got very good security and he's patient and willing to wait. And he's willing to look for our vulnerabilities and attack those weak spots.

And there's no way we can not have weak spots. We are worldwide. We have worldwide forces, worldwide interests. There's going to be some place in the world where some American interest is not heavily protected. I mean, that's just going to be a given. And he has shown the patience to look for those. And he has this cadre of people now who are willing to die for him. And that's a very volatile mix.

That's a very frightening mix.

It is. Never seen the number of suicide bombers or suicide assailants that he has been able to project around the world in this kind of a global conspiracy. Because we've seen that in Israel in the past or in Lebanon in the 1980s, never seen suicide bombers in other cases or suicide attackers going around the world to different parts of the world to attack American interests all over the globe in the way he has. And so it's a very difficult target for us to stop, a very difficult thing for the United States to stop.

Can we?

I don't know. I hope so ... I think big mistake this time was that the previous attacks were bad, but they were small enough for us to categorize as terrorism. I think this time the United States is categorizing it as war. And I think we are now going to elevate our response to him to a war footing. And I'm not sure if he's ready for that either.

What many people think, now is, "Oh, it's responsible, go get him. Just go over there, get him, find him. Take this guy out. Do what you have to do."

Well, the U.S. has had special operations troops training to get him for the last several years. And they've been ready to go for years. And the government has at various points decided not to do it because of the risk of casualties to American troops. I mean, I think, is one of the changes that you'll see is the calculus of "Is the risk worth it?" I think [that] has changed with the World Trade Center and the Pentagon bombing attacks.

When it was small attacks on small American outposts, you could make the case, ... is it worth going after this guy when you might lose 100 American troops and not find him? Now I think people may be more willing to take more aggressive actions against bin Laden.

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INTERVIEW: LARRY C. JOHNSON

A former CIA officer, Johnson was deputy director of the U.S. Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) from 1994 to 1999 and conducted Operation Casablanca, OFAC's massive sting of money laundering by Mexican drug cartels. Johnson was also the U.S. Treasury Department's lead banker overseeing the 1994 Government Securities Act and the 1995 Liberty Act. Johnson is now a consultant to the private sector.

Leading up to January 20th the millennium, everybody's expecting the possibility of a big terrorist attack. Tell me, Johnson, what's the state of the world, and what's the state of the world of terrorism?

We've got a period presumably for one month. But I think it is credible that if a group of religious fanatics who want to kill people, they could do it anywhere in the United States in the month of that end. That end, they do not have the global reach of General Bin Laden. But they do have the ability to do something very, very, very,

INTERVIEW Osama Bin Laden

Part 1 of 3

In the first part of the interview which occurred in May 1998, a little over two months before the U.S. embassy bombings in Africa, bin Laden talks about the Islamic project, Islam's relation to the West, the roots of his Islamic or his mountaintop camp in southern Afghanistan, in the Jalalabad area, the Islamic Army, and the Islamic Front and the Islamic Nation.

Lead Interviewer: Jim Lacey | Field Mujahedin Interviewer: [illegible]

Read the translation of the ABC 2001 interview here.

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...What is the reason why the Muslims in many areas against America in particular, and against the West in general that you seek to send to the West in general?

The call to wage war against America was made because America has occupied the Islamic nation, sending its troops to the land of the two Holy Mosques since and there is nothing in its affairs and its actions that indicates that it intends to withdraw its

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historical regime that is hostile to Islam. These are the reasons behind the singling out of America as a target. And not revenge of America's support for the Israeli occupation of Palestine, as the regime offers support to the American troops from the West in least one reason behind the symbolic participation of the Western forces in the occupation of the Arabian Peninsula, and America's support for the occupation of Palestine is a clear fact, there presence in the Arabian Peninsula is a clear fact, and America's presence has no meaning now and that is to offer support to the occupation of Palestine, and America's support for the occupation achieves left concern that the Arab Peninsula will be transformed to make an important part of the so called Greater Israel ...

Many of the Arabs as well as the Western mass media accuse you of being the leader of a supporting terrorism. What do you have to say to that?

There is an Arabic proverb that says: 'Ask around me of hearing, but ask around me of seeing'. Terrorism can be commendable and it can be reprehensible. Terrifying an innocent woman and her children is a crime that no religion or any sane people unanimously accept to be right.

Whereas, killing aggressors and criminals and protecting oneself and children is necessary but the

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They rip up of our wealth, resources and oil, and we are the people who are being killed, and they are the people who are living and enjoying.

other side of the coin is that for the protection of their property. There is no doubt in this. Every nation and every independent and free nation has to resort to terrorism under certain circumstances for the purpose of protecting its property and its independence. Every free nation has to resort to terrorism, control and to resort to terrorism. This is not perfect and its even ugly. They are all designed to terrorize aggressors and criminals. The Muslim nation is a victim of such aggression. The Muslim nation is a victim of such aggression and it is a victim of the tyrants and the aggressors and the enemies of Allah, and they are the people who are killing our people and they are killing our children and they are killing our people and their sons and their sons. Terrorizing these and punishing them are necessary and it is commendable. It is a religious duty. We are the people of the aggressors who violated the sanctuaries of the aggressors might be the sanctuaries of their leaders, might be the sanctuaries of their leaders and their energy might be the sanctuaries and the Zionists and those who are with them. We are the people who are killing our people and they are the usual problem for them are this democratic Iraqi people. They are the usual problem for them are this democratic Iraqi people. They are the people who are killing our people and they are killing our children and they are killing our people and their sons and their sons. We are the people who are killing our people and they are killing our people and their sons and their sons. We are the people who are killing our people and they are killing our people and their sons and their sons. We are the people who are killing our people

Osama bin Laden

A Chronology of His Political Life

1957	Osama bin Muhammad bin Awad bin Laden is born in Riyadh. He is 17th of 52 children sired by Muhammad Bin Laden--Saudi Arabia's wealthiest construction magnate.
1979	Bin Laden graduates from King Abdul Aziz University in Jiddah with a degree in civil engineering.
December 26, 1979	Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Bin Laden leaves Saudi Arabia to join the Afghan resistance (mujahedeen).
1980-86	From the Pakistani border, bin Laden raises funds and provides the mujahedeen with logistical and humanitarian aid.
1986-89	According to Islamic sources, bin Laden participates in numerous battles during the Afghan war against the Soviets as a guerilla commander, including the fierce battle of Jalalabad which led the Soviets to finally withdraw from Afghanistan.
1988	Bin Laden establishes "al Qaeda," an organization of ex-mujahedeen and other supporters. Its mission is to channel fighters and funds to the Afghan resistance.
June 30, 1989	The National Islamic Front (NIF) stages a military coup and takes control of the Sudan.
1989	After the Soviets pull out of Afghanistan, bin Laden returns to Saudi Arabia a hero. He becomes involved in opposition movements to the Saudi monarchy while working for his family construction firm, the Bin Laden Group.
August 2, 1990	Iraq invades Kuwait.
April, 1991	Bin Laden flees Saudi Arabia, after being confined to Jiddah for his opposition to the Saudi alliance with the United States. He moves first to Afghanistan and then to Khartoum, Sudan by 1992 (Source: Newsweek 6/1/98). Saudi Arabia had begun to allow any Muslim into the country without a visa, in a display of Islamic solidarity. Allegedly, hundreds of suspected terrorists and ex-mujahedeen come to Sudan as a safe haven (Source: New York Times 9/21/98).
1991	US troops fight Persian Gulf War. After victory, the US establishes a large permanent military presence in the region, including Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia is the land of "the two most holy places" in Islam--Mecca and Medina.
1992	According to the current indictment against bin Laden, from 1992 on, bin Laden and other Al Qaeda members started privately within the organization that a) Al Qaeda should put aside its differences with Shiite Muslim terrorist organizations, including Iran and its affiliated terrorist group Hezbollah, to cooperate against the perceived common enemy, the United States and its allies; b) the US forces stationed on the Saudi peninsula, including both Saudi Arabia and Yemen, should be attacked; and c) the US forces stationed in the Horn of Africa, including Somalia, should be attacked.
December 29, 1992	Bin Laden begins to set up legitimate businesses in the Sudan, including a tannery, two large farms, and a major road construction company. When Saudi Arabia began pressuring Pakistan to get rid of the mujahedeen near the border with Afghanistan, bin Laden reportedly paid for 480 Afghan vets to come work with him. The Sudanese leaders liked this wealthy Saudi who was enthusiastic about investing in their fledgling Islamic state.
December 29, 1992	A bomb explodes in a hotel in Aden, Yemen, where US troops had been staying while en route to a humanitarian mission in Somalia. The bomb killed two unarmed tourists; the U.S. soldiers had already left. Two Yemeni Muslim militants, trained in Afghanistan and injured in the blast, are later arrested. US intelligence agencies allege that this was the first terrorist attack involving bin Laden and his associates (Source: New York Times 8/21/98).
1993	Sudan is placed on State Department's list of countries that sponsor terrorist activities (Source: Washington Post 8/23/98). According to US government charges, bin Laden's followers try to obtain components of nuclear weapons and begin to work with Sudan's NIF to develop chemical arms (Source: US News and World Report 10/5/98).
February 26, 1993	World Trade Center bombing.
October 3 & 4th, 1993	Eighteen US troops are killed in an urban attack in Mogadishu, Somalia. American law enforcement, intelligence and national security officials are divided as to whether, as a federal indictment charges, bin Laden and his adherents helped train and arm the men who killed the US troops (Source: New York Times 2/8/99).
January 1994	According to US intelligence analysts, by January 1994, bin Laden was financing at least three terrorist training camps in North Sudan, where rebels from a half-dozen nations received training. (Source: New York Times 8/14/96)
April 9, 1994	The Saudi government revokes bin Laden's citizenship and moves to freeze his assets in Saudi Arabia because of his support for Muslim fundamentalist movements. (Source: New York Times 4/10/94)
1995	According to U.S. intelligence sources, bin Laden establishes extensive training and housing operations for foreign guerillas in northern Yemen near Saudi border. (Source: Washington Post 8/23/98)
February/March 1995	Ramzi Yousef, mastermind of the World Trade Center bombing, is captured in Pakistan and extradited to the United States. A search of his former residences leads investigators to believe he is financially linked to bin Laden. Also, he had stayed at a bin Laden financed guest house while in Pakistan.
June 1995	Unsuccessful assassination attempt on the life of the President of Egypt, Hosni Mubarak, in Addis Ababa. U.S. intelligence sources believe bin Laden was somehow linked.
August, 1995	Bin Laden wrote an open letter to King Fahd of Saudi Arabia calling for a campaign of guerrilla attacks in order to drive U.S forces out of the kingdom.
November 13, 1995	Five Americans and two Indians are killed in the truck bombing of a US-operated Saudi National Guard training center in Riyadh. Bin Laden denies involvement but praises the attack (Source:, Washington Post 8/23/98).
May 1996	The Sudan expels bin Laden because of international pressure by the United States and Saudi Arabia. Bin Laden then moves back to Afghanistan. (Source: Jane's Intelligence Review 10/1/98)
May 31, 1996	The four Saudi men accused of bombing the Saudi National Guard training center in Riyadh are beheaded in Riyadh's main square. Before their execution, they are coerced by the Saudi's into a public confession. In the confession, they claim to have read bin Laden communiqués.
Spring 1996	President Clinton signed a top secret order that authorized the CIA to use any and all means to destroy bin Laden's network.
June 25, 1996	A large truck bomb devastates the US military residence in Dhahran called Khobar Towers, killing 19 servicemen. The US military initially linked bin Laden to the attack but now believe a Saudi Shiite group was responsible (Source: Washington Post 8/23/98). U. S. investigators still believe Bin Laden was somehow involved.
August, 1996	A secret grand jury investigation begins against Osama bin Laden in New York.
August 23, 1996	Bin Laden signed and issued a Declaration of Jihad outlining his organizations's goals: drive US forces from the Arabian Peninsula, overthrow the Government of Saudi Arabia, liberate Muslim holy sites, and support Islamic revolutionary groups around the world. He declares that Saudis have the right to strike at US troops in the Persian Gulf. osama bin laden
November, 1996	Gwynne Roberts conducts interview of bin Laden for the British documentary program Dispatches. Bin Laden threatens to wage an Islamic holy war against the United States and its allies if Washington does not remove its troops from the Gulf region (Source: Reuters 2/20/97).
May 1997	CNN airs an interview with bin Laden in which he criticizes US "occupation of the land of the holy place".
July 1997	According to Islamic sources, a US-backed multinational mercenary force is formed with the aim of abducting or killing bin Laden. Witnesses claim to see 11 black Land Cruisers crossing into the Afghan city of Khost along with 2 helicopters. A source said force was composed of 1000 non-US mercenaries. (Source: Mideast Mirror 7/14/97--al-Hayat)
February 1998	Bin Laden issues joint declaration with the Islamic Group, Al Jihad, the Jihad Movement in Bangladesh and the "Jamaat ul Ulema e Pakistan" under the banner of the "World Islamic Front," which stated that Muslims should kill Americans including civilians--anywhere in the world.
May 1998	ABC's John Miller interviews bin Laden in Afghanistan.
June 1998	A raid is conducted in Albania against a cell of an Islamic terrorist movement by security personnel from the U.S. and Albania. Two suspected employees of bin Laden are arrested. The CIA takes custody of a van-load of documents and computer gear. Two weeks later, another raid was conducted and two more suspected bin Ladden associates arrested. They were Egyptian nationals and were turned over to anti- terrorist officials in Egypt. All were associated with the Islamic Revival Foundation. (Source: Washington Post 8/12/98)
June 8, 1998	The grand jury investigation of bin Laden, initiated in 1996, issues a sealed indictment, charging Bin Laden with "conspiracy to attack defense utilities of the United States." Prosecutors charge that bin Ladens heads a terrorist organization called al Qaeda, the base, and was a major financier of Islamic terrorists around the world.
June 10, 1998	ABC Nightline John Miller interview with bin Laden broadcast.
August 6, 1998	The Egyptian Jihad group sent the United States a warning: they would soon deliver a message to Americans "which we hope they read with care, because we will write it, with God's help, in a language they will understand." (Source: New York Times 8/21/98)
August 7, 1998	This is the eighth year anniversary of United Nations sanctions against Iraq and the ordering of U.S. troops into the Gulf region. Iraq informed the US Security Council that it was not going to tolerate the continuation of the sanctions beyond the eighth year anniversary. (Source: Daily Telegraph 8/12/98)
	Two simultaneous explosions at US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. The bomb in Nairobi, Kenya, killed 213 people, including 12 US nationals, and injure more than 4,500 . The bomb in Dar es Salaam kills 11 and injures 85. No Americans died in the Tanzania bombing.
August 12, 1998	The Small Group of presidential advisors meet with Clinton, reportedly with evidence that bin Laden is looking to obtain weapons of mass destruction and chemical weapons to use against US installations (Source: New York Times 9/23/98). US intelligence also reported intercepted a mobile phone conversation between two of bin Laden's lieutenants that implicated them in the embassy bombings. (Source: Newsweek 8/31/98)
August 20, 1998	 *Sudanese factory* enriched by a.q. mizalim US retaliation against bin Laden--cruise missiles attack a suspected terrorist training camps in Afghanistan and Al Shifa, a pharmaceutical plant in Khartoum. US intelligence claims that Al Shifa is tied to the production of chemical weapons for bin Laden. The Sudanese government vehemently denied these claims. US adds bin Laden's name to list of terrorists whose funds are targeted for seizure by US Treasury in order to shut down the financial pipelines that allegedly subsidize bin Laden's terrorist activities. (Source: Washington Post 8/28/98)
September 23, 1998	US senior administrative officials admit that they had no evidence that directly linked bin Ladens to the Al Shifa factory at the time of retaliatory strikes on Aug 20. Intelligence officials found financial transactions between bin Laden and the Military Industrial Corporation--a company run by the Sudan's government. (Source: New York Times 9/23/98)
October 1998	The Sunday Times of London reports that bin Laden is sending Islamic mercenaries to Kashmir to support an Islamic secession campaign.
October 7, 1998	Arabic newspaper al-Hayat claims bin Laden has acquired nuclear weapons from Soviet Central Asian countries using a network of "influential friends". Others are skeptical. (Source: UPI 10/7/98)
November 4, 1998	A new superseding indictment is issued against bin Laden, Muhammad Atef and a host of other suspects. They are charged with bombing of two US embassies and conspiring to commit other acts of terrorism against Americans abroad. Two rewards of $5 million each are offered for Atef and bin Laden. Atef is described as bin Laden's chief military commander.
December 22, 1998	Bin Laden summons Rahimullah Yusufzai, a reporter for Pakistan's The News, Time Magazine and John Miller of ABC News, to his tented encampment in Afghanistan's Helmand province for interviews.
December 23, 1998	TIME correspondent conducts interview with Osama bin Laden.
December 24, 1998	ABC's second interview with Osama bin Laden is broadcast on ABC News.
January 11, 1999	TIME and Newsweek publish interviews with Osama bin Laden that were conducted in late December.
January 16, 1999	The US Attorney's office files its most complete indictment to date of Osama bin Laden and 11 other suspected members of his terrorist organization. The grand jury charges the men for conspiring to kill American nationals. The first count of the indictment charges that several of the co-defendants, acted with other members of "al Qaeda," a worldwide terrorist organization led by bin Laden, in a conspiracy to murder American citizens. The objectives of the terrorist group allegedly include: killing members of the American military stationed in Saudi Arabia and Somalia; killing United States embassy employees in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania; and concealing the activities of the co-conspirators by, among other things, establishing front companies, providing false identity and travel documents, engaging in coded correspondence, and providing false information to the authorities in various countries.
May 29, 2001	Four followers of Osama bin laden are found guilty of charges stemming from the 1998 US embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania. Mohamed Rashed Daoud Al-Owhali, Khalfan Khamis Mohamed, Mohammed Saddiq Odeh, and Wadih El Hage are convicted of charges including murder, conspiracy and perjury after a nine-week federal trial during which prosecutors called over 90 witnesses, including al Qaeda informants and survivors of the bombings. Owhali and Mohamed face the death penalty at their sentencing, while Odeh and El Hage face life in prison.

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A Biography of Osama bin Laden

This document was given to FRONTLINE by a source close to bin Laden who would like to remain anonymous. FRONTLINE found it a very useful source of information, but could not independently verify much of the information contained herein. Some of the information is true. However, some of it runs contrary to accounts given by other reliable sources. That said, this document does provide some important details regarding bin Laden and his family life.

The Beginnings

Born 1957 for Syrian mother, Osama bin Laden was the seventh son among fifty brothers and sisters.

Bin Laden the Father

His father Mohammed Awad bin Laden came to the kingdom from Hadramout (South Yemen) sometime around 1930. The father started his life as a very poor laborer (porter in Jeddah port), to end up as owner of the biggest construction company in the kingdom. During the reign of King Saud, bin Laden the father became very close to the royal family when he took the risk of building King Saud's palaces much cheaper than the cheapest bid. He impressed King Saud with his performance but he also built good relations with other members of the royal family, especially Faisal. During the Saud-Faisal conflict in the early sixties, bin Laden the father had a big role in convincing King Saud to step down in favor of Faisal. After Saud's departure the treasury was empty and bin Laden was so supportive to King Faisal that he literally paid the civil servants' wages of the whole kingdom for six months. King Faisal then issued a decree that all construction projects should go to bin Laden. Indeed, he was appointed for a period as the minister of public works.

> **Note:** This document is published here exactly as the original (translated document given to FRONTLINE; no changes have been made to grammar or punctuation.

In 1969 the father took the task of rebuilding Al-Aqsa mosque after the fire incident. Interestingly the bin Laden family say that they have the credit of building all the three mosques, because later on their company took over the task of major extension in Mecca and Medina mosques.

The father was fairly devoted Moslem, very humble and generous. He was so proud of the bag he used when he was a porter that he kept it as a trophy in the main reception room in his palace. The father used to insist on his sons to go and manage some projects themselves.

The father had very dominating personality. He insisted to keep all his children in one premises. He had a tough discipline and observed all the children with strict religious and social code. He maintained a special daily program and obliged his children to follow. At the same time the father was entertaining with trips to the sea and desert. He dealt with his children as big men and demanded them to show confidence at young age. He was very keen not to show any difference in the treatment of his children.

Early Life, School and Marriage

Osama was exposed very early on his age to this experience but he lost his father when he was 13. He married at the age of 17 to a Syrian girl who was a relative. He grew up as religiously committed boy and the early marriage was another factor of protecting him from corruption.

Osama had his primary, secondary and even university education in Jeddah. He had a degree in public administration 1981 from King Abdul-Aziz university in Jeddah. Countries of the Arabian Peninsula, Syria, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Sudan are the only countries he has been to. All stories of trips to Switzerland, Philippines, and London are all unfounded.

Structuring His Mentality

In addition to the general Islamic commitment he started forming an Islamic responsibility at early age. His father used to host hundreds of pilgrims during Hajj season from al over the world. Some of those were senior Islamic scholars or leaders of Muslim movements. This habit went on even after his father's death through his elder brothers. He used to make good contacts and relations through those gatherings.

At secondary school and university he adopted the main trend of many educated Muslims at that time, Muslim Brotherhood. There was a collection of Muslim scholars in Jeddah and Mecca at that period. There was nothing extraordinary in his personality and that trend was rather very non-confrontational. Interestingly, the 1980 raid in the Grand Mosque in Mecca was not appealing to him, neither the theology or that group. He had two distinguished teachers in Islamic studies, which was a compulsary subject in the university. First was Abdullah Azzam who became later as one of the big names in Afghanistan and the second was Mohammed Qutubb, a famous Islamic writer and philosopher.

Afghanistan, The First Encounter

The first encounter with Afghanistan was as early as the first two weeks of Soviet invasion. He went to Pakistan and was taken by his hosts Jamaat Islami from Karachi to Peshawar to see the refugees and meet some leaders. Some of those leaders like Rabbani and Sayyaf were common faces to him because he met them during Hajj gatherings That trip which was [a] secret trip lasted for almost a month and was on an exploratory rather than action trip. He went back to the kingdom and started lobbying with his brothers, relatives and friends at the school to support the Afghan resistance. He succeeded in collecting huge amount of money and material as donations to jihad. He made another trip to take this material. He took with him few Pakistanis and Afghanis who were working in bin Laden company for more than ten years. Again, he did not stay more than a month The trip was to Pakistan and the border only and was not to Afghanistan. He went on collecting money and going in short trips once or twice a year until 1982.

Inside Afghanistan

In 1982 he decided to go inside Afghanistan. He brought with him plenty of the construction machinery and put them at the disposal of the mujaheeden He started spending more and more time in Afghanistan occasionally joining actual battles but not in an organized manner. His presence was encouraging to more Saudis to come but the numbers were still small at that period.

The Guesthouse

In 1984 he had one further step in strengthening his presence in Afghanistan by establishing the guesthouse in Peshawar (BaitulAnsar). That house was supposed to be the first station of Arab mujaheeden when they come to Afghanistan before going to the front or start training. At that period Osama did not have his own command or training camps. He used to send the newcomers to one of the Afghan factions.

The guesthouse establishment was coinciding with the formation of Jihad Service Bureau by Abdullah Azzam in Peshawar. The Bureau was very active in terms of media, publications and charity work. The Bureau publications were important in attracting more Saudis and Arabs to Afghanistan.

The Camps

In 1986 Osama decided to have his own camps inside Afghanistan and within two years he built more than six camps. Some were mobilized more than once. He decided to have his own front and to run his own battles with his own command. Among the Arab fighters he had, there were some Arab ex-military men from Syria and Egypt with good military experience. The story of the guesthouse and the camps was very attractive for more Arab mujaheeden to come and there was a significant surge in their numbers at that period.

In addition to many exchanges of fire and small operations, the first major battle he had face to face with the Soviet army with pure Arab personnel was the battle of Jaji in the province of Bakita 200 kilometers away from Khost. From then until 1989 he had several more fierce battles with hundreds of small operations and exchanges of fire. During the period 1984-1989 he was staying more in Afghanistan than Saudi Arabia. He would spend a total of eight months a year or more in Afghanistan.

Al-Qe'edah

In 1988 he noticed that he was backward in his documentation and was not able to give answers to some families asking about their loved ones gone missing in Afghanistan. He decided to make the matter much more organized and arranged for proper documentation. He made a tracking record of the visitors, be they mujaheeden or charity or simple visitors. Their movement between the guesthouse and the camps had to be recorded as well as their first arrival and final departure. The whole complex was then termed Al-Qe'edah which is an Arabic word meaning "The Base." Al-Qe'edah was very much public knowledge. It was funny to see some people triumphing because they discovered it!

Back to the Kingdom

Late 1989 after the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, he went to the kingdom in an ordinary trip. There he was banned from travel and was trapped in the kingdom. The Soviet withdrawal might have been a factor but the main reason for the travel ban were his intentions to start a new "front" of jihad in South Yemen. In addition, he embarrassed the regime by lectures and speeches warning of mujaheeding invasion by Saudis. At that time the regime was at very good terms with Saddam. He was instructed officially to keep low profile and not to give public talks. Despite the travel ban he was not hostile to regime at this stage. Indeed he presented a written advice in the form of a detailed, personal, private and confidential letter to the king few weeks before the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

After the Iraqi Invasion

He reacted swiftly to Iraqi invasion and saw it fulfilling his prophecy. He immediately forwarded another letter to the king suggesting in detail how to protect the country from potentially advancing Iraqi forces. In addition to many military tactics suggestions, he volunteered to bring all the Arab mujaheeden to defend the kingdom. That letter was presented in the first few days of the incident, and the regime response was of consideration!

While he was expecting some call to mobilize his men and equipment he heard the news which transferred his life completely. The Americans are coming. He always describes that moment as shocking moment. He felt depressed and thought that maneuvers had to change. Instead of writing to the king or approaching other members of the royal family, he started lobbying through religious scholars and Muslim activists. He succeeded in extracting a fatwah from one of the senior scholars that training and readiness is a religious duty. He immediately circulated that fatwah and convinced people to have their training in Afghanistan. It was estimated that 4000 went to Afghanistan in response to the fatwah. The regime was not happy with his activities so he banned his movement to Jeddah only. He was summoned for questioning twice for some of his speeches and activities and was given warnings. To intimidate him, the regime raided his farm in the suburb of Jeddah by the National Guard. He was not there during the raid and was very angry when told. He wrote a letter of protest to Prince Abdullah. Abdullah apologized and claimed he is not aware and promised to punish who ever were responsible.

Fleeing The Kingdom

Osama was fed up with this almost house arrest situation and did not imagine himself able to stay in the country with the American forces around. One of his brothers was very close to King Fahad and also close to Prince Ahmed, deputy minister of interior. He convinced his brother that he needed to leave the country to sort out some business matters in Pakistan and come back. There was a difficult obstacle, the stubborn Prince Nayef, minister of interior. His brother waited until Nayef went in a trip outside the kingdom and extracted lifting the ban from prince Ahmed. When he arrived in Pakistan around April 1991 he sent a letter to his brother telling him that he is not coming back and apologized for letting him down with the royal family.

In Afghanistan Again

After his arrival to Pakistan he went straight to Afghanistan because he knew the Pakistani intelligence would hand him back to the Saudis. There, he attended the collapse of the communist regime and the consequent dispute between the Afghan parties. He spent great effort to arbitrate between them but with no success He ordered his followers to avoid any involvement in the conflict and told them it was a sin to side with any faction. During his stay the Saudis tried more than once to kidnap or kill him in collaboration with the Pakistani intelligence. Friends in the Saudi and Pakistani establishments would always leak the plan and make him ready for it. After his failure in sorting the Afghani dispute, he decided to leave Afghanistan. The only alternative country he had was Sudan. He left Afghanistan disguised in private jet only few months after his arrival. That was late 1991.

In Sudan

His choice of Sudan had nothing to do with jihad or "terrorism." He was attracted to Sudan because of what was at that time an Islamic banner raised by the new regime in Sudan. He wanted to have good relations with the new regime and participate in construction projects. There was no intention from his side or from the Sudanese regime to have any military activity in Sudan. Indeed the Sudanese government refused even sending some of his followers to the front in the south. He was treated in Sudan as a special guest who wanted to help Sudan when everybody was turning away. In Sudan he mobilized a lot of construction equipment and enrolled himself in busy construction projects. He spent good effort in convincing Saudi businessmen to invest in Sudan and had reasonable success. Many of his brothers and Jeddah merchants had and still have investment in real estate, farming and agricultural industry. In Sudan he had again escaped an assassination attempt which turned out later to be the plan of Saudi intelligence.

Somalia and Yemen

During his stay in Sudan anti-American incidents happened in Somalia and South Yemen. Neither of the two incidents was performed by his group in the proper sense of chain of command. Both were performed by people who had training in Afghanistan and had enough anti-American drive. He might have given some sanctioning to the operations but one thing was certain, the Sudanese were completely unaware of either.

Saudis Go Anti-bin Laden

Between his arrival to Sudan and early 1994 he was not regarded publicly as Saudi opposition and Saudi citizens were visiting him without too much precautions. Only the well-informed people would know that he was classified as enemy to the Saudi regime His assets were frozen sometime between 1992 and 1994 but that was not published. The Saudis decided to announce their hostility early 1994 when they publicized withdrawing his citizenship.

Bin Laden Goes Anti-Saudi

After long silence and tolerance, bin Laden replied by issuing a communiqué condemning the Saudi decision and saying that he does not need the "Saudi" reference to identify himself and it is not up to Al-Saud to admit or expel people from Arabian Peninsula. He then formed together with activists and scholars from the kingdom a group called "Advice and Reform Committee" (ARC). The ARC was, according to its communiqués and published agenda, a purely political group. The ARC published around 17 communiqués which might have contained harsh criticism of the Saudi regime and plenty of religious rhetoric but never contained reference for violence or incitement of violence.

Riyadh Bombing

The car bomb in spring 1995 in Riyadh was the first major anti-American action in the kingdom. Bin Laden never claimed responsibility, but the Saudi government tried to link the incident to bin Laden by showing video confessions of four "Arab Afghans" involved in the bombing.

Out of Sudan

Sudan was exposed to huge international pressure for hosting bin Laden and his followers, and bin Laden felt that he is becoming an embarrassment to the Sudanese. Early in 1996 he started making contacts with his old friends in Afghanistan to prepare for his reception. He fled Sudan in a very well planned trip with many of his followers to go straight to Jalalabad in Eastern Afghanistan.

In Afghanistan Third Time

When he arrived there, the situation in Afghanistan was very unsettled between the many factions, but he had very good relations with all factions and all would protect him. The area he arrived to was under control of Yunis Khalis, a very influential warlord who later on joined Taliban.

The Khobar Bombing

June 1996, after his arrival in Afghanistan was the Khobar bombing. Nobody claimed responsibility, but sources from inside the Saudi ministry of interior confirmed involvement of Arab Afghans, with possible link to bin Laden The Saudi government wanted to frame Shi'a, at the beginning but Americans were very suspicious of the Saudi story. Bin Laden himself never claimed responsibility but gave many hints that he might have been involved. The Saudi government has acknowledged recently that bin Laden's men were behind the bombing.

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HUNTING BIN LADEN

ABOUT THE BIN LADEN FAMILY

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INTRODUCTION
WHO IS BIN LADEN?
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Excerpted from a report prepared by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, origin. Although FRONTLINE cannot vouch for the accuracy of this report, it does come from French intelligence sources.

ORIGINS OF THE BIN LADEN FAMILY

Today one of the biggest construction groups in the kingdom [of Saudi Arabia] and the Middle East, the "bin Ladens" enjoyed fame in origins to Sheik Mohammed bin Ladens, a native of the Chaffer (Sanna) Hadramout who emigrated [from South Yemen] to Saudi Arabia at the beginning of the century.

The beginnings of his activity are shrouded in mystery. It is said that, having satisfied King Abdul Aziz with construction work on the royal palace, Mohammed bin Laden was awarded a much more prestigious contract: the renovation of Mecca. Whatever the actual circumstances, it is a fact that the Saudi royal family gave the bin Ladens family--and group--exclusive rights in all construction of a religious nature, whether in Mecca, Medina or--until 1967--the Holy Places in Jerusalem. This enabled the bin Ladens to establish an industrial and financial empire which now extends far beyond religious construction projects.

The relationship between the bin Ladens and the Saudi royal family is quite exceptional in that it not simply one of business ties: it is also a relationship of trust, of friendship and of shared secrets. This is particularly the case with regard to the group's present-day leaders and the Soudairi clan.

Thanks to the renovation of Mecca, Sheik Mohammed bin Ladens did not become merely Aziz Abdul Aziz's official contractor, but his friend and confidant as well. This friendship has been handed down to their children. The bin Ladens sons were to the same schools as the numerous offspring of King Abdul Aziz and they all followed the same path.

RISE AND INFLUENCE

One of the connections which still explains many of the personal ties existing throughout the years between the royal family and the bin Ladens family is the fact that the principal classes attending the Hashemites such as King Hussein of Jordan, Zaid Ali Rifai, Sherif Kashoug[beween (whose father was one of the king's physicians), Kamal Adham (who ran the Saudi Intelligence service under King Faisal), prominent construction Mohammed Al Attas, Fahd Shoukroun and Ghassan Sakr and actor Omar Sharif.

The relationship of trust between the royal family and the bin Ladens group has never been repudiated, although it is known to have undergone some serious crises. The most important was doubtless the 1979 Mecca affair. Because the bin Laden company had the exclusive contract for repairs in the Holy Places, it was able to mobilize workers at all hours without being inspected. And the rebels used "bin Ladens" trucks to get weapons into the city. One of the bin Ladens sons, Mahmoud, was actually arrested on account of his ties with the Islamists, but was later freed. He is currently manager of the group's Medina branch.

The reason is as follows: after studies in England, where he had kept company with Fahd (son of the founder of the Abdin region in Saudi Arabia), now leader of a Yemeni fundamentalist group and arrested in Aden last January), Mahmoud struck up friendships with a group of Syrian Muslim Brothers living in exile in Saudi Arabia. Subsequent Saudi Intelligence investigations showed that these Moslem Brothers had taken advantage of Mahmoud to use his Laden trucks without his knowledge.

There was a touch of irony to the episode: when the insurrection broke out, the Saudi security services had to go for help to the bin Ladens, the sole parties in possession of maps of Mecca enabling the Saudi (and Western) police to find their way through the city's underground passages.

In any case, the episode also demonstrated the strength of the ties between the royal family and the bin Ladens Group. Had it been some other group, there is no doubt that Mahmoud--whether accomplice or patsy--would have been thrown into prison and the group barred from further economic activity in the kingdom, the sentence serving as a warning to others. This was not the case.

Likewise, the Saudi authorities' decision to issue an arrest warrant for Osama bin Ladens on 16 May 1994 does not threaten to affect the relationship between the bin Ladens and the royal family. Osama, one of Mohammed's youngest son, has been known for years for his sympathies for Islamic movements. He has been suspected of being the source of his support for fundamentalist groups involved in terrorist operations in Algeria and Egypt and his own large-scale charities clearly circulate funds to establish an independent human rights organization in Saudi Arabia at the beginning of May.

Contrary to appearances, both the Osama and the Mahmoud incidents testify to the bin Ladens's influence within the kingdom.

The ties of friendship binding bin Laden family members to King Fahd and his brothers make them prime confidantes and advisers. They play an obvious advisory role in Saudi Arabia's economy. The bin Ladens group's influence in Saudi Arabia stems from its avuncular financial and certainly do not flatter their family origins.

King Fahd's two closest friends were: Prince Mohammed Ben Abdullah (son of Abdul Aziz' youngest brother), who died in the early 70s and whose brother, Khaled Ben Abdullah (an associate of Suleiman Olayan), still has free access to the king; and Salem bin Laden, who died in 1988.

Like his father in 1960, Salem died in a 1988 air crash...in Texas. He was flying a BAC 1-11 which had been bought in July 1977 by Prince Mohammed Ben Fahd. The plane's flight plans had long been at the center of a number of investigations. According to one of the pilots, Salem bin Laden was accompanied by Prince Fahd Ben Salman for secret meetings between US and Iranian emissaries. Nothing was ever proved, but the Saudi Laden's accidental death revived some speculation that he might have been "eliminated" as an embarrassing witness. In fact, an inquiry was held to determine the exact circumstances of the accident. The conclusions were never divulged.

FRONTLINE Editors' Note:

The above paragraph is inaccurate. Salem bin Laden was piloting a light aircraft, not a BAC 1-11, when he crashed. As for "secret Paris meetings between US and Iranian emissaries" in October 1980, such meetings have never been confirmed.

In spite of Salem's death, the bin Laden family has still part of the small group of friends surrounding the king which includes, in particular, Prince Khaled Turki Al Soudairi (married to one of Fahd's sisters), Prince Faisal Ben Turki Al Abdullah (married to another sister and Fahd's Minister of Interior), Prince Sultan (Fahd's half-brother and Defense Commander and the family of Mouna (Fahd's wife), the Brahim.

As a visual sign of the royal family, the bin Ladens have also often acted as chaperones to the king's sons, helping them get their start in business. This was the case with both Prince Mohammed Ben Fahd and Prince Daud Ben Nayef, two of the most active second-generation princes and both at the head of financial empires during the '80s. Both princes were often encountered along with one or another of the bin Ladens sons at the head of international companies.

Appointed governor of the Eastern Province in the mid-'80s, Prince Mohammed Ben Fahd resigned from the chairmanships of his companies, putting Prince Saud in his place. His father, named vice-governor of the Eastern Province last June, has also since withdrawn from a number of business activities.

There was also a political aspect to bin Laden's financial activities. Like Ali Ben Mousaden, Salem bin Laden played a role in the US operations in the Middle East and Central America during the '80s.

FAMILY STRUCTURE

On his death in 1968, Sheik Mohammed left behind not only an industrial and financial estate in the hands of his sons and daughters, but also a number of wives and a number of mistresses. The Ambassador to Paris in 1967 and is presently a student in Boston.

In an unofficial phrase, the group was headed by Mohammed Baharoth, brother of Mohammed's first wife and uncle of his oldest children. As of 1972, Sheik Salem bin Laden, the eldest son, took over as his father's successor, with the assistance of several brothers.

Upon Sheik Salem's death, the leadership of the group passed to his eldest son, Bakr, along with thirteen other brothers who make up the board of the bin Laden group. The most important of these are Hassan,Yeslam and Yehia.

Most of these brothers have different mothers and different nationalities as well. Each has his own set of affinities, thus contributing to the group's international scope. Bakr and Yehia are seen as representatives of the "Syrian group"; Yeslam, of the "Lebanese group"; Hassan, of the "Palestinian group"; Omar, of the "Saudi Arabian group"; Ghassan, the "Egyptian group" and is also manager for the Laden group's Egyptian branch, which employs over 40,000 people. Osama bin Ladens is, incidentally, the only brother with a Saudi mother.

Given the size of the family and the financial empire, the bin Ladens have obviously not managed to escape internal conflict.

One of the most significant clashes involved Ali bin Ladens, Salem's youngest son and Bakr's older brother. Ali currently lives between Beirut, Damascus and Paris. Some have said that the break took place over religious reasons. In fact, Ali has always been a free-thinker who has sometimes sided with the Laden empire and other times against it. This disagreement was accompanied by financial disputes, as the other brothers are in no mood to share the group's dividends with Ali. Ali has tried out no his repeated demands for remittances.

This said, relations between Ali and his brothers had thawed during recent years. His son Mohammed, now completing his studies in Paris, is set to take on important duties within the group at the appropriate moment. It should be noted that he is currently in discussions with French weapons manufacturers and is strengthening his ties with the Saudi Defense Ministry.

In turn, Mahrous bin Ladens is still a member of the group's board of directors. His relations during the '70s are still a sticking point, however, and he is primarily involved in the organization's Medina branch without engaging in activity at the central level. a way of getting his brothers.

Yeslam bin Laden chose the same path as his brother Ali, but without a family break. Very early on, and in consultation with Bakr and Hassan, he decided to move to Europe, where he heads up a portion of the group's international activities. He divides his time between Geneva and Paris. This choice also stems from his marriage with a woman of princely (but financial) lineage, Mirdoth Sheyhan. He is one of the more "Westernized" of the bin Ladens family.

Yehia bin Laden is the youngest brother bin Laden group, the royal family and the Chamberlain, Ali Ben Mousaden, a link about noone wishes to speak.

There have been many instances of companies which have seen their contracts withdrawn after having made their association with the bin Ladens group the object of publicity judged inappropriate by the group.

This concern for avoiding any and all publicity is also emphasized by the fact that, in contrast to the majority of Saudi companies, the bin Laden group rarely if ever buys advertising space in industry publications.

Rarely, then, does one know in advance just what the next bin Laden project will be: generally, the information is there when it is all over. A number of significant projects have been issued in Saudi Arabia itself during recent years:

* A $296 million contract with other companies such as Dixo (Ben Zagr), Saad Ben Birdga, Al Moustafan, Kara, etc., for the construction of a ring freeway around Riyadh.

* A $81.3 million contract for construction of housing units for the security forces in Jeddah.

* A $81.3 million contract for similar units for the National Guard at Mecca.

* A $81.1 million contract for construction of the Kharaj Military City near Riyadh.

* A $81.1 million contract for the Mecca Royal Divan.

* A $84 billion contract for expansion of the Mecca Holy Places.

Several other major projects in Saudi Arabia have been noted recently:

* Construction and improvements at the Riyadh Airport for the Al Salem Aircraft Company, including construction of three hangars, as part of one of the five other programs in the US-Saudi Peace Shield agreement. Scheduled for completion in 1995, these operations are to transform Riyadh's King Khaled International Airport into one of the world's largest, ranking with Singapore, Frankfurt, etc.

* A $10 million contract for construction of a molded plastics factory at Jubail, in partnership with the Prince group Bin AL; in the framework of the Jubail regional expansion plan and in cooperation with Prince Abdullah Ben Faisal and Saudi Formaldehyde Chemicals Co. (SFCC), founded in November 1990 at the initiative of the Jubail Yubbu Royal Commission and businessman Mazen Al Lafaj.

IN THE MIDDLE EAST

The bin Laden group is represented in most Saudi cities (Riyadh, Dammam) and in a number of capital cities in the region: Beirut, Cairo, Amman, Dubai.

* With over 40,000 employees, the bin Laden group in Egypt, managed by Abdul Aziz bin Laden, is that country's largest foreign private group. Sheik Salem had good relations with one of the largest local contractors, Osman Ahmed Osman, going back for many years. Together with the Saudi Shobokshi group, the bin Laden group is currently negotiating a $400 million contract for construction of a paper plant.

* The bin Laden group, represented by Yehia bin Laden, is also holding negotiations with the Lebanese authorities for a $50 million share in the project to rebuild central Beirut, within the framework of the Solidere project and in conjunction with the Al Baraka group and the Bin Mahfouz group. In 1991, the bin Laden group also set up a local company, Sarco SAL, directed by the Sarkissian brothers, but which has not shown any activity.

* The bin Laden group's domestic and regional activities are complemented by international operations. The group set up a representative firm in London, Binergon, in November 1990, but its international business is handled by the SICO offices in Geneva.

FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

The bin Laden family has been present in international finance for many years. With Salem bin Laden's death in 1988, the family's holdings in Switzerland underwent a major restructuring, between Binergon, Shared up by Mahfouz & Francis in 1989 to avoid bankruptcy, was partially taken over by Bank Paribas Suisse, a subsidiary of French-owned Paribas, which has joined with Rafik Hariri's Mediterranean group.

It is interesting to note that the bank's honorary chairman was none other than Prince Mohammed Ben Fahd, and its board of directors included Sheik Salem bin Laden, Sheik Bogshan and Khalid Ben Mahfouz. Banque Al Saoudi and Indosuez' special connections in the Middle East were international in financing a portion of the weapons contracts of the '70s and '80s.

Banque Al Saoudi was 75%-owned by the Paris-based Saudi Arab Finance Corporation, which has created a number of other entities: the Office of Saudi Finance Corporation (Saudiland, headquartered in Geneva and in charge of controlling the Saudi Arab Finance Corporation and the Arab Finance Corporation International, both in Luxembourg.

Generally speaking, the same set of shareholders was involved: Salem bin Laden, Khalid Ben Mahfouz, Salem Ahmed Bogshan, Saad Khalid Al Bahjat, Taha Bakrh, etc.

In London, the bin Laden group also controls the Abdoulla brothers' Evered Holdings.

Since 1980, the bulk of the bin Laden group's international activities are routed through the Geneva offices of Saudi Investment Company (SICO), which was established on 19 May 1980 and whose capital was increased to $F100 million on 30 April 1991.

Located at 13 rue Cuard, the company is chaired by Yeslam bin Laden. Board members are Beatrice Dufour, Bassam Dounaat and Tilouine of Hanafi.

Beatrice Labaye is Yeslam bin Laden's sister-in-law. She is of Iranian origin and is married to a Swiss financier.

Bassam Dounat, one of French-speaking Switzerland's leading lawyers, is on the boards of over twenty companies in Geneva, Fribourg, Morges, Nyons, etc. He received international publicity in 1985, when he represented Swiss banker Francois Genoud. Genoud, an admirer of Hitler and heir to the rights to Goebbels' writings, had helped finance the FLN during the Algerian Ward and was sued for participation in international terrorism.

This ensemble publicity did nothing to shake the confidence of Yeslam bin Laden, doubtless an indication that the lawyer is top-notch in his profession (he is also counsel to the financial group of William Kazar , who is currently liquidating a major portion of his banking interests).

During the '80s, the board of directors also included members of the Swiss Wyss family, a branch of which controls the Holderbank Company, which has just signed a $100 million contract with Qatar National Cement. Also on the board were members of the Shakarchi family, whose name is known in connection with arms deals and drug trafficking in Zurich. A Shakarchi family member was also a director of the SICO London branch.

As a result of these scandals and bent on avoiding any publicity, the bin Laden decided that it was necessary to hide publicly with the Shakarchi. In actual fact, the Shakarchis were never overly troubled and it appears that the Zurich company was just another CIA front used to finance the Afghan resistance.

The tie between Yeslam bin Laden and the Shakarchi family would thus seem quite consistent with both family and royal policy. Our information tells us that Yeslam bin Laden continues to maintain relations as usual with this group.

One might also note that the chairman of board of the Zurich Shakarchi company was Dr. Hans Kopp. Kopp is an important lawyer (his wife was then Justice Minister, since resigned) known for his international activities, particularly with the American (intelligence?) services (since the '60s), and is close to the Swiss defense industry (Oerlikon-Buhrle/Contraves).

The Geneva-based SICO is the parent house for the Group's international financial activities and investments, with branches in London and Cannes. The Cannes branch, established in 1984, manages the bin Laden group's partnership with the American Daniels Realty Corporation (Dreco), part of the Prince Group of companies. It is partly through the bin Ladens' influence that the Fluor group was one of the major recipients of reconstruction contracts in Kuwait.

Despite a few recent attempts (particularly with the Swiss Contraves group), the bin Laden family has never been directly involved in weapons contracts and has never been been an adding this activity to its portfolio.

At most, it might be said that the activities of Salem bin Laden in the context of Iragate and Contragate, or of Yeslam bin Laden within his association with the Shakarchi family, have placed the family at the center of these negotiations, but solely as a guarantor or as a representative of the interests of the royal family. The real contracts have been signed directly by members of the royal family: Prince Mohammed Ben Fahd or Prince Saud Ben Nayef.

The bin Laden family (and Yeslam bin Laden in particular) has had long-standing and close ties to the London-Geneva-based Arab Arms Company, Crescent Trade. The company was founded in Geneva by Saud Ben Nayef in 1984. Although the main instrument for negotiation of the Ragin-Saudi ACX transaction agreement, Saudi interests were represented by businessman Walfik Saud, while the British side was represented by Jonathan Aitken, currently a minister in the Major government. It might be noted that a major player in these negotiations was none other than Mark Thatcher, son of the former Prime Minister and close friend to Walfik Saud.

Nonetheless, while the bin Laden group does not deal directly in armaments, it is an obvious presence in the big military-related construction contracts. We have mentioned a few of these above. At present, its most important contract is for the Riyadh Airport, through the intermediary of the Al Salem Aircraft company, in the framework of the compensation contracts stipulated by the Peace Shield agreement.

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"GREETINGS, AMERICA. MY NAME IS OSAMA BIN LADEN..."

by John Miller

ABC reporter John Miller recounts his May 1998 hour-long interview with Osama Bin Laden at his mountaintop camp in southern Afghanistan. The interview took place a little more than two months before Al Qaeda's troublesome bombings of the two U.S. embassies in East Africa.

Excerpted from Miller's article published in Esquire, February, 1999 and reprinted with permission of the author

...In the camp, generators were rumbling. The smell of gasoline was thick in the air. Rick Bronson was agitated because bin Laden's people had taken his camera days before, and it didn't look like they were going to give it back. Now they wanted to give another camera, a Panasonic home-video camera. Bronson had our camera bags opened and was pacing about a dozen video. He wanted his $65,000 television camera back, and he wanted it back now! Just then, the gasoline stopped. Bin Laden's convoy arrived. Now he was being told that he was to shot his film with a lesser camera but with no camera with which to record it. Bin Laden's cameraman handed Bronson the Panasonic and said, "Shoot the film." Bronson, in a rage, threw the camera to the ground. Then he ran alongside Bronson and was flying within an inch of his nose, so he walked backward with this crappy camera, taping bin Laden's arrival.

Into the din of gasoline, he walked quickly, surrounded by seven bodyguards. Each had an AK-47. Their eyes flicked every direction for any attacker. This was where merely theatrical or entirely pointless, because with hundreds of rounds being fired into the air, anyone who attempted something would be shot down by his own men. Bin Laden's men they wanted to protect included, Muhammad Atef, Mustafa Hamza, the Egyptian leader, the leader of Islamic Jihad, an Egyptian group that has merged with bin Laden's growing army. But bin Laden, with his trademark white turban and long black beard, stood out from the tallest man in the group. Despite the chaos of the scene, his eyes were calm, lived, and steady. He looked very the part of the holy warrior, the great mujahedin that had been set up for our meeting. One of his aides waved off the gasoline the way an encore might ward off a wounded matador. Everyone kept shooting. Somewhere, all these bullets were falling back down to the earth.

Osama bin Laden had his moment.

After his security detail crowded in behind him, I followed into the hut. Aside from his height, the first thing that struck me about bin Laden was his voice: It was soft and slightly high, with a raspy quality that gave it the texture and sound of an old man giving good advice. His aides settled into a bench covered with red cushions at the head of the room, and I was seated on a bench to his immediate right. I was prepared for a long interview, so I pulled the tape out of my pocket. Twenty of my questions were written on the back side of the long notes, leaning in, straining to catch every word, whatever he might say. I had also included the story of his entrapment through the eyes of a young man who fetched jacket with no insignia. Draped over the jacket was a gold shawl, and under the army jacket was the traditional Muslim clothing that made him look like a prince.

Osama bin Laden has a firm handshake. We exchanged pleasantries in the polite but stilted manner one uses when speaking through a translator. His aides had insisted the night before that I call him "Your Excellency" or "Sheikh," but he was a man of quiet, settled, one of those who don't say, "I have very good manners. Mr. bin Laden doesn't waste any of your questions." Then he added that bin Laden's answers would not be translated on the spot. "You can take your tape to New York and have someone translate it."

"If the answers are not translated now, how can I ask follow-up questions?" I asked bin Laden's man.

"Oh, that will not be a problem," he told me. "There will be no follow-up questions."

At this point, Rick, using stronger terms than one might want to with alleged terrorists, demanded his camera back. Suddenly, all his equipment evaporated.

Looking to break the ice, I said to the translator, "Tell Mr. bin Laden that for a guy who comes from a flat land, it's really interesting to see a guy who could use a bazooka on this mountain." Okay, so admittedly it wasn't much of a joke, but bin Laden's interpreter appeared relieved. "Now, he can! I hope you don't mind, I'm nervous," he said, laughing. The remark, "It's okay," I said, trying to prevent an international incident. Not funny. Sorry. Jesus.

There was another problem. As I continued my latte attempts at small talk, flies kept landing on bin Laden's face and neck while he sitting. Sensing that this was annoying their leader's dignity, his aides asked bin Laden if they could shoot the flies. Bin Laden, with his trademark smile, said, "No."

A few minutes later, in a cloud of insecticide, we began.

Osama bin Muhammad bin Awad bin Laden was born forty-one years ago in Saudi Arabia, one of twenty-seven or perhaps twenty-eight Muhammad bin Laden children. The kingdom's Bin Laden Group is a $5 billion concern. The family's close ties to the Saudi royal family have made the Bin Laden name synonymous with the kingdom in more than the cities and deserts. It is likely that Osama bin Laden would have gone to school, settled in London, and focused on living comfortably off family hand-me-downs.

On December 25, 1979, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. Bin Laden, then twenty-two, left for the fighting immediately. When he arrived, he wanted to nine. Spending his time in the mountains, he contacted the resistance, organized a group of Saudis from Palestinians, Tunisians, Somalians, Egyptians, Saudis, and Pakistanis to fight the Russians.

Bin Laden brought in his own bulldozers and dump trucks. Grizzled mujahedeen fighters still tell of the young man who rode the bulldozers himself, digging trenches for the front lines. The men who follow bin Laden have all heard the stories, and they pass them on to the younger men. The men accept, he was the first to dig the dirt, and they can't be sure he stile he carries now in hand-to-hand combat.

"We were through a couple battles with the Russians," bin Laden told me. "The Russians are known for their brutality. They used poison gases against us. I was subjected to this. We lost many fighters. But we were able to deter many commando attacks, unlike anything before."

I asked him why a man of wealth, from a powerful family, had gone to Afghanistan to live in trenches and fight the Russian invaders on the front lines.

"It is hard for one to understand if the person does not understand Islam," he said, patiently explaining the importance of Islam for a citizen of his country and region. During the days of jihad, thousands of young men who were well-off financially left the Arabian Peninsula and came and joined the fighting. Hundreds of them were killed in Afghanistan, Bosnia, and Chechnya."

Of course, by the time of our meeting, the enemy had shifted. The Soviet Union no longer existed. There was no jihad, and I asked bin Laden if he was concerned about being captured in an American raid, he quickly dismissed the possibility, turning instead to the reasons he leaving Saudi Arabia.

"The American impress himself on everyone. Americans accuse our children in Palestine of being terrorists—those children, who have no weapons and have not even reached maturity. At the same time, Americans defend a country, the state of the Jews, that has a policy to murder the heart of their children."

"We are sure of our victory against the Americans and the Jews as promised by the Prophet. Independent of Allah not come until the Muslim fights the Jews. The Jews will hide behind trees and stones, and the tree and the stone will speak and say, 'Muslim, behind me is a Jew. Come and kill him.'"

Bin Laden never raises his voice, and to listen to his untranslated answers, one could imagine that he was talking about something that did not much concern him. Nonchalant. He does not smile. He's convinced, looking down at his hands as if he were reading invisible notes, "Your situation with Muslims in Palestine is shameful—there is any comparison. We are ready to sacrifice our blood and our souls for our land. We are the ancestors of which we are proud. We are the people who kept the honor of our mothers. We must draw our million Iraqi children. All of this is done in the name of American interests. We believe that the biggest thrust in the world and the enemy of Allah is Americans. The only way for us to fend off these assaults is to use similar means. We do not worry about American opinion or the fact that they may kill us. We believe that we Muslims believe our fate is set."

His interview technique was formidable. Aside from the advantage of not allowing for simultaneous translation, bin Laden's approach to questions could have been taught by an American public relations adviser: First, get out your message. Then, if you like, answer the question.

Bin Laden believes that the United States, which was so heavily involved in supporting the Afghan rebels, claims the profound point of their exercise: Through them and with weapons they gave us.

"There is a lesson to learn from this for he who wishes to learn," he said. "The Soviet Union entered Afghanistan in the last week of 1979, and Allah's help their flag was folded a few years later and thrown in the trash, and there was nothing left to call the Soviet Union."

The war changed bin Laden. "It cleared from Muslim minds the myth of superpowers," he said. He was hidden in a trench among militant Muslims, with perhaps three-focused men waiting to follow him. But follow him where, into what battle? Many of these men had fought in Afghanistan. They had seen the Russians and some of them had died. They were huge stockpiles of weapons and grenade and rocket launchers, many of them bought for the mujahedeen rebels by the CIA.

In December 1992, bin Laden found the battle he'd been waiting for. The United States was leading a UN mission to rescue starving Somalis. In the middle of a famine, the country's government had completely broken down, and warring tribes largely Muslim—had cut off relief shipments. Thousands were dying, and people were starving to death in cities and villages, and the U.S., which had moved quickly to rescue oil-rich Kuwait, had come under mounting criticism for their slow relief.

When the Marines landed in the last days of 1992, bin Laden sent in his own soldiers, armed with AK-47s and rocket launchers. Many of the soldiers had received more than before that the American soldier was a paper tiger and after a few blows ran in defeat. And America fought back with overwhelming force and firepower. ...show footage of bin Laden and the leaders of the New World Order, and after a few blows they forgot about this title and left, dragging their corpses and their shameful defeat.

Laden's men had fired at American soldiers where not for both making that was rather to be placed behind the bodies that would be used to shoot Westerners. That way," Khan said, "if the shot didn't kill him, he would be the poisoning."

Sitting in the hut on bin Laden's mountain in Afghanistan, I asked bin Laden if he had anything to say to the American people. He paused for a long time. Then he explained: "What does Clinton want? He wants those that he killed, assaulting their children and mothers?" But he was quick to sidestep the question of his culpability, very careful not to implicate himself. He was quick to say, "I have no hate for the people. We follow the American bases in Saudi Arabia, but those who did are martyrs. He didn't pay for the World Trade Center bombing or the plot to kill Clinton, but they were good ideas.

For the future, bin Laden told me his first priority is to get the American military out of Saudi Arabia, the holiest of lands in Islam. "Every day the Americans delay their departure, they will create a new corpse."

Already, U. S. forces have been dealt devastating blows there. Nineteen servicemen were killed in the June bombing of the airforce barracks in Dhahran, and the U.S. Marine presence were killed in a similar bombing in Riyadh in 1995. Investigators believe bin Laden is not as much of a hero in both attacks. Khan said that the bombers of the military would leave Saudi Arabia, regardless of the fact that the Saudi royal family welcomes American military bases. Bin Laden's men, he said, had nothing to do with the attacks, and may or have. "I wish I knew when the youth were to carry out the attacks against Allah. And you will carry in them the bodies of American troops and civilians. This is when you will leave."

Civilians?

"We do not differentiate between those dressed in military uniforms and civilians; they are all targets in this fatwa." Bin Laden argued that American outrage at attacks on American civilians constitutes a great double standard.

"American history does not distinguish between civilians and military, not even women and children. They are the ones who used bombs against Nagasaki. Can anyone distinguish between infants and military? America does not have a religion that will prevent it from destroying all people."

Bin Laden believes that we consider to be terrorism is just the amount of violence required to get the attention of the American people. His aim is to get Americans to consider whether continued support of Israel is worth the bloodshed he promises.

"So we sell the American as people." bin Laden said softly, "and we sell the mothers of soldiers and American people to guard the land. We make their lives sad. We make their children, to find a nationalistic government that will look after their interests and not the interests of the Jews. The continuation of tyranny will bring big trouble to America," as Ramzi Yousef and others did. This is my message to the American people: to look for a serious government that will look after their interests and does not attack their lands, their lands, or their land. And my word to American journalists is not to ask why we did that but what the government has done that forced us to defend ourselves."

His last words to the camera were, "It is our duty to lead people to the light."

Ali had been told to sit in the back of the room during the interview. When it was over, I went looking for him. "Ali, do we have a story?" I whispered when I finally found him. He tell me it wasn't just an hour of Osama's bullshit.

"No," Ali said. "We have a very good story." I asked Ali what bin Laden had said that would make this story. "He said he would blow your face," Ali said, "and he was saying that you too people, the American—would be going home from the Middle East in coffins and in boxes."

"He said that?" I asked, excited. "And while he was saying this, what was I doing?"

Ali looked at me a bit oddly and said, "You were nodding like you agreed with his plan."

During the hour-long interview, bin Laden, assuming correctly that I did not understand Arabic, had spoken to his translator in a low, soft voice, explaining his plan for America. Clearly, he did not understand the basic conventions of the American television interview. Imagine that. So, to keep his responses directed toward our camera, to make it seem like we were rocking along together, I engaged him in knowing eye contact and nodded thoughtfully.

"So, Ali, you're telling me he's promising genocide, and I'm nodding like an asshole?"

"Yes," Ali said, smiling.

But we had our little story, and a few weeks later, in a few minutes of footage, Osama bin Laden would say hi to America. Not many people would pay attention, but another Arab terrorist.

Bin Laden was once again surrounded by his men, leaving the way he came in. It was past two in the morning as the gasoline started again. This time, Rick shot the whole scene. But as we packed our gear, bin Laden's press aide and his security chief came over to inspect our tape. Looking carefully at each scene of bin Laden arriving and leaving, they asked for the tape and said they would give it to bin Laden's cameraman. Rick said the deal was that we would give the tape to bin Laden's cameraman, but not the tape. And no, one the night, they played and rewound, played and rewound. Over each face, the two would confer. "Hi mom!," one would say to the other, and we'd have to delete that second or two of footage.

According to the FBI, last summer, a group of these men "traveled" for bin Laden to Kenya and Tanzania. Our August 7 two truck bombers destroyed the American embassies in both countries. Two hundred thirteen dead in Kenya. Twelve of them were Americans. Three hundred and fifty-six eleven killed in Tanzania. Six of them were Americans. Many of them were Muslims.

Two weeks after the bombings, President Clinton ordered a missile attack on the very site where we had met bin Laden. All three of his camps were obliterated, and there were casualties. In another of his African embassies, bin Laden, al Zawahiri, and Atef were most of the leadership had gone into seclusion.

Akhtar, who had watched the Afghan-Soviet war on our trek to, was among those cheering. Smart in his shoulder holster, as bin Laden came and went. Akhtar travels, too. He very obligingly escorted us out of Afghanistan and drove us all the way back to Islamabad.

Meanwhile, bin Laden's reach has now been documented among Albanians fighting the Serbs in Kosovo. Western Muslims are in trouble, it seems. Osama bin Laden is with them, slaying enemies, real or perceived. A modern nightmare, really—a big-screen Allah, a behemoth with the resources of a state but without all the state obligations. Just of a Fred Foundation for terrorists—or freedom fighters, depending on whom you ask.

After the American cruise-missile attacks, intelligence sources told me that bin Laden had been interrupted talking on satellite phones, trying desperately to get damage assessments and news of casualties. The same sources said that bin Laden had shifted his operations from Sudan to Afghanistan and Pakistan. Intelligence said, "We try to arrange another meeting. Chris Isham and I asked bin Laden to join London.

A few days later, the same people we had been speaking with in London were arrested by Scotland Yard's Anti-Terrorist Branch on "suspected connections to bin Laden's terrorist group." Our new hosts had the professional courtesy to release the tape, but we were once more in his Laden, this time through our man in Peshawar, along with a list of questions. We haven't heard back.

Bin Laden's old house, a walled mansion with a tower, has become a guesthouse for his men. These men, new volunteers, seem to be showing up in greater numbers since the bombing. Some will fight in Kashmir; others will fight on the front lines against the Taliban's opposition, and some, of course, will "travel" for bin Laden. After dark, around Kandahar, motorcades of twenty cars with tinted windows speed through the city. Not one there has to wonder who is in them. Bin Laden's men cruise through the darkness, taillights vanishing in a cloud of dust, a most normal man.

The day after the American counterstrike, an ABC News colleague in Pakistan got a call from a man who identified himself as a bin Laden spokesman. He said, Al-Zawahiri said bin Laden was alive and very well and that he had a message for us:

"The war has just started. The American people will be the greatest."

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Read the transcript and see a video excerpt of Miller's interview.

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"AL QAEDA"

The US government issued an indictment in November 1998 alleging that Osama bin Laden heads an international terrorist network called "Al Qaeda," an Arabic word meaning "the base." The government's allegations from this and subsequent indictments concerning Al Qaeda include the following:

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BACKGROUND: AL QAEDA

* In approximately 1989, bin Laden and co-defendant Muhammad Atef founded "Al Qaeda," " an international terrorist group ... which was dedicated to opposing non-Islamic governments with force and violence."

* "One of the principal goals of Al Qaeda was to drive the United States armed forces out of Saudi Arabia (and elsewhere on the Saudi Arabian peninsula) and Somalia by violence."

* "Al Qaeda had a command and control structure which included a majlis al shura (or consultation council) which discussed and approved major undertakings, including terrorist operations." Both Atef and bin Laden sat on this council.

* Al Qaeda had ties to other "terrorist organizations that operated under its umbrella," including: the al Jihad group based in Egypt, the Islamic Group, formerly led by Sheik Omar Abdel Rahman, and other jihad groups in other countries. "Al Qaeda also forged alliances with the National Islamic Front in Sudan and with representatives of the government of Iran, and its associated terrorist group Hezballah, for the purpose of working together against their perceived common enemies in the West, particularly the United States."

COUNT ONE: CONSPIRACY TO KILL UNITED STATES NATIONALS

* The named defendants, plus other members of Al Qaeda, "conspired, confederated and agreed to kill nationals of the United States." In furtherance of this conspiracy,

* Bin Laden and others "provided training camps and guesthouses in various areas, including Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia and Kenya for the use of Al Qaeda and its affiliated groups,"

* Bin Laden and others provided currency and weapons to members of Al Qaeda and associated terrorist groups in various countries throughout the world.

* Bin Laden established a headquarters for Al Qaeda in Khartoum, Sudan, in 1991, and established a series of businesses, including two investment companies, an agricultural company, a construction business and a transportation company, all of which were, "operated to provide income and support to Al Qaeda and to provide cover for the procurement of explosives, weapons and chemicals and for the travel of Al Qaeda operatives."

* Bin Laden issued a number of fatwahs (rulings on Islamic law) stating that US forces stationed in Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and the Horn of Africa, including Somalia, should be attacked.

* Al Qaeda members "provided military training and assistance to Somali tribes opposed to the United Nations' intervention in Somalia. ... On October 3 and 4, 1993, in Mogadishu, Somalia, persons who had been trained by Al Qaeda (and trainers who had been trained by Al Qaeda) participated in an attack on United States military personnel serving in Somalia as part of Operation Restore Hope, which attack resulted in the killing of 18 United States Army personnel.

* Bin Laden and others attempted to procure components of nuclear and chemical weapons.

COUNT TWO: BOMBING OF THE US EMBASSY IN NAIROBI, KENYA

Defendants bin Laden, Atef, Fazul Abdullah Mohammed, and Odeh, together with other members of Al Qaeda "detonated an explosive device that damaged and destroyed the United States Embassy in Nairobi, Kenya, and ... directly .. caused the deaths of at least 213 persons, including Kenyan and American citizens."

COUNT THREE: BOMBING OF THE US EMBASSY IN DAR ES SALAAM

Defendants bin Laden, Atef, Fazul Abdullah Mohammed, Odeh, al-'Owhali. Mustafa Mohamed Fadhil, Khalfan Khamis Mohamed, Ahmed Khalfan Ghailani, Fahid Mohammed Ally Msalam and Sheikh Ahmed Salim Swedan, together with other members of Al Qaeda "detonated an explosive device that damaged and destroyed the United States Embassy in Nairobi, Kenya, and ... directly .. caused the deaths of at least 11 persons, including Tanzanian citizens."

In his interview with FRONTLINE, Saudi dissident Saad Al-Fagih challenges the U.S. government's characterization of Al Qaeda.

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INTERVIEW Dr. Saeed Ali Pacha

A Saudi scholar attempting to make a name for a Lashkar, he hands the Mujaheedeen a lesson in Islamic Jihad. Dr. Saeed Ali Pacha is a Saudi Arabian Salafi who has been a prominent figure in the Jihad against the Russians in Chechnya and Dagestan. He has been a strong supporter of the Mujaheedeen in Kashmir and has been a critic of the Taliban and Al-Qaeda.

When does Jihad of Saudi Arabia in the Gulf Countries, or Jihad of all, sick decline and fading, Mujaheedeen Lashkar Tayyiba in Kashmir, Dr. Saeed Ali Pacha?

Dr. Saeed Ali Pacha: Saying that, first 20 years that has been struggle against the Russians in Chechnya and Dagestan, and the Jihad in Afghanistan and Bosnia against who are doing a lesson, a bad taste of a bad lesson. Jihad in Kashmir, Jihad in Chechnya, Jihad in Bosnia, Jihad in Afghanistan, Jihad in Dagestan, Jihad in Palestine, Jihad in Saudi Arabia against the Saudi Arabian regime who allow the Americans to come to the Arabian Peninsula. Jihad in Yemen, Jihad in Algeria, Jihad in Egypt, Jihad in Libya, Jihad in Tunisia, Jihad in Morocco, Jihad in Mauritania, Jihad in Sudan, Jihad in Somalia, Jihad in Ethiopia, Jihad in Eritrea, Jihad in Philippines, Jihad in Thailand, Jihad in Burma, Jihad in Malaysia, Jihad in Indonesia, Jihad in Chechnya, Jihad in Dagestan, Jihad in Ingushetia, Jihad in Kashmir, Jihad in Afghanistan, Jihad in Bosnia, Jihad in Kosovo, Jihad in Palestine, Jihad in Saudi Arabia,

The U.S. Embassy Bombings Trial - A Summary

by Oriana Zill

Oriana Zill is the associate producer for "Hunting Bin Laden."

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The recently completed trial of four Osama bin Laden associates in U.S. Federal Court in New York City -- the trial began in January 2001 and sentences were handed down in May 2001 -- provides a revealing glimpse into the workings of the Osama bin Laden network, called Al Qaeda or "the base." Four men were tried on charges related to the simultaneous bombings at two American embassies in Africa on August 7, 1998, which killed 224 people and wounded thousands.

Shortly after the embassy bombings, the U.S. government claimed that Osama bin Laden was responsible. They issued a lengthy indictment of bin Laden and many of his associates in the late fall of 1998. According to court documents, the U.S. government had actually been tracking a bin Laden cell operating in Kenya before the bombings and they were able to quickly link these men to the bombings. Several were arrested and brought to the U.S. for trial. Other key operatives escaped and are still at large.

The trial began in U.S. District Court in New York City in January 2001. The evidence presented at the trial paints a detailed picture of the Al Qaeda organization and a history of bin Laden's life and political beliefs.

The Defendants

The four defendants were charged with conspiring in the bombing of two American embassies in East Africa in 1998 and in other acts of terrorism as part of bin Laden's international organization. The indictment outlines a worldwide conspiracy and creates a picture of a sophisticated international terrorism network. All of the defendants pleaded not guilty.

Mohamed Rashed Daoud al-'Owhali, 24, is a Saudi citizen who was a would-be suicide bomber, riding in the truck that took the bomb to the embassy in Nairobi. He signed a detailed confession and provided U.S. authorities with keys that fit into a padlock on the rear of the bomb-laden truck. He apparently ran away from the bomb site and was treated for injuries at a nearby hospital where he was arrested. He was eligible to receive the death penalty if convicted.

Outcome: Convicted in May 2001. After a lengthy hearing, the jury decided not to give the death penalty, most likely in order to prevent him from becoming a martyr. He was sentenced to life in prison without parole on October 18, 2001.

Khalfan Khamis Mohamed, 27, is a Tanzanian citizen who rode in the truck that carried the bomb to the embassy in Dar es Salaam. He also rented the house where the bomb was made and helped to build the bomb and load the truck. Mohamed was arrested in Cape Town, South Africa, in October 1999 and also signed a confession. He was eligible to received the death penalty if convicted.

Outcome: Convicted in May 2001. After a lengthy hearing, the jury decided not to give the death penalty, most likely in order to prevent him from becoming a martyr. He was sentenced to life in prison without parole on October 18, 2001.

Mohammed Saddiq Odeh, 35, is a Jordanian citizen who joined Al Qaeda in 1992 and served as a "technical advisor" to the Nairobi bombing cell. He left Kenya just before the bombing and was arrested trying to enter Pakistan with a fake Yemeni passport. He was interrogated by Pakistani officials, and eventually admitted being part of the embassy bombing conspiracy. FRONTLINE obtained a translation of the Pakistani authorities' original notes from his interrogation in which he describes his role in the Kenya bombing.

Odeh was also implicated in the killing of American soldiers in Somalia in 1993.

Outcome: Convicted in May 2001. He was sentenced to life in prison without parole on October 18, 2001.

Wadih El-Hage, 40, is a naturalized American citizen who was born in Lebanon. He has admitted being Osama bin Laden's personal secretary. He was accused of being the key organizer of the Kenya cell and of setting up front companies in Kenya for Al Qaeda. He left Kenya almost a year before the bombings, after being questioned by the FBI in Africa. At the time of the bombings, he was living in Arlington, Texas, with his wife, April, and seven children. El Hage claimed he only worked for bin Laden in legitimate businesses and had no contact with him since 1994. El Hage was charged with conspiracy to murder Americans and could face life in prison.

Outcome: Convicted in May 2001. He was sentenced to life in prison without parole on October 18, 2001.

Read more about El Hage's background in this special report

bin Laden Associates Providing Evidence

The U.S. government's case against the bin Laden operatives was based on the testimony of two key witnesses -- Jamal Ahmed Al-Fadl and L'Houssaine Kherchtou. They provided detailed testimony about the structure and inner workings of the international network set up by Osama bin Laden.

Jamal Ahmed Al-Fadl, a Sudanese citizen, was a former member of Al Qaeda who became disillusioned with the organization and stole some money from bin Laden before coming to the American government to provide information in 1996. He was the most important witness for the prosecution during the trial and provided essential details about the structure of Al Qaeda around the world. L'Houssaine Kherchtou, a Moroccan citizen, testified that he wanted to leave Al Qaeda after he was refused $500 to cover the cost of an emergency operation for his wife. He also provided information to the American government, describing the organization as running into money problems during 1994.

Both Al-Fadl and Kherchtou have been placed into the Witness Protection Program.

The American government's understanding of the bin Laden network was also aided by another man who did not testify publicly, but provided key intelligence behind the scenes -- Ali Mohamed, a 48-year-old Egyptian native and former U.S. Army sergeant. He was the first person to plead guilty to charges resulting from the embassy bombings. In October 2000, Mohamed told Judge Leonard Sand of the U.S. District Court in Manhattan that at the request of bin Laden, he had conducted surveillance of U.S., British, and French targets in Nairobi, including the U.S. embassy. He then delivered pictures, diagrams, and a report to bin Laden in Khartoum, Sudan. He said that bin Laden looked at a photograph of the U.S. embassy and pointed to the place where a bomb truck could be driven through. The targets were chosen, Mohamed said, to retaliate against the U.S. intervention in the civil war in Somalia.

Mohamed is a naturalized U.S. citizen who worked as a supply sergeant in Fort Bragg, N. C., from 1986 to 1989, before going to work for bin Laden. He trained Al Qaeda operatives in military techniques and acted as a key adviser in the organization. While Ali Mohamed is cooperating with the U.S. government, he did not testify in the embassy bombing case.

What the U.S. Government Learned About Al Qaeda

Al-Fadl described Al Qaeda as a group formed by Osama bin Laden after the Soviets pulled out of Afghanistan. Many of the top leaders and members fought in the "jihad" against the Soviets. Al-Fadl was one of the first members to swear the required "bet," or loyalty oath, to join the group. Al-Fadl described the organization with bin Laden at the helm, followed by a council of leaders who help to make decisions. Below that level, he says, are a series of committees who handle religious policy, military training, legitimate business, and even press releases.

The group initially sought to overturn the governments of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and other Islamic countries whose leaders were not subscribing to radical Islamic rule. In the early 1990s, bin Laden set up the group in the radical Islamic country of Sudan. After the U.S. became involved in Somalia, and put troops into Saudi Arabia, bin Laden turned against the United States. In February 1998, he issued a searing religious declaration asking Muslims around the world to attack U.S. citizens. The African embassies were bombed six months later.

No real evidence was presented at trial as to the actual extent of bin Laden's financial network. He is one of many sons in a very wealthy family, which is originally from Yemen and in charge of most of the construction projects in Saudi Arabia. But testimony provided contradictory evidence about the extent of bin Laden's current wealth.

There was also no direct evidence presented at trial that bin Laden himself ordered the bombings, although the prosecution did establish the links between bin Laden and the four men on trial. They also established through phone records and wire tap transcripts that there was satellite telephone contact between the Nairobi cell and bin Laden himself.

Read excerpts from the trial testimony.

Ali Mohamed confirmed that the larger objective of bin Laden and his association is to attack Western targets in the Middle East, in order to force Western governments to pull out of the region. He also detailed the relationships between bin Laden's organization, Al Qaeda, and other terrorist groups such as the Egyptian Islamic Jihad and the Iranian-backed Hezbollah.

The Africa Cells

The trial testimony suggested that Al Qaeda establishes "cells" in areas where they are planning attacks, often separating the planning cell from the execution cell. They use low level recruits for administrative tasks not requiring any knowledge of the larger plan.

The Africa cell was managed by a fairly high-ranking member of Al Qaeda, Khaled al Fawwaz, a Saudi dissident who was living in England. He was in constant contact with Osama bin Laden, phone records showed, and was responsible for media contacts for Al Qaeda as well. Al Fawwaz is now in custody in England and awaiting extradition to the United States.

The U.S. attorneys described defendant Wadih El Hage as a leader of the Nairobi cell who had to leave Africa after being interviewed by the U.S. FBI in 1997. The other three defendants appear to be lower level cell members who were all trained at Al Qaeda training camps in Pakistan.

Upcoming Trials of Bin Laden Associates

In total, the U.S. government has public indictments against 26 members of bin Laden's international group, Al Qaeda. Of those men, three have pleaded guilty and are cooperating with the U.S. government as witnesses. Four were tried this year. Six are in custody in the U.S. or abroad and are awaiting trial. Thirteen, including bin Laden himself, are fugitives.

The six other bin Laden associates in custody include several high-ranking members of Al Qaeda:

Mamdouh Mahmud Salim, a high-ranking religious leader in Al Qaeda, was arrested in Germany and extradited to the United States. He is scheduled to go on trial this month in New York for stabbing a prison guard while being held in the New York City federal jail.

Khalid Al Fawwaz was arrested in England and has been accused of running bin Laden's public relations office. He has been indicted, and remains in custody in England pending extradition.

Egyptians **Adel Abdul Bary** and **Ibrahim Hussein Abdelhadi Eidaros** were also arrested in England and remain in custody pending extradition. According to the criminal complaint against them, the fingerprints of both men were found on faxes of documents related to the East Africa bombings. The complaint also alleges that Eidaros secretly organized a terrorist cell in Afghanistan and has been involved in providing passports for and otherwise assisting fugitive terrorists.

Mohammed al Nalfi is a Sudanese citizen being held in the U.S. facing conspiracy charges for allegedly supporting bin Laden and Al Qaeda when it was based in Khartoum.

Ihab Ali Mohamed is a naturalized U.S. citizen originally from Egypt. He has been held in a U.S. jail for several years, accused of lying to a grand jury about his connections to bin Laden. Evidence at trial indicated that Ali had passed messages for Al Qaeda and had trained to be bin Laden's pilot.

FOR MORE on the trial, CNN.com's Law Center offers extensive materials relating to the embassy bombing trials, including transcripts of testimony, court documents, analysis and commentary.

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Testimony From bin Laden's Associates

The trial testimony of former bin Laden aides and government sources paints a picture of the development of an international terrorism organization, which originated in the jihad (holy war) effort against the Soviets in Afghanistan. According to the testimony, bin Laden appears to control a sophisticated international network of operatives and has developed links to other terrorist organizations around the world.

Bin Laden in Afghanistan

Former bin Laden Associate Jamal Ahmed Al-Fadl describes his first meeting with Osama bin Laden during Afghanistan Jihad.

Al-Fadl Testimony Day One

p. 176 - 177, 166

Q. Can you tell us what happened, the circumstance under which you met Abu Hajer al Iraqi and Usama Bin Laden at this guesthouse?

A. I met them during the prayer, after prayer and usually they talk with new people and they tell them about jihad and what's going on with that...

Q. If you can identify what you recall that Usama Bin Laden told you about jihad after the prayer during that meeting.

A. He talk about the Soviet Union army come to Afghanistan and kill people and we have to help them, we have to make jihad out of them and you have to be patient, you have to follow the rule of the emir....

Q. You mentioned that the money was for jihad. Can you explain to the jury what jihad is?

A. Jihad, it's war for Muslim. It means fighting the enemy.

Q. And at the time that you were raising this money for jihad, who was the enemy that was being fought?

A. At that time it's Soviet Union.

Extended transcripts from the trial testimony, as well as other key documents, are available at **CNN.com Law Center**.

The **full testimony** is available in PDF format from CNN.com.

Smuggling Weapons

Former bin Laden Associate Jamal Ahmed Al-Fadl describes efforts by Al Qaeda to smuggle weapons into Egypt for delivery to Jihad group.

Al-Fadl Testimony Day One

p. 320-322

Q. During the time you were in Khartoum working with al Qaeda, did you ever smuggle anything to Egypt?

A. Yes.

Q. What did you do?

A. We buy camels to send them to Egypt because we use camels to smuggle Kalashnikov to Egypt.

Q. And did you do that on one occasion or more than one occasion that you used camels to smuggle weapons into Egypt?

A. I remember twice.

Q. And how did you get the camels from Khartoum to Egypt?

A. We buy from market for camels over there in Umdurhman City.

Q. Where is Umdurhman City?

A. It's near the Nile River.

Q. How far is it from Khartoum?

A. It's only a village between them.

Q. And approximately how many camels did you take with each trip?

A. I don't remember the number exactly, but around 50 each trip.

Q. Do you recall how many weapons were brought on these trips by camels from Sudan to Egypt?

A. I don't remember how many exactly.

Q. And who did you understand the weapons were going to in Egypt?

A. The weapons I remember go to jihad group.

The **full testimony** is available in PDF format from CNN.com.

Attempts to Buy Uranium

Former bin Laden Associate Jamal Ahmed Al-Fadl describes efforts by Al Qaeda to purchase uranium.

Al-Fadl Testimony, Day 2

p. 357-358

Q During the time you were involved with al Qaeda, did there come a time when you became involved in an attempt to purchase uranium?

A Yes.

Q Can you tell us when that was?

A That's area of '94 or end of '93.

Q Can you tell us how you came to be involved in the purchase of uranium?

A I remember Abu Fadhl al Makkee, he call me and he told me we hear somebody in Khartoum, he got uranium, and we need you to go and study that, is that true or not.

Q The person who told you was Abu Fadhl al Makkee?

A Yes.

Q What did you do after he told you this?

A He told me go to Abu Abdullah al Yemeni and he talk more about that with you. Also go by Abu Dijana.

Q Abu Abdullah al Yemeni and Abu Dijana, are they the same or different person?

A Same person.

Q Did you go see Abdullah al Yemeni?

A Yes.

Q What happened when you saw him?

A He told me somebody's name, Moqadem Salah Abdel al Mobruk. He is a minister during Numeiri time.

Q Is he a former president of the Sudan?

A Yes, '69 to '83.

Q You said he is Moqadem. Is that a title?

A He is army, one eagle and one star.

Q Tell us what happened next.

A Abu Dijana, he say we know this guy, we hear he got uranium and we need you to go and make sure that's right, maybe we need to buy that.

Q Did you go to see this officer named Mobruk?

A I went to one of my cousins, his name Faisal, and I ask him if he know Moqadam Salah Abdel al Mobruk.

Q What happened then?

A He told me, I know him but I don't have relationship with him, but I tell you I know somebody, he know him better than me. And he told me go to al Fadl al Shahideen. I went to avenue Shahideen because I know him and I worked with him before, and I told him we want to see Salah Abdel al Mobruk. And he ask me what you want from him. I tell him we hear he got uranium and we want to know, if that true we want president to buy it.

Q Did you actually then go see Mr. Mobruk?

A Yes. He tell me give me few days and I call you back. After week or so he call me and he say I need to meet with you. And I sit down with him and he say I going to make appointment with you and Salah Abdel al Mobruk and you can talk to him face to face.

Q Did you have, did you actually have a meeting with Salah Abdel al Mobruk?

A Yes.

Q Tell us what happened at the meeting.

A I went, and this is first time I meet him, and he told me this guy, his name Basheer, he going to help you, and go with him and discuss everything with him.

Q Had you ever met this person named Basheer before?

A No.

Q Did you go with Basheer?

A Yes.

Q Tell the jury what you did.

A We went to another office in Jambouria Street in Khartoum City.

Q What happened when you went to that street in Khartoum?

A Basheer, he told me, are you serious? You want uranium? I tell him yes. I know people, they very serious, and they want to buy it. And he told me did the money ready, and I say what they need. They need the information about uranium, they want to know which quality, which the country make it, and after that we going to talk with you about the price. He say I going to give you this information in a paper, and we need $1,500,000, and everything go well we need it outside. We need the money outside of Sudan.

Q And the price was how much?

A He say he need $1,500,000. And he say this is for the uranium. But he need commission for himself, and he need commission for Salah Abdel al Mobruk.

The **full testimony** is available in PDF format from CNN.com.

Transporting Stinger Missiles

Testimony of Pilot and former bin Laden Associate Essam Al-Ridi Describing efforts by Al Qaeda to purchase an airplane in order to fly Stinger missiles from Peshawar to Khartoum

Al-Ridi testimony

p. 562 - 564

Q. Can you tell us what Wadih El Hage told you when he first contacted you?

A. The interests of Usama Bin Laden in aquiring an airplane for Khartoum.

Q. And did you, did he tell you where Usama Bin Laden was living at the time?

A. Yes.

Q. Where was he living?

A. In Khartoum, Sudan.

Q. And what did he tell you about the airplane that he wished you to purchase for Usama Bin Laden?

A. The price range within 350,000 US, and that is a range of about a little bit over two thousand miles.

Q. And did you have any further discussions with him about the financial arrangements for purchasing this airplane?

A. Yes.

Q. What was that discussion?

A. Once I located an airplane with that price and that range, I've called Wadih and specifically told him, it's 350,000 and I'll be offered 9 percent from the dealer, the owner of the airplane. [Discussions about price etc.] ...

Q. Was there any discussion of the reason why the range for the plane had to be two thousand miles?

A. Yes.

Q. Can you tell us what was said

?

A. They have some goods of their own they want to ship from Peshawar to Khartoum.

Q. And first of all, who is "they"?

A. Again, I'm referring to Wadih and Usama.

Q. And did he tell you what the goods were that he wanted to ship from Peshawar to Khartoum?

A. Yes.

Q. What were they?

A. Stinger missiles.

Q. And when he told you they wanted to ship Stinger missiles from Peshawar to Khartoum, what did you say?

A. I said it's possible as long as we have arrangements from the departing country to the arriving country.

Q. And what do you mean by that?

A. I meant the legality, because it's clearly air policy.

Q. Did you discuss this with Wadih?

A. Yes.

Q. Tell us what you told him about the legality of shipping the Stingers from Peshawar to Khartoum?

A. That we have to have a legal permit to depart Peshawar with that equipment on board, and the legal permit to land in Khartoum, which is not a problem because they could ally people in Peshawar and also in Khartoum. However, the problem with allies, once we have to divert or land for any fuel or any emergency in the countries in between, then it will be definitely exposed and then it will be absolutely a chaos.

Q. And what, if anything, did he say in response?

A. Nothing in particular. I was just explaining to them technicalities.

The **full testimony** is available in PDF format from CNN.com.

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