Exhibit 5

THE 9/11 COMMISSION REPORT

Finally, Bin Ladin had another advantage: a substantial, worldwide organization. By the time he issued his February 1998 declaration of war, Bin Ladin had nurtured that organization for nearly ten years. He could attract, train, and use recruits for ever more ambitious attacks, rallying new adherents with each demonstration that his was the movement of the future.

2.3 THE RISE OF BIN LADIN AND AL QAEDA (1988–1992)

A decade of conflict in Afghanistan, from 1979 to 1989, gave Islamist extremists a rallying point and training field. A Communist government in Afghanistan gained power in 1978 but was unable to establish enduring control. At the end of 1979, the Soviet government sent in military units to ensure that the country would remain securely under Moscow's influence. The response was an Afghan national resistance movement that defeated Soviet forces.[19]

Young Muslims from around the world flocked to Afghanistan to join as volunteers in what was seen as a "holy war"—*jihad*—against an invader. The largest numbers came from the Middle East. Some were Saudis, and among them was Usama Bin Ladin.

Twenty-three when he arrived in Afghanistan in 1980, Bin Ladin was the seventeenth of 57 children of a Saudi construction magnate. Six feet five and thin, Bin Ladin appeared to be ungainly but was in fact quite athletic, skilled as a horseman, runner, climber, and soccer player. He had attended Abdul Aziz University in Saudi Arabia. By some accounts, he had been interested there in religious studies, inspired by tape recordings of fiery sermons by Abdullah Azzam, a Palestinian and a disciple of Qutb. Bin Ladin was conspicuous among the volunteers not because he showed evidence of religious learning but because he had access to some of his family's huge fortune. Though he took part in at least one actual battle, he became known chiefly as a person who generously helped fund the anti-Soviet jihad.[20]

Bin Ladin understood better than most of the volunteers the extent to which the continuation and eventual success of the jihad in Afghanistan depended on an increasingly complex, almost worldwide organization. This organization included a financial support network that came to be known as the "Golden Chain," put together mainly by financiers in Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf states. Donations flowed through charities or other nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Bin Ladin and the "Afghan Arabs" drew largely on funds raised by this network, whose agents roamed world markets to buy arms and supplies for the mujahideen, or "holy warriors."[21]

Mosques, schools, and boardinghouses served as recruiting stations in many parts of the world, including the United States. Some were set up by Islamic extremists or their financial backers. Bin Ladin had an important part in this

activity. He and the cleric Azzam had joined in creating a "Bureau of Services" (Mektab al Khidmat, or MAK), which channeled recruits into Afghanistan.[22]

The international environment for Bin Ladin's efforts was ideal. Saudi Arabia and the United States supplied billions of dollars worth of secret assistance to rebel groups in Afghanistan fighting the Soviet occupation. This assistance was funneled through Pakistan: the Pakistani military intelligence service (Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate, or ISID), helped train the rebels and distribute the arms. But Bin Ladin and his comrades had their own sources of support and training, and they received little or no assistance from the United States.[23]

April 1988 brought victory for the Afghan jihad. Moscow declared it would pull its military forces out of Afghanistan within the next nine months. As the Soviets began their withdrawal, the jihad's leaders debated what to do next.

Bin Ladin and Azzam agreed that the organization successfully created for Afghanistan should not be allowed to dissolve. They established what they called a base or foundation (al Qaeda) as a potential general headquarters for future jihad.[24] Though Azzam had been considered number one in the MAK, by August 1988 Bin Ladin was clearly the leader (*emir*) of al Qaeda. This organization's structure included as its operating arms an intelligence component, a military committee, a financial committee, a political committee, and a committee in charge of media affairs and propaganda. It also had an Advisory Council (Shura) made up of Bin Ladin's inner circle.[25]

Bin Ladin's assumption of the helm of al Qaeda was evidence of his growing self-confidence and ambition. He soon made clear his desire for unchallenged control and for preparing the mujahideen to fight anywhere in the world. Azzam, by contrast, favored continuing to fight in Afghanistan until it had a true Islamist government. And, as a Palestinian, he saw Israel as the top priority for the next stage.[26]

Whether the dispute was about power, personal differences, or strategy, it ended on November 24, 1989, when a remotely controlled car bomb killed Azzam and both of his sons. The killers were assumed to be rival Egyptians. The outcome left Bin Ladin indisputably in charge of what remained of the MAK and al Qaeda.[27]

Through writers like Qutb, and the presence of Egyptian Islamist teachers in the Saudi educational system, Islamists already had a strong intellectual influence on Bin Ladin and his al Qaeda colleagues. By the late 1980s, the Egyptian Islamist movement—badly battered in the government crackdown following President Sadat's assassination—was centered in two major organizations: the Islamic Group and the Egyptian Islamic Jihad. A spiritual guide for both, but especially the Islamic Group, was the so-called Blind Sheikh, Omar Abdel Rahman. His preaching had inspired the assassination of Sadat. After being in and out of Egyptian prisons during the 1980s, Abdel Rahman found

refuge in the United States. From his headquarters in Jersey City, he distributed messages calling for the murder of unbelievers.[28]

The most important Egyptian in Bin Ladin's circle was a surgeon, Ayman al Zawahiri, who led a strong faction of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad. Many of his followers became important members in the new organization, and his own close ties with Bin Ladin led many to think of him as the deputy head of al Qaeda. He would in fact become Bin Ladin's deputy some years later, when they merged their organizations.[29]

Bin Ladin Moves to Sudan

By the fall of 1989, Bin Ladin had sufficient stature among Islamic extremists that a Sudanese political leader, Hassan al Turabi, urged him to transplant his whole organization to Sudan. Turabi headed the National Islamic Front in a coalition that had recently seized power in Khartoum.[30] Bin Ladin agreed to help Turabi in an ongoing war against African Christian separatists in southern Sudan and also to do some road building. Turabi in return would let Bin Ladin use Sudan as a base for worldwide business operations and for preparations for jihad.[31] While agents of Bin Ladin began to buy property in Sudan in 1990,[32] Bin Ladin himself moved from Afghanistan back to Saudi Arabia.

In August 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait. Bin Ladin, whose efforts in Afghanistan had earned him celebrity and respect, proposed to the Saudi monarchy that he summon mujahideen for a jihad to retake Kuwait. He was rebuffed, and the Saudis joined the U.S.-led coalition. After the Saudis agreed to allow U.S. armed forces to be based in the Kingdom, Bin Ladin and a number of Islamic clerics began to publicly denounce the arrangement. The Saudi government exiled the clerics and undertook to silence Bin Ladin by, among other things, taking away his passport. With help from a dissident member of the royal family, he managed to get out of the country under the pretext of attending an Islamic gathering in Pakistan in April 1991.[33] By 1994, the Saudi government would freeze his financial assets and revoke his citizenship.[34] He no longer had a country he could call his own.

Bin Ladin moved to Sudan in 1991 and set up a large and complex set of intertwined business and terrorist enterprises. In time, the former would encompass numerous companies and a global network of bank accounts and nongovernmental institutions. Fulfilling his bargain with Turabi, Bin Ladin used his construction company to build a new highway from Khartoum to Port Sudan on the Red Sea coast. Meanwhile, al Qaeda finance officers and top operatives used their positions in Bin Ladin's businesses to acquire weapons, explosives, and technical equipment for terrorist purposes. One founding member, Abu Hajer al Iraqi, used his position as head of a Bin Ladin investment company to carry out procurement trips from western Europe to the Far East. Two others, Wadi al Hage and Mubarak Douri, who had become acquainted in Tuc-

son, Arizona, in the late 1980s, went as far afield as China, Malaysia, the Philippines, and the former Soviet states of Ukraine and Belarus.[35]

Bin Ladin's impressive array of offices covertly provided financial and other support for terrorist activities. The network included a major business enterprise in Cyprus; a "services" branch in Zagreb; an office of the Benevolence International Foundation in Sarajevo, which supported the Bosnian Muslims in their conflict with Serbia and Croatia; and an NGO in Baku, Azerbaijan, that was employed as well by Egyptian Islamic Jihad both as a source and conduit for finances and as a support center for the Muslim rebels in Chechnya. He also made use of the already-established Third World Relief Agency (TWRA) headquartered in Vienna, whose branch office locations included Zagreb and Budapest. (Bin Ladin later set up an NGO in Nairobi as a cover for operatives there.)[36]

Bin Ladin now had a vision of himself as head of an international jihad confederation. In Sudan, he established an "Islamic Army Shura" that was to serve as the coordinating body for the consortium of terrorist groups with which he was forging alliances. It was composed of his own al Qaeda Shura together with leaders or representatives of terrorist organizations that were still independent. In building this Islamic army, he enlisted groups from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Oman, Algeria, Libya, Tunisia, Morocco, Somalia, and Eritrea. Al Qaeda also established cooperative but less formal relationships with other extremist groups from these same countries; from the African states of Chad, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, and Uganda; and from the Southeast Asian states of Burma, Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia. Bin Ladin maintained connections in the Bosnian conflict as well.[37] The groundwork for a true global terrorist network was being laid.

Bin Ladin also provided equipment and training assistance to the Moro Islamic Liberation Front in the Philippines and also to a newly forming Philippine group that called itself the Abu Sayyaf Brigade, after one of the major Afghan jihadist commanders.[38] Al Qaeda helped Jemaah Islamiya (JI), a nascent organization headed by Indonesian Islamists with cells scattered across Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, and the Philippines. It also aided a Pakistani group engaged in insurrectionist attacks in Kashmir. In mid-1991, Bin Ladin dispatched a band of supporters to the northern Afghanistan border to assist the Tajikistan Islamists in the ethnic conflicts that had been boiling there even before the Central Asian departments of the Soviet Union became independent states.[39]

This pattern of expansion through building alliances extended to the United States. A Muslim organization called al Khifa had numerous branch offices, the largest of which was in the Farouq mosque in Brooklyn. In the mid-1980s, it had been set up as one of the first outposts of Azzam and Bin Ladin's MAK.[40] Other cities with branches of al Khifa included Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Pittsburgh, and Tucson.[41] Al Khifa recruited American Muslims to

fight in Afghanistan; some of them would participate in terrorist actions in the United States in the early 1990s and in al Qaeda operations elsewhere, including the 1998 attacks on U.S. embassies in East Africa.

2.4 BUILDING AN ORGANIZATION, DECLARING WAR ON THE UNITED STATES (1992–1996)

Bin Ladin began delivering diatribes against the United States before he left Saudi Arabia. He continued to do so after he arrived in Sudan. In early 1992, the al Qaeda leadership issued a fatwa calling for jihad against the Western "occupation" of Islamic lands. Specifically singling out U.S. forces for attack, the language resembled that which would appear in Bin Ladin's public fatwa in August 1996. In ensuing weeks, Bin Ladin delivered an often-repeated lecture on the need to cut off "the head of the snake."[42]

By this time, Bin Ladin was well-known and a senior figure among Islamist extremists, especially those in Egypt, the Arabian Peninsula, and the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region. Still, he was just one among many diverse terrorist barons. Some of Bin Ladin's close comrades were more peers than subordinates. For example, Usama Asmurai, also known as Wali Khan, worked with Bin Ladin in the early 1980s and helped him in the Philippines and in Tajikistan. The Egyptian spiritual guide based in New Jersey, the Blind Sheikh, whom Bin Ladin admired, was also in the network. Among sympathetic peers in Afghanistan were a few of the warlords still fighting for power and Abu Zubaydah, who helped operate a popular terrorist training camp near the border with Pakistan. There were also rootless but experienced operatives, such as Ramzi Yousef and Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, who—though not necessarily formal members of someone else's organization—were traveling around the world and joining in projects that were supported by or linked to Bin Ladin, the Blind Sheikh, or their associates.[43]

In now analyzing the terrorist programs carried out by members of this network, it would be misleading to apply the label "al Qaeda operations" too often in these early years. Yet it would also be misleading to ignore the significance of these connections. And in this network, Bin Ladin's agenda stood out. While his allied Islamist groups were focused on local battles, such as those in Egypt, Algeria, Bosnia, or Chechnya, Bin Ladin concentrated on attacking the "far enemy"—the United States.

Attacks Known and Suspected

After U.S. troops deployed to Somalia in late 1992, al Qaeda leaders formulated a fatwa demanding their eviction. In December, bombs exploded at two hotels in Aden where U.S. troops routinely stopped en route to Somalia, killing two, but no Americans. The perpetrators are reported to have belonged to a

group from southern Yemen headed by a Yemeni member of Bin Ladin's Islamic Army Shura; some in the group had trained at an al Qaeda camp in Sudan.[44]

Al Qaeda leaders set up a Nairobi cell and used it to send weapons and trainers to the Somali warlords battling U.S. forces, an operation directly supervised by al Qaeda's military leader.[45] Scores of trainers flowed to Somalia over the ensuing months, including most of the senior members and weapons training experts of al Qaeda's military committee. These trainers were later heard boasting that their assistance led to the October 1993 shootdown of two U.S. Black Hawk helicopters by members of a Somali militia group and to the subsequent withdrawal of U.S. forces in early 1994.[46]

In November 1995, a car bomb exploded outside a Saudi-U.S. joint facility in Riyadh for training the Saudi National Guard. Five Americans and two officials from India were killed. The Saudi government arrested four perpetrators, who admitted being inspired by Bin Ladin. They were promptly executed. Though nothing proves that Bin Ladin ordered this attack, U.S. intelligence subsequently learned that al Qaeda leaders had decided a year earlier to attack a U.S. target in Saudi Arabia, and had shipped explosives to the peninsula for this purpose. Some of Bin Ladin's associates later took credit.[47]

In June 1996, an enormous truck bomb detonated in the Khobar Towers residential complex in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, that housed U.S. Air Force personnel. Nineteen Americans were killed, and 372 were wounded. The operation was carried out principally, perhaps exclusively, by Saudi Hezbollah, an organization that had received support from the government of Iran. While the evidence of Iranian involvement is strong, there are also signs that al Qaeda played some role, as yet unknown.[48]

In this period, other prominent attacks in which Bin Ladin's involvement is at best cloudy are the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center, a plot that same year to destroy landmarks in New York, and the 1995 Manila air plot to blow up a dozen U.S. airliners over the Pacific. Details on these plots appear in chapter 3.

Another scheme revealed that Bin Ladin sought the capability to kill on a mass scale. His business aides received word that a Sudanese military officer who had been a member of the previous government cabinet was offering to sell weapons-grade uranium. After a number of contacts were made through intermediaries, the officer set the price at $1.5 million, which did not deter Bin Ladin. Al Qaeda representatives asked to inspect the uranium and were shown a cylinder about 3 feet long, and one thought he could pronounce it genuine. Al Qaeda apparently purchased the cylinder, then discovered it to be bogus.[49] But while the effort failed, it shows what Bin Ladin and his associates hoped to do. One of the al Qaeda representatives explained his mission: "it's easy to kill more people with uranium."[50]

Bin Ladin seemed willing to include in the confederation terrorists from

almost every corner of the Muslim world. His vision mirrored that of Sudan's Islamist leader, Turabi, who convened a series of meetings under the label Popular Arab and Islamic Conference around the time of Bin Ladin's arrival in that country. Delegations of violent Islamist extremists came from all the groups represented in Bin Ladin's Islamic Army Shura. Representatives also came from organizations such as the Palestine Liberation Organization, Hamas, and Hezbollah.[51]

Turabi sought to persuade Shiites and Sunnis to put aside their divisions and join against the common enemy. In late 1991 or 1992, discussions in Sudan between al Qaeda and Iranian operatives led to an informal agreement to cooperate in providing support—even if only training—for actions carried out primarily against Israel and the United States. Not long afterward, senior al Qaeda operatives and trainers traveled to Iran to receive training in explosives. In the fall of 1993, another such delegation went to the Bekaa Valley in Lebanon for further training in explosives as well as in intelligence and security. Bin Ladin reportedly showed particular interest in learning how to use truck bombs such as the one that had killed 241 U.S. Marines in Lebanon in 1983. The relationship between al Qaeda and Iran demonstrated that Sunni-Shia divisions did not necessarily pose an insurmountable barrier to cooperation in terrorist operations. As will be described in chapter 7, al Qaeda contacts with Iran continued in ensuing years.[52]

Bin Ladin was also willing to explore possibilities for cooperation with Iraq, even though Iraq's dictator, Saddam Hussein, had never had an Islamist agenda—save for his opportunistic pose as a defender of the faithful against "Crusaders" during the Gulf War of 1991. Moreover, Bin Ladin had in fact been sponsoring anti-Saddam Islamists in Iraqi Kurdistan, and sought to attract them into his Islamic army.[53]

To protect his own ties with Iraq, Turabi reportedly brokered an agreement that Bin Ladin would stop supporting activities against Saddam. Bin Ladin apparently honored this pledge, at least for a time, although he continued to aid a group of Islamist extremists operating in part of Iraq (Kurdistan) outside of Baghdad's control. In the late 1990s, these extremist groups suffered major defeats by Kurdish forces. In 2001, with Bin Ladin's help they re-formed into an organization called Ansar al Islam. There are indications that by then the Iraqi regime tolerated and may even have helped Ansar al Islam against the common Kurdish enemy.[54]

With the Sudanese regime acting as intermediary, Bin Ladin himself met with a senior Iraqi intelligence officer in Khartoum in late 1994 or early 1995. Bin Ladin is said to have asked for space to establish training camps, as well as assistance in procuring weapons, but there is no evidence that Iraq responded to this request.[55] As described below, the ensuing years saw additional efforts to establish connections.

Sudan Becomes a Doubtful Haven

Not until 1998 did al Qaeda undertake a major terrorist operation of its own, in large part because Bin Ladin lost his base in Sudan. Ever since the Islamist regime came to power in Khartoum, the United States and other Western governments had pressed it to stop providing a haven for terrorist organizations. Other governments in the region, such as those of Egypt, Syria, Jordan, and even Libya, which were targets of some of these groups, added their own pressure. At the same time, the Sudanese regime began to change. Though Turabi had been its inspirational leader, General Omar al Bashir, president since 1989, had never been entirely under his thumb. Thus as outside pressures mounted, Bashir's supporters began to displace those of Turabi.

The attempted assassination in Ethiopia of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in June 1995 appears to have been a tipping point. The would-be killers, who came from the Egyptian Islamic Group, had been sheltered in Sudan and helped by Bin Ladin.[56] When the Sudanese refused to hand over three individuals identified as involved in the assassination plot, the UN Security Council passed a resolution criticizing their inaction and eventually sanctioned Khartoum in April 1996.[57]

A clear signal to Bin Ladin that his days in Sudan were numbered came when the government advised him that it intended to yield to Libya's demands to stop giving sanctuary to its enemies. Bin Ladin had to tell the Libyans who had been part of his Islamic army that he could no longer protect them and that they had to leave the country. Outraged, several Libyan members of al Qaeda and the Islamic Army Shura renounced all connections with him.[58]

Bin Ladin also began to have serious money problems. International pressure on Sudan, together with strains in the world economy, hurt Sudan's currency. Some of Bin Ladin's companies ran short of funds. As Sudanese authorities became less obliging, normal costs of doing business increased. Saudi pressures on the Bin Ladin family also probably took some toll. In any case, Bin Ladin found it necessary both to cut back his spending and to control his outlays more closely. He appointed a new financial manager, whom his followers saw as miserly.[59]

Money problems proved costly to Bin Ladin in other ways. Jamal Ahmed al Fadl, a Sudanese-born Arab, had spent time in the United States and had been recruited for the Afghan war through the Farouq mosque in Brooklyn. He had joined al Qaeda and taken the oath of fealty to Bin Ladin, serving as one of his business agents. Then Bin Ladin discovered that Fadl had skimmed about $110,000, and he asked for restitution. Fadl resented receiving a salary of only $500 a month while some of the Egyptians in al Qaeda were given $1,200 a month. He defected and became a star informant for the United States. Also testifying about al Qaeda in a U.S. court was L'Houssaine Kherchtou, who told of breaking with Bin Ladin because of Bin Ladin's professed inability to provide him with money when his wife needed a caesarian section.[60]

In February 1996, Sudanese officials began approaching officials from the

United States and other governments, asking what actions of theirs might ease foreign pressure. In secret meetings with Saudi officials, Sudan offered to expel Bin Ladin to Saudi Arabia and asked the Saudis to pardon him. U.S. officials became aware of these secret discussions, certainly by March. Saudi officials apparently wanted Bin Ladin expelled from Sudan. They had already revoked his citizenship, however, and would not tolerate his presence in their country. And Bin Ladin may have no longer felt safe in Sudan, where he had already escaped at least one assassination attempt that he believed to have been the work of the Egyptian or Saudi regimes, or both. In any case, on May 19, 1996, Bin Ladin left Sudan—significantly weakened, despite his ambitions and organizational skills. He returned to Afghanistan.[61]

2.5 AL QAEDA'S RENEWAL IN AFGHANISTAN (1996–1998)

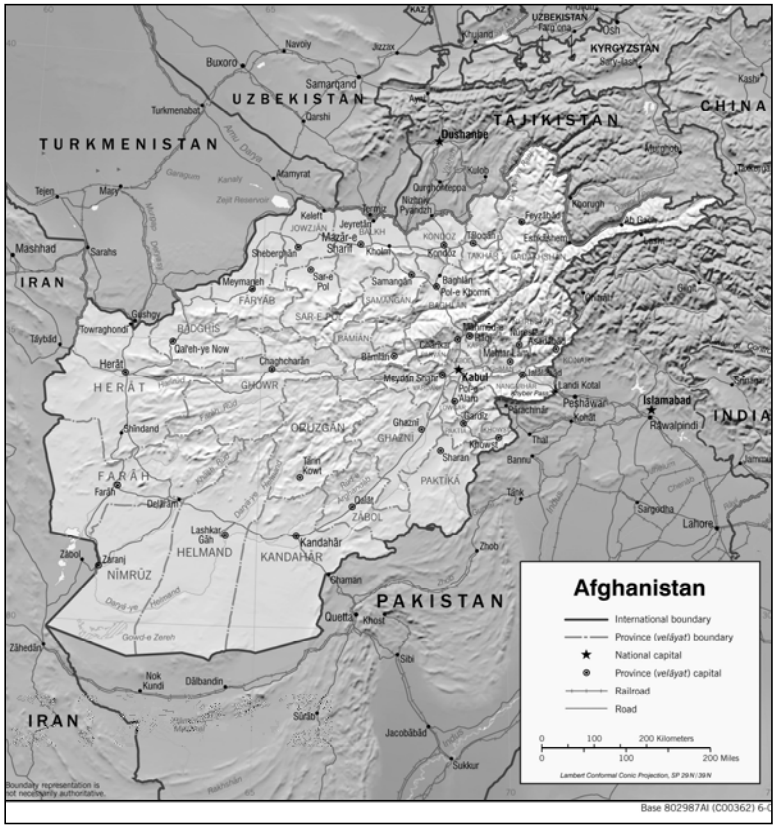
Bin Ladin flew on a leased aircraft from Khartoum to Jalalabad, with a refueling stopover in the United Arab Emirates.[62] He was accompanied by family members and bodyguards, as well as by al Qaeda members who had been close associates since his organization's 1988 founding in Afghanistan. Dozens of additional militants arrived on later flights.[63]

Though Bin Ladin's destination was Afghanistan, Pakistan was the nation that held the key to his ability to use Afghanistan as a base from which to revive his ambitious enterprise for war against the United States.

For the first quarter century of its existence as a nation, Pakistan's identity had derived from Islam, but its politics had been decidedly secular. The army was—and remains—the country's strongest and most respected institution, and the army had been and continues to be preoccupied with its rivalry with India, especially over the disputed territory of Kashmir.

From the 1970s onward, religion had become an increasingly powerful force in Pakistani politics. After a coup in 1977, military leaders turned to Islamist groups for support, and fundamentalists became more prominent. South Asia had an indigenous form of Islamic fundamentalism, which had developed in the nineteenth century at a school in the Indian village of Deoband.[64] The influence of the Wahhabi school of Islam had also grown, nurtured by Saudi-funded institutions. Moreover, the fighting in Afghanistan made Pakistan home to an enormous—and generally unwelcome—population of Afghan refugees; and since the badly strained Pakistani education system could not accommodate the refugees, the government increasingly let privately funded religious schools serve as a cost-free alternative. Over time, these schools produced large numbers of half-educated young men with no marketable skills but with deeply held Islamic views.[65]

Pakistan's rulers found these multitudes of ardent young Afghans a source



of potential trouble at home but potentially useful abroad. Those who joined the Taliban movement, espousing a ruthless version of Islamic law, perhaps could bring order in chaotic Afghanistan and make it a cooperative ally. They thus might give Pakistan greater security on one of the several borders where Pakistani military officers hoped for what they called "strategic depth."[66]

It is unlikely that Bin Ladin could have returned to Afghanistan had Pakistan disapproved. The Pakistani military intelligence service probably had advance knowledge of his coming, and its officers may have facilitated his travel. During his entire time in Sudan, he had maintained guesthouses and training camps in Pakistan and Afghanistan. These were part of a larger network used by diverse organizations for recruiting and training fighters for Islamic insurgencies in such places as Tajikistan, Kashmir, and Chechnya. Pakistani intelligence officers reportedly introduced Bin Ladin to Taliban leaders in Kandahar, their main base of power, to aid his reassertion of control over camps near

Khowst, out of an apparent hope that he would now expand the camps and make them available for training Kashmiri militants.[67]

Yet Bin Ladin was in his weakest position since his early days in the war against the Soviet Union. The Sudanese government had canceled the registration of the main business enterprises he had set up there and then put some of them up for public sale. According to a senior al Qaeda detainee, the government of Sudan seized everything Bin Ladin had possessed there.[68]

He also lost the head of his military committee, Abu Ubaidah al Banshiri, one of the most capable and popular leaders of al Qaeda. While most of the group's key figures had accompanied Bin Ladin to Afghanistan, Banshiri had remained in Kenya to oversee the training and weapons shipments of the cell set up some four years earlier. He died in a ferryboat accident on Lake Victoria just a few days after Bin Ladin arrived in Jalalabad, leaving Bin Ladin with a need to replace him not only in the Shura but also as supervisor of the cells and prospective operations in East Africa.[69] He had to make other adjustments as well, for some al Qaeda members viewed Bin Ladin's return to Afghanistan as occasion to go off in their own directions. Some maintained collaborative relationships with al Qaeda, but many disengaged entirely.[70]

For a time, it may not have been clear to Bin Ladin that the Taliban would be his best bet as an ally. When he arrived in Afghanistan, they controlled much of the country, but key centers, including Kabul, were still held by rival warlords. Bin Ladin went initially to Jalalabad, probably because it was in an area controlled by a provincial council of Islamic leaders who were not major contenders for national power. He found lodgings with Younis Khalis, the head of one of the main mujahideen factions. Bin Ladin apparently kept his options open, maintaining contacts with Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, who, though an Islamic extremist, was also one of the Taliban's most militant opponents. But after September 1996, when first Jalalabad and then Kabul fell to the Taliban, Bin Ladin cemented his ties with them.[71]

That process did not always go smoothly. Bin Ladin, no longer constrained by the Sudanese, clearly thought that he had new freedom to publish his appeals for jihad. At about the time when the Taliban were making their final drive toward Jalalabad and Kabul, Bin Ladin issued his August 1996 fatwa, saying that "We . . . have been prevented from addressing the Muslims," but expressing relief that "by the grace of Allah, a safe base here is now available in the high Hindu Kush mountains in Khurasan." But the Taliban, like the Sudanese, would eventually hear warnings, including from the Saudi monarchy.[72]

Though Bin Ladin had promised Taliban leaders that he would be circumspect, he broke this promise almost immediately, giving an inflammatory interview to CNN in March 1997. The Taliban leader Mullah Omar promptly "invited" Bin Ladin to move to Kandahar, ostensibly in the interests of Bin Ladin's own security but more likely to situate him where he might be easier to control.[73]

There is also evidence that around this time Bin Ladin sent out a number of feelers to the Iraqi regime, offering some cooperation. None are reported to have received a significant response. According to one report, Saddam Hussein's efforts at this time to rebuild relations with the Saudis and other Middle Eastern regimes led him to stay clear of Bin Ladin.[74]

In mid-1998, the situation reversed; it was Iraq that reportedly took the initiative. In March 1998, after Bin Ladin's public fatwa against the United States, two al Qaeda members reportedly went to Iraq to meet with Iraqi intelligence. In July, an Iraqi delegation traveled to Afghanistan to meet first with the Taliban and then with Bin Ladin. Sources reported that one, or perhaps both, of these meetings was apparently arranged through Bin Ladin's Egyptian deputy, Zawahiri, who had ties of his own to the Iraqis. In 1998, Iraq was under intensifying U.S. pressure, which culminated in a series of large air attacks in December.[75]

Similar meetings between Iraqi officials and Bin Ladin or his aides may have occurred in 1999 during a period of some reported strains with the Taliban. According to the reporting, Iraqi officials offered Bin Ladin a safe haven in Iraq. Bin Ladin declined, apparently judging that his circumstances in Afghanistan remained more favorable than the Iraqi alternative. The reports describe friendly contacts and indicate some common themes in both sides' hatred of the United States. But to date we have seen no evidence that these or the earlier contacts ever developed into a collaborative operational relationship. Nor have we seen evidence indicating that Iraq cooperated with al Qaeda in developing or carrying out any attacks against the United States.[76]

Bin Ladin eventually enjoyed a strong financial position in Afghanistan, thanks to Saudi and other financiers associated with the Golden Chain. Through his relationship with Mullah Omar—and the monetary and other benefits that it brought the Taliban—Bin Ladin was able to circumvent restrictions; Mullah Omar would stand by him even when other Taliban leaders raised objections. Bin Ladin appeared to have in Afghanistan a freedom of movement that he had lacked in Sudan. Al Qaeda members could travel freely within the country, enter and exit it without visas or any immigration procedures, purchase and import vehicles and weapons, and enjoy the use of official Afghan Ministry of Defense license plates. Al Qaeda also used the Afghan state-owned Ariana Airlines to courier money into the country.[77]

The Taliban seemed to open the doors to all who wanted to come to Afghanistan to train in the camps. The alliance with the Taliban provided al Qaeda a sanctuary in which to train and indoctrinate fighters and terrorists, import weapons, forge ties with other jihad groups and leaders, and plot and staff terrorist schemes. While Bin Ladin maintained his own al Qaeda guesthouses and camps for vetting and training recruits, he also provided support to and bene-

fited from the broad infrastructure of such facilities in Afghanistan made available to the global network of Islamist movements. U.S. intelligence estimates put the total number of fighters who underwent instruction in Bin Ladin–supported camps in Afghanistan from 1996 through 9/11 at 10,000 to 20,000.[78]

In addition to training fighters and special operators, this larger network of guesthouses and camps provided a mechanism by which al Qaeda could screen and vet candidates for induction into its own organization. Thousands flowed through the camps, but no more than a few hundred seem to have become al Qaeda members. From the time of its founding, al Qaeda had employed training and indoctrination to identify "worthy" candidates.[79]

Al Qaeda continued meanwhile to collaborate closely with the many Middle Eastern groups—in Egypt, Algeria, Yemen, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia, Somalia, and elsewhere—with which it had been linked when Bin Ladin was in Sudan. It also reinforced its London base and its other offices around Europe, the Balkans, and the Caucasus. Bin Ladin bolstered his links to extremists in South and Southeast Asia, including the Malaysian-Indonesian JI and several Pakistani groups engaged in the Kashmir conflict.[80]

The February 1998 fatwa thus seems to have been a kind of public launch of a renewed and stronger al Qaeda, after a year and a half of work. Having rebuilt his fund-raising network, Bin Ladin had again become the rich man of the jihad movement. He had maintained or restored many of his links with terrorists elsewhere in the world. And he had strengthened the internal ties in his own organization.

The inner core of al Qaeda continued to be a hierarchical top-down group with defined positions, tasks, and salaries. Most but not all in this core swore fealty (or *bayat*) to Bin Ladin. Other operatives were committed to Bin Ladin or to his goals and would take assignments for him, but they did not swear bayat and maintained, or tried to maintain, some autonomy. A looser circle of adherents might give money to al Qaeda or train in its camps but remained essentially independent. Nevertheless, they constituted a potential resource for al Qaeda.[81]

Now effectively merged with Zawahiri's Egyptian Islamic Jihad,[82] al Qaeda promised to become the general headquarters for international terrorism, without the need for the Islamic Army Shura. Bin Ladin was prepared to pick up where he had left off in Sudan. He was ready to strike at "the head of the snake."

Al Qaeda's role in organizing terrorist operations had also changed. Before the move to Afghanistan, it had concentrated on providing funds, training, and weapons for actions carried out by members of allied groups. The attacks on the U.S. embassies in East Africa in the summer of 1998 would take a different form—planned, directed, and executed by al Qaeda, under the direct supervision of Bin Ladin and his chief aides.

The Embassy Bombings

As early as December 1993, a team of al Qaeda operatives had begun casing targets in Nairobi for future attacks. It was led by Ali Mohamed, a former Egyptian army officer who had moved to the United States in the mid-1980s, enlisted in the U.S. Army, and became an instructor at Fort Bragg. He had provided guidance and training to extremists at the Farouq mosque in Brooklyn, including some who were subsequently convicted in the February 1993 attack on the World Trade Center. The casing team also included a computer expert whose write-ups were reviewed by al Qaeda leaders.[83]

The team set up a makeshift laboratory for developing their surveillance photographs in an apartment in Nairobi where the various al Qaeda operatives and leaders based in or traveling to the Kenya cell sometimes met. Banshiri, al Qaeda's military committee chief, continued to be the operational commander of the cell; but because he was constantly on the move, Bin Ladin had dispatched another operative, Khaled al Fawwaz, to serve as the on-site manager. The technical surveillance and communications equipment employed for these casing missions included state-of-the-art video cameras obtained from China and from dealers in Germany. The casing team also reconnoitered targets in Djibouti.[84]

As early as January 1994, Bin Ladin received the surveillance reports, complete with diagrams prepared by the team's computer specialist. He, his top military committee members—Banshiri and his deputy, Abu Hafs al Masri (also known as Mohammed Atef)—and a number of other al Qaeda leaders reviewed the reports. Agreeing that the U.S. embassy in Nairobi was an easy target because a car bomb could be parked close by, they began to form a plan. Al Qaeda had begun developing the tactical expertise for such attacks months earlier, when some of its operatives—top military committee members and several operatives who were involved with the Kenya cell among them—were sent to Hezbollah training camps in Lebanon.[85]

The cell in Kenya experienced a series of disruptions that may in part account for the relatively long delay before the attack was actually carried out. The difficulties Bin Ladin began to encounter in Sudan in 1995, his move to Afghanistan in 1996, and the months spent establishing ties with the Taliban may also have played a role, as did Banshiri's accidental drowning.

In August 1997, the Kenya cell panicked. The London *Daily Telegraph* reported that Madani al Tayyib, formerly head of al Qaeda's finance committee, had turned himself over to the Saudi government. The article said (incorrectly) that the Saudis were sharing Tayyib's information with the U.S. and British authorities.[86] At almost the same time, cell members learned that U.S. and Kenyan agents had searched the Kenya residence of Wadi al Hage, who had become the new on-site manager in Nairobi, and that Hage's telephone was being tapped. Hage was a U.S. citizen who had worked with Bin Ladin in Afgha-

nistan in the 1980s, and in 1992 he went to Sudan to become one of al Qaeda's major financial operatives. When Hage returned to the United States to appear before a grand jury investigating Bin Ladin, the job of cell manager was taken over by Harun Fazul, a Kenyan citizen who had been in Bin Ladin's advance team to Sudan back in 1990. Harun faxed a report on the "security situation" to several sites, warning that "the crew members in East Africa is [*sic*] in grave danger" in part because "America knows . . . that the followers of [Bin Ladin] . . . carried out the operations to hit Americans in Somalia." The report provided instructions for avoiding further exposure.[87]

On February 23, 1998, Bin Ladin issued his public fatwa. The language had been in negotiation for some time, as part of the merger under way between Bin Ladin's organization and Zawahiri's Egyptian Islamic Jihad. Less than a month after the publication of the fatwa, the teams that were to carry out the embassy attacks were being pulled together in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam. The timing and content of their instructions indicate that the decision to launch the attacks had been made by the time the fatwa was issued.[88]

The next four months were spent setting up the teams in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam. Members of the cells rented residences, and purchased bomb-making materials and transport vehicles. At least one additional explosives expert was brought in to assist in putting the weapons together. In Nairobi, a hotel room was rented to put up some of the operatives. The suicide trucks were purchased shortly before the attack date.[89]

While this was taking place, Bin Ladin continued to push his public message. On May 7, the deputy head of al Qaeda's military committee, Mohammed Atef, faxed to Bin Ladin's London office a new fatwa issued by a group of sheikhs located in Afghanistan. A week later, it appeared in *Al Quds al Arabi*, the same Arabic-language newspaper in London that had first published Bin Ladin's February fatwa, and it conveyed the same message—the duty of Muslims to carry out holy war against the enemies of Islam and to expel the Americans from the Gulf region. Two weeks after that, Bin Ladin gave a videotaped interview to ABC News with the same slogans, adding that "we do not differentiate between those dressed in military uniforms and civilians; they are all targets in this *fatwa*."[90]

By August 1, members of the cells not directly involved in the attacks had mostly departed from East Africa. The remaining operatives prepared and assembled the bombs, and acquired the delivery vehicles. On August 4, they made one last casing run at the embassy in Nairobi. By the evening of August 6, all but the delivery teams and one or two persons assigned to remove the evidence trail had left East Africa. Back in Afghanistan, Bin Ladin and the al Qaeda leadership had left Kandahar for the countryside, expecting U.S. retaliation. Declarations taking credit for the attacks had already been faxed to the joint al Qaeda–Egyptian Islamic Jihad office in Baku, with instructions to stand by

for orders to "instantly" transmit them to *Al Quds al Arabi*. One proclaimed "the formation of the Islamic Army for the Liberation of the Holy Places," and two others—one for each embassy—announced that the attack had been carried out by a "company" of a "battalion" of this "Islamic Army."[91]

On the morning of August 7, the bomb-laden trucks drove into the embassies roughly five minutes apart—about 10:35 A.M. in Nairobi and 10:39 A.M. in Dar es Salaam. Shortly afterward, a phone call was placed from Baku to London. The previously prepared messages were then faxed to London.[92]

The attack on the U.S. embassy in Nairobi destroyed the embassy and killed 12 Americans and 201 others, almost all Kenyans. About 5,000 people were injured. The attack on the U.S. embassy in Dar es Salaam killed 11 more people, none of them Americans. Interviewed later about the deaths of the Africans, Bin Ladin answered that "when it becomes apparent that it would be impossible to repel these Americans without assaulting them, even if this involved the killing of Muslims, this is permissible under Islam." Asked if he had indeed masterminded these bombings, Bin Ladin said that the World Islamic Front for jihad against "Jews and Crusaders" had issued a "crystal clear" fatwa. If the instigation for jihad against the Jews and the Americans to liberate the holy places "is considered a crime," he said, "let history be a witness that I am a criminal."[93]

able targets were not promising. The experience of the previous week, he wrote, "has only confirmed the importance of defining a clearly articulated rationale for military action" that was effective as well as justified. But Slocombe worried that simply striking some of these available targets did not add up to an effective strategy.[60]

Defense officials at a lower level, in the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict, tried to meet Slocombe's objections. They developed a plan that, unlike Clarke's, called not for particular strikes but instead for a broad change in national strategy and in the institutional approach of the Department of Defense, implying a possible need for large-scale operations across the whole spectrum of U.S. military capabilities. It urged the department to become a lead agency in driving a national counterterrorism strategy forward, to "champion a national effort to take up the gauntlet that international terrorists have thrown at our feet." The authors expressed concern that "we have not fundamentally altered our philosophy or our approach" even though the terrorist threat had grown. They outlined an eight-part strategy "to be more proactive and aggressive." The future, they warned, might bring "horrific attacks," in which case "we will have no choice nor, unfortunately, will we have a plan." The assistant secretary, Allen Holmes, took the paper to Slocombe's chief deputy, Jan Lodal, but it went no further. Its lead author recalls being told by Holmes that Lodal thought it was too aggressive. Holmes cannot recall what was said, and Lodal cannot remember the episode or the paper at all.[61]

4.3 DIPLOMACY

After the August missile strikes, diplomatic options to press the Taliban seemed no more promising than military options. The United States had issued a formal warning to the Taliban, and also to Sudan, that they would be held directly responsible for any attacks on Americans, wherever they occurred, carried out by the Bin Ladin network as long as they continued to provide sanctuary to it.[62]

For a brief moment, it had seemed as if the August strikes might have shocked the Taliban into thinking of giving up Bin Ladin. On August 22, the reclusive Mullah Omar told a working-level State Department official that the strikes were counterproductive but added that he would be open to a dialogue with the United States on Bin Ladin's presence in Afghanistan.[63] Meeting in Islamabad with William Milam, the U.S. ambassador to Pakistan, Taliban delegates said it was against their culture to expel someone seeking sanctuary but asked what would happen to Bin Ladin should he be sent to Saudi Arabia.[64]

Yet in September 1998, when the Saudi emissary, Prince Turki, asked Mullah Omar whether he would keep his earlier promise to expel Bin Ladin, the

Taliban leader said no. Both sides shouted at each other, with Mullah Omar denouncing the Saudi government. Riyadh then suspended its diplomatic relations with the Taliban regime. (Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and the United Arab Emirates were the only countries that recognized the Taliban as the legitimate government of Afghanistan.) Crown Prince Abdullah told President Clinton and Vice President Gore about this when he visited Washington in late September. His account confirmed reports that the U.S. government had received independently.[65]

Other efforts with the Saudi government centered on improving intelligence sharing and permitting U.S. agents to interrogate prisoners in Saudi custody. The history of such cooperation in 1997 and 1998 had been strained.[66] Several officials told us, in particular, that the United States could not get direct access to an important al Qaeda financial official, Madani al Tayyib, who had been detained by the Saudi government in 1997.[67] Though U.S. officials repeatedly raised the issue, the Saudis provided limited information. In his September 1998 meeting with Crown Prince Abdullah, Vice President Gore, while thanking the Saudi government for their responsiveness, renewed the request for direct U.S. access to Tayyib.[68] The United States never obtained this access.

An NSC staff–led working group on terrorist finances asked the CIA in November 1998 to push again for access to Tayyib and to see "if it is possible to elaborate further on the ties between Usama bin Ladin and prominent individuals in Saudi Arabia, including especially the Bin Ladin family."[69] One result was two NSC-led interagency trips to Persian Gulf states in 1999 and 2000. During these trips the NSC, Treasury, and intelligence representatives spoke with Saudi officials, and later interviewed members of the Bin Ladin family, about Usama's inheritance. The Saudis and the Bin Ladin family eventually helped in this particular effort and U.S. officials ultimately learned that Bin Ladin was not financing al Qaeda out of a personal inheritance.[70] But Clarke was frustrated about how little the Agency knew, complaining to Berger that four years after "we first asked CIA to track down [Bin Ladin]'s finances" and two years after the creation of the CIA's Bin Ladin unit, the Agency said it could only guess at how much aid Bin Ladin gave to terrorist groups, what were the main sources of his budget, or how he moved his money.[71]

The other diplomatic route to get at Bin Ladin in Afghanistan ran through Islamabad. In the summer before the embassy bombings, the State Department had been heavily focused on rising tensions between India and Pakistan and did not aggressively challenge Pakistan on Afghanistan and Bin Ladin. But State Department counterterrorism officials wanted a stronger position; the department's acting counterterrorism coordinator advised Secretary Albright to designate Pakistan as a state sponsor of terrorism, noting that despite high-level Pakistani assurances, the country's military intelligence service continued "activities in support of international terrorism" by supporting attacks on civilian targets in Kashmir. This recommendation was opposed by the State Department's South Asia bureau, which was concerned that it would damage already

sensitive relations with Pakistan in the wake of the May 1998 nuclear tests by both Pakistan and India. Secretary Albright rejected the recommendation on August 5, 1998, just two days before the embassy bombings.[72] She told us that, in general, putting the Pakistanis on the terrorist list would eliminate any influence the United States had over them.[73] In October, an NSC counterterrorism official noted that Pakistan's pro-Taliban military intelligence service had been training Kashmiri jihadists in one of the camps hit by U.S. missiles, leading to the death of Pakistanis.[74]

After flying to Nairobi and bringing home the coffins of the American dead, Secretary Albright increased the department's focus on counterterrorism. According to Ambassador Milam, the bombings were a "wake-up call," and he soon found himself spending 45 to 50 percent of his time working the Taliban–Bin Ladin portfolio.[75] But Pakistan's military intelligence service, known as the ISID (Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate), was the Taliban's primary patron, which made progress difficult.

Additional pressure on the Pakistanis—beyond demands to press the Taliban on Bin Ladin—seemed unattractive to most officials of the State Department. Congressional sanctions punishing Pakistan for possessing nuclear arms prevented the administration from offering incentives to Islamabad.[76] In the words of Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott, Washington's Pakistan policy was "stick-heavy." Talbott felt that the only remaining sticks were additional sanctions that would have bankrupted the Pakistanis, a dangerous move that could have brought "total chaos" to a nuclear-armed country with a significant number of Islamic radicals.[77]

The Saudi government, which had a long and close relationship with Pakistan and provided it oil on generous terms, was already pressing Sharif with regard to the Taliban and Bin Ladin. A senior State Department official concluded that Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah put "a tremendous amount of heat" on the Pakistani prime minister during the prince's October 1998 visit to Pakistan.[78]

The State Department urged President Clinton to engage the Pakistanis. Accepting this advice, President Clinton invited Sharif to Washington, where they talked mostly about India but also discussed Bin Ladin. After Sharif went home, the President called him and raised the Bin Ladin subject again. This effort elicited from Sharif a promise to talk with the Taliban.[79]

Mullah Omar's position showed no sign of softening. One intelligence report passed to Berger by the NSC staff quoted Bin Ladin as saying that Mullah Omar had given him a completely free hand to act in any country, though asking that he not claim responsibility for attacks in Pakistan or Saudi Arabia. Bin Ladin was described as grabbing his beard and saying emotionally, "By Allah, by God, the Americans will still be amazed. The so-called United States will suffer the same fate as the Russians. Their state will collapse, too."[80]

Debate in the State Department intensified after December 1998, when Michael Sheehan became counterterrorism coordinator. A onetime special

forces officer, he had worked with Albright when she was ambassador to the United Nations and had served on the NSC staff with Clarke. He shared Clarke's obsession with terrorism, and had little hesitation about locking horns with the regional bureaus. Through every available channel, he repeated the earlier warning to the Taliban of the possible dire consequences—including military strikes—if Bin Ladin remained their guest and conducted additional attacks. Within the department, he argued for designating the Taliban regime a state sponsor of terrorism. This was technically difficult to do, for calling it a state would be tantamount to diplomatic recognition, which the United States had thus far withheld. But Sheehan urged the use of any available weapon against the Taliban. He told us that he thought he was regarded in the department as "a one-note Johnny nutcase."[81]

In early 1999, the State Department's counterterrorism office proposed a comprehensive diplomatic strategy for all states involved in the Afghanistan problem, including Pakistan. It specified both carrots and hard-hitting sticks—among them, certifying Pakistan as uncooperative on terrorism. Albright said the original carrots and sticks listed in a decision paper for principals may not have been used as "described on paper" but added that they were used in other ways or in varying degrees. But the paper's author, Ambassador Sheehan, was frustrated and complained to us that the original plan "had been watered down to the point that nothing was then done with it."[82]

The cautiousness of the South Asia bureau was reinforced when, in May 1999, Pakistani troops were discovered to have infiltrated into an especially mountainous area of Kashmir. A limited war began between India and Pakistan, euphemistically called the "Kargil crisis," as India tried to drive the Pakistani forces out. Patience with Pakistan was wearing thin, inside both the State Department and the NSC. Bruce Riedel, the NSC staff member responsible for Pakistan, wrote Berger that Islamabad was "behaving as a rogue state in two areas—backing Taliban/UBL terror and provoking war with India."[83]

Discussion within the Clinton administration on Afghanistan then concentrated on two main alternatives. The first, championed by Riedel and Assistant Secretary of State Karl Inderfurth, was to undertake a major diplomatic effort to end the Afghan civil war and install a national unity government. The second, favored by Sheehan, Clarke, and the CIA, called for labeling the Taliban a terrorist group and ultimately funneling secret aid to its chief foe, the Northern Alliance. This dispute would go back and forth throughout 1999 and ultimately become entangled with debate about enlisting the Northern Alliance as an ally for covert action.[84]

Another diplomatic option may have been available: nurturing Afghan exile groups as a possible moderate governing alternative to the Taliban. In late 1999, Washington provided some support for talks among the leaders of exile Afghan groups, including the ousted Rome-based King Zahir Shah and Hamid Karzai, about bolstering anti-Taliban forces inside Afghanistan and linking the

Northern Alliance with Pashtun groups. One U.S. diplomat later told us that the exile groups were not ready to move forward and that coordinating fractious groups residing in Bonn, Rome, and Cyprus proved extremely difficult.[85]

Frustrated by the Taliban's resistance, two senior State Department officials suggested asking the Saudis to offer the Taliban $250 million for Bin Ladin. Clarke opposed having the United States facilitate a "huge grant to a regime as heinous as the Taliban" and suggested that the idea might not seem attractive to either Secretary Albright or First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton—both critics of the Taliban's record on women's rights.[86] The proposal seems to have quietly died.

Within the State Department, some officials delayed Sheehan and Clarke's push either to designate Taliban-controlled Afghanistan as a state sponsor of terrorism or to designate the regime as a foreign terrorist organization (thereby avoiding the issue of whether to recognize the Taliban as Afghanistan's government). Sheehan and Clarke prevailed in July 1999, when President Clinton issued an executive order effectively declaring the Taliban regime a state sponsor of terrorism.[87] In October, a UN Security Council Resolution championed by the United States added economic and travel sanctions.[88]

With UN sanctions set to come into effect in November, Clarke wrote Berger that "the Taliban appear to be up to something."[89] Mullah Omar had shuffled his "cabinet" and hinted at Bin Ladin's possible departure. Clarke's staff thought his most likely destination would be Somalia; Chechnya seemed less appealing with Russia on the offensive. Clarke commented that Iraq and Libya had previously discussed hosting Bin Ladin, though he and his staff had their doubts that Bin Ladin would trust secular Arab dictators such as Saddam Hussein or Muammar Qadhafi. Clarke also raised the "remote possibility" of Yemen, which offered vast uncontrolled spaces. In November, the CSG discussed whether the sanctions had rattled the Taliban, who seemed "to be looking for a face-saving way out of the Bin Ladin issue."[90]

In fact none of the outside pressure had any visible effect on Mullah Omar, who was unconcerned about commerce with the outside world. Omar had virtually no diplomatic contact with the West, since he refused to meet with non-Muslims. The United States learned that at the end of 1999, the Taliban Council of Ministers unanimously reaffirmed that their regime would stick by Bin Ladin. Relations between Bin Ladin and the Taliban leadership were sometimes tense, but the foundation was deep and personal.[91] Indeed, Mullah Omar had executed at least one subordinate who opposed his pro–Bin Ladin policy.[92]

The United States would try tougher sanctions in 2000. Working with Russia (a country involved in an ongoing campaign against Chechen separatists, some of whom received support from Bin Ladin), the United States persuaded the United Nations to adopt Security Council Resolution 1333, which included an embargo on arms shipments to the Taliban, in December 2000.[93] The aim of the resolution was to hit the Taliban where it was most sensitive—

on the battlefield against the Northern Alliance—and criminalize giving them arms and providing military "advisers," which Pakistan had been doing.[94] Yet the passage of the resolution had no visible effect on Omar, nor did it halt the flow of Pakistani military assistance to the Taliban.[95]

U.S. authorities had continued to try to get cooperation from Pakistan in pressing the Taliban to stop sheltering Bin Ladin. President Clinton contacted Sharif again in June 1999, partly to discuss the crisis with India but also to urge Sharif, "in the strongest way I can," to persuade the Taliban to expel Bin Ladin.[96] The President suggested that Pakistan use its control over oil supplies to the Taliban and over Afghan imports through Karachi. Sharif suggested instead that Pakistani forces might try to capture Bin Ladin themselves. Though no one in Washington thought this was likely to happen, President Clinton gave the idea his blessing.[97]

The President met with Sharif in Washington in early July. Though the meeting's main purpose was to seal the Pakistani prime minister's decision to withdraw from the Kargil confrontation in Kashmir, President Clinton complained about Pakistan's failure to take effective action with respect to the Taliban and Bin Ladin. Sharif came back to his earlier proposal and won approval for U.S. assistance in training a Pakistani special forces team for an operation against Bin Ladin. Then, in October 1999, Sharif was deposed by General Pervez Musharraf, and the plan was terminated.[98]

At first, the Clinton administration hoped that Musharraf's coup might create an opening for action on Bin Ladin. A career military officer, Musharraf was thought to have the political strength to confront and influence the Pakistani military intelligence service, which supported the Taliban. Berger speculated that the new government might use Bin Ladin to buy concessions from Washington, but neither side ever developed such an initiative.[99]

By late 1999, more than a year after the embassy bombings, diplomacy with Pakistan, like the efforts with the Taliban, had, according to Under Secretary of State Thomas Pickering, "borne little fruit."[100]

4.4 COVERT ACTION

As part of the response to the embassy bombings, President Clinton signed a Memorandum of Notification authorizing the CIA to let its tribal assets use force to capture Bin Ladin and his associates. CIA officers told the tribals that the plan to capture Bin Ladin, which had been "turned off" three months earlier, was back on. The memorandum also authorized the CIA to attack Bin Ladin in other ways. Also, an executive order froze financial holdings that could be linked to Bin Ladin.[101]

The counterterrorism staff at CIA thought it was gaining a better understanding of Bin Ladin and his network. In preparation for briefing the Senate