

How the CIA created Osama bin Laden

A Research

“Throughout the world ... its agents, client states and satellites are on the defensive — on the moral defensive, the intellectual defensive, and the political and economic defensive. Freedom movements arise and assert themselves. They're doing so on almost every continent populated by man — in the hills of Afghanistan, in Angola, in Kampuchea, in Central America ... [They are] freedom fighters.”

Is this a call to *jihad* (holy war) taken from one of Islamic fundamentalist Osama bin Laden's notorious *fatwas*? Or perhaps a communique issued by the repressive Taliban regime in Kabul?

In fact, this glowing praise of the murderous exploits of today's supporters of arch-terrorist bin Laden and his Taliban collaborators, and their holy war against the “evil empire”, was issued by US President Ronald Reagan on March 8, 1985. The “evil empire” was the Soviet Union, as well as Third World movements fighting US-backed colonialism, apartheid and dictatorship.

How things change. In the aftermath of a series of terrorist atrocities — the most despicable being the mass murder of more than 6000 working people in New York and Washington on September 11 — bin Laden the “freedom fighter” is now lambasted by US leaders and the Western mass media as a “terrorist mastermind” and an “evil-doer”.

Yet the US government refuses to admit its central role in creating the vicious movement that spawned bin Laden, the Taliban and Islamic fundamentalist terrorists that plague Algeria and Egypt — and perhaps the disaster that befell New York.

The mass media has also downplayed the origins of bin Laden and his toxic brand of Islamic fundamentalism.

Mujaheddin

In April 1978, the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) seized power in Afghanistan in reaction to a crackdown against the party by that country's repressive government.

The PDPA was committed to a radical land reform that favoured the peasants, trade union rights, an expansion of education and social services, equality for women and the separation of church and state. The PDPA also supported strengthening Afghanistan's relationship with the Soviet Union.

Such policies enraged the wealthy semi-feudal landlords, the Muslim religious establishment (many mullahs were also big landlords) and the tribal chiefs. They immediately began organizing resistance to the government's progressive policies, under the guise of defending Islam.

Washington, fearing the spread of Soviet influence (and worse the new government's radical example) to its allies in Pakistan, Iran and the Gulf states, immediately offered support to the Afghan *mujaheddin*, as the “contra” force was known.

Following an internal PDPA power struggle in December 1979 which toppled Afghanistan's leader, thousands of Soviet troops entered the country to prevent the new government's fall. This only galvanized the disparate fundamentalist factions. Their reactionary *jihad* now gained legitimacy as a “national liberation” struggle in the eyes of many Afghans.

The Soviet Union was eventually to withdraw from Afghanistan in 1989 and the *mujaheddin* captured the capital, Kabul, in 1992.

Between 1978 and 1992, the US government poured at least US\$6 billion (some estimates range as high as \$20 billion) worth of arms, training and funds to prop up the *mujaheddin* factions. Other Western governments, as well as oil-rich Saudi Arabia, kicked in as much again. Wealthy Arab fanatics, like Osama bin Laden, provided millions more.

Washington's policy in Afghanistan was shaped by US President Jimmy Carter's national security advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski, and was continued by his successors. His plan went far beyond simply forcing Soviet troops to withdraw; rather it aimed to foster an international movement to spread Islamic fanaticism into the Muslim Central Asian Soviet republics to destabilize the Soviet Union.

Brzezinski's grand plan coincided with Pakistan military dictator General Zia ul-Haq's own ambitions to dominate the region. US-run Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe beamed Islamic fundamentalist tirades across Central Asia (while paradoxically denouncing the “Islamic revolution” that toppled the pro-US Shah of Iran in 1979).

Washington's favoured *mujaheddin* faction was one of the most extreme, led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. The West's distaste for terrorism did not apply to this unsavory “freedom fighter”. Hekmatyar was notorious in the 1970's for throwing acid in the faces of women who refused to wear the veil.

After the *mujaheddin* took Kabul in 1992, Hekmatyar's forces rained US-supplied missiles and rockets on that city — killing at least 2000 civilians — until the new government agreed to give him the post of prime minister. Osama bin Laden was a close associate of Hekmatyar and his faction.

Hekmatyar was also infamous for his side trade in the cultivation and trafficking in opium. Backing of the *mujaheddin* from the CIA coincided with a boom in the drug business. Within two years, the Afghanistan-Pakistan border was the world's single largest source of heroin, supplying 60% of US drug users.

In 1995, the former director of the CIA's operation in Afghanistan was unrepentant about the explosion in the flow of drugs: “Our main mission was to do as much damage as possible to the Soviets... There was a fallout in terms of drugs, yes. But the main objective was accomplished. The Soviets left Afghanistan.”

Made in the USA

According to Ahmed Rashid, a correspondent for the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, in 1986 CIA chief William Casey committed CIA support to a long-standing ISI proposal to recruit from around the world to join the Afghan jihad. At least 100,000 Islamic militants flocked to Pakistan between 1982 and 1992 (some 60,000 attended fundamentalist schools in Pakistan without necessarily taking part in the fighting).

John Cooley, a former journalist with the US ABC television network and author of *Unholy Wars: Afghanistan, America and International Terrorism*, has revealed that Muslims recruited in the US for the *mujaheddin* were sent to Camp Peary, the CIA's spy training camp in Virginia, where young Afghans, Arabs from Egypt and Jordan, and even some African-American "black Muslims" were taught "sabotage skills".

The November 1, 1998, British *Independent* reported that one of those charged with the 1998 bombings of US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, Ali Mohammed, had trained "bin Laden's operatives" in 1989.

These "operatives" were recruited at the al Kifah Refugee Centre in Brooklyn, New York, given paramilitary training in the New York area and then sent to Afghanistan with US assistance to join Hekmatyar's forces. Mohammed was a member of the US army's elite Green Berets.

The program, reported the *Independent*, was part of a Washington-approved plan called "Operation Cyclone".

In Pakistan, recruits, money and equipment were distributed to the *mujaheddin* factions by an organization known as Maktab al Khidamar (Office of Services — MAK).

MAK was a front for Pakistan's CIA, the Inter-Service Intelligence Directorate. The ISI was the first recipient of the vast bulk of CIA and Saudi Arabian covert assistance for the Afghan contras. Bin Laden was one of three people who ran MAK. In 1989, he took overall charge of MAK.

Among those trained by Mohammed were El Sayyid Nosair, who was jailed in 1995 for killing Israeli rightist Rabbi Meir Kahane and plotting with others to bomb New York landmarks, including the World Trade Center in 1993.

The *Independent* also suggested that Shiekh Omar Abdel-Rahman, an Egyptian religious leader also jailed for the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center, was also part of Operation Cyclone. He entered the US in 1990 with the CIA's approval. A confidential CIA report concluded that the agency was "partly culpable" for the 1993 World Trade Center blast, the *Independent* reported.

Bin Laden

Osama bin Laden, one of 20 sons of a billionaire construction magnate, arrived in Afghanistan to join the *jihad* in 1980. An austere religious fanatic and business tycoon, bin Laden specialized in recruiting, financing and training the estimated 35,000 non-Afghan mercenaries who joined the *mujaheddin*.

The bin Laden family is a prominent pillar of the Saudi Arabian ruling class, with close personal, financial and political ties to that country's pro-US royal family.

Bin Laden senior was appointed Saudi Arabia's minister of public works as a favour by King Faisal. The new minister awarded his own construction companies lucrative contracts to rebuild Islam's holiest mosques in Mecca and Medina. In the process, the bin Laden family company in 1966 became the world's largest private construction company.

Osama bin Laden's father died in 1968. Until 1994, he had access to the dividends from this ill-gotten business empire.

(Bin Laden junior's oft-quoted personal fortune of US\$200-300 million has been arrived at by the US State Department by dividing today's value of the bin Laden family net worth — estimated to be US\$5 billion — by the number of bin Laden senior's sons. A fact rarely mentioned is that in 1994 the bin Laden family disowned Osama and took control of his share.)

Osama's military and business adventures in Afghanistan had the blessing of the bin Laden dynasty and the reactionary Saudi Arabian regime. His close working relationship with MAK also meant that the CIA was fully aware of his activities.

Milt Bearden, the CIA's station chief in Pakistan from 1986 to 1989, admitted to the January 24, 2000, *New Yorker* that while he never personally met bin Laden, “Did I know that he was out there? Yes, I did ... [Guys like] bin Laden were bringing \$20-\$25 million a month from other Saudis and Gulf Arabs to underwrite the war. And that is a lot of money. It's an extra \$200-\$300 million a year. And this is what bin Laden did.”

In 1986, bin Laden brought heavy construction equipment from Saudi Arabia to Afghanistan. Using his extensive knowledge of construction techniques (he has a degree in civil engineering), he built “training camps”, some dug deep into the sides of mountains, and built roads to reach them.

These camps, now dubbed “terrorist universities” by Washington, were built in collaboration with the ISI and the CIA. The Afghan contra fighters, including the tens of thousands of mercenaries recruited and paid for by bin Laden, were armed by the CIA. Pakistan, the US and Britain provided military trainers.

Tom Carew, a former British SAS soldier who secretly fought for the *mujaheddin* told the August 13, 2000, *British Observer*, “The Americans were keen to teach the Afghans the techniques of urban terrorism — car bombing and so on — so that they could strike at the Russians in major towns ... Many of them are now using their knowledge and expertise to wage war on everything they hate.”

Al Qaeda (the Base), bin Laden's organization, was established in 1987-88 to run the camps and other business enterprises. It is a tightly-run capitalist holding company — albeit one that integrates the operations of a mercenary force and related logistical services with “legitimate” business operations.

Bin Laden has simply continued to do the job he was asked to do in Afghanistan during the 1980's — fund, feed and train mercenaries. All that has changed is his primary customer.

Then it was the ISI and, behind the scenes, the CIA. Today, his services are utilized primarily by the reactionary Taliban regime.

Bin Laden only became a “terrorist” in US eyes when he fell out with the Saudi royal family over its decision to allow more than 540,000 US troops to be stationed on Saudi soil following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.

When thousands of US troops remained in Saudi Arabia after the end of the Gulf War, bin Laden's anger turned to outright opposition. He declared that Saudi Arabia and other regimes — such as Egypt — in the Middle East were puppets of the US, just as the PDPA government of Afghanistan had been a puppet of the Soviet Union.

He called for the overthrow of these client regimes and declared it the duty of all Muslims to drive the US out of the Gulf states. In 1994, he was stripped of his Saudi citizenship and forced to leave the country. His assets there were frozen.

After a period in Sudan, he returned to Afghanistan in May 1996. He refurbished the camps he had helped build during the Afghan war and offered the facilities and services — and thousands of his mercenaries — to the Taliban, which took power that September.

Today, bin Laden's private army of non-Afghan religious fanatics is a key prop of the Taliban regime.

Prior to the devastating September 11 attack on the twin towers of World Trade Center, US ruling-class figures remained unrepentant about the consequences of their dirty deals with the likes of bin Laden, Hekmatyar and the Taliban. Since the awful attack, they have been downright hypocritical.

In an August 28, 1998, report posted on MSNBC, Michael Moran quotes Senator Orrin Hatch, who was a senior member of the Senate Intelligence Committee which approved US dealings with the *mujaheddin*, as saying he would make “the same call again”, even knowing what bin Laden would become.

“It was worth it. Those were very important, pivotal matters that played an important role in the downfall of the Soviet Union.”

Hatch today is one of the most gung-ho voices demanding military retaliation.

Another face that has appeared repeatedly on television screens since the attack has been Vincent Cannistrano, described as a former CIA chief of “counter-terrorism operations”.

Cannistrano is certainly an expert on terrorists like bin Laden, because he directed their “work”. He was in charge of the CIA-backed Nicaraguan contras during the early 1980's. In 1984, he became the supervisor of covert aid to the Afghan *mujaheddin* for the US National Security Council.

The last word goes to Zbigniew Brzezinski: “What was more important in the world view of history? The Taliban or the fall of the Soviet Empire? A few stirred up Muslims or the liberation of Central Europe and the end of the Cold War?”

CIA provided funds to financiers of Sept 11 bomber

Bush restricts access to Presidential Records

"[The FBI] were prevented for political reasons from carrying out full investigations into members of the Bin Laden family in the US before the terrorist attacks of September 11"

London Guardian, 7 November 2001

FBI Deputy Director resigned in protest in July

One of the consequences of the mass FBI investigation into the September 11 bombings is that its hunt for suspects has inevitably lead to many trails overseas, and as a result directly into territory which is more typically occupied by the CIA.

In so doing it has become apparent that the alleged leader of the September 11 suicide bombers, Mohammed Atta, was provided with finance on the instructions of the head of the Pakistan Intelligence Service (ISI). The ISI has in turn had access to considerable funds from the CIA for the purpose of supporting militant groups in Afghanistan. According to one account provided earlier in the year from a regional policy expert with access to CIA officials, much of the spending of this money has been left to the discretion of the ISI itself with whom ***"The CIA still has close links"***.

Although these terrorist funding revelations were originally revealed by the Times of India (where favourable coverage of Pakistani affairs is not guaranteed), the situation has also been briefly reported in the Pakistani press as well as the Wall St Journal. The FBI's discovery of the situation involved information provided by the Indian intelligence services whose interest in the matter will have made the subject difficult for the US and Pakistani governments to subsequently sweep under the carpet. The ISI director-general concerned has therefore now been 'retired'.

The Times of India comments starkly in its story of 9 October that: ***"A direct link between ISI and the WTC attack could have enormous repercussions..... Evidence of a larger conspiracy could shake US confidence in Pakistan's ability to participate in the anti-terrorism coalition."***

But do the implications of the situation in fact spread well beyond the questionable loyalty of America's 'allies' in the war against terrorism? The prospect of the US's own covert activities in Pakistan providing funds for the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon will undoubtedly prove too troubling for many to wish to contemplate.

Such a scenario would, however, at the very least provide a clear example of what are the ultimate consequences of the US's continual malevolent interference in the affairs of other countries as it seeks to spread its economic influence into new regions of the world following the collapse of the Soviet empire. In this case access to the oil rich Caspian Sea region is the principal factor lying behind America's cynical support of violent factions in

Afghanistan, of which the murderous Northern Alliance are only the latest candidates of convenience (see 'Killer dons mantle of hero', *London Times*, 12 November 2001)

Many have questioned how it was possible that US intelligence failed to stop the attacks [*] on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon despite the advance warnings. Now it appears CIA funds may even have helped finance them.

But that is not all. The French Newspaper *Le Figaro* reported 11 October that the CIA had met with Osama Bin Laden in Dubai as recently as July this year (Bin Laden's apparent ten day stay at the American hospital in Dubai has also been commented on by the *London Times*. It appears neither *Le Figaro* nor the *Times* have been allowed to question Dr Terry Callaway, the Canadian surgeon reported to have been treating Bin Laden at the hospital for a kidney disorder).

During the course of earlier investigations into to embassy bombings in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, according to *Le Figaro*, **"the FBI discovered 'financing agreements' that the CIA had been developing with its 'Arab friends' for years"** and that **"The [Bin Laden-CIA] Dubai meeting is then within the logic of 'a certain American policy'"**.

Le Figaro also reports that French intelligence services had confirmed that **"very specific information was transmitted to the CIA with respect to terrorist attacks against American interests around the world, including on US soil. A DST report dated 7 September enumerates all the intelligence, and specifies that the order to attack was to come from Afghanistan."** Moreover the Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Airforce, General Anatoli Kornukov, told the press 12 September that **"Generally it is impossible to carry out an act of terror on the scenario which was used in the USA yesterday. We had such facts too. As soon as something like that happens here, I am reported about that right away and in a minute we are all up."**

If there is any truth in these reports then the question arises as to why the FBI is not making more progress in pursuing its investigations into the events surrounding September 11. According to the *London Times* (3 November 2001: 'FBI arrogance and secrecy dismays US') the FBI has now **"exhausted most of its leads"** and is **"convinced that the key to al-Qaeda operations lay in Germany"**. Unfortunately for the FBI arrests made by the security services in Germany and other European countries based on these FBI leads have shown that **"in almost every case these cells knew nothing about the September 11 hijacks"**.

The *Times* also reports that: **"The main suspect in US custody ... had been picked up by immigration authorities in August but the FBI refused to let its field agents search his laptop computer which contained clues as to the September 11 mission....."**. The *Times* further points out that despite 7,000 FBI agents on the case: **"Nobody has yet been charged over the attacks on America"**, and in a separate article in the same edition, that **"60 per cent of Muslims in the Middle East believe that Israeli or US intelligence services were responsible for the September attacks"** (3 November 2001: 'Blair loses his way on road to Damascus').

According to the BBC this perception has been encouraged by the fact that: **"The FBI was quick to release a list of alleged hijackers, but some of them turned up alive and well in the Arab world."** (3 November 2001, 'Bin Laden popular in Saudi Arabia').

A subsequent report by the London *Guardian* (7 November, 2001, 'FBI claims Bin Laden inquiry was frustrated') reveals that **"FBI and military intelligence officials in Washington say they were prevented for political reasons from carrying out full investigations into members of the Bin Laden family in the US before the terrorist attacks of September 11"** and that **"the restrictions became worse after the Bush administration took over this year"**. The intelligence agencies had been told to 'back off' from investigations involving **"other members of the Bin Laden family, the Saudi royals, and possible Saudi links to the acquisition of nuclear weapons by Pakistan"**.

The evening before the BBC *Newsnight* programme had posed the critical question **'Has someone been sitting on the FBI?'**. The programme interviewed US national security expert Joe Trento, author of *'Secret History of the CIA'*, into whose hands confidential FBI documentation relating to the Bin Laden family had fallen. Another interviewee on the programme states that **"There is a hidden agenda at the very highest levels of our government"**.

In a follow up article entitled **'Bush took FBI agents off Laden family trail'** the *Times of India* 7 November tells its readers that the FBI document featured by *Newsnight* had **"alleged that the cynicism of the American establishment and 'connections between the CIA and Saudi Arabia and the Bush men and bin Ladens' may have been the real cause of the deaths of thousands in the World Trade Centre attacks."**

Earlier the London *Independent* had reported (10 October) that **"To the embarrassment of investigators, it has also emerged that the firm used to buy many of the 'put' options - where a trader, in effect, bets on a share price fall - on United Airlines stock was headed until 1998 by 'Buzzy' Krongard, now executive director of the CIA."** United Airlines was one of the carriers whose aircraft were used in the attacks on the US and in whose shares there was highly unusual trading just before September 11 indicating prior knowledge of the strikes.

It is already known that prior warnings of the impending strikes were provided to the CIA by Israeli ([Daily Telegraph, London, 16 September 2001](#)) and other intelligence services around the world . It is interesting, therefore, that in inverse fashion the *Independent* cautiously raises the concept of an unspeakable scenario by meekly asserting that **"There is no suggestion that Mr Krongard had advance knowledge of the attacks"**.

The *Independent* offers no alternative suggestion as to who might have placed the 'put' options. It merely observes that those who profited from the exercise had not collected their \$2.5m gains on the trade because they **"failed to foresee that the first response of the US stock markets to the disaster was to suspend all trading for four days, thereby denying them the chance of cashing in their profits"**. However, the CIA is known to have well established connections at the highest levels within Wall Street ('The CIA's Wall Street connections' KPFA 94.1 FM Radio, Berkeley, CA, October 12, 2001).

Given these wider circumstances; given his agency's intimate links with the intelligence services in Pakistan; and given the latter's direct linkage to the September 11 suicide attacks, it seems that the time is now well overdue to get the Director of the CIA, George Tenet, into the witness box. As Time magazine put it on 24 September: **"At some point, when the nation has moved beyond grief and vengefulness, CIA Director George**

Tenet and FBI Director Robert Mueller will have to explain how the \$10 billion-a-year anti-terror system failed...."

But where does the buck stop? More recently two members of the US House of Representatives Committee on Government Reform have written to George W. Bush (6 November 2001) expressing their dismay at the President's sudden change to the Executive Order governing the release of Presidential records. Bush's new order places fresh restrictions on public access to such records. According to the letter's authors the new Executive Order even goes so far as to allow ***'the sitting President to withhold the records of a former President, even if that President wants those records released'***.

Just exactly why should these extraordinary steps be introduced at this time in a country which claims to be unremittingly engaged in the defence of 'democracy' and 'freedom' on behalf of the 'civilised' world? The title of an article in the US newspaper the *'Seattle Post-Intelligencer'* 8 November - "Is Bush trying to protect dad?" - may provide a clue given the President's father's personal links to the CIA and the Bin Laden family. An important element of these links revolve around international 'defence' contracts pursued by Bush senior on behalf of the Carlyle group based in Washington DC (which now claims to be the largest private equity firm in the world and has also signed up former British Prime Minister John Major according to the London *Guardian* 31 October).

Equally to the point, the new Executive order means ***"that Mr Bush's personal papers detailing the decision-making process in the current war on terrorism could remain secret in perpetuity"*** ('Bush blocks public access to White House papers', *London Guardian*, 2 November 2001). This is in stark contrast to those documents recently unearthed which reveal that Franklin Roosevelt knew of the impending Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour well in advance and did not stand in its way. President Roosevelt's purpose was to allow an outrage of sufficient magnitude to provoke an unwilling US public into accepting America's entry into the second world war.

We have now moved into the next century but how much has the world of power politics really changed?

It is now known that the FBI and the military intelligence services have already been obstructed from within the US administration from carrying out their investigations into the Bin Laden family ***'for political reasons'***. What is especially ominous in all of this is that moves characteristic of the introduction of a police state are now afoot to further consolidate the CIA's control of US 'intelligence'. These moves arise from a high level proposal that would incorporate the Pentagon's own three largest intelligence-collection agencies within the CIA (*Sydney Morning Herald* 9 November 2001 'CIA to watch the watchers in intelligence overhaul'). The three Pentagon agencies have traditionally been under the direction of the secretary of defence (London *Guardian*, 'Row looms on CIA intelligence coup', 9 November).

Just prior to the arrival of these deeply totalitarian steps unprecedented legal action by Congress was already underway against Vice-President Cheney for his refusal to disclose records of his energy task force that had met in secret with major contributors to the Bush Presidential campaign in order to discuss US energy policy. The events of September 11 have, however, now served as an opportunity to conveniently squash these efforts to get at the truth. Such efforts are now vilified as 'unpatriotic'.

The Cheney situation (which may well be related to concealment of US energy strategy in relation to Afghanistan and the Caspian Sea region), together with the President's efforts to restrict public access to White House records, makes it necessary to ask whether the 'war against terrorism' is quietly being used to execute an escape manoeuvre on behalf of a government whose very legitimacy might otherwise be seriously in question by now. That is, were it not for the war smoke screen. ("***The former Vice-President [Al Gore] won 51 million votes in last year's election, more than any American in history save Ronald Reagan. More than that, a comprehensive study of the Florida contest confirmed this week that Mr Gore would be occupying the Oval Office if he had found a way of triggering a state-wide recount of rejected ballots.***" - London Times, 17 November, 'Nearly man who should be President')

There is, of course, nothing like a war to keep domestic scrutiny at bay. Meanwhile the BBC quotes a former Pakistani diplomat's knowledge as far back as July of a pre-planned US attack on Afghanistan scheduled for October. According to the London *Guardian* 22 September the matter was raised by US representatives at a meeting in Berlin convened by the UN secretary general's special representative on Afghanistan, Francesc Vendrell, and attended by US, Russian, Iranian and Pakistani former diplomats.

Until some credible answers are provided to a large number of searching and disturbing questions about the activities and intentions of the Bush Administration, American citizens should switch off CNN, start reading the foreign press, and consider more carefully the import of what is going on around them. They should consider what their most patriotic course of action might be in these unexpected circumstances, and they should not flinch from asking the very questions that the US media will not pose on their behalf. The very survival of the 'American dream' depends on those questions being asked.

Patriotism yes. Blind patriotism no. What on earth do the American people suppose is really going on?

As a Los Angeles Times syndicated cartoon presented it 17 November under the title "***Is Bush Trumanesque or Nixonesque?***" - (Voice of Truman to Bush): '*Pay no attention to your critics. Do what is best for your country...*'. (Voice of Nixon to Bush): '*...After making sure that all the cheap, political advantage has been wrung out of it first*'."

The London [Times](#) 13 November reminds its readers that the US's new found allies in the 'war against terrorism', the Northern Alliance killed 25,000 mostly civilians during a previous battle over Kabul in the 1990s and in the process "***systematically looting and raping women***". In another assault "***there were reports of prisoners roasted alive in metal containers in the sun, and others skinned alive***". In other words, the Northern Alliance are a group of terrorists of a standard to rival the Taliban. Or as the [Mirror put it 14 November](#) "***One lot of barbarians has displaced another. Is this really what the allies want?....The war against terrorism is not over. It has simply entered a new and infinitely more complex, phase... Meanwhile, the menace of international terrorism is still with us. The bombs have not killed it.***"

Either you are for terrorism or you are against it - but only when it's convenient it would seem in the case of the US and NATO. Which country will be bombed next after Afghanistan? The London [Times](#) 15 November reports the discovery of nuclear weapon technology documentation in Kabul following the departure of the Taliban. This was

documentation **"which confirms the West's worst fears and raises the spectre of plans for an attack that would far exceed the September 11 atrocities in scale and gravity"**. How likely is it that such information is now only in the hands of one terrorist organisation following the break up of the Soviet Union and most recently the dispersal of key leaders of the Taliban into neighbouring countries?

The *Times* observes 16 November that **"Bin Laden realises that the obsession is with catching him, so that leaves a chance for his lesser-known associates"**. The prospect of members of al-Qaeda having now decamped to Pakistan and Turkmenistan does not offer much comfort. Despite US air supremacy over the country Pakistan has been allowed to fly senior members of the Taliban out of Afghanistan. When questioned as to why America was allowing such flights the leader of the Northern Alliance General Dawood replied: **"That is a question that you will have to put to the Americans."** (London Times, 16 November print version p3, article continued from p1 - online version excludes this question and response).

An assessment of how the US's predilection for providing covert succour to terrorist organisations for tactical gain (of which the Taliban has been only one) was provided by Professor Michel Chossudovsky of the University of Ottawa shortly after the September 11 attacks. Already further demonstrated in the west's hasty support for the Northern Alliance Professor Chossudovsky elucidates the potential for an unfolding quagmire scenario at a more strategic level in the longer term concluding that: **"In the wake of the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington the truth must prevail to prevent the Bush Administration together with its NATO partners from embarking upon a military adventure which threatens the future of humanity."** And the military adventure will not be just overseas.

In a move more reminiscent of a country undergoing a coup d'etat President Bush signed an order at the beginning of November that would allow foreigners accused of terrorism to be tried by a special military commission (*New York Times*, 15 November 'Seizing Dictatorial Power') . The order does not require approval from Congress and the trials would take place in greater secrecy than an ordinary criminal court, according to an *Associated Press* report 13 November. This means that any testimony given by foreign nationals which simultaneously exposed CIA complicity in fostering terrorists overseas - such as that which might be given by Bin Laden himself if captured - would be heard in secret.

Is the picture becoming clearer? Well here's a bit more: **"... in late September and early October, leaders of Pakistan's two Islamic parties negotiated bin Laden's extradition to Pakistan to stand trial for the September 11 attacks. The deal was that he would be held under house arrest in Peshawar. According to reports in Pakistan (and the Daily Telegraph), this had both bin Laden's approval and that of Mullah Omah, the Taliban leader.... Later, a US official said that 'casting our objectives too narrowly' risked 'a premature collapse of the international effort if by some luck chance Mr bin Laden was captured'....** (Daily [Mirror](#) 16 November 2001).

Contrary to their first impression the latter comments from the US official are indeed helpful, but only in the sense that they help clarify why it was that the US let Bin Laden go in Dubai back in July.

The piece from the Mirror continues by focusing on what has stemmed from this approach: ***"What the Afghani people got instead was 'American justice' - imposed by a president who, as well as denouncing international agreements on nuclear weapons, biological weapons, torture and global warming, has refused to sign up for an international court to try war criminals: the one place where bin Laden might be put on trial."*** And it's now not difficult to see why.

Back in the US ***"Hundreds of suspects, of mainly Middle Eastern origin, are being held in a New York jail but nobody has been charged"*** (London [Times](#) 17 November); anthrax attacks are a constant threat; and the Bush administration continues to splurge over \$1 billion per day on 'defence'.

With this monstrous background in mind it is worth reflecting on the long-standing nature of US sponsored violence in foreign lands as articulated by General Smedley Butler, one of the few Americans to be twice awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor, in a statement he made in the 1930s:

" War is just a racket. A racket is best described, I believe, as something that is not what it seems to the majority of people. Only a small inside group knows what it is about. It is conducted for the benefit of the very few at the expense of the masses. . .

I spent thirty-three years and four months in active military service as a member of this country's most agile military force, the Marine Corps. I served in all commissioned ranks from Second Lieutenant to Major-General. And during that period, I spent most of my time being a high class muscle-man for Big Business, for Wall Street and for the Bankers. In short, I was a racketeer, a gangster for capitalism. I suspected I was just part of a racket at the time. Now I am sure of it. Like all the members of the military profession, I never had a thought of my own until I left the service. ...

I helped make Mexico, especially Tampico, safe for American oil interests in 1914. I helped make Haiti and Cuba a decent place for the National City Bank boys to collect revenues in. I helped in the raping of half a dozen Central American republics for the benefits of Wall Street. The record of racketeering is long. I helped purify Nicaragua for the international banking house of Brown Brothers in 1909-1912 (where have I heard that name before?). I brought light to the Dominican Republic for American sugar interests in 1916. In China I helped to see to it that Standard Oil went its way unmolested....

Looking back on it, I feel that I could have given Al Capone a few hints. The best he could do was to operate his racket in three districts. I operated on three continents."

At the time General Smedley Butler made these remarks the threat of economic recession in the US had already set in (as indeed is the case today) and there had been plans by American corporations to overthrow President Franklin Roosevelt in a concealed coup d'etat, and to install a right wing government. Attempts were made to recruit General Smedley Butler, promising him an army of 500,000 men, unlimited financial backing, and favourable treatment by the media.

Roosevelt was to be pushed aside and the situation presented to the public as being the result of deteriorating personal health. Butler was told **"You know the American people will swallow that. We have got the newspapers"**. The coup, however, was foiled when the general revealed the details in testimony to the McCormack-Dickstein Congressional Committee.

In the light of this litany of unsavoury historical and contemporary ingredients it is useful to reflect on a more recent observation made by Bill Richardson, US energy secretary in 1998, on the importance of US influence over pipeline related developments in 'newly independent countries' (of which the Balkans were of particular topical interest at the time). Richardson's comments on Caspian oil reserves and their transit routes lucidly give the game away regarding America's enthusiasm for subsequent military intervention in Afghanistan: **"This is about America's energy security..... We've made a substantial political investment in the Caspian, and it's very important to us that both the pipeline map and the politics come out right"** (London [Guardian](#), 15 February 2001).

To further re-emphasise the oil and gas related geopolitical point, on 15 November the global news agency [Inter Press Service](#) reported from Paris that: **"Under the influence of U.S. oil companies, the government of George W. Bush initially blocked U.S. secret service investigations on terrorism, while it bargained with the Taliban the delivery of Osama bin Laden in exchange for political recognition and economic aid, two French intelligence analysts claim."** The report refers to the publication of a book last Wednesday in Paris entitled **"Bin Laden, la verite interdite"** ('Bin Laden, the forbidden truth').

The book reveals that the FBI's deputy director John O'Neill resigned in July in protest over the obstruction. With the strategic objective of securing access to oil and gas reserves in Central Asia one of the book's authors states: **"At one moment during the negotiations, the U.S. representatives told the Taliban, 'either you accept our offer of a carpet of gold, or we bury you under a carpet of bombs' "**.

The authors also draw a portrait of President Bush's closest aides, linking them to oil business. From the U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney, through the director of the National Security Council Condoleezza Rice, to the Ministers of Commerce and Energy, Donald Evans and Stanley Abraham, all have for long worked for U.S. oil companies. (And, as it happens, in a separate development following the start of the Afghan war Prime Minister Blair's 'closest and most trusted' adviser Anji Hunter has now left 10 Downing St in order to join British Petroleum).

With the London *Times* already reporting a related story on 3 September, it may not come as a complete surprise in these circumstances to learn that **"While the United States is relentlessly bombing Afghanistan with the official aim of getting Osama bin Laden, one of bin Laden's top collaborators is running a terrorist training camp in an area of [Kosovo](#) that is under U.S. control"** (*Executive Intelligence Review*, 2 November 'U.S. Protects Al-Qaeda Terrorists in Kosovo').

The Balkans are yet another region of key strategic energy importance as General Michael Jackson, commander of NATO forces in Macedonia, previously confided to the Italian daily, *Sole 24 Ore*, 13 April 1999: **"Today, the circumstances which we have created here have changed. Today, it is absolutely necessary to guarantee the stability of**

Macedonia and its entry into NATO. But we will certainly remain here a long time so that we can also guarantee the security of the energy corridors which traverse this country. The Italian paper went on to say, ***"It is clear that Jackson is referring to the 8th Corridor, the East-West axis which ought to be combined to the pipeline bringing energy resources from Central Asia to terminals in the Black Sea and in the Adriatic, connecting Europe to Central Asia. That explains why the great and medium-sized powers, and first of all Russia, don't want to be excluded from the settling of scores that will take place over the next few months in the Balkans".***

Or for that matter now in Afghanistan. Jostling for strategic position in relation to perceived long term energy 'security' and revenues is the unspoken order of the day for NATO countries and others. Is it not becoming a little clearer where it is that Russia's President Putin is now coming from both in his sponsorship of the Northern Alliance and also in his simultaneous attempts to 'befriend' Bush? If Unocal Corporation, the US company previously scheduled to build the trans-Afghan oil pipeline, have to negotiate its security with allies of Russia, then from Putin's perspective - 'well, that would be nice obviously'.

Needless to say, any serious discussion by world leaders of the development of a global economy based instead on renewable energy sources remains notable simply by virtue of its almost total absence, despite the overwhelming relevance of such an approach to future prospects for world peace (['Solar Energy, Agriculture and World Peace'](#), NLPWessex, June 2001).

Meanwhile, whilst those pulling Bush's strings back at home play fast and loose with global security in order to promote US economic interests at home and abroad, thousands of innocent UK troops are being made ready to risk their lives as 'peace keepers' in Afghanistan. Yet the decades-long fight against terrorism in Northern Ireland continues to confront the British public post September 11, with bombs and sectarian murders emanating from their fellow Christians at home.

Such acts have a long history of receiving finance from America, ironically with many wealthy supporters in New York fuelling the supply. To quote the BBC: ***"While Libya's donation of arms to the IRA in the 1980s has been the most public sign of where the republican movement has previously turned for support, the reality is that North America has been the most important link of all."*** ('Rich Friends in New York' - BBC Online 26 September).

Back in the Islamic world *The Sunday Times* 18 November reports that ***"While thousands of Taliban have retreated to Pakistan, many say they will return to wage a guerrilla war - a tactic used successfully by mujaheddin against the Soviet forces...The threat of guerrilla warfare raises the prospect of a long and bloody campaign against the Northern Alliance, southern Afghan commanders and western troops"***.

Northern Ireland or Afghanistan? Which situation now represents the greater challenge for the British troops? Described as ***"a motley collection of ethnic leaders and regional warlords"*** (i.e. they are terrorists) the Northern Alliance has already issued a veiled threat against UK troops arriving in Afghanistan ('Alliance warns British troops to stay away', London *Times* 17 November). Which would you prefer, corporal - Belfast or Kabul?

Unable to placate seething Christians in 'the civilised world' back home, how long do our boys-in-berets plan to stay in Afghanistan, bearing in mind that one American official has already confirmed the possibility that **"we are embarking on the next Hundred Years' War"**? What will be the cost of their stay? What evidence is there that their efforts will eliminate terrorism from those or any other lands? And where are the papers published in peer reviewed scientific journals that demonstrate this?

Naturally objective evidence confirming the likely success of any strategy in the 'war against terrorism' is an important criterion for the political decision making process of the western world, which prides itself on a commitment to science, rationality and progress. Or so it has been assumed. In reality, this is a pretence.

Until the known and preventable causes of terrorism are addressed through proven effective means - means that are already available on a non-violent and cost effective basis supported by extensive published scientific data - it is impossible to respect the sincerity of the 'war against terrorism'. Until then it can only be expected that the world will deteriorate into an increasingly unsafe place for all mankind, irrespective of creed or race.

New Light Shed on CIA's 'Black Site' Prisons

On his last day in CIA custody, Marwan Jabour, an accused al-Qaeda paymaster, was stripped naked, seated in a chair and videotaped by agency officers. Afterward, he was shackled and blindfolded, headphones were put over his ears, and he was given an injection that made him groggy. Jabour, 30, was laid down in the back of a van, driven to an airstrip and put on a plane with at least one other prisoner.

His release from a secret facility in Afghanistan on June 30, 2006, was a surprise to Jabour -- and came just after the Supreme Court rejected the Bush administration's assertion that the Geneva Conventions do not apply to prisoners like him.

Jabour had spent two years in "black sites" -- a network of secret internment facilities the CIA operated around the world. His account of life in that system, which he described in three interviews with The Washington Post, offers an inside view of a clandestine world that held far more prisoners than the 14 men President Bush acknowledged and had transferred out of CIA custody in September.

"There are now no terrorists in the CIA program," the president said, adding that after the prisoners held were determined to have "little or no additional intelligence value, many of them have been returned to their home countries for prosecution or detention by their governments."

But Jabour's experience -- also chronicled by Human Rights Watch, which yesterday issued a report on the fate of former "black site" detainees -- often does not accord with the portrait the administration has offered of the CIA system, such as the number of people it held and the threat detainees posed. Although 14 detainees were publicly moved from CIA custody to the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, scores more have not been publicly identified by the U.S. government, and their whereabouts remain secret. Nor has the administration acknowledged that detainees such as Jabour, considered so dangerous and valuable that their detentions were kept secret, were freed.

After 28 months of incarceration, Jabour -- who was described by a counterterrorism official in the U.S. government as "a committed jihadist and a hard-core terrorist who was intent on doing harm to innocent people, including Americans" -- was released eight months ago. U.S. intelligence and counterterrorism officials confirmed his incarceration and that he was held in Pakistan and Afghanistan. They would not discuss conditions inside black sites or the treatment of any detainee.

A House in Islamabad

By Jabour's account, and that of U.S. intelligence officials, his entrance into the black-sites program began in May 2004. In interviews, he said he was muscled out of a car as it pulled inside the gates of a secluded villa in the Pakistani capital of Islamabad.

In the week before his arrival, Jabour said, Pakistani intelligence officers had beaten, abused and burned him at a jailhouse in Lahore, where he was arrested. There two female American interrogators also questioned him and told him he would be rich if he cooperated and would vanish for life if he refused. He said he was later blindfolded and driven four hours north to the villa in a wealthy residential neighborhood.

The house in Islamabad, which U.S. intelligence officials say was jointly run by the CIA and Pakistani intelligence, had been outfitted with jail cells. When Jabour arrived, he saw as many as 20 other detainees, including the 16-year-old son of an Egyptian sheik, who had been captured in Pakistan. Dozens of al-Qaeda suspects swept up in the years after Sept. 11, 2001, have been through the house, according to accounts by former prisoners and U.S. intelligence officials with knowledge of the facility.

Jabour spent five weeks there, chained to a wall and prevented from sleeping more than a few hours at a time. He said he was beaten nightly by Pakistani guards after hours of questions from U.S. interrogators. Then he and others were whisked off to CIA-run sites. Some sites were in Eastern Europe; Jabour went to one in Afghanistan. Interrogators -- whom he described as Americans in their late 20s and early 30s -- told Jabour he would never see his three children again.

Human Rights Watch has identified 38 people who may have been held by the CIA and remain unaccounted for. Intelligence officials told The Post that the number of detainees held in such facilities over nearly five years remains classified but is higher than 60. Their whereabouts have not been publicly disclosed.

"The practice of disappearing people -- keeping them in secret detention without any legal process -- is fundamentally illegal under international law," said Joanne Mariner, director of the terrorism program at Human Rights Watch in New York. "The kind of physical mistreatment Jabour described is also illegal." Mariner interviewed Jabour separately as part of the organization's investigation.

The CIA said it would not comment directly on Jabour. "The agency does not, as a rule, publicly discuss specific rendition cases from the war on terror," said Paul Gimigliano, a spokesman for the CIA. But, he said, renditions "are a key, lawful tool in the fight against terror, and have helped save lives by taking terrorists off the street. They are conducted with care, they are closely reviewed, and they have produced valuable intelligence that has allowed the United States and other nations to foil terrorist plots."

John D. Rockefeller IV (D-W.Va.), chairman of the Senate intelligence committee, plans to investigate the fate of the missing detainees as part of a larger examination into the CIA's operation of secret prisons and its rendition program.

Aiding Al-Qaeda Fighters

In interviews with The Post from his parents' home in the Gaza Strip, Jabour acknowledged helping al-Qaeda and Taliban fighters who fled Afghanistan as the U.S. military hunted for the perpetrators of the Sept. 11 attacks.

Jabour was born to Palestinian parents in Jordan, raised in Saudi Arabia and educated in Pakistan. In 1998, he said, he became drawn to the plight of Muslims in Chechnya living under Russian rule. He crossed the border into Afghanistan so he could train in jihadist camps, then planned to join up with Chechen separatists.

"In Afghanistan, I met other people who believed in the Islamic state, where it was safe to practice Islam the way they wanted," Jabour said in a recent conversation. "I became friends with other Arabs who felt like me, Palestinians and Jordanians, but after three months of training I was told there was no chance to go to Chechnya."

Jabour returned to Pakistan in 1999. Two years later, after the U.S. military offensive in Afghanistan, those he lived and trained with came calling for help.

"Some of their children were injured, some of their women were wounded. From that moment, they came to our home and we helped them," he said.

Using funds from al-Qaeda financiers, Jabour said, he arranged for food, medical treatment and travel documents for several dozen people and arranged for others, including two African men who fought for al-Qaeda, to slip out of Pakistan. He did not return to Afghanistan to fight, and he said he had no interest in attacking Americans.

The U.S. counterterrorism official who discussed aspects of Jabour's classified file did not call him a member of al-Qaeda. But the official said that in Pakistan, Jabour "was in direct touch with top al-Qaeda operations figures," including Hamza Rabia, who briefly served as one of Osama bin Laden's lieutenants before a missile from a CIA predator drone killed him in December 2005. In interviews, Jabour said he met with Rabia on two occasions.

The official said Jabour "provided the money and means for other jihadists to move from Afghanistan to Pakistan" and provided funds that went to an al-Qaeda bioweapons lab. "He's an all-around bad guy," the official said. No charges were brought against Jabour, however, and the official would not say why he is free today.

Taken to Afghanistan

On June 16, 2004, after weeks in the villa, Jabour was drugged, blindfolded and put on a plane. Counterterrorism officials did not dispute that he was taken to a black site in Afghanistan. Jabour said the facility was run by Americans in civilian clothes and guarded by masked men who wore black uniforms and gloves.

He said he does not know where the facility is located, and counterterrorism officials would not say whether Jabour was held at two known detention sites in Afghanistan -- one run by the U.S. military at Bagram air base, the other operated by the CIA outside Kabul.

Jabour said he was often naked during his first three months at the Afghan site, which he spent in a concrete cell furnished with two blankets and a bucket. The lights were kept on 24 hours a day, as were two cameras and a microphone inside the cell. Sometimes loud music blasted through speakers in the cells. The rest of the time, the low buzz of white noise whizzed in the background, possibly to muffle any communication by prisoners through cell walls.

Daily interrogations were conducted by a variety of Americans. Over two years, Jabour said he encountered about 45 interrogators, plus medical staff and psychologists. He was threatened with physical abuse but was never beaten.

Once, he was shown a small wooden crate his interrogators called a "dog box" and was told he would be put in it if he didn't cooperate. He was told that Khalid Sheik Mohammed, the suspected architect of the Sept. 11 attacks who was among the 14 moved to Guantanamo Bay last year, became cooperative after he had been put in the box. But Jabour said he was not subjected to the crate.

He was, however, chained up and left for hours in painful positions more than 20 times and deprived of sleep for long periods. Sometimes he would have one hand chained to a section of his cell wall, making it impossible to stand or sit.

About six weeks into his stay, he was issued a pair of pants. Later he was given a T-shirt, then shoes, a Koran and finally a mattress. Jabour said prison conditions slowly improved: Air conditioning was installed; a library was built and stocked with books in Arabic, Urdu and English. Well-behaved detainees were rewarded with movie nights, in which such Hollywood blockbusters as "Titanic" were screened. A deputy director of the facility taught Jabour how to play chess and gave him pencils and paper. Jabour used to draw pictures of trees and grass, which he hung in his windowless cell.

Jabour recalled with fondness the prison director, a man named Charlie. "He told me, 'Marwan, we need information -- if you cooperate, that is good.' I told him I wasn't hiding anything and was not a dangerous man. He told me that they didn't want to use force but would if they had to. I told him I wouldn't lie to him."

Jabour began to receive better food, including pizza and Snickers and Kit-Kat bars.

Transferred and Released

On Dec. 18, 2004, six months after his arrival, Jabour was transferred to a larger cell. Under the sink he found a small inscription that read: "Majid Khan, 15 December, 2004, American-Pakistani." Khan, whose family lives outside Baltimore, was arrested in March 2003 in Karachi, Pakistan, and was among the group transferred to Guantanamo five months ago. The U.S. government has not divulged where Khan was held during his first 3 1/2 years of incarceration.

Jabour met only one other prisoner during his time there. That was an Algerian named Yassir al-Jazeera, a suspected high-level al-Qaeda operative who was arrested in Pakistan in March 2003. Their visits were arranged by the facility director, who told Jabour they were rewards for good behavior.

During interrogations, Jabour was often shown hundreds of photographs of wanted or captured suspects. One photo appears to have been that of Muhammad Naeem Noor Khan, a British-Pakistani who was arrested in Pakistan in July 2004.

Noor Khan, a suspected al-Qaeda operative, was thought to be involved in the planning of a disrupted 2004 attack on U.S. and British financial institutions. Babar Awan, a Pakistani lawyer hired by Noor Khan's family, said he has "heard nothing from the government authorities or any other authorities about where Noor Khan is."

There is no public U.S. government record available that states the CIA ever held Jabour, al-Jazeera or Noor Khan.

Last April, John D. Negroponte, who was then director of national intelligence, told Time magazine that he did not know what would be the "endgame for the three dozen or so high-value detainees" in CIA custody at that time.

Jabour's odyssey ended with a secret flight to Amman, Jordan, where he woke to find himself in an office staring at government wall portraits of King Abdullah and his dead father, King Hussein. "I don't know why they released me, but I told them everything I knew . . .," Jabour said. "You have to tell them the truth and that was no problem for me. They are smart people," he said of his American captors.

The Jordanians called the International Committee for the Red Cross, which sent a representative to interview Jabour and to contact his family. He remained in Jordanian custody for six weeks, was interrogated and was then handed over to Israel's security services.

The Israelis treated him better than his other captors, he said. They got Jabour his first lawyer, an Israeli Arab named Nizar Mahajna, who said in an interview that the Israelis had held Jabour in a prison near Haifa for two months. He was not mistreated, blindfolded or shackled, the lawyer said.

Israeli authorities had considered charging Jabour with fighting for an enemy of the Jewish state. But, Mahajna said, Jabour's training in Afghanistan had occurred more than eight years earlier, he was not a member of al-Qaeda and he had never lived in the Palestinian territories.

"The Israelis were given secret information on Marwan, which they got from the Americans. It wasn't shared with me but whatever it says, the central fact remained that the Pakistanis and the Americans had let him go. Why should Israel keep him?" Mahajna said.

The Israeli government dropped the case and transferred Jabour to Gaza. Prison guards drove him to the Erez border crossing between Israel and the Gaza Strip. "Good luck," one of them said to Jabour as he crossed into Gaza, where his parents awaited.

