

COUNTDOWN TO

9/11

ISLAM UNDER SIEGE

Tahir Mohammad Zai

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CHAPTER 1

THE LAW OF THE JUNGLE

Once upon a time a wolf and a sheep were drinking water at a stream in the jungle, and it so happened that the sheep was drinking downstream and the wolf upstream; the wolf questioned the sheep,

“Why are you polluting the water for me?”

“I am drinking downstream, how I could possibly pollute the water?” the sheep replied.

“Then why did your grandfather do a bad thing to my grandfather?”

“I was not even born then, how do I know? And how can I be responsible? If you want to pick a fight why are you looking for excuses?”

“You talk and argue too much, I think you should be silenced.”

The sheep was attacked, killed and mutilated.

“Saddam Hussein is a very dangerous man.”

“He has Weapons of Mass Destruction.”

“He is actively seeking to acquire nuclear weapons.”

“He is a very dangerous man; he should not be allowed to stay in power.”

Those were the exact words used by the US president making his case before starting his adventure to occupy Iraq. Since capturing Iraq, on

so many occasions he has said; “Saddam Hussein was given a chance to avoid war, yet he chose to go to war.” “He was asked by the world community to disarm and cooperate ‘fully’ but he ignored world demands and brought it on himself.”

Examining the above-mentioned rhetoric about the war we find lies and deceptions. The US president thinks that people living on this planet have no memory. The Iraqis were ordered to destroy something which they did not possess, and since there was no way to fulfill these unjust demands, they were accused of not cooperating “fully” and thus subjected to the worst kind of oppression.

This tells us that we are living in a global jungle where might is right and there is no such thing as the rule of Law or decency. Where shameless liars and war mongers can unleash death and destruction on the innocent under false pretexts and can get away with it. Even in 2006 the U.S. President repeated the same rhetoric; at Kansas State University on 23rd January 2006 he said;

“And so we passed another resolution that said that Saddam is in — and it unanimously passed, and the reason why is because the world thought he was a danger. It said: disarm, disclose, or face serious consequences. I’m the kind of fellow, when I — when we say something, I mean it, like I told you before. And I meant it.”

“And so Saddam Hussein was given a choice. He chose war. And so we moved and he was removed from power. And there is absolutely no doubt in my mind, America is safer for it, and the world is better off without Saddam Hussein”.

And again on May 4, 2006, addressing the American Jewish Committee’s Centennial Dinner at Washington D.C, he said,

“My administration shares a strong commitment with the AJC to make sure relations between Israel and America remain strong. (Applause) We have so much in common. We’re both young countries born of struggle and sacrifice. We’re both founded by immigrants escaping religious persecution.”

“And I saw a threat in Saddam Hussein. He had invaded a neighbor, he had used weapons of mass destruction against his own people, he had the capability of making weapons of mass destruction, he harbored terrorists, and he was shooting at U.S. aircraft. He was a threat, and the world is better off without Saddam Hussein in power.”

THE 20TH CENTURY

Before we go any further let us take a brief look at history, since every passing day becomes part of history and affects the present and the future. The 20th century saw the demise of colonialism - the so called “independence” in most of the Muslim world. The colonial powers had to let go of these colonies not because they wanted to promote democracy or majority rule, but simply because after the world war, they could not sustain their huge military might, and had no choice but to let go of these colonies one by one. But have these nations been able to gain independence in reality is a big question that has yet to be answered. Wherever the colonial powers abandoned their colonies, especially the Muslim nations, these colonies were left with problems which would haunt them forever with hardly any solution in sight, and the ex-colonials would continue manipulating the situation.

We see today that most of these so-called independent states are under the firm grip of either their former colonial masters or the new emerging imperialists. So much so that the policies in those states are dictated and executed through various channels from outside. Brutal dictators are put in power to serve the needs of their masters to the extent of oppressing and brutalizing their own people; just to please their masters. Those who may not want to tow the line, or those who may have had served their purpose and are no longer needed are subjected to “regime change” one way or another.

The 20th century also saw the birth of the state of Israel, the ‘illegal and illegitimate child’ of the West, breastfed and nourished by the US

on “occupied territories” modelled in the same manner exactly as the white criminals from Europe occupied North America, butchered the indigenous population with gun powder and bullets, and drove them to extinction; the only difference in the Middle East is that despite killing and displacing the Palestinians by the hundreds of thousands over the decades they have not been able to eliminate the entire population altogether. Thus the dream of “Greater Israel” remains elusive to date; but surely is not abandoned. The occupation of Palestine in fact is a deep wound which will keep on bleeding and may never heal. Ironically the demands by the West for Muslims to recognize the state of Israel is something like demanding that a thief be recognized as the legitimate owner of the goods he stole.

That century also saw the discovery of the enormous wealth of oil, mostly in the Muslim world, attracting speculators from all over the world like flies to sugar, thus making the Middle East the target of all kind of conspiracies and that is likely to remain as such.

We saw also the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of the US as the strongest military power, assuming the self appointed role of the constable of the planet. Towards the end of the previous millennium we heard about the plans of the “New World Order” and “Project for the New American Century”. Once we try to reach a deeper understanding of these plans, only then we see the true colors of a face which seems very gentle on the surface. These plans are imperialist in nature and are designed for world domination and control of the whole planet. They call for instilling fear of the powers of the US and to destroy anything and everything which might stand in its way. They want to have access to the wealth and resources of other nations and to protect US interests at any cost. To impose their will on others forcibly, they feel no hesitation to invade and occupy other sovereign nations to effect “regime change”. They like to bully others because there is no fear of reprisals from anyone any more.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Third World

War (the cold war), the Western intelligence and spy networks which were having huge funds at their disposal were going to become irrelevant in the emerging environments. They were in desperate need to prove their worth to exist and to that end they needed an enemy; be it real or imaginary. At that moment in history very cunningly the attention was turned towards Islam and Muslims. Since it was the Muslims in Afghanistan who caused the collapse of the Soviet Union and were heroes in the West, people who were invited and received with honor at the Reagan White House, suddenly became 'terrorists' and 'wanted' by succeeding administrations, because they had already served their purpose and were no longer needed.

As the modern wars are fought initially by the media, the western corporate media (electronic & print) started openly attacking Islam. The Salman Rushdie episode (many others as well) was part of the campaign. He became an overnight celebrity and darling of the West for a despicable piece of literary work and is considered an asset. The issuing of a decree by the Iranians calling for his assassination was an emotional thing to do, which played right in to the hands of the enemy. The absence of having an effective media of the Muslims to combat the poisonous Western propaganda machine left a huge vacuum of incorrect and unbalanced information. Even some Muslims fell for and echoed the stereo type. No effort was made by the Muslims to correct the misconceptions about Islam and Muslims, thus giving an easy walkover to an anti-Islamic, Western media. Muslims were painted negatively and branded intolerant, fundamentalists etc. Our apologetic aptitude in trying to call ourselves liberals, non-fundamentalists or moderates, etc. in order to be accepted by the West, made things worse.

THE 9/11 EPISODE

As the initial groundwork for the attack on Muslims was prepared by the Western media, we suddenly saw the spectacular event of 9/11. An act being staged and shown by the media all around the world in

dramatic form; an event which altered the course of history altogether. Muslims, Islam and “Global Terrorism” immediately came to the forefront and the seeds of hatred were sown in an already prepared fertile field - those seeds grew and blossomed at an amazing speed. Now the term “Global Terrorism” is solely associated with Islam and Muslims, in a mindset which may never change. The unfolding events after 9/11 makes we Muslims **dutibound** to have a very thorough, detailed and critical analysis, as well a forensic and scientific study of the anatomy of the 9/11 event itself. We must leave no stone unturned to find out the truth and reasons leading to the event and its aftermath. In our quest we may find more questions than answers but we have to keep searching and put everything on record whether our questions are answered or not, since we Muslims as an “Ummah” have been affected and damaged in a manner never heard of before.

CHAPTER 2

Plans for World Domination and Wars

Let us have a look at events leading to 9/11, going through a time line. These accounts have been taken mainly from western media outlets and from multiple sources, so we will have to remember that the western media has its anti-Muslim agenda. They have tried to put the responsibility of 9/11 on Muslims but having a closer and objective look a **very different picture** may emerge even from these hostile sources. The groundwork for going to war had started years before actual invasions.

March 8, 1992: Raw US World Domination Plan Is Leaked to the Media

The Defense Planning Guidance, “a blueprint for the department’s spending priorities in the aftermath of the first Gulf War and the collapse of the Soviet Union,” is leaked to the New York Times. [Newsday, 4/16/2003; New York Times, 4/8/1992]

The document causes controversy, because it hadn’t yet been “scrubbed” to replace candid language with euphemisms. [Observer, 5/7/2002; New York Times, 4/10/1992; New York Times, 4/11/1992]

The document argues that the US dominates the world as sole superpower, and to maintain that role, it “must maintain the mechanisms for deterring potential competitors from even aspiring to a larger regional or global role.” [New York Times, 4/8/1992; New York Times, 4/8/1992]

As the Observer summarizes it, “America’s friends are potential enemies. They must be in a state of dependence and seek solutions to their problems in Washington.” [Observer, 5/7/2002]

The document is mainly written by Paul Wolfowitz and I. Lewis “Scooter” Libby, who hold relatively low posts at the time, but become deputy defense secretary and Vice President Cheney’s chief of staff, respectively, under George W. Bush. [Newsday, 4/16/2003]

The authors conspicuously avoid mention of collective security arrangements through the United Nations, instead suggesting the US “should expect future coalitions to be ad-hoc assemblies, often not lasting beyond the crisis being confronted.” [New York Times, 4/8/1992]

They call for “punishing” or “threatening punishment” against regional aggressors before they act. [Harper’s, 11/2002]

Interests to be defended preemptively include “access to vital raw materials, primarily Persian Gulf oil, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles, [and] threats to US citizens from terrorism.” The section describing US interests in the Middle East states that the “overall objective is to remain the predominant outside power in the region and preserve US and Western access to the region’s oil..., deter further aggression in the region, foster regional stability, protect US nationals and property, and safeguard ... access to international air and seaways.” [New York Times, 4/8/1992]

Senator Lincoln Chafee (R) later says, “It is my opinion that [George W. Bush’s] plan for preemptive strikes was formed back at the end of the first Bush administration with that 1992 report.” [Newsday, 4/16/2003]

In response to the controversy, US releases an updated version of the document in May 1992, which stresses that the US will work with the United Nations and its allies. [Washington Post, 6/24/1992; Harper’s, 11/2002]

January 1993: Cheney Releases New Global Domination Strategy

While still serving as Defense Secretary, Dick Cheney releases a document titled “Defense Strategy for the 1990s,” in which he reasserts the plans for US global domination outlined in the Defense Policy Guide leaked to the press in March 1992. [Harper’s, 11/2002]

Clinton’s inauguration as president later in the month precludes Cheney from actually implementing his plans.

June 3, 1997: PNAC Think Tank Issues Statement of Principles

The Project for the New American Century (PNAC), a neoconservative think tank formed in the spring of 1997, issues its statement of principles. PNAC’s stated aims are:

- To “shape a new century favorable to American principles and interests”
- To achieve “a foreign policy that boldly and purposefully promotes American principles abroad”
- To “increase defense spending significantly”
- To challenge “regimes hostile to US interests and values”
- To “accept America’s unique role in preserving and extending an international order friendly to our security, our prosperity, and our principles.”

[Project for the New American Century, 7/3/1997]

The Statement of Principles is significant, because it is signed by a group who will become “a roll call of today’s Bush inner circle.” [Guardian, 3/26/2003]

ABC’s Ted Koppel will later say PNAC’s ideas have “been called a **secret blueprint for US global domination.**” [ABC News, 4/5/2003]

October 1997: Brzezinski Highlights the Importance of Central Asia to Achieving World Domination

Former National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski publishes a book in which he portrays the Eurasian landmass as the key to world power, and Central Asia with its vast oil reserves as the key to domination of Eurasia. He states that for the US to maintain its global primacy, it must prevent any possible adversary from controlling that region. He notes, “The attitude of the American public toward the external projection of American power has been much more ambivalent. The public supported America’s engagement in World War II largely because of the shock effect of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.” He predicts that because of popular resistance to US military expansionism, his ambitious Central Asian strategy can not be implemented “except in the circumstance of a truly massive and widely perceived direct external threat.” [Brzezinski, 1997]

August 24, 1998: Bombed Training Camps Were Built by US and Allies

The New York Times reports that the training camps recently attacked by the US in Afghanistan were built by the US and its allies, years before. The US and Saudi Arabia gave the Afghans between \$6 billion and \$40 billion to fight the Soviets in the 1980s. Many of the people targeted by the missile attacks were trained and equipped by the CIA years before. [New York Times, 9/24/1998]

1999: CIA Purportedly Establishes Network of Agents throughout Afghanistan, Central Asia

CIA Director Tenet later claims that in this year, the CIA establishes a network of local agents throughout Afghanistan and other countries aimed at capturing bin Laden and his deputies. [United Press International, 11/17/2002 *Sources: George Tenet*]

Tenet states that by 9/11, “a map would show that these collection programs and human networks were in place in such numbers to nearly cover Afghanistan. This array means that, when the military campaign to topple the Taliban and destroy al-Qaeda [begins in October 2001], we [are] able to support it with an enormous body of information and a large stable of assets.” [US Congress, 11/17/2002]

1999: NORAD Exercise Simulates Crashes into US Buildings; One of Them Is the World Trade Center

According to USA Today, “In the two years before the Sept. 11 attacks, the North American Aerospace Defense Command conduct[s] exercises simulating what the White House [later] says was unimaginable at the time: hijacked airliners used as weapons to crash into targets and cause mass casualties.” One of these imagined targets is the World Trade Center. According to NORAD, these scenarios are regional drills, rather than regularly scheduled continent-wide exercises. They utilize “numerous types of civilian and military aircraft” as mock hijacked aircraft, and test “track detection and identification; scramble and interception; hijack procedures; internal and external agency coordination; and operational security and communications security procedures.” The main difference between these drills and the 9/11 attacks is that the planes in the drills are coming from another country, rather than from within the US. Before 9/11, NORAD reportedly conducts four major exercises at headquarters level per year. Most of them are said to include a hijack scenario. [USA Today, 5/18/2004; CNN, 5/19/2004]

March 3, 1999: New Pearl Harbor Needed to Change US Military Policies, Says Expert

Andrew Krepinevich, Executive Director of the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, testifies before the Senate Armed Services

Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities: “There appears to be general agreement concerning the need to transform the US military into a significantly different kind of force from that which emerged victorious from the Cold and Gulf Wars. Yet this verbal support has not been translated into a defense program supporting transformation ... the ‘critical mass’ needed to effect it has not yet been achieved. One may conclude that, in the absence of a **strong external shock to the United States**—a latter-day ‘Pearl Harbor’ of sorts—surmounting the barriers to transformation will likely prove a long, arduous process. [US Congress, 4/5/1999]

This is very similar to what strategists at PNAC have said.

June 8, 1999: New York Emergency Command Center Opened in WTC Building 7

New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani opens a \$13 million emergency Command Center on the 23rd floor of World Trade Center Building 7. [Newsday, 10/12/2001]

The center is intended to coordinate responses to various emergencies, including natural disasters like hurricanes or floods, and **terrorist attacks**. The 50,000 square foot center has reinforced, bulletproof, and bomb-resistant walls, its own air supply and water tank, and three backup generators. This Command Center is to be staffed around the clock and is intended as a meeting place for city leaders in the event of an act of terrorism. [CNN, 7/7/1999; London Times, 10/12/2001]

The center is ridiculed as **“Rudy’s bunker.”** [Time, 1/31/2002]

Most controversial is the 6,000-gallon fuel tank. In 1998 and 1999, Fire Department officials warn that the fuel tank violates city fire codes and poses a hazard. According to one Fire Department memorandum, if the tank were to catch fire it could produce **“disaster.”** **Building 7 will be destroyed late in the day on 9/11; some suspect this tank helps explains why.** [New York Times, 1/20/2002]

Early 2000: US Builds Up Influence in Central Asia

By the start of this year, the US has already begun “to quietly build influence” in Central Asia. The US has established significant military-to-military relationships with Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan. Americans have trained soldiers from those countries. The militaries of all three have an ongoing relationship with the National Guard of a US state—Kazakhstan with Arizona, Kyrgyzstan with Montana, and Uzbekistan with Louisiana. The countries also participate in NATO’s Partnership for Peace program. [Washington Post, 9/27/2002]

March 2000: Clinton’s Attempt to Fight Terrorism Financing Defeated by Republican

The Clinton administration begins a push to fight terrorism financing by introducing a tough anti-money laundering bill. The bill faces tough opposition, mostly from Republicans and lobbyists who enjoy the anonymity of offshore banking, which would be affected by the legislation. Despite passing the House Banking Committee by a vote of 31 to 1 in July 2000, Senator Phil Gramm (R) refuses to let the bill come up for a vote in his Senate Banking Committee. [Time, 11/15/2001]

Other efforts begun at this time to fight terrorism financing are later stymied by the new Bush administration in February 2001.

April 2000: US Granted Permission to Expand Qatar Military Base

The US obtains permission to expand greatly a military base in the Persian Gulf nation of Qatar, and construction begins shortly thereafter. The justification for expanding Al Adid, a billion-dollar base, is presumably preparedness for renewed action against Iraq. [Los Angeles Times, 2/6/2002]

Dozens of other US military bases sprang up in the region during the 1990s. [Village Voice, 12/13/2002]



People involved in the 2000 PNAC report (from top left): Vice President Cheney, Florida Governor Jeb Bush, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld, Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, Cheney Chief of Staff I. Lewis Libby, Undersecretary of State John Bolton, Undersecretary of Defense Dov Zakheim, and author Eliot Cohen.

September 2000: PNAC Report Recommends Policies That Need New Pearl Harbor for Quick Implementation

PNAC drafts a strategy document, “Rebuilding America’s Defenses: Strategies, Forces and Resources for a New Century,” for George W. Bush’s team before the 2000 Presidential election. The document was commissioned by future Vice President Cheney, future Defense Secretary Rumsfeld, future Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, Florida Governor Jeb Bush (Bush’s brother), and future Vice President Cheney’s Chief of Staff Lewis Libby. [Project for the New American Century, 10/2000]

- The document outlines a “blueprint for maintaining global US preeminence, precluding the rise of a great power rival, and shaping the international security order in line with American principles and interests.”

- PNAC states further: “The United States has for decades sought to play a more permanent role in Gulf regional security. While the unresolved conflict with Iraq provides the immediate justification, the need for a substantial American force presence in the Gulf transcends the issue of the regime of Saddam Hussein.”
- PNAC calls for the control of space through a new “US Space Forces,” the political control of the Internet, and the subversion of any growth in political power of even close allies, and advocates “regime change” in China, North Korea, Libya, Syria, Iran, and other countries.
- It also mentions that “advanced forms of biological warfare that can ‘target’ specific genotypes may transform biological warfare from the realm of terror to a politically useful tool.”
- However, PNAC complains that these changes are likely to take a long time, “absent some catastrophic and catalyzing event—like a new Pearl Harbor.”

[Los Angeles Times, 2/12/2003]

Notably, while Cheney commissioned this plan (along with other future key leaders of the Bush administration), he defends Bush’s position of maintaining Clinton’s policy not to attack Iraq during an NBC interview in the midst of the 2000 presidential campaign, asserting that the US should not act as though “we were an imperialist power, willy-nilly moving into capitals in that part of the world, taking down governments.” [Washington Post, 2/12/2002]

A British member of Parliament will later say of the report: “This is a blueprint for US world domination—a new world order of their making. These are the thought processes of fantasist Americans who want to control the world.” [Sunday Herald (Glasgow), 10/7/2002]

Both PNAC and its strategy plan for Bush are almost virtually ignored by the media until a few weeks before the start of the Iraq war.

September 2000: General Tommy Franks Tours Central Asia to Build Military Aid Relationships

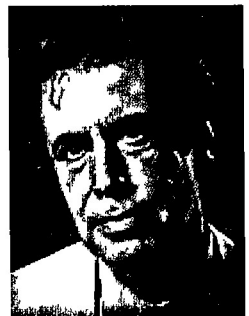
US General Tommy Franks tours Central Asia in an attempt to build military aid relationships with nations there, but finds no takers. Russia's power in the region appears to be on the upswing instead. Russian Defense Minister Igor Sergeev writes, "The actions of Islamic extremists in Central Asia give Russia the chance to strengthen its position in the region." However, shortly after 9/11, Russia and China agree to allow the US to establish temporary US military bases in Central Asia to prosecute the Afghanistan war. The bases become permanent, and the Guardian will write in early 2002, "Both countries increasingly have good reasons to regret their accommodating stand. Having pushed, cajoled, and bribed its way into their Central Asian backyard, the US clearly has no intention of leaving any time soon." [Guardian, 2/10/2002]



General Tommy Franks

November 2000: Taliban Allegedly Offers to Hand bin Laden to US Officials

In 1999, Kabir Mohabbat, an Afghan-American businessman, had initiated conversations about bin Laden between the US government and the Taliban. According to Mohabbat, the Taliban were ready to hand bin Laden over to a third country, or the International Court of Justice, in exchange for having the US-led sanctions against Afghanistan lifted. (Elmar Brok, a German member of the European Parliament, later confirms that he helps Mohabbat make contact with the US government in 1999.) The initial talks lead to a secret meeting this



Kabir Mohabbat.

month between Taliban ministers and US officials in a Frankfurt hotel. Taliban Foreign Minister Wakil Ahmed Muttawakil reportedly says in the meeting, “You can have him whenever the Americans are ready. Name us a country and we will extradite him.” However, after this face-to-face meeting, further discussions are never held because, Brok believes, a “political decision” has been made by US officials not to continue the negotiations. He does not clarify when he believes such a decision was made. [Reuters, 7/5/2004 Sources: Elmar Brok]

December 2000: Incoming Bush Administration Briefed on Terrorism Threat; Apparently Ignores Recommendations

CIA Director Tenet and other top CIA officials brief President-elect Bush, Vice President-elect Cheney, future National Security Adviser Rice, and other incoming national security officials on al-Qaeda and covert action programs in Afghanistan. Deputy Director for Operations James Pavitt recalls conveying that bin Laden is one of the gravest threats to the country. Bush asks whether killing bin Laden would end the problem. Pavitt says he answers that killing bin Laden would have an impact but not stop the threat. The CIA recommends the most important action to combat al-Qaeda is to arm the Predator drone and use it over Afghanistan. [9/11 Commission, 4/24/2004; Reuters, 4/24/2004]

However, while the drone is soon armed, Bush never gives the order to use it in Afghanistan until after 9/11.

December 19, 2000: US Seeks Taliban Overthrow; Considers Russia-US Invasion of Afghanistan

The Washington Post reports, “The United States has quietly begun to align itself with those in the Russian government calling for military action against Afghanistan and has toyed with the idea of a new raid to wipe out Osama bin Laden. Until it backed off under local pressure, it

went so far as to explore whether a Central Asian country would permit the use of its territory for such a purpose.” Russia and the US are discussing “what kind of government should replace the Taliban. Thus, while claiming to oppose a military solution to the Afghan problem, the United States is now talking about the overthrow of a regime that controls nearly the entire country, in the hope it can be replaced with a hypothetical government that does not exist even on paper.” [Washington Post, 1/19/2001]

It appears that all pre-9/11 plans to invade Afghanistan involve attacking from the north with Russia.

Early 2001: Taliban Disinformation Project Is Cancelled

The heads of the US military, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, have become frustrated by the lack of CIA disinformation operations to create dissent among the Taliban, and at the very end of the Clinton administration, they begin to develop a Taliban disinformation project of their own, which is to go into effect in 2001. When they are briefed, the Defense Department’s new leaders kill the project. According to Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Henry Shelton, “[Defense Secretary] Rumsfeld and Deputy [Defense] Secretary Paul Wolfowitz were against the Joint Staff having the lead on this.” They consider this a distraction from their core military missions. As far as Rumsfeld is concerned, “This terrorism thing was out there, but it didn’t happen today, so maybe it belongs lower on the list ... so it gets defused over a long period of time.” [Los Angeles Times, 4/30/2004]

(January 30, 2001): First National Security Council Meeting Focuses on Iraq and Israel, Not Terrorism

The Bush White House holds its first National Security Council meeting. The focus is on Iraq and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. [Bamford, 2004 *Sources*: Paul O’Neill]

Israeli-Palestinian conflict “We’re going to correct the imbalances of the previous administration on the Mideast conflict,” Bush reportedly tells his national security team. “We’re going to tilt it back toward Israel.” His view is that the Israeli government, currently headed by Ariel Sharon, should be left alone to deal as it sees fit with the Palestinians. “I’m not going to go by past reputations when it comes to Sharon. I’m going to take him at face value. We’ll work on a relationship based on how things go.” Justifying his position, he recalls a recent trip he took to Israel with the Republican Jewish Coalition. “We flew over the Palestinian camps. Looked real bad down there. ... I don’t see much we can do over there at this point.” Powell, surprised by Bush’s intended policy towards the 50-year old Israeli-Palestinian conflict, objects. According to Secretary of Treasury Paul O’Neil, Powell “stresse[s] that a pullback by the United States would unleash Sharon and the Israeli army.” When Powell warns the president that the “consequences of that [policy] could be dire, especially for the Palestinians,” Bush shrugs. “Sometimes a show of strength by one side can really clarify things,” he suggests. [Bamford, 2004]

Iraq - The meeting then moves on to the subject of Iraq. National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice begins noting “**that Iraq might be the key to reshaping the entire region.**” She turns the meeting over to CIA director George Tenet who summarizes current intelligence on Iraq. He mentions a factory that “**might**” be producing “either chemical or biological materials for weapons manufacture.” The evidence he provides is a picture of the factory with some truck activity, a water tower, and railroad tracks going into a building. He admits that there is “**no confirming intelligence.**” [Bamford, 2004]

US Secretary of Treasury Paul O’Neill, later recalls: “From the very beginning, there was a conviction, that Saddam Hussein was a bad person and that he needed to go ... From the very first instance, it was about Iraq. It was about what we can do to change this regime. Day

one, these things were laid and sealed.” O’Neill will say officials never questioned the logic behind this policy. No one ever asked, “Why Saddam?” and “Why now?” Instead, the issue that needed to be resolved was how this could be accomplished. “It was all about finding a way to do it,” O’Neill will explain. “That was the tone of it. The president saying ‘Go find me a way to do this.’” [New York Times, 2/12/2004; Guardian, 2/12/2004; Vanity Fair, 6/2004; CBS News, 2/10/2004
Sources: Paul O’Neill]

Another official who attends the meeting will later say that the tone of the meeting implied a policy much more aggressive than that of the previous administration. “The president told his Pentagon officials to explore the military options, including use of ground forces,” the official will tell ABC News. “That went beyond the Clinton administration’s halfhearted attempts to overthrow Hussein without force.” [ABC News, 2/13/2004 *Sources:* Unnamed senior official of the Bush administration]

The council does more than just discuss Iraq. It makes a decision to allow the Iraqi National Congress (INC), an Iraqi opposition group, to use \$4 million to fund efforts inside Iraq to compile information relating to Baghdad’s war crimes, military operations, and other internal developments. The money had been authorized by Congress in late 2000. The US has not directly funded Iraqi opposition activities inside Iraq itself since 1996. [Guardian, 3/3/2005]

After Paul O’Neill first provides his account of this meeting in 2004, the White House will attempt to downplay its significance. “... The stated policy of my administration toward Saddam Hussein was very clear,” Bush will tell reporters during a visit to Mexico In January 2004. “Like the previous administration, we were for regime change. ... And in the initial stages of the administration, as you might remember, we were dealing with desert badger or fly-overs and fly-betweens and looks, and so we were fashioning policy along those lines.” [New York Times, 2/12/2004]

February 1, 2001: Rumsfeld Envisions Post-Saddam Iraq

The Bush White House holds its second National Security Council meeting. Like the first meeting the issue of regime change in Iraq is a central topic. [New York Times, 2/12/2004; CBS News, 2/10/2004]

Officials discuss a memo titled “Plan for post-Saddam Iraq,” which talks about troop requirements, establishing war crimes tribunals, and dividing up Iraq’s oil wealth. [Sources: Paul O’Neill]

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld argues that by removing Saddam Hussein, the Bush administration would “demonstrate what US policy is all about.” It would also help **transform the Middle East**, he claims. According to Paul O’Neill, Rumsfeld talks at the meeting “in general terms about post-Saddam Iraq, dealing with the Kurds in the north, the oil fields, the reconstruction of the country’s economy, and the ‘freeing of the Iraqi people.’” [New York Times, 2/12/2004 Sources: Paul O’Neill]

Other people, in addition to O’Neill, Bush, and Rumsfeld, who are likely in attendance include Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary of State Colin Powell, National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice, Director of Central Intelligence George Tenet and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Richard B. Myers. [US President, 3/13/2001]

February 26, 2001: Paul Bremer: Bush Administration Paying No Attention to Terrorism

Paul Bremer, who will be appointed the US administrator of Iraq in 2003, says in a speech that the Bush administration is “paying no attention” to terrorism. “What they will do is stagger along until there’s a major incident and then suddenly say, ‘Oh my God, shouldn’t we be organized to deal with this.’” Bremer speaks shortly after chairing the National Commission on Terrorism, a bipartisan body formed during the Clinton administration. [Associated Press, 5/29/2004]

March 2001: US and Taliban Discuss Handing over bin Laden

Taliban envoy Rahmatullah Hashimi meets with reporters, middle-ranking State Department bureaucrats, and private Afghanistan experts in Washington. He carries a gift carpet and a letter from Afghan leader Mullah Omar for President Bush. He discusses turning bin Laden over, but the US wants to be handed bin Laden and the Taliban want to turn him over to some third country. A CIA official later says, “We never heard what they were trying to say. We had no common language. Ours was, ‘Give up bin Laden.’ They were saying, ‘Do something to help us give him up.’ ... I have no doubts they wanted to get rid of him. He was a pain in the neck.” Others claim the Taliban were never sincere. About 20 more meetings on giving up bin Laden take place up until 9/11, all fruitless. [Washington Post, 11/29/2001]

Allegedly, Hashimi also proposes that the Taliban would hold bin Laden in one location long enough for the US to locate and kill him. However, this offer is refused. This report, however, comes from Laila Helms, daughter of former CIA director Richard Helms. While it is interesting that this information came out before 9/11, one must be skeptical, since Helms’ job was public relations for the Taliban.

March 15, 2001: India, Iran, Russia, and US Work in a Concerted Front to Remove Taliban

Jane’s Intelligence Review reports that the US is working with India, Iran, and Russia “in a concerted front against Afghanistan’s Taliban regime.” India is supplying the Northern Alliance with military equipment, advisers, and helicopter technicians and both India and Russia are using bases in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan for their operation. [Jane’s Intelligence Review, 4/15/2001]

COUNTDOWN TO

9/11

ISLAM UNDER SIEGE

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