



agents posing as terrorists invited a prominent terror leader to a secret meeting with extremist colleagues. This terror leader, duped into attending the meeting, was stunned when only minutes into the “conference,” his “colleagues” took off their Muslim headgear and arrested him....

After bin Laden was killed, American agents fueled panic and hysteria among the terrorists, using their own websites to demoralize the followers. Posing as terrorists, they expressed outrage that while the

smalltime militants had been risking their lives on the battlefield and hiding out in cellars and caves, Osama had been living in relative comfort in a compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan.

In fact, some US officials claim that the operation that killed bin Laden would never have been successful just a decade earlier, when the American military was used to battle from a different mindset. This operation, according to them, had evolved as a result of the lessons the US had learned in

the years after 9/11 and the steps it had undertaken in response.

All these effective counter-terrorism strategies were launched during the Bush administration and are still in use today, during the Obama administration. President Obama decided to maintain the counter-terrorism campaign of his predecessor and upheld many of Bush’s counter-terrorism policies and strategies. For instance, Obama widened the scope of the pilotless plane attacks in Pakistan and other countries.

With the death of bin Laden and the uprisings in Egypt, Libya and other Middle Eastern countries, Al-Qaeda is now at a crossroads. It is still too early to declare victory in the US war against Al-Qaeda, but the good news is that the government has finally learned to deal with this terror group effectively. They have also learned how to institute timely changes in policy in the case of new threats or dangers.

Although Americans are not yet completely safe from the terrorists, they are far safer than they were just a decade ago. ■

Terror Blunders

Despite Al-Qaeda’s reputation and its many successes at sowing havoc and wrecking lives, the high-profile terror organization is hardly the well-trained, sophisticated network it once was or was once feared to be. In many cases, its members have acted as complete amateurs who barely know how to hold a gun properly and are busier fighting among themselves than attacking the common enemy.

After America was taken completely by surprise during the well-coordinated and masterfully executed attacks of September 11, 2001, we were suddenly deluged with information about a dangerous enemy who was previously completely unknown. The media was quick to take over

and paint frightening pictures of what future horrors this terrorist organization could bring upon us, screaming in the headlines about sleeper cells spread across the United States. These cells were lying quietly in wait for a signal from the supreme commander notifying them that the time was right to

spring into action and rain down more death on us hapless Americans.

Magazines showed pictures of terrorists training in long black robes in the rugged mountains of Afghanistan, learning to rappel down walls and practicing to compete in hand-to-hand combat. The pundits promised that more attacks on America were imminent, on a greater scale than this past horrible destruction.

One famous group of counter-terrorism experts announced that a fresh attack was less than 90 days away. On October 5, 2001, a high-ranking intelligence official warned Congress that there was a “100% chance” that terrorists would carry out another attack on America if America were to invade Afghanistan—which America did, exactly two days later. Others scoffed at this statement, saying future attacks were being prepared regardless of whether or not America would take revenge.

When the year 2001 passed with no further attacks, experts rolled back the



The colored warning system created by the Department of Homeland Security.

deadline by which they expected to see further terrorist activity. In June 2002, a security advisor to then-governor of California Gray Davis stated that “If the summer passes without any further terror attacks, we will be very lucky.”

We were very lucky.

What happened? Experts now explained that Al-Qaeda was run by leaders who were prepared to bide their time and plan carefully before taking action in order to ensure that the attacks would be successful.

America created a Department of Homeland Security to coordinate intelligence activities and prevent further attacks. The Department initiated a color-coded warning system to alert Americans when an attack was expected. In the early days, the slightest hint of anything out of the ordinary seemed to be enough to trigger an upgrade from code orange to code red.

Tom Ridge, the first Secretary of Homeland Security, publicly declared an 80% chance of America being attacked again within the next few years. In June 2006, anonymous officials told CBS News that they would be surprised if America were not attacked by the end of that year.

It wasn't.

Even when a few isolated attacks were attempted on the United States, and were either bungled or stopped by US security, the terrorists always succeeded in frightening Americans with their incredible “ability” to hurt large numbers of people.

In December 2008, the Commission on the Prevention of Weapons of Mass Destruction Proliferation and Terrorism stated that there was “a greater chance than not” that by the end of 2013 terrorists would attack somewhere in the world with chemical, biological or nuclear weapons.

What Happened?

America has suffered numerous disasters and catastrophes since September 11, 2001, but not one of them involved terrorists.

Tellingly, we saw more deadly terrorist attacks in the decade preceding 9/11 than in the decade that followed it.

The main reason that another 9/11 or anything like it has not taken place, is that Al-Qaeda today is no longer what it once was. Most of its top leadership has been apprehended, and the training camps and international coordination severely disrupted. What is left is mostly a gang of ragged individuals with little knowledge or experience in carrying out attacks, and who in many ways represent a greater danger to themselves than to America.

In the past, terrorists like Mohammed Atta could spend months or years pursuing training in specially created training grounds. He would amass field experience by flying around the world, contacting others and preparing with them. However, the destruction of the training camps and terrorist sanctuaries in Afghanistan and other lands has disrupted the procedure for preparing raw, new recruits. As a result, most terrorists today barely have a chance to learn the most basic procedures about firing weapons and handling explosives before they are rushed out to do their work.

This, by the way, leads to one of the main reasons America has not abandoned its war in Afghanistan. As long as America remains on the battlefield and can ensure that the terrorists’ attempts to organize themselves are constantly disrupted, the homeland will remain safe. Our greatest protection from Al-Qaeda lies in forcing them onto the defensive.

Nowhere is the gap between the perceived danger and the blundering reality as clear as it is in Afghanistan, where 50% of suicide terrorist attacks end with the death of the terrorist alone. Over the years that the Taliban has been employing suicide attacks their rate of success has not grown, showing that nothing is being learned from their hundreds of experiences.

As bizarre as it may sound, one of the leading causes of failure is the custom among



Widely publicized photo of Taliban and Al-Qaeda terrorists training.



Learning to storm a building.



They are busier fighting with each other than with their enemies.



Al-Qaeda fighters with their late chief Osama bin Laden.