

mation over newfangled electronic systems, like email, to other agencies of the U.S. government.⁷⁹

Security concerns also increased the difficulty of recruiting officers qualified for counterterrorism. Very few American colleges or universities offered programs in Middle Eastern languages or Islamic studies. The total number of undergraduate degrees granted in Arabic in all U.S. colleges and universities in 2002 was six.⁸⁰ Many who had traveled much outside the United States could expect a very long wait for initial clearance. Anyone who was foreign-born or had numerous relatives abroad was well-advised not even to apply. With budgets for the CIA shrinking after the end of the Cold War, it was not surprising that, with some notable exceptions, new hires in the Clandestine Service tended to have qualifications similar to those of serving officers: that is, they were suited for traditional agent recruitment or for exploiting liaison relationships with foreign services but were not equipped to seek or use assets inside the terrorist network.

Early Counterterrorism Efforts

In the 1970s and 1980s, terrorism had been tied to regional conflicts, mainly in the Middle East. The majority of terrorist groups either were sponsored by governments or, like the Palestine Liberation Organization, were militants trying to create governments.

In the mid-1980s, on the basis of a report from a task force headed by Vice President George Bush and after terrorist attacks at airports in Rome and Athens, the DCI created a Counterterrorist Center to unify activities across the Directorate of Operations and the Directorate of Intelligence. The Counterterrorist Center had representation from the FBI and other agencies. In the formal table of organization it reported to the DCI, but in fact most of the Center's chiefs belonged to the Clandestine Service and usually looked for guidance to the head of the Directorate of Operations.⁸¹

The Center stimulated and coordinated collection of information by CIA stations, compiled the results, and passed selected reports to appropriate stations, the Directorate of Intelligence analysts, other parts of the intelligence community, or to policymakers. The Center protected its bureaucratic turf. The Director of Central Intelligence had once had a national intelligence officer for terrorism to coordinate analysis; that office was abolished in the late 1980s and its duties absorbed in part by the Counterterrorist Center. Though analysts assigned to the Center produced a large number of papers, the focus was support to operations. A CIA inspector general's report in 1994 criticized the Center's capacity to provide warning of terrorist attacks.⁸²

Subsequent chapters will raise the issue of whether, despite tremendous talent, energy, and dedication, the intelligence community failed to do enough in coping with the challenge from Bin Ladin and al Qaeda. Confronted with such questions, managers in the intelligence community often responded that they had meager resources with which to work.⁸³