

Select Committee on Intelligence on September 2, Tenet was told that the intelligence community knew more about Bin Ladin's network "than about any other top tier terrorist organization."¹⁰²

The CIA was using this knowledge to disrupt a number of Bin Ladin-associated cells. Working with Albanian authorities, CIA operatives had raided an al Qaeda forgery operation and another terrorist cell in Tirana. These operations may have disrupted a planned attack on the U.S. embassy in Tirana, and did lead to the rendition of a number of al Qaeda-related terrorist operatives. After the embassy bombings, there were arrests in Azerbaijan, Italy, and Britain. Several terrorists were sent to an Arab country. The CIA described working with FBI operatives to prevent a planned attack on the U.S. embassy in Uganda, and a number of suspects were arrested. On September 16, Abu Hajer, one of Bin Ladin's deputies in Sudan and the head of his computer operations and weapons procurement, was arrested in Germany. He was the most important Bin Ladin lieutenant captured thus far. Clarke commented to Berger with satisfaction that August and September had brought the "greatest number of terrorist arrests in a short period of time that we have ever arranged/facilitated."¹⁰³

Given the President's August Memorandum of Notification, the CIA had already been working on new plans for using the Afghan tribals to capture Bin Ladin. During September and October, the tribals claimed to have tried at least four times to ambush Bin Ladin. Senior CIA officials doubted whether any of these ambush attempts had actually occurred. But the tribals did seem to have success in reporting where Bin Ladin was.¹⁰⁴

This information was more useful than it had been in the past; since the August missile strikes, Bin Ladin had taken to moving his sleeping place frequently and unpredictably and had added new bodyguards. Worst of all, al Qaeda's senior leadership had stopped using a particular means of communication almost immediately after a leak to the *Washington Times*.¹⁰⁵ This made it much more difficult for the National Security Agency to intercept his conversations. But since the tribals seemed to know where Bin Ladin was or would be, an alternative to capturing Bin Ladin would be to mark his location and call in another round of missile strikes.

On November 3, the Small Group met to discuss these problems, among other topics. Preparing Director Tenet for a Small Group meeting in mid-November, the Counterterrorist Center stressed, "At this point we cannot predict when or if a capture operation will be executed by our assets."¹⁰⁶

U.S. counterterrorism officials also worried about possible domestic attacks. Several intelligence reports, some of dubious sourcing, mentioned Washington as a possible target. On October 26, Clarke's CSG took the unusual step of holding a meeting dedicated to trying "to evaluate the threat of a terrorist attack in the United States by the Usama bin Ladin network."¹⁰⁷ The CSG members were "urged to be as creative as possible in their thinking" about preventing a Bin Ladin attack on U.S. territory. Participants noted that while the FBI had