

danger.”⁸⁰ The President blamed al Qaeda for 9/11 and the 1998 embassy bombings and, for the first time, declared that al Qaeda was “responsible for bombing the USS *Cole*.”⁸¹ He reiterated the ultimatum that had already been conveyed privately. “The Taliban must act, and act immediately,” he said. “They will hand over the terrorists, or they will share in their fate.”⁸² The President added that America’s quarrel was not with Islam: “The enemy of America is not our many Muslim friends; it is not our many Arab friends. Our enemy is a radical network of terrorists, and every government that supports them.” Other regimes faced hard choices, he pointed out: “Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make: Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists.”⁸³

President Bush argued that the new war went beyond Bin Ladin. “Our war on terror begins with al Qaeda, but it does not end there,” he said. “It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped, and defeated.” The President had a message for the Pentagon: “The hour is coming when America will act, and you will make us proud.” He also had a message for those outside the United States. “This is civilization’s fight,” he said. “We ask every nation to join us.”⁸⁴

President Bush approved military plans to attack Afghanistan in meetings with Central Command’s General Franks and other advisers on September 21 and October 2. Originally titled “Infinite Justice,” the operation’s code word was changed—to avoid the sensibilities of Muslims who associate the power of infinite justice with God alone—to the operational name still used for operations in Afghanistan: “Enduring Freedom.”⁸⁵

The plan had four phases.

- In *Phase One*, the United States and its allies would move forces into the region and arrange to operate from or over neighboring countries such as Uzbekistan and Pakistan. This occurred in the weeks following 9/11, aided by overwhelming international sympathy for the United States.
- In *Phase Two*, air strikes and Special Operations attacks would hit key al Qaeda and Taliban targets. In an innovative joint effort, CIA and Special Operations forces would be deployed to work together with each major Afghan faction opposed to the Taliban. The Phase Two strikes and raids began on October 7. The basing arrangements contemplated for Phase One were substantially secured—after arduous effort—by the end of that month.
- In *Phase Three*, the United States would carry out “decisive operations” using all elements of national power, including ground troops, to topple the Taliban regime and eliminate al Qaeda’s sanctuary in Afghanistan. Mazar-e-Sharif, in northern Afghanistan, fell to a coalition assault by Afghan and U.S. forces on November 9. Four days later the Taliban had fled from Kabul. By early December, all major cities