

posals to management in 1986, 1995, and 1997. No action was taken on them. In 1997, a National Security Unit was set up to handle alerts, track potential terrorist cases for possible immigration enforcement action, and work with the rest of the Justice Department. It focused on the FBI's priorities of Hezbollah and Hamas, and began to examine how immigration laws could be brought to bear on terrorism. For instance, it sought unsuccessfully to require that CIA security checks be completed before naturalization applications were approved.⁴³ Policy questions, such as whether resident alien status should be revoked upon the person's conviction of a terrorist crime, were not addressed.

Congress, with the support of the Clinton administration, doubled the number of Border Patrol agents required along the border with Mexico to one agent every quarter mile by 1999. It rejected efforts to bring additional resources to bear in the north. The border with Canada had one agent for every 13.25 miles. Despite examples of terrorists entering from Canada, awareness of terrorist activity in Canada and its more lenient immigration laws, and an inspector general's report recommending that the Border Patrol develop a northern border strategy, the only positive step was that the number of Border Patrol agents was not cut any further.⁴⁴

Inspectors at the ports of entry were not asked to focus on terrorists. Inspectors told us they were not even aware that when they checked the names of incoming passengers against the automated watchlist, they were checking in part for terrorists. In general, border inspectors also did not have the information they needed to make fact-based determinations of admissibility. The INS initiated but failed to bring to completion two efforts that would have provided inspectors with information relevant to counterterrorism—a proposed system to track foreign student visa compliance and a program to establish a way of tracking travelers' entry to and exit from the United States.⁴⁵

In 1996, a new law enabled the INS to enter into agreements with state and local law enforcement agencies through which the INS provided training and the local agencies exercised immigration enforcement authority. Terrorist watchlists were not available to them. Mayors in cities with large immigrant populations sometimes imposed limits on city employee cooperation with federal immigration agents. A large population lives outside the legal framework. Fraudulent documents could be easily obtained. Congress kept the number of INS agents static in the face of the overwhelming problem.⁴⁶

The chief vehicle for INS and for state and local participation in law enforcement was the Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF), first tried out in New York City in 1980 in response to a spate of incidents involving domestic terrorist organizations. This task force was managed by the New York Field Office of the FBI, and its existence provided an opportunity to exchange information and, as happened after the first World Trade Center bombing, to enlist local officers, as well as other agency representatives, as partners in the FBI investigation. The FBI expanded the number of JTTFs throughout the 1990s, and by