

Administration's cooperation with the *New York Times* in December 2000 and with CBS's *60 Minutes* on stories about terrorism as efforts to inform the American people of the growing terrorist threat.

These efforts were, however, largely sporadic and, given the classified nature of intelligence, limited in terms of the specifics that could be shared with the public about the immediacy and gravity of the threat. They were not sufficient to mobilize and sustain heightened public awareness about the danger of a domestic attack.

By comparison to what has occurred since September 11, the American public was not focused on and was not on heightened alert regarding Bin Ladin, his *fatwa* against the United States, and the immediate likelihood of a terrorist attack on American soil. In the aftermath of September 11, two incidents illustrate the difference that an alerted American public can, and does, make:

- On September 11, 2001, passengers aboard Flight 93, aware that two aircraft had been flown into the World Trade Center towers in New York City, attempted to retake control of their hijacked aircraft and, it is widely believed, saved further loss of life and destruction; and
- On December 22, 2001, an alert flight attendant on board an American Airlines flight from Paris to Miami noticed passenger Richard Reid attempting to light a fuse in his shoe. Reid was subsequently subdued by a number of passengers and has pleaded guilty to charges of attempting to blow up the aircraft.

[Page 133]

Kristen Breitweiser, speaking on behalf of the families of the victims of the September 11 attacks, reminded the Joint Inquiry of the importance of an alert and involved American public in the war against terrorism. In her testimony, she emphasized the potential importance of information that was not shared with the public before September 11, 2001:

One thing remains clear from history. Our intelligence agencies were acutely aware of an impending domestic risk posed by Al Qaeda. A