

on the United States, neither President Clinton nor President Bush nor their National Security Councils put the government or the Intelligence Community on a war footing before September 11.

O. Lack of an Integrated Response

Usama Bin Ladin's involvement in international terrorism first came to the attention of the Intelligence Community in the early 1990s. As his direct involvement in planning and directing terrorism became more evident, CTC created a unit to focus specifically on Bin Ladin and the threat he posed to U.S. interests. CTC personnel recognized as early as 1996 that Bin Ladin posed a grave danger to the United States.

Following the August 1998 bombings of two U.S. embassies, the DCI placed Bin Ladin's terrorist network among the Intelligence Community's highest priorities. The DCI raised the status of the threat further still when he announced to CIA senior managers in December 1998:

We are at war [with Bin Ladin] I want no resources or people spared in this effort, either inside the CIA or the [Intelligence] Community.

These were strong words. Rather than having a galvanizing effect, however, the Joint Inquiry record reveals that the Intelligence Community continued to be fragmented without a comprehensive strategy for combating Bin Ladin. The record also shows that the DCI was either unable or unwilling to enforce consistent priorities and marshal resources across the Community.

Evidence of a fragmented Intelligence Community can be found in the limited distribution of the DCI's declaration. The Community as a whole had only a limited awareness of the statement. For [page 248] example, although some senior NSA and DIA managers were aware of it, few FBI personnel were. The Assistant Director of the FBI's Counterterrorism Division told the Joint Inquiry that he "was not specifically aware of that declaration of war." Equally disturbing, Joint Inquiry interviews of FBI field personnel showed that they did not know of the DCI's declaration, and some had only passing familiarity with Bin Ladin and al-Qa'ida before September 11. Senior U.S. military officers were also unaware of the DCI's declaration.