

S. Limited Counterterrorism Contributions by other Intelligence Community Members

The criticisms regarding the FBI's limited attention to the danger at home reflects a large gap in the nation's counterterrorism structure, a failure to focus on how an international terrorist group might target the United States itself. No agency appears to have been responsible for regularly assessing the threat to the homeland. In his testimony before the Joint Inquiry, Deputy Secretary of Defense Wolfowitz asserted that an attack on the United States fell between the cracks in the U.S. Intelligence Community's division of labor. He noted that there is "a problem of where responsibility is assigned."

The CIA and NSA followed events overseas, and their employees saw their job as passing relevant threat information to the FBI. Both the CIA and NSA are leery of activity that suggests they are monitoring U.S. citizens or conducting assessments linked to the activities of persons in the United States, a task that officials interviewed at these agencies believed belongs exclusively to the FBI. The FBI, on the other hand, does not have the analytic capacity to prepare assessments of U.S. vulnerability and relies heavily on the CIA for much of its analysis.

At times, the CIA ignored threat activity linked to the United States, focusing instead on radical activity overseas. For instance, one CIA officer told the Joint Inquiry in an interview that the travel of two hijackers to Los Angeles was not important and that he was interested only in their connection to Yemen.

[A particular failure by NSA and the FBI to coordinate the interception of communications by al-Qa'ida operatives before September 11 illustrates the gaps between programs implemented by the members of the Intelligence Community. Both the FBI and NSA had programs in place to collect al-Qa'ida communications. [_____]. The FBI had not identified a significant number of al-Qa'ida cells in the United States and, thus, had fewer opportunities to use electronic surveillance against these targets].

[While each agency pursued its own collection strategy, neither exerted any effort to develop a coordinated plan to intercept international communications, particularly those between the United [page 260] States and foreign countries. We now know that several hijackers communicated extensively abroad after arriving in the United States and that at least two entered,