

The Intelligence Community recognized early on that an effective U.S. response to al-Qa'ida must be global and that foreign intelligence and security services ("liaison services") would be important allies in fighting terrorism. Improving ties to liaison services became increasingly important for the CIA, FBI, NSA, and other agencies, and their efforts helped make foreign countries more effective partners and more willing to assist U.S. counterterrorism efforts.

[Several problems remained, however, some of which are inherent to bilateral relationships. CIA's liaison partners vary in competence and commitment. Others are unwilling to share information and some include individuals believed to have cooperated with terrorist groups. At times, U.S. policies and procedures also hinder successful liaison].

A. Efforts to Improve Foreign Liaison

[In the mid-1990s, CIA counterterrorism officials recognized that unilateral CIA operations alone were not sufficient in penetrating and countering terrorist organizations. For instance, difficulties in unilaterally penetrating [—————] extremist groups necessitated increased cooperation with liaison services, according to a former CTC Chief. To this end, CIA, NSA, and other Intelligence Community agencies strengthened their liaison relationships with existing partners and forged new relationships to fight al-Qa'ida and other terrorist groups.

Throughout the 1990s, the FBI also greatly expanded its efforts to work with foreign governments against terrorism. Former FBI Director Louis Freeh testified that he met with dozens of foreign leaders to build a global counterterrorism network and greatly expanded the Bureau's presence overseas through its Legal Attache ("Legat") program. As of September 11, 2001, the FBI had agents assigned to 44 U.S. embassies. As Mr. Freeh explained, the FBI began to position itself around the globe "in places that matter in the fight against terrorism," particularly in the Middle East, as Legats were assigned to Cairo, Islamabad, Tel Aviv, Ankara, [page 286] Riyadh, and other sites. As a result, he added, the FBI was often able to expedite access to witnesses and create additional channels for information about terrorism.