

The GAO reported that these applicants were presumed to be eligible based upon pre-9/11 internal State Department policies that stressed that all applicants from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates were to be considered “good cases” and, therefore, exempt from interviews. Moreover, the GAO noted that applicants from these two countries were not required to “complete their applications or [provide] supporting documentation.”³⁰ Why was this so? The pervasiveness in Saudi Arabia of Wahhabism, a radical, anti-American variant of Islam, was well-known before 9/11. The JIS should have inquired why the country of Saudi Arabia was given such preferential treatment by the State Department and whether the intelligence agencies were complicit in the policy.

III. Comments on Recommendations

When there is a crisis, there is a tendency to look for easy solutions. A case in point is the first and most publicized Recommendation to come out of this investigation: the creation of a new “Director of National Intelligence.” Good policies, good leadership, adequate resources, and will can better protect the American people from terrorism than simply creating new offices and rearranging organizational charts. And, as we have attempted to show, policy, resources, and leadership were issues that were not treated in sufficient depth by the JIS. It is not at all clear that a new intelligence “czar” could succeed where the Director of Central Intelligence has not. For that matter, the Report does not even conclude that DCI Tenet or any predecessor DCI did fail. The disconnect between the JIS’ investigative efforts and the Recommendation supposedly based on them is remarkable.

On the merits of the “Director of National Intelligence” idea itself, we would concur with some of the points made by Vice Chairman Shelby in his Statement of Additional Views. Separating the job of the head of the intelligence community from the directorship of the CIA is an idea of some value. It has been endorsed by a number of post-Cold War studies of intelligence-community reform. However, we in the House and Senate intelligence committees have not yet deliberated enough on this question to draw any conclusions.

³⁰GAO report, p. 17.