

Qa'ida posed an increasing threat to United States interests, investigations in the United States of those who raised funds for other terrorist groups continued to consume considerable field resources and attention prior to September 11.

While the FBI devoted considerable resources to the criminal investigations of the terrorist attacks overseas, substantial efforts to prevent similar attacks at home were lacking. Former National Security Advisor Sandy Berger told the Joint Inquiry: “. . . if there was a flood of intelligence information [on terrorism] from the CIA, there was hardly a trickle from the FBI.” In some FBI field offices, there was little focus on, or awareness of, Usama Bin Ladin and al-Qa'ida. This included the San Diego field office where FBI agents would discover, after September 11, that there had been numerous local connections to at least two of the hijackers.

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The Executive Assistant Director of the FBI's Counterterrorism Division testified to the Joint Inquiry that the FBI had no war plan against Bin Ladin: “Did we have a war plan, a five-paragraph ops order issued on Usama Bin Ladin and al-Qa'ida? Absolutely, we did not at that time.” When asked how the FBI's counterterrorism program fit into the overall Intelligence Community counterterrorism program, the same Assistant Director replied: “I am not sure if I know the answer to that. I talked to [the DCI] briefly about this. I have talked to [the CTC Chief] prior to -- the answer to your question is, I don't know the answer.” Without a comprehensive strategy in place for the whole Intelligence Community, there was no assurance that agencies like the FBI were focused on the DCI's “war” effort.

Consistent with the absence of any comprehensive strategy, a recent Department of Justice Inspector General (IG) report found that: “The FBI has never performed a comprehensive written assessment of the risk of the terrorist threat facing the United States.” As the IG report explained: “Such an assessment would be useful not only to define the nature, likelihood, and severity of the threat but also to identify intelligence gaps that need to be addressed. Moreover, we believe that comprehensive threat and risk assessments would be useful in determining where to allocate attention and resources...on programs and initiatives to combat terrorism.” This kind of assessment still had not been completed as recently as Director Mueller's testimony on October 17, 2002. Nor did the DCI's National Intelligence