

As counterterrorism became an increasingly important concern for senior Intelligence Community officials, collection and analytic efforts did not always keep pace because other requirements competed with terrorism for attention, and real priorities often were not clear. In Joint Inquiry interviews, CIA officials said that, because overall resources were finite, any increased focus on counterterrorism meant that other issues would have to receive less attention. At the FBI, where overall funding had increased, officials said that substantial efforts focused on investigating terrorist cases overseas, critical infrastructure protection programs, and other priorities not directly related to strategic intelligence or al-Qa'ida activity within the United States.

[The Director of NSA testified that prior to September 11, other priorities frustrated his attempts to acquire capabilities to process modern communications used by terrorists and other intelligence targets:

It required a significant redirection of investment for us to acquire the capabilities to exploit modern communications. I mentioned . . . trying to churn . . . within what was then a fixed top line about \$200 million And we could only get about a third of it to stick because the people who were using the products we created out of traditional means were unable to give up those product lines to allow us to reinvest those dollars for the new age signals environment I was unable to move some money because we were going to erode our coverage of [another intelligence target] as part of this effort.]

Even within the CTC, the staff and resources dedicated to counterterrorism could not keep pace with the amount and scope of incoming intelligence reporting. The DCI attributed CIA inaction on a cable pointing to al-Hazmi's travel to the United States to the fact that overworked CTC personnel did not have time to read "information only" cables from the field:

The cable that came in from the field at the time, sir, was labeled "information only," and I know that nobody read that cable. . . . Sir, we weren't aware of it [page 54] when it came into headquarters. We couldn't have notified the [FBI]. Nobody read that cable in the March time frame. . . . It was an information-only cable from the field and nobody read that information-only cable. [In hindsight, of] course it should have been.