Date and Time: Saturday, May 4, 2024 2:17:00AM EEST

Job Number: 223498164

Documents (25)

1. *No Headline In Original*

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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2. *No Headline In Original*

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6. *Enemy of the state?*

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Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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8. *Flight From the Taliban*

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Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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News	Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2001 to Dec 31, 2005

9. *Kingmaker: (Part 1): Long a tourism magnet, Trinidad and Tobago's tropical beauty conceals a darker identity. Donna Jacobs investigates Trinidad's ties to terror and, in an exclusive interview, talks to the Toronto-educated man who holds the key to the country's uncertain future.*

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10. *Left Behind*

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Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

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11. *Family ties;The Bin Ladens*

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12. *Bordering on What?*

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13. *The Making of the Speech*

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14. *How 2,988 words changed a presidency: (Part 1): Since words are the key to the presidency in times of crisis,George W. Bush was in trouble in the days following the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. His language was undisciplined and he often seemed lost and scared. D.T. Maxx explains how a White House team 'wrote for history' by crafting Bush's brilliant address to Congress on Sept. 20.*

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15. *The road to ground zero*

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16. *A SEPTEMBER 11 SURVIVOR IS HURT AS MAN DIES IN JERUSALEM ATTACK*

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Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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17. *One Man and a Global Web of Violence*

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18. *The War Inside the Arab Newsroom*

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19. *The Interregnum*

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20. *The Most Wanted Palestinian*

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21. *The Sunshine Warrior*

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23. *Fern Holland's War*

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24. *100 DAYS*

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January 13, 2004, Tuesday

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Section: A,

Length: 730 words

Byline: ecornelius

Body

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Enemy of the state?

Sydney Morning Herald (Australia)

November 16, 2002 Saturday

Late Edition

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Section: GOOD WEEKEND; Pg. 40

Length: 4108 words

Byline: Story by GEORGE PACKER

Body

When New York lawyer Lynne Stewart agreed to take on an Egyptian terrorist as a client, she didn't foresee that she herself would soon be facing trial, and up to 40 years in jail. Here, how a '60s radical found herself on the wrong side at the wrong time.

One Saturday morning in November 1994, Ramsey Clark, attorney-general under President Johnson and more recently a spokesman for radical Arab causes, met in his Manhattan office a criminal defence lawyer named Lynne Stewart. Clark wanted Stewart to take on a new client - Sheik Omar Abdel Rahman, a blind Egyptian cleric and the spiritual leader of the worldwide jihad movement. The sheik was about to go on trial for directing a conspiracy among his followers to bomb sites around New York City, including bridges, tunnels and the United Nations. His previous attorneys, the left-wing lawyers William Kunstler and Ronald Kuby, had been taken off the case because they represented other defendants who had conflicts of interest with Abdel Rahman. The sheik had dismissed his court-appointed lawyer. A month before trial, Clark told Stewart only she could do the job.

In 1994 Stewart had barely heard of Hamas or ***Hezbollah***, let alone the Islamic Group of Egypt, a violent fundamentalist organisation that targeted Coptic Christians, secular intellectuals, policemen and foreign tourists, and for which the sheik provided inspirational leadership. Political Islam was not, as she puts it, on her "radar". Most of her clients were young black and Latino men accused of ordinary crimes, but throughout the 1980s, she also defended members of the radical American underground. Stewart was a "movement" lawyer - she didn't just defend the legal rights of her clients; she also advocated their politics. Friends warned her that the sheik wasn't her kind of client. He was a religious fascist who opposed everything that the feminist, atheist and vaguely revolutionary Marxist Stewart stood for.

What concerned Stewart, though, was not the sheik's politics but her ability to represent him with almost no time to prepare. The little she knew of the sheik himself - a man hounded by the government, accused of masterminding a terrorist plot on which he seemed to have left no fingerprints - appealed to her. That day in Ramsey Clark's office, Stewart wavered. Finally Clark told her that if she refused, the Arab world would feel betrayed by their friends on the American Left. So she agreed to take the case.

As Stewart got to know her new client, she came to see him as a fighter for national liberation on behalf of a people oppressed by dictatorship and American imperialism.

She came to admire him personally, too, for his honesty, his strength of character, his teasing humour.

"I've made up my mind," the sheik would say. "I'm going to marry you, and that will solve everything."

"And what do ***women*** get if they fight in jihad?" she would ask.

"Eternity in paradise with whichever of your husbands you like best."

"Husbands? That's all we get?"

Stewart threw herself into the case with the passion for which she was known in criminal-defence circles. At trial she tried to convince the mostly black jury that the sheik was not an unfamiliar figure to them. "He has advocated for the suffering of his people at home, in Egypt," she said in her opening argument.

"He has advocated by any means necessary, and that is not acceptable to this government." But Stewart misjudged her audience. When the jury returned with a conviction, she wept.

In 1995, few people were paying attention. Today, the trial transcript reads like a 20,000-page prelude to September 11: sleeper cells, secret funds, international jihad, connections to a group called al-Qaeda and a man named bin Laden.

Stewart stayed by the sheik over the years of appeals, paid minimally by contributions from his Muslim supporters, who now regarded her as their champion. She was labouring under the restrictions imposed by the government's Special Administrative Measures, or SAMs, which curtail the activities of convicted terrorists to prevent them from plotting future acts of terrorism. Stewart, like other lawyers in this situation, had to sign an agreement not to pass information to or from clients except for strictly legal purposes.

Then in May 2000, at a meeting with Stewart in a Minnesota prison, the sheik dictated a statement to his Arabic translator, Mohammed Yousry, calling for an end to the cease-fire between the Islamic Group and the Egyptian government. The statement was phoned to Islamic Group leaders by Ahmed Abdel Sattar, a New York mailman and follower of the sheik who had worked as a paralegal on the case. The sheik's followers in Egypt doubted the statement's authenticity - until Stewart herself, in violation of the SAMs, held a press conference a few weeks later to confirm that Abdel Rahman advocated withdrawal from the cease-fire.

She imagined that she might be cut off from the sheik. She did not know that her prison conversations with the sheik were being taped by a court order stemming from Sattar's activities with the Islamic Group. And she did not imagine what would happen on April 9 of this year, when she was handcuffed outside her Brooklyn town house by FBI agents and charged in a federal court with two counts of lying to the government and two counts of aiding a terrorist organisation. Attorney-General John Ashcroft himself flew to New York to announce Stewart's indictment, along with those of Yousry, Sattar and an Islamist in London. The trial will begin next year. Stewart, now 62, faces 40 years in federal prison.

"At trial you'll see two different narratives," says Stephen Gillers, vice-dean of New York University School of Law. "The defence narrative is going to be that the US is using 9/11 to destroy constitutional rights that the government has upheld for 200 years, through wars and disasters. And the prosecution narrative is going to be: focus on what Lynne Stewart did in that prison in May of 2000, well before September 11."

There is a third narrative, one that isn't likely to receive a full hearing at the trial. In this version, a white middle-class girl from Queens, formed by the '50s, is radicalised by the '60s and by a black man for whom she is willing to tear her life in two. Together they become New York revolutionaries, and so they remain long after the radical years have ended and others have moved on. Then, late in life, in a new era, the woman takes up a new cause, commits herself ever more deeply to it and suddenly finds that she has become the defendant. "My true goal," Stewart says, "was always to be on the right side of history."

But Islamic fundamentalism isn't black power, and the history that began on September 11 will not be forgiving of people who pick the wrong cause. Always drawn in the most personal way to the outcast, Stewart herself now seems isolated even within the world that has been her only true home, the legal Left. She had told Ramsey Clark that she would take the sheik's case only if other "movement" lawyers helped, but she faces ruin alone.

Physically, Lynne Stewart suggests a cheerful and profound self-neglect. Her hair, grey and lank, seems to have expired on her head. She dresses for court like a Sicilian widow in sensible shoes, hobbling from excess weight and a recent courtroom fall. Friends have to remind her to cut her hair, which she did after pleading "emphatically not guilty" while the cameras fixed her in their unpitying sights.

What pictures and public statements don't convey is Stewart's warmth, her vulnerability. These come across in her brown eyes, and in conversation, which unspools in long, discursive and quite unguarded strands. Stewart does not talk like a lawyer or a politico - no jargon, no euphemisms. Her great talent as a lawyer, says Ron Kuby, is to see something redemptive in everyone and to make jurors see it, too.

In person it isn't possible to dislike her - and she never expresses deep dislike.

Growing up in the 1950s, the daughter of schoolteachers, Lynne Feltham was a bookish tomboy. One day she told her mother: "All my friends have boyfriends, and I don't have a boyfriend. What's wrong with me?"

"You're too smart," her mother said. "Tone it down."

She didn't tone it down, but she suffered the peculiar pain of being "an honorary guy - which is interesting, because that's of course how the Muslims also treat me. They don't have to deal with the feminine. I'm an honorary guy, or else they couldn't deal with me at all."

She still suffers. However far she has moved away from the conformist 1950s, Stewart can't muster the unbridled defiance of a woman 10 years younger. What she calls a self-esteem problem extends to her current crisis. "I never expected to be fighting for myself," she says. "I could fight for you, but to fight for me? That's hard. Because I was a girl of the '50s, because I'm not worth it? I don't know. But it's too self-aggrandising, too necessary to make myself into an image of something, rather than just be, you know, all the warts, what I am."

She followed the pattern of her generation into early marriage and motherhood. But when her husband suffered a psychological breakdown, Stewart, then 21, found that the family's moral and financial support depended on her. She went to work as a librarian in a decaying elementary school in Harlem. It was 1962.

Across the hall was the classroom of a black teacher named Ralph Poynter. A short, broad former amateur boxer, Poynter had brought from western Pennsylvania a love of jazz clarinet and a pent-up rage. When Stewart met him, he was "a repressed revolutionary in a suit and tie". She was seeing things for which nothing in her life had prepared her: an eight-year-old boy whose lips had been chewed by a rat while he slept; teachers who expected their students to learn nothing. The white librarian and the black teacher gravitated towards each other, and Poynter became Stewart's guide to black America. James Baldwin's Fire Next Time came out that year, Malcolm X's fame was growing, Harlem seethed. It all matched Ralph Poynter's mood. And his militancy felt like liberation of every kind to Lynne Stewart.

"Two people who are passionate about the same things," Ginny Gernes, Stewart's best friend from schooldays, says, "and then what else can happen?"

It still embarrasses Stewart to talk about their affair, and yet nothing animates her more than to recall how she fell in love and became a radical in one risky and inextricable leap. Everything was happening at once, history feeding rage, rage politics, politics intimacy. They plunged into the community-school movement at its left-wing fringe, with Poynter in the role of organiser and enforcer, losing his job and eventually serving six months in prison for three counts of assaulting a police officer.

It was all part of the attraction. "Oh, I'm Desdemona," Stewart says, laughing, alluding to Othello's famous lines: "She loved me for the dangers I had pass'd/ And I loved her that she did pity them."

Stewart had to prove herself worthy over and over. When Poynter lost his job, she gave him half her pay cheque, though he was still living with his wife and Stewart felt too guilty to take child support from her ex-husband. Poynter agonised over his own motives, searching for traces of racial self-hatred. "He talks black," people at meetings would say, "but he sleeps white." He sought advice from a Harlem legend, Queen Mother Moore of the Captive Non-Self-

Governing Nation of Africans Born in America. Queen Mother Moore told Poynter that Lynne Stewart was the real thing and would never betray him. But she also urged him to have many other ***women***, because he was a black warrior who needed to propagate the race.

"I enjoyed that view," Poynter says, "but that was not my view."

"He indulged that view," Stewart clarifies, "but he did not adopt it."

Forty years after they met in Harlem, Stewart and Poynter have an extended multiracial clan - seven children between them (one together) and seven grandchildren. He drives her everywhere, while she nags him to watch the road. Winding along the East River from Bronx County Courthouse, he announces, "This country is founded on brutality." "Exploitation," she says. "I like it better when you say exploitation, Ralph." "Brutal exploitation." She smiles fondly and pats his hand.

In the 1970s, Stewart went to law school and began a criminal practice. But she had missed the golden age of the legal Left, the trials of the draft resisters and the Chicago 8 and the Panther 21. By the early '80s, Stewart was defending violent members of the splinter groups that were all that remained of the revolutionary dreams of the '60s - the Weather Underground, the Ohio 7, the Black Liberation Army. And when these cases ended, when the armed revolutionaries were all in jail or dead, "movement" lawyers like Stewart and William Kunstler and Ron Kuby no longer had a movement. They took on even more dubious clients: drug dealers, cop killers, mobsters, mentally ill assassins. It was hard to see exactly what was left-wing about Colin Ferguson, the Long Island Rail Road shooter (except, if you asked Kunstler, his skin colour), or Sammy the Bull (Salvatore Gravano), the mob informant who was Stewart's client until her indictment (except that the government was out to get him). The idea of a genuine program for social change no longer animated their careers. The legal Left now represented thugs trying to beat the system.

In recent years, Stewart's practice has been devoted primarily to defending poor, young black and Latino men - a few of them her own family members or employees. The boundaries between family and friendship and work are blurred for her. Stewart's son practises law with her; she represented her daughter's common-law husband (Poynter calls him "my sin-in-law") on drug charges; her paralegal is a former client who served 3 1/2 years for harbouring her fugitive husband (one of the Ohio 7) and whose child temporarily came under Stewart and Poynter's care; her office assistant is the son of a jailed black revolutionary. Most of her cases and clients are too obscure to count as political. And yet, for Stewart, this, too, is politics - perhaps the truest kind. Not long ago, reading aloud to Poynter from the preface to Richard Wright's Native Son, she exclaimed: "This is why I'm a criminal defence lawyer! It's because he's talking about these kids in the black community that have no voice, that can't articulate, that are just so consumed by their own anger and frustration. And it hasn't changed."

There her career might have remained, if Stewart hadn't been introduced by Ramsey Clark to a new movement. But this was a truly worldwide movement. It was serious; it was real - realer in a way than anything in the '60s.

On a humid evening in June, I was coming out of the offices of the Centre for Constitutional Rights when I heard a Queens accent pronounce my name. Lynne Stewart was limping along the sidewalk in a striped smock. I told her that the meeting of the Lynne Stewart Defence Committee had been cancelled at the last minute.

"Cancelled? Nobody told me." She looked stricken. "Maybe it was the leak."

Three days earlier, a supposedly sealed affidavit for a search warrant had turned up on the website thesmokinggun.com. It contained excerpts from her taped prison conversations with the sheik. The information was damaging: Stewart, the translator Yousry and the sheik seemed to be enjoying tricking the guards into thinking that she and the sheik were having a lawyer-client conversation, when in fact the sheik was dictating a statement to Yousry. At one point she joked that she should get an acting award. We went back inside. In the elevator, Stewart wondered aloud whether the Centre for Constitutional Rights might be withdrawing from her defence "because they get a lot of their support from Zionists. Well, from Jews, who aren't all Zionists, but some of them are."

Informed that the meeting had been cancelled for logistical reasons, Stewart left, still looking shaky. Her practice was suffering badly; I had heard from a friend of hers that Stewart was more frightened than ever in her life. I asked whether she was just being brave.

"Haven't you heard of Brave Irene?" Stewart said. "Irene was my mother's name, it's my middle name. But it's the title of a wonderful children's book. Brave Irene - there's snow, it's dark and cold, but she soldiers on. I used to give it out when I was a librarian."

Stewart was due to speak at an anti-war rally in a church on Washington Square. As we came out onto the street, it started raining, and she looked around for Poynter. He was waiting in their cluttered four-wheel drive. The church was only a few blocks away, but Stewart couldn't make it on foot. They discussed whether to re-park.

"Meanwhile, Ralph, I'm drowning."

"Sorry, my dear." Poynter hurried over with an umbrella.

We drove through the pouring rain. "Nobody told me it was cancelled," Stewart said again. For a moment she seemed utterly isolated, and I could feel what it would mean for her and Poynter to be separated by prison as they grow old. "Maybe it was the leak, Ralph."

"Maybe it was. If so, it tells us a lot about what we already know is in there."

She looked at him in exasperation. "What do we know, Ralph? What do we know?"

"That it's all a bunch of bull."

At Judson Memorial Baptist Church, the crowd consisted of greying Maoists, students in antiglobalisation garb and young Muslim ***women*** from South Asians Against Police Brutality and Racism. When Stewart spoke, she said: "We have had no movement in this country for many years. But what I see tonight, many movements coming together, tells me it could happen again, and we must make it happen. No matter what General Ashcroft says, no matter what they leak to the press, I am guilty of no crime. I'm very moved to see the young people here. I almost had tears when these young ***women*** made their testimonies. This is what movement is all about. It gives us back a lot more than we give to it. It gives us a life." She was helped from the podium to a standing ovation.

For most American dissidents, opposition to the war on terrorism involves a nod to the loss of innocent American life, a tendentious comparison with the loss of innocent Afghan life, a playing down of the danger posed by al-Qaeda and an exaggeration of the Justice Department's domestic security abuses (which don't need exaggerating). Stewart is more intellectually honest than this. When the towers fell, she felt that her city had been violated and her own life disrupted. But this warm-hearted woman took the slaughter of innocents with a certain cold-bloodedness. The US is constantly at war around the world and shouldn't expect its acts to go unanswered, she says.

The Pentagon was "a better target"; the people in the towers "never knew what hit them. They had no idea that they could ever be a target for somebody's wrath, just by virtue of being American. They took it personally. And actually, it wasn't a personal thing." As for civilian deaths in general: "I'm pretty inured to the notion that in a war or in an armed struggle, people die. They're in the wrong place, they're in a nightclub in Israel, they're at a stock market in London, they're in the Algerian outback - whatever it is, people die." She mentions Hiroshima and Dresden. "So I have a lot of trouble figuring out why that is wrong, especially when people are sort of placed in a position of having no other way."

Stewart doubts the government's version of Osama bin Laden - nor does she find him too "repugnant" to represent, though she allows that she herself might not be able to offer the best defence at this point. As for the sheik, in spite of his extensive connections to al-Qaeda, she still sees him as a fighter for Egyptian self-determination. She backs his Islamism for the same reason that she backed Mao and Ho's communism: because it resists imperialism. This logic is entirely different from the civil-liberties rationale of most lawyers who defend accused terrorists. The strategy of her own trial will be to mute it in favour of constitutional arguments, but the political nature of Stewart's commitment to the sheik is what led her to violate the SAMs - an identification so strong that her lack of concern for

her own welfare strikes even some supporters as reckless. In her retelling, the effort to deceive prison guards was quite deliberate: a great man was locked down in near-total isolation - "Daniel in the lions' den". If she couldn't speak for him politically, what had been the point of taking the case in the first place? Her decision was "a necessary mistake", she says, like an affair that ends a marriage.

Brooklyn, where Stewart and Poynter live in a narrow, book-filled town house, provides a quiet base for some of the world's most extreme political groups. It's an unnoticed miracle that there aren't frequent car bombings and shootouts. The Israeli settler movement draws support in the borough; al-Qaeda's predecessor organisation had its US headquarters not far from the mosques where the sheik used to preach jihad. And remnants of the American Left's most hard-core cells have settled nearby. At a book sale on Stewart's behalf, members of the Madame Binh Graphics Collective were donating 20-year-old African liberation posters, while survivors of the May 19 Communist Organisation and the United Freedom Front chatted over hors d'oeuvres. The ageing American leftists have resurfaced, while the young Arab Islamists are going underground - a dead movement and a living one, with Lynne Stewart the human link.

In his autobiography, William Kunstler wrote that when he took the sheik's case in 1994, he felt as if it were 1969 again and this were the Chicago conspiracy trial. A better analogy would be to the 1950s, when the foreign enemy was real, the domestic support marginal and the hard questions had to do with the appropriate legal response. There's nothing new about the post-September 11 era, says the man who will try to keep Stewart out of prison, the renowned criminal defender Michael Tigar.

He mentions the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798, the internment of Japanese-Americans, the McCarthy years: "The point is that all times of this kind are different times." At trial Tigar will argue that, although Stewart violated the SAMs in May 2000, she didn't intend to when she signed them. He will claim that, in speaking out on behalf of the sheik, Stewart was doing what lawyers do, under the protection of the First Amendment.

Dozens of New York criminal defenders showed up for Stewart's arraignment. They talk about the indictment's "chilling effect" on the defence of unpopular clients. They say that the charges would never have been brought if not for the terror attacks, and that Attorney-General John Ashcroft is making a scapegoat of an easy target.

But in conversations with criminal lawyers, including members of what might be called the terror bar, I found many of them less decisive in Stewart's defence than the public chorus suggests. Carl Herman spent a year and a half fighting to keep Mohammed Saddiq Odeh from receiving the death penalty for the Nairobi Embassy bombing. On September 11 Herman lost a friend in one of the twin towers. A few weeks later he had to visit Odeh in jail, and found that he couldn't look his client in the eye. Herman has sworn off defending terrorists. "We're not talking about phoney revolutionaries, or Mafia guys, or nuts," he says. "These guys are really dedicated to wiping out me and my family. I can just find something else to do with my time."

Even Ron Kuby, a strong defender of Stewart, has rethought many things since September 11. He now regrets having defended El Sayyid A. Nosair, accused of killing the Jewish extremist Meir Kahane. When Sattar, the sheik's paralegal, was arrested along with Stewart, Kuby was ready to represent him at the bail hearing, until Kuby's wife said, "You don't know what he was doing." Kuby reached a decision: "I sure as hell don't think people who would take my family, put them in purdah and put me up against a wall and shoot me are entitled to my support in that struggle."

Kuby escorted me from his office, lit a cigarette and grew melancholy. He asked what I thought of Stewart's case. I said that the men of the legal Left had been more savvy, and now she was all alone to pay the price. "Lynne is dying for our sins?" Kuby considered it. "Maybe. History is very unforgiving of people who pick the wrong side at the wrong time in the wrong place. And even if she wins, Lynne is ruined as a lawyer."

Graphic

Margaret Salmon and Dean Wiand; Frances M. Roberts "Muslims treat me as an honorary guy. They don't have to deal with the feminine. I'm an honorary guy, or else they couldn't deal with me at all": Lynne Stewart at home; (facing page) with supporters of her client Sheik Omar Abdel Rahman in 1995. FAIRFAX PHOTO LIBRARY Coming to their defence: Stewart (above) speaks about her client, mob informant Sammy the Bull (Salvatore Gravano; pictured top, centre foreground) in May last year. MARGARET SALMON AND DEAN WIAND The good fight?: Stewart and Poynter in their Brooklyn home. After 40 years, their revolution has become a lonely one.

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Section: FEATURES; Pg. 23

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Byline: Jim Soorley

Body

Thanks for the movie sex lesson

I HAVE discovered there are many film fanatics out there, people who know their movies so well they were able to come up with examples of black men and white ***women*** in Hollywood sex scenes.

Thanks to everyone who shared their expertise after my item last week questioning the lack of stories involving such liaisons on the big screen.

I certainly overlooked Spike Lee. This director has always pushed boundaries, so he was defiant in films like He Got Game and Jungle Fever. So apparently were actors Laurence Fishburne and Irene Jacob in Othello. Others mentioned 100 Rifles in which Raquel Welch and Jim Brown had a steamy scene that nearly "melted the celluloid and caused riots in the streets of Alabama". Others said Sidney Poitier and Elizabeth Hartman got very intimate in A Patch of Blue along with James Earl Jones and Jane Alexander in The Great White Hope.

But most agreed that Hollywood plays safe by down-playing the romance if it's inter-racial, or substituting Cuban or Latina ***women*** who are less likely to ruffle feathers. Final word goes to the reader who said that it appears to be preferable to depict graphic sexual assaults and violence on the screen than consensual sex between black men and white ***women***.

I'm baffled by

'un-Australian'

DICTIONARIES regularly revise their lists of words to make sure they are relevant to the language of the day. So it's not surprising that "un-Australian" has made it to the fourth edition of the Macquarie Dictionary, due out in October.

"Un-Australian" is defined as "disloyal to the nation". How confusing is that? What one person thinks is disloyal, like not supporting the national cricket team or not getting emotional on Anzac Day, might be viewed very differently by another. Similarly, locking up people who come seeking refuge from murderous regimes or refusing to say "sorry" for past injustices to Aborigines are not what I consider Australian behaviour.

They must give

peace a chance

No Headline In Original

'The price of AK-47 has gone up to $700

THE Lebanese have made their presence felt in this country in a positive way. Some of my best mates are Lebanese, and I love their food.

For 22 years their country was torn apart as Israel used the place as a firing range and bomb-testing buffer zone. Then Syria decided it would have a go, while the Lebanese Christians and Muslims were adding a bit more blood to the streets through years of civil war.

For the past few years there has been relative calm and Lebanon has begun to bloom again. Beirut has taken off as a tourist destination, returning to its glory days when it was one of the beautiful cities of the Mediterranean.

Is this all about to end? Former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri was killed in a bomb attack and now George Bush has said he will make Lebanon and the destruction of ***Hezbollah*** the centre of his next "war for peace".

Not a good sign. Let's hope this gutsy country does not revert to civil war again as many are predicting.

A grim portent is that the price of an AK-47 rifle has risen from $100 to $700 in the past couple of weeks.

Why Grant is

an inspiration

GRANT Hackett is in my view one of Australia's greatest athletes -- and a great Australian. Just imagine how you would cope with his lot in life. At the beginning of his swimming career he comes up against Kieren Perkins and when Perkins retires Ian Thorpe appears on the scene.

In any other period in history, Grant's medal tally alone would establish him as one of the greatest swimmers ever. He always displays style, sportsmanship, and resilience. It was wonderful to see him do what few others have ever done and no male swimmer has done for 20 years -- win the 200m, 400m, 800m, and 1500m at the national trials.

I just hope that when staring at the black line is over he gets all the personal and commercial accolades he has earned.

Hope I'm wrong

on bank chief

PAUL Wolfowitz is set to replace Australian James Wolfensohn as president of the World Bank. The bank is an institution whose mandate is to address Third World poverty and debt levels, development projects, and First World responsibilities. I hope I'm wrong about Wolfowitz but my gut instincts are that the man who was instrumental in advising President Bush to wage war against Iraq is unlikely to be overflowing with the milk of human kindness.

Life, light and

hope to you all

EASTER is an ancient pagan celebration of northern hemisphere spring. A new dimension was added with the Christian story of death and resurrection. It's a time of hope, of new life and light after the darkness of winter. I wish everyone a wonderful Easter holiday.

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Flight From the Taliban

The Sunday Herald

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Byline: By Stephen Naysmith

Body

Dr Mohammed Shafiq had already been warned. When the Taliban took control of the Laghman province in the east of Afghanistan, he had been reprimanded - at the point of a Kalashnikov - for talking to his unmarried nurse. But that was minor. Now he was in serious trouble, in an interview room in a Taliban prison. A soldier demanded to know his connections to Hizbi-Islami, an opposition party, then grabbed him by the hair and smashed his head off the table.

In the recesses of the Middle East where extremes meet, dismay at the loss of innocent lives was tempered with happier emotions ranging from quiet satisfaction to open celebration.

The Great Satan had been made to suffer. Wall-to-wall satellite coverage of the stricken burning towers provided easy confirmation that the world's only superpower was vulnerable to the strikes of the righteous; that it might be possible to eliminate its evil monopoly of power, influence and greed. Fearing that any outburst of enthusiasm might damage them in Washington's eyes Arab leaders from Yasser Arafat to Egypt's Hosni Mubarak clamped down on any dancing in the streets but the censorship did not extend to what went on inside people's minds. Half a century ago the American-Jewish writer Ben Hecht infamously said that every time a British soldier fell victim to a Jewish terrorist in the last days of the British mandate in Palestine, he took "a little holiday in his heart" In the past few days some Arabs, not all of them fundamentalists or terrorists, have indulged in a long vacation.

It was not a widespread feeling and it was expressed by a small minority but throughout the Middle East and within the Islamic world in general it was fired by a brooding dislike of the US and all its works. Much of it is caused by poverty and dispossession, not least in the teeming Palestinian refugee camps, and the mood of those caught up in the web of suffering is heightened by a belief that a US-led conspiracy is the reason for all their misfortunes. The dilution of Islamic religious and cultural values is another reason for the widespread anti-American feeling: the downgrading of Islamic religious law, ignorance about the teachings of the Koran and the break-up of the Islamic community with its concept of inclusiveness, all of which have encouraged the extremists. When Palestinians drove through Gaza waving flags and firing off Kalashnikovs they were expressing a rumbling belief that the US had it coming to them and that the use of airliners as missiles was a suitable payback for years of western repression and a long history of betrayal by the great powers.

Their joy had nothing to do with the huge loss of life in Washington and New York City - Islam deplores unnecessary killing, especially of the innocent, and outside the extremists suicide is not regarded as a virtuous act - but it has everything to do with the fact that the US had been discomfited as mayhem came to the streets of Manhattan. On one level their schadenfreude was fuelled by ideological and religious differences, an abhorrence of Coca-Cola culture, contempt for the half-witted pornography which clogs the internet and disdain for the greed-is-

good outlook which seems to them to characterise so much of American life to the exclusion of simpler values. On another related level, many Arabs in the Middle East cannot understand the unstinting support which is granted to Israel and which allows ordinary Palestinians to be gunned down without a smidgen of international protest. In their judgment, by backing Israel's policy of colonisation in Palestinian territory, the US has engaged in a hostile act which fully justifies the antagonism and the violence.

Both reasons combine to provide a focus for the burning sense of injustice which underpins any discussion about the US amongst hardline Muslims in the Middle East. All around them can be found examples of interference and the recent history of the region provides ample fuel to stoke those embers. Israel came into being in May 1948 largely as a result of Washington's prompting - President Truman's administration exerted tremendous pressure on Britain to end its UN mandate in Palestine and in so doing half a million Palestinians were expelled from their homes as the new state was born. Ever since that violent birth the country has enjoyed favoured client-state status, giving the impression that US and Israeli interests march hand-in-glove and that Israel is little more than the 51st state. Throughout the years of confrontation with the neighbouring Arab states, including three major wars, and the peace process which tried to end it, the US has stood accused of favouring Zionist interests while ignoring the claims of Islam. And allied to this has been the not unfounded suspicion that the Jewish lobby within the US has been an important source of votes for successive presidents.

"The link between Israel and American Jewry is vital to both sides," argues David A. Harris, Executive Director of the American Jewish Committee. "This link, however, cannot simply be taken for granted. If it begins to fray, it could have catastrophic consequences. Israel is absolutely indispensable to the Jewish identity of American Jews. Israel makes American Jews stand taller. Israel's miraculous rebirth, sheer survival and remarkable development should be sources of immense pride to Jews everywhere."

As with most injustices, real and imagined, the grounds for the argument are easily proved but the problem itself is less easily solved. Weapons and military muscle are the most obvious point of connection. In 1962, fearing that the Soviet Union was gaining a strategic advantage in the Middle East by supplying Egypt with strategic bombers President John F. Kennedy agreed to sell Hawk anti-aircraft missiles to Israel, thereby overturning the State Department's objections that Israel was strong enough to defend itself. The sale began a a trend which culminated in the supply of Patriot missiles at the time of the 1991 Gulf War, a move which was instrumental in dissuading Israel from taking unilateral action against Baghdad after it had been attacked by Scud missiles.

The benefits of that special relationship became apparent in the Yom Kippur War of 1973, a conflict which could have been lost but for US intervention. After a week of heavy fighting and setbacks Israel was running out of supplies and ammunition and facing the possibility that the Soviet Union might intervene with airborne forces to save the surrounded Egyptian Third Army on the east bank of the Suez Canal. Anguished calls for help were answered on October 24 when President Richard Nixon put the US on a heightened state of war readiness - DefCon 3, the same level ordered by President George W Bush last week - and ordered two carrier task forces into the eastern Mediterranean. Two days later Moscow backed down, Israel was saved and just as importantly it did not carry out a veiled threat to use nuclear weapons.

"For Israel, the special relationship with the United States has been of fundamental importance," claims Professor Robert J Lieber of Washington's Georgetown University. "During the height of the Cold War this worked to counterbalance what could otherwise have been dangerously strong intervention from the Soviet Union."

Finance was also part of the equation. In the last 25 years Israel has received over $ 50 billion in US aid and during President Ronald Reagan's tenure at the White House a free trade treaty was signed, a move which opened up the entire US market so that by 1995 the volume of trade was worth $ 11 billion. To put that piece of diplomacy into perspective the treaty was agreed long before similar agreements were reached with neighbouring Mexico and Canada. The wellspring of sympathy shown by post-war presidents also cemented the relationship: asked by the Soviet leader Aleksei Kosygin why the US supported three million Israelis when there were 80 million Arabs, President Lyndon B. Johnson replied, "Because it is right." Only George Bush senior(who positively disliked his opposite number Yitzhak Shamir) and Dwight D. Eisenhower were considered to be lukewarm to Israeli aspirations while President Jimmy Carter had a passionate emotional attachment which sprang from his reading of the bible.

One result of that empathy was the Camp David agreement of September 1978 which brokered a courageous deal with Egypt but Carter always insisted that in wanting to intervene in the Middle East to create peace he saw the scriptures as less of a religious text and more of a living history: "The bible stories are woven into into my childhood memories as the gallant struggle of modern Jews to be free of prosecution is also woven into our souls . . . I consider this homeland for the Jews to be compatible with the teaching of the bible, hence ordained by God. These moral and religious beliefs made my commitment to the security of Israel unshakable."

Carter's role in bringing together the age-old enemies Israel and Egypt began a lengthy involvement in the peace process which stretched into the next two decades and which resulted in the Oslo peace accords of 1993. As the talks progressed the US was seen, rightly so, as the only powerbroker which could effect an agreement and so it proved. With Washington's support the land for peace deal came into being and with it a belief that Israeli and Palestinian interests could be harmonised. As it turned out most of the optimism of that heady period was illusion and the high hopes quickly ran into the sands, mainly as a result of Israeli concerns about the security of the homeland. With the election last year of the hardline Ariel Sharon a new clash became inevitable and when it came Palestinians started being killed in droves as civilians faced Israeli armour on the streets. All this violence was laid at America's feet and the images of Israeli brutality only seemed to confirm the view held by many Arabs - that by refusing to condemn these actions the US was colluding in them. Even when Israeli tanks rumbled into Jericho and Jenin last week, bringing the Palestinian death toll in the current intifada to 573 the attack received little attention from a world still focussed on events in downtown Manhattan. Arafat protested as best he could but his voice was ignored and to rub in salt Sharon told the US Secretary of State Colin Powell that the Palestinian leader was no better that Osama bin Laden and his "coalition of terror".

That failure to bring Israel to heel has also put strains on Washington's relationship with Arab states which remain nominally friendly and have been partners in the peace process. Neighbouring Jordan has strong historical ties with the US and Britain but it also possesses a large Palestinian population whose patience is being tested by events on the other side of the River Jordan. The new leader, King Abdullah II has shown himself to be a deft performer in balancing his Israeli links with opinion in the rest of the Arab world but at this crucial juncture he dare not enter into too close a relationship with the US. The same holds true for Egypt where Mubarak has had to contend with his own battle against hostile Islamic fundamentalist groups and has enemies in the wider Arab world. Both men have expressed their revulsion for the attacks on New York and Washington but their loyalty would be stretched if the US makes a retaliatory strike which produces large numbers of Arab casualties.

Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states are in similar positions, being oil-rich and therefore in a strategic partnership with the west. Their interests are bound up with, and protected by, that relationship but they, too, have to keep it at arm's length. Opponents of the regimes have lambasted the failure to put pressure on the US over its perceived bias towards Israel and the criticism could grow shriller. Their governments know that there will be further strains in the coming weeks as they face calls for support from Bush and growing demands from their own people to ignore them. With nothing to lose, as he is still a pariah as far as Washington and London are concerned, Iraq's Saddam Hussein applauded the attacks but across his eastern border the dilemma facing many Arabs was expressed by Iran's reformist leader Mohammad Khatemi. For years, under the rule of the extremist ayatollahs, Iran was the focus of the bulk of anti-American sentiment in the Middle East but under the new regime there has been a softening in the approach with words of comfort being sent from Tehran to Washington but the generosity would never survive any attack on a fellow Islamic country.

Underpinning that unease is the wider belief that the west and the US in particular must bear a responsibility for much of the violence which has disfigured the Middle East in recent years - the bloody Israeli war against Lebanon in 1982, the Gulf War against Iraq in 1991 and the the sanctions regime and the bombing campaign which followed it. As has become all too painfully clear, that policy is not only failing to achieve anything but it has led to incredible hardship for thousands of ordinary Iraqi people while Saddam and his henchmen remain relatively unscathed. The absence of medical care, the lack of funds and equipment to restore the infrastructure and the indifference to local suffering have combined to create conditions which younger Iraqis will neither forget nor forgive. There is also a growing belief in the Arab world that the sanctions are not even-handed and are being imposed simply to bring down a rogue regime by whatever methods come to hand. As for the routine bombing of targets in the air-exclusion

zones in northern and southern Iraq these are rarely reported even though the attacks produce casualties, not all of them military.

For many Arabs there seems to be one rule for them and another for the west and its ally Israel. In 1988 a US Aegis class destroyer, the USS Vincennes, mistook an Iranian airliner for an attacking warplane and shot it down, killing 290 passengers and crew but the incident was only the cause of "deep regret" and no US commander was punished. This was in stark contrast to an Israeli attack on the intelligence-gathering ship USS Liberty in 1967: although 34 sailors were killed the incident was hushed up and forgotten in order to protect Israeli interests at the time. That feeling of exclusion extends to the way events are reported and the past is remembered. In the aftermath of last week's attacks other "Islamic atrocities" were recalled - the destruction of the three western airliners at Dawson Field in Jordan in 1970 and the execution of a US naval diver during the hijacking of a TWA airliner 15 years later - but no one resurrected the attack by Jewish terrorists on the King David Hotel in June 1946 which killed 91 and injured many more. As for the subsequent hanging of three British sergeants in an orange grove by way of retaliation for the execution of Jewish terrorists, that is remembered not at all.

Not that the US has not suffered itself at the hands of Arab terrorism and, of course, in the past few weeks dozens of Israelis have fallen victim to Palestinian suicide bombers. In recent years the US has had three of its ambassadors murdered, 49 people were killed when the embassy in Beirut was car -bombed in 1983, an atrocity which was overshadowed by the killing of 24 marines in the same city a few months later, in December 1988 a Pan Am airliner was blown up over Lockerbie and 270 lost their lives and in 1996 19 marines were blown up in their barracks at Khubar Towers in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. All were by-products of US involvement in the region - the support for Israel, the attacks on Iraq, the naval and military presence in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf - yet far from appeasing the hatred, the attacks and the retaliation only served to inspire the extremists.

Small wonder that so many younger Arabs in the Middle East are attracted to the groups which exist on the verges of the world of Islam and throw in their lot with terrorist organisations such as Hamas, ***Hezbollah*** and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, all of which are prepared to use violence as a means of achieving their aim of winning a Palestinian homeland. When they see the failure of the peace process and the inability of their leaders to gain any ground in the discussions with Israel they turn their thoughts to other means of confrontation, with predictable results. The suicide bomber might be a terrible manifestation of their frustration but at least he gains headlines and takes the battle to the heart and soul of the perceived enemy, Israel. At a time when Arafat and his cohorts from the once revered Palestine Liberation Organisation had completed the familiar transition from terrorists to statesmen a growing army of young and disillusioned Arabs see nothing terribly wrong with joining the alliance of fellow Palestinians who want to avenge their plight through the use of more violent methods.

And yet, it would be a dangerous folly to suppose that all Arabs in the Middle East operate under an unconditional hatred of the US or nurse violence in their hearts. The words "Islamic fundamentalist terrorist" are not the same combination as "pepper and salt" or "oil and vinegar" and there is a danger that in demonising the world of Islam or making wild and vengeful calls for retaliation the west will only reinforce the cycle of mistrust which creates the conditions for violence. One simple fact remains true: to react to any atrocity by abandoning the self-control imposed by the democratic state is to give comfort and a cause to the terrorist.

"He struck me like that, I don't know how many times," the doctor explains, polite but passionate as he talks about his homeland. "Soon after the first blow I was unconscious. When I came to, my nose was broken and my forehead split open."

Shafiq has lived through Afghanistan's nightmare, having fled from the Taliban in darkness and in fear of his life two years ago. Now living in Glasgow, he has been granted asylum and, at 31, has started anew.

As he looks back over 23 years of turmoil, amid both cold war and civil war, he can only pray that things will get better for his country. While the terrorist attacks on America have left a dark threat hanging over Afghanistan, maybe things cannot get any worse. Perhaps, just perhaps, if things work out, he could go back and start his new life there instead, he says.

"When I grew up, Afghanistan was a very nice country, peaceful and tranquil," he explains. "It was a monarchy, under the reign of King Zahid Shah. I can just remember when he was overthrown."

Shah was replaced in a bloodless coup in 1973, after a drought and economic crisis, and a new republic was set up with Shah's cousin, former prime minister Daoud Khan, declaring himself president. Under the king, Afghanistan had mainly flourished, with major advances in ***women***'s rights. Khan's regime continued much of this progress.

"For five years, the country developed. We built bridges, roads, factories. Education expanded and conditions were getting better day by day. There was co -education for girls and boys. There was no place for the religious men," Shafiq remembers.

Educated and from a well-off family, as a youngster Shafiq would spend the winter in the rural village where his family lived and then go to the capital, Kabul, for the summer to continue his studies. It was cooler there and his father would go there seeking recruits for the police force.

He remembers the busy streets and the mild evenings. He remembers the gardens outside the city. Now Kabul is a bombed-out relic, shell-torn and broken. "Nothing remains in the city now. It is a ruin," he says.

Everything changed when the communists seized power in 1978. Khan was assassinated and his close family massacred by Marxists backed by the USSR.

"They bombed Daoud's villa at night," remembers Shafiq. "I was eight years old. The communists didn't care about the people and their traditions and so the people rose against them. Many parties sprang up to take advantage of the situation, including Islamic parties of exiles in Pakistan and Iran.

"Other people from the Middle East came to fight against the Russians. Osama bin Laden was among them. There were many people and the Western countries and the Arab world supported those organisations and gave them ammunition and missiles."

As the communist regime met resistance from guerrilla groups and the mujahidin, Russia came to its aid. Shafiq remembers the day.

"It was the first day of the conflict. I was playing volleyball with friends. Further along the playing grounds were other children, just running around. In the distance, a tank fired a shell. It landed 20 yards away from me, killing three of the children.

"After that, every day there was conflict, fighting, shells. Then there were the mines. I saw a boy I knew die in a mine blast. I saw his pieces. He was in bits. We don't want that situation again."

The war struck even closer to home. As the young Shafiq watched from the window of his family home, a Russian helicopter hovered over the village, firing its guns at targets on the hillside. He could see two people huddled under shawls, crouching but unable to get to shelter.

"Volleyball was the most popular sport in the district and my cousin was the best player. He was out walking with his brother-in-law and they were both killed. My cousin was hit in the head and the heart. They carried back the bodies and told us he was dead.He was 22."

A decade of bitter war was followed by subsequent years of civil war. Shafiq trained as a doctor at Kabul University and returned to work in a hospital in his home province. As the mujahidin guerrillas fought on, various leaders came and went and, in the background, a new force was born.

The Taliban militia, formed by religious students, seized Kabul in 1996. With the Russians gone, ordinary Afghans expected a return to calm.

"People thought, 'The Taliban, they are sent by the UN. Peace will come to our country because they are nice people,'" explains Shafiq. "But we didn't know the Taliban. No-one knew. Then they revealed their face."

Flight From the Taliban

As the Taliban enforced their fundamentalist version of Islamic law on the country, torture and punishment became commonplace. Education was no longer valued, only religious scholarship. ***Women*** were repressed and a Talib - the word means "student" - was installed in every office and institution.

But it wasn't until the Taliban marched into his hospital that Shafiq realised how badly ordinary Afghans had been betrayed. His working relationship with his nurse ended that day. Under the Taliban, ***women*** are only allowed to associate with men if they are close relatives - fathers, brothers, husbands.

"She was banned, and so were all the ***female*** staff in the hospital," says Shafiq. "They were my colleagues, but the Talib had a Kalashnikov in his hand and I said, 'OK, sorry.'

"We are Muslim too, but there is no place in Islam for the things they do. Under the rule of the Taliban, there are no jobs for ***women***, no place for educated people, no place for doctors."

Soon Shafiq's profession was to separate him from his family - from his mother, father and three brothers, and from his wife and three children. He knew a commander in the rebel Hizbi-Islami, and some of the party's personnel. They were his patients. It was this that landed him in jail.

"I was in jail for two days in terrible conditions after they beat me. I was released, but only because local people came and told them, 'Let him go, he is a doctor, a good man'."

The incident was a second and final warning. Shafiq knew he must comply or face even worse retribution. But he was in an impossible ethical position.

"Two months later there was an outbreak of typhoid, and I treated these people. They were fighting against the Taliban, but it was my moral duty to treat them. They were my patients."

Still anguished, he stresses the point: "I was the doctor responsible for that area. I had to treat them. But I was spotted by a Taliban spy. A friend warned me, 'They will kill you. Don't go to your house tonight. This is the only chance for you to go.'"

That night, as Shafiq sheltered at a friend's house, his mother was visited by the Taliban. "They said, 'Where is the doctor? We need help.' But she wasn't deceived."

There was no time even for farewells with his wife and children, Shafiq says, his face betraying little emotion. But his insistent explanations reveal his constant suffering since he fled across the border to Pakistan. "No-one would leave their house and family if they were not in a desperate situation, in danger of their life," he says. "I had already been warned, but I did not leave my country. I was beaten, but I did not leave my country. But when I realised they would kill me, I knew I had to go."

That was in 1999. Since then Shafiq has been granted asylum in the UK. He lives in Glasgow, where he has been working as a waiter - his refugee status means he is legally unable to use his medical qualification in Britain.

In the growing international crisis, he is just one of many such Afghan refugees. All are terrified of the prospect of further conflict in their homeland.

This week Shafiq will embark on a journey which fills him with trepidation. His family have crossed into Pakistan for a reunion which he has awaited for two years. He aims to meet them there, but fears his nationality may count against him if the situation worsens. "I have to see my family," he says. "But time is very short."

As for talk of war, he makes an impassioned plea for calm from the West. "We have begged for years for America or the UN to intervene, but after the communists were defeated they were not interested," he says.

"We said, 'You armed these people, now arm us.' Nobody wants the Taliban but the people of Afghanistan are unarmed, they can't fight them. No -one can say the ordinary people of Afghanistan are involved in terrorism.

"Osama bin Laden is not from Afghanistan. The Taliban are his friends but they are not involved in terrorism." Of course, he says, the culprit for last week's attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon must be brought to justice. "But if bin Laden did this, then for one person they could kill thousands who have already suffered 23 years of civil war.

"If they fire rockets from far away, the Taliban will retreat to mountains and caves, but the missiles will kill farmers and people doing ordinary jobs. We are victims of terrorism, suffering for 23 years."

Yet while there is fear and despair at the seemingly inevitable conflict, Shafiq also harbours hope. He is enthusiastic about reports that suggest the US may be planning to oust the Taliban and bring back the exiled King Zahid Shah, currently living in Rome.

"The Taliban are not as strong as they say. Ordinary people will join with the Americans and give help if they send ground troops.

"If the exiled king came back, I would go back to Afghanistan and start my life again. There would be no terrorism and no refugee crisis - we would not be here. We would go back to our own country. I think this may happen. The Americans won't be happy to bomb ordinary people."

Mohammed Shafiq's name has been changed at his request

Graphic

Western arms that helped the Afghans fight communism did not extend to fighting the Taliban Photograph: Uimonen Ilkka/Sygma

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Kingmaker: (Part 1): Long a tourism magnet, Trinidad and Tobago's tropical beauty conceals a darker identity. Donna Jacobs investigates Trinidad's ties to terror and, in an exclusive interview, talks to the Toronto-educated man who holds the key to the country's uncertain future.

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Body

PORT OF SPAIN, Trinidad - Trinidad has a troubling kind of beauty.

Ostentatious wealth flourishes in disturbing proximity to severe poverty. Exotic restaurants abound not far from garbage dumps where people fight vultures for scraps of food. The vibrant Carnival rocks the island with explosions of colour and music while people lose lives and loves in almost daily shootings and kidnappings. The gorgeous sight of the sky turning blood-red from a flock of scarlet ibises twists the heart. And so will the sight of a baby being bathed at a ditch waterpipe.

Trinidad is a study in extremes.
Citizen Special

Under the Shadow of the Swords

It's April 2003, 19 months after terrorists took down all of the World Trade Center and part of the Pentagon.

I am in a mosque compound in Trinidad, waiting to meet Yasin Abu Bakr, the imam of the Jama'at-al-Muslimeen. The name translates to, simply, Muslim Group.

Known as Jamaat, it is widely regarded as radically Islamic, and has mosques throughout the country.

It's hard to get a precise Jamaat membership figure for Trinidad, but estimates start at 20,000 -- almost two per cent of Trinidad's 1.3 million population. (Jamaat is not active on Trinidad's smaller tourism-driven sister island, Tobago). The group's growth hasn't gone unnoticed.

Even Trinidad and Tobago's prime minister, Patrick Manning, tells me he is concerned about Jamaat's recruitment rate among poor black Afro-Trinidadians.

As Jamaat's influence grows and spreads, the international community is taking fresh notice -- especially since Sept. 11, 2001.

A year ago, the British government warned against travel to the islands due to the threat of terrorism, prompting the temporary cancellation of cruises. This followed a newspaper report that a radical Muslim group, The Islamic Front, planned a biological or chemical attack on U.S. and British interests in Trinidad if the two countries invaded Iraq.

"With our weapons we are going (to) reach you. We will reach you where you sleep, we will reach you where you take your baths, we will reach you where you take your meals and have your drinks, even a glass of water you hold in your hand to drink may not be safe," said a statement that appeared in the Trinidad Express.

The statement was given to a reporter who was taken, blindfolded, to a lab where he said chemical and biological weapons were being created. Jamaat dismissed the group and its leader, Umar Abdullah, as marginal. The government said it was a bogus publicity stunt. Abdullah insisted that he is a security threat.

Only a few weeks ago, airline bomb threats shut down the airport, Piarco. Coastal and port security is tightening.

Last month, Manning assured U.S. President George W. Bush that Trinidad was moving to protect energy supplies from terrorism by upgrading its coast guard, adding a radar system and two new patrol boats to monitor the coastline.

I have gone to Trinidad and Tobago to try to make sense of this, to gauge the threat of Jamaat and to try to reconcile the tropical glory of the islands with the dark stories about terror.

It was a journey that gave me the unsettling feeling that Trinidad, for all its breathtaking beauty and powerful industrial base, is really a ticking time bomb. And I suspect it's not a matter whether the bomb will go off, but when.

Visitor From the North

Sitting in the mosque, also waiting to see Yasin Abu Bakr, are three men and a woman. They don't look at me.

The mosque office is small. Its only art is a map of "The Muslim World" that colour-codes an impressive march of Islam around the globe. North America is least Islamic.

The map is probably meant to encourage Trinidadian Muslims, but amidst this sense of hostility, it looks like a battle plan.

Finally, a man in a white Muslim gown and fez arrives.

"Why are you here?" he demands.

I tell him I have an appointment to interview Yasin Abu Bakr, news he receives with disapproval.

The four people in the waiting room tense up, as do I.

"What?" I ask, with bravado. "Are you going to frisk me?"

Much tense silence as he glares at me.

Suddenly, he laughs.

"Frisk you? You just came from Canada," he says. "I don't want SARS."

Everyone else laughs.

Trinidad's Strategic Importance

Trinidad and Tobago, the southernmost islands of the Caribbean archipelago, won their independence from Britain in 1962. Today, thousands of North Americans escape the winter each year by booking holidays in the twin-island nation, especially Tobago, with its miles of white sand beaches and average temperature of 30C. Next month, the

islands will attract plane-loads of visitors for their annual celebration of Carnival, a famous Mardi-Gras-like festival similar to those held across South America and the Caribbean at this time of year.

But I wonder how long this will continue untroubled.

With its petroleum exports to the U.S. and Europe, Trinidad is strategically crucial. Its southern-based powerhouse industrial complex keeps churning out oil and chemical products to the world.

It is a base for the world's energy giants, including BP Amoco, British Gas, EOG, BHP Billiton, Exxon Mobil, Trinidad's state-owned Petrotrin and such Canadian companies as PetroCanada, Talisman Energy, Vermilion Oil and Gas and Methanex, the world's largest methanol company.

Yet, Trinidad is shot through with corruption and destablized by profitable money-laundering, drug and gun smuggling from a terrorist-rich South America 12 kilometres away -- where al-Qaeda, Hamas and ***Hezbollah*** are well-ensconced.

(Opposition leader and former prime minister Basdeo Panday has said outright that al-Qaeda is here and has ties to the government.)

Bakr arrives with a small entourage. After another wait, I am summoned to finally meet this man face to face.

We had spoken by phone over a period of a year -- harsh interviews focused on allegations he was planning an Islamic uprising in this oil-rich Caribbean country.

After all, it wouldn't have been his first. Only 10 years before, 114 Jamaat members launched a bloody coup that made headlines around the world.

During the six-day insurrection, Bakr's lieutenant, Bilaal Abdullah, and his armed followers stormed Trinidad and Tobago's parliament. They trussed up the ailing prime minister, Arthur Robinson, who was shot in the leg. Another MP bled to death of his gunshot wound; the attorney general was also shot. Other legislators lay tied.

One Jamaat member crashed a car into the police headquarters, killing a guard in the explosion. Meanwhile, Bakr took over the state television station to announce to a stunned country he had overthrown the government. Jamaat maintains it was an act of self-defence, that it had advance warning security forces were coming to kill the Jamaat leadership.

Bilaal Abdullah -- who renounced Jamaat membership in 1993, is critical of Jamaat now and is a paid adviser to Manning -- explains the coup was never an Islamic act. He tells me a week ago, 114 men "could not rule our country and it would have been wrong and will always be wrong for a tiny minority to impose their will on the nation by force of arms and take over the reins of the state machinery. But it is also wrong to single out a minority for destruction through abusing the power to command the security forces."

In all, 31 people died and 693 people were injured in the shooting and looting which caused $36 million in property damage.

The coup ended when Bakr and Abdullah negotiated an amnesty with the government. However, security forces rounded up the 114 insurrectionists anyway, charged them with murder and treason and put them in jail. Two years later, they were freed after a court upheld the amnesty.

Post-9/11, the coup seems still more ominous. Trinidadian parliamentarians and businessmen told me Bakr had links to Libyan and Sudanese terrorists, and possibly to al-Qaeda. There is speculation that Jamaat has been busy setting up cells all over the Caribbean and in Latin America: in Guyana, Surinam, St. Vincent, Grenada, Barbados, Jamaica, St. Kitts, Belize, St. Lucia and Antigua, though Jamaat denies this.

Political sources told me Jamaat had penetrated the government at the highest levels in exchange for helping Manning's People's National Movement (PNM), a leftist party, to win at the polls.

The methodology, say opposition politicians such as Senator Robin Montano, was a sophisticated voter-padding scheme funded with public money. The PNM gave Jamaat millions of dollars in social and job-program contracts. Jamaat directed the money to its members who, in turn, registered and swung the vote in four key ridings.

Bakr describes himself as a "kingmaker."

"Whichever party we support, wins," he says, matter-of-factly.

Montano says the PNM-Jamaat tie mirrors Indonesia's tolerance of Islamic terrorism which turned Bali into a soft target for al-Qaeda. The result was the October 2002 nightclub bombings that killed 202 and injured 300.

Terrorism expert Mark Ensalaco is familiar with Bakr and the 1990 coup. He says al-Qaeda is adept at finding a haven, or an operations base, in countries with Islamic organizations sympathetic to some -- if not all -- of its aims.

"If you look at the Americas, there are only a few places like that, and Trinidad makes perfect sense as a place where you would suspect al-Qaeda."

Ensalaco, director of International Studies and Human Rights at Ohio's University of Dayton, has studied Osama bin Laden and Middle East terrorism for a book he is writing, From Black September to September 11 -- A terrorism history from 1968-September 2001.

Al-Qaeda, he says, can "patiently organize in places where they think they can prosper. I think you have one in Trinidad and Tobago."

They could use Trinidad and Tobago to launder money, solicit funds, or, he says, "move their people through the Americas."

However, if they are planning terror operations, "natural gas becomes a potential site of terrorist attack."

In time, he suggests, al-Qaeda might step in and take over an existing organization. "If al-Qaeda or groups in the global terror network have an interest in Trinidad and Tobago, and if they begin to make contacts, they can just simply push aside Bakr."

Social Unrest and Rampant Crime

While intelligence experts worry about Trinidad's allure as an anti-U.S. anti-Britain terror target, ordinary people told me simply that they feared another coup. But this time, a coup would take place in a less-stable Trinidad, one buffeted by violent crime. Many citizens blame Jamaat's predominantly poor black members for the crime rampage; the sudden infusion of millions of dollars into social welfare programs has fuelled a murderous rise in the gang-controlled gun and drug trade. In 2003, a record 229 people were murdered.

But a new, sinister crime -- kidnapping -- has shattered what remains of Trinidad's sense of security.

It has also raised racial tensions between the country's equal populations of Indian and African descendants. Most kidnap victims are Indians; most kidnappers are blacks. (The indigenous populations have dwindled.)

The Afro-Trinidadians are descendants of slaves brought from Africa by Europeans from the 1500s. The Indo-Trinidadians descend from indentured servants whom the British 'imported' from East India after slavery was outlawed in 1845.

Socially and economically, Indians are winning. They dominate retail, industry and the professions. Wealthy Indians school their children abroad. They carry themselves with elan and a sense of easy superiority over visitors and locals -- as the saying goes, "more British than the British."

But the blacks have a champion in two key Trinidadians: Prime Minister Patrick Manning and Bakr. Manning's PNM is largely supported by blacks.

He eagerly sought and received Bakr's help in winning the October, 2002 elections -- even if Bakr had al-Qaeda ties. Bakr describes himself as an "adviser" to Manning on matters concerning black youth.

In our talks, I sensed a revolutionary fervour in the charismatic Bakr, although he speaks as a social reformer.

Clearly, he is no Osama bin Laden, but what is he? And what risk does he pose? And how does social unrest, much of it generated by Jamaat, create an environment that is ripe for international terrorism?

From Ryerson Grad to Radical

Bakr greets me from behind his large desk with a genuine smile. He looks even taller than his six-feet-four-inches with his white Muslim fez.

My first thought is of who Bakr used to be. In his previous life, he was Lennox Phillip, an Anglican-born police officer. Phillip read the Koran in 1969 and converted to Islam and Bakr was born.

Yet his two identities often converge. On this day, Bakr speaks enthusiastically about Canada, where, in the '70s, he graduated from Ryerson Polytechnical Institute and worked in film production at CBC's Toronto office. He has already mentioned his friendship with Nancy Sinclair, daughter of legendary journalist Gordon Sinclair.

It is easy to forget, when you talk to him, that he is under surveillance by the CIA, FBI, Britain's MI5 and MI6 and possibly by Canada's CSIS and the RCMP and has been for some time since the coup and even before, when his ties to Libya triggered Western suspicions. He is barred from entering the U.S. and Canada and was scooped up for interrogation by MI5 at London's Heathrow Airport.

His office is as simple as the other buildings on the religious and educational compound. The large open-air mosque dominates at 1 Mucurapo Rd. in St. James -- a western suburb of the capital city, Port of Spain.

Bakr is a staunch personal friend of Libya's Col. Moammar Gadhafi.

"He is the most beautiful human being I have met in my life," he says. "As a leader to his people, he is par excellence."

Like Muslims from scores of countries, Bakr reportedly has received millions of dollars -- he won't say how much -- from Libya through his membership in the World Islamic Call Society (WICS). These funds went exclusively to his mosque, schools and medical centre, he says, and not to support the spread of radical Islam throughout the Caribbean.

WICS describes itself as an Islamic benevolent society with UN recognition.

Washington Times columnist and president of the Center for Security Policy, Frank J. Gaffney Jr., describes WICS as a "well-known and longstanding Libyan-controlled funding vehicle for terrorism."

Abdul Rahman al-Amoudi, recently indicted in the U.S. for illegal ties to Libya, has admitted to laundering hundreds of thousands of dollars, some of it from Libya, in Saudi Arabia before depositing it in the U.S. for his American Muslim Foundation.

He selected and trained U.S. Muslim military chaplains, including Capt. James Yee, now held on suspicion of espionage at the Guantanamo, Cuba detention centre for Taliban and al-Qaeda operatives.

Two of Bakr's sons have received religious education in Libya. Jamaat members have taken military training there, and, according to Trinidadian newspaper reports citing "intelligence sources," a small group of Jamaat members just recently returned from Libya.

Bakr's loyalty to Gadhafi costs him in public opinion, especially now with Libya's confession of complicity in the 1988 bombing of Pan Am 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland. Even as the aging Libyan leader makes a public repentance to Bush, promises millions of dollars to the 270 victims' families and promises to renounce violence in order to end UN sanctions, Great Britain is reportedly signing oil deals with Gadhafi.

Bakr was elected to the WICS executive council in 2000, the same year its general congress called for jihad against Western "tyranny and imperialism," "sacrifice until martyrdom" and "liberation of Palestine from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean." Explicit in this manifesto is the eradication of Israel.

At the same meeting, it denounced "all aspects of violence, terrorism and extremism."

Bakr also attends meetings of Gadhafi's World Islamic People's Leadership (WIPL) which has primary headquarters in Tripoli, and secondary headquarters at the Taric Islamic Centre at 99 Beverly Hills Dr. in Toronto. Both have ties to UN agencies, including UNESCO, and operate as Muslim charities. Nonetheless, the suspicion still exists among more moderate Muslims that the group is also involved in uncharitable activities towards the West.

Proclamation of Innocence

In person, Bakr keeps his Caribbean good humour throughout a stream of questions on Jamaat's alleged links to kidnappings for ransom and terrorism, both domestic and international.

During the 2002 national election, did he dispatch a band of Jamaat members to intimidate voters in four key ridings where he became kingmaker with easy access to a grateful Prime Minister Patrick Manning? Is he linked to al-Qaeda, Hamas and other Islamic terrorist groups?

"No and no," he says, to each question.

He parries even the sharpest questions without rancour.

"I have extreme patience," necessary for any man, he implies, with four wives and 15 children. But, finally, after an hour, he pounds the table. Not in denials but in an aggressive attack on successive governments that he says break trust with the black people of Trinidad.

"There are too many people in this country who are not fed. The ghettos are hungry and starving. People have nothing to eat on a daily basis. The basis of the economy is oil and the money belong to the people and the money do not get to the people."

He is almost out of breath, almost shouting.

"They live in poverty, squalour and destitution. This country is the largest producer of methanol, the largest producer of ammonia in the world. This country was an oil-producing nation since 1912, long before the Arabs had any oil. We have asphalt. We have water. We have very, very fertile land. If you spit outside, something will grow. Where is all this money?"

He says corrupt politicians steal public funds needed for food and medicine. He claims his complaints about corruption have made him a government target. In August, Bakr had his first run-in with the law since the coup. He was arrested for conspiracy to murder two Jamaat members in June whom he'd expelled for "unislamic activities." The two men had denounced Bakr and Jamaat on radio for tolerating criminal activity. One of the men was injured and the woman with him was killed in a shooting that followed the radio program.

The alibi Bakr offered to the court: He was working at the state-owned Petrotrin oil company 100 kilometres away at the time he was supposed to be ordering the killing of the two men. (The alibi shows how freely Bakr operates -- even gaining a work pass at the high-security oil patch.) The case is still working its way through the courts.

His alleged co-conspirator has fled the country. Bakr says he was charged because "some people in the People's National Movement government think that I am getting too powerful. That is actually what was said. 'Take him down.' That is the word."

Ordinary Trinidadians gossip about regular meetings between Bakr and Manning.

"People say that you often see the prime minister," I say.

"I will see the prime minister," he answers quietly, "if I want to see the prime minister."

'Carvin' Out De Hills'

"I'm going to take you on a tour," says Bakr, "to the other side, where ***women*** still have to bathe at a stand on the side of the road. See for yourself; 27 per cent of people live below the poverty level. That means no food, no shelter, no clothing.

"Mr. Manning have a budget of $20 billion (Trinidadian, roughly $4.3 billion Canadian) … show me what is happening."

In this most wealthy Caribbean country, one-quarter of the people live in poverty despite the $11 billion Canadian gross domestic product. Most of Trinidad's wealth comes from its large petroleum industry. The U.S. relies on Trinidad for two-thirds of its imported liquid natural gas. Other exports include chemicals, steel goods, fertilizer and sugar, cocoa and coffee.

I've already gone by cab to the poor, crime-ridden eastern Port of Spain suburb of Laventille. We drive up and down the hills, past hovels, and homes under repair, past curious children who want their photos taken. One offers me a plastic bead necklace with a large green crucifix as a gift.

But Bakr wants me to see other places, worse places. We agree to meet the next day, a third meeting.

Bakr isn't here. In his place, he has selected a high-ranking Jamaat member from the entourage at the mosque. Sadiq Al Razi drives his small Japanese car (apparently without suspension system) with purpose. We are silent for the first 10 minutes.

We pass a large, elegant condominium complex. He points to it bitterly.

"I can't go in there."

"Why not?" I ask, thinking of the fear Jamaat provokes.

"Because I'm a black man. I could go there today because I'm with a white woman."

Al Razi relaxes, introduces himself more fully and allows a few personal questions.

He, too, is an imam whose mosque is in prosperous Point Fortin, home of Trinidad's lucrative petrochemical industry. As civil engineer and technician by training, he worked as a quality auditor in design and construction on a large Atlantic LNG (Liquid Natural Gas) installation.

Our first destination is Goodwood, where businesspeople live in huge houses on the sides of wooded hills. A bulldozer is making a large shelf in the hill for another.

"Carvin' out de hills ..." he says, slipping into Carib. "And this is nothing, nothing" compared to the country's more wealthy sections.

It's not, he insists, the wealth that angers him.

"No, if they earned it, more power to them. I'm saying the wealth is circulating among the rich and nothing is reaching the poor people. These people don't recognize that sooner or later, sooner or later, the shit is going to hit the fan and" -- a short laugh -- "is going to spill on them."

Next, he takes me past the former U.S. army base in Chaguaramas, which was established for training and transit during the Second World War, at Trinidad's northwest tip.

While I notice the U.S. is unloved by nearly everyone I encounter, Canadians are seen as good employers, for their petrochemical investments and for more than $40 million in Canadian International Development Agency and the International Development and Research Centre grants over the past 40 years.

The newspapers, rich with anti-American sentiment, reinforce public resentment against American ideology and actions, especially the Iraq invasion. Some Trinidadian oil workers fear a revenge terror attack on the U.S. and British-owned multinational petroleum industry.

I asked Bakr about the situation in Iraq and he was, predictably, sympathetic to Saddam Hussein.

I ask Bakr point blank if he is a security risk to his country.

"I don't know what all the fuss is about," he says, innocently.

"How can I be a security risk? I live here. I born here. I am a security risk to whom?"

Divisions Along Racial Lines

Now Al Razi and I arrive at nearby Staubles Bay, home of the coast guard and the drydock for rows of multimillion-dollar yachts. They're used only a few times a year, says Al Razi.

"Many, many are running drugs. There are big, big drugs going in and out, mostly cocaine, some heroin, from Venezuela. You can see Venezuela right there, 12 kilometres away."

(Trinidadians will name off hotel-owners and other businessmen whose sudden drug-financed wealth purchased businesses and mansions. Some go legit afterwards. There are few secrets on this island.)

Bakr insists that 95 per cent of kidnap victims are involved in the cocaine trade.

Trinidad is a drug dealer's and money launderer's haven. The Royal Bank of Trinidad and Tobago puts the processing of "dirty money" from drugs alone at $6 billion -- more than half the country's 2002 GDP.

"And not one prosecution -- not one," Al Razi growls, "in this country, because these people own the judges."

Al Razi says Trinidadians are angry and cynical as corruption and injustice "continue unabated. Police force, politicians, the judicial system -- they are all very, very corrupt."

Al Razi says he is starting a trade school, affiliated with Jamaat, to train unemployable, unskilled black youths in pipefitting, instrumentation, welding and fabricating. Most companies he's asked to contribute have declined their help. It's shortsighted, he says.

"Every 50 youths they help to rehabilitate will be 50 fewer desperate men who will be coming at them in kidnappings and robberies."

While Jamaat is not the only Muslim group in Trinidad, it is by far the most vocal and most controversial and draws unwelcome notice to Trinidad's many moderate Muslim organizations. In fact, it's hard to determine the number of Muslims in Trinidad and Tobago. Estimates range from six per cent, as reflected in the 1990 census, to 12 per cent, the figure used by international Muslim organizations. That puts the Muslim population between 65,000 and

130,000. The census figures are likely out of date as they predate Jamaat's heaviest period of recruitment, following the coup.

Al Razi echoes the general statement that Islam is the fastest growing religion in Latin America and the Caribbean.

"Tens of thousands of young people in Trinidad have become Muslims over the last 10 years. I know about more than 25,000."

(Prime Minister Manning doesn't give numbers but, in his words to the Citizen, Jamaat is busy recruiting.)

"Young men's parents are keeping them back. As soon as they get an opening, (young black men) come to the mosque. They see this as something they can relate to."

Bakr sees wealth and status divided along racial lines.

"For 25 years we fought against the PNM because we felt they were doing nothing for the African people.

"It is now at the stage," he thunders, "that 99.9 per cent of the doctors are Indians and 77 per cent of the lawyers are Indians and 95 per cent of the people in prisons are African and 86 per cent of the people in the mad house, the crazy house, are African."

Depending on which group's political party is in power, the aid and benefits swing markedly in their direction. Indians and Africans dominate the island's populations at 40 per cent each.

The chief remaining ethnic populations: mixed 18 per cent, Chinese, Middle Eastern, Portuguese, native Indian and Creole 1.2 per cent and white 0.6 per cent.

Love Mixed With Fear

Al Razi drives to the Sea Lots. This is the worst place I've been on the island. We drive through quickly, too quickly, and I have to ask him to return and drive around this tiny tin-shack community within view of downtown towers. When the tide rises, the bare earth turns to mud and floods the tiny shed homes.

"These people live as rats," says Al Razi.

The stench among the tiny corrugated shacks is overpowering -- somewhere between that of rotted garbage and carrion.

Al Razi looks at a young woman who is washing her baby at a roadside pipe.

"They don't need to live like that."

Yet, this, even this, isn't the worst. In nearby Beetham Estates, Al Razi says, there is a dump where people fight the vultures for scraps of refuse. "I could take you there, too, but I don't want to. That place is very, very dangerous. Sick."

Poor people, wealthy people -- everyone is still traumatized by the 1990 coup and the death, injury and destroyed businesses. Some well-known figures still refuse to speak to Bakr or shake his hand. He is not forgiven.

His refusal to publicly apologize for the coup rankles. But some days he takes a softer tone.

I caught up with him, by phone, during Ramadan 2002.

"Is the coup one of your mistakes?" I ask.

He begins, as he often does, with a story.

"Let me answer you this way. Imagine you were to come into your house and you saw somebody murdering your daughter or your son. You kept telling them to stop that act of aggression and to stop murdering and oppressing your children. And a gun went off and some of the peop

Graphic

Colour Photo: Illustration by Robert Cross, The Ottawa Citizen; (See hard copy for illustration).; Colour Photo: (Donna Jacobs); Photo: Donna Jacobs; Yasin Abu Bakr, leader of a failed coup attempt in 1990 in Trinidad, was open to discussion about his alleged ties to terrorism. Though he denies ties to al-Qaeda, he readily admits that his group, Jamaat, 'rules the streets.'; Photo: Shirley Bahadur, Associated Press; Supporters of cheer Yasin Abu Bakr, imam of the Jama'at-al-Muslimeen (Muslim Group) in Trinidad. The group's membership is estimated at 20,000 -- almost two per cent of Trinidad's 1.3 million population.; Photo: Donna Jacobs; Sources say Jamaat has penetrated the government at the highest levels in exchange for helping the People's National Movement, a leftist party, win at the polls.; Photo: Donna Jacobs; A young woman washes her baby at a roadside pipe at Sea Lots, an impoverished tin-shack community within view of Port of Spain highrises. Jamaat officials complain that 'these people live as rats.'; Map: (See hard copy for map).; Photo: Donna Jacobs; Poverty and crime run rampant in Port of Spain suburb Laventille.; Photo: Donna Jacobs; Goodward Estates -- where businesspeople live in huge houses on the sides of wooded hills -- is one example Jamaat points to as how the rich are getting richer (some from drug dealing, money laundering and government corruption) while the poor get poorer.; Photo: Donna Jacobs; Sadiq Al Razi, an engineer by training, is a high-ranking Jamaat member. Trinidadians are angry and cynical, he says, as corruption and injustice 'continue unabated.'; Photo: Donna Jacobs; Trinidad and Tobago's Prime Minister Patrick Manning has assured the Americans that Trinidad is moving to protect the islands' energy supplies from terrorism.

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Left Behind

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Byline: By George Packer; George Packer is the author, most recently, of "Blood of the Liberals."

Body

One Saturday morning in November 1994, Ramsey Clark, attorney general under President Johnson and more recently a spokesman for radical Arab causes, met in his Manhattan office with a criminal defense lawyer named Lynne Stewart. Clark wanted Stewart to take on a new client -- Sheik Omar Abdel Rahman, a blind Egyptian cleric and the spiritual leader of the worldwide jihad movement, whose most recent address before the Metropolitan Correctional Center was a fourth-floor apartment in Jersey City. The sheik was about to go on trial for directing a conspiracy among his followers to bomb sites around New York City, including bridges, tunnels and the United Nations. His previous attorneys, the left-wing lawyers William Kunstler and Ronald Kuby, had been taken off the case because they represented other defendants who had conflicts of interest with Abdel Rahman. The sheik had dismissed his court-appointed lawyer. A month before trial, Clark told Stewart that only she could do the job.

In 1994 Stewart had barely heard of Hamas or ***Hezbollah***, let alone the Islamic Group of Egypt, a violent fundamentalist organization that targeted Coptic Christians, secular intellectuals, policemen and foreign tourists, and for which the sheik provided inspirational leadership. Political Islam was not, as she puts it, on her "radar." Most of her clients were young black and Latino men accused of ordinary crimes, but throughout the 1980's, she also defended members of the radical American underground. Stewart was a "movement" lawyer -- she didn't just defend the legal rights of her clients; she also advocated their politics. Friends warned her that the sheik wasn't her kind of client. He was a religious fascist who opposed everything that the feminist, atheist and vaguely revolutionary Marxist Stewart stood for.

What concerned Stewart, though, was not the sheik's politics but her own ability to represent him with almost no time to prepare. The little she knew of the sheik himself -- a man hounded by the government, accused of masterminding a terrorist plot on which he seemed to have left no fingerprints -- appealed to her. All morning in Ramsey Clark's office, Stewart wavered. Finally Clark told her that if she refused, the Arab world would feel betrayed by their friends on the American left. So she agreed to take the case.

As Stewart got to know her new client, she came to see him as a fighter for national liberation on behalf of a people oppressed by dictatorship and American imperialism. She came to admire him personally too, for his honesty, his strength of character, his teasing humor.

"I've made up my mind," the sheik would say. "I'm going to marry you, and that will solve everything."

"And what do ***women*** get if they fight in jihad?" she would ask.

"Eternity in paradise with whichever of your husbands you like best."

"Husbands? That's all we get?"

Stewart threw herself into the case with the passion for which she was known in criminal-defense circles. At trial she tried to convince the mostly black jury that the sheik was not an unfamiliar figure to them. "He has advocated for the suffering of his people at home, in Egypt," she said in her opening argument. "He has advocated by any means necessary, and that is not acceptable to this government." Prints of John Brown's home and grave hang in her office, and in her summation she invoked his spirit. But this time Stewart misjudged her audience. When the jury returned with a conviction, she wept.

In 1995, few people were paying attention. Today, the trial transcript reads like a 20,000-page prelude to Sept. 11: sleeper cells, secret funds, international jihad, connections to a group called Al Qaeda and a man named bin Laden.

Stewart stayed by the sheik over the years of appeals, paid minimally by contributions from his Muslim supporters, who now regarded her as their champion. She was laboring under the restrictions imposed by the government's Special Administrative Measures, or SAM's, which curtail the activities of convicted terrorists to prevent them from plotting future acts of terrorism. Stewart, like other lawyers in this situation, had to sign an agreement not to pass information to or from clients except for strictly legal purposes.

Then in May 2000, at a meeting with Stewart in the federal prison in Rochester, Minn., the sheik dictated a statement to his Arabic translator, Mohammed Yousry, calling for an end to the cease-fire between the Islamic Group and the Egyptian government. The statement was phoned to Islamic Group leaders by Ahmed Abdel Sattar, a Staten Island mailman and follower of the sheik who had worked as a paralegal on the case. The sheik's followers in Egypt doubted the statement's authenticity -- until Stewart herself, in violation of the SAM's, held a press conference a few weeks later to confirm that Abdel Rahman advocated withdrawal from the cease-fire.

She imagined that she might be cut off from the sheik. She did not know that her prison conversations with the sheik were being taped by a court order stemming from Sattar's activities with the Islamic Group. And she did not imagine what would happen on April 9 of this year, when she was handcuffed outside her Brooklyn town house by F.B.I. agents and arraigned in federal court in Manhattan on two counts of lying to the government and two counts of aiding a terrorist organization. Attorney General John Ashcroft himself flew to New York to announce Stewart's indictment, along with those of Yousry, Sattar and an Islamist in London. The trial will begin next year. Stewart, now 62, faces 40 years in federal prison.

"At trial you'll see two different narratives," says Stephen Gillers, vice dean of New York University School of Law. "The defense narrative is going to be that the U.S. is using 9/11 to destroy constitutional rights that the government has upheld for 200 years, through wars and disasters. And the prosecution narrative is going to be: focus on what Lynne Stewart did in that prison in May of 2000, well before Sept. 11."

There is a third narrative, one that isn't likely to receive a full hearing at trial. In this version, a white middle-class girl from Bellerose, Queens, formed by the 50's, is radicalized by the 60's and by a black man for whom she is willing to tear her life in two. Together they become New York revolutionaries -- for this is at every turn a local story, though it crosses paths with world events -- and so they remain long after the radical years have ended and others have moved on. Then, late in life, in a new era, the woman takes up a new cause, commits herself ever more deeply to it and suddenly finds that she has become the defendant. "My true goal," Stewart says, "was always to be on the right side of history."

But Islamic fundamentalism isn't black power, and the history that began on Sept. 11 will not be forgiving of people who pick the wrong cause. Always drawn in the most personal way to the outcast, Stewart herself now seems isolated even within the world that has been her only true home, the legal left. She had told Ramsey Clark that she would take the sheik's case only if other "movement" lawyers helped, but she faces ruin alone.

Physically, Lynne Stewart suggests a cheerful and profound self-neglect. In press photographs she resembles Ma Kettle. Her hair, gray and lank, seems to have expired on her head. She dresses for court like a Sicilian widow in sensible shoes, hobbling side to side from excess weight and a recent courtroom fall. Friends have to remind her to cut her hair, which she did after pleading "emphatically not guilty" while the cameras fixed her in their unpitying sights.

What pictures and public statements don't convey is Stewart's warmth, her vulnerability. These come across in her brown eyes, and in conversation, which unspools in long, discursive and quite unguarded strands, the thick Queens vowels often rising on screeches of amusement as she squints in delight. Stewart does not talk like a lawyer or a politico -- no jargon, no euphemisms. Her great talent as a lawyer, says Kuby, is to see something redemptive in everyone and to make jurors see it too. In person it isn't possible to dislike her -- and she never expresses deep dislike, even when the subject turns to John Ashcroft.

Growing up in the 50's in farthest Queens, the daughter of schoolteachers, Lynne Feltham was a bookish tomboy. She resisted the rites of passage into womanhood, and one day she told her mother: "All my friends have boyfriends, and I don't have a boyfriend. What's wrong with me?"

"You're too smart," her mother said. "Tone it down."

She didn't tone it down, but she suffered the peculiar pain of being "an honorary guy -- which is interesting, because that's of course how the Muslims also treat me. They don't have to deal with the feminine. I'm an honorary guy, or else they couldn't deal with me at all."

She still suffers. However far she has moved away from the conformist 50's, Stewart can't muster the unbridled defiance of a woman 10 years younger. What she calls a self-esteem problem extends to her current crisis. "I never expected to be fighting for myself," she says. "I could fight for you, but to fight for me? That's hard. Because I was a girl of the 50's, because I'm not worth it? I don't know. But it's too self-aggrandizing, too necessary to make myself into an image of something, rather than just be, you know, all the warts, what I am."

She followed the pattern of her generation into early marriage and motherhood. But when her husband suffered a psychological breakdown, Stewart, then 21, found that the family's moral and financial support depended on her. She went to work as a librarian in a decaying elementary school in Harlem. It was 1962.

Across the hall was the classroom of a black teacher named Ralph Poynter. A short, broad former amateur boxer, Poynter had brought from western Pennsylvania a love of jazz clarinet and a pent-up rage. When Stewart met him, he was "a repressed revolutionary in a suit and tie." She was seeing things for which nothing in her life had prepared her: an 8-year-old boy whose lips had been chewed by a rat while he slept; teachers who expected their students to learn nothing. The white librarian and the black teacher gravitated toward each other, and Poynter became Stewart's guide to black America. James Baldwin's "Fire Next Time" came out that year, Malcolm X's fame was growing, Harlem seethed. It all matched Ralph Poynter's mood. And his militancy felt like liberation of every kind to Lynne Stewart.

"Two people who are passionate about the same things," Ginny Gernes, Stewart's best friend from schooldays, says, "and then what else can happen?"

It still embarrasses Stewart to talk about their affair, and yet nothing animates her more than to recall how she fell in love and became a radical in one risky and inextricable leap. Everything was happening at once, history feeding rage, rage politics, politics intimacy. They plunged into the community-school movement at its left-wing fringe, with Poynter in the role of organizer and enforcer, losing his job and eventually serving six months on Rikers Island for three felony counts of assaulting a police officer.

It was all part of the attraction. "Oh, I'm Desdemona," Stewart says, laughing, alluding to Othello's famous lines: "She loved me for the dangers I had pass'd,/And I loved her that she did pity them."

Stewart had to prove herself worthy over and over. When Poynter lost his job, she gave him half her paycheck, though he was still living with his wife and Stewart felt too guilty to take child support from her ex-husband. Poynter agonized over his own motives, searching for traces of racial self-hatred. "He talks black," people at meetings would say, "but he sleeps white." He sought advice from a Harlem legend named Queen Mother Moore of the Captive Non-Self-Governing Nation of Africans Born in America. Queen Mother Moore told Poynter that Lynne Stewart was the real thing and would never betray him. But she also urged him to have many other ***women***, because he was a black warrior who needed to propagate the race.

"I enjoyed that view," Poynter says, "but that was not my view."

"He indulged that view," Stewart clarifies, "but he did not adopt it."

Forty years after they met in Harlem, Stewart and Poynter have an extended multiracial clan -- seven children between them (one together) and seven grandchildren. He drives her everywhere, while she nags him to watch the road. Winding along the East River from Bronx County Courthouse, he announces, "This country is founded on brutality." "Exploitation," she says. "I like it better when you say exploitation, Ralph." "Brutal exploitation." She smiles fondly and pats his hand.

In the 1970's, Stewart went to law school and began a criminal practice. But she had missed the golden age of the legal left, the trials of the draft resisters and the Chicago 8 and the Panther 21. By the early 80's, Stewart was defending violent members of the splinter groups that were all that remained of the revolutionary dreams of the 60's -- the Weather Underground, the Ohio 7, the Black Liberation Army. And when these cases ended, when the armed revolutionaries were all in jail or dead, "movement" lawyers like Stewart and Kunstler and Kuby no longer had a movement. They took on even more dubious clients: drug dealers, cop killers, mobsters, mentally ill assassins. It was hard to see exactly what was left-wing about Colin Ferguson, the Long Island Rail Road shooter (except, if you asked Kunstler, his skin color), or Sammy the Bull (Salvatore Gravano), the mob informant who was Stewart's client until her indictment (except that the government was out to get him). The idea of a genuine program for social change no longer animated their careers. The legal left now represented thugs trying to beat the system.

In recent years, Stewart's practice has been devoted primarily to defending poor, young black and Latino men -- a few of them her own family members or employees. The boundaries between family and friendship and work are blurred for her. Stewart's son practices law with her; she represented her daughter's common-law husband (Poynter calls him "my sin-in-law") on drug charges; her paralegal is a former client who served three and a half years for harboring her fugitive husband (one of the Ohio 7) and whose child temporarily came under Stewart and Poynter's care; her office assistant is the son of a jailed black revolutionary. Most of her cases and clients are too obscure to count as political. And yet, for Stewart, this, too, is politics -- perhaps the truest kind. Not long ago, reading aloud to Poynter from the preface to "Native Son," she exclaimed: "This is why I'm a criminal defense lawyer! It's because he's talking about these kids in the black community that have no voice, that can't articulate, that are just so consumed by their own anger and frustration. And it hasn't changed."

There her career might have remained, if Stewart hadn't been introduced by Ramsey Clark to a new movement. But this was a truly worldwide movement. It was serious; it was real -- realer in a way than anything in the 60's.

On a humid evening in June, I was coming out of the offices of the Center for Constitutional Rights onto lower Broadway when I heard a Queens accent pronounce my name. Lynne Stewart was limping along the sidewalk in a striped smock. I told her that the meeting of the Lynne Stewart Defense Committee had been canceled at the last minute.

"Canceled? Nobody told me." She looked stricken. "Maybe it was the leak."

Three days earlier, a supposedly sealed affidavit for a search warrant had turned up on the Court TV Web site thesmokinggun.com. It contained excerpts from her taped prison conversations with the sheik. The information was damaging: Stewart, the translator Yousry and the sheik seemed to be enjoying tricking the guards into thinking that she and the sheik were having a lawyer-client conversation, when in fact the sheik was dictating a statement to Yousry. At one point she joked that she should get an acting award. We went back inside. In the elevator, Stewart

wondered aloud whether the Center for Constitutional Rights might be withdrawing from her defense "because they get a lot of their support from Zionists. Well, from Jews, who aren't all Zionists, but some of them are."

Informed that the meeting had been canceled for logistical reasons, Stewart left, still looking shaky. Her practice was suffering badly; I had heard from a friend of hers that Stewart was more frightened than ever in her life. I asked whether she was just being brave.

"Haven't you heard of Brave Irene?" Stewart said. "Irene was my mother's name, it's my middle name. But it's the title of a wonderful children's book. Brave Irene -- there's snow, it's dark and cold, but she soldiers on. I used to give it out when I was a librarian."

Stewart was due to speak at an antiwar rally in a church on Washington Square. As we came out onto Broadway, it started raining, and she looked around for Poynter. He was waiting at the corner of Third Street in their cluttered Montero. The church was only a few blocks away, but Stewart couldn't make it on foot. They discussed whether to repark.

"Meanwhile, Ralph, I'm drowning."

"Sorry, my dear." Poynter hurried over with an umbrella.

We drove along Third Street. It rained harder. "Nobody told me it was canceled," Stewart said again. For a moment she seemed utterly isolated, and I could feel what it would mean for her and Poynter to be separated by prison as they grow old. "Maybe it was the leak, Ralph."

"Maybe it was. If so, it tells us a lot about what we already know is in there."

She looked at him in exasperation. "What do we know, Ralph? What do we know?"

"That it's all a bunch of bull."

A parking place appeared near Sixth Avenue. Stewart turned around. "Did you know Ralph used to work for Greyhound summers while he was teaching? He was the first black driver."

"Actually," Poynter said, pulling into the space. "I was the third black driver."

"Actually," she said, "you're a mile away from the curb."

At Judson Memorial Baptist Church, the crowd consisted of graying Maoists, students in antiglobalization garb and young Muslim ***women*** from South Asians Against Police Brutality and Racism. When Stewart spoke, she said: "We have had no movement in this country for many years. But what I see tonight, many movements coming together, tells me it could happen again, and we must make it happen. No matter what General Ashcroft says, no matter what they leak to the press, I am guilty of no crime. I'm very moved to see the young people here. I almost had tears when these young ***women*** made their testimonies. This is what movement is all about. It gives us back a lot more than we give to it. It gives us a life." She was helped from the podium to a standing ovation.

For most American dissidents, opposition to the war on terrorism involves a nod to the loss of innocent American life, a tendentious comparison with the loss of innocent Afghan life, a playing down of the danger posed by Al Qaeda and an exaggeration of the Justice Department's domestic security abuses (which don't need exaggerating). Stewart is more intellectually honest than this. When the towers fell, she felt that her city had been violated and her own life disrupted (her office is below Canal Street). But this warmhearted woman took the slaughter of innocents with a certain coldbloodedness. The U.S. is constantly at war around the world and shouldn't expect its acts to go unanswered, she says.

The Pentagon was "a better target"; the people in the towers "never knew what hit them. They had no idea that they could ever be a target for somebody's wrath, just by virtue of being American. They took it personally. And actually, it wasn't a personal thing." As for civilian deaths in general: "I'm pretty inured to the notion that in a war or in an

armed struggle, people die. They're in the wrong place, they're in a nightclub in Israel, they're at a stock market in London, they're in the Algerian outback -- whatever it is, people die." She mentions Hiroshima and Dresden. "So I have a lot of trouble figuring out why that is wrong, especially when people are sort of placed in a position of having no other way."

Stewart doubts the government's version of Osama bin Laden -- nor does she find him too "repugnant" to represent, though she allows that she herself might not be able to offer the best defense at this point. As for the sheik, in spite of his extensive connections to Al Qaeda, she still sees him as a fighter for Egyptian self-determination. She backs his Islamism for the same reason that she backed Mao and Ho's Communism: because it resists imperialism. This logic is entirely different from the civil-liberties rationale of most lawyers who defend accused terrorists. The strategy of her own trial will be to mute it in favor of constitutional arguments, but the political nature of Stewart's commitment to the sheik is what led her to violate the SAM's -- an identification so strong that her lack of concern for her own welfare strikes even some supporters as reckless. In her retelling, the effort to deceive prison guards was quite deliberate: a great man was locked down in near-total isolation -- "Daniel in the lions' den." If she couldn't speak for him politically, what had been the point of taking the case in the first place? Her decision was "a necessary mistake," she says, like an affair that ends a marriage.

Brooklyn, where Stewart and Poynter live in a narrow, book-filled town house, provides a quiet base for some of the world's most extreme political groups. It's an unnoticed miracle that there aren't frequent car bombings on Flatbush Avenue and shootouts in Midwood. The Israeli settler movement draws support in the borough; Al Qaeda's predecessor organization had its U.S. headquarters on Atlantic Avenue, not far from the mosques where the sheik used to preach jihad. And remnants of the American left's most hard-core cells have settled around Park Slope. At a book sale on Stewart's behalf, members of the Madame Binh Graphics Collective were donating 20-year-old African liberation posters, while survivors of the May 19 Communist Organization and the United Freedom Front chatted over hors d'oeuvres. The aging American leftists have resurfaced, while the young Arab Islamists are going underground -- a dead movement and a living one, with Lynne Stewart the human link.

In his autobiography, William Kunstler wrote that when he took the sheik's case in 1994, he felt as if it were 1969 again and this were the Chicago conspiracy trial. A better analogy would be to the 1950's, when the foreign enemy was real, the domestic support marginal and the hard questions had to do with the appropriate legal response. There's nothing new about the post-Sept. 11 era, says the man who will try to keep Stewart out of prison, the renowned criminal defender Michael Tigar. He mentions the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798, the Palmer raids in 1920, the internment of Japanese-Americans, the McCarthy years: "The point is that all times of this kind are different times." At trial Tigar will argue that, although Stewart violated the SAM's in May 2000, she didn't intend to when she signed them. He will claim that, in speaking out on behalf of the sheik, Stewart was doing what lawyers do, under the protection of the First Amendment.

Dozens of New York criminal defenders showed up for Stewart's arraignment. They talk about the indictment's "chilling effect" on the defense of unpopular clients. They say that the charges would never have been brought if not for the terror attacks, and that John Ashcroft is making a scapegoat of an easy target. The leaked affidavit also suggests that Ramsey Clark may have violated the SAM's (he denies it), but he remains unindicted. (David Kelley, the deputy U.S. attorney for the Southern District of New York, wouldn't comment on the case.)

Frederick Cohn, who represented one of the defendants in the Nairobi Embassy bombing trial, is suing Ashcroft over new Justice Department regulations that allow eavesdropping on lawyer-client conversations without a court order. "Lawyer jokes are funny, and frequently they're apt," Cohn says, "but a core of lawyers serve a very important function, which is to make sure everybody gets a fair trial. Ashcroft wants the tools to take this away. Then we all march off to the camps." The case against Stewart, Cohn says, is inconsequential.

But in conversations with criminal lawyers, including members of what might be called the terror bar, I found many of them less decisive in Stewart's defense than the public chorus suggests. Carl Herman spent a year and a half fighting to keep Mohammed Saddiq Odeh from receiving the death penalty for the Nairobi Embassy bombing. He waited for the day when Odeh would have a change of heart, but it never arrived. On Sept. 11 Herman lost a friend in one of the towers. A few weeks later he had to visit Odeh in the downtown Metropolitan Correctional Centers,

and Herman found that he couldn't look his client in the eye. Afterward he heard that the embassy bombers, when told what the loud noise at the World Trade Center had been, exchanged thumbs up. Herman has sworn off defending terrorists. "We're not talking about phony revolutionaries, or Mafia guys, or nuts," he says. "These guys are really dedicated to wiping out me and my family. I can just find something else to do with my time."

Even Ron Kuby, a strong defender of Stewart, has rethought many things since Sept. 11. He now regrets having defended El Sayyid A. Nosair, accused of killing the Jewish extremist Meir Kahane. When Sattar, the sheik's paralegal, was arrested along with Stewart, Kuby was ready to represent him at the bail hearing, until Kuby's wife said, "You don't know what he was doing." Kuby reached a decision: "I sure as hell don't think people who would take my family, put them in purdah and put me up against a wall and shoot me are entitled to my support in that struggle."

Lawyers are cowards, Kuby told me -- he far more than Lynne Stewart. They live vicariously through their clients. "Movement" lawyers, especially, identify with the people they represent. When the lawyer is as loving and committed as Stewart, he said, and the client as charismatic as Sheik Omar Abdel Rahman, the identification becomes passionate. "In the best of cases we identify with their determination, with their courage, and we see the people that maybe we could have been had we the courage to do what they did. And as a result, if you're a good lawyer, you spend a lot of time doing gut checks. And because it's a profession that is so cowardly, enjoying the aura of being those people without ever taking the risks of being those people, it's easy to say: this is the right thing to do, I'm not hurting anyone, this is morally justified. I'm refusing to do it out of fear because I'm a coward, and I've got to change that. I can't succumb to that kind of fear, because if I'm afraid of the government here, I can't do this job."

Kuby escorted me from his office out onto lower Broadway. He lighted a cigarette and grew melancholy. He asked what I thought of Stewart's case. I said that the men of the legal left had been more savvy, and now she was all alone to pay the price. "Lynne is dying for our sins?" Kuby considered it. "Maybe. History is very unforgiving of people who pick the wrong side at the wrong time in the wrong place. And even if she wins, Lynne is ruined as a lawyer."

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Graphic

Photos: Lynne Stewart (Margaret Salmon and Dean Wiand); Stewart and supporters of her client/cause celebre, Sheik Omar Abdel Rahman, in 1995. (Frances Roberts); Stewart and Poynter in their Brooklyn home. After 40 years, their revolution has become a lonely one. (Margaret Salmon and Dean Wiand)

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Family ties;The Bin Ladens

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Body

THERE isn't a doubt in the mind of Arabella Warburton. "The bin Laden family are thoroughly good people," she says. "They've castigated Osama bin Laden. They've distanced themselves from him and they've issued statements condemning the attacks on America. It's just unfair to cast doubt on them. It's guilt by association."

In the recesses of the Middle East where extremes meet, dismay at the loss of innocent lives was tempered with happier emotions ranging from quiet satisfaction to open celebration.

The Great Satan had been made to suffer. Wall-to-wall satellite coverage of the stricken burning towers provided easy confirmation that the world's only superpower was vulnerable to the strikes of the righteous; that it might be possible to eliminate its evil monopoly of power, influence and greed. Fearing that any outburst of enthusiasm might damage them in Washington's eyes Arab leaders from Yasser Arafat to Egypt's Hosni Mubarak clamped down on any dancing in the streets but the censorship did not extend to what went on inside people's minds. Half a century ago the American-Jewish writer Ben Hecht infamously said that every time a British soldier fell victim to a Jewish terrorist in the last days of the British mandate in Palestine, he took "a little holiday in his heart" In the past few days some Arabs, not all of them fundamentalists or terrorists, have indulged in a long vacation.

It was not a widespread feeling and it was expressed by a small minority but throughout the Middle East and within the Islamic world in general it was fired by a brooding dislike of the US and all its works. Much of it is caused by poverty and dispossession, not least in the teeming Palestinian refugee camps, and the mood of those caught up in the web of suffering is heightened by a belief that a US-led conspiracy is the reason for all their misfortunes. The dilution of Islamic religious and cultural values is another reason for the widespread anti-American feeling: the downgrading of Islamic religious law, ignorance about the teachings of the Koran and the break-up of the Islamic community with its concept of inclusiveness, all of which have encouraged the extremists. When Palestinians drove through Gaza waving flags and firing off Kalashnikovs they were expressing a rumbling belief that the US had it coming to them and that the use of airliners as missiles was a suitable payback for years of western repression and a long history of betrayal by the great powers.

Their joy had nothing to do with the huge loss of life in Washington and New York City - Islam deplores unnecessary killing, especially of the innocent, and outside the extremists suicide is not regarded as a virtuous act - but it has everything to do with the fact that the US had been discomfited as mayhem came to the streets of Manhattan. On one level their schadenfreude was fuelled by ideological and religious differences, an abhorrence of Coca-Cola culture, contempt for the half-witted pornography which clogs the internet and disdain for the greed-is-good outlook which seems to them to characterise so much of American life to the exclusion of simpler values. On another related level, many Arabs in the Middle East cannot understand the unstinting support which is granted to

Israel and which allows ordinary Palestinians to be gunned down without a smidgen of international protest. In their judgment, by backing Israel's policy of colonisation in Palestinian territory, the US has engaged in a hostile act which fully justifies the antagonism and the violence.

Both reasons combine to provide a focus for the burning sense of injustice which underpins any discussion about the US amongst hardline Muslims in the Middle East. All around them can be found examples of interference and the recent history of the region provides ample fuel to stoke those embers. Israel came into being in May 1948 largely as a result of Washington's prompting - President Truman's administration exerted tremendous pressure on Britain to end its UN mandate in Palestine and in so doing half a million Palestinians were expelled from their homes as the new state was born. Ever since that violent birth the country has enjoyed favoured client-state status, giving the impression that US and Israeli interests march hand-in-glove and that Israel is little more than the 51st state. Throughout the years of confrontation with the neighbouring Arab states, including three major wars, and the peace process which tried to end it, the US has stood accused of favouring Zionist interests while ignoring the claims of Islam. And allied to this has been the not unfounded suspicion that the Jewish lobby within the US has been an important source of votes for successive presidents.

"The link between Israel and American Jewry is vital to both sides," argues David A. Harris, Executive Director of the American Jewish Committee. "This link, however, cannot simply be taken for granted. If it begins to fray, it could have catastrophic consequences. Israel is absolutely indispensable to the Jewish identity of American Jews. Israel makes American Jews stand taller. Israel's miraculous rebirth, sheer survival and remarkable development should be sources of immense pride to Jews everywhere."

As with most injustices, real and imagined, the grounds for the argument are easily proved but the problem itself is less easily solved. Weapons and military muscle are the most obvious point of connection. In 1962, fearing that the Soviet Union was gaining a strategic advantage in the Middle East by supplying Egypt with strategic bombers President John F. Kennedy agreed to sell Hawk anti-aircraft missiles to Israel, thereby overturning the State Department's objections that Israel was strong enough to defend itself. The sale began a a trend which culminated in the supply of Patriot missiles at the time of the 1991 Gulf War, a move which was instrumental in dissuading Israel from taking unilateral action against Baghdad after it had been attacked by Scud missiles.

The benefits of that special relationship became apparent in the Yom Kippur War of 1973, a conflict which could have been lost but for US intervention. After a week of heavy fighting and setbacks Israel was running out of supplies and ammunition and facing the possibility that the Soviet Union might intervene with airborne forces to save the surrounded Egyptian Third Army on the east bank of the Suez Canal. Anguished calls for help were answered on October 24 when President Richard Nixon put the US on a heightened state of war readiness - DefCon 3, the same level ordered by President George W Bush last week - and ordered two carrier task forces into the eastern Mediterranean. Two days later Moscow backed down, Israel was saved and just as importantly it did not carry out a veiled threat to use nuclear weapons.

"For Israel, the special relationship with the United States has been of fundamental importance," claims Professor Robert J Lieber of Washington's Georgetown University. "During the height of the Cold War this worked to counterbalance what could otherwise have been dangerously strong intervention from the Soviet Union."

Finance was also part of the equation. In the last 25 years Israel has received over $ 50 billion in US aid and during President Ronald Reagan's tenure at the White House a free trade treaty was signed, a move which opened up the entire US market so that by 1995 the volume of trade was worth $ 11 billion. To put that piece of diplomacy into perspective the treaty was agreed long before similar agreements were reached with neighbouring Mexico and Canada. The wellspring of sympathy shown by post-war presidents also cemented the relationship: asked by the Soviet leader Aleksei Kosygin why the US supported three million Israelis when there were 80 million Arabs, President Lyndon B. Johnson replied, "Because it is right." Only George Bush senior(who positively disliked his opposite number Yitzhak Shamir) and Dwight D. Eisenhower were considered to be lukewarm to Israeli aspirations while President Jimmy Carter had a passionate emotional attachment which sprang from his reading of the bible.

One result of that empathy was the Camp David agreement of September 1978 which brokered a courageous deal with Egypt but Carter always insisted that in wanting to intervene in the Middle East to create peace he saw the scriptures as less of a religious text and more of a living history: "The bible stories are woven into into my childhood memories as the gallant struggle of modern Jews to be free of prosecution is also woven into our souls . . . I consider this homeland for the Jews to be compatible with the teaching of the bible, hence ordained by God. These moral and religious beliefs made my commitment to the security of Israel unshakable."

Carter's role in bringing together the age-old enemies Israel and Egypt began a lengthy involvement in the peace process which stretched into the next two decades and which resulted in the Oslo peace accords of 1993. As the talks progressed the US was seen, rightly so, as the only powerbroker which could effect an agreement and so it proved. With Washington's support the land for peace deal came into being and with it a belief that Israeli and Palestinian interests could be harmonised. As it turned out most of the optimism of that heady period was illusion and the high hopes quickly ran into the sands, mainly as a result of Israeli concerns about the security of the homeland. With the election last year of the hardline Ariel Sharon a new clash became inevitable and when it came Palestinians started being killed in droves as civilians faced Israeli armour on the streets. All this violence was laid at America's feet and the images of Israeli brutality only seemed to confirm the view held by many Arabs - that by refusing to condemn these actions the US was colluding in them. Even when Israeli tanks rumbled into Jericho and Jenin last week, bringing the Palestinian death toll in the current intifada to 573 the attack received little attention from a world still focussed on events in downtown Manhattan. Arafat protested as best he could but his voice was ignored and to rub in salt Sharon told the US Secretary of State Colin Powell that the Palestinian leader was no better that Osama bin Laden and his "coalition of terror".

That failure to bring Israel to heel has also put strains on Washington's relationship with Arab states which remain nominally friendly and have been partners in the peace process. Neighbouring Jordan has strong historical ties with the US and Britain but it also possesses a large Palestinian population whose patience is being tested by events on the other side of the River Jordan. The new leader, King Abdullah II has shown himself to be a deft performer in balancing his Israeli links with opinion in the rest of the Arab world but at this crucial juncture he dare not enter into too close a relationship with the US. The same holds true for Egypt where Mubarak has had to contend with his own battle against hostile Islamic fundamentalist groups and has enemies in the wider Arab world. Both men have expressed their revulsion for the attacks on New York and Washington but their loyalty would be stretched if the US makes a retaliatory strike which produces large numbers of Arab casualties.

Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states are in similar positions, being oil-rich and therefore in a strategic partnership with the west. Their interests are bound up with, and protected by, that relationship but they, too, have to keep it at arm's length. Opponents of the regimes have lambasted the failure to put pressure on the US over its perceived bias towards Israel and the criticism could grow shriller. Their governments know that there will be further strains in the coming weeks as they face calls for support from Bush and growing demands from their own people to ignore them. With nothing to lose, as he is still a pariah as far as Washington and London are concerned, Iraq's Saddam Hussein applauded the attacks but across his eastern border the dilemma facing many Arabs was expressed by Iran's reformist leader Mohammad Khatemi. For years, under the rule of the extremist ayatollahs, Iran was the focus of the bulk of anti-American sentiment in the Middle East but under the new regime there has been a softening in the approach with words of comfort being sent from Tehran to Washington but the generosity would never survive any attack on a fellow Islamic country.

Underpinning that unease is the wider belief that the west and the US in particular must bear a responsibility for much of the violence which has disfigured the Middle East in recent years - the bloody Israeli war against Lebanon in 1982, the Gulf War against Iraq in 1991 and the the sanctions regime and the bombing campaign which followed it. As has become all too painfully clear, that policy is not only failing to achieve anything but it has led to incredible hardship for thousands of ordinary Iraqi people while Saddam and his henchmen remain relatively unscathed. The absence of medical care, the lack of funds and equipment to restore the infrastructure and the indifference to local suffering have combined to create conditions which younger Iraqis will neither forget nor forgive. There is also a growing belief in the Arab world that the sanctions are not even-handed and are being imposed simply to bring down a rogue regime by whatever methods come to hand. As for the routine bombing of targets in the air-exclusion

zones in northern and southern Iraq these are rarely reported even though the attacks produce casualties, not all of them military.

For many Arabs there seems to be one rule for them and another for the west and its ally Israel. In 1988 a US Aegis class destroyer, the USS Vincennes, mistook an Iranian airliner for an attacking warplane and shot it down, killing 290 passengers and crew but the incident was only the cause of "deep regret" and no US commander was punished. This was in stark contrast to an Israeli attack on the intelligence-gathering ship USS Liberty in 1967: although 34 sailors were killed the incident was hushed up and forgotten in order to protect Israeli interests at the time. That feeling of exclusion extends to the way events are reported and the past is remembered. In the aftermath of last week's attacks other "Islamic atrocities" were recalled - the destruction of the three western airliners at Dawson Field in Jordan in 1970 and the execution of a US naval diver during the hijacking of a TWA airliner 15 years later - but no one resurrected the attack by Jewish terrorists on the King David Hotel in June 1946 which killed 91 and injured many more. As for the subsequent hanging of three British sergeants in an orange grove by way of retaliation for the execution of Jewish terrorists, that is remembered not at all.

Not that the US has not suffered itself at the hands of Arab terrorism and, of course, in the past few weeks dozens of Israelis have fallen victim to Palestinian suicide bombers. In recent years the US has had three of its ambassadors murdered, 49 people were killed when the embassy in Beirut was car -bombed in 1983, an atrocity which was overshadowed by the killing of 24 marines in the same city a few months later, in December 1988 a Pan Am airliner was blown up over Lockerbie and 270 lost their lives and in 1996 19 marines were blown up in their barracks at Khubar Towers in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. All were by-products of US involvement in the region - the support for Israel, the attacks on Iraq, the naval and military presence in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf - yet far from appeasing the hatred, the attacks and the retaliation only served to inspire the extremists.

Small wonder that so many younger Arabs in the Middle East are attracted to the groups which exist on the verges of the world of Islam and throw in their lot with terrorist organisations such as Hamas, ***Hezbollah*** and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, all of which are prepared to use violence as a means of achieving their aim of winning a Palestinian homeland. When they see the failure of the peace process and the inability of their leaders to gain any ground in the discussions with Israel they turn their thoughts to other means of confrontation, with predictable results. The suicide bomber might be a terrible manifestation of their frustration but at least he gains headlines and takes the battle to the heart and soul of the perceived enemy, Israel. At a time when Arafat and his cohorts from the once revered Palestine Liberation Organisation had completed the familiar transition from terrorists to statesmen a growing army of young and disillusioned Arabs see nothing terribly wrong with joining the alliance of fellow Palestinians who want to avenge their plight through the use of more violent methods.

And yet, it would be a dangerous folly to suppose that all Arabs in the Middle East operate under an unconditional hatred of the US or nurse violence in their hearts. The words "Islamic fundamentalist terrorist" are not the same combination as "pepper and salt" or "oil and vinegar" and there is a danger that in demonising the world of Islam or making wild and vengeful calls for retaliation the west will only reinforce the cycle of mistrust which creates the conditions for violence. One simple fact remains true: to react to any atrocity by abandoning the self-control imposed by the democratic state is to give comfort and a cause to the terrorist.

Warburton, the private secretary of former Tory Prime Minister John Major, needs to be confident about this. Her boss is, after all, the European chairman of the Carlyle Group, an international merchant bank that took nearly (pounds) 1.5 million directly from the bin Laden family. Not everyone shares her confidence, however. Intelligence sources say they are in the dark about the exact nature of the relationship between bin Laden and his huge extended family, which includes more than 50 brothers and sisters of him alone from the four wives of Osama's father.

The vast majority of the bin Ladens have truly disowned Osama, as the family have continually told the world since 1994. But there is proof that a few rogue members are still in contact with Osama and may hold dangerously similar political beliefs. The lingering fear is whether or not this means Osama still has some sort of financial link to the family or even, through them, access to the corridors of power in Saudi Arabia and beyond.

This isn't a family with just one aberrant son. If you look below the surface, Osama is not the only member of the family with links to terrorism. One of Osama's brothers was involved in an attack in Saudi Arabia, another helped Osama flee the country when he was under effective house arrest, and a brother -in-law has been linked by the CIA to the attack last year on the USS Cole in Yemen by Osama's terror group, al-Qaeda ("the base").

While the family say publicly that they have no contact with Osama, that is not quite the case. Certainly, the world's most wanted man is still close to some of his relatives. He phoned his stepmother, Al-Khalifa bin Laden, two days before the terrorist attacks on America to tell her "something big" was about to happen. Osama and his stepmother, who raised him after the death of his natural mother, had been planning a meeting in the Middle East somewhere, say wire-tappers with the US National Security Agency, who listened in on the call. Bin Laden told her they would be unable to meet and she wouldn't hear from him for a while.

Following the phone call, which Al-Khalifa received while on holiday in Damascus - the suspected venue of her proposed meeting with Osama - she and her family party were interviewed by police and intelligence officers on their return to Saudi Arabia on September 12, a day after the attacks. According to security sources, most of the rest of the family, who are scattered across America and Europe, also returned to Saudi Arabia after the attacks, for fear of reprisal.

There are also reports that Osama's step-mother and other family members attended the marriage of his son in Kandahar in Afghanistan earlier this year.

The bin Laden family is one of the richest and most influential clans on earth. They tap into a worldwide network of wealth and power, which in turn connects bin Laden to some of the most heavyweight figures of influence on the globe.

United States officials believe that at least two of the more junior members of the family have maintained contact with Osama. Two brothers-in-law - Mohammed Jamal Khalifa and Saad al-Sharif - are alleged to have financial connections to al-Qaeda. Khalifa, who is based in Saudi Arabia, is suspected by US intelligence of using a charity called the International Islamic Relief Organisation to finance Islamic terrorists in the Philippines. These terror groups are also connected to al-Qaeda. Vincent Cannistraro, the former CIA chief of counter-terrorism, said Khalifa may also have funded the Islamic Army of Aden, which claimed responsibility for the bombing of the USS Cole. Khalifa was detained briefly in the US in 1994 after immigration officials discovered that he had been sentenced to death in Jordan in absentia for "conspiracy to carry out terrorist acts".

One of bin Laden's brothers, Mahrous - who was once arrested over his connections to armed Islamists in Saudi Arabia - is currently manager of the Saudi Binladin Group, the family's multibillion-dollar business, at its branch in Medina.

After studying in England in the 1970s, Mahrous struck up a friendship with members of the Muslim Brothers, a Syrian Islamic fundamentalist organisation then in exile in Saudi Arabia. Members of this organisation used bin Laden company trucks to get weapons into the city of Mecca in 1979 when at least 500 dissidents invaded and seized the Grand Mosque. The organisation justified the attack by saying the Saudi regime had lost its legitimacy through "corruption, ostentation and mindless imitation of the West".

All the men who took part in the attack were later beheaded in the squares of four Saudi cities but Mahrous was freed from prison after a period of detention. Saudi intelligence later said that the bin Ladens were the only people in possession of full maps of Mecca. It is believed that the bin Ladens' close relationship with the Saudi royal family saved Mahrous.

The bin Laden dynasty was founded by Osama's father, Mohammed. He emigrated to Saudi Arabia from Yemen early in the 20th century and cosied up to King Abdul Aziz by doing a bargain-basement construction job on a royal palace. He later pulled off a series of contracts that would cement the family's position as one of the most powerful clans on the Arabian peninsula - the exclusive rights to renovate the holy sites in Mecca and Medina.

This established an industrial, financial and political empire that today stretches around the globe. Mohammed even became minister of public works for a time. With their father's position consolidated in Saudi, his children began to create an international network of power-players for themselves. The bin Laden boys were sent to study in Egypt's prestigious Victoria College in Alexandria, where their schoolmates included Prince Hussein, who later became king of Jordan, the actor Omar Sharif, and the Khashoggi brothers, whose family were infamous for arms dealing.

Osama's brother, Salem bin Laden, took over as head of the family after his father's death in a plane crash in 1968. He was one of Saudi ruler King Fahd's closest friends until he also died in a plane crash in Texas in 1988. Salem was educated at Millfield boarding school in Somerset and he acquired US properties in Florida and New England. A number of family members live in Boston.

The bin Ladens also cannily befriended the Saudi king's sons and helped them get their first start in the business world - a surefire way of keeping the clan right at the heart of Saudi power for future generations.

Since the death of Salem, the command of the business empire has rested with his eldest son, Bakr. He and 13 of Salem's brothers - including Mahrous - make up the board of the Binladin Group. Salem's other son, Ali, who studied in Paris, at one time held discussions with French weapons companies about strengthening links to the Saudi defence ministry.

Most of the bin Laden sons were educated at private schools in England and expensive universities in Britain and America, but Osama stayed to study in the Middle East. He did, however, flirt with a Western lifestyle for a short while in the late 1970s when compatriots remember him drinking and fighting over ***women*** in the then decadent Lebanese capital, Beirut.

By the 1980s, the Binladin Group was representing foreign companies in Saudi Arabia, ranging from Audi and Porsche to the UK's Hunting Surveys Ltd. In London, the Binladin Group took over Evered Holdings but most of its international activities were routed through the Geneva offices of the Saudi Investment Company (SICO), which was set up in May 1980.

The Saudi Investment Company is chaired by Beatrice Dufour, of Iranian origin and sister-in-law of one of the bin Laden brothers, Yeslam. In 1983, her co -chairman, Baudoin Dunant, represented Swiss banker Francois Genoud, who had helped finance Arab extremists in Algeria and was on trial for participation in international terrorism.

The board of directors included members of the Shakarshi family, linked to a money-laundering scandal and drug-trafficking in Zurich. A member of the Shakarshi family was also a director of the SICO office in London. There have been allegations that the Zurich company was a CIA front used to finance Afghan resistance - in which bin Laden was a prime mover - during the Soviet occupation of the country. Yeslam bin Laden continues to maintain relations with the Shakarshis.

The bin Laden family - and Yeslam in particular - have long-standing links to Al Bilad, a London-Geneva company used as part of the negotiations over the Anglo-Saudi Al Yamama arms-for-oil agreement, which was worth (pounds) 21.5 billion. Present at the negotiations was the now disgraced former Tory minister Jonathan Aitken, sent by John Major to represent the UK. Major claims he has no connection to the bin Laden family, despite his links to them through his job as European chairman of the Carlyle Group. Mark Thatcher was also involved in the Al Yamama deal.

Major is not the only significant world leader to be dragged into this mess. The Carlyle Group also counts former US President George Bush senior among its team. The former president even met the bin Laden family in Jidda in November 1998.

Current President George W Bush is also tangentially linked to Osama. Bush's lifelong friend James Bath acted as a representative in Texas for Osama's older brother, Salem, between 1976 and 1988. Bath bought real estate for the family, including Houston Gulf Airport.

Other companies and organisations connected to the Binladin Group family business include General Electric - the most valuable US company - and Citigroup, the biggest US bank, as well as Motorola, Quaker, Nortel, Unilever, Cadbury Schweppes and the investment bank ABN Amro. Judicial Watch, the Washington DC legal watchdog, said any company dealing with the Binladin Group was "disloyal to the US". The UK mobile phone group, Multitone, suspended business with the Binladin Group immediately after the September 11 attacks.

Then there are the academic institutions linked to the family. Dale Eickelman is the current bin Laden visiting fellow at Oxford University's Centre for Islamic Studies, which is financed to the tune of $ 150,000 ((pounds) 100,000) by Osama's family. Harvard University has fellowships endowed by the family worth $ 2m ((pounds) 1.35m), and Tufts University in America received $ 300,000 ((pounds) 200,000) from the bin Ladens.

The irony of the bin Laden network is hard to miss. A few years ago, when Saudi Arabia was in fear of attacks on its soil by al-Qaeda, signs outside Prince Sultan Air Base, where US service personnel are stationed, read: "Security upgrades by Binladin Group". The same signs were in Aden last year when FBI agents arrived to investigate the bombing of the USS Cole. The bin Ladens, it seems, are on both sides of the terrorist war. He blows things up and his family rebuild them.

Sitting in his office at Boston University, Professor Adil Najam - one of the world's best authorities on bin Laden and his relatives - came up with a rather neat little aphorism to explain the strange relationship between the world's most wanted man and his "unfortunate" family.

"The bin Ladens," he said, "must look at Osama with the same horror and disbelief that a Rockefeller would see one of their own errant sons if he became a communist."

It is a well-turned phrase but it doesn't tell the whole story. After all, the Rockefellers - despite being the capitalist dream made flesh - have long been plagued with allegations that they sent funds to Russia's Bolsheviks to protect their own interests, which came primarily in the shape of barrels of crude oil. As one former intelligence source said: "Who the hell knows what goes on inside families?"

Graphic

Osama bin Laden is still in contact with some members of his Saudi family;Osama's brother Salem bin Laden with a baby by his first wife in 1975 Photograph: Corbis

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Bordering on What?

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Byline: By Christopher Caldwell

Christopher Caldwell, a contributing writer for the magazine, is writing a book about immigration, Islam and Europe.

Body

The East in the West

On a warm Saturday night, beneath the cable car that runs up into the mountains from a quiet neighborhood in the historic Ottoman city of Bursa, the Teleferik Family Tea Garden is mobbed. Whole families from the farthest reaches of Anatolia, the Asian part of Turkey, are crowded around tables in front of glasses of tea, watching a pair of guys with a keyboard sing arabesques and rock songs in Kurdish. The families have arrived in the past few years, a cashier explains, from Tunceli, a town at the epicenter of the terrorist campaign against the Turkish state that Kurdish guerrillas waged from 1984 to 1999. Most of the young ***women*** wear the loose-fitting headscarves traditional in Turkey; others, the more elaborate and constraining ones that are a mark of newer currents in political Islam. Still others are on the dance floor, uncovered, bare-armed, dancing in an implausibly immodest way they have probably seen on videos. None of the boys are far enough removed from village mores to dare join them. Watching the dancers impassively, their mothers, in headscarves and long rain jackets despite the heat, smoke cigarettes and chatter on cellphones.

This jostling together of European fads, age-old rural folkways and Islamic fervor has been a fact of Turkish life for a long time, especially in big provincial cities like Bursa. Imitating Europe was already an Ottoman project when Mustafa Kemal Ataturk founded the Turkish Republic in 1923. But thereafter, the Europeanization of its citizens became the state's mission, its raison d'etre even. This meant modernizing industry, mores and the Turkish language. Mostly it meant pushing Islam out of the public square. There were bans on headscarves in university classes and at state jobs. There were government-trained imams who gave government-issued sermons on Fridays. Elites tended to approve Ataturk's vision; when they didn't, a huge standing army could be summoned to defend it.

And yet even as Turkey prepares to open membership negotiations with the European Union next week, the country's Europeanizing mission has been challenged, both at home and abroad. Turkey started petitioning for admission to the European Union's precursor organizations nearly half a century ago. Until the late 1990's, Europe wasn't interested. But embarrassed by persistent Turkish accusations that they were running a ''Christian club,'' Europe's bureaucrats softened their stance. If Turkey could democratize according to the so-called Copenhagen criteria -- by getting the army out of politics, eliminating the death penalty and expanding freedom of speech and religion, among other things -- it could seek full E.U. membership. Turkey has complied, mostly. At a summit

meeting last winter, the E.U. agreed to start talks this Oct. 3. There was cause for satisfaction on both sides. Turkey would get a ratification of its European identity from Europe itself. Europe would get a closer partnership with an economically dynamic Muslim country that has a long track record of keeping religious enthusiasm under control.

It looked different to the European on the street. French and Dutch voters rejected the union's proposed constitution last spring, citing worries about immigrant labor. A poll by the E.U.'s Eurobarometer service showed only 35 percent of Europeans favoring Turkish accession. So now, on the eve of negotiations, European politicians are looking for a face-saving way to leave Turkey at the altar. The French prime minister, Dominique de Villepin, spoke out in favor of delaying talks unless Turkey recognized the Greek part of Cyprus, which Turkey sees as a new condition. Germany's Christian Democrat leader, Angela Merkel, asked Turkey to be content with a ''privileged partnership'' rather than member status. It is not likely that Turks will consider that prize worth the self-abasement. Earlier this month, Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul told The Economist: ''Should they propose anything short of full membership or any new conditions, we will walk away. And this time it will be for good.''

What is unclear is where Turkey would walk away to. Back to its American ally, from whom the Iraq war has estranged it? Into ad hoc pacts with its neighbors Iran, Iraq, Syria and Russia? Or into the embrace of the worldwide Muslim umma? Maybe the failure of Turkey's E.U. candidacy could even cause Turks to renounce altogether their century-old aspiration of making themselves ever more European.

The Cultural Contradictions of Kemalism

Since the end of the cold war, the lid has come off Turkish life. Turkey's population is growing by nearly a million people a year, even as emigration to Europe continues. Suat Kiniklioglu, who heads the Turkish office of the German Marshall Fund of the United States, says, ''Urban Turkey is being overrun by the countryside.'' Take Bursa. In the 1980's, the city had fewer than a million people. Now it is at 1.5 million and swelling daily with newcomers from both the surrounding villages and places like Tunceli. The western edge of Bursa is as modern and European as any place in Turkey, with malls, trimmed lawns, ''Beware of Dog'' signs and the Renault and Fiat plants that are the backbone of the country's auto industry. But some of the newer apartment blocks near the Teleferik Family Tea Garden are home to people who work for village-level wages, practice a village-level piety and give their votes to the three-year-old Islamist government of Recep Tayyip Erdogan's Justice and Development Party.

Maybe ''Islamist'' is a simplistic way of putting it, but maybe not. What Erdogan has sought to do since his party came to power in 2002 is to resolve some of the cultural contradictions of Ataturk's republic. The Turkish state has always tried to imitate the ways of Western democracies, but without giving the country's Muslim middle and lower-middle classes much voice in the matter. Turkey's masses are pious even by the standards of the Islamic world, though their piety has mostly been a private one, bearing scant resemblance to the authoritarian fundamentalism of the Saudi Wahhabis or the Iranian Khomeneiites. For almost all of the last century, they were too distant, too poor and too disorganized to demand a hearing. Yet whenever society has reclaimed a bit of power or freedom from the Turkish state, it has done so in the name of Islam or, at the very least, of traditional Turkish values. In a Turkish context, more democracy generally means more Islam.

The lesson has never been lost on Erdogan. In 1994, the Welfare Party, founded by the hard-line Islamist Necmettin Erbakan, swept big-city mayoral races across the country. Erdogan, who as a young man led the youth wing of a precursor to the Welfare Party, became mayor of Istanbul. The key to his success was that there were 11 million people living in and around Istanbul, six times the population of three decades before. Empty lots and unclaimed fields had filled up with houses and apartments known as gece kondu -- a Turkish expression that means, roughly, ''thrown up overnight.'' The devout, dirt-poor and disoriented new arrivals found in Erdogan a mayor who was one of them. It was not just that he himself had grown up a poor provincial in Istanbul (his family were sailors from the Black Sea) or that he had sold simit (Turkey's ubiquitous singed sesame bread rings) on street corners to pay for his schoolbooks or that his mighty baritone had made him a sought-after muezzin or that he eschewed alcohol (and even tried as mayor to ban it from the touristy neighborhood of Beyoglu). The new arrivals also respected him because he was a formidable organizer. He had studied management and understood how a modern municipality worked. In an era of endemic official corruption, he was accessible and relatively transparent. He was a maestro at bringing electricity and running water into the gece kondus and garbage and sewage out.

That first round of Turkish Islamism flamed out. When the Iranian ambassador sang the praises of fundalmentalism at a public rally, the army sent tanks into the street. This "postmodern coup," as it is called, eventually resulted in Erbakan's resignation and the banning of his party. Erdogan, meanwhile, was arrested, jailed and stripped of his mayoralty in 1998 for publicly reciting a poem about bayonets and minarets.

But events cut in Erdogan's favor. The 1997 coup did not do what it was meant to. It brought a wave of corruption that discredited all the establishment political parties. As 2000 turned to 2001, Turkey underwent a banking collapse and then a currency crash. Erdogan broke with Erbakan and founded the Justice and Development Party, or A.K.P., in 2001 with the help of secular centrist politicians. He won an overwhelming parliamentary majority in elections the following year. He entered office in 2003 (once a ban on his holding office had been lifted) in very good shape. An International Monetary Fund bailout package gave him a road map for economic revival that he followed punctiliously. His mix of market economics and social conservatism won the support of newly prosperous Muslim entrepreneurs in the Anatolian heartland. And the perennial problem faced by any conservative Turkish politician -- wooing the Muslim base while not scaring the staunchly secular army -- was simplified greatly by Turkey's E.U. candidacy, which has always been understood to stand or fall on society's ability to keep the military out of public life.

Freedom and the Headscarf

Since Sept. 11, the West's biggest question about Turkey has been whether it forms part of the problem of an increasingly militant Islam or part of the solution. The E.U.'s rationale for welcoming Turkey into its councils and its economic sphere used to be a matter of "strategic rent," compensation for its position at a crossroads of continents and military blocs. Today, says Soli Ozel, a political scientist at Bilgi University, what Europe sees in Turkey is "an example that a modern, secular democratic state and capitalist society is compatible with a Muslim population." Europe has come to value Turkey not just for where it is but for what it is.

About a third of the Justice and Development Party's support comes from liberals who joined it in hopes that Erdogan's commitment to the European project would bring them visa-free travel, investment opportunities or equality for ***women***. It is an open question which part of Erdogan's coalition is the dog and which the tail. He has shown signs of wanting to coax hard-line Islamists into the modernizing consensus. He has also shown signs of using Europe as a means to weaken the army to the point where he can pursue untrammeled an Islamist agenda of the sort he espoused a decade or two ago.

One of Erdogan's notorious pronouncements during his term as Istanbul mayor was that democracy was like a streetcar: "You ride it until you arrive at your destination, then you step off." In the old days, he was one of those Islamist politicians who would not shake a woman's hand. Turkey's secular order still poses problems in his personal life -- there have been state functions that his headscarf-wearing wife could not attend. And even as he has sought to Europeanize Turkey's political structures, he has lost few opportunities to Islamicize its social ones. Weeks before his visit to Brussels last December to make the final push for the start of Turkey's accession talks, he tried to change Turkish law to criminalize adultery. The A.K.P. has all but destroyed Turkey's fledgling wine industry with punitive taxes. And Erdogan has decriminalized "clandestine" Koran courses, even though they have been a meeting place for radicals of the Iran-backed Turkish ***Hezbollah*** movement.

Erdogan harps on the need for religious freedom -- American-style religious freedom. Last year he explained to a German newspaper that secularism as the French understand it (i.e., as a state ideology) was not the Turkish way. "We Turks," he explained, "are closer to the Anglo-Saxon understanding of secularism" (i.e., as religious freedom). As regards the government, this assertion is preposterous: the Turkish system was not just inspired by, but copied from, the French. As regards the public, he is probably right. The increasing visibility of religion in Turkey has many of the same sources that it does in the United States. In a recent Pew poll that asked why Islam's role is increasing, the largest reason cited (by more than a third of Turks) was the "growing immorality in our society."

Erdogan opposes abortion and contraception, both of which are legal. But Turkey's hot-button issues of religion and state concern whether university ***women*** and civil servants should be permitted to wear the headscarf and whether young men who attend religious schools should be allowed to transfer their credentials to nonreligious programs. These pit the parliamentarians of Erdogan's party against the Higher Education Council, which appoints

rectors who can veto laws that threaten universities' secular orientation. The council was established by the military government in 1980, when radical leftist and radical rightist students were murdering one another by the literal thousands. But over time, public patience with such supervision erodes. "Suppose the scarf is a political symbol against the secular republic," says Nazli Ilicak, a newspaper owner and columnist and an ally of Erdogan since before his A.K.P. days. "There is still no harm in their going to university. If you are against religion, let them go! They'll get more emancipated and have their own jobs."

More and more Turks share Ilicak's view that Islam and its symbols are compatible with modernity, are perhaps even a sign of modernity: a woman who aroused no comment on a goat path migrates to a city and stands out when she takes a computer class or sits in Starbucks. "It's not that people are more religious," says Can Paker, a businessman and analyst at Tesev, an Istanbul policy center. "It's that they are more free." And free, upwardly mobile ***women*** may choose to wear the veil for a variety of reasons. It can be a sign of solidarity with the family or small town left behind. It can be a marker of membership in a new rising elite. It can be simply chic. After all, the prime minister's wife wears one.

Sunni Rotarianism

Calls for veiling and more religious instruction are modern in another way. They reflect the increasing economic clout of provincial Muslims. Before the Ottoman Empire collapsed and its ethnic populations were reshuffled, most businessmen were Christians and Jews. It has taken a long time for the Muslims who took over their functions to build up father-and-son firms into big national and international ones. But now they have done it, aided by a kind of Sunni Rotarianism. Muslim obligations of zakat, or charitable tithing, inevitably turn the country's rural businessmen into important community leaders and lead them into clubby (and formal) fraternal arrangements. The challenge to political establishments posed by powerful entrepreneurs espousing traditional values is familiar from the American Sun Belt or the Canadian or Australian west.

A natural affinity is developing between Erdogan's party and the most innovative sectors of the economy. For years, the centralized Turkish state bought social peace by creating jobs in state-backed industries, which are now a drag on the economy. About a sixth of the work force is still in the public sector, and its interests are protected by aggressive unions. The A.K.P.'s voters, however, are almost by definition outsiders to this statist system and have no stake in defending it.

No political party in Turkey has ever found itself more often in the Thatcherite role. Erdogan fought the public-sector paper company SEKA, which used to dump tons of chlorine into the Bay of Izmit while losing tons of money. Despite a 51-day occupation of the factory by militant workers, he succeeded in closing down the plant. He is now fighting to privatize Erdemir, the public steel company -- a fight that pits him not only against Erdemir's unions but also against supporters of the army, who have argued for its strategic importance. When Erdogan visited Diyarbakir, an impoverished eastern city, in August, a heckler called on him to build more factories. "Listen, my friend," Erdogan replied, according to a report in the English-language Turkish Daily News. "The A.K.P. government will not build any factories here." Instead he promoted a new enterprise-zone law his government had passed, which offered tax rebates and utility discounts to private companies. "What else do you want?" he asked. "Don't get used to freebies."

The provincial cities where Sunni Rotarianism flourishes -- Denizli, Gaziantep, Urfa, Konya and others -- are called the Anatolian Tigers. One of the more important is the 5,000-year-old Silk Road trading town Kayseri, which now makes furniture, beds, textiles, carpets and denim. Mehmet Ozhaseki, the mayor of Kayseri, is a direct fellow who wears a dapper gray suit and the regulation A.K.P. thick mustache. Close to Erdogan, he is one of the mayors who came to power in the Welfare Party's Islamist wave of 1994. Ozhaseki received 72 percent of the popular vote in the last election. He attributes his success locally to good government and the A.K.P.'s nationally to its perceived freedom from corruption. He says, "People never give their votes saying, 'They can be corrupted like other parties, but at least they're Islamic.'" He notes that the headscarf ranks seventh or eighth when voters are asked what's on their minds; jobs generally top the list.

So what interests Ozhaseki is managing the monsoon of social change. Last year, 139 factories opened in Kayseri, and dozens of 15-story apartment blocks are under construction on Kayseri's outskirts. Kayseri had

100,000 people in the 1950's. It has 750,000 today and will have a million in five years. Traditionally, this growth came from agricultural villages nearby, but now Kayseri is one of many Turkish cities getting not just migrants but also immigrants. Local residents say thousands of Iranians live and work in Kayseri. In Turkey as a whole, estimates of the number of "irregular" immigrants -- from Iran, Syria and elsewhere -- run as high as a million.

Why Trust Turkey?

Turkey's aspiration to the E.U., its adjustment to the global economy, its booming tourist trade and, now, the first signs of mass immigration -- all of these make the country a more porous place than it has been for the past century. But the treatment of Armenians, Greeks, Jews and others remains a sensitive subject. Turkey has been mostly free of the anti-Semitism that is widespread in all other Muslim countries of the Middle East. But "Mein Kampf" is now a best-seller, on sale in at least a half-dozen low-price Turkish-language editions. The "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" is also for sale, and its theses are trumpeted regularly in Vakit, the large-circulation Islamist daily.

In late August, on the eve of important E.U. meetings to iron out Turkey's responsibilities on Cyprus, prosecutors announced that Orhan Pamuk, the country's most acclaimed novelist, would be tried under a law that prohibits denigrating Turks or Turkey. Pamuk had told a Swiss publication in February that "30,000 Kurds were killed here, one million Armenians as well." Many scholars (and the French National Assembly) call the Turkish killings of Armenians between 1915 and 1923 a genocide, but the Turkish state considers it fallout from a civil war. For many Europeans, Pamuk is the embodiment of the kind of Turkey that the E.U. could welcome. The decision of authorities to prosecute him could be a blunder that jeopardizes the country's accession chances, though the blame is likely not Erdogan's. The prosecutor who brought charges against Pamuk -- a member of the pre-A.K.P. state bureaucracy -- investigated Erdogan himself four years ago for "insulting the state."

If Turkey requires a new way of relating to its neighbors and its minorities, the man most influential in formulating it is likely to be Erdogan's adviser Ahmet Davutoglu, a historian and a specialist in international affairs. Mutatis mutandis, Davutoglu is Turkey's closest equivalent to a neoconservative. That is, as he makes moment-to-moment political judgments, he is never far from considering his country's history and ideals. In Davutoglu's case, the relevant history is that of the Ottoman Empire, and the relevant ideals are the ones that permitted that empire to accommodate (not without friction) a wide range of minorities and subcultures. His scholarly obsession of late has been what German historians call the Mittellage -- the geographical position that traps certain countries in the cockpit of history. How should such countries face the world?

Part of Davutoglu's answer is to be found in his 2000 book, "Strategic Depth" (not translated into English), in which he urges that Turkey pursue a "zero-problem strategy" with its neighbors. Ataturk's motto was "Peace at home and peace in the world." In the 1990's, Turkey's decision to damp down conflicts with its neighbors, particularly Syria, which had sponsored and sheltered Kurdish guerrillas, helped further its ambitions to enter the E.U. What is new about Davutoglu's formulation is that it looks to Ottoman history for inspiration. "If you want good examples of cultures living in harmony, where do you look?" he asked during an interview in the prime ministry in Ankara in July. "You look to Ottoman cities: Istanbul. . .Sarajevo." He sets great store by the fact that in Ottoman times Turkey was probably the most cosmopolitan place on earth, even if he tends not to dwell on the amount of governmental force that was required to keep the multiethnic empire together.

The practical consequences of a zero-problem strategy have been clearest in the cases of Iran and Syria. Turkey has favored talking with, rather than confronting, Iran over its nuclear program and has not been prominent among those countries stepping up the pressure on Syria to democratize. Erdogan, insiders suggest, is of the view that Bashar al-Assad of Syria is at heart a reformer and deserves support against elements in Syria's security forces that are responsible both for infiltrating terrorists into Iraq and for assassinating Rafik Hariri, the former Lebanese prime minister. Assad visited Turkey last year at Erdogan's invitation. Some Turks fear that a good-neighbor policy may be ideological camouflage to move the country's foreign policy in a more Islamist direction. And indeed, the A.K.P.'s supporters would like to see a bit more Muslim solidarity from Turkey. Nazli Ilicak, for instance, laments that Turkey opposed the Algerian movement for independence from France. "Until the 1960's," she says, "we acted like Europeans toward the Arab world."

That mending fences with your Muslim neighbors could constitute a defection from the West is something that appears not to have occurred to Davutoglu. In his office in July, he seemed affronted by the very suggestion. He called it "ignorant." Turkey, he noted, borders on just as many Christian countries -- Bulgaria, Greece, Georgia, Armenia -- as Muslim ones. Closer ties with Christian neighbors are something he positively invites. "Europeans feel if Turkey is part of Europe, Turks will invade," he told me. "I say the opposite: Istanbul will be invaded by Eastern Europe." It is a welcoming vision, even if it is not in line with Gallup's polls of Turkish opinion, which show that the top reason Turks favor belonging to the E.U. is the ability to move to any country in Europe and work there.

The End of the 'Deep State'

In confronting the Erdogan government's efforts to create a more Muslim democracy, the old Turkish order -- the army and the Kemalist institutions around it that are often called the "deep state" -- must cut against the whole logic of modern economics and life. There is not any sense in which A.K.P. leaders can be considered reactionaries. For all his interest in the past and whatever his level of personal piety, Davutoglu is pitching his vision in the language of multiculturalism and globalization. Erdogan has not only been custodian of Turkey's European ambitions for the last half decade; he is also talking about Americanizing its system of constitutional rights.

Against this, the deep state does not look particularly deep. Its civilian followers man the Turkish equivalent of Rust Belt industries. The army has some historic claim to be the guardian of Turkish institutions and freedoms, including ultimately its democratic ones, but its recent record has been mixed. The 1997 coup capsized the economy, which has been righted only by a combination of the International Monetary Fund's expertise and the A.K.P.'s discipline in following it. World conditions are moving to render the deep state less and less effective as a counterbalance to populist excesses. During the 1980 coup, 180,000 political activists were arrested, dozens were executed and most party leaders were banned from politics for a decade -- and the country's largely self-enclosed economy barely felt it. A coup under present circumstances would look very different. Any dip in the currency, for instance, could endanger Turkey's delicate international banking agreements.

It is such concerns -- over what the E.U.'s bureaucrats or America's bankers would think -- that have provided the real discipline of the A.K.P. These have kept under control a growing anti-Americanism in the party and in the public at large. According to polling by the youth-oriented policy institute ARI Hareketi, 36 percent of Turks think the United States and Turkey are heading toward a war. Last winter, "Metal Storm," a fantasy set in 2007 in which a U.S. invasion of Turkey ends with the nuclear destruction of Washington, became one of the best-selling novels in Turkish history. Turks are quick to insist that public opinion is not anti-American, only anti-Bush. They recall the standing ovation Bill Clinton got when he addressed the National Assembly in November 1999.

But much anti-Americanism in Turkey could be called "primary" and is unaffected by American behavior one way or the other. The last U.S. ambassador, Eric S. Edelman, who departed in June to replace Douglas Feith as under secretary of defense for policy, was a butt of calumny in the popular press, some of it anti-Semitic. Erdogan often has difficulty trammeling his own ideological reflexes, as when he referred to Iraqis killed in Fallujah as martyrs or when he questioned the legitimacy of Iraq's elections last January or when he accused Israel of "state terrorism" after the assassination of the Hamas leader Sheik Ahmed Yassin.

The March 1, 2003, parliamentary vote to deny the United States its request to attack Iraq from Turkish soil was a democratic milestone. Newspapers were filled with impassioned arguments, people wrote angry letters to their parliamentarians and phone lines were jammed at the National Assembly. According to Kiniklioglu of the German Marshall Fund, "People were behaving for the first time as if public opinion affected foreign policy." So Turks now quote resentfully an interview that Paul Wolfowitz, then the deputy defense secretary, gave to CNN-Turk two months later, lamenting that the military "for whatever reason. . .did not play the strong leadership role on that issue." This summer, Foreign Minister Gul -- who was acting prime minister at the time of the March 1 vote (since Erdogan was in the final days of his ban from holding office) and supposedly in charge of winning it -- said it was a good thing it had failed.

Treason and Paranoia

The recasting of the U.S. relationship and the sudden deterioration of the European one come at a bad time. Over the past year, Kurdish separatists have relaunched their war. Since June 2004, when the Kurdish Workers Party, or

P.K.K., announced an end to its five-year cease-fire, more than 100 people have been killed, mostly by remote-control bombs. Mayors have been kidnapped, clandestine chemists blown up making bombs and tourists bombed in the resort town Cesme.

Terrorists enter the country from the Kurdish section of Iraq, Turks claim, where they have safe haven in the Kandil Mountains. One American official admits that there is a grain of truth to this. The U.S. Army has been too busy elsewhere in Iraq to do much about the problem, but Washington is now taking the matter more seriously. Earlier this month, top military officers visited Turkey's highest ranking general to discuss the P.K.K. Now that the United States is in Iraq, Turkish forces can no longer cross the border and sort out the problem themselves. So the frustration is multidimensional. Turks resent the European Union for placing obstacles in the way of a no-holds-barred antiterrorist strategy. They resent Americans for being in Iraq. And they resent themselves for removing themselves from the Kurdish region of Iraq.

Under such circumstances, the basic and perennial Turkish fear is easily reactivated -- namely, that foreign countries will gang up and dismember it, as European countries did the Ottoman Empire in the 19th and early 20th centuries. According to ARI Hareketi, two-thirds of Turks hold this view. Turks are easily whipped into a panic over threats to the nation. Last spring, there were huge protests, with flags hanging from balconies all over the country, after a flag desecration in the port city Mersin was shown on TV. Alongside this arguably healthy patriotism are signs of a malevolent nationalism. There have been attempts to lynch people suspected of terrorist ties in Trabzon, on the Black Sea coast, and in Seferihisar, near Cesme.

There is an explicitly nationalist party, the M.H.P., that draws thousands to its meetings atop Mount Erciyes outside Kayseri every summer. This year, Devlet Bahceli, the party's leader, accused the A.K.P. of compromising Turkish sovereignty and giving away Cyprus for the chimera of E.U. membership. "There are dress rehearsals for treason going on," Bahceli proclaimed. But these attitudes go far beyond the M.H.P. Erdogan himself is not immune to nationalism's promptings. In a bizarre speech early this summer, he said: "I condemn and curse the BBC and Reuters for describing the P.K.K. as a 'militia group.' . . .If this attitude continues, the terror that hits the sons of this country today will hit them tomorrow."

Nationalism is now the most plausible alternative to the A.K.P. That will be a rude awakening to Turkey's traditional allies, who tend to assume that there remains a Kemalist "loyal opposition" that will somehow "tone down" the enthusiasms of the A.K.P. or that the country has the option of "going back" to the semidemocratic, westernizing regime that suited the purposes of the free world very well. The problem is that that regime did not always suit the purposes of Turkish society, which, anyway, has entered into a new era. The past century has turned Turkey inside out. The Ottoman Empire was a multicultural society under a Muslim government. The Turkish Republic is an overwhelmingly Islamic society in an officially secular state. The open question at the front of European and American minds is whether reforming that state according to society's wishes can lead to anything other than an Islamic republic.

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Graphic

Photos: Urban Tradition: An open-air market in the conservative Fatih neighborhood of Istanbul.

Strong Rulers: Banners heralding Ataturk and Erdogan, legendary founder of the republic and current prime minister, respectively, at a political conference outside Ankara. Photographs by Lynsey Addario/Corbis)

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The Making of the Speech

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Body

The president could not find the right words. Soon after the World Trade Center and the Pentagon were attacked on Sept. 11, he tried to articulate his response. In one week he gave more than a dozen speeches and remarks to comfort, rally and then -- when he'd rallied too much -- calm the country. To some, his language seemed undisciplined. He called the terrorists "folks" and referred to the coming battle as a "crusade." He called for "revenge," called Osama bin Laden the "prime suspect" and asked for him "dead or alive." He said "make no mistake" at least eight times in public remarks. When Bush didn't seem lost, he often seemed scared. When he didn't seem scared, he often seemed angry. None of this soothed the public. "It was beginning to look like 'Bring Me the Head of Osama bin Laden,' starring Ronald Colman," one White House official remembered.

In a time of national crisis, words are key to the presidency. Too many and people tune out; too few and they think he is hiding. The president knew he had not yet said the right things. He returned from Camp David the weekend after the attacks with an intense desire to make a major speech. His aides agreed. The president needed to reassure Americans while conveying a message of resolve to the world.

Shaping a successful speech wouldn't be easy. Karen P. Hughes, the counselor to the president, helped write the straightforward statement the president gave on the night of the attack. The speech, delivered from the Oval Office, was poorly received; it felt too slight, too brief for the great events. Three days later, the president's speechwriting team, led by Michael Gerson, came up with an eloquent meditation on grief and resolution, which the president read at the National Cathedral. "We are in the middle hour of our grief," it began. But the beautiful speech sounded borrowed coming from Bush's mouth. The tone was too literary. The president's next speech had to be grand -- but it also had to sound more like him.

The White House also had to decide where to give it. Among the choices the president and his advisers had was an address to Congress, which had invited him to speak before a joint session. There is no greater backdrop for a president. But some advisers were reluctant. The president couldn't march up Pennsylvania Avenue without something new to say. And according to his advisers, Bush wasn't sure yet what the administration's response to the attack would be. Some advisers suggested a second Oval Office speech, which would be more intimate and controlled than an address to Congress. Others suggested speaking at a war college. He would look strong there.

Karl Rove, the president's chief political adviser, felt strongly that the president did better with a big audience. Applause revved him up. Congress, he thought, was ideal: it would build a sense of national unity. That was important. The speech was a huge political opportunity for Bush. War had given the president a second chance to

define himself, an accidental shot at rebirth. Bush's first eight months had been middling. To many, he seemed a little slight for the job. His tax cut had gone through, but the education initiative, the defense transformation and the faith-based initiative were not moving forward well. Americans had still not embraced him as a leader. A strong speech could revive Bush's presidency.

The president decided to speak to Congress. But he wasn't sure yet what to say. The main focus of the speech was tricky to define. "He had to speak to multiple audiences," his national security adviser, Condoleezza Rice, later told me. "He was speaking to the American people, foreign leaders, to the Congress and to the Taliban."

Karen Hughes met Bush at the White House residence Sunday afternoon to discuss what ground the speech might cover. She jotted down notes: Who are they? Why they hate us? What victory means? How will it be won? On Monday morning, Bush talked to Hughes again. According to Hughes, he told her how to deal with the fact that military action might come anytime. "If we've done something, discuss what we have done," he told Hughes. "If not, tell people to get ready." He told her he wanted a draft quickly. Hughes called Michael Gerson and told him that he had until 7 p.m. to come up with something.

Gerson does not write alone. He has five other writers, two of whom he works closely with, Matt Scully and John McConnell. Scully is wiry and ironic, like a comedy writer. McConnell is more earnest. They help bring Gerson down to earth. Gerson, 37, is an owlish man who fills yellow pads with doodles when you ask him a question. He says he believes that social justice must be central in Republican thought. "The great stories of our time," he told me, "are moral stories and moral commitments: the civil rights movement, the War on Poverty." He and the president get along well. The president calls Gerson "the scribe." They share an intensely felt Christianity.

Gerson had written speeches with Scully and McConnell during the campaign. They worked well together. Since then, Gerson has moved up a notch: he now has an office in the basement of the West Wing. The office is prestigious but not great for writing. It is claustrophobic and illuminated by artificial light. McConnell and Scully were in the Old Executive Office Building. If the West Wing, with its plush carpeting and secretaries in heels, resembles a Sun Belt office suite, the O.E.O.B. is by comparison a funky hotel. Every office, no matter how small, had its own couch, yet no office had a matching set of chairs. It was a good place to brainstorm.

So Gerson crossed West Executive Avenue to see McConnell and Scully. The three writers sat around the computer in McConnell's office, Gerson in one of the gray suits he wears, bouncing nervously, Scully's feet up on the couch. They began to write, adopting the magisterial tone of presidential speechwriting. These were great events. They deserved great sentiments, a lofty style that Don Baer, a communications director in the Clinton administration, called "reaching for the marble." The three wrote as a team, trying out sentences on each other: "Tonight we are a country awakened to danger. . . . " They went quickly. They knew there would be time to change things and plenty of hands to do it. They assumed that one of the widows of the heroes of United Airlines Flight 93 would be there, so they put in Lyzbeth Glick, the widow of Jeremy Glick, one of the men who apparently fought with the hijackers. (In fact it would be Lisa Beamer, whose husband, Todd, had also been on the plane.) They knew little for certain, and knowing little increased their natural tendency to sound like Churchill, whose writing they all liked. Gerson tried out: "In the long term, terrorism is not answered by higher walls and deeper bunkers." The team kept going: "Whether we bring our enemies to justice or bring justice to our enemies, justice will be done." The computer screen filled with rolling triads. "This is the world's fight; this is civilization's fight; this is the fight of all who believe in progress and pluralism, tolerance and freedom." Words tumbled out.

"They were just sitting there, jamming," said Juleanna Glover Weiss, the vice president's press secretary, whose office is next door. "There was a sort of one-upsmanship to it." Gerson wrote, "Freedom is at war with fear." Together, they tweaked it: "Freedom and fear are at war." They worked steadily, getting meals from the White House mess to keep them going.

The patriotic riffs were falling in place. But what, and how much, could they tell the country about the administration's plans for bin Laden and Afghanistan? They received some help from John Gibson, another speechwriter. Gibson writes foreign-policy speeches for the president and the National Security Council and regularly attends meetings with Condoleezza Rice, the national security adviser, and Stephen Hadley, her deputy.

Gibson has the odd job of writing public words about the government's most private decisions. He has top-secret security clearance; his hard drive is stored in a safe.

Getting good information is always a problem for White House speechwriters. The most important officials keep it away from them for the obvious reason that they are writers: they have friends at newspapers; they eventually write memoirs. When sensitive policy is made, the principals close the door. Since the attack, information, as they say in the intelligence community, had become "stovepiped." Gibson's meeting with Rice and Hadley was canceled, and he couldn't get through to them.

Fortunately, Gibson had made contact with Richard A. Clarke, the counterterrorism director for the N.S.C. Clarke is a white-haired, stocky man who has been in the job for nearly a decade. He speaks very loudly. "Even his e-mails are blustery," one White House employee told me. Whatever the meetings were, he was still going to them. Gibson e-mailed Clarke questions that unintentionally echoed Hughes's original discussion with Bush: Who is our enemy? What do they want?

The e-mailed answer came in a bulleted memo. Who is our enemy? "Al Qaeda." What do they want? "That all Christians and Jews must be driven out of a vast area of the world," and "that existing governments in Islamic countries like Egypt and Saudi Arabia should be toppled. They have issued phony religious rulings calling for the deaths of all Americans, including ***women*** and children." Gibson liked the tone and authority of the response. He handed over an edited version to Gerson.

Using Gibson's edit, Gerson, Scully and McConnell began on the Taliban. Scully started: "We're not deceived by their pretenses to piety." Gerson wrote: "They're the heirs of all the murderous ideologies of the 20th century. By sacrificing human life to serve their radical visions, by abandoning every value except the will to power, they follow in the path of Fascism and Nazism and imperial Communism." Scully added, "And they will follow that path all the way to where it ends." They paused. Where would it end? They didn't know. But there were plenty of ready-made phrases around. McConnell threw out five or six, like crumbs from his pocket. They liked the idea of predicting the end of the Taliban's reign of terror. "You know, history's unmarked grave," McConnell said. The group bounced the phrase around until McConnell came up with: "It will end in discarded lies." Gerson liked that, too. So the line read, "history's unmarked grave of discarded lies."

But if the Taliban were going to wind up on the ash heap of history, then someone had to suggest how this would be accomplished. Would we attack tomorrow? Would we mount a land invasion of Afghanistan? Would we take on Iraq as well? No one knew. Policy and prose work their way on separate tracks at the White House, only meeting at higher levels. Speechwriters sometimes sit around with finished speeches, waiting for the policy person to call and let them know what the whole thing is for. Not knowing what the president was going to announce, Gerson and his team couldn't come up with the right tone for an ending. But they had done what they could, written a joint-session speech in a day. They sent it off to Hughes.

Late Monday night, Karen Hughes told Gerson that the president found the draft promising but thought it needed a lot of work. Hughes herself was already considering changes. Like Bush, she is a Texan who looks to the heartland. She is the person who reads with the president's eyes. "I can hear his voice," she said, "the way he likes to inflect and speak and the rhythm of his words."

Gerson and his team gave Hughes notes for a suggested ending. Hughes gave the draft a critical read. Speechwriters like beautiful phrases, the "marble." But this president stumbles over ornate writing. It makes him seem small. When he has time to edit, he cuts adjectives. "I've always described the president's style as eloquent simplicity," Hughes said. "There's a poetry, but it's a minimalist poetry." Some of this was image and some was reality and some was reality imitating image. The walls of the West Wing are lined with pictures of the president on the range in his jeans, pulling out trees by their roots. After two years of national exposure, the public had a certain expectation.

The way Hughes saw it, the speech needed to be vivid. "I felt strongly the need for new images to replace the horrible images we'd all seen," she said. It had to have sound bites. That was also her department: she had at one point been a TV reporter before going to work for Bush's first gubernatorial campaign. The White House press

secretary, Ari Fleischer, would distribute a summary of the speech to the press beforehand so it could alert their listeners what to listen for. And the language couldn't be too flowery. Hughes felt the way to reach the vast middle ground was to explain things as if you were talking to a friend. The speechwriters were writing for history, but she just wanted it to be an informative conversation. She began making additions to the text: "Al Qaeda is to terror what the Mafia is to crime."

Meanwhile, the answer to what America was going to do next had been decided. Meeting at Camp David, the president's war cabinet among them Rice; Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld; Rumsfeld's deputy, Paul Wolfowitz; and Secretary of State Colin Powell -- spread out maps and charts of Central Asia before they began discussing strategy. Not everyone had a firm sense of the geography of places like Tajikistan. One question was how the United States would define victory. Obviously, capturing bin Laden wasn't enough. But should the United States go after every state that had ever harbored terrorism in the Middle East? Syria, Iraq and Iran were all on the State Department's state-sponsored terrorism list. Powell argued for a narrow targeting of the terrorists; Wolfowitz argued for a broader statement, one that would include Iraq. Powell prevailed. The president subsequently sided with him at a National Security Council meeting. "We decided we'd start with O.B.L., his lieutenants and Al Qaeda and then take it from there," a senior administration official recalled. For a president who had surprised many Americans in his first eight months with his hard-line conservatism, it was a turn toward the center.

At the same time, it was agreed that the speech would have flexible language that would give the military free license to win a war. There would be no pledge made not to bomb Kabul or Baghdad.

Under Powell's guidance, the State Department drafted the language of the goals. Condoleezza Rice walked them into the Oval Office. There, Bush was saying that he liked the speech but the ending wasn't right; the speechwriters and Hughes scribbled notes as he spoke. Bush was enormously excited, Hughes recalled. The speech shouldn't end reflectively, he said. It should end with him leading. Rice then read aloud the demands Powell sent over: deliver the leaders of Al Qaeda to the United States; release detained foreign nationals and protect those in Afghanistan; close the terrorist camps. Give the United States full inspection access. Bush liked the points. Calling on the Taliban to give up bin Laden in front of Congress would be a moment of some power. He told the speechwriters to translate them from bureaucratese. Rice left her notes with the speechwriters.

Bush still wasn't sure whether to give the speech or not. Andrew Card, his chief of staff, told Bush that Congress was eager for a decision. Bush said he still needed time.

The speechwriters went back to work. They laid more marble: "This is not, however, just America's fight. And what is at stake is not just America's freedom. This is the world's fight. This is civilization's fight."

Meanwhile, Rice and Hughes wondered if the speech conveyed the Taliban's evil well enough. Rice sent Dick Clarke and Zalmay Khalilzad, another N.S.C. member, who is Afghan born, to Hughes to help punch up the section. Clarke and Khalilzad told her how men could be punished if their beards were too short, how ***women*** weren't allowed to go to school, how movies were illegal. Hughes took notes and put them into her copy of the speech. She was thinking domestically: these were wrongs Americans could understand. Hughes also amplified language that Gerson's team had written expressing compassion for the Afghan people. What had helped Bush become president were the overtures of compassion in his conservatism. In the days after the attack, he'd been so bellicose that his father called to tell him to tone it down. It was time to bring back the candidate.

Gerson, Scully, McConnell and Hughes sat down in Hughes's office on Wednesday at 11 a.m. They grouped around Hughes's computer. In front of her was a little plaque quoting Churchill: "I was not the lion, but it fell to me to give the lion's roar." New material kept coming in. Vice President Dick Cheney sent up a short text with McConnell defining the new cabinet position, director of homeland security. Hughes felt that the speech didn't make the point clearly enough about America's respect for Muslim Americans. The president's rush visit to a mosque had gotten a good response on Monday; it was important to highlight that theme. Hughes changed the phrase "Tonight I also have a message for Muslims in America" to "I also want to speak tonight directly to Muslims throughout the world. We respect your faith." She helped write the sentence "The United States respects the people of Afghanistan." Hughes was taking the speech out of marble and making it concrete. She added "I ask you to live your lives and

hug your children." Rove stopped by; as a result of his input, the speechwriters added the line "I know many citizens have fears tonight, and I ask you to be calm and resolute." Rice's deputy, Stephen Hadley, who had to worry about more terrorism, suggested reminding people that there might be more terrorism to come. "Even in the face of a continuing threat" was added to the sentence.

All week, the president worked on the speech at night in the residence. He likes his speeches to make a point and for the point to be clear. He hates redundancies. He took a course in American oratory at Yale and remembers how a speech divides into an introduction, main body, peroration. (He once annotated a speech with phrases like "tugs at heartstrings" and "emotional call to arms.") Bush writes his notes with a black Sharpie pen. His edits tend to simplify. He is a parer. "Bush favors active verbs and short sentences," Rove said.

The president had strong feelings about the speech's ending. Although they had not yet found a place for it, the writers had suggested including a quote from Franklin Delano Roosevelt in the speech's conclusion: "We defend and we build a way of life, not for America alone, but for all mankind." The president didn't want to quote anyone else. He'd said this to them in emphatic terms at a meeting the day before, explaining that he saw this as a chance to lead. "I was scribbling notes as fast as I could," Gerson said.

The team worked on an ending that would be all Bush. They revisited the phrase "freedom and fear are at war" and gave it a providential spin: "We know that God is not neutral between them." Without hitting it too hard, a religious note would be sounded.

At 1 p.m., Gerson's team met with Bush and Hughes. They pulled up their chairs around the desk in the Oval Office. "You all have smiles on your faces; that's good," Bush said. Then, wearing his glasses, he began reading the speech aloud, stopping only for a few edits. He read the new ending aloud. "It is my hope that in the months and years ahead, life will return almost to normal," it said. "Even grief recedes with time and grace." But these comforting words were not all. "I will not forget the wound to our country and those who inflicted it," the speech went on. "I will not yield. I will not rest. I will not relent in waging this struggle for freedom and security for the American people." It echoed William Lloyd Garrison ("And I will be heard!"), but it was his own. Here was his peroration, and it tugged on your heartstrings and called you to arms. The final "freedom and fear" image worked, too. The president said: "Great speech, team. Let's call the Congress." He would give the speech the next night, on Thursday the 20th.

Although the main building blocks of the speech were in place and the speech would definitely be given, a lot had still to be nailed down. Other agencies had yet to be heard from. Speeches are sent out for comment to all the interested parties in the administration. Sometimes this encompasses much of the executive branch, speeches being like a ligament that binds together the administration. "The process of writing the speech forces the policy decisions to be finalized," Hughes said. In the case of a speech as big as a joint-session address, nearly everyone is involved, from the secretary of state to the chief of staff. People drop by and read a draft late in the process to make sure nothing has changed. They call with suggestions and send their emissaries.

Predictably, the State Department wanted emphasis on the coalition building that Powell was working on. Language went in. Defense was worried that the speech would focus on the wrong things. "Their point of view," one official remembered, "was that you could put a concrete dome over every stadium in the country and we still wouldn't be safe. The best defense is a good offense." These jostlings were the last echo of the arguments over the map at Camp David. They were an attempt to affect policy through minute changes in the text. Motivating it was the fact that a president's words receive enormous scrutiny overseas. Bin Laden had already thrown back some of Bush's most ill-chosen remarks, promising his jihad would beat Bush's "crusade." As Karl Rove told me: "In a crisis there's a gravity to each sentence. It's an awesome time and an awesome responsibility."

So the text got an extraordinary going-over. Language suggesting that Islamic organizations in the United States should be more aggressive in denouncing terrorism had earlier been tabled. Now "imperial Communism" was deleted from the list of ideologies that McConnell had put on the unmarked grave of discarded lies. According to one participant, the worry was about offending Russia, whom the alliance was courting. (The generic "totalitarianism" replaced it.) Some things that were in the text for no reason anyone could understand were cut. At one point, Hughes had put in that in Afghanistan you could be jailed for watching "movies like 'Gone with the Wind.'"

It seemed odd to everyone, including Hughes, so it went out. Surprisingly to some, Hughes's Mafia line was not cut by Rove, who expended much effort courting American Catholics. Fact checking led to more changes. Someone realized that it was not true, as the speech asserted, that "Americans have known wars. But for the past 136 years they have been wars on foreign soil." What about Pearl Harbor? Pearl Harbor was added. History was history. But "sneak attack" became a "surprise attack." We were friends of the Japanese now and hoped to remain so. The staff collated the changes.

It was amazing how many countries you had to be nice to. The phrase "there are thousands of these terrorists concealed in more than 60 countries" lost the word "concealed." The terrorist organizations linked to Osama bin Laden were limited strategically to the Egyptian Islamic Jihad and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan -- two, as one White House official noted, "of the most obscure terrorist organizations in the world." The ***Hezbollah***, the Fatah and the Muslim Brotherhood never got in. The Middle East was a fragile place. Still, that wasn't enough. An N.S.C. official flagged the phrasing of a sentence that read, "Any nation that harbors or supports terrorism will be regarded by the United States as 'hostile.'" What about Syria? The wording became "any nation that continues to harbor," giving the country, as one official said, "another chance to straighten up and fly right." Such softening was inevitable, but America still had to stand strong. Bush needed one hard phrase to lean on. It became this: "You're either with us, or with the terrorists."

Rice got one last look at the speech. If something misguided slipped in, it would be her problem first. She signed off. Policy and prose were now in place.

The president had to rehearse. it was the first thing he'd thought of after deciding to do the speech. The more time he practices, the better his speeches come off. The downward furl of his mouth relaxes. His tendency to end every phrase with an upward cadence diminishes. The first teleprompter rehearsal was at 6:30 Wednesday night. The president came out in his blue track suit with his baseball cap on. His dog, Spot, ran around the room, nuzzling the writers as they sat listening. The president weighed the sounds in his mouth. He came to lines about the administration's domestic legislative agenda, lines that had been slowly piling up -- the energy plan, the faith-based initiative, the patients' bill of rights. "This isn't the time," he said and cut them. Hughes agreed. This was the time for Bush to assert his credentials on foreign policy and not retreat into the domestic sphere.

The president made more cuts. When he saw how many billions of bailout dollars the speech promised for the airline industry, he insisted the line be deleted. "We're still negotiating that," he said. He put in little things for sound. After "The United States respects the people of Afghanistan," he inserted the phrase "After all" to begin the next sentence, "we are currently its largest source of humanitarian aid." It would give him a chance to breathe. Hughes coached him: "Give the ear time to catch up," she advised.

Thursday morning, the day of the speech, Bush rehearsed again. He didn't like the clunky paragraph that contained the list of our allies: the Organization of American States and the European Union, among others. It was too much of a mouthful. They would no longer hear their names spoken. State lost that round.

The president took a nap at 4:30, was awakened by an aide and rehearsed one more time. At 5:15 Hughes told Gerson the name of the new director of homeland security. It was Bush's old friend, the governor of Pennsylvania, Tom Ridge. The news had been held back so it wouldn't leak. Tony Blair, the British prime minister, was late arriving for dinner, and the president was offered a chance to rehearse again but said he was ready. The communications office prepared a list of sound bites and distributed them to the press: "The enemy of America is not our many Muslim friends." "Be ready." "Freedom and fear are at war."

The president got into his motorcade and went to the Capitol. The vice president stayed behind so they would not be in the Capitol together. It was an unprecedented security move. It meant that every time the camera showed Bush, you would think about the meaning of Cheney's absence. You would remember the crisis. Bush walked into the Capitol, a president in wartime. He wore a pale blue tie. He began: "Mr. Speaker, Mr. President pro tempore, members of Congress and fellow Americans." He was interrupted for applause 31 times.

A week after the speech, the flag at the White House was back at full mast, waving in the wind. Karen Hughes wore a metal American flag on her lapel, upward streaming too. Was the speech a success? For the president, yes. "He

told me he felt very comfortable," Hughes said. "I told him he was phenomenal." Bush had wanted to steady the boat, and he had done it. He had shown leadership. The Congress felt included. "The president's speech was exactly what the nation needed -- a message of determination and hope, strength and compassion," Ted Kennedy said. For the writers, there was catharsis: Gerson felt that by working on the speech, he had become connected to "the men digging with shovels in New York." Pundits wrote that the president had said just the right thing in a time of crisis. The Uzbeks were pleased. The Syrians were not enraged. Only the Canadians, of all people, were piqued: their mention, as part of O.A.S., had been cut so the speech wouldn't sag. Even professional speechwriters, tough critics of one another, were impressed. "It was a good, strong speech," said Ted Sorensen, who wrote speeches for John F. Kennedy. "I'm not sure 'freedom versus fear' means much. But it had a nice ring to it, and you can be sure we're on the side of freedom."

Hughes quoted to me an e-mail message she had gotten from a journalist, saying that after the speech he'd been able to sleep again. It made sense. The speech reassured, even in the way it alternated its soaring Gersonian moments and its Hughesian explanations. America was mad but not too mad, mindful and not weak. Courage, compassion, civility and character were all there too -- the values that Bush ran on and that Gerson helped articulate in the campaign. After months of placating the right wing and days of disarray, the president had returned to the political and emotional center.

The very act of the speech suggested that civilized life would continue. The president had just sat around a big war map at Camp David -- but instead of first doing something violent, he turned to words. Some of those words were bland. Many were vague. Other than the demands to the Taliban, there was little policy in it. "This was a strategic speech, not tactical,"

admitted a senior White House official.

This wasn't a State of the Union address. It wasn't a moment to look ahead. Bad news could wait. New presidents are terrified of looking indecisive, but this one realized it would be worse to be rash. Who are they? Where are they? How can we strike back? The coming challenge is enormous. By delivering a speech that emphasized reason over wrath, Bush bought himself some time until someone could draw a real map for the first war of the 21st century.

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Graphic

Photos: President Bush (Corbis Sygma); Bush, Karen Hughes and Michael Gerson go over revisions the night before the speech. (Eric Draper/The White House); Bush addresses Congress: A speech that emphasized reason over wrath. (Joele Cuyler/The New York Times)

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How 2,988 words changed a presidency: (Part 1): Since words are the key to the presidency in times of crisis,George W. Bush was in trouble in the days following the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. His language was undisciplined and he often seemed lost and scared. D.T. Maxx explains how a White House team 'wrote for history' by crafting Bush's brilliant address to Congress on Sept. 20.

The Ottawa Citizen

October 13, 2001 Saturday

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Body

President George W. Bush could not find the right words. Soon after the World Trade Center and the Pentagon were attacked on Sept. 11, he tried to articulate his response. In one week he gave more than a dozen speeches and remarks to comfort, rally and then -- when he'd rallied too much -- calm the country. To some, his language seemed undisciplined. He called the terrorists "folks" and referred to the coming battle as a "crusade." He called for "revenge," called Osama bin Laden the "prime suspect" and asked for him "dead or alive." He said "make no mistake" at least eight times in public remarks. When Bush didn't seem lost, he often seemed scared. When he didn't seem scared, he often seemed angry. None of this soothed the public. "It was beginning to look like 'Bring Me the Head of Osama bin Laden,' starring Ronald Colman," one White House official remembered.

In a time of national crisis, words are key to the presidency. Too many and people tune out; too few and they think he is hiding. The president knew he had not yet said the right things. He returned from Camp David the weekend after the attacks with an intense desire to make a major speech. His aides agreed. The president needed to reassure Americans while conveying a message of resolve to the world.
The New York Times Magazine

Shaping a successful speech wouldn't be easy. Karen P. Hughes, the counsellor to the president, helped write the straight-forward statement the president gave on the night of the attack. The speech, delivered from the Oval Office, was poorly received: it felt too slight, too brief for the great events. Three days later, the president's speechwriting team, led by Michael Gerson, came up with an eloquent meditation on grief and resolution, which the president read at the National Cathedral. "We are in the middle hour of our grief," it began. But the beautiful speech sounded borrowed coming from Mr. Bush's mouth. The tone was too literary. The president's next speech had to be grand -- but it also had to sound more like him.

The White House also had to decide where to give it. Among the choices the president and his advisers had was an address to Congress, which had invited him to speak before a joint session. There is no greater backdrop for a

president. But some advisers were reluctant. The president couldn't march up Pennsylvania Avenue without something new to say. And according to his advisers, Mr. Bush wasn't sure yet what the administration's response to the attack would be. Some advisers suggested a second Oval Office speech, which would be more intimate and controlled than an address to Congress. Others suggested speaking at a war college. He would look strong there.

Karl Rove, the president's chief political adviser, felt strongly that the president did better with a big audience. Applause revved him up. Congress, he thought, was ideal: it would build a sense of national unity. That was important. The speech was a huge political opportunity for Mr. Bush. War had given the president a second chance to define himself, an accidental shot at rebirth. Mr. Bush's first eight months had been middling. To many, he seemed a little slight for the job. His tax cut had gone through, but the education initiative, the defence transformation and the faith-based initiative were not moving forward well. Americans had still not embraced him as a leader. A strong speech could revive Mr. Bush's presidency.

The president decided to speak to Congress. But he wasn't sure yet what to say. The main focus of the speech was tricky to define. "He had to speak to multiple audiences," his national security adviser, Condoleezza Rice, later told me. "He was speaking to the American people, foreign leaders, to the Congress and to the Taliban."

Karen Hughes met Mr. Bush at the White House residence Sunday afternoon to discuss what ground the speech might cover. She jotted down notes: 'Who are they? Why they hate us? What victory means? How will it be won?' On Monday morning, Mr. Bush talked to Ms. Hughes again. According to Ms. Hughes, he told her how to deal with the fact that military action might come anytime. "If we've done something, discuss what we have done," he told Ms. Hughes. "If not, tell people to get ready." He told her he wanted a draft quickly. Ms. Hughes called Michael Gerson and told him that he had until 7 p.m. to come up with something.

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Mr. Gerson had written speeches with Mr. Scully and Mr. McConnell during the campaign. They worked well together. Since then, Mr. Gerson has moved up a notch: he now has an office in the basement of the West Wing. The office is prestigious but not great for writing. It is claustrophobic and illuminated by artificial light. Mr. McConnell and Mr. Scully were in the Old Executive Office Building. If the West Wing, with its plush carpeting and secretaries in heels, resembles a Sun Belt office suite, the building is by comparison a funky hotel. Every office, no matter how small, had its own couch, yet no office had a matching set of chairs. It was a good place to brainstorm.

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So Mr. Gerson crossed West Executive Avenue to see Mr. McConnell and Mr. Scully. The three writers sat around the computer in Mr. McConnell's office: Mr. Gerson in one of the gray suits he wears, bouncing nervously; Mr. Scully's feet up on the couch. They began to write, adopting the magisterial tone of presidential speechwriting. These were great events. They deserved great sentiments, a lofty style that Don Baer, a communications director in the Clinton administration, called "reaching for the marble."

The three wrote as a team, often trying out sentences on each other: "Tonight we are a country awakened to danger ..." They went quickly. They knew there would be time to change things and plenty of hands to do it. They assumed that one of the widows of the heroes of United Airlines Flight 93 would be there, so they put in Lyzbeth Glick, the widow of Jeremy Glick, one of the men who apparently fought with the hijackers. (In fact, it would be Lisa Beamer, whose husband, Todd, had also been on the plane.) They knew little for certain, and knowing little increased their natural tendency to sound like Churchill, whose writing they all liked. Mr. Gerson tried out: "In the long term, terrorism is not answered by higher walls and deeper bunkers." The team kept going: "Whether we bring

our enemies to justice or bring justice to our enemies, justice will be done." The computer screen filled with rolling triads. "This is the world's fight; this is civilization's fight; this is the fight of all who believe in progress and pluralism, tolerance and freedom." Words tumbled out.

"They were just sitting there, jamming," said Juleanna Glover Weiss, the vice-president's press secretary, whose office is next door. "There was a sort of one-upsmanship to it." Mr. Gerson wrote, "Freedom is at war with fear." Together, they tweaked it: "Freedom and fear are at war." They worked steadily, getting meals from the White House mess to keep them going.

The patriotic riffs were falling in place. But what, and how much, could they tell the country about the administration's plans for Osama bin Laden and Afghanistan? They received some help from John Gibson, another speechwriter. Mr. Gibson writes foreign-policy speeches for the president and the National Security Council and regularly attends meetings with Condoleezza Rice, the national security adviser, and Stephen Hadley, her deputy. Mr. Gibson has the odd job of writing public words about the government's most private decisions. He has top-secret security clearance; his hard drive is stored in a safe.

Getting good information is always a problem for White House speechwriters. The most important officials keep it away from them for the obvious reason that they are writers: they have friends at newspapers; they eventually write memoirs. When sensitive policy is made, the principals close the door. Since the attack, information, as they say in the intelligence community, had become "stovepiped." Mr. Gibson's meeting with Ms. Rice and Mr. Hadley was cancelled, and he couldn't get through to them.

Fortunately, Mr. Gibson had made contact with Richard A. Clarke, the counter-terrorism director for the N.S.C. Mr. Clarke is a white-haired, stocky man who has been in the job for nearly a decade. He speaks very loudly. "Even his e-mails are blustery," one White House employee told me. Whatever the meetings were, he was still going to them. Mr. Gibson e-mailed Mr. Clarke questions that unintentionally echoed Ms. Hughes's original discussion with Mr. Bush: Who is our enemy? What do they want?

The e-mailed answer came in a bulleted memo. Who is our enemy? "Al-Qaeda." What do they want? "That all Christians and Jews must be driven out of a vast area of the world," and "that existing governments in Islamic countries like Egypt and Saudi Arabia should be toppled. They have issued phoney religious rulings calling for the deaths of all Americans, including ***women*** and children." Mr. Gibson liked the tone and authority of the response. He handed over an edited version to Mr. Gerson.

Using Mr. Gibson's edit, Mr. Gerson, Mr. Scully and Mr. McConnell began on the Taliban. Mr. Scully started: "We're not deceived by their pretences to piety." Mr. Gerson wrote: "They're the heirs of all the murderous ideologies of the 20th century. By sacrificing human life to serve their radical visions, by abandoning every value except the will to power, they follow in the path of Fascism and Nazism and imperial Communism." Mr. Scully added, "And they will follow that path all the way to where it ends." They paused. Where would it end? They didn't know. But there were plenty of ready-made phrases around. Mr. McConnell threw out five or six, like crumbs from his pocket. They liked the idea of predicting the end of the Taliban's reign of terror. "You know, history's unmarked grave," Mr. McConnell said. The group bounced the phrase around until Mr. McConnell came up with: "It will end in discarded lies." Mr. Gerson liked that, too. So the line read, "history's unmarked grave of discarded lies."

But if the Taliban were going to wind up on the ash heap of history, then someone had to suggest how this would be accomplished. Would we attack tomorrow? Would we mount a land invasion of Afghanistan? Would we take on Iraq as well? No one knew. Policy and prose work their way on separate tracks at the White House, only meeting at higher levels. Speechwriters sometimes sit around with finished speeches, waiting for the policy person to call and let them know what the whole thing is for. Not knowing what the president was going to announce, Mr. Gerson and his team couldn't come up with the right tone for an ending. But they had done what they could, written a joint-session speech in a day. They sent it off to Ms. Hughes.

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Late Monday night, Ms. Hughes told Mr. Gerson that the president found the draft promising but thought it needed a lot of work. Ms. Hughes herself was already considering changes. Like Mr. Bush, she is a Texan who looks to the heartland. She is the person who reads with the president's eyes. "I can hear his voice," she said, "the way he likes to inflect and speak and the rhythm of his words."

Mr. Gerson and his team gave Ms. Hughes notes for a suggested ending. Ms. Hughes gave the draft a critical read. Speechwriters like beautiful phrases, the "marble." But this president stumbles over ornate writing. It makes him seem small. When he has time to edit, he cuts adjectives. "I've always described the president's style as eloquent simplicity," Ms. Hughes said. "There's a poetry, but it's a minimalist poetry." Some of this was image and some was reality and some was reality imitating image. The walls of the West Wing are lined with pictures of the president on the range in his jeans, pulling out trees by their roots. After two years of national exposure, the public had a certain expectation.

The way Ms. Hughes saw it, the speech needed to be vivid. "I felt strongly the need for new images to replace the horrible images we'd all seen," she said. It had to have sound bites. That was also her department: she had at one point been a TV reporter before going to work for Mr. Bush's first gubernatorial campaign. The White House press secretary, Ari Fleischer, would distribute a summary of the speech to the media beforehand so they could alert their audiences what to listen for. And the language couldn't be too flowery. Ms. Hughes felt the way to reach the vast middle ground was to explain things as if you were talking to a friend. The speechwriters were writing for history, but she just wanted it to be an informative conversation. She began making additions to the text: "Al-Qaeda is to terror what the Mafia is to crime."

Meanwhile, the answer to what America was going to do next had been decided. Meeting at Camp David, the president's war cabinet --including Ms. Rice, Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld, Mr. Rumsfeld's deputy, Paul Wolfowitz, and Secretary of State Colin Powell -- spread out maps and charts of Central Asia before they began discussing strategy. Not everyone had a firm sense of the geography of places like Tajikistan. One question was how the United States would define victory. Obviously, capturing Mr. bin Laden wasn't enough. But should the United States go after every state that had ever harboured terrorism in the Middle East? Syria, Iraq and Iran were all on the State Department's state-sponsored terrorism list. Mr. Powell argued for a narrow targeting of the terrorists; Mr. Wolfowitz argued for a broader statement, one that would include Iraq. Mr. Powell prevailed. The president subsequently sided with him at a National Security Council meeting. "We decided we'd start with O.B.L., his lieutenants and al-Qaeda and then take it from there," a senior administration official recalled. For a president who had surprised many Americans in his first eight months with his hard-line conservatism, it was a turn toward the centre.

At the same time, it was agreed that the speech would have flexible language that would give the military free license to win a war. There would be no pledge made not to bomb Kabul or Baghdad.

Under Mr. Powell's guidance, the State Department drafted the language of the goals. Condoleezza Rice walked them to the Oval Office. There, Mr. Bush was saying that he liked the speech but the ending wasn't right; the speechwriters and Ms. Hughes scribbled notes as he spoke. Mr. Bush was enormously excited, Ms. Hughes recalled. The speech shouldn't end reflectively, he said. It should end with him leading. Ms. Rice then read aloud the demands Mr. Powell sent over: deliver the leaders of al-Qaeda to the U.S.; release detained foreign nationals and protect those in Afghanistan; close the terrorist camps. Give the United States full inspection access. Mr. Bush liked the points. Standing before Congress and calling on the Taliban to give up Mr. bin Laden would be a moment of some power. He told the speechwriters to translate the bureaucratese. Ms. Rice left her notes with the speechwriters.

Mr. Bush still wasn't sure whether to give the speech or not. Andrew Card, his chief of staff, told Mr. Bush that Congress was eager for a decision. Mr. Bush said he still needed time.

The speechwriters went back to work. They laid more marble: "This is not, however, just America's fight. And what is at stake is not just America's freedom. This is the world's fight. This is civilization's fight."

Meanwhile, Ms. Rice and Ms. Hughes wondered if the speech conveyed the Taliban's evil well enough. Ms. Rice sent Dick Clarke and Zalmay Khalilzad, another N.S.C. member, who is Afghan born, to Ms. Hughes to help punch up the section. Mr. Clarke and Mr. Khalilzad told her how men could be punished if their beards were too short, how ***women*** weren't allowed to go to school, how movies were illegal. Ms. Hughes took notes and put them into her copy of the speech. She was thinking domestically: these were wrongs Americans could understand. Ms. Hughes also amplified language that Mr. Gerson's team had written expressing compassion for the Afghan people. What had helped Mr. Bush become president were the overtures of compassion in his conservatism. In the days after the attack, he'd been so bellicose that his father called to tell him to tone it down. It was time to bring back the candidate.

Gerson, Scully, McConnell and Hughes sat down in Hughes's office on Wednesday at 11 a.m. They grouped around Hughes's computer. In front of her was a little plaque quoting Churchill: "I was not the lion, but it fell to me to give the lion's roar." New material kept coming in. Vice-President Dick Cheney sent up a short text with McConnell defining the new cabinet position, director of homeland security. Ms. Hughes felt that the speech didn't make the point clearly enough about America's respect for Muslim Americans. The president's rush visit to a mosque had gotten a good response on Monday; it was important to highlight that theme. Ms. Hughes changed the phrase "Tonight I also have a message for

Muslims in America" to "I also want to speak tonight directly to Muslims throughout the world. We respect your faith." She helped write the sentence "The United States respects the people of Afghanistan." Ms. Hughes was taking the speech out of marble and making it concrete. She added "I ask you to live your lives and hug your children." Mr. Rove stopped by; as a result of his input, the speechwriters added the line "I know many citizens have fears tonight, and I ask you to be calm and resolute." Ms. Rice's deputy, Stephen Hadley, who had to worry about more terrorism, suggested reminding people that there might be more terrorism to come. "Even in the face of a continuing threat" was added to the sentence.

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All week, the president worked on the speech at night in the residence. He likes his speeches to make a point and for the point to be clear. He hates redundancies. He took a course in American oratory at Yale and remembers how a speech divides into an introduction, main body, peroration. (He once annotated a speech with phrases like "tugs at heartstrings" and "emotional call to arms.") Mr. Bush writes his notes with a black Sharpie pen. His edits tend to simplify. He is a parer. "Bush favours active verbs and short sentences," speeches to make a point and for the point to be clear, Mr. Rove said.

The president had strong feelings about the speech's ending. Although they had not yet found a place for it, the writers had suggested including a quote from Franklin Delano Roosevelt in the speech's conclusion: "We defend and we build a way of life, not for America alone, but for all mankind." The president didn't want to quote anyone else. He'd said this to them in emphatic terms at a meeting the day before, explaining that he saw this as a chance to lead. "I was scribbling notes as fast as I could," Mr. Gerson said.

The team worked on an ending that would be all Mr. Bush. They revisited the phrase "freedom and fear are at war" and gave it a providential spin: "We know that God is not neutral between them." Without hitting it too hard, a religious note would be sounded.

At 1 p.m., Mr. Gerson's team met with Mr. Bush and Ms. Hughes. They pulled up their chairs around the desk in the Oval Office. "You all have smiles on your faces; that's good," Mr. Bush said. Then, wearing his glasses, he began reading the speech aloud, stopping only for a few edits. He read the new ending aloud. "It is my hope that in the months and years ahead, life will return almost to normal," it said. "Even grief recedes with time and grace." But these comforting words were not all. "I will not forget the wound to our country and those who inflicted it," the speech went on. "I will not yield. I will not rest. I will not relent in waging this struggle for freedom and security for the American people." It echoed William Lloyd Garrison ("And I will be heard!"), but it was his own. Here was his peroration, and it tugged on your heartstrings and called you to arms. The final "freedom and fear" image worked,

too. The president said: "Great speech, team. Let's call the Congress." He would give the speech the next night, on Thursday the 20th.

Although the main building blocks of the speech were in place and the speech would definitely be given, a lot had still to be nailed down. Other agencies had yet to be heard from. Speeches are sent out for comment to all the interested parties in the administration. Sometimes this encompasses much of the executive branch, speeches being like a ligament that binds the administration. "The process of writing the speech forces the policy decisions to be finalized," Mr. Hughes said. In the case of a speech as big as a joint-session address, nearly everyone is involved, from the secretary of state to the chief of staff. People drop by and read a draft late in the process to make sure nothing has changed. They call with suggestions and send their emissaries.

Predictably, the State department wanted emphasis on the coalition- building that Mr. Powell was working on. Language went in. Defence was worried that the speech would focus on the wrong things. "Their point of view," one official remembered, "was that you could put a concrete dome over every stadium in the country and we still wouldn't be safe. The best defence is a good offence." These jostlings were the last echo of the arguments over the map at Camp David. They were an attempt to affect policy through minute changes in the text. Motivating it was the fact that a president's words receive enormous scrutiny overseas.

Mr. bin Laden had already thrown back some of Mr. Bush's most ill-chosen remarks, promising his jihad would beat Mr. Bush's "crusade." As Karl Rove told me: "In a crisis, there's a gravity to each sentence. It's an awesome time and an awesome responsibility."

So the text got an extraordinary going-over. Language suggesting that Islamic organizations in the United States should be more aggressive in denouncing terrorism had earlier been tabled. Now "imperial Communism" was deleted from the list of ideologies that Mr. McConnell had put on the unmarked grave of discarded lies. According to one participant, the worry was about offending Russia, whom the alliance was courting. (The generic "totalitarianism" replaced it.) Some things that were in the text for no reason anyone could understand were cut. At one point, Ms. Hughes had put in that in Afghanistan you could be jailed for watching "movies like Gone with the Wind." It seemed odd to everyone, including Ms. Hughes, so it went out. Surprisingly to some, Ms. Hughes's Mafia line was not cut by Mr. Rove, who expended much effort courting American Catholics. Fact checking led to more changes. Someone realized that it was not true, as the speech asserted, that "Americans have known wars. But for the past 136 years they have been wars on foreign soil." What about Pearl Harbor? Pearl Harbor was added. History was history. But "sneak attack" became a "surprise attack." We were friends of the Japanese now and hoped to remain so. The staff collated the changes.

It was amazing how many countries you had to be nice to. The phrase "there are thousands of these terrorists concealed in more than 60 countries" lost the word "concealed." The terrorist organizations linked to Osama bin Laden were limited strategically to the Egyptian Islamic

Jihad and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan -- two, as one White House official noted, "of the most obscure terrorist organizations in the world." The ***Hezbollah***, the Fatah and the Muslim Brotherhood never got in. The Middle East was a fragile place. Still, that wasn't enough. An NSC official flagged the phrasing of a sentence that read, "Any nation that harbours or supports terrorism will be regarded by the United States as 'hostile.' " What about Syria? The wording became "any nation that continues to harbour," giving the country, as one official said, "another chance to straighten up and fly right." Such softening was inevitable, but America still had to stand strong. Mr. Bush needed one hard phrase to lean on. It became this: "You're either with us, or with the terrorists."

Ms. Rice got one last look at the speech. If something misguided slipped in, it would be her problem first. She signed off. Policy and prose were now in place.

The president had to rehearse. It was the first thing he'd thought of after deciding to do the speech. The more time he practices, the better his speeches come off. The downward furl of his mouth relaxes. His tendency to end every phrase with an upward cadence diminishes. The first teleprompter rehearsal was at 6:30 Wednesday night. The president came out in his blue track suit with his baseball cap on. His dog, Spot, ran around the room, nuzzling the

writers as they sat listening. The president weighed the sounds in his mouth. He came to lines about the administration's domestic legislative agenda, lines that had been slowly piling up -- the energy plan, the faith-based initiative, the patients' bill of rights. "This isn't the time," he said and cut them. Ms. Hughes agreed. This was the time for Mr. Bush to assert his credentials on foreign policy and not retreat into the domestic sphere.

The president made more cuts. When he saw how many billions of bailout dollars the speech promised for the airline industry, he insisted the line be deleted. "We're still negotiating that," he said. He put in little things for sound. After "The United States respects the people of Afghanistan," he inserted the phrase "After all" to begin the next sentence, "we are currently its largest source of humanitarian aid." It would give him a chance to breathe. Ms. Hughes coached him: "Give the ear time to catch up," she advised.

Thursday morning, the day of the speech, Mr. Bush rehearsed again. He didn't like the clunky paragraph that contained the list of our allies: the Organization of American States and the European Union, among others. It was too much of a mouthful. They would no longer hear their names spoken. State lost that round.

The president took a nap at 4:30, was awakened by an aide and rehearsed one more time. At 5:15, Ms. Hughes told Mr. Gerson the name of the new director of homeland security. It was Mr. Bush's old friend, the governor of Pennsylvania, Tom Ridge. The news had been held back so it wouldn't leak. Tony Blair, the British prime minister, was late arriving for dinner, and the president was offered a chance to rehearse again but said he was ready. The communications office prepared a list of sound bites and distributed them to the press: "The enemy of America is not our many Muslim friends." "Be ready." "Freedom and fear are at war."

The president got into his motorcade and went to the Capitol. The vice-president stayed behind so they would not be in the Capitol together. It was an unprecedented security move. It meant that every time the camera showed Mr. Bush, you would think about the meaning of Mr. Cheney's absence.

You would remember the crisis. Mr. Bush walked into the Capitol, a president in wartime. He wore a pale-blue tie. He began: "Mr. Speaker, Mr. President pro tempore, members of Congress and fellow Americans." He was interrupted for applause 31 times.

A week after the speech, the flag at the White House was back at full staff, waving in the wind. Karen Hughes wore a metal American flag on her lapel, upward streaming, too. Was the speech a success? For the president, yes. "He told me he felt very comfortable," Ms. Hughes said. "I told him he was phenomenal."

Mr. Bush had wanted to steady the boat, and he had done it. He had shown leadership. The Congress felt included. "The president's speech was exactly what the nation needed -- a message of determination and hope, strength and compassion," Ted Kennedy said.

For the writers, there was catharsis: Mr. Gerson felt that by working on the speech, he had become connected to "the men digging with shovels in New York." Pundits wrote that the president had said just the right thing in a time of crisis. The Uzbeks were pleased. The Syrians were not enraged. Only the Canadians, of all people, were piqued: Their mention, as part of O.A.S., had been cut so the speech wouldn't sag. Even professional speechwriters, tough critics of one another, were impressed. "It was a good, strong speech," said Ted Sorensen, who wrote speeches for John F. Kennedy. "I'm not sure 'freedom versus fear' means much. But it had a nice ring to it, and you can be sure we're on the side of freedom."

(Continued on part 2)

Graphic

Photo: Knight Ridder; Win McNamee, Reuters ; (George W., Bush's address to Congress on Sept. 20.); Photo: (Seal of the, President of the United States of America plaque); Photo: 'He had to, speak to multiple audiences. He was speaking to the American people,, foreign leaders, to the Congress and to the Taliban.' Condoleezza, Rice, President George W. Bush's national security adviser

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The road to ground zero

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Body

For much of his life, Mohammed Atta seemed meek and compliant. How did he lead a terror attack that transfixed the world? A Sunday Times investigation begins today.

Monday, September 10 was a lovely, late summer day on the northeastern seaboard of America. From Portland, Maine, to Atlantic City, New Jersey, the sky was clear but for a few light clouds and temperatures were in the high seventies.

During the afternoon two young Arabs - an Egyptian called Mohammed Atta and a Saudi, Abdulaziz al-Omari - rented a four-door blue Nissan from an Alamo car hire office in Boston, Massachusetts, and headed for Portland. They cruised past a branch of Dunkin' Donuts and a Wendy's burger bar along US Highway 1A and out onto Interstate 95 for the two-hour journey north.

They crossed the Piscataqua bridge shortly after 5pm and about 45 minutes later were checking into the Comfort Inn in Maine Mall Road. The men shared a non- smoking room and paid their $ 149 bill in advance, saying they would be leaving early in the morning.

Nearly 300 miles away in his 34th-floor office in Manhattan, John O'Neill was thinking about the night ahead. He was dressed as usual in a black Burberry suit with a white shirt and a striped tie. It was the plain-clothes uniform he had worn for four years as the FBI's national security chief, and he was still wearing it on the eighth day of his new job as director of security at the World Trade Center. But he couldn't wait to change into his night uniform: the same black suit with a black shirt and no tie.

Heavily built and 6ft tall, O'Neill was a bulldozer of a figure, an Irish-American cop - but an unusual one. His FBI career was studded with successes and littered with enemies. Before leaving the agency he had been America's point man in the fight against terrorism.

"He knew more about Osama Bin Laden than anybody in the world," said his friend Howard Safir, the former top cop of New York. O'Neill believed he was on the Saudi terrorist's personal hit list. He also believed that bureaucratic rivals had blocked his investigations into some of Bin Laden's bomb attacks.

O'Neill was both smart and sensitive. He liked to have fresh flowers alongside the sword collection in his office. But he was also arrogant, secretive, restless and compulsively gregarious to a self-destructive degree. Even at 50, he was still running up debts and hurting those who loved him in order to party with the stars. The FBI had balked at his expenses for entertaining such contacts.

Just over a decade ago, stationed in Chicago, he had been offered a drink in a bar by a beautiful brunette called Valerie James. He had not told her until they were two years into a love affair that he had an estranged wife and family back in New Jersey. Valerie stuck with him and when his erratic professional behaviour finally exasperated even his most powerful friends last summer it was she who persuaded him to resign. "I am the FBI," he protested when she said it was time to quit. "I'm not in love with the FBI," she replied.

O'Neill promised to clean up his act and start coming home at night now that he had no need to entertain sources and colleagues from intelligence agencies around the world. But on the evening of September 10 he wanted to go uptown to the China Club, an exclusive night spot catering to celebrities.

Valerie was tired. They had already partied on Sunday at a big wedding at the Plaza hotel, and she wanted to stay home at their expensive apartment in Peter Cooper Village, lower Manhattan. (It had "the biggest collection of books on terrorism" - and of whisky bottles, she says.) She told O'Neill to go out on his own. In his black suit and black shirt he promised to be home by 11.30pm.

The China Club, in the theatre district near Times Square, has a long history as one of the hippest places to be seen. On Mondays, muscle magnifies the glamour. Millionaire professional athletes hang out there, attracting a large crowd of celebrity jocks.

That Monday night was O'Neill's last night alive. For four years he had warned that the Arab terror groups he was chasing had the capability and infrastructural support to attack America from within. He didn't know they were about to strike. According to friends, he stood at the bar drinking his usual Chivas Regal with water and a twist of lemon, smoking a cigar. Vindication was on his mind. "There were no attacks in New York on my watch," he told a friend.

IN PORTLAND, Atta and al-Omari were spending the evening killing time, cruising the streets in their Nissan. At 8.30pm, a security camera inside the Fast Green cash dispenser on a restaurant car park caught the pair on film: al-Omari grimacing, then laughing. Atta appeared emotionless. Their last supper consisted of a brief visit to Pizza Hut down the road from their hotel. By 9.20pm they were again caught on camera, at a Wal-Mart supermarket south of town. Atta, in a striped polo shirt, was carrying a plastic bag when they headed back to their mock-Andalusian motel.

O'Neill's former FBI colleagues have been unable to piece together the conversation between Atta and al-Omari that night. Al-Omari appeared to be only a junior member of Atta's gang, but he was once an imam at an Afghan training camp. Perhaps Atta, knowing he was only hours from death and troubled by memories of his own behaviour in Las Vegas strip clubs and Florida bars, was seeking some spiritual guidance. Did they follow the list of instructions to assassins later found in Atta's luggage, urging them to shave and to clean themselves ritually?

Midnight passed. At home in lower Manhattan, Valerie James awoke after 2am and found she was still alone. Too annoyed to go back to sleep, she started a game of solitaire on the computer. Eventually O'Neill returned. Staring drunkenly at the game, he put his arm around her and said sarcastically: "You're really good at that."

"F*** you," she replied. They slept apart.

Shortly after 5.30am, Atta and al-Omari left the Comfort Inn without breakfast. Twelve minutes later they went through security checks at Portland International Jetport for US5930, a hop to Boston where they had another flight to catch. A security camera recorded them. Atta strode purposefully forward. In Boston, Newark and Washington DC, 17 other young Arabs were dressing for the last time. It was another day of sunshine.

In Manhattan, O'Neill heard Valerie get up and go to her bathroom. He tapped contritely on the door and was forgiven - again. An hour later, they were racing against the morning rush-hour traffic. O'Neill pulled in front of her office in the garment district where she was an assistant fashion designer. They hurriedly said goodbye and O'Neill rejoined the traffic, heading for the Trade Center.

The skies of the eastern seaboard were busy with commuter airliners. In four of them death loomed.

Shortly before 9am, a colleague leant over Valerie's desk. A plane had hit one of the twin towers, she said, and there is a call for you. It was O'Neill. He had seen it all - and escaped. "It's terrible, there are body parts everywhere. My bosses are dead … Val, are you crying?" he asked. "No," she lied. She was overwhelmed that he was alive. She felt such relief. "I'll call you later," he said, and hung up.

Valerie and her colleagues moved into a conference room with a big-screen television. When she saw the first tower crumble, she crumpled into a chair. "John is dead," she said out loud. Rescue workers found his body nine days later. The 1,000 guests who had been invited to a planned retirement party on the top floor of the twin towers showed up for his funeral instead.

"Some people have tried to suggest that Bin Laden was targeting John," says Valerie now. "I don't buy it. He may have known who John was, but he wouldn't kill 3,000 people to get just one man."

Even a Nostradamus would have blushed to predict the bizarre symmetry of O'Neill's death. Much more disturbing, however, is the story of what went on while O'Neill was still alive and commanding hundreds of agents as the FBI's top counterterrorist fighter.

He and a small number of other key figures in a covert American war on terror are now accused of failure. Were they to blame or were their warnings ignored? Was there a political failure under President Bill Clinton or did the shrewdest players of the intelligence community deliberately leave this messy anti-terrorist work to the O'Neills of their world? As one of them put it: "Careers were not made in counterterrorism."

Most disturbing of all is the story not of failure but of success - Mohammed Atta's success in leading the ruthless suicide assault on the bastions of American power, and Osama Bin Laden's success as the strategist behind the conspiracy.

He has acknowledged on tape that he was closely involved in the planning and that Atta led the hijackers. How could two religious maniacs - one an apparently effeminate Egyptian, the other a pampered Saudi millionaire - successfully cause such terrible and lasting damage to the secular world?

These stories of success and failure intertwine over several decades and over many thousands of miles before the climactic moment of fusion at 8.45am on September 11. One of the strands - which leads to an understanding of Atta's conspiracy - starts on the River Nile.

After flowing through half of Africa from its headstream in Burundi, the Nile splits at Cairo like a wishbone. Sluggish, brackish waters head northwest in one branch towards Alexandria; in the other, northeast towards Port Said.

Between the two branches, criss-crossed by a 19th-century network of irrigation channels, is the alluvial triangle of the Nile delta, one of the most densely populated areas in the world. Near its centre lies the agricultural centre of Kafr el-Sheikh, a sprawling settlement of crumbling concrete apartments, shacks and smallholdings.

In the town centre, amid the dust, donkeys and unrelenting heat, wooden stalls are heaped with citrus fruits, cucumbers, lettuces, potatoes and olives. The two mainstays of the local economy are rice and cotton cultivated on the waterlogged delta plains.

Those born in the town have slim prospects. Half of the population is illiterate and most of the youth face unemployment or at best a modest income from the land. There are some jobs in a small number of businesses in the town, including engineering and building companies, but those who want to be wealthy head for the capital on the Alexandria-Cairo train. Only the lucky few succeed.

Fifty years ago, Mohammed el-Amir Atta, a quick-witted teenager with slicked-back hair and an eye for an opportunity, was determined to be one of the lucky ones. He came from one of the more successful farming families on the delta, but he did not want to earn his living off the land. He aspired to the expensive suits and Mercedes cars of the rich Cairenes who drove along the pot-holed highway towards their retreats on the coast.

He had better prospects than the newborn John O'Neill, who had just arrived in the world nearly 6,000 miles away in Atlantic City, New Jersey, the son of a taxi driver who could barely pay the rent. As a boy, O'Neill would pin all his dreams on a television series called The FBI.

El-Amir was delighted when after finishing high school in Kafr el-Sheikh he passed the entrance examinations to Cairo University. His friendship with another student from his home town, Mohamed Sharake, who belonged to one of its most influential families, was to prove as important as his studies.

In the intimidating atmosphere of Cairo University, where many of the other students lived such lavish lifestyles as to be barely comprehensible to those back in Kafr el-Sheikh, el-Amir and Sharake forged a close friendship. During their holidays back home, el-Amir also became infatuated with Sharake's sister, Bouthaynai, who was 14. When he left university, he married her in a union that was brokered between the two families. Sharake opened a small legal business in the town and hired el-Amir.

Bouthaynai was not as enamoured with her ambitious and overbearing husband as her family was, but she settled down to life as a housewife. She gave birth to two daughters, Mona and Azza, and a son, Mohammed, born on September 1, 1968.

It was a time of high international tension and social unrest. The Soviet Union invaded Czechoslovakia. There were anti-government riots in western Europe, anti-Vietnam war demonstrations in Washington. In Atlantic City, a teenage and patriotic John O'Neill kept his head down and studied hard to join the FBI.

In Egypt, President Nasser had been humiliated by Israel in the six-day war in 1967 and had only two years to live, but his populist promises to stop rich Egyptians from carving up the country still strongly appealed to people from el-Amir's lower middle-class background. Life was probably as good as it was going to get in Kafr el-Sheikh. El-Amir wanted to be in Cairo. As far as he was concerned, it was there to be taken.

El-Amir was a strict father who attended mosque every Friday and believed in academic excellence. His quiet, scrawny son never played football with the other boys, but would always be clutching a book on the way to school.

Ten years after Atta was born, El-Amir felt he had saved enough money and was established enough as a lawyer to leave Kafr el-Sheikh at last. The family moved to Abdeen, a central district of Cairo, near the presidential palace. It was a strange neighbourhood for the young lawyer to choose, one of the poorest. He was, however, not concerned with his neighbours. He established a law practice and ran his family life behind closed doors.

Young Atta went to the Ahmed Oraby state school opposite the Ministry of the Interior in a class of 25 other Mohammeds. Every year their teacher would ask what they wanted to do when they left school and Atta would reply: "I want to be an engineer when I grow up."

Other children changed their minds, but not Atta. He wanted to build things. Engineering was just the type of profession that his father approved of. The boy was also showing a talent for drawing.

After school he would hurry home through the rubble-strewn maze of streets with his head down, perhaps chatting briefly to his neighbour, Araby Kamel, who repaired cars. "I want to build new cities in the desert," Atta told him.

There seemed little else in his life. He never joined classmates on school trips to the beach. He would always carry a sick note saying he was unable to take part in sports. While the children ran around in the school compound, he would read a book or consult a teacher.

Sometimes, in the warm evenings, he stood with friends on the main street where the air was thick with tobacco fumes from the coffee houses. Once he had been out for more than half an hour, the guttural voice of his father would be heard calling him home.

The neighbours felt sorry for Atta. His father was viewed by some as an overbearing snob. Nobody understood why el-Amir had chosen to live in Abdeen. He had the money to be in a better part of the city. He would never invite anyone into his home, which was two apartments knocked into one. When he bought a white Mercedes to replace

his Fiat 132 it was seen as an unnecessarily ostentatious purchase by neighbours who could afford only rusting cars or donkeys.

When Bouthaynai came home with the shopping, prime cuts of meat and other delicacies would be piled high in her trolley; she declined the neighbours' offers of help.

Inside the eight-room apartment, El-Amir ruled. There were fierce rows. His wife told her relatives back in Kafr el-Sheikh that she was unhappy with the marriage. During the often turbulent family scenes, Atta, even as a teenager, regularly sat on her lap, much to the consternation of his father. "Toughen up, boy!" he would shout at his son. He already had two daughters and he did not want a third, he told his wife.

El-Amir was also prone to hectoring monologues and political rants. The plight of the Palestinians and the corrupting influence of what he called the "tyrant nation" - the United States, with its adultery and homosexuality - were two of his favourite topics. He shared many of the views of the Muslim Brotherhood, an organisation founded in 1928 with the written aim of "mastering the world" through Islam.

Although the brotherhood was outlawed in Egypt, it was still one of the most active political groups in the country. It fed on disillusionment. Many middle-class professionals like El-Amir were angered that the elite were once again enriching themselves on the back of increasingly cordial relations with the West initiated by Nasser's successor, President Sadat. Atta absorbed his father's views. The Palestinians and corruption among Cairo's "fat cats" would become his obsessions.

The Middle East was in turmoil throughout these impressionable years. In 1979 the Iranian mullahs had set up a religious dictatorship and were exporting Islamic revolution. In 1981 President Sadat was assassinated. In 1982 Israel invaded Lebanon in pursuit of the PLO. In Beirut, Islamic terrorists deployed a new tactic: the suicide bomber. ***Hezbollah*** fundamentalists carried out devastating suicide attacks, killing 299 Americans and Frenchmen, mainly military personnel, in October 1983.

By the time Atta began to study architecture at Cairo University in 1985, Islamic terrorist organisations including Egyptian Islamic Jihad - which had been blamed for Sadat's murder - were recruiting students. Egypt was one of the main sources of men for the Islamic jihad against the Soviet invaders of Afghanistan.

Atta was not an extremist, however, let alone a terrorist. Relatives said he was "like a girl" and ***female*** students in his class thought his baby face was cute. Male students noticed he hardly had any muscles on his upper body. When he graduated at the end of his five-year course, he was not politically or religiously active.

Egyptian fighters started to come home from Afghanistan after the Russian withdrawal, as the Soviet empire disintegrated. The Americans sent an army to Saudi Arabia to fight Iraq after its invasion of Kuwait. Atta remained uninvolved in protests. His personal upheavals were yet to come.

His father wanted him to study next in Germany. German, said el-Amir, was the language of engineers. A German tourist couple, identified only as Michaels, struck up a friendship with him in Cairo and agreed to sponsor him.

Atta arrived in Hamburg on July 24, 1992, in the middle of a heatwave. Packed in his bags were bundles of Egyptian pounds from his father, skilfully tailored leather jackets from the Cairo bazaars, family photographs and a copy of the Koran. He was overawed and already homesick.

He had the first chance in his life to be free of his father. El-Amir, however, still cast a long shadow. When Atta was refused a place to study architecture at the University of Applied Sciences despite passing the entrance examination, his father insisted on a legal appeal on the grounds of racial discrimination. The university quickly relented. Atta had by then won a place at the Hamburg-Harburg Technical University, however.

Hamburg was a bewildering place after Cairo, especially for a small, diffident 23-year-old. In the Egyptian capital there was no lurid red-light district and only the occasional drunken westerner. Hamburg had gaudy prostitutes, muggers and vagrant alcoholics.

It was also a thriving metropolis enjoying an economic boom because of the new markets opened up by the collapse of communism in eastern Europe. Most foreign students found Hamburg intoxicating. Atta just missed home. He was particularly worried about his mother.

Atta put the snapshots of family and pictures of Cairo on his wall at his comfortable student lodgings at Am Centrumshaus, near the main square in Harburg, and studied hard. Slowly his personality started to change. With Germans he was polite and discreet. Margritte Schroeder, wife of the caretaker of the lodgings where he stayed from 1992-98, was the German who knew him best. To her, he was "perfect, without blemish, an exceptional young man … He invited us regularly to his flat to have a cup of tea and a chat".

She said: "He came back from Egypt with sweatshirts for my husband and he brought me a lucky charm - a little green statue of a mythic creature. His parents gave him an allowance, so he had no need to work to make money. He used to wear beautiful jackets of exquisite Egyptian leather. You couldn't buy quality like that here.

"So long as he lived here he had no television or video. The walls had pictures of Cairo, maybe some shots of his family. He never had a girlfriend so long as I knew him."

Once he moved out she saw much less of him, but "anybody who says he changed in the later months is just trying to make themselves sound important. I saw him here in early July (2001) and he was as nice as ever."

Muslim friends tell a different story. They say Atta became assertive, physically aggressive and fond of dabbling in "white trash" culture - while at the same time becoming belligerently religious.

Although none of his university friends in Cairo had thought him particularly devout, in Hamburg his religion became an important support. It was not uncommon for Muslim students to go through a period of extreme devotion in their early twenties. It was often connected to Salifism, a school of thought that relies on a literal interpretation of the Koran and emphasises the importance of jihad as an armed struggle. By their late twenties, many Muslims once again embraced western customs.

Atta, however, never lost this fascination with Muslim fundamentalism. His mother and sisters had never worn veils, but now he even had strong views on which materials Muslim ***women*** should wear: finely woven fabrics were too ornate, he said.

While studying, Atta started a part-time job at Plankontor, a planning company in Altona, a fashionable district of Hamburg. He took a prayer mat to work and scrutinised food to ensure it did not contain pork fat. His colleagues organised trips to football matches and the cinema, but Atta just went home. He did not even go to the annual office party. He did, however, earn his salary of Pounds 550 a month for a 19-hour week. He was a meticulous draughtsman and never missed a deadline. Wearing cotton slacks, a button-down shirt and jacket, he would pore over his work, poker-faced, drawing intricate plans of various towns. He signed them with his father's name.

The only occasion when Atta showed any sign at work of an inner life was when he presented a slide show of historic Cairo. In fluent German he spoke about the importance of preserving this architectural heritage. He was angered at plans for parking lots in Fatimid Cairo, one of the most historic districts, and a scheme to bulldoze ramshackle shops for a new open-air museum.Cairo's inhabitants should be spared "Disneyland" developments. He hated the towering office blocks and multistorey hotels that had sprouted up among Cairo's domes and minarets.

Atta was studying Islamic architecture in his degree, and in his dissertation he mapped out an entire section of the city of Aleppo in Syria, showing how many storeys each building had. He felt that taller buildings were an invasion because they overlooked the courtyards of traditional Arab homes.

Whenever Atta looked at Cairo and other Islamic cities, he told friends, he saw the unwelcome signs of what his father called the "thug" country, America. It was not only the new multistorey developments, but also the prevalence of the dollar and the Levi jeans coveted by ***female*** students at Cairo University. Although he accepted the education that the West had to offer, he began to refuse to wear jeans, the badge of America.

In Atta's world there were now no shades of grey. There was right and there was wrong. His views were crystallising on the template created by his father. But there was also a further dimension.

The acutely sensitive Atta despaired at what he saw as the inhumanity of the international community towards the Islamic world. In Bosnia, Iraq or Palestine it was Muslims who suffered. The United Nations did nothing and often the villain, so hated by his father, was America.

Atta hated Jews. The Palestinian issue was his predominant concern. "It is a conspiracy," he said. "Israel kills Muslims in the Palestinian territories with the sanction of the United States." There was no point in the Oslo peace agreement between Israel and the PLO or any other deal. It was all a plot rigged against the Muslim world.

By 1995 - when he made a pilgrimage to Mecca, for which he grew a beard and wore a seamless white ihraam robe - his fundamentalist critique was complete.

On a study trip in Cairo that year, he applauded when an Egyptian academic was forced to divorce because he had applied the principles of literary criticism to the Koran. "Literary interpretation of the Koran is heresy," Atta emphatically told friends, sipping a mango juice in the 40C heat outside the Al-Azhar mosque.

He also railed against Cairo's wealthy elite. "They are bigwigs who scratch each other's backs when it comes to jobs and money," he said. "How can you hope to implement a fair social policy?" But he adored driving around the chaotic streets of the city in his yellow Fiat, listening to the Koran and blasting away at the horn with all the other drivers. He did not want to go back to Hamburg, he told his mother, who was going through a divorce from his father.

"I miss you," he told her. But both knew El-Amir would not tolerate disobedience. "Daddy wants you to go and you mustn't upset him," she said. "He's spent a great deal of money on your education and you must finish it."

He returned to Hamburg reluctantly. He realised he had embarked on a religious and intellectual journey that was likely to have an unpleasant denouement. He was still opposed to violence but his final transformation from wimp to bully and eventually to dogmatic killer was about to begin.

On the other side of the fence the "thug" country - America - had also been groping for bearings in a changing world. At the CIA, the operations department overflowed with officers who had returned home from covert assignment in the cold war after the Soviet Union collapsed in December 1991. Many had been involved in the war in Afghanistan where CIA agents working in Pakistan had shipped hundreds of millions of dollars of cash and weapons to the Islamic rebels. They knew that thousands of Arab rebels, who had been brought over to fight, largely funded by the government of Saudi Arabia, were now on the loose with their weapons.

CIA field officers in Africa were told to watch out for these weapons and warriors reaching Somalia, where American troops were trying to bring peace to a community riven by civil war. Most in the field regarded those intelligence warnings as simply another "CYA (cover your ass) operation" by the spooks, not a serious threat.

On the night of December 29, 1992, a bomb went off outside a hotel in Aden, Yemen, where American troops destined for Somalia had been billeted. At the headquarters of the CIA in Langley, Virginia, the news was received by the duty officer on the seventh floor. It was relayed two floors down to the counterterrorism centre, a multi-agency "fusion centre" where groups of anti-terrorism experts shared information and techniques.

Here was one open-plan floor divided into cubicles enclosing the cells which examined each terrorist problem. Desks overflowed with paper files, videos, video machines and television and computer terminals. Above the paths between the desks, signs hung from the low ceiling. Here was "Tamil Tiger Terrace" and over there "Abu Nidal Boulevard". As yet, there was no Bin Laden Street.

In charge of the CIA Near East desk - which included the Middle East and South Asia as far as Bangladesh - was one of the agency's most formidable Arab experts, a thoughtful and vastly experienced operative named Frank Anderson, who was in his last two years at the agency.

According to those close to Anderson, it was the bomb in Aden which first led him onto Bin Laden's trail.

"It was only after Aden that first word came through of Bin Laden's connections and how he might target America," agreed a former senior official of the CIA's department of operations.

However, in a pattern that was to become familiar over the coming years, the significance of the incident was quickly forgotten by the American political establishment.

In Washington the big news as December 1992 gave way to January 1993 was the change of power: the return of the Democrats after 13 years in the wilderness since Jimmy Carter. And, as everyone now knew, it was not foreign affairs that mattered in politics. It was "the economy, stupid" that had enabled the challenger Bill Clinton to defeat the incumbent President George Bush (senior), whose strong suit had been foreign policy. The Gulf war had been won and the cold war was over and America wanted to sit back and make lots of money.

While the Washington inauguration parties continued, one man sat up working late each night. Richard Alan Clarke was one of the few survivors of the George Bush White House, a career civil servant, a foreign policy "geek" whom everyone needed. He was Mr Indispensable.

Clarke's desk was in the same suite of offices in which Colonel Oliver North had worked on the third floor of the Old Executive Office Building overlooking the White House west wing. It was the very den of White House conspiracies and plotting: a world of secure phones and specially toughened and insulated windows to protect from eavesdropping by foreign agents and rocket attack.

A bachelor and a 16-hours-a-day workaholic with an aversion for publicity, Clarke had the pallid appearance of a man with no life beyond his desk. Superficially, nobody could be more different from the gregarious, party-going John O'Neill of the FBI. In fact, professionally they were Tweedledum and Tweedledee. Clarke was another bruiser, a bull in the china shop who fought bureaucratic battles with sheer force of personality and deft manoeuvring.

As one of his old colleagues put it: "With a super-aggressive style, here is a man who inspires a reaction in anyone he meets. He has more friends - and more enemies - than anyone else around the White House. And this is a town of monstrous egos and bruisers."

Officially, Clarke was special assistant for global affairs. In fact, he became Clinton's most senior anti-terrorism adviser. Like O'Neill he was obsessed with Osama Bin Laden and knew all that could be known about him.

With one bruiser taking over anti-terrorism in the White House, another moving into the same slot at the FBI, why wasn't Bin Laden doomed before he even had a chance to recruit Atta? As we shall see, there were several reasons.

First, the CIA was about to be enfeebled by a series of internal crises. Second, despite Clarke's and O'Neill's individual brilliance and occasional successes, they suffered from the law of diminishing returns. The more they hectored their colleagues to try to get results, the more isolated they became. Energy was wasted on bureaucratic battles. Third, and crucially, there was no interest at the top. There was no strategic overview or willingness to take risks to ensure the terrorist threat to America would be met by a co-ordinated and successful response.

Bin Laden Street became a lonely place where Mohammed Atta and his team of terrorists could walk without being seen.

Insight reporters have fanned out through Europe, the Middle East, Asia and America seeking the key figures who know the hidden story behind the September 11 conspiracy. Stepehn Grey interviewed Bill Clinton's most senior advisors, top congressmen, directors of CIA clandestine operations and former FBI counter-terrorism directors. John Ungoed-Thomas tracked down relatives and friends of Mohammed Atta in Egypt. Nicholas Hellen discovered Atta's associates and former teachers in Hamburg. Gareth Walsh interviewed Saudi sources about other conspirators. Joe Lauria heard the story of former counter-terror chief John O'Neill's last hours from his friends, son and girlfriend in New York.

Additional reporting by Richard Miniter in Washington, John Goetz and Hartwig Nathe in Hamburg, Ben Smalley in Dubai, Nicholas Rufford and Zoe Thomas in London, Issandr el Amrani in Cairo, Ghulam Hasnain in Peshawar, Justin Sparks in Prague and Uzi Mahnaimi in Amman

Graphic

Insight

Load-Date: January 7, 2002

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A SEPTEMBER 11 SURVIVOR IS HURT AS MAN DIES IN JERUSALEM ATTACK

NEW YORK TIMES

January 28, 2002, Monday

Information Bank Abstracts
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Section: Section A; Page 1, Column 1

Length: 108 words

Byline: BY JAMES BENNET

Body

Suicide bomber sets off explosion in central shopping district in Jerusalem, killing herself and 81-year-old man and wounding 113 others; wounded include 43-year-old New Yorker Mark Sokolov, who survived September 11 terrorist attacks against World Trade Center; wife and two children suffer slight injuries; attacker is first ***female*** suicide bomber to strike in Israel since such attacks began in 1994; is identified by ***Hezbollah*** as student from Al Najah University in Nablus; scene of destruction on Jaffa Road described; Jerusalem Mayor Ehud Olmert blames Palestinian leader Yasir Arafat; accuses him of inspiring atmosphere of terrorism; photo (M)

Graphic

Photograph

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One Man and a Global Web of Violence

The New York Times

January 14, 2001 Sunday

Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section 1; Column 0; Foreign Desk; Pg. 1; HOLY WARRIORS -- First of three articles: A Network of Terror

Length: 6859 words

Byline: The following article is based on reporting by Craig Pyes, Judith Miller and Stephen Engelberg and was written by Mr. Engelberg.

Body

Mr. bin Laden, the Saudi millionaire, would use his camps in Afghanistan to take holy warriors from around the world -- who had always pursued local goals -- and shape them into an international network that would fight to bring all Muslims under a militant version of Islamic law.

Some of his comrades in arms warned him that the goal was unattainable.

"I talked to Osama one day and asked him what was he doing," recalled Abdullah Anas, an Algerian who was fighting in Afghanistan at the time and provided a rare personal narrative of the formation of Mr. bin Laden's organization. " 'Imagine after five years a guy from Malaysia goes back to his country. How can he remember you are his leader? He will get married, have children, engage in work in his country. How can you establish one camp for jihad in the world?' "

But he and other doubters watched as Mr. bin Laden, who is now America's most wanted terror suspect, set about doing just that. Mr. Anas's account and those of other witnesses, along with intelligence from United States, the Middle East and Europe, draw a vivid and newly detailed portrait of the birth of a modern jihad movement. What began as a holy war against the Soviet Union took on a new dimension, Mr. Anas said, when Mr. bin Laden broke away and established a new corps of militant Muslims whose ambitions reached far beyond the borders of Afghanistan.

From his Afghan camps, Mr. bin Laden created a kind of clearinghouse for Islamic terrorism, which American officials say not only conducts its own operations but trains and underwrites local militants, connecting home-grown plots to a global crusade.

His strategy is aptly captured by one of his many code names: The Contractor. The group he founded 13 years ago, Al Qaeda, Arabic for The Base, is led by masterful opportunists who tailor their roles to the moment, sometimes teaching the fine points of explosives, sometimes sending in their own operatives, sometimes simply supplying inspiration.

The group has become a beacon for Muslim Malaysians, Algerians, Filipinos, Palestinians, Egyptians, even Americans who have come to view the United States as their enemy, an imperial power propping up corrupt and godless governments. Mr. bin Laden has tried to bridge divisions in a movement long plagued by doctrinal, ethnic

and geographic differences. ''Local politics drives what they're doing, but it's much more visionary,'' said Robert Blitzer, a former F.B.I. counterterrorism official. ''This is worldwide. This is, 'We want to be somewhere in a hundred years.' ''

According to a recent Central Intelligence Agency analysis, Al Qaeda operates about a dozen Afghan camps that have trained as many as 5,000 militants, who in turn have created cells in 50 countries. Intelligence officials say the group is experimenting with chemical weapons, including nerve gas, at one of its camps.

Mr. bin Laden and his supporters use centuries-old interpretations of the Koran to justify violence in the name of God against fellow Muslims or bystanders -- a vision on the farthest extremes of one of the world's largest religions. But their operations are thoroughly modern -- encrypted e-mail, bomb-making recipes stored on CD-ROM's, cell phones and satellite communications.

The group plans attacks months or years in advance, investigators say. A former United States Army sergeant, Ali A. Mohamed -- who worked for Mr. bin Laden and is now a government witness -- has told prosecutors that Al Qaeda trains ''sleeper'' agents, or ''submarines,'' to live undetected among local populations.

Mr. bin Laden has not achieved his more ambitious goals. He has not brought more Muslims under the rule of Islamic law, toppled any of the Arab governments he took aim at, or driven the United States out of the Middle East. His violence has repulsed many believers and prompted severe crackdowns in Arab states that already have limited political freedoms.

Nonetheless, he and his small inner circle have preoccupied American officials, paralyzing embassies, thwarting military exercises and making Americans abroad feel anxious and vulnerable. Earlier this month, the United States closed its Rome embassy for nearly two days after intelligence officials warned of a possible attack.

American officials have charged Mr. bin Laden with masterminding the 1998 bombings of two embassies in Africa that killed more than 200 people, and suspect him of involvement in the October bombing of the destroyer Cole in Yemen, which killed 17 sailors. Four men went on trial this month in lower Manhattan in the African bombings.

American authorities are also examining Al Qaeda's role in three plots timed to millennium celebrations in 1999 -- attacks directed at another American ship, a so-far unknown target in the United States, and tourist sites and a hotel in Jordan.

Mr. bin Laden's group has recently attempted operations against Israel -- a significant departure, American and Middle Eastern officials say. They acknowledge that he has ensured his organization's survival, in the event of his capture or death, by designating a successor: his longtime aide, Abdulaziz abu Sitta, an Egyptian known as Muhammad Atef or Abu Hoffs al-Masri. Last week, according to Al Jazeera, an Arab satellite channel, his son married Mr. Masri's daughter in Kandahar, Afghanistan.

''His arrest, which we dearly hope for, is only one step along the road of the many things we need to do to eliminate the network of organizations,'' said Richard A. Clarke, the top White House counterterrorism official.

The Cause

Afghan War Draws Young Arab Fighters

Al Qaeda grew out of the jihad inspired by Muslim scholars to combat the Soviet Union's 1979 invasion of Afghanistan. They issued religious rulings, known as fatwas, which exhorted Muslims everywhere to defend the Islamic land of Afghanistan from infidels. Over the next few years, several thousand young Arab men joined the Afghan resistance.

One of the first to answer the call was a young Algerian named Boujema Bounouar, who went by the nom de guerre Abdullah Anas. In recent interviews in London, where he now lives, Mr. Anas recounted how Mr. bin Laden went to Afghanistan to fight the Soviets and was drawn to a group of Egyptians who wanted to start a global jihad.

Mr. Anas, who is now a leader of an Algerian Islamic political party, is not a dispassionate observer. He acknowledges that he opposed Mr. bin Laden, whose program of terrorism, he says, has tarred the reputations of thousands of Arabs who fought honorably for the Afghan cause. But his firsthand account, which conforms with Western intelligence analysis, provides one of few portraits of Mr. bin Laden's evolution as a militant leader.

The two men were defined by many of the same forces. Mr. Anas said his journey from teacher of the Koran to holy warrior began in 1984, when he was 25 and living with his family in Western Algeria. Visiting the local library, he read in a news weekly about a religious ruling that waging war against the Soviets was every Muslim's duty.

''After a few days, everyone heard about this fatwa and started talking,'' he recalled. '' 'Where is this Afghanistan? Which people are they? How can we go there? How much is the ticket?' ''

That year, Mr. Anas was among the million Muslims who participated in the hajj, the annual pilgrimage to Mecca, Saudi Arabia. ''You feel very holy,'' he said. ''People from all over the world. From Zimbabwe to New Delhi. Everyone is wearing just two pieces of white cotton. Everybody. You can't describe who is the minister, who is the president. No jewelry. No good suit.''

In Mecca, he said, prayer leaders spoke emotionally about the jihad in Afghanistan.

He was standing in the marble expanse of the Great Mosque with 50,000 others when, he said, a friend pointed out a radical Palestinian scholar who was organizing the Arab support for the Afghans. His name was Abdullah Azzam, and his writings, which would help spur the revival of the jihad movement in the 20th century, were just becoming widely known.

Mr. Anas introduced himself and asked whether the magazine article he had seen in the library was correct. Had the religious leaders agreed that fighting in Afghanistan was a duty of all Muslims?

''He said, 'Yes, it's true.' ''

'' 'O.K.,' I said. 'If I want to go to Afghanistan, what do I do now?' ''

Mr. Azzam gave him a business card with a telephone number in Islamabad, Pakistan, where he was a university professor. A week later, Mr. Anas was on a flight from Saudi Arabia to Pakistan.

He had no idea where he was going, or what he would do. He dialed the only phone number he knew in Pakistan, reaching Mr. Azzam, who offered him a place to stay in his own house, a bustling salon frequented by students and scholars.

It was there that he first caught sight of Mr. Azzam's youngest daughter, whom he would marry five years later. And Mr. Azzam introduced him to a Saudi visitor identified in the traditional Arabic way, as Abu Abdullah, the father of his eldest son, Abdullah. The visitor was Osama bin Laden.

The two men exchanged pleasantries. Mr. bin Laden's name was well known. He was said to be the youngest of 24 brothers in a family that ran one of the largest construction companies in the Arab world.

Mr. bin Laden seemed no different from the other Arab volunteers who were starting to arrive in Pakistan, Mr. Anas recalled. The conversation turned to how the volunteers could help the Afghans win their jihad, and teach them more about Islam.

The Soviet forces had a considerable advantage in the Afghan conflict. Their helicopter gunships controlled the air, and their troops held the main roads. But the rebels had powerful friends. The United States and Saudi Arabia were spending millions funneling arms to the Afghans through Pakistan's intelligence service.

Mr. Anas began by teaching the Koran to the Afghan rebels, who did not speak Arabic and learned the verses by rote. He also led prayers at a "guest house" set up in Pakistan for Arab volunteers. At the time, he said, there were no more than a few dozen Arabs in the country, working with the rebels. None spoke the Afghan languages.

After a few months, Mr. Anas said, he trekked into Afghanistan to join a combat unit, one of three Arabs traveling with a caravan of 600 Afghan soldiers. He learned Farsi and took on the role of mediator, traveling among the feuding rebel camps. He spent most of each year inside Afghanistan.

Mr. Anas became a top aide to Commander Ahmed Shah Massoud, whose troops controlled northern Afghanistan and are now fighting the Taliban rulers -- who support Mr. bin Laden.

Like many Muslims who joined the rebels, Mr. Anas expected to die in the Afghan jihad and earn the special status designated in the Koran for martyrs, which includes forgiveness of sins and the enjoyment in Paradise of beautiful virgins. ''It's not the main idea to be a shahid,'' or martyr, he said. ''But it's part of my plan.''

In the mid-1980's, American and Middle Eastern intelligence officials say, Mr. bin Laden moved to Peshawar, a Pakistani city near the border with Afghanistan. The city was a staging ground for the war against the Soviets; American, French and Pakistani intelligence officers intrigued and competed there to manipulate the Afghan cause to their countries' advantage.

Mr. bin Laden's fortune of several hundred million dollars gained him immediate popularity.

''He was one of the guys who came to jihad in Afghanistan,'' Mr. Anas said. ''But unlike the others, what he had was a lot of money. He's not very sophisticated politically or organizationally. But he's an activist with great imagination. He ate very little. He slept very little. Very generous. He'd give you his clothes. He'd give you his money.''

Mr. Anas, who returned annually to Pakistan from the Afghan battlefields to visit with Mr. Azzam, said Mr. bin Laden at first slept in the guest house in Peshawar on a cushion on the floor. He recalled that Mr. Azzam liked to say: ''You see, this man has everything in his country. You see he lives with all the poor people in this room.''

At about this time, in 1984, Mr. Azzam set up the organization that would play a pivotal role in the global jihad over the next decade. It was called the Makhtab al Khadimat, the Office of Services, and its goal was to recruit and train Muslim volunteers for the Afghan fronts. Mr. Azzam raised money for the organization in countries overseas including the United States and gave impassioned speeches promoting the Afghan cause. Mr. bin Laden embraced the idea from its inception and became Mr. Azzam's partner, providing financial support and handling military affairs.

Mr. bin Laden worked best with small groups, Mr. Anas said. ''When you sit with Osama, you don't want to leave the meeting,'' he said. ''You wish to continue talking to him because he is very calm, very fluent.''

A main goal of the Office of Services, Mr. Anas said, was to prevent the increasing number of outside volunteers from taking sides in the rebels' factional struggles. ''We are in Afghanistan to help the jihad and all the Afghan people,'' Mr. Azzam told him.

But there was increasing frustration from many of the disaffected young Muslims over Mr. Azzam's insistence that the Office of Services support only the Afghan cause -- when many were agitated about the plight of their own homelands. Some approached Mr. bin Laden.

''They told him: 'You shouldn't be staying with Abdullah Azzam. He doesn't do anything about the regimes -- Saudi, Egyptian, Algerian. He's just talking about Afghanistan,' '' Mr. Anas said.

''These people are always saying to Osama: 'You should establish something. Have a clear idea to use these people after Afghanistan for other wars.' ''

Among those most ardently courting Mr. bin Laden was a group of Egyptian radicals called the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, which helped assassinate President Anwar el-Sadat in 1981.

The Egyptian group advocated the overthrow of governments by terrorism and violence, and one of its key figures, Ayman al-Zawahiri, had taken shelter in Afghanistan. Mr. Anas said -- and Western intelligence agencies agree --

that Dr. Zawahiri was a commanding early influence on Mr. bin Laden. Today he is part of Al Qaeda's leadership, according to intelligence officials.

But Mr. Azzam quarreled bitterly with the Egyptians.

Mr. Anas said he once witnessed a heated argument between Mr. Azzam and Sheik Omar Abdel Rahman, a radical religious scholar, who argued that the flouting of Islamic law had turned Presidents Mohammed Zia ul-Haq of Pakistan and Hosni Mubarak of Egypt into infidels who could therefore be killed. Sheik Abdel Rahman later moved to Brooklyn, where he was associated with an Office of Services branch. In 1995 he was convicted of plotting to blow up New York landmarks.

In 1986, according to Mr. Anas and Middle Eastern intelligence officials, Mr. bin Laden began to chart a separate course. He established his own training camp for Persian Gulf Arabs, a group of about 50 who lived in tents set apart from the other Afghan fighters. He called the camp Al Masadah -- The Lion's Den.

Within little more than a year the movement divided, as Mr. bin Laden and the Egyptians founded Al Qaeda -- the "base" for what they hoped would be a global crusade.

Mr. Anas said Mr. Azzam confided to him that Egyptian ideologues had wooed Mr. bin Laden away, gaining access to his money. "He told me one time: 'I'm very upset about Osama. This heaven-sent man, like an angel. I am worried about his future if he stays with these people.' "

The differences between Mr. Azzam and Mr. bin Laden were largely tactical, Mr. Anas said, noting that the two men remained friends.

A committed enemy of Israel, Mr. Azzam believed the Arab warriors should focus on creating an Islamic state in Afghanistan, a process that could take decades. Mr. bin Laden, according to Mr. Anas, came to believe that such a war could be fought in many countries simultaneously.

"The arguments were very secret," Mr. Anas said. "Only three to four people knew about them at the time." Mr. Azzam saw little difference between the United States and the Soviet Union, contending in his articles and speeches that both were hostile to Islam. But Mr. Azzam opposed terrorism against the West, Mr. Anas said.

By the late 1980's, Peshawar had become a magnet for disaffected young Muslims who shared Mr. bin Laden's views. "Ten people would open a guest house and start issuing fatwas," Mr. Anas recalled. " 'We are going to make revolution in Jordan, in Egypt, in Syria.' And they haven't got any contact with the real jihad in Afghanistan."

The tide of the Afghan war was turning. Stinger missiles, provided through the American covert program, had forced Soviet aircraft to fly far above the battlefields. Afghanistan had become Moscow's Vietnam. By February 1989, the Soviets had withdrawn.

A C.I.A. official said that the agency, aware of the changing nature of the jihad, had taken some steps he would not specify to counter the threat. But Milt Bearden, the former C.I.A. station chief in Islamabad, who coordinated the agency's anti-Soviet effort in Afghanistan, disagreed.

"The Soviet Union, armed to the teeth, was falling apart," he said. "A shooting war then erupted in the Persian Gulf. Afghanistan was off the front burner."

When the war ended, he said, "we got the hell out of there."

The Afghan rebels' war continued, first against the Soviet-backed government and then within their own ranks. On Nov. 24, 1989, Mr. Azzam and two sons were killed by a car bomb in Peshawar as they drove to Friday Prayers. The murders were never solved.

Mr. Anas said he tried to take over leadership of the Office of Services. According to the C.I.A., the group split; the extremist faction took control, siding with Mr. bin Laden.

"They loved the ideas of Osama and the person of Abdullah Azzam," Mr. Anas said wistfully. "They don't love me."

The Base

From Many Lands, Under One Banner

Fired by their triumph over the Soviets, the Arabs who had fought in Afghanistan returned home, eager to apply the principles of jihad to their native lands.

The Koran sets strict limits on when and how holy war is to be undertaken. But Gilles Kepel, a leading French scholar of contemporary Islam, said the Afghan veterans were guided by their own radical interpretation of sacred Muslim texts. "Intoxicated by the Muslim victory in Afghanistan," he said, "they believed that it could be replicated elsewhere -- that the whole world was ripe for jihad, which is contrary to Islamic tradition."

They called themselves the Arab Afghans.

In Jordan some founded a group, Jaish Muhammad, that officials say took aim at King Hussein, whose family claims descent from the Prophet Muhammad.

In Algeria, the Arab Afghans were among the founders of the Armed Islamic Group, the most radical to emerge after the military government canceled the 1991 elections. Known by its French initials, G.I.A, it began by blowing up military targets and escalated to wholesale massacres of Algerians who did not believe in the jihad.

According to Mr. Anas, one of its founding members was an Algerian who had initially fought with him in Afghanistan but joined Al Qaeda in the late 1980's. Mr. Anas says he has been told that Mr. bin Laden provided some of the seed money for the G.I.A.

The early 1990's proved difficult for Mr. bin Laden. He was enraged by King Fahd's decision to let American troops wage the Persian Gulf war from Saudi Arabia, site of the two holiest shrines in Islam. He began to focus his wrath on the United States and the Saudi government. After the conflict ended, he moved to Afghanistan.

But his stay was brief. Within months he fled, telling associates that Saudi Arabia had hired the Pakistani intelligence service to kill him. There is no confirmation that such a plot existed. Nonetheless, in 1991, Mr. bin Laden moved to Sudan, where a militantly Islamic government had taken power.

Over the next five years, Mr. bin Laden built a group that combined legitimate business with support for world holy war.

He also set out to accomplish his overriding goal of gathering the leading Islamic extremist groups under one banner. According to Middle Eastern officials, Mr. bin Laden and his envoys met with radicals from Pakistan and Egypt to propose an international Islamic front, led by Afghan veterans, that would fight Americans and Jews.

Al Qaeda began training its own operatives. Ali Mohamed, the government witness, who has said he arranged Mr. bin Laden's move to Sudan, told investigators that he taught group members about weapons, explosives, kidnapping, urban fighting, counterintelligence and other tactics at camps in Afghanistan and Sudan. He said he showed some of the trainees how to set up cells "that could be used in operations."

The dispatch of American troops to Somalia in late 1992 and 1993 as part of a United Nations mission was another affront to Mr. bin Laden. The Bush administration presented it as a relief operation.

American officials say a defector from Al Qaeda told them it viewed the deployment as a dangerous expansion of American influence in the region and a step toward undermining the Islamic government of Sudan.

Al Qaeda privately issued fatwas that directed members to attack American soldiers in Saudi Arabia, Yemen and the Horn of Africa, according to American prosecutors. They said he also sent his military chief, an Egyptian who had been with him at the formation of Al Qaeda, to find the vulnerabilities of United Nations forces in Africa.

Al Qaeda created a cell in Kenya as a "gateway" to its operations in Somalia, the prosecutors assert. Members of the group blended into Kenyan society, opening legitimate businesses that sold fish and dealt in diamonds, and operating an Islamic charity.

Federal prosecutors say at least five group members crossed the border to Somalia, where they trained some of the fighters involved in an Oct. 3, 1993, battle with United States special forces that left 18 Americans and several hundred Somalis dead.

The battle, one of the most widely publicized setbacks for American forces in recent memory, cast a shadow over every subsequent Clinton administration debate on the possible uses of ground troops. American intelligence did not learn of Al Qaeda's role in the ambush until several years later.

Prosecutors say the group also considered attacking Americans in Kenya to retaliate for the Somalia mission. Mr. Mohamed testified that Mr. bin Laden sent him to Nairobi in late 1993 to look over possible American, French, British and Israeli targets for a bomb attack, including the American Embassy. He said he took photos, drew diagrams and wrote a report, which he delivered to his boss in Khartoum. ''Bin Laden looked at the picture of the American Embassy and pointed to where a truck could go as a suicide bomber,'' he said.

American prosecutors say Al Qaeda had more grandiose plans: a leading member, an Iraqi who Mr. Anas said had first gravitated to Mr. bin Laden in Afghanistan, tried to buy enriched uranium in Europe.

The Iraqi, Mahdouh Mahmud Salim, forged links between Mr. bin Laden's group and others supported by Iran. Mr. Salim met with an Iranian religious official in Khartoum, and soon afterward, the prosecutors say, Al Qaeda members got training from ***Hezbollah***, the Iranian-backed Shiite group in Lebanon skilled in making car bombs. American officials said this alliance was notable because it marked the first time radicals from the minority Shiite branch of Islam collaborated with extremists from the dominant Sunni branch.

Mr. bin Laden's business ventures in Sudan -- including a tannery, a transportation company and a construction concern -- raised money and served as cover for the travels of Mr. Salim and others, according to American officials. They said that his companies cornered Sudan's exports of gum, sunflower and sesame products -- and that he invested $50 million of his family money in a new Islamic bank in Khartoum.

The Network

As in Afghanistan, So in the World

The new jihad movement was fueled by the civil war that consumed Afghanistan in the early 1990's. The training camps that had once schooled soldiers to battle the Soviet enemy now attracted militants more interested in fomenting holy war back home -- in America, Europe or the Middle East -- than in the struggle for control of Afghanistan.

The Office of Services, the Pakistan-based group founded in the 1980's by Mr. Azzam to recruit soldiers for the anti-Soviet cause, arranged the travels of some of these new jihadists, according to European and American officials.

Many of those associated with the office, Mr. Anas said, shared Mr. bin Laden's vision of a global movement. American officials suspect they were acting under his instructions, though this remains a subject of debate among intelligence analysts.

American investigators stumbled across the first signs of the new global phenomenon in 1993, when they began to examine the bombing at the World Trade Center.

They discovered that the four men who carried out the attack, which killed 6 and wounded more than 1,000, had ties to Sheik Omar Abdel Rahman, whom they charged with leading a worldwide ''jihad organization'' that had begun plotting to kill Americans as early as 1989.

Mr. Abdel Rahman was later convicted of conspiring to blow up New York landmarks, including the United Nations. But in the years since, American intelligence officials have come to believe that he and the World Trade Center bombers had ties to Al Qaeda.

The evidence is suggestive, but not conclusive. Several of those convicted in the World Trade Center case were associated with the Brooklyn refugee center that was a branch of the Office of Services, the Pakistan-based organization that Mr. bin Laden helped finance and lead. The Brooklyn center was headed for a time by Mustafa Shalabi, an Egyptian murdered in 1991 in a case that remains unsolved. Federal prosecutors recently disclosed that it was Mr. Shalabi whom Mr. bin Laden called in 1991 when he needed help moving to Sudan, according to Mr. Mohamed, the federal witness.

One of the men convicted of bombing the World Trade Center, Ahmad M. Ajaj, spent four months in Pakistan in 1992, returning to the United States with a bomb manual later seized by the United States government. An English translation of the document, entered into evidence in the World Trade Center trial, said that the manual was dated 1982, that it had been published in Amman, Jordan, and that it carried a heading on the front and succeeding pages: The Basic Rule.

Those appear to be errors. Two separate translations of the document, one done at the request of The New York Times, show that the heading said Al Qaeda -- which translates as The Base, the name of Mr. bin Laden's group. In addition, the document lists a publication date of 1989, a year after Mr. bin Laden founded his organization. And the place of publication is Afghanistan, not Jordan.

Steven Emerson, a terrorism expert who first pointed out the errors, said they deprived investigators of a subtle early clue to the existence of Mr. bin Laden's group.

While the trade center trial ended in 1994, federal prosecutors did not open their grand jury investigation of Mr. bin Laden and Al Qaeda until 1996.

''Had the government correctly translated the material,'' Mr. Emerson said, ''it might have understood that the men who blew up the World Trade Center and Mr. bin Laden's group were linked.''

Asked about the mistranslation, an official in the United States Attorney's office, who declined to be identified, said only that Mr. Ajaj had been carrying ''voluminous material printed by various organizations.'' He added that their titles referred to international conspiracy, commando operations and engineering of explosives.

The jihad movement also took root in Europe. In August 1994, three young French Muslims of North African descent, wearing hoods and brandishing machine pistols, opened fire on tourists in a hotel lobby in Marrakesh, Morocco, killing two Spaniards and wounding a third. The French police investigating the attack learned that it had been planned by two Moroccan veterans of the Afghan war, who had recruited commandos for the attack in Paris and Orleans and sent more than a dozen of them to Afghanistan for training.

The indoctrination of the young Muslims began with religion, according to French court papers and testimony. An Orleans mathematics professor and interpreter of the Koran, Mohamed Zinedine, gathered around him a group of men from the slums of Orleans who wanted to learn how to pray. Later, French court papers say, he instructed them in the concept of waging jihad against corrupt governments, saying it was a higher stage of Islamic observance.

One young Moroccan testified that Mr. Zinedine -- who is now a fugitive -- showed him a videotape of Muslim victims of ''torture in Bosnia, of babies with their throats cut, of pregnant ***women*** disemboweled, and fingernails torn off.'' The young man added, ''He told me there was a way of helping them and that I must help them.'' Prayers for people like the Muslims in Bosnia, he quoted Mr. Zinedine as saying, were not enough. He must become an ''armed humanitarian.''

European investigators tracing the Afghan network in France, Belgium and Germany found records of phone calls between local extremists and the Office of Services in Pakistan. In March 1995, Belgian investigators came across

another clue: A CD-ROM in the car of another Algerian, who had been trained in Afghanistan in 1992 and was part of the G.I.A. cell in Brussels. The CD was initially ignored, Belgian officials say.

Months later, the Belgians began translating its contents and discovered several different versions of a manual for terrorism that had begun circulating among Islamic militants in the early 1990's. The voluminous manual covered diverse subjects, from "psychological war in Islam" to "the organizational structure of Israeli intelligence" to "recruiting according to the American method."

The manual also offered detailed recipes for making bombs, including instructions on when to shake the chemicals and how to use a wristwatch as a detonator. In addition there were instructions on how to kill with toxins, gases and drugs. The preface included a dedication to the new hero of the holy war: Osama bin Laden. Versions of the manual circulated widely and were seized by the police all over Europe.

Reuel Gerecht, a former C.I.A. official, said he was told that the agency did not obtain its own copy of the manual before the end of 1999. "The truth is," he said, "they missed for years the largest terrorist guide ever written." The omission, he asserted, reflects the agency's reluctance to scrutinize the fallout from its support of the anti-Soviet jihad.

A C.I.A. official said that the agency had had "access to versions" of the manual since the late 1980's. "It's not the Holy Grail that Gerecht reports it to be," he said, adding that the terrorist-related parts were fairly recent additions.

By the mid-1990's, American officials had begun to focus on Mr. bin Laden and his entourage in Sudan. They saw him as the embodiment of a dangerous new development: a stateless sponsor of terrorism who was using his personal fortune -- which one Middle Eastern official estimated at $270 million -- to bankroll extremist causes.

American officials pressed Sudan to eject Mr. bin Laden, and in 1996 they succeeded, forcing him into exile. It was a diplomatic triumph, but one that many American officials would come to rue. Mr. bin Laden made his way back to Afghanistan, where a new group of young Islamic militants, the Taliban, was taking control.

American and Middle Eastern officials said some of the cash that the Taliban used to buy off local warlords came from Mr. bin Laden. Soon the new, hard-line rulers of Afghanistan allowed him to use their country to pursue his goal of creating "one jihad camp for the world," as Mr. Anas put it.

The Edict

A Sacred Muslim Duty To Kill All Foes

Two years after he arrived in Afghanistan, in February 1998, Mr. bin Laden publicly announced his intentions. At a camp in Khost, in eastern Afghanistan, he and several other leaders of militant groups declared that they had founded the International Islamic Front for Jihad Against Jews and Crusaders, an umbrella entity that included Al Qaeda and groups from Egypt, Pakistan and Bangladesh, among others.

The front issued the following fatwa: "To kill Americans and their allies, both civil and military, is an individual duty of every Muslim who is able, in any country where this is possible."

On Aug. 7, 1998, eight years to the day after the first American troops set foot in Saudi Arabia, Mr. bin Laden delivered on the threat, American prosecutors say. Bombs exploded hours apart at the American Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania.

The plot, as described by federal prosecutors, was truly international. Prosecutors assert that the attacks were carried out by Muslims from Tanzania, Saudi Arabia and Jordan, most of whom were trained in Afghanistan. The Kenyan plotters, they say, spoke directly with Mr. bin Laden by satellite telephone as they developed their plans.

The attacks were costly for Al Qaeda. Less than two weeks after the embassy bombings, the United States conducted air strikes against Mr. bin Laden's camps in Afghanistan. Over the next two years, police and intelligence

agencies around the world, many prodded by the United States, arrested more than 100 militants in some 20 countries.

Almost every month, authorities detain or question people with ties to Al Qaeda. Late last year, in what American officials described as one of the more alarming cases, the Kuwaiti police arrested a local man, an Afghan veteran, who said he was associated with Mr. bin Laden's group and planning to bomb American and Kuwaiti targets. American officials say he ultimately led the police to a weapons cache of almost 300 pounds of explosives and more than 1,400 detonators.

And in addition to the two-day closure of the American Embassy in Rome, officials say, recent warnings of a possible Al Qaeda attack prompted the United States to divert an entire carrier battle group scheduled to dock in Naples.

American officials acknowledge that Al Qaeda and Mr. bin Laden have proven resourceful, resilient adversaries. Much of his personal wealth has now been spent, or is in bank accounts that are now frozen. But officials say he is raising money through a network of charities and businesses. His group reconstitutes its networks in many countries as quickly as they are disrupted.

And failure can breed success. In late 1999, American officials say, a group of Yemenis botched an attempt to blow up an American ship, The Sullivans, as it passed through Yemen. Their boat, loaded with explosives, sank a few feet off shore.

This year, American officials say, a Saudi operative of Mr. bin Laden's who helped organize that attack worked with some of the same people on the bombing of the Cole in Yemen.

Internal crackdowns on Muslim militants, like the Algerian government's largely successful attempts to stamp out the G.I.A. in the mid- 1990's, have in several instances fueled the international jihad.

American officials said the most radical Algerians were now collaborating with Mr. bin Laden. In 1999, Algerians were for the first time implicated in plots against the United States, when Ahmed Ressam was arrested crossing the border from Canada with a carload of explosives. Mr. Ressam goes on trial later this year in Los Angeles.

American and Middle Eastern officials say Al Qaeda has now expanded its jihad to include Israel, which until recently had regarded Mr. bin Laden as an American problem. The officials say Al Qaeda has financed and trained an anti-Israel group, Asbat al Ansar, that operates from a Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon.

Last June, Israel charged in a sealed indictment that a Hamas member who was plotting to attack targets within Israel, including settlers and the army, had been trained in one of Mr. bin Laden's Afghan camps. ''Al Qaeda wants in on the action -- the new intifada against Israel,'' said one American official.

Olivier Roy, a French scholar who follows Islamic activities, says Al Qaeda's biggest asset is the thousands of jihadists around the world who no longer see their struggle in strictly local or even national terms, which makes them impervious to normal political or military pressure.

Mr. bin Laden's actions, he said, are ''not the continuation of politics by other means.''

''Osama bin Laden doesn't want to negotiate.''

Holy Warriors

TODAY -- The making of an Islamic terror network.

MONDAY -- A look inside a plot that could have crippled Jordan's capital.

TUESDAY -- What motivates the jihad's young recruits.

War, terrorism and the world of Osama bin Laden.

1979: Soviet troops invade Afghanistan; local Muslims declare a "jihad," which the U.S. and Saudi Arabia later support, against the invaders.

1981: President Anwar el-Sadat of Egypt is assassinated; Muslim militants are charged.

1984: The Office of Services is founded by Abdullah Azzam, a Jordanian militant, to recruit and support the jihadists.

1984: Osama bin Laden moves from Saudi Arabia to Pakistan to help Azzam establish training camps across the border of Afghanistan.

1986: Bin Laden founds Al Masadah, a training camp for Arabs from the Gulf states.

1988: Bin Laden establishes Al Qaeda, a group to promote the jihad.

1989: The Soviet Union withdraws from Afghanistan. The United States closes its embassy. Afghans get an interim government.

Bin Laden returns to Saudi Arabia to join his family construction company.

Azzam is killed by a car bomb; the Office of Services splits; its extremist faction join Al Qaeda.

1990-1991: The United States sends forces to Saudi Arabia to drive Iraq out of Kuwait, starting the gulf war.

Infuriated by an American presence near Islamic holy sites, bin Laden moves to Sudan, relocating Al Qaeda headquarters.

1992: The Algerian Army cancels final parliamentary elections. Armed Islamic groups seeking to overthrow the government set off civil war.

The United States sends troops to Somalia for a U.N. relief mission.

Al Qaeda issues proclamations that U.S. forces in Saudi Arabia, Yemen and the Horn of Africa, including Somalia, should be attacked.

Civil war grips Afghanistan.

1993: A bomb explodes at the World Trade Center, killing six. Links to the Office of Services and Al Qaeda emerge but do not lead to charges.

1993: Somali tribesmen trained by Al Qaeda, U.S. prosecutors say, attack the U.N. relief operation, killing 18 Americans.

1994: The Taliban emerge as a force in Afghanistan's civil war.

Saudi Arabia strips bin Laden of citizenship; his family disavows him.

Explosions in the Paris Metro that kill eight are traced to Algerian militants trained in Afghanistan.

1995: A car bomb explodes in Riyadh, killing five Americans and two Indians. Four Saudis are beheaded after confessing, saying they were inspired by bin Laden.

1996: Sudan, pressed by the United States, evicts bin Laden, who relocates to Afghanistan.

1996: A truck bomb explodes at the Khobar Towers in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. Nineteen American soldiers are killed.

1998: The International Islamic Front for Jihad Against Jews and Crusaders, an umbrella for international militant groups organized by bin Laden, issues its first formal religious order: It is the individual duty of Muslims to kill Americans, including civilians, anywhere possible.

American Embassies in Kenya (right) and Tanzania are bombed, killing more than 200 people. The United States bombs sites in Sudan and Afghanistan in retaliation.

Bin Laden is indicted on charges of complicity in the bombings; $5 million is offered for his capture.

1999: Jordan announces that it has foiled an Al Qaeda-linked plot to bomb tourist sites in Amman during the millennium celebrations.

The United States arrests Ahmed Ressam at a customs check- point at Port Angeles, Wash., driving a rented car with a cache of explosives.

2000: The destroyer Cole is bombed in Aden harbor, Yemen, killing 17 sailors. Investigators link the explosion to bin Laden.

Ali Mohammed, a former U.S. Army sergeant, pleads guilty to participating in a conspiracy initiated by bin Laden to bomb the embassies in East Africa.

2001: Jury selection for trial of four charged in the embassy bombings begins in Federal District Court in Manhattan.rmer U.S. Army sergeant, pleads guilty to participating in a conspiracy initiated by bin Laden to bomb the embassies in East Africa.

2001: Jury selection for trial of four charged in the embassy bombings begins in Federal District Court in Manhattan. (pg. 16-17)

http://www.nytimes.com

Graphic

PHOTOS: An Arab channel said this image showed Osama bin Laden, right, and his son Muhammad at the son's wedding last week to the daughter of Abu Hoffs al-Masri, left, Mr. bin Laden's designated successor. (Al Jazeera Television via Associated Press)(pg. 1)

ABDULLAH AZZAM -- A Palestinian scholar who drew young Arabs to help Afghanistan's Muslims expel the Soviets, he opposed further broadening the jihad and was killed by a car bomb. (Steven Emerson)

ABDULLAH ANAS -- "How can you establish one camp for jihad in the world?" this Algerian fighter once asked Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan. He then watched Mr. bin Laden do just that. (Jonathan Player for The New York Times)

(Agence-France Presse)(pg. 16)

The Minds Behind the Jihad -- OSAMA BIN LADEN -- The man whose version of a worldwide jihad resulted in the founding of Al Qaeda. (Associated Press)

ABU ZUBAYDAH -- A key Al Qaeda aide responsible for contacts with non-Afghan Islamic militant groups.

AYMAN AL-ZAWAHIRI -- An Egyptian physician responsible for military operations who was an early influence on Mr. bin Laden.

ABU HOFFS AL-MASRI -- An Islamic law expert designated to succeed Mr. bin Laden as Al Qaeda's leader should he be captured or killed.

(Agence France-Presse)(pg. 17) CHART: ''An Empire of Violence

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The War Inside the Arab Newsroom

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Byline: By Samantha M. Shapiro

Samantha M. Shapiro is a contributing writer. She last wrote for the magazine about students at an evangelical Christian college.

Body

Abdul Rahman Al-Rashed, the general manager of Al Arabiya, a 24-hour satellite-news channel broadcasting from Dubai, has six plasma-screen TV's in his office on the floor of the channel's glowing, ultramodern newsroom set. They are always on. One is tuned to Al Arabiya itself, and depending on where the cameras are placed, Al-Rashed sometimes catches a glimpse of himself, pacing around his desk on his cellphone. Another shows Al Jazeera, the channel's main competition. A third is tuned to a new Saudi government satellite channel, and a fourth displays CNN. Al-Rashed likes to flip around on the other two -- from Al Hurra, the widely ignored news channel that the United States government started last February, to the BBC and then to Al Manar, the ***Hezbollah***-owned station that was banned by the French and American governments last month for broadcasting anti-Semitic slanders and what a State Department spokesman called "incitement to violence."

Al-Rashed's job is to find a place for Al Arabiya within this array, preferably at the top of the ratings. For now, though, it is Al Jazeera, which was started in 1996 by the emir of the gulf state of Qatar, that sets the standard, and the tone, for Arab television news. According to a poll conducted last May by Zogby International and the University of Maryland, Al Jazeera is the first choice for 62 percent of satellite-news viewers in Jordan, 66 percent in Egypt and 44 percent in Saudi Arabia. In most countries in the poll, Al Arabiya came in a distant second, although the professor who designed the poll, Shibley Telhami, said it had captured a "remarkable" market share for a satellite channel that, at the time, had been on the air for only a year; 39 percent of satellite-news viewers said they watched Al Arabiya almost daily. And in Saudi Arabia, the biggest advertising market in the region, the ratings race is much closer.

Sheik Walid al-Ibrahim, a Saudi, is the owner of both Al Arabiya and its parent network, the Middle East Broadcasting Center, or MBC, the flagship station of which, a "family entertainment" channel called MBC 1, has more viewers than any other channel in the Middle East. Sheik Walid started Al Arabiya in February 2003 to provide a more moderate alternative to Al Jazeera. His goal, as he told me last month, was to position Al Arabiya as the CNN to Al Jazeera's Fox News, as a calm, cool, professional media outlet that would be known for objective reporting rather than for shouted opinions. He said he thought the market was ready for an alternative. "After the events of Sept. 11, Afghanistan and Iraq, people want the truth," he said. "They don't want their news from the Pentagon or from Al Jazeera."

Sheik Walid's personal political interests may also be a motivating factor. He is the brother-in-law of King Fahd of Saudi Arabia; the Saudi royal family dislikes Al Jazeera because it gives air time to Al Qaeda, and one of Al Qaeda's most cherished goals is the overthrow of the Saudi government. And before Al Jazeera, Saudi businessmen owned almost all of the major pan-Arab media, including MBC, the only channel that broadcast news bulletins to the whole of the Middle East, so the country and its rulers were rarely scrutinized by Arab journalists. Qatar's emir allowed Al Jazeera's reporters to take on the Saudis, as well as other governments in the Middle East.

Al Arabiya's sophisticated production values set it apart from other Arab news channels. Its sets and graphics have a clean, high-tech look, and its news bulletins are fast-paced -- no item lasts longer than two and a half minutes -- and are introduced with a dramatic drumbeat. While Al Jazeera anchors sit at a desk in front of a drab two-dimensional backdrop that looks a little like a local American news set from the 1970's, Al Arabiya's news is broadcast from the floor of its futuristic in-the-round silver-and-glass newsroom.

From its inception, Al Arabiya had a different style than Al Jazeera. There was nothing on Al Arabiya quite like Al Jazeera's signature programs, ''Islamic Law and Life,'' which offers advice to viewers on how to apply Sharia to their lives, and ''The Opposite Direction,'' which features fierce head-to-head debates. But what was reported and broadcast on Al Arabiya in its first months was, at times, similar to what you could see and hear on Al Jazeera. The two stations competed to show the most provocative, gory footage of casualties from Iraq. And after American troops captured Baghdad, Al Arabiya reported, incorrectly, that American forces had carried off all the treasures in the national museum.

American military authorities in Iraq and the American-appointed Iraqi Governing Council certainly didn't seem to distinguish between the two satellite channels: they considered both to be allied with the enemy. In September 2003, the Governing Council suspended Al Arabiya from reporting on official government activities for two weeks because, the council maintained, the channel was supporting resistance attacks. And that November, the council ordered Al Arabiya to stop all of its Iraqi operations after the channel broadcast a taped message from Saddam Hussein in hiding. At a news conference that month, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld called Al Arabiya ''violently anticoalition'' and in a separate interview said, ''There are so many things that are untrue that are being reported by irresponsible journalists and irresponsible television stations, particularly like Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya, that are leaving the Iraqi people with a totally imbalanced picture of what is happening in their country.''

When Sheik Walid heard in early 2004 that Al-Rashed had just stepped down as editor of Asharq Al Awsat, a prominent Arab-language daily published in London, he began trying to persuade him to come to Dubai. Al-Rashed, an American-educated Saudi, is well known for his often angry and outspoken columns criticizing Islamic fundamentalism, and especially for a particularly scathing column that he wrote after Chechen rebels seized a school in North Ossetia in September, a siege that ended in more than 300 deaths. ''It is a certain fact that not all Muslims are terrorists, but it is equally certain, and exceptionally painful, that almost all terrorists are Muslims,'' he wrote. ''What a pathetic record. . . . We cannot tolerate in our midst those who abduct journalists, murder civilians, explode buses; we cannot accept them as related to us, whatever the sufferings they claim to justify their criminal deeds. These are the people who have smeared Islam and stained its image.''

Beyond Al-Rashed's criticism of Islamic fundamentalists, the main target of his wrath is the Arab media. He didn't want to speak on the record about Al Jazeera, but during the three weeks I recently spent with the station's management and staff, he made it clear that he thinks his competition is not just misguided but actively dangerous. ''The region is being filled with inaccuracies and partial truths,'' he told me. (Like everyone I met at the station, he spoke English with me and Arabic with his co-workers.) ''I think people will always make good judgments if they have the right information and the whole information. What we lack right now is the truth and information. After that, we'll have a sane society. Right now it is an insane society because of the way information is being delivered to individuals.''

When Al-Rashed arrived at Al Arabiya, he replaced the news director and hired a new executive editor. The three men share a vision for the station that involves less gore and a wider definition of what is news and what should captivate the interest and emotions of their viewers. The new leadership triumvirate is interested in reporting stories about honor killings and violence against ***women*** in Arab countries, a widespread phenomenon rarely considered

newsworthy by other Arab media outlets. Al-Rashed and his top editors also push for lighter stories about daily life -- the kind of apolitical features that fill much of the programming day on Western news channels.

On directions from Al-Rashed, Al Arabiya anchors and correspondents now refer to American troops in Iraq as "multinational forces," not "occupying forces." He told the producer of "The Fourth Estate," a program that serves as a roundup of Western media, to stop quoting from The Guardian and The Independent, two left-leaning British papers whose content used to provide much of the show's material. One Al Arabiya host told me that she had been instructed to cut off guests who digress into anti-American rants, and other hosts I spoke to said they were being encouraged to ask tougher questions in their interviews.

To Al-Rashed, the challenge he faces is much bigger than simply revamping a television channel. His goal is to foster a new kind of dialogue among Arabs, to carve out space for moderate and liberal ideas to enter the conversation, and in the process to do nothing less than save the Arab world from itself. "People become radicals because extremism is celebrated on TV," he told me. "If you broadcast an extremist message at a mosque, it reaches 50 people. But do you know how many people can be sold by a message on TV?"

Al-Rashed, 49, had never worked full time in television before coming to Dubai. But he knows that television is the medium that is remaking the Middle East, for bad or good. "I am sitting on a nuclear reactor," he said, speaking of Al Arabiya. "It could produce electricity and light up a city, or it could cause destruction. It's up to the person sitting in the chair where I am sitting to decide which way it will go."

For most of the short history of the Arab media, television stations have been run by national governments, who used them as extensions of their information ministries. Satellite TV changed that dynamic by allowing Arab journalists to go offshore -- initially mostly to London -- and beam Arab news into the Arab world without fear of being arrested or shut down. MBC was the first network to do so, but after 11 years in London, it was lured in 2002 to Dubai, the glimmering hub of capitalism and tourism in the United Arab Emirates. Dubai is a city under construction, 24 hours a day, and what is being built often seems like a caricature of Western excess: an archipelago of man-made islands shaped like the continents; the tallest skyscraper in the world; and, still on the drawing board, the largest mall in the world, replete with an indoor ski slope, and an underwater hotel. As part of the development of Dubai, the emirate established "free zones" -- tax-free areas with financial incentives to lure businesses into clustered luxury office parks. The Al Arabiya offices are in the flagship building of Media City, facing a man-made lake with unnaturally even waves, not far from Internet City, Health Care City and Knowledge Village.

The chance to be in the Arab world but still removed from the economic and political problems that plague many of its countries proved attractive to MBC and to a number of other media outlets. It also appealed to Al-Rashed. The second of 14 children born to two wives in a middle-class Saudi family, Al-Rashed hadn't lived in the region since he left Riyadh in his 20's to attend American University in Washington. The seven years that he spent in the United States were eye-opening: he watched the Iranian revolution through the prism of the American media and covered events in the early 1980's from Washington for Al Majalla, a Saudi-owned London-based magazine. Al-Rashed moved to London in 1985 and rose through the ranks of elite Saudi-owned magazines and newspapers. He never thought he would return to the Middle East. Dubai, he said, is the only place in the Arab world he can "exist." He sees Dubai as an experiment that could spur reform in other Arab countries and show what can be accomplished with a little openness and less corruption.

The population of Dubai is only 18 percent native; the rest of the residents are Western and Arab expatriates and laborers, mainly from India, Pakistan and East Asia who live in camps of squat cinder-block housing and ride back and forth to their work sites in company buses. Young single journalists at Al Arabiya go out to places like the cafe at the Dubai marina, where they can smoke water pipes next to a fountain designed to mimic the sounds of the ocean. In self-consciously "Arabian"-style restaurants and nightclubs, Al Arabiya employees find themselves in combinations that would be unlikely in their home countries: one night atop the Royal Mirage rooftop bar, I sat sipping cosmopolitans with a Sunni, a Shiite and a Maronite Christian, all from Lebanon. With its Disneyesque Arab souks in which you can purchase Arab handicrafts or a Cinnabon, Dubai seemed like an elaborate stage set for modernization in the Arab world, a shallow facade of empty skyscrapers with -- so far -- nothing but sand behind them.

Al-Rashed has been in Dubai for nine months, and he misses his house in the Kensington neighborhood in London, where he lived alone and where most of his possessions remain. He occupies an apartment suite in a downtown hotel, but he has barely set foot in the kitchen, and the bedroom serves as little more than a warehouse for half-unpacked suitcases and dress shirts still in their boxes. I met him at his place one morning in December, and we rode the elevator down to a cafe in the lobby for breakfast. He beamed politely at our waitress, Almira, a petite Indonesian woman in a lavender fez-like hat and apron whose name tag read ''Amy.'' ''I missed you,'' he told her, his dimples flashing. ''You were gone so long over Ramadan.''

Halfway through his croissant and latte, his cellphone beeped with a text message from the news director at Al Arabiya: ''Wael Essam is arrested by Americans.'' Wael Essam, or Wild Wael, as Al-Rashed likes to call him, is Al Arabiya's correspondent in Falluja. He is only 27, and he has something of a reputation as a renegade. He was the only reporter who was able to get into Falluja at the beginning of the American offensive in November without being embedded with the United States military. From inside Falluja, he delivered breathless reports on Al Arabiya, his brow furrowed with intensity, his camera spinning from plumes of smoke billowing over the city to black-hooded fighters gathered in a lantern-lighted room. In a report I saw, the insurgents spoke calmly, not in the formal, didactic style of the kidnappers on beheading tapes; they were obviously relaxed around Essam, even when they were telling him that they were registered to commit ''martyr operations.''

Essam was born in Qatar, to Palestinian parents. He attended Baghdad University, where he was president first of the Palestinian student group and then of the Arab students' union. He started working for Al Arabiya in 2003 as a reporter. Partly because of his student-government position, Essam had connections to families in Falluja and to former members of Saddam Hussein's Baathist government, and last April he began pestering his editors to let him report from Falluja. Salah Negm, who was the news director before Al-Rashed arrived, refused to give Essam the assignment, saying it was too dangerous. So last April, Essam used his vacation time to travel to Iraq from Dubai and ''embed'' himself in a house of insurgents in Falluja.

Essam spent the summer back in Dubai, working in the newsroom. In the fall, when the American military authorities in Iraq announced plans to retake Falluja, Essam knew he wanted to return there. He couldn't bear to be in the office any longer, he told me. ''I hate it too much,'' he said. ''You just stay in your chair just taking news from wires.'' Al-Rashed was hesitant about sending Essam to Falluja, because, he said, Essam is ''hot-blooded.'' When Essam threatened to use his vacation time to go back, Al-Rashed relented.

Overall, Al-Rashed has been happy with Essam's reports from Iraq. The Al Arabiya Web site featured them prominently, detailing Essam's journey through Falluja, from his close calls with insurgents and American marines to the ''large predatory mosquitoes'' he encountered just outside the city. Al-Rashed knew it was a great coup to have a reporter behind the lines in Falluja -- American and British television journalists couldn't safely report from there, and in August Al Jazeera was banned from Iraq altogether by the government of Ayad Allawi.

Al-Rashed, finishing his croissant, did not seem particularly fazed by the text message about Essam's capture. If Essam was in American custody, Al-Rashed reasoned, he was less likely to be shot or blown up. ''The chance that he was going to be killed was a lot higher than that he would be arrested,'' he said. ''If the Americans have him with two legs and two arms, that's good news.'' (He was right to be sanguine, as it turned out; Essam was released a few hours later.)

American troops have killed three Al Arabiya employees in Iraq. Ali al-Khatib, a reporter for the channel, and Ali Abdul Aziz, a cameraman, were killed last March by American gunfire near the site of a rocket attack on a Baghdad hotel. Mazen Al-Tumeizi was killed by a missile fired from an American helicopter in September while he was reporting live on a crowd celebrating in the streets of Baghdad after an attack that destroyed a Bradley fighting vehicle.

Even more Al Arabiya employees in Iraq have been killed by insurgents. In late October, a suicide bomber detonated a car bomb outside the Al Arabiya compound in the Al Mansour neighborhood in Baghdad, killing five, wounding dozens and destroying the channel's Baghdad office. Al Arabiya, like many Arab news stations, received threats from Islamist groups, by e-mail and posted on Web sites, in the preceding months. A group called the

Jihadist Martyrs Brigades took credit for the attack. In its dispatches, members had criticized Al Arabiya for giving the new Iraqi government overly favorable coverage. They called Al Arabiya a "terrorist channel" and suggested that its name, which means "the Arab," should be changed to "the Hebrew."

After the attack, Al-Rashed's first directive to his Baghdad staff was to get on the air. Within minutes, he was on the phone to his roving anchor in Baghdad, Najwa Kassem, a serious, high-cheekboned veteran of five wars. It was important to send the terrorists a message, Al-Rashed told her, that they had failed to drive the channel out of Iraq or off the air. Kassem was in the compound during the attack, and she had been thrown onto some broken glass by the explosion. She was still helping wounded co-workers when Al-Rashed got her on the phone. After she spoke to him, she began reporting live by telephone from the blast site, and as soon as the channel's video feed was fixed, she was on the air, saying in a shaky voice that the bodies of her colleagues were too torn apart to identify. The list of the dead, she said, was being determined by who was missing.

I watched the tape in the Al Arabiya office, and it is powerful footage. Kassem's face looked strangely naked -- it had seemed inappropriate to wear makeup for the broadcast, she told me last month -- and she spoke urgently, affecting none of the rhythmic speech and eyebrow-lifting of a typical rehearsed report.

In the days following the report, Al-Rashed said, a group called the Baath Party Arab Congress began to post reports on its Web site threatening Kassem by name. One, issued on Nov. 13, charged Kassem with being the "organizational point-person" responsible for "the dissemination and perpetuation of falsehoods against the resistance" and labeled her "the prime-mover of such a policy at the present time." After Al-Rashed read the statements and other warnings, he reversed his earlier instructions to Kassem. Without saying why, he told her she would be fired if she didn't go to Beirut immediately. It was only after she had arrived that he told her her life had been threatened.

Many employees in Al Arabiya's newsroom have intimate connections with the conflicts they cover, and not all of them agree with all of Al-Rashed's ideas. There are Sudanese Arabs, Palestinians who grew up in Syrian refugee camps and a reporter who had been a member of Saddam Hussein's Baath Party. There are also several former Al Jazeera employees. Some were poached for their expertise; others defected because, they said, Al Jazeera's management these days is too Islamist for them. ***Women*** were discouraged from wearing tight pants, they said, and some men refused to shake your hand if they knew you didn't follow Islamic law.

The job of overseeing a staff of reporters that comes from so many places, geographically and politically, falls to a man named Nabil Khatib. Al-Rashed didn't hire Khatib directly. He hired Khatib's boss, Nahkle El Hage, a former executive at MBC who is now the news director at Al Arabiya, and the first thing El Hage did in his new position was hire Khatib. El Hage knew Khatib from the 12 years Khatib spent as MBC's bureau chief for the Palestinian territories and Israel. El Hage was impressed by what he saw as Khatib's sense of fairness, even when it caused trouble for MBC. "I took a lot of heat for his coverage," El Hage said. "At seminars and parties, people would ask: 'How can you be neutral on Palestine? Why don't you say martyr?'" -- meaning that Khatib should have been using the word "shahid," or martyr, to describe Palestinian suicide bombers. "I was glad we didn't," El Hage went on. "Nabil was the most evenhanded reporter in the region."

Khatib's desk is just outside Al-Rashed's office. There is a constant rhythm going on all around him -- urgent bleeps from the wire services, the ring of his office phone and the warble of his cellphone. He answers most calls with the same deep-voiced greeting, "habibi," which means sweetheart, an endearment that he also finds the opportunity to murmur to a surprising number of co-workers.

Khatib has a 5 o'clock shadow, and dark bags draw his big, bloodshot eyes downward. His head and shoulders seem permanently rounded forward, even when he is not staring at his computer monitor. A pack of Dunhill Lights usually sits by his keyboard. Khatib is a big man, but he used to be even bigger, and these days his clothes bunch baggily at his waist. In the four months he has worked at Al Arabiya, Khatib has lost 36 pounds. One evening he complained to me that he had not seen his baby daughter in two weeks, because she is asleep when he arrives home at night, and she is still asleep when he leaves in the morning. Woefully, he described the time he made his

wife meet him at a nearby mall for lunch so he could see her and his daughter. "I had only time for coffee and to kiss her," he said. "Calls came in the entire time."

Khatib was hunched at his desk one morning over the story lineup for the next bulletin, typing, when Wael Essam called. Essam was upset that his most recent report from Falluja had been broadcast only twice over the weekend. Khatib hadn't seen it. Essam later told me that he puts in these sorts of phone calls fairly regularly to both Khatib and Al-Rashed, complaining that his reports aren't getting enough air time. "We are the only channel that has this kind of tape!" he said he told them. "Why didn't we show it every hour? We have to show it many times!"

Khatib punched a few keys on his computer, and Essam's latest report popped open on his screen. At this point, the American operation in Falluja was winding down. But according to Essam's report, American harassment had not ended. "More than 200 families in Falluja are under siege by troops," Essam's voice said on Khatib's screen.

Khatib leaned in and asked: "What does he mean? Let us see."

An Iraqi man angrily told Essam's camera: "They are not allowing us to go out of our homes. They are arguing when we say we need to go out. They say snipers will shoot if you go out."

"Well, that doesn't sound like a siege," Khatib mused. "Maybe a curfew. Let us see." Then his cellphone chirped. He took the call and muted the audio but kept watching the screen. While he talked, on the video Red Crescent workers searched for a missing man, and a woman sobbed in a rage inside her damaged house. Essam cut to a close-up of holes in her walls.

Khatib hung up, raised the volume and translated for me. "The woman says she lost her son in this house and now it is damaged," he said. "She is screaming, 'Where should I go now after I lost my house -- to sleep in the street?'"

The next scene showed families leaving their houses to go to a Red Crescent shelter. Khatib rewound the video and played it again. The families loaded into the car again. He rewound again to the beginning, where the man described not being able to leave his house because of snipers. Khatib played the video through to the end, where Essam signed off, sitting casually on a ledge at the Red Crescent shelter with a group of families, new refugees in their own city.

Khatib thought he saw a contradiction there. Essam was reporting that families couldn't go out because of snipers and curfews, but in the second part of the clip families were shown leaving their houses to go to shelters, walking in the street with American soldiers in the background, who did not appear to be shooting at them.

Khatib said: "I have the feeling that he didn't care that much about being accurate. He just wanted to explain that the people of Falluja are suffering in many ways." A little later, Khatib crossed the newsroom floor to head down to the cafeteria for the one meal he eats a day. When he sat down to his meal, his phone rang again. It was Essam. He still hadn't seen his report back on the air. Khatib asked if the curfew Essam described was in place throughout Falluja. Then he asked about the scenes of American soldiers standing around people on their way to shelters. Essam explained that the second scene was from another area in Falluja, which is not under curfew.

Khatib told him: "If there's still a place where people can't go out, you have to say it is just that part where they can't go out. There is no reason to exaggerate tragedy. The pictures are strong, but it's a big problem for viewers to think everyone in Falluja cannot leave his place."

Essam's segment was not broadcast again.

Khatib and Al-Rashed share many of the same views about journalism. They are both idealistic about the transformative social power of objective journalism, and both want to push Al Arabiya toward a less emotional, more measured view of the Middle East. But they came to these ideas from experiences that were almost completely opposite.

Al-Rashed's political perspective evolved at a distance from the Arab world, in the United States and England, where he seems to have found life more pleasant, rational and interesting than it is in Saudi Arabia. Khatib's life and

career, by contrast, have been bound up in the claustrophobic conflict he was born into. Khatib is the youngest of seven children raised by a widowed mother in Nablus, in the West Bank. He said he first got the idea to be a journalist at age 15, in 1978, after he spent three months being interrogated in an Israeli jail before being released without charges. He was frequently beaten, he told me, and during one such beating, by an Israeli officer who called himself Captain Uzi, Khatib was told he had been arrested for incitement. Khatib didn't know what the word meant. After his release, he asked his oldest brother. ''Incitement,'' his brother told him, ''is journalism.''

When Khatib graduated from high school, he was eager to do whatever he thought would make Captain Uzi most angry, so in 1981 he applied for a Palestine Liberation Organization scholarship to Belarus State University in Minsk to study journalism. His courses trained him in the Soviet art of creating propaganda on behalf of the proletariat. During his sophomore year, when the P.L.O. mobilized students on campus to go to Lebanon to fight the Israeli Army, Khatib was inspired to join, and he persuaded a friend, who was studying medicine, to come with him. When they arrived, Khatib said, he quickly realized how woefully unprepared they were for war. Neither had been given any military training. His friend was killed in front of him, and two weeks later Khatib had had enough. When he flew back to Minsk, his anger had a different focus.

''I was ready to die for a cause, and we were excited to fight for justice,'' he said. ''But it gave me a difficult question about good and bad: Who are these politicians who decide I should go to war when I don't know how to fight -- really to send me to a war when I am not a fighter -- because they want to make a strong showing numbers-wise? Who decided it was the right thing for me to leave my studies?''

After he completed his Ph.D., Khatib returned to the West Bank, where he started his own news agency and eventually became bureau chief for MBC. Reporting on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict brought him close to death again and again. He watched as his colleague Nahum Barnea, a journalist for the Israeli newspaper Yediot Aharonot, discovered that his own son had been killed in a suicide bombing that both men were covering. He reported in Hebron in 1994, after Baruch Goldstein killed 29 Muslims at prayer. He was looking over a list of the dead when an illiterate woman asked him if her son was included. His was the first name on the list, but Khatib couldn't bear to tell her.

Khatib does not discuss these experiences easily, but their imprint on him is apparent. He has a sense about him that there is weight to the task he has been charged with: there is something irrevocable about making a mistake, about getting information wrong. He is clearly sickened by the media landscape of the Arab world. ''Sensationalism incites people to hatred,'' he said. ''I have smelled the blood of hatred, and I cannot understand how someone in an air-conditioned newsroom feels that he has the right to manipulate people's emotions, to rile people up or to generalize about a group, when he sees the repercussions.''

More than anyone else at the station, Khatib was deeply frustrated by the ground rules of Arab TV journalism. Aside from the obvious ethical concerns an editor has about sending a reporter to dangerous places like Iraq and the West Bank, he said, there are other dangers involved in dispatching reporters to Arab countries where there is little or no freedom of the press. ''If in Libya or Egypt I push someone to tell a story that will get him in conflict with the authorities,'' Khatib explained, ''I can't tell them, 'We need it.' Because it goes without saying that this subject is dangerous. This applies to most of the issues that matter -- all the things related to corruption and political conflicts.'' Al-Rashed told me that Al Arabiya can't report freely on the Saudi government because it is Saudi-owned, and the channel is unable to cover Algeria at all right now. Al Arabiya's correspondent has been prohibited from reporting for the last eight months by the government of Abdelaziz Bouteflika, the recently elected president: during the election, the reporter had predicted that Bouteflika's rival would win.

The central problem, as Khatib sees it, is that although Arab journalists have access to state-of-the-art technology, the governmental and civic structures needed to support a free modern press don't exist in the Middle East. ''CNN works in an environment that supports CNN,'' Khatib explained. In the United States, ''there are groups that regulate the media and protect the public interest. There is rule of law and access to information.'' Not so, he said, in nearly every Arab country. Even basic information like demographic statistics is treated as if it were a state secret, and it is almost impossible for the channel to report on the inner workings of Arab governments -- how budgets are drawn up or how leaders are chosen.

To Khatib, those stories are much more important than the daily dose of news from Israel that is a prerequisite for Arab stations, both the old government mouthpieces and the new satellite channels. ''People are lazy,'' Khatib said. ''And Israel is a safe target. The access is easier there than in many Arab countries. But this reporting doesn't help Palestinians know which mayoral candidate to vote for.''

Khatib is in the minority in the newsroom. Right next to his cubicle sat Abdelkader Kharoubi, then the assignment editor. Kharoubi told me that he thinks it makes sense that the Israel-Palestine bureau is Al Arabiya's largest and most sophisticated, because that conflict, he said, is a tragedy unsurpassed in human history: ''Nothing like this ever happened in the world. What happened in Palestine is the most horrible murder in the history of humanity.'' Kharoubi said he thinks that Al Arabiya's reporters should always refer to Jerusalem as '''occupied Jerusalem,' with the emphasis on 'occupied.'''

There is a general feeling around the Al Arabiya offices that since Al-Rashed was named news director, the channel has become pro-American. Kharoubi agrees. Recent injunctions from Al-Rashed and Khatib to balance coverage in Iraq have gone too far, he said. Al-Rashed told me he thinks Al Arabiya's coverage of the Iraq conflict overemphasized civilian deaths in Falluja and played down American military successes against terrorists. Kharoubi thinks the opposite. ''How can you 'balance' civilian deaths?'' he asked me. ''Maybe you could show dead soldiers, but the American government doesn't even want us to show them. When you talk about the agonies of civilians, there is no way to balance it -- they are a different category of people. The Iraqi government says, 'Please concentrate on positive aspects.' Why should we concentrate on good things?''

Kharoubi recently went in to Al-Rashed's office to express his concern that the station's portrayals of the American military and the Iraqi interim government were too positive. He was worried, he said, that it put the channel's Baghdad staff at continued risk. ''One concern I mentioned was that we don't want them to be killed again,'' he said. ''Not by Americans or terrorists.'' He also said that the recent direction in Al Arabiya's coverage means a risk of losing viewers. ''If we keep talking to Arab viewers as if this government'' -- the Allawi government in Iraq -- ''is going to introduce democracy, as if the U.S. Army are very nice occupiers who kill only terrorists, then they won't switch us on,'' he said.

When Al Arabiya's reporters were killed by Americans, Al-Rashed said, the station received hundreds of condolence calls from journalists at other channels, and the reporters were mourned as martyrs. By contrast, after the Al Arabiya bureau in Baghdad was bombed by insurgents, Al-Rashed said, only a few of his colleagues offered a single word about the five employees who died.

Diar al-Omari, an Iraqi-born reporter for Al Arabiya, worries that the channel is increasingly seen in the Arab world as being too partisan toward the Allawi government. ''In Iraq we are losing sympathy,'' he said. ''People are not looking to Arabiya as an independent channel.''

Ehab Elalfy, 30, a burly, bearded Al Arabiya reporter from Egypt, was very happy working at the station until the last few months, he told me. On one afternoon when I visited with him, Elalfy returned from midday prayers to find that he had been assigned to write an item from a wire report on the aftermath of an insurgent attack on American-trained Iraqi soldiers in Mosul. He winced when he got to a line in which an American military spokesman said, ''Twelve more unidentified bodies were found by multinational forces.'' Elalfy said no one specifically told him to stop using the phrase ''occupying forces'' in bulletins, but whenever he does, it is edited out. This isn't the only change at his job that he is annoyed by. A few months ago, he would run searches on Google Arabic every hour or so looking up words like ''Zarqawi,'' the name of an insurgency leader. He would often find a page that was up for just a few hours with a videotaped threat or hostage tape and take it straight to his editor. He said he's proud that because of those efforts, the station was sometimes able to play such tapes before Al Jazeera. But lately his bosses don't seem as interested. As an observant Muslim, Elalfy didn't like these tapes -- he said he thinks they violate Muslim laws about how to treat prisoners of war, especially ***women*** and civilians. But still, he thought they belonged on TV.

As Elalfy typed up his report, Rana Abu Atta, a young Al Arabiya reporter from Saudi Arabia with short, curly black hair pulled back with a headband, swung by Elalfy's desk to see if he wanted to get in on her lunch order to Burger King. Elalfy scowled at her.

"Oh, sorry, I forgot!" she said, and laughed.

For the last eight years, Elalfy has boycotted American products, because, he told me, "American products help the U.S. administration earn more profit, and they use that profit to provide Israel with weapons to kill Palestinian civilians."

Until recently, it was the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that dominated Elalfy's imagination and passions. He recently completed an unpublished novel titled "Me and Best Wishes," about an Egyptian journalist who plans to visit the Al Aksa mosque in Jerusalem but doesn't want to recognize the legitimacy of Israel by crossing its border legally. So instead, he sneaks across the Lebanese border with suicide bombers. Elalfy's protagonist is sidetracked in Lebanon when he falls in love with a Palestinian girl, who is killed by an Israeli airstrike. Hopeless, the protagonist decides to "avenge her death" by taking part in an attack on Israeli soldiers.

In the smoke-filled stairwell of the MBC building -- where employees conduct business while chugging cigarettes and sipping foamy Nescafe dispensed by a machine -- Elalfy told me that part of the reason he wants to be a novelist is to inspire pan-Arab nationalism. Elalfy said that all Arab lands should be one country; it is ridiculous, he said, that he has to apply for a visa to enter Lebanon. Gamal Abdel Nasser, the former president of Egypt, is his hero, because "when Egypt came to freedom, it helped all Arab countries become free."

Elalfy recently started work on a new novel. It is about Iraq, the issue that has joined the Palestinian situation for him as the most pressing and important in the Arab world. It is based in part on his experiences reporting for Al Arabiya from Iraq a few months ago. In Iraq, Elalfy reported stories that were close to his heart and also didn't hesitate to involve himself in what he was reporting. He told me about one incident in which he saw an American soldier manhandling an Iraqi and picked a fight with the soldier. Elalfy said that while reporting from Falluja, he helped pull civilians out of rubble. He kept a little girl's dust-covered green plaid dress and mounted it in a wood frame. "It was a child named Hannin's," Elalfy said. "She died holding it, and her brother said I could keep it."

I sat with Elalfy one day when he was asked to take two sound bites from a 45-minute speech by Allawi. He wanted to follow one of Allawi's statements -- that suicide operations in Iraq are not true jihad -- with a statement from an imam saying that in fact they are. But his editors wouldn't let him.

"There's no balance between the points," he said, shrugging, seeming defeated. When he finished the report, he drove back to the Gardens, the beige-and-apricot complex where Media City workers live, rubbing a fragrant Egyptian oil on his hands to kill the cigarette smell, a Palestinian kaffiyeh wrapped around the headrest of his passenger seat.

It is unclear if the Department of Defense has changed its view of Al Arabiya since Donald Rumsfeld called it "violently anticoalition" a year ago. "At this point in time, we do not want to offer our evaluation of the editorial content or direction of a particular news outlet," a Department of Defense spokesman, Lt. Col. Barry Venable, told me late last month. George Bush did choose to give Al Arabiya an interview after the Abu Ghraib prison scandal, and Al Arabiya's business manager, Shafaat Khan, said he was visited by a few American generals in the summer who wanted to establish friendly relations. They summed up their view of the Arab media by saying that as they understood it, "Al Jazeera is very, very bad, and Al Arabiya is bad."

But on the newsroom floor, producers and editors said they find it difficult to get the American perspective when they want to put it on the air. On Nov. 19, gunfire broke out at a mosque in northern Baghdad. Khatib said he immediately had a local sheik on the line offering his account of the attack: that the United States Army opened fire on civilians. But Khatib saw in the footage an exchange of fire and wondered if the mosque had been harboring fighters. He spent the 45 minutes until air time trying to get an American or Iraqi government account of the incident; three hours later, he still didn't have one.

"To my surprise," he said, "the opposition is doing better, P.R.-wise, than the official Americans and Iraqis, who are not as readily available for comment to give their side as the opposition. The militants are ready with a video of masked men and a person available for comment a half-hour after the story breaks." Khatib went ahead and broadcast the segment on the gun battle at the mosque without the Army's side of the story; he said that the

segment looked unbalanced but that he had a choice between an incomplete segment or not covering the fight at all.

The United States government's primary strategy with the Arab media has been to create its own outlets -- the satellite-news station Al Hurra and Radio Sawa -- at a cost of $100 million, rather than engage aggressively with existing Arab media stations. But as a result, there is no easy mechanism for journalists at these stations to find American voices, even ones that might be able to make a sympathetic case to Arab viewers. One night, Nael Najdawi, a middle-aged producer in suspenders, ran up to me in the newsroom, his glasses bouncing off the cord around his neck. He asked me if I knew anyone who was related to a victim of the Sept. 11 attacks. I said that a woman in my neighborhood whom I had met a few times lost her brother. "Can we get her to go live for the 10 o'clock bulletin?" he asked.

Officials in the State Department's public diplomacy division have argued for more direct engagement with the Arab media. But Norman Pattiz, a member of the Broadcasting Board of Governors, who masterminded Al Hurra and Radio Sawa, told me he thinks that view is mistaken, because it "presupposes that the indigenous media is the solution, not the problem." Pattiz speaks about the Arab media as a monolith. In a recently published essay, he wrote: "Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya transcend traditional media roles. They function, in effect, as quasi-political movements, reflecting two of the defining characteristics of the Middle East today. One is the lack of political and press freedom. The other is Arab nationalism. Arab networks manifest both." He said Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya do this by covering news that Arab regimes suppress and stories that "intensely arouse Arab passions," namely the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the war in Iraq.

Among experts who track the Arab media, there is a debate over whether this kind of coverage is good or bad for the prospects of democracy in the Middle East. Marc Lynch, assistant professor of political science at Williams College, agrees with Norman Pattiz that the satellite networks focus on hot-button issues -- his recent research broke down coverage on Al Jazeera since 1999 and found that the top three topics shifted among Iraq, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and Arab political reform -- but to Lynch, this makes Al Jazeera the most pro-democracy of all the stations in the Arab world: it reflects public opinion and opens up space for political debate.

William Rugh, a former United States ambassador and now an adjunct scholar at the Middle East Institute, likewise thinks that the dialogue on Al Jazeera, heated though it may be, opens up discussions that force authorities to be more accountable. But he says that Al Jazeera's attention to controversial issues and different points of view has not translated into democratic politics. "That next step has not been taken as you might expect in terms of bringing democracy to the Arab world," he says. "People haven't formed political parties and interest groups. You can't assume that just because there is a lot of shouting going on that there is a lot of transparency and accountability going on."

S. Abdallah Schleifer, director of Adham Center for Television Journalism at the American University in Cairo, says that part of a healthy democracy is that there are certain ground rules for discussion. "The danger of a press moving from an authoritarian mode is sensationalism, which is sometimes evident in Al Jazeera," he says. "Things are said on that network that would never be said in England and America because they are moving into uncharted territory, and so there are no taboos, no libel and slander, no limits to what one says."

Schleifer went on to say that he hopes Al Arabiya's more cautious and more professional approach will provide a foil for Al Jazeera: "It might show that you could have a free press operating but with manners, and democracy depends on good manners."

Khatib said he plans to stay at Al Arabiya for only a year. Although Dubai is an easier place to live than Ramallah, he said he doesn't want to stay because he is troubled by the "huge gap" between Dubai and the world Al Arabiya broadcasts to. "In New York, as an editor, you can go have coffee, and everything around you gives you the feeling of the place," he told me one day in the newsroom. "Working in Cairo, just going to work in the morning as an editor, you might see 10 people asking for money and come up with 200 stories. In Dubai, the most you see on your way to work is traffic."

Khatib said that people in Dubai "don't live in the real world, the Arab world, and this affects the depth and the richness of our reporting." Gesturing to the newsroom, he said: "They convey reality through glass. It's fake. I don't want to be like those who are away from the public. I felt this the first day I was here. If the network succeeds and I stay, I will lose what made me a good journalist."

But when pressed, Khatib also admitted that he is not enthusiastic about returning to his bureau in the West Bank. He said he is always treated as a Palestinian first and a journalist second, being held at checkpoints for hours en route to appointments. And he said that at times, the struggle to offer calm reports about a painful situation was overwhelming. "I am tired of the process," he said, "and the constant tension to hold my emotions at bay, and I don't feel that in a year or two years it will end."

Khatib took the job at Al Arabiya, he said, because he thought "the Arab world was not able to be as moderate and free as it could be, because they are not getting true information." He wanted to be a bridge between ideals he holds about journalism and the realities of Arab reporting, and he thought he could have real impact at Al Arabiya.

But now that he has been in Dubai for four months, he said late one night in the marble lobby of the MBC building, the distance between those points seems vast. "I am not sure I can personally afford to pay the price for this success, even if it is possible," he said wearily.

Al-Rashed is usually more optimistic about the prospects for Al Arabiya, and for creating a truly free press in a region that is not free. But when pressed, he admits that his undertaking is risky, and that the cost of failure would be great. "In a real way, I have to win this," he said one evening as his driver took us to the station. "I have been preaching for a long time these kinds of thoughts, and if it doesn't work, I have to walk out and say, 'It didn't work -- you're on your own.' I am dragging everyone with me on this. I have to succeed."

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Graphic

Photos: Abdul Rahman Al-Rashed left Saudi Arabia in his 20's to attend American University in Washington and then thrived in the Arab expatriate media world of London. He never thought he'd return to the Middle East.

Nabil Khatib is responsible for overseeing Al Arabiya's reporters. It's no small task, considering that many of them don't agree with all of Al-Rashed's ideas about the channel's mission -- he has lost 36 pounds in his four months on the job and reads through bloodshot eyes.

Al Arabiya's employees take cigarette breaks in the stairwell outside the newsroom, which overlooks the man-made lake in Media City. Media City was built as part of Dubai's effort to use tax incentives to lure businesses into clustered luxury office parks.

Najwa Kassem, getting ready to anchor the news in Dubai. In October, after a suicide bombing outside Al Arabiya's Baghdad offices, Kassem, a veteran correspondent, reported live from the blast site, without makeup, which she deemed inappropriate to the circumstances. (Photographs by Lynsey Addario/Corbis, for The New York Times)

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James Bennet, a staff writer for the magazine, was chief of the New York Times bureau in Jerusalem from September 2001 through last summer.

Body

The day they buried Yasir Arafat in the Ramallah fort that had become his prison, the most remarkable sight was not the thousands who brushed aside Palestinian security to swarm over the walls and bid him an impassioned farewell, some with semiautomatic gunfire. It was not Uri Avnery, the dogged Israeli dove, comparing Arafat to Moses for leading his people from bondage to die within sight of his promised land; it was not the delegation of Moonies from Rockville, Md., who sat primly amid the mob. One grows accustomed to such things. This was Palestine after all, and Palestine is really a state of mind, or a state of being, but not, in any event, a state. Its rules are its own rules, those of a place that is not wholly real, that is dreamlike and a little scary -- an Oz at once remembered and mythic with a small number, yet more than its share, of flying monkeys.

What was most remarkable that day was that the crowd simply vanished. The Palestinians buried their Old Man, their epic hero, and they went home to eat, to break the fast of the Muslim holiday of Ramadan. They went home to get on with their lives. It was not as if they drifted away. It was as if they teleported. They left behind an honor guard by the grave, a few spent mourners sprawled on a dirtied red carpet and a startlingly tranquil dusk.

This struck me as a very hopeful sign. On subsequent visits to Palestine, I was impressed by the absence of passion about Arafat's death, by its bearable lightness, even though its cause was never disclosed and Palestinians took it for granted that Israel had poisoned him. The posters of Arafat tore, faded, then vanished. Visitors came to the grave, but by the handful. Their mood tended to be reflective. A few days after Arafat's burial, I visited the guards outside his Gaza City headquarters, which like the Ramallah compound had been bombed repeatedly by Israel. They said they would protect this ruin by the Mediterranean forever, as a memorial. Then one blustery day in February, the governing Palestinian Authority obliterated it, leaving a trim sand lot and a clean sweep to the sea.

People were sad about Arafat's death. Even those who were thwarted by him felt bereft -- fatherless, as one Palestine Liberation Organization official who disdained Arafat put it, with surprise at his own reaction. But it was not as if they felt suddenly leaderless. They were used to Arafat's absence; they missed him while he was still alive.

"I don't really speak about real, effective accomplishments," Haider Abdel Shafi said in Gaza City after a long pause, when I asked him to name Arafat's achievements. At 86, he is a grand old man of the movement and a longtime critic of Arafat. "Arafat left us in a real way to drift along," he added.

Now for Palestinians, he said, "the challenge is on the level of to be or not to be."

Yasir Arafat was wrong about a lot of things. He was wrong to believe, as two of his closest associates told me he did, that Israel would never elect Ariel Sharon to be prime minister, that after rejecting Ehud Barak's offer at Camp David in the summer of 2000 the Palestinian leader could exploit the second intifada, which began that fall, to continue negotiating concessions from a re-elected Barak. He was wrong to believe after the Sept. 11 attacks that the Bush administration would tilt to him and away from Israel, to court the Muslim world. He was wrong to believe the following spring that Sharon would never risk international criticism by launching a giant offensive into the West Bank, and he ignored the pleas of aides who begged him to pre-empt Sharon by cracking down on militants. The invasion came, and the governing Palestinian Authority, created by the Oslo accords, lost control of the major Palestinian cities. Israel began forbidding even the Palestinian Police to function, saying they included terrorists.

One night in Arafat's office in Ramallah, after Israel had trapped him there, I asked if he still expected to see a Palestinian state in his lifetime. ''No doubt,'' he replied without hesitation. ''No doubt.'' Well, he was wrong about a lot of things.

But he was right about at least one big thing. Arafat's core insight, derived in the 1960's from Frantz Fanon, was to reject the ascendant pan-Arabism of Egypt's Gamal Abdel Nasser and to posit instead a Palestinian exceptionalism. He believed that a distinct Palestinian nationalism would take shape through armed struggle with Israel. After Israel humiliated Nasser and the Arab armies in the Six-Day War in 1967, Arafat and his vision emerged as the heroic alternative. The Palestinians are divided by class, religion and geography, yet, drawn together by opposition to Israel, they have attained a national coherence that other recovering wards of British colonialism -- like the Iraqis -- lack.

As the struggle for nationhood took shape, a yearning grew not just for any state but for a democratic one. In their diaspora, Palestinians worked or studied under dictatorships and democracies and appreciated the difference. Those living under Israeli occupation in the West Bank and Gaza after the Six-Day War came to resent authority. Liberated in a way by their very statelessness -- lacking a glass house -- Palestinians developed what the political scientist Khalil Shikaki has called a ''culture of criticism,'' freely ridiculing Arab autocrats and declaring they could do better. Hardest for some Palestinians to admit is the influence of Israel, of the parliamentary debates and acerbic press they followed on television and in the newspapers. To be Palestinian is to be intimately, painfully acquainted with paradox. It is to know that, in part, you owe your national character and your democratic dream to the very people who occupied your land and compromised your rights.

This national coherence and democratic aspiration combine to explain why, on Arafat's death, the Palestinian public pivoted from Arafat to Mahmoud Abbas and why it did it so smoothly. More than four years into their latest violent conflict with Israel, Palestinians drew together behind Arafat's longtime No. 2, Abbas, who turns 70 this month, as one of the few national figures remaining -- one with the credentials to span the divided populations of the West Bank, Gaza Strip and the diaspora. In an election Jan. 9, he won more than 60 percent of the vote. That he did so well was evidence to Palestinians of their national unity; that he did not do better was evidence to them of the strength of their democratic institutions. Hassan Khreisheh, an opposition member of the Palestinian Parliament, tied these themes together when he proudly declared at the swearing-in of Abbas, ''Our people have put an end to the 99.999 percent that Arab leaders have become accustomed to.'' Palestinians were now exceptional, he was saying, because they had democracy.

But these strands in the Palestinian identity do not usually pull in the same direction. With national liberation as his goal, Arafat was able to slough off such niceties of nation-building as creating an independent court system, just as low-level militants are still able to avoid licensing their cars. Who could dun men who are risking their lives for the cause? For many Palestinians, building a state before they have one puts the cart before the horse. Khaled Al Batish, a leader of Islamic Jihad, told me that he supported democratic reforms but ''these democratic steps won't last if the occupation remains. The occupation will confuse matters, and the focus will be on resistance.'' Even the most reform-minded Palestinians bridle at the fact that President George W. Bush has made democratic change a condition for negotiations. ''I always preach the need to look in the mirror -- responsibility, accountability, all of that,'' Salam Fayyad, the Palestinian minister of finance and the official closest to the Bush administration, said with some

heat. ''But you should not mistake the depth of my feeling about how unfair it is to put conditions on our freedom.'' We were speaking in his Ramallah office, which looks out on an Israeli settlement.

For Abbas, nation-building is the path to national liberation. It is the armed struggle that must give way. Over the counsel of some advisers, who feared he was touching the third rail of Palestinian politics, Abbas called for a halt to violence during his campaign this winter. ''I told them everything openly -- that I'm against the armed intifada, I'm against the rockets,'' Abbas told me one night in February in Gaza City. ''It was in the interest of our people. So I told them the truth, and for that I believe -- I don't know -- they elected me.''

Much has been made of the fact that Abbas wears a suit rather than a uniform and headdress, as Arafat did. His style is not that of a charismatic leader but of a negotiator, and both Palestinians and Israelis suspect him of being soft. He has a negotiator's surface mildness, not a politician's riveting passion -- possibly a severe handicap for the leader of a liberation movement. He prefers not to dwell on old grievances (''It's better not to talk about history or religion,'' he told me once with a wry smile at the improbability of this sentiment's being realized), and in the interview he tried to avoid assigning blame for this intifada. Ultimately, he said Israel started it, but that ''both sides'' were responsible for its duration. He refused to call the uprising a mistake, saying that what's done is done. It was, he said, time to talk. Yet his mildness should not be mistaken for uncertainty, as Arafat's bluster was sometimes mistaken for decision. While Abbas is conciliatory in trying to achieve his principles, he is certain about the principles themselves. He did not much want his new job and told me he planned to keep it for only a year or two, maybe three. He comes across as entirely confident and in command, even a little supercilious. When he wants to smoke -- and he often does -- his practice is to tilt a cigarette tip into the air and wait for an aide to snap to with a lighter.

Since he was in his 20's, Abbas worked in Arafat's shadow, quarreling with him, sometimes breaking with him, but ultimately serving beside him. ''He was a real, real leader,'' Abbas said. He acknowledged that he often disagreed with Arafat -- even that they did not speak for what proved the last year of Arafat's life, until just before he died in a Paris hospital. ''At the last I went to him,'' Abbas told me. ''I talked to him, and I followed him to Paris. He is my brother, but the brothers also have their own differences.'' Abbas, and the world, can now test if those differences matter. Arafat could never completely break with armed conflict; his fortress became not only his prison but also the Palestinians'. Abbas wants Palestine to make sense abroad. By ending what he calls the armed intifada and creating an orderly Palestinian state-in-waiting, he seeks to rally the world to the Palestinian cause and, above all, to recruit an American president who equates democracy with freedom and freedom with peace. To do this, Abbas will have to persuade Palestinians to be patient and to embrace, for now, yet another paradox in their national life -- democracy without freedom. It is the only way that he sees to eventually exchange the dream of Palestine, and the nightmare of Palestine, for a state of Palestine.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict -- a narcissistic face-off that pays little notice to the world around it -- counsels cynicism as the safest guide. Yet the seemingly endless, and in fact episodic, violence disguises the fact that over the last 20 years, the two peoples have moved toward recognizing each other's rights to statehood. Still, Abbas's strategy is one for the long term. Arafat's departure may have removed an impediment to calm and to state-building. But it seems less likely to have removed an obstacle to their higher forms, peace and sovereignty. It may simply lay bare how far apart even leaders who wear suits remain.

Abbas's approach is different, but his stated goals are like Arafat's. He said that he considered Arafat ''a model for the pragmatic and moderate people,'' and he should be taken at his word. Abbas also rejected the deal that Barak offered at Camp David. Like other Palestinians who support a two-state solution, Abbas argues that the Palestinian leadership made its territorial concession many years ago, agreeing to settle for the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem. That amounts to a mere 22 percent of historic Palestine, Abbas likes to point out. A refugee himself, Abbas is no less insistent than Arafat that Israel recognize a ''right of return'' for refugees of the 1948 Arab-Israeli war and their descendants, though he has explored ways to limit any resulting immigration into Israel. But the intifada has made the Israelis far less likely to offer as much as Barak did. While Abbas struggles to build a state, Sharon is forging ahead with plans that may well define it. As he tries to pull Israelis out of Gaza and four settlements on the northern West Bank, Sharon is building Israel's barrier elsewhere on the West Bank and tightening its hold on the big settlements there. He is chipping away at Abbas's 22 percent.

Abbas knows all this. When I asked him if he expected to see a Palestinian state in his lifetime, he replied: "I hope. I hope we will see it." Most Palestinians I spoke to think that he will not. An optimist in Palestine these days is someone who believes that calm will prevail for a few years, before the next intifada begins.

To the outside world, Abbas may look like the one-eyed man in the land of the blind. He is trying to persuade Palestinians of things that seem obvious: that firing crude rockets into Israeli fields harms Palestinians more than Israelis, by summoning overwhelming Israeli retaliation; that dispatching the young to blow themselves up among Israelis is also a form of national suicide. Yet seen from inside Palestine, the violence has developed a logic of its own. Militants in Gaza and on the West Bank believe that it is they who see the world as it is.

Rashid Abu Shbak proudly flashed his right thumb when I walked into his office in Gaza City two days after Abbas was elected. His nail was stained purplish black. Like all Palestinians who had voted, he looked as if he had banged his thumb with a hammer. In theory, Abu Shbak bears great responsibility for making this latest attempt at calm succeed. He is the chief of the Palestinian Preventive Security force in the Gaza Strip, the notional front-line force in any strategy to stop militants. Gaza is emerging as the proving ground for a Palestinian state because of Sharon's plan to remove the 8,500 Israeli settlers who live there and the many thousands more troops who guard them.

"After four and a half years of intifada, four and a half years of chaos -- of absence of law and order -- the mission is very tough for Abu Mazen," Abu Shbak said, referring to Abbas by his nickname. (It means "Father of Mazen"; Mazen, Abbas's eldest son, died three years ago.) He added, "I hope in the coming days there will be changes."

Abu Shbak was talking like a man inheriting a big mess. Yet like many of Abbas's men, he had been in the same post for years. I had a memory of him pounding his desk almost two years ago and declaring of rockets that militants launched into Israel, "We are convinced that the firing of Qassams must be stopped!" At the time, maybe I should have paid more attention to the passive voice. But I had spent enough time in Palestine to know why a security chief could call for action and supply none. Inevitably, a devastating Israeli raid to stop the rockets would provide a reason, or pretext, not to act. Sure enough, the Israelis came, and just as surely, the rocket fire intensified.

Skip forward again to January. Our conversation was getting weirder. "The security apparatus should abide by the law," Abu Shbak declared indignantly. I could only agree; for more than two years, the security services had been like private militias. But Abu Shbak was not referring to the rule of law in general. He dropped a half-inch-thick stack of paper on his desk: a bill spelling out just what the Preventive Security was supposed to do. "In the last 10 years," Abu Shbak explained, "there was no law."

The door opened, and two men entered. One was Samir Mashharawi, a rising leader of 39, a politician-slash-security-man with wide-spaced eyes, a dimpled chin and an aura of cool, assured intelligence. Like many Palestinian men of his age, he cut his teeth in the first intifada, learned Hebrew in Israeli prisons and came to chafe under the leadership of Arafat and members of his generation who returned from decades in exile with little understanding of Israelis or even life under occupation.

It was Mashharawi who, one evening in Gaza City, gave me the most elegant description I have heard of Palestinian-Israeli bargaining. Palestinian officials were then negotiating, unsuccessfully, not for their own state but for the Israelis to pull their troops back to their positions before the uprising. Mashharawi recalled how, during one of his terms in prison, he and other inmates demanded chairs and tables. So the Israelis took their mattresses. The Palestinians demanded the mattresses back. "We forgot that we asked for the chairs and tables," he continued. "After a month, they returned the mattresses. And we felt very happy because we achieved something." I said this reminded me of the Jewish story in which a rabbi advises a man to bring a goat into his home; when, at the rabbi's instructions, he eventually takes the goat out, the man's wife no longer finds her house too small. Mashharawi nodded. "Israeli diplomacy," he said, "is based on this idea."

I did not know the man accompanying Mashharawi. He wore work boots, black jeans and a baggy khaki coat. He had the weary, aged look of the hard-core militant. The hard boys of the militant groups tend to swagger and pose, as if a photographer at any moment might snap their portraits for martyr posters. Their leaders, at least those who have lived into their 30's, have seen too much for that.

''Ah,'' Abu Shbak exclaimed, brightening at the sight of the second man. ''By chance you meet the leader of the Abu Al Reesh Brigades!''

The Abu Al Reesh Brigades is a militant offshoot of Fatah, Arafat's mainstream, secular-leaning faction, which dominates the Palestinian Authority and to which Abbas, Abu Shbak and Mashharawi belong. Abu Al Reesh is part of the loose confederation of Fatah freedom fighters, terrorists and gangsters that also includes the Al Aksa Martyrs Brigades. This man, Abu Amani, 35, was among the Gaza militants most wanted by Israel. Militants say that the Israelis call him the Fox, though militants tend to say things like that, and it is not always clear how they would know.

It struck me as unusual, even by Gazan standards, that the Fox would pay a call on the head of Preventive Security.

''He was my teacher in Israeli jail,'' Abu Amani explained, nodding at the benignly beaming Abu Shbak. ''It's my duty to visit him.'' For two years, Abu Amani said, he had not been able to visit Abu Shbak in Gaza City because he could not cross the intervening Israeli checkpoints. But the Israelis had loosened restrictions to permit voting. ''I took advantage of the elections,'' he said.

The road map, the negotiating template drawn up by the United States, the United Nations, the European Union and Russia, calls on the Palestinian Authority to immediately begin ''sustained, targeted and effective operations aimed at confronting all those engaged in terror and dismantlement of terrorist capabilities and infrastructure.'' But Abbas is trying to co-opt militants, not confront them. As Mashharawi told me later, he was meeting with militants to broker Abbas's cease-fire. The relationship between Abu Shbak and Abu Amani helps to explain why the new Palestinian leader is using this approach. They are not just old friends. They are comrades in the same struggle -- a struggle not only for statehood but also for political control of Palestine right now.

In its early days, the uprising against Israel functioned partly as Palestinian diplomacy by other means. But it became Palestinian politics by other means. From the West Bank and Gaza, Palestinian factions began competing to conduct sensational attacks as much to score political points against one another as to kill and terrify Israelis. Within Fatah -- a word that translates as ''conquest'' -- militants like Abu Amani are seen as having preserved the faction from a challenge by the Islamic Resistance Movement, known by its acronym, Hamas, which is also an Arabic word that means ''zeal.'' The day after meeting Abu Amani, I sat in a Gaza City coffee shop with three Fatah militants. The fighters said that they would normally never go to such a public place, but that since I was an American, they felt safe from Israeli attack. One of them, Abu Haroun, 27, was a member of Abu Al Reesh. He said that he supported Abbas, but that when it came to resistance, ''We have our own vision.''

''What sustained Fatah were the military activities that Al Aksa and Abu Al Reesh did in the West Bank and Gaza Strip,'' he said. ''This revived Fatah. Abu Mazen must understand it.''

When I asked if he would accept a job with the security services, which is how Abbas hopes to co-opt the militants, he looked blank. Most of his comrades already worked for the security services, he said. ''We're Fatah,'' he said. ''It's their duty to get us jobs.'' He had seen many friends die, he said, and he was not going to settle for getting his mattress back. He had a list of demands, including an Israeli withdrawal to the 1967 lines, and little expectation the Israelis would meet it. ''Nobody should blame Abu Mazen later if they find out he is taking the same path as Arafat,'' he said. Abbas has shown no sign of promoting any alternative resistance, like civil disobedience. When negotiations stall, these men see only one road.

The father of two girls, Abu Haroun said he did not relish fighting, but that he had little choice. ''Resistance is not a hobby,'' he added. That is a mantra I have often heard from such men. It means, I think, that this is not a game, that violence is not entered into lightly or abandoned easily.

The fighters were willing to quiet things down, but they would keep their weapons handy. ''And the day we feel they aren't doing what they promised,'' Abu Haroun said, ''we will use them again.'' It was not clear if by ''they'' he meant the Israelis, the Palestinian leadership or both. Moments later, he left, saying that next time we should meet elsewhere; the cappuccino machine here was just too loud. Unlike the men of Hamas and Islamic Jihad, these

Fatah militants say they want a two-state solution. That is why, for Fatah, there is a strategic component to this violent interfactional politicking. It is perhaps the most twisted rule of Palestine, but it makes sense to those who advocate it. Marwan Barghouti, the fiery West Bank leader of the uprising and probably the most skillful Fatah politician after Arafat, explained it to me one day in the spring of 2002. ''It's very helpful for the peace,'' he said that day of the violence.

I had asked Barghouti, then in hiding, about recent high-profile Fatah killings, including the first suicide bombing by a woman. He insisted that he supported attacking only settlers and soldiers in occupied territory, resistance that Palestinians believe to be legal under international law. But he said proudly that all the attacks had rebuilt Fatah's popularity. As a result, Barghouti said, Fatah was again strong enough to make an agreement stick. Because it had killed so many Israelis, it could make peace. ''Do you think a very weak organization can protect a historical agreement?'' he asked. Yet in salvaging a Palestinian constituency, Fatah, and Arafat, sacrificed their Israeli one. With Al Aksa suicide bombers exploding in Tel Aviv, Israelis no longer saw any difference between the factions. Fatah seemed as intent as Hamas on destroying Israel. Israel arrested Barghouti shortly after I saw him, and he was convicted in an Israeli court last year of murder charges, which he denied.

There is a final reason that violence is likely to remain at hand for the Palestinian national movement: Palestinians have good cause to believe that it is working. Although the outside world sees the intifada as purely a disaster for the Palestinians, within Palestine, the violence seems to have succeeded, at a high cost. It has resulted in something, at least in prospect, that all the negotiating by men like Abbas never achieved: the actual evacuation of Israeli settlements.

In mid-February, I returned to Gaza to see if the Abbas administration and the prospect of Israeli withdrawal were changing life on the ground. There were signs of progress. Abbas had ordered the demolition of buildings erected without permits along the beach during the intifada. Most striking, along the trashed roads of the Jabaliya refugee camp, uniformed police officers were stopping cars and demanding to see proof of insurance. For Gazans, this was like having the lights turned on after years in the dark.

Small as they were, these steps signaled change, and not just in Gaza. They also demonstrated a surprising political savvy by Abbas. In 2003, he served for four months in the newly created post of prime minister. With no constituency of his own, he was outmaneuvered by Arafat and by Sharon, who did not think the prime minister had a chance. He quit, confirming his reputation as a sulker. He was now starting to dispel that reputation. With Arafat gone, Abbas, at heart a closed-door diplomat, was beginning to act like a politician. During his campaign he kissed babies and gave speeches in isolated places long ignored by the Palestinian leadership, like Khan Yunis in southern Gaza and Jenin in the northern West Bank. He donned an Al Aksa Martyrs cap at one stop, and he opposed violence less as morally wrong than as undercutting Palestinian interests. He was careful to praise ''martyrs,'' a term that refers to all Palestinians who died in the conflict. Criticizing them is the true third rail of Palestinian politics. Sometimes Abbas sounded like his old comrade. The distinction was that no Palestinian doubted where he stood on ending the intifada. ''All my political life was under the table, was secret,'' Abbas told me. ''Now I was obliged to go outside to talk to the people. It is the first time in my life.'' He began to laugh. ''I don't know how it happened!''

He had a very long way to go. ''We are starting below zero, not from zero,'' Abbas said. ''From every corner, we have to start from the very beginning. It is not impossible. It is difficult, very difficult. But not impossible.'' The Israelis had halted their armored raids, and they had stopped hunting accused militants from the skies. But in Gaza, as on the West Bank, people were feeling few other changes. An Israeli withdrawal seemed a long way off.

On the day Abbas met with Sharon at the Egyptian resort of Sharm el Sheikh to announce their cease-fire, I visited Khan Yunis. It abuts Israel's Gush Qatif settlement bloc, which is surrounded by a wall more than 40 feet high of concrete and steel, braced by guard towers. Israel has responded to the mortar and rocket fire into Gush Qatif with repeated raids into Khan Yunis, churning the landscape into a heaving sea of broken concrete and twisted rebar. Down a dirt track about a hundred yards from the wall stands a three-story cinder-block tenement. Beside it lie the remains of neighboring houses. Its own walls are so pocked with bullet holes, scores of them, that the building resembles a cheese grater. On the second floor lived Ghada Brais, 27, with her four children. The only toy I saw

was a toddler's walker. You could fit apples through some of the bullet holes in the walls. She kept her apartment spotless.

Brais's husband, Yousef, 28, left for Canada two years ago to find work. He called and sent money, but she had no identity papers and so could not join him. She was trapped. She did not speak in slogans. Instead she talked about constant shooting at night and about trying to act as if she were not scared. She spoke about her children's bed-wetting. She was particularly concerned about her eldest, a 9-year-old boy named Barah. ''I think the intifada interfered with his studies,'' she said. ''He always wants to be in the streets. I go crazy when his grades get really bad.'' She tried to keep him indoors, but he insisted on going out to play and had taken to running along the settlement's wall; one bullet had grazed his leg, she said. ''I can't control him,'' she said. She said she hoped the Israelis would follow through and remove the settlements. But she did not expect her children to recover quickly. ''I think it will always remain in their minds,'' she said.

It lacks the headline-grabbing drama of attacks or reprisals, but the steady expansion of Israeli settlements has been an engine of this uprising. To Palestinians, it proved that Israel would never permit a Palestinian state. Abbas is betting that if he can stop the fighting, he can shift international attention from suicide bombers to settlements, which are growing on the West Bank.

In Gaza City, I met another woman from Khan Yunis, Rana El Farra. Wearing winter coats, we spoke in the family's apartment, its windows open despite the day's chill. Open windows are less likely to shatter from sudden shifts in air pressure; the apartment is across the street from a Palestinian security headquarters, a frequent Israeli bombing target.

On one table stood two dozen containers of cobalt-blue mouthwash. El Farra asks Gazans to gargle it, then return it to her to provide DNA samples, which she isolates in a gel. A molecular biologist, El Farra is archiving Gaza's DNA in hopes of curing diseases like the diabetes that contributed to her beloved father's death, as well as of comparing the oral histories of Gaza's clans with their DNA footprints. ''I prepare the samples here, and then DHL them to the States,'' she said in her idiomatic English. She sends them to Utah for sequencing at Brigham Young University, where she got her master's. She loved Utah, feeling at home with its conservative values, its big families. ''Provo is just like Khan Yunis,'' she explained. ''Only it's cleaner.'' A lively woman with a musical laugh, the married mother of a 3-year-old girl, El Farra teaches cell biology at Al Azhar University. She adores ''Friends'' -- she identifies with Monica -- and she recently finished Hillary Rodham Clinton's memoir.

El Farra and people like her are the real political face of Hamas. About three years ago, a year into this uprising, El Farra became more religious. She began covering her hair. ''Islam is the best pole you can hold onto when things get really tough,'' she said. She saw no contradiction between her science and her religion, finding God's handiwork in the intricate, complete systems of cells.

But she did find contradictions in her politics, and trying to follow her thinking was like racing through a series of switchbacks up a steep mountain trail. She is hopeful that Abbas will improve life for Palestinians, but she did not vote for him because she is fed up with his faction. ''Fatah didn't do anything in the last 10 years,'' she said. She said she will probably support Hamas if it fields candidates in legislative elections scheduled for July because its leaders were not corrupt and they were serious about improving government services. But she supported Hamas only for internal reform, not conducting relations with Israel. At that level, she wanted a Fatah politician to represent her, because Fatah supports negotiations. But she did not expect negotiations to succeed.

''We just need a break,'' she said. ''I know the war between the Israelis and the Palestinians will be there until God stops the whole system. But we just need a break of five years.'' She explained, ''We got used to this system, of taking this break for some time, probably 10 years, and then, when things reach a point where no one can deal with them anymore, then war will be for some time.''

El Farra agreed with Abbas that it was wrong to carry out armed attacks -- at least for now. ''I don't think it's the right time for suicide bombings,'' she said. But she argued that violence was ultimately necessary because she thought Israel responded to nothing else. ''When they say no to peace, we have to be able to answer back,'' she said. She thought the two sides would never settle their differences -- because Israeli Jews would never yield the

man-made plateau in Jerusalem that they call the Temple Mount and because Muslims would never relinquish their claim to the same plot, which they call the Noble Sanctuary. No matter how tired the Palestinians became, she said, they would not abandon this goal, because future "generations will probably curse us."

"It's very contradictory, the feelings that we have and our reality," she said at last. "The reality is pushing very hard." She slapped one hand into the other. "Our feelings and beliefs are pushing hard, too. You know what I mean? It's very contradictory. And I see this with all the people, and I see it with myself too. See, you want to have peace; you want to live; you want to have children; you want to be able to live a normal life. But at the same time you cannot just give up on everything in return for this." She paused, then added more quietly, "For me, I think we all need psychotherapy here, at least in Gaza."

From this welter of political impulses, Abbas was trying to wrest a political deal with Hamas. He was trying to persuade Hamas to sell high -- to join the Palestinian political system at a moment when Hamas was very popular. His strategy was to contain it, just as the Israeli system contains parties that reject any Palestinian state. Islamic Jihad would follow Hamas, Abbas's advisers said. Hunted by Israel, under pressure from the United States and Europe and attuned to the mood in the street, Hamas politicians in Gaza and the West Bank wanted to calm things down, according to numerous Palestinian officials.

While I was in Gaza, I encountered a Hamas leader named Nizar Rayan. Rayan earned a master's degree in Jordan with a thesis on martyrdom. (His doctoral thesis was on the future of Islam.) A mountain of a man with four wives -- "I love ***women***," he once told me -- he is one of Hamas's most charismatic leaders, pulling young men into the movement. He has been in hiding from Israel for 18 months. He was very proud of his second son, killed at 16 in a suicidal shooting attack on a settlement. "To get back our land," he said another time, "it seems to me we have to lose half of this generation." He called Israeli Jews "Europe's trash." But gone were the days when he would bring his laptop to an interview so he could call up scriptural justifications for suicide bombings. In February, he was happy to have his picture taken, but he did not want to say much beyond "Hello, nice to see you." Hamas was having only its more polished spokesmen and sophists speak with the media. It was treading very carefully.

In municipal elections in Gaza in January, candidates from Hamas trounced Fatah candidates in several areas. In its disciplined way, Hamas ran engineers and academics -- people like El Farra; Fatah had put forth people with no such credentials. Abbas said Hamas had committed to field legislative candidates; Hamas had previously refused to run for the Palestinian Parliament because it was a creature of the Oslo agreement. Abbas told me that he would be happy to appoint ministers from Hamas. "If they want to participate, why not?" he asked. "It's good for us." Hamas was almost certain not to contest the national leadership. "If they rule, what are their choices?" asked Ziad Abu Amr, a legislator and political scientist who is Abbas's chief liaison to Hamas. "Do they go and negotiate with Israel or do they declare all-out war? Can they afford this? I don't think so." Abu Amr thought Hamas could win as many as half the parliamentary seats. Even if Hamas wins a small minority of seats, it will supply an effective opposition, promoting debate and legitimizing what is otherwise government by Fatah. It might also, at last, wake Fatah up to its political decay.

It was obvious in Gaza that Fatah's weakness was still Abbas's biggest internal problem. Regardless of the ferocity of its militants, Fatah was facing a reckoning for its failure at nation-building. Abbas needed the truce with Israel to build his national institutions, but he needed the institutions to keep the truce. Palestinians were referring to the halt in violence not as a cease-fire but merely as a "tahdiyah" -- a "lull." Palestinian officials were concerned that leaders of Hamas and Islamic Jihad in Damascus would not back the political deal. And they were particularly worried about the Lebanese guerrilla group ***Hezbollah***, which Israeli intelligence officers also said was financing and directing some Al Aksa cells in the West Bank. Allies of Abbas were pressing Palestinian security chiefs to cut off this money. In late February, an Islamic Jihad suicide bomber killed five Israelis and wounded dozens at a Tel Aviv nightclub. Israel blamed Syria and warned that if Abbas did not act against Islamic Jihad and other groups, it would.

Over time, Abbas was betting that a massive jobs program, together with an Israeli withdrawal, would strengthen his hand. But for now, his chief political ally, a temporary one, was the exhaustion of his people. He could not even be certain his orders were being carried out. Abu Amr told me that he had asked Abbas why he had stopped demolishing illegal buildings. He said Abbas was surprised the work had halted and had immediately reissued his

order. ''He still has to institutionalize his authority,'' Abu Amr said. Abbas was depending on some Fatah officials with reputations for corruption. The campaign over, he had also stopped making public speeches. Many reformist politicians feared he was not moving fast enough. He was locked in a debilitating standoff with the prime minister, Ahmed Qurei, another longtime negotiator who, several Palestinian politicians said, felt he should have been Arafat's successor. Qurei resisted appointing new faces to the government until he faced a parliamentary revolt. No wonder Gazans were mocking Fatah by calling it by a feminine form, ''Fat'hiah'' -- a name that brought to mind a doddering peasant woman.

One day while I was in Gaza, gunmen from two large families burst into a Gaza City prison and shot dead two accused murderers. They dragged a third Palestinian prisoner to a refugee camp, where they beat him and burned him with cigarettes before killing him. That day, Hamas militants fired off some rockets, prompting two other groups -- not wanting to cede the political stage -- to do the same; each group followed its salvo with a press statement. Then something surprising happened: Abbas fired several security officials for not stopping the mayhem. They were men he could afford to fire -- either responsible enough not to fight back or lacking any constituency -- but the move nevertheless spoke of a new accountability. My own most hopeful experience in Gaza also came that day. I was visiting Mashharawi in his heavily guarded office. He was still working the phones and meeting with militants, reminding them of their ''national duty,'' keeping the lid on. On one wall hung a framed poster that was a gift from the Abu Al Reesh Brigades. It showed a man lying amid rubble and bore the words, ''You purify my soul, you martyr.'' A visitor appeared -- none other than Abu Amani, the Fox. He seemed transformed. He had exchanged his heavy coat and boots for a black jacket and street shoes, and he looked about 10 years younger. He was smiling. It turned out he had remained in Gaza City, rather than return to Khan Yunis, to enjoy his new freedom. ''When you saw me last time, you could tell I was exhausted,'' he said, grinning. ''Now, we can move more freely, sleep more.'' Maybe resistance was not a hobby. But at least some militants, given a real choice and national leadership, were eager to give calm a chance.

With the Israelis easing travel restrictions, word in mid-February was that one could drive from the growing fortification of the Israeli barrier around Jerusalem to Jenin without hitting a checkpoint. After leaving Gaza, I gave it a try. It was not a frictionless passage -- Israeli soldiers were stopping Palestinian cars by the side of the road, and I passed through one checkpoint -- yet the road was more open, the Israeli military presence less obvious, than I had seen it. Besides, on the West Bank, spring was coming. The almond trees were blooming white, and the first poppies with their startling red were spangling green fields that would soon bake to dust. Spring is always an ambiguous moment in Palestine: a time of hope, yet also the time of year that makes the land seem most worth the contest.

I had come to Jenin to visit an acquaintance, Mahmoud Hawashin. Hawashin is not a militant leader or a politician, though he functions as a liaison between them. He is not a religious thinker or a deeply educated man, though in an environment that does not always favor it, he thinks for himself. He is broad-shouldered, with a close-shaved scalp and something of the appearance of Laurence Fishburne, together with that actor's air of steeliness and potential menace. He is 34, though he seems years older. He leads a considered life. He trimmed his ambitions to fit his unyielding environment rather than conserve them as dreams. It is a kind of courage found, if not celebrated, in Palestine like everywhere else. He grew up in Jenin's refugee camp, a forge of extremism, and still lives there. At 15, during the first intifada, he was jailed by Israel for a year and a half. He dreamed of becoming an electrical engineer, but could not afford the tuition. He now works as an electrician on the side while doing one of the toughest jobs in Jenin: he is in charge of collecting utility fees. Jenin residents took to not paying their bills during the uprising and even to attacking the collectors. Hawashin once told me, with bitterness, that he knew he had gotten his managerial city job -- he is one of few residents of the camp to have one -- because officials believed his credentials as a fighter and ties in the camp would ease collections. Like other residents of the camps, he felt discriminated against. ''If I go to the U.S., in five years I can get residency,'' he said once. ''We are 50 years living here in Jenin, and we have never been considered residents.''

''My dream as a refugee is not to return back to my original village,'' he said. ''It's to buy a piece of land here and register it under my own name.'' He wanted a house with a garden -- ''a normal house, where I can keep my memories to myself.'' He had bought the land, but he could not yet afford to build.

Most militants are from the camps, and when Israel forbade the Palestinian Police to operate, the militants began taking control of cities like Jenin, in some cases avenging themselves on elites. Jenin is now effectively run by an Al Aksa leader, Zacharia Zubeida. Part of the challenge for Abbas is to make sure that West Bank enclaves like Jenin do not feel forgotten as he focuses on Gaza. For Abbas to consolidate control, he must somehow sideline the local warlords. Yet in a sign of the militants' power, the day I saw Hawashin he was arranging a meeting for the mayor with Zubeida; he said the mayor was hoping Zubeida would intervene on his behalf with Abbas to secure money for the city. Hawashin respected Zubeida, but it alarmed him that his own children looked up to the militant. ''I want them to have a childhood,'' he said. ''I don't want them to spend a day in jail.''

Once, while Arafat was alive, Hawashin astonished me by saying that his people needed a ''Palestinian Sharon.'' He did not admire Sharon's policies, but he did respect his dedication to his nation's interests. ''Abu Mazen could be that person,'' Hawashin said when I caught up with him in his office last month. While city workers processed bills around him, he sat at the head of a long table. The walls, like most walls in Jenin, were plastered with images of the dead, but they also bore photographs of Hawashin's children and more prosaic pictures of workers repairing electric lines.

Hawashin admired Abbas's courage in criticizing the armed intifada. Hawashin had long argued that Palestinians let themselves be led by emotion rather than reason, that the violence of the uprising -- of all the fights with Israel -- had only left the Palestinians further behind. Now he was hearing a Palestinian leader say similar things. ''There's a shared quality you can find in both Abu Mazen and Sharon, which is clarity and frankness,'' he said. ''Sharon is clear with his own people and in telling the world what he wants.'' The parallel may run deeper. Abbas is trying a Palestinian version of Sharon's own unilateralism. In pushing for a pullout from Gaza, Sharon is trying to break the zero-sum logic of the conflict, to persuade his people that a move that appears to benefit the Palestinians is actually in Israel's interest. For his part, Abbas is trying to end Palestinian violence and promote democracy to serve the Palestinian interest, not Israel's. These are not concessions to each other. They are concessions to reality. But realists can disagree as strongly as myth-makers, and for better reasons.

Hawashin argued that most Palestinians wanted internal reforms long before Israel or the Bush administration demanded them. Many Palestinians believe Arafat encouraged the intifada to give an outlet to discontent with his own rule. Hawashin gestured with a broad hand at the portrait of Arafat above his head. ''Unfortunately, our symbol -- and we consider him a model -- his real mistake was not to establish institutions in Fatah or the Palestinian Authority.'' In Jenin, he said, Palestinians did not yet feel any change, but they were anxious for it. ''Everyone knows the reality,'' he said. ''Israel brought us to a point where we started looking just for bread.'' He said that he would settle for ''the minimum of my dreams,'' but he thought that minimum was well above Israel's maximum concession.

What is known rather grimly as a ''final status'' deal does appear a long way off. There is a possible intermediate step, and Abbas fears it. He worries that the Israelis and Americans will seize on a Gaza withdrawal to push for a possibility mentioned in the road map, the creation of ''an independent Palestinian state with provisional borders.'' No one knows exactly what this would be. But it would give the appearance of a great step forward, an achievement for Bush on the order of Oslo. Abbas says he would reject it as a trap, a version of what Sharon calls a ''long-term interim agreement'' that would defer resolution of the toughest issues. Abbas thinks it could create a state that hopscotched from Gaza through enclaves on the West Bank, while downgrading the conflict to just another border dispute and releasing international pressure on Israel for further concessions. From a historical perspective, it is an astounding possibility: that Ariel Sharon could wind up insisting on a Palestinian state over the objections of a Palestinian leader. If Bush backs it, it may be an offer Abbas cannot refuse.

Sharon's aides say that he believes a long-term interim arrangement will allow the adversaries to cool off and learn to live together. As time goes by, they say, the precise borders will matter less. Yet the historical pattern is the opposite. It is when Palestinians are feeling rested and prosperous that their political demands come once more to the fore. Nation-building makes people impatient for national liberation. Like other Palestinians, Hawashin is already anticipating the fire next time. ''There will be another intifada, of course,'' he told me. The Palestinians will once again be ruled by their hearts, not their heads, he said, and in their hearts they will never surrender.

''I don't consider myself a defeated person,'' Hawashin said. ''I consider myself a weak person.''

I left Jenin by crossing through the barrier at the town's edge. Built here of electrified fencing, it stretched into the distance on either hand, flanked by a dirt road and stacked coils of concertina wire. The old checkpoint, an ad hoc array of concrete blocks and armored vehicles, was gone. In its place was a giant yellow steel gate, a separate passageway to examine pedestrians and a building of glass and steel. The soldier smiled as he took my passport. It looked, as the major checkpoints increasingly do, like an international border crossing. As I drove past it, between the rich brown furrows of Israel's Jezreel Valley, a paraglider circled overhead against the blue sky. From up there, it must all look so peaceful and sensible: Israelis on one side, Palestinians on the other, a bright, sharp line in between. I wondered what he would think if an errant breeze carried him into Palestine.

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Graphic

Photos: Yasir Arafat's grave at the presidential compound in Ramallah.

Nizar Rayan, a Hamas leader in Gaza whose master's thesis was on martyrdom.

Rana El Farra, a molecular biologist and professor who is archiving Gaza's DNA.

Mahmoud Hawashin, who grew up in Jenin's refugee camp and is now in charge of collecting utility fees. (Photographs by Taryn Simon for The New York Times)

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Body

In the early morning of April 5, in the West Bank town of Tubas, an elderly man was milking his goats in his olive grove when he heard the whining of an unmanned drone in the sky. He looked up and saw Israeli special forces emerging from behind some trees on the nearby hillside and from cars with Palestinian plates to surround a small stone house that belonged to his son. "Jaish, jaish" ("army, army"), he shouted to his son, and told him to send his wife and daughter down the slope. He did not suggest that his son, Munqas Sawafta, try to escape. Sawafta had given refuge the day before to five Palestinian fighters, in the midst of Israel's Operation Defensive Shield.

"Would it have been acceptable for the host to run away and leave behind his guests?" asked the father, in his red kaffiyeh, leaning on his cane. "It was better he die with dignity than be killed as a collaborator." Someone had obviously tipped off the Israelis that the men were hiding in the house and that among them was Qeis Adwan, a 25-year-old Hamas activist, inventive bomb maker, mastermind of several devastating suicide-bomb attacks and charismatic political leader who had risen to the top of Israel's most-wanted list the previous summer. He had already escaped several attempts to capture or kill him.

The Israelis shouted an order to surrender. Sawafta came out the front door while one of the Palestinian fighters slipped out the back, skidding down toward the olive trees, firing his rifle. Both were shot dead. Tanks, helicopters and troops besieged the house. Around midafternoon, after hours of trading gunfire, the Israelis dispatched a neighbor with a white flag, to see if anyone in the house had survived the onslaught. In fact, Qeis Adwan and the three other fighters were still alive and armed. The neighbor told them they had two choices -- surrender or be martyred. The discussion was brief; they'd never surrender.

As an Israeli D-9 armored bulldozer ripped off the front of the house, one of the men had time to scrawl a message in blood on the bedroom wall above a white bed frame: "Allah-u-Akhbar, Abu Hamza Said, Tulkarm" ("God is great," his name and hometown). By dusk the four men were dead. Adwan was the last to die, shot in the head at close range. The next day, the military wing of Hamas, the Iz al-Din Al Qassam Brigades, issued a statement vowing horrific revenge: "It will be a new kind of punishment this time, of an unaccustomed type that will shake their entity and destroy its pillars."

By now, israeli assassination operations against Palestinians have become as routine as Palestinian suicide bombings. Every terrorist act prompts an Israeli military response or what the Israelis call a "targeted killing," which in turn elicits a murderous Palestinian retaliation -- particularly when the target is a leader of an armed wing like Al Qassam Brigades of Hamas; Al Aksa Martyrs Brigades of Fatah, Arafat's nationalist party; Islamic Jihad; or the

Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. The cycle has been spiraling unabated, with minor truces, for more than eight years, since Hamas launched its first suicide-bombing missions to avenge a massacre by an Israeli settler, Baruch Goldstein. And it shows no signs of abating: in just the week before this article went to press, Jerusalem suffered two suicide attacks in which 26 were killed and retaliated by killing 2 militants, seizing Palestinian lands and sweeping up thousands of Palestinians.

Most Israelis had never heard of Qeis Adwan (pronounced kice ODD-wahn) until he was killed and the newspapers reported his rap sheet: how he masterminded the suicide attacks at the Matza restaurant in Haifa on March 31, two days after the start of Operation Defensive Shield; at a Sbarro restaurant in Jerusalem last August; and on a crowded railway platform in the coastal town of Nahariya the following month. Altogether, 31 Israelis died in the bombings, and scores more were wounded. To Shin Bet, the Israeli internal security service, Adwan had become one of the most dangerous Palestinian militants, threatening enough to merit a carefully calculated -- and expensive -- assassination plot, right in the middle of the army's first emergency call to war since the invasion of Lebanon in 1982.

One morning a few weeks after Adwan's death, I met with a Shin Bet officer in Tel Aviv to find out why Adwan was considered to be so dangerous. "He had three outstanding characteristics which were catastrophic from our point of view," the officer said: his ability to manufacture ever more potent bombs, his logistical imagination in the plotting and execution of the attacks and his leadership potential.

Adwan had emerged as the most popular and inspiring leader of the student union at An Najah National University in Nablus, which is, with 13,000 students, the largest in the West Bank. But he was also a longtime member of Hamas, the virulently anti-Israeli Islamic group. So when the second intifada began, in September 2000, he moved quickly into a more militant role, assuming command responsibility in the northern military wing of Hamas.

He not only recruited and dispatched suicide bombers but led attacks against Israeli military positions. He also pushed to improve the Palestinians' crude and so far ineffective Qassam rocket, a homemade weapon with a range of about five miles. He coordinated military attacks and financial matters for Hamas in the West Bank and Gaza (physical travel between the two is impossible for most Palestinians) and talked with affiliates in other countries. "He's one of the few who were in touch with Hamas headquarters in Jordan and Syria," the Shin Bet officer said.

On March 31, two days after Israeli tanks rolled into Ramallah, Adwan produced his deadliest bomb yet and sent it off in an explosives belt with a young man from a village not far from his own. The bomber detonated himself in the Arab-run Matza restaurant, killing 15 and wounding more than 40. Among the dead -- many of whose bodies were disfigured beyond recognition by fire and shrapnel packed inside the bomb -- were several Israeli Arabs.

Listening to the Shin Bet officer's descriptions of Qeis Adwan's Haifa bombing -- "an outstanding operation," "he learns from his mistakes," "he pulled off a difficult one, a first for Hamas" -- I had the feeling that he almost admired his adversary in a professional way. But if he did, the feeling was tempered by moral revulsion.

"I've been in this business for 20 years," the officer said, "and I've never encountered such a vicious and cruel terrorist as Qeis Adwan."

It was an astonishing claim regarding such a young man barely out of college, given the long list of his predecessors -- among them, Yahya Ayyash, the prototype of the Hamas "engineer" (typically a bomb maker with an engineering degree) and originator of Hamas's suicide bombers.

The Shin Bet officer shook his head. Ayyash had a family, he said, but Adwan had no personal life whatsoever -- no wife, no interest in his family. He was, he said, a "terror machine."

Cross the Green Line into the West Bank, and not surprisingly, you find an entirely different portrait of Qeis Adwan. "Kind," "simple," "flexible," "polite," "diligent," "beloved." When I met his mother a few weeks after his death, she said, "He never carried a gun." She was a tall, formidable woman, dressed in black with a white hijab tight around her face. Her eyes shone with pride in Qeis as she showed me a photograph of him crouching next to a snowman. "He was an angel in a human body," she said. "When he was young, he didn't even like to see insects die."

One of Qeis's brothers, Nassar, a skinny 22-year-old studying civil engineering, told me he was taking an exam last summer when a friend passed him a newspaper with Qeis's name printed in a list of those most wanted by the Israelis. He raced home from Nablus. "I opened the door, and Qeis looked at me and knew I knew, and that I wanted a reaction. He said: 'What they're saying is totally untrue. Is it possible I could be responsible for all this?'

"All of us knew it was the death sentence for Qeis," Nassar continued. "In the past, if Israel suspected you, they arrested you. But in this intifada they send you a rocket."

The Adwans all agreed -- Qeis was enough politics for one family. Nassar stays out of the limelight at college. Ahmad, Qeis's oldest brother, who sacrificed his dream of attending college to help finance Qeis's studies, is engaged to be married.

The family now lives in a modern, airy apartment that Qeis insisted they move into after his graduation. (It was not clear who financed the move, or how.) Until then, Qeis, his four brothers, parents and grandparents had shared one stone room in a crammed alleyway in the old quarter of Jenin, just a five-minute walk from the new place. The domed room is bare and dusty now, except for one relic from Qeis's student days -- an ornate architectural model for a fine arts building at An Najah University. White and blue and gold, the model sits shining in relief, as if it might offer some clue to Qeis's life, like the golden-hued watercolor he painted for his architecture professor.

The watercolor depicts the corner of an old stone house, with a shuttered window and curved stone steps leading to a door shaded in an archway. "He was so committed to academics and politics," his professor said, fingering the sketch, "I can't imagine what changed him -- if it's true." Shin Bet would say that nothing changed him, that he was Hamas and that Hamas is terror. But what forces had converged, I wondered, to transform a promising young architect and student leader into the commander of a regiment of suicide bombers?

Qeis Adwan Abu Jabal (Abu Jabal means "father of the mountain" and is his family name) was 10 in 1987, when the first intifada exploded throughout Gaza and the West Bank. Streets in his old neighborhood -- the stronghold of the resistance in Jenin during that time -- bear names like Al Mujahedeen, Al Intifada and Yahya Ayyash. Growing up, he saw constant confrontations between the Israeli Army and young stone-throwing Palestinians. He watched the army storm the homes of his neighbors and relatives. His aunt recalled him watching his uncle, who was 16 at the time, getting beaten by Israeli soldiers. His uncle never recovered his mental faculties, she said.

When Qeis wasn't in school, he spent hours at the mosque with his grandfather, a devout man from Siris, a village in the valley between Nablus and Jenin, where the family still has olive orchards. By 12 or 13, one of his friends said, Qeis was a Hamas child, hanging up the group's green flags, pasting up martyrs' posters and throwing stones at the soldiers in the municipal park.

Later, he was one of the top students at his high school. He memorized large sections of the Koran and followed, like every Hamas child, the group's motto: "Allah is its goal, the prophet is its model, the Koran is its constitution, jihad is its path and death for the sake of Allah is its most coveted desire." In his last year in high school, he landed in an Israeli prison for 40 days, family members said, on suspicion of belonging to Hamas. (The Shin Bet officer insisted that it was only eight days.)

The next year, his parents mustered the money for him to study architectural engineering. Soon after, he lost one of his closest friends and a fellow Hamas activist, Tariq Mansour, who was shot dead in uncertain circumstances at an Israeli checkpoint. And in his second semester, he was hauled off again to prison, this time for six months and by the Palestinian Authority, which had been pressured by Israel to round up Islamic militants after a spate of suicide attacks. While there, as his friend and the current student leader of An Najah University, Ala'a Hmeidan, put it, he gained "the ability to sustain pain like a sponge."

In prison, Qeis forged one of his most important relationships, with Sheikh Jamal Abu al-Haija, a Hamas leader in the Jenin refugee camp. As a child, Qeis listened to his preachings, but it was in prison that their bond was sealed. He became Qeis's spiritual mentor. Qeis gave lessons to Jamal's young children on visiting days. Jamal was the caretaker of the prison's other political detainees. Qeis was his deputy, leading hunger strikes and attending to prisoners' problems.

Qeis was on affable terms with everyone, even his jailers, said a cousin and a Fatah officer from his ancestral village. But he was enraged that the Palestinian authorities were detaining political activists without trial. This was not the free Palestine he had imagined since childhood. The experience intensified both his determination to resist and his belief that "Islam is the solution" -- a Hamas slogan. Sacrifice, in whatever form, became the essence of his ideology. A fellow prisoner recalled him reiterating the word like a mantra in every context: "He said, 'My only concern now is how I can sacrifice myself to stop the oppression in our homeland.'"

At An Najah University he found a way. Spread out under the rocky mountains of Nablus, the university is not only the largest but also the most radical in the West Bank. In the annual student elections -- pitting candidates from student affiliates of all the major Palestinian parties -- the Islamic bloc has won by increasing margins every year since 1995. It's not hard to see why. The Islamic parties are not considered to be corrupt. They don't work for the Palestinian Authority intelligence services, as do many in Arafat's Fatah party. And they have a highly efficient recruitment apparatus. Any time the P.A. rounds up Hamas student activists or the Israelis assassinate a suspected militant (as they did 15 in Nablus in 2001), the Islamic bloc wins more members.

Hamas calls An Najah University "the nest of the Qassami Brigades," the group's military wing, and boasts that the university has produced 11 suicide bombers for the intifada. The day I arrived in mid-May, two Hamas leaders opened an exhibition on the Israeli occupation, and local journalists were being barred from entering the campus. The administration was eager to avoid a repeat of the scandal last September, when Hamas unveiled an exhibit on the bombing of the Sbarro pizza restaurant in Jerusalem. That attack, which took place at lunch hour at the intersection of Jaffa and King George Streets -- the equivalent of Times Square -- was planned and executed seemingly with malevolent care to produce the maximum carnage. Packed with nails, the bomb killed 15 people, including 6 children, and wounded 130 more.

The Sbarro exhibit was a room-size installation with broken tables splattered with fake blood and body parts, a mannequin of the bomber with a Koran and a rifle and a slogan referring to Hamas's military wing: "Qassami Pizza is more delicious." After a report on Israeli television, the university president's office was bombarded with outraged faxes from around the world. Yasir Arafat promptly had the exhibit shut down.

Qeis was on the political scene from his first days in the engineering department in 1996. By his junior year, he was so popular that the Palestinian Authority sparked a revolt by detaining him and another student leader just days before the campus elections. Students boycotted classes and went on hunger strikes. Even the Fatah youth candidates railed at the P.A. for corrupting their image -- for making it look as if they had conspired to sabotage Qeis. After three days, the P.A. released the two, and the Islamic bloc won.

As the leader of the student union, Qeis advocated "Islam as a solution," not just to fight Israel but to change Palestinian society. He led demonstrations against the Palestinian Authority's crackdowns on Islamic activists. He visited students in prison and registered them for classes. At this stage, his friends claimed, Qeis often said that as long as the P.A. considered jihad illegal, "we will delay until a suitable time and focus our priorities elsewhere." He closely followed the teachings of Hasan al-Banna, an imam who founded the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt in 1928 and was assassinated in 1949. "Build the state of Islam in your hearts," al-Banna once said in a passage that is often quoted, "so this will lead to the Islamic state on your land." When the student council chose Qeis as its leader, he accepted in divine terms. "I am mandated by God to help the students," he once wrote.

Everywhere I went on the campus, I heard stories of Qeis's efforts to solve students' problems. "He found my sister housing and lowered her tuition fees," a local journalist said. He created a Web site for the student council to connect with students elsewhere in the West Bank and in Gaza. He was the poor students' advocate, collecting funds from rich families to give to the poor, finding them cheap housing, appealing to the administration to lower or waive their fees. He opened a used-book store on campus.

Students of every political persuasion sought him out for help with their psychological, financial and academic problems. They affectionately called him Abu (father) Tariq, a name he once gave himself in memory of his high-school friend killed by Israelis. In the courtyard, he erected a clock tower in the shape of pre-1948 Palestine, to

remind students that "we own all of Palestine," said a classmate. It is now called Qeis's or Abu Tariq's Tower. And he brought to the campus the muezzin's call to prayer five times a day.

Tensions between the Islamic parties and Fatah were often explosive in Nablus. And yet, his professors said, Qeis always tried to unify the factions and mollify the Palestinian Authority. He was not a fanatic, they insist, but a pragmatist. "And he was funny," Ala'a Hmeidan said. "This opened all doors for him."

"He would have been a great political leader in our history," his mother told me. And that is precisely what had so worried the Shin Bet officer. It was the combination of his engineering and strategic and political talents, the officer said, that "made him lethal."

But history and politics intervened in Qeis's destiny. In July 2000, the Camp David summit meeting convened and quickly unraveled, with each side accusing the other of intransigence. Qeis led a campus protest, shouting: "From Camp David 1979 to Camp David 2000 is all a path of compromises. Our Palestine is from the river to the sea, and we will not give up a grain of soil."

As his brother Ahmad said: "Of course he didn't approve of the peace process. We didn't regain a lot of our lands. The lands handed to the Palestinians weren't contiguous. As a Palestinian and Muslim, he argued, he couldn't get to Al Aksa Mosque even once in his life." While the mosque is on the Temple Mount in East Jerusalem, and under nominal Palestinian control, Israeli travel restrictions prevent Palestinians outside Jerusalem from getting to the city. In fact, Qeis never made it out of the Nablus-Jenin area.

And then on Sept. 29, 2000, Ariel Sharon, who would soon be Israel's prime minister, went to the Temple Mount in a move that enraged the Palestinians. At a campus protest two days later, Qeis shouted, "Let Sharon know that all of us will be time bombs which will explode one day defending Al Aksa Mosque." And he led the students out of the university gates, through the city and toward an army checkpoint.

There, suddenly, the whole game changed. Time magazine published a collection of intifada diary entries at the time. One, by Qeis, reflected on that day:

"I was under a special premonition of fear and portent. After dawn, I started reading the Koran. The sun's rays were weaving a special dress of martyrdom. The sun told us, 'You have a date with martyrdom.' My heart was brimful with a special feeling. Large numbers of students gathered in the courtyard. We started shouting, 'God is most great!' I asked the students to wash their faces and hands before prayers. I looked at the faces of the youths, thinking that a serious incident would occur.

"It was the biggest march I have ever seen at An Najah University. We walked for five or six kilometers. Hundreds of the marchers rushed to the front line to clash with the soldiers. I could not forget these moments. The shooting from the Israeli soldiers was intense. It was like a battlefield. Our faith is our weapon against the soldiers, the occupiers. Two youths standing next to me were wounded. The number of casualties was large beyond expectation.

"I was told that my roommate, Zakariya Kilani, 21, was among the martyrs. He was with me for two years. He was my brother and my friend. He was my body. I could not believe that Zakariya died. I lost my dearest friend. This is the decree of God. He told me at the mosque that he wanted to die as a martyr. Heaven has opened its gates for martyrs. Honestly, though, I was shocked when Zakariya fell a martyr."

With the violence spreading to every Palestinian city, Israel gambled that a swift military response would crush the uprising. Within five days, 42 Palestinians were dead and about 1,300 wounded. Three Israelis were killed. Qeis was delighted that the confrontation had finally arrived. Until then, he had obeyed the Palestinian Authority's ban on jihad. Now, with Fatah in the fray, everything was fair game. "He said this is the true nature of our relations with Israel until the occupation ends," one friend told me.

Another, Muhammad Hambali, said: "Qeis began to rethink everything. 'We're giving all these martyrs by means of stones and marchers,' he said. 'We're losers with these methods.' And so he began to develop the new method." In

retrospect, it looks as if Qeis's life had been one long germination process for the second intifada. He had come of age with Hamas, which was founded in 1987, and in joining Al Qassam Brigades he took the final step to jihad.

Sometime in the fall of 2000, the "engineers" of Nablus, the West Bank headquarters of Al Qassam, began educating Qeis in the arts of bomb-making. That December, the first Hamas suicide bomber from An Najah University blew himself up at a roadside cafe packed with soldiers. Days later, Hamed Abu Hejli, a friend of Qeis's on the student council, blew himself up at a bus stop in Netanya. "It's marvelous," Qeis remarked at ceremonies for the two bombers, "that man sacrifices himself so as to enable his nation to live."

In May 2001, shortly before his graduation, Qeis noticed a white Subaru pull up outside his building. Three men dressed like Palestinians but looking suspiciously like Israeli special forces stepped out. When one aimed a pistol at Qeis, who was standing in the window, he shouted to the students in the street and ducked under the table. The men jumped back into the Subaru and sped away. After that, said Qeis's friend Muhammad Hambali, Qeis was constantly on the move, and his friends rarely saw him anymore.

Before I left An Najah University, I took a tour of the Hamas exhibition of the Israeli occupation. I was curious to see what the university officials had wanted to hide from the local press. A dropcloth painted like the facade of a gray house with blood dripping down the stones was draped over the building. The exhibition began in a room haunted by taped screams and lined with photographs of the invasion of Nablus, as well as a shot of a house collapsed atop a ponytailed girl. The next gallery reproduced a military internment camp, with photographs of imprisoned students behind fake jail bars. Just ahead of me, dozens of students squeezed through a dark, narrow tunnel and covered their mouths to hide their laughter as they filed past a live model of a militant in fatigues, lying motionless in a sniper's position, defending the Jenin refugee camp. Rockets made from plastic bottles, painted in gold with the words "Made in America," penetrated a stone wall.

A warning sign was tacked over the door to the next room: "If you have a weak heart or troubles, take care when entering this room." There you were greeted by photographs of Palestinian babies torn apart, of bodies charred and chewed up by shrapnel. Next was a scene from paradise -- a photograph of Qeis in military fatigues atop a painted mountain, with an elegy to him as he joins his Hamas comrades.

What followed was an homage to Qeis: his graduation project, which was a large model of a tree-lined bus terminal and shopping center planned for downtown Jenin, and photographs of him accepting the student leadership, speaking at a rally and honoring the best students. On display behind black curtains and a low black scrim were the highlights of his career in Al Qassam -- models of the Sbarro restaurant, the Matza restaurant, posters of the suicide bombers involved in each and a poster with Qeis in the middle flanked by Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, the founder and leader of Hamas, and Osama bin Laden.

At the end, there was a decree: "After we studied and saw the number of Zionists killed, and in accordance with the rules of Jihad, we decided to grant Qeis Adwan Abu Jabal, born in Jenin, a degree of excellence in martyrism from Yahya Ayyash College with all the rights of this degree." It was signed "Iz al-Din Al Qassam Brigades."

The exhibit wrapped up in paradise: birds singing amid bouquets of flowers; a sweet aroma of perfume; a life-size dummy of Qeis in a shroud, the jacket he died in draped over it; and a photograph of Qeis and Zakariya Kilani smiling, relaxed, before the intifada.

Later, I met up with a student of marketing and advertising called Ali, and his art professor, who said they felt it was time for the silent dissenters -- "And we're not a small faction," Ali said -- to speak out against the suicide bombings. "In the past, people thought we should leave the extremists alone," the art professor said. "Now it has changed. We should stop them because they are hurting us." Then he glanced over his shoulders. "I want to shout it, but sometimes I am afraid."

In mid-May, hoping to fill in the remaining mystery of Qeis's life -- the military side -- I paid a visit to his old friend and mentor Sheikh Jamal Abu al-Haija in the Jenin refugee camp. A glossy scorecard of past suicide operations was being passed around the camp, and the guys from Hamas were angry. How could they be last on the list, after Islamic Jihad and Al Aksa Martyrs, especially since their attacks were usually the deadliest?

In the exposed third floor of one house, where the facade had been stripped off by an Israeli bulldozer, a poster of Saddam Hussein balanced on a chair. A local journalist told me that Saddam's money had just arrived for 40 families with destroyed homes -- $25,000 per family, the same amount given to the families of suicide bombers. A retarded boy wandered by spraying perfume over the odor of unseen rotting bodies. "Give me liberty or give me death" was scrawled in English on the shard of a wall.

Wanted men appeared and disappeared. A fatherly figure, whose destroyed living room is now an open-air porch and meeting point for the homeless, said about an elusive fighter I needed to talk to: "He can't stay in one place too long. He's still wanted." The fighter, with a pistol in his pants and a face flecked with shrapnel bites and black burned patches, appeared momentarily but then dashed off.

Jamal is the wanted man in the camp these days. He's 42, with a kinky gray-and-black beard. His eyelids are so dark that they look as if they were brushed with charcoal. I met him a few weeks earlier, when he was still insisting that he was just a media spokesman and that he had seen Qeis in passing only over the last six months. This time, in his home, Jamal partly lifted the veil, as if he had decided that his days were numbered and that the publicity could only do Hamas good. The house, like the whole of the Jenin camp, was a damaged martyrs' gallery, decorated with posters of those who bombed the Sbarro and Matza restaurants, as well as of the fighter who led the camp's resistance.

Young men wandered in and out all day, each filling in pieces of Qeis's life. "You see Hamas is now attracting the intellectuals," Jamal said with a touch of sarcasm, since most of the young men were studying hard sciences. Indeed, the Hamas militant responsible for the recent Jerusalem bus bombing, 22-year-old Muhammad al-Ghoul, was pursuing a master's degree in Islamic studies from An Najah University.

"Hamas's operations are so painful to the Israelis because they use their scientific capabilities," Jamal added. Qeis himself, in the months leading up to his killing, was concocting ever more lethal explosives. "He was developing rocket-propelled grenades and Qassam rockets," said one of the young men, a computer scientist. Pointing to him, Jamal laughed and said, "You should replace Qeis." The young man shook his head shyly, saying, "No, no."

The men clearly loved Jamal and his warm, embracing manner. He sat in his chair rubbing the short nub that remains of his left arm, which he lost March 1, during the first invasion of the Jenin refugee camp. Two school-age boys came home with their red backpacks. One of them, Jamal's 10-year-old son, Hamzi, said that he was a great admirer of Qeis, who taught him how to do his homework and brought toys for his little sister, Sadjita. "I told him I want to be like you, a fighter for freedom," Hamzi said. Sadjita, who is about 5, piped up and said she wanted to be a martyr when she grows up. Her father said that she told him she's going to meet his martyred friends in paradise, between the mountains. To me, she said, "I want to meet Qeis in paradise."

Martyrdom, revenge, jihad, occupation, liberation. The words, the deeds, the aspirations have become so enmeshed that it's impossible to envision a world outside this deadly ring. Here in Jamal's half-destroyed home, in the destroyed camp, in the besieged city of Jenin, there was the collective sense of resisting the occupiers. But there also was a collective disease born of utter despair, a cult of suicide, of celebrating death as a solution for life. You rarely see posters of singers, athletes or actors in the West Bank anymore. Suicide bombers are the new celebrities and heroes of Palestine.

In the evening, Jamal's cellphone rang. It was Zaid Kilani, the brother of Qeis's best friend Zakariya. He's in prison, having partly blown himself up in March 2001, when Israeli special police ambushed him at a checkpoint in Wadi Ara as he was rushing back from Tel Aviv to Jenin with a defective bomb. Zaid's story is a tale of revenge and conversion. And speaking to him through my translator, I caught a glimpse of the mundane details that make up what these militants and suiciders see as their "sublime vocation."

He was leading a directionless, debauched life, he said, until his brother Zakariya was shot dead. "I went out on the streets with a knife," Zaid recalled. "I wanted to kill any Jew." Then he went to Qeis. He asked for his help to avenge his brother's killing. He told Qeis that he wanted to join Al Qassam Brigades. "Qeis told me, 'I felt you would come to see me.' So he mobilized and prepared me. He rented me an apartment, gave me a pistol and money, 2,000

shekels" (about $400 today). Zaid became a soldier for Al Qassam and began to change his ways. He started praying, stopped drinking and started thinking seriously about marriage.

"Before Qeis, I had no aim in my life," Zaid said quietly. (He is apparently not supposed to have the cellphone in prison.) "He was the essential element in changing my life. He lightened the road for me and raised my morality." Soon after Zakariya's death, Zaid traveled to Tel Aviv to the Carmel market and stabbed an Israeli officer.

Zaid had two assets that were extremely appealing to Qeis. Having worked in various restaurants in Tel Aviv, he knew all the city's shopping centers and streets. But more important, he had a 20-year-old Russian Jewish girlfriend, Angelica Francesca Yosefov. Zaid wanted to end the relationship and marry a Palestinian woman, but "Qeis told me: 'No, keep it. You have to use it.' We planned to rent an Israeli apartment in the Russian girl's name and establish a laboratory there to manufacture bombs inside Tel Aviv. Qeis told me we have to do our best to kill at least 200 Jews, me and him."

Zaid did not aspire to be a suicide bomber. "How many could I kill in a suicide? Ten? Twenty? I could make much greater losses on the Israeli side by planting explosives." But just in case of a slip-up, he carried a pistol, preferring martyrdom to detention. Carrying two sets of explosives, Zaid said he picked up Angelica and went to a restaurant on Allenby Street in Tel Aviv. He left one bomb there and headed to the Dolphinarium, a nightclub where a friend worked as a guard and where, three months later, a suicide bomber would kill 21 and wound more than 100, mostly young people.

Zaid slipped inside, dropped off a sack with the second bomb and left. The detonator was supposed to be activated by a cellphone. "Suddenly Qeis called me," Zaid said. "The bomb was discovered in the restaurant. It didn't explode. So I went back and took the explosives from the nightclub."

Zaid said that Israeli investigators told him that there were 36 missed calls registered on the phone detonator of the restaurant bomb. "I tried to explode it 36 times," he exclaims. "But the explosives had so many technical errors." Qeis told him to leave immediately and throw his phone into the sea.

"Unfortunately," he said, "I didn't obey him. It was my fatal mistake." The Israelis traced the contact between his cellphone, the detonator in the restaurant and the calls to Qeis. When the Israeli police surrounded him, he used his pistol to detonate the explosives. He lost an eye, a hand and his stomach lining, but his proud achievement, he said, is that he killed an Israeli. He's still in touch with Angelica, who is also in prison. And though he did in fact marry a Palestinian woman -- 10 days before his arrest -- he said he would like to marry Angelica, too, one day.

Why, I asked Zaid, did you choose to blow up the Dolphinarium? "The only guidelines my Al Qassami colleagues gave me," he said, "were that the bombs must be far away from the schools and kindergartens, far away from the synagogues and far away from the inhabited buildings and universities. I was very close to that site, and I saw those young men and young girls who are drunk. There were a lot of them. So I chose that spot because I'd have the chance to kill a large number of them."

For the Israelis, Zaid was a boon. He said he tried to keep quiet in the interrogation, but sleep deprivation and injections of some kind of stimulant defeated him. "I only told them Qeis led me to get the bombs from Mohaned Tahir," who is known as Engineer No. 5. The Shin Bet didn't believe him, thinking correctly that the bombs had come from Qeis. And from that moment on, Qeis was a wanted man.

Qeis's friends and followers often described him as simple, a word of praise you often hear in Islamic countries. It doesn't mean ignorant, as much as lacking ostentation, plain, pure, fundamental, like the prophet Muhammad. Qeis believed himself to be not only continuing the heroic struggles of the prophet but also following in the footsteps of Sheikh Iz al-Din al-Qassam, after whom Hamas named its military wing. A Syrian-born imam, al-Qassam organized terrorist cells to kill the British and the Jews in Palestine. He was forced to flee to the mountains around Jenin, where he was killed by the British in 1935. His final, 10-day stand and his execution exalted his life into legend.

By the summer of 2001, Qeis was taking refuge in those same mountain villages between Jenin and Nablus where he had harvested olives as a child. There he read the Koran, dispatched martyrs and plotted his operations.

I was given a glimpse of that period in Qeis's life from a thin young man with wide, dark eyes and long eyelashes, whom I met in Sheikh Jamal's house on my visit to Jenin. When the man appeared at the landing, the other men in the room were asked to leave, so as not to see his face. He was one of Qeis's soldiers, trained and inspired by him. We went into the bedroom, where grain was drying on a mat. He drew a curtain over the interior window and began to paint a sketchy picture of Qeis's life underground.

He reiterated Qeis's teachings. "We don't like killing the Jews, but Al Aksa is under the Israeli occupation, and we have to liberate Al Aksa Mosque and all Palestinian lands." With each memory of Qeis, a shy smile of a child spread across his face.

He recalled bringing a few dates and bread to Qeis to break his Ramadan fast. "And though it wasn't much, Qeis told me, 'Our aim in this life is not only to eat.' And he took these dates and bread and went to the mountain saying, 'I hope I will take my meal in paradise.'" Qeis knew he could no longer marry on earth, the man said, so he talked instead of marrying the huris (the virgins) in paradise.

Shortly after Qeis's name appeared on the wanted list, the young soldier went to warn him. When the soldier found Qeis in his shelter, he was calmly preparing explosives. The soldier urged Qeis to lie low, but he refused. He planted his bombs on a Jenin bypass road -- one of the special roads built for Israeli settlers and soldiers -- and waited for an Israeli patrol. As soon as the jeep was in view, he detonated his bombs by remote control, killing several soldiers. "He came back to the shelter. He was happy and smiling, and he told me: 'You see. We are mujahed, and we mustn't be afraid.'"

In September 2001, just days before the World Trade Center attack, Muhammad Saker Habashi blew himself up at a train station in the northern coastal town of Nahariya. He was an Israeli Arab, the first to mount a suicide operation, and his act set a terrifying precedent, given the million Israeli Arabs inside Israel. Moreover, he was 48, with two wives and several children; not the usual profile of a suicide bomber.

Qeis, the young man told me, was astonished when Habashi had come to his shelter and said he wanted to be a martyr. "He said, 'But you're an old man, why?' Habashi answered: 'Every human being has his own aim in this life, and mine is I want to be a martyr. I want to enter paradise.'

"I remember Qeis was touched by his strong words, and he took the explosives belt and told Habashi: 'I will go instead of you. You stay.' Habashi refused. They had lunch. They sat on the floor and drank coffee. They talked for four hours. Qeis insisted that Habashi take care of his family. Habashi replied: 'The pioneers and martyrs in the beginning of Islam used to leave their families and go to al jihad. They didn't care about their families.' The next day, Habashi walked to the train platform, which was crowded with Israeli soldiers, and blew himself up. Three Israelis were killed, and more than 90 people -- Arabs among them -- were injured.

Qeis maintained his reign as terrorist mastermind throughout the winter and into the spring. Once a prospective architect and engineer and caretaker of students, he was now the caretaker of martyrs and an unrepentant killer, deciding the fates of Palestinians and Israelis alike. Ultimately, he would tell prospective bombers -- who often competed hotly for the chance to carry out attacks -- it makes no difference who is chosen. "All of us expect to be martyred," he said in a taped interview shortly after the Sbarro bombing. "When the mujahed carries a rifle in one hand and his soul in the other, he knows his destiny is martyrdom."

He also feels empowered, according to Dr. Iyad Serraj. A psychiatrist in Gaza, Serraj has been studying the effects of the occupation and resistance on young Palestinians, particularly from the first, unarmed intifada. "When you join one of these militant organizations, you suddenly have access to guns and grenades and all these symbols of man's power," he said. "This brings back to the children their early traumatic experience and puts them in a position today to say: 'I am not powerless like my father was. I am in control.' Of course there's the element of excitement, being able to play a very serious game of hide-and-seek, of chasing the enemy and risking your life. Take all this and put on it the question of ideological teaching, and you have a new person."

The last time the young soldier saw Qeis was on April 4. "Qeis wanted very much to commit a suicide-bomb attack," the soldier recalled. "We used to prepare explosives for the invasions, but the night before the Israelis invaded, he

told me to leave the camp immediately, because he didn't want us to lose all our armed men." The Israelis believe that Qeis was given instructions from Hamas leaders outside Israel to save himself for future use. The young soldier said, "I remember Qeis said: 'Scatter yourselves. Work by wisdom. Use your brain. And take care.' He took his M-16 and a belt of explosives that weighed 35 pounds. He insisted that he would never surrender.

"Qeis," the soldier said, fidgeting and obviously eager to be on his way, "is a loss you can't restore." But, he vowed, he will follow in Qeis's path with the other young men who share his spirit of faith and jihad.

I left Jamal at 11 p.m. Three hours later, tanks ground into Jenin while helicopters clattered overhead. Shots rang out here and there. The family I was staying with was accustomed to it by now. The youngest daughter had a thick stack of postcard-size collectors' items, like baseball cards, only these were martyrdom cards. Toubasi, Al Masri, Hamad, Hashem, Tawalbi, she said, dropping one after another on my lap. On television, Al Manar, the ***Hezbollah*** station and one of the favorites in the Arab world, flashed a picture of Tawalbi, a leader of Islamic Jihad, who was killed leading the resistance in the Jenin camp. Another daughter crooned at the TV and kissed Tawalbi's image.

The next morning, with the city closed off by Israeli tanks, I returned to Jamal's house. Outside, two children were mocking the speech Arafat made weeks earlier from his compound in Ramallah, which was then surrounded by Israeli tanks. Arafat had said he wanted to be "a shahid, a shahid, a shahid," a martyr. The kids said, "You say you want to be a shahid, but you're just a traitor, a traitor, a traitor."

Jamal's home had been dynamited during the night. Wet and charred clothes, furniture, the boys' red schoolbags and a red grenade handle were scattered on the roof in front of his second-floor door. The clock was stopped at 3:15. His wife, Assma, in her green-and-white veil, was calm as she described a long, surreal night with Israeli forces under the command of a Captain Jamal, a Druze officer who spoke Arabic and knew everything about the family. (The Israeli military was unable to comment by press time.)

Assma said she awoke to gunshots and the heat of a fire. She screamed, "Don't shoot, don't shoot," grabbed her children and ran outside. Someone shouted at her, "Tell anyone inside we're going to burn your house down."

She wanted her passport and other documents. Sadjita asked if she could get her toys. Then, according to several Palestinians interviewed separately, and who claim to have witnessed the entire incident, Captain Jamal told them to shut up and summoned each child by name. A soldier put a pistol to 11-year-old Assam's head shouting, "Where's your father?" The boy didn't know and was beaten. The same was done to the next son. They took aside Banan, Jamal's 18-year-old daughter, and interrogated her. But her fear had been numbed long ago. Even Sadjita, eating an unripe cherry, said: "I am very sad because my toys were burned, and they beat my brothers in front of me. But I didn't feel frightened from the army. They don't kill children. Only big people. And God is stronger than them."

Captain Jamal summoned Assma and offered a deal for her husband. "We'll put him in prison, not kill him," if she would tell him where he was. But she said she didn't know where he was. "Take my mobile, call him, tell him to come so we won't destroy your house," Captain Jamal said, according to Assma. She began prayers to Allah. "Look," she said the captain told her, "we know there were five young men and a journalist in your house. They stayed until night. Jamal washed, went for prayers and didn't come back. We know what you eat. What you have for lunch, for supper. Not one of our spies was watching you but 20. You have five minutes to decide: where's your husband, or we demolish the house." Assma wasn't budging. The five minutes were over.

"Close your ears," Captain Jamal shouted. After the dynamite had been exploded, the Palestinian witnesses said, Captain Jamal told Assma: "All this army came for your husband, Jamal. We brought 11 military vehicles, tanks, a truck for prisoners. Your husband sends people to blow themselves up and kill our children. We are going to capture him." To date, he's still hiding in Jenin somewhere.

Assma said she prepares herself and her children every moment for Jamal's death. After this last invasion, she said, "the spirit of jihad has been planted in the children and ***women*** themselves. The hatred gets wider and wider."

Over the two days I spent in the Jenin camp, I watched and occasionally talked to a 13-year-old girl who was staying with Jamal's family because her house had been destroyed and her father killed. She had an encyclopedic brain and an uncanny memory. She remembered what I wore in the camp a month before, though we had never met. She remembered conversations with her father from eight years ago and knew what all the politicians were saying or had said. She never smiled and told me that her father wanted her to be a doctor. She said she would prefer to study nuclear physics so she could blow up America. "When someone comes to fight you in your home, you have to fight him back, isn't that true?" she asked.

Of course, these are the words of an angry, hurt child. But in the mind of Serraj, the psychiatrist in Gaza, they may express a potentially terrifying illness, the fruits of 15 years of unending violence. "We have seen the children of the first intifada become suicide bombers," he had said. "You only have to wait and see these children of today, what kind of horror they will bring to the world."

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Graphic

Photos: At age 7, Qeis Adwan (far right) was still playing little-boy games with guns. By the time he was 12 or 13, having experienced the first intifada, in 1987, he had become dedicated to Hamas.; At 17, Qeis was a top high-school student, memorizing long Koran passages and taking the Hamas motto to heart.; At 23, thanks to the second intifada, Qeis became the man he had been growing up to be: a terrorist mastermind. His engineering, strategic and political talents "made him lethal." ; At 25, Qeis was finally caught by Israeli special forces. "It's marvelous that man sacrifices himself so as to enable his nation to live," he once said in celebration of the martyrdom of others. (Adwan Family); Qeis's mother, Fatiya, and three of his brothers -- Ahmad, Waseem and Nassar -- outside their old home in Jenin.; Sheikh Jamal, Qeis's spiritual mentor, is now the most wanted man in the Jenin camp. (Heidi Levine/SIPA Press, for The New York Times)

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The Sunshine Warrior

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Body

Fort Leavenworth in midsummer is a sultry campus for the Army's new leaders, American and allied majors on the fast track and generals who have just earned their first star. When Paul D. Wolfowitz, the deputy secretary of defense, steps out of an Air Force Gulfstream into the Kansas heat, it is not just an overdue courtesy call and not just a peace overture to a rankled service. (He has just killed the Army's prized new $11 billion artillery piece, the Crusader.) It is one more engagement in the war over the coming war.

The subject of his remarks, which the former political-science professor delivers seminar style to the majors and more formally to the generals, is his recent visit to Afghanistan. But Iraq is never far out of sight. Introducing Wolfowitz to an auditorium full of new one-stars and their wives, General Eric K. Shinseki, the Army chief of staff, points out that as a young Pentagon analyst Wolfowitz directed a secret assessment of Persian Gulf threats that marked Iraq as a menace to its neighbors and to American interests. This, Shinseki informs them with everything but a drumroll, was in 1979, a dozen years before Desert Storm.

Wolfowitz then proceeds to use Afghanistan to illustrate how far the military's pinpoint-targeting ability has advanced since that war, when American air and ground forces, unable to communicate with one another, succeeded in destroying only a single one of Saddam Hussein's Scud missile emplacements (and that one was a harmless decoy). The message is that next time around, if there is a next time, what was demonstrated in Afghanistan -- that choreography of unmanned aerial vehicles, precision-guided weapons, indigenous insurgents and special-operations soldiers on the ground -- should, in the first hours of an attack, prove far more adroit at disabling Saddam's most fearsome weapons.

Soldiers tend to cock an eyebrow when civilians who have not known combat talk confidently about the coming conquest, but the closest thing to an open challenge this day comes during Wolfowitz's session with the majors -- from a British officer who raises a hand and asks about Scott Ritter, the former U.N. weapons inspector. Ritter has been in London arguing that Iraq's destructive capability is already neutralized. So where is the threat worth spending American blood?

An exasperated look crosses Wolfowitz's wide, boyish face; Ritter's comments are "simply amazing," he says. Then he stops himself. He acknowledges that Ritter knows something about Iraq and concedes that Saddam has probably not been able to rebuild his nuclear program, not yet. But he notes that when inspectors went in after the gulf war, they found he was far closer than anyone imagined, that in fact he was pursuing four separate avenues for manufacturing a nuclear weapon. And chemical weapons, which he has employed against his own people, or

biological weapons are threat enough, and much easier to construct in a secretive, fearsome police state. This is, Wolfowitz tells the majors, a man who has been known to have children tortured in front of their parents. (The line would later turn up in the president's address to the U.N.)

Revisiting Ritter's argument a few days later in his Pentagon office, Wolfowitz seems genuinely puzzled by the notion that we need evidence of imminent danger to justify getting rid of Saddam. He has encountered this argument earlier -- from the State Department and the C.I.A., in fact, before President Bush stifled that particular line of internal debate by declaring Saddam an intolerable threat, end of story. By the conventions of American foreign policy, a pre-emptive strike against an uncertain threat is perhaps the most radical new security notion of the post-cold-war era. But Wolfowitz says he believes Sept. 11 has awakened us to a world where certainty is an expensive luxury.

"There's an awful lot we don't know, an awful lot that we may never know, and we've got to think differently about standards of proof here," Wolfowitz tells me. "In fact, there's no way you can prove that something's going to happen three years from now or six years from now. But these people have made absolutely clear what their intentions are, and we know a lot about their capabilities. I suppose I hadn't thought of it quite this way, but intentions and capabilities are the way you think about warfare. Proof beyond a reasonable doubt is the way you think about law enforcement. And I think we're much closer to being in a state of war than being in a judicial proceeding."

Wolfowitz is always careful to say that the president has not decided exactly what to do about Iraq and that he himself is not completely convinced yet that a military liberation of Baghdad is worth the risk. But in an administration that is not exactly a hotbed of Saddam coddlers, Wolfowitz has been on the case longer, more consistently, more persistently, than anyone. His tenacity is one reason that the internal debate has moved, astonishingly fast, from a theoretical possibility to questions of method and timing. So fast, in fact, that one argument some make for invading is that Bush has already gone too far out on the limb to back down.

In the first days after Sept. 11, when Secretary of State Colin L. Powell and others within the administration contended it was too early to put Iraq on the agenda -- that there was a war to win in Afghanistan first and that there was no evidence Iraq was complicit in the attacks on the Pentagon and the twin towers -- Wolfowitz argued that Iraq was at the heart of the threat. He suspected then that those who were saying "not yet" really meant "not ever." Now that the president has declared "regime change" the party line, Wolfowitz says, he takes his more skeptical colleagues at face value when they say "not yet." But, he adds, "it seems to me that people who want to say, 'I'm in favor of a regime change, but not now,' have a certain burden to answer the question, 'O.K., well, when?'"

The answer to that question remains a secret, if it has been decided at all. But on the way home from Fort Leavenworth at the end of July, we stopped at Scott Air Force Base, the military's main transportation dispatching hub, where Wolfowitz spent a couple of hours closeted with the men who, soon thereafter, began routing shipments of men and materiel to the gulf. Just in case.

In Washington, some people go straight to caricature, without getting much chance to be interesting or complicated. Paul Wolfowitz, who is interesting and complicated, has been cast since Sept. 11 in the role of zealot. Except for one humanizing incident when he was booed for mentioning the suffering of Palestinians at a pro-Israel rally, Wolfowitz has been summarily depicted as a hawk (The Economist preferred "velociraptor"), conservative ideologue, unilateralist, nemesis of Colin Powell's State Department and, sometimes, "Israel-centric." These epithets capture something of Wolfowitz's views and something of the company he keeps. His mentors have been hard-liners, many of his friends are devout Reaganites and the tracts he has signed when out of public office were written by those who now happily talk of a new American imperialism. One close friend of Wolfowitz's is Richard Perle, the combative defense analyst who might actually relish being called a velociraptor; he heads an adjunct group of advisers, the Defense Policy Board, that has been a vehicle for introducing controversial, even incendiary, viewpoints into the government tent. Perle, in fact, was offered the No. 3 position in the Defense Department, under secretary for policy, and after he declined the job, it went to Douglas Feith, a lawyer and firebrand who worked for Perle in the Reagan Defense Department. President Bush may employ many people who worked for his father, but this is decidedly not his father's Pentagon.

The shorthand version of Paul Wolfowitz, however, is inadequate in important ways. It completely misses his style, which relies on patient logic and respectful, soft-spoken engagement rather than on fire-breathing conviction. The stereotype also overlooks a critical distinction in his view of the world. Unlike many conservative gloom-mongers, he does not see the world plummeting toward an inevitable clash of civilizations.

From a few months' immersion in the subject of Paul Wolfowitz, it seems to me he has brought at least three important things to the table where American policy is made, qualities that have made him, though he holds the rank of deputy, a factor in moving America this close to invading Iraq. One is something of a reputation as a man who sees trouble coming before others do, his long anxiety about Iraq being one example.

The second thing he brings is an activist bent. It is forged partly of humanitarian impulse, a horror of standing by and watching bad things happen. He often talks about Kitty Genovese, the New York woman murdered in 1964 while dozens of neighbors watched from their apartment windows without lifting a phone to call the police. His inclination to act derives, too, from his analytical style, a residue, perhaps, of the mathematician he started out to be. In almost any discussion, he tends to be the one focusing on the most often overlooked variable in decision making, the cost of not acting. On Iraq, that has now been taken up as a White House mantra.

The third striking thing about Wolfowitz is an optimism about America's ability to build a better world. He has an almost missionary sense of America's role. In the current case, that means a vision of an Iraq not merely purged of cataclysmic weaponry, not merely a threat disarmed, but an Iraq that becomes a democratic cornerstone of an altogether new Middle East. Given the fatalism that prevails about this most flammable region of the world, that is an audacious optimism indeed.

Wolfowitz's moralistic streak and the generally sunny view of the world's possibilities may explain the affinity between the born-again and resolutely unintellectual president and this man he calls "Wolfie," the Jewish son of academia who dabbles in six foreign languages and keeps Civil War histories at his bedside. A senior official who has watched the two men interact says that Wolfowitz and the president have reinforced each other in their faith in "a strategic transformation of the whole region."

If the interventionists are right, America can reasonably expect to be more secure, respected and very, very busy -- and much of the foreign-policy old guard will have been proved wrong. But if Wolfowitz and those with him are wrong, if Iraq comes down around their ears, America will be standing deep in the rubble, very alone.

If you spend much time with Wolfowitz, you will probably hear him tell the joke about Saddam Hussein's barber, an old one that dates from the years of Communist collapse. The story goes that every time Saddam shows up for a trim, his barber asks about Nicolae Ceaucescu, Romania's cult-of-personality tyrant, who has recently been executed in a popular uprising. Irritated, Saddam demands to know why the barber insists on bringing up this toppled dictator at each visit. "Because every time I do, the hair goes up on the back of your neck, and it's easier to cut it."

Wolfowitz loves the story because he feels if Romania can throw off a despot and muddle toward modernity, how much more promising is Iraq, with its bitterly oppressed but educated, energetic people and the ability to pump billions of dollars worth of crude oil a year? Look at the Iraqi Kurds, he says, who have created in their American-protected enclave in northern Iraq a comparatively open society "by Middle East standards," despite suffering the U.N. sanctions against the country.

Wolfowitz says he worries deeply about the risks of going into Iraq -- about disabling the small arsenal of Scud missiles before one possibly delivers poisons to Israel or the Saudi oil fields, about persuading Israel (as he personally helped do during the gulf war) not to join the war even if attacked, knowing that would tend to mobilize the Arab world against the United States, about the potential mess of urban warfare and civilian casualties. "I think the getting in is the dangerous part," he says.

He worries considerably less about the day after.

"I don't think it's unreasonable to think that Iraq, properly managed -- and it's going to take a lot of attention, and the stakes are enormous, much higher than Afghanistan -- that it really could turn out to be, I hesitate to say it, the first Arab democracy, or at least the first one except for Lebanon's brief history," he says. "And even if it makes it only Romanian style, that's still such an advance over anywhere else in the Arab world."

This is a notion regarded with deep skepticism at the State Department, where Powell and others tend to see the aftermath of an invasion as a long, world-class headache administered by an American general. Not only within the State Department but elsewhere where foreign policy is discussed and formulated -- including the Capitol Hill offices of leading senators of both parties -- there reigns the view that Iraqi democracy is a utopian fantasy, that the country will fragment like a grenade into ethnic enclaves, that American garrisons will be targets for an eruption of Arab fury, that oil supplies will be endangered, that Americans lack the patience and generosity to midwife a free and pro-Western Iraq.

"This is a very risky operation at best," I was told, typically, by Henry Siegman, a Middle East scholar at the Council on Foreign Relations. "And the expectation that we will then be splendidly situated to resolve all the region's problems is wildly optimistic."

Iraqi democracy, it should be said, is not the president's declared purpose of "regime change" in Iraq, which is to get rid of a very bad man with a fondness for terrorists and a hunger for weapons of hideous power. But it is, to many in the administration, including Wolfowitz, a large part of the enticement.

"You hear people mock it by saying that Iraq isn't ready for Jeffersonian democracy," Wolfowitz says, citing a line that Colin Powell has been known to use. "Well, Japan isn't Jeffersonian democracy, either. I think the more we are committed to influencing the outcome, the more chance there could be that it would be something quite significant for Iraq. And I think if it's significant for Iraq, it's going to cast a very large shadow, starting with Syria and Iran, but across the whole Arab world, I think."

The idea of Iraq as a launch pad of Arab democracy and a counterweight to Islamist extremism has gained some credence in Washington. As unromantic an expert as Dennis B. Ross, who ran the Middle East account for President Clinton, thinks Wolfowitz is right, that liberating Iraq would not only chasten despots and encourage democrats but that it could also unleash a joy in Iraq that would help alleviate the wider Arab anger against America. So does Henry Kissinger, whose cold realism has not often meshed with Wolfowitz's sense of the world.

A democratic Iraq, however, is sure to be unnerving to some of America's less-than-democratic allies in the region, including Saudi Arabia. Wolfowitz does not demonize the Saudi royal family, as a briefer did in July at one of Perle's Defense Policy Board meetings, but he seems more pleased than not that democracy in Iraq (and a free flow of competing Iraqi oil) makes the Saudis uneasy. He does not sound so sure that rocking the stability of tyrannies in the Arab world, even West-leaning tyrannies, is a bad thing.

In January, Bob Woodward, the investigative eminence for The Washington Post, and his colleague Dan Balz wrote a voluminous reconstruction of the decision making in the Bush administration during the weeks following Sept. 11. Most senior officials, including the president, Vice President Cheney and Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld, gave interviews for the series. Paul Wolfowitz, following the advice of the Rumsfeld press office, declined. That may have some bearing on the fact that he was one of the few officials to come across in the series as less than commanding. He is portrayed as single-mindedly obsessed by Iraq. At one point, Colin Powell and General Hugh Shelton, then the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, are described sharing an eye roll over Wolfowitz's war fever.

The narrative reaches a climax in the Laurel Lodge at Camp David, where the president gathered his war council the weekend following the attacks. During the meetings, Wolfowitz keeps pushing Iraq toward the front burner. He is so persistent, so seemingly deaf to the politics of the moment, that he even interrupts Rumsfeld to push his point. During a break, Andrew H. Card Jr., the White House chief of staff, on a signal from the president, takes Wolfowitz and Rumsfeld aside to ask that the Defense Department speak with one voice, which is a polite way of telling Wolfowitz to shut up.

The story has congealed into Washington wisdom, confirming the image of Wolfowitz as a man possessed.

Wolfowitz and two others who were in the room told me an alternative version of the day. It is not exactly incompatible (though both Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz say the Card scolding never happened, while Card, through a spokesman, confirms it), but it casts the day in a somewhat different light. They say that during a break in the meetings, the president listened in as Wolfowitz expounded on the Iraqi threat for a small group gathered around the fireplace of the rustic lodge. The president asked Wolfowitz why he hadn't made those points in the meeting and encouraged him to do so. Far from being an unwelcome voice, he was invited to speak up.

Some students of Washington intrigue have deduced from all this that Wolfowitz was set up. Rumsfeld brought him to Camp David specifically to make the Iraq case, knowing full well that the State Department, the C.I.A. and some of the brass would be opposed, knowing that a war with Iraq was more than the president could bite off in the first phase. The defense secretary wanted to define the ultimate problem as something bigger than Osama bin Laden and Afghanistan. So he pushed Wolfowitz forward. Wolfowitz would end up with the knives in him -- better a deputy than Rumsfeld himself -- but he would get the case for Iraq out where the president could consider it. And, sure enough, the president did define the terrorism problem early on as a global one including state sponsors. (Rumsfeld denies any such Machievellian design and says he doesn't even remember his deputy talking at the meeting.)

The larger point is that even as early as Sept. 15 of last year, the president was intrigued by what Wolfowitz was saying. By April, sooner than anyone expected, the president was telling journalists that "regime change" was his goal for Iraq. And when the president earlier this month assembled his war advisers in the Laurel Lodge, Iraq was on everybody's front burner.

In Washington, no career-conscious official would ever suggest that he had influenced the president. It is essential to the mythology of executive leadership that presidents make up their own minds, and this administration is more hypersensitive than most to any suggestion that the president needs to be propped up by smart people. In any case, on the question of a more muscular American presence in the world, Wolfowitz is hardly a lone voice. His most important Washington patrons -- Cheney, whom he served in the first Bush Pentagon, and Rumsfeld -- have increasingly taken over the role of drum majors on Iraq. But the new worldview evolving in the Bush administration Washington -- interventionist, idealistic, less sensitive to alliance diplomacy -- is one created more at the Pentagon than the State Department and one to which Wolfowitz has brought intellectual weight. Morton Abramowitz, a veteran diplomat who has worked with, and occasionally sparred with, Wolfowitz, calls him "the pre-eminent house intellectual."

Wolfowitz says that the new approach reflects the president's own instincts, which he maintains were evident even during the 2000 campaign to anyone who cared to look beyond the awkwardness of a foreign-policy novice -- and the scorn he heaped on nation building. Wolfowitz, who was one of the so-called Vulcans, the small cadre of thinkers who advised the campaign on defense and foreign policy, clearly finds the younger Bush more open to big, bold, activist ideas than his father.

"He's much more comfortable with speeches that lay out visions," Wolfowitz says. "I think he really believes in them. So there's that sort of Reaganism, if you want to call it that, in him, but a little more on the pragmatic side than Reagan when it comes to actual policy."

When the new Bush administration was coalescing, Colin Powell called Wolfowitz and offered him the job of ambassador to the United Nations. Given this administration's standoffish relationship with the U.N. and Wolfowitz's own wariness of multilateralism, that could be regarded as a trap rather than an honor, but Powell insists it was a sign of his great admiration for Wolfowitz's ability to think big and argue an issue to the ground. Wolfowitz has been similarly effusive in his praise of Powell, especially since news reports of their battles over Iraq.

And not only Iraq: the tensions between State and Defense are rooted in starkly different views of how America should deal with the world. The State Department tends to see the world as a set of problems to be handled, using the tools of professional diplomacy and striving for international consensus. This Defense Department tends to define leadership as more (in the Pentagon's favorite buzzword of the moment) "forward leaning," including a willingness to act unilaterally if need be and to employ muscle. Rumsfeld and Cheney, who have been friends since

the Nixon administration, are visceral advocates of this more assertive view, but Wolfowitz is its theorist -- its Kissinger, as one admirer put it.

"What I think distinguishes him, and it's very alarming to some people, is that there is this spirit in Washington that foreign policy consists of managing problems," said Charles H. Fairbanks, a Johns Hopkins political scientist who has known Wolfowitz since college. "Paul Wolfowitz is really free of that tendency."

In 1992, in what would turn out to be the last year of the first Bush administration, Wolfowitz, then under secretary for policy in Cheney's Defense Department, presided over the writing of a new "Defense Planning Guidance," a broad directive to military leaders on what to prepare for. An early draft proposed that with the demise of the Soviet Union the United States doctrine should be to assure that no new superpower arose to rival America's benign domination of the globe. The U.S. would defend its unique status both by being militarily powerful beyond challenge and by being such a constructive force that no one would want to challenge us. We would participate in coalitions, but they would be "ad hoc." The U.S. would be "postured to act independently when collective action cannot be orchestrated." The guidance envisioned pre-emptive attacks against states bent on acquiring nuclear, biological or chemical weapons. It was accompanied by illustrative scenarios of hypothetical wars for which the military should be prepared. One of them was another war against Iraq, where Saddam had already rebounded from his gulf-war defeat and was busily crushing domestic unrest.

After the draft was leaked to The New York Times and was roundly denounced as bellicose and unilateralist, the language was softened. But a number of years later, in an essay published in The National Interest, Wolfowitz contended that most Americans had come around to favoring the kind of Pax Americana envisioned in that document. He argued that American interventions in the Balkans and elsewhere had demonstrated a growing consensus for an American leadership, which entailed "demonstrating that your friends will be protected and taken care of, that your enemies will be punished and that those who refuse to support you will live to regret having done so."

That now seems to have become the Bush doctrine, sprung from Sept. 11, and Iraq stands to be its most serious test. The evidence suggests that the world consensus is somewhat shakier than Wolfowitz predicted. Allied support is confined to the loyal Tony Blair, who may pay a high price at home for it; the American public is supportive, but in no hurry; the president's father's inner circle is sounding cautions.

Wolfowitz regards all of this as little different from the hand-wringing before Desert Storm or before the intervention in Bosnia. "If we get to the point where we're talking about reconstructing a post-Saddam Iraq, I think we'll have an awful lot that we agree on," he says. "And a lot of the differences of today, which revolve around how you get there, will seem like ancient worries."

In its early days, the Bush administration set in motion a review of Iraq policy, but it dragged on without much direction, so that by Sept. 11 the Bush policy on Iraq was essentially the one inherited from the Clinton administration. At the C.I.A., the holdover director, George J. Tenet, was pushing the idea of "stateless" terrorism, which implied less, not more, emphasis on the role of state patrons. At State, Colin Powell seized on an idea that had been gestating in the Clinton administration -- smart sanctions" -- that would have eased restrictions on food and medicine sales to Iraq but would have clamped down hard on smuggling of equipment for Saddam's rearmament. There was general agreement within the administration that sanctions were an abject failure, doing little to impede Saddam's military ambitions while creating a P.R. nightmare of hungry children. It is not clear that anybody had much faith that sanctions could be fixed, but smart sanctions created the impression of doing something. Iraq was, frankly, nobody's high priority -- not Rumsfeld, who was preoccupied with missile defense; not Cheney, who was consumed by the domestic agenda; not Condoleezza Rice or Powell, who had Russia and China to think about. When the Sept. 11 terrorists struck, Wolfowitz was the first into this vacuum.

Friends of Wolfowitz's say his initial reaction was that Iraq was probably a party to the attacks. He had already studied the work of Laurie Mylroie, an investigator who has labored to connect Iraq to earlier terrorist attacks, including the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center, and now an ardent student of clues connecting Saddam to Sept. 11. The Clinton administration treated Mylroie as, in her words, "a nut case," but Wolfowitz -- then spending

the Clinton years as dean of the prestigious School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins -- listened to her 90-minute briefing on the evidence trail and wrote a sympathetic blurb for her book blaming Iraq for the first trade-center attack. After Sept. 11, he encouraged his friend R. James Woolsey, the former C.I.A. director, to visit England as a consultant to a Justice Department mission and sniff out evidence of Iraqi connections. Woolsey contends that evidence connecting Iraq with terrorist assaults on America, while circumstantial, is "about as clear as these things get." Few others go that far, Wolfowitz included. He can describe the evidence in detail, the clandestine meetings between Iraqi intelligence and figures who may have been Al Qaeda operatives, and says he finds it intriguing but not conclusive.

But the more general connection between Saddam and terrorists -- his hosting of the murderous and recently deceased Abu Nidal, his subsidies for Palestinian suicide bombers -- is enough, in Wolfowitz's view, to make their future collaboration against America almost a given. While Iraq might arm a missile or a bomber with one of those horrible weapons, Wolfowitz says, the more likely delivery system is via the terrorist international. And that, too, is an underlying assumption in the administration's case for war.

Throughout his career, Wolfowitz has managed to push hard against the prevailing view while avoiding the kind of confrontation that gets you marked as not a team player. But several people who know Wolfowitz say he seemed galvanized by Sept. 11 into a bet-your-career sense of purpose.I think Paul tended to be Mr. Interagency Stealth in the past, and now he's Mr. Open Warfare," says Stephen Sestanovich, a Russia expert who once worked for Wolfowitz as a policy planner. "Right after Sept. 11, the idea that Iraq was where we had to go next was the lunacy that had to be fought back. Now, in this town, there's a near consensus about it. They've accepted the Wolfowitz goal, and now they're just haggling about how it's to be done. That was a result that could only be achieved by open warfare."

A result of his being so out front, of course, is that along with the considerably higher stakes of human life and strategic order, one thing riding on the future of Iraq is Wolfowitz's future. If, as some of his friends believe, Wolfowitz, who is 58, would like to ascend to a cabinet job -- Rumsfeld would be 72 at the start of a second Bush term; Powell has dropped hints of being a one-termer; and a shuffle could land him as national security adviser or C.I.A. director -- his prospects are paradoxically wedded to those of Saddam Hussein.

Wolfowitz grew up in a household in which Hitler and Stalin were not abstractions. His father, a mathematics professor at Cornell and an innovator in the field of statistics, was a Polish Jew who emigrated from Russian-held Warsaw in 1920. He often told his children how lucky they were to have escaped the totalitarian horrors of Europe for the benign security of America. There were many Wolfowitzes consumed in the Holocaust, and according to Wolfowitz's sister, Laura, the world's perils and America's moral responsibility were constant topics at their dinner table.

As a teenager, Wolfowitz was a lonely John F. Kennedy Democrat in his conservative Ithaca, N.Y., high school. He says the only time he ever marched in a demonstration was when he was 19, at Martin Luther King Jr.'s civil rights spectacular in Washington. He remains, by his own description, a "bleeding heart" on social issues and a civil libertarian. The day I watched him under questioning from those eager majors at Fort Leavenworth, he argued against the use of torture in interrogating terror suspects and against the deployment of the military in domestic crises.

But his sense of America's large place in the world, like his father's, has always hewed close to that of the late Senator Henry M. Jackson, the pioneering Democratic hawk nicknamed Scoop, who believed in an American obligation to support democracies and in the willingness to use military force sometimes to accomplish that. (Jackson was also Richard Perle's mentor.) Wolfowitz, who switched parties during the Reagan administration, now describes himself as "a Scoop Jackson Republican."

Wolfowitz followed his father into mathematics, taking courses from him at Cornell, shifted to chemistry and "probably would have ended up a very unhappy biochemist" if not for the intervention of Allan Bloom, the charismatic political philosopher, who was a resident scholar in the elite student dormitory where Wolfowitz lived.

Bloom emboldened Wolfowitz to follow his childhood fascination with world affairs, to the enormous dismay of his father, who regarded political science as roughly equivalent to astrology.

Wolfowitz earned his doctorate at the University of Chicago, a seedbed of what is now called neoconservative thinking in economics, political science and strategic studies. His mentor there was Albert Wohlstetter, perhaps the most influential thinker about military strategems of the nuclear age and godfather of the anti-detente school during the cold war.

Student deferments kept him out of the military draft during the Vietnam War, and he looks back on that war with a kind of scholarly detachment that is in striking contrast to, say, Colin Powell, who served two tours there and regards Vietnam as the paradigm of good intentions gone wrong. Wolfowitz was sympathetic to the war and only later came around to the view that it was "a very costly overreach." At the same time, he wonders if the American role in Vietnam might have given anti-Communist forces in Asia time to gather strength. "We know the costs of Vietnam," he says. "They were horrendous." And then he adds a quintessentially Wolfowitz kicker: "But we don't know what that part of the world would have looked like today if it hadn't been."

After three years teaching political science at Yale, Wolfowitz was recruited through Wohlstetter's profuse grapevine to work in Washington at the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency. In the waning days of the Nixon administration, the agency was one link in a network of conservative insurgents. Their target was the diplomacy of patient coexistence with the Soviet Union. Their ringleader was Perle, operating out of Scoop Jackson's office. Their Antichrist was Kissinger, the mastermind of detente. The insurgent view was that the Soviet Union should be not simply contained but challenged on all fronts. They argued that American intelligence agencies had played down the aggressive designs and military advances of the Soviet Union to conform to the White House drive for arms control.

In the waning days of the Ford administration, the C.I.A. (director: George H.W. Bush) sought to appease the hard-liners by commissioning "Team B," a group of kibitzers with license to second-guess the intelligence reports on the Soviet Union. Wolfowitz was one of the 10 members. The report they produced was more than Bush bargained for. It painted the Soviet Union as an expansionist boogeyman. In hindsight, much of the Team B report was worst-case hyperbole; it credited the Soviet Union with developing superweapons it never had and ignored the handicaps of a failing Soviet economy. But Team B became a political bludgeon to batter the proponents of arms control and drive up American military spending. Wolfowitz, who contributed a thoughtful and unhysterical chapter on the importance of intermediate-range missiles to the Soviet strategy, says he never bought Team B's alarmist contention that the Soviet Union believed it could fight and win a nuclear war. But he says the report was a useful guerrilla attack on conventional thinking, including the tendency of intelligence agencies to assume that rival countries think the same way we do.

It was a similar Team B-style exercise that led to his current job. Rumsfeld was impressed by Wolfowitz's work for him on a commission set up by Congressional hawks in 1998 to prod the Clinton administration toward deploying missile defense. (Rumsfeld is a missile-defense devotee; Wolfowitz somewhat less so, since he worries it would not stop low-flying cruise missiles.)

Wolfowitz abandoned the Yale tenure track and threw himself into the practice of national security, moving back and forth between Defense and State. His earliest jobs were in the wonkish realm of policy analysis -- gazing at the horizon. He had a knack for luring bright, opinionated thinkers, some of whom rank high in the current administration. Cheney's chief of staff, I. Lewis Libby, was captivated by Wolfowitz's political science course at Yale and worked for him at the in-house think tanks in both the State and Defense Departments. Condoleezza Rice's deputy, Stephen J. Hadley, who is chairman of an influential committee of cabinet deputies that meets several times a week on national-security issues, worked for Wolfowitz in the Cheney Defense Department and was a fellow Vulcan in the campaign.

Contrary to his ideologue image, Wolfowitz is described by colleagues as open to new ideas and encouraging of dissent. Dennis Ross went to work for Wolfowitz shortly after writing a paper trashing the work of Team B. "What I always found in him that separated him from everybody else on that side of the political spectrum is not that he

didn't have predispositions, but that he was much more open, much more intellectually open, to different kinds of interpretations," Ross says. Charles Fairbanks, who also worked for Wolfowitz in the policy-planning office of the State Department, recalls him as "sort of on the one hand, on the other hand on most issues," but ardent on the subject of certain regimes he regarded as outside the norms of civilized behavior, including the radical Baath party of Iraq and Muammar el-Qaddafi's Libya. "I once presented talking points on Libya, which I considered very tough. He said: 'You don't understand. I really want to destroy Qaddafi, not just constrain him.'"

His proteges cite several examples of Wolfowitz's homing in on subjects before they grew into major issues, often when they were politically inconvenient. For example, as the Soviet empire was unraveling and the first President Bush was clinging to the waning figure of Mikhail Gorbachev, Wolfowitz and his boss, Cheney, believed that Boris N. Yeltsin represented a better prospect of a real end to the cold war.

And then there is Iraq. When he arrived at the Pentagon in the aftermath of the 1973 Yom Kippur War and the Arab oil embargo, Wolfowitz was surprised to find that the Persian Gulf region was scarcely on their minds.

"There was a fairly big NATO office," he recalls, "and a modest size East Asian one and then a cats-and-dogs office. I said, 'Where's the Persian Gulf office?' 'Oh, we don't plan forces for the Persian Gulf.' This was 1977. And one of the unspoken reasons, I think, was Vietnam. But one of the spoken reasons was, the shah takes care of the Persian Gulf for us. And I said, 'Well, that's a little shortsighted.'"

So he assembled a small group, including Dennis Ross, and they wrote a secret assessment of threats. Much of the report was about possible Soviet moves into the region, but planted in the midst of this is a bright red flag about Iraq. Examining Iraq's outsize military and unresolved territorial claims, the report talked about possible attacks on Kuwait or Saudi Arabia, which would give Iraq control of the West's oil lifeline. The U.S. was seen as woefully unprepared to respond. The report recommended beefing up forces to provide "a credible and visible balance to Iraq's local power."

The report was not well received by the Carter administration, which was then busy courting Iraq as an offset to the new revolutionary regime in Iran. But Wolfowitz persisted, and one result was a decision to permanently pre-position cargo ships in the gulf region loaded with tanks, artillery and ammunition. By the time of the gulf war, some of the equipment was rusty, but as Lewis Libby, Cheney's chief of staff, points out, it was the first heavy weaponry to hit the ground against Saddam's army.

When Iraq swooped into Kuwait in 1990, Wolfowitz was Cheney's under secretary for policy. He was the strongest advocate for dispatching warships early as a sign of American resolve, and his was a persistent voice for putting American troops on the ground. After Iraq was driven out of Kuwait, Wolfowitz argued unsuccessfully that America should support the Kurds in the north and Shiites in the south in their attempts to finish off Saddam.

There is an entertaining echo of his frustration in "Ravelstein," Saul Bellow's roman a clef about Wolfowitz's college guru, Allan Bloom. In the novel, Wolfowitz has a walk-on part as a former student who has made it big in Washington and periodically delights his old tutor by phoning in tidbits of inside dope. Professor Bloom/Ravelstein returns from one such phone call during the gulf war to inform his friends: "Colin Powell and Baker have advised the president not to send the troops all the way to Baghdad. Bush will announce it tomorrow. They're afraid of a few casualties."

Neither Wolfowitz nor anyone else in the administration was calling for sending American troops to Baghdad, since that far exceeded their mandate from Congress and the United Nations to liberate Kuwait. But Wolfowitz was dismayed by the decision to quickly extricate American troops and let the situation in Iraq run its course. When Clinton, who inherited the aftermath of the war, continued to stand by as Saddam suppressed the Kurds, Wolfowitz wrote a blistering op-ed article in The Wall Street Journal, calling it "Clinton's Bay of Pigs" -- a rebuke he could as aptly have applied to the first President Bush. In language unusually fierce for Wolfowitz, he derided "our passive containment policy and our inept covert operations" and clearly implied that ousting Saddam should be American policy without quite saying it. The following year he was explicitly proposing "the military option," unilateral if necessary, to rid the world of Saddam.

Until America came directly under attack last year, Wolfowitz says, he was still thinking in terms of providing arms, training and air support for indigenous rebels, not sending in American divisions.

"I certainly would not then have favored us sending occupying forces into Iraq," he says. "But we might have overthrown a terrible regime. It might have worked out well. It could hardly be worse than what we've had for the last 10 years. And if it had been a mess, we could've said, O.K., well, we gave them their chance.

"In contrast, we're at a point now, I think, that if Iraq is liberated, our responsibility for it is going to be so large that our responsibility for the outcome -- and our stake in the outcome -- is going to be much larger."

Wolfowitz's pentagon jobs under various presidents persuaded him that Iraq was chronic trouble. His vision of Iraq as an opportunity, though, evolved from his work in the State Department.

Two years into the Reagan administration, Wolfowitz asked Secretary of State George P. Shultz to move him from the world of theory into the world of practice, as assistant secretary of state for East Asia. Shultz says he hesitated -- Wolfowitz was known for his brains, not his management skills -- but agreed. Wolfowitz quickly found himself riding shotgun on another campaign against the geopolitics of Henry Kissinger, this time on how to deal with China. Shultz and Wolfowitz agreed that Kissinger put too much value on China as a counterbalance to the Soviet Union, with the result that the U.S. bent over backward to preserve "the relationship" by making concessions on issues like Taiwan. The new team argued, in essence, that it was possible to be a hard-liner on the Soviet Union without pandering to China. Once China was downsized as a factor in the cold war, the administration felt freer to turn more attention to Japan, first, but also to the emerging Asian democracies of South Korea and Taiwan.

For his next act, Wolfowitz applied to be ambassador to Indonesia, the country with the world's largest Muslim population and a place that his wife and college sweetheart, Clare, had chosen as the focus of her anthropological studies. (They are now separated, but she speaks of him with intense admiration.) He threw himself into the public diplomacy, learning the language well enough to take questions at public gatherings and even entering a cooking contest sponsored by a ***women***'s magazine. (He won third place for a dish he dubbed Madame Mao's Chicken.) He especially prides himself on a public speech that called on the Indonesian strongman, Suharto, to introduce political openness -- a message he diplomatically saved for the end of his tour as ambassador but one that still infuriated Suharto.

Wolfowitz has talked for years about the incubation of Asian democracies and the more recent currents of freedom in Indonesia as reason to hope for something similar in the Islamic Mideast. Since Sept. 11, this has been a favorite theme in his speeches.

Wolfowitz was still a young Pentagon wonk when President Anwar el-Sadat of Egypt braved the wrath of the Arab world to visit Jerusalem and deliver a speech of peace to the Israeli Parliament. To an American Jew raised with a high sense of individual moral obligation, this was such an admirable piece of statesmanship that Wolfowitz bought Arabic language tapes and studied them in his car on his commute to the Pentagon so that he could appreciate the valor of Sadat's speech in the original.

You hear from some of Wolfowitz's critics, always off the record, that Israel exercises a powerful gravitational pull on the man. They may not know that as a teenager he spent his father's sabbatical semester in Israel or that his sister is married to an Israeli, but they certainly know that he is friendly with Israel's generals and diplomats and that he is something of a hero to the heavily Jewish neoconservative movement. Those who know him well say this -- leaving aside the offensive suggestion of dual loyalty -- is looking at Wolfowitz through the wrong end of the telescope. As the Sadat story illustrates, he has generally been less excited by the security of Israel than by the promise of a more moderate Islam.

"As a moral man, he might have found Israel the heart of the Middle East story," Stephen Sestanovich says. "But as a policy maker, Turkey and the gulf and Egypt didn't loom any less large for him."

After Sept. 11, Wolfowitz supported the successful effort to include the localized killers of Hamas and ***Hezbollah*** on America's global terror list and was part of a large administration chorus (basically, everyone except the State

Department) that argued for bypassing Yasir Arafat. But he has not hesitated to tell Israel when American interests trumped theirs. He supported selling sophisticated surveillance aircraft to Saudi Arabia, despite intense Israeli lobbying against the sale -- and those Awacs planes proved invaluable in the gulf war. Benjamin Netanyahu, the right-wing former prime minister, still complains that Israel was wrong to succumb to Wolfowitz's diplomacy during the gulf war, when he persuaded Israel to hold its fire as Iraqi Scuds were landing. Netanyahu, who generally admires Wolfowitz, thinks this forbearance emboldened his country's enemies. If there is a new war, persuading Ariel Sharon to show similar forbearance may be more difficult, but Wolfowitz will be foremost among those arguing the case.

Alongside the conference table where we did our talking, Wolfowitz has mounted a painting that, from across the room, resembles a tranquil Maryland landscape. On closer inspection, the dark foreground is a river of corpses. Wolfowitz, a Civil War buff, had it copied from a painting called "The Bloody Lane," a rendering of the deadliest battle in American history, Antietam, which shattered the momentum of the South and emboldened Lincoln to issue the Emancipation Proclamation. It seems like sobering company for a man who deals in the gruesome cost-benefit analysis of warfare.

Wolfowitz says that he agonizes a good deal over the dangers of dispatching Americans to war, that he respects the traditional conservatism of men in uniform who know the Antietams of the globe firsthand. Interventions that are only indirectly about American interests, like Somalia, he says, should be "as close to risk-free as possible," and, he suggests, "maybe somewhere along the way we should have a volunteer force that is specifically volunteering for missions other than defending the country." The opposite of the Peace Corps, you might say.

Wars that defend our safety may command a higher price. What price? Would the danger posed by a nuclear-armed Saddam be worth, say, the lives of thousands of American soldiers, if that is what the experts estimated it would take to disarm him by force?

Wolfowitz posed the question himself and answered no. Weapons of mass destruction would not be enough to justify the deaths of thousands of Americans. And in any case, thousands killed would mean the mission had gone badly wrong.

But Wolfowitz was not letting the discussion end there. Later, he e-mailed me an afterthought about that grisly calculus of going to war against Iraq.

"So if that's what you estimate the costs of action to be, then you have to have something more on the other side of the ledger than just the possession of weapons of mass destruction," he wrote. Whether that "something more" that would justify that greater sacrifice meant evidence that Iraq was on the verge of using its weapons, or the prospect of establishing Iraq as an outpost of democracy, or a smoking gun tying Iraq to Sept. 11, he did not specify. "In the end, it has to come down to a careful weighing of things we can't know with precision, the costs of action versus the costs of inaction, the costs of action now versus the costs of action later."

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Graphic

Photos: Paul Wolfowitz in his Pentagon office. Caricatures of him miss his style: soft-spoken engagement, not fire-breathing conviction (Barbel Schmidt); Wolfowitz with the president at the Pentagone days after the terrorist attacks. (Paul J. Richards/Agence France: Presse.); At the Saudi Arabia command center during the gulf war, Wolfowitz, right, with, to his left, Schwartzkopf, Cheney and Powell.; Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz discusssing the war in Afghanistan in Rumsfeld's office last October. (David Hume. Kennerly/Corbis Sygma)

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Chicago Daily Herald

October 7, 2001, Sunday F1,F2

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Body

Religion, nationalism an uneasy mixture

Like most people here and around the world, I have experienced many emotions since the tragic events on Sept. 11. I have read the newspapers and tried to keep up-to-date on the constantly changing information, opinions and responses.

I have read a lot of comments, such as the ones printed on the Opinion page in the Sept. 21 paper, referring to the many religions of our nation, with mixed feelings. I agree with Walter Paquet's statement, "We are all branches from the same family tree" and with the headline, "Remember we belong to a global village."

My concern is with the many comments I have read this past week such as Paquet's, "The only thing that has held this nation together in all our calamities has been the belief in God that is held by its citizens."

At the risk of being called "politically correct," our country is home to many more religions than the three he mentions - Judaism, Islam and Christianity. Some of our citizens do not believe there is only one god, and many do not believe in any god or supreme being.

Even under the umbrella of Christianity, there is a great diversity in the belief of a god, such as there is in my faith.

I understand that those who do believe in God are expressing their feelings through their spirituality during this difficult time, and I encourage us all to do so in our own way.

So instead of saying "God bless America," I prefer to say "United we stand" or "Bless us all." The division between religion and nationalism is a thin line at this time and that is one of the many issues that has brought mixed emotions for me this past week.

Kathy Underwood

South Elgin

Director of Religious Education

Unitarian Universalist

Church of Elgin

School boys allowed naivete; we aren't

No Headline In Original

The Sept. 11 terrorist attacks have unleashed both words of wisdom and distorted dictums. It is understandable when naive boys from a local high school write words that reveal their ignorance. It is far more disturbing when others, including some journalists and area college educators, promulgate false or misleading theories. Thus, it is time for a reality check regarding some of the stupid notions being circulated about today's terrorists and the U.S. response to terrorism.

Distortion No. 1 - Terrorists, such as extremist Palestinians, are trying to make political statements with terrorist acts.

Reality Check No. 1 - As noted on a recent broadcast of the History Channel, today's terrorists are not seeking to gain support to rectify political injustice. They are religious fanatics seeking the wholesale destruction of those they perceive to be enemies. If extremist Palestinians were really interested in peace, rather than the destruction of Israel, they would have accepted former Prime Minister Barak's unprecedented generous offer, a deal that cost him his political future.

Distortion No. 2 - Poverty and hopelessness are the root cause of terrorism against the rich of the world.

Reality Check No. 2 - If this were really the case, then the poor of other parts of the world - Far East, Africa, South America - also would be engaged in acts of terrorism against the wealthy Western nations. Osama bin Laden's band of barbarians includes men who are educated. Bin Laden himself is the product of wealth and privilege.

Distortion No. 3 - The United States really had it coming due to our unjust foreign policies.

Reality Check No. 3 - While the United States certainly has made its share of foreign-policy mistakes, today's terrorists, unlike the thugs of the 1970s and 1980s who hijacked planes to free their fellow criminals or gain attention on the world stage, are ruthless and coldblooded and motivated by an irrational hatred of the United States and Western world regardless of our foreign policies. If the United States withdrew all support for Israel tomorrow, these nuts would still hate our guts.

Distortion No. 4 - The United States is going to bomb Afghanistan off the map.

Reality Check No. 4 - I am certainly no Republican or fan of George W. Bush, but I have never heard the president, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, Secretary of State Colin Powell or anyone in a position of authority in the U.S. military or Bush administration indicate that the United States intends to engage in indiscriminate bombing. In fact, it appears that Afghanistan is so ravaged due to wars and the criminal and inhumane acts of the Taliban, that there is nothing worth bombing there. Indeed, we are sending food to aid the suffering Afghans.

Distortion No. 5 - We should try to talk with or negotiate or simply forgive and forget these terrorist acts because retaliation will simply result in more attacks.

Reality Check No. 5 - As a Chicago newspaper reporter, Ron Grossman, argued in his Sept. 30 article, "anti-Americanism is the anti-Semitism of the 21st century. Like the latter, anti- Americanism is a form of odium as intense as it is irrational." Today's terrorists are inspired by a bastardized form of religion in which they see violence as a sacrament. They speak of holy wars and martyrdom. They are engaged in thinking errors that are so far gone there is no point in trying to talk. Would it be wise to negotiate with a Hitler, a Stalin, a Pol Pot? Heavens no! Well, neither is it responsible to put stock in discussions with these modern-day agents of Satan.

The United States and other Western nations are hated simply because we are Western. Fanatics hate our freedoms and our way of life. Authentic Islam recognizes Jews and Christians as "People of the Book," people who worship the same God. Yet bin Laden and his followers call us "infidels" and seek to destroy all of us - civilians, ***women***, children and the aged, and to set up a pseudo- Islamic system.

For more than 30 years, the United States and Western nations have failed to respond with resolve, strength, unity and decisiveness against terrorists. Bad behavior unsanctioned emboldens bad actors to escalate their crimes. Our collective weakness has resulted in thousands of deaths from 270 people on Pan Am 103, to 241 Marines in

Lebanon, to 243 people in U.S. embassies in Africa, and now more than 6,000 people from 80 nations at the World Trade Center and Pentagon. This is only a partial list of the victims of Islamic extremists.

Terrorist organizations will continue to attack us whether we retaliate or not. If left to their own devices, they will surely launch other attacks with chemical, biological or nuclear weapons. Thus, all terrorists from bin Laden and his gang to ***Hezbollah***, Islamic Jihad, Hamas and other religious fanatics must be hunted down and destroyed. Their sponsors, including some current governments, must be eliminated as well.

Will the destruction of these evildoers guarantee an end to terrorism? Probably not. But doing more of what we have been doing the past 30 years will ensure that Sept. 11 will be repeated in an even more horrific form.

Yes, we need to work for justice and peace. We must try to change the thinking of people who hate America and the West on principle. But, let's not be naive. Jews have been dealing with anti-Semitism for centuries. Anti-Americanism probably won't be going away anytime soon, either.

Kim Freitag

Elgin

Let stolen flag remind us of nation's strength

To the person who stole the flag from our church in Century Oaks, I thought you might like to know a little bit about it. That flag was flown over the U.S. Capitol and donated to the church in honor of the Eagle Scout who erected the flag pole.

It was a nice flag, larger than the ones you can get in the hardware store. It had sewn stars. We just had new rigging and a light installed after the Sept. 11 tragedy so our congregation and our neighbors could enjoy Old Glory.

I really didn't know what to tell the police officer when he asked me its value. "Priceless" came to mind. Priceless to those who gave their lives for it. Perhaps priceless in terms of the eternal consequences to the one who stole it.

But whether it was a large flag with sewn stars or a plastic one, how could anyone steal a flag and then hoist it up in front of their home or business? Remember the cherry tree? Remember Honest Abe? What does that flag stand for?

In 1831, Alexis de Tocqueville, the famous French historian, came to our country at the request of the French government to study our penal institutions. He also made a close study of our political and social institutions. In less than 10 years, de Tocqueville had become world-famous as the result of the four- volume work he wrote titled "Democracy in America." Here is his own stirring explanation of the greatness of America:

"I sought for the greatness and genius of America in her commodious harbors and her ample rivers, and it was not there; in her fertile fields and boundless prairies, and it was not there; in her rich mines and her vast world commerce, and it was not there. Not until I went to the churches of America and heard her pulpits aflame with righteousness did I understand the secret of her genius and power. America is great because she is good, and if America ever ceases to be good, America will cease to be great."

God help us to rekindle the integrity we will need for the war ahead. Without it, He will not join us in battle. With it, we cannot fail.

Bishop Doug Heaton

Elgin

We meld together, but terror isn't new to us

No Headline In Original

On Sept. 11, the United States was introduced to the reality of terrorism. Since then, the country has melded together to form a steel hammer (like the hammer of Thor) to fight this terrorism.

Our sons/daughters are asked to pick up arms and go with our military to be part of this hammer, and we glow with pride as we band together. But wait! Terrorism is nothing new to us.

Ask the parents and friends of the 11-year-old girl who was gunned down in a drive-by. Ask those people who have had bullets embedded in their home or the young man gunned down while in class.

Like the president, our city officials should take the same stance. Flush terrorists out and shut down their hiding and festering places. Those harboring these terrorists also should be flushed out. But wait! Will the ACLU stand for this? Who cares!

Richard C. Tucker

South Elgin

Pre-Sept. 11 silence the death of psychics?

This letter is for those so-called believers in the Irene Hughes-type predictors, zodiac readers, tarot cards readers, 900 phone number psychics.

Not one of the professional services mentioned above stepped forward on Sept. 10 to warn us about a horrible crash or explosion someplace in the East in which thousands would lose their lives.

So are you still going to spend your money on those $9 per minute phone calls or seminars with prognosticators or tea-leaf readers, etc.?

Please do not spend one more dime on these psychics. None of them foresaw the very worst bloodshed of our times. None. Isn't that proof enough?

I predict that no one will answer this letter in favor of psychics.

Chuck Rosene

Elgin

Letter writer likes local give and take

I wish to peaceably address both Clarence Hayward's and Gail Patterson's letters in response to my opinion about terrorist attacks.

I will begin with Hayward's. It was my opinion that in hearing the president speak before Sept. 11, he came across as an awkward speaker and leader in general. I have witnessed a very different president since the attacks. Rather than offering President Bush an apology, as Hayward suggested, I would like to thank the president for enlightening me.

I am very sorry if I have given Gail Patterson the impression that I blame our society for the deaths of thousands of innocent American people. She made a very important point, "Each one of us has our strengths and weaknesses." We have the ability to make something good come out of a bad situation. This was the point I was trying to make.

I think this is a wonderful concept - a newspaper that allows their readers to express their opinions and for others to civilly respond. Not only does this bring us closer as a community, but we learn from each other, and in the process, we learn something about ourselves.

Allison Kramer

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Fern Holland's War

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Byline: By Elizabeth Rubin

Elizabeth Rubin, a contributing writer for the magazine, has reported extensively from Iraq.

Body

Late one night this past March in the Babylon Hotel, on the banks of the Euphrates River, Fern Holland sat alone in her office writing e-mail -- unwinding, she wrote to a friend, with a glass of Johnnie Walker and listening to Michelle Branch singing "All You Wanted." She had many things on her mind, and among them was figuring out where she could get a bulldozer so she could help two Iraqi ***women*** get their land back.

The Babylon Hotel, in Hilla, about an hour's drive south of Baghdad, used to be a regular haunt of Saddam Hussein's intelligence agents. Now it was home to Holland's employer, the south-central regional branch of the U.S.-led Coalition Provisional Authority. The Hilla office was responsible for governing the Shiite heartland of Iraq. Holland, who was 33, had practiced law for several years in her native Oklahoma and worked as a human rights legal adviser in West Africa before she signed up in July of last year to help bring democracy and the rule of law to Iraq. "Whatever the Bush administration's motive was for invading Iraq, it didn't matter to Fern," a friend of hers in Tulsa told me. An idealist tempered by realism, Holland was a doer, not a doubter.

Since her arrival in Iraq, she and her Iraqi assistant, Salwa Oumashi, had fertilized a broad swath of the middle Euphrates region with ideas of change. She organized human rights groups, opened ***women***'s centers and acted as a strong advocate for Iraqi ***women***'s rights. She was working 18-hour days, seven days a week, and still, she wrote to a friend: "I wish I had more hours in the day. . . . It's crazy and is driving me crazy because I really love these people and I see the potential and I just can't give enough to do them justice."

Sitting at her computer that night in March, she sent an e-mail message back to Tulsa to her close friend Stephen Rodolf, for whose law firm she worked from 1993 to 1999. She told him about two ***women*** from a nearby farming village who had come seeking her aid in a legal dispute:

"They are widows. They wear all black, all you can see is their faces -- no hair or neck. They don't wear gloves though and you can see their hands -- very rough hands, dry and cracked and evidence of broken fingers from years ago, and huge knuckles from years of manual labor. Their faces wrinkled and dark, no makeup, but 2 small faded blue circles on their chins -- tattoos. One of Saddam's thugs grew crops on their land and they thought they could remove him upon liberation. No such luck. He built a house on their land and refused to leave. They have court orders and everything and nobody will move the guy. Everyone's afraid of him. So much for the rule of law. I'm

going to see him Saturday morning, along with the little ladies, the manager of the new ***women***'s center, the judge, and a couple Iraqi policemen. These little ladies reminded me of my mother. Salt of the Earth.''

Two days later, Fern showed up at the judge's courthouse in Kifl, a farming village about 12 miles from Hilla. The judge was impressed by her knowledge of Iraqi law. Holland promised, in her slight Oklahoma lilt, that she would bring an Internet cafe to his rice-farming village, which boasts the tomb of the prophet Ezekiel. He agreed with her when she said, ''No one should jump over a woman's rights,'' but with all the suffering people in Iraq, he was a little puzzled why this slight, 5-foot-2, fiery American, with golden hair and sky blue eyes, was putting so much energy into this particular case. The judge pointed out how shameful it is to destroy somebody's house -- so much so that no local would dare to carry out his order to do so. Tribal or religious leaders usually mediate such quarrels.

Still, he gave his word to implement the ruling that he had himself issued, but on one condition: Holland had to bring the bulldozer.

''A bulldozer?'' cried Adly Hassanein back at the Babylon Hotel. An elegant Egyptian-American human rights adviser with the C.P.A., Hassanein worked closely with Holland and shared her commitment. ''Fern,'' he said, ''that is an Israeli act.'' He begged her to let it go: it's family business; it's local culture. She smiled at him. She knew Hassanein's paternal routine. ''They can't just harass ***women*** this way, Dr. Adly,'' she said.

Three days later, on a warm spring Tuesday, Holland collected some petty cash, found a bulldozer and a driver and returned to Kifl. The judge set off with 30 policemen following the bulldozer. The man's house was demolished. The ''salt of the earth'' got back their property. And in Holland's mind another step had been taken toward getting Iraqis to trust in the rule of law.

Arabs have a saying about meddling in family affairs: Put yourself between the onion and its skin, and you'll just get a bad smell. Holland also had a saying: If I don't do it, nobody will. Baghdad red tape infuriated her. She needed to be invested in Iraqi lives, and she was not going to serve up democracy by remote control from inside a fortress of barbed wire and concrete blast walls. The C.P.A. had already earned such a reputation for governing from the secure green zone in Baghdad that ''green-zoned'' had become a term for ''safe but clueless.''

From early in her life, Holland harnessed a go-it-alone, pioneer mentality to a Wilsonian belief in universal human rights and self-determination. As an American, she felt a moral obligation to the world, despite or maybe because of her decidedly rough beginnings. As one of Holland's Oklahoma neighbors told me: ''You will never convince me that someone didn't leave that girl on the doorstep of that home. Because she's so different. And in that tiny town in Oklahoma, influences that touch on the problems of the world and the bigger picture of humanity just don't surface. She was just born with some light that comes from nowhere.''

That tiny town was Bluejacket, a place of rolling pastures, wide, daunting skies, one store and 300 people -- as heartland America as Hilla is heartland Shiite Iraq. Fern, the youngest of five children, always considered the Holland farm in Bluejacket her home, although she lived and went to school a few miles away in Miami, a sports-proud, mostly Baptist community of about 13,000 settled by land-rushers and what the locals refer to as the ''civilized Indian tribes.''

Bluejacket was horses and fishing ponds, firing shotguns with her brothers and sisters; Miami was where her family fell apart, one summer afternoon, when Fern was 4 and her mother tried to kill herself. Her father was a charming, hard-drinking rancher who taught at a junior college and didn't know how to respond to his wife's suicide attempt. He put her in an institution where the doctors gave her electroshock treatments.

''After that, Fern didn't talk for a long time,'' her sister Vi says. Her parents split up. Fern became her mother's guardian angel, and over time, her mother became her hero as she resurrected herself at 40, working days as a secretary at a boron plant and studying at night for a psychology degree until she became a counselor for addicts and the mentally ill. When Fern was 12, her father died of a heart attack. There was pandemonium all around, her brother Joe Ben remembered when I met him recently in his mobile home north of Tulsa. But Fern sat quiet. When Joe Ben caught her pensive stare, she just said, ''I wonder where he is now.'' Fern never got any special treatment,

Joe Ben said, contemplating his sister's journey so far from Bluejacket. "There wasn't Aristotle or Socrates around to teach her," he said. "She just did it. Maybe being raised tough did it."

What is "it"? "Making herself perfect," Vi says. Fern got straight A's while working at Tastee-Freez and Radio Shack. She was the family's peacemaker, comedian and natural athlete. She was pretty and popular, a friend to the ostracized, class salutatorian and homecoming queen. She was an honor student in psychology at Oklahoma University, then flew off to see the world, which to her meant saving it. She tended children dying of nuclear-disaster-related diseases in a Russian hospital. She taught kids in a squatter camp in South Africa. She thought about medical school but concluded that the law, as she wrote in her law-school application, was the best means to "create the most equal and just global society obtainable." She got her law degree in Tulsa, then began handling medical malpractice suits while helping Vi take care of her mother, who was dying of emphysema. It was all preparation. A year after she buried her mother in the Bluejacket cemetery, she gave up her partner-track position, joined the Peace Corps and found herself in the Namibian bush not far from the Angolan border.

But if she sometimes did saintly things, she was a hard-living saint. In high school she loved to drive fast, blasting the Violent Femmes, and stay out late at the lake with a bottle of vodka and her best friend, Angie. Her vacations were on the wild side: jumping out of planes, diving with sharks, hiking alone in the snowy Himalayas with a busted knee and summer clothes.

Holland was not, and never claimed to be, a team player. She was an interventionist: getting her Oklahoma friends to send computers to Namibia to bring the Internet to the bush; rousing homeless people in New York City from their slumbers to give them what was left of her meal. As Joe Ben said: "Fern was tough. If she got mad, thought somebody was a bully, sure she could bulldoze his house down."

Two years ago, Holland moved to Washington, D.C., hoping to plug into the international-aid scene. She joined the firm of Woodley & McGillivary while looking out for pro bono work abroad. The American Refugee Committee sent her to Guinea to investigate claims that workers for certain nongovernmental organizations were demanding sex from Sierra Leonian and Liberian refugees, ***women*** and children, in exchange for humanitarian aid. Not satisfied with documenting the crimes, she proposed setting up a legal-aid clinic in the camps so abused ***women*** and children could pursue their cases in court. "Everyone thought, Come on, this is Africa," recalled Colleen Striegel of the American Refugee Committee. "We didn't think it was realistic. But she looked into Guinean law and learned that Guinea had signed on to international conventions against discriminating against ***women*** and children." That was enough. She persuaded the committee to go for the idea and began training local attorneys.

Holland was passionate about spreading the legal-aid clinics to other camps. But her firm did not want her making any more pro bono trips. Without much dithering, she decided to leave her six-figure job at the firm, went to work at Starbucks on a morning shift and spent the rest of her time trying to raise money for the Guinean project and pursuing, with her law professor John Norton Moore, the idea of an African Institute for Democracy. But it was the spring of 2003, and the only game in Washington was Iraq.

Babil, home of ancient Babylonia, is often called "the white flower." The Euphrates lolls through Babil, watering willows, eucalyptus and acres of date palms. The people in Hilla, Babil's capital, for the most part welcomed coalition troops as liberators. A mostly Shiite community, Hilla had lost thousands of men during the Iran-Iraq war and the disastrous, American-inspired 1991 uprising against Saddam. In the spring of 2003, after the Baathists were overthrown, the people of Hilla dug up mass graves to look for their relatives. I was traveling there at the time and, in some of the bleakest stretches of desert, watched men praying, "God is the only god," as they heaved remains from the heavy earth: shirts crumpled around skeletons, toe bones tucked in sandals, leg bones clanking like gourds. A man in a dishdasha, drenched in sweat, was searching for his wife among neatly lined-up piles in white shrouds. Inside one he found a black abaya crumpled as if the woman had melted. There was no jewelry, no shoes, just a mulch of henna-colored bones, hair and nails. He had no way of knowing who she was, but he broke down anyway. I looked at my interpreter, a Kurd from Halabja, whom I'd been traveling with since before the war began, and I could see as we drifted slowly from pit to pit that he just wanted to sink and die. One of the men shadowing a grave pointed inside. "This is America," he said. "They lie here because of America. I'm sorry if you

are American, but tell your countrymen that's why they are here. The father Bush betrayed us and brought Saddam back, and look what he did."

It was graves like these that convinced Holland she had to stay in Iraq. As Stephen Rodolf, her Tulsa lawyer friend, recalled the story: "I was telling Fern about the protest in the U.S. against our being there, and the fact that the lack of W.M.D.'s was invalidating everything we went in for. She said: 'I don't know anything about W.M.D. But I can tell you this countryside is littered with the graves of men, ***women*** and children murdered by this regime.' " She was collecting testimony for future war-crimes trials from Shiite survivors of Saddam's massacres -- hair-raising tales of escape, of being buried alive beneath the dead, of identities hidden for 12 years until Saddam's fall. Some of these survivors formed the human rights associations that sprouted up across the south that spring.

Babil was ripe for the idealistic vision of Mr. Mike, as Mike Gfoeller, an Arabic-speaking American diplomat and the regional C.P.A. coordinator, was affectionately known. Gfoeller had a plan to open human rights and ***women***'s centers and tribal democracy centers in each of the five Shiite provinces he governed. Holland picked up Mr. Mike's vision and went flying, with her focus sharpened on the mission of democracy education and liberating Iraqi ***women***.

Within a month, the crumbling, two-story building she identified in Hilla was a spanking-new ***women***'s center with computers and Internet access, sewing machines, a gym, an auditorium for democracy lectures and a kitchen where the local ***women*** could cater for the new Iraqi Olympic boxing team. Holland soon identified five more suitable buildings, one in every province.

It was an exciting time. Visions were grand. Cash was flowing by the truckload from Baghdad. Because it was confiscated money from Saddam's coffers that the U.S. was distributing and not official American funds, there were almost no regulations on how it was spent. As Rachel Roe, a reservist and lawyer who was rebuilding the legal system in Najaf, told me: "Fern showed up in the palace in Baghdad looking for the head of democracy and human rights to see what's the plan and found some 21-year-old political appointee who had no idea what was going on. Someone would just say, 'O.K., take this cash, put it in a backpack and build democracy centers.' It was insane. I was looking for guidance on Iraqi law and was met by a 22-year-old American in charge of the Ministry of Justice who said, 'Don't worry about that, I'm pretty sure we're going to rewrite that constitution anyway.' This is a country of 23 million people, and we're there with no plan for what we're going to do. So we just started figuring it out ourselves."

They had little time. The money and fancy gear generated envy, and Iraqi men were not accustomed to envying ***women*** in a fight over resources. In both Hilla and Karbala, the C.P.A. had kicked out religious parties from government-owned buildings to install the ***women***'s centers. A cleric "destroyed the reputation of a woman on the town council whom I'm very fond of and I love her kids," Holland wrote in an e-mail message to a colleague in Washington. "She was the driving force for the ***women***'s group, and now has withdrawn. . . . She's being called a Baathist and a Zionist, etc. . . . My brain is on overdrive trying to hold these fragile groups together. It's like you're on the verge of something explosive and just trying to contain it."

In the evenings, after a jog along the river inside the compound, Holland would eat, but not much, then begin her nightly e-mail to family and friends, to Republicans and Democrats and nonprofit organizations. She sought money and experts to implement the Bush administration's vision of democratizing the Middle East. "Islamic fundamentalism is spreading across the south-central region," she wrote in one letter, seeking money to hire professors. "Education is the key for democracy to take root," she continued. "People must know what it is and believe in democracy if we expect them to be motivated to protect it." She wanted to reach the "middle-of-the-road types who are very religious in their faith but not violent" before the Shiite religious parties engulfed the south, and before the confiscated Saddam cash, and perhaps America's commitment to teaching democracy, dried up. The local parties had 30 years of experience organizing underground cells against Saddam. They had money and they had those powerful campaign billboards -- party founders portrayed as sympathetic martyrs, just like the pictures of Shiism's beloved martyrs Hussein and Ali.

So what started as a humanitarian endeavor to liberate Iraqi ***women*** quickly shaped into a political battle. It was the war after the war, and in the Shiite heartland, Holland and her assistant, Salwa Oumashi, were at this war's center. Oumashi's mother, a Christian Syrian widow who'd lost a son to Saddam, was growing anxious for her daughter. But Oumashi and Holland would always tell her, ''If we don't take this opportunity now to fight for rights, we won't have another chance for 50 years.'' When Gfoeller rolled out his idea for a ''heartland conference'' at Hilla's university, gathering ***women*** activists as the vanguard for a democracy movement and a new political leadership, ''Fern single-handedly took over the organizing, renovating dormitories at the university, arranging travel,'' recalled her onetime boss at the United States Agency for International Development, where she worked before the C.P.A. ''She went gangbusters with visibility. She knew heavy hitters in D.C. Condoleezza Rice did a video-con message to the participants. Fern took it to greater heights than we ever imagined.''

On Oct. 4 of last year, L. Paul Bremer III, the head of the C.P.A., choppered in and told the ***women*** that the Heartland Conference was one of the most exciting events he'd been to. He made a tour of Holland's ***women***'s center. Photos were snapped. What Bremer didn't stick around to see were the angry men outside threatening to bomb the place or the slogans that went up overnight on the university campus: ''C.P.A., Americans, British don't intervene in Iraqi affairs.'' And: ''These strange ***women*** are here to spread knowledge that doesn't belong to our culture.'' The elite, secular Iraqi ***women*** who had recently returned from exile were unnerved by the backlash. Conservative ***women*** from the holy city of Najaf, just half an hour away, resented the conference and its dubious teachings. Each group of ***women*** shouted down the speakers of the other groups. When Zainab Al-Suwaij, an Iraqi who was brought up by her grandfather, a revered ayatollah, gave a talk about the need for separation of church and state, even she was heckled, despite her Islamic credentials.

Suwaij told me later that Holland had taken a leadership position and tried to please everyone, but it was impossible. ''It was very tense,'' Suwaij said. ''My bodyguards would hear the men outside talking about Fern. They hated her. She was a threat to them. She was nervous and didn't know what was happening, and I told her: 'Be careful. These people you are dealing with are smiling in your face and at the same time putting up slogans against you and sending ***women*** to find out what's going on here.' Even I didn't feel safe.''

Suwaij hadn't been back to Iraq in many years -- she went into exile after participating in the 1991 anti-Baathist uprising -- and she said: ''Basra, my home, used to be a modern port city. After I came back, almost all the ***women*** were covered. The mentality of the people changed. The wars, the sanctions. They are generous and sweet when you visit, but they are cynical and don't trust people. The political parties are controlling their minds and the ***women***'s activities. . . . You find ***Hezbollah*** offices in Basra. Hamas offices in Nasiriya.''

Last November, Holland persuaded families in Karbala and Najaf to allow her to take some ***women*** to Washington, New York and Boston for democracy seminars and to meet President Bush. She even included some of the conservative Najafi ***women***. One Iraqi lawyer returned to her home in Najaf to find an effigy of herself hanging on her door with the word ''spy.'' She dropped all her activities. One close Iraqi friend of Holland's recalled riding a minibus in Najaf with a simple man who told him, ''My uncle, these foreigners have come to take our wives to foreign lands.''

Fern Holland was making a name for herself. Those she touched called her Barbie, the doll, the white dove or the angel dropped from the sky. But there were also the other names that adhere to Westerners -- spy, Jew -- and, in her case, dangerous agent injecting Western notions in the minds of good Muslim ***women***. Oumashi too, who had lived for a time in the United States and brought back her American clothes and airs and ideas about ***women***'s liberation, was considered an American agent. They were, after all, touching Najaf, the center of the Shiite world. It is the home of the shrine of Ali and of the Shiites' most sacred burial ground, where millions have transported their dead for burial in the city's catacombed cemetery. Billions of dollars were at stake from the pilgrim industry, as was the power to define much of the Shiite majority's future in the new Iraq. The last thing male religious leaders wanted was Holland and Oumashi teaching ***women*** that they had the power to select their own leaders.

By February of this year, Holland was busy getting a ***women***'s center up and running in Karbala, 12 miles northwest of Hilla, despite strong local opposition. It was not just a matter of struggling with local religious conservatives, though that would have been enough in a city built around the tomb of the Shiite martyr Hussein.

Just across the street, Karbala's policemen worked in a blighted station house while Holland and Oumashi unloaded new computers and other fancy goods for the sole benefit of Karbala's ***women***. The police were not even being paid any longer; the interior ministry had stopped sending money to the provinces, despite the desperate need for security. Why were the Americans spending their money in this way? In Friday sermons, clerics loyal to the young militant Moktada al-Sadr spread rumors: "You know what the Americans are doing in these centers, my brothers? They are offering free abortions. You know what these Internet centers are doing? They are offering free porn to the students of the Hawza [the Shiite seminary]."

Bremer flew in for a ribbon-cutting ceremony at the ***women***'s center with an entourage of private bodyguards and Western reporters. He extolled the talents of the Iraqi ***women*** -- all of whom were draped in black from crown to toe. The C.P.A. needed some good-news stories, and the liberation of Iraqi ***women*** -- which the administration had increasingly trumpeted as the insurgency failed to crumble and no weapons of mass destruction could be found -- read well back home. The more Iraq spun out of control, the more sugary were C.P.A. Hilla's press releases. "During the past few weeks, the coalition has given out more than 1,000 soccer balls to children," read one. "The children always come running up . . . happy smiles on their faces."

But inside the center, the ***women*** were worried about their men and the lack of jobs. Dr. Amal, a young farm veterinarian whom Holland had chosen to direct the Karbala center, asked Bremer what he planned to do for Iraq. "Always it was the same promises -- democracy, participation of ***women*** in the political future," she told me last summer. But no jobs. Companies, Bremer told her, couldn't come into such an insecure environment. Bremer touted the free market, borders flung open, no restrictions on goods. But in truth there was no free market. Bechtel and Halliburton were stepping in to do the work of the government ministries that had employed so many Iraqis. These companies were hiring foreign workers and security guards from around the world, paying enormous salaries, while young Iraqi men sat idle.

On March 9, the same day Holland went to Kifl and the house was bulldozed, she and Oumashi were scheduled to visit Karbala. Adly Hassanein, the avuncular Egyptian human rights adviser, later told me that he had urged Holland to skip her Karbala visit. Tensions were high in the city. A week earlier, suicide bombers tore apart hundreds of Shiite pilgrims congregated around the shrine of Hussein.

Holland told Hassanein she had to go, but she'd be quick and turn back if the roads were bad. She had a special appointment at the ***women***'s center. The previous summer, she began a close working relationship with Ahmed Alhilaly, an investigative judge, and Mohanned Alkinany, a lawyer. Together, the two men founded the Karbala human rights center. They never had any money, and they and Holland joked about forming a ballet company, with Alkinany as the lead dancer because he was so fat. On a trip home over Christmas, "she didn't forget to get the ballet slippers," Alhilaly remembered when I spoke to him in July. He and Holland had arranged a surprise gift-giving ceremony for the morning of March 9 to give Alkinany his dancing shoes. Alhilaly filmed the event and Holland gave a speech about how lucky she was to have discovered people like them who truly wanted to build a new Iraq.

Holland and Oumashi shared a lunch of fesenjoon -- chicken with dried-pomegranate sauce -- with the ***women*** on the Karbala center's board and began explaining how the money would be distributed when the C.P.A. left in June. Bob Zangas, an idealistic marine who fought in the invasion of Iraq and returned as a civilian, was upstairs giving a lecture about media ethics and the possibility of installing a radio station for ***women***.

Well before sundown, Holland, Oumashi and Zangas headed out of Karbala with Salman Majeed, a translator who lived outside town. Majeed had taken Zangas to take pictures around Karbala that afternoon. "Fern was asking Bob about what he'd seen," Majeed recalled. "He was so excited describing the shrine and downtown. He'd taken pictures of faces, banana sellers, watch sellers, people celebrating the birthday of Al Hussein."

They dropped off Majeed and stopped at a tea stall on the crowded streets of Hindiya, then got back on the road, Holland at the wheel, driving past the blossoming farms. She often teased her worried sisters and brothers by saying Hilla was just like Bluejacket: "Peaceful. Birds chirping. Kids playing. Elderly walking hand in hand."

As the three sped along a flat, desolate stretch of road 20 minutes from Hilla, a white police truck gunned its engine and veered alongside her Daewoo. Bursts of AK-47 rounds blasted through Holland's windshield. Her car swerved across the highway median and jolted still into a scraggy verge. The gunmen vaulted out of the pickup and fired again at Oumashi, who was crouched in the back, her arms covering her head.

Fifteen minutes later, Brigadier Qais Al Mamouri, the police chief of Hilla, whom Holland had befriended, showed up at the scene. "I pulled them out of the car with my hands," he told me. Holland was leaning into Zangas as if she were sleeping. "Fern had been driving," Mamouri said, "and most of the bullets targeted her. The man was shot in the head, but the bullets were fired 360 degrees around the car. Probably 30 or more."

Mamouri sent his officers across the fields and down dirt roads and before dark six policemen from the Karbala station were captured in a white Nissan pickup with supposedly hot AK-47's and pistols, which used the same types of bullets that were found at the scene. A witness had apparently noticed one of the gunmen shouting at Oumashi in Arabic, leading investigators to conclude that the gunmen knew their victims. The Hilla police arrested the men and turned them over to Polish and American forces. And the case appeared to be closed just as suddenly as the murder had ended the lives of Bob Zangas, Salwa Oumashi and Fern Holland.

That night, Abu Amir, on guard at the Hilla ***women***'s center, got a phone call from a friend in the police force. He couldn't believe the news. He thought of a night when had Holland pulled in from Jordan and was unpacking her car under a streetlamp, her hair radiant like the sun. Amir rushed out and told her to get inside for fear such a beauty would be abducted. But killed? He drove to the hospital. He opened the freezer drawer and talked to her, touching her hair. In tears he told her, "You don't deserve this."

Before dawn in Oklahoma City, Viola Holland, Fern's sister and best friend, was text-messaging her boyfriend because she couldn't sleep. The phone rang at 5 a.m. with a call from a friend in Washington saying she'd read something on the Internet about three people killed outside Hilla. Vi phoned the Pentagon looking for information. Then came the call from a general at the Pentagon and a simultaneous knock at the door -- two men in uniform from Fort Sill. She asked them to sit quietly for a few minutes while she composed herself.

Holland and Zangas were the first American civilian employees of the C.P.A. to be killed in Iraq. The murders had a lock-down effect. When Steve Moore, a democracy promoter and fellow Oklahoman, was e-mailed about the murder, he had to break the news to Salwa Oumashi's sister, Suhair, who was his interpreter and sat in the next office. "I had to tell Salwa's family," Moore told me. "And everything you might imagine about telling someone's mother that their daughter is dead. . . . It was absolutely awful." Suhair immediately quit the translating job. Oumashi's family became terrified of contact with foreigners. "Fern had been killed for doing what we both do, and so after that, I started thinking, Well, how long do I want to stay here?" Moore said. "What do I want to accomplish?" He'd been in country for nearly eight months. He decided it was time to move on.

Although the Shiite insurgency, the battles in Falluja, the kidnappings and the beheadings would not begin for another month, the us-versus-them atmosphere had already begun to take over the Shiite world. ***Women*** began receiving increasingly graphic death threats. "Fern changed my life," said Sausam al Barak, a chemical engineer and board member at the Hilla center. "She was the best face of America." But when I met her in May, Barak was holed up home with several armed guards posted outside. ***Women*** at the various centers read the March 9 murders as a clear augury of their own future. Iraqis who danced with the infidels would die like the infidels.

In Baghdad after the murders, I met Manal Omar, an American activist who has worked all over the Arab world and is director of Iraq's branch of ***Women*** for ***Women*** International, which in Hilla and Karbala operated out of Holland's centers. Omar immediately froze the work in the south after March 9. The previous day, she noted, had seemed so propitious. March 8 was international ***women***'s day; the interim constitution was signed, and it included a goal of 25 percent participation by ***women*** in the projected parliament. Holland had worked hard with Iraqi colleagues to ensure this, and it had seemed time for celebration. "It was pure ecstasy," Omar remembered. "And then the next day, pure terror."

That same morning of March 9, Omar's own staff members were ambushed on the way to Karbala and survived only by their driver's wits. The murders that day "challenged all my absolute beliefs," Omar recalled. "Fern and I had

the same approach. No guns. Community outreach. Don't hide behind walls. Don't alienate the ***women***. After her death, I thought maybe we're wrong.''

Holland's story immediately took on mythic qualities. Rumors spread in Baghdad that she'd been riddled with 79 machine-gun bullets, a palpable symbol of Iraqi wrath against America. And in a way her story slipped effortlessly into a parable about American exceptionalism. Headstrong, reckless, idealistic, Americans have always believed in the power of will -- that one man or woman with enough faith and tenacity can at some moment pull off his or her vision. It happens here, in America, often enough. But in much of the rest of the world, the willful individual, moiling away against the system, may attain nobility in some moral order but is nonetheless fated to be crushed. These two perspectives are colliding in Iraq. The collision may, in the future, give way to some fruitful synthesis. For now, the result of the occupation is mostly carnage.

As if suspecting that Holland's death might breed doubts, one of her colleagues at the C.P.A. in Baghdad wrote to me: ''Fern had no patience for the narcissistic anguish about the legitimacy of American power that now pervades the foreign-policy establishment, and that is all about what Americans feel about themselves. For Fern it was all about the Iraqi people and what she could do to help this obviously tortured people pull themselves out of the morass of repression.''

But how do you separate Fern's humanitarian mission from the politics of American occupation?

Just off the banks of the Tigris in Baghdad stands an Alhambresque blue-and-white house, with peeling columns and faded arches -- a rare relic of old Baghdadi architecture in an impoverished neighborhood. Zainab Salbi's grandfather owned the house, and now she's using it as a center for ***Women*** for ***Women*** International, which she founded in 1993. ***Women*** for ***Women*** receives grants from the U.S. government, and when I traveled in Iraq this past spring, several fatwas and notices were circulating in the mosques forbidding Iraqis from working with foreigners. One of the ***Women*** for ***Women*** trainers, cloaked in a black abaya, told me: ''Our society doesn't understand our relation with Americans, and that's why I and all of us are afraid. Anyone dealing with Americans -- friendship, work -- they're considered a spy. In my neighborhood, one of the clerics on the municipal council was threatened once to get off. The next time, they killed him.''

The conservative, poor ***women*** I saw had all received approval to be at the center from their husbands and brothers. The program's goal is to lead ***women*** to financial independence and educate them about their rights. In one room a trainer was telling the ***women***: ''A woman cooks kuba and gives it to her husband to sell in the market. She must learn to ask her husband for a salary. She must speak out and ask for her rights. No one will give them to her.'' Then she added: ''We mustn't work against the men. I have to help my husband, so he will demand even more for me.''

One woman arrived late because her nephew, who drove a Kia-brand taxi, disappeared three days earlier, on the same day that three Kia taxis were blown up in a car-bombing. They were trying to find him or his remains. Another woman was absent because her nephew had been killed in a shootout. Every day this summer there were more such stories of killing and dying.

The center's director was completely rattled -- and like so many Iraqis these days wouldn't dare speak English on her cellphone if she was on the street. She talked about how patient Holland had been. And she said: ''The Shia took the sweets from America and now their real face will appear. They want us to be like Iran. Iran is funding them with money, guns and people because the borders are open. They don't want ***women***'s rights or democracy. I am Shia. I know. They call America the biggest devil.'' It was an outburst made in anger and fear, but with regard to the religious parties, much of it was true.

As I left the center, one of the trainers told me how much Holland had changed the image of Americans and said she hoped such people would appear again. Yet everywhere I went, that idealistic, generous side of America was curdling, overwhelmed by cultural dissonance.

When I'd arrived in Karbala, the city was still in shock from the uprising of the Mahdi Army and a week of heavy American bombardment. The smell of rotting flesh baking in the noonday sun suffused the pilgrim hotels and the old

market. Around the shrine to Hussein, crowds gathered in front of a small TV playing video of an American tank being attacked. The police station across from the ***women***'s center was ringed by Bulgarian tanks and American Bradleys. Most of the police fled the day the Mahdi Army rose.

I stopped in at the Karbala ***women***'s center, a two-story yellow and brown building set back behind a gated garden. A Bulgarian soldier was playing a video war game to a Metallica song in the reception room. His comrades were camped out with their machine guns and ammo boxes in the library amid the potted plants and democracy pamphlets and copies of the Swiss constitution. Bullets had pierced the monitors in the computer rooms and destroyed the windows. A machine gun on a tripod was perched beneath small posters with political aphorisms that were a testament to Holland and Oumashi's ambitious dreams: ''A society of sheep must in time beget a government of wolves'' (Bertran de Jouvenal); ''Those against politics are in favor of the politics inflicted upon them'' (Bertolt Brecht); ''A great deal of intelligence can be invested in ignorance when the need for illusion is deep'' (Saul Bellow).

Some of the ***women*** had come back to check the place out only to be handed a decree, announcing a new board, from the offices of Sayyid Farqat Qizwini, a cleric who had managed to endear himself to the C.P.A. A few days later the phone calls began -- You'll be followed and killed if you don't abandon the ***women***'s center. The C.P.A. had financed the sleek new Regional Center for Democracy in Hilla and appointed Qizwini director. The day before Bremer left Iraq, he flew down to Qizwini's for a photo op and a ceremony of encouragement. ''He was just a great press release to send to the White House: 'Big religious figure, tortured by Saddam, saying great things about the liberation of Iraq,' '' remarked Adly Hassanein. Nonetheless, Hassanein, too, found it expedient to accept Qizwini: ''He opened up a place for us to teach democracy for people who didn't want to be seen as collaborating with the coalition.''

After Holland's death, the C.P.A. gave Qizwini $5 million in cash to administer all the provincial centers for democracy, human rights and ***women***. However, it seemed that the human rights activists and ***women*** were refusing to submit. By empowering Qizwini, the C.P.A. had tried to create an alternative the Shiite establishment, but he had no credibility among Iraqis. ''Fern would be rolling in her grave if she knew a man was running her centers,'' said Manal Omar of ***Women*** for ***Women*** International's branch in Baghdad. ''Most of my staff is Shia, I am a practicing Muslim, we are all god-fearing ***women***, but we're pulling out of those centers because of the unclear organizational structure. We love and respect the religious groups but need to preserve our independence when we are working with the ***women***.'' The boardmembers Holland had chosen in Karbala were all young ***women*** who swore they would remain independent even if it meant they'd have no budget.

John Berry, the Karbala C.P.A. director and a seasoned Arabic-speaking foreign-service officer, had not had his optimism dented in the least. He was barricaded in a fortified compound inside a trailer on the outskirts of town and, despite everything that had gone wrong -- ''we thought most people knew we were the good guys'' -- he was proud of what he'd accomplished in less than a year. The C.P.A. had given way to the interim Iraqi government under Prime Minister Ayad Allawi. Berry saw his own job as having been exhilarating. ''For the first time,'' he said, ''I was running a province. Where does a guy go from here?'' At times, he said, he'd felt like a medieval king taking petitions. ''By golly this was a golden opportunity for Americans to interface with Arabs, to play a mentoring role with Iraqis and change the way they think,'' he said.

''I think we can take credit for a lot here,'' Berry continued. ''I formed the provincial council and got the governor elected.'' In fact, there had been no election. Berry selected the council after a half-hour interview with each candidate, testing him or her on the fundamentals of democracy.

Holland had not been impervious to this kind of maneuvering. In Najaf, when Bremer's office saw that religious parties were going to win the provincial council elections, Bremer canceled them. Shortly thereafter the Najaf C.P.A. director was nearly killed and fled the country. Adly Hassanein told me that, in order to get more ***women*** on the council, John Berry simply drew up a list inside his trailer. ''There was no democratic process at all, and Fern helped him by getting ***women***'s names to put on the list,'' Hassanein said. ''They were all good people. But do they represent the will of the society? No. They weren't elected. So immediately they're 'our guys.' I wanted Fern out of this. Working on the ground to advocate for ***women***'s rights is different than working from the top and imposing your

views. The backlash was that Moktada al-Sadr's people pressured 60 to 70 percent of the ***women*** in the council, and they withdrew."

In conversation, Abu Saddiq, the hospitable local representative of the religious party Sciri (the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq), immediately brought up the 11 ***women*** appointed to the 40-member provincial council. "I told the American representative: 'In the American Congress you don't even have that percentage. Why here in the religious city of Karbala? It's possible for you to develop our country in science, or by building factories and general services, but you can't change our traditions. Our religion is like a nail in the wall. When you hit the nail it doesn't come out. It goes deeper.' "

Who killed Holland, Oumashi and Zangas? As I drove around the region, I met many ***women*** and men who wept when they remembered Holland. But I was discovering that there were plenty of people who wanted her and Oumashi out of the south. Zangas, it seems, was simply in the wrong car. The Karbala police chief, a portly and friendly man known as General Abbas, told me one morning in May that the police officers accused of killing Holland had been released from Abu Ghraib prison two days earlier. Ballistics tests done by the F.B.I. didn't produce a match, so the men were presumed to be innocent.

In Hindiya, a notoriously seedy crossroads town where Holland stopped shortly before being killed, I met some farmers from the same tribe as the arrested policemen. At first they denied knowing anything, but later one of them said: "Don't think it was some spontaneous decision made that day. Everyone knew those 'journalists' were spies. A lot of special groups were watching them for a long time before they planned and killed them." In Hilla, the special police told me a small clique connected to Sadr's sharia court in Najaf ordered Holland's killing. An investigative lawyer in Najaf told me that her death was ordered by a 27-year-old self-proclaimed ayatollah in Hindiya, whose fanatical followers had killed American M.P.'s in Karbala and who has since disappeared. A judge in Baghdad told me it had to be Sciri or Dawa, the two most organized religious parties; Holland was becoming too successful at organizing ***women*** in Najaf, he said, and the clerics and political parties there had some bizarre notion that she was a Jew trying to create an espionage base for Israel. An American lawyer told me that the F.B.I. suspected her killing was connected to Kifl. It appeared that the woman who had chiefly instigated the bulldozing was a cousin and sister-in-law to the man whose house was destroyed. There were also rumors in Kifl -- whose Jewish population fled to Israel in the 1950's -- that Israel was sending agents to collect information on formerly Jewish properties. "Imagine you put your finger in that ball of fire?" Adly Hassanein said.

Americans working in Iraq blamed the occupation. The Shiite south was initially expected to be quiet. For Washington's political reasons, and out of an unwillingness to bring in more U.S. troops, the south was mainly handed over to a coalition of the least enthusiastic nations, who have demonstrated above all else a talent for conflict avoidance. "Everyone in Najaf will tell you that this was the second great betrayal of the Shia by the Americans," said Rachel Roe, the Army legal adviser working with marines in Najaf.

A State Department official in Washington told me: "We're responsible for her death. When you push someone with a greater sense of urgency to get their good-news stories done, and when you bring down Jerry Bremer for high-profile ceremonies with helicopters and bodyguards so he can take credit for liberating Iraqi ***women***, after he flies off, the person caught in the crossfire is Fern. And we had a responsibility to protect her. We didn't."

In the lobby of one of Najaf's pilgrim hotels I met Fuad al-Turfi, a stout, white-turbaned cleric and a spokesman for Moktada al-Sadr. I expected him to have harsh words for Holland's work on ***women***'s rights. I was stunned when his eyes became red as he began talking about her. He said that Sadr had sent him to the inauguration of the Najaf human rights center. He met Holland there. She offered him cake. "She was so courteous," he told me as he smiled at the memory. "She had such good behavior."

He was dizzy for days after he heard she had been killed, he told me. "This is not our behavior," he said. "It's against the dignity of the Iraqi. She was a woman. She was unarmed. She came for humanitarian reasons and human rights. And I said, 'What will the good-intentioned people in the U.S. think of us?' To me her murder is a historical crime." Embarrassed, he whispered that he kept Holland's photograph as his computer's screen saver.

Turfi bore the Americans no ill will, but was astounded at how badly they'd mishandled the Shiites -- not supporting the police, not securing the borders and most of all, welcoming every religious faction into politics except Moktada al-Sadr and his followers. The results, he said, were the growing popularity of Sadr as a revolutionary hero and the gun-toting young men outside the hotel trading shop talk -- Rocket the tank in the treads, not the turret -- and yearning for martyrdom.

Turfi said that Sadr's office had sent him to Karbala to investigate the murder. He said he had discovered that a tribal man angry over her work in Hindiya had told his buddies at the Hindiya police station that she was a spy. ''He followed her with the local police and they killed her,'' he said. ''He's called 'Aja,' a nickname meaning sandstorm, because he has such a temper. We say in our slang this man 'reached the devil hour,' that he could kill a woman.''

Hassanein, however, didn't buy any of these theories in particular. He said that when he spoke to Iraqis about the murder, their answer was simple: ''She crossed the line. She went deep into the land of male superiority. She was trying to bring with her a very Westernized ***women***'s-emancipation program, and she hit the wall. Whether there's a specific group or an individual or anything, it has to do with the religious beliefs in the region and it has to do with the folkways.''

Holland probably knew what she was up against and, despite her indefatigable energy and will, was beginning to have doubts. A week before her death, she made the 20-hour journey from Jordan -- where she took some judges and lawyers to a conference -- to Hilla with Ahmed Alhilaly, the investigative judge from Karbala, who later fled Iraq to save his life. Holland was upset. She said she felt that too much money was being spent on buildings and not people. ''She always said, 'We have to build people before buildings,' '' Alhilaly recalled. ''She loved those words. She asked me how we can change Iraqis. I told her we need years, not months. We know nothing about democracy or human rights or freedom.'' And then he recalled that she said to him: '' 'I've failed. I've discovered I've been fighting for nothing.' ''

Alhilaly protested, but Holland went on, he said: '' 'I went back to America to get another contract with the C.P.A. to continue with you, to establish the ***women***'s centers and human rights centers. But if you want the truth, I didn't find almost anyone who is working for his community. Everyone is out for himself.' '' Alhilaly suggested she go back home. ''But she said: 'No. I'll wait. Every step is difficult, but we have to give some time to your people, and we can win three here, three there. It will make a difference.' She had lovely dreams. But they are still just dreams. They killed her and our dreams with her.' ''

Shortly before I left Iraq, I went to a Baghdad provincial council meeting with a council member, Siham Hamdan. She lives in Baghdad's impoverished Sadr City and had spent several days with Holland in Washington. A professor of English literature at Mustansirya University in Baghdad, Hamdan tried to explain why Iraq's young men had revolted. ''We did nothing for them in a year,'' she said. ''No jobs. No projects. No water, services, sewage, electricity.''

And then there was the cultural miscommunication, which seems to have been complete. The American military has its code of ethics and behavior; the Iraqis have their dignity; and the two have only clashed. She said she spent her last night in Washington touring the city with Holland and had met some of her friends. ''I came to believe she was wonderful,'' Hamdan said. ''She told me she wanted to come back to Iraq because she loved the people and couldn't leave them anymore.''

The conversation reminded Hamdan of E. M. Forster's ''Passage to India.'' She valued Forster for understanding that some English conventions were wrong, and that he needed to change the colonial mentality: ''He tried to tackle this in all his novels until he made this final clash -- personal, religious, political, social, cultural, all in one time, in one place in the caves.'' She was describing the novel's climax, when two Englishwomen visit the Marbar Caves with their Indian male friends, and the young Miss Adela Quested comes flying out of the darkness accusing the Indian doctor of assaulting her. ''From that point every party tries to defend his own,'' Hamdan said. ''And what began as an attempt at friendship and understanding ends in misunderstanding, failure and total chaos. And the final sentence is marvelous.'' As Hamdan recalled it, the English colonial, Fielding, asks the Indian doctor if they can ever be friends again: ''And the doctor answered: 'Not yet. Not now.' '' Hamdan laughed, then said: ''Sometimes I

feel what's happening between Iraqis and Americans is just like this: 'Not yet. Not now.' I can have an excellent understanding on the personal level but understanding between our nations is somehow impossible.''

Actually, the novel ends a little differently than Hamdan remembered and, in the context of Iraq today, perhaps more prophetically. The Indian doctor on his horse rages at his old friend Fielding: ''Clear out, you fellows, double quick, I say. We may hate one another, but we hate you most. If I don't make you go, Ahmed will, Karim will, if it's fifty-five hundred years we shall get rid of you, yes, we shall drive every blasted Englishman into the sea, and then' -- he rode against him furiously -- 'and then,' he concluded, half kissing him, 'you and I shall be friends.' ''

http://www.nytimes.com

Graphic

Photos: The ***women***'s center in Karbala that Fern Holland helped open despite strong opposition from local clerics. It was damaged during the Mahdi Army uprising. (Photograph by Stephanie Sinclair/Corbis, for The New York Times)

Fern Holland with several of the ***women*** at the center in Hilla. Among those who benefited from her stubborn idealism, she was beloved. To many Iraqi men, she was a provocative interloper. (Photograph from the Holland Family)

The possibility of empowerment came suddenly to Iraqi ***women*** with the American-led occupation. Though the Coalition Provisional Authority championed ***women***'s rights from the start, threats from conservative clerics have grown steadily with the Shiite insurgency.

Fearing for their lives, the relatives of Salwa Oumashi pose in the shadows to mask their identities. Oumashi, Fern Holland's Iraqi assistant, was murdered with Holland.

In the religious Shiite heartland of the south -- and even in the ***women***'s centers of the conservative slums of Baghdad, above -- Fern Holland's vision of ***women***'s rights still seems a long way away. (Photograph by Stephanie Sinclair/Corbis, for The New York Times)

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100 DAYS

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Body

The day began innocently at water fountains and coffee pots, with conjecture about Michael Jordan's return to pro basketball and the latest buzz on Calif. Rep. Gary Condit.

In New York, the 56th General Assembly of the United Nations was about to convene.

Kofi Annan, the secretary general, hadn't yet left home. But he had issued a message in advance to set the tone for the day, which was to include the ringing of the Peace Bell.

"Let us dare to imagine a world free of conflict and violence," he concluded.

It was Sept. 11, the U.N.'s International Day of Peace.

A day of the unimaginable. At airports in Boston; Newark, N.J.; and suburban Washington, groups of young men boarded cross-country airliners, settled into their seats and began counting minutes.

A world away, a ragged army of Afghan guerrilla soldiers, who called themselves the Northern Alliance, mourned its leader. Ahmed Shah Massoud, an enemy of the Taliban and an enemy of Osama bin Laden, was mortally wounded Sept. 9 by a suicide bomber posing as a journalist.

That was how it began. The U.N. Peace Bell would not ring, not for three days. And by then, the world was ringing with talk of war.

A hundred days have passed since, an kaleidoscope of emotions, pictures and words.

DAY 1

TUESDAY, SEPT. 11: A passenger jet from Boston, American Airlines Flight 11, swoops from a pale blue sky and bulldozes into the north tower of New York's World Trade Center at 8:45 a.m. A second plane, United Airlines Flight 175, also from Boston, banks and slams into the south tower 18 minutes later.

Jet fuel explodes into fireballs, melting steel.

The south tower lasts 62 minutes; the north tower, 103 minutes. Both plummet into the streets below, spewing massive clouds of dust and debris through lower Manhattan. People gasp or moan or scream, and run.

Nearly an hour after the first crash, American Airlines Flight 77 from Washington's Dulles International Airport slams into the Pentagon, triggering evacuations throughout the capital city.

America screeches to a halt. Airports shut down, along with bridges and tunnels. Planes still flying are ordered to land. President Bush cuts short a visit with schoolchildren in Sarasota and announces that the country had suffered an "apparent terrorist attack."

Just after 10 a.m., a fourth airliner, United Airlines Flight 93 from Newark, crashes into a field in Somerset County, Pa., southeast of Pittsburgh. Days later, stories would emerge of a heroic attempt to wrest the plane from hijackers. Federal authorities suspect it was headed for Camp David, Md., the White House or the U.S. Capitol.

New York postpones its primary elections. Financial markets close. Mayor Rudolph Giuliani finds a new role as the strong voice of calm and compassion in a city under siege.

"More than any of us can bear," he says, when asked how many have died. Some estimates range as high as 10,000.

By afternoon, news reporters are uttering a familiar name: Osama bin Laden, a millionaire Saudi fugitive blamed for past acts against American targets.

Palestinian groups deny responsibility, as does the al-Qaida group headed by bin Laden.

Muslims in the United States condemn the attacks, and the nation turns to prayer.

The Emmy Awards show is postponed. Kmart suspends gun and ammunition sales. Theme parks and shopping malls shut down. The country mourns. The world seems dazed.

Before nightfall, Bush returns to the Oval Office to address the country. "Today, our nation saw evil, the very worst of human nature, and we responded with the best of America."

DAY 2

WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 12: After FBI agents descend on Boston's Logan International Airport, U.S. authorities identify 18 hijackers, a number later increased to 19. Investigators cast a worldwide net for accomplices.

The FBI serves search warrants on major Internet service providers.

One U.S. official tells reporters another hijacking might have been thwarted by increased security at New York's John F. Kennedy and LaGuardia airports. At least eight people are arrested, including four challenged at one of the airports Sept. 11.

In Hamburg, Germany, police search four apartments looking for information about two of the alleged hijackers, Mohamed Atta and Marwan al-Shehhi, who were students at the Technical University Hamburg-Harburg.

Jittery travelers flock to trains, buses and rental cars. Blood donors line up by the thousands.

Gov. Jeb Bush worries the attacks could hurt the state's economy, which stands on the brink of recession.

Muslims in Florida and elsewhere report threats, harassment and vandalism.

And in New York, the last survivor to be found in the mountains of debris, a woman, is pulled from beneath a collapsed walkway.

DAY 3

100 DAYS

THURSDAY, SEPT. 13: As Tropical Storm Gabrielle sidles up to Florida from the south, airlines slowly resume flights at Tampa International Airport and others across the country. But few passengers are aboard, and the air carriers project losses of $10 billion.

In Tampa, Neiman Marcus cancels a gala at its new International Plaza store, set to open Friday, and the mall limits its grand opening to a simple ceremony.

Police arrest a man taken off a plane at New York's Kennedy airport after he allegedly flashes a fake pilot's ID. FBI agents search a Jersey City, New Jersey, apartment after detaining two people in Texas.

A Spring Hill hospital suspends a physician after an alleged anti-American comment.

Tampa gun dealers report a 30 percent jump in sales. Most college football games are canceled for the weekend. Television networks postpone fall season premiers and revise weekend movie runs. NASCAR postpones the Winston Cup race, set for Sunday.

Hillsborough firefighter Brian Muldowney joins the search for his brother, a New York firefighter, and the University of South Florida's robotics team arrives in lower Manhattan, at the spot now known as ground zero.

DAY 4

FRIDAY, SEPT. 14: Investigators tie three of the suspected hijackers - Ziad Samir Jarrah, Marwan al-Shehhi and Mohamed Atta - to South Florida, where they are believed to have taken flight lessons.

Tampa's International Plaza debuts to the public on a somber, soggy Friday, as Gabrielle dumps 8 inches of rain on the Bay area.

A band of Florida executives stranded in Chicago starts home by taxi. Reports emerge of e-mail scams purporting to be raising money for victims' families.

Military recruiters notice an increase in applicants. And the USS Cole is relaunched a day earlier than planned, 11 months after a terrorist attack blamed on bin Laden killed 17 while the ship was at port in Yemen.

DAY 5

SATURDAY, SEPT. 15: Continental airlines announces plans to lay off 12,000 workers and reduce flights by 20 percent. American, United and other carriers soon take similar steps.

A Disney cruise ship is evacuated after dogs trained to sniff out explosives find suspicious luggage.

Five people die in Port Isabel, Texas, when barges smash into a bridge, collapsing a 160-foot section of the span.

Track great Michael Johnson runs the final race of his career in Yokohama, Japan.

Vandals target a store in Hudson owned by an Indian man, Silta Amin.

The Central Florida Arms Show, the largest in the Southeast, draws a crowd stocking up on ammunition - while Cease Fire Tampa Bay reports a 56 percent drop in gun buybacks.

DAY 6

SUNDAY, SEPT. 16: Bin Laden denies any role in the attacks.

"The U.S. government has consistently blamed me for being behind every occasion its enemies attack it," he says in a statement released to Arabic television.

"I would like to assure the world that I did not plan the recent attacks, which seems to have been planned by people for personal reasons."

Churches throughout the Bay area fill with parishioners uniting in prayers, songs and offerings in honor of attack victims.

The FBI searches a Delray Beach apartment where suspected hijacker Saeed Alghamdi lived, amid indications that two other suspected hijackers also had spent time there.

Attorney General John Ashcroft and FBI Director Robert Mueller meet with congressional leaders to discuss giving federal investigators broader powers. The Bush administration says it is re-examining intelligence rules to better fight terrorism.

Smaller disasters are lost in the larger flood of news, including word that eight members of the University of Wyoming's cross-country team have been killed in a head-on collision.

DAY 7

MONDAY, SEPT. 17: U.S. financial markets open for the first time since the terrorist attacks.

President Bush declares prime suspect bin Laden, "Wanted - dead or alive."

Ashcroft expresses concern that more terrorist assaults might be planned against the country.

"Frankly, I think we need to be careful, and we need to understand that there is a risk," he tells CNN's Larry King.

DAY 8

TUESDAY, SEPT. 18: Reports are surfacing about Zacarias Moussaoui, arrested three weeks before the attacks on an alleged passport violation.

Two weeks before, the reports say, FBI agents were at a flight school in the Midwest asking questions. Moussaoui had paid $8,000 in cash for flying lessons - but wasn't interested in learning about take off or landing procedures.

Filipino investigators say they warned the FBI six years ago of a terrorist plot to hijack commercial planes and slam them into the Pentagon, CIA headquarters and other buildings.

Arista Records re-releases Whitney Houston's 1991 version of "The Star- Spangled Banner," recorded during Super Bowl XXV at Tampa Stadium.

DAY 9

WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 19: The government releases photographs of the suspected hijackers, and Attorney General Ashcroft speculates that the terrorists must have received support from other governments.

Alabama Republican Sen. Richard Shelby calls the attacks "a massive failure" on the part of the U.S. intelligence community.

Schools nationwide report record turnouts for the 12th annual "See You At The Pole" event, in which students gather at the school flagpole to pray before class.

The Pentagon coins the phrase "Operation Infinite Justice" to describe the deployment of aircraft to areas surrounding the Persian Gulf, Indian Ocean, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

Bay area firefighters raise money in a boot drive for their fallen comrades.

100 DAYS

Anticipating revenue declines, Tampa International Airport scales back construction projects.

DAY 10

THURSDAY, SEPT. 20: Pennsylvania Gov. Thomas Ridge is appointed director of the new Office of Homeland Security.

Federal agents arrest an alleged associate of bin Laden, Nabil Al-Marabh, 34, outside Chicago.

The FBI begins enlisting the aid of banks to follow the money trail in the attacks while trying to resolve whether the hijackers used as aliases the names of people still alive.

MacDill's 6th Air Mobility Wing is ordered to ready itself for deployment to support U.S. military action in the Middle East.

The Federal Aviation Administration eases a ban on some private aircraft flights.

In St. Petersburg, a Middle Eastern family moves after receiving a postcard death threat.

DAY 11

FRIDAY, SEPT. 21: Investigators begin focusing on Abdulaziz Alomari - one of the men on the jet that hit the World Trade Center's north tower - as a key player in the Sept. 11 attacks.

Northwest Airlines announces it will cut 10,000 jobs.

The war on terror goes Hollywood. Movie makers begin juggling release plans and plotlines because of the attacks.

Entertainers including U2, Celine Dion and Mariah Carey stage "America: A Tribute to Heroes," a telethon that raises $150 million for victims and families. Actors Jack Nicholson and Tom Cruise work the phone bank.

DAY 12

SATURDAY, SEPT. 22: President Bush signs a $15 billion aid package for the nation's airlines.

Eight lower Manhattan buildings reopen, and New York's Mayor Giuliani calls for a return to normalcy.

In his weekly radio address, President Bush predicts an economic turnaround.

College football games resume.

A doll wearing a turban is hung from a billboard in Hudson, with a sign around its neck reading, "Honk for death of bin Laden."

DAY 13

SUNDAY, SEPT. 23: President Bush returns the U.S. flag to full staff at Camp David.

The Federal Aviation Administration grounds crop-dusters for the second time since the attacks.

Thousands attend a prayer service at New York's Yankee Stadium.

Nearly 2,000 attend a candlelight vigil at St. Mark the Evangelist Roman Catholic Church in New Tampa.

Pro football games resume with added security and patriotic pregame ceremonies.

DAY 14

100 DAYS

MONDAY, SEPT. 24: Bin Laden calls on followers to fight against "the new Jewish and Christian crusade."

Russian President Vladimir Putin voices support for U.S. antiterrorist operations in Afghanistan.

President Bush freezes the assets of 27 people and organizations in an effort to "drain the lifeblood" of terrorist groups.

Members of the Florida Air National Guard's 290th Communication Squadron, based at MacDill, prepare to travel overseas.

A union representing 60,000 commercial pilots says it will ask Congress to allow pilots to carry firearms in the cockpit.

Children getting ready for Halloween make a rush on firefighter and police costumes.

DAY 15

TUESDAY, SEPT. 25: The Pentagon calls some 2,000 more reservists to active duty, bringing the call-up total to 12,243.

The last standing section of the World Trade Center's south tower is brought down. Officials say it might be used in a memorial.

Saudi Arabia cuts ties with the Taliban government and accuses it of defaming Islam by harboring terrorists.

A crowd of 9,000 fills the Ice Palace in Tampa for "An American Anthem," a patriotic program featuring music and prayers.

The Bay Area Pistol Range in Tampa starts using uses targets emblazoned with bin Laden's face.

DAY 16

WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 26: Delta Air Lines says it will cut 13,000 jobs, bringing the number of layoffs in the airline industry to more than 100,000.

Thousands of Afghans storm the abandoned U.S. Embassy in Kabul, burning an effigy of President Bush.

University of South Florida researchers receive $6.3 million in federal money to help defend the state against bioterrorism.

Another 600 reservists are called up, including members of an Air Force special operations force from Niceville.

DAY 17

THURSDAY, SEPT. 27: President Bush authorizes the Air Force to shoot down commercial airliners that threaten Americans.

Four thousand National Guard troops prepare to patrol the nation's airports.

Jobless claims nationwide soar to a nine-year high.

DAY 18

FRIDAY, SEPT. 28: Officials say it will take a year and cost $7 billion to clear away the World Trade Center's remains.

100 DAYS

A handful of U.S. commandos and CIA agents land in are in Afghanistan to scout Taliban positions and search for bin Laden, U.S. officials say.

USF Professor Sami Al-Arian is put on paid leave after his appearance on a television program the Fox News program "The O'Reilly Factor" draws a rash of threatening e-mail and telephone calls.

The state says Florida tourism has lost $20 million a day since the attacks; Walt Disney World and other theme parks struggle to regain their footing.

Dealers say more ***women*** are buying guns since the attacks.

DAY 19

SATURDAY, SEPT. 29: The CIA says it has secretly been sending teams to Afghanistan for the past three years to capture or kill bin Laden.

The Empire State Building's observation deck reopens.

Gov. Bush says the state budget might require more than $1 billion in cuts, while nearly 80 percent of Florida's aviation-related companies say they will lay off workers.

DAY 20

SUNDAY, SEPT. 30: Attorney General Ashcroft cites a "clear and present danger" of more terrorist attacks if the United States retaliates for Sept. 11.

Saudi Arabia refuses to allow U.S. troops to use bases on its soil to launch attacks on Arabs or Muslims.

The Immigration and Naturalization Service temporarily freezes immigration applications.

Otis Vincent Tolbert of Brandon, a victim of killed in the attack on the Pentagon, is remembered in during a memorial service at Bell Shoals Baptist Church.

An 8-year-old boy from Coral Sunset Elementary in Boca Raton is told he can't run a Sept. 11 relief fundraiser from his school because only fundraisers that benefit students are allowed.

Robbers steal 25 American flags from a store in Largo.

DAY 21

MONDAY, OCT. 1: President Bush freezes $6 million in 50 bank accounts allegedly linked to terrorists.

Djamel Beghal, an Islamic militant suspected of trying to organize attacks against U.S. interests in France, is extradited from the United Arab Emirates to France.

A fourth U.S. aircraft carrier, the USS Kitty Hawk, is deployed to the Arabian Sea.

Luis Martinez-Flores and Kenys Galicia of Virginia are arrested on charges of helping suspected hijackers obtain false identification documents.

In Tampa, Ellen Arena works on a quilt-making project to raise money for victims of the attacks.

DAY 22

TUESDAY, OCT. 2: New York's Weill Cornell Burn Center releases its first World Trade Center burn victim, Manu Dhingra.

In a rare show of bipartisanship, the Senate approves a $345 billion defense measure 99-0.

U.S. officials say they aborted weekend mili tary strikes against the Taliban and terrorists in Afghanistan when allies Saudi Arabia, Oman and Uzbekistan expressed reservations.

NATO Secretary General George Robertson says the United States has provided clear and compelling evidence of bin Laden's involvement.

The Hillsborough County School Board approves the names Liberty Middle and Freedom High for two schools under construction in New Tampa.

Stores report dwindling stocks of books about terrorism.

Day 23

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 3: President Bush and congressional leaders agree to assemble a new antirecession package containing as much as $75 billion in tax cuts and emergency spending.

Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson testifies at a Senate hearing that the United States is not prepared for bioterrorism.

DAY 24

THURSDAY, OCT. 4: Reagan Washington National Airport is the last to reopen after the attacks.

President Bush announces $3 billion in emergency aid for U.S. workers laid off since Sept. 11, and $320 million in humanitarian aid for Afghanistan.

Pakistan becomes the first significant Muslim ally to declare acceptance of the U.S. case that bin Laden was to blame for the attacks.

The FBI releases new details and videotapes of suspected hijackers Mohamed Atta and Abdulaziz Alomari to help generate more investigative leads.

DAY 25

FRIDAY, OCT. 5: Bob Stevens, 63, a photo editor for the supermarket tabloid The Sun in Boca Raton, dies from inhalation anthrax.

Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta orders airlines to strengthen cockpit doors within 30 days.

The Florida National Guard begins its first day on duty at Tampa International Airport, which reports an 11 percent decline in air traffic since Sept. 11.

Uzbekistan says the United States can base troops on its soil.

The Pentagon says 1,000 troops from the 10th Mountain Division will be deployed.

Lotfi Raissi, 27, is denied bail by a British court. The Algerian pilot accused of training some of the suicide hijackers is wanted in the United States.

Plant City's Strawberry Airfest is canceled because of flight restrictions.

DAY 26

100 DAYS

SATURDAY, OCT. 6: More than 50 health and law enforcement officials fan out across Palm Beach County to retrace the steps of anthrax victim Stevens.

Major air carriers cut fares up to 50 percent to encourage travelers to fly again.

President Bush warns the Taliban that time is running out. It offers to release eight foreign aid workers if the United States stops threatening military action.

U.S. and British intelligence officials identify Mohammed Atef, one of bin Laden's closest aides, as a key planner of the Sept. 11 attacks.

Investigators implicate suspected hijacker Khalid Almihdhar in the August 1998 bombings of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, as well as the October 2000 attack on the USS Cole in Yemen.

DAY 27

SUNDAY, OCT. 7: America strikes back.

The United States and Britain pound Afghanistan and its Taliban regime with volleys of cruise missiles and waves of bombs. President Bush tells the nation in a 1 p.m. speech from the White House.

U.S. Air Force C-17 cargo planes begin dropping food and medical supplies inside Afghanistan to aid displaced Afghan civilians.

Bin Laden says in a videotape, "There is America, full of fear from its north to its south, from its west to its east. Thank God for that."

Amid tightened security at Raymond James Stadium, the Tampa Bay Buccaneers defeat the Green Bay Packers, 14-10.

The Emmy Awards telecast is again called off.

DAY 28

MONDAY, OCT. 8: A second anthrax case is reported at American Media Inc., The Sun's parent company in Boca Raton.

Tom Ridge is sworn in as director of the Office of Homeland Security.

Ashcroft encourages Americans to have a "heightened sense of awareness."

A second round of airstrikes takes place in Afghanistan. Thousands protest in Pakistan.

The Florida Highway Patrol orders its troopers to begin looking closely at trucks and drivers carrying hazardous materials.

DAY 29

TUESDAY, OCT. 9: The anthrax that killed Stevens is traced to a strain harvested at an Iowa facility in the 1950s.

The United States claims air supremacy over Afghanistan.

Florida's seaports ask for National Guard security details. The Port of Tampa gets help from local law enforcement.

Authorities confirm the Oct. 1 arrests of two Middle Eastern men seen videotaping near the Tampa Port Authority building.

100 DAYS

Gov. Bush says he might call special sessions of the Legislature to address the budget deficit and terrorism.

DAY 30

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 10: Stocks rally to near pre-Sept. 11 levels.

The White House releases a "most wanted" list of 22 suspected terrorists, including bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahri of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad. "We list their names; we publicize their pictures; we rob them of their secrecy," President Bush says.

A third American Media employee tests positive for anthrax, and the Bay area is beset by anthrax scares.

Prosecutors say they have no evidence linking the outbreak to Sept. 11.

Pakistan allows the United States to use its airfields, and U.S. warplanes slam Taliban and al-Qaida forces with 5,000-pound bombs.

Air Force Master Sgt. Evander Andrews dies in a forklift accident in Qatar, the first U.S. casualty of Operation Enduring Freedom.

DAY 31

THURSDAY, OCT. 11: President Bush attends a somber ceremony at the Pentagon to mark one month since the Sept. 11 attacks, and workers at the World Trade Center site pause to remember the dead.

In his first prime-time news conference, Bush offers to end the bombing in Afghanistan if the Taliban will surrender bin Laden.

The FBI warns of additional terrorist attacks.

DAY 32

FRIDAY, OCT. 12: NBC says a ***female*** aide to anchor Tom Brokaw has anthrax.

The Bush administration adds 39 names to the list of individuals and organizations whose assets in the United States are frozen for suspected ties to terrorist groups.

The American Red Cross says it intends to spend only $111 million of $543 million in contributions on Sept. 11 victims, provoking an outpouring of criticism from donors.

DAY 33

SATURDAY, OCT. 13: A U.S. bomb misses its target in Kabul and slams into a residential area a mile away.

Bioterrorism worries escalate when five more American Media employees show signs of anthrax antibodies, and a second NBC employee develops symptoms of the disease.

Delta Air Lines cancels a nonstop flight from New York to Amsterdam, Netherlands, after two men described as Middle Easterners buy one-way tickets and two others inquire about doing so.

DAY 34

SUNDAY, OCT. 14: Attorney General Ashcroft says it's "unlikely" that all the Sept. 11 conspirators have been apprehended.

In a moment reminiscent of the United States' more innocent days, Disney character Winnie-the-Pooh celebrates his 75th birthday.

DAY 35

MONDAY, OCT. 15: An aide to Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle opens a letter, releasing a cloud of anthrax spores into the Hart Senate Office Building.

ABC News announces that the 7-month-old son of an employee has tested positive for skin anthrax.

New York's Mayor Giuliani is knighted by Queen Elizabeth II for his "outstanding help and support to … British families in New York."

The Taliban's leadership begins to splinter with the defection of foreign minister Wakil Ahmed Muttawakil.

The Holland Tunnel, which connects Jersey City, N.J., to lower Manhattan, is fully open for the first time in 35 days.

DAY 36

TUESDAY, OCT. 16: Minutes before American Airlines Flight 11 hit the World Trade Center, a voice says: "Nobody move, please; we are going back to the airport. Don't try to make any stupid moves," a transcript from the cockpit recorder shows.

Investigators say they have found no link between the anthrax cases and organized terrorism.

Since Sept. 11, screeners at Tampa International Airport have seized 8,626 items from carry-on bags, ranging from handcuffs to knitting needles.

DAY 37

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 17: In response to anthrax fears, the U.S. House of Representatives shuts down for five days for anthrax testing. The Senate stays open with minimal staffing.

German authorities arrest a man boarding a plane to Iran. In his baggage they find a "holy war" manual, camouflage clothing, a chemical weapons protection suit and materials to produce an explosive detonator.

Israel Tourism Minister Rehavam Zeevi is assassinated in East Jerusalem.

The Polk County Commission votes to display the Ten Commandments in the county's administration building.

DAY 38

THURSDAY, OCT. 18: Four al-Qaida terrorists convicted in the 1998 bombing of U.S. embassies in Africa are sentenced to life in prison.

Vice President Dick Cheney visits rescue workers at ground zero.

A Port Charlotte nurse is charged with using a hoax weapon of mass destruction after spreading a powdery substance around her boss's office.

DAY 39

FRIDAY, OCT. 19: British police say they are investigating more than 20 terrorism suspects at the request of the FBI.

After a white powder is found on two Northwest Airlines flights, the carrier pulls artificial sweeteners and powdered coffee creamer from its airplanes.

A suitcase full of plastic explosive is found at a Philadelphia bus station.

DAY 40

SATURDAY, OCT. 20: Federal officials say they have detained 830 people in the investigation of the Sept. 11 attacks - but have no evidence that anyone in custody is a conspirator.

Anthrax spores turn up for the first time on the U.S. House of Representatives side of the Capitol complex.

Firefighters dance in the aisles and taunt bin Laden on stage as Paul McCartney, David Bowie and Billy Joel headline a televised "Concert for New York" at Madison Square Garden. The concert raises at least $30 million.

News reports show that only four of Hillsborough County's 14 hospitals have the bare minimum of equipment necessary to deal with a mass casualty disaster.

Bay area schools face potential teacher and employee shortages because of the U.S. military reserve call-up.

DAY 41

SUNDAY, OCT. 21: In the first concerted strike in support of the Northern Alliance, U.S. warplanes pound Taliban front lines.

A crowd of 46,000 gathers in Washington for a concert featuring Michael Jackson and 'N Sync. Proceeds will go to victims of the terrorist attacks.

Gas prices have fallen an average of 9 cents a gallon in two weeks as travel fears slow demand.

DAY 42

MONDAY, OCT. 22: Officials report two Washington postal workers have died from anthrax and two more are hospitalized.

In St. Petersburg, a Dixie Hollins High School teacher is told she can't use a likeness of bin Laden as a bull's-eye in a physics project that involves dropping eggs. The principal reverses the decision after a public outcry.

DAY 43

TUESDAY, OCT. 23: Traces of anthrax are found at a White House mail sorting facility, and three more postal workers are hospitalized.

Members of Congress seek temporary office space while anthrax testing continues at the Capitol.

Walt Disney World asks its staff to cut hours by 20 percent to save money.

A toll-taker on the Suncoast Parkway near State Road 52 reports getting a possibly tainted dollar bill from a carload of "Arabic-looking men."

DAY 44

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 24: The U.S. House votes to give the federal government broader law enforcement powers to fight terrorism.

The U.S. Postal Service tells Americans to treat their mail as a "threat." Meanwhile, three more postal workers are hospitalized with anthrax in Maryland.

Opposition leaders in Afghanistan begin planning a post-Taliban government.

DAY 45

THURSDAY, OCT. 25: Attorney General Ashcroft pledges to unleash broad surveillance and searches on suspected terrorists.

Federal health authorities publish guidelines for anthrax treatment.

The Florida Senate approves a rule allowing committees to meet and vote on security issues in private.

The parents of missing government intern Chandra Levy say the search continues out of the public eye.

Naples Jaycees are staging a mock execution of bin Laden at their haunted house.

DAY 46

FRIDAY, OCT. 26: The U.S. Supreme Court, the CIA's mail operations and a Washington post office close in response to the anthrax threat.

The Taliban catch and execute exiled Afghan rebel leader Abdul Haq.

U.S. warplanes accidentally bomb Red Cross buildings in Afghanistan.

The head of the American Red Cross resigns amid allegations that terrorism victims will get less than half of the $543 million raised.

President Bush signs a sweeping antiterrorism bill into law. The law gives police and intelligence agencies broad powers to fight terrorism.

DAY 47

SATURDAY, OCT. 27: The Bush administration says it is studying the idea of using military tribunals to try suspected terrorists.

In Britain, defense chief Adm. Michael Boyce suggests the war in Afghanistan might continue for up to four years.

A security crackdown doesn't scare away Guavaween revelers. A participant dressed as Uncle Sam carries a fake bin Laden head on a stick.

DAY 48

SUNDAY, OCT. 28: Federal health authorities confirm an eighth case of inhalation anthrax, a ***female*** New Jersey postal worker.

The New York Times says the nearly 1,000 people held in the Sept. 11 attacks include people who made congratulatory telephone calls minutes after the disasters.

U.S. warplanes extend the bombing campaign to far north-central Afghanistan.

The theme park industry says it will cost tens of millions of dollars in added security, higher insurance premiums, extra advertising and discounts to lure back visitors.

100 DAYS

DAY 49

MONDAY, OCT. 29: The FBI issues a vague warning that terrorists might be planning to strike the United States. This is the second alert in October.

U.S. astronaut Frank Culbertson, orbiting Earth in the International Space Station, says he could see the smoke from the World Trade Center fires from space the day of the attacks.

Zephyrhills firefighter Tim Stromsnes is investigated for allegedly making a terrorist threat after he played an anthrax "practical joke" on a co- worker.

DAY 50

TUESDAY, OCT. 30: Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld announces that U.S. special forces have been on the ground in Afghanistan for several days.

Game 3 of the World Series between the New York Yankees and the Arizona Diamondbacks at Yankee Stadium in the Bronx is sold out.

The number of gun applications in Florida has jumped by 50 percent since Sept. 11.

DAY 51

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 31: The Taliban offers to negotiate if the United States provides proof of bin Laden's guilt.

Inhalation anthrax kills a fourth person, 61-year-old Kathy T. Nguyen of New York, a hospital stockroom worker.

Attorney General Ashcroft asks the State Department to prevent members and supporters of 46 terrorist organizations from entering the United States.

Gold and silver worth $200 million, belonging to the Bank of Nova Scotia, is recovered beneath 4 World Trade Center.

DAY 52

THURSDAY, NOV. 1: Western and Arab news organizations report receiving a letter from bin Laden asking Pakistan's Muslims to defend Islam against "a Christian crusade."

The House of Representatives rejects the Senate's aviation security bill, saying the federal government should not be responsible for luggage screening.

Gov. Bush offers to send Florida National Guard troops to the Port of Tampa as well as the state's two nuclear power plants.

DAY 53

FRIDAY, NOV. 2: New York firefighters protesting cuts in the number of rescue workers at ground zero clash with police.

President Bush says he will not halt the bombing in Afghanistan during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan.

The Bush administration adds the anti-Israeli organizations Hamas and ***Hezbollah*** to a list of groups under financial sanctions.

More than 1,000 people are on hand to unfurl the world's largest American flag at the Florida State Fairgrounds.

To help doctors distinguish between anthrax and the flu, federal health officials announce that anthrax patients do not get runny noses.

DAY 54

SATURDAY, NOV. 3: Chicago authorities arrest Subash Gurung, 27, a native of Nepal, after he tried to board a flight with nine knives, a can of Mace and a stun gun. The question and release him.

The Pentagon confirms that an unmanned Predator spy plane crashed in Afghanistan because of severe weather.

Concerned that bin Laden might plunder it, the United States offers to help Pakistan secure its nuclear stockpile.

American forces rescue an ill special operations serviceman from northern Afghanistan after a failed attempt Nov. 2 injured four others.

In Tampa, more than 200 health care professionals attend a seminar, "Bioterrorism for the Medical Practitioner."

DAY 55

SUNDAY, NOV. 4: The CIA acknowledges it lost a counterterrorist office when 7 World Trade Center was destroyed.

The Arizona Diamondbacks defeat the New York Yankees to take the World Series. The winning hit comes from Tampa native Luis Gonzalez.

Twice postponed, the 53rd annual Emmy Awards finally air.

Hurricane Michelle pummels Cuba and swipes the Florida Keys.

The New York City Marathon takes off in a field of red, white and blue. Runners are told not to accept cups of water from spectators.

DAY 56

MONDAY, NOV. 5: The Pentagon confirms use in Afghanistan of BLU-82s, the biggest conventional bomb in the Air Force arsenal, intended as much for psychological impact as explosive power.

A report documents a surge in prescriptions for antianxiety drugs since Sept. 11.

The government releases copies of pamphlets dropped on Afghanistan showing the Taliban's Mullah Mohammed Omar in cross hairs.

Authorities rearrest Subash Gurung, but later say there's no indication of terrorist activity.

DAY 57

TUESDAY, NOV. 6: Michael Bloomberg, a multimillionaire who has never held office, is elected mayor of New York.

Northern Alliance officials claim to have captured three districts near the strategic city of Mazar-e Sharif.

President Bush threatens to veto bipartisan efforts to increase spending on homeland security measures.

Cuba says Hurricane Michelle killed at least five people, flooded crops and destroyed at least 2,000 homes.

DAY 58

100 DAYS

WEDNESDAY, NOV. 7: The Bush administration freezes the assets of 62 organizations and individuals suspected of supporting bin Laden.

DAY 59

THURSDAY, NOV. 8: In Miami, the federal government appeals the release of former University of South Florida Professor Mazen Al-Najjar, held in detention for 31/2 years on secret evidence.

Federal officials report they have blocked about $971,000 from a suspected terrorist financial network.

"Let's roll," President Bush says, urging Americans to return to normal lives.

Rates for 30-year mortgages drop to 6.45 percent, a survey finds.

DAY 60

FRIDAY, NOV. 9: The State Department says it will slow the process for granting visas to young men from Arab and Muslim nations in an effort to prevent terrorist attacks.

Northern Alliance forces take Mazar-e Sharif.

Czech Prime Minister Milos Zeman tells CNN that hijacker Mohamed Atta contacted an Iraqi agent to discuss a terror attack on the Radio Free Europe building in Prague.

In the anthrax investigation, the FBI uses case studies and analyses to create a profile of the person behind the attacks - likely an opportunistic, antisocial man with some scientific expertise, unconnected to bin Laden.

DAY 61

SATURDAY, NOV. 10: A stern President Bush addresses the U.N. General Assembly, declaring, "The time for sympathy has now passed, the time for action has now arrived."

Pakistan's Dawn newspaper says bin Laden threatened to use nuclear and chemical weapons in response to U.S. attacks. Pakistan's president assures the United Nations that his country's nuclear arsenal is in "safe hands."

More than 1,000 people visit the Islamic Society of Tampa Bay's mosque on Sligh Avenue to learn more about Islam.

DAY 62

SUNDAY, NOV. 11: In a Veterans Day tribute two months after the attacks, President Bush tours the rubble of the World Trade Center. "Evil ones have roused a mighty nation, a mighty land," he says. "And for however long it takes, I am determined that we will prevail."

DAY 63

MONDAY, NOV. 12: An American Airlines jet plunges into a neighborhood in Queens, N.Y., minutes after takeoff, killing 265 people - all 260 on the plane and five on the ground. Witnesses say the plane seemed to disintegrate. The government investigates the crash as an accident but initially does not rule out terrorism.

In Afghanistan, Taliban military forces flee the capital city of Kabul. Northern Alliance forces, crowded on pickup trucks, roll in behind them.

DAY 64

100 DAYS

TUESDAY, NOV. 13: Liberated residents of Kabul play music, shave beards and tell ***women*** they no longer have to wear the burqa, a heavy head-to-toe veil with a mesh opening over the eyes. Under Taliban rule, such behavior was illegal.

Attorney General Ashcroft orders law enforcement officials to question more than 5,000 young men of Middle Eastern descent who entered the United States in recent years.

President Bush signs an order providing for military tribunals for suspected terrorists.

Tests show the Tampa International Airport postal service site is anthrax-free.

DAY 65

WEDNESDAY, NOV. 14: Two U.S. missionaries and six relief workers are rescued from a Taliban prison.

Stung by criticism, the American Red Cross agrees to use all Liberty Fund money, $543 million, for attack victims.

DAY 66

THURSDAY, NOV. 15: Rescued American aid workers Dayna Curry and Heather Mercer reunite with their parents in Pakistan.

The FBI says a man being sought by German authorities, Ramzi bin al-Shibh, is the intended 20th hijacker. He reportedly tried to enter the United States unsuccessfully several times with the help of Mohamed Atta.

Lawmakers agree to replace private contractors with federal employees at airports nationally within one year.

United Airlines says it will arm pilots with stun guns.

Gary Condit is subpoenaed in the disappearance of Chandra Levy.

DAY 67

FRIDAY, NOV. 16: Atlanta airport authorities evacuate 10,000 people and delay hundreds of flights after a man charges past security guards. Michael S. Lasseter escapes federal charges. He says he charged past security because he was late for a flight to a Georgia Bulldogs football game.

Reports surface that former Egyptian police officer Mohammed Atef, a bin Laden lieutenant and the accused mastermind of the 1998 U.S. Embassy bombings in Africa, is believed killed in a U.S. airstrike.

Samir Ati Mohamed is charged in a plot to blow up Los Angeles International Airport.

DAY 68

SATURDAY, NOV. 17: Burhanuddin Rabbani, the ousted president of Afghanistan and a Northern Alliance political leader, returns to Kabul.

After a decade of violence, Serbs and Albanians vote peacefully in elections for a new Kosovo provincial assembly.

Laura Bush delivers the weekly White House radio address, marking the first time a first lady has given the address without the president's participation.

DAY 69

100 DAYS

SUNDAY, NOV. 18: The Leonid meteor display dazzles sky watchers as the Earth passes through streams of cosmic dust left by an orbiting comet.

The Northern Alliance accedes to U.S. pressure and agrees to attend a meeting of Afghan opposition groups to plan a post-Taliban government.

The Taliban offers to surrender Kunduz if foreign nationals loyal to bin Laden are allowed to live.

In London, 15,000 people demonstrate against the war.

A poll reports that a majority of Americans would take a smallpox vaccination if it were available.

Florida farmers worry that tighter immigration control could create a shortage of migrant workers.

DAY 70

MONDAY, NOV. 19: Four foreign journalists are kidnapped and shot dead between the Afghan towns of Jalalabad and Kabul.

President Bush signs the aviation security law, giving the federal government responsibility for screening baggage and passengers.

The United States begins broadcasting a radio message in Afghanistan that puts a $25 million bounty on bin Laden.

The government accuses Iraq and five other countries of pursuing germ warfare programs.

Bush spares the life of Liberty, a 55-pound turkey, as the nation prepares to celebrate Thanksgiving.

DAY 71

TUESDAY, NOV. 20: President Bush cancels holiday White House tours, citing the threat of terrorist attacks.

The official toll of dead and missing at the World Trade Center continues to fall as duplications and other errors are removed from the list. The number is now less than 3,900.

Ottilie Lundgren, 94, of Connecticut, who rarely leaves her home, is diagnosed with inhalation anthrax.

Highway officials predict Thanksgiving traffic jams as travelers avoid airlines and hit the road instead.

DAY 72

WEDNESDAY, NOV. 21: Lundgren becomes the fifth person to die from inhalation anthrax since Sept. 11.

Some police chiefs balk at Attorney General Ashcroft's request for help questioning thousands of Middle Eastern men, saying they are concerned about racial profiling.

A top Taliban official vows that his soldiers will fight to the death to defend Kandahar.

In response to Sept. 11, employers start rewriting company policies about issues such as background checks, military leave and flag displays.

DAY 73

THURSDAY,NOV. 22: The Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade in New York, as well as others across the country, go on as planned despite terrorism fears.

Requests for concealed-weapon permits soar nationwide, authorities say.

U.S. warplanes work through a target list of cave complexes, hitting them with guided missiles and large bombs.

Fighting continues near Kunduz, despite Northern Alliance assertions the Taliban have agreed to surrender the city.

DAY 74

FRIDAY, NOV. 23: A conservative nonprofit group says it has assembled a list of 117 anti-American statements made on college campuses since Sept. 11.

After seven weeks, military officials say, the war in Afghanistan hasn't produced a single U.S. casualty from enemy fire.

Spain says it will not extradite eight terrorism suspects to the United States unless the administration agrees to try them in civilian courts and not military tribunals.

DAY 75

SATURDAY, NOV. 24: Hundreds of Taliban fighters surrender at Kunduz.

In Tampa, Palestinian researcher Mazen Al-Najjar is rearrested after a federal appeals court upholds efforts to deport him for immigration violations.

A "Saturday Night Live" sketch parodying Defense Secretary Rumsfeld focuses on inane reporter questions. Cast members say it's tough to make fun of a guy who's doing well and sticking to his guns.

DAY 76

SUNDAY, NOV. 25: Hundreds of Marines land at a makeshift airfield near Kandahar to step up the hunt for bin Laden.

Taliban prisoners of war revolt against Northern Alliance captors at Qala Jangi, near Mazar-e Sharif.

DAY 77

MONDAY, NOV. 26: Taliban prisoners continue to fight in an uprising at the Qala Jangi prison near Mazar-e Sharif. A CIA officer is reported to be among the dead.

Hours after establishing a base in Afghanistan, Marines help direct airstrikes on a Taliban convoy.

Authorities send letters to each of the nearly 300,000 Middle Eastern nationals living in the Detroit area, inviting them to make an appointment to be interviewed by the Justice Department.

Officials say an American flag that flew at ground zero in New York will accompany U.S. troops in Afghanistan.

DAY 78

TUESDAY, NOV. 27: Transportation Secretary Mineta says airports likely will miss the deadline set for screening of all passenger baggage.

A suspicious package found in a man's luggage sparks the evacuation of half the main terminal at Tampa International Airport. Nothing deadly is found.

U.S. forces report finding sites throughout Afghanistan where Taliban or al-Qaida forces researched weapons of mass destruction.

Home sales nationwide increase 5.5 percent from a year ago, real estate experts say.

DAY 79

WEDNESDAY, NOV. 28: U.S. officials confirm the death of CIA officer Johnny "Mike" Spann in the Taliban POW uprising at Qala Jangi. The uprising is declared over.

The Transportation Department now says it will meet the deadline for baggage screening at U.S. airports.

Construction of three security checkpoints at the Port of Tampa is postponed because a state transportation agency denied funding.

DAY 80

THURSDAY, NOV. 29: President Bush endorses a plan to reward immigrants with special status if they provide useful information about suspected terrorists.

Clayton Lee Waagner is named as a suspect in a rash of anthrax hoax letters sent to abortion clinics.

The Northern Alliance encircles the last Taliban stronghold of Kandahar and prepares to lay siege to the city.

Tampa announces a hiring freeze as the Sept. 11 attacks fuel a nationwide recession.

The world mourns the death of George Harrison, the youngest Beatle, at 58.

DAY 81

FRIDAY, NOV. 30: Investigators find traces of anthrax on a letter mailed to a home in Connecticut a half-mile from the home of Ottilie Lundgren, who died of the disease.

Environmental workers fumigate the Hart Senate Office Building with chlorine dioxide to kill anthrax.

Negotiations for a new government in Afghanistan stall.

New York firefighters are invited to lead Gasparilla's 97th Parade of Pirates.

Helped by good Thanksgiving Day crowds, Walt Disney World, Universal Studios and Sea World say they will begin hiring.

DAY 82

SATURDAY, DEC. 1.: U.S. B-52s pound Taliban positions near Kandahar.

Four U.S. Army Special Forces soldiers receive the Purple Heart for wounds received during the Qala Jangi prison uprising near Mazar-e Sharif.

Palestinian suicide bombers strike in downtown Jerusalem, killing 12 Israelis and wounding 170.

Charities set up for victims of the Sept. 11 attacks say many families could get as much as $1 million.

DAY 83

SUNDAY, DEC. 2: U.S. warplanes target caves near Tora Bora, a suspected al-Qaida hideout.

Attorney General Ashcroft says religious and political groups suspected of terrorism may be monitored by government agents.

Two more suicide bombers set off nail-packed bombs in Jerusalem, killing 25 and wounding 200.

DAY 84

MONDAY, DEC. 3: For the third time since Sept. 11, Americans are put on alert for terrorist attacks. Officials cite credible but unspecific threats.

American John Walker Lindh tells U.S. officials he fought for the Taliban for months before he surrendered to Northern Alliance forces.

The mysterious invention nicknamed "It" or "Ginger" is unveiled by inventor Dean Kamen. It turns out to be a battery-powered scooter.

DAY 85

TUESDAY, DEC. 4: Hundreds of tribesmen head for the mountains in eastern Afghanistan to hunt down Taliban forces and bin Laden.

President Bush shuts down the offices of the Holy Land Foundation, a suspected Hamas supporter.

Charles Frank Burlingame III, pilot of the plane that crashed into the Pentagon and a Navy reservist, is denied a military burial at Arlington National Cemetery because he wasn't yet 60 years old.

The Olympic flame arrives in Atlanta during a two-month, 46-state journey to Salt Lake City for the Winter Games.

DAY 86

WEDNESDAY, DEC. 5: After weeks of preparation, investigators open an anthrax-contaminated letter sent to Vermont Sen. Patrick Leahy.

Clayton Lee Waagner, wanted in connection with the mailing of hundreds of anthrax hoax letters to U.S. abortion clinics, is arrested in Cincinnati.

Lt. Col. Martha McSally sues the Defense Department for requiring her to wear Muslim clothing when she leaves her Air Force base in Saudi Arabia.

Florida flying schools claim business is off at least 50 percent.

Space shuttle Endeavour is the first to launch since Sept. 11. Because of increased security, only a select few people are allow to watch the launch.

DAY 87

THURSDAY, DEC. 6: Attorney General Ashcroft blasts critics who say Bush administration policies are trampling on civil liberties, saying such questions only help terrorists.

The State Department says it has put 39 groups, charities and companies on a "terrorist exclusion list," giving authorities the power to deport members or deny them visas.

A suicidal factory employee guns down a co-worker and wounds six others in Goshen, Ind.

Evangelist Billy Graham is made an honorary knight of the British Empire during a ceremony in Washington.

DAY 88

100 DAYS

FRIDAY, DEC. 7: Taliban soldiers flee Kandahar, but the whereabouts of their leader, Mullah Mohammed Omar, remains unknown.

Army officials reverse themselves and will allow Charles Burlingame III his own plot in Arlington National Cemetery.

The terrorist attacks lend poignancy to ceremonies marking the 60th anniversary of Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor.

DAY 89

SATURDAY, DEC. 8: The Pentagon says it has a videotape linking bin Laden to the World Trade Center attacks.

Marines acknowledge that John Walker Lindh, the American citizen discovered fighting with the Taliban, is in custody at the Marines' Camp Rhino outpost near Kandahar.

A new mural for the Baker County courtroom in MacClenny meant to depict 6,000 years of north Florida history fuels dissent with images of the Ku Klux Klan and the Confederate battle flag.

DAY 90

SUNDAY, DEC. 9: Army Gen. Tommy Franks, commander of the war in Afghanistan, meets with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers after their win against the Detroit Lions. He tells them to "never quit."

DAY 91

MONDAY, DEC. 10: CIA officer Johnny "Mike" Spann, the only American killed by the enemy in Afghanistan, is buried at Arlington National Cemetery.

As America and its allies battle the Taliban, the United Nations and its secretary-general, Kofi Annan, receive the Nobel Peace Prize.

A government study shows Persian Gulf War veterans are twice as likely as other soldiers to contract amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, better known as Lou Gehrig's disease.

DAY 92

TUESDAY, DEC. 11: A federal grand jury indicts Zacarias Moussaoui on six counts of plotting with bin Laden and al-Qada to attack the United States.

Two Pakistani nuclear scientists are reported to have discussed nuclear, chemical and biological weapons with bin Laden.

Health officials say smallpox - not anthrax - is bioterrorism's deadliest threat.

Nearly 70 employees at Salt Lake City's airport are accused of fabricating their backgrounds to get jobs and security passes.

DAY 93

WEDNESDAY, DEC. 12: Four crewmen aboard a B-1 bomber are rescued from the Indian Ocean after their plane goes down. Officials blame "multiple malfunctions."

Pilot Charles Burlingame III is buried at Arlington National Cemetery.

Denver Nuggets coach Dan Issel is suspended for four games after yelling profanity and an ethnic slur at a fan.

100 DAYS

DAY 94

THURSDAY, DEC. 13: The Pentagon releases a videotape of bin Laden gloating about the Sept. 11 attacks and saying he knew about them beforehand. The tape prompts furious reactions worldwide.

Authorities say they believe U.S. forces have bin Laden surrounded in one of the sprawling caves in Tora Bora. "We're trying to find him," Defense Secretary Rumsfeld says, "and when we find him, we will announce it."

Congress approves a $343.3 billion defense bill, while Rumsfeld delays a new round of base closings until 2005.

The Israeli Cabinet cuts ties to Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, declaring him "irrelevant."

DAY 95

FRIDAY, DEC. 14: Authorities say bin Laden's height - he is about 61/2 feet tall - will make it easier to identify him. Military experts doubt he will be captured alive.

Even after fumigation with deadly chlorine dioxide gas, anthrax spores remain in the Hart Senate Office Building.

And facing a rising crescendo of questions from reporters over bin Laden's whereabouts, White House spokesman Ari Fleischer says, "There's no telling how long any one operation bringing bin Laden to justice will last."

DAY 96

SATURDAY, DEC. 15: U.S. forces say they might have overheard and recorded bin Laden communicating orders by radio in Tora Bora in the past week.

The Observer, a London newspaper, claims it found an al-Qaida notebook detailing plans for a bomb attack on London's financial district.

Health officials will recommend about 3,000 people exposed to anthrax - including Capitol Hill employees and Washington postal workers - be offered an experimental vaccine as a precaution.

Educators force 7,500 students nationwide to retake their SATs because the originals apparently were quarantined with other pieces of mail for anthrax contamination in New Jersey.

DAY 97

SUNDAY, DEC. 16: After overrunning the labyrinth of caves near Tora Bora, Afghan commanders say, "This is the last day of al-Qaida in Afghanistan." At least 200 foreigners loyal to al-Qaida are dead, but bin Laden is nowhere to be found.

Defense Secretary Rumsfeld visits Bagram, Afghanistan; he is the highest-ranking American official to do so since the war began.

Three U.S. Marines are wounded when one of them steps on a land mine at the Kandahar airport. One loses a foot and part of his leg.

Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat says Israel has "declared war" on the Palestinians, and calls for a cease-fire to end nearly 15 months of conflict.

DAY 98

MONDAY, DEC. 17: Speculation mounts that bin Laden has fled Afghanistan.

Eighteen al-Qaida fighters captured in the fall of Tora Bora are paraded past reporters. Reportedly they begged not to be turned over to Americans.

An intelligence officer in the new Afghan regime says Mohammed Omar, the mullah who led the Taliban to its downfall, may be holed up with hundreds of fighters in south-central Afghanistan.

The American flag is raised over the U.S. Embassy in Kabul for the first time since 1989.

White House press secretary Ari Fleischer says the evidence on the anthrax sent to Sens. Tom Daschle and Patrick Leahy is increasingly "looking like it was a domestic source."

The National Park Service says Liberty Island - home of the Statue of Liberty - will reopen to visitors Dec. 20, although the statue itself will remain closed at least until after New Year's.

The Tampa Sports Authority decides against using security wands to screen patrons at Raymond James Stadium, saying it would be a logistical nightmare.

DAY 99

TUESDAY, DEC. 18: Afghan tribal fighters withdraw artillery from around Tora Bora, signaling the worst of the fighting there is over. One soldier said, "Al-Qaida is finished. I am now going to go home."

U.S. commandos are still in the area looking for bin Laden, but an Afghan tribal leader says they also might pull back soon.

Defense Secretary Rumsfeld tells NATO allies that their cities could be terrorism's next targets.

Firefights are reported in Yemen between the army and suspected members of al-Qaida.

The airlines and tourism industry widen an aggressive price-cutting campaign designed to get people to travel again.

DAY 100

WEDNESDAY, DEC. 19: As the sun rises on the 100th day of digging at what was once the World Trade Center, the air is still tinged with the haze and bitter smell from a fire continuing to burn deep in the rubble.

The sounds of the cleanup reverberate in the damp morning air - the rumble of trucks, the growl of cranes, the occasional crash of a beam or the shout of a worker.

The latest official death toll stands at 3,233 - exactly 3,000 in New York, 189 at the Pentagon, and 44 from the crash of United Flight 93 in Pennsylvania.

The New York figure includes more than 1,977 for whom death certificates have been issued but whose bodies haven't been found, and another 494 listed as missing. Among these is Dennis Chen, a young father of two who worked in 4 World Trade Center.

"I really don't know if my brother is dead," his sister, Sumay Chen of Wyckoff, N.J., tells a reporter. "I'm still hoping he's in a coma or has amnesia. Maybe his name got crossed up."

"Until they call me and say, "We found his wallet,' or "We found him … ' " she continues, her voice trailing off.

For many, it will be like this always.

(CHART) (C) Each square below represents one of the 3,233 reported victims of the September 11 attacks.

The brown squares in the graphic signify the 44 passengers and crew members aboard United Airlines Flight 93, which crashed near Shanksville, Pa.

The green squares signify the 189 victims outside Washington, where American Airlines Flight 77 struck the Pentagon; 64 of those victims were aborad the plane, and 125 were on the ground.

The dark blue sqaures signify teh 529 confirmed dead in New York, where American Airlines Flight 11 and United Flight 175 were flown into the World Trade Center towers, causing both 110-story structures to collapse; Flight 11 was carrying 92 passengers and crew, and Flight 175 was carrying65.

The dark gray squares signify an additional 1,977 death certificates issued without a body, at the request of the victims' families.

The light gray squares signify the 494 individuals listed as missing.

Fgures are the most up-to-date available, as of Dec. 18.

(See micorfilm for complete chart.)

Tribune graphic by GREG WILLIAMS.

Notes

100 DAYS

Graphic

PHOTO 25 (7C) CHART (C)

Phot from The Associated Press

INITIAL SHOCK: Megan Elise McFarlane, center, and other students in Iowa City, Iowa, react to television coverage Sept. 11 of the terrorist attacks on the United States.

ON THE COVER: Above, a plane approaches the south tower of the World Trade Center as the north tower burns. Ninety minutes later, a key part of the New York skyline would be a memory. Below, a section of the Pentagon collapsed after it, too, was hit by a fuel-laden jetliner.

Photo from The Associated Press

WORD OF MOUTH: President Bush's chief of staff, Andy Card, whispers the news to the president Sept. 11 that the twin towers had been hit by aircraft. Bush was reading to second-graders at Sarasota's Emma E. Booker Elementary.

Photo from The Associated Press

UNTHINKABLE DESTRUCTION: The south tower of New York's World Trade Center begins to collapse shortly after 10 a.m. Sept. 11. Initial fears were that more than 10,000 people died, including hundreds of firefighters, police officers and other rescue workers who ran into the towers when most people ran away.

Photo from The Associated Press

A BREAK IN THE PENTAGON: The symbolic home of the U.S. military burns after its outer ring was breached by a plane. The building's southwest wedge recently had been renovated, and the changes are credited with saving lives. About 26,000 people work in the complex across the Potomac River from Washington.

Photo from The Associated Press

SCARRED FIELD: One day after United Airlines Flight 93 crashed into a field near Shanksville, Pa., investigators search for clues. In final phone calls to family and friends, some of the 44 people onboard described a plan to stop the hijackers. The heroic passengers are credited with

preventing more death and destruction.

Photo from The Associated Press

PRAYERS FOR THE DEAD: Lena Beck, foreground, joins in a candlelight vigil Sept. 12 at McKenzie Park in Panama City, Fla. After false rumors circulated about Tampa Muslims celebrating the terrorist attacks, USF students held two vigils.

Photo from The Associated Press

SOLIDARITY: President Bush embraces firefighter Bob Beckwith during his Sept. 14 visit to ground zero. When workers shouted that they could not hear Bush's encouraging words, he replied: "I can hear you. The rest of the world hears you. And the people who knocked down these buildings will hear all of us soon!"

Photo from The Associated Press

(C) TEARS FOR BROTHERS: Ventura County, Calif., Fire Department Capt. Mark Acevedo salutes fallen rescue personnel during a Sept. 18 memorial in Ventura.

Photo from The Associated Press

(C) SECOND WAVE OF TERROR: FBI agents work outside the American Media Inc. building in Boca Raton on Oct. 9, four days after a photo editor died from inhalation anthrax. The building was closed and searched for the deadly spores.

Photo from The Associated Press

(C) SEARCH BEYOND ORDINARY SCALE: Workers continue to dig Sept. 24 through the pile of rubble where the twin towers once stood. For many, the search is a quest to bring home the bodies of the thousands of fathers, mothers, sons and daughters who lost their lives in the collapse.

Photo from Teh Associated Press

(C) REMNANTS OF EVERYDAY LIFE: A shoe, covered in the dust that permeates the World Trade Center site, is among the personal items investigators are poring over almost six weeks after Sept. 11. As truckloads of rubble are removed from ground zero, they are taken to the Fresh Kills Landfill on

Staten Island, N.Y.

Photo from The Associated Press

(C) HARVESTING RELIEF: Afghans gather food packets dropped Oct. 13 by U.S. planes in a field near Khwaja-Bahauddin in northern Afghanistan. Food drops began the same day as the bombing campaign.

Photo from The Associated Press

(C) MORE LIVES, ANOTHER PLANE LOST: Fire scorches the Rockaway neighborhood of Queens, N.Y., where American Airlines Flight 587 plunged to the ground minutes after takeoff on Nov. 12. All 260 onboard the flight from Kennedy International Airport to the Dominican Republic died, as did five people on the ground.

Photo from The Associated Press

RIOT'S END: Bodies of Taliban members litter the yard of the Qala Jangi prison near Mazar-e Sharif, Afghanistan, on Nov. 28. A bloody revolt there lasted days.

Photo from The Associated Press

WHITE HOUSE WELCOME: Aid workers and former Taliban prisoners Heather Mercer, right, and Dayna Curry were greeted Nov. 26 by President Bush.

Photo from The Associated Press

LEGEND LOST: The Beatles' star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame became a place to remember George Harrison, the youngest Beatle, who died Nov. 29. The guitarist and writer of "Here Comes the Sun," and "My Sweet Lord," was 58.

Photo from The Associated Press

AMERICAN FIRE POWER: Mark Rohe and Kathy Lucio load an air-to-air missile on a warplane making bombing runs Dec. 11 from the USS Theodore Roosevelt to the Tora Bora region of Afghanistan, where it is believed bin Laden is hiding.

Photo from The Associated Press

FIGHTING FOR THE ENEMY: John Walker Lindh, a 20-year-old Californian, is found among the Taliban who survived the prison riot near Mazar-e Sharif.

Photo from The Associated Press

INDICTED: Zacarias Moussaoui is the first person charged in the attacks.

Knight-Ridder/Tribune

SUPPORT FOR BIN LADEN: A protester in Quetta, Pakistan, on Dec. 7 shouts that he wants to "tear Americans to pieces" during an anti-American rally.

Photo from The Associated Press

ESCALATING VIOLENCE: Palestinian boys throw stones Dec. 15 at an Israeli tank in Beit Hanoun, Gaza Strip. The enemies continue to exchange fire and words.

Photo from The Associated Press

HOMECOMING: A Marine honor guard carries two flags that formerly flew over the mission from the U.S. Embassy in Kabul, which reopened Dec. 17.

CAUGHT ON TAPE: In a videotape released Dec. 13, Osama bin Laden brags about the success of the Sept. 11 attacks during a dinner with a Saudi sheik.

Photo from hereisnewyork.org, donated by ANDREW HAAGEN

(C) COLLAGE OF HOPE AND MEMORIES: New Yorkers hung posters in Union Square while searching for the lost. As days passed, the wall became a memorial, splashed with candle wax.

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Body

Blame the parents, not the neighbors

While reading your article "How can a child starve to death and no one notice?" (Daily Herald, Dec. 26), I was appalled by the writer's suggestion that the death of 18-month-old James Fredrickson was the result of neighbor indifference rather than the neglect and abuse of his parents, Amanda and Kristian Fredrickson.

How could the writer repeatedly implicate neighbors, "They knew two children lived down the hall … They didn't know their names … Nor could they describe them to anyone who asked … They heard the baby boy crying … (They) didn't worry much about getting to know them," yet refrain from laying the blame on James' parents?

To make matters worse, Prevent Child Abuse Illinois' executive guru, Roy Harley, explained the Fredricksons' actions by claiming "when someone's self-worth begins to deteriorate, sometimes they take it out on someone, and sometimes that's a vulnerable child."

Is Harley suggesting that a "lack of self-worth" is the Fredricksons' excuse? Nonsense! Perhaps Harley should be more interested in preventing child abuse and protecting children than excusing abusive behavior.

Amanda and Kristian Fredrickson had the responsibility to feed, clothe and care for their children. At the time of James' death, he "weighed less than 10 pounds" and died from apparent starvation. Since neither parent appeared gaunt or malnourished, both obviously had access to food and water. Yet they chose not to feed James, according to reports.

Frankly, according to reports, the Fredricksons' neighbors never witnessed any obvious telltale signs of abuse. And, if they did, there is no doubt, just as in other neighborhoods, they would have done whatever they could to report that abuse and, therefore, prevent James' death. It was only after James' death that they pieced together possible "signs." And these "signs" certainly were not "red flags warranting a police call," but merely casual observations of a would-be normal family.

Nothing saddened me more this week than reading of the death of little James Fredrickson. And nothing infuriated me more than blaming his death on so-called indifferent neighbors.

Pat Sutarik

Palatine

Reconsider cuts at mental health center

No Headline In Original

The staff of the Elgin Mental Health Center has asked me to express my views on the downsizing of the civil unit of the hospital.

Before the decision was made, the local legislators were not asked for our input on the downsizing of the civil unit. I was first informed of the cuts by reporters during the veto session. I expressed my concern at the need for downsizing.

On an annual basis, the civil section of the hospital serves between 1,200 and 1,400 severely mentally ill patients for Lake, Cook, DuPage, McHenry and Kane counties. These individuals are a threat to themselves and the citizens of their communities.

The Elgin facility is staffed by a network of experts who daily handle about 150 patients. The section is staffed with skilled employees who have a high level of pride in their work. I recently have met with the members of this group and have seen and heard of their success. It makes little sense to break up this section when it has proved its success at rehabilitating mentally ill patients.

I am told the state plans to save $3 million from downsizing. However, to serve the 1,200 mentally ill patients through area social service agencies will take additional local and state resources. How will Crystal Lake, Waukegan, Oswego, Sycamore and the other communities treat their citizens who need these critical mental health services? How many of the patients who will not be receiving adequate care will end up in our judicial system, costing the courts and the Department of Corrections thousands of dollars?

I believe downsizing the state hospital will cost the governments of Illinois more, rather than less money. For the sake of our communities, the mentally ill and the workers of the Elgin State Mental Health Center, I would ask the state to reconsider its plan to downsize the civil section of the hospital.

Douglas L. Hoeft

State Representative

66th District

Elgin

It is time for Arafat to leave office

Yasser Arafat stands indicted for negligence as the Israelis have charged. He stands indicted simply by the virtue that he is still alive! He lives in a society surrounded and infused by terrorists who place little importance on human life if it opposes their political agendas. They are totally opposed to peace on any terms other than their own. Anybody who doubts this indictment should revisit recent history, particularly the lives and roles of Anwar Sadat and Yitzhak Rabin, who lost their lives in the pursuit of a permanent and eventual peace in the region.

They did not take a courageous stance to become martyrs for their cause but valued the co-existence of different cultures and religions to occupy the same land and live side by side without the ever-present conflict the area is now enduring. Possibly, the fear of losing our lives is why so few of us step forward with courage and conviction for such causes.

The forces of terrorism lurk in the shadows while preparing for the next strike, and Arafat knows that. I believe his fear outweighs the principles he supposedly stands for. If he either signed a peace treaty with Israel or even arrested significant ***Hezbollah*** or Hamas leaders and executed them as they deserve, he would be next on the list, and he knows that. Therefore, he either needs to resign, be removed from office, or do the right thing and promptly leave the country, where he can be safe. The decision is his!

James D. Cook

Streamwood

No Headline In Original

Bush waging selective war against terrorism

In his Sept. 20 speech, President Bush described the terrorists who have attacked our nation as follows: "They are the heirs of all the murderous ideologies of the 20th century. By sacrificing human life to serve their radical visions, by abandoning every value except the will to power, they follow in the path of fascism, and Nazism, and totalitarianism."

Conspicuous by its absence on the above list, however, is communism, the most murderous ideology of the 20th century. That is quite an omission, particularly considering that Russian communism not only spawned the international terrorist network but continues to provide it with vital support today. How can the terrorist network be eliminated when Russian sponsorship of that network is ignored, and when Russia is made our ally in the fight against terrorism?

President Bush recently welcomed Russian President Vladimir Putin to the White House. Putin was the head of Russia's Federal Security Service, the renamed KGB. Does Bush honestly believe this unrepentant veteran of the Soviet police-state apparatus can be trusted?

This past October, Bush met in Shanghai with Chinese president Jiang Zemin, where the two world leaders agreed to work together in the fight against terrorism. China is, of course, an openly communist country, perhaps explaining why our president did not include communism in his list of "murderous ideologies of the 20th century." China has been a longtime sponsor of terrorist regimes and groups, including the Taliban.

In a news conference on Oct. 11, President Bush promised a "war against all those who seek to export terror, and a war against those governments that support or shelter them." Instead, the administration is waging a selective war. American liberties will be the real loser in this "no-win" war.

David V. Walden

Des Plaines

Where did so-called patriots come from?

I don't know, where does patriotism start or go astray? It is against the law to desecrate our flag. It shouldn't touch the ground, be stepped on or burned in a demonstration, etc., but someone out there in this great country - tell me about all those items made in the form and design of our flag - made the flag into pillows, blankets, socks, shorts, shirts, undershirts, bikinis, brassieres and God only knows what else that can be thrown on the ground - walked on - sat on or rolled.

Now I would like to know as an American citizen, would the above be desecrating our colors? The main reason I would like to know is because I am a World War II disabled veteran, and I did not fight for anyone making money any which way they can by being patriotic only for the means of making money and especially now, after the catastrophe of Sept. 11. I notice there are many flags flying all over our country. What I would like to know is - where did these so-called patriots come from?

Does it take a tragedy for them to come out of the woodwork or is this the time to say, "I'm an American patriot. I am flying the American flag, and I support the troops because they are the ones who will protect our freedoms"?

If it weren't for World War II veterans, we wouldn't have had such a good life in the last 60 years. But they are forgotten in most instances unless some tragedy happens. Then we are all patriotic and show it by flying the flag. This country of ours is made of different nationalities, and when they become American citizens, they should all be treated equally, no ifs, buts or maybes. We are supposed to obey the laws and treat each other as we would want to be treated, but that is something we all don't practice.

There is nothing wrong with our country - it is the people in it that don't put their shoulders to the wheel to make it work. We put people into office, and they are supposed to represent the people - all American citizens - but they

forget why they were put into office. Our forefathers were really wise men to come up with the Constitution, etc. Now some want to change the wording in it! I say, don't you dare touch it -"if it isn't broke don't fix it."

John F. Kolnicki

Bartlett

Brave Americans won't bow to fear

Fear is a powerful emotion that will make your mind paranoid. Fear is a dirty, four-letter word to most people. Fear plays mind games with your brain. The terrorists are using fear with anthrax to scare the American people. But the American people are rough and tough and hard to bluff, brave people who won't bow down to the fear factor.

What evil the terrorists have done to the American people since Sept. 11 has failed. For the terrorists' evil, God has returned good and compassionate deeds for America. The Americans are united, one in the spirit of democracy. All the American flags flying in the 50 states make you thank God you are an American.

The churches in the United States of America are united for a mighty revival over this terrible tragedy.

Man's fears will make you worry, but the fear of the Lord in the beginning of wisdom for the humble.

George Culley

Pinckneyville

Abortion justification doesn't stand scrutiny

I can't let David Kives' use of the Bible (Dec. 2 Fence Post) to justify abortion go unchallenged. His use of Genesis 2:7 reflects a shallow understanding of Scripture. Genesis 2:7 speaks to the creation of the first man, Adam. To use one verse of the Bible to suggest that God doesn't consider us worthy of life until we take our first breath is absurd. It not only contradicts the very nature of God but disregards numerous Scriptures that tell us God cares about us from the moment of conception. For example:

Psalms 22:10 -"You have been my guide since I was first formed."

Psalms 139:13-14 -"Truly you have formed my innermost being. You knit me in my mother's womb."

Jeremiah 1:5 -"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you."

If Kives chooses to disregard that evidence, I wonder if he is ready to follow his own logic that a fetus is not a child until the first breath is taken. One of my daughters, as a nurse in the neonatal ward of a major hospital, cares for premature infants. She estimates that 20 percent of babies in her unit cannot breathe on their own when delivered and must be put on a ventilator for days or even months. Kives' logic would allow parents of these babies, or fetuses by his definition, to extinguish their short existence if they felt they were no longer capable of raising the child. Of course, the very idea is preposterous, and our Constitution rightfully protects these infants.

The issue here is not religion but morality and ethics. It is about the sanctity of life. Kives suggests that pro-life advocates should not attempt to impose laws on others, a position you hear summarized in the line, "If you don't like abortion, don't have one." That position is comparable to that of the slaveholder in an earlier period of our history telling an abolitionist, "If you don't like slavery, don't own one." Fortunately, this action, led by Christians I might add, came to recognize the injustice of slavery. Hopefully, we as a people also will come to recognize the even greater injustice of abortion.

Richard Kaiser

Elk Grove Village

No Headline In Original

Past words of wisdom offer meaning today

I recently discovered in some old files a letter written by my senior adviser at Amherst College to the members of the class of 1943 who were on the threshold of going to war. More than 80 percent of the seniors served. The adviser, David Morton, was a renowned poet at that time.

A portion of the letter made a great impression on me because it seemed to provide courage for those young people who are facing the same situation today, in a somewhat different form.

The segment of the letter is as follows: "It is important for those of us living in this present and for those who come after us, that we see for what it is the womb that has borne this evil. We shall be criminally stupid … if we do not gain from this spectacle some fresh understanding of the ugly pregnancy of those qualities of spirit which banished their lovelier opposites and so brought the world to the present catastrophe. We shall be stupid on yet another count if we drop into the easy error of supposing that there are national lines in such matters. These impieties have been present in all our breasts; they have bred monsters in some powerful few.

"But I am more concerned here with the enduring Pieties than with the doomed aggressors. Name them over :so excellent are their names: Reverence, Love, Pity, Temperance, Learning, Piety toward the great things of the past. Look in your own hearts and learn how it is with you, and know from that how it is with all men, save those dark few. These presences that have been at once the presiding graces of man's spirit, continue to shine, there and with a singular radiance in the surrounding darkness. As that darkness comes nearer, they will continue to shine, and as the barbaric roar increases, they will continue to whisper their own incontrovertible wisdom. Finally beyond these catastrophic hours, when the race emerges upon new uplands, it will be their presence that endows the way of our going with their light, their fragrance and their wisdom."

A recent article in a major national publication reviewed in detail the historical part contributed by the prophet Abraham in the religions of Christianity, Hebrew and Islam. A just war, such as the one in which America is engaged, hopefully will result in increased understanding among these religious groups.

May the sought-after results enhance and support the endurance and courage of the younger generation in these difficult times!

Samuel A. Hess

Mount Prospect

Moral alternative to contraception

Yet another birth-control/anti-life device will soon be available to American ***women***. Reports say that this device, known as the Ortho Evra contraceptive skin patch, can be worn for seven days before replacing it with a new one.

Planned Parenthood is thrilled, of course, as are other proponents of illicit contracepted sex - that is, sex devoid of procreation. (After all, we wouldn't want the marital act to be used for its God-ordained purpose, now would we?)

But what about those married couples who already have "enough" children? How can they express their mutual love and fidelity without being, well, "irresponsible"? The answer is natural family planning (also known as natural fertility regulation).

NFP is safe, healthy and morally acceptable to all religions and cultures. More importantly, it adheres to the natural and divine law by allowing the marital act to be open to the transmission of life - something contraception does not do.

In his book, "The Facts of Life," author and researcher Brian Clowes, Ph.D., talks about the various methods of NFP - the rhythm/calendar method (Ogino-Knaus method), the Basal Body Temperature method; the ovulation method; and the Sympto-Thermal method.

Clowes goes on to say that NFP strengthens marriage by "fostering an atmosphere of knowledge, communication and intimacy between husband and wife. It also manifests a couple's willingness to forego immediate self-gratification for each other, to say nothing of giving a good example of self-control and chastity to their children." He cites the statistic that while nearly half of all marriages end in divorce, the divorce/separation rate among couples who practice NFP is less than 1 in 8.

It should be clear, then, that for the good of society, married couples should not practice contraception; rather, they should exercise responsible parenthood by utilizing the methods of NFP, if there is an authentically serious impediment to having additional children.

Matt C. Abbott

Director of Public Affairs

Pro-Life Action League

Chicago

Too bad David Lemak did not help his wife

While I am sickened by what Marilyn Lemak did - jealous rage is an awful thing - too bad her husband, a doctor, didn't do more to help his wife and protect his children instead of marrying in his "bereaved" state!

Clare A. Mack

Barrington

Load-Date: January 13, 2002