

Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden,... Study Guide

**Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA,
Afghanistan, and Bin Laden,... by Steve Coll**

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Plot Summary

Ghost Wars, by Steve Coll, is one of the best historical narratives of the problems in Afghanistan and the rise of al-Qaeda and bin Laden. The book explains how the war against the Soviets began and how the CIA became involved during the Cold War years. The big concern of the United States at the time was oil since Central Asia is rich in oil. The Soviet move into Afghanistan was viewed as the first step toward the Middle East oil countries and this is one of the reasons they wanted to contain the Soviets.

The war began when factions in Afghanistan revolted against the Soviet authority. The CIA supplied the rebels with money and weapons, like Stinger missiles. They also funded training camps to train the people who came to help fight the Soviets. One of these was the billionaire Sheikh Osama bin Laden. Bin Laden at the time had close relations with Saudi Arabian intelligence and various Arab charities and provided money for the rebels and for humanitarian aid for the population.

When the Taliban was formed as a small militia group which opposed all of the corruption, it quickly grew. Mullah Omar and his people eventually received the support of the Saudis and Pakistanis. When the Russians withdrew, they left Afghanistan in the midst of a civil war. Massoud and his Northern Alliance were eventually forced into the northern part of the country. The United States declared neutrality and refused to overtly support any faction.

Bin Laden also left Afghanistan, but the al-Qaeda had already been formed and he was viewed as a rising leader in the world of radical Islam. As a result of this anti-royal stance and criticism of the Saudi royal family during the Gulf War, he was expelled from Saudi Arabia and went to Khartoum, Sudan. After several years he was asked to leave and moved to Afghanistan where the Taliban was now in control.

The training bases that had been used to train fighters against the Soviets were now being used to train Arab jihadist terrorists. In addition there were hundreds of Stinger missiles in the country that the various factions had that could be used to shoot down passenger airplanes. The CIA was quietly trying to buy them, which gave them a reason for covert activities in Afghanistan.

As bin Laden, al-Zawahiri and al-Qaeda grew stronger, and more and more terrorist acts were traced to them, the United States tried to have them captured. This was a new generation of terrorists that they were trying to cope with. The new kind of terrorist was different from the groups of the past. They were recruited in the madrasses and trained in Afghanistan as was the Hamburg cell and those involved with the September 2001 attacks on New York and Washington.

Steve Coll does an exceptional job of telling the story that began with the tribal revolts in Afghanistan and culminated in the attacks on American soil. His book is the result of intensive research and many hours of interviews with various involved people. He reveals to the reader the inner workings of the CIA and how their hands were pretty

much tied at this time. Ghost Wars is a very readable book and well worth the time spent reading it.



Prologue, Chapters 1-2

Prologue, Chapters 1-2 Summary and Analysis

Gary Schroen, a CIA agent meets with Ahmed Shah Massoud, the former Afghan defense minister. The CIA fed large amounts of money to Massoud's organization during the war with the Soviet Union. By 1996, Massoud's popularity is waning. The Taliban form in 1994 and is trying to clear Afghanistan of warlords, including Massoud. The Americans, who walk away from Afghanistan when the Soviet Union dissolves, will be coming back in the future, Schroen says because of terrorism.

Osama bin Laden comes to Afghanistan for asylum in May 1996. The wealthy sheikh is known to the warlords for his help against the Soviets. He is a financier of Islamic terrorist groups and is expelled by the Sudan and stripped of his Saudi citizenship. The CIA has a special unit for gathering information on bin Laden.

Schroen and the CIA want Massoud's help against bin Laden. They want Massoud's help in retrieving the Stinger missiles they made available during the war with the Soviets. He agrees to help. He also agrees to provide information on bin Laden. Both sides view the meeting as a beginning. A week later, the Taliban capture Kabul and Massoud is forced to the northern part of the country. Bin Laden forms al-Qaeda and uses Afghanistan as his base of operation leading to the attacks of September 11, 2001.

Chapter One begins with the November 21, 1979 riots in Islamabad and attack on the United States embassy. Schroen and others incinerate classified documents as they watch bus after bus of rioters arrive. The attack is coordinated by a radical group at Quaid-I-Azam University located several miles from the embassy. The day before, there is an attack at the Grand Mosque in Mecca and U.S. hostages are still being held at the embassy in Tehran.

Most of the embassy still in Islamabad takes refuge in the code room where they wait for assistance from the Pakistani government. The Pakistani military dictator, Zia, is bike riding and does not send troops to rescue the embassy personnel. The staff waits until the rioters depart.

Chapter Two looks at the role of the Russians who have a communist government in Afghanistan. The result is a revolt by the Islamic opposition in March 1979 in Herat. At this time, President Zia allows the CIA to locate listening stations in Pakistan. In July 1979, the CIA is allowed to begin operations in Afghanistan using Zia's intelligence service as an intermediary. In December, 1979, the Soviets invade Afghanistan. Their goal is to kill the Afghan leader, Hafizullah Amin and install a new communist regime. This brings about a closer alliance between the United States and Pakistan.



Chapters 3-5

Chapters 3-5 Summary and Analysis

Howard Hart is a CIA agent providing arms to the Afghan anti-Soviet guerrillas. He is in Peshawar to meet Abdul Haq, an Afghan rebel commander. Hart becomes the CIA station chief in Islamabad in 1981 and begins supplying the rebels with arms but has to supply them through Pakistan under the control of General Zia. This is why Hart and Abdul Haw have to meet in secret.

Hart also meets regularly with Akhtar due Rahman, the director of ISI, Pakistan's intelligence service. Ahktar establishes the rules for the CIA and the success of the CIA depends on Hart's ability to work with Akhtar. They will develop the list of weapons that are required.

In Chapter Four, Ahmed Badeeb is sent to Pakistan with money from Price Turki al-Faisal who is the head of Saudi intelligence. He meets with President Zia. The Soviet invasion is viewed as a threat to Saudi oil wealth. The Saudis and Pakistan have relied on each other before and they are allies against the Soviets. The Saudis are anti-Marxist and work with the CIA against the Soviets. During this period, Turki travels to Pakistan at least five times each month. The Saudis view Abdurrab Rasul Sayyaf as the most important rebel. He has formed his own rebel party. Many Saudis join the Afghan jihad, including Osama bin Laden.

Saudi intelligence uses religious charities to funnel money to Afghanistan and builds many madrassas along the frontier. There is no contact between the CIA and bin Laden during this time and he meets regularly with high kingdom officials.

In Chapter Five, President Reagan receives a report from CIA director William Casey saying how effective their campaign has been in Afghanistan and estimates that the war in Afghanistan has cost the Soviets twelve billion dollar with a total of four hundred million dollars from the United States and Saudi Arabia.

William Casey, CIA chief, visits the Saudis and Pakistanis many times. He also views the Soviet role in Afghanistan as tied to oil. It is the first step in their move into the Middle east. By the mid-1980s, the Afghan rebels are staging attacks within the Soviet Union.



Chapters 6-7

Chapters 6-7 Summary and Analysis

Massoud is born in the Panjshir Valley and lives in Kabul from the age of eleven on. While attending the Kabul Polytechnic Institute, he joins the Muslim Youth Organization. Like all students of the time, he has a choice between communism or radical Islam. This radical Islam is based on the Muslim Brotherhood and the teaching of Sayyed Qutb who combines Leninism with Islamic Revolution. This is taught in classes attended by bin Laden.

Massoud's group protects the Solang Highway and attacks the Soviets that use it. They capture weapons and equipment, repair them and use them against the Soviets. As a result of this he is a top target for the Soviets. Good intelligence allows him and his men to avoid Soviet attacks. He is very popular in the Panjshir. Eventually, Massoud reaches a truce with the Soviets.

When the Soviets plan to attack the Panjshir Valley, Massoud orders it evacuated. His men hide in caves surrounding the valley. Massoud has no contact with the CIA in the 1980s because of the CIA agreement with Pakistan but they do provide money and supplies without the Pakistanis knowing it. Massoud begins sending his men to various capitols looking for aid.

Chapter Seven finds William Casey looking for support for the covert war in Afghanistan. The new plan is known as National Security Decision Directive 166 and this is the basis for the increased CIA involvement beginning in 1985. The Agency will now provide satellite intelligence on terrorism. As a result of the increased supplies and weapons, it is now harder to keep the CIA's involvement a secret. There is concern that the Soviets will retaliate against Pakistan or the United States.

Massoud's people are lobbying in Washington for money and weapons.

Brigadier Mohammed Yousaf is the ISI operation director. He does not want Kabul to become comfortable for Soviet officers. His people stage car and other bombings and assassinations. At this time, the Afghan intelligence service, which is trained by the Soviets, begins operations in Iran and Pakistan and has secret residences in other countries. They slowly penetrate the mujaheddin.

The Afghan rebels refuse to take part in suicide missions and this frustrates some of Yousaf's plans to cut Soviet supply lines. They claim it is against their religion but the CIA and Pakistan keep supplying explosives. They continue the terrorist attacks through 1985 in various parts of the world. This leads to the formation of the CIA's Counterterrorist Center on February 1, 1986. There is a debate on when it is and is not right to kill terrorists that continues until September 2001.

Yousaf builds what becomes known as the terrorist infrastructure.



Chapters 8-9

Chapters 8-9 Summary and Analysis

Milton Bearden becomes CA station chief in Islamabad in July 1986. Casey wants him to wage the war against the Soviets. The CIA sponsored rebels are now facing constant helicopter attacks from the Soviets. Stingers are introduced in an attack on helicopters at the Jalalabad airport. There is fear of retaliation from the Soviets. The CIA does not favor the use of Stingers because they can be used by terrorists against passenger airplanes.

The CIA still funds and supplies Abdul Haq and Massoud. The Americans have to travel around the area carrying large sums of money and there is always the fear of robbery and murder. There are also thousands of Arab volunteers. Bin Laden has moved to Peshawar at this time in 1986. There are also many charities that are active in the city. One Muslim Brotherhood volunteer is Aymen al-Zawahiri, from Egypt.

Abdullah Azzam moves to Peshawar from Islamabad in 1984. A university professor, he founds the Office of Services and travels around the Persian Gulf raising money. He teams up with his former pupil, bin Laden, who offers to pay the expenses of any Arab who wants to fight in Afghanistan. Building projects are undertaken with bulldozers supplied by bin Laden. In 1986, bin Laden opens his camp to train Arab jihadists.

On November 13, 1986, there is a meeting in Moscow in which the Soviets decides to pull out of Afghanistan within a year or two. Afghan President Najibullah is told of the plan in December. Gorbachev is angry that the Americans are committed to the area and are not interested in a settlement.

The fighting continues and in April 1987, the Soviets attack bin Laden's camp at Jaji which establishes him as a warrior with Arab jihadists. He begins a media campaign and meets al-Zawahiri. Bin Laden is preaching global jihad. At this time, questions are being asked in Washington about the CIA support of radical Islam. In September, the Americans learn of the Soviet plans to withdraw.

In Chapter Nine, the big questions at the United States embassy in Kabul in 1988 are about whether or not the Soviets are going to pull out. The belief is the Najibullah cannot survive without the Soviets and there might be an Islamic fundamentalist government. Different scenarios are discussed.

The treaty for the Soviet withdrawal is signed in Geneva on April 14, 1988. In August, the ISI captures and sells a Russian SU-25 to the CIA. On August 17, 1988, President Zia is killed in a plane crash. In Afghanistan the different factions are warring with each other. On February 15 the last Soviet troops leave Afghanistan. There is a champagne party at CIA headquarters.



Chapters 10-12

Chapters 10-12 Summary and Analysis

Gary Schroen is back at the United States embassy in Islamabad as Kabul station chief. The Najibullah government has not fallen so Schroen waits in Pakistan. The CIA is still funding Massoud and other rebels without the ISI knowing it. Hamid Gul is now chief of the ISI. Pakistan has formed an Afghan government and proposes an attack against Jalalabad so the new government can be installed on Afghan soil. Benezair Bhutto is now Prime Minister and is suspicious of Gul and the ISI but approves the Jalalabad campaign.

The battle for Jalalabad wages for months. Neither Jalalabad or the Najibullah government falls. The views and recommendation of Ed McWilliams runs counter to those of the CIA at Langley. The Foreign Service officer is transferred back to Washington.

The CIA establishes a radio facility for the rebels near Parrot's Beak. The CIA agents are in Afghanistan in violation of official rules. They misread the problems with the Arab jihadists. Jallaladin Haqqanni operates near Parrot's Beak and tests weapons and equipment for the CIA.

Bin Laden has already formed the al-Qaieda and moves his family back to Saudi Arabia in 1989.

In Chapter Eleven, Peter Tomsen is the new Foreign Service officer for Afghanistan. The fall of the Berlin Wall in November, 1989 means that Najibullah is no longer part of a world Communist movement. The State Department is calling for a broad based government to succeed Najibullah and the CIA continues its covert activities. They break with the Islamic approaches of Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

At this time, the CIA and ISI are planning another offensive. They are trying to build the strength of Massoud and other rebel leaders. The plans during the winter of 1989-90 are to take Kabul. Masoud is supposed to cut off the Salang Highway but does not and the offensive fails.

Bin Laden is funding groups against both Najibullah and Bhutto at this time. Hekmatyar and Massoud are still rival factions. When CIA funding is cut in 1990, Saudi and other Arab funding increases

The new Pakistani intelligence chief resumes support of Massoud. Since Pakistan is close to having nuclear capability, American aid ends under a law known as the Pressler Amendment.

Bin Laden is sponsoring jihad in Communist Yemen and opposes the Saudi government when they allow American troops in to liberate Kuwait.



Chapter Twelve reveals that the State Department and CIA support different factions in 1991. The State Department supports Massoud. The tanks and weapons captured from Iraq are sent to the Afghan rebels. The training camps are being used to train jihadists who will be sent to other countries.

An attack of Khost results in Hekmatyar being victorious.

Bin Laden is in Saudi Arabia promoting radical Islamic policies that irritates the government. In 1991, Bin Laden has to leave Saudi Arabia. By September 1994, both the United States and Russia stop funding activities in Afghanistan. The CIA's activities are now limited to information gathering.

In the coming weeks, even bin Laden tries to negotiate a settlement between Hekmatyar and Massoud. Massoud attacks and enters Kabul.

Chapters 13-14

Chapters 13-14 Summary and Analysis

The civil war in Afghanistan continues but is ignored by the United States. Now that the Soviet Union is gone, terrorists are seen as the biggest threat. The Clinton administration is soon to take office and a new CIA chief is selected. It is James Woolsey.

Two men from Pakistan are in the United States. Mir Amal Kasi is from a wealthy family near Quetta and is working as a courier in Virginia. On January 23, 1993, he begins shooting employees entering the CIA headquarters. The next day, he flies to Pakistan. Ramzi Yousef was born in Kuwait. His family flees during the Iraq invasion and he volunteers for the jihad. He receives bomb training, then returns to Pakistan. On February 26, 1993, he and his group attacks the World Trade Center in New York City and that night he flies back to Pakistan.

It takes the government a while to identify the men since different government entities have their own counter terrorist units that do not work together. It has been decided to treat terrorists as criminals without giving them claims to political legitimacy. In 1995, the FBI is named the lead agency. They have to follow strict rules and anything collected by the CIA cannot be used in criminal prosecutions.

In Chapter Fourteen, Paul Pillar, a chief analyst at the CIA Counterterrorist Center, begins to look at terrorists from Egypt as more information emerges on the World Trade Center bombing. The blind Egyptian Sheikh Rahman is one of the organizers and many Islamic groups are spawned as offshoots of the Muslim Brotherhood. The CIA begins to collect information on the radical Islamic groups in North Africa. Many of the reports from Egypt, Algeria and Tunisia are discounted in Washington.

Pillar uses the term "ad hoc terrorists" in referring to people like Ramzi Yousef who belong to no organized group. The term is dropped by Pillar, believing that the WTC bombing is the beginning of a new era. These new terrorists are financed by sources in Saudi Arabia.

The civil war continues in Afghanistan in 1993. McWilliams, now based in Central Asia, warns that the policy of allowing the Afghans to find their own solution has failed and that the country is a training ground for terrorists. The CIA and government are more concerned with Iran.



Chapters 15-16

Chapters 15-16 Summary and Analysis

Economic sanctions are imposed against the Sudan in 1993 because of government sponsored terrorism. Cofer Clack becomes the CIA station chief there in 1993. The basic objective of the CIA station there is terrorism since Khartoum is haven for terrorists and radicals like Carlos the Jackal. The country is a safe base for groups like Hezbollah, Hamas, Egypt's Islamic Group and Algeria's Islamic Salvation Front since the ruling party, the National Front, is led by Hasan al-Turabi. The station gathers information on bin Laden and describes him as an emerging leader. At this time the Saudi's are still trying to work out their differences with bin Laden until they revoke his citizenship in 1994.

On February 8, 1995, Ramzi Yosef is brought back to the United States. He believes that only extreme acts can bring about change. He tells the FBI that he is inspired by certain leaders but refuses to say who. Yosef will not talk about bin Laden. Yosef and his associates also have plans to hijack a plane and fly it into CIA headquarters.

These kinds of attacks continue throughout the world by groups in North Africa, the Sudan, Egypt and Pakistan with bin Laden being mentioned as the source of inspiration and financing. By mid-1995, American intelligence realizes that there is a new generation of terrorists.

Chapter Sixteen presents the history of Afghanistan's rulers. Many of the Kandahar Durrani are living in exile in various parts of the world in 1994. The beginning of the Taliban in 1994 with Mullah Mohammed Omar as its leader, is in opposition to the Kandahar warlords. They begin as a small militia and grow, gaining support from some of the influential tribes.

The Taliban is formed in 1994. They capture the city of Kandahar. They help Bhutto's commercial trucks pass through the province on their way to Central Asia. The ISI begin to supply the Taliban in 1995. The Taliban soon controls Southern Afghanistan.

In 1995, the Taliban leaders meet with representatives of Saudi intelligence. They have to learn how to form and operate an Islamic government. The Saudis also provide aid. Bhutto does not tell the Americans about Pakistani aid to the Taliban but says they will bring peace to the nation.



Chapter 17-18

Chapter 17-18 Summary and Analysis

There are oil and gas reserves in Central Asia. Unocal is one oil company that is interested. The company wants to build a pipeline from Turkmenistan through Kandahar to Pakistan. The company sends Marty Miller and John Imle to negotiate. Carlos Bulgheroni, an Argentine oilman, has the same idea as Unocal. Bulgheroni has the support of Prince Turki. The Bhutto government promises to buy Bulgheroni's gas but the Turkmenistan government makes their deal with Unocal. There is support in Washington for the Unocal deal.

Multilateral lending for the Unocal project requires a stable government. Afghanistan does not meet the requirements at the time. Unocal also needs Pakistan to drop its pledge to buy from Bulgheroni but Bhutto will not. When the Unocal people arrive in Afghanistan, they cannot meet with Mullah Omar because they were not Muslims. The Taliban want the contract but on their terms. The Unocal team return to Pakistan.

In Chapter Eighteen, the CIA has nothing at all in Afghanistan. They meet with businessmen like Marty Miller, who visit the area. Gary Schroen becomes station chief in 1996 in Islamabad.

The U.S. efforts in counterterrorism are increased at this time. The CIA's Counterterrorist Center establishes a new office dedicated to bin Laden in 1996. This is the first time anything like this has been done and it is because they realize that bin Laden is rising in popularity and is a significant financier.

There is talk of closing the United States embassy in Khartoum due to the Sudan's support for terrorism. The Sudan government is told that one of the things they can do to improve their standing with the United States is to provide intelligence on bin Laden and his followers. Sudan looks into expelling bin Laden back to Saudi Arabia. Accounts differ on what is said, but bin Laden is not sent back. The Sudanese do ask bin Laden to leave and he moves to Afghanistan, but not to an area controlled by the Taliban.

The Taliban takes Kabul on September 26. Massoud and his troops go to the Panjshir Valley. The Taliban imposes strict Islamic rules and regulations and severely limits the rights of women. The U.S. is to accept the severe social regulations since it basically results in peace for most of the country.



Chapters 19-20

Chapters 19-20 Summary and Analysis

Schroen is the Islamabad station chief in 1996 and is the primary assistance for the agency's virtual station on bin Laden. The CIA is trying to recover Stinger missiles and the Taliban will not sell back the ones they have.

By November 1996, bin Laden has moved his operations to the south to Kandahar. He is now building his reputation in the international media. He also becomes an ally of the Taliban.

Unocal is working on its pipeline plan and rents a house across the street from bin Laden. This is only one of his compounds. He is also establishing training camps, but the United States has no plans for anything other than intelligence gathering.

Massoud, in the north, is finding sponsors in Iran and India. They raise money from selling gems and heroin to finance the fight of the Taliban and their Islamic totalitarian state. Massoud's group is suspicious of the United States and their relationship to the Taliban. His one link is Gary Schroen and in 1997 they decide to use CIA contacts from Central Asia. The intelligence agents learn of assassination plots against Massoud.

At this time Bhutto is ousted from office in 1997 and Nawaz Sharif becomes prime minister. Pakistan recognizes the Taliban as the official government without Sharif's knowledge. Several days later, the Taliban is expelled from northern Afghanistan. The United States still refuses to recognize the Taliban. George Tenet becomes the new CIA director in 1997.

Chapter Twenty discusses George Tenet and his reform program for CIA. He de-emphasizes covert actions and emphasizes intelligence gathering. Tenet views terrorism as a growing threat to the United States and world but bin Laden is not high on the list of priorities.



Chapters 21-22

Chapters 21-22 Summary and Analysis

The CIA hires a group of Afghan tribal fighters to find Mir Amal Kasi, who attacks CIA employees in 1993. The agency outfits the group with supplies and money, including tracking and locating equipment using satellites. Kasi is taken on June 15, 1997. Since the equipment is already in place, they decide to use it for the capture of bin Laden. If there is not a grand jury indictment in the United States, they hope some other country will accept him for trial. The tribe plans to hold him in a cave for thirty days so there is less of a chance for an attack on the Americans who come to remove him. However, in order to comply with various executive orders, bin Laden has to be captured alive.

Al-Zawahiri arrives in Afghanistan after bin Laden but by 1998 they publish a joint manifesto declaring the United States as the enemy. In a few days the CIA and State Department issue an alert. The United States government still does not view bin Laden as a serious threat that requires a priority. At the Counterterrorist Center, William Clarke realizes the seriousness of the threats and supports the plan to capture bin Laden.

In Chapter Twenty Two, Prince Turki and other members of the royal family are becoming concerned about bin Laden. Followers of bin Laden are being arrested in the kingdom and his media attacks on the kingdom continue. They decide to have Turki talk to Mullah Omar about bin Laden and he meets with the Taliban leaders. The Saudis make it clear that if the Taliban want good relations with their government, they have to expel bin Laden.

The 1998 conspirators are all trained in Afghanistan and some belong to al-Qaeda sleeper cells. The two groups attack United States embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam. More than two hundred people are killed and over four thousand injured in the attacks. There is no indication of an impending attack by either station chief. It takes one week for the CIA to determine that bin Laden is behind the attacks.

On August 20, bin Laden and other terrorists groups plan a meeting at the Zawhar Kili camp complex. The United States attacks with Tomahawk missiles. Bin Laden is not there at the time of the attack. They also use missiles against bin Laden properties in the Sudan and begin targeting his finances. The Taliban will not expel bin Laden and Saudi Arabia recalls its Afghan ambassador.



Chapters 23-24

Chapters 23-24 Summary and Analysis

The purpose of the CIA is to prevent surprise attacks. They obtain and analyze information and distribute it in the form of reports. They do not want any surprise attacks during the Clinton impeachment hearings that could weaken the Presidency. Al-Qaeda generates huge amounts of information. Pillar's Counterterrorist Center provides so much information that the recipients complain about the volume. The information indicates that bin Laden is planning attacks in the United States.

The United States and ships and submarines with missiles sitting off the Pakistani coast wait to receive the coordinates of bin Laden's location. The CIA tries to confirm his location. A memorandum of Notification signed by Clinton in 1998 gives the agents the authority to use lethal force to capture bin Laden and the al-Qaeda leadership. Government lawyers spend months debating under what circumstances lethal force is legal and under what circumstances it constitutes assassination.

Massoud is forced into a corner in northern Afghanistan when the Taliban capture the city of Mazar. He requests but does not receive United States aid.

Chapter Twenty Four begins with the changes in Pakistan. General Pervez Musharraf is named to head the army and General Khwaja Ziauddin is the new chief of ISI. The CIA suspects Pakistani intelligence of working with bin Laden in training recruits for fighting in Kashmir. They are hoping that Ziauddin will help them capture bin Laden.

There are several times when they think they know where bin Laden is and want to attack. However, because they cannot be absolutely certain that bin Laden is at the site, the government will not give permission for the missile attack.



Chapters 25-26

Chapters 25-26 Summary and Analysis

George Tenet believes that bin Laden is a serious threat in early 1999 but believes that nuclear proliferation is a bigger threat. Tenet wants more information on bin Laden from reliable sources. He appoints a new chief of the bin Laden unit known as Rich and Cofer Black is named head of the Counterterrorist Center. Blackl takes a more pro-active approach and decided that Uzbekistan is the best government in the area to work with. The leader Islam Karimov agrees to work with the CIA.

CIA teams also meet with Massoud and supply him with some monitoring and other equipment. Massoud believes that eventually the Taliban strength will wither so he will patiently wait. He wants the United States to pressure the Pakistanis to stop supporting the Taliban. Clinton and the United States are neutral in the Afghan civil war but they will work with Massoud on the bin Laden problem. The team that meets with Massoud in October 1999 is known as JAWBREAKER. Massoud agrees to help but says that taking bin Laden and/or al-Zawahiri will not stop al-Qaeda.

Chapter Twenty Six begins with the arrival in Afghanistan of Mohammed Atta, Ziad Jarrah, Marwan al-Shehhi and Ramzai Binalshibh. They are al-Qaeda volunteers and become known as the Hamburg cell. The plan to use airplane attacks has already been made by bin Laden and his planners. The four men are told to begin pilot training in the United States.

In spring of 1999, Musharraf and Pakistan stage an attack in Kashmir. When Presidents Sharif and Clinton meet, Sharif orders his troops out of Indian-held Kashmir. The Pakistanis soon offer to help capture bin Laden. Musharraf is appointed head of Pakistan's joint chiefs of staff. Ziauddin is put in charge of the army but the army supports Musharraf, who becomes the leader of Pakistan.

Two al-Qaeda operatives are arrested around the New Year. Abu Zubaydeh is arrested in Jordan and Ahmed Ressaan in Washington state. Both have planned terrorist attacks but are arrested before they can be carried out. The CIA learns of a meeting in Kuala Lumpur of Kahlid al Mihdhar and Nawaf al-Hazmi. Neither man is placed on a terrorist watch list at the time but both are veterans of the wars in Afghanistan and Bosnia.

Chapters 27-28

Chapters 27-28 Summary and Analysis

In early 2000, bin Laden goes to his Derunta Camp near Jalalabad. Only Arabs are allowed in the elite camp. The Americans feel they were experimenting with chemicals. Massoud sends a commando team to the area but the CIA can find no evidence of an attack on the camp. The CIA have increased recruitment but cannot penetrate the al-Qaeda.

Bin Laden is very security conscious as he moves around and it is difficult for the CIA to obtain information. Since bin Laden and al-Zawahiri travel in luxury SUVs, satellites are used to locate the vehicles in a place where most people do not have cars. However, they cannot track them on a day to day basis. The Pentagon also do not want to try a commando raid due to the logistics and lack of reliable intelligence. Failed attacks with civilian casualties will raise bin Laden's stature in the Islamic world.

In Chapter Twenty Eight Musharraf is establishing himself in Pakistan. He owes his power and position to General Mahmoud Ahmed who is made head of ISI. Soon after the coup, Clinton visits both India and Pakistan. The United States tells Mahmoud that the Pakistanis should stop supporting the Taliban and that United States policy will soon change. Mahmoud goes to Kandahar and tells the Taliban that the Americans want bin Laden extradited and brought to justice. He relays a variety of other bluffs. Nothing comes of it and Pakistan continues to support the Taliban. Then Mahmoud announces that he is a born again Muslim and closes himself off to the CIA.

The Americans do not fare much better with the Saudis. They fear a backlash within the Kingdom.

Massoud is gaining strength with deals with new arms suppliers and feels that the Taliban is weakening. Many Taliban opponents are siding with Massoud who is rebuilding the Northern Alliance. The United States still refuse to support them. The CIA maintain their contacts with Massoud knowing the United States official position will change if al-Qaeda stages an attack in the United States.



Chapters 29-30

Chapters 29-30 Summary and Analysis

In Spring 2000, the United States looks for new ways to approach the bin Laden problem. The CIA buys Predator drones to use in Afghanistan. Uzbekistan agrees to allow the Predator to be operated from one of its air bases while the control will be in Langley. They begin the flights over the places bin Laden is known to visit. The flights continue until winter. The group begins to concentrate on the Tarnak complex again. The families of bin Laden and his aides live in the compound.

In September the Northern Alliance loses Taloqan to the Taliban. The following month the USS Cole is attacked in Yemen. They have to develop a new plan to deal with bin Laden. Schroen feels that the United States has to work with Massoud but they cannot get approval.

Chapter Thirty begins with George Bush as President. Terrorism has not been a campaign issue. Bush keeps George Tenet as the CIA director but there are many changes. There is no change on the official position on Afghanistan and the Taliban and the Predator flights are not resumed. The CIA cannot obtain support for Massoud.

The Bush administration lets Pakistan know that improved relations between the countries depend on the resolution of the bin Laden problem. In Pakistan the debate is deepening about support for the Taliban and jihadists.

George Tenet warns of the possibility of terrorist attacks by bin Laden. Terrorism is not Tenet's top priority. He flies to Islamabad in spring of 2001 to meet with Mahmoud. He tells Mahmoud that he feels that Pakistan can do much more than they are doing in the fight against bin Laden. Plans are made for Mahmoud to visit the United States in early September.

Chapters 31-32

Chapters 31-32 Summary and Analysis

Massoud now employs a lobbyist to promote his efforts in Washington. He meets with other countries to obtain supplies and addresses the European Parliament about the al-Qaeda threat. Schroen and his group meet Massoud in Paris to guarantee the continuation of the agency's support. Massoud is forging a coalition of anti-Taliban forces. Peter Tomsen, now retired from the foreign service, writes a strategy paper for Massoud.

In April, the Bush administration begins to study the al-Qaeda problem. Recommendations are for more money and support for Massoud. By this time Tenet, Black and others say that there are indications of a big impending strike but they do not know where. Bin Laden openly brags to the media of impending attacks. It takes several months for United States policy to change. By June they feel that an attack is imminent.

There is a movement around the world to arrest and question al-Qaeda people. There are many intercepted fragments, much of which they figure is disinformation, but nothing concrete. By mid- July, all nineteen attackers are in the United States and awaiting the signal to go. They are supported by money transfers from overseas.

Massoud and others are still trying to obtain United States support for the Northern Alliance when Karzai is expelled from Pakistan. Massoud will welcome him to Afghanistan if he chooses to go there.

In Chapter Thirty Two two Arab journalists, with Belgian passports, enter Northern Alliance territory. They want to interview Massoud and are really al-Qaeda agents. The letter of introduction comes from al-Zawahiri's computer. But Massoud is too busy to see them at first.

American policy fails during this period when they coddle Pakistan and Saudi Arabia instead of working with Massoud. Their refusal to act against undemocratic Muslim governments makes it easier for al-Qaeda.

There is a September 4 cabinet meeting that discusses a new policy approach to al-Qaeda and Afghanistan. Tenet presents the case for an armed Predator and is told to pursue it.

On September 9 the two journalists meet with Massoud. An explosion injures Massoud who is flown to a Tajik hospital. Massoud dies from his injuries. The Bush Administration decides to send a delegation to Afghanistan to ask for bin Laden's expulsion. If they have to forcibly overthrow the Taliban, they will.



Characters

Gary Schroen

Gary Schroen is a CIA officer in clandestine services for twenty-six years. In September 1996 he is serving as chief of station in Islamabad, Pakistan. He speaks Persian and Dari and is involved with intelligence agents, espionage and covert operations. Schroen is from East St. Louis and has served in the military and joins the CIA in 1969. He is in the United States embassy on November 21, 1979, when it is attacked. Schroen stays in Islamabad and is instrumental in trying to recover the Stinger missiles that the United States supplied to the rebels during the Afghan war with the Soviets. He becomes involved in the battle against bin Laden and has operatives in Afghanistan trying to find him. Schroen tries to work with General Ziauddin when he becomes the Pakistani intelligence chief to find bin Laden. He is involved in the planning of various plots. In 1999 Schroen becomes deputy chief of the Near East Division of the Directorate of Operations. He is always a strong supporter of attempts to kidnap or kill bin Laden and tries to secure support for Massoud and the Northern Alliance against the Taliban. He risks his life many times making unauthorized trips into Afghanistan.

Ahmed Shah Massoud

Ahmed Shah Massoud is the defense minister of Afghanistan at one time. He is also the leader of the Northern Alliance. During the war with the Soviet Union, he is an anti-Soviet guerrilla commander during the 1980s. He is known as the Lion of Panjshir. His family moves to Kabul when he is eleven. Before that he lives in Helmand and Herat. He is born in the Panjshiri Valley in 1952. Both of his parents can read and write and insist that their four children also learn. Massoud turns down a scholarship to a French university in favor of military school and attends the Kabul Polytechnic Institute, where he joins the Muslim Youth Organization after his first year. The organization is dedicated to fighting the communists. Massoud becomes an influential rival faction to the Taliban as the leader of the Northern Alliance. He maintains contact with the CIA but the Americans refuse to back him against the Taliban in the late 1990s. The United States maintains its neutrality but aligns with Massoud on the bin Laden problem. He and his emissaries travels to different countries looking for support against the Taliban and he addresses the European Parliament with this goal in mind. On September 10, 2001, Massoud is killed by al-Qaeda operatives at his headquarters.

Osama bin Laden

Osama bin Laden is the son of a Saudi billionaire. He arrives in Afghanistan in May 1996 with a band of Arab radicals. He is expelled from the Sudan where he is living. Since the Saudis revoke his citizenship, Afghanistan is one of the few places where he can go. He is a well known financier of terrorist groups and is now promoting violence



against Americans. Osama is the son of Mohammed bin Laden who builds a multi-billion dollar construction empire. Osama grows up in Medina and graduates from King Abdul Aziz University in Jeddah in 1987. Many of his teachers become leaders of radical Islamic groups. He moves his family to Peshawar in 1986 and lives in Khartoum in 1993-1994 when the Saudi government revokes his citizenship because of his anti-royal stance. When he is expelled from the Sudan, he moves to Afghanistan.

Prince Turki al-Faisal

Prince Turki al-Faisal is the head of the Saudi intelligence service. He is born on February 15, 1945 while the Yalta Conference is in progress and is the son of Prince Faisal. He is sent to the elite Lawrenceville School in New Jersey at the age of fourteen and attends Georgetown University in 1964. He leaves Georgetown in his junior year and later finishes his education in England. His father who is king is assassinated. He becomes head of intelligence in 1970. Turki meets with other intelligence agencies as he builds the GID and becomes an authority in the Saudi government. His stance on the Taliban is to wait and they will mellow and he basically supports them.

Mohammed Zia-ul-Haq

General Zia is the military dictator of Pakistan. Born and raised on the Indian side of the Pakistan-India border, he is a captain in the Punjabi unit of the colonial army when the British leave India. He believes that political Islam should be the organizing principle of Pakistan. After being promoted to army chief of staff, he overthrows and hangs Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and declares Pakistan an Islamic state. He supports the establishment of hundreds of madrasas along the Afghan border to provide for the religious education of the young and gradually comes to support jihad.

William Casey

William Casey is director of the CIA for President Reagan and is in his seventies. He is a self-made millionaire and a Catholic who funnels covert funds through the church. He has a mansion on Long Island. He attends Fordham University and serves in the Navy during World War II and then with the OSS beginning in 1943. He is instrumental in placing teams behind enemy lines. He makes his fortune after the war. Casey dies in 1987 at the age of seventy four.

Hamid Karzai

Hamid Karzai grows up in the Kandahar area and is of royal Pashtun heritage. The family flees to Quetta during the Soviet invasion. He is deputy foreign minister in 1993 and tries to mediate between the rival factions. He is arrested by Massoud's intelligence agents and escapes through the Khyber Pass to Pakistan. In 1999 the Karzai family begin to oppose the Taliban. They warn the Taliban to change their ways which leads to



the assassination of Hamid's father. Hamid is asked to leave Pakistan by the end of September 2001.

Paul Pillar

Paul Pillar is the chief analyst at the CIA Counterterrorist Center after the truck bombing at the World Trade Center. He is educated at Dartmouth and Oxford and has a doctorate from Princeton. He is an officer in the Army during Vietnam before joining the CIA as an executive assistant to the director. Pillar becomes one of the top terrorism analysts at the CIA within a six year period.

Howard Hart

Howard Hart is the CIA agent involved with arming the Afghan rebels fighting against the Soviets. He is born in a Japanese internment camp in the Philippines during World War II and is liberated by MacArthur's troops when he is five. He studies Hindi and Urdu and completes graduate school before joining the CIA and serves in Calcutta, Bahrain and Tehran. He is named head of the Islamabad station in 1981.

Abdul Haq

Abdul Haq is an Afghan rebel commander who is fighting the Soviet invaders. He is approximately twenty-seven years of age when he begins to work with Howard Hart and the CIA. He is from the area of Jalalabad and from a prominent Pashtun tribal family. He organizes a fighting group after the Soviet invasion and becomes the go-between for the CIA and MI6.

Ayman al-Zawahiri

Ayman al-Zawahiri comes from a wealthy Egyptian family. He is a medical doctor who volunteers through the Muslim Brotherhood and settles in Peshawar in 1986. He meets bin Laden the following year and they keep in touch. Al-Zawahiri is considered the more violent of the two and bin Laden finances many of his activities.

George Tenet

George Tenet becomes CIA director in 1997 at the age of forty four. He has worked as a lobbyist and as a staffer for various members of Congress. In 1995 Tenet becomes deputy director of CIA. As director, his priority is to raise morale. Tenet and his twin brother are born and raised in Queens, New York. He marries Stephanie Falkas and lives in Maryland.



Pervez Musharraf

Musharraf is born in New Delhi in 1943 where his father is a bureaucrat. The family moves to Pakistan during the war during partition. He is sent to Christian boys' schools and then to Pakistan's major military academy and then a British military college. He is named chief of the army in 1999 and then head of the joint chiefs of staff. It is at this time that a coup makes him the leader of Pakistan.

Cofer Black

Cofer Black is the CIA station chief in Khartoum, Sudan in 1993. He grows up in Connecticut and attends the University of Southern California earning a masters degree in international relations. He joins the CIA in 1974 and serves in the former British colonies in Africa. He is involved in the capture of Carlos the Jackal by the French and is the subject of an assassination plot by bin Laden's men.

Mullah Muhammed Omar

Mullah Muhammed Omar is the leader of the Taliban. He is born in 1950 in Kandahar province and fights against the Soviets and loses his right eye. He is a religious student and leader who forms a small militia that eventually controls Afghanistan.



Objects/Places

Kabul

Kabul is the capital of Afghanistan.

Islamabad

Islamabad is the capital of Pakistan.

Langley

Langley, Virginia, outside of Washington D.C., is where the headquarters of the Central Intelligence Agency is located.

Mecca

Mecca is a city in Saudi Arabia where the Grand Mosque is located.

Peshawar

Peshawar is a Pakistani town on the Afghan-Pakistan border.

Foggy Bottom

Foggy Bottom is the area of Washington D.C. where the Old Executive Office Building is located. This is where meetings for the interagency group for Afghanistan meetings are held.

New York City

New York City is the location of the World Trade Center which is attacked by Ramzi Yosef.

Khartoum

Khartoum is the capital of the Sudan which had economic sanctions imposed by the United States in 1993 because of government sponsored terrorism.

Kandahar

Kandahar is the area of Afghanistan where the Taliban is formed.

Turkmenistan

Turkmenistan is an oil rich country in the former Soviet Central Asia.

Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan is a Central Asia republic that agrees to work with the CIA against bin Laden in 1999.



Themes

Hatred and Rivalry

In reference to Afghanistan, the most obvious theme is rivalry. The various factions are the cause of the civil war once the Soviets depart. They cannot agree with one another long enough to hold together a coalition government that will last for long. The tribes align with one faction or another. The Taliban, which begins as a small militia group, eventually takes Kabul and establishes strict social rules and regulations and shelters bin Laden and the al-Qaeda. The Northern Alliance of Massoud is eventually forced into the northern part of the country. It is the rivalry between the factions that fuels the civil war in the country and keeps the fighting going.

In reference to the terrorists, hatred is more of a theme than rivalry is. This is particularly evident in bin Laden who criticizes the Saudis for allowing American troops during the Gulf War. His criticism and antagonism leads to his expulsion from the country. Then his hatred of the United States begins to spill over in the media, especially once he is expelled from the Sudan. Bin Laden and al-Zawahiri call for jihad against the United States and Israel. It is not known how much of bin Laden's hatred comes from his own personal situation in being expelled from Saudi Arabia and the Sudan. However, the hatred of bin Laden and al-Zawahiri fuels the hatred of the jihadists that they support.

Fanaticism

Fanaticism is a theme that applies to al-Qaeda. The terrorists are all willing to die for their cause which is evidenced by the number of suicide missions that they carry out. They spend years preparing for their mission, as do the members of the Hamburg cell. They seem to follow orders without questioning them. If they are arrested and interrogated, they are closed-mouthed. They reveal little information about al-Qaeda. This is one of the reasons why the CIA and others have so many problems trying to obtain information about terrorist attacks. They know something major is going to happen in fall of 2001, but they do not know what or where. There are no reliable sources and it is impossible for them to penetrate al-Qaeda, who have themselves penetrated Saudi and Pakistani intelligence. The al-Qaeda people do not talk to sell information. The depth and intensity of their fanaticism means that they are willing to die for their cause. This may be a result of the training they receive.

Ambiguous Policy

Another underlying theme of the book can be called ambiguous policy in Afghanistan. When the Soviets are in Afghanistan, the CIA becomes involved in supplying Massoud and others as part of their Cold War strategy. They fear that the Soviets are trying to move into the oil countries of the Middle East. The role of the United States at this time is strictly covert. It is not their war and they cannot commit to it publicly.



It is a different story after the Russians depart. By this time, many of the training camps the CIA had funded are now being used to train radical jihadists that are being sent to other parts of the world and the Stinger missiles that the CIA supplied to the rebels can be used to shoot down civilian passenger planes. The CIA is quietly trying to buy back as many of these missiles as they can. The rise and control of the Taliban results in an undemocratic totalitarian form of government with many abuses. In addition, it harbors bin Laden, al-Zawahir and the al-Qaeda. However, the United States has a policy of neutrality toward Afghanistan up until September 2001. They want bin Laden expelled, captured or killed. The CIA covertly funds Massoud but the government will not change its position of neutrality. It also supports Saudi Arabia and Pakistan who openly support the Taliban. Legalities in United States law and treaties severely tie the hands of the CIA as it is trying to capture bin Laden and stop the al-Qaeda. The activities and the jihadist training camps and bin Laden might have been curtailed if United States policy had been different.

Style

Perspective

Ghost Wars is written in the third person point of view with the author Steve Coll as narrator. The use of the third person allows the author to provide the background details and information that are necessary for the reader. This allows the author to convey the most information to the reader and is the appropriate choice for an informational book of this kind. The author wants to tell the story of Afghanistan and the events leading up to the September 2001 attacks on Washington and New York. He begins with the problems in Afghanistan that lead to the Soviet invasion and result in covert CIA activities. He explains how training camps are established and how bin Laden becomes involved, forms the al-Qaeda, and becomes the leading financier of terrorism.

Steve Coll is well qualified to write a book of this nature. He is a Pulitzer Prize winning journalist who specializes in explanatory journalism. He works as the Washington Post's South Asian bureau chief from 1989 to 1992 and then becomes the managing editor. Coll is able to use his many contacts to obtain information and interviews for the book. As a journalist, he is an experienced researcher who checks and documents his facts. He wants the story of Afghanistan, al-Qaeda, and United States policy and activities known and wants people to know what happens that leads to the September 2001 attacks on American soil. His experience as a researcher and journalist results in one of the best books there is on the subject.

Tone

The tone of the book is factual and well documented. It is both objective and subjective. The tone is objective in the presentation of the facts as they occur and is very well documented. Coll tells the story of Afghanistan, the rivaling factions and what happens. He explains how the jihadist training camps come into being and how al-Qaeda is formed and how it grows and becomes so powerful. He presents the facts of United States involvement and United States policy. This is where the tone becomes somewhat subjective. United States policy makers basically stumble by not opposing the Taliban that offers safe haven to bin Laden. In addition Coll is an American who is obviously not an al-Qaeda supporter, and this fact is evident in the book.

The tone of the book is appropriate for the kind of book Coll wrote. It is factual and well documented and his analysis draws on his years of experience as a journalist and the reader of the book appreciates this.

Structure

The book is divided into a Prologue and three parts based on time periods. The Prologue takes place in September 1996 when CIA agent Gary Schroen returns to



Afghanistan to meet with Massoud. Part One covers events from November 1979 to February 1989. It discusses the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and concludes with the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the adjustment that takes place. Part Two covers the period from March 1989 to December 1997 and explains how the Taliban comes to power. It is during this period that the US comes to recognize bin Laden and the al-Qaeda as a significant terrorist reality and threat. Part Three covers events from January 1998 to September 10, 2001, the day that Massoud is killed by al-Qaeda operatives posing as journalists and the day before the attacks on New York and Washington. There are a total of thirty two chapters in the book, each titled with a quote from one of the characters.

The well documented book has a copious Notes section and Bibliography, indicating the depth of Coll's research and making it easy for readers wanting more information about a particular topic. In addition to Afterword and Acknowledgments sections, there is also a comprehensive Index. The book also contains many maps and charts. The list of maps is given in the front of the book with the map appearing in the relevant place in the text. The charts show the list of characters from each country and are an easy reference source at the front of the book.

The chosen structure works very well for the book. The information is easily obtainable for the reader, who will find the book hard to put down once he/she begins to read it.

Quotes

"Look, we're here," Schroen said. "We want to reopen the relationship. The United States is becoming more and more interested in Afghanistan." It may be a year, Schroen told them, or maybe two years, but the CIA was going to return. That's the way things are moving, he said. One concern in particular was now rising: terrorism, (Prologue, p. 9).

Akhtar led Ahmed Badeeb to a meeting with President Zia in Rawalpindi. Badeeb announced that Saudi Arabia had decided to supply cash to ISI so that the Pakistani intelligence service could buy precision-made rocket-propelled grenade launchers from China, among other weapons. Badeeb's cash would be the first of many installments, (Chapter 4, p. 72).

Massoud had become a serious, deeply read student of Mao Zedong, Che Guevara, and French revolutionary strategist Regis Debray. Following their precepts he did not try to face the Soviets and stop them. From the earliest days of the rebellion he maintained well-placed intelligence agents in the Afghan army and typically would find out days, weeks, or even months in advance that the Soviets were planning an attack. Just before the first aerial bombing runs began, Massoud's forces would melt away into the intricate network of side valleys that spread out from the Panjshir like veins on a leaf, (Chapter 6, p. 116).

Bearden understood that Casey "had a giant vision" of global struggle against the Soviet Union through covert action and that "Afghanistan was a little part of it." Yet Casey made clear that he saw this last push along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border as an urgent moral mission. As Bearden saw it, Casey believed that sacrificing Afghan lives without pursuing total victory over the communists was a strategy for "small minds." Casey was "the best and worst director" the CIA had ever known, Bearden thought, (Chapter 8, pp. 147-148).

Bin Ladin continued to look beyond Afghanistan. He decided that the time had come to wage jihad against other corrupt rulers. He flew home to Jeddah and resettled his family in Saudi Arabia. He continued to fly back and forth to Pakistan, but he began to spend less time on the Afghan frontier. He had new enemies in mind, (Chapter 10, p. 204).

State-sponsored terrorism had been the pattern throughout the 1980s: Whatever their declared cause, successful terrorists usually sought money, passports, asylum, or technical support from radical governments such as Iran or Libya, (Chapter 13, p. 252).

From this evidence Black and his case officers described bin Ladin as an emerging leader. They saw him as determined to become a significant player in the Islamist movement. He was a financier, however, not yet an operator. Bin Laden was ready to fund and encourage a wide variety of Islamist and terrorist groups, but neither the Khartoum station or CIA headquarters had solid evidence that he had joined directly in terrorist attacks, (Chapter 15, p. 268).



The Americans were the "main enemy" of Muslims worldwide, an angry bin Laden told a British journalist who visited him in an eastern Afghan mountain camp weeks after his arrival in Jalalabad. Saudi Arabian authorities were only "secondary enemies," he declared. As bin Laden say it, the world had now reached "the beginning of war between Muslims and the United States," (Chapter 18, p. 326).

Yet this threat still did not galvanize a plan to attack bin Laden, whose paramilitary and terrorist ambitions remained something of a mystery to both the CIA and the White House counterterrorism office. In fact, bin Laden had already dispatched operatives to Africa and elsewhere to prepare for terrorist strikes against American targets, but the United States was unaware of these plans. The White House did not begin to push for covert operations against bin Laden beyond intelligence collection until the end of 1997, a year after he established himself openly in Mullah Omar's Kandahar, (Chapter 19, p. 343).

Like bin Laden, al-Zawahiri believed that it was time for jihadists to carry the war to "the distant enemy" because, once provoked, the Americans would probably reply with revenge attacks and "personally wage the battle against the Muslims," which would make them ripe for a "clear-cut jihad against infidels," (Chapter 21, pp. 382-383).

"We are at war. I want no resources or people spared in this effort." It did not happen. Resources and people at the Counterterrorist Center remained tight. Tenet and other managers tried to shift budgets around to help the bin Laden unit but they did not have the money to fight anything more than a metaphorical war. Tenet was not prepared to tear down other bureaus of the CIA and pour every dollar into the campaign against al Qaeda. There were too many other active threats and important national priorities that demanded expensive intelligence collection, he believed, (Chapter 23, p. 436).

Even if the CIA succeeded in capturing or killing bin Laden, Massoud argued to his CIA visitors, the United States would still have a huge problem in Afghanistan. Al Qaeda was not much bigger than bin Laden or al-Zawahiri alone. Protected by the Taliban, its hundreds and even thousands of international jihadists would carry on bin Laden's war against both the United States and secular Central Asian governments, (Chapter 25, p. 471).

Bin Laden practiced intensive operational security. He was wary of telephones. He allowed no Afghans into his personal bodyguard, only Arabs he had known and trusted for many years. He varied his routes, did not stay in any one place for long, and never told anyone but his Arab inner circle about his plans. These practices limited the effectiveness of the CIA's recruitments because the agency's sources and paid agents were mainly Afghans who were kept at bay by bin Laden's core bodyguard and leadership group. The CIA was unable to penetrate the inner circle, but bin Laden did have one security weakness, as agency operatives saw it; his several wives, (Chapter 27, p. 496).



"We've got to change the rules," the CIA's bin Laden unit chief argued in the aftermath. It was time for the agency to try to break the policy stalemate about the Taliban. Al Qaeda was growing, and its sanctuary in Afghanistan allowed ever more ambitious operations, (Chapter 29, p. 538).

The CIA prepared a briefing paper on July 10 for senior Bush administration officials: "Based on a review of all-source reporting over the last five months, we believe that [bin Laden] will launch a significant terrorist attack against U.S. and/or Israeli interests in the coming weeks. The attack will be spectacular and designed to inflict mass casualties against U.S. facilities or interests. Attack preparations have been made. Attack will occur with little or no warning," (Chapter 31, p. 568).



Topics for Discussion

How did the Soviets become involved in Afghanistan? How did this attract the CIA and GID?

After the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, what problems did the nation face and why?

In what ways did money from the Gulf States frustrate CIA plans? How did they fund the international Islamic threat?

Explain how bin Laden became active in the radical Islamic movement?

What is the Taliban? How and why did it form? What was the Northern Alliance?

In what ways were the CIA and Saudi intelligence responsible for the establishment of radical Islamic jihadist training camps?

Explain the U.S. efforts to capture bin Laden. What did they try and how? What problems did they encounter and why?