

HOW TO STOP

Bin Laden

The World Needs Justice, Not More Terror

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was translated by CCN as, 'Any nation that does not attack us will not be attacked.' (<http://tinyurl.com/42a9x>) 'Us' is meant to refer to the community of Muslim nations and populations, and 'attack' has a broad meaning, as former CIA official Michael Scheuer explains.

Writing before the invasion of Iraq, Scheuer commented: 'How will [al Qaeda] recognise victory? Easy, by forcing drastic changes in U.S. foreign policy... when U.S. and British forces **evacuate Saudi Arabia** and the rest of the Arabian peninsula; when the United States has terminated all **aid to Israel**; and when the U.S. and UN **embargoes on Iraq** are lifted.' (These achievements, bin Laden believes, 'will lead inevitably to destruction of Israel and what bin Laden has called the regimes of "hypocrites" in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, and elsewhere.) (*Through Our Enemies' Eyes*, p. 256) To these goals, one might add the ending of the US-UK **occupation of Iraq** and **presence in Afghanistan**.

LEGITIMATE GRIEVANCES

Underlying these demands are legitimate grievances against the West: Western support for Israeli oppression of the Palestinians; the invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan; the brutal sanctions imposed on Iraq (now lifted); and US-UK support for dictatorial regimes in the Middle East. **These are immoral policies which should be reversed because they are wrong.** So is the policy of ignoring—or supporting—oppression in Chechnya and elsewhere.

It so happens that reversing these immoral policies would drain most if not all of the hatred which fuels al Qaeda. This is how we can stop bin Laden. War, retaliation and violence simply adds to his appeal.

PUNISHMENT OR SURVIVAL

The governments of Britain and the United States can pursue the path of punishment and preventive violence, or they can seek to bring this wave of terrorism to an end. Bringing al Qaeda-style terrorism to an end means, above all, reducing the motivation that exists to carry out terrorism. This does not mean 'negotiating with terrorists' or 'capitulating to their demands', but seeking justice and human rights for all, including the peoples of Palestine and Iraq.

The answer to terrorism is justice, not more terrorism.

London and Washington must also stop practising the **terrorism of the powerful**—invasion, occupation, and indirect terrorism via oppressive states.

'We should recognise that in much of the world the U.S. is regarded as a leading terrorist state, and with good reason.' Noam Chomsky (*Chomsky, 9/11*, Seven Stories, 2001, p. 23)

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EXPLAINING AL QAEDA—THE WRONG ANSWERS

Five days after the 11 September attacks, President Bush said that Osama bin Laden was 'the prime suspect'. He added, 'Now, I want to remind the American people that the prime suspect's organization is in a lot of countries—it's a widespread organization based upon one thing: terrorizing. **They can't stand freedom; they hate what America stands for.**' (<http://tinyurl.com/4k4ef>)

Addressing Congress on 20 Sept. 2001, President Bush said, 'Al Qaeda is to terror what the mafia is to crime. But its goal is not making money; **its goal is remaking the world—and imposing its radical beliefs on people everywhere.**' He added, 'Americans are asking, why do they hate us? **They hate what we see right here in this chamber—a democratically elected government.** Their leaders are self-appointed. **They hate our freedoms**—our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech, our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other.' (<http://tinyurl.com/rrrkj>)

Prime Minister Blair told the House of Commons on 14 Sept. 2001 that Parliament had been specially recalled because 'these attacks were not just attacks upon people and buildings; nor even merely upon the USA; these were **attacks on the basic democratic values in which we all believe so passionately** and on the civilised world'. (<http://tinyurl.com/3ry3n>)

EXPLAINING AL QAEDA—THE REAL ANSWERS

The US Government's official '9/11 Commission' reported that bin Laden's grievance with the United States 'started in reaction to specific US policies'. Bin Laden and his group 'say that America had attacked Islam... Americans are blamed when Israelis fight with Palestinians, when Russians fight with Chechens, when Indians fight with Kashmiri Muslims, and when the Philippine government

fighters ethnic Muslims in its southern islands.' The US is also 'held responsible for the governments of Muslim countries, derided by al Qaeda as "your agents".'

Such charges, says the Commission, 'found a ready audience among millions of Arabs and Muslims angry at the United States because of issues ranging from Iraq to Palestine to America's support for their countries' repressive rulers.' (*The 9/11 Commission Report*, New York: Norton & Co, 2004, p. 51)

WHAT THE CIA'S BIN LADEN EXPERT SAYS

The Commission's analysis may have drawn on the writings of Michael Scheuer, who served in the CIA for 22 years, and who headed the CIA Counter-Terrorism Centre's bin Laden task force (1996-1999). Scheuer, who retired in Nov. 2004, wrote two recent books as 'Anonymous': *Through Our Enemies' Eyes* and *Imperial Hubris: Why the West Is Losing the War on Terror*. (He was unmasked in the *Boston Phoenix* <<http://tinyurl.com/yvwo0>>)

Scheuer contests the view put forward by George W. Bush and Tony Blair: 'We in the United States and the West make a mistake when we argue, as has [New York Times columnist] Thomas L. Friedman, that bin Laden's attacks are "not aimed at reversing any specific U.S. foreign policy," or, as Steve Simon and Daniel Benjamin did in *Survival* in early 2002, that bin Laden has "no discrete set of negotiable political demands"': (*Through Our Enemies' Eyes*, p. 256)

Scheuer argues that Osama bin Laden has 'clear, focused, limited and widely popular foreign policy goals', including:

'the end of U.S. aid to Israel and the ultimate elimination of that state; the removal of U.S. and Western forces from Iraq, Afghanistan, and other Muslim lands; the end of U.S. support for the oppression of Muslims by Russia, China, and India; the end of U.S. protection for repressive, apostate regimes in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Egypt, Jordan, et cetera; and the conservation of the Muslim world's energy resources and their sale at higher prices.'

Scheuer observes that, 'Bin Laden is out to drastically alter U.S. and Western policies toward the Islamic world, not necessarily to destroy America, much less its freedoms and liberties. He is a **practical warrior**, not an apocalyptic terrorist in search of Armageddon.' (*Imperial Hubris*, p. xviii)

Scheuer wrote, while still a serving CIA officer, 'Bin Laden has been precise in telling America the reasons he is waging war on us. **None of the reasons have anything to do with our freedom, liberty and democracy**, but have everything to do with **U.S. policies and actions** in the Muslim world.' (*Imperial Hubris*, p. x)

Scheuer goes further, arguing that 'the United States, and its **policies and actions**, are bin Laden's only indispensable allies'. (*Imperial Hubris*, p. xi)

WHAT CAN WE DO?

The 9/11 Commission also asked the question, 'What can we do to stop these attacks?' It suggested that, while bin Laden's campaign had begun in reaction to US policies, 'it quickly became far deeper': 'To the second question of what America could do, al Qaeda's answer was that America should abandon the Middle East, convert to Islam, and end the immorality and godlessness of its culture... If the United States did not comply, it would be at war with the Islamic nation'. (*The 9/11 Commission Report*, pp. 50-51)

The Commission produced no evidence that al Qaeda had such a maximalist programme. Michael Scheuer vigorously disputes this view, drawing a distinction between 'the things a Muslim would find offensive', and things which a Muslim might regard as an attack on Islam or on Muslims. 'Part of bin Laden's genius is that he recognized early on the difference between those issues Muslims find offensive about America and the West, and those they find intolerable and life threatening.' (*Imperial Hubris*, p. 10)

Jason Burke, Chief Reporter for the *London Observer*, points out in his book *Al-Qaeda*, 'While bin Laden's discourse may be based on an interpretation of Islamic history, his power is derived from playing on the current social, economic and political problems of the Muslim world.' (*Al-Qaeda*, Penguin, 2004, p. 25)

In the case of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, bin Laden and other non-Afghan Muslims 'went there to fight the Red Army not because the Soviets were atheists and communists' but because of their brutal invasion. (*Imperial Hubris*, p. 10) After the invasion was reversed, the mujahideen did not continue armed action against the atheist and anti-Islamic Soviet Union. When the grievance ended, so did the mujahideen war.

Scheuer, as already pointed out, argues that Osama bin Laden has 'clear, focused, [and] limited' foreign policy goals. The goal is not the establishment of an Islamic fundamentalist state in the US, whatever the 9/11 Commission asserts, but deep change in US foreign policy.

WHAT WOULD MAKE AL QAEDA STOP?

After 11 September, bin Laden said, 'Just as they are killing us, we have to kill them so there will be a balance of terror... We will do as they do. If they kill our women and innocent people, we will kill their women and innocent people **until they stop**.' (Cited in *Through Our Enemies' Eyes*, p. 247, emphasis added)

Intervening in the closing days of the 2004 presidential election, bin Laden told the American people, 'Your security does not lie in the hands of Kerry, Bush, or al-Qaeda. Your security is in your own hands. **Each and every state that does not tamper with our security will have automatically assured its own security**.' (BBC, 30 Oct., <<http://tinyurl.com/53vms>>) This