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February 9, 2004

MEMORANDUM

From: The Commission's PDB Review Team

Subj: Report on Review of PDB Articles

The Review Team has completed its review of all PDB articles prepared from 1998 until September 20, 2001 touching on Al Qa'ida, Usama Bin Ladin, or Afghanistan, or mentioning terrorism issues involving Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, or Sudan. By our count there are 353 such articles. (The number 362 has also been used, which depends on how sets of data provided post-9/11 are counted. For example, we count a set of charts provided together on a particular day as one article.)

After a brief introduction, this report first summarizes 24 PDB articles that discussed possible terrorist attacks in the United States and/or al-Qa'ida use of aircraft. This is the "core group" provided to the four-person Review Team that includes the Chair and Vice Chair. From our review of all the other PDB articles, we have prepared a more general summary of how these important intelligence reports handled other key topics in our investigation. Those summaries include more specific descriptions of the most critical articles. This larger category was available only to the two-person subcommittee of the Review Team.

Introduction

A PDB article can be as short as one paragraph. Usually, however, an article is a free-standing piece, a few hundred words long, with a title like, "Bin Laden Terrorist Network Still a Threat." A similar product, but written for a much broader audience of national security policymakers, is the Senior Executive Intelligence Brief (SEIB) or its pre-1999 predecessor, the National Intelligence Daily (NID). The Commission already has a set of the relevant NID/SEIBs, a set compiled using the same search terms used in our request for relevant PDB articles.

In the Clinton administration (1998-2000), there is some overlap between NIDs and SEIBs and the PDB, but also significant differences. Out of 255 relevant PDB articles and 188 relevant NID or SEIB articles in this period, only 55 of them overlap wholly or in substantial part. In other words, only about 22% of the relevant PDB articles were wholly or substantially reproduced in the NID or SEIB. More articles on terrorism were put into the PDB.

In the Bush administration (20 Jan 2001 to 20 Sep 2001), most of the relevant PDB articles before 9/11 were also distributed in the SEIB. Out of 50 relevant PDB articles and 142 relevant SEIB pieces prior to 9/11, 41 of them overlap. In other words, 82% of the relevant PDB articles were entirely or substantially reproduced in the SEIB. Fewer—

articles were being put into the PDB (estimated at about five per day). Relatively more material on terrorism was going into the SEIB.

The degree of PDB/SEIB overlap diverged again after 9/11, as the number of relevant articles radically expanded – 48 articles in the subsequent nine days.

There are important differences in the way the two administrations received and distributed high-level intelligence on Al Qaeda and other subjects. [Staff note: We can discuss our analysis of those differences, drawing on our work from other sources, when we present this report.]

Much of the threat reporting found in the PDB articles is no longer of particular interest, however important it may have been at the time.

Possible Terrorist Attacks Inside the United States or al Qa'ida Use of Aircraft

1. Middle East, 24 Feb 98

- Reports that Bin Ladin and others have issued fatwa. No analysis.

2. Islamic Threat to Western Interests, 5 Mar 98

- Islamic extremists in a group referred to as the Three Brothers Islamic Front threaten attacks on Montreal subway system, with similar threats to NY, London and Paris. Possible hoax.

3. Possible Targets for Anti-US Attacks by Bin Ladin, 23 Jun 98

- In March UBL called for jihad in Saudi Arabia, saying publicly in May that he intends to destroy US military installations in 23 locations, 7 in Saudi Arabia. UBL may try multiple attacks, as in 1992, when he and Yemeni allies attempted three simultaneous attacks in Aden.
- In May, UBL threatened possible attack in US, but PDB states we have no information indicating that UBL has a terrorist network in the US.

4. Reports That UBL is Planning Attacks Inside the US, 3 Jul 98

- Four reports from highly questionable, unreliable sources on UBL planning attacks in the US. Mentions possible attacks against DC/shopping mall; possible kidnap attempt vs 25X1; unspecified other attacks in US or Saudi Arabia; or other possible attacks in Pakistan, NY, or Washington – but without details.
- Significant concerns expressed about these sources, but technical sources indicate that UBL may be planning an operation soon, possibly in the US.
- Little info on UBL operatives in the US. Possible ties to Arabs in Boston where charity he funds has a branch office. Charity's NY branch involved in WTC. Al-Gama'at al Islamiyya ("Gama'at") also has presence in US.

5. Status of UBL, 30 Jul 98

- In Afghanistan, UBL and supporters moving around. They are hiding from US, not from Taliban.
- They are planning possible near-term attacks against US and Saudi Arabia with help from EIJ and Gama'at. Recent arrests of operatives and allies in Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Egypt, Pakistan and Albania may have delayed plans for possible attacks in US or against other Saudi targets (although most sources reporting possible attacks in US were considered questionable).

6. UBL Terrorist Network Still a Threat, 28 Aug 98

- Indications that UBL survived cruise missile strikes and his network (in at least 60 countries) is intact. Training had resumed in some camps, others being moved.
- UBL reportedly looking at attack options against the US, UK, and other foreign countries. Has well-established infrastructure in North America, Europe and East Asia. PDB refers to earlier reports that UBL was considering attacks in the US. More than 80 threats against US interests worldwide reported since 8/20.

7. UBL's Infrastructure in North America, 1 Sep 98

- FBI says several members of UBL organization live in US but appear to be loosely connected rather than organized in cell. FBI monitoring former UBL Africa cell leader Al-Hajj in Dallas; also unnamed associates in Sacramento and Tampa. FBI pursuing weapons procurement official who may be member of his Shura council.
- UBL NGOs mentioned, but discussion focuses on their work abroad. Names Mercy International Relief Agency, Haramayn, and MAK.

8. Americans Face Greater Terrorist Threat in US and Europe, 4 Sep 98

- Most serious threat from UBL, but affiliated groups like EIJ and Gama'at, with presence in North America and Europe, could conduct independent attacks or collaborate in attacks on US interests. Several sources in past 3 months claim UBL has considered conducting attacks in the US. UBL has associates in the US but the network appears less structured than cells elsewhere and no reporting indicates that supporters in the US have engaged in planning terrorist attacks. Near-term threat to Americans is greater in Europe; UBL infrastructure there is better established. UBL cutting dependence on ~~25X1~~ so he would be more willing to attack there.

9. UBL's Location and Intentions, 10 Sep 98

- UBL moving among various locations in eastern Afghanistan, also maybe Herat
- No conclusive information on future attack plans. May focus on places previously surveilled, where his operatives work freely, where security at US facilities is less stringent.
- Numerous foreign countries targeted.
- Walk-in sources offering information at various overseas locations may be casing US facilities.
- UBL reportedly said late last month that his preferred option is to strike the US on its own soil in Washington. A walk-in claims the same group responsible for the

bombings in Africa may fly an explosive-packed airplane into a US city. (Also, HUM has publicly threatened a CW attack.)

10. Threat Environment Heightened Vs US Interests Worldwide, 11 Sep 98
 - Nearly 300 threats documented since 7 Aug; now subsiding. Overseas threats ranked at top, with most threats to diplomatic facilities; none to domestic US are mentioned. Report lists recently threatened methods, including hijacking, kidnapping, rocket and chemical attacks, and assassination.
11. UBL Preparing to Hijack US Aircraft and Other Attacks, 4 Dec 98
 - 25X1, UBL preparing for attacks on US, including hijacking to gain release of blind Sheikh, others. Senior Gama'at member reportedly said that, as of late October, the Gama'at had completed planning for operation in US for UBL, but the operation was on hold. Senior UBL operative from Saudi Arabia to visit GI counterparts in US soon after to discuss options.
 - Gama'at leader Islambuli reportedly planning to hijack US airline in next couple of weeks to free blind Sheikh and others, according to what may be a different source. Same source said that UBL might implement hijacking plans before December beginning of Ramadan, and two members of op team had evaded security checks at an unidentified NY airport.
 - Some members of network have received hijack training; none have carried out a hijacking. Gama'at has reportedly obtained SA-7s, thinking to move them from Yemen to Saudi Arabia to shoot down Egyptian plane or US military or civilian aircraft.
 - UBL/allies reportedly moving closer to implementing anti-US attacks at unspecified locations, but unclear whether related to attacks on aircraft.
12. Significant Near-Term Threat of UBL Attacks, 11 Dec 98
 - Recaps information leading to assessment UBL may be planning near-term attacks and cites possible attack 25X1. Lists, and prioritizes, potential overseas threat locations.
 - Highest priority for UBL probably US facilities in the Persian Gulf. Strong indications he would like to attack US, UK, and Israeli homelands. Also where he has networks, like Pakistan and Egypt. If those targets are too well defended, may target interests in other places.
 - Possible means of attack listed include assassinations, bombings, and SA-7s. Notes some trained in aircraft hijacking. Efforts to acquire unconventional weapons.
13. Press Leaks on UBL Mirror Interagency Threat Advisory, 18 Jun 99
 - US news reports similar to 5/28 advisory, but with more details beyond those in the advisory. Notes possibility of attack in US.
14. UBL, 21 Jul 99
 - 25X1 source has UBL saying his group made dry run of bombing of FBI HQ and indicated operation would take place soon. 25X1

expressed reservations about this source. Anticipating US attack, UBL reportedly postponed operations of his own in favor of using local extremist groups to target US facilities in 25X1

15. UBL: Determined and Capable Despite Setbacks, 3 Aug 99

- UBL changing location to avoid capture/death from US missile strikes, slowing communications with field. Organization suffered from arrest of key operatives. EIJ also reeling from arrest of 40 members since June of '98. But organization still dangerous. Many reported targets 25X1 suggest possible deliberate effort to mislead. Still planning attacks in Washington and overseas. US forces in Arabian Peninsula still most desired target.

16. Significance of Foiled Terrorist Plot in Jordan, 8 Dec 99

- Jordanian authorities arrested 16 with apparent direct links to Bin Ladin, Zubayda, and al-Masri. New Year's Eve plans included poisons, explosives. Notes hallmarks of UBL methods – soft targets, minimize Muslim casualties, use of chemical agents.

17. Terrorism: Various Groups Planning Anti-US Attacks, 23 Dec 99

- Detainees in Jordan say at least three operatives still at large, recently completed training for a separate operation. Long (6 mos) training period suggests operation of high magnitude.
- Another source mentions potential UBL-related operations overseas. Notes Ressam may have been accompanied by another person.

18. Terrorism: Near-Term Threat Undiminished, 30 Dec 99

- practically identical to SEIB item of same title and date

19. Disruptions reveal Bin Ladin support network in the Levant, 9 Mar 00

- Information on UBL support for a cell in Israel. Information from suspected Bin Ladin associate 25X1 indicates links to Jordanian network. Jordanian millennium plot and subsequent discoveries of cells in Syria and Lebanon reveal a more active Bin Ladin-affiliated support network than we had assessed.
- A manifesto seized from 25X1 cell recommending targeting of places such as the Statue of Liberty or the Eiffel Tower to create havoc without loss of life, or alternately, attacking population targets, such as skyscrapers, airports, or nuclear power plants. PDB notes that recommendation to avoid loss of life is inconsistent with Bin Ladin focus on casualties.

20. UBL Threat to Attack US, Israeli, and Jordanian Interests in Jordan, 23 Jun 00

- Several overseas threats discussed. Concern that UBL may be planning attacks not just in Jordan, but in Europe, the US and Israel.

21. Potential for Significant Terrorist Acts Through Next Month, 21 Dec 00

- Three top threats are Islamic groups, Iraq and Colombian guerillas, as most likely actors to conduct significant terrorist attacks. Notes al-Qa'ida determined to carry

out spectacular terrorist attacks against the US before year end. Information on threats in Europe and the Middle East most credible, but attacks in other regions, including the US, are possible.

- PDB notes al-Qa'ida's ability to conduct large car-bombings and crude chemical or biological attacks and launch simultaneous attacks.

22. Captured Terrorist Details Hostage Plot, 22 May 01

- Similar to 5/23 SEIB (0801236), but SEIB has more caveats and is less stark. PDB refers to 25X1 terrorist plot to kidnap Americans (not only diplomats) overseas. Conspirators, who want to force the release of the "blind sheik" and others, may hijack an aircraft or storm a US Embassy; several factors suggest a joint terrorist operation is possible.

23. FOR DEPSECDEF: On 1998 fatwa, 25 Jul 01

- Identical to SEIB (0801290)

24. "Bin Ladin Determined to Strike in US," 6 Aug 01

- Compare to SEIB of 8/7 (0801297):
- PDB's 1st bullet after 1st para is added: 'After US missile strikes on his base in Afghanistan in 1998, Bin Ladin told followers he wanted to retaliate in Washington, according to a 25X1 service.'
- 2d bullet of PDB identical to bullet after 1st para of SEIB, except it begins 'An Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ) operative told 25X1 service at the same time' that Bin Ladin was
- 2d para and bullet identical
- 3rd para adds to PDB the phrase, "Although Bin Ladin has not succeeded," to the beginning. Otherwise identical.
- 4th para identical, except after phrase "and the group apparently maintains a support structure" it adds "that could aid attacks"; also in-bullet 'A clandestine source said in 1998' then rest, versus "A Bin Ladin cell in New York in 1998 was recruiting Muslim-American youth" (PDB suggests report was in '98; SEIB says activity in '98)
- PDB adds following text at the end:

We have not been able to corroborate some of the more sensational threat reporting, such as that from a 25X1 service in 1998 saying that Bin Ladin wanted to hijack a US aircraft to gain the release of 'Blind Shaykh' 'Umar 'Abd al-Rahman and other US-held extremists. [boldface type in original]

- Nevertheless, FBI information since that time indicates patterns of suspicious activity in this country consistent with preparations for hijackings or other types of attacks, including recent surveillance of federal buildings in New York.
- The FBI is conducting approximately 70 full field investigations throughout the US that it considers Bin Ladin-related. CIA and the FBI are investigating a call to

our Embassy in the UAE in May saying that a group of Bin Ladin supporters was in the US planning attacks with explosives.

The following descriptions are derived from a limited number of PDB articles that were among those available only to the two-person subcommittee of the Review Team.

Bin Ladin and His Organization

Articles in the PDB would sometimes step back from immediate threat reports to offer a broader depiction of UBL and his organization. They would try to indicate how he and his group were coping with problems, as in the example of a spring 1998 article mentioning that UBL had aborted an attack planned against the US embassy in Islamabad, apparently because the plan had been compromised (the threat had been noted earlier) and operatives had noticed heightened security. This was a case where intelligence appeared to have worked.

After the 1998 Embassy bombings and the US strikes on Afghanistan, the 18 Sep 98 PDB reported that the Taliban might pressure UBL to leave. The article noted the possible connection between this information and the Saudi efforts to persuade the Taliban to expel UBL. The report suggested that the German arrest of Mamduh Mahmud Salim, aka Abu Hajar al-Iraqi, might disrupt operations in Europe. Abu Hajar was detailed as a very significant official in al Qa'ida. This article was the first time, to our knowledge, that a PDB article mentioned al Qa'ida in any way. This one also noted that al Qa'ida had a decisionmaking council and treated it as a worldwide organization. All prior articles in 1998 refer just to UBL's group, or his organization, or to UBL and his associates, or to UBL and his followers.

By early 1999 the PDB was still reporting setbacks for Bin Ladin, such as arrests in the UAE and Albania, though the organization was acknowledged to be resilient. While the major attack warned of at the end of the 1998 did not materialize, the 1999 PDBs reflect a daily engagement between the US and its allies, on the one hand, and Bin Ladin's organization on the other. For example, after a 23 Mar 99 report that Bin Ladin was planning attacks despite pressure being applied to him through his supporters, there is a report of a Gama'at cease fire and public renunciation of its December 1998 call for jihad against the US, though the report notes that this could be a cover for concealed plans. This is followed by a description of possible ~~25X1~~ retaliation for the Egyptians taking al-Zawahiri's brother into custody. In August 1999, there is a review of the setbacks that Bin Ladin has suffered and the impact on his ability to function. Yet, toward the end of the year, once again there are threat warnings and reports that the Jordanians foiled a planned attack on pilgrims that would have used poisons and explosive devices to harm US and Israeli persons. The basic message was that planning continued despite rising concern among members of UBL's network about crackdowns in several countries.

The Taliban was said to be pressuring UBL to act more discreetly, prompting him to try and enlist surrogates for future attacks to hide his role and protect his hosts. Another article in this period reinforced the message about Taliban ambivalence – and continued tolerance for UBL – commenting, for instance, that the Taliban permitted Bin Ladin to use its helicopters.

In the autumn of 1999 a PDB article reported on UBL's involvement with the Taliban in narcotics trafficking, noting how he was investing in drug labs along with Mullah Omar. These activities provided UBL with options for earning additional money. Another article early in 2000 added that UBL also justified narcotics trafficking as part of his anti-West campaign. 25X1 were aiding UBL with this trafficking, including 25X1 to transport heroin.

A September 1999 PDB warned that UBL might be striking back against US counterterrorist efforts. It reported that UBL believed US commandos sent to kill him were in Pakistan. UBL had sent his own team to Peshawar to target those involved. Some sources said UBL was sending operatives to Quetta with a similar mission. The article said that innocent Americans could be misidentified as such 'commandos.'

In 2000 articles portrayed UBL's overseas network as resurgent, despite security crackdowns. An article in June 2000 focused on the Levant, where UBL's network remained resilient as it had been in East Africa, where the US embassies were attacked even though UBL's Kenyan cell had been disrupted less than a year before. An October 2000 PDB article said UBL was working to overcome disruptions of his network by the US and others. It also observed that some bombings might have been postponed because of pressure from UBL's Taliban hosts.

In President Clinton's last months in office, a PDB article offered some broader reflections on UBL's evolving organization, less than two weeks before the attack on the USS Cole:

Millennium Plots Reveal Refinements to UBL's Methods, 27 Sep 2000

- The article looked back at the Millennium plot episode nearly a year earlier. The organization was reaching out to other extremists. Planning was being simplified so that UBL's headquarters might approve the broad outlines of a plan but allow local cells to choose targets and timing. This was in contrast to the more centralized control seen in operations like the Embassy bombings.
- The organization was also improving its operational security – frequently changing aliases and communication patterns 25X1

This kind of look back remained relatively rare, but the PDB offered another one to the new administration, responding to a specific request from a senior administration official. It noted UBL's involvement in the Afghan war and saw significance in UBL's link by early 1990 to an NGO recruiting Muslims to fight in Afghanistan. The report mentioned UBL's links to particular warlords such as Hikmatyar and Abu Sayyaf.

Afghanistan, the Taliban, and the Northern Alliance

PDB articles followed developments in Afghanistan. In April 1998, set against a visit to the region by UN envoy Richardson, an article warned there was no evidence the Taliban would hand over Bin Ladin. In the autumn of 1998, as Bin Ladin's role in narcotics was being detailed, the PDB also stressed the Taliban's role in narcotics trafficking. These articles linked Bin Ladin and the Taliban to the Quetta Alliance, the most powerful narcotics network in Southwest Asia. Taliban leaders were involved with the Noorzai group within that network. The traffickers were providing direct financial support to the regime.

In October 1998 the PDB included a more general, negative assessment of the implications for the US of the Taliban government's policies. Articles in 2000 pointed out that Taliban claims to have banned poppy growing were false; Taliban claims to have destroyed drug labs were bogus. In fact, early in 2001 a PDB article emphasized that the Taliban was using the poppy ban in order to corner the drug trade.

PDB articles also mentioned Afghanistan's role in regional politics. Iran, India and Russia all were opposing the Taliban. This regional alignment rankled Pakistan. In August 2000, the PDB reported that 25X1 was starting to supply the Northern Alliance.

The PDB rarely analyzed the Northern Alliance on its own, but did so in an article of 7 Dec 00, at a time when increased aid to save the Northern Alliance was on the policy agenda. The PDB led with UN and NGO concerns about a possible US strike that might retaliate for the attack on the USS Cole.

Alleged or real strains between the Taliban and Bin Ladin were a topic for the PDB, as in an article in January 1999. Rumors that UBL had adopted a 'no first strike' policy against the US were dismissed as disinformation in two PDB articles in late July 1999. The CIA later made its views even clearer:

Taliban's ties to UBL remain strong, 3 Jan 00

- Taliban ministers in Dec 99 had decided unanimously against expelling Bin Ladin, rejecting the latest round of Saudi and UAE requests. Rabbani, a known opponent of UBL remaining, was absent.
- The report held out hope that the possibility of a US retaliation for a new attack might unnerve many Taliban members and bolster UBL's opponents. Musharraf might increase pressure on them too.

Though later PDB articles reported occasional strains with Mullah Omar, the conclusion remained that these problems would not affect UBL's terrorism work. Warned by 25X1 the Taliban reportedly tried to restrain UBL from attacking President Clinton during his brief visit to Pakistan in March 2000. That same spring a PDB article indicated, however, that Mullah Omar had executed 25X1 25X1 earlier in the month because they opposed his policy of giving sanctuary to

UBL. A report shortly afterward reiterated that Taliban restrictions on UBL had not interfered with his terrorist planning. (The same article noted that UBL had reportedly recovered from his kidney ailment.) Again in the summer of 2000 the PDB revisited this theme: Omar sees UBL as a problem but balks at surrendering him.

The new administration received the same message. A very senior administration official asked CIA for a specific analysis on whether the Taliban might give up UBL. The answer was circulated in the PDB on March 22. An NSC staff member asked for additional PDBs analyzing Taliban relations with UBL and the possibility of a crackdown. The skeptical answers were circulated in two PDB articles on March 26 and 27, 2001.

Bin Ladin and Weapons of Mass Destruction

Evidence of UBL interest or activity in trying to acquire WMD was another regular topic for the PDB. Reports about a December 1997 terrorist meeting on this topic were noted in the PDB a few months later. In July 1998, the PDB again noted UBL's interest, including some discussion among 25X1 associates of UBL's desire for a 'Hiroshima.' But the article reported evidence of interest, not capabilities. An article in early 1999 reported that UBL's network thought they had gotten chemical weapons 25X1 but the information was not corroborated.

The most worrisome PDB articles on UBL's WMD capabilities were delivered in late May and June 1999. They started with:

New Information on UBL's Unconventional Weapons Capability, 25 May 99

- A 25X1 source provided 25X1 suggesting UBL's pursuit of CBRN capabilities. The information 25X1 rough diagrams of potential CW designs. The information reportedly came from someone who had been 25X1 25X1 [Staff note: We believe this was 25X1]
- This information asserted that 25X1 were working on nuclear weapons 25X1 though analysts were skeptical about the truth of this assertion. They were more worried about radiological weapons, and reported information about work near 25X1 to enhance conventional explosives with HEU.

This report prompted a set of follow-up articles in the PDB suggesting, from 25X1 25X1 and 25X1 that trainees 25X1 had produced and tested dozens of chemical and biological toxins in numbers and types greater than previously estimated. Another follow-up focused further on the danger of enhanced explosives. Finally, the Agency analyzed prospects for improving their own 25X1 to understand UBL's unconventional weapons facilities. They were pessimistic: limited access to Afghanistan and lack of precise locational data made it unlikely that the Intelligence Community could 25X1

Other difficulties were cited in finding agents 25X1
25X1

PDB mention of WMD issues then fell off during the remainder of the Clinton administration. The warnings were recapitulated, however, for the leaders of the new administration shortly after they took office, along with some new information:

UBL Pursuing Unconventional Weapons, 12 Feb 01

- New reports suggested that UBL was trying to develop or acquire more sophisticated unconventional weapons than the crude toxic chemicals or biological materials already judged to be at his disposal. Chemical weapons and uranium-enhanced explosives 25X1
- UBL's tight security had kept the US from acquiring key details about his program or corroboration for these reports.

Reactions followed. A senior administration official asked questions that were answered in a memo to him circulated in the PDB on February 14. The same official then asked what kind of chemical and biological training was being given in Afghanistan. An answer 25X1 described training to use older types of chemical weapons, not nerve agents. Another senior administration official then asked for more details 25X1. These details, were then provided from information compiled by CIA, DIA, and NIMA. [We have been told that such memos were circulated as additional PDB articles to all PDB recipients.]

Pakistan

Pakistan and its ties to the Taliban or UBL was another important topic for the PDB. In late 1998 and early 1999, Pakistani president Nawaz Sharif's difficulties in tackling the Taliban or UBL problems were noted, along with Sharif's eroding domestic position. One reason for such pessimism is evident in the following article:

25X1 30 Jun 99

- After a brief introduction alluding to India and the Kargil crisis, the article states that 25X1 had briefed UBL on Kargil. He offered 25X1 hundreds of his fighters. 25X1 had warned the Taliban about US-supported Afghan groups monitoring UBL's movements 25X1 25X1 advising UBL not to travel too near Pakistan.

Other articles in 1999 tracked Sharif's weak progress on UBL issues and his political decline. After Musharraf's takeover in October 1999, articles assessed his prospects. At first the tone was: Pakistan opts for business as usual in Afghanistan. By June 2000, after six months of political efforts by the Clinton administration, the tone was slightly more upbeat: Pakistan pressing UBL network. But by the fall PDB articles reported that Musharraf was hemmed in at home.

Saudi Arabia

The PDB regularly reported on Saudi Arabia's role in the struggle against terrorism. In April 1998, the PDB reported briefly about a 25X1 meeting with UBL in late March, with no information about what 25X1 did. In May, the PDB noted that 25X1 was helping to fund HAMAS, on its humanitarian side. [Staff note: At this time a major Saudi initiative was being launched to persuade the Taliban to expel UBL.] Later, the broader problem of UBL for the Saudis was discussed:

UBL's Political Message Threatens Saudi Status Quo, 9 Sep 98

- UBL's call for Islamic purity, his attacks on the royal family, and his anti-Western stance were resonating among a deeply conservative Saudi populace.
- Saudi press reaction to the Embassy bombings was considered perfunctory.
- The Kingdom's worsening economic conditions helped Islamic critics. Crown Prince Abdallah was pursuing an anti-corruption initiative. Prospects for stability might worsen if 25X1
- Further US attacks on UBL could make him a rallying point for Islamic opposition, empowering his message.

Saudi Arabia had suspended relations with the Taliban after Mullah Omar rejected the Kingdom's ultimatum in September 1998. Further ideas to enlist Saudi help were developed in 1999, but the PDB reported sensitive intelligence that undermined 25X1 25X1

Saudis and UAE aid Taliban, 16 Jul 99

- A clandestine source said the Saudi 25X1 passed 25X1 to a Taliban representative 25X1 Abu Dhabi had provided another 25X1
- The Saudis might have concluded that isolating the Taliban had failed and that they could gain more influence by resuming contact.

Saudis backsliding on policy toward Taliban, 30 Jul 99

- According to new information from a clandestine source (separate from the previous item), 25X1 had given Taliban representatives cash in 25X1 in response to a veiled threat 25X1
- The Saudis were also concerned about disruption of the hajj.

Later in the year, though, articles began reporting that the Saudis were quietly moving against terrorists at home and were probing payments being made to Islamic militants. Then, in December, the PDB mentioned the Saudi role in spreading militant Islam. By spring 2000, PDB articles were again emphasizing more constructive Saudi behavior, cracking down on funding to UBL and worried about terrorist threats in the region. A PDB article for the new administration discussed how public sympathy for UBL posed dilemmas for Riyadh.

Iran and Iraq

The PDB would occasionally speculate on state support for UBL beyond Afghanistan or Pakistan. Both Iran and Iraq were mentioned, with more attention to Iran.

Relations Between Iran and UBL, 8 Jan 98

- Many sources indicate that UBL and the Iranian Revolutionary Guards (IRGC) had worked together since 1992 training and smuggling weapons for Islamic extremists. UBL's Khartoum activities facilitated Iranian efforts to help Sudan too.
- 25X1 claims that Iran, Sudan, and UBL agreed to work together in late 1991. Cannot be corroborated but would be consistent with beginning of IRGC-Sudan cooperation in late 1991. 25X1 links Lebanese Hizballah and IRGC to training for UBL's followers.
- Several sources indicate UBL initiated contacts with high ranking Iranian government officials, 25X1 in 1996 after UBL's move to Afghanistan. Intensified conversations in 1997.
- Iran may be asking UBL for help with Taliban. Other sources say UBL wants Iran as possible refuge if he is forced out of Afghanistan.
- If Khatami has any say in this, article doubts he would take such a risk.

Further evidence of Iranian links with UBL or affiliated organizations was reported in the PDB. A week after this article, the PDB noted that the head of al-Gama'at was relocating to Iran. By the summer of 1999, there was evidence of fresh contacts between the IRGC and UBL, including proposed cooperation between Supreme Leader Khamenei and UBL. CIA appeared to be wary about whether the account was true, however. The next such report in the PDB appeared in December 2000, suggesting a threat of possible joint action between Hizballah, Iran, and UBL. 25X1 had reservations about the accuracy of these reports.

The topic returned to the PDB in August 2001, responding to a specific request from a senior administration official.

Intelligence cases against Iran and UBL in the Khobar Towers bombing, 2 Aug 01

- The 25X1 reporting points to Iranian support, not to UBL. This reporting confirms 25X1 information implicating Saudi Hizballah with help from Lebanese Hizballah. Iranian officials 25X1 sponsored training and probably had foreknowledge, gave encouragement, privately claimed credit, and 25X1 Reports from a 25X1 service directly implicate Supreme Leader Khamenei.
- Nonetheless, a few reports suggest possible role of UBL. Argument points to smuggling of explosives into Kingdom in 1994 and 1995, including post facto report that explosives sent from Sudan to Yemen were used in the attack. According to an unconfirmed source, UBL took credit. Two terrorists implicated in Cole bombing also profess ties to Khobar bombers.

There is less PDB discussion of possible ties between UBL and Iraq. An article in early 1999 cited a 25X1 report that an Iraqi intelligence officer met with a UBL representative in 25X1. The report was presented as uncorroborated, with analysts doubting that such cooperation was taking place. In 2001 a senior administration official asked for an assessment of the level of contacts between Iraq and al-Qa'ida. The reply came in early April. A week later the same official also asked about UBL and Ramzi Yousef. That reply was circulated in the PDB. [Staff note: That official suggests the connection of Ramzi to Iraq in other documents to which the Commission has access.]

Predator

A series of PDB articles in September and October 2000 detail the progress of the Predator as it flew its first reconnaissance missions into Afghanistan. They are a useful distillation of program progress and also show how the effort was depicted in the PDB.

- The first missions in early September were considered successful. The program was summarized later that month, concisely explaining how the UAV was operated. 25X1
- The fifth and seventh missions were described as satisfactory. The eighth mission, in late September, encountered two significant threats from MiG aircraft scrambled to find it. 25X1
- A report about the eighth mission noted that the Predator had identified a tall man dressed in white surrounded by aides and being treated deferentially at Tarnak Farm Qila, near Kandahar. A clandestine source also said that UBL was in Tarnak.
- An article in early October was devoted to threats to the Predator's operations. The UAV could be identified by the Taliban. 25X1
25X1 If 25X1 lost, 25X1 would be publicized. UBL might tighten his security.
- The next day an article explained that no sensitive technology would be lost if a UAV fell into unfriendly hands.
- A week later, after the eleventh mission, the PDB indicated that the Taliban may again have tracked part of the mission. The UAV encountered some technical difficulty. The article said the Community was standing down for at least a day to evaluate the situation.

No other PDB articles discuss the Predator program in the Clinton administration, or in the relevant period of the Bush administration.

The Attack on the USS Cole

The first PDB article on possible perpetrators, in mid-October, mentioned the Islamic Army of Aden, the Lebanon-based Palestinian group Asbat al-Ansar (linked in the article to UBL and EIJ), Egyptian terrorists close to Bin Ladin, or the IRGC, Hizballah, or HAMAS as possible suspects. An analysis the next day of the Islamic Army of Aden was skeptical about the group's ability to carry out the attack, while noting its links to Bin Ladin.

The next review of culpability appeared about a week later:

Multiple Suspects for USS Cole Attack, 20 Oct 00

- Article cannot conclusively link any terrorist group to the attack. UBL was keeping a low profile, reportedly having known beforehand that the attack team had left Afghanistan.
- Other sources blame Islamic Army of Aden, which has ties to UBL. Another blames a Libyan group tied to UBL.
- Still other sensitive reporting 25X1 saying UBL may have done it, but that a Yemeni group might be responsible. EIJ had used 25X1 for an attack on the day of the bombing.

Another PDB article a few days later cited evidence that 25X1 officials knew who had carried out the attack, referring to 25X1. Other 25X1 tended to point toward UBL, though could also mean 25X1.

The next PDB article on responsibility for the Cole attack was circulated after the new administration had just taken office.

UBL Links to USS Cole Bombing, 25 Jan 01

- Preliminary results of joint US-Yemeni investigation and intelligence reports indicate individuals with varying degrees of association with al-Qa'ida were involved in the attack against the USS Cole.
- At least two key planners are known AQ operatives: al-Nashiri and bin Attash [Staff note: "Khallad"]. **Intelligence and investigation do not yet provide explicit confirmation that UBL or one of his lieutenants personally masterminded or authorized the attack.** These conclusions relied mainly on 25X1 information from suspects; but US intelligence generally corroborated the 25X1 case.
- Other reporting highlights al-Qa'ida involvement. 25X1 told 25X1 that Shaykh Usama planned the attack three years earlier. 25X1 correctly identified two of the key operatives. Also, a well-known 25X1 told friends the Cole attack was a 14 month-long AQ operation. 25X1 identified a key player by 25X1 and was clearly privy to the failed attack on the Sullivans.

Summer of Threats

PDB articles began sounding especially loud alarms about possible attacks in mid-April 2001. Amid several reports, one on May 22 spotlighted terrorist planning against US targets in Western Europe. On June 2 a PDB article, not circulated in the SEIB, summarized the recent Middle East-related anti-US terrorist threats.

- UBL threats in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Israel, Jordan, or Yemen.
- Yemeni militants in Yemen.
- 25X1 in India, Indonesia, and Turkey
- Sunni extremists in Rome, Western Europe
- Lebanese Hizballah in an unknown location
- 25X1 in Gaza or Israel

The threat reports continued. More PDB articles called attention to dangers in late June and early July. Another snapshot, on July 11, summarized in the PDB what was known about the threats:

- Al Qa'ida, possibly occurring in July and possibly taking place in Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Pakistan, Bahrain, East Asia, Kuwait, Turkey, Morocco, Jordan, the G-8 summit in Italy, or Mauritania.
- Abu Zubayda planning 'internal' and 'external' operations, seen as probably against Israeli interests inside and outside Israel
- An unknown group seemed to have left Kuwait in late June
- Sunni extremists in Rome or elsewhere in Western Europe
- 25X1 extremists in India, Indonesia, or Turkey
- 25X1 in Beirut
- Malaysian extremists in Malaysia
- Abu Sayyaf in the Philippines
- 25X1 in Kenya
- UBL-linked groups in 25X1 against a target in 25X1

A PDB article advised that the threat remained even after arrests in Rome. Another article later in July stated that one operation was delayed, but others might still be on track.

The PDB threat articles then fall off. [But see the 6 Aug 01 article above.] An August article looked back, offering information about attacks that had been planned in France, obtained after the arrest of a UBL associate in the UAE. Another noted that UBL's operational practices had become expert and flexible.

9/11 Aftermath

Reporting after September 11 provides several leads about intelligence that might have been available before September 11.

The first PDB article after the attacks is dated 12 September, 0400 EDT. It reviews the initial evidence the Intelligence Community could compile:

- A muj facilitator in Afghanistan claimed 25X1 that UBL had left Kandahar for Kabul in anticipation of a possible operation, perhaps to avoid conflict with Taliban.
- Clandestine source says UBL and Omar clashed in August about UBL determination to attack US. UBL told Omar he had operations in progress that would cause great damage to the US.
- Other evidence was collected 25X1 on September 11.
- Possible terrorist al-Ghamdi. FBI walk-in late in August said an individual with a similar name would enter the US via Canada to carry out a terrorist attack in New York.

A PDB article on September 19 focuses on a possible UBL crop duster plot. It notes information from 25X1 on Moussaoui, linking him to a senior AQ officer, Hamza al-Ghamdi. Both had ties to a UBL camp linked to poison training by a 25X1 25X1. The article says FBI reports also link Moussaoui to an individual with close ties to at least two of the hijackers.