

~~TS~~ 25X1

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Event: Mike Scheuer

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Additional notes: The witness was placed under oath at the start of his first interview on December 11, 2003. At the start of this interview, he was reminded that he was still under oath.

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Team Number: Three (Counterterrorism Policy)

Location: 2100 K Street

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Non-Commission: Mike Scheuer, 25X1

ALEC Station

~~(TS)~~ 25X1 There was very little reporting on UBL in the 1991 to 1995 period. Scheuer knew of no intelligence on UBL's financial dealings during this period; rather UBL was assumed to be a financier because he carried money over to Afghanistan, was a Saudi, and his family was rich. CIA began to do some collecting on UBL in Sudan in 1994, since Sudan was known to be in some sense a state sponsor of terrorism, but it was the Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ) that was thought to be the terrorist organization it had links with at the time. Plans were drafted for covert activities to take out some of UBL's construction equipment, but C/NE 25X1 was not supportive. By late 1995, Scheuer described UBL as someone with whom CIA was "dabbling." It was the attack on OPM/SANG in November 1995 that "got CIA fired up on UBL."

~~(S)~~ Scheuer noted, therefore, that collection on UBL began with the creation of TFL (later ALEC Station) in 1996, not because there was intelligence on UBL's terrorist finance links but because then DDO David Cohen was "obsessed" with virtual stations. Scheuer linked the acceleration of CIA's intelligence on UBL in 1996 to the excellence of his officers and luck (eg. walk-ins).

~~(TS)~~ 25X1 Scheuer had taken 25X officers with him from IEB (who had been working the Islamic extremist target for about two years) to TFL/ALEC Station in 1996, and eventually got up to 25X1 officers. By the summer of 1998, Scheuer had 25X officers working for him in ALEC Station: 25 officers working on the capture operation, 25 reports officers, 25X working on Al Qaeda worldwide, and 2 in the front office. His staff was going after targets 25X1
25X1 -locations where CIA had assets willing to work with CIA.

Working a Case

~~(TS)~~ 25X1

25X1

25X1

~~(TS)~~ Scheuer noted that for a long time NSA would not share 25X1 numbers with CIA, that is, those numbers related to the number CIA had given them; NSA reporting would be disseminated, but without numbers. He mentioned the case of Abu Hajar the Iraqi, who CIA failed to pick up 25X1 because NSA did not disseminate the intelligence until too late. By early 1999, Scheuer estimated that NSA was tracking perhaps 25X1 numbers for CTC.

~~(TS)~~ According to Scheuer, there is not much CIA can do 25X1 other than use the substance of the conversation—25X1
25X1 When good locational information is obtained from the substance of a conversation, then you have a traveling case and it is easy to track someone: you get in touch with the field who calls liaison and asks them to pick them up. "Once these people are moving," Scheuer explained, "you've got a case." Scheuer noted that because ALEC was able to release its own cables, he did not need to wait very long for a cable clearance from the area division.

Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM)

~~(TS)~~ Scheuer recalled that while CIA was chasing Al Qaeda operative Ramsi Yousef from the 25X1 in January 1995, Ramsi 25X1 KSM, possibly from 25X1 Ramsi had said that he was supposed to put a bomb on a Gulf airliner that would be placed on a flight 25X1 CIA apparently learned about this from 25X1 25X1 walk-in, possibly called 25X1 [it is unclear to whom Scheuer is referring]. In early 1995, Ramsi was approved to do this job with the 25X1 but the scheme fell apart.

~~(TS)~~ Meanwhile, CIA located KSM working in the water ministry in Qatar; a unilateral source who was working with him 25X1 Scheuer acknowledged that CIA had perhaps obtained detailed information 25X1 on KSM's location, that is, targeting information 25X1 But Scheuer himself remembered nothing from the 25X1 Scheuer believes that FBI may have also obtained KSM 25X1 but he was unsure whether this evidence together was enough for an arrest.

~~(TS)~~ Scheuer recalled that discussions were held as to whether the CIA, FBI or U.S. military had the capability to mount an effective 25X1, X5 operation for KSM in Qatar without the cooperation of the Qatar government; the military, he remembered, did not want to do such an operation. In Scheuer's mind, the U.S. should have wanted to avoid going to the Qataris above

all else, for fear KSM would be tipped off by someone within the Qatar government. But before the discussion advanced very far, it was lifted up to the NSC-level where it was decided to side with U.S. Ambassador to Qatar, Patrick Theros, who recommended going to the Qataris. The NSC's Dick Clarke supported Theros' position. Scheuer described Clarke as "obsessed" above all else with a U.S. contract with Qatar for F-16s worth millions and billions of dollars. (He recalled being at a meeting with Clarke when this contract was discussed). After Theros approached the Qataris, however, "KSM was no more."

~~(TS)~~ Scheuer was working the KSM issue (at CIA's Islamic Extremist Branch or IEB) until it fell apart at this point, (Scheuer believed this was in 1996). When he went to TFI/AI.FC Station. Scheuer explained that he wanted two targets: KSM and 25X1

25X1 For bureaucratic reasons, "they sliced the baby in half," and IEB retained the KSM case 25X1 which, Scheuer commented, "messed up." Scheuer was unaware of other opportunities to get KSM after 1996; at ALEC Station he wanted to chase him, but felt he was not given the opportunity (because the case had been given to IEB). He knew of no travel by KSM during his tenure at ALEC.

~~(TS)~~ Scheuer added that CIA did have the capacity to mount a unilateral 25X1, X5 operation in Qatar, 25X1 "That's what those guys get paid for," he commented. He found the 25X1 guys "pretty remarkable" and noted, "look what they did in Afghanistan." Scheuer explained, however, that the "pucker factor gets pretty high in this situation,"—or in other words, as for the CIA taking risks, "they'd rather not talk very much about it."

The May 1998 Capture Operation

~~(TS)~~ 25X1 According to Scheuer, the capture operation being planned through the spring of 1998 was "the perfect operation": it showed no U.S. hand, the infrastructure needed was minimal ("a plane that could fly at night and a pilot"), and although the CIA's Afghan assets were not 25X1 but "really just 25X1 thugs," they were good at kidnapping. Scheuer described the operation as "very common sense," and "a no brainer."

~~(TS)~~ 25X1 The plan called for 25X1 to kidnap UBL from his qila and take him to a location southeast of Kandahar where they had a redoubt that even the Soviets had never discovered. There, the Afghans would keep UBL as long as necessary before bringing him to an airstrip the CIA had selected and 25X1 complete rehearsals were run for the operation, (he believes there were two 25X1 25X1, as well as a full command post rehearsal.

~~(TS)~~ 25X1 Scheuer was concerned to refute those (such as the DCI) who might argue that the CIA's single thread of intelligence for this operation was insufficient. He pointed out that CIA had an asset in Afghanistan who was the 25X1 and gave CIA consistently good intelligence. CIA had provided 25X1 so they could talk to one another, as well as 25X1 with which to talk to their CIA handlers, and Scheuer noted that almost all the intelligence coming from 25X1 was corroborated 25X1 In addition, two counterintelligence

investigations were conducted to ensure that 25X1 "were not doping us," and both came back positive. Although single-threaded, therefore, Scheuer argued that "this operation was missing no source of corroboration," and "if anybody tells you this was a cowboy operation or a half-assed operation, you ought to put them under oath and ask them again." He maintained passionately that "people put their lives and souls into this" for the best part of a year, and his opinion was that the operation could have succeeded. (He noted that the Inspector General's investigation will confirm this).

~~(TS/25X1~~ According to Scheuer, the military wanted no part of the operation—CIA used its own 25X1 support instead. The whole program was put before General Schoomaker, then Commander in Chief of U.S. Special Operations Command, who said the military could not do better. Schoomaker was willing to help with the planning. 25X1
25X1

~~(TS/25X1~~ The operation was approved within the Agency 25X1
25X1 and with Executive Director (EXDIR) David Carey, Assistant Director of Central Intelligence for Military Support (ADC/MS) BGen Rod Isler, Director for Operations (DDO) Jack Downing and his deputy, Jim Pavitt, Deputy Director for Intelligence (DDI) John McLaughlin and his deputy, Winston Wiley—"everyone approved it." It was agreed that the plan had a 20-30% chance of complete success. Moreover, COS Islamabad Gary Schroen sent a cable saying that he thought the plan had a 50-60% of working (although he had originally thought that it would not work at all).

~~(TS/25X1~~ Nevertheless, it was relayed back to Scheuer by his contacts in New York that C/CTC Geoff O'Connell had briefed the operation to the Attorney's office of the Southern District of New York as having 0% chance of success. He was not told about there having been any discussion at the meeting as to whether anyone would get killed in the operation, though Scheuer noted of O'Connell that, "to his credit, he will not do anything that would risk anyone's life," adding that he is therefore "probably not the guy to have in charge of covert operations."

~~(TS/25X1~~ Scheuer recalled that Clarke had also had his reservations about offensive operations. In March or April, 1998, Scheuer, 25X1 Chief of CT at FBI Headquarters John O'Neill, and FBI's Dale Watson (then Section Chief for the Bureau's International Terrorism Operations Section or ITOS), briefed Clarke for half an hour on the capture operation, and Clarke's reaction had been, "CIA just wants to kill UBL, don't you?" Scheuer said that his response had been, "if you wanted him dead, he would have been dead a long time ago." This conversation was relayed back at CIA Headquarters, Scheuer commented, where "they all puckered up again."

The UBL Indictment

~~(TS/25X1~~ In June 1998, Scheuer was aware of the sealed indictment against UBL for his activities in Somalia, (he noted that FBI's Danny Coleman was assigned to ALEC Station at the time). In Scheuer's opinion, the indictment "put a kink" in CIA plans to capture UBL because it

meant that UBL could be brought to the U.S. a condition that automatically made it very difficult 25X1 no 25X1 was going to want to be an accessory to handing over UBL to U.S. Scheuer thought that, ideally, CIA would have liked 25X1 to snatch UBL and not the U.S., because the 25X1 would be able to get more information out of UBL than the Americans: "the 25X1 could be persuasive." However, John O'Neill at FBI had always been reluctant for the Bureau to help CIA with UBL if they were not able to bring UBL to the U.S. Overall, Scheuer thought the indictment was counterproductive operationally, and certainly made no difference regarding the amount of energy and resources being devoted to working the target.

Saudi Efforts with the Taliban

(TS) 25X1 Scheuer believes that the Saudi effort to effectively bribe the Taliban into giving up UBL evolved in early May 1998, and that one of the reasons why the CIA capture operation was cancelled was "because the Saudis said they could do this." Scheuer's staff wrote a memo saying the Saudis would never be able to do this.

(C) Scheuer accompanied the DCI and Chief of Near East and South Asia Division (C/NE) 25X1 on a trip to Saudi Arabia in May 1998, the purpose of which was specifically to talk to Crown Prince Abdullah about the Saudis' proposed effort with the Taliban. He recalled that he was not taken to the meeting with the Crown Prince in Jeddah, however, because there had been strong disagreement between Scheuer and 25X1 on their assessment of the Saudi proposal. 25X1 Scheuer remarked, "was trying to flog this as the answer to our dreams," whereas Scheuer thought the effort would go nowhere.

(C) Scheuer clearly thought his advice held little water with the DCI. Although CIA's Saudi experts all knew the Saudis were a creature of the Taliban, Scheuer explained, the DCI was only getting advice from the likes of 25X1 who believed the Saudi initiative would work (and who Scheuer thought uninformed). Scheuer noted a memo from 25X1 in the field to C/CTC O'Connell on this issue, on which 25X1 marginalia was "Gee, this sounds good!" With the weight of advice seeming to favor taking the Saudi offer seriously, Scheuer noted the DCI most likely did not want to take a position that would backfire on him or his career. He added that the Crown Prince later told a USG official—and possibly the DCI, either directly or perhaps via Prince Turki—that if the Taliban did expel UBL to Saudi Arabia he would not turn him over to the U.S. The DCI was apparently told by Abdullah, "don't ever let me hear one word that you want this guy turned over to the Americans."

(C) Scheuer was aware of high-level conversations occurring between the USG and the Saudis during the summer of 1998. He noted, however, that the U.S. relationship 25X1 has never been based in reality. "The Saudis have always lied to us," he said, "and their record of cooperation on UBL and most other issues, until recently, has been zero." (He cited as an example the case of UBL associate Madani al-Tayyib; although the Saudis had given sanctuary to Tayyib, CIA first found out about this through the media, whereupon he Saudis told the USG Tayyib was mentally unbalanced, knew nothing, and that they were not going to give the U.S. access to him). By August 1998, Scheuer noted that the Saudi diplomatic effort was still inconclusive and came to a full stop some time in September. At the end of the day, Scheuer

said, he recalled that Turki went back to talk to Mullah Omar one last time, who said, "When did the Saudis become the Americans' lackeys?" (Note: Scheuer acknowledged that he only had direct access to documents on these matters if Rich Blee, then Executive Assistant to the DDCI, sent them to him through the back channel).

The August 1998 Embassy bombings and U.S. Retaliatory Action

~~(S)~~ Scheuer explained that it had been coincident with the beginning of the effort to "get the Saudis to do our dirty work," that DDO Downing and ADDO Pavitt tried to dismantle ALEC Station in the spring of 1998. Consequently, ALEC's main activity over the summer was trying to stop personnel from leaving ALEC, and he noted that "we were not in good shape." He admitted that ALEC Station might therefore have missed some intelligence in the lead up to Al Qaeda's attacks on the U.S. Embassies in East Africa.

~~(S)~~ Right after the attacks, Scheuer said that his primary goal had been to do what FBI asked him to do: "generally, we were their poop boys." ALEC Station was asked to provide support to the Bureau for the first sixty days (mostly performing traces), and consequently had no opportunity to do its own investigation of the Al Qaeda connections that emerged from East Africa. He noted that when ALEC personnel were later "cut out" of the State Department's Accountability Review Board on the attacks, it "must have been done deliberately." After August 1998, Scheuer commented that the Al Qaeda account was not primarily within ALEC of CIA.

Operation Infinite Reach

~~(C)~~ Following the attacks on the U.S. embassies in East Africa, Scheuer was involved in policy deliberations within CIA, with DOD, and at the CSG level at the NSC as to what action the U.S. should take against Al Qaeda. He also recalled briefing National Security Adviser Berger at this time.

~~(S)~~ According to Scheuer, the military's position was already clear: DoD did not want to put "boots on the ground" in Afghanistan. He recalled earlier discussion on this option around the time of the cancelled May 1998 capture operation, and referred to a staff cable from ALEC Station^{25X1} which noted that General Hugh Shelton, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) had made a judgment to this effect: the military would not put boots on the ground. After the Embassy bombings in August 1998, Scheuer briefed General Shelton and his deputy, General Joseph Ralston, along with the DCI, and noted that it was clear to him that the option had again been discussed and discarded.

~~(C)~~ Scheuer never saw guidance on paper at this time as to what were the U.S. objectives for use of force in Afghanistan; to his knowledge, there was no such document. He initially thought the first objective for the August 20th retaliatory strikes (Operation Infinite Reach) was to kill UBL, since CIA had provided intelligence on his holding a meeting of senior Al Qaeda operatives on the same day. But "when it came down to the nuts and bolts," Scheuer commented, it was clear this was not necessarily the policymakers' primary goal; there was much concern about attacking during prayer time, he noted, because this would be offensive to Muslims, and about potential collateral damage. He also recalled "a tremendous debate" over the al-Shifa soil sample (which Scheuer believed to be a peripheral issue).

~~(TS)~~ 25X1

~~(TS)~~ Scheuer added that, to be fair, he was not sure whether CIA had enough intelligence to actually be able to kill UBL on August 20th. He recalled receiving intelligence 25X1 officers (and maybe a 25X1 asset) had been killed in the strikes. He thinks that one of UBL's camps in Afghanistan was most likely training 25X1 but analysis at the time was that the officers who had been killed were not there to tip off UBL but served in that area.

Operation Infinite Resolve

~~(C)~~ Scheuer was briefed and engaged in discussions on the proposal that the August 20th retaliatory strikes would be part of a broader CT campaign. But added that it was already clear to him from June or July 1998 that DoD was not prepared to put "boots on the ground" in Afghanistan, and he was never informed that they had changed their opinion after August.

~~(S)~~ Scheuer was also involved with the ADCI/Military in developing targets for follow-on strikes. He recalled discussing potential TLAM attacks on UBL's qila in Kandahar and more terrorist training camps around the country, as well hitting Afghanistan's national infrastructure such as roads and the two dams that provide most of the country's electrical power. But there were no really attractive military targets for attacking UBL's infrastructure unless the USG was willing to start targeting the Taliban. Scheuer said he had brought up this point in August, but the Taliban was not yet seen as a threat to the U.S.; there was perhaps some discussion of targeting Taliban ammunition dumps, but Scheuer noted that there was not much infrastructure here either, other than old Soviet weapons. Overall, he had little faith in the idea that Afghans would be intimidated by cruise missile strikes or that any efforts on the part of the USG would have compelled the Taliban to hand over UBL to the U.S.

Back to Covert Action

~~(TS)~~ 25X1 By September 1998, CTC was wrapping up terrorist cells all over the world, 25X1 Although most of these operations had been underway for more than a year, Scheuer noted that the August 1998 bombings might have hastened progress, as the USG was looking for results on targeting Al Qaeda.

~~(TS)~~ 25X1 It was Scheuer's impression that the policymakers had become "more enamored" of the CIA's 25X1 after the August 20th strikes (and their failure to kill UBL). The capture plan suddenly looked much better to them and an effort was made to review the operation.

~~(TS)~~ 25X1 Scheuer understood his instructions to be two-fold: use 25X1 to capture UBL, or provide the military with specific, locational data so he could be targeted with TLAMs, (he understood there to be submarines off the coast waiting to carry out such a strike). ALEC Station therefore adopted a two-pronged effort with 25X1. They worked on efforts to kidnap UBL, but this had become more difficult following the strikes since he was now constantly on the move, and 25X1 were not "stand-up fighters"—he judged their chances of capturing UBL after August 1998 as "not good." CTC also tried to provide the military with information from its assets to allow them to launch a TLAM strike against UBL. Scheuer commented that he always argued against using 25X1 for collection rather than offensive operations.

~~(TS)~~ 25X1

~~(C)~~ Scheuer noted that after CIA's 25X1 communications was 25X1 operations against UBL became "hit and miss." "We have not had reliable intelligence on UBL since 25X1" (Scheuer noted that there had been no effective investigation into 25X1 though he thought it sounded like a military leak).

~~(C)~~ Scheuer commented that he had no knowledge of the DCI's declaration of war on UBL in December 1998. The first time he heard about this, he noted, was on September 12, 2001.

"Eyes-On" UBL

~~(TS)~~ 25X1 Scheuer pointed out that he was directly tasked to acquire "eyes-on" intelligence on UBL, which he and his officers fulfilled on five occasions. Overall, he noted that tribal reporting on UBL's location, whether it was at a camp, at one of his houses, or in the desert, was always corroborated 25X1 He was only directly involved in the decision-making process on whether or not to launch a strike against UBL on one of these occasions.

December 23, 1998: The Governor's Palace in Kandahar

~~(TS)~~ 25X1 In this instance, it was 25X1 a CIA asset) who reported that UBL was staying the night in one of the wings of the Governor's Palace in Kandahar—25X1 UBL go into a room for the night. Scheuer briefed DCI Tenet on the situation, along with DDCI Gordon and C/CTC O'Connell, there was a phone conversation with Berger or Clarke, and Scheuer thinks there was a DC or PC at NSC (with Berger). Scheuer accompanied Tenet and Gordon to the NSC, where only Principals were admitted into the conference room, so Scheuer and Gordon had to wait in the Ops Center.

~~(TS)~~ 25X1 It was a long meeting. Scheuer recalled that the DCI later told him that the military—supported by everyone else in the room—had not wanted to launch a strike, the reason being that no one had seen UBL for a few hours (that is, they could not be absolutely sure of his exact location). According to Scheuer, the Principals "talked it to death," and by the time the meeting broke up it was about 3:30pm, approaching dawn in Afghanistan, so even if a decision had been made to strike it would have been a close-call that UBL would still have been in his room by the time the TLAMs hit. (At this point, Scheuer thought that the system for decision-making on this issue had not yet been compressed).

February 11-12, 1999: Herat

~~(TS)~~ 25X1 Scheuer was unsure about the details of this episode. He recalled an opportunity to target UBL in Herat rather than Kandahar, and that he then moved on to the Shaykh Ali camp in the desert south of Kandahar. [Note: Scheuer seems to have his facts mixed up here; according to the Situation Reports for these dates, UBL left Shaykh Ali's camp for Herat on February 11th]. He did not recall why a military strike was not launched on this occasion (noting that after December 1998 he had been completely cut out of 7th floor deliberations).

February 26, 1999: The Governor's House in Kandahar

~~(TS)~~ 25X1 Scheuer recalled that in this case there was unilateral reporting that UBL was spending the night at the Governor's House in Kandahar—25X1 UBL go into the bedroom for the night). He related how a 25X1 had the location under surveillance. By the time CIA had this information and had conveyed it to the Principals, however, it was old and no one had seen UBL for a number of hours.

March 1999: The UAE Shaykh Ali hunting camp.

~~(TS)~~ 25X1 Scheuer related how a member of the CIA's Afghan 25X1 network was in the guard force that the Taliban provided to the UAE royal family when they came to Afghanistan for hunting, that is, CIA had an asset 25X1 around UBL. When the Emirates entered Afghanistan, UBL moved into the area where their hunting camp was located and set up a satellite camp of his own (perhaps north west of the Shaykh Ali camp). It was reported to CIA that the 25X1 UBL when he visited the Emirates, and there was 25X1 of greeting activities at the camp at the same time.

~~(TS)~~ 25X1 It was not known how long UBL would stay in this area, but Scheuer noted that the Emirates' hunting camps tended to be very lush and so they usually stayed for a while. CIA spent several days checking on the bona fides of the 25X1 since there was such a demand from CIA for precision and irrefutable evidence on UBL's location. After confirming that what the asset had said was true, Scheuer thought that all the necessary indicators were there to construct an opportunity for a strike. A system was constructed whereby when the asset knew the next time 25X1 UBL to the camp, he would immediately inform 25X1 25X1

~~(TS)~~ 25X1 The sighting was briefed to the CSG. According to Scheuer, just after noon on March 7—and before a decision as to whether to strike the camp had been made—Clarke called a UAE official (perhaps 25X1 and told him the U.S. was watching one of its camps, saying it was probably not a good idea for the Emirates to be there. Scheuer cited from a memcon written by Clarke to the 25X1 saying that, as agreed to by CIA, he had informed the UAE official of U.S. concern about seeing a C-130 at the camp; the official had told Clarke UBL was unlikely to be in the area. Scheuer said he was "positive" this call was made before a strike had been ruled out. On the 25X1 overpass of the camp, the C-130 was gone and the camp had been deserted; all that was left was "a pile of smoking garbage." (Scheuer thought that there was also HUMINT confirming UBL's departure).

~~(TS)~~ Scheuer pointed out that Clarke's assertion that he was acting in agreement with CIA by calling the 25X1 was false. Scheuer asked O'Connell if Clarke had agreed on this line of action with him, and O'Connell said no. CIA only found out about the call on March 12. Scheuer wrote a memo to 25X1 informing them that after checking all the way up to the DCI, he had no indication that CIA had known about the decision to make the call.

~~(TS)~~ Scheuer noted that Clarke's action—giving intelligence to a foreign government that was "unfriendly" to the U.S.—might have resulted in the compromise of CIA assets. He explained

~~TS~~ 25X1

that had it been known the Principals had decided against launching a strike. CIA would have moved its assets out of the area to protect them. 25X1

May 14-18, 1999: Five Nights in Kandahar

~~(TS)~~ 25X1 On this occasion, UBL's overnight location in Kandahar, the CIA's strongest area of coverage, was reported for 5 nights in a row, before he departed for Kabul. According to Scheuer, this was the largest and most sustained surveillance effort against UBL. 25X1

25X1 and was performed in a very professional manner. He recalled that it may have been during this period that UBL stayed at the 25X1

25X1 Although he had no first-hand knowledge of why it was decided not to strike UBL at this time, he did recall being told at one point that a decision not to strike had been made for fear of collateral damage. 25X1 (Scheuer referred to a memo he had written to the DCI during this period, signed by Geoff O'Connell).

~~(TS)~~ 25X1 Scheuer was not aware if CIA had eyes-on UBL between May 1999 and the Predator flights in the fall of 2000.

Authorities and Capabilities

~~(TS)~~ 25X1 Scheuer noted that there was no real need for the August 20th 1998 MON authorizing offensive operations against UBL in Afghanistan. As far as he could tell, the 1986 Worldwide CT Finding authorized all the covert action programs that CIA had already been doing against the target without the need for an MON, and it was therefore unclear as to why the President authorized new authorities. "In terms of our operations, it didn't change anything."

~~(TS)~~ 25X1 Scheuer was clear in his assertion that he thought CIA authorities after August 1998 "consistently were that UBL could be killed only in the environment of a credible capture operation." He added that he was consistently told this. From working with CTC's lawyers, Scheuer's understanding of the February 1999 MON (to which the President took his pen) was that if a credible capture operation was set up and UBL was killed in the midst of it, "that's OK." If it was not possible to capture UBL, Scheuer knew that he should not be allowed to get away, and that killing him was to be the very last option. Nevertheless, Scheuer noted that "we always talked about how much easier it would have been to kill him [UBL]," especially given how well CIA knew the ground in Afghanistan. (He added that 25X1 had even offered to kill UBL for the Americans, but he had had to say no).

~~(TS)~~ 25X1 Scheuer believed CIA 25X1 would have been happy to kill UBL but not capture him. "You have to match the operation to the asset," he argued, and 25X1 were "highway men," not "stand-up fighters." Between May 1997 and August 25, 1998 (the date of the 25X1), Scheuer judged the viability of CIA's assets carrying out a kill operation as high. It would have been "very easy" to kill UBL at this time since he was "like a blue collar guy," keeping a regular schedule. Scheuer speculated that he could have been killed using a land mine laid on a route he regularly traveled, or in a RPG attack (which the tribals were good at). After August 1998, however, killing UBL was "not a sure thing" but still possible. Scheuer noted that 25X1 could not carry out ambush operations at this time because it would have involved a standoff against UBL's guard.

~~TS~~ 25X1

~~(TS)~~ 25X1 That being said, Scheuer emphasized the fact that there was an intense determination to capture UBL, because CIA's choices had been narrowed down to this one option: "capture was our primary effort."

The Northern Alliance

~~(TS)~~ 25X1 Scheuer noted that when Rich Blee came into CTC as Chief of ALEC Station one of the changes that occurred was that he stopped using the 25X1 In Scheuer's opinion, those in the DO "did their best to discredit the southern assets," and Blee started selling the idea of using Masood and the Northern Alliance instead: "the DO decided they were going to do things from the north." Scheuer thought this idea was "dumb" and would never work. He argued that, first, UBL never went north to Masood's area of coverage; second, Masood was Muslim, and therefore would never turn UBL over to "the Great Satan" thus bringing upon himself the condemnation of the Muslim world ("that's Afghanistan 101"); and third, CIA did not give Masood the authority to kill UBL (and the Northern Alliance were not going to try to capture him).

The 25X1 Option

~~(TS)~~ 25X1 Asked his opinion on the 25X1 that CIA undertook to train for a capture operation against UBL, Scheuer commented, "I'm not good at never-never land stuff." He believed that everything CIA asked the 25X1 to do for them was against 25X1 and would never come to anything. When options regarding 25X1 were put together "upstairs," Scheuer believed they were "90% imagination."

Airplanes as Weapons

~~(TS)~~ Scheuer was asked if he recalled hearing about two credible intelligence reports on UBL's potential use of airplanes against the U.S.: one, attributed to a walk-in from September 1998, referred to the possible use of an explosives-laden aircraft used against the U.S.; the other, a late November 1998 report widely circulated in early December 1998 and into 1999, was about a hijacking plan, perhaps to secure the release of key prisoners such as the Blind Sheikh, and targeted against the East coast of the U.S. Scheuer remembered both reports, as well as the "dickering around" on the 25X1 for the hijacking threat. But, he added, the idea of using airplanes as weapons was not new news to him—he had known about this potential threat since the uncovering of a plot in 1996 for Abdul Hakim Murad to use the training he had received at U.S. flight schools to carry out a suicide attack on CIA Headquarters (Murad had been designated "the airplane guy" within CIA). These subsequent reports in 1998 merely added to a threat that was already known, or as Scheuer put it, "we had it, we got more of it."

~~(C)~~ Scheuer would hand such reports to the analysts, whose job it was to judge whether this was credible intelligence. If the analysts wanted to write about it, they would have come back to Scheuer's reports officers, but he does not recall this happening (and referred us to 25X1 25X1 The fact that these reports reached the NSC or White House did not surprise Scheuer,

and is not an indication of their veracity or validity, "it just means somebody was trying to cover their ass."

Concluding Comments

(S) In Scheuer's opinion, there is still no commitment within CIA to building expertise on the CT issue. The core of ALEC Station on January 1st, 1997 is the core and strength of CTC today on Al Qaeda (about one third of approximately ^{25X1} personnel); the rest is made up of newly trained recruits who never spend enough time on the issue to learn anything. (Scheuer explained that a new crop of Clandestine Student Trainees, or CSTs, passes through AQ Department every ^{25X1} before going on to a new assignment). The net effect is that CTC is weaker today than before 9-11 because too much time is spent training inexperienced personnel: "We're never going to beat this thing unless we have people who know the difference between Ramadan and Disneyland." Moreover, since staff constantly need to train and manage inexperienced officers, they are unable to devote the necessary time to working the targets. Although CTC witnessed a surge in personnel just after 9-11, Scheuer noted that, "other than the kids," there has been no more surge, and the CT effort is still woefully understaffed: "it's a reprehensible situation."

(C) Scheuer recommended a CT career track which offers rewards for advancements. At present, the CIA does not reward CT work; he cited the example of the ^{25X1} officer who captured Al Qaeda operative Abu Hajar, but rather than be rewarded was given a job on the ^{25X1} desk.

(C) According to Scheuer, the problem is systemic. "The mindset at the Agency is incapable of dealing with the problem," and he argued that "the cowards in charge are never going to change it." Scheuer believes the senior management at CIA is still not committed to the target and thinks the 9-11 attacks were a "one-off", otherwise they would have focused on building up a cadre of CT officers. "This is my kid's life that's at stake here, and you've got minor comen playing shell games."

(C) Scheuer noted that his own career has been deliberately sidetracked by these "minor comen" exactly because of his experience with and expertise on the terrorist threat. He remarked that his book, *Through Our Enemies Eyes*, was deemed so accurate by Al Qaeda that ^{25X1} a conversation between two operatives asking whether UBL lieutenant Abu Zubaydah had written it. And yet when it was recommended that Scheuer be sent to question Zubaydah after he was captured, because of his deep understanding of Al Qaeda, DDO Pavitt apparently would not authorize this, remarking that Scheuer had no role to play in the matter.

(C) Scheuer explained that he has stayed with the UBL issue so that no one could ever say to him that he did not do his best to target the threat. He has tried to work through the system to fix what he sees as the problems inherent in CIA, but believes that "the system isn't working." He noted that if the 9-11 Commission does not fix CIA's problems, he will either go to the chair of one of the Congressional intelligence committees or write to the President of the United States.