

**TESTIMONY OF JAMES L. PAVITT**  
**BEFORE THE**  
**NATIONAL COMMISSION ON TERRORIST ATTACKS UPON THE UNITED STATES**

*April 14, 2004*

Good morning. It is a privilege for me to appear before this commission on an issue of vital importance to our nation. By virtue of my position in the CIA, I am not a public person. Indeed, in the history of the CIA, no one in my position has ever testified publicly.

And, like my colleagues here at the table, I am a public servant, dedicated to defending the security of our nation. For the last five of my more than 30 years in the intelligence business, I have had the honor of leading a unique organization—the Directorate of Operations—the clandestine service of America. I am remarkably proud of this extraordinary group of dedicated professionals, their commitment and their accomplishments. Many of the men and women of my organization operate abroad in dangerous locales and always in secret. They cannot publicly appear before you today. I am here to represent them all.

The threat posed by terrorists prior to 9/11 was unambiguous. The threat was not just outlined in sensitive intelligence documents. Two highly regarded commissions—the Bremer Commission and the Hart Rudman Commission—were prophetic in laying out in unclassified reports, the terrorist threat we faced—including the possibility of terrorists inflicting mass casualties both overseas and on American soil.

Two-and-a-half years ago, that adversary shattered the sense of security that the people of this country have come to cherish. We fought this enemy through the 1990s, but it was the tragedy of September 11 that unified and focused this country and allowed us to counter this threat as never before.

The damage to al-Qa'ida since that tragedy has been striking. The pre-9/11 al-Qa'ida leadership, almost gone. Bin Ladin and al-Zawahiri, in hiding. Clandestine operations, at the heart of some of the most dramatic takedowns of the al-Qa'ida organization. Covert action, working hand-in-glove with the US military to oust the Taliban and al-Qa'ida from Afghanistan in an intelligence/military partnership that is seen as a model. I will answer all the questions you have today, but my first responsibility here is to look at where we are in this campaign. And to give you a sense of where we are headed. As you know, I cannot publicly describe our operations in detail. But I can give you, I hope, a clear sense of how we see this point in time, and how we want to chart the next steps forward. As I paint this picture, I want to return to a few themes:

- One: working with partners here and abroad, we are in the midst of inflicting irreversible damage on the al-Qa'ida organization.
- Two: Al-Qa'ida has poisoned an international movement with an ideology that is fueling attacks from Madrid to Manila. Our mission will not end as long as members of this

broad movement see the killing of innocents as an acceptable cost of achieving their ends.

- Three: The demise of Bin Ladin and al-Zawahiri will be a signpost, not a turning point. All of us...you, me, the American people watching today must realize that this is a campaign with no clear end in sight, a campaign that will continue to demand our attention, our partners' assistance, and the full commitment of American resources and tools of national power.

Let me turn to where we are, by taking a step back for a moment. Think back to October of 2001, and imagine what you would have said if someone had described the following future to you:

- Taliban and al-Qa'ida, essentially ousted from Afghanistan.
- International recognition of new leadership in Afghanistan, with a Political process in place.
- Periodic times of heightened alerts in this country, but no further attacks on our soil.
- About three-quarters of the al-Qa'ida leadership, gone.
- A worldwide coalition of partners, dozens and dozens, cooperating despite occasional political differences, in a global, behind-the-scenes war of massive, indeed unprecedented, proportions.

Despite all we have left to do, the vision I just described is as real today as it was unimaginable even 30 months ago. The clandestine service I lead is at the heart of this transformation. Men and women who are committed to helping their countrymen regain some of the sense of security, the American way, that has become so tested in these past few years.

Where does this leave us, today, in this campaign? This adversary is hurt, but we are by no means through yet with al-Qa'ida. The group's leadership was surprised by the ferocity of our reaction to September 11; they had no coherent escape plan from Afghanistan. They fled, east into and through Pakistan and west, into and beyond Iran. They tried to reconstitute a command structure. They failed.

Pakistani cities are no longer a hub of senior leadership plotting, cleared of senior leaders by our work in partnership with Pakistan and its courageous leader, President Musharraf. Iran detained many of the leaders who fled west.

As these leadership nodes eroded, the operational cells they directed or inspired, in North Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, and Southeast Asia, coiled to strike. And they did, in Bali, Saudi Arabia, East Africa, Morocco, and elsewhere. At an operational pace that was no less intense after September 11 than it was before.

But our operations, in concert with our partners, are gaining ground against the core of al-Qa'ida. Again, look back. Two-and-a-half years ago, we would have listed our top concerns: Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Southeast Asia. And we remain concerned about extremists operating in these areas. But today, almost every senior target is gone in Yemen, killed or captured. We have a level of cooperation in Saudi Arabia that far exceeds anything we have seen before, and the results show it: damage to the leadership of almost all the al-Qa'ida cells we have identified in the Kingdom. Progress as well in Southeast Asia, where we are working against one of al-Qa'ida's most dangerous affiliates, Jemaah Islamiyah.

These are all places where we have targeted leadership, through technical operations, human sources, and joint work with partners. Khalid Shaykh Mohammed, Abu Zubaydah, Hambali, Nashiri. All senior al-Qa'ida leaders or associates, all taken down directly as a result of human source operations that are the fuel for our successes today.

The capabilities and partnerships we are using to fight this campaign are notable, not only for what they bring to bear in the field overseas but also for the unity of effort they represent at home. Overseas, every station in the clandestine service has counterterrorism as its top priority. Not just to take down individual terrorists, but to follow finances; terrorists' efforts to find chemical, biological, or radiological materials; terrorist recruitment; false document rings; alien smuggling. we are working on every aspect of this international network.

I've mentioned our work with services worldwide as one of the tools we are using. I cannot overestimate the importance of the global clandestine coalition we are forging. We work with friends, we work with foes. We cover a terrorist target around this globe using a cadre of case officers that is smaller than the number of FBI officers who work in New York City alone.

Complementing these classic clandestine operations is a covert action capability that became critically important two-and-a-half years ago. My officers remain in the field in Afghanistan, today providing the intelligence eyes that are helping to drive the operations of our military partners. This capability did not appear overnight. Remember, our ability to move quickly in Afghanistan, one of the most successful covert actions ever, grew out of the strategic decision we made in the late 1990s to maintain a relationship with the Northern Alliance.

The Washington end of this story, today, is no less vibrant. Visit my building; let me tell you what you will see. On covert action, interaction and coordination with the US military that is not just regular, it is daily, every single working day. We talk with military field operators, daily, and Pentagon civilian and military officers sit in our Counterterrorist Center, privy to any operational detail we discuss. You would see the same cooperation with law enforcement. On any given day, some 20 full-time FBI officers sit in our Counterterrorist Center. They know our operations, and they know our human agents. We still need to learn how to continue improving this partnership, but we started learning well before September 11, when we first posted a senior FBI officer as one of the deputy directors in the Center. We can and we will be better still.

People outside this circle have access to what we know, including information about our operations. We provide our backbone database, a highly sensitive combination of intelligence reporting and operational detail, to officers across the community who are sitting in the Terrorist

Threat Integration Center. And we have a large cadre of officers whose sole job it is to disseminate intelligence information to the Intelligence Community and beyond. If we receive a threat, we disseminate it immediately.

I am proud of what this unique collection of Americans has done. But make no mistake. While we pursue this enemy, the record since September 11 shows, time and time again, that it can operate in the midst of decline. I mentioned earlier a few of the operations al-Qa'ida and its affiliates have conducted since September 11. I will return to my office today, and I guarantee, before the day is out, my officers will speak to me about plotters around the world who want to attack us with a lack of regard for human life that defies description. We are prevailing, but this fight is far from over.

Why? Why is this so? How can I speak to you about the series of successes at the same time that I warn you that the world I see today, April 14, is seething with people who are hatching plots that are tomorrow's Madrids, Balis, and Casabancas? It is because we are watching, as we preempt, disrupt, and destroy the relatively small group we know as al-Qa'ida, the spread of a far looser, flatter movement of people inspired by Bin Ladin. Our mission will change with this enemy, month by month, year by year. I've drawn an image of an al-Qa'ida organization that has its back against a wall, damaged but still potent.

Let me now turn for a few minutes to the movement that this group has spawned, the movement that I believe represents the next stage in this long campaign. Bin Ladin and his operators attacked in East Africa in 1998, in Yemen in 2000, in New York in 2001. But his organization never saw itself as the sole master of all terrorism. The group trained Egyptians, Algerians, Moroccans, Saudis, Yemenis, Filipinos . . . and Americans. And, maybe more important, the group developed and disseminated an ideology that led others, regardless of their affiliation with al-Qa'ida itself, to see the world as al-Qa'ida does, with the United States as the primary enemy. What we will face, in the coming years, are those who absorbed this message, those who now themselves see the murder of innocents as an acceptable cost of their drive to act on this ideology.

The web we are disrupting is increasingly global, increasingly dispersed, and increasingly local. And the tools we use to break down this web must continue to extend beyond intelligence, the military, and law enforcement. We need diplomacy to keep partners engaged, education to stem the tide of recruits into this network, economic progress to undercut the despair that drives people to radicalism. And, above all, we cannot afford to dilute the focus and commitment to prevent another leader from emerging to ride this ideological wave. Never forget, because our adversary never will.

The kinds of commitments my service will need to make reflect this assessment of an international network that is broad, committed, and durable. We started re-growing the clandestine service in the 1990s. It will take us years to get where we need to be, in clandestine training, language skills, and field experience. Field officers will be crucial.

The 90's were lean times for the human intelligence business. As a result of the post Cold War's so-called "Peace Dividend," We were in a period of decline. Our clandestine ranks were reduced by 20%. During this period, our targets were diverse-from terrorism to weapons proliferation to counternarcotics-but our resources were not keeping pace. We worked hard to sustain our collection efforts against the terrorist target. But let me be clear: We were vastly underfunded and we did not have the people to do the job.

The tragedy of September 11 unified and focused our government and our country. As a result, we were granted new and more robust authorities and resources to attack this threat as never before. The Patriot Act and expanded covert action authorities mandated by President Bush are important elements of the foreign policy response to 9/11. We finally had an unprecedented authority to mount an aggressive and effective offensive. Further, we received an immediate infusion of funding to hire hundreds of additional staff. Today, more than 50% of our funding and about 30% of our people are focused on the terrorism target. Our Counterterrorism Center has more than tripled in size since 9/11.

The resources we will need to fight this war will not diminish. They may in fact increase, directly as a result of the fact that our operations, like our enemy, will have to be global and dispersed.

This vision of an overseas intelligence coalition, working with our clandestine assistance and supported by all the tools of national power, must run in parallel to a homeland architecture that gives us the same sort of teamwork. As we attack this target, we will not only coordinate with our law enforcement colleagues, we will expand on programs to run joint human sources with them, not only overseas but here in the homeland. We must. Our adversary doesn't respect our borders; we have to have the capability, working with law enforcement, to ensure that this government can operate seamlessly across borders as well.

Our operational focus is shifting as well, to meet the challenge of the coming years of this fight. We have invested, in the months and years after September 11, in taking out the leadership of the organization that conceptualized and conducted the attack. We came to understand better how embedded their web is. We will maintain these disruption operations against the Al-Qa'ida organization, but we will also increasingly shift to aggressive infiltration of the broader network, to recruitment and penetration operations that will allow us to map this web, not just its operations but its low-level and support personnel. We are taking down those who plotted the murder of 3,000 Americans; we are planning for a future where we take down those who may follow them.

I know it is time to turn your to your questions but first I must speak on behalf of those men and women of the CIA who could not be here today but who work so hard to stop Bin Laden and his associates; indeed their lives are consumed with combating the terrorist threat.

- To the families, I want to extend our heartfelt condolences to you for the tragic loss of your loved ones. My officers sounded the alarm about the gathering, lethal threat and put their hearts and souls into disrupting and preventing attacks against America. Their

commitment, bravery, sacrifice and dedication to the defense of our nation are second to none. But in the end that was not enough to stop the attacks on September 11<sup>th</sup>. We did all we knew ho to do. We failed to stop the attacks.

- I can assure you the memory of your loved ones continues to be a tremendous source of inspiration to those of use who dedicate our lives to combating this enemy. We will succeed.