

OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM

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The Khobar Towers Bombing 1996 (SGM Ricardo Weems)

On June 25, 1996, members of Hezbollah Al-Hejaz exploded a fuel truck near a housing complex. The complex was housing foreign military personnel as well as Americans. The complex located in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, was an eight-story building housing United States Air Force personnel. The terrorists smuggled explosives from Lebanon. A truck was used to carry 20,000-30,000 lbs of TNT. The bomb damaged and/or destroyed six high-rise apartment buildings in the complex. A crater 85 feet wide and 35 feet deep was left where the truck had been and within a few hours was swelling up partially with saltwater from the Persian Gulf. The blast was felt 20 miles away in the Persian Gulf state of Bahrain. In The death toll was 19 U.S. service members and one Saudi were killed. Another 372 of many nationalities were wounded.

The Conspirators

According to the United States, a group of terrorists who wanted to remove Americans from Saudi Arabia organized the attack. On June 21, 2001, an indictment was issued charging Ahmed Ibrahim Al-Mughassil, Abdelkarim Hussein Mohamed Al-Nasser, Ali Saed Bin Ali El-Hoorie, Irahim Salih Mohammed Al-Yacoub, nine other Saudis, and one Lebanese with murder, conspiracy, and other charges.

In 2004, the 9/11 Commission noted that Osama Bin Laden was seen being congratulated on the day of the Khobar attack. Bin Laden may have helped the group. He may have aided them in obtaining explosives or the sophisticated timing device used to enable the escape of the perpetrators. According to the United States, classified evidence suggests that the government of Iran was the key sponsor of the incident, and several high-ranking members of their military may have been involved. A U.S. federal court has speculated that the Khobar Towers bombing was authorized by Ayatollah Seyyed 'Alî Hossaynî Khâmene'î, the Supreme Leader of Iran. The

Secretary of Defense at the time of the bombing, William Perry, suggested in 2007 that the bombing was carried out by al-Qaeda and not Iran

Impact on America

The impact was that the American people were outraged that some soldiers were hurt in this bombing. They wanted the remaining soldiers to return home. They also wanted to find out who committed the offense against the American troops. The feeling toward Saudi Arabia country was very poor and the American public wanted justice.

U.S. Military and Government Response

The United States and the government responded by stating an investigation on the bombing. They wanted to make sure that the chain of command had done everything that they could to prevent the bombing. After several months of investigating the government found that the chain of command did everything reasonable to protect the force. So no one was relieved of their command. However, the staff of the new Secretary of Defense, William Cohen, asked the Air Force to do a second evaluation. That report also found no grounds for taking action against the command. But the Secretary of Defense, William Cohen decided that he would not let the commander get his next promotion.

World Trade Center 2001 (SGM Ricardo Weems)

On September 11, 2001, attacks against the United States of America caused numerous deaths and affected thousands upon thousands of lives. These attacks conducted by members of al-Qaeda changed the way Americans view terrorism forever. Nineteen terrorists with ties to al-Qaeda hijacked four commercial airliners. The terrorist teams trained as pilots in the U.S. The

terrorists flew two planes, American Airlines Flight 11 and United Airlines Flight 175 into Tower One and Tower Two of the World Trade Center located in New York City. The impact of the airlines and the intense heat from the fuel caused both towers to collapse. The impact of the explosion also caused damage to several buildings in the surrounding areas. The third airplane hijacked was American Airlines flight 77. Flight 77 crashed into the Pentagon building located near Washington D.C. in Arlington, Virginia. A fourth airplane hijacked United Airlines Flight 93 intended for use in destroying the United States Capital was unsuccessful. Passengers attempted to retake the plane from the hijackers, but it crashed in a field in Pennsylvania. The death toll for the attack that occurred on September 11th is estimated at 2,974 people. Twenty-four people are still missing and presumed dead (Wikipedia).

The Conspirators

The FBI identified the 19 hijackers believed to have an association with al-Qaeda within hours as the culprits. Of the 19 hijackers, 15 of the attackers were from Saudi Arabia, two from the United Arab Emirates, one from Egypt, and one was from Lebanon. The FBI was able to identify the hijackers by name. They also acquired other details such as date of births, place of residence, and visas. The hijackers did not attempt to use alias' on flight records or credit cards. One of the hijackers lost luggage contained papers that had the 19 hijacker's identities on documents.

World Trade Center Bombing 2001

On the day of the attacks, the National Security Agency intercepted communications that pointed to Osama bin Laden. German intelligence agencies also had the same information. Osama bin Laden was immediately suspected of playing a major role in the attacks, with events dating back to 1996 and 1998. He continues to elude capture. In 1996 bin Laden declared a jihad

against non-Muslim nations and issued his first of two fatwa's. The first fatwa declared by bin Laden in 1996 called for American Soldiers to leave Saudi Arabia. The second fatwa issued by bin Laden in 1998, urged his followers to kill Americans anywhere. Bin Laden outlined his thoughts in regards to American foreign policy with Israel. Clearly, bin Laden did not want the United States to support Israel. In addition, bin Laden did not want American troops in Saudi Arabia after the Gulf War. The National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States concluded in July 2004 that the 19 members of al-Qaeda were in fact responsible for the attacks that occurred on September 11th 2001. Osama bin Laden has not been formally charged with any crimes in relation to the attacks (Wikipedia).

Impact on America

Americans response as with the previous attacks on American soil was shock and outrage. Americans had the notion that government agencies could have prevented the hijackings and saved the thousands of lives that were lost that day. The attacks heightened American security and increased threat levels to this day. The events that occurred on 9/11 had an overwhelming effect on Americans everywhere. The publics' level of awareness for civil service employees and service members increased to a level of respect and admiration.

Hate crimes increased in the United States as a direct result of the attacks. Middle Easterners and Muslims living in the U.S. were targets. Crimes included verbal abuse, attacks on mosques, as well as attacks on people. One murder can be attributed to hate crimes because of this attack.

U.S. Military and Government Reaction

Immediately following the attacks, President Bush declared a war on terrorism. The President's goals were to capture Osama bin Laden, destroy al-Qaeda, and prevent future

terrorist networks from forming. These goals would be accomplished by means including economic and military sanctions against states perceived as harboring terrorists and increasing global surveillance and intelligence sharing. Saddam Hussein was a suspected of playing a role in the attack, but suspicions remain unfounded. His possible role led to the invasion of Iraq in 2003. The Global War on Terrorism included the overthrow of the Taliban rule in Afghanistan. The U.S. increased its military readiness. The other nations increasing their readiness were the Philippines and Indonesia. These countries also have internal conflicts with Islamist terrorism.

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