

Nine/eleven attacks left americans fearing for their security and their liberties

RAFAEL LORENTE

THE terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, did more than destroy buildings and kill innocent people. They shattered the nation's sense of security.

Not since the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941 had Americans felt so vulnerable at home. The terrorists who crashed airplanes into the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and a Pennsylvania field lived among us and their leaders promised more attacks on American soil.

The White House and Congress promptly created a new Department of Homeland Security, revamped screening at airports and beefed up the surveillance powers of the FBI by passing the controversial USA Patriot Act, which expanded law enforcement's powers. Authorities also began looking at ways to safeguard nuclear plants, seaports and other vulnerable points.

At every level of society, from the schoolhouse door to the courthouse steps, Americans today must walk around barricades and through metal detectors. Cameras, prevalent before Sept. 11, are multiplying.

The net result, Bush administration officials say, is that Americans are more secure than before Sept. 11. But the safeguards are not foolproof, and no one thinks another terrorist attack is out of the question. At the same time, civil libertarians say gains made in the past two years have come at a significant cost to personal freedom and civil liberties.

To many civil libertarians, the culture of security spawned by the terrorist attacks has made us less free. They say the Bush administration used fear of terrorism to justify an invasion of privacy and an erosion of freedom. They point to the arrests of hundreds of New York-

area non-citizens and individuals of Arab descent immediately after the Sept. 11 attacks, many of them undocumented immigrants later set free without being charged, as one example of security trumping liberty.

"We are concerned that we have given up too much in the name of security," said Ruth Gottlieb, chapter chairwoman of the Palm Beach County American Civil Liberties Union.

Bush administration officials say it is only doing what government is supposed to do first and foremost -- protect its citizens.

"The first responsibility of government is to provide the security that preserves the lives and liberty of the people," Attorney General John Ashcroft said in a speech at the American Enterprise Institute last month.

Safety vs. Liberty

The war on terrorism, while far from over, is working, Ashcroft said. At least 255 criminal charges have been brought in terrorism cases since Sept. 11, and 132 people have been convicted or pleaded guilty for various terrorism-related charges. Thousands of terrorists have been arrested or killed around the world.

In addition, tighter airport security has netted 2.3 million knives, 49,331 box cutters and 1,437 firearms since the inception of the Transportation Security Administration in February 2002. The FBI, CIA and other law enforcement and intelligence agencies say they are doing a better job of cooperating and sharing information, addressing one of the shortcomings that existed before Sept. 11, 2001.

"Most important, no major terror attack has occurred on American soil since Sept. 11," Ashcroft said this summer in testimony to the House Judiciary Committee.

At the local level, police depart-

ments across the country have assigned officers to counterterrorism and intelligence, and local governments have begun working to secure vulnerable targets in their jurisdictions, such as Port Everglades in Broward County.

"In a sense I feel for the Bush administration because people want it both ways," said Robert Jarvis, a law professor at Nova Southeastern University. "On the one hand, they want to be safe, but on the other hand they don't want to

give up civil liberties."

But critics say liberty is losing out

"We are in a situation now where our fear of the terrorist threat has driven us to create the intelli-



The event that changed the world

gence apparatus of a police state," said Christopher Pyle, a professor of politics at Mount Holyoke College and a former Army Intelligence officer.

Pyle, who in the 1970s worked for Sen. Frank Church's Select Committee on Intelligence, has argued that that modern computer technology, in the hands of an overzealous Department of Justice with little congressional oversight, could be a dangerous new weapon. Authorities, newly inspired to target suspected terrorists, might feel emboldened to search dozens of databases with information about an individual's personal, political and financial information. Credit card accounts, travel records and Internet usage patterns all could be tracked to gather intelligence in the name of national security.

For example, a piece of unverified information implying that an individual might have ties to terrorism could easily find its way from a foreign intelligence agency into the databases of American law enforcement officials. True or not, verified or unverified, that information could wind up tarring an innocent person when he applied for a job or was wrongly accused of a crime, Pyle said.

Groups like the ACLU have been joined by members of Congress from both parties who also are concerned with an erosion of civil liberties. Much of the ire has been aimed at the Patriot Act.

The act, passed just six weeks after the Sept. 11 attacks, made a number of changes to existing laws to give terrorism investigators the same tools that criminal prosecutors already had. It expanded surveillance authority by allowing investigators to get roving wiretaps on all

the phones used by a suspect, not just on one of their lines, with a judge's approval.

The act also allows the FBI to secretly inspect library and bookstore records to see what a person is reading without the target of the investigation ever finding out. And it makes it easier for law enforcement to do so-called sneak-and-peek searches, where police conduct a search after getting a search warrant but delay notifying the potential suspect that a search has been conducted.

Defenders of the act say it mostly builds on previous laws and includes enough checks and balances to prevent abuses.

"[Civil libertarians] are making blanket allegations without ever presenting real or persuasive examples of the civil liberties that are being violated," said Heather MacDonald, a fellow at the Manhattan Institute and the author of the book, "Are Cops Racist?"

There is no privacy right to things like library book lists, she said, because patrons give away that information to the library.

But the ACLU says the act allows the FBI to spy on ordinary Americans without reasonable grounds to believe they are engaged in criminal or terrorist activity. The ACLU still has some suits pending over parts of the act.

Rejecting the Patriot Act

Alaska, Hawaii, Vermont and almost 160 local governments have passed resolutions opposing parts of the Patriot Act. The Broward County Commission in May passed a resolution urging Congress to monitor use of the Patriot Act and asking federal law enforcement agencies to disclose the names of detainees suspected of terrorism.

Ashcroft, who has become a lightning rod for criticism about civil liberties, toured the country defending the Patriot Act and saying the Justice Department needs more power. A sequel to the Patriot Act, which could include expanded powers to hold suspects and deny them bail, may be shelved because of increased criticism of the way the department has carried out the first Patriot Act.

Concerns about erosion of basic liberties are growing. The Senate is expected to consider a bill that would prevent sneak-and-peek searches. The House has passed companion legislation.

And the Patriot Act is not the only target of civil libertarians.

First, it was Operation TIPS, a Department of Justice plan that was never carried out that would have encouraged mail carriers, utility workers, truck drivers and others to report suspicious behavior. Public outcry and complaints from members of Congress killed it.

Earlier this year Congress also put the clamps on the Defense Department's Terrorist Information Awareness program, which called for mining computer databases to collect medical, financial and other records to find potential terrorists.

And critics from all corners are railing about CAPPs II, a computerized system being developed by the Transportation Security Administration that would mine databases in search of terrorist ties among airline passengers.

"I think we have certainly made ourselves less free," said Nova's Jarvis. "The question that remains is whether we've made ourselves more safe."

Courtesy: Sun-Sentinel, Washington

Is US winning its war on terror? A BBC analysis

FRANK GARDNER

MUCH has happened in the past 12 months. Some of al-Qaeda's leading lights have been caught and interrogated. Saddam Hussein is no longer in power in Baghdad. Numerous plots and attacks have been thwarted. And yet, depressingly, the so-called war on terror is still with us.

The suicide bombings have not stopped, nor has the stream of anti-western invective from websites and audio broadcasts from those sympathetic to al-Qaeda. So who is winning and who is losing the war?

If we were to look at this purely in terms of military gains the answer would be obvious. The US has swiftly toppled two governments it considered to be rogue regimes - first in Afghanistan, then in Iraq. The Pentagon's supremacy on the battlefield is unrivalled and unstoppable. Its troops are holding down a sort of peace in both countries.

But waging a war on terror is a complex business. In fact many in Britain are convinced that the regime of Saddam Hussein, brutal as it was, had little to do with terrorism per se.

The most dangerous enemy for

the US in particular, and for the West and its allies in general, remains the secretive terror networks inspired by - but not necessarily linked to - al-Qaeda. So what progress is being made by those trying to stop them?

Since it was President Bush who declared the war on terror two years ago, let us look at the gains and losses from the perspective of his administration.

The gains

Key arrests: There have, unquestionably, been some major arrests in recent months. Last year the FBI seized al-Qaeda operations chief Abu Zubaydah in Pakistan.

Although at first he was able to mislead his captors with false trails, his interrogation has eventually helped the US catch more members of the network.

In September 2002 Pakistani police seized the self-confessed 11 September plotter Ramzi Binalshibh in Karachi. Six months later they caught Khalid Sheikh Muhammed, arguably the most important operational member of the network now in custody.

In August Thai police working with the CIA captured Riduan Isamuddin - also known as Hambali - believed to be the key link between

al-Qaeda and its south-east Asian affiliate, Jemaah Islamiyah.

There have also been a number of important arrests in Saudi Arabia, while Iran is believed to be holding Sulaiman Abu Ghaith, once the main spokesman for Al-Qaeda who used to appear in videos sitting beside Osama Bin Laden in Afghanistan.

On 24 July, 2003, US Vice-President Dick Cheney gave this upbeat assessment: "One by one, in every corner of the world, we will hunt the terrorists down and destroy them."

But while these arrests have all dealt blows to al-Qaeda and its affiliates, other recruits will be quick to replace them and in time they will develop similar skills.

Deaths: The most spectacular death of any al-Qaeda member since 11 September was the targeted assassination in Yemen in November 2002 of Qaed Senyan al-Harhi.

With permission from the Yemeni authorities, the CIA launched an unmanned Predator drone aircraft from Djibouti, identified a car carrying the suspect and five others, then fired a Hellfire missile at it, killing all the occupants.

Al-Harhi had been on the run for years and was believed to be planning attacks on western interests in the region, possibly shipping. But the way he was killed was so controversial that the CIA have not repeated it outside Afghanistan.

In Saudi Arabia the security forces have been fighting gun battles on an almost weekly basis with well-armed Islamist militants. In one such battle in July they cornered a cell leader called Turki Nasser al-Dandani in a remote mosque in the north.

To the dismay of local villagers, the police poured machine-gun fire into the mosque and he died along with other fugitives.

But the Saudi authorities also bungled an attempt to capture alive one of the most wanted al-Qaeda suspects. Mohammed al-Ayeyeri was killed in a gun battle north of Riyadh in May.

At a stroke, the Saudis - and the CIA - lost the chance to interrogate the man believed to be the mastermind behind one of al-Qaeda's websites. The contacts he held in his head would undoubtedly have led to many arrests.

International co-operation: After 11 September most countries were quick to sign up in principle to President Bush's war on terror. But in practice, for many of them the co-operation was half-hearted until they themselves were hit.

Since the Bali bombing of October 2002 Indonesia has opened up its resources to the FBI and Australian investigators, pursuing a more pro-active and often unpopular stance towards extremists.

Similarly, it took the Riyadh bombings of 12 May 2003 for the Saudis to finally take seriously the security problem they had on their hands. Since then they have gone to great lengths to try to wrap up the terror networks that have secretly flourished in their midst.

The Saudis have also begun trying to tackle the problem at grass-

roots level, removing hundreds of anti-western imams from their mosques and sending them to Riyadh for retraining - i.e. instruction in how not to incite attacks on westerners.

There is, however, a flip side to this co-operation. Since US policies in the Middle East are deeply unpopular with many Arabs, any government seen cracking down on Islamist militants at Washington's behest risks upsetting the wider population.

In Saudi Arabia, where most people strongly condemn the Riyadh bombings, there is also a backlash of resentment at all the extra security measures such as impromptu checkpoints.

Increased preparedness: In Britain and America there is no such backlash. Both governments have warned that a major attempted attack by al-Qaeda-linked terrorists is inevitable; they have been preparing accordingly and few are complaining.

In the US the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has given \$100m to state and local governments to update their emergency hazard contingency plans.

Exercises have been held across the US, training people how to deal with deliberate releases of pneumonic plague, radiological and other biological weapons.

In Britain the placing of concrete crash barriers around the Palaces of Westminster is only the tip of the counter-terrorist iceberg. Millions of pounds have been earmarked for mass decontamination and monitoring equipment.

Extra funding has been given to the Metropolitan Police's counter-terrorism unit and hundreds of mobile decontamination units have been ordered.

In terms of intelligence gathering the most significant development in Britain has been the establishment in London of JTAC, the Joint Terrorism Assessment Centre.

Employing dozens of specialists from several agencies, this secretive unit continually monitors the threat from terrorism to Britain's interests. Its recent assessment of the security risk in Saudi Arabia resulted in the suspension of British Airways flights to both Riyadh and Jeddah.

Silencing al-Qaeda: Although this will never be 100% effective, it is now far harder for al-Qaeda's remnant leadership to communicate effectively with the rest of the world.

Back in 2001 the videotapes came thick and fast, featuring Osama Bin Laden, his number two Ayman al-Zawahri, and others, all calmly putting their views forward to a rapt audience on satellite TV.

No longer. The messages that leak out from al-Qaeda and its affiliates these days tend to be audio broadcasts on the internet or faxed messages sent to news networks. It is often hard to establish their authenticity.

Wannabe groups have sprung up, sometimes trying to take the credit for operations they did not carry out.

bomb killed 202 people. Then came the attack on the hotel near Mombasa in November 2002. Then a lull, then the triple bombings in Riyadh in May 2003, killing more than 30 people.

Then there was Casablanca, Jakarta and a whole string of major bombings in Iraq that may or may not be connected to Islamist suicide bombers sympathetic to al-Qaeda.

US intelligence analysts are convinced that the US remains the prime target and that Bin Laden's supporters have not given up their quest to carry out a truly devastating and humiliating attack on either the US or Britain.

Diversification: Before the Afghan campaign of 2001, al-Qaeda was relatively easy to find. It had a logistical and command headquarters in Afghanistan.

Now that it has been scattered across the world it has been likened to a hornet's nest hit with a stick. The hornets are everywhere and harder to catch.

In order to survive, al-Qaeda has successfully mutated. It is no longer a structured organisation with different divisions for financing, recruitment and operations.

Instead it has transferred its

shoot down an airliner as it came in to land.

There have also been a number of SAM attacks on aircraft in Chechnya and Iraq.

The threat of a chemical/biological attack on a western civilian population was brought closer in January 2003 with the discovery of the lethal toxin ricin at a north London flat.

While in this case nobody has been convicted, it is known that al-Qaeda conducted experiments in Afghanistan using poisonous chemicals, practising on live animals.

Amongst other new methods of operation being employed by al-Qaeda supporters is the recruitment of new converts from non-Arab ethnic groups for future operations. This is something which is deeply troubling the FBI and other investigators.

Hearts and minds: The importance of this clichéd expression cannot be underestimated. Victories on the battlefield or in the interrogation rooms are meaningless if terror networks can continue to recruit from a large wellspring of discontented youth.

And that is exactly what is happening. The wave of horror and



Riyadh blast, May 2003

to change their policies only confirm that view.

Against this backdrop it is hardly surprising that the US - and its close ally Britain - are losing the battle for Arab and Muslim hearts and minds.

Frank Gardner is BBC security correspondent

Nine/eleven and aftermath

UMMEE SAILA

AFTER the Second World War (1941-1945), September 11 (2001) Twin Tower destruction in New York was the most event which caused instability in the whole world in its aftermath. This has been visible not only in the Middle East, but also in the political and economic spheres of the world at large. The number of people died in Twin Tower attack was 2792. But we do not know how many Afghans, Iraqis, American-British soldiers died in the retaliatory actions taken by the United States. We do not know how much the number will increase in the prolonging aftermath of 9/11.

Twenty-six days after 11th September American and British forces launched their attack on Afghanistan to dislodge Taliban and catch Osama-bin-Laden. They spent 4.5 billion dollars on bombing of Afghanistan. Quite a few thousand civilians died in this attack. Then Iraq was accused of possessing WMD (Weapon of Mass Destruction). So US and British coalition attacked Iraq on 20th March, 2003. The US government spent around \$12 billion to occupy Iraq. Again thousands of civilians died in this attack. From the day US President George Bush declared end of war with Iraq, one American soldier is dying on average every day under the rage of Iraqi people. The recent explosion at United Nations headquarters in Baghdad, the destruction of oil pipelines in Iraq, Bali and Jakarta bombing in Indonesia -- all shows the price world is paying for 9/11.

Love begets love; violence begets hatred; retaliation begets violence. As the superpower is possessing 50 per cent wealth of the world and controlling global politics and economy, any irresponsible decision on its part would cause turmoil in the whole world. If the superpower goes back to the concept of imperialism of 17th century even by implication, all other countries who are comparatively powerful will start occupying weaker countries on this or that pretext. The carefully reared and maintained concepts such as 'sovereignty', 'independence' will have no value. United Nations will go into oblivion like League of Nations.

We have to remember the proverb "history repeats itself". Once dominating Roman Empire was destroyed because of corruption of their senators. Roman and Greek history tells us how the great powers' wrong decisions destroyed civilizations. The collapse of Twin Tower which was the symbol of American capitalism, has started a new episode in the history of world politics.

US is spending \$1 billion a week for its soldiers in Iraq. But it offered only \$65 million for providing the basic necessities to the 23 million people of Iraq. It is very surprising to know that only 10 per cent of US military expenditure can ensure decent life for the people all over the world. So, we hope developed countries of the world will not only be mindful of the rights of their own people only. They should remember that any war causes human rights violation to thousands of people.

Yes, no sensible person can support the heinous terrorist attack of 9/11. The whole world was shocked. Directly or indirectly the whole world was effected. All of us could have taken action unitedly under the umbrella of United Nations. The actual responsible persons could be punished under the law of International Court of Justice. But unilateral action by the United States and its few allies created sort of instability across the world. Foreign trade, foreign direct investment hampered and international migration increased. So we will expect more rational and responsible action henceforth from the superpower.

WTC

KAHIRUL ANAM

Disbelief like the inhale of a Python
Pulls me near to nearer.
Devine octopus blindfolds
Eyes of the mind.

Bible, Torah, Quran
Heavenly if, why hatred so much?
Swear on Jehovah,
Secret killing is not permitted
By the books from the heaven.

Jesus said
"Will be back to relieve pain"
Where is he? And Muhammad, who preached peace?

Seen Angels?
Emit divine ray from their eyes
Search for broken bodies
In fire and destruction, embrace death,
They can't be human.

In WTC nobody died Jewish
None as Christian, Hindu or Buddhist
None as Muslim,
The icy hand of death
Put its medusa touch
Only on human.

The smiling Devil
Sew the hemlock seed
In the palpitating warmth.

The suicide squad
Must have taken the name of their God
So did everyone before death.
Some said, "God saved me, thank God"
And others,
O Lord why punish?

The joys of success
Pains of failure
Sadness of deprivation
Frustration and powerlessness
All we put on the shoulder of God.

Thank God, there is a God.