

9/11 ANNIVERSARY

How safe is the world after three years?

A.H. JAFFOR ULLAH

ODAY (September 11) the world remembers the deaths and destructions brought on by 19 terrorists from Saudi Arabia and other parts of Middle East to America. Osama bin Laden, the renegade Arab jihadist offered his famous fatwa in late 1990s to declare a war on America. He reasoned that America's policy had harmed the Muslims all over the globe. He blamed America for 1991 First Gulf War in which the Muslim nation of Iraq was humiliated. Osama also lambasted the Saudi monarch for bringing American soldiers to the Muslim holy land. Osama is a man of word; he kept his promise. Taking advantage of political dissension in Saudi Arabia, his organisation al-Qaeda was able to recruit a majority of the would-be plane hijackers from Saudi Arabia. The idea was to drive a wedge between America and the Saudi Royal family. That part of the equation worked rather well as predicted.

Mr. Michael Moore, the American filmmaker, made a brilliant documentary on 9-11 calling it *Fahrenheit 9/11*. In that documentary, we saw how cozy the Bush family was with some wealthy Saudis. In fact, Saudi royal family had seemingly become a stooge in the hands of Americans. Therefore, by recruiting a bulk of the terrorists from Saudi Arabia, Osama bin Laden was able to break that cozy relationship America have had with the House of Saud and some very influential Saudi family such as bin Laden's.

Mr. Bush and his faithful are now telling the Americans that Osama's brainchild, al-Qaeda, was decimated by Pentagon's policy and by two successive wars. This assertion by the Republican Party faithful is supposed to garner votes for Mr. Bush so that he could hold onto power for four more years. Mr. Bush's sidekick, vice president Dick Cheney, had recently addressed a political rally in the battleground state of Iowa in which he said that if they [American voters] elect Sen. Kerry and Edwards, then the terrorists might strike America again. In other words, the get-tough policy of Mr.

Bush won't allow al-Qaeda to strike America again. Bush and his team thus were selling fear to gain the confidence of American voters. This of course had engendered an intense debate in America.

No sooner the debate over selling fear by Bush and his running mate could subside, we read (September 9, 2004) in Reuters' report that al-Qaeda's second man in command had appeared in a new video tape, which was shown by Al Jazeera TV channel. Mr. Andrew Hammond of Reuters sent a dispatch from Dubai in which he wrote, "Ayman al-Zawahri, the number two figure in al Qaeda, appeared in a new videotape aired on Al Jazeera on Thursday (September 9, 2004), ridiculing U.S. forces which he said were hiding in their trenches in Afghanistan."

Drawing to the fact that Taliban forces are active again in some



pockets as election nears in Afghanistan to elect a president, the video taped message serves as a chilling reminder that Al-Qaeda and their blood brothers, Talibans, are down but not out. In the presidential election President Hamid Karzai is the leading candidate but the Talibans wanted very badly to disrupt the election.

The second most powerful man of al-Qaeda, Ayman Al Zawahri, spoke to camera for few minutes using his usual attire but this time he sported a machine gun by his side. Zawahri said, "East and south Afghanistan have become an open arena for the Mujahideen (jihad fighters). The enemy are limited to their capitals. The Americans are hiding in their trenches and refuse to come out to face the Mujahideen, as the Mujahideen shell them, fire on them and cut roads off around them."

All of a sudden, al-Qaeda wanted to send a strong message to the world. First, it wished to disrupt the up coming election.

Second, they feel that since America and many other Western nations would stage some programmes to remember the deaths and destructions caused by 9-11 attack, it will be a good time to send a videotaped message. In the taped message, Al Zawahri was seen alone. A year ago in another videotaped message the world saw both Osama and Zawahri side-by-side. We learned recently that the Pakistani military with assistance from the U.S. military have been trying to capture Osama bin Laden in NWFP region of Pakistan that borders with Afghanistan. On the face of it, the Talibans have regrouped in Pashtun-speaking areas inside Afghanistan, mostly in the East and South where they are harassing both Karzai's and America's troops. To poke fun at their adversaries, Al Zawahri said, "In Kabul, the Americans and peacekeeping forces are hiding from the shells of the Mujahideen and expect martyrdom (suicide) attacks at every moment."

The Talibans were soundly defeated in the late December 2001, we all thought that Afghan people's dark days are over. But how wrong we were! Mr. Bush had other ideas in his head. After 15 months, Mr. Bush declared his unilateral war against Iraq by alienating America's trusted allies in Europe. The democratisation and rebuilding of Afghanistan were put into the proverbial back burner. The Talibans saw a golden opportunity as American soldiers were fighting to quell down insurrections that erupted in both the Sunni Triangle and in Najaf in Southern Iraq where Shiites live in far greater number. On June 30, 2004, American occupation had ended officially but the insurgency continued unabated. So far, about 1000 American soldiers have died in the conflict. American public will take a note of this casualty figure as they decide which candidate they should pick in the presidential election.

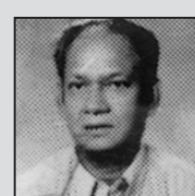
The third year anniversary of 9-11 terrorist attack raises all the above questions and in all likelihood the challenger, Senator Kerry and Senator Edwards will ask the Americans the same questions as they give stump speech in tossup states. However, I think the al-Qaeda leader, Dr. Ayman Al Zawahri, stole the show when his organisation released a new-videotaped message, which Al Jazeera TV channel "religiously" as they have done in the past. The al-Qaeda is not a dummy organisation. They are an opportunistic entity. Knowing the importance of September 11, they decided to release their videotaped message preemptively to mar the somberness of the day.

On the third anniversary of 9-11 terrorist attack -- that ushered in a new world order -- I fervently hope that the elected leaders of the free world would address the cause that led to the emergence of Muslim fundamentalists as a power who were bent on making our world a bit awry. Let us fervently hope that there won't be any repetition of such vile act. Humankind can ill afford such dastardly act. Rationality should prevail over madness. The world could use some prudent politicians who would not use rash judgment. The world had experienced two nasty wars spawned by 9-11 terror attack. Therefore, let us hope that there won't be a repeat performance of 9-11 in our lifetime.

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BESLAN

Incredible horror and pain



ARSHAD-UZ-ZAMAN

THE HORIZON THIS WEEK

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union a decade and a half ago, Russia has been busy trying to recover from those traumatic events and bring closer within her orbit the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). For the Chechens to expect that Russia will relax her grip is moonshine. In fact thanks to the events of Beslan the chances are that Russia will tighten her grip.

Russian military surrounded the school and waited. Why the terrorists let the situation to develop into a full blown tragedy, will never be known since virtually all the terrorists are dead or some fled. In the meantime sensing the Russian military about to strike, the terrorists panicked and unleashed their deadly weapons. This led to the death of at least 350 and the toll is daily mounting. More than a hundred remain unaccounted for. The scene in Beslan is heartbreaking and the whole of Russia was in official mourning for two days.

Because of the barbarous nature of hostage taking of very small children, some of them escaping naked, without food or water for nearly three days. No organisation has claimed responsibility.



Relatives cry during the first funerals for the hundreds killed in the Russian hostage siege in Beslan.

confusion, what vaguely emerged was that the terrorists wanted independence for Chechnya. Now it is well known that Russia has on her hands a war in Chechnya almost since the collapse of the Soviet Union in the beginning of the nineties. The Russian Federation after the loss of sizeable territory in the shape of nearly ten states in the south and the east had to take a stand and they chose Chechnya. A bloody battle has been raging for more than a decade.

The ghastly events in Beslan are the most cruel and indefensible of the string of episodes. For very little children were held hostage and the negotiations naturally could not make any headway. Meanwhile the

ability for this act. Of the hostage takers it has been prominently mentioned that nearly ten of them were Arabs. Since it is very unlikely that they are Arab Christians, Islam is sure to come in for bashing. In any case thanks to the silent support of US President George W Bush, Israeli Premier Ariel Sharon has a free hand for raining death and destruction on unarmed Palestinians and he will only be encouraged to follow this policy of repression.

The events of Beslan have done incalculable harm to the Chechens, for whom this hostage taking is supposed to have been mounted. Those involved in this operation should have the simple common

sense that it is not possible to bring to its knees any state and certainly not a state of the size and power of Russia. Indeed hostage taking and indiscriminate murder of often very poor civilians seem to have become the order of the day. We witness that in Iraq daily, poor truck drivers are brought before TV cameras and killed without a second thought. Thanks to the world wide alert mounted by France for her two journalists that they may yet be saved! The French journalists have to ensure that school going children are allowed to wear head scarves, banned by the government of President Jacques Chirac! In Turkey there is a similar problem of wearing scarves in educational institutions! In short the world has gone topsy turvy since President Bush inflicted the war in Iraq. It was localised in the Palestine region and now there is a tendency of its spreading further.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union a decade and a half ago, she has been busy trying to recover from those traumatic events and bring closer within her orbit the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). For the Chechens to expect that Russia will relax her grip is moonshine. In fact thanks to the events of Beslan the chances are that Russia will tighten her grip on the Chechens and other tiny minorities that border her vast land. The authorities in Russia will no doubt draw appropriate lessons from the horrific events of Beslan and close the gaps in her security apparatus. Russia will no doubt pay heed to the legitimate aspirations of the people of Chechnya like other small minorities.

From the events of September 11, has the greatest power the USA drawn the lesson that pandering to the endless demands of Israel drives the world inevitably to catastrophe. Sanity demands that the US rather than chasing the ghost of terrorism throughout the world should find a solution to the Palestine problem. This was what courageous President Bill Clinton had tried and it must be tried again.

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