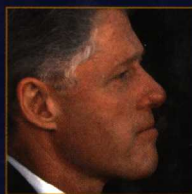
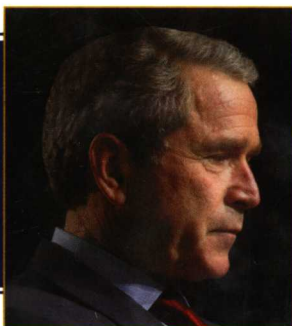


Against All Enemies

Inside
America's War
on Terror



Richard A. Clarke

AGAINST ALL ENEMIES



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FREE PRESS

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TO THOSE WHO WERE MURDERED ON
SEPTEMBER 11, 2001, INCLUDING THOSE WHO
TRIED TO STOP IT, AMONG THEM JOHN O'NEILL AND THE
EXTRAORDINARILY BRAVE PASSENGERS ON UNITED FLIGHT 93;
AND TO ALL THOSE THEY LEFT BEHIND.

PREFACE

FROM INSIDE THE WHITE HOUSE, the State Department, and the Pentagon for thirty years, I disdained those who departed government and quickly rushed out to write about it. It seemed somehow inappropriate to expose, as Bismarck put it, "the making of sausage." Yet I became aware after my departure from federal service that much that I thought was well known was actually obscure to many who wanted to know.

I was frequently asked "exactly how did things work on 9/11, what happened?" In looking at the available material, I found that there was no good source, no retelling of that day which history will long mark as a pivot point. Then, as I began to think about teaching graduate students at Georgetown and Harvard, I realized that there was no single inside account of the flow of recent history that had brought us to September 11, 2001, and the events that followed from it.

As the events of 2003 played out in Iraq and elsewhere, I grew increasingly concerned that too many of my fellow citizens were being misled. The vast majority of Americans believed, because the Bush administration had implied it, that Saddam Hussein had something to do with the al Qaeda attacks on America. Many thought that the Bush administration was doing a good job of fighting terrorism when, actually, the administration had squandered the opportunity to eliminate al Qaeda and instead strengthened our enemies by going off on a completely unnecessary tangent, the invasion of Iraq. A new al Qaeda has emerged and is growing stronger, in part because of our own actions and inactions. It is in many ways a tougher opponent than the original threat we faced before September 11 and we are not doing what is necessary to make America safer from that threat.

This is the story, from my perspective, of how al Qaeda developed and attacked the United States on September 11. It is a story of the

CIA and FBI, who came late to realize that there was a threat to the United States and who were unable to stop it even after they agreed that the threat was real and significant. It is also the story of four presidents:

- Ronald Reagan, who did not retaliate for the murder of 278 United States Marines in Beirut and who violated his own terrorism policy by trading arms for hostages in what came to be called the Iran-Contra scandal;
- George H. W. Bush, who did not retaliate for the Libyan murder of 259 passengers on Pan Am 103; who did not have an official counterterrorism policy; and who left Saddam Hussein in place, requiring the United States to leave a large military presence in Saudi Arabia;
- Bill Clinton, who identified terrorism as the major post-Cold War threat and acted to improve our counterterrorism capabilities; who (little known to the public) quelled anti-American terrorism by Iraq and Iran and defeated an al Qaeda attempt to dominate Bosnia; but who, weakened by continued political attack, could not get the CIA, the Pentagon, and FBI to act sufficiently to deal with the threat;
- George W. Bush, who failed to act prior to September 11 on the threat from al Qaeda despite repeated warnings and then harvested a political windfall for taking obvious yet insufficient steps after the attacks; and who launched an unnecessary and costly war in Iraq that strengthened the fundamentalist, radical Islamic terrorist movement worldwide.

This is, unfortunately, also the story of how America was unable to develop a consensus that the threat was significant and was unable to do all that was necessary to deal with a new threat until that threat actually killed thousands of Americans.

Even worse, it is the story of how even after the attacks, America did not eliminate the al Qaeda movement, which morphed into a distributed and elusive threat, how instead we launched the counter-productive Iraq fiasco; how the Bush administration politicized counter-

terrorism as a way of insuring electoral victories; how critical homeland security vulnerabilities remain; and how little is being done to address the ideological challenge from terrorists distorting Islam into a new ideology of hate.

Chance had placed me inside key parts of the U.S. government throughout a period when an era was ending and another was born. The Cold War that had begun before my birth was ending as I turned forty. As the new era began I started what turned into an unprecedented decade of continuous service at the White House, working for the last three presidents.

As the events of 2003 unfolded, I began to feel an obligation to write what I knew for my fellow citizens and for those who may want to examine this period in the future. This book is the fulfillment of that obligation. It is, however, flawed. It is a first-person account, not an academic history. The book, therefore, tells what one participant saw, thought, and believed from one perspective. Others who were involved in some of these events will, no doubt, recall them differently. I do not say they are wrong, only that this account is what my memory reveals to me. I want to apologize in advance to the reader for the frequent use of the first-person singular and the egocentric nature of the story, but it was difficult to avoid those features and still do a first-person, participant's account.

The account is also necessarily incomplete. Many events and key participants are not mentioned, others who deserve rich description are only briefly introduced. Great issues such as the need to reform the intelligence community, secure cyberspace, or balance liberty and security are not fully analyzed. There will be other places for a more analytical reflection on those and other related issues of technical detail and policy import. Much that is still classified as secret by the U.S. government is omitted in this book. I have tried, wherever possible, to respect the confidences and privacy of those about whom I write. Nonetheless, there are some conversations that must be recalled because the citizenry and history have a justifiable need to know.

I recognize there is a great risk in writing a book such as this that many friends and former associates who disagree with me will be offended. The Bush White House leadership in particular have a reputa-

tion for taking great offense at criticism by former associates, considering it a violation of loyalty. They are also reportedly adept at revenge, as my friend Joe Wilson discovered and as former Secretary of the Treasury Paul O'Neill now knows. Nonetheless, friends should be able to disagree and, for me, loyalty to the citizens of the United States must take precedence over loyalty to any political machine.

Some will say this account is a justification or apology, a defense of some and an attack on others. It is meant to be factual, not polemical. In a decade of managing national security, many made mistakes, definitely including me. Many important steps were also taken in that decade as the result of the selfless sacrifice of thousands of those who serve the superpower and try daily to keep it on the path of principle and progress. I have tried to be fair in recounting what I know of both the mistakes and the service. I leave bottom-line assessments of blame and credit to the reader, with a caution that accurate assignments of responsibility are not easily done.

The close reader will note that many names recur throughout the book over a period of not just a decade, but more than two decades. That fact reflects the often unnoticed phenomenon that during the last five presidencies, many of the behind-the-scenes national security midlevel managers have been constant, people such as Charlie Allen, Randy Beers, Wendy Chamberlin, Michael Sheehan, Robert Gelbard, Elizabeth Verville, Steven Simon, Lisa Gordon-Hagerty, and Roger Cressey. When things worked, it was because they were listened to and allowed to implement their sound advice. Working closely with them were an even less noticed cadre of administrative assistants, such as the stalwart Beverly Roundtree, who has kept me in line and on time for the last fifteen years of our twenty-five-year association and friendship.

No one has a thirty-year run in national security in Washington, including ten years in the White House, without a great deal of help and support. In my case that help has come from Republicans, Democrats, and independents, from Members of Congress, journalists, partners in foreign governments, extraordinary colleagues, mentors and mentees, and a long list of very tolerant and long-suffering bosses. Since some will not want to be named, I will spare them all specific

mention here. They know who they are, and so do I. Many thanks. Thanks too to Bruce Nichols of Free Press and to Len Sherman, without whom I would not have been able to produce a readable book.

In the 1700s a small group of extraordinary Americans created the Constitution that governs this country. In it, they dictated an oath that the President of the United States should swear. Forty-three Americans have done so since. Scores of millions of Americans have sworn a very similar oath upon becoming citizens, or joining the armed forces, becoming FBI agents, CIA officers, or federal bureaucrats.

All of the above-mentioned groups have sworn to protect that very Constitution "against all enemies." In this era of threat and change, we must all renew our pledge to protect that Constitution against the foreign enemies that would inflict terrorism against our nation and its people. That mission should be our first calling, not unnecessary wars to test personal theories or expiate personal guilt or revenge. We must also defend the Constitution against those who would use the terrorist threat to assault the liberties the Constitution enshrines. Those liberties are under assault and, if there is another major, successful terrorist attack in this country there will be further assaults on our rights and civil liberties. Thus, it is essential that we prevent further attacks and that we protect the Constitution . . . against all enemies.



cials who gave the impression that they had never heard of al Qaeda; who focused incessantly on Iraq; who even advocated long-discredited conspiracy theories about Saddam's involvement in previous attacks on the United States.

Clarke was the nation's crisis manager on 9/11, running the Situation Room--a scene described here for the first time--and then watched in dismay at what followed. After ignoring existing plans to attack al Qaeda when he first took office, George Bush made disastrous decisions when he finally did pay attention. Coming from a man known as one of the hard-liners against terrorists, *Against All Enemies* is both a powerful history of our two-decades-long confrontation with terrorism and a searing indictment of the current administration.



RICHARD CLARKE

was appointed by President Clinton as the first National Coordinator for Security, Infrastructure Protection, and Counterterrorism in May 1998 and continued in that position under George

W. Bush. Until March 2003 he was a career member of the Senior Executive Service, having begun his federal service in 1973 in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, as an analyst on nuclear weapons and European security issues. In the Reagan administration, Mr. Clarke was the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Intelligence. In the first Bush administration, he was the Assistant Secretary of State for Politico-Military Affairs.

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Chapter 1

EVACUATE THE WHITE HOUSE

I RAN THROUGH THE WEST WING to the Vice President's office, oblivious to the stares and concern that brought. I had been at a conference in the Ronald Reagan Building three blocks away when Lisa Gordon-Hagerty called to say an aircraft had struck the World Trade Center: "Until we know what this is, Dick, we should assume the worst." Lisa had been in the center of crisis coordination many times in exercises and all too often in the real world.

"Right. Activate the CSG on secure video. I'll be there in less than five," I told her as I ran to my car. The CSG was the Counterterrorism Security Group, the leaders of each of the federal government's counterterrorism and security organizations. I had chaired it since 1992. It was on a five-minute tether during business hours, twenty minutes at all other times. I looked at the clock on the dashboard. It was 9:03 a.m., September 11, 2001.

As I drove up to the first White House gate Lisa called again: "The other tower was just hit." "Well, now we know who we're dealing with. I want the highest-level person in Washington from each agency on-screen now, especially FAA," the Federal Aviation Administration.

As I pulled the car up to the West Wing door, Paul Kurtz, one of the White House counterterrorism team, ran up to me. "We were in the Morning Staff Meeting when we heard. Condi told me to find you fast and broke up the meeting. She's with Cheney."

Bursting in on the Vice President and Condi—Condoleezza Rice, the President's National Security Advisor—alone in Cheney's office, I

caught my breath. Cheney was famously implacable, but I thought I saw a reflection of horror on his face. "What do you think?" he asked.

"It's an al Qaeda attack and they like simultaneous attacks. This may not be over."

"Okay, Dick," Condi said, "you're the crisis manager, what do you recommend?" She and I had discussed what we would do if and when another terrorist attack hit. In June I had given her a checklist of things to do after an attack, in part to underline my belief that something big was coming and that we needed to go on the offensive.

"We're putting together a secure teleconference to manage the crisis," I replied. "I'd like to get the highest-ranking official from each department." My mind was already racing, developing a new list of what had to be done and done now.

"Do it," the Vice President ordered.

"Secret Service wants us to go to the bomb shelter," Condi added.

I nodded. "I would and . . . I would evacuate the White House."

Cheney began to gather up his papers. In his outer office the normal Secret Service presence was two agents. As I left, I counted eight, ready to move to the PEOC, the Presidential Emergency Operations Center, a bunker in the East Wing.

Just off the main floor of the Situation Room on the ground level of the West Wing is a Secure Video Conferencing Center, a clone of the Situation Room conference room except for the bank of monitors in the far wall opposite the chairman's seat. Like the conference room the Video Center is small and paneled with dark wood. The presidential seal hangs on the wall over the chair at the head of the table.

On my way through the Operations Center of the Situation Room, Ralph Seigler, the longtime Situation Room deputy director, grabbed me. "We're on the line with NORAD, on an air threat conference call." That was a procedure instituted by the North American Aerospace Defense Command during the Cold War to alert the White House when Soviet bombers got too close to U.S. airspace.

"Where's POTUS? Who have we got with him?" I asked, as we moved quickly together through the center, using the White House staff jargon for the President.

"He's in a kindergarten in Florida. Deb's with him." Deb was

Navy Captain Deborah Lower, the director of the White House Situation Room. "We have a line open to her cell."

As I entered the Video Center, Lisa Gordon-Hagerty was taking the roll and I could see people rushing into studios around the city: Donald Rumsfeld at Defense and George Tenet at CIA. But at many of the sites the Principal was traveling. The Attorney General was in Milwaukee, so Larry Thompson, the Deputy, was at Justice. Rich Armitage, the number two at State, was filling in for Colin Powell, who was in Peru. Air Force four-star General Dick Myers was filling in for the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Hugh Shelton, who was over the Atlantic. Bob Mueller was at the FBI, but he had just started that job.

Each Principal was supported by his or her member of the CSG and behind them staffs could be seen frantically yelling on telephones and grabbing papers. Condi Rice walked in behind me with her Deputy, Steve Hadley. "Do you want to chair this as a Principals meeting?" I asked. Rice, as National Security Advisor, chaired the Principals Committee, which consisted of the Secretaries of State and Defense, the CIA Director, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, and often now the Vice President.

"No. You run it." I pushed aside the chair at the head of the table and stood there, Condi visibly by my side.

"Let's begin. Calmly. We will do this in crisis mode, which means keep your microphones off unless you're speaking. If you want to speak, wave at the camera. If it's something you don't want everyone to hear, call me on the red phone."

Rice would later be criticized in the press by unnamed participants of the meeting for "just standing around." From my obviously partial perspective, she had shown courage by standing back. She knew it looked odd, but she also had enough self-confidence to feel no need to be in the chair. She did not want to waste time. I thought back to the scene in this room when the Oklahoma City bombing took place. President Clinton had walked in and sat down, chairing the CSG video conference for a few minutes. While it showed high-level concern and we were glad to have him there, it would have slowed down our response if he had stayed.

"You're going to need some decisions quickly," Rice said off cam-

era. "I'm going to the PEOC to be with the Vice President. Tell us what you need."

"What I need is an open line to Cheney and you." I turned to my White House Fellow, Army Major Mike Fenzel. The highly competitive process that selected White House fellows had turned out some extraordinary people over the years, such as another army major named Colin Powell. "Mike," I said, "go with Condi to the PEOC and open a secure line to me. I'll relay the decisions we need to you."

Fenzel was used to pressure. As a lieutenant, he had driven his Bradley Fighting Vehicle down the runway of an Iraqi air base shooting up MiGs and taking return fire. As a captain, he had led a company of infantry into war-torn Liberia and faced down a mob outside the U.S. embassy. (Eighteen months after 9/11, Fenzel would be the first man to parachute out of his C-17 in a nighttime combat jump into Iraq.)

"Okay," I began. "Let's start with the facts. FAA, FAA, go." I fell in to using the style of communication on tactical radio so that those listening in the other studios around town could hear who was being called on over the din in their own rooms.

Jane Garvey, the administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration, was in the chair. "The two aircraft that went in were American flight 11, a 767, and United 175, also a 767. Hijacked."

"Jane, where's Norm?" I asked. They were frantically looking for Norman Mineta, the Secretary of Transportation, and, like me, a rare holdover from the Clinton administration. At first, FAA could not find him. "Well, Jane, can you order aircraft down? We're going to have to clear the airspace around Washington and New York."

"We may have to do a lot more than that, Dick. I already put a hold on all takeoffs and landings in New York and Washington, but we have reports of eleven aircraft off course or out of communications, maybe hijacked."

Lisa slowly whispered, "Oh shit." All conversation had stopped in the studios on the screens. Everyone was listening.

"Eleven," I repeated. "Okay, Jane, how long will it take to get all aircraft now aloft onto the ground somewhere?" My mind flashed back to 1995 when I asked FAA to ground all U.S. flights over the Pa-

cific because of a terrorist threat, causing chaos for days. It had taken hours then to find the Secretary of Transportation, Federico Peña.

"The air traffic manager," Jane went on, "says there are 4,400 birds up now. We can cancel all takeoffs quickly, but grounding them all that are already up . . . Nobody's ever done this before. Don't know how long it will take. By the way, it's Ben's first day on the job." Garvey was referring to Ben Sliney, the very new National Operations Manager at FAA.

"Jane, if you haven't found the Secretary yet, are you prepared to order a national ground stop and no fly zone?"

"Yes, but it will take a while." Shortly thereafter, Mineta called in from his car and I asked him to come directly to the Situation Room. He had two sons who were pilots for United. He did not know where they were that day. I suggested he join the Vice President.

Roger Cressey, my deputy and a marathoner, had run eight blocks from his doctor's office. Convincing the Uniformed Secret Service guards to let him back into the compound, Roger pressed through to the Situation Room. I was relieved to see him.

I turned to the Pentagon screen. "JCS, JCS. I assume NORAD has scrambled fighters and AWACS. How many? Where?"

"Not a pretty picture, Dick." Dick Myers, himself a fighter pilot, knew that the days when we had scores of fighters on strip alert had ended with the Cold War. "We are in the middle of Vigilant Warrior, a NORAD exercise, but . . . Otis has launched two birds toward New York. Langley is trying to get two up now. The AWACS are at Tinker and not on alert." Otis was an Air National Guard base on Cape Cod. Langley Air Force Base was outside Norfolk, Virginia. Tinker AFB, home to all of America's flying radar stations, was in Oklahoma.

"Okay, how long to CAP over D.C.?" Combat Air Patrol, CAP, was something we were used to placing over Iraq, not over our nation's capital.

"Fast as we can. Fifteen minutes?" Myers asked, looking at the generals and colonels around him. It was now 9:28.

I thought about the 1998 simultaneous attacks on the American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. There was the possibility now of

multiple simultaneous attacks in several countries. "State, State. DOD, DOD. We have to assume there will be simultaneous attacks on us overseas. We need to close the embassies. Move DOD bases to combat Threatcon."

The television screen in the upper left was running CNN on mute. Noticing the President coming on, Lisa turned on the volume and the crisis conference halted to listen. "... into the World Trade Center in an apparent terrorist attack on our country."

During the pause, I noticed that Brian Stafford, Director of the Secret Service, was now in the room. He pulled me aside. "We gotta get him out of there to someplace safe . . . and secret. I've stashed FLOTUS." FLOTUS was White House speak for Mrs. Bush, First Lady of the United States, now in a heavily guarded, unmarked building in Washington. Stafford had been President Clinton's bodyguard, led the presidential protection detail. Everyone knew that, despite the Elvis hairstyle, Stafford was solid and serious. He told presidents what to do, politely and in a soft Southern drawl, but in a way that left little room for discussion.

Franklin Miller, my colleague and Special Assistant to the President for Defense Affairs, joined Stafford. Frank squeezed my bicep. "Guess I'm working for you today. What can I do?" With him was a member of his staff, Marine Corps Colonel Tom Greenwood.

"Can you work with Brian," I told Miller. "Figure out where to move the President? He can't come back here till we know what the shit is happening." I knew that would not go down well with the Commander in Chief. "And Tom," I directed at Colonel Greenwood, "work with Roger—Cressey—on getting some CAP here—fast."

Stafford had another request. "When Air Force One takes off, can it have fighter escorts?"

"Sure, we can ask," Miller replied, "but you guys know that CAP, fighter escorts, they can't just shoot down planes inside the United States. We'll need an order." Miller had spent two decades working in the Pentagon and knew that the military would want clear instructions before they used force.

I picked up the open line to the PEOC. I got a dial tone. Someone