

-This column in the Wx Post four days after the 2001 terrorist bombing of the world's tallest buildings, the twin towers of the NY Trade Mart, and of the Pentagon, by means of hijacked commercial airliners, reminds me that I cannot remember a single major crisis of which the CIA warned the country in advance.

The country has more than enough ~~xxxx~~ neutr^en bombs to wipe the entire world out. It for years had been trying to get others to give their's up and to make no more while the U.S. is insisting it needs still more of those same bombs that are not to be used and with the size of the national debt, is actually manufacturing new ones-when it has this massive supply of the ^{ny} on hand.

All those bombs on hand, more on the way, much more than all the rest of the world has, we are trying to get all others destroyed, we insist on the right to make even more- and this can happen, with people killed in the thousands, and there was not a thing this country was in a position to do because the CIA (and the NSA) failed to do what is expected of them - as usual.

My beliefe^y fear- is that this will be misused to bring about- to make acceptable-further repressive changes in national policy, taking the country and its policies farthur from the Constitution and from the intent of the founding fathers.

I was reminded of how great those changes are when I sat and thought of this most awful terrorism and what could have been in part responsible for it and that it could happen. In major part it is the change in the media-all of it. The media whose importance to the nation and to the working of the system of government was intended by those great thinkers and the creators of this nation and of their intent to protect the media so it could function as intended. And then I was reminded that when I had the first book on the Kennedy assassination and the Warren Report, I could not get it published. I had more than a hundred rejections, without a single adverse editorial comment. When I published it myself it did not get a single review. And the press has changed but little on this but the worst kind of slop gets published so many the list supposedly is in the hundreds. No first amendment needed for that but the intent of the founding fathers, for real freedom and for the government to work as intended, the press must do as expected by those truly great political thinkers who founded the country.

9/15/01

Post

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2001 A27

Richard Cohen

Anatomy Of a Failure

It is the first obligation of the government of the United States to protect the people of the United States. It is fair to say that the government failed in that obligation. Terrorists struck in both New York and Washington, and while we must honor the dead and treat the wounded, we cannot forget that, in this respect at least, our government utterly failed us.

The United States spends about \$30 billion a year on intelligence, although the exact figure is secret. It has intelligence agencies galore. The best-known are the CIA and the National Security Agency. Others are maintained by the various armed services, not to mention the State Department, the FBI and the Secret Service. Yet, somehow, a largely successful terrorist operation was launched on America with a loss of life that was once inconceivable and remains, even after the event, unimaginable.

The air of Washington is thick with oaths of bipartisanship and how, Republican and Democrat, we are all in this together. And so we are. The intelligence failures that produced Tuesday's horrific consequences were themselves bipartisanly arrived at. It took the combined efforts of Democratic and Republican presidents, plus key members of Congress from both parties, to give this nation an intelligence apparatus that failed us so badly.

What's missing, key members of Congress told me, are the human assets that might have brought some warning about what was being planned. We are terribly high-tech—satellites overhead and intercepts of all kind. We can spot a car moving on the ground and read its license plates, but we cannot look the driver

in the eye and see where he's going. For that we need another human being.

The argument I hear from some very informed people is that we have reformed the CIA into near-uselessness. The reforms instituted by the Carter administration in the wake of the Vietnam War may well have gone too far. The human elements—unsavory, repugnant and often just plain criminal—were purged from the payroll. But just as cops need informers, so do intelligence agencies. These people are not the sort you'd bring home to meet the wife.

The Reagan administration attempted to reconstitute that ele-

ment of the intelligence apparatus. The trouble was that CIA Director Bill Casey went, in the words of one knowledgeable Capitol Hill source, "1,000 miles too far." The Iran-contra scandal ended any effort to rebuild human assets.

Something else needs to be said, and President Bush ought to say it: America was not, as he maintains, targeted for attack because we're the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world," but because it has repeatedly inserted itself into the Middle East.

Whether the cause is oil, Israel or the principle of resisting aggressors our response to Iraq's conquest of Kuwait, we have taken the lives of Muslims, and some of them will not forgive us. Our ally, Israel, controls Jerusalem's Islamic holy places. We have troops stationed in Saudi Arabia, too close, apparently, to holy Mecca. We have imposed an embargo on Iraq, and so we are accused—falsely, but so what?—of killing babies. And everywhere we go in the region and even from outside it, we exude a noxious modernity—the music, the clothing, the contempt for tradition and authority. We are a dangerous people.

So this "war" that Bush keeps mentioning did not begin this week and it will not end soon. It began even before 241 American Marines were killed in Lebanon in 1983 and it will not stop when Osama bin Laden himself is stopped. This is a continuing war with a mind-set, a culture. The short term will be very long indeed.

This war will cost us lives. Just as we are going to have to get dirty again with our human intelligence operatives, so we are going to have to abandon our insistence that military operations somehow be conducted only from the air. At the moment, more than 200 New York City firefighters are missing and presumed dead. They were mostly members of an elite unit, and they knew when they volunteered for that duty what the risks were. We cannot ask firefighters to risk their lives and somehow ensure that no soldiers will lose theirs.

New York and Washington grieve because we failed, and failed badly, at the business of intelligence. Republicans were at fault and Democrats were at fault and so, in a way, were we all. Most of us believed that high-tech could do the work of people and that war could be waged without the loss of life. On Tuesday, in the rubble somewhere, was an uncounted victim: our innocence.