

Statement of George J. Tenet,
former Director of the Central Intelligence Agency,
on the release of the OIG Report on CIA Accountability with Respect to
the 9/11 Attacks

21 August 2007

In August of 2001, the Office of the Inspector General produced an insightful and valuable review of CIA's counterterrorism efforts. Unfortunately, it is not the one released today.

Just weeks before 9/11, the Office of the IG reported that "The DCI Counterterrorist Center (CTC) is a well-managed component that successfully carries out the Agency's responsibilities to collect and analyze intelligence on international terrorism and to undermine the capabilities of terrorist groups." The report went on to say: "CTC fulfills interagency responsibility for the DCI by coordinating national intelligence, providing warning and promoting effective use of Intelligence Community resources on terrorism issues." The report noted that "CTC's resources have steadily increased over the last five years with personnel growing by 74 percent during that period and the budget more than doubling. The Center's comparatively favorable resource situation allows it not only to expand its own programs but also to support operations against terrorists and liaison relationships that DO (Directorate of Operations) area divisions otherwise could not fund."

The August 2001 report stated that "relationships with the FBI have been vastly improved" and further informed us "CTC's relationship with NSA has improved dramatically since the last inspection."

The IG recommended no actions to me to improve our operations against terrorism. It did correctly note that the people of CTC were extraordinarily hard working and were facing a monumental task combating the tide of terrorism. The August 2001 report is sharply at odds with what is being released today. After 9/11, with the clarity of hindsight, the IG, while acknowledging that "the DCI was actively and forcefully engaged in the counterterrorism efforts of the CIA . . . [and] was personally engaged in sounding the alarm about the threat to many different audiences," nevertheless criticized me for not having a strategic plan to fight terrorism and inadequately marshalling resources for such an effort. In these later judgments, the IG is flat wrong.

There was in fact a robust plan, marked by extraordinary effort and dedication to fighting terrorism, dating back to long before 9/11. Without such an effort, we would not have been able to give the President a plan on September 15, 2001 that led to the routing of the [Taliban](#), chasing al Qa'ida from its Afghan sanctuary and combating terrorists across 92 countries. The IG report rightly

praises the “most effective interagency effort against UBL [Usama Bin Laden]” as the work of the Assistant DCI for Collection from the early months of 1998 to 9/11. But it fails to note that this effort was at my direction and was regularly monitored by me. This plan was based on actions that were taken over a sustained period using the assets of the Intelligence Community to collect intelligence against al Qa’ida, to develop relationships with key foreign intelligence services, to develop networks of assets inside the Afghan sanctuary, and to develop innovative technologies to deal with an illusive target. All of this was done pursuant to my direction, as quoted in the IG report, that there be “no resources or people spared in this effort, either inside the CIA or the Community.”

The latest IG report is equally wrong regarding resources. Although resources available for everything else at CIA went down or stayed flat, counterterrorism resources were going up. The IG report fails to understand where we were starting from or the geopolitical context that the intelligence community faced. We had to try to rebuild a seriously under-funded intelligence community across the board. During the 1990s, as a Community, we had lost 25 percent of our people and tens of billions of dollars in investment compared to the 1990 baseline. The rebuilding of the entire Community was essential to bolstering our counterterrorism efforts and enabling us to address all the intelligence priorities established by the President. For me, however there was no priority higher than fighting terrorism. The IG fails to understand how intensely I pushed the counterterrorism issue because he failed to interview either me or policymakers from either the Clinton or Bush Administrations on this matter. Had he done so he might have learned that I was relentless in seeking additional funding for the Intelligence Community in general and counterterrorism in particular. I wrote the Administration in 1998 and 1999 imploring for more money to rebuild U.S. intelligence. When only a small portion of what I requested was made available, I went outside established channels to work with then-Speaker Gingrich to obtain a \$1.2 billion budgetary supplemental for the intelligence community.

The IG’s report released today also vastly under appreciates the challenges faced and heroic performance of the hard working men and women of the CIA in general and CTC in specific. As the 9/11 Commission report says: “Before 9/11, no agency did more to attack al Qa’ida than the CIA.” The hard work, skill and selfless dedication of Agency officers saved countless lives and enhanced the security of our country. No IG Report will ever change that reality.

I do not want my comments here to be misconstrued as saying that CIA’s performance prior to 9/11 was beyond reproach. We did not obtain the tactical information which may have allowed us to thwart the 9/11 attacks. As I said to the 9/11 Commission: “No matter how hard we worked — or how desperately we tried — it was not enough. The victims and the families of 9/11 deserved better.”

But just as we owed it to the country to do better — the CIA IG owed it to the nation and the men and women of the intelligence community to do a better job in reviewing the circumstances that led to the tragedy of September 11th.