ForeWord Reviews

POLITICAL SCIENCE

Osama's Revenge: The Next 9/11
Paul L. Williams
Prometheus Books
978-1-59102-252-7
(June 2004)

In a state of suspended unease, America awaits the next terrorist attack. Lest people have begun to relax in the nearly three years that have elapsed since 9/11, the author points out that one of Osama Bin Laden's defining characteristics is patience. According to Williams, it's only a matter of when, where, and how big.

A former FBI consultant on international terrorism and the author of The Vatican Exposed: Money, Murder, and the Mafia, Williams lays out a sobering case for the likelihood of a terrorist nuclear attack on U. S. soil. Citing sources he considers reliable, Williams is convincing, though his case is largely speculative and unsupported by hard evidence. Williams bases his argument on probability, on what he believes to be the very real likelihood that Bin Laden has acquired nuclear capability. Before its breakup, the Soviet Union had produced hundreds of "nuclear suitcases," devices that have the potential to be fired from grenade or rocket launchers or detonated in public places. Williams cites reports from Israeli intelligence that over the course of several years Bin Laden obtained forty-eight of these nuclear suitcases. Inevitably, some of them have been smuggled into this country.

Of course, such sophisticated weaponry is of little use without the technical expertise to employ it, but, as Williams persuasively argues, this is not an insurmountable obstacle. By 1996, more than 3,000 disillusioned scientists with expertise in the construction and maintenance of weapons of mass destruction had left Russia. Reportedly, some of them obtained lucrative employment with Al Qaeda and other terrorist groups. Perhaps the most chilling intersection of terrorism and science is the alliance of Bin Laden with Dr. Abdul Qadeer Kahn, Pakistan's most revered nuclear scientist. Williams cites experts who consider Dr. Khan "the most dangerous man in the world."

For the time being, Bin Laden is said to be safe and secure near the Afghanistan—Pakistan border; but even if Bin Laden himself were unable to coordinate another terrorist attack on the U. S., the danger is very great. Williams advises that it's wishful thinking to view Al Qaeda as a tiny radical fringe group and characterizes terrorism as a multi-headed

hydra. Williams caps his unnerving, heat-seeking exposé with the prediction of former members of Al Qaeda that the next terrorist attack will take place at various locations, simultaneously throughout the U. S.

This coherent wake-up call to the complacent concludes with the warning that terrorist cells have been established in several major American cities, that they have the motive and the means and just await the opportunity.

Rob Mitchell