

DEFEATING THE JIHADISTS

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DEFEATING THE JIHADISTS

A Blueprint for Action

**The Report of a Task Force Assembled and
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FOREWORD

The public and experts alike generally reacted to the collapse of the Soviet Union with a sense of optimism about the future—an optimism built upon a firm belief in America’s global preeminence and near invulnerability. This consensus went largely unchallenged despite the fact that most scholars, analysts, and officials had been disquietingly off base in failing to foresee the end of the Cold War. Of course, concern about the shortcomings of intelligence analysts and security scholars was blunted by the fact that the “unexpected” news turned out to be very good news indeed. Regrettably, the luxury of such complacency about American invincibility turned out to be all too brief an experience. The events of September 11, 2001, wrenched the nation and the world into a stark realization that peace and security remained fragile and the threat of terrorism had been widely underestimated.

Inside the U.S. government, however, the seriousness of this threat had been identified well before September 11, albeit by a relatively small group of professionals. They had become increasingly convinced during the 1980s and early 1990s that new dangers to the United States and Europe were a growing possibility. They worked to increase the security focus of governments on terrorism, especially on the threat posed by would-be jihadists who saw the United States and its allies as the principal impediment to their dreams of radical and fundamentalist Islamic states. As the work of the 9/11 Commission has shown, while most of us lost our moorings in the immediate aftermath of the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, these individuals had a clear understanding of the enemies we faced and the policies we needed to fight them.

Among this group are the authors of this report: Glenn P. Aga, Richard A. Clarke, Roger W. Cressey, Stephen E. Flynn, Blake W. Mobley, Eric Rosenbach, Steven Simon, William F. Wechsler, and Lee S. Wolosky.

These authors are a remarkable group, rich in experience, scholarly in the depth of their knowledge, and practical in the relevance of their prescriptions. In their report, they draw on their immense store of knowledge and experience, providing a taut description of the most important

terrorist groups operating today and offering candid and concise descriptions of the political and security circumstances of the Muslim nations that are absolutely essential for a successful strategy to combat terrorism. And, perhaps most important, the authors of *Defeating the Jihadists: A Blueprint for Action* have charted a course for a more effective response to the threat of terrorism.

Almost fifteen years ago, The Century Foundation began a series of projects concerned with the need to reorient intelligence efforts after the end of the Cold War. In 1993, following the bombing of the World Trade Center, we intensified these efforts, producing two task force reports along the way, *The Need to Know* and *In From the Cold*. After September 11, we launched a significant expansion of related work, beginning a major Homeland Security Project cochaired by former Governors Thomas Kean and Richard Celeste and supported by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. Numerous publications have been produced as part of this project, including a report on the need for a Department of Homeland Security, a paper on security challenges facing state and local governments, and a book of essays, *The War on Our Freedoms*. This task force was assembled and chaired by Richard A. Clarke. The Century Foundation's Homeland Security Project is ongoing in the hope of provoking more discussion of alternative strategies for the effort to contain terrorism.

Wherever one comes out on the efficacy of recent policy, different choices are possible and debate is desirable. This volume is premised on the notion that we will be better prepared for the tests ahead if we are a nation armed not just with a powerful military and well-organized intelligence apparatus but also with a deeper public understanding of what we are up against and what we need to do. The thoughtful analysis in this report reminds us that, when making policy, ideology is no substitute for expertise, thorough knowledge, and thoughtful reflection. Since September 11, much has been done, but no one can promise an end to risk. In the struggle against terrorism, the United States and its allies have sufficient power, wealth, and patriots to force compliance with our wishes, at least for a time, upon most other nations. But our strength is not unlimited. We must use it with wisdom and efficiency. Otherwise, we shall squander opportunities for greater security and erode essential support from our own

people and our allies. No course seems certain to lead to a quick diminution of the dangers we face. While any long-term strategy will test our patience and resolve, it is becoming increasingly clear that we must begin by sweeping away many misconceptions about our enemies and redressing any existing misallocation of our resources. To some extent, we must reorient our debate about what to do, founding it on a deeper understanding of the threat and a stronger commitment to developing a global coalition to combat it.

The authors of this report have done a great service by laying out the facts about the dangers we face and the realities of future policy choices. On behalf of the Trustees of The Century Foundation, I thank them for their efforts.

RICHARD C. LEONE, *PRESIDENT*
The Century Foundation
October 2004

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The Age of Sacred Terror (Random House, 2002), which won the Council on Foreign Relations 2004 Arthur Ross Award, and coeditor of *Iraq at the Crossroads: State and Society in the Shadow of Regime Change* (Oxford University Press/IISS, 2003).

WILLIAM F. WECHSLER has held a number of senior government positions including: special advisor to the secretary of the Treasury, director for transnational threats at the National Security Council, and special assistant to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. During his years in government, he led U.S. efforts to combat international money laundering, chaired the interagency effort to disrupt Osama bin Laden's financial network, and coordinated the drafting of Presidential Decision Directives on political-military planning for complex contingencies, on managing international civilian police operations, and on defending American computer networks and critical infrastructures from information warfare. He received his BA from Cornell University and a Master's Degree from Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs. He is currently a vice president of Greenwich Associates, the international financial services strategic consulting firm and is a CFA charterholder.

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