

# ‘Looking backward’ to ‘look forward’ serves as a message to heed today

For those who don’t recognize the names, Mike Scheuer and Richard Clarke were among the federal officials sounding early alarm bells about a tall and obscure figure in the Middle East who was hell-bent on orchestrating a massive terrorist plot against the United States in the years surrounding the Millennium.

While the two had a reported disdain for each other, they nevertheless were united in their belief that Osama bin Laden and his Al Qaeda terrorist network posed a significant threat to U.S. security, and that the Saudi-born militant was determined to make a deadly splash on American shores.

Beginning in 1996, Scheuer was the point person at the CIA for hunting down bin Laden, heading a 15-person team assigned to track his whereabouts and to either capture or kill him.

Clarke, who served as the White House counterterrorism adviser from 1997-2001, had a similar mission, heightened after the near simultaneous bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998, followed by the attack on the U.S.S. Cole in 2000, Al Qaeda plots that claimed hundreds of innocent lives and foreshadowed greater peril to come.

The combined death toll in those three incidents, of course, would pale in comparison to the loss of life on 9/11, when passenger planes were turned into missiles, toppling the twin towers of the World Trade Center, partially destroying the Pentagon, and forever altering our daily way of life.

In the wake of the attacks, Congress authorized a bipartisan 10-member independent commission to conduct an

exhaustive investigation as to how and why 9/11 happened, and to recommend strategies and policy changes to ensure that something just as terrifying and crippling never occurs again.

After 18 months of work, the commission led by Chair Thomas Kean, the former Republican governor of New Jersey, and Vice Chair Lee Hamilton, former Democratic Congressman from Indiana, produced “The 9/11 Report,” a more than 560-page examination into the makings and aftermath of a national tragedy.

“We learned about an enemy who is sophisticated, patient, disciplined, and lethal,” Kean and Hamilton wrote in the preface to the book. “Its purpose is to rid the world of religious and political pluralism, the plebiscite, and equal rights for women. It makes no distinction between military and civilian targets. Collateral damage is not in its lexicon.

“We learned that the institutions charged with protecting our borders, civil aviation, and national security did not understand how grave this threat could be, and did not adjust their policies, plans, and practices to deter or defeat it.

“At the outset of our work, we said we were looking backward in order to look forward,” Kean and Hamilton noted. “We hope that the terrible losses chronicled in this report can create something positive – an America that is safer, stronger, and wiser. That September day, we came together as a nation. The test before us is to sustain that unity of purpose and meet the challenges now confronting us.”

The profound nature of that message transcends time and comes nearly 20



years after it was written. It also begs the question of whether our vulnerabilities are just as inviting to a would-be attacker today or have we plugged enough security holes to prevent us from being blindsided on a sunny day again.

Sadly, the answer figures to be cloaked in mystery for years to come and serves as a cautionary tale for how we as a nation – and as a world – choose to deal with an even greater threat to our collective homeland security.

The current problem is one of epic proportions and revolves around Russia’s threatened use of tactical nuclear weapons to bring the war in Ukraine to a victorious and yet inglorious end. If Putin carries through on his threat, the nuclear strike would produce nothing more than a Pyrrhic victory for the Russian homeland, exacting such a devastating toll that it wouldn’t begin to justify his military mission.

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It also undoubtedly would serve to embolden his communist allies in China and North Korea to potentially launch similar nuclear strikes in an effort to redress their grievances with Taiwan and the U.S., respectively, provoking retaliatory attacks that could reduce the world to rubble.

Such a doomsday scenario is no longer as far-fetched as it once seemed, especially with a series of rogue ideologues lurking in the nuclear weeds. In large part, it has provided the impetus for us to launch the Primerus™ Foundation, an organization that we hope can channel enough global energy to counter the prevailing winds of war that are buffeting the world.

In 1945, World War II came to an end when we entered the nuclear age. It is our intent now to harness the power of good by first ringing enough alarm bells to prevent a possible third world war that begins in a tragically nuclear way.

Best regards,

**Jack Buchanan, President**