

Your Government Failed You — Chapter Excerpts

Chapter 1: 9-11 Changed Everything?

When I said "Your government failed you" to the families of the victims of 9-11, it seemed to me that I was merely stating the obvious: the government had failed the American people. And I had.

Three thousand people had been murdered in a morning, not on a battlefield, not in their battleships as had happened in Pearl Harbor, but in their offices. They had been killed by a terrorist group that had promised to attack us, and which we had been unable to stop.

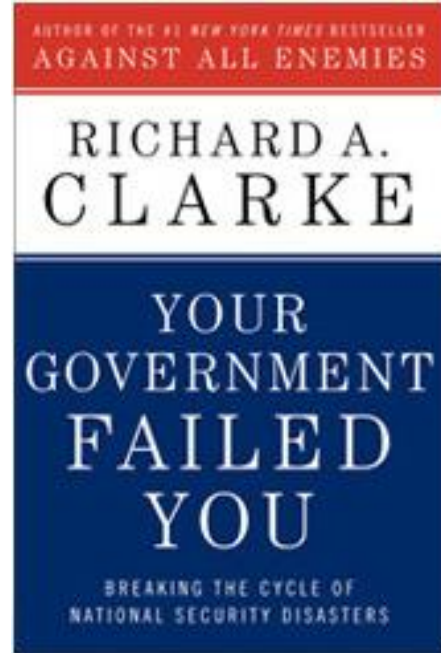
"9-11 changed everything." That was the remark that we heard over and over again in the years that followed. It was only partially true. 9-11 did not change the Constitution, although some have acted as if it did. Nor did the government's response to the attack make us more secure.

By the second anniversary of the 9-11 attack on America, the United States had invaded and occupied two Islamic nations, created an Orwellian-sounding new bureaucracy, launched a spending spree of unprecedented proportions, and was systematically shredding the Constitution. Despite our frenzy, or in many cases because of it, the problem we sought to address, violent Islamist extremism, was getting worse. Much of what our government did after 9-11, at home and abroad, departed from our values and identity as a nation. It was also massively counter-productive. Our government failed us before and after 9-11, and it continues to do so today.

Chapter 2: NO MORE VIETNAM

For no institution is the pain of failure more personal than for our military. When the military fails, their friends die and leave widows. Many of the living lose limbs or acquire post-traumatic stress disorder. And no institution has tried as hard as the U.S. military to understand why failure occurs or has worked as diligently to correct mistakes so that they do not recur. The formal Lessons Learned process is ingrained in the U.S. military's way of doing business. And yet there is Iraq.

The U.S. military is so richly deserving of our thanks and respect that few civilians have been willing to suggest that the Iraq disaster is at all the military's fault. Clearly the elected civilian commander-in-chief, his seasoned Vice President, the two-time Secretary of Defense, Congress, and others should bear most of the blame. But the military, more precisely the officer corps, and specifically many general officers over the course of thirty years, deserve some culpability. I say that not to add to the chorus of scapegoating and finger-pointing, but so that we as a nation can follow in the military's tradition of lessons learned, so that we can avoid Santayana's condemnation. And I believe the trail leads back to the military's own reactions to the national failure that was the Vietnam War. To understand Iraq, we need to remember Vietnam and what happened in the U.S. military after that war....



....Despite Shali's greater willingness to use force, a risk aversion deriving from the Weinberger-Powell Doctrine continued. That attitude was taken to its illogical extreme in dealing with terrorism. Before 9/11, as the President's head of counterterrorism, I came to the reluctant but inescapable conclusion that the U.S. military leadership did not want to be part of offensive operations against terrorists. On several occasions the National Security Advisor and his cabinet colleagues in the NSC Principals Committee asked the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs to plan operations to go after terrorists. Sometimes the targets involved were just one man—a lone al Qaeda operative in a hotel room in Khartoum in 1998 or in 1995 a single terrorist working in the Water Department in Qatar. Every time the military came back, recommending against the operations and presenting plans intentionally oversized, involving enormously outsized forces that would have blown any chance of surprise and would have looked as if we were invading. The man working in the Qatar Water Department was reported to be the uncle of 1993 World Trade Center bomber Ramzi Yousef, whom we had hunted down in Pakistan in 1995.

The man in Qatar had been secretly indicted in New York, and evidence suggested that he had had a hand in other operations and would probably plan more. We wanted him badly, but we knew that if we approached the Qatari government to arrest him and hand him over, someone would probably tip him off and he would escape. The CIA correctly said it had no capability to stage covert snatches in Qatar, nor did the FBI. So, remembering that there were small Special Operations Command units trained to do just such things, I urged that the military be ordered to go in with a small team. The Chairman came back not with a small covert unit of Special Operations forces but with an enormous force package and a recommendation against using it. The principals decided not to overrule the military and instructed us to ask the Qataris to arrest the terrorist. We did, but then the Qatari police went to do so, our terrorist had, predictably, just fled the country. The man in the Qatar Water Department did, as we suspected, go on to plan other terrorist strikes. His name was Khalid Sheik Mohammed. He went on to mastermind the 9/11 attacks on the United States.

Chapter 3: NO MORE IRAQs

The third failure happened when it became clear that the President and his advisors were intent on invading Iraq, and those generals empowered to give professional military advice to the civilian commander in chief (and the Congress) failed to point out that the U.S. military was not prepared for what was a foreseeable—indeed, I would argue a likely—scenario: insurgency.

CIA analyses at the time made clear that insurgency was a possible postinvasion outcome. In January 2003, two intelligence assessments, “Principal Challenges in Post-Saddam Iraq” and “Regional Consequences of Regime Change in Iraq,” predicted that internal violence and a surge in Islamist extremist violence might follow an overthrow of Saddam Hussein and an occupation.

It is one thing not to prepare for counterinsurgency in the hope that America will never have to fight one. It is quite another thing not to tell the President that you have little or no counterinsurgency capability when he directs you to conduct a war where an insurgency is likely. The point of not having a counterinsurgency capability was, presumably, so we would never have to fight one again. However, the strategy works only if you tell the Secretary of Defense or the President or the Congress the dirty little secret that you are not prepared for such a war. Then, if you are lucky, they will decide not to run the risk of going into a war that could result in a counterinsurgency. That strategy does not work if you remain silent. I am reminded of the scene in the 1960s movie *Dr. Strangelove*, in which the Soviet Ambassador reveals that any U.S. nuclear attack on the USSR will automatically trigger a world-ending response.

Incensed, Dr. Strangelove yells at him, “the . . . whole point of the doomsday machine . . . is lost . . . if you keep it a secret! Why didn’t you tell the world, eh?”

And later in the chapter

A fifth failure of some generals crossed a line that had long been defended by the leadership of the U.S. military. For generations, the U.S. military’s leaders had held fast to observing international law with regard to prisoners. They believed that only if we upheld international standards did we have any chance of convincing others to do so. In short, if we tortured and abused prisoners, it increased the chances that our own troops would be abused when they were captured. Yet the record seems clear that generals, perhaps including the top U.S. commander in Iraq, Rick Sanchez, knew about, condoned, and authorized the kind of despicable treatment that the world saw in the pictures from Abu Ghraib. There may even have been daily reports to Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld on the progress of abusive interrogations and torture. Beyond the effect on what others might do to future U.S. prisoners, the Abu Ghraib phenomenon had an immediate effect on Arabs’ and Muslims’ perceptions of the United States of America. It was like rocket fuel for the al Qaeda movement worldwide. While generals failed in their legal, moral, and strategic mission by permitting such activity, at least one general did his duty. Major General Antonio Taguba was asked to investigate what had happened and write a report. He was encouraged to sweep as much as possible under the rug, make it look as if a “few bad apples,” low-ranking personnel, had run amok. Instead, Taguba told the truth.

For doing so, he was asked to retire early. He knew that he was sacrificing his two-decade-long career, but he also knew he had to do the honorable thing. After retiring, he told the reporter Seymour Hersh, “We inculcate duty, honor, integrity . . . and yet when we get to senior officer level we forget those values. I know the Army will be mad at me . . . but the fact is that we violated the laws of land warfare, . . . our own principles, . . . and the core of our military values. . . . Those civilian and military leaders responsible should be held accountable.” In any hall of American military heroes, there should be a special place for Antonio Taguba, for he demonstrated a form of courage rarer than battlefield valor, and he gave real meaning to the word *honor*.

Chapter 4: Can we reduce intelligence failures?

...There are similar problems with the other class of technical collection, Signals Intelligence (SIGINT). The problem is not usually a matter of our ability to collect electrons; it is sometimes a question of recognizing the importance of what has been collected. In 1988 a young State Department INR analyst reported to me that he had found, in the many reports sent to him, a one-line item about a signal normally associated with Chinese long-range nuclear missiles. The problem was that the analyst covered Saudi Arabia, not China, and the report was about Saudi Arabia.

No one else seemed to have noticed the routine report, nor did anyone seem to care when he raised a question about the aberrant signal. The report of that electronic bleep made no sense to me at first. Saudi Arabia was a close U.S. ally and got its weapons from us and from the Europeans. Neither we nor the Europeans would ever have sold it long-range nuclear-capable missiles. But wait, that was the point. Of course, we would not have sold it such a missile. Maybe the Saudis, therefore, had not asked us. Maybe they were crazy enough to have wanted such a weapon and bought them from the Chinese. Surely, however, we would have detected the negotiation of such a deal, or at least the delivery of such a big weapons system. As I said those words to the analyst, I realized that they were probably not accurate. I had already learned never to assume that U.S. intelligence had detected something, no matter how big and

obvious. We asked for satellite photography and promptly found an extremely large base in the Saudi desert, complete with Chinese troops and long-range nuclear-capable missiles. The base was almost completed and the missiles were not yet operational.

Conveniently, the Chinese foreign minister was a floor above me at the time, meeting with Secretary of State George Shultz. Shultz was less than delighted with the prospect of having to confront his guest and the Saudis about their secret activities. However, he quickly understood that the Saudis appeared to be pulling their own version of the Cuban Missile Crisis. It looked as if the Saudis were trying to sneak nuclear missiles into their country and have them operational before anyone knew about them. China, which in the 1980s was not rich and had little respect for the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, had readily agreed to sell the old missiles for a small fortune. Had it also agreed to sell the nuclear warheads without which the inaccurate missiles were worthless? Shultz did not ask that question of his guest. Instead, he asked the Saudi king to agree that no nuclear warheads would be introduced into Saudi Arabia and that the Chinese base would be open for inspection. The Saudis agreed. Had they not, it is likely they would soon have seen heavily laden fighter-bombers marked with the Star of David streaking overhead well before their missile base was completed....

Chapter 5:

Before leaving this period, I want to make a slight diversion to go into detail on one of the more incredible parts of the 9/11 tragedy, the fact that the CIA did not tell the FBI, Immigration, the State Department, or the National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism (me) that two known al Qaeda terrorists had made it to America and were running around somewhere in this country. A year and a half later those two terrorists participated in the 9/11 attacks.

As jaded and cynical as I am about government failures, I still find this one mind-boggling and inexplicable. The 9/11 Commission Report does not tell us very much about how or why it happened, and their explanations, while they could be correct, strain credulity and leave many questions unanswered. Here are the facts as we now know them:

In 1998 the United States discovered that al Qaeda was using a telephone number in Yemen. Monitoring the Yemen number, NSA and CIA obtained names of al Qaeda operatives, including Khalid al-Midhar. Link analysis connected him to others to the U.S. embassy bombings.

In late 1999 al Qaeda planners used this telephone to place calls discussing a meeting to be held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, for just after the millennium rollover at the beginning of 2000. (Al Qaeda anticipated that several attacks would take place in Jordan, Yemen, and the United States around New Year's Day, but the plots were foiled or failed.) Khalid al-Midhar was among those traveling to Malaysia. Alerted to his travel and his planned change of planes in Dubai, the CIA arranged to obtain and photograph his passport. In that passport, CIA discovered a visa for entry into the United States. It had been issued by the U.S. Consulate in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, several months before.

The CIA and NSA had not placed his name on the "don't give this guy a visa" list before his July 1999 application, even though they had known he was an al Qaeda operative from the Yemen intercepts (mistake number 1). Moreover, the Saudis had reportedly told the CIA that al-Midhar and al-Hamzi were al Qaeda members. Yet no one told that to the visa section at the U.S. Embassy in Riyadh (mistake number 2). When the CIA learned in Dubai that al-Midhar had a valid U.S. visa (by looking at it), they did not ask the State Department to revoke the visa, nor did they place his name on Immigration's "do not enter the

United States" list (mistake number 3), even though there was a CIA program to do that kind of notification and CIA had done so hundreds of times before with other terrorist names.

Al-Midhar and al-Hamzi met in Kuala Lumpur with known al Qaeda operative at a swank golf club condo. The CIA requested the local security service to photograph people entering the meeting, which it did. A few days later al-Midhar and al-Hamzi traveled to Thailand. No one followed them, but the CIA assumed for some reason that they would remain in Thailand for a while. Instead, the two men got on a United Airlines flight (not for the last time) and flew to Los Angeles, where they waltzed through Immigration. Two months later, the Thai intelligence service got around to telling the CIA that the two had gone to the United States.

To ensure that the CIA and FBI exchanged needed information and stopped keeping secrets from each other, we had created a system of exchange officers. There were several CIA officers at the FBI terrorism office and a number of FBI agents at the CIA's Counterterrorism Center. Some exchange officers even supervised the other agency's personnel. After Midhar and Hamzi showed up in Los Angeles, an FBI agent at CIA headquarters asked permission to tell FBI headquarters that terrorists were at large in California. The exchange program was working. The FBI agent had seen something that he needed to tell his parent agency, something that had not yet been shared with the Bureau for some inexplicable reason. His request was denied by his CIA supervisor (mistake number 4). At that point, the failure to tell the FBI went from being a sloppy oversight to being a conscious decision.

Meanwhile, the two terrorists were trying to figure out how to cope in L.A., when one day they met a nice man in a restaurant. Omar al-Bayoumi was also from Saudi Arabia and, according to him, he just happened to hear some Saudi accents and befriended his fellow countrymen. Shortly thereafter, al-Bayoumi arranged for the two terrorists to move across the street from him in San Diego and then began receiving monthly stipends from his employer to take care of the boys. His employer was a Saudi company that had contracts with the Saudi government. Oman, however, did not actually work at the company. He spent his time roaming around among Saudis in Southern California. Many people, including the local FBI office at the time, assumed he was a Saudi intelligence officer.

The two terrorists signed up for flight school, did badly, and dropped out. Bored, al-Midhar went back to Yemen and may have been involved in the October 2000 attack on the U.S.S. Cole. The FBI investigators in Yemen working on the Cole case then found evidence of the earlier Malaysia meeting, where it seems the attack on the Cole had been on the agenda. The FBI provided the CIA with pictures of people who they believed had gone to the meeting and telephone numbers associated with them, asking for anything the CIA knew about them. Even though they knew about Midhar, the CIA said nothing (mistake number 5). Al-Midhar, meanwhile, went underground for a while, showing up again in Saudi Arabia in June 2001 to get yet another U.S. entry visa from the State Department (mistake number 6). He landed at John F. Kennedy International Airport on July 4, 2001, and again cleared Immigration (mistake number 7).

A little earlier, CIA officers had also flown to New York to meet with the FBI there. The New York FBI office had the lead in the Bureau's investigating of Al Qaeda and by then had indicted bin Laden and others. The visiting CIA officers showed pictures of al-Midhar and al-Hamzi and asked what the FBI knew about them. They seemed to be fishing. They offered the FBI no information. Sometime later in July, a CIA officer assigned to FBI headquarters sent a message back to the CIA expressing his concerns about the terrorists. He seems to have learned at CIA that al-Midhar and al-Hamzi were in the United States, but apparently had been instructed not to tell any of his FBI analysts or superiors (mistake number 8). He got no answer from CIA headquarters. Then an FBI agent in New York stumbled upon the fact that the CIA

knew the two were in the United States, but was told by a CIA officer to "stand down: and do nothing about it (mistake number 9).

Finally, on August 23, 2001, the CIA alerted the FBI and Immigration that the two were in the United States. It did so in a way that attracted little attention. It did not mention it in the Interagency Threat Committee, chaired twice a week by Roger Cressey of the NSC. It did not mention it in the Counterterrorism Security Group I chaired at that weekly. It did not call Dale Watson, the FBI's top counterterrorism official. In fact, it was so low-key that the FBI did not immediately grasp how important the information was, and, therefore, did none of the obvious steps that would have located the two (such as checking if they had credit cards in their real names—they did—and where they had recently used them).

The names resurfaced on the day of the attack, 9/11. The CIA Director recalled the fact that the two al Qaeda terrorists were in the United States as soon as he heard about the attacks. Dale Watson, then the number two person in the FBI, was told by his staff that two of the names on the passenger manifests of the hijacked aircraft were those of known al Qaeda terrorists. That's how Dale found out that the U.S. government had already known about the two terrorists prior to the hijackings. Watson placed a call to me at the Situation Room, pulling me out of the crisis group to tell me. That's how and when I found out about al-Hamzi and al-Midhar.

The human brain is designed to take disparate data and order them, make sense of them, place them into a context we can understand from past experience. Sometimes it mistakenly forces data into a pattern, trying to cause things to make sense when they are purely random. This human tendency leads to conspiracy theories, which are attempts to order data that otherwise seems chaotic and improbable. Working in national security, intelligence, and terrorism, I have had to deal with a lot of conspiracy theories, such as: the queen of England is a narcotics trafficker, the U.S. Navy shot down TWA flight 800, the feds blew up the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, Y2K was a conspiracy by the software industry to make money, Israel blew up the World Trade Center on 9/11, there was no airplane that hit the Pentagon, Iraq had a role in 9/11. As an investigator you suspend disbelief. You check the theories out. You run them to ground. Ninety percent of the time or more, you debunk them. Once in a while, you keep the jury out.

...I know that highly trained, independent investigators with the 9/11 Commission and with the Justice Department's inspector general examined the record of this amazing series of breakdowns surrounding Midhar and Hamzi. The CIA inspector general, John Helgerson, also did an extensive investigation into this and other alleged lapses of the CIA's performance related to al Qaeda. The Helgerson Report notes that not one or two, but sixty (60) CIA personnel knew about the presence in the United States of al-Hamzi and al-Midhar and did nothing to tell the FBI. Maybe they thought it was someone else's job among the group of five dozen, but if they thought someone else had told FBI, did none of them ever think to ask what the FBI had done with the information, not once during a year and a half?

The Senate and House Intelligence Committees investigated 9/11-related intelligence in a rare joint committee. Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman Bob Graham came to the conclusion that Omar al-Bayoumi, the nice man in the L.A. restaurant, was a Saudi intelligence agent.

The reason that there may be doubts about all of this is that there is an ordering explanation, a way of making these seemingly unbelievable facts fit a pattern. The 9/11 Commission's own staff report and the Helgeson Report both unintentionally provide a beginning. What if, they ask, the U.S. government had not been a bumbling giant unaware of what it already knew? Well, then, the reports posit, we would have had the option of intentionally letting Hamzi and Midhar into the United States and trying to flip them to become our first real sources inside al Qaeda, or we might just have followed them around to see where they went, who they talked to. But, the Commission staff reports note, that was probably not something the pre-9/11 FBI was up to. Quite right. Had the FBI known about the location in the United States of two known al Qaeda terrorists, it would have arrested them before the coffee cooled. Unlike some other police intelligence agencies around the world, the FBI does not usually believe in giving people a chance to slip surveillance when they know that the people being surveilled are likely to go out and kill.

The CIA would not try such a dangerous ploy as trying to flip al Qaeda terrorists in the United States into becoming CIA sources because that would violate laws prohibiting CIA operations inside the United States. The CIA would not ask Saudi intelligence to approach al-Midhar and al-Hamzi in Los Angeles, because foreign intelligence agencies are legally barred from running intelligence missions in the United States. Right?

...The human mind rejects the randomness and chaos represented by the theory that the repeated mistakes made about al-Midhar and al-Hamzi were just routine, compounded incompetence. But incompetence happens. Often it is other people who pay for it.

So we prefer to think that repeated incompetence is what happened because we disdain conspiracy theories and would rather not confront the alternative....

Chapter 6: Homeland

...It is scenarios like that, perhaps, that cause some people to think that we need wiretaps without warrants and other infringements of traditional American civil liberties. The possibility that we have homegrown terrorists causes some to think we need to deal with the current terrorist threat differently than we have other security and law enforcement challenges we have faced. It is the fear of another 9/11 that justifies, in some minds, torturing suspected terrorists in camps in legal no-man's-lands like U.S. military enclaves in Cuba, Afghanistan, and Iraq.

I deeply disagree. Torture and warrantless wiretaps are unnecessary. They also erode the support we need abroad and the unity we need at home to overcome the threat from violent Islamist extremists. Most important, they are steps in the wrong direction, steps a little closer to the horrors that humans can engage in when rights are eroded. Experts have known for decades that torture draws unreliable information from its victims and that other methods have good track records in producing cooperation and information from suspects and prisoners. We know of specific examples where tortured prisoners have

provided false information, such as the erroneous report that Iraq trained al Qaeda terrorists in the use of weapons of mass destruction.

The belief that Americans have used torture in Abu Ghraib and other U.S. military camps in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Cuba has convinced many in the Islamic world that we do disrespect Muslims. It has helped some to justify terrorist tactics and support for al Qaeda and similar groups. It has convinced many that we are hypocrites when we talk about human rights and democracy. I have long believed that the U.S. Bill of Rights and the U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights are among the few membranes, the thin tissues, that separate humanity from another descent into the kind of world that only a few decades ago saw many millions of people degraded and industrially disposed of in the horror camps of Nazi Germany and the Communist Soviet Union. It is in humanity's genes and makeup that people can engage in such atrocities. And many people have done so.

We need to hold the line well this side of the police state, far from the torture chamber. Yet the U.S. Justice Department originated a ruling that the only torture that was out of bounds was that which caused pain equivalent to organ failure. Anything else done by Americans was permissible, as long as it was not done in the United States. The Vice President of the United States drove to the Congress to lobby members to permit what he euphemistically called "alternative interrogation techniques." It is hard to believe. You want to think it's all a bad dream, but it's not. You thought America was a force in the world against this sort of thing, not a nation that would actually engage in it. Thankfully, for a while we had John McCain as our conscience. McCain, who was repeatedly tortured, was there to remind us of what it means to be Americans, what it is that we stand for in this world, and who we are not. Unfortunately, he later voted against a legislated ban on waterboarding by the CIA...

People throughout the world knew at one point that the United States stood for something. Even if they disagreed with us on some things, they respected us for our principles. When we criticized others for violating the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, people knew that we had worked hard to overcome our flaws with regard to slavery and racial discrimination. The world knew that it was the government in Washington that fought against those in our country who still tried to violate human rights on the basis of race. It gave us a strength in the world beyond our military might and economic prowess. What we did in violating human rights in the fight against terrorists showed us to the world as hypocrites, and we lost that strength. After 9/11, the United States also abandoned the oldest protection in the Anglo-American legal system, the concept of habeas corpus. This abandonment of legal tradition allows prisoners to be held by U.S. officials indefinitely, without charges, and without any really impartial review of evidence against them.

Congress has been a party to these erosions of our legal system and civil liberties. When finally it forced the administration to amend the relevant laws instead of just ignoring them, it gave the Attorney General decision-making authority in place of judges' control over wiretaps. Congress further agreed to abandon habeas corpus when it came to some detained terrorist suspects, including those in the United States. The

disregard of civil liberties, human rights, international law, privacy rights, and due process clearly and repeatedly demonstrated by the U.S. government after 9/11 has made it almost impossible for the American people to join in a consensus with their Congress and government to do some of the sensible things that should be done to enhance security and fight crime...

Chapter 7: Energy

...Prior to 9/11, I was incredibly frustrated because I could see a “clear and present danger” to the United States but, despite my warnings and those of others, the U.S. government remained complacent until it was too late. The result was the death of three thousand innocent people in one day of attacks on two iconic American symbols. As horrendous as that was, it may someday seem less significant than the deaths from floods, the forced migration of millions, the spread of diseases, the dust bowls that were once fertile lands, all of which may be the result of the climate change that we are causing. And, as with 9/11, we were warned, told for years that climate change was happening. Those like Al Gore who told us what was coming were not merely ignored, they were mocked. Imagine their frustration. During critical years when something might have been done to stop climate change, we not only failed to act, we made it worse. When most of the world united to address the problem, the United States rejected the approach and failed to offer an effective alternative.

The “know-nothings” of climate change have contended for years that the science of climate change was uncertain or that global warming may actually be a good thing on balance. They were right about one thing, that there is uncertainty: we are uncertain about whether we have already passed the point of no return, whether cataclysmic climate change is now inevitable. On the chance that it is not too late to mitigate the damage, to make it less bad than it might otherwise be, we should embark on a national emergency program to reduce carbon emissions. Instead, today, our government continues to fail on the conjoined issues of energy policy and climate change. We are misdiagnosing the national security issues associated with oil, and we are far from a national emergency effort on climate change. We have a muddled, leaderless effort that will not significantly reduce carbon emissions in the foreseeable future. Future generations will likely regard the last decade’s activity, or lack of it, on climate change as the most important failure of government in human history. And the failure continues...

Because we do not have that precise knowledge, we seem to think it is acceptable to do little or nothing. If, however, we were told that a terrorist group was going to attack New York City or Florida sometime in the next few decades with a weapon that would flood the areas and make them uninhabitable, we would not hesitate to begin acting now. Yet climate change may have a greater effect in this century than any combination of major terrorist attacks or wars, causing population centers to disappear, millions of people to move, and the global balance of power to shift away from the United States...

I have never really understood why some national security experts willingly accept the need to act on the basis of unquantifiable and remote threats from terrorists or the ballistic missiles of countries that do not yet have long-range systems, but at the same time ridicule the need to act against a threat that almost all

reputable scientists say is real. In his book *The One Percent Doctrine*, Ron Suskind tells the tale of Vice President Cheney's being willing to wage a fierce (and counterproductive, the way he waged it) war against Iraq and terrorism if there were just a 1 percent possibility of a terrorist nuclear weapon going off in the United States, perhaps destroying New York, on some unknown day in the future. "The United States must act now as if it were a certainty." Well, there is a far greater risk than 1 percent of destruction occurring in all of our coastal cities over the lifetime of children alive today, not because of an enemy, but because of our own and other nations ignoring climate change.

Chapter 8: Into Cyberspace

...Cyberwarfare has thus far apparently been limited to simple hacking. When China and Taiwan have a spat, there is often a fair amount of defacing of web sites (replacing what should be on the web page with something less flattering) and denial-of-service attacks (the floods of messages that overwhelm servers and knock sites offline). In 2007 the problems of tiny Estonia seemed to be a possible case of low-level cyberwar. The Estonians had had the temerity to move a giant statue put up during the Cold War by the Soviet Red Army to honor itself. Known in Tallinn as "the only Russian soldier who did not rape in 1945," it was seen by Estonians, not as a symbol of their 1945 liberation, but as a testament to their 1945–1990 oppression and occupation. When it was moved, Estonia's networks and web sites were assaulted with defacements and denial-of-service attacks that went on for weeks. The attacks were easily traceable to Russia, where the government said it must be private citizens doing it and added that it was incapable of doing anything to stop them. (Oh, so limited are the enforcement capabilities of the KGB's successors under Putin.)

Cyberwarfare, however, may be grander stuff than what we saw going on in Estonia and Taiwan. A possible window into the potential of cyberwarfare may have been opened when Israel flew F-16s and F-15s into Syria in 2007. News reports indicate that Syria's expensive Russian radar and apparently never saw the attack. *Aviation Week* magazine suggested that a cyberwarfare capability similar to a U.S. program known as Suter could have allowed the attackers to take over the defense's radar screens and eliminate any indications of the attacking aircraft. It could be similar to the scene in the movie *Ocean's 11* where the hacker replaces a video feed of a vault looking nice and safe while the vault is actually in the hands of the gang.

Around the same time as the Israeli attack on Syria, USA Today and CNN reported that U.S. government researchers had experimented with a way of damaging electric power generators by hacking from the internet into the internal network running the Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) software that controls the generator. Spin a big electric power generator at the wrong speed, and it can go crashing off its moorings and break apart.³⁹ Theoretically, one could also try the *Ocean's 11* technique on a section of a power grid. If you could get into the grid's SCADA system, you could perhaps send instructions to transformers and switches that would trigger a blackout, while all the while the control room's dials would show that things were normal. But how could you get into such a network? I am tempted to say let me count the ways, but I will merely note that some power grids actually send SCADA commands via radio. Almost no utility companies use encryption or authentication on their networks, so that if you can get in, you can issue instructions. Guides to the software used on SCADA systems are not hard to get. A handful of SCADA software systems are used around the world.

In January 2008 we saw the first hints that this threat had gone from theory to reality. A CIA spokesman told an audience at a summit on SCADA security that a series of attacks had occurred against foreign utilities involving intrusions through the internet, followed by extortion demands. The CIA spokesperson said that “in at least one case, the disruption caused a power outage affecting multiple cities. We do not know who executed these attacks or why, but all involved intrusions through the internet.”

...Although the extent of the problem of reliance upon insecure computer systems is beginning to be understood broadly, government has yet to act decisively to address it. The National Strategy to Secure Cyberspace, signed by the President in 2003, sat gathering dust, unimplemented for four years. The public-private partnership that created the strategy withered, largely because the private sector lost faith in its partner because of the government’s inaction.

Then as 2007 wore on, stories leaked that an intrusion into the network in Secretary of Defense Robert Gates’s own office had been traced back to China. German Chancellor Angela Merkel’s office reported her system had also been hacked by a Chinese entity. British authorities were also tracking Chinese hacking, prompting MI5 (the British Security Service) to send an advisory to the top three hundred British corporations telling them that in all probability their networks were already penetrated by China. The warning did not suggest that it was Chinese individuals, but rather the Chinese government, saying it was an “electronic attack sponsored by Chinese state organizations . . . designed to defeat best-practice IT security systems.”

Private-sector IT security experts were finding evidence of Chinese hacks everywhere, including an ingenious Trojan-horse program embedded in digital picture frames sold at electronics stores across America, such as BestBuy. When you connected the digital picture frame to your computer to download your photos, the picture frame uploaded a program into your computer that disabled antivirus programs, found all of your passwords, and sent them to China. The picture frame was, of course, made in China. The results of the investigation of the hacking into the Pentagon reportedly led Admiral Mike McConnell, the second person in the job of Director of National Intelligence, to hit the alarm bell. Rumors spread that China was well inside sensitive and classified U.S. networks, casting doubt on the Pentagon’s current and future plans based on “net centric warfare.” According to one U.S. Air Force officer, the new “Byzantine series (of attacks) tracks back to China.”

Chapter 9: Getting it Right

It’s a neighborhood with Tiffany, Hermès, and Gucci boutiques among hundreds of other stores in several sprawling shopping malls. It is also a neighborhood filled with the offices of firms with large contracts with the national security agencies and departments. Tysons Corner was the nation’s first “edge city,” according to Joel Garreau’s seminal work on self-sufficient minicities in suburbia. It is a place where one can live in a high-rise condo or town house, shop or dine in one of hundreds of choices, exercise in a variety of gyms and health clubs, watch a newly released movie in a multiplex, and work in a high-rise for any one of scores of outsourcing firms. If you live there, you never have to leave. It is, of course, slightly unreal, detached from the nearby nation’s capital, indeed from the lives of most Americans. After 9/11, a

huge new office building started to go up on one of the few underdeveloped streets in the edge city. Oddly, there was no sign saying what company the new complex would house.

When the outer structure of the building was complete, designers from the Walt Disney Company arrived. Disney has a large store less than a mile away (I know because I have stood in line there buying presents for a three-year-old). But these designers were not there to create a place for Princess Bride birthday parties; they had come to help build a counterterrorism command center. Jumbotrons now hang above a broad expanse with scores of workstations. It has a Hollywood feel, looking like the set for the command center in movies like *Dr. Strangelove* and *War Games*. It is also reminiscent of the network operations center for a major telephone company I visited in New Jersey. There a corporate Vice President had been candid enough to admit to me, “We spent a boatload making this place look like NASA’s Mission Control, but it’s just to wow the customers. It could all be done from a normal office with cubicles.” Counterterrorism could all be done from a normal office, too, but the Disney-designed command room is meant to impress members of Congress and the media that the new National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) is cutting edge. It is also extremely popular with NCTC staff and their guests when they use the Jumbotrons to watch the Super Bowl. In case the command center did not impart its mission statement sufficiently, NCTC renamed the street outside Liberty Crossing.

The hundreds of people working for NCTC come in two flavors: first, government employees, mainly on loan from the CIA and FBI, and second, the equally numerous private contractors. “The only way you can tell the difference is the color of their badge,” one person who frequented Liberty Crossing explained. (Every person in the center is required to have a plastic identification tag hanging around his or her neck or pinned onto his or her lapel.) Much of what the NCTC staff does all day is to talk with people at other terrorism centers around Washington, the largest of which is the CIA’s Counterterrorism Center (CTC) about a mile away at CIA headquarters. Probably next in size is the FBI’s counterterrorism center in the J. Edgar Hoover Building near the White House. These are not to be confused with the Terrorist Screening Center, for which the FBI is the executive agent, which is housed in a nondescript office tower near National Airport. Nor should one overlook the Foreign Terrorist Asset Tracking Center, which is run by the Treasury Department, or the new Intelligence Fusion Centers for counterterrorism in every state capitol, or the Joint Terrorism Task Forces now in one hundred cities, or...

Next to the large NCTC complex, another huge edifice is rising at Liberty Crossing. This one is to house the staff of the burgeoning Office of the Director of National Intelligence and the many contract employees supporting it. Reflecting the suburban sprawl that has defaced northern Virginia outside Washington, the FBI is moving some things a little farther out, to Prince William County, where a building, “nicknamed ‘the Taj Mahal’ by some FBI officials, will feature highly finished terrazzo floors at the entrance, a soaring atrium and a giant fingerprint etched into the elevator doors. The Bureau plans to bring new counter terrorism squads to the new Prince William office and to open a language translation unit there, to help with the chronic problem of attracting Arabic speakers.” No doubt the terrazzo floors and the access to more distant shopping malls will help the FBI overcome its chronic inability to recruit or maintain employees with the needed linguistic capabilities.

Nearby is the first of several buildings in another CIA campus, curiously, called the Discovery Center. The building serves as an “intake center” for polygraphing, interviewing, and assigning the many new CIA employees needed to obtain the goal of doubling the staff of the Agency. Prospective employees sit awaiting their turn to have their bodies strapped to a machine whose results are not admissible in any federal court. If they were applying for a private sector job, the law in most states would prohibit an employer from screening prospective employees with a polygraph, but this is the CIA, which believes in the disproven flutter box. So they sit, perhaps in the nice new Starbucks in the center or in the lounge where all of the new flat-screen televisions are set to FOX News.

I know that good work is done at the National Counterterrorism Center, but I also know how to run counterterrorism operations and they do not require Jumbotrons or the very nice color calendar one can download from NCTC’s web page, which notes for each day of the year what famous terrorist-related events took place on that day in history. “The NCTC for Kids” web page has a nice Disney quality, with a cartoon eagle and a cartoon Lady Liberty, but the command center, calendar, and cartoon characters all bespeak a larger issue: bloat.