

## THE TOWERS OF LEBANON

October 29 2004

*Bin Laden's address to the peoples of Europe in the spring of 2004 sought to capitalize on the Spanish elections that had just toppled one of the Bush Administration's allies in the occupation of Iraq. This videotape, made available in the autumn of 2004 to al-Jazeera by the al-Sahab Institute for Media Production—by now the major conduit for al-Qaeda's video messages—was designed as an intervention in the US Presidential elections.<sup>1</sup> The timing of its broadcast, a few days before voters went to the polls on November 3, made it one of the most dramatic of bin Laden's statements. Possibly under American pressure, al-jazeera initially broadcast only an edited five-minute extract. But its impact may not have been inconsequential, if the Democratic contender for the White House is to be believed. In an interview given in January 2005, John Kerry attributed the failure of his campaign not only to 9/11, but to this eve-of-poll message from bin Laden: "We were rising in the polls up until the last day when the tape appeared. We flat-lined the day the tape appeared, and went down on Monday."<sup>2</sup>*

*The aim of the message, crafted for its non-Muslim audience, is to isolate the Bush administration, and beyond it the American political establishment as whole, from American popular feeling—as well as European opinion. Bin Laden repeats that he well understands that "security is one of the pillars of human life," whose value no free people underestimates. The cause he represents is not hostile to freedom or the West as such. Al-Qaeda has not attacked Sweden, which has never been an aggressor in Muslim world. If the American people wish to avoid another Manhattan, they must understand the causes and consequences of US policies in the Middle East. For the first time claiming direct responsibility for the attacks of 9/11, bin Laden links them with*

<sup>1</sup> A link to the video was posted on the Islamist al-Islah message forum (<http://www.islahi.net/vboard/showthread.php?t=116671>), which has since been closed down. The videotape was also posted on <http://www2.vh-p.net/su/img/257.zip>.

<sup>2</sup> Interview with NBC's "Meet the Press" on January 30 2005. For a full transcript, go to <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/6886726/>

*the American-backed Israeli invasion of Lebanon in June 1982. He recalls the horrific images of the siege of Beirut, and the repeated attacks on West Beirut's high-rise apartment blocks: "As I looked at those destroyed towers in Lebanon, it occurred to me to punish the aggressor in kind by destroying towers in America." He then lists the occasions when he repeatedly warned America that an assault like 9/11 would happen, both in interviews with Western journalists in the late 1990s, and in attacks on US military and diplomatic outposts in the Middle East.*

*Pouring scorn on the Bush family—the father, visiting kings and dictators in the Middle East, sought to emulate them in the US; the son failed to react to the first news of 9/11—bin Laden says the current administration has played into al-Qaeda's hands by plunging into a war on Iraq against which American thinkers and intellectuals themselves had warned it. Bush had every opportunity to remove weapons of mass destruction peacefully, if Saddam had possessed them in the first place. But oil seduced him into an adventure in which the profits of vast corporations connected to his administration, which have won enormous contracts for the reconstruction of Iraq, were put ahead of American public interest. The result has been heavy casualties on both sides, and a mounting federal deficit, requiring emergency budgets. "This shows the success of our plan to bleed America to the point of bankruptcy, with God's will." The security of the American people, bin Laden concludes, lies not in the hands of Bush, or Kerry, or al-Qaeda, "but in your own hands"—for "whichever state does not encroach upon our security ensures its own."*

Peace be upon those who are rightly guided.

People of America,

I speak to you today about the best way to avoid another Manhattan, about the war, its causes, and its consequences. First of all, I tell you that security is one of the pillars of human life. Free men do not underestimate the value of their security, despite Bush's claim that we hate freedom.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps he can tell us why we did not attack Sweden, for example?

It is well known that those who despise freedom do not possess proud souls, unlike the nineteen [the 9/11 attackers], may God bless them. We have been fighting you because we are free men who cannot acquiesce in injustice. We want to restore security to our *umma*. Just as you violate our security, so we violate yours. Whoever encroaches upon the security of others and imagines that he will himself remain safe is but a foolish criminal. When disasters happen,

**3** On September 18 2001, at a photocall with President Chirac of France, President Bush stated that "we have entered a new type of war. It's a war against people who hate freedom."

intelligent people look for the reasons behind them, so that they can avoid them in the future.

But I am amazed at you. Although we are now into the fourth year since the events of September 11, Bush is still practicing his deception, misleading you about the real reason behind it. As a result, there are still motives for a repeat [attack]. I will explain to you the reasons behind these events, and I will tell you the truth about the moments when this decision was taken, so that you can reflect on it. God knows that the plan of striking the towers had not occurred to us, but the idea came to me when things went just too far with the American-Israeli alliance's oppression and atrocities against our people in Palestine and Lebanon.

The events that made a direct impression on me were during and after 1982, when America allowed the Israelis to invade Lebanon with the help of its third fleet.<sup>4</sup> They started bombing, killing, and wounding many, while others fled in terror. I still remember those distressing scenes: blood, torn limbs, women and children massacred. All over the place, houses were being destroyed and tower blocks were collapsing, crushing their residents, while bombs rained down mercilessly on our homes. It was like a crocodile devouring a child, who could do nothing but scream. Does a crocodile understand anything other than weapons? The whole world heard and saw what happened, but did nothing. In those critical moments, many ideas raged inside me, ideas difficult to describe, but they unleashed a powerful urge to reject injustice and a strong determination to punish the oppressors.

As I looked at those destroyed towers in Lebanon, it occurred to me to punish the oppressor in kind by destroying towers in America, so that it would have a taste of its own medicine and would be prevented from killing our

<sup>4</sup> On June 6 1982, Israel invaded Lebanon in Operation Peace for Galilee, under the direction of Defense Minister (now Prime Minister) Ariel Sharon. The stated aim of the invasion was to prevent Palestinian militia from firing rockets at civilian targets in Galilee (the first such attack for ten months had been provoked by an Israeli air raid on refugee camps and other PLO targets in Lebanon, killing 45 and wounding 150); its real aim was the destruction of the PLO. Israeli forces reached Beirut, where they encountered strong opposition from Palestinian militia; in the ensuing siege, nearly 20,000 people died, at least half of them civilians. Later that year, the Israeli military allowed Lebanese Christian Phalange militia to massacre Palestinians in the Sabra and Chatila refugee camps (see above. Statement 163, n. 5). Here bin Laden recalls the repeated Israeli bombardments of West Beirut's high-rise apartment blocks. US opposition to the Israeli invasion was muted at best; in the Arab world it was widely believed to have endorsed the invasion. See Paul Rogers, "Iraq, al-Qaeda and a Renewed Caliphate," *International Security Monthly Briefing*, October 2004.

women and children. On that day I became sure that the oppression and intentional murder of innocent women and children is a deliberate American policy. It seemed then that "freedom" and "democracy" are actually just terror, just as resistance is labelled "terrorism" and "reaction." Imposing lethal sanctions on millions of people, as Bush Sr did, and carrying out the mass butchering of children, is the worst thing that humanity has ever known. So is dropping millions of pounds of bombs and explosives on millions of children in Iraq, as Bush Junior did, to remove a former collaborator, and install a new one who will help steal Iraq's oil, as well as commit other atrocities.<sup>5</sup>

Against the background of these and similar images, the events of September 11 came as a response to these great injustices. Can you blame someone for protecting his own? Self-defense and punishing the oppressor in kind: is this shameful terrorism? Even if it is, we have no other option. This is the message that we have repeatedly tried to convey to you in words and deeds, years before September 11. You could see this, if you were so inclined, in the interview with Scott MacLeod in *Time* magazine in 1996, as well as the one with Peter Arnett on CNN in 1997, and with John Weiner in 1998. You could see it in the events in Nairobi, Tanzania, and Aden; you could see it in my interviews with Abdel Bari Atwan and with Robert Fisk, who is a fellow [Westerner] and a co-religionist of yours, but one whom I consider unbiased.<sup>6</sup>

Would those in the White House, and the TV channels who answer to those who claim to stand for freedom, dare to interview him [Fisk], so that he could explain to the American people everything he has learned from us about the reasons for our struggle? For if you could avoid perpetrating these injustices, you Americans would be on the right path towards the security you enjoyed before September 11. This is what I can say about war and its reasons.

As for the consequences of 9/11, they are, thanks to God Almighty, very positive. They surpassed all expectations and measures. This was so for many

<sup>5</sup> On March 21 2003 the US launched 1,700 bombing sorties, 504 using cruise missiles, against Iraq. Eighteen months later, a detailed analysis in *The Lancet* concluded that the civilian death toll for the conflict might be as high as 100,000.

<sup>6</sup> Abdel Bari Atwan, editor of the Arabic-language London newspaper *Al-Quds Al-Arabi*, interviewed bin Laden in Afghanistan in August 1996. The British journalist Robert Fisk has covered events in the Middle East for London's *Independent* newspaper for over 23 years; he interviewed bin Laden in 1993 and 1996.

reasons, the most important of which are as follows: we found no difficulty in leading Bush and his administration on, in light of the similarity between them and the regimes in our countries, half of whom we would describe as being ruled by the military, and the other half by sons of kings and presidents. We have long experience of them. There are many of both types who are well known for their arrogance, conceit, and illegal theft of funds.

This similarity goes back to the visits of Bush Senior to the region. While some of our people were dazzled by America and hoped that these visits would make an impression on our countries, in fact it was he who was impressed by these monarchic and military regimes. He envied the fact that they could remain in power for decades, embezzling the nation's funds with neither account nor regulation. So he brought tyranny and the suppression of liberties to his own country and called it the Patriot Act, implemented under the pretext of fighting terrorism.

Bush Sr saw the benefits of making his sons state governors. Nor did he forget to import into Florida from our region's leaders the idea of falsifying elections, so that he could use this plan at tricky moments.<sup>7</sup> As we mentioned previously, it was easy for us to provoke this administration and lure it into perdition. All we had to do was send two *mujahidin* to the Far East to raise up a rag on which "al-Qaeda" was written, and the generals came running. This inflicted human, financial, and political losses on America without them even achieving anything worth mentioning, apart from providing business for their private corporations. In addition, we gained expertise in guerrilla and attritional warfare in our struggle against the great oppressive superpower, Russia, in which we and the *mujahidin* ground it down for ten years until it went bankrupt, and decided to withdraw in defeat, praise and thanks be to God. We are continuing to make America bleed to the point of bankruptcy, by God's will. For God is able to do that. It would not be accurate to say that al-Qaeda has defeated the White House administration, or that the White House administration has lost this war, for on closer inspection it cannot be said that al-Qaeda is the sole reason for these amazing gains. The White House leadership, which is so keen to open up war fronts for its various corporations,

<sup>7</sup> George W Bush became Governor of Texas in 1994; he won re-election in 1998. John Ellis ("Jeb") Bush was appointed Governor of Florida in 1998. The role of Jeb Bush, and his Secretary of State Katherine Harris, in the Florida elections of the 2000 US presidential election attracted considerable controversy.

whether in the field of arms, oil, or construction, has also contributed to these remarkable results for al-Qaeda. To some analysts and diplomats, it seems as if we and the White House are on the same team shooting at the United States' own goal, despite our different intentions.

These and other such ideas were referred to by a British diplomat at the Royal Institute for International Affairs. For example, al-Qaeda spent \$500,000 on the September 11 attacks, while America lost more than \$500 billion, at the lowest estimate, in the event and its aftermath. That makes a million American dollars for every al-Qaeda dollar, by the grace of God Almighty.

This is in addition to the fact that it lost an enormous number of jobs—and as for the federal deficit, it made record losses, estimated at over a trillion dollars.

Still more serious for America was the fact that the *mujahidin* forced Bush to resort to an emergency budget in order to continue fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq.<sup>8</sup> This shows the success of our plan to bleed America to the point of bankruptcy, with God's will.

It truly shows that al-Qaeda has made gains, but on the other hand it also shows that the Bush administration has likewise profited. Anyone seeing the enormity of the contracts won by dubious large corporations, like Halliburton and others connected to Bush and his administration, can be certain of that. But the reality is that it is you, the American people and your economy, who are losing.

For your information, we agreed with the general commander Muhammed Atta," may God bless his soul, to carry out all operations within twenty minutes, before Bush and his administration could be aware of them, and it did not occur to us that the Commander-in-Chief of the American armed forces would leave fifty thousand of his citizens in the two towers to face this great horror on their own, just when they needed him most. It seems that a little girl's story about a goat and its butting was more important than dealing with aeroplanes and their butting into skyscrapers.<sup>10</sup> This gave us three times the amount of required time to carry out the operations, praise be to God.

8 On October 25 2004, Pentagon and Congressional figures announced that the Bush administration intended to seek around \$70 billion in emergency funding for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, pushing total spending to \$225 billion since the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

9 The Egyptian Mohammed Atta al-Sayed (1968-2001) was named as the pilot of the first plane to crash into the World Trade Center on 9/11, and was, as bin Laden indicates, the leader of the attacks.

10 A play on words in Arabic: "skyscrapers" are literally "cloud-butters".

It should also be clear to you that American thinkers and intellectuals warned Bush before the war that everything he needed to guarantee America's security by removing weapons of mass destruction—assuming they existed—was at his disposal, that all countries were with him when it came to inspection, and that America's interest did not require him to launch into a groundless war with unknown repercussions. But the black gold blinded him and he put his own private interests ahead of the American public interest. The war went ahead and many were killed. The American economy bled and Bush became embroiled in the quagmires of Iraq, which now threaten his future. He is like the grumpy goat who dug out of the ground the very knife with which he would be killed.

I tell you, fifteen thousand of our people have been killed, and tens of thousands injured, while you have had over a thousand killed and more than ten thousand wounded." Bush's hands are covered with the blood of all these casualties, from both sides, all in the name of oil and more business for his private companies.

You should know that you act like the nation that punishes the weak man who has profited from the death of one of its sons, but absolves someone from a more privileged background who has profited from the deaths of a thousand of its sons—just like your allies in Palestine who terrorize women and children, and kill and imprison men.

You should remember that every action has a reaction. Finally, you would do well to consider the wills of the thousands who left you on September 11, waving desperately for help. These are inspiring testaments, worthy of being published and studied. One of the most significant things I have read about their torments before falling was that they said: "We were wrong when we let the White House inflict unchecked its aggressive foreign policy on the poor people." They were saying to you: "People of America, call those who caused our murder to account." Happy is he who learns from the experiences of others. Their desperate signals also remind me of a verse of poetry I once read:

Evil kills its perpetrators and oppression's pastures are fatal.<sup>12</sup>

**II At end October 2004 a total of 1,155 US service personnel had died in Iraq, with 8,235 wounded. See [http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/iraq\\_casualties.htm](http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/iraq_casualties.htm)**

<sup>12</sup> Also quoted above, p. 234.

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It has been said that a penny spent on prevention is better than a fortune on cure. You should know that returning to truth is better than continuing to lie, and that any sensible person would never underestimate the value of his security, his property, or his home for the sake of the liar in the White House.

In conclusion, I say to you in truth that your security lies not in the hands of Kerry, Bush, or al-Qaeda. It lies in your own hands, and whichever state does not encroach upon our security thereby ensures its own. God is our master; you have none.

Peace be upon those who follow true guidance.