

By Steve Forbes, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

*"With all thy getting get understanding"*



## Helping bin Laden and Saddam

IT APPEARS CONGRESS IS ABOUT TO IMPOSE GRATUITOUS AND extremely harmful restrictions on our military's ability to employ special operations forces in routine but unpublicized operations. The Senate sneaked a nasty provision into a report accompanying the 2004 intelligence authorization bill. This provision would require the Pentagon to go through the same bureaucratic procedures to utilize its special ops that our intelligence agencies must undergo before engaging in clandestine intelligence and counterintelligence operations.

So, if we discovered an al Qaeda group of guerrillas operating, say, in the Philippines, we could no longer promptly attack them with near-the-scene commandos. Instead, the Pentagon would be required to obtain a presidential directive, wherein the President would formally declare such an action to be in the national interest. Then the White House would be required to send its finding to Capitol Hill, where it would have to pass before the chairmen of the House and Senate Intelligence Committees, among others,

before getting the green light. This process could take days, even weeks. By that time, the opportunity would have long passed.

Needless to say, this is head-in-the-sand stupidity, especially when a quick response is vital to successfully fighting terrorism around the world. The President—not the Senate and the House of Representatives—is Commander-in-Chief. We need more flexibility, not more rigidity, both in deploying our special operations forces and in undertaking covert-action intelligence operations.

Imagine if we had had to go through this bureaucratic rigmarole every time ground commandos wanted to move against the Taliban in Afghanistan after 9/11. There is no rationale whatsoever for redefining traditional military activities as some form of intelligence operation. The President should put an abrupt stop to Congress' attempt to play backseat general/admiral by vetoing any bill that includes such a constitutionally usurpative provision.

How could a *Republican* Senate even consider such a destructive move, one that would only bring joy to our terrorist enemies?

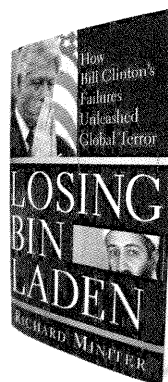
## The U.S. Let the Monster Grow

**Losing bin Laden: How Bill Clinton's Failures Unleashed Global Terror**—by Richard Minitzer (Regnery, \$27.95)—chronicles in grim, eye-popping detail how the Clinton Administration mortally bungled our pre-9/11 efforts against global terrorism. The author tapped an extraordinary array of sources to piece this sorry tale together. This book delivers a devastating blow to the former President's reputation. When Clinton took office, Osama bin Laden was a two-bit player in global terrorism. By the time George W. Bush took office, bin Laden was a master of that hideous universe, with cells in 55 countries and a record of numerous successful attacks against U.S. targets. Read this book and you won't wonder why bin Laden thought the U.S. was a paper tiger that, despite its strength, lacked the will to effectively fight Islamic fanaticism.

*Losing bin Laden* gives us head-shaking accounts of paralyzing bureaucratic infighting between the State Department, the Pentagon, the CIA, the National Security Council, the FBI, et al. This infighting hampered our antiterrorist efforts, despite irrefutable evidence of terrorism's growing

menace to U.S. security. Missed opportunities to destroy bin Laden and his accomplices abounded. One particularly ghastly instance, which preceded the 1998 bombings of two of our embassies in Africa, involved Sudan, where bin Laden had his headquarters for a few years. The Sudanese government badly wanted our economic sanctions removed and went out of its way on numerous occasions not only to try to share its detailed intelligence on bin Laden and his operations with us but also to just about deliver the devil himself to us on a platter. Sudan's efforts were repeatedly rebuffed.

President Clinton never forcefully cracked bureaucratic heads to achieve an effective coordinated antiterrorist undertaking. He and his Administration were never fully engaged; antiterrorist efforts were haphazard, half-hearted. Why? It wasn't as if the Administration was oblivious to the threat. Minitzer speculates that there were a variety of factors, prime among them Bill Clinton's deep ambivalence about the use of American power, a holdover from his anti-Vietnam War days.



## Degrading Our Military

AFTER OUR TROOPS' SPLENDID PERFORMANCE IN THE IRAQ WAR, you'd think Washington would do everything possible to make sure nothing would stand in the way of their getting the best training

possible for any future conflicts. Think again. In recent years environmental extremists have been achieving more and more success in restricting the armed services from conducting ongoing,

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