



11 September 2001

George W. Bush's longest day

WEBSITE

www.oliviercourteaux.com



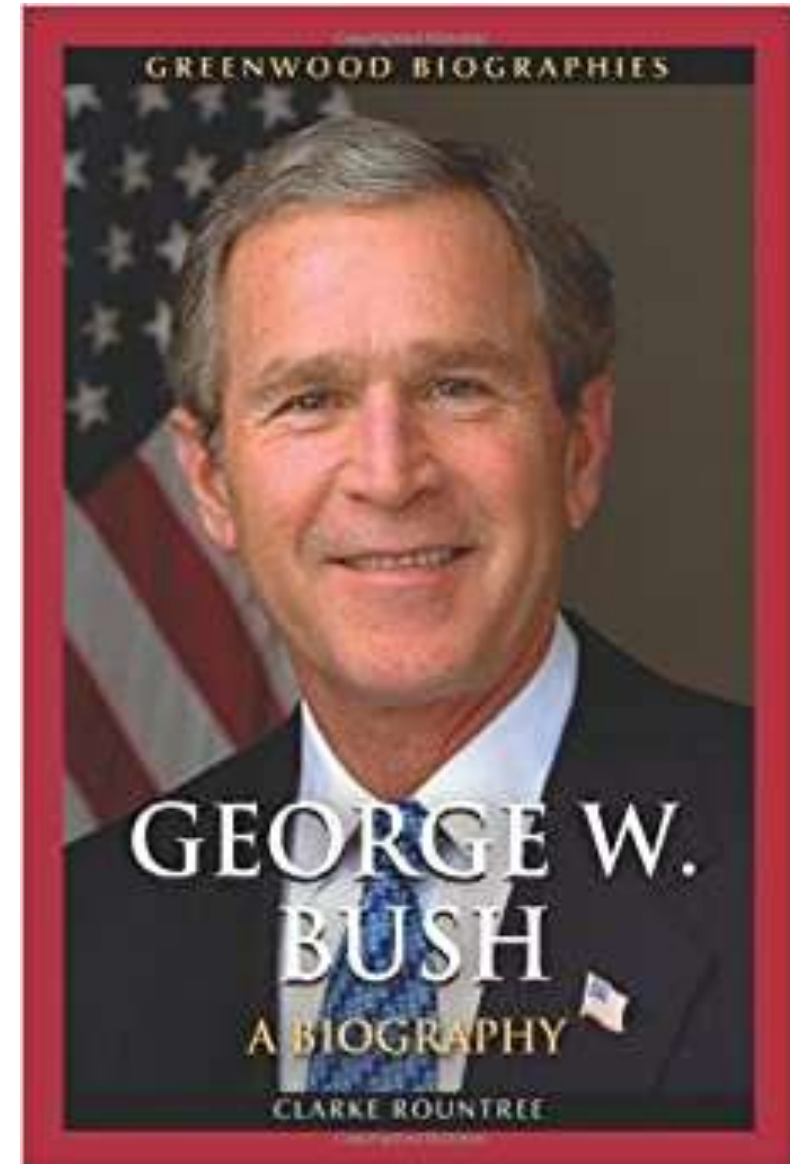
Click on **Life Institute**



Password to access the PowerPoint
presentations: **lifeinstitute**

THE
9/11
COMMISSION
REPORT

FINAL REPORT OF THE NATIONAL COMMISSION ON
TERRORIST ATTACKS UPON THE UNITED STATES



“It should be a quiet day”

8am: ***Presidential Daily Brief***

A CIA analyst discussing tensions in
the Middle-East

Focus on **education reform** blocked
by Senate





9am: Emma E. Booker Elementary
School

Karl Rove (Senior Advisor): a small plane
has hit the World Trade Center

"It might be a commercial plane"



Condoleezza Rice



9.03am: second Boeing 767
(United Airlines 175) hit the South
Tower







Meanwhile at the White House...

VP Dick Cheney: *"It is likely a terrorist attack"*

George W. Bush: *"We are at war"*



A close-up portrait of Brian Stafford, a man with short dark hair and blue eyes, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and a patterned tie. He is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. The background is a blurred American flag with white stars on a blue field.

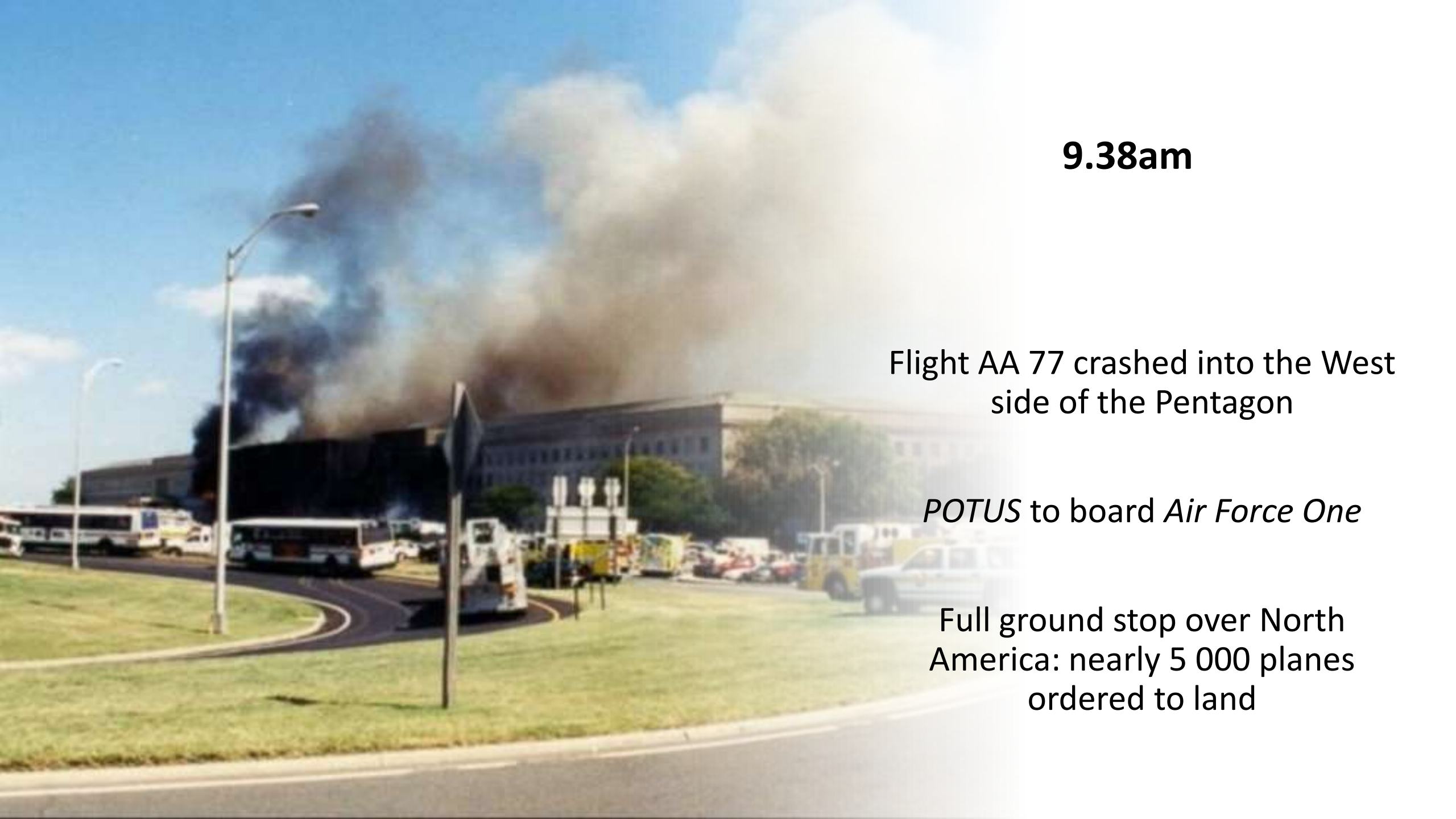
Bush not to return to
Washington

Another flight (AA 77) on its way to
Washington?

Loss of contacts

The White House evacuated
Cheney moved to the *Presidential
Emergency Operations Center*

Brian Stafford
Director US Secret Service



9.38am

Flight AA 77 crashed into the West
side of the Pentagon

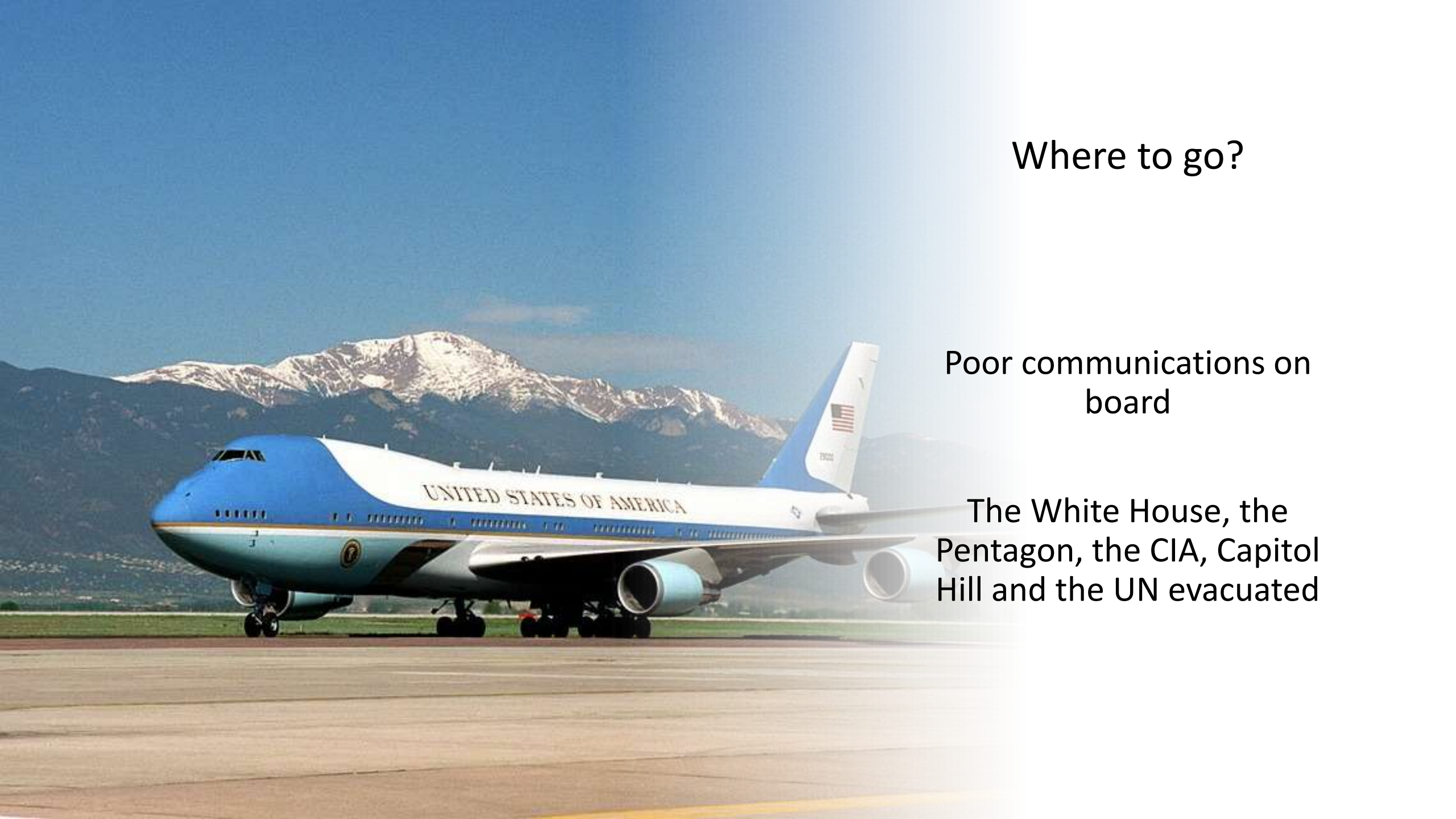
POTUS to board Air Force One

Full ground stop over North
America: nearly 5 000 planes
ordered to land

Where to go?

Poor communications on
board

The White House, the
Pentagon, the CIA, Capitol
Hill and the UN evacuated





9.59am

The collapse of the South Tower
10.30am: the collapse of the North
Tower

The symbol of America's financial
power

Decision to shoot down any
unresponsive aircraft



UA Flight 93

Crashed in Pennsylvania
Its target: the Capitol or the
White House

BARKSDALE AIR FORCE BASE



AIR FORCE GLOBAL STRIKE COMMAND





“Where is the President?”

The President still not allowed
to return to Washington

Direction military base of Offutt
(Nebraska)

*“We are at war against
terrorism”*

Who did it?

“Ben Laden”





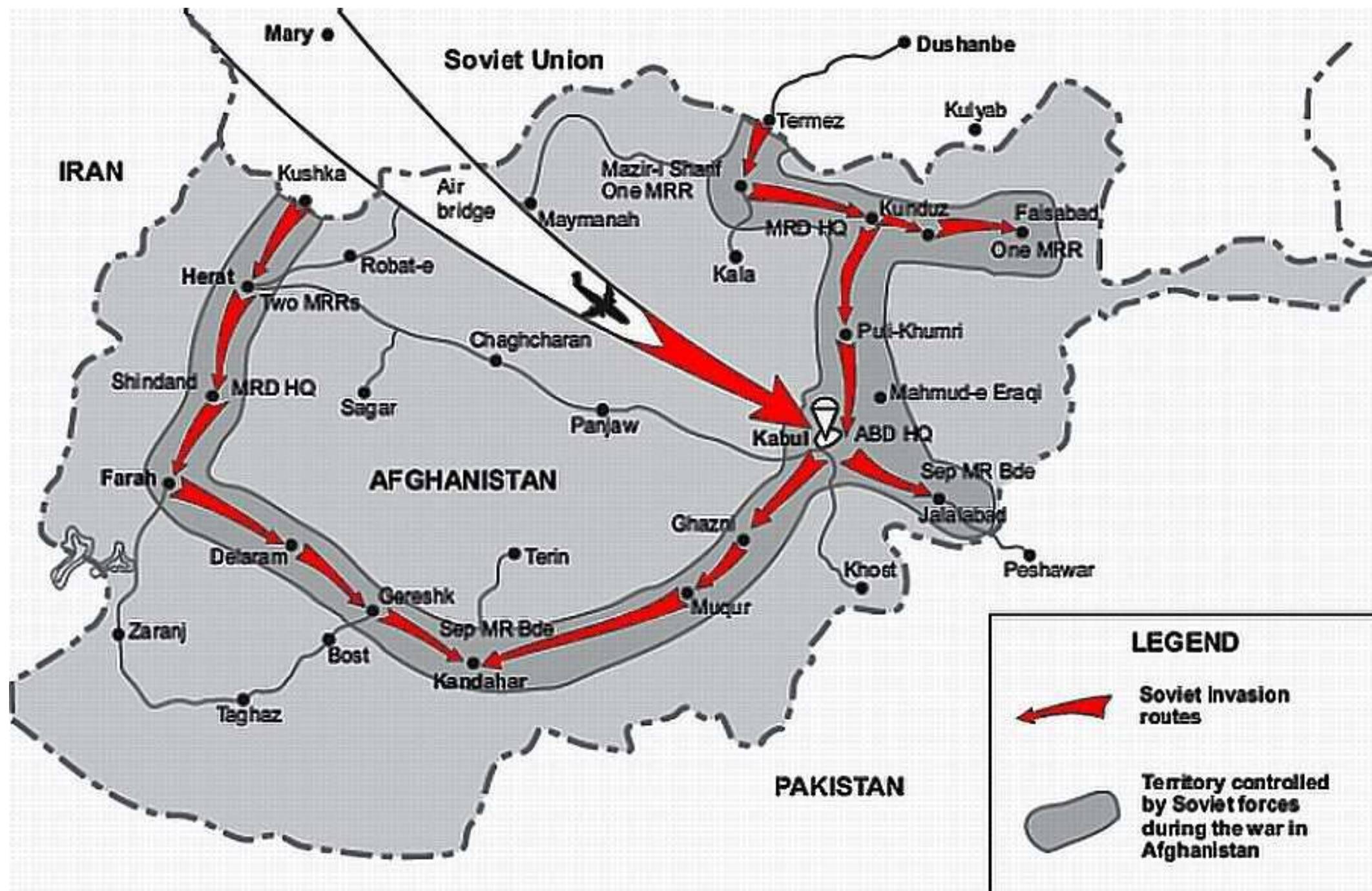
24 December 1979

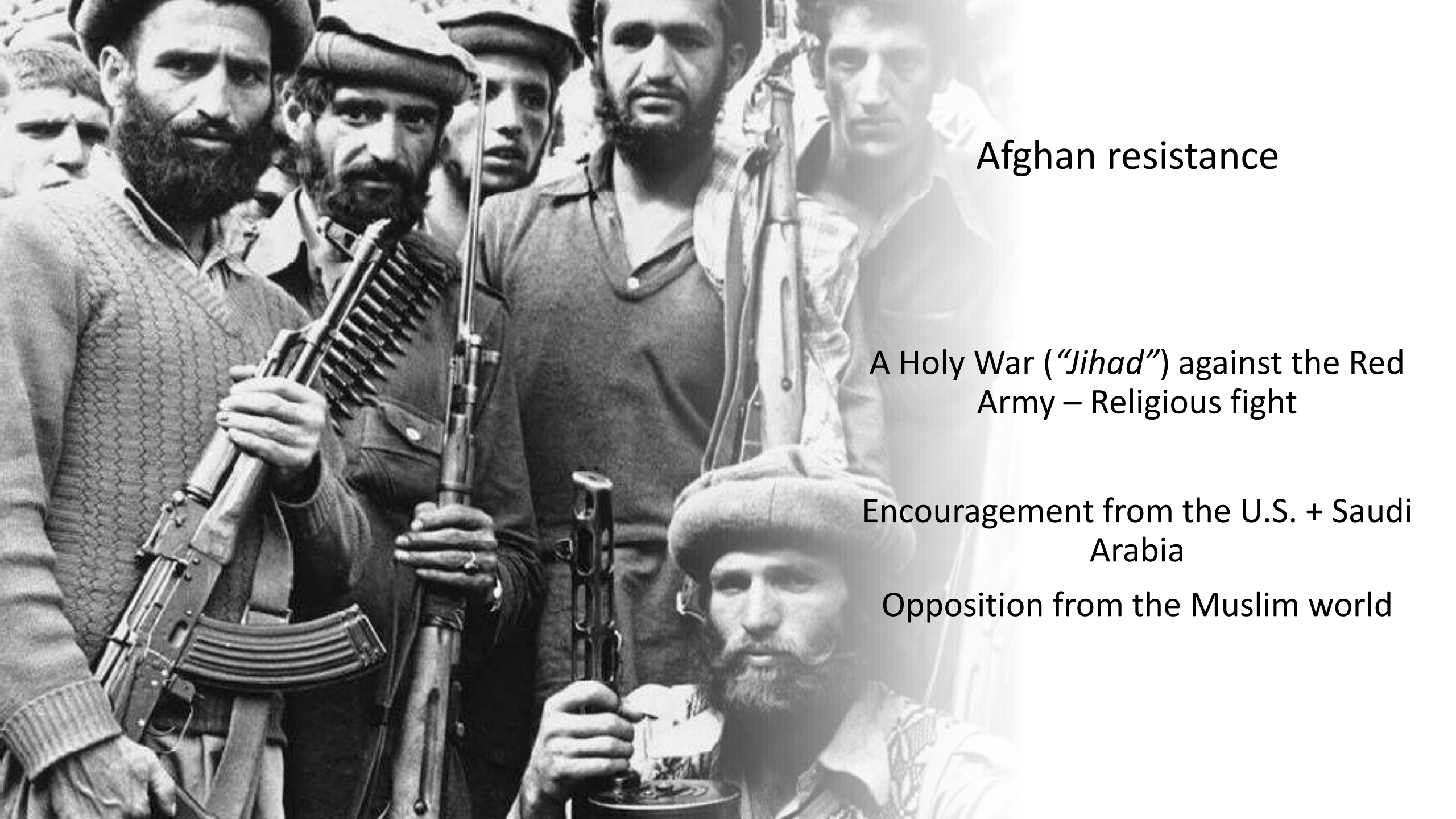
The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan

WHY?

To maintain an unpopular
Communist regime (since 1978) in
power

The "*Brezhnev Doctrine*": once
communist, a country must remain
communist





Afghan resistance

A Holy War ("*Jihad*") against the Red Army – Religious fight

Encouragement from the U.S. + Saudi Arabia

Opposition from the Muslim world



The *Mujahideen*

Multiple groups dominated by warlords

Fighters from the Muslim world
(international brigades): Saudi Arabia,
Yemen, Algeria, Egypt...

Why were they allowed to leave their
countries?

A way to get rid of the most extremist
elements



Miscalculation

Afghan guerilla against Red Army

Foreign jihadists formed in Afghanistan
but rarely involved

Most would return to their countries
(fully trained and indoctrinated)



Osama ben Laden

Trained in Afghanistan

The birth of Al-Qaida (“base”)

Base where jihadists were trained

+

Database (name of those who
were trained – Easily mobilized via
internet)



What role for the U.S.?

CIA financial involvement (\$600 million per year)

Afghanistan: the Soviet "Vietnam"

Afghan guerilla supplied in weapons (mostly Chinese) paid by the CIA and Saudi Arabia



Iranian Revolution

The hostage crisis

The Islamist threat in Iran (Shiites)
Sunni Islamism not taken seriously
by the U.S. (financial help in
Afghanistan)



14 February 1989

Soviet withdrawal from
Afghanistan

The final collapse of the
Soviet Union



Afghanistan in 1989

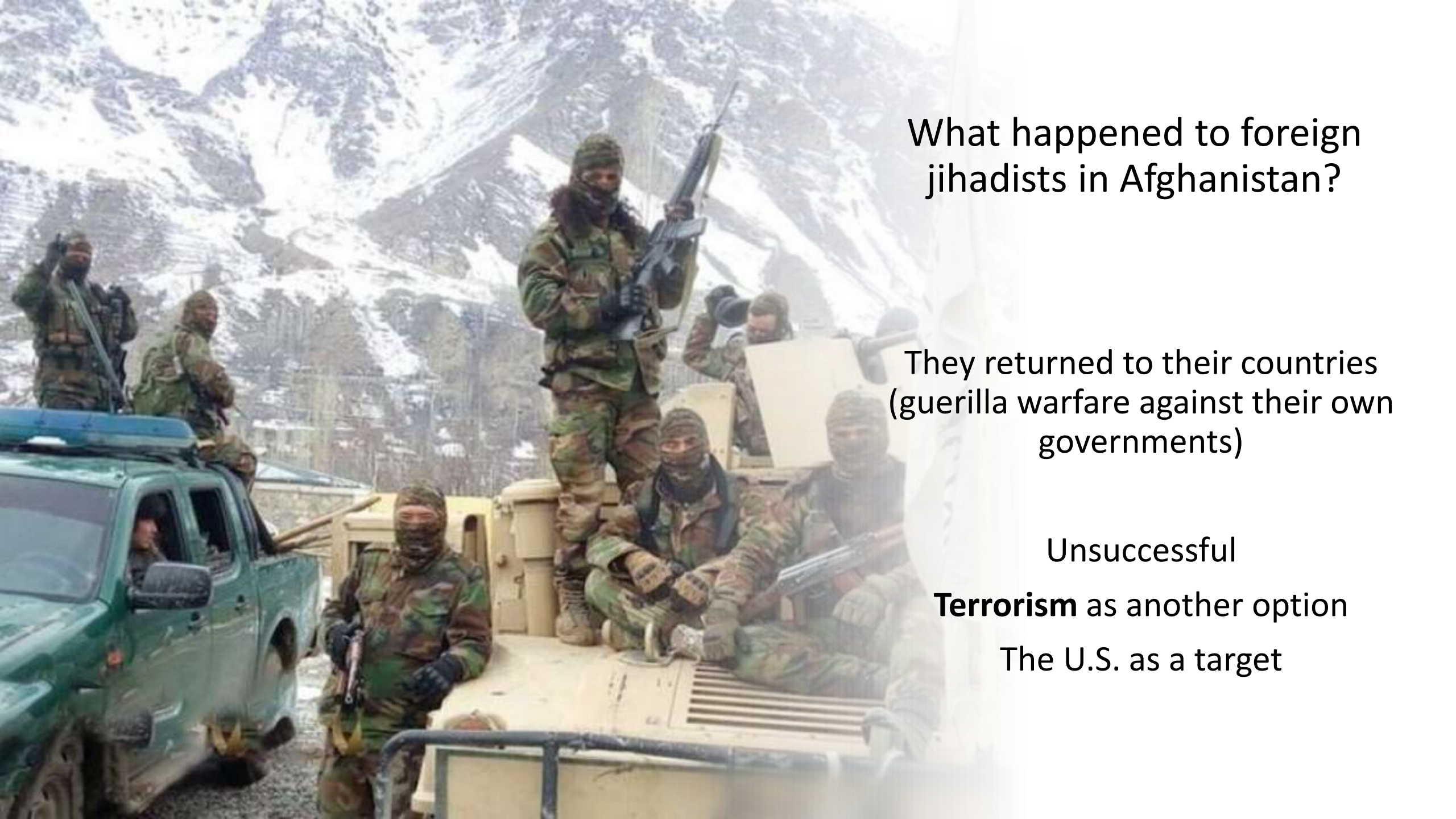
Anarchy and chaos

Pro-communist regime fell in 1992

Civil war: the rise of the Taliban or
“students” (1996)

Movement preaching a hardline
form of Sunni Islam

(Mostly financed by Saudi Arabia)



What happened to foreign
jihadists in Afghanistan?

They returned to their countries
(guerilla warfare against their own
governments)

Unsuccessful

Terrorism as another option

The U.S. as a target



The end of the Cold War

Deep cuts in U.S. intelligence
budgets



1991

U.S. intelligence services preoccupied by the end
of the Cold War and the **disintegration of the
Soviet Union**



The rising threat of Islamist terrorism ignored

The CIA budget decreased

Less recruitment

Lack of Arabic-speaking agents



1993 World Trade Center bombing

Inadequate cooperation between
the FBI & the CIA

U.S. targets in Kenya, Tanzania
(1998)

Suicide attack against *USS Cole*
(Yemen) in 2000

June 2001: *“I am relying on my sixth sense, but I see it happening soon. This time, they are going to hit us hard”*
(George Tenet, Director of the Central Intelligence Intelligence)

No one listening!





Condoleezza Rice
(National Security Advisor)

A brilliant specialist of... Russia!

Little interest for Islamist
terrorism

The new **Bush** administration

The Clinton era failed to fully exploit the post Cold War superiority of the U.S.

Establishing U.S. global superiority

Little interest for ben Laden and his group of fanatics



9/11: the clues



February 2001: instructors at a Phoenix flight school reported the strange behavior of a student to the **Federal Aviation Administration**

A strange request: to learn only how **to take off** a Boeing 737





Spring 2001: a warning from the CIA

Al Qaeda preparing terror attacks in the Middle-East & Europe

The possibility of an attack on U.S. soil not considered



Al Qaeda: **no study** of bin Laden's organization by a U.S. intelligence until... 1999!

No serious thoughts as to the concept of **martyrdom** (a necessary part of Islamist *Jihad*)



Suicide-bombing: one of Al Qaeda's trademarks

Ramzi Yousef (one of the 4
terrorists convicted of plotting
the 1993 World Trade Center
bombing)



Plan to simultaneously hijack 12
commercial airliners



June 2001: warning from
the Federal Aviation
Administration

Increased risks of hijacking

Action taken: the closing of U.S.
embassies in Bahrein & Dakar!



Entrance To
Level A Garage
Open 24 Hours
Visitor Parking
Parking By Permit Only:

A FBI report on student-pilot eager
to learn about take-off techniques

Mired in FBI bureaucracy: no action
taken





August 2001: Zacarias
Moussaoui (Franco-Moroccan)
charged with immigration
violation

Moussaoui: one of the students so
eager to learn how to take off a Boing
787!

Warning from French intelligence
Moussaoui: a member of Al Qaeda

No action taken



When the CIA hid information
from the FBI

CIA managed to photocopy passport of a member
of Al Qaeda Khalid al-Mihdhar on his way to Kuala
Lumpur

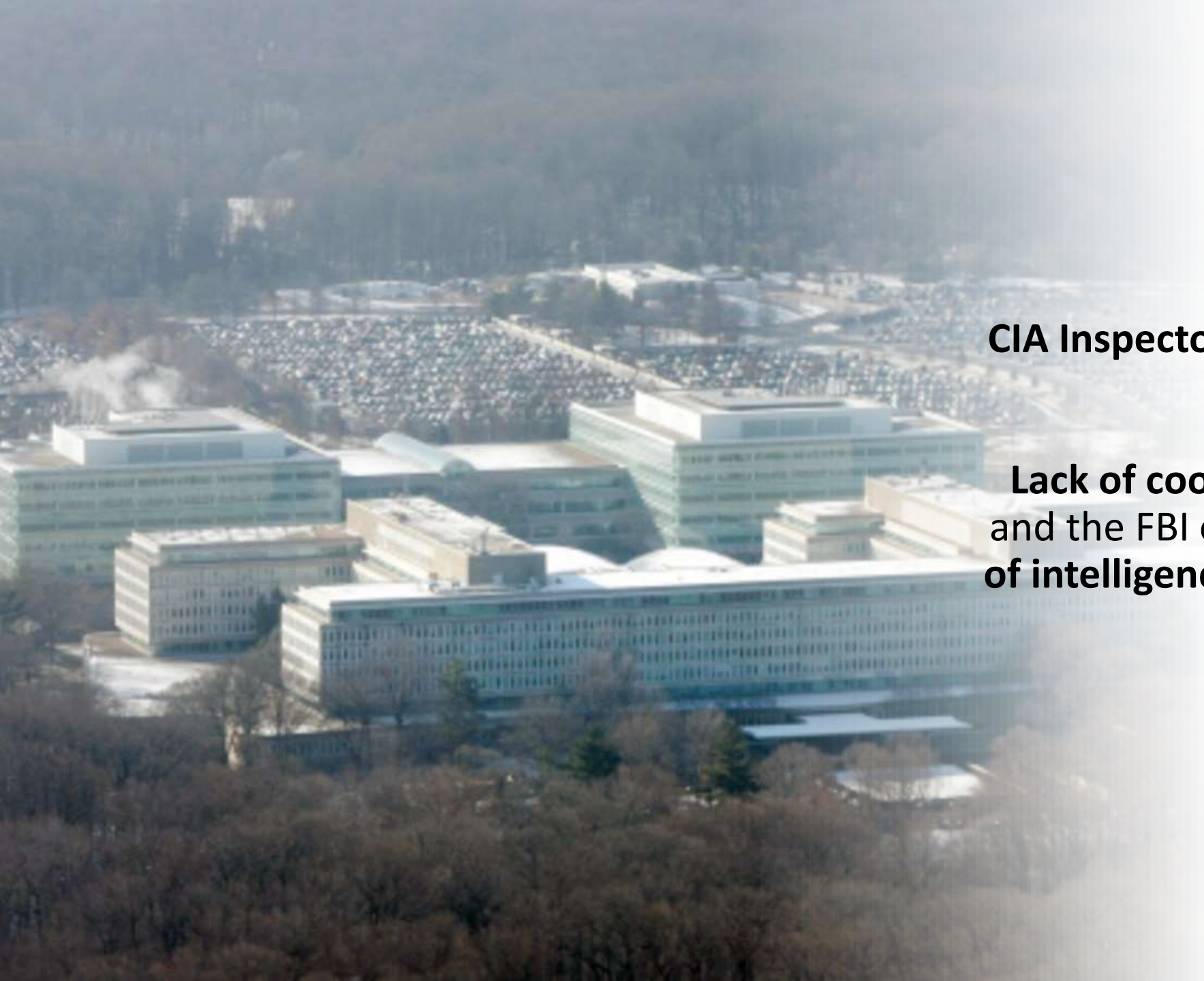
Entry visas to the U.S. but al-Mihdhar not added to
the list of dangerous individuals to intercept until
late August 2001!

Al-Mihdhar: one of the hijackers on 9/11

Why this deliberate lack of cooperation?

1. The CIA hoped to turn him into a double-agent?
2. An error?





CIA Inspector General's Report on 9/11
(June 2005):

Lack of cooperation between the CIA and the FBI explains the **non-treatment of intelligence** that could have given the alert



11 September 2001

George W. Bush's longest day



Addressing the nation
from the Oval Office

Bush back to Washington
Will he be able to reassure a
nation under stress?

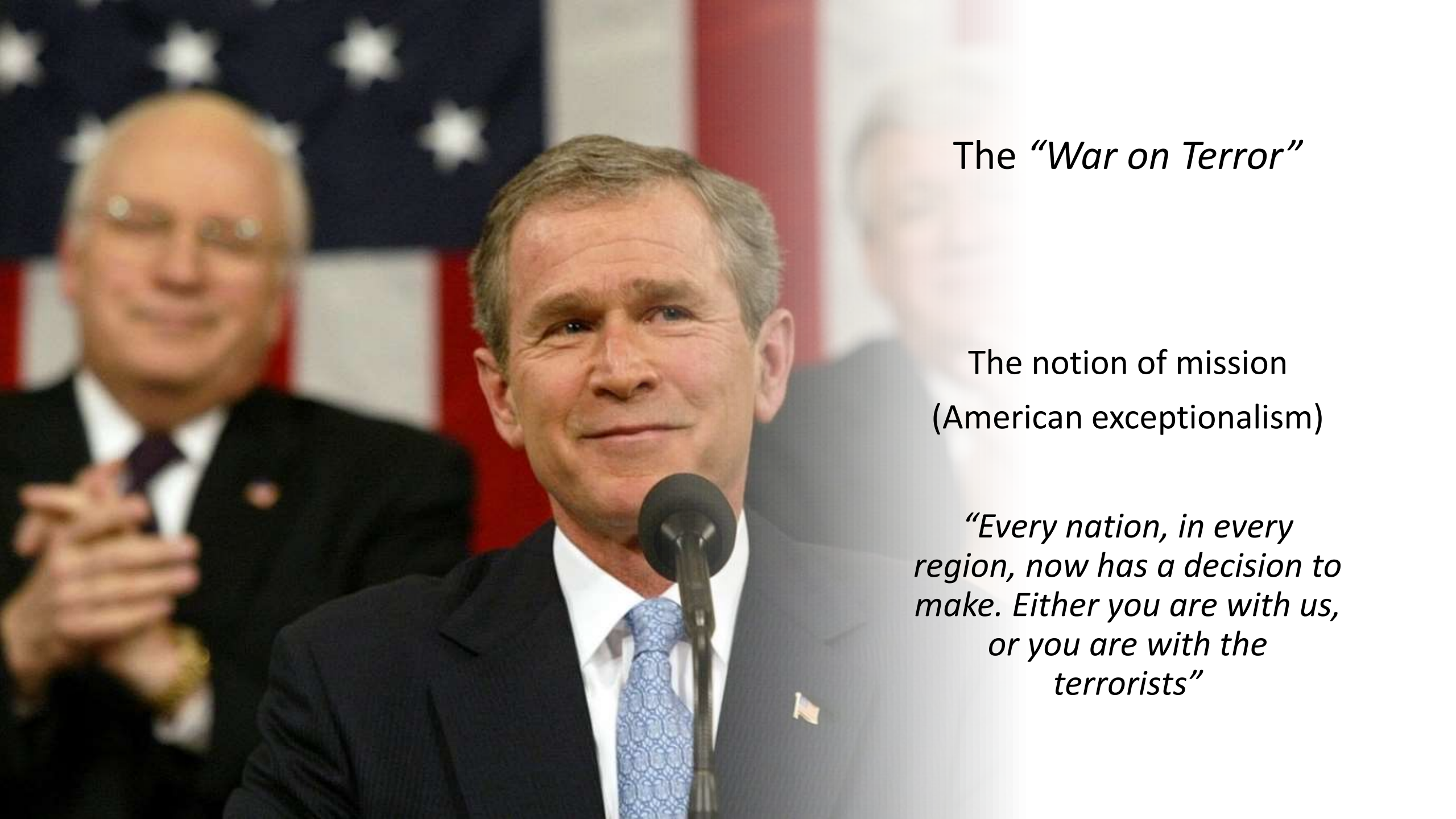




George W. Bush

From political lightweight to
“providential man”

Approval rating on 9-11: 90%



The “*War on Terror*”

The notion of mission
(American exceptionalism)

*“Every nation, in every
region, now has a decision to
make. Either you are with us,
or you are with the
terrorists”*

A 21st century Pearl Harbor?

Pearl Harbor: the first frame of reference for the attacks

Widespread use of Pearl Harbor imagery

“The Pearl Harbor of the 21st century took place today”
(George W. Bush)



The Pearl Harbor analogy

Al-Qaeda: a loosely organized network
Not a station-state

Pearl Harbor: a military base

World Trade Center: an international symbol of
capitalism

Roosevelt embraced an international coalition

Bush's phrase: *"either you are with us, or you are
with the terrorists"*

=

Anti-internationalist rhetoric



The “Axis of Evil”

WW2 “Axis” and Reagan’s
“empire of evil” (Soviet Union)

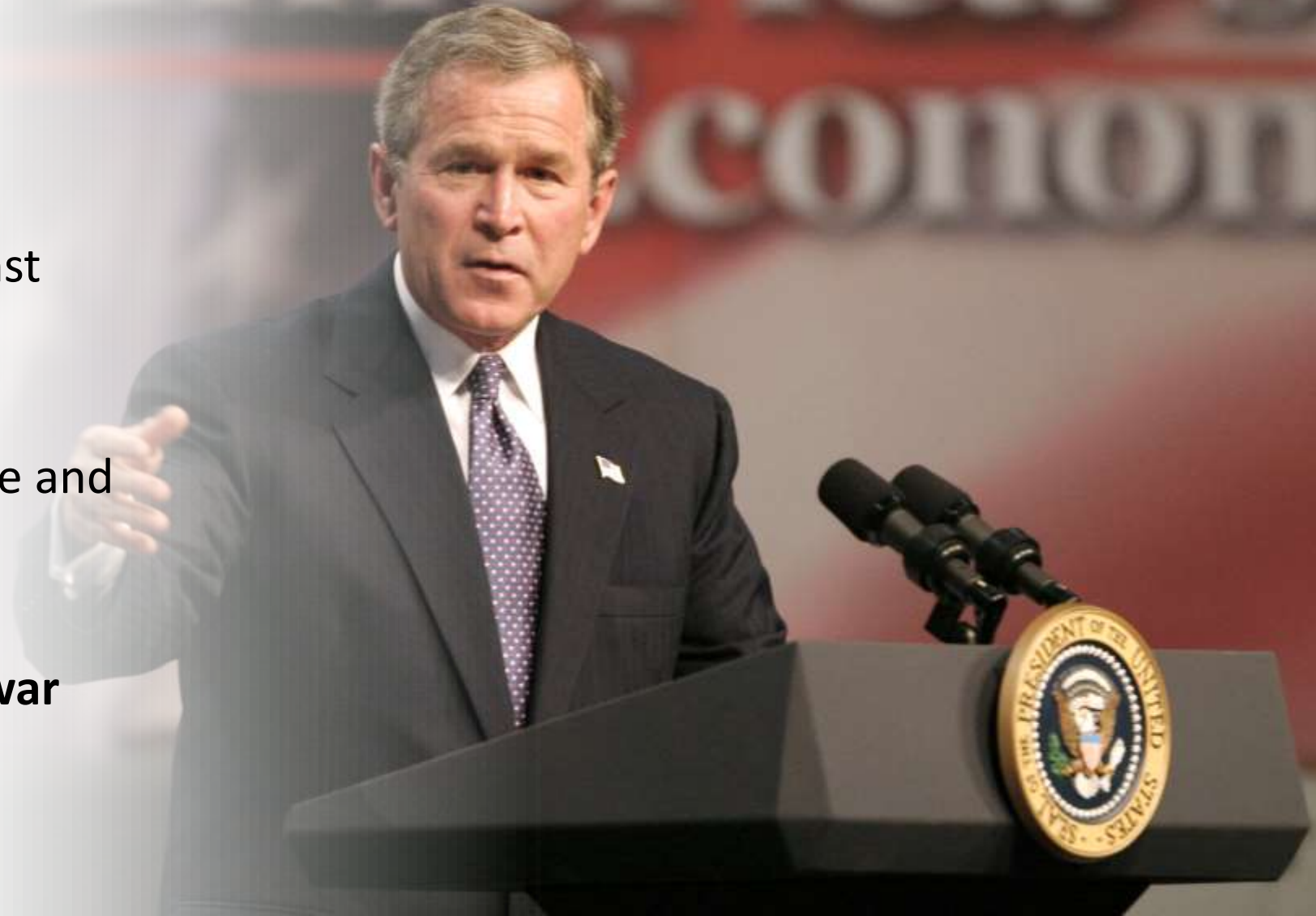


The “Bush Doctrine”

The defence of peace against
“terrorists and tyrants”

To spread peace by helping free and
open societies

The concept of **preventive war**





Preventive vs. pre-emptive

Pre-emptive action: imminent danger

Preventive war: to prevent another country or group of countries from developing a military might that could pose a threat in the future



Afghanistan: the stalemate

The longest U.S. led conflict

2001: a clear objective

Bush: attacks as *“acts of war”*

“We will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed those acts (Al-Qaeda) and those who harbor them (the Taliban)”

A simple strategy

To eradicate Al-Qaeda and get rid of the Taliban

To impose a new political order in Afghanistan in line with American interests – *Regime change*

Minimum military involvement



Northern Alliance
Territorial Claims

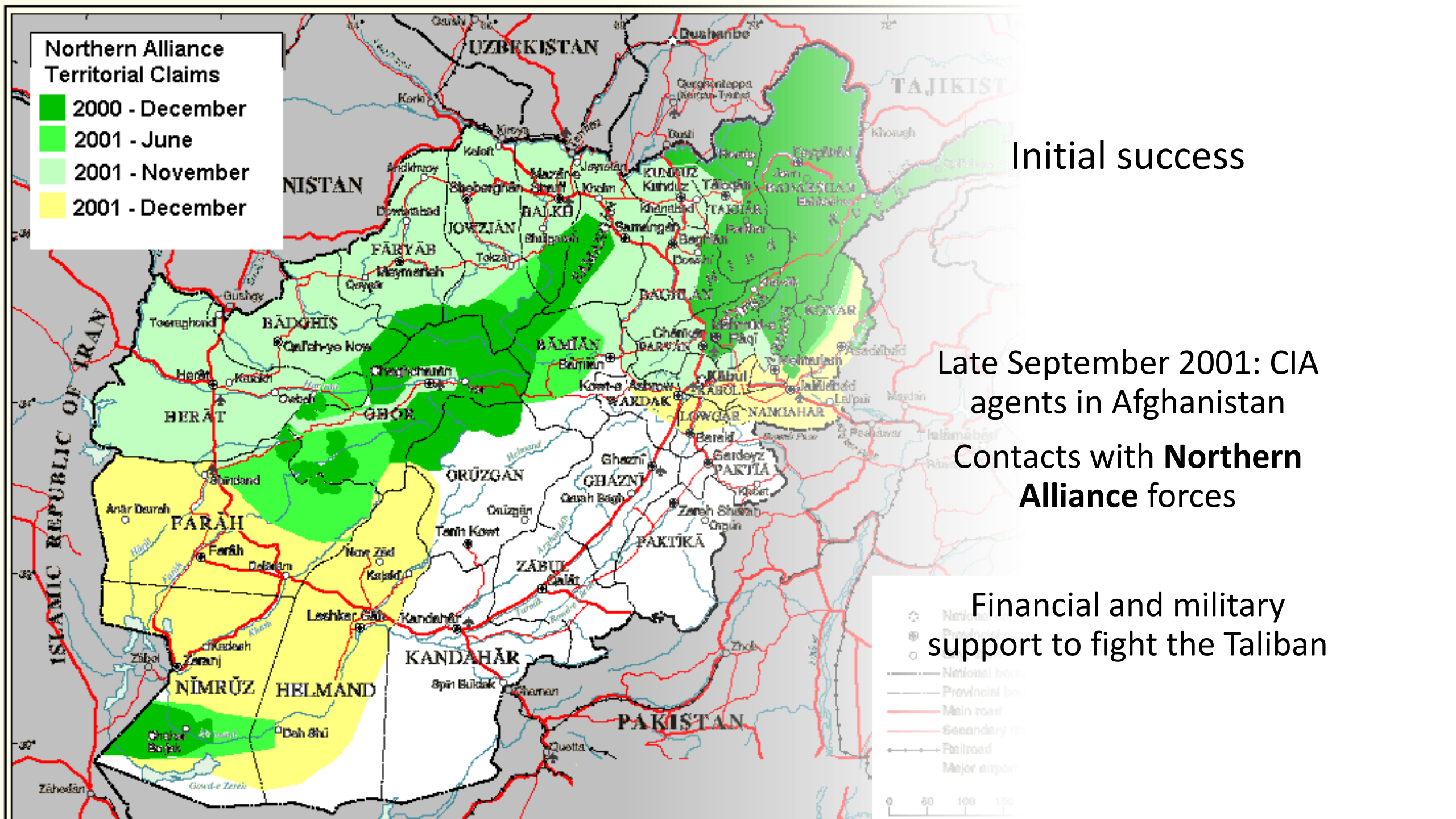
- 2000 - December
- 2001 - June
- 2001 - November
- 2001 - December

Initial success

Late September 2001: CIA
agents in Afghanistan

Contacts with **Northern
Alliance** forces

Financial and military
support to fight the Taliban





October 2001

Special forces commandos to
coordinate fighting and
bombardments (U.S. air force)

Northern Alliance Territorial Claims

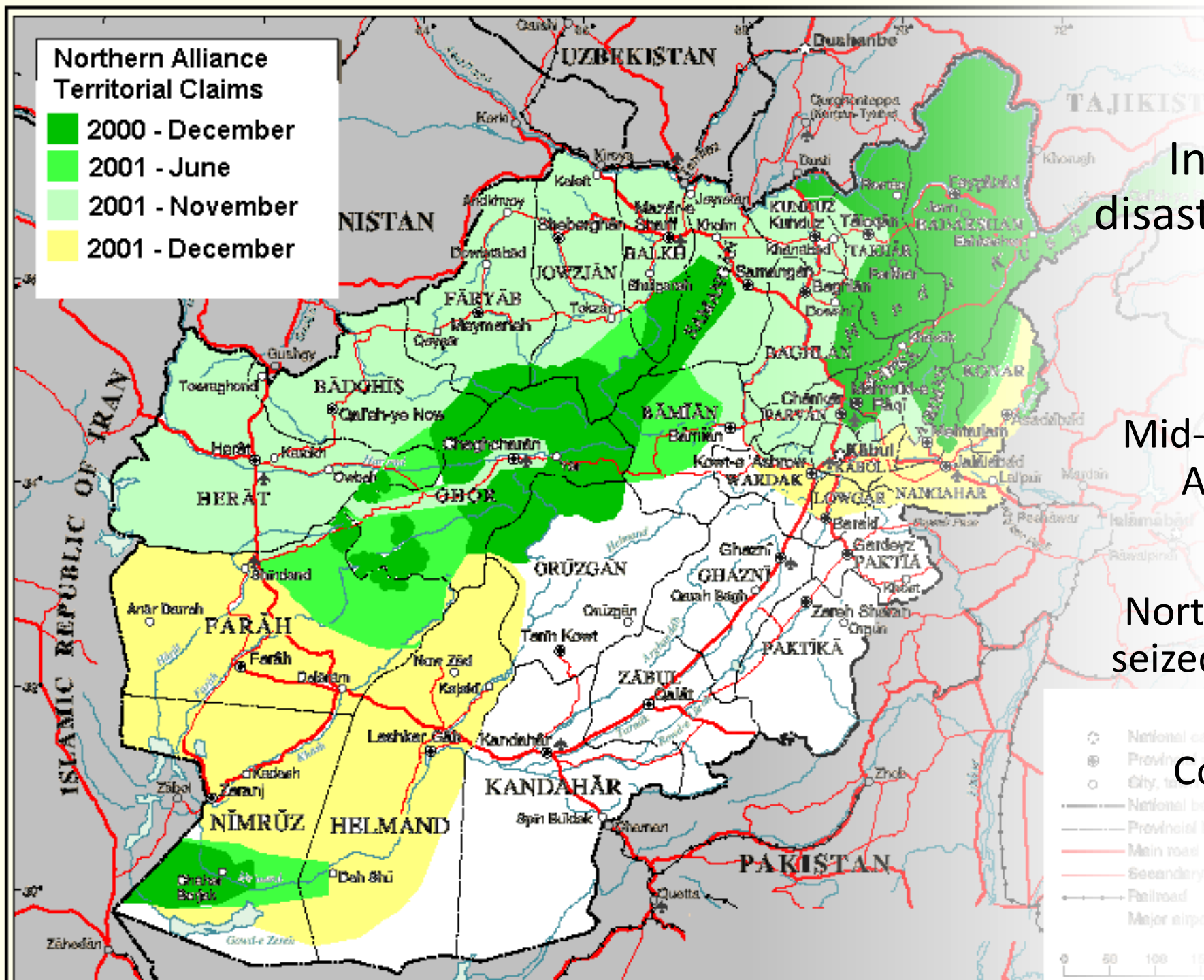
- 2000 - December
- 2001 - June
- 2001 - November
- 2001 - December

Initial success but
disastrous consequences

Mid-November: Northern
Alliance took Kabul

Northern Alliance leaders
seized key resources + best
land

Control over Afghan
administration



A new political regime

A provisional government led by Hamid Karzai
2004: a new Constitution + presidential election
2005: legislative elections





A corrupt regime

Afghanistan divided amongst
warlords (supported
financially by the U.S.)


Massive and generalized
corruption



Pashtun populations
marginalized

Foreign presence perceived
as an occupation

Coalition troops: little
respect for local customs



Taliban armed insurrection
(2004-2005)

2009: military redeployment (from
Iraq to Afghanistan)

100 000 U.S. troops

BUT

NO new strategy



2011: Ben Laden shot
dead in Pakistan

Afghan regime on the verge
of implosion

2020 Agreement for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan

A “permanent ceasefire” with the
Taliban

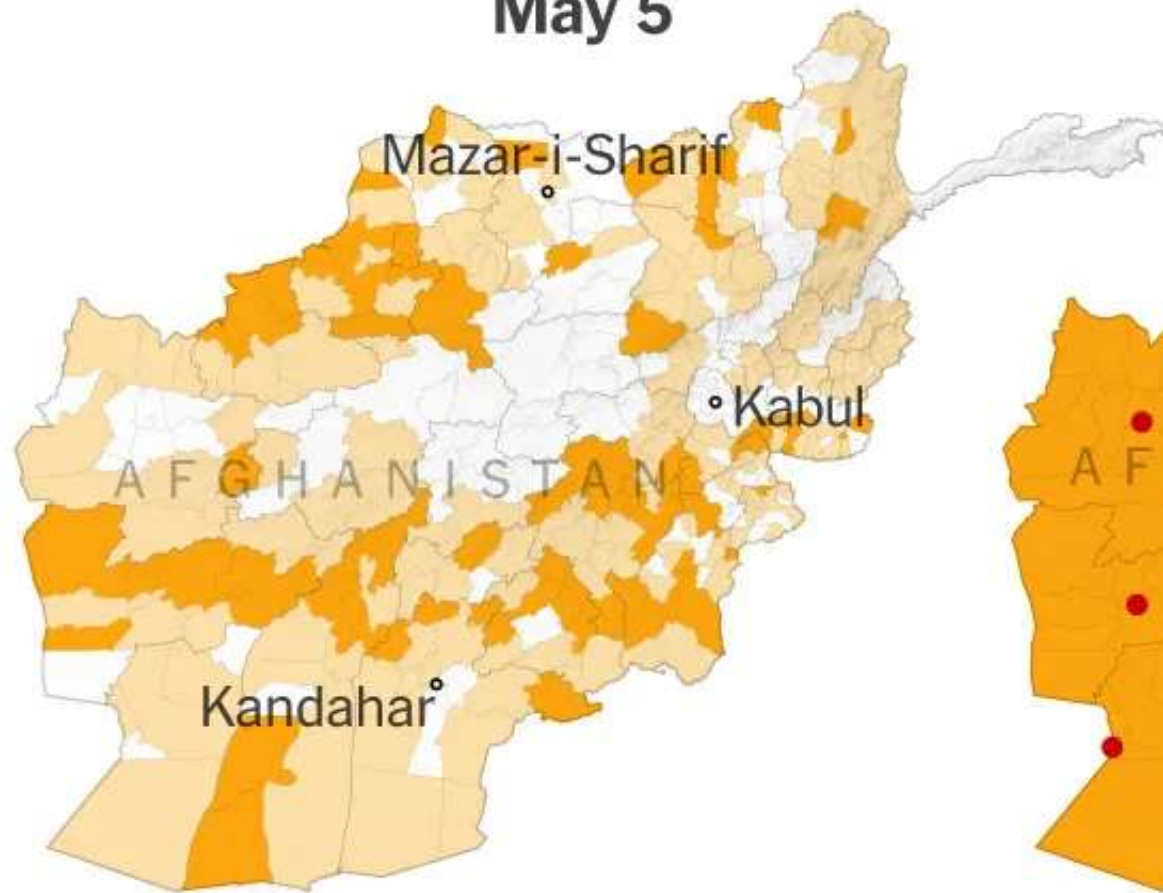
Trump’s very public commitment to
withdraw American forces out of
Afghanistan

OR

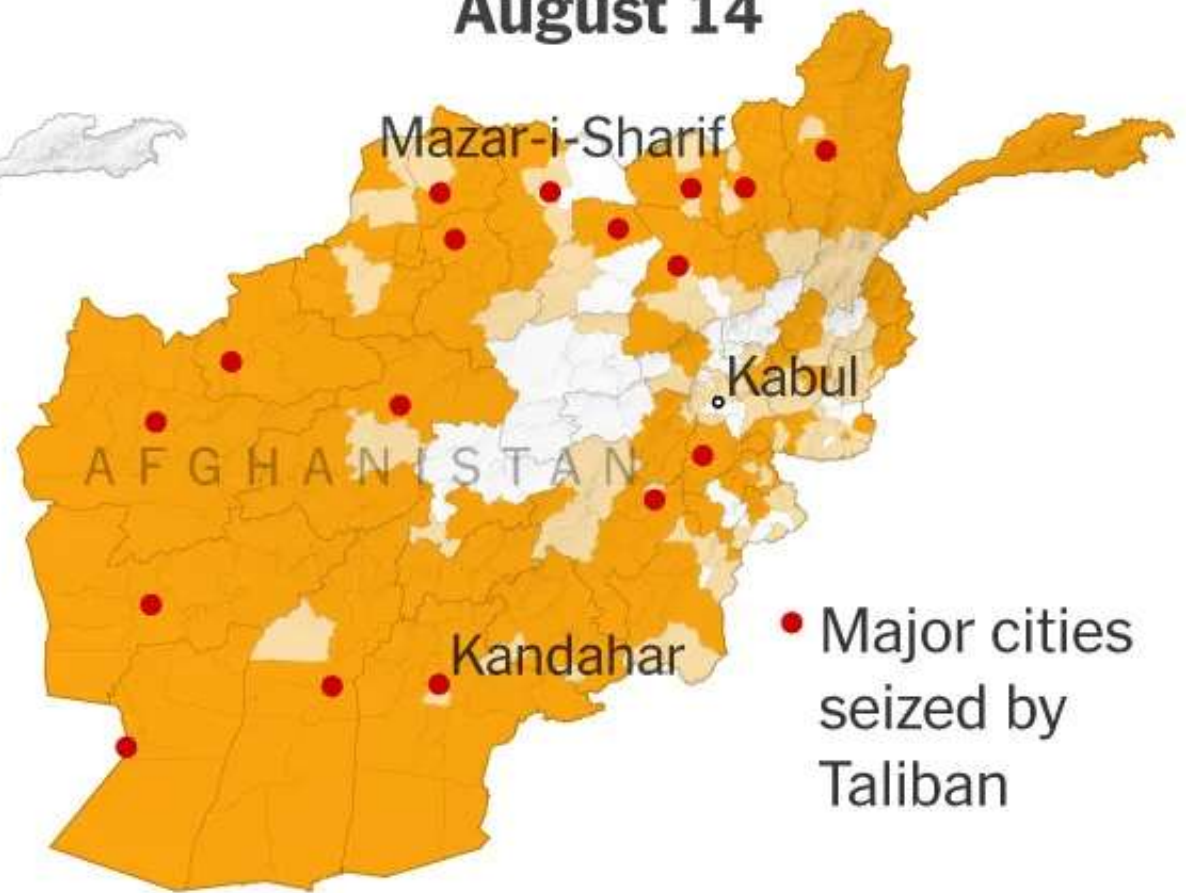
How to undermine an agreement



May 5



August 14



• Major cities seized by Taliban

 Taliban

 Contested


 Government



Violence grew to its
highest levels

70% of Afghan territory controlled
by the Taliban

Little resistance by Afghan security
forces (trained and financed by
the U.S. coalition)



2021: Joe Biden's decision to
withdraw from Afghanistan

775 000 U.S. troops in 20 years

Estimated cost: \$US 900 billion

2 500 dead

The U.S. unable to promote a stable
political regime

Regime change: a failure



2003: U.S. intervention
in Iraq

In the name of the war on
terror

Weapons of mass destruction

2002 *National Intelligence
Estimate (NIE)* heavily redacted

Initial conclusions: no weapons
of mass destruction in Iraq

[]/NF Obtaining accurate information on the size of foreign CW weapons holdings is extremely difficult because CW munitions storage areas [] and because most foreign states take extraordinary precautions to conceal their locations.

~~(S/NF)~~ We judge that Iraq has continued its weapons of mass destruction (WMD) programs in defiance of UN resolutions and restrictions. Baghdad has chemical and biological weapons as well as missiles with ranges in excess of UN restrictions; if left unchecked, it probably will have a nuclear weapon during this decade. (See INR alternative view at the end of these Key Judgments.)

[]/NF The presence of al-Qa'ida militants in Iraq poses many questions. We do not know to what extent Baghdad may be actively complicit in this use of its territory for safehaven and transit. Given the

C01030196

Approved for Release: 2014/12/09 C01030196

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~NOFORN~~/X1

(b)(3)

Handle via
Channels Joints

(b)(3)

National
Intelligence
Estimate

~~(S/NF)~~ Iraq's Continuing Programs
for Weapons of Mass Destruction

~~(S/NF)~~ Covert Acts Employing CBW
~~(S/NF)~~ All past clandestine operations we know Iraq to have committed, attempted, or supported have involved conventional tactics, and we have no solid evidence Iraq has ever provided CBW or materiel to any terrorist group.

- Although we assess that Saddam does not yet have nuclear weapons, he remains intent on acquiring them. Most agencies are reconstituting its nuclear program about the time that UNSCOM was dismantled in December 1998.

infrastructure, and already engaged in a life-or-death struggle against the United States—could meet his requirements. In such circumstances, he might decide that the extreme step of assisting the Islamist terrorists in conducting a WMD attack against the United States would be his last chance to exact vengeance by taking a large number of

NIE 2002-16HC



The planning of the Iraq
intervention

State Department experts on Arab world not
consulted

Initial plans for Iraq occupation ignored



What vision for the Middle-East?

Building a democratic state controlled by the U.S.

Total ignorance of Iraq's realities

Opposition Shiites vs. Sunnis enhanced by U.S. military intervention

Destabilizing effects



Initial success

Iraqi forces rapidly destroyed

The collapse of Saddam
Hussein's regime

The occupation of Iraq



Stalemate

The initial goal: to rebuild
Iraq

Security forces dissolved
Iraqi elites dismissed

A fiasco



2007 *Surge*

Additional 20 000 men

Bush re-elected in 2004: not to be
perceived as the president who lost
the war in Iraq

Support from the U.S. military

TIME
SURGE

DOES SENDING MORE SOLDIERS TO IRAQ MAKE **ANY** SENSE?

Marine
Lance Corporal
Philip
Busevlatner
in Ramadi



Civil War

The rise of the Islamic State
(ISIS)

An army led by former Sunni
officers under Saddam



Barack Obama: what policy
for the Middle-East?

Iraq war: a useless war

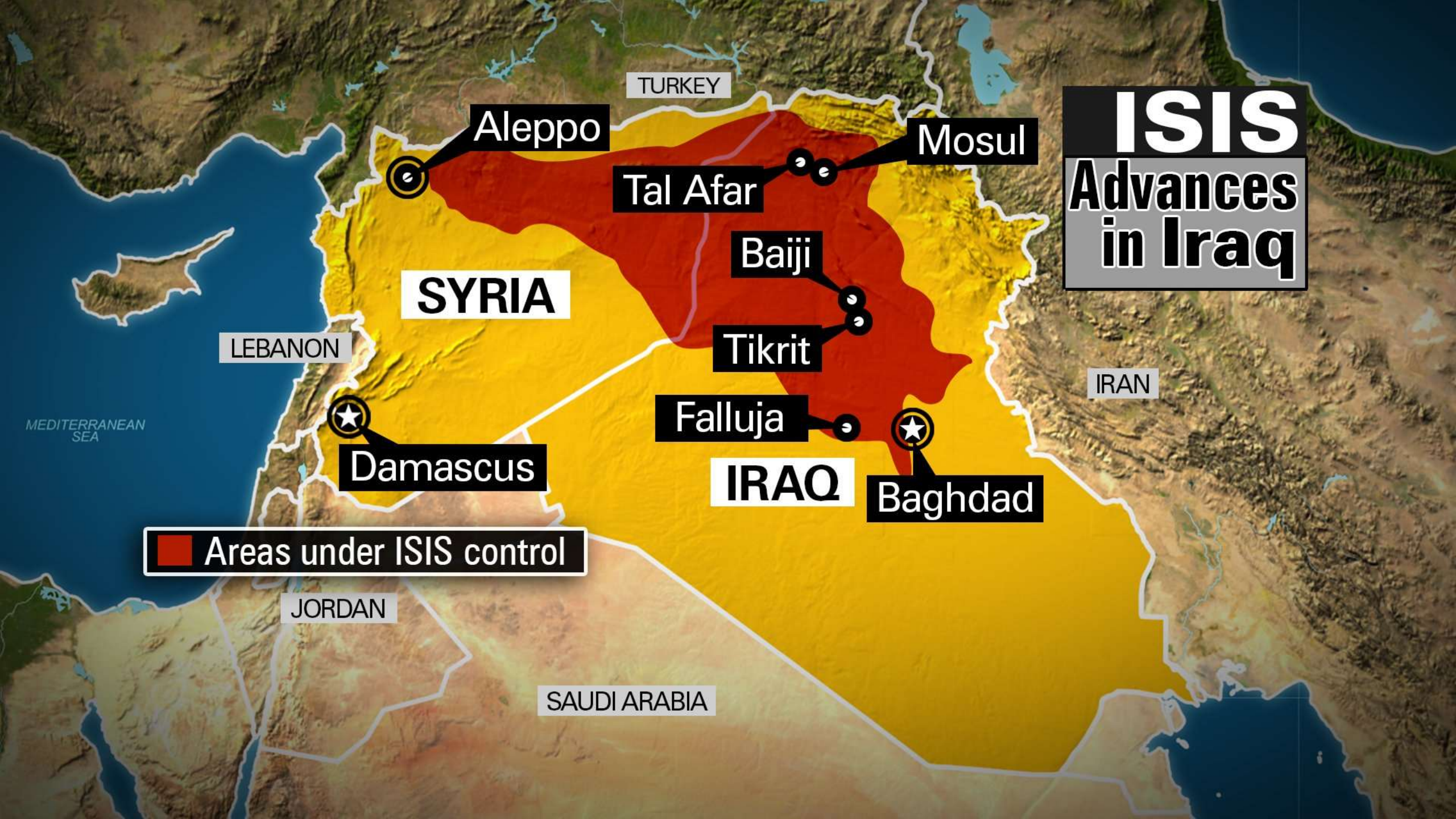
Disengagement + re-deployment of
troops in Afghanistan

Strategic “*pivot*” towards Asia

Renewed relations with Iran (ending
its nuclear program)

Iran’s influence in Iraq

ISIS Advances in Iraq



TURKEY

Aleppo

Mosul

Tal Afar

Baiji

Tikrit

Falluja

Baghdad

SYRIA

IRAQ

IRAN

LEBANON

JORDAN

SAUDI ARABIA

Areas under ISIS control

MEDITERRANEAN SEA



Arab Spring (2011)

Obama supportive (democracy in the Middle-East)

BUT

U.S bureaucracy, secret services & Pentagon keen to maintain status quo

Gulf monarchies (Saudi Arabia): NO to democracy in the region

Dictatorships preferred



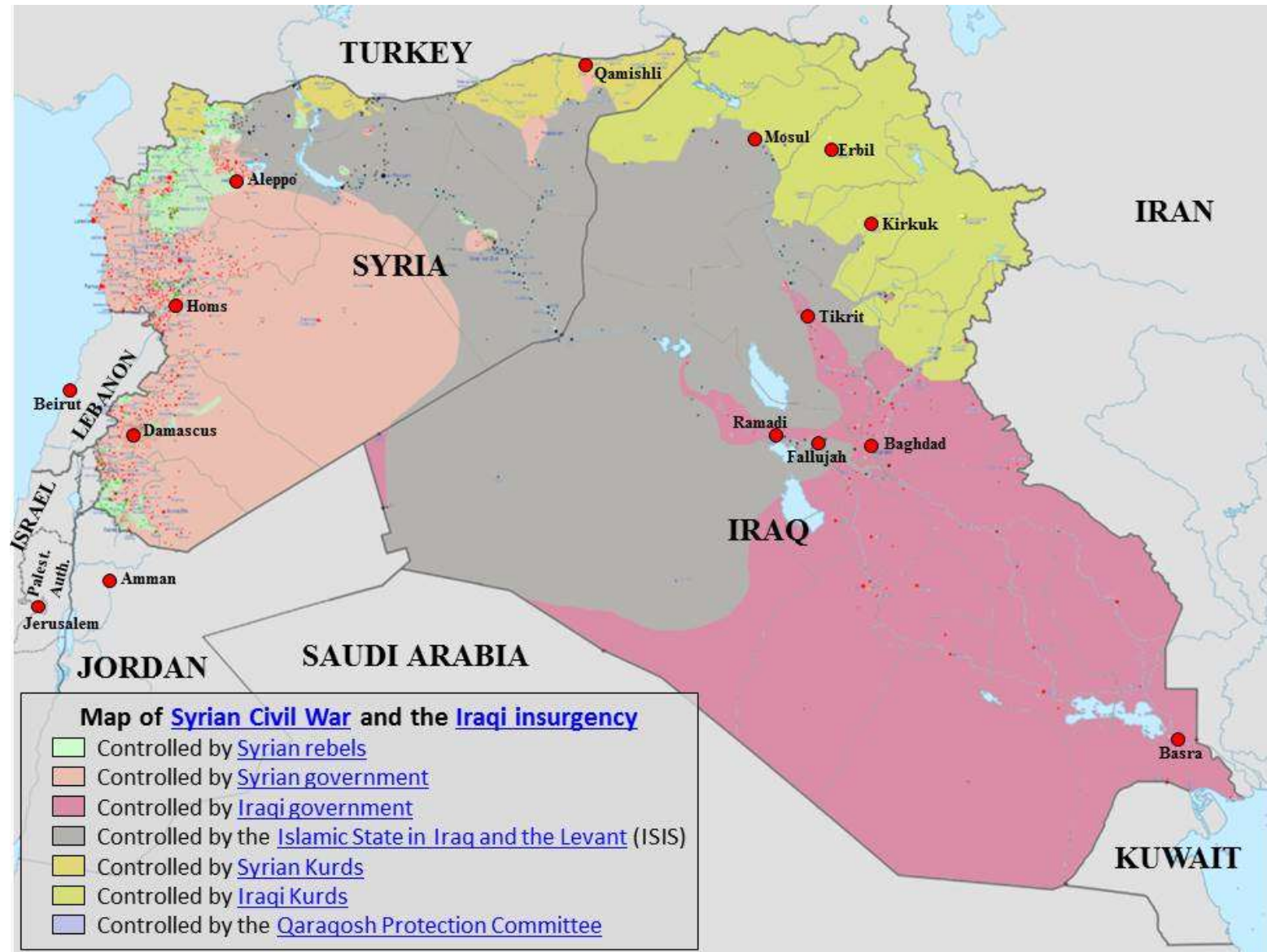
Civil War in Syria

A very complex situation

Pro-democracy groups + jihadists
against Assad regime supported by
Iran & Russia

Chaos

ISIS control over parts of Syria





2012: Obama's "red line"
remark

Assad regime not to use
chemical weapons against its
population or else...

Assad regime DID use
chemical weapons against its
population



What about Trump?

Military strikes against Assad regime

BUT

Overall **disengagement** from the region

No to Iran nuclear deal

Closer relations with Saudi Arabia

Recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital



Joe Biden

U.S. disengagement from
Middle-East to continue

Middle-East: no longer a U.S.
priority

Focus on America's key rival:
China