

September 11th, The President's Story: Part III
9/11/02

STUDIO

A LOT HAS HAPPENED IN THE YEAR SINCE SEPTEMBER 11TH. LAST WEEK IN THE OVAL OFFICE WE ASKED THE PRESIDENT ABOUT IRAQ, ABOUT WHETHER AMERICANS ARE SAFE AT HOME AND ABOUT OSAMA BIN LADEN.

TAPE

(PELLEY) You must be frustrated, maybe angry. After a year, we still don't have Osama Bin Laden?

(BUSH) How do you know that //I don't know whether Osama Bin Laden is dead or alive. I don't know that. He's not leading a lot of parades. And he's not nearly the hero that a lot of people thought he was. This is much bigger than one person anyway. This is—we're slowly but surely dismantling and disrupting the al Qaeda network that-that hates America. And we will stay on task until we complete the task. I always knew this was a different kind of war, Scott. See, in the old days, you measure the size and the strength of the enemy by counting his tanks or his airplanes and his ships. This is an international manhunt. We're after these people one at the time. They're killers. Period.

(PELLEY) But have you won the war before you find Osama Bin Laden dead or alive?

(BUSH) If he were dead, there's somebody else to replace him. And we would find that person. But slowly but surely, we will dismantle the al Qaeda network. And those who sponsor them and those who harbor them. And at the same time, hopefully lay the seeds for, the conditions necessary so that people don't feel like they've got to conduct terror to achieve-objectives.

(PELLEY) Do you look back on the Afghan campaign with any doubts? Certainly, we've overthrown the Taliban government. Certainly, al Qaeda has been scattered. But some of the Taliban leaders appear to have gotten away. And there have been many civilian casualties as well.

(BUSH) Uh huh. Well, you know, I am sad that civilians lost their life. But I understand war. We did everything we can to-everything we could to protect people. //when civilians did die, it was because of a mistake. Certainly not because of intention. We liberated a country for which I'm extremely proud. No, - I don't second guess things. It's -things never go perfect in a time of war.

(PELLEY) Are you committed to ending the rule of Saddam Hussein?

(BUSH) I'm committed to regime change.

(PELLEY) There are those who have been vocal in their advice against war in Iraq. Some of our allies in the Gulf War, Saudi Arabia, Turkey for example. Even your father's former national security advisor, Mr. Scowcroft has written about it in the paper. What is it in your estimation that they don't understand about the Iraq question that you do appreciate?

(BUSH) The policy of the government is regime change, Scott, hasn't changed. I get all kinds of advice. I'm listening to the advice. I appreciate the consultations. And we'll consult with a lot of people but our policy hasn't changed.

(PELLEY) On Air Force One-you described the terrorists as evil.

(BUSH) yeah

(PELLEY) I don't think anyone would disagree with that, but at the same time, many in the Arab world are angry at the United States for political reasons because of our policy in Israel or our troops in the oil region of the Middle East. Is there any change in foreign policy that you're considering that might reduce Arab anger against the United States.

(BUSH) Hmm. Well, I'm working for peace in the Middle East. I'm the first President that ever went to the United Nations and publicly declared the need to have a Palestinian state living side by side with Israel in peace.// I've made it clear that in order for there to be peace the Palestinians have gotta to get some leadership that renounces terror and believes in peaces and quits using the Palestinian people as pawns. I've also made it clear to the other Arab nations in the region that they've got responsibilities. If you want peace they gotta work toward it. We're more than willing to work for it, but they have to work for it as well. //But all this business isn't going to happen as long as a few are willing to blow up the hopes of many. So we all gotta work to fight off terror.

(PELLEY) Arafat has to go?

(BUSH) Either, he's, he's been a complete failure as far as I am concerned. Utter disappointment.

(PELLEY) There has been some concern over the year about civil liberties.

(BUSH) yeah...

(PELLEY) In fact, an appeals court recently was harsh about your administration's decision to close certain deportation hearings. They said, quote, "A government operating in secrecy stands in opposition to the Constitution." Where do you draw the line sir?

(BUSH) I draw the line at the Constitution.//We will protect America. But we will do so on, within the guidelines of the Constitution, confines of the Constitution, spirit of the Constitution.

(PELLEY) Is there anything that the Justice Department has brought to you as an idea that you've thought, "No, that's too far. I don't wanna go..."

(BUSH) Nah, not that that I remember. And I am pleased with the Justice Department. I think that Attorney General's doing a fine job, by the way//and to the extent that our courts are willing to make sure that they review decisions we make, I think that's fine. I mean, that's good,. It's healthy. It's part of America.

(PELLEY) Franklin Roosevelt said that America should stand in defense of four freedoms. Freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom from want and freedom from fear. Do we have that today Mr. President? Freedom from fear?

(BUSH) I think more than we did, in retrospect. // The fact that we are on alert, the fact that we understand the new circumstances makes us more free from fear than on that fateful day of September the 11th. We've got more work to do.

(PELLEY) And Americans should not live their lives in fear?

(BUSH) I don't think so. No. I think Americans oughta know their government's doing everything possible to help. And obviously if we get information that relates directly a particular attack we'll deal with it. And if we get noise that deals with a general attack, we'll alert people. There are a lot of good folks working hard to disrupt and deny and run down leads. And the American people need to go about their lives. It seems like they are.

(NATS CRICKETS)

ONE YEAR AGO THE PRESIDENT WAS NEW ON THE JOB, WITH LITTLE EXPERIENCE IN FOREIGN POLICY. HE HAD WANTED TO PULL THE MILITARY BACK FROM FOREIGN ENTANGLEMENTS. NOW, ON HIS ORDERS, U.S. FORCES ARE ENGAGED AROUND THE GLOBE IN A WAR HE DID NOT EXPECT, IN A WORLD COMPLETELY CHANGED.