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Politics

Q&A

Continued from Page 1B

Who is Osama bin Laden?

Born in 1957 to a wealthy family in Saudi Arabia, bin Laden's childhood was anything but remarkable. He was described as a moderately religious youth who joined the Muslim Brotherhood while in school. He came into contact with Afghan rebel leaders in 1979 when the Soviets invaded Afghanistan. Inspired, bin Laden collected money and supplies for the resistance movement. He began to build camps for his followers who supported his fight against the Soviets. He named his group the al-Qaeda, Arabic for "the base," thus creating an organized militant army. Ironically, the movement to drive the Soviets from Afghanistan was funded by U.S. dollars. The al-Qaeda is said to be unlike any terrorist group faced before. Instead of a tight infrastructure with a definite command structure, it has a very loose coalition and a wide range of groups scattered throughout the world.

When did bin Laden begin to express his anger firmly at the United States and their Middle Eastern allies?

Bin Laden has never been a whole-hearted supporter of the Saudi regime. He was expelled by Saudi Arabia in 1991 for anti-government activities. Bin Laden then spent the next five years in Sudan funding Islamic groups. The United States encouraged the Sudanese government to expel bin Laden, at which time he returned to Afghanistan, his present hiding place. Bin Laden's ideologies became more radical in 1998 when he called for a global war against all Americans and Jews; he also released a formal proclamation of war at that time. The embassy bombing in Tanzania and Kenya followed a few months later.

TALIBAN

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Dr. Brian Linn, professor of history and director of the Military Studies Institute at Texas A&M, said, "If the enemy is cultural imperialism, it doesn't matter who the enemy is, so there is nothing the West can do that will convince these people that we aren't a threat to them."

"Part of the problem is that these fundamentalists believe that corruption and tyranny within Afghanistan is the fault of Western influences," Black said.

Islamic militants believe that the United States and their allies have corrupted their people and they must reclaim their moral beliefs by minimizing the power of the United States, he said.

One argument proposed by Black was that bin Laden's anger could be stemming from the presence of U.S. troops in Saudi Arabia, which was his homeland until he was exiled in 1991.

Black emphasized, however, that the actions taken by the terrorists were not of a devout Muslim nature.


He said, "Maybe some of these people just don't know their own religion very well and therefore have behaved in such a misguided manner in the name of Islam."

UNITED STATES

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"However," Linn added, "if Afghanistan refuses to turn over the people and groups responsible for the terrorist attacks, then our targets will broaden."

Despite, this seeming confusion about who the United States is now at war with and why this enemy has attacked, one thing can be determined: we have done nothing to deserve what has happened and justice will be served.



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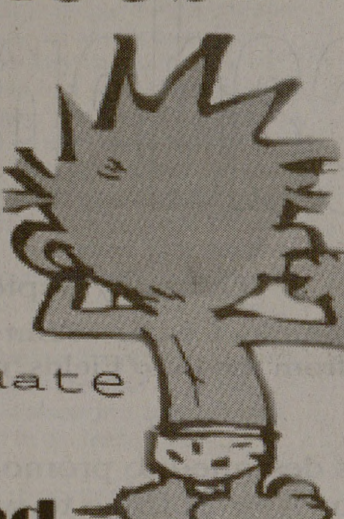
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