

Bin Laden's days are numbered

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By Robert B. Adolph Jr.

The U.S. intelligence community has long known of the many murderous actions and dubious affiliations of the world's leading terrorist, Osama Bin Laden. The reclusive Saudi Arabian multimillionaire who funds and helps to plan the terrorist activities of radical Islamic groups is a committed ideologue and religious zealot.

It was obviously clear to decision-makers in Washington that cruise missile strikes into Afghanistan and Sudan several months ago were particularly brutal and callous of innocent life, both American and African.

Those bombings could be tied to Bin Laden and his cowardly minions. Bin Laden can run, but he can't hide. He will eventually be tracked down and brought to justice. His days are numbered.

Bin Laden's protectors in Afghanistan are also Islamic extremists. Their close affiliation with him is perfectly understandable. Bin Laden helped the Saudi government funnel literally hundreds of millions of dollars into Mujahideen hands during the Afghans' long and horrific struggle with the army of the former Soviet Union. Bin Laden's money and religious connections buy him sanctuary in a still-warring Afghan context. After defeating the Soviet Union, the Afghans went back to doing what they had always done — killing one another. Impeachment aside, the president did the right thing. Terrorists cannot be tolerated. Their activities must be halted by all legal means.

When the governments of Afghanistan and Sudan provided safe havens for the activities of terrorists, they gave up any legal rights they might have claimed to be spared the recent American cruise missile attacks. Killing innocents is not an acceptable form of political or religious expression.

Many foreign governments condemned America for taking unilateral

military action without consultation. This is self-serving diplomatic double talk. Who else would or could hope to bring the malfesants to justice? Moreover, many of those same governments privately applauded our initiative in hitting the terrorists where they live and feel safe. It's just that they dare not say so publicly for fear of becoming terrorist targets themselves.

The Cold War is over. In what former President George Bush called the New World Order, there must be a new recognition that the community of nations can no longer tolerate terrorists and their activities.

What gives the American government the right? The right comes from a very practical recognition that if not us, then who?

The United Nations lacks both the power and authority to hunt down terrorist criminals. Terrorism has for too long hidden behind the cloak of renegade nations' sovereignty. The Palestine Liberation Organization and many of its splinter groups formerly hid behind countries like Syria and Iraq. The Lockerbie, Scotland bombers continue to hide behind Libya's skirts. Bin Laden cannot be permitted to continue his support to terrorism without paying. Those nations that hide terrorists must also come to know that there is a price.

Today, there is a historic opportunity to turn the tide against all terrorists everywhere. During the Cold War, America often sacrificed issues of morality for the sake of practical expediency, recognizing that the greater evil of the Soviet Union had to be defeated. All other U.S. military, political, and diplomatic con-

siderations were subordinated to this reality.

Many Cold War warriors still occupy positions of power in Washington. Their past reluctance to use America's might to attack terrorism wherever it rears its ugly head must be overcome. Giving in to terrorism by not fighting back can be worse than the terrorism itself.

Allowing terrorists to believe that they have safe places to hide cannot be permitted to continue. To do so only encourages them to more and greater acts of bloody destruction. When possible, America should no longer permit innocents to be slaughtered without appropriate and immediate response.

Our attacks in the Sudan and in Afghanistan were the right thing to do. Osama Bin Laden's days, and the days of those like him, are numbered.

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