

Historical US Cabinet of 2001

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GSMUN 2011



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Welcome, delegates!

With the airports closed and the entire nation in distress, we hope you are all safely making your way to the capital. Yesterday, September 11, 2001, is a day that will live in infamy. After enduring devastating attacks on a few of our nation's most prominent buildings, our nation is in a vital state of recovery. Our job is simple: hold the nation together, prevent chaos, save as many lives as possible, pursue justice, and ensure that such a tragedy will never be repeated. That isn't too much to ask, right?

Although I am President Bush in the world of GSMUN XIV, I prefer to go by the name Emily in the real world. Currently a senior at Maggie Walker, I was born in Midlothian. I enjoy traveling and hitting the slopes in the winter for some snowboarding. I'm a huge movie buff, and I spend much of my free time watching movies, as well as playing tennis, volleyball, and cello. I'm a proud American-born Chinese, and every few years I go back to China to soak up those roots that I so love.

You can call me Vice President Cheney for the weekend, but everyone else knows me as Laura. I'm a senior at Maggie Walker who, when not practicing my marksmanship, divides my time between the debate and We the People teams. I can more often than not be found debating the constitution with my unit or working to defend my unofficial title of 1780s Expert. In the little free time that remains, I enjoy reading, baking scones, and drinking unhealthily large quantities of coffee.

Now that you know all about us, it's time to refocus on the task at hand. As you stroll through the doors of the White House tomorrow, come with your game faces on and be prepared to guide our nation out of devastation and into revival. If, along the way, you get stuck in DC traffic or simply have a question, feel free to shoot us an email. Ready yourselves for the forthcoming challenge; there are terrorists to be found, people to be saved, and security systems to be reevaluated. The stability and future of the nation rests in our hands, but no pressure.

See you in March,

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Committee Information

Welcome, delegates, to an emergency meeting of the United States Cabinet. Today is September 12, 2001, and we are gathered to address yesterday's devastating terrorist attacks on our nation. Islamic extremists executed the first major, successful terrorist attack on American soil. Nineteen Al Qaeda members hijacked four commercial airliners; two crashed into the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in New York City, the third into the Pentagon, and the fourth into a field in Pennsylvania after an unsuccessful attempt to attack the White House. The nation is in a delicate state, and the Cabinet must enact measures to restrict the damage, minimize casualties, reinstate stability, and make changes regarding security and foreign policy. The attacks will have both short-term and long-term repercussions for the US and for the global community. It is the responsibility of the Cabinet to not only help the nation recover from the physical damage of the attacks, but also to address the economic and political effects on our nation and to ensure the safety of our citizens.

Committee Background

The US Cabinet serves to advise and assist the President in important decisions and his responsibilities. It is a group of 15 individuals: the Vice President and the secretaries of the Departments of State,

Treasury, Defense, Justice, the Interior, Agriculture, Commerce, Labor, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, Transportation, Energy, Education, and Veterans Affairs. The White House Chief of Staff, US Trade Representative, and US Ambassador to the United Nations, and the heads of the Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Management and Budget, and Council of Economic Advisers also hold Cabinet-rank status. In addition, due to the nature of this crisis, members of the National Security Council and the Joint Chiefs of Staff may be present in the Cabinet.

George Washington introduced the concept of a Cabinet, and it has greatly expanded over the years as the need has arisen for more experts in highly specialized fields. Although appointed by the President, these Cabinet members must be confirmed by the Senate with a simple majority. As executive appointees, Cabinet Secretaries serve at the request of the President and may be dismissed at any time. The role of the Cabinet is to advise and assist the President, and the Cabinet may only execute decisions approved by the President. The President is under no obligation to follow the Cabinet's advice, and the President is free to appoint as many Cabinet members as necessary.

The Attacks

Two of yesterday's attacks targeted the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in New York City. American Airlines Flight 11 departed from Boston Logan International Airport at 7:58 AM with the intended destination of Los Angeles. Of the 81 passengers on board, five were terrorists. Fifteen minutes into the flight, the hijackers injured at least three people, forcefully

breached the cockpit, and overpowered the pilot and first officer. At 8:13, the Boston Central Air Traffic Controller recognized that something was amiss, as the pilot failed to confirm his instructions to increase elevation. The situation was confirmed to be a hijacking when one of the hijackers mistakenly transmitted announcements for passengers to air traffic control. At 8:46, American Airlines

Flight 11 crashed into the North Tower of the World Trade Center, killing all 92 people aboard, plus an unconfirmed number of people in the building. The impact and subsequent fire caused the North Tower to collapse almost two hours later, resulting in thousands of additional casualties.

United Airlines Flight 175 took off from Boston at 8:14 AM, also heading to Los Angeles. Five of the 56 passengers on board were hijackers. Approximately 30 minutes into the flight, they too forcefully breached the cockpit and overpowered the crew. The aircraft's communication control was turned off, and the aircraft strayed from the assigned flight path for several minutes before air traffic controllers took notice and made several unsuccessful attempts to contact the cockpit. Passengers and crew made phone calls from the plane and provided information about the hijackers and the injuries that had been inflicted. At 9:03, Flight 175 crashed into the South Tower of the World Trade Center, killing all 65 people on board. This was the only impact seen on live television, and it demonstrated to the world that the attacks on the World Trade Center were, in fact, deliberate. Fifty-six minutes later, damage from the impact and fire caused the South Tower to collapse, causing hundreds of additional casualties.

At 8:20 AM, American Airlines Flight 77 departed from Washington Dulles International Airport for Los Angeles. The five hijackers on board took control of the plane less than 35 minutes into the flight, storming the cockpit and forcing passengers to the rear of the aircraft. Flight 77 made an unauthorized change in course, moving back towards Washington, DC at 8:54. The aircraft crashed into the western side of the Pentagon at 9:37. All 64 people on board the aircraft and the 125 in the building were killed. The impact severely damaged a portion of the Pentagon and ignited a large fire that has not yet been extinguished.

The final hijacked flight, United Airlines Flight 93, departed from Newark Liberty International Airport at 8:42 AM, heading to San Francisco. Approximately 40 minutes into

the flight, four hijackers breached the cockpit, overpowered the pilots and took control of the aircraft. They diverted the plane towards Washington, DC, intending to hit the White House. Several passengers and crew members made telephone calls aboard the flight and learned about the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. As a result, the passengers decided to fight back, and at 10:03, they united in a counter-attack on the hijackers to regain control of the aircraft. The plane crashed in a field in Somerset County, Pennsylvania, killing all 44 people on board. Of the four hijacked flights, this was the only one that failed to reach its intended target. Overall, nearly 3,000 people died in the attacks, including the 19 hijackers.

History of Terrorism and Al Qaeda

The official US government definition of terrorism is a crime that “appears to be intended (i) to intimidate or coerce a civilian population; (ii) to influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion; or (iii) to affect the conduct of a government by assassination or kidnapping.” Terrorist groups have formed in countries all over the world. Initially, religion was the primary motivation for terrorism, but it has since been surpassed by politics. After World War II, with the rise of nationalism, ethnicity and ideology began to contribute to terrorism as well. In the 1980s, there was a resurgence of state-sponsored terrorism, in which states support, train, and/or arm terrorist groups. This expedited a series of attacks on the US and other Western nations by Middle Eastern nations, such as Iran, Iraq, Libya, and Syria. However, religiously inspired terrorism has recently resurfaced, raising a great concern among members of the international community. For example, the revolution that transformed Iran into an Islamic republic led to the use and support of terrorism as a way of spreading Islamic ideals to other nations. The use of terrorism to disseminate ideas has also spread to other nations and to religions and cults. Publicized terrorism and proxy warfare have since been adopted by many different

sects. Yesterday's attacks are a signal to the international community of the severity of this threat.

Al Qaeda is a terrorist network that was created in 1988 and is allegedly responsible for yesterday's attacks. Originally founded to recruit and train people to aid the Afghan resistance against the Soviet Union, Al Qaeda currently works to eliminate Western influence in Muslim countries and to install Islamic regimes in these countries. It is believed that Al Qaeda's headquarters are currently in Taliban-controlled Afghanistan. Because the Taliban share the militant ideology of Al Qaeda and because Afghanistan is largely isolated from American political influence and military power, Afghanistan is the perfect location for Al Qaeda and its headquarters. On February 23, 1998, Osama bin Laden, along with other Islamist leaders, issued a religious decree that "the duty of all Muslims [is] to kill US citizens – civilian or military – and their allies everywhere."

Bin Laden, who founded Al Qaeda, has been instrumental in the development of this terrorist group. Upon returning to Saudi Arabia after the Soviets left Afghanistan, the imminent threat of an Iraqi invasion led bin Laden to offer the services of his guerilla group to King Fahd in order to protect Saudi Arabia from the large Iraqi army. However, the King refused bin Laden's offer, instead allowing Allied forces to place troops in Saudi territory. Bin Laden's public criticism of the King caused him to be banished and forced to live in Sudan. As a result, bin Laden became hostile towards the US, and the activities of Al Qaeda became largely anti-American.

The US government estimates that Al Qaeda is present in over 100 countries worldwide, including the US itself. Al Qaeda uses a wide array of methods to inspire fear, including assassinations, bombings, hijackings, and suicide attacks. It often targets important symbols, such as embassies and public buildings. Through a network of connections with other terrorist groups, bin Laden minimizes his direct involvement with the execution of attacks, making it much more

difficult to assign responsibility to him. Al Qaeda is allegedly responsible for the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center that killed seven people and injured over 1,000, the 1996 bombing of the Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia, the 1998 bombings of US Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, and the 2000 bombing of the USS Cole in Yemen. Additionally, Al Qaeda has been linked to several attempted attacks that were disrupted, including a 1995 attempt to kill President Bill Clinton in the Philippines, a 1995 attempt to set off explosions on 12 US commercial airliners, and the 1999 attempt to bomb the Los Angeles International Airport.

The possible motives behind these attacks are numerous. As revenge for American involvement in the banishment and torture of four members of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ), Al Qaeda carried out attacks on the US embassies in 1998 in conjunction with EIJ. Al Qaeda claimed that its goal for the attacks on the Khobar Towers was to provoke the removal of US troops from Saudi Arabia, but the attacks may also have been orchestrated to lure the US into Afghanistan, which had long been called "The Graveyard of Empires." Bin Laden felt that jihadists, who had already defeated the Soviets, needed to remove the US as a threat to Muslims around the world. Although the previous attacks were mostly successful, bin Laden saw them as insufficiently symbolic, and three factors remain the underlying causes for his attacks on the US: the support of Israel, which had displaced Palestinians from their homes; military presence in Saudi Arabia near two holy mosques of Islam; and the use of sanctions on Iraq.

The intelligence community had been monitoring activity by bin Laden and Al Qaeda long before yesterday's attacks. The attack on the Khobar Towers brought bin Laden and EIJ leader Ayman al-Zawahiri to American attention for the first time. In response, a special unit was assembled to track bin Laden and other Al Qaeda leaders, and bin Laden was placed on the Ten Most Wanted list by the US Federal Bureau of Investigation. Although this unit had some

success, anticipating Al Qaeda's numerous attacks proved difficult because the information was not widely shared throughout the terrorist group.

Lead-up to the September 11 Attacks

In recent months, the American intelligence community has discovered substantial evidence indicating that international terrorists were capable of and had already planned attacks on the US. The 1998 bombings of US Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania and the discovery of the 1993 plots to bomb New York City landmarks and the Los Angeles International Airport were clear indications of not only the hostility that Al Qaeda and other terrorist groups felt towards the US, but also their willingness to engage in terrorism and their ability to execute devastating attacks. After the first bombing of the World Trade Center in early 1993, the intelligence community recognized the increased danger of this newly-developed form of terrorism in which violent radical Islamic cells were linked to anti-American sentiment, rather than to a specific country. Upon identifying the very real threat of these Islamic terrorist groups, the national security community began reaching out to the intelligence, security, and law enforcement agencies of foreign nations in an attempt to disrupt the terrorists' activities.

Long before 2001, the intelligence community had already intercepted some information that perhaps alluded to the possibility of an attack on the US. At the time, however, it did not recognize the importance of some information, which has now proven to be valuable. Various agencies had a wealth of information on bin Laden's activities from over 30 interceptions of communications, but there were no details regarding the time, place, or method of a possible attack. Furthermore, although there was information indicating that the attack might happen domestically, an overwhelming majority of intelligence experts believed that the attack would happen on overseas American interests. Finally, there was some evidence that the attack might involve the

use of aircraft, but few measures were taken in response, and many were not even aware of this information.

In April 2001, Ahmad Shah Massoud, leader of the Northern Alliance, the Afghan resistance to the Taliban, was invited to address the European Parliament. Massoud warned that his intelligence agents had gained limited knowledge about a large-scale terrorist attack on US soil. On September 9, Massoud was assassinated by militants linked to Al Qaeda who claimed to be Moroccan-born Belgian reporters. There is heavy speculation that Massoud's assassination is connected to the September 11 attacks, which appear to be the attacks that Massoud referenced in his speech to the European Parliament.

Response in the Past 24 Hours

After the first plane hit the World Trade Center, news agencies reporting on the incident suggested that the crash had been an accident. Most people, including top government officials, believed this theory until the second plane crashed on live national television 17 minutes later. From that point forward, the world knew that these were intentional acts of terrorism. At 9:25 AM, the Federal Aviation Administration grounded all flights, marking the first time that there has been a nationwide ground-stop. Fifteen minutes later, North American airspace was closed and all flights were ordered to land at the nearest airport. All international flights en route to the US were redirected to Canada and Mexico. At 10:00, President Bush issued an executive order authorizing the military to shoot down hijacked commercial planes.

Within 30 minutes of the crash into the second World Trade Center tower, all bridges, tunnels, highways, and airports in New York City were closed, and government buildings and other important buildings were evacuated and secured. Upon receiving reports that American Airlines Flight 77 had turned back towards Washington, DC, Vice President Dick Cheney was evacuated from the White House. President Bush was not in the White House at

the time, but rather was visiting a second grade class in Sarasota, Florida. At 9:45, after the Pentagon had been hit, all major US sites, including the White House, the Empire State Building, the UN building, and even Disney World, were evacuated.

At 1:04 PM, President Bush put the United States military around the world on high alert. In his prime-time address to the nation, President Bush stated that the administration was confident that bin Laden and Al Qaeda were behind the attacks. He pledged that there would be “no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them.”

Analysis of the Situation

There are several issues that the Cabinet needs to address. Most immediately, we must address the crisis at hand and determine what role the national government should play in the recovery and rescue effort, as time is of the essence. The Cabinet must also decide what further action will be taken regarding the airlines and other modes of transportation. All planes were grounded and American airspace is still closed, but we must choose whether or not to extend the ban on flying and whether additional precautions will be necessary. We must also consider possible effects on the economy. The New York Stock Exchange has been closed and will likely show large decreases in stock prices when it reopens, negatively impacting both the American economy and world markets.

Apart from these immediate concerns, the Cabinet needs to plan for the long term. We must consider errors on the part of the intelligence community, such as a lack of integrated response, focus on domestic threat, and resources for counterintelligence. All necessary changes in protocol must be made to ensure that this catastrophe is not repeated. Airport security protocol in dealing with hijackers may also need to be analyzed and revised.

Finally, the Cabinet must decide on a course of action regarding the terrorists responsible for the attack, who are believed to

be members of Al Qaeda, and any countries that may be harboring them. A cornerstone of our agenda must be to ensure the safety of the American people. Above all, the Cabinet must work to minimize the ability of international terrorist organizations to attack the US or other nations.

Questions to Consider

- What immediate actions must be taken by the US government to save lives, prevent any other imminent attacks, and ensure the safety of Americans?
- How should the US balance the prevention of unnecessary military measures with the desire to send a message to other terrorist groups that such attacks will not go unpunished?
- What economic, political, and social implications might these attacks have on the US and global community?
- What changes does the government need to make to its protocol in order to prevent such attacks in the future? What mistakes were made that may have allowed the attacks to occur?
- How can the US work internationally to prevent the actions of other terrorist organizations, now that it is evident that this new culture of terrorism is a very large threat to the global community?
- Should the US attempt to negotiate with the Taliban in Afghanistan, with the hope that they will close all the terror camps and hand over bin Laden and his associates, or should the United States take a more aggressive, military-based approach?
- What needs to be done to rally the American people in this time of struggle and to increase national morale?

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