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Bin Laden Means What He Says

07.30.2008 | Culture and Society, Faculty Osama Bin Laden said last year that he wanted to push the price of oil to \$300 a barrel. The author of a complete history of Middle East terrorism said it's important to listen to Osama Bin Laden, because the al-Qaida leader usually makes good on his word.

The upcoming 10th anniversary of the Aug. 7, 1998, U.S. embassy bombings in Tanzania and Kenya that killed more than 200 people should serve as a reminder, according to Mark Ensalaco, political violence expert and University of Dayton human rights program director.

"President Bush said we should listen to Bin Laden, but he keeps ignoring him," said Ensalaco, author of *Middle Eastern Terrorism From Black September to September 11*. "Bush says al-Qaida's hostility toward the U.S. isn't about Iraq. It's (al-Qaida's hostility) always been about Iraq. In a video, months before the 1998 embassy bombings, Bin Laden talked about (the first U.S. invasion of) Iraq. Behind him, there was a gun strategically pointed at the horn of Africa."

Plus, Ensalaco said, the first deployment of U.S. troops in Saudi Arabia to guard Kuwait against an Iraqi invasion was Aug. 7, 1990.

Ensalaco wrote *Middle Eastern Terrorism From Black September to September 11* in response to a student's question about the 9/11 attacks? — "Where did that come from?" Ensalaco realized there was no single, narrative account of the entire history of Middle East terrorism, so he set out to write it. The book chronicles Middle East terrorism from the first plane hijackings in 1968 to the 9/11 attacks.

"There is little or no work like this available to scholars, teachers and citizens at a time when an informed public should be engaged in a thoughtful discourse on this matter," said Donna Schlagheck, author of *International Terrorism: An Introduction to Concepts and Actors*.

Other little-known or reported facts in Ensalaco's book include:

- The Secret Service and the FAA conducted a videotaped simulation of a suicide attack by plane on the White House as early as 1985.
- The Al Dawa party in today's Iraqi parliament was a terrorist organization that attacked the United States embassy in Kuwait in 1983.
- A year before the Sept. 11 attacks, two Arab men twice tried to enter the cockpit of a U.S. airliner. When questioned, the men claimed they were trying to enter the bathroom. One of those men was denied entry into the U.S. after the Sept. 11 attacks; U.S. forces in Afghanistan captured the other one.

As Ensalaco followed terrorism's evolution, he noticed its changing face. Militant Islam replaced secular Palestinian nationalism as the ideology of terror, he said. Jihad against apostates and infidels replaced the liberation of Palestine as the cause.

Al-Qaida revolutionized terror, argues Ensalaco, whom CNN, The Associated Press and Reuters, among others, have interviewed about terrorism. Ensalaco said Osama bin Laden's 1998 fatwa calling on Muslims to kill Americans as a religious obligation is tantamount to an incitement to genocide.

The book's epilogue chronicles developments in the war on terror since 9/11. Ensalaco concludes that victory in the war on terror will depend on the United States' ability to thwart future terror conspiracies and to maintain momentum in what is essentially a low-intensity conflict against Islamic extremism.

But ultimately, Ensalaco said, "Islamic terrorism will ebb only when the most influential Muslim clerics rule that terrorism contravenes the principles of warfare in the Quran. Only then will the belief be abandoned that the slaughter of innocent civilians is jihad in the way of Allah and suicide in the act of murdering others bestows the glories of martyrdom."

Ensalaco's book, published by University of Pennsylvania Press, is available through Amazon.com, Barnes & Noble and Borders for \$39.95.

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