

The logo for FRONTLINE, featuring the word "FRONTLINE" in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters on a red rectangular background.

FRONTLINE “LOOKING FOR ANSWERS”

PBS AIRDATE: Tuesday, October 9, 9 P.M. 60 minutes

Encore broadcast Thursday, October 11, 9 P.M., 60 minutes

On October 7, as U.S. fighter bombers and cruise missiles attacked targets in Afghanistan, Osama bin Laden released a videotape calling for Muslims to join his cause. Sitting next to him, on his left, was Ayman al-Zawahiri, the man some call the real mastermind behind the terror network.

Ayman al-Zawahiri is a central character in “Looking for Answers,” a FRONTLINE co-production with *The New York Times* airing Tuesday, October 9, at 9 P.M. on PBS (check local listings). Head of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, Ayman al-Zawahiri joined forces with bin Laden’s al Qae’da in 1998 to form the World Islamic Front for Fighting Crusaders and Jews. The documentary investigates the roots of the terror network, and traces how the two men’s trajectories meet in the mountains of Afghanistan. The documentary is produced by the team behind the recently updated FRONTLINE “Hunting bin Laden.”

“In the few weeks since the September 11 attack, our production team has assembled a detailed dual biography that significantly deepens our understanding of this terrorist network and the motivations behind their actions,” says FRONTLINE Executive Producer David Fanning.

In “Looking for Answers,” FRONTLINE and *The New York Times* examine how the seeds of hatred were sown, not in Afghanistan, but in the lands of the two great U.S. allies in the Islamic world: Egypt and Saudi Arabia. “When we first reported on bin Laden in 1999, we discovered that the Egyptians played a crucial role in the U.S. Embassy bombings in Africa,” says FRONTLINE producer Martin Smith. “We thought it was time to go back to the roots of terror and take a closer look at why so many of bin Laden’s recruits come from Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and other countries where critical battles against terrorism must be fought.”

Correspondent Lowell Bergman interviews bin Laden sympathizers, members of fringe militant Islamic groups, and Egyptian and Saudi ambassadors and dissidents, who explain their objections to everything from American troops on Saudi soil to the U.S. government’s support for Israel and for repressive regimes in the oil-rich Middle East.

“You send your troops to defend us. Nobody asked for the American troops to go there. You went there to protect your own interest,” says Ahmed Sattar, a radical Muslim from Egypt. “You went to protect some corrupted regimes that are working against their own people.”

Sattar tells FRONTLINE, “The American government has one enemy. The Islamic movement throughout the world.”

The Muslim Brotherhood movement in Egypt was born in the 1920s. Its goals: to build a society based on simple Islamic values. But this clashed with the Egyptian constitution, which provides for a secular democracy. For decades, violent conflict followed. In 1981 Islamic militants succeeded in assassinating Egyptian president Anwar Sadat before many of the most violent among them were driven from the country. Osama bin Laden would later recruit the Egyptian militants to help wage war against the Soviets in Afghanistan. Many have stayed on to help him wage a war of terror on the United States and its allies.

Along with Egypt, many of Osama bin Laden’s associates come from Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia practices one of the strictest forms of Islam and promotes the adoption of Islamic law throughout the world. Though he was stripped of his Saudi citizenship and disowned by his wealthy and powerful family in 1994, bin Laden secretly continues to raise much of the funding for his fight against Western ideas and influence from wealthy Saudi sympathizers.

“Bin Laden used to come to us when America was helping our brother Mujahedins in Afghanistan to get rid of the communists,” says Saudi Ambassador Prince Bandar bin Sultan. “We never gave him the weight that now everybody is giving him. We just thought he was a nuisance and he was a bad image of Saudi Arabia, of Islam, his family.”

But Prince Bandar admits he may have underestimated bin Laden. It seems U.S. intelligence may have underestimated him as well.

“You are such a huge country,” Prince Bandar bin Sultan tells FRONTLINE correspondent Lowell Bergman. “Nobody spends enough time to understand the culture of other countries. What makes them tick? What is the reality, and what is the falseness? And because you don’t need them the way other people need to know you, it’s a weakness. It definitely is a weakness.”

But Richard Armitage, U.S. deputy secretary of state, classifies relations another way. “If you look at our relationships with Saudi Arabia and Egypt, although we have relatively close relationships, they are full of scratchy and neuralgic issues,” Armitage says. “We’re constantly talking about need for religious freedom or need for further democratization, need to raise living standards, the need for education, things of this nature.”

Did the U.S. government’s inability to fully understand the cultures of the Middle East leave the world’s most powerful country vulnerable to attack? Or was it the intelligence agencies’ failure to infiltrate bin Laden’s terror network and understand the hatred that motivates him and his followers?

“It is war. And unfortunately, there’s going to be too many losers before anybody achieves a victory,” says Ahmed Sattar. “Nobody stays on the top forever. And nobody oppresses people forever. Sometimes you are on the top, and some day you will go down. And you cannot stay on top forever. One day, you will come down.”

Following the broadcast, access the “Looking for Answers” Web site at www.pbs.org/frontline for more on this report, including:

- Interviews with top Egyptians and Saudi Arabians on the roots of Islamic extremism in their countries;
- A chronology of the development of radical Islam movements since the 1960s, plus links and readings on understanding the rise of Islamic extremism.
- Interviews with senior American law enforcement officials and FBI agents on what it will take to mount an effective counterterrorism campaign.
- A collection of The New York Times articles on the trail of evidence to terrorist networks and Osama bin Laden.

“Looking for Answers” is a FRONTLINE co-production with *The New York Times* and Rain Media in association with Granada Factual USA. The producers are Martin Smith, Lowell Bergman, Michael Sullivan, and Eamon O’Connor. The correspondent is Lowell Bergman.

The executive in charge for *The New York Times* is Michael Oreskes. The director of television programming is Lawrie Mifflin. The reporters for *The New York Times* are Judith Miller, Jeff Gerth, and Tim Weiner.

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FRONTLINE is closed-captioned for deaf and hard-of-hearing viewers.

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