Al-Jazirah Program on Bin Ladin
Osama bin Laden
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["Special" program entitled: "Usama Bin Ladin, the Destruction of the Base" presented by Salah Najm; interview with Usama Bin Ladin conducted by Jamal Isma'il in an unspecified location in Afghanistan; date not give - recorded]

[FBIS Translated Text]

Salah Najm: When Bin Ladin's name is mentioned, a number of conflicting ideas cross one's mind. Wealth, asceticism, terrorist, heroism, and Jihad. What links all these words together is this man, whom some people consider to be a devil, while others believe he is a fighter with a cause.

Usama Bin Ladin: Usama Bin-Muhammad Bin-'Awad Bin Ladin. God Almighty was gracious enough for me to be born to Muslim parents in the Arabian Peninsula, in al-Malazz neighborhood in al-Riyadh, in 1377 hejira [1957 or 1958 depending on the month in which he was born]. Then God was gracious to us as we went to Holy Medinah six months after I was born. For the rest of my life I stayed in Hejaz moving between Mecca, Jeddah, and Medinah.

As it is well known, my father, Shaykh Muhammad Bin-'Awad Bin Ladin, was born in Hadramaut. He went to work in Hejaz at an early age, more than 70 years ago. Then God blessed him and bestowed on him an honor that no other contractor has known. He built the holy Mecca Mosque where the holy Kaabah is located and at the same time -- because of God's blessings to him -- he built the holy mosque in Medinah for our prophet, God's prayers be upon him. Then when he found out that the Government of Jordan announced a tender for restoration work on the Dome of the Rock Mosque, he gathered engineers and asked them to estimate the cost price only, without profit. They said to him: With God's help, we will be awarded the project and make some profit as well. He said to them: Calculate only the cost price of the project. When they did, they were surprised that he, God have mercy on his soul, reduced the cost price in order to guarantee that God's mosques, and this mosque in particular, are well served. He was awarded the project. Because of God's graciousness to him, sometimes he prayed in all three mosques in one single day. May God have mercy on his soul. It is not a secret that he was one of the founders of the infrastructure of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Afterward, I studied in Hejaz. I studied economy at Jeddah University, or the so-called King 'Abd-al-'Aziz University. I worked at an early age on roads in my father's company, may God have mercy on his soul. My father died when I was 10 years old.
This is something brief about Usama Bin Ladin. As to what he [Usama Bin Ladin] wants; what he wants and demands is the right of any living being. We want our land to be freed of the enemies, we want our land be free of the Americans. God equipped these living creatures with an instinctive zeal and they refuse to be intruded upon. For instance, if an armed military man walks into a chicken's home wanting to attack it, the chicken will fight back and it is only a chicken. We are demanding a right given to all living creatures, not to mention the fact that it a right for all human beings, and a right for Muslims in particular.

There was an attack on the countries of Islam, especially on the holy shrines and on al- Aqsa Mosque, the prophet's first Kiblah. And then the aggression continued with the Crusader-Jewish alliance being led by the United States and Israel. Now they have taken the country of the two holy mosques. The only source of strength is Allah.

We seek to instigate the nation to get up and liberate its land, to fight for the sake of God, and to make the Islamic law the highest law, and the word of God the highest word of all.

[S'ad-al-Din Ibrahim, journalist and social sciences professor at the American University of Cairo] With regards to Bin Laden, he is the exception that proves the rule, because he is the youngest child, and because his family, despite its considerable wealth, is still considered a marginal one in Saudi Arabia originating from Hadramaut, which is why he was not fully accepted in Saudi society despite his wealth This marginalization sometimes explains the desire to rebel against the system, and if he is unable to do this on the inside, then he does it from the outside. This applies to some Saudi princes -- even in the era of [former Egyptian President Jamal] 'Abd-al-Nasir -- who were not very popular among the Saudi royal family and who rebelled against the royal family, the system, and their class as a result of attempts to marginalize them.

['Abd-al-Bari 'Atwan, editor in chief of the London-based Al-Quds al-'Arabi newspaper] I found him to be a man who is very modest in nature. He believes in every word he says. He does not lie. He does not exaggerate. He does not complement anyone. He does not even try to hide anything. He expresses everything he feels. He is very enigmatic. His voice is calm and well-mannered. I spent a whole day with him and I truly sensed his charm, his refined manners, and true modesty, not exaggerated or with fake modesty. He is a man who seeks the after-life and who truly feels that he has lived more than enough. You feel that there is a sadness inside him -- which he did not express -- that he was not martyred when he was fighting the Soviet or the communists or the heathens. You feel like he is saying: Why am I alive?

[Larry Johnson, expert on terrorism and former US intelligence officer, in English with superimposed Arabic translation] It is clear, he has killed and wounded more American citizens than any other group involved in terrorist attacks in the past seven years. No individual or group has killed as many Americans or foreigners. For example, if we were to count the number of victims per attack, we find that Usama Bin Ladin and his followers have killed about 125 victims per attack, while Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement]—which is number two on the list -- has killed six victims per attack.
This difference shows that Bin Ladin is not doing the ordinary, but rather has taken it upon himself to carry out a clear mission. He believes that the United States is desecrating the cradle of Islam in Saudi Arabia, and has thus directed his war against American interests. Fortunately, his capabilities are limited; after all he is only human. He is not a giant, he is not superman, nor can he tell the future or read minds, but he is still a threat. He has pledged to kill people and has acted on it. I think that he is a man of his word. He made a threat and we should not just consider him an idiot. We should take his threat seriously.

Najm: Usama Bin Ladin is the man that the United States has declared war on, and who has declared war in return. An attempt to assassinate him has cost several hundreds of millions of dollars that fell in the form of Cruise missiles on his camp in (Khoft) mountain in Afghanistan. It is the same camp that the United States called the base. The story does not start here.

The Afghan war was just starting after a series of military coups, the first of which toppled the monarchy, and brought pro-Soviet Union governments to this hard-to-invade country. The cold war, with all its implications, hit Afghanistan: Soviet troops entered Afghanistan, the United States issued a warning:

[Former US President Jimmy Carter; archive recording of speech, date not given; in English] I have sent a message today to the US Olympics Committee spelling out my own position, that unless the Soviets withdraw their troops within a month from Afghanistan, the Olympic games will be moved from Moscow to an alternate site or multiple sites, or postponed, or cancelled.

Najm: The resistance movement began. The mujahidin were fighting communist atheism, while the United States was fighting the progress of Soviet influence, and for the first time in centuries, the banner of Jihad in the name of Islam and the war on the Soviets in the name of Jihad was raised. There are those who say that this holy war was launched in the name of the United States and with its support. Were the mujahidin US agents who turned against Washington when it turned on them?

Usama Bin Ladin: This is a US attempt to distort things. Praise be to God who made their plots backfire on them. Every Muslim who sees discrimination begins to hate the Americans, the Jews, and Christians. This is part of our religion and faith. Since I become aware of things around me, I have been in a war, enmity, hatred against the Americans. What they claim has never happened. Saying that they supported jihad or fighting, it became clear to us that this support was from the Arab states, particularly the Gulf states, for Pakistan to encourage it to support jihad. This support was not for the sake of Almighty God, but out of fear for their thrones from the Soviet advance. At the time time, Carter was the US President. He could not say anything significant until after some 20 days in 1399 [hegira], corresponding to 20 January [year not given]. He said any Russian interference in the Gulf region will be termed an aggression against the United States. This is because he occupies this region and its oil. This is why he said we will use military force if this interference takes place. The Americans are lying when they say that they cooperated with us in the past, and we challenge them to show any evidence of this. The truth of the matter is that they were a burden on us and on the mujahidin in Afghanistan. There was no agreement on this. We were doing our duty in support of Islam in Afghanistan, although this
duty used to serve, against our desire, the US interests. This situation was similar to the Muslims' fight against the Romans. We know that fighting between the Romans and the Persians has always been strong. So, no wise man can say that when the Muslims fought the Romans first at the Mu'tah battle they were agents to the Persians, but interests met at this point. In other words, your killing of the Romans, which is a duty for you, used to please the Persians. However, after they finished with the Romans, they began to fight the Persians. So, the conversion of interests without agreement does not necessarily mean relations or agentry. In fact, we have been hostile to them since then. Praise be to God, we gave lectures during those days in Hejaz and Najd on the need to boycott the US goods and to attack the US forces and the US economy. This was more than 12 years ago.

Najm: The United States has always tried to belittle the size of the role it played there, however, it admitted that it extended aid. In the US capital, Washington, Larry Johnson, a former US intelligence employee, is still doing his job of training government quarters on how to combat terrorism. He speaks about that period:

Johnson: Several foreign powers before the Russians went into Afghanistan. The British went to Afghanistan and tried to control its people. The British and the Russians failed. I do not think that there is anyone who can control Afghanistan other than its people. However, saying that the United States went there and trained the mujahidin how to use rifles or plant explosives, this is nonsense. Did we do this? Yes, we went and helped in training and we provided them with aid which helped them in expelling the Russians. However, this was not a phenomenon that was created by the United States. This practice has been going on there for centuries, and we should realize this.

Najm: At the beginning of that war, the Arabs used to flow into Afghanistan, mujahidin and journalists. Jamal Isma'il, al-Jazirah correspondent, used to study there at the time. He was acquainted with a wealthy young man who was full of enthusiasm of jihad against the infidels. Usama Bin Ladin was in Peshawar:

Isma'il: I was first introduced to Shaykh Usama Bin-Muhammad Bin Ladin when he used to visit the Pakistani city of Peshawar during the Afghan jihad against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. At the time, I was a student at Peshawar University. I used to visit the Arab relief aid offices to report news to those interested at the time. I knew him first in 1984 when he established a services center. It was called the Mujahidin Services Center [MSC]. I knew him in the city of Peshawar in 1984 when the MSC was established in cooperation between Shaykh Usama Bin-Muhammad Bin Ladin and the Palestinian Shaykh 'Abdallah 'Azzam who was killed in Peshawar in 1989. At the time, Usama Bin Ladin used to finance the biggest part of the MSC budget and some Arab preachers or mujahidin at the Afghan fronts. However, he was not a permanent resident in Peshawar or on the Afghan territories. He used to come to these areas once every three or four months. Most of the time, he used to come to Peshawar to acquaint himself with the situation and to meet with the Afghan mujahidin leaders, Shaykh 'Abdallah 'Azzam, and others. He used to visit the internal Afghan fronts. Later, things developed for him. So, he financed the establishment of the first camp for the Arab mujahidin in 1986 or at the end of 1986. This camp began to prepare and train Arab fighters in an areas in Afghanistan and close to the Pakistani border. It was called the (Geiji).
Usama Bin Ladin came to Afghanistan when many states used to encourage their youths to go to Afghanistan to take part in the battles there. The United States also did not object to this. A number of Muslims used to come from the United States too. They participated in the battles during the Russian invasion of Afghanistan. Usama Bin Ladin also came at the same time. The Saudi Government also did not object to this. He stayed in Afghanistan.

Najm: However, the losing party in this war had another viewpoint. General (Valenkov), commander of the Soviet land forces in Afghanistan, laid down his arms and became a member of the Soviet Parliament. However, several years ago, when the war was at its peak, the general was at the frontline, fighting the Mujahidin. Then he withdrew.

(Valenkov): The United States played a really decisive role. Since we sent our forces into Afghanistan, the Americans knew about our decision which was very well known.

However, the Americans kept silent. They did not show any stand for fear that we might change our opinion. They wanted us to go there. But when we entered Afghanistan, they did their utmost to fully support the Afghan opposition, materially, technologically, and ideologically. They exploited the presence of Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Iran.

They provided every material need to establish military camps, training centers, arsenals, and bases. Some other countries also contributed to this, including Pakistan for a clear purpose; namely, preparing the Afghan refugees in the best possible way. Obviously, we called those who constituted armed factions gangs but they were real armed groups. They used to dispatch arms convoys to Afghanistan through Pakistan. They knew that they had definite tasks and that they were fighting not only for religion or a cause but for the substantial amounts of money they were receiving. The mujahidin had a direct financial interest in fighting and this is very important.

Najm: During the battles that raged in Afghanistan between the government forces and the Mujahidin, Usama Bin Ladin visited Afghanistan several times. During these visits, his participation in the operations with the mujahidin developed from one level to the next.

Usama Bin Ladin: This military camp was called the al-Ansar Lions' Den, or the Arab camp. In 1987, it was exposed to land and air attacks from the Soviet and Afghan communist government forces against the Arab camps at the time. The Afghan fighters who were there withdrew when the battles, the air attacks, and the landing of paratroopers began. The Arab fighters, led by Shaykh 'Abdallah 'Azzam and Usama Bin-Muhammad Bin Ladin and a group that, as far as we knew, did not exceed 35 persons, held their ground for two weeks of fierce fighting. Then the so-called legend of Bin Ladin or the Arab fighters in Afghanistan was born and began to develop gradually, especially ... [sentence incomplete; voice fades out]

Najm: This was Usama Bin Ladin's experience that was accumulated in years of fighting. An experience of which he is proud because he believes it ended with a victory over the Soviets, an experience he used to establish a training camp which was attacked by the United States with missiles. The United States called this camp the "base camp."
Najm: Two main characters were the driving force behind receiving and organizing Arab fighters and then sending them to the battlefield. They were Shaykh 'Abdallah 'Azzam, a Palestinian shaykh who decided to undertake jihad, and Usama Bin Ladin.

[Begin recording of Shaykh 'Azzam's voice over video clip of tanks firing, battle scenes, piles of ammunition, scenes of destruction, and the 1996 house and camp of Bin Ladin]

Shaykh 'Azzam: To the widowed mothers, orphaned children, our righteous martyrs, makers of glory, and leaders of conquests, we present this tape entitled: The buzzing of bullets.

Usama Bin Ladin: Shaykh 'Abdallah 'Azzam, may God have mercy on his soul, is a man worth a nation. After his assassination, Muslim women proved to be unable to give birth to a man like him. The people of jihad who lived that epoch know that Islamic Jihad in Afghanistan has not benefited from anyone as it has from Shaykh 'Abdallah 'Azzam. He instigated the nation from the farthest east to the farthest west. During that blessed jihad, the activities of Shaykh 'Abdallah 'Azzam, may god bless his soul, as well as the activities of our brother mujahidin in Palestine, particularly Hamas, increased. His books, particularly his book The Verses of the Merciful, began to enter Palestine and instigate the nation for jihad against the Jews. The shaykh proceeded from the narrow, regional, and often city atmosphere that was familiar to Islamists and shaykhs, to the larger Islamic world and began to instigate this Islamic world. We and the shaykh were in one boat, as is known to you, together with our brother Wa'il Jalidan.

A plot was concocted to assassinate all. We were very careful not to be together all the time. I often asked the shaykh, may God have mercy on his soul, to stay away from Peshawar in (Sada) due to the increasing plots, especially since one or two weeks earlier a bomb was discovered in the mosque where the shaykh lived in Sab' al-Layl. The Jews were mostly harmed by Shaykh 'Abdallah 'Azzam's movement. It is believed that Israel, together with some of its Arab agents, were the ones who assassinated the shaykh. As for this accusation, I think that it is being promoted today by the Jews, Americans, and some of their agents. However, this is not worth a response. It is illogical for a person to chop off his head and the one who was in the field knows the extent of the strong relationship between me and Shaykh 'Abdallah 'Azzam. This accusation is silly and baseless. There was no competition [between me and him] Shaykh 'Abdallah's field was that of call [da'wah] and instigation, while we were on the (Baktia) mountains in the interior. He sent us young people as well as directives. We did what he ordered us. We pray that God will accept him and his two sons, Muhammad and Ibrahim, as martyrs, and to compensate the nation by giving it one who can carry out the duty he used to perform.

Ibrahim: This was a phenomenon that was considered healthy by all those opposing occupation and colonialism, even if this colonialism was by a friendly state like the Soviet Union at that time. When the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan came to an end, a large number of the volunteers maintained fighting as part of their lifestyle. They diverted their attention from fighting a non-Muslim foreign occupier to an attempt to topple regimes in Arab and Islamic states, which they did not consider sufficiently Islamic. Those Arab nationals were called the Afghan Arabs or Arab Afghans. Some of them returned to Algeria, Egypt, Yemen, and other
states and tried to do so. They originally came from middle-class society and had some degree of knowledge and education. They had an ambition to be something in this life through public service, educational excellence, or vocational prominence. When they faced obstacles to the attainment of their ambition, which I think was legitimate, they either left their country in search of other opportunities abroad, or began to question the legitimacy of the regime, which does not allow them to fulfill this legitimate ambition.

[Valyenkov, commander of Russian ground troops in Afghanistan during the Russian invasion of the country, speaking in Russian with superimposed Arabic translation] We evacuated Afghanistan in circumstances that I vividly remember, because I was there. There were lots of flowers. Similarly, the people were tearful. Of course, this was not the sentiment of all Afghans. For those who were hurt by the war or suffered a setback as a result of it had completely different sentiments. Nonetheless, most Afghans had fears about the repercussions of our withdrawal from the country. They even tried to obstruct this withdrawal. If we are to talk about Afghan leaders, they did not want this at all. I am talking about Najibullah and others. [video footage from archives shows hostilities in the Afghan war]

Najm: The Soviets left. They withdrew after it had become clear that Afghanistan was a quagmire that drowned the Soviet Union in stagnant political and military waters. The entire Soviet empire was about to collapse. The mujahidin felt victorious and proud, because they felt that they brought the greatest military power on earth to its knees. They waged the war and won it. An enemy was vanquished while another is still to be overcome.

Usama Bin Ladin: Nowadays, jihad needs to be waged by the nation. The obligation to engage in jihad may be dropped if people suffer from disability. But, we believe that those who participated in the jihad in Afghanistan bear the greatest responsibility in this regard, because they realized that with insignificant capabilities, with a small number of RPG's, with a small number of antitank mines, with a small number of Kalashnikov rifles, they managed to crush the greatest empire known to mankind. They crushed the greatest military machine. The so-called superpowers vanished into thin air. We think that the United States is very much weaker than Russia. Based on the reports we received from our brothers who participated in jihad in Somalia, we learned that they saw the weakness, frailty, and cowardice of US troops. Only 80 US troops were killed. Nonetheless, they fled in the heart of darkness, frustrated, after they had caused great commotion about the new world order.

[Jamal Isma'il, al-Jazirah correspondent who conducted an interview with Bin Ladin] Until the year 1989, he [Bin Ladin] was in Peshawar or in Afghanistan in general. He used to frequent Peshawar. Afterwards, he left for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on a visit. He was denied travel for domestic reasons. However, the former Pakistani government said that this had something to do with the Pakistani Government, which asked that he be deported from Pakistani territory.

Najm: A short while after his return to Saudi Arabia, the region was boiling with change. The following year, the earthquake occurred [video shows footage from the archives of the Iraqi-Kuwaiti crisis]
[Former US President George Bush, in English] We're here to protect freedom, we're here to protect our future, and we're here to protect innocent lives. But we won't pull punches, we are not here on some exercise. This is a real world situation. And we are not walking away until our mission is done, until the invader is out of Kuwait. And that may well be where you come in.

Najm: Arab Afghans began to return to their home countries at almost the same time. Since that date, their presence was felt in several Arab capitals which pointed a finger of accusation at them regarding many operations which extremist Islamic groups were accused of. In Algeria, in Egypt, in Saudi Arabia, and many of them appeared in the United Kingdom.

Isma'il: After the second Gulf war, the war of Kuwait, Usama Bin Ladin was given a passport by the Saudi Government—and at the time he was not permitted to have a passport—with an exit-only visa. The following day, he left for the Pakistani city of Peshawar. At the time, his movement and activity was engulfed with some secrecy in fear of being exposed to assassination, especially since Shaykh 'Abdallah 'Azzam was assassinated in Peshawar with his two sons Muhammad and Ibrahim two years earlier.

Usama Bin Ladin: We were in deep grief during the dispute between these factions and the parties of the Mujahidin. But God Almighty was gracious to the Arab nations by giving it the Taleban Movement, which came to rescue this Jihad from the US scheme which supported Najib [Najibullah] and was pressuring the Mujahidin, through Pakistan, to form a secular government. Fifty percent of its members would be former communists and some of those who had studied in the west, and the rest would be from the seven Afghan parties.

Praise be to God, we were blessed with the coming of this movement. It came at a time when things came to a head and people got sick and tired of bandits of which there were becoming more and more, unfortunately. The Americans and their allies managed to divide Afghanistan to five small states. You, in Pakistan, no doubt are watching this. There was a state in the east, which is called (Hawzat Sharq), Jalalabad. They are (Ningirhar) (Lughman) and (Kunar). There was a state and a president of a state. Their leader was Haji Qadir. In the west there was another state, there was a state and a president of a state led by Haji Qadir. In the West there was another state, (Hawzat Gharb). Muhammad Isma'il Khan and he ruled over three to four provinces between (Hirat), (Farah), and Numrouz) and that too was a virtually independent government from Afghanistan. In the north there was the state that was supported by the communists in the past and it was led by Dostum. He had provinces there. In the north and the center there was a government ruled by Ahmad Shah Mas'ud and Najib and Sayyaf.

What is shocking is that every time Muslims are deceived. How can we believe that a government can be established in Kabul and in one neighborhood we have, Najib the communist who killed more than 70,000 Muslims, and right next to him there is Ahmad Shah Mas'ud? How can we believe that they had a joint government in the full sense of the word and that the former communist president Najib signs the state budget? Then we are told: We are not Communists
and we do not support the communists. In reality, it was a joint government being supported by foreign parties and Najib was part of it.

The southern part was a state for the Taleban. It consists of the provinces of Qandahar, Zabol, and (Hilmend). So there were five governments in this small state, not to mention the bandits who were considered small states with the states.

God blessed the Muslims with the coming of the Taleban rule. It was not a force being pushed in from abroad, as the Crusaders in the western media try to depict them; but it was rather a pulling force from the inside. People had become sick and tired of road bandits and from paying taxes and protection money. So any tribe that had students of religion who had connections with the Taleban they [the Taleban] would ask the students to come to this or that province. This is why we see that engineer Hekmatyar was on the borders of Kabul for four years. He had the public support of Pakistan and was trying to move forward a few meters to seize Kabul, but he could not. It is known that the Islamic party led by Hekmatyar is the best Afghan party in terms of power, organization, and deployment in Afghanistan. He could not move forward. On the other hand, it is also known, these students of religion are generally young and many of them had not participated in fighting. But because of the popular support after the people had reached a state of despair from previous events, they were successful.

Hekmatyar: I honestly think that this war was forced on us just like these wars were imposed on all the Muslims in the world. I ask you: Why are all the wars taking place in the Muslim world? Why are Muslims being killed and their houses destroyed? Why are the problems in Europe and the United States easily solved, while simple issues in the Muslim world ignite vicious wars? Why the problems in Algeria, Palestine, and Kashmir? I think that the Hizb-e Islami is the underdog. Unfortunately, the Muslim world does not know how this war was imposed, starting with the war that the coalition government in Kabul declared against the Hizb-e Islami and later the Taleban Movement.

Why does the US State Department say: We are the ones who did not permit Hekmatyar to enter Kabul? The US defense minister said: We cannot allow the Hizb-e Islami to rule Kabul; while a CIA official tells CNN: We have decided to destroy the Hizb-e Islami. This is what they say, but there are people who do not know how the war started, who is funding it, and why it is being launched against the Hizb-e Islami, or why the coalition government and later the Taleban movement are waging a war against the party. The United States was behind this war just to prove to everyone that Jihad is a failure. If an Islamic government was formed by the mujahidin after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States believed that this type of government will spread to the rest of the rest of the region. They thought to themselves: We must strike at this movement and not allow the mujahidin to form an Islamic government. They consequently imposed this war on us.

Isma'il: In 1991 and 1992, I interviewed him [Bin Ladin] more than once to find out some details. At that time I was a correspondent for [London-based] Al-Hayah newspaper and he was the head of a reconciliation committee between the Afghan factions that were at
war in some states. He was chosen by these factions as a neutral party that is supportive of Afghan jihad in general. After 1992, when the mujahidin parties entered the Afghan capital, Kabul, and were at war with each other, which stunned all observers, especially the Muslims, Usama Bin Ladin -- along with a number of Arab Islamic activists who were in Peshawar and other Arab countries -- exerted intensive mediation efforts between Hekmatyar, Masud, and Rabbani, but all these efforts failed, so he moved to Sudan in mid-1992 and stayed there until May 1996, when the Sudanese Government was forced to ask him to leave.

According to the Afghan information minister in the Taleban Government, a deal was made between the United States and Sudan to drive Usama Bin Ladin out to Afghanistan because Afghanistan has no means of communication. In return for this, the sanctions and economic and political pressure on Sudan was to be eased off.

'Atwan: He [Bin Ladin] told me about attempts to tempt him to stop his jihad and the money he was offered. He said -- and he was telling the truth -- that he was offered hundreds of millions of dollars and he refused them. He named the mediators who visited him, whether in Sudan or even in Afghanistan, to talk him into going back, and he refused. He used to affirm that he will stick with this approach until the end and that he has dedicated his life to the cause of God and Islam. He was saying this without hesitation.

He told me about his days in Sudan and the challenge he faced when Arab aid to Sudan stopped and how he was able to survive with limited local resources. He told me about the agricultural projects he carried out in the al-Jazirah area in Sudan. He told me that this country can feed the whole world if it were allowed to be properly invested. He told me about how he was able to produce a record number of sunflowers. His agricultural projects were many and included cotton farms. He wished he could have stayed in Sudan and continued his projects, but he was forced to flee back to Afghanistan.

Najm: In 1994, we saw the first attack against US targets in the Middle East begin. The target was Riyadh, the headquarters of the US mission which was training the Saudi National Guard. In 1996, an attack was carried out in al-Khubar, the headquarters of the US Marine force. Some reports linked both with Usama Bin Ladin, who made every effort to praise the men who carried out the attacks.

Usama Bin Ladin: These were popular reactions by young men who willingly offered their lives, seeking the satisfaction of Almighty God. I hold in great esteem and respect these great men because they removed the brand of shame from the forehead of our [Islamic] nation, whether those who carried out attacks in Riyadh or those who carried out bombing attacks in al-Khubar and East Africa and other places. I also view with great esteem our brother cubs in Palestine who are teaching the Jews lessons in faith and the pride of the faithful. Regrettably, after these daring operations in Palestine, the world's infidelity was gathered. It is a cause of sadness that they gathered on the soil of Egypt. They gathered their agents from the rulers of the region, the Arab rulers, who had been deceiving the Islamic nation for more than half a century. Whenever a president and a king met they used to say that they discussed the Palestinian cause. Fifty years later, the clear picture emerged; namely, they met not only to betray the mujahidin in Palestine but to denounce these cubs whose fathers and brothers were killed, imprisoned, and tortured in
defense of their religion and for endeavoring to evacuate the infidels from their land. The proverb says: Clear things are impossible to explain.

'Abd-al-Bari 'Atwan, chief editor of the London-based Arabic daily Al-Quds al-'Arabi] Following the attacks on the US forces in al-Khubar and in Riyadh, he [Bin Ladin] expressed unusual sympathy with those who carried out the attacks. He was very close to saying that they were from among his supporters. He was close but he did not say this. You sense pride in his eyes, that these real men, as he told me, were capable of implementing these two successful operations.

Najm: However, the real turning point which drew the attention of the United States was the issuance of a fatwa [religious edict].

Usama Bin Ladin: The previous fatwa says that in our religion, we have divisions that are different from what they claim, even if they claim something and act in the opposite way. We differentiate between the man, the woman, the child, and the old people. The man is a fighter, whether he carries arms or helps kill us by paying taxes and by gathering information. He is a fighter. With regards to reports among Muslims that 'Usama is threatening to kill civilians, then, what are they killing in Palestine? They are killing children, not only civilians, but children as well. The United States has an advantage media-wise and has great media power that varies its standards according to its needs. Our enemy, the target -- if God gives Muslims the opportunity to do so -- is every American male, whether he is directly fighting us or paying taxes.

You may have heard these days that almost three quarters of the US people support Clifton's strikes on Iraq. They are a people whose president becomes more popular when he kills innocent people. They are a people who increase their support for their president when he commits some of the seven cardinal sins. They are a lowly people who do not understand the meaning of principles.

As I said, we are pursuing our rights to have them [the Americans] evicted from the Muslim world countries and to prevent them from dominating us. We believe that the right to self-defense is to be enjoyed by all people. Israel is stockpiling hundreds of nuclear warheads and bombs. The Christian West is largely in possession of such weapons. Hence, we do not regard this as a charge, but rather as a right. We do not accept to see anybody level charges against us in this regard. It is as if you were accusing a man of being a courageous knight and fighter. It is as if you were denying him this. Only a man who is not in his right mind would level such accusations. This is a right. We supported the Pakistani people and congratulated them when God was gracious enough to enable them to acquire the nuclear weapon. We regard this as one of our rights, of Muslim rights. We disregard such worn-out US charges.

Let us say that there are two parties to the conflict: The first party is world Christianity, which is allied with Zionist Jewry and led by the United States, Britain, and Israel; while the second party is the Muslim world. In such a conflict, it is unacceptable to see the first party mount attacks, desecrate my lands and holy shrines, and plunder the Muslims' oil. When it is met by any
resistance on the part of the Muslims, this party brands the Muslims as terrorists. This is 
stupidity. People's intelligence is being belittled. We believe

that it is our religious duty to resist this occupation with all the power that we have and to punish
it using the same means it is pursuing against us.

The US claims are numerous. If we presume that they are true, we are not concerned by them.
These people are resisting the forces of world infidelity that occupied their lands. Why should
the United States get angry when the people resist its aggressions? Its claims are baseless.
However, if it means that I have something to do with instigating them, I would like to say that
this is obvious. I have frequently admitted to having done so. I admitted that I was one of those
who cosigned the fatwa [religious edict] that urged the nation to engage in jihad. We did so a few
years ago. Thanks be to God, many people responded favorably to our fatwa. Of these people
were the brothers whom we regard as martyrs. They were brother 'Abd-al-'Aziz al-Mi'thim, who
was killed in Riyadh, brother Muslih al-Shamrani, brother Riyad al-Hajiri, and brother Khalid al-
Sa'id. The only strength is that bestowed by God. We beseech Almighty God to accept them all
During interrogation, they admitted to coming under the influence of some of the statements and
circulars we issued to people. In these statements and circulars, we communicated the fatwas
issued by clergymen regarding the need to engage in jihad against these US occupiers.

'Atwan: I felt that the man had his own vision and special strategy. This strategy is based on his
concept of the region. The first point in this strategy is that the US Administration or the US
forces, which he considers occupation forces in the Gulf and Arabian Peninsula, are a prelude to
a comprehensive Israeli-Jewish hegemony over the region with the aim of looting its wealth and
humiliating its Muslim people. One senses this as the essence of his creed and strategy.
Therefore, he believes that expelling these US forces from the Arab world is a top priority. He
believes that the regimes should be reformed or, more correctly, changed. The regimes immune
to reform should be changed, the shari'ah should be applied properly, and a just Islamic system
should be set up in the Islamic and Arab states, particularly the Gulf states. This is a summary of
his strategy. Currently, he does not want to fight the regimes. That is what he told me He wants
to fight the Americans, who are protecting these regimes.

Najm: Although Usama Bin Ladin insists in all his statements that his role is confined to the
issuance of fatwas and instigation, he almost stated in the interview conducted with him by our
respondent Jamal Isma'il that he was aware of all aspects of the US Embassy explosion in
Nairobi.

Usama Bin Ladin: It was a painful blow. They [the Americans] had not sustained such a blow
since the blowing up of the Marines in Lebanon The Nairobi [US] Embassy was actually six
embassies combined in one. The brutal US invasion of Somalia kicked off from there. Some
13,000 from among our brothers, women, and sons in Somalia were killed under the banner of
the United Nations. Reports, corroborated by photographs, said that our Somali brothers were
grilled as if they were sheep. It is only God who bestows strength They did not speak about the
scope of brutality or aggression and so forth and so on. Muslims are always reproached when
they defend themselves. For the past few decades, plots have been hatched to partition Sudan from there. These plots are hatched in Nairobi. As is widely known, the US Embassy in Nairobi is the agency that is doing this. The greatest CIA center in eastern Africa is located at this embassy. Thanks to God's grace to Muslims, the blow was successful and great. They deserved it. It made them taste what we tasted during the massacres committed in Sabra, Shatila, Dayr Yasin, Qana, Hebron, and elsewhere.

Najm: The United States did not make do with the bombardment. It issued an arrest warrant against Usama Bin Ladin and promised a $5 million prize to whoever provides information leading to his arrest. It tried to freeze his financial assets. Usama Bin Ladin began his odyssey in Afghanistan when he was 22 years old. Now, he is 42 years old. He was the paramount Arab Afghan. The number of Arab Afghans in Afghanistan is diminishing. Those who met him said that he is no longer the same man.

'Atwan: I believe that the Nairobi and Dar es Salam bombings changed Bin Ladin. He was aware that the Americans were targeting him, but not with this intensity. There was not a single piece of evidence that he was behind the al-Khubar and Riyadh bombings. He may have been wanted by the Americans. But, there was no powerful evidence incriminating him. I think that the situation now is different. Nonetheless, even prior to these two incidents, the man took all the necessary security precautions. For example, I know that he built a camp in the open air to give the impression that it was his base when he was interviewed by CNN. It was not a base. I am aware of this. He did not allow the CNN team to bring its own camera. The team left for the camp and found the camera waiting for it. It was Bin Ladin's camera. He asked the team members not to bring anything with them. The CNN team members were inspected, pursued, and monitored indirectly to make sure that they were neither followed nor monitored by the US intelligence service. The man knows how to take care of his security concerns. I hope that he will be successful in his efforts in this regard. He is taking his own precautions. I know that he is now in a secure place, that his moves are banned, not because Taleban wants to restrain his moves, but because it wants to protect him. Taleban officials have strong convictions that the press and press men are the trap that could track his whereabouts and bring about his liquidation.

Isma'il: It goes without saying that he feels that is under siege. He as well as the Afghan Taleban-led government have admitted that his moves in Afghanistan are not restrained. Nonetheless, he is banned from engaging in any action originating in Afghan territory against any country whatsoever regardless of whether or not it has recognized the Taleban-led government. All that he is currently doing on Afghan territory is confined to addressing appeals, engaging in media-related activities, and issuing fatwas, along with a group of Afghan or other clergymen, promoting fighting, which Taleban cannot ban or restrain, because this is enshrined in Koranic verses and traditions of the prophet.

Najm: The base was destroyed, but Bin Ladin survived. He is trying to mobilize more supporters even though he has fears that their number may shrink in the future.
Usama Bin Ladin: When jihad was obscured for a long time, we saw the emergence of a generation of students who did not experience the heat of jihad. They were affected by the US media that invaded Islamic countries. Without even engaging in combat, they suffered a psychological defeat. They acknowledge the necessity for jihad. Nonetheless, they say that they cannot fulfill such an obligation. The people who had the honor of engaging in jihad in Afghanistan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, or Chechnya--we had such an honor--are certain that the nation nowadays can, God willing, engage in jihad against the enemies of Islam, particularly, the external archenemy, the Crusader-Jewish alliance.

Najm: All this brings us back to the Arabian Gulf, which some call the Persian Gulf. Shiites are living on one of its coasts, while the other coast is inhabited by a combination of Sunnites and Shiites. Holy shrines are located to the west of the gulf: In Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem. Similarly, holy shrines are located to the north: In al-Najaf and Karbala'. There are also holy shrines in the east: In Qom and Mashhad. Afghanistan is a stone's throw away. Iraq is under siege. Weapons are deployed at sea, on land, and in the air. An oil artery is running through its waters. It is the embodiment of wealth and conflict. What we forget in the midst of routine details is the cumulative effect of things. When somebody drops a stone in a river, this may cause the river course to change once and for all. Washington and Usama Bin Ladin are part of this mosaic. To them, the targets have been delineated and the pursuit has begun.

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