

Terrorism and Bureaucratic Turf:

L AURIE MYLROIE'S reconstruction of the probable provenance of the World Trade Center bombing in your Winter issue is, as CIA's former chief of counterterrorism attests, a "brilliant" job of research and imaginative scholarship—and it was a brilliant (and gutsy) decision on your part to publish it. Saddam Hussein's bloody handprints are smeared all over the rubble. What really died there (one hopes) was American complacency that terrorism cannot be brought home to us.

But there are problems of omission. The author's explanation of why it is that law enforcement—catching, trying, and convicting the perpetrators—is walled off from national security concerns—who really 'dunit, and how, and why—is wanting. Indeed, the answers she offers for our

inspection are not explanations at all, but, rather, the most obvious of rationalizations; curiously, she stops short of saying so.

"Protecting bureaucratic turf"? Sure—but only if those who own and operate *all* of the turf, the FBI's *and* the CIA's, protect the protectors. Ms. Mylroie's second explanation, offered without editorial comment, is even curiously:

[T]he U.S. government cannot properly address both the national security question of state sponsorship and the criminal question of the guilt or innocence of individual perpetrators at the same time.

It "cannot"? Why? I thought, perhaps naively, that our government had long since mastered the art of chewing gum and simultaneously walking in a straight line.

Saddam Hussein, alas, cannot be brought to American justice along with the hapless bombers themselves. But it must also be noted that the same stringent standards of proof do not apply: the evidence that almost surely would "convict" Saddam of conspiracy to abet terrorism would probably not be produceable in a U.S. court—and, on national security grounds ("protection of sources and methods"), probably ought not to be. But that does not, nor should not, get Saddam off the hook. It simply shifts the judgment of his guilt *and the assessment of his appropriate punishment* to other ground: namely, to the implementation of national security policy at the highest levels of our government.

Qaddafi, or Hafez al-Asad, or Kim Jong Il) inevitably raises the question, *and what do we intend to do about it?* This is not an easy one to answer: not for the Israeli authorities who rooted out and eliminated "the Engineer" a few months ago or who earlier isolated the terrorist kingpin in the security of his Tunis bedroom and murdered him there, or for that matter for Ronald Reagan when he ordered the airstrike against Qaddafi in his encampment outside Tripoli. Little wonder that our authorities invoke every stratagem to evade the question; but they cannot avoid it forever.

All thanks to Laurie Mylroie for helping us reach the right question. For answers we'll probably have to await the arrival of experienced, resolute adults at those "highest levels" of U.S. political leadership.

Charles M. Lichenstein
The Heritage Foundation

Mylroie replies:

Charles Lichenstein, of course, is right. Two New York area investigators told me that they believe that the question of state sponsorship was not properly addressed because the Clinton administration did not want to do what the American public would have demanded if it were known that Iraq was behind the Trade Center bombing.

Something similar happened in the second bombing conspiracy, where Sudan's involvement never came out. Two Sudanese intelligence agents were to supply the diplomatic plates to get the bomb-laden van into the UN parking garage. The agents were declared personae non grata, while, during the trial, the government referred to them only as "employees" of Sudan's UN mission.

But clearly, dealing with state-sponsored terrorism in this way, as if it were solely a criminal matter, will invite the state sponsors to commit their terror in America and leave a few dupes to be tried.