Section 6

KHOBAR TOWERS AFTER ATTACK

Khobar Towers, Dhahran, Saudi Arabia

On June 25, 1996, a terrorist truck bomb exploded outside the northern perimeter of Khobar Towers, Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, a facility housing U.S. and allied forces supporting the coalition air operation over Iraq, Operation SOUTHERN WATCH.

This was a brutal and cowardly terrorist attack on a multi-national peacekeeping force leaving 19 dead and hundreds injured. These peacekeepers were enforcing United Nations sanctions and the dead and injured represent citizens from several nations. Peace in our time can only be assured in a world free from terrorism and the loss of innocent lives.

Estimates of the size of the bomb range from the equivalent of 3,000 to more than 30,000 pounds of TNT. The Task Force estimated that the bomb was between 3,000 and 8,000 pounds, most likely about 5,000 pounds. While U.S. Air Force Security Police observers on the roof of the building overlooking the perimeter identified the attack in progress and alerted many occupants to the threat, evacuation was incomplete when the bomb exploded. Nineteen fatalities and approximately 500 U.S. wounded resulted from the attack.

The perpetrators escaped.
AERIAL VIEW OF THE KHOBAR TOWERS COMPLEX

KHOBAR TOWERS COMPLEX    BUILDING 131
This is a photo of The Khobar Towers apartment complex. The shaded building represents Building 131. This gives an idea of the size of the buildings and also how close they were located to the road. This display was first introduced to us at our FBI briefing in Quantico, VA December 1997, 18 months after the blast!
The meeting lasted for 3 days where the families were given uninterrupted and undivided attention. We were guests at the FBI Academy at Quantico and lived in the dorms, away from the media and all outside contact. It was informative and we all came away with a renewed faith in ‘the system’ that appeared to have let us down.
We all had plenty time for one on one, for questions or whatever and everyone treated us nicely.

The evening dinner with Janet was one of the funniest conversations you could ever imagine. She seems so stiff and proper at the podium but in person, she was very down to earth and could be a lot of fun. This weekend provided information and gave us contacts. Ms Reno was introduced by the then, Acting Secretary or the AF, Mr Whit Peters who has since become a friend.
A Father's Grief / A Mother's Grief

Remember the best selling book, “Men are from Mars, Woman are from Venus? “ Well the same is true for grief. Most men grieve on Mars and most woman on Venus. The statistics are grim. More than half the couples who experience the death of a child are divorced within two years. Why? There is a delicate balance that must be maintained in a relationship during the grief process. Life does go on, but normalcy is a tough task after the death of your child. How does a couple grieve differently? How do they renew their communication?

To understand how we must first understand why. Most Men and Woman do grieve in different ways. As men and woman, the basic components of our psyche are so different. It makes sense that in stressful situations, we may not all react in the same manner. Most men see the “big picture” while most woman are detail oriented. He thinks and she feels. He is logical and realistic while she may be more intuitive and idealistic. He copes with stress and grief internally and she copes externally.

In many, but certainly not all, support group situations, woman attend for longer periods of time and are generally more communicative and verbal. While both will handle the grief intrinsically unique from the other, both need the opportunity to express their feelings. The love of both parents should transcend any gender differences. When it comes to the grieving process, many fathers express “making peace” within 3-9 months. Most mothers, however, do not report that feeling of acceptance until 9-24 months or even longer.

How can you help a grieving mother, if she is your wife talk about the event a great deal. She is in the process of gathering every possible detail about your child’s death. It is as if she is playing the tape in her mind and rewriting it over and over again. She will ask questions that may be unanswerable, such as how or why? Be patient with her, and listen. If you are frustrated with her, attend a support group meeting with her. It is a safe place for mom to review details of the event unconditionally. The mother may want to visit the grave very frequently. She feels that this is her way “to take care” of her child. At the grave, she can see for and close the only physical part of your child that she has left. Allow her to visit as often as she needs to. You do not have to go with her, however, don’t discourage her or tell her it is unhealthy. This may be detrimental to the lines of communication.

What about dealing with a father’s grief? Many men, unlike woman, feel uncomfortable discussing the death of his child. It is too deep and too emotional. Dad is the culturally recognized “Protector” and “Stronghold of the family.” It is his duty to remain strong and unyielding. Even if his heart is breaking, he may have difficulty expressing it openly. Encourage him by simply listening when he does choose to talk. If you attempt to comfort him while he is grieving, he may feel guilty for making you hear the burden of the “Protector” and quickly dry his tears. Just listening is an effective way to support a grieving father. Hugging and soft comforting words are an effective way to comfort a grieving mother.

Respect each others feelings don’t expect the same grief that you have to be shared by your spouse. Share memories of your child, moments you both cherished. Most of all remember that this child was a gift that was given, but taken away before it’s time.

from Dear Cheyenne A book for Bereaved parents and for those who Love them by Joan Cacciapueto
January 8, 1998

Mr. and Mrs. Gary Heiser
Coldwell Banker
39 Old Kings Road North
Palm Coast, Florida 32137

Dear Gary & Fran:

    I received your note and articles and wanted to drop you a short note to say thank you.

    A great deal of effort and thought into the Khobar Towers Conference. We wanted the conference to be informative and beneficial to the families.

    I have signed the picture you sent, and you will find it enclosed in this letter.

    Again, thank you for attending, and we will keep you and your entire family in our prayers.

    With warm regards,

Sincerely,

Louis J. Freeh
Director
Mr. and Mrs. Gary Heiser  
39 Old Kings Road North  
Palm Coast, FL 32317  

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Heiser:

I wanted to thank you personally for coming to the FBI Academy last week. Although the discussions raised many sad memories, I hope you found the meetings to be helpful and supportive.

Michael was a precious member of your family. He was also a very important and respected member of our military family, and had a considerable role in sustaining world peace. Michael leaves each of us with his enduring legacy of duty... honor... country.

The Department of Defense and our nation recognize that you bear the terrible sorrow of the ultimate sacrifice. We stand with you in your loss, and will do all that we can to support you.

It was an honor to meet you. Please know that you and your family are very much in my thoughts.

With best wishes, I am

Sincerely,

[Signature]

The signature is difficult to read, it says, Bill Cohen.
Mr. and Mrs. Gary Heiser
39 Old Kings Road North
Palm Coast, FL 32137

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

Dear Mr. & Mrs. Heiser,

Thank you so much for your thoughtful note. I enjoyed our chance to visit over dinner. I do hope you will keep in touch & let me know if there is anything we can better assist and support the victims of Khobar Tower and their loved ones. Your strength & courage inspire us.

Sincerely,

James

11/2/98
A few miscellaneous old news clippings that might explain why we get so upset and can’t let go

Once again, flag-draped caskets arrived at Dover Air Force Base in Delaware. Once again, American families were shattered by the loss of their loved ones. Once again, our nation is numbed by a terrorist attack. Once again, our president was outraged by an atrocity and vowed to get the "cowards who committed this murderous act."

And once again, none of the brass hats is standing tall and taking responsibility or being held accountable for the death of 19 Americans and the wounding of over 400 from the latest terrorist attack in the Middle East.

Military leaders are again circling the wagons as they go into an it-wasn’t-my-fault mode and pass the buck, claiming they took all the precautions necessary to defend the Saudi base where the airmen died against terrorism.

Florida-based Army Gen. J.H. Buxford Peay III, the top U.S. commander for Saudi Arabia, says the bomb was a big one and not part of "normal" types of terrorism. That is pure spin. There is no such thing as a "normal" terrorist operation. Terrorists aren’t into following some neat military handbook.

"Air Force Maj. Gen. Kurt Anderson, commander of the Joint Task Force in Saudi Arabia, implied in a New York Times interview that his hands were tied because our forces are in Saudi Arabia. He said, "We do not own this country. We are here living on the facilities they have provided us. That sets up certain constraints that our security measures must operate within.""

What nonsense. U.S. commanders are responsible for the security of their troops wherever they are. Our forces were not there for rest and recreation but rather according to Army Gen. John Shalikashvili, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to provide "stability to the region."

Any leader worth his stripes or stars should have demanded that our people be correctly secured or threatened to move them where they would be adequately protected.

The airmen who died were billeted in a building no more than 30 yards from where the truck bomb exploded. Even a raw recruit would have realized a fanatic could have thrown a hand grenade that far.

"It doesn’t take a genius. Nor does it take a military genius to figure out that some madman might steal a big truck, fill it with explosives, park it by a fence and set off the 1983 Marine barracks bombing in Beirut, Lebanon, that killed 241 U.S. servicemen. A terrorist bombing, incidentally, for which the brass — from the commander of the Marine Corps, Gen. P.X. Kelly, right down to the commanding officer — took the rap even though they personally knew beforehand that the security was stink."

"Air Force personnel who lived in the blasted building knew they were hanging out. It was common scuttlebutt they were billeted too close to the street and were at high risk to car bombs. Many joked about reducing the danger by sleeping in their offices."

Only last November, at another U.S. facility in Saudi Arabia, five Americans were killed and 80 wounded by a car bomb. Four terrorists were tried and beheaded.

After this hit, you’d think the brass would have gotten the word. Especially since this latest assault was not a surprise attack. In fact, the mannequins in the buildings months ago they’d even the score for their headless pals.

"Under the circumstances, the top brass should have personally checked out the billet, talked to the airmen and found out what was worrying them." Pegaview the security plan. Anderson did increase alertness and put lookouts on top of the buildings. But neither general set up a man’s land of at least 500 feet between the billets and potential bombers.

The guards on the roof saw the truck park and the gnomes run to a waiting car and zoom off. They tried to alert everyone, running down the stairs shouting, "Get out of the building."

"But surely in the information age, the warning system could be a little more sophisticated than what our forlorners used in the trenches of France in 1918 when the Germans launched a gas attack."

"Our commanders insist they did their duty. Try telling that to the families of the dead and those who survived."

"Unlikely Beirut, those responsible should not be allowed to sidestep their accountability this time around."

"Retired Army Col. David H. Hackworth is a contributing editor of Newsweek magazine and author of the syndicated column "Defending America."

"Any leader worth his stripes or stars should have demanded that our people be correctly secured."

Suspects in bombing of U.S. base tied to Iran

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Dozens of suspects detained in Saudi Arabia for the bombing of a U.S. military housing complex belong to a shadowy group inspired by Iran, Saudi security sources and Shiite Muslim dissidents said Saturday.

The little-known Shiite Muslim organization Hezbollah has links with the Lebanon-based Iranian-backed group of the same name, as well as connections with Iran’s close Arab ally, Syria, said the sources, speaking on condition of anonymity.

In a statement sent to The Associated Press, the group denied any involvement in the blast.

The statement predicted that authorities might try to pin the blame for the bombing on Hezbollah members. Other sources suggested the government was focusing on the Shiites and Iran but that majority Sunni Muslims were also among the suspects.

Security officials said the investigation still had not reached a conclusion. Speaking on condition of anonymity, they said that the probe focused on the Shiites in detention. An official announcement would be made soon, they said without elaborating.

Above dated August 12, 1998

Right dated November 3, 1996
THE JUNE 25 truck-bomb attack on U.S. forces in Saudi Arabia, which claimed 19 American lives, “signaled that terrorism is now an ever-present and serious threat to U.S. forces overseas.” So says Deputy Secretary of Defense John White. But Mr. White is wrong. The signal had come much sooner. Pentagon officials did not receive it correctly.

Retired general Wayne Downing has completed an investigation into the June 25 bombing: it documents the military’s failure to defend against such an attack despite ample and specific warning of the danger. Gen. Downing found breakdowns in the chain of command, failures in the gathering and sharing of intelligence, failures to respond appropriately as the U.S. mission in Saudi Arabia changed, failures even in basic equipping and training of U.S. personnel for security duties.

As it happens, these findings mirror to an eerie and disturbing degree the findings of retired Adm. Robert L. J. Long, who 13 years ago investigated the terrorist truck-bombing that killed 241 U.S. servicemen in Beirut—an attack that truly “signaled that terrorism is now an ever-present and serious threat to U.S. forces overseas.” In congressional testimony Wednesday, Gen. Downing acknowledged “an amazing amount of similarity” between his findings and those of Adm. Long.

The Beirut bombing was a long time ago, but a truck-bombing inside Saudi Arabia last November provided as much reminder as should have been necessary. Yet even then, commanders did not take obvious preventive measures, such as shatterproofing windows or extending their security perimeter. They continued to rotate security forces in and out every 15 to 90 days. Command authorities from headquarters in Florida never inspected security measures at Khobar Towers where the bombers struck. And the Pentagon excuse that the June bombing took place on a whole new scale does not hold water; even a bomb of exactly the same power as the November attack would have claimed lives and wreaked serious damage at Khobar.

Who is culpable? In 1983, President Reagan preempted the Long report, accepted all blame, and said no U.S. commanders “should be punished for not fully comprehending the nature today’s terrorist threat.” Defense Secretary William Perry similarly announced that he is “not responsible for the safety and the welfare of all our forces.” But what does that really mean? Mr. Perry is not offering to resign, and he is quick to note that he “cannot inspect every security defense.” He has asked an Air Force panel to examine whether disciplinary measures are called for, and he said he does not want “prejudice their findings.” Yet before Congress Wednesday, Mr. Perry expressed “full confidence” in the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and in Gen. J. H. Binford Peay III, who heads Central Command. That would seem to leave lower-ranking officers ripe for scapegoating.

Clarification

The broadcasting of indecent material on television is governed by criminal statute, not by the Children’s Television Act, as was implied in an editorial Sept. 17.
Above dated September 17, 1996

Right dated January 24, 1997

There was and still is a lot of controversy over the General losing his second star but you will never get everyone to agree. Personally, I think he was singled out and others should have shared in the blame, but I do not agree with those who say he should not have been punished. Too many stood up and ‘accepted blame’ only to be allowed to retire with full pension and honor. As Mr Hackman so eloquently put it, “our commanders say they did their duty, try telling that to the families of the dead!” There should be accountability at all levels, all the way to the top when necessary. Isn’t it a shame we are not all governed by the same set of rules?
Another early warning!!!

January 31, 1997

Is our relationship with Saudi money oriented?!?!
This is probably the worst slam of all! To allow bin Laden Construction to rebuild Khobar Towers! After reading some of the articles and information we have shared, it might give you a better insight as to the attitude problem we know so well.
Khobar Tower Pictures

Crankshaft believed to be from the truck that exploded

FBI agents sift through the debris
After viewing a mess like this, our only hope is that this happened so fast none of them knew what hit them. You can only imagine, no we can’t even imagine!

More information about this Reward is posted on

heroes@heroes.net

Apparently no one has attempted to claim a reward yet