National Security Policy Responses to the 9/11 Attacks

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The acts of terrorism upon the United States of America on September 11, 2001 are forever stamped in the history of this country. Americans called for a response from their leaders in a time of tragedy and uncertainty. What partially came about from those calls for action were policy changes focused on national security agencies that hopefully would prevent such attacks from happening in the future. Intelligence sharing among the numerous national security agencies became the mantra for those agencies, which had come under the direction of the newly formed Director of National Intelligence in 2004. This research project investigates and outlines different changes in policy implemented by three of the major players in counterterrorism efforts: the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the National Security Agency, and the Central Intelligence Agency. The study includes details from an interview with former Congressman and Vice-Chairman of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, Lee Hamilton.
Introduction

The years after the Cold War were important times for the Intelligence Community, and ultimately detrimental to some degree. One of the factors contributing to the negativity was the fact that after the end of the Cold War the government cut budgets for the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Central Intelligence Association (CIA), and the National Security Agency (NSA) during the 1990s by twenty-five to thirty percent (Hamilton). Every security agency in the United States had been focusing to a large degree on the Soviet Union during the Cold War, so when it ended everyone seemed a bit confused over his or her purpose. The leaders of these agencies were unsure of who they should be focusing their work on then, and with the cuts to their budgets they had less resources for any work they wished to accomplish. In short, they did not know from whom or what they were trying to protect America from.

The American Intelligence Community (IC) had a lack of direction, and was in a state of chaos all the way up to September 11, 2001, a day that significantly impacted the United States, especially those within the IC. Those within the IC felt a sense of guilt for having not prevented the attacks from happening, since after all, that was their principal job. What was even more disconcerting was the fact that these various agencies had different pieces of information that if all put together might have stopped the attacks, but the agencies were unable to come together and put together the information. To Americans, this seemed eerily the same as the tragedy in 1941 and the attack on Pearl Harbor. The only difference was that Pearl
Harbor was supposed to teach the United States a lesson, and the United States was never supposed to be able to be attacked again on its own soil.

"Time is passing. Yet, for the United States of America, there will be no forgetting September the 11th. We will remember every rescuer who died in honor. We will remember every family that lives in grief. We will remember the fire and ash, the last phone calls, the funerals of the children," said President George W. Bush after the attacks on the United States. The first reaction of the citizens of the United States was fear, because nobody knew what exactly had happened, and who was responsible. People did not know if they were safe or if the attacks were over. It is an extremely scary thought to have an invisible enemy and to not now when or where this enemy is going to attack you. Headlines in newspapers and magazines around the country read, “Terror, U.S. Attacked, Day of Death, Freedom Under Siege, Assault on America.” These headlines did not help the panic that Americans were struck by, but it was exactly how they were feeling. The next reaction of the people was to mourn and grieve the losses of the thousands of people in the terrorist attacks. This process could only begin once people knew that the attacks were finished and they were safe, or at least somewhat safe. The United States has still not gained back its feeling of safety and security that it had before 9/11 to most people.

Once the grief and mourning quieted down, because it never really stopped, came the anger, and it came in extreme proportions. This mood was reflected in statements like, "We're going to find out who did this and we're going after the bastards," by Senator Orrin Hatch. Statements like these were very frequent after
the attacks, in fact statements were often more explicit than that from the American people. Americans were angry and they wanted the people responsible for the attacks dead, no questions asked. This view could be generalized for the entire country including people whose views were normally more liberal than that.

The positive side of all of the fear, anger, and mourning was the way that Americans came together and helped each other. In many circumstances complete strangers risked their own lives to help out others. Typical statements were like this one from Dan Rather, “As a country, I think we've become more focused on what is important and on the challenges we face. Focused on our national identity. And focused on the world beyond our borders -- after years of looking ever-inward, Americans are once again looking outward, in a way I haven't seen since the height of the Cold War. While no one would ever say that September 11 was in any way a good thing, these developments may ultimately prove to be healthy for a democratic nation such as ours, one that wields such great influence and power on the world stage but one that is, as we have learned in such a hard way, still vulnerable to those who hate us,” captured this newfound spirit. Also, Barack Obama said, “Even the smallest act of service, the simplest act of kindness, is a way to honor those we lost, a way to reclaim that spirit of unity that followed 9/11.” Just like any other tragedy that happens there were many conspiracies as to how, why, and what really happened on September 11, 2001. Some conspiracies stated that the United States government was behind the 9/11 attacks, and it set explosives inside the World Trade Center to go off when the planes allegedly flown by Americans crashed into the towers.
When a tragedy of this magnitude happens, it is the job of elected officials to take measures to secure the safety of their citizens, and to brainstorm, with a clear mind, actions that need to be taken. This obviously does not always happen in situations like these, because people let their emotions get the best of them. Either way, it is ultimately their decision what steps are taken. After 9/11 many tactical steps were taken all across the country to insure people’s safety, especially important people. The government and big corporations hired security, and beefed up their current security teams to keep their executives out of danger. Government agencies and other big corporations were “locked-down” for a lengthy period of time, meaning nobody got in or out. Also, the President and several other high-ranking government officials kept moving from place to place, not staying in one area too long, without revealing where they were. These security measures were just a small fraction of the effort that went into trying to once again make Americans feel safe. But, people needed to know that the race and effort to make sure they were once again out of harms way was going to be a long and grueling one, and even a decade later they would still be questioning their safety (Hamilton).

Tactical steps after 9/11 were not the only ones that needed to be taken by the government. It was important for them early on to develop broad policy to try and prevent any more of these tragedies from happening and protect the American people. The 9/11 Commission was a good start to determine what changes needed to come, with a couple being a new organization of the IC and the newly formed office of the Director of National Intelligence. The FBI, CIA, and NSA needed to figure out how they were going to step up their game and make sure they prevented
anything like this from happening again. Finally, none of the security agencies or officials had to search any longer for tasks and groups to focus on. Their new targets had basically fallen on their laps.

**Federal Bureau of Investigation**

“By all accounts, the morning of September 11, 2001 was a pivotal point in American history—and for the FBI” (FBI). It was not long after the 9/11 attacks that the national security agencies put all the pieces of information together and found out the groups responsible for the attacks and exactly how they had done it. They realized that members of the group responsible, al-Qaeda, had even been living for long periods of time within the United States, and carrying out their training there, which was sickening to Americans. The largest task for national security agencies lay ahead. This task was for each agency to find out what specific things about their own agency needed to be fixed so that all agencies were functioning properly together.

“The inability to detect the Sept. 11, 2001, hijacking plot amounts to a "significant failure" by the FBI and was caused in large part by "widespread and longstanding deficiencies" in the way the agency handled terrorism and intelligence cases” (Eggan). This statement by a writer for the Washington Post reflected the views of many citizens and government officials after the terrorist attacks. According to many FBI employees and former agents, the views inside the organization prior to 9/11 were that threats such as al-Qaeda were viewed as simply criminals who should be treated as if they were the same as bank robbers, arsonists, or drug dealers. Even though the possibility for greater harm to a large
population of people was greater with terrorists, they were still handled in the same way (FBI).

The FBI did exactly what they were supposed to do after the attacks happened, by figuring out from the information they had who was responsible. On September 27, 2001 the FBI released photos of the hijackers and announced their links to al-Qaeda. Investigators discovered that the hijackers used pre-paid calling cards as their primary method of communication prior to the attacks. “Sleeper agents”, or enemy al-Qaeda operatives were discovered within the United States. This fact hit a nerve with American citizens, because they came to the realization that these hijackers, and other al-Qaeda operatives had been in the United States for many years, and had been training to carry out the attacks against the United States on American soil. FBI investigators linked phone and financial records between the hijackers and other al-Qaeda operatives. Those that were captured were indicted on various charges of terrorism and providing material support to terrorist groups. The FBI as well as the other national security agencies made quick work of figuring out who was responsible using their law enforcement approach, and this was an extreme indicator that this approach needed to be changed. The FBI needed to be able to stop these things from happening instead of picking up the pieces afterward (FBI).

The director of the FBI, Robert Mueller, broadly outlined the needs for the FBI. “Over the past decade, the FBI has made a series of changes to enhance its ability to protect the nation from a vast array of ever-evolving threats—from hateful terrorists plotting in the shadows to cyber villains using emerging technologies to
invade our homes and offices…from white-collar criminals scheming in corporate
suites to burgeoning gangs sowing violence and crime in our communities” (FBI).
The attitudes and operations of the FBI have drastically changed since the terrorist

Prior to 9/11 the FBI was primarily a federal law enforcement agency. Their
priorities were set on apprehending criminals after they had already committed the
crimes. The FBI did not diversify their organization enough in other important
areas such as foreign language capabilities and intelligence, and instead recruited
people that had the same law-enforcement mindset as they did. A crucial link in the
process of defending a nation is intelligence. Intelligence is so crucial, because
without it you have no idea what your enemy is doing or preparing for. “The FBI
mentality prior to 9/11 equated to a focus on apprehension after a crime rather
than long-term surveillance, penetration, and prevention (Richelson).” The FBI
realized they needed to be more proactive and that their new focus needed to be on
prevention of the crime rather than on apprehension after the crime is committed
(Sulmasy).

The mission of the “new and improved” FBI after the 9/11 attacks is “to help
protect you, your children, your communities, and your businesses from the most
dangerous threats facing our nation—from international and domestic terrorists to
spies on U.S. soil…from cyber villains to corrupt government officials…from
mobsters to violent street gangs…from child predators to serial killers. Along the
way, we help defend and uphold our nation’s economy, physical and electronic
infrastructure, and democracy. Learn more about how we have evolved into a more
proactive, threat-driven security agency in recent years” (FBI). Many things have been done within the structure of the FBI to strengthen the fight against terrorism, as well as all crimes. The FBI has shifted many agents from criminal programs to counterterrorism matters, the number of intelligence analysts has doubled, number of linguists has tripled, and agents have been dedicated to cyber-terrorism. These are just a couple of the hundreds of measures the FBI has taken to improve their counterterrorism efforts (FBI).

Another issue the FBI needed to address after the 9/11 attacks was their lack of valuable intelligence. The Patriot Act has greatly helped the FBI, because it allows them to share their information with agencies like the CIA and vice versa. Another important tool that helped the FBI after 9/11, the issuing of National Security Letters, was ruled against on March 14, 2013 by a federal court in California. The government is currently forming an appeal to this ruling. National Security Letters allow the FBI to demand records and information from a company about a customer of that company. The company is “gagged” from ever telling the customer that the letter was issued. According to the California court this violates an important chunk of free speech under the First Amendment of the Constitution. Before the FBI can issue these National Security Letters they must establish need for the surveillance. Some government officials have stated that the FBI has gone overboard while issuing the NSLs, many times without establishing reason for surveillance. “The FBI was issuing an average of 50,000 letters a year after the 2001 attacks. In 2011, according to the Justice Department, it made 16,500 requests for data on 7,200 Americans.” The FBI claims that they have fixed the problems with which NSLs
were being issued and that NSLs are an extremely important step in the FBI stopping further acts of terrorism (Nakashima).

DNI & NCTC

On November 27th 2002, the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, also known as the 9/11 Commission was set up “to prepare a full and complete account of the circumstances surrounding the September 11 attacks” (Thompson). The main task of the Commission was to prepare recommendations to guard against future terrorist attacks. The Commission interviewed over 1,200 people in ten countries and reviewed over two and a half million pages of documents. They received a lot of scrutiny, because the members were all appointed by President Bush and Congress. The problem with this is that the commission was supposed to be independent from the U.S. government, because their job was to review the actions of the government during the attacks. The final report of the 9/11 Commission was released on July 22, 2004. According to the Commission, “The United States has the resources and the people. The government should combine them more effectively, achieving unity of effort,” referring to national security and intelligence organizations (Thompson).

Five major recommendations offered by the Commission regarding necessary structural changes within the United States government were: “unifying strategic intelligence and operational planning against Islamist terrorists across the foreign-domestic divide with a National Counterterrorism Center; unifying the intelligence community with a new National Intelligence Director; unifying the many participants in the counterterrorism effort and their knowledge in a network-
based information-sharing system that transcends traditional governmental boundaries; unifying and strengthening congressional oversight to improve quality and accountability; and strengthening the FBI and homeland defenders” (Thompson). The most important word used throughout the entirety of this report was “unifying.” This word was used so often in order to get the point across to the government and country that a large reason for the national security failures were that people and organizations were not working together and sharing information as they should have been.

In his 2003 State of the Union Address President Bush announced the creation of the Terrorist Threat Integration Center at the recommendation of the 9/11 Commission. The name and structure of the TTIC was short lived, because the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 renamed the TTIC to the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC), which it is still to this day. With its new name also came a new structure. The NCTC was now under the newly implemented DNI. “The NCTC implemented a key recommendation of the 9/11 Commission: ‘Breaking the older mold of national government organizations, this NCTC should be a center for joint operational planning and joint intelligence, staffed by personnel from the various agencies.’” (ODNI). One of the main missions of the NCTC was to improve upon the lack of sharing between intelligence and national security agencies. “NCTC collocates more than 30 intelligence, military, law enforcement and homeland security networks under one roof to facilitate robust information sharing. NCTC is a model of interagency information sharing” (ODNI). This certainly appears to be improvement from the intelligence failures that came before 9/11.
As stated before, the main point of instituting a Director of National Intelligence and a staff was to “unify”, or to bring better coordination and cooperation among all national security agencies. Prior to the institution of the DNI the head of the Intelligence Community was the Director of Central Intelligence, who was also the Director of the CIA. The Commission wanted to separate the positions and make a clear leader of the IC that seemingly ruled over all intelligence agencies. On December 17, 2004 President Bush signed the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004, which established the DNI as the designated leader of the United States Intelligence Community. It also prohibited the DNI from serving as the head of any of the other organizations in the IC subsequently. Ultimately, the directors of every intelligence organization were to report their activities to the DNI. The question that loomed was whether the creation of this new office would truly streamline intelligence and national security efforts so that another terrorist attack would not happen or it just created another layer of bureaucracy for agencies to get through. The trouble with having to get through more “red tape” is that it delays the response time of these agencies and can have an effect on whether or not an attack is stopped (History).

Ronald Kessler, the chief Washington correspondent for Newsmax.com stated, “The 9/11 commission recommended the appointment of a national intelligence director with budgetary authority to better coordinate the work of the intelligence community and resolve differences. As proposed by the commission, the national intelligence director would not head a major agency. Rather, the appointee would have a ‘relatively small staff of several hundred people, taking the
place of the existing community management offices housed at the CIA,’ according to the commission’s report. President Bush and Congress endorsed the national intelligence director proposal, and the office was created in April 2005. However, rather than having a staff of several hundred, the national intelligence director has ballooned into an agency with 1,500 employees” (Kessler). Arthur M. Cummings Jr., who headed FBI counterterrorism and counterintelligence investigations said, “The ODNI often gets in the way and produces little of value to the bureau” (Kessler). Kessler interviewed many people inside and around the ODNI including the former Inspector General Edward Maguire. Maguire told Kessler that many times when employees of the ODNI were asked what role the ODNI held, they were unable to give a clear answer.

Another statement from Cummings read, “The intelligence community operators are doing a good job. It’s the massive bureaucracy around them that slows things down and frustrates the effort. You have this big planning machine generating endless meetings. We would walk out of the meetings shaking our heads” (Kessler). Kessler went on to say that most of the time when the ODNI received information from different intelligence agencies, it would take its time making adjustments to it, often times after new information has already come in. It is evident that people inside the IC are frustrated with the ODNI. They claim it slows down the processes of intelligence agencies and what they are ultimately trying to accomplish. Also, it is clearly evident that the original intentions of the 9/11 Commission were not completely followed when the ODNI was established, and what the government has let it grow into.
An interview conducted by PBS between General Clapper (DNI), Philip Zelikow (Executive Director of the 9/11 Commission), and former White House counterterrorism official Richard Clarke, outlined many current problems within the ODNI and what can be done to make it a more effective organization. They explain how turf battles between the major agencies who were formerly independent, but are now under the new DNI led to many of the appointed DNIs prior to Clapper resigning. An important reason why they believe Clapper can do a better job is that he has worked within two of the major agencies that are now under the DNI. Zelikow explains how the ODNI is only a “partial success”, because Congress only enacted a couple of the recommendations of the 9/11 Commission. These experts all recommend that General Clapper reduce the size of not just the ODNI, but also the IC as a whole. They say that there is too much overlap between agencies and when there is too much overlap you reduce the transparency of your organization. Another important recommendation from these experts is that the DNI forms a close bond with the President, so that he becomes a “trusted advisors.” If the President trusts the DNI he will trust that the information he is getting from the IC is accurate, and actions will happen much more quickly (Intel).

C.I.A.

The Central Intelligence Agency was created on July 26, 1947 when President Harry S. Truman signed the National Security Act into law. This was sparked by the surprise attack at Pearl Harbor in 1941. After World War II, the United States “redoubled its commitment to conducting intelligence activities during peacetime” (Eisler). The 9/11 attacks seem to almost be a repeat of the Pearl Harbor disasters,
because the intelligence that was being gathered was not put together, as was the case before 9/11. Then, both attacks happened and people were scrambling to form new policy and tighten security so that another attack would not happen.

The CIA, being one of the major agencies in the IC, realized that it needed to do its part after 9/11 to insure the safety of the American people. The 9/11 Commission Report stated that the President had not been well served by the FBI and CIA, so they both had a lot to prove. One of the largest problems within the CIA, as well as the other agencies, was a lack of counterterrorism experts. They had an agency full of intelligence analysts that did not have a great amount of counterterrorism knowledge, so they had to be trained. Another problem the CIA faced after 9/11 was recruiting the new enemy to spy on behalf of the United States. This was difficult, because al-Qaeda cells are extremely tight-knit. One of the reasons they are hard to infiltrate is that many of the members of these cells are family members or are from the same village. After being concentrated on recruiting Soviet spies for so long, this was a difficult task for operations officers (Neary).

When transitioning from traditional intelligence to counterterrorism the most important issue for the CIA was speed. Speed is important for how they gather the intelligence so they can defend or stop whatever attack is being plotted. In traditional intelligence missions, relationships have to be formed between operations officers and their recruits in order to get any information from them. Sometimes it takes from six months to a year for a recruit to feel comfortable enough with an officer to give them any sort of information. Also, an operations
officer must expose a reason that the recruit would spy, such as financial reasons or safety. The recruit must trust the officer to do what they say they will in order for them to risk their life by spying. When it comes to attempting to prevent a terrorist attack, sometimes the CIA will receive information about a coming attack in the next few days. When something like this happens, they have to respond quickly and use all of their resources to stop the attack from happening. These situations are where the advanced technology from the CIA’s Directorate of Science and Technology come into action. Representative Pete Hoekstra of Michigan says that this section of the CIA is one that has shown extreme improvement since 9/11 (Eisler).

In order to develop these advanced technologies quicker and more often the Directorate of Science and Technology needed more support and staffing. So, the CIA doubled the number of science and technology officers abroad since 9/11. This jump represents a dedication from the CIA to its foreign operations. A recommendation from the 9/11 Commission to the CIA was to re-focus on an extremely important side of intelligence gathering, human intelligence. Sometimes human intelligence becomes overshadowed when all of these new technologies are being invented and used. So, the 9/11 Commission wanted to make sure that the CIA re-ampld their human intelligence capabilities. After this re-emphasis, the CIA added 50% more operatives and analysts abroad to supplement their foreign operations. The reason percentages are used instead of actual numbers of employees is because of the classified nature of the CIA’s work (Eisler).

Another focus for the CIA has been to integrate their employees more within the intelligence community as a whole. This comes from the lack of transparency
between many agencies within the IC before 9/11. One example of this would be the attempted cooperation from the CIA with the Pentagon on the drone program. The CIA states that the IC can accomplish things today that they would not have dreamed of accomplishing before 9/11 and that they are more integrated. Also, the demand from other agencies for science and technology experts from the CIA, and the CIA’s cooperation with these other agencies has helped improve the IC. Some concerns and issues that have crossed public headlines across the world about torture have had to be addressed by the CIA and federal government. As expressed by the Bush administration, waterboarding did not constitute torture and was able to be used to obtain intelligence. According to the Obama administration, waterboarding is considered torture. The recent consideration for promotion of an unnamed woman to the role of Director of Clandestine Services for the CIA has caused an uproar. This is because she helped run the CIA’s detention and interrogation programs after the 9/11 attacks. These programs over the years have been littered with reports of cruel forms of torture, and the destroying of evidence of any torture. CIA Director Brennan was forced to bring in a panel of highly regarded associates to meet and discuss the fate of this unnamed woman and her position, because the CIA has struggled with controversies for decades, and Brennan is wanting to distance the agency, as well as himself, from these controversies (Miller & Tate).

An extremely important tool used to combat terrorist groups since 9/11 in the War on Terror is drone strikes. These drones (unmanned aerial vehicles) were started under the Bush administration and are controlled by the CIA. The majority
of drone strikes have been carried out along the Pakistan and Afghanistan borders. Fewer than 50 drone strikes were carried out during the Bush administration, while more than 360 have been carried out during the Obama administration. These numbers can certainly be inaccurate due to the secrecy of the drone programs and their missions though. Also, the Obama administration has inherited them since the beginning of their term, whereas the Bush administration only had them for the last couple years of their term. These drone strike missions are heavily criticized around the world for many reasons. The most obvious reason is the killing of innocent people in the strikes. People can operate drones thousands of miles away in the United States and drop bombs on locations in the Middle East. The act of killing from behind a computer screen seems cowardly to many critics, and reports have been that many innocent people are killed. Many government officials have fought to reduce the secrecy with which the drone programs are operated, so that more information about them can be used to determine whether or not they should continue to be used. But, so far drone strikes are continuing to be carried out (Gerecht).

The most outrage surrounding the drone program was the release of a report by the New York Times, about Pakistan’s President, Pervez Musharraf. Musharraf allegedly allowed the U.S. to carry out drone strikes in tribal regions along the Pakistani border, if they agreed to stay away from Pakistan’s nuclear plants and sites where Pakistani terrorists trained for attacks against India. The report stated that Pakistan would take credit for the bombings and deaths that happened as the result of the drone strikes if the U.S. held up their end of the bargain. The report
states that over four hundred civilian deaths were caused in Pakistan due to the drone strikes. Opponents of the strikes are in outrage that the United States would make a deal like this (Gerecht).

**N.S.A.**

The National Security Agency handles, for the intelligence community, the interception of communications, and when necessary attempts to decrypt communications that have been encrypted, as well as protect the United States government’s information systems. The NSA gains intelligence from things such as the Internet, telephone calls, and other forms of communication. “The National Security Agency/Central Security Service (NSA/CSS) leads the U.S. Government in cryptology that encompasses both Signals Intelligence (SIGINT) and Information Assurance (IA) products and services, and enables Computer Network Operations (CNO) in order to gain a decision advantage for the Nation and our allies under all circumstances” (NSA). The NSA was officially established on November 4, 1952 after its predecessor, the Armed Forces Security Agency, was deemed ineffective by President Truman and his advisors. It took quite a few years before Americans noticed the existence of the NSA. This was partially because the United States government denied the existence of the agency for many years, earning it the nickname “No Such Agency”. A large difference between the NSA and other agencies in the IC community is that the NSA wasn’t established via legislation like others were; it was born in secrecy (NSA).

The National Security Agency is the largest employer of mathematicians and telecommunications experts in the country, and probably the world. The reason
they hire so many people from these fields is due to the type of work they have to do. On a daily basis they are sifting through large amounts of data and communications that have to be precisely looked into in order to find what they want. They need people that are precise. The NSA is “not only a civilian agency; it’s also a military organization, so the director of the NSA wears two hats” (Spying). The military side of the organization gathers intelligence from eavesdropping and signals intelligence. Its intelligence gathering is supposed to be limited only to foreign communications, but instances including warrantless wiretapping have taken place. They have a tough task of collecting information that constitutes foreign intelligence or counterintelligence, while not acquiring information concerning the domestic activities of people in the United States. NSA leaders state that they rely on the FBI to collect information on foreign intelligence activities within the U.S. But, it has been reiterated many times that the FBI did not have an effective system for gaining, storing, and sorting through intelligence, and also that these two agencies did not share information. So, this brings forward several reasons that the NSA was not doing an adequate job prior to the 9/11 attacks (Spying).

The Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978 was introduced by Senator Ted Kennedy as a response to President Nixon’s illegal use of intelligence activities on political and activist groups. Prior to FISA, the NSA would illegally obtain intelligence straight from telecommunications companies. Before there were computers, the NSA would go straight to telegram companies such as Western Union and ask for copies of all telegrams, and after much pleading they would get
them. These were extremely secret exchanges that only a couple people in each organization were aware of. When computers were invented they continued the same exchanges with these organizations. The communication information they received from these was not just information on foreign subjects; it was information on everyone, including United States citizens, which was extremely illegal. There were a couple probes by the U.S. government into the way the NSA was gathering intelligence on U.S. persons. They were the Church Committee, the Rockefeller Commission, and an investigation by the Justice Department. The NSA was shaken up by these investigations and the organization vowed to follow the strict guidelines of the law set forth by FISA from then on. Between the establishment of the FISA courts and 9/11 the NSA says adhered to all guidelines and focused their efforts overseas (Spying).

In all of the investigations and discussions post 9/11 about what went wrong it was uncovered that several messages were received by the NSA prior to 9/11 that pointed towards a terrorist attack on the U.S. The NSA cites several different reasons that these messages were not picked up and acted upon. The largest reasons for the NSA not picking up on the messages is the vast amount of raw data they gather on a daily basis. The NSA has been criticized for not having adequate ways to sift through all of the information that they gather in a timely manner. There is no use in having all of that information if there is no good way to immediately sort it all into useful material. NSA officials that even if these messages were translated before 9/11 they would not have necessarily been connected to the terror plot. More and more messages have turned up since 9/11 that possibly could
have pointed the NSA in the right direction towards stopping the attacks, but without a way to connect all the dots the information is useless (Pincus & Priest).

On September 14, 2001 Congress passed the Authorization to Use Military Force, allowing the President to “use all necessary and appropriate force” against those responsible for the 9/11 attacks. After this authorization was passed, the Bush administration decided, “communications intelligence is an essential part of waging war that “must be included in any natural reading” of the authorization. Engaging in warrantless surveillance is a common and critical practice for wartime Presidents” (Spying). The warrantless wiretapping that was being carried out was extremely secretive and not many people had knowledge of it until recently. American citizens were outraged when they found out about the eavesdropping being carried out on them by the NSA. This is where the ongoing argument between security and privacy comes into play. Balancing security and privacy when trying to keep a nation secure is an extremely tricky task. Americans need to feel safe in their own country, but they also do not want to feel like their privacy is being infringed upon, a fundamental founding principle of our country. In 2007 the Bush administration was forced to stop the NSA’s warrantless wiretapping program due to extreme public pressure.

The NSA has improved its intelligence capabilities under current director, General Keith B. Alexander. They have dedicated a large amount of work to improving the way they use the vast amounts of intelligence that they collect. Another thing that has been improved upon is the cooperation between the NSA and the Pentagon. There have always been turf wars between the intelligence analysts
in the Pentagon and the Intelligence Community. The NSA had to ramp up its Arabic capabilities after 9/11, since that was the main language of the new enemy. They also had to figure out how to collect intelligence from the extremely rural areas in the Middle East (NSA).

**Conclusion**

The acts of terrorism against the United States on September 11, 2001 were devastating to the entire country. Many American citizens no longer felt safe in their own homes after the attacks. Americans were scrambling for answers just as other government officials were. The only difference was that the ordinary citizens were looking to the government officials, such as the President, for answers. The United States has matured since the 9/11 attacks and adjusted itself in many different ways to deal with more modern threats. There were many problems within the intelligence and national security agencies within the United States that were to point fingers at. These agencies missed several opportunities before the attacks to put pieces of intelligence together and stop the attacks. One reason these mistakes were made was because of the relaxed defensive posture of the agencies.

The largest fault noted by many sources on stopping the 9/11 attacks before they happened was the lack of communication between agencies. Experts that have looked at the issue after the attacks have stated that collecting intelligence is only the first step. That piece of information collected must then be combined with all the other information collected from other agencies. The inability of agencies to do this before 9/11 was a major reason that the attacks were not stopped. Many pieces of information such as names of potential threats and locations were in possession
by different organizations, but they were not shared with each other, therefore the
attacks were still carried out. Officials within both the CIA and FBI have said that
there was an imaginary wall between the two organizations, and many policy
makers thought this wall was a good thing and effective. Besides the lack of
communication between the two agencies, there were also legal guidelines between
local and federal agencies regarding the kind of sensitive information that was
allowed to be shared. Intelligence officers were many times unable to communicate
with law enforcement officials, and law enforcement officials were unable to
communicate terrorism-related information with members of the intelligence
community. This legal web was something presumably put into place to keep
sensitive material confidential and the public safe, but it was essentially doing the
opposite of that and not allowing the sharing of essential information.

Drastic changes have been made to every organization dealing with the
national security of the United States since the attacks of September 11, 2001. The
FBI devoted more effort to intelligence capabilities. The CIA took analysts and had
to make them into counterterrorism experts. The ODNI was established to “unify”
the IC and streamline intelligence processes. The NSA had to figure out how to
balance Americans privacy and their security, and also increase their Arabic
capabilities. There were many pieces of legislation that were put into place after
9/11 to try and insure the safety of Americans. There were also hundreds of bills
suggested that were never signed into law. The Patriot Act allows for better sharing
of information between intelligence and security agencies. The Intelligence Reform
and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 established the ODNI. The Foreign
Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978 has been amended since the 9/11 attacks, monitoring intelligence conducted on American citizens. These are just a couple of the legislative steps taken by these agencies.

According to the Vice-Chairman of the 9/11 Commission Lee Hamilton, the Commission observed 263 agency changes among the United States government. He explained how the budgets for the national security and intelligence skyrocketed after 9/11, and in regards to funding, these agencies basically got whatever they asked for. There were several conclusions made after the research was completed. Most of the changes made in the national security and intelligence communities were structural in nature. Few of the recommendations made by the 9/11 Commission Report were acted upon. Sharing of information between agencies has improved since 9/11, but it is something that is going to need constant work. Overall, there have been positive strides within intelligence and national security, but Americans need to make sure that these strides continue (Hamilton).
Works Cited


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