

kistan. . . . His collection efforts on the Pakistani effort to develop nuclear weapons is amazingly successful and disturbing. I would sleep better if he and his people did not find out so much about what is really going on in secret and contrary to President Zia's assurances to us."<sup>29</sup>

Ship after ship, truck convoy after truck convoy, the CIA's covert supplies to the Afghan frontier had surged to unprecedented levels during Hart's tour. The program was hardly a secret anymore, either. President Reagan had begun to hint openly that America was aiding the Afghan "freedom fighters." Journalists from the United States and Europe traveled inside Afghanistan with mujahedin escorts. Their stories made clear that the rebels were receiving substantial outside help.

Still, Zia maintained his public denials. In private he continued to fear Soviet retaliation against Pakistan. Hardly a meeting with Hart or other CIA officers could pass without the dictator bringing up his metaphor about the need to keep the Afghan pot simmering at just the right temperature—to prevent it from boiling over. At their liaison meetings at ISI headquarters Hart and Akhtar began to turn the metaphor into a private joke. More wood on the fire! they would say to each other as they scrawled out weapons orders on their requisition forms.

Hart now believed the Soviets were not prepared to reinforce their occupying forces in Afghanistan enough to make a serious thrust into Pakistan. "The fuckers haven't got the balls, they aren't going to do it," he concluded. "It is not going to happen, boys and girls, so don't worry about it." The CIA was winning. It could afford to press its advantage.

## 4

## "I Loved Osama"

IT WAS BRAND NEW, imported from the United States in wooden boxes, and it was very heavy. Along with his personal luggage, Ahmed Badeeb checked about \$1.8 million in American cash on a Saudia Airlines commercial flight to Karachi, and as soon as he collected his bags in Pakistan, he regretted the absence of a trusted porter. He felt his muscles bulging under the strain. To reach Islamabad, Badeeb had to transfer to a domestic Pakistan International Airlines flight. Customs officials and security guards wanted to search his bags by hand. He was a lively man who was quick with an off-color joke, and he began to filibuster in front of the security tables. *These are very important documents; I cannot show them to anyone.* Fine, the guards said. We'll put the boxes through the X-ray machine. Fearing the consequences of exposure—for himself and for the cash if it was discovered by poorly paid Pakistani customs officers—Badeeb began chattering again. *I have very important films in here; if you put them in the X-ray, they will burn.* Finally, they let him pass. He heaved his boxes across the check-in counter. Landing in Islamabad, he was relieved to see that his mission had attracted a high-ranking reception party. General Akhtar Abdur Rahman, the ISI chief, welcomed Badeeb as he came off the plane.

In his midthirties when the anti-Soviet jihad gathered force in the early 1980s, Ahmed Badeeb was a desert-born Saudi Arabian who had attended an American college in the snow-swept plains of North Dakota. He had worked for a time as a teacher employed by the Saudi ministry of education. One of his pupils had been an earnest young man named Osama bin Laden. They had become friends. Ahmed Badeeb was a stout, bearded man with dark skin and a natural, boisterous confidence. By dint of luck, family connections, and the generous machinery of Saudi government patronage, he had lately graduated from academia to become chief of staff to the director of the General Intelligence Department of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.<sup>1</sup>

Soon after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Prince Turki al-Faisal, the chief of Saudi intelligence, dispatched Badeeb to Pakistan with the kingdom's calling card: cash dollars. The Saudi intelligence service—along with Saudi charities whose funds the spy agency sometimes directed—was becoming ISI's most generous patron, even more so than the CIA.

Akhtar led Ahmed Badeeb to a meeting with President Zia in Rawalpindi. Badeeb announced that Saudi Arabia had decided to supply cash to ISI so that the Pakistani intelligence service could buy precision-made rocket-propelled grenade launchers from China, among other weapons. Badeeb's cash would be the first of many installments.

As Zia and Badeeb talked that night, five ISI generals pried open Badeeb's boxes in an adjoining room and began to count the money, as Badeeb recalled it. He tried to keep half an eye on them while maintaining polite conversation with the Pakistani president. "Excuse me, Mr. President, I have to see if the generals are . . ."

"It's counted!" he told them in the other room, half-joking. "It's brand new! The serial numbers are there!"

A Saudi spy quickly became accustomed to being treated like a bank teller. "We don't do operations," Prince Turki once told a CIA colleague from the D.O.'s Near East Division. "We don't know how. All we know how to do is write checks."<sup>2</sup>

As it did in Langley, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan had a galvanizing impact in the headquarters of the Saudi General Intelligence Department, or GID, the desert kingdom's main external spy service. Saudi Arabia's deeply religious Bedouin royal family viewed Soviet communism as heresy. A Soviet drive toward the Persian Gulf threatened the Saudi elite's oil wealth. Leading Saudi princes embraced the American view of Pakistan as a frontline state in the worldwide effort to contain Soviet ambitions. And beyond statecraft, Turki

and Akhtar "both believed fervently in the importance of an Islamic brotherhood which ignored territorial frontiers," as one of Akhtar's senior aides put it. After the upheavals of 1979, Crown Prince Fahd, soon to become king, saw Pakistan as Saudi Arabia's most muscular, reliable ally on its eastern flank. He authorized his intelligence service to open its bountiful treasury to Akhtar's ISI.<sup>3</sup>

The clandestine alliance between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan was grounded in history. Each was a young, insecure nation that saw Islam as central to its identity. Pakistani troops had been hired by the Saudis in the past for security deployments in the kingdom. The Saudi air force had secretly provided air cover over Karachi during Pakistan's 1971 war with India.<sup>4</sup>

Until the early 1980s, the Saudi spy service played a limited role. The General Intelligence Department had been for many years a weak and unprofessional organization. It had been built around royal family connections. Modern Saudi Arabia's founding monarch, King Abdul Aziz ibn Saud, who had forty-one children by seventeen wives and reigned from 1902 until his death in 1953, at one stage dispatched one of his older sons, Faisal, to Turkey to evaluate a marriageable woman with royal lineage. Faisal ended up marrying the woman himself. His new wife's wealthy Turkish half-brother, Kamal Adham, who had connections across the Arab world, was appointed during the 1960s as Saudi Arabia's founding spy chief. Adham opened GID offices in embassies abroad. He was fired during the mid-1970s and replaced by his worldly young nephew, Prince Turki al-Faisal. It was an appointment typical of Saudi politics, where maintaining balance among restive royal family clans was imperative.<sup>5</sup> From this semiaccidental beginning Prince Turki went on to hold the GID directorship for more than two decades, becoming one of the longest-serving and most influential intelligence operatives on the world stage.

As much as any individual, Prince Turki became an architect of Afghanistan's destiny—and of American engagements with Islamic radicalism—in the two decades after 1979. He picked winners and losers among Afghan commanders, he funded Islamist revolutionaries across the Middle East, he created alliances among these movements, and he paid large subsidies to the Pakistan intelligence service, aiding its rise as a kind of shadow government.

A champion of Saudi Arabia's austere Islam, a promoter of women's rights, a multimillionaire, a workaholic, a pious man, a sipper of banana daiquiris, an intriguer, an intellectual, a loyal prince, a sincere friend of Americans, a generous funder of anti-American causes, Prince Turki embodied Saudi Arabia's cascading contradictions. His spy agency became an important

liaison as the CIA confronted communism and, later, militant Islam. At least as much as Pakistan's ISI, the Saudi intelligence agency that Prince Turki built became the chalice—sometimes poisoned, sometimes sweet—from which the CIA's Near East and counterterrorist officers believed they had no choice but to drink.

PRINCE TURKI AL-FAISAL was born in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on February 15, 1945, the day after Saudi King Abdul Aziz boarded an American warship anchored in the Red Sea to meet for the first time the president of the United States, Franklin Roosevelt, who was returning from Yalta.

The Bedouin king brought aboard his own herd of sheep so that he could slaughter them at mealtimes. He watched newsreels of American soldiers in action and befuddled his hosts by then sleeping for long and unpredictable



Credit: Richard Furno

hours. Yet Roosevelt, who even before the Nazi surrender sought allies for the postwar world, made a favorable impression on him. They discussed Palestine and oil. Abdul Aziz knew relatively little of the world, but he identified with the Arab struggle against the Zionists. Roosevelt's agents on the Arabian peninsula, some of them oil prospectors, had begun to glimpse the vast wealth sloshing beneath the sands. They had urged their president to embrace the Saudi royals before the British wheedled in, and Roosevelt did, flattering Abdul Aziz as best he could and winning limited pledges of military and economic cooperation.

The al-Sauds, the royal family Abdul Aziz led, had largely evaded colonial subjugation. They lived in an area so bleak and isolated that it did not interest European powers. They first burst out of the hot empty deserts of the central Nejd region in the eighteenth century to wage tribal war. The Arabian peninsula then was a severe, poor, sparsely inhabited wasteland of camel-breeding nomads. The nearest thing to civilization was Jeddah, a desultory trading port of the Ottoman Empire that had become a modest prize in colonial competitions. Few of its urbane residents dared to venture far from the Red Sea. The interior lands were scorching, and the local tribes were unforgiving. Muslim pilgrims did flock inland each year to Mecca and Medina, but they had to beware of robbery and extortion on the roads.

The al-Sauds were but one militia among many until they forged a fateful alliance with an austere and martial desert preacher, Mohammed ibn Abdul Wahhab. The decorous, arty, tobacco-smoking, hashish-imbibing, music-happy, drum-pounding Egyptian and Ottoman nobility who traveled across Arabia to pray at Mecca each year angered Wahhab deeply. In his personal reading of the Koran, the Ottoman pilgrims were not the Muslims they claimed to be but were blasphemous polytheists, worshipers of false idols. Local Arabs also aggravated Wahhab by honoring saints with monuments or decorated gravestones, and by mixing Islam with animist superstitions. All this Wahhab denounced as *bida*, forbidden by God. People who worshiped graven images lived outside Allah's true community. They were Allah's enemies, and they should be converted or destroyed. Wahhab won the allegiance of the al-Saud tribes to his theology—or they won him to their political cause, depending on which family recounts the history. Either way, Wahhab's proselytizing merged with the al-Sauds' military ambition. When the united religious militia overran an oasis, they destroyed grave markers and holy trees and spread the unforgiving word of Allah as interpreted by Wahhab. At one point Wahhab came across a woman accused of fornication and ordered her stoned to death. The preacher's fearsome legend spread.

Honored with great tracts of land for his righteousness, Wahhab ultimately retreated to a life of religious contemplation and multiple marriages. After his death the Egyptians surged onto the peninsula and pushed his descendants—and the al-Saud tribes—back into the empty Nejd. (The vengeance-minded Egyptians executed one of Wahhab's grandsons after forcing him to listen to music from a one-stringed violin.) There the Saudis languished for most of the nineteenth century, herding animals and nursing grievances.

They roared back to the Red Sea when the Ottoman Empire collapsed amid the chaos of World War I. The al-Sauds were led this time by their extraordinary commander Abdul Aziz, a laconic and skillful emir who united the peninsula's fractious Bedouin tribes through military courage and political acumen. "His deliberate movements, his slow, sweet smile, and the contemplative glance of his heavy-lidded eyes, though they add to his dignity and charm, do not accord with the Western conception of a vigorous personality," wrote a British traveler who encountered the king. "Nevertheless, report credits him with powers of physical endurance rare even in hard-bitten Arabia."<sup>6</sup> Abdul Aziz embraced Wahhabi doctrine. He sponsored a new, fierce, semi-independent vanguard of *Ikhwan*, or Brothers, war-fighting believers who dressed in distinctive white turbans and trimmed their beards and mustaches to express Islamic solidarity. The Ikhwan conquered village after village, town after town. In Wahhab's name they enforced bans on alcohol, tobacco, embroidered silk, gambling, fortune-telling, and magic. They denounced telephones, radios, and automobiles as affronts to God's law. When a motor truck first appeared in their territory, they set it on fire and sent its driver fleeing on foot.

Abdul Aziz skillfully employed the Ikhwan to capture Mecca, Medina, and Jeddah between 1914 and 1926. But the king soon felt threatened by the brotherhood's unquenchable radicalism. The Ikhwan revolted, and Abdul Aziz put them down with modern machine guns. To outflank the brotherhood's popular appeal to Islamic righteousness, Abdul Aziz founded the Saudi religious police, organized eventually as the Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice. The king declared that his royal family would govern strictly by the doctrines of Wahhab, enforcing a severe and patriarchal piety shorn of adornment.

It was the debut of a strategy employed by the Saudi royal family throughout the twentieth century: Threatened by Islamic radicalism, they embraced it, hoping to retain control. The al-Sauds' claims to power on the Arabian peninsula were weak and grew largely from conquests made by allied jihadists. They

now ruled the holiest shrines in worldwide Islam. There seemed to them no plausible politics but strict official religiosity. Many among the royal family were themselves true believers. Theirs was, after all, the only modern nation-state created by jihad.<sup>7</sup>

Prince Turki al-Faisal, the future spy chief, grew up less than a generation after the Saudi nation's awkward blood-soaked birth. He came of age before the kingdom's great boom in oil revenues, before its accompanying modernization drives, before the hastily laid ribbons of California-style freeways and the indoor shopping malls. In the mid-1950s, when Turki was a boy, two-thirds of Saudi Arabians were still nomads or semi-nomads. Less than a quarter lived in cities or towns. Even in the mid-1960s half of Saudi Arabians earned their living from animal husbandry. Slavery was banned only in 1962. Africans and Asians continued to be indentured informally in Saudi households for years afterward. Traditional Bedouin nomad culture viewed settled labor with contempt. Americans and other foreigners were beginning to drill for oil in the eastern provinces, and the first investments in roads and telephone lines had begun, but the kingdom of Turki's childhood was still largely an impoverished land of wanderers, tent-dwellers, camel-breeders, and preaching mullahs, all ruled by a shaky alliance between a privileged royal family and its righteous *ulama*, or senior Islamic clergy.<sup>8</sup>

In this unmodern landscape Prince Turki's father, Prince Faisal, was a relatively modern man. He was a hardworking nationalist, well read, and a leading technocrat and government reformer among Abdul Aziz's older sons, some of whom had little education and sybaritic appetites. Prince Faisal believed in balanced budgets, social investments, and the benefits of technology. He also embraced Wahhabi Islam and argued that the kingdom should pursue social change slowly and carefully. An experienced provincial governor, he seemed destined for the Saudi throne and expected his sons to prepare for serious lives. This meant an American education.

Faisal dispatched Prince Turki at age fourteen to Lawrenceville School, a preparatory and boarding school for wealthy boys in New Jersey. To call the young Turki's transition to prep school a culture shock would hardly do it justice. "I was alone," Turki recalled years later. "I was extremely nervous. . . . As I entered the dormitory, I felt somebody's hand slapping me on my backside." A young man called out to him, "Hi. My name is Steve Callahan. Who are you?" Turki stood in stunned silence "because in Saudi Arabia, you never hit anybody on the backside." Finally he offered his name. Callahan replied, "Oh. Like a Thanksgiving turkey?"<sup>9</sup>

In later years Turki rarely spoke in public, and more rarely still did he speak of his inner life, so it is difficult to know what impressions he had of America, traumatic or favorable or both, from Lawrenceville. Barely an adolescent, Turki had been sent oceans away from home, catapulted from an isolated kingdom of austere Islamic ritual to an American world of football, sex, and beer. At least his fellow Lawrenceville students had wealth, as he did. There were some other foreign students as well; Turki's prep school classmates included a future president of Honduras.

Back in the kingdom, his father entered a tenacious struggle with his older half-brother, Saud, the first of Abdul Aziz's sons to succeed to the throne after the great patriarch's death. By taking many wives and siring many sons Abdul Aziz created multiple competing branches within the royal family. Confused power struggles erupted as soon as he was gone. Saud's spendthrift ways exacerbated the trouble. The oil bubbled and the dollars began to flow, but Saud and his retainers managed to spend it all and then some on palaces, shopping sprees, and poorly managed development projects. In search of order, the family arranged for Prince Faisal's appointment as crown prince. But Saud resented him, and in frustration Faisal resigned his office while Turki was still at Lawrenceville.

Prepped in the American East Coast manner, Turki matriculated at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., in 1964, a member of the same class as an ambitious, talkative boy from Hope, Arkansas, named Bill Clinton. In a rare breakdown of Clinton's networking radar, he failed to seek out and befriend a rich crown prince's son destined for power. (The pair met for the first time at the White House soon after Clinton became president.) Years later Turki told a reunion at Georgetown, referring to Clinton's infamous claim that he had tried marijuana but never inhaled, "It wasn't just the class that didn't inhale. It was the class that tried to smoke banana peels. Do you remember that? I promise you, can anybody imagine smoking a banana peel? But those were the days."<sup>10</sup>

On campus someone approached Turki during his freshman year and asked, "Did you hear the news?" Turki said he had not. "Oh, your father has become king."

Saud had finally relinquished his crown. Georgetown's dean called Turki in and asked if he wanted a security detail. Turki declined because, as he later put it wryly, "I'd never have anybody following me in those days, especially at Georgetown."<sup>11</sup>

He left the university after his junior year. He said later it was because he

was upset and disillusioned by the Arab defeat by Israel in the Six Day War of 1967. "You can't imagine the state of total depression and sense of failure that struck the Arab world." A few years later he finished his education in England. Turki found employment as a counselor in a government ministry before following his uncle as director of the GID.

By then Turki's father lay dead of an assassin's bullet. Two years after he shocked America by leading the anti-Israel oil boycott that sent global energy prices soaring, King Faisal was murdered by an aggrieved, deranged cousin. His killing had roots in the kingdom's struggles over modernization. In 1965, Saudi television debuted, and Wahhabi radicals stormed a government studio in violent protest. One of the protestors, a cousin of King Faisal, died in the shootout. A decade later, on March 25, 1975, the victim's brother leveled a pistol at the king during a local festival and shot him to death in apparent revenge. Turki had lost his father to a terrorist act at least partially derived from Saudi Arabia's attempt to marry postindustrial development with regressive Islamic orthodoxy. "It was," Turki said later, without elaborating, "the most painful thing."<sup>12</sup>

AS PRINCE TURKI took charge in the late 1970s, the Saudi intelligence service was in the throes of a massive expansion. Gushing oil revenue poured into every bureaucratic nook and cranny in the kingdom. Saudi Arabia's five-year government budget from 1969 to 1974 was \$9.2 billion. During the next five years it was \$142 billion. Just a generation removed from nomadic poverty, the kingdom was on a forced march to the computer age. Turki wired up the General Intelligence Department offices inside the kingdom and in thirty-two embassies and consulates abroad. All the software, however, failed to detect the violent plot by the crazed Juhayman al-Utaybi to seize Mecca in November 1979. With its echoes of the Ikhwan revolt put down by Abdul Aziz, the Mecca uprising rattled all of the Saudi security agencies. It also helped convince the royal family that it needed to invest heavily in spies and police.<sup>13</sup>

Not only the Saudis worried. After the Shah of Iran's fall, the American intelligence community feared the Saudi royal family might be next. The CIA station in Jedda tried to improve its reporting on the kingdom's opaque internal politics. The Mecca uprising only emphasized how little the agency knew about Islamic radicalism on the peninsula. One way to deepen access was to cozy up to the Saudi spy service by providing technical assistance. After 1979 the CIA's station in Saudi Arabia redoubled its efforts to recruit sources in the

kingdom unilaterally. At the same time, as part of its official liaison, the CIA helped GID with its computer system and also with a sensitive program to capture electronic intercepts from Soviet sources.<sup>14</sup>

Turki and his aides traveled to Langley as well as European and Arab capitals to study how other intelligence agencies were organized. As he built GID, he copied the CIA's blueprint. Prince Turki was the agency's non-cabinet-level director. Immediately beneath him were half a dozen directorates. As at Langley, one of these was the Directorate of Operations, which carried out covert action and liaisons with foreign intelligence agencies. Turki also organized a Directorate of Intelligence, which produced classified reports for the Saudi royal family about security issues. His Directorate of Intelligence even circulated a daily intelligence digest for the Saudi king and crown prince, mirroring the President's Daily Brief circulated at the White House by the CIA.<sup>15</sup>

His impeccable English, his polite manner, his sly humor, his elegant taste for luxury, his serious reading of history, and, above all, his rare ability to navigate between Saudi Arabia and the West—and to interpret each for the other—helped ingratiate Prince Turki with the Americans. He was an unassuming man who spoke softly but with a sweeping, cogent confidence. One Arabic-speaking CIA officer who worked with him described Turki as the most accomplished, nuanced interpreter of the English language into Arabic that he had ever met. Turki consumed Western news sources voraciously. He became a regular delegate to the annual gatherings of the international elite in Davos, Switzerland, and other off-the-record conferences devoted to finance, strategy, and the global balance of power. At the same time some at the CIA recognized that Turki was a master manipulator. “He was deceitful,” recalled Clair George, a senior officer in the CIA's clandestine service who eventually ran the agency's Directorate of Operations. The scale of wealth Turki seemed to acquire on the job stunned his American counterparts. As George put it, “You're not going to find somebody to run their intelligence service who hasn't stolen a lot of money.” Of course, in the Saudi system, there were no clear lines between government funds, royal wealth, and private wealth. All the senior princes in the kingdom enriched themselves. Turki used GID's funds not only to live well but to recruit American and European friends willing to defend Saudi interests. When CIA station chiefs, State Department diplomats, or MI6 officers with experience in Saudi Arabia retired or left government service, many landed on the GID payroll as Turki's well-paid private consultants, his eyes and ears in Washington, London, and elsewhere. Turki

also systematically subsidized intelligence services in poorer Arab countries, buying information and allies.<sup>16</sup>

Ahmed Badeeb and his brother Saeed were two of Turki's key aides. Their father had been a modestly successful merchant in Jeddah. Ahmed Badeeb was an energetic operator, working as Turki's advance man, bag man, and operational surrogate. Saeed was milder, bespectacled, and bookish. He earned a Ph.D. at George Washington University in Washington, D.C., during the early 1980s and then returned to his post as chief of the GID's Directorate of Intelligence. He wrote his doctoral thesis on Saudi relations with Yemen and Egypt, and published a book about Saudi relations with Iran. Both Badeeb brothers interacted regularly with CIA counterparts.<sup>17</sup>

The Saudi royals, so hostile to Marxist atheism that they did not even maintain diplomatic relations with the Soviets, had quietly collaborated with the CIA against Moscow for decades. During the annual *hajj* season (the pilgrimage to Mecca made in the twelfth month of the Muslim year), the Saudis arranged for CIA officers to interview Muslim pilgrims from Soviet Central Asia about conditions back home. During the 1970s, when CIA covert operations were inhibited by scandals in Congress and caution at the White House, Turki's GID joined Britain, France, Morocco, and Iran to form a “Safari Club” that worked covertly against Soviet-backed Marxist movements in Africa.<sup>18</sup>

When the Soviets invaded Afghanistan, Turki quickly reached out to Pakistan. The ISI's Akhtar flew to the kingdom within weeks and met with Turki and Ahmed Badeeb at a restaurant in Riyadh. Akhtar carried a message from President Zia warning that Saudi Arabia itself faced danger if the Soviet incursion wasn't checked. Soon Badeeb began his shuttle to Islamabad and Peshawar, sometimes hauling his wooden boxes of cash.

Turki believed that the Soviet invasion signaled a drive by Moscow to establish strategic parity with the United States in the Middle East. Until recently arms sales had been the communists' primary calling card in the Arab world. Now the Soviet Union was looking to gain more influence over oil prices and supplies. Occupying Afghanistan was not per se a Soviet objective, he concluded, but a step toward increasing its power in the region through proxy communist parties and leftist movements. Geographically, Turki thought, Pakistan offered the best path to confront Soviet ambitions. Aid to the Afghan rebels channeled through Pakistan's army and intelligence service would also helpfully strengthen Pakistan as a regional ally after the devastation of its war with India in 1971.<sup>19</sup>

Turki reached a formal agreement with the CIA in July 1980 to match U.S.

congressional funding for the Afghan rebels. Each year the Saudis sent their part of the money to their embassy in Washington. The Saudi ambassador in Washington, Bandar bin Sultan, then transferred the funds to a Swiss bank account controlled by the CIA. The agency used its Swiss account to make its covert purchases on the international arms markets. Langley's Near East Division, which handled the Saudi liaison, had to continually haggle with Turki's GID over late payments. Once the money was pried out of Riyadh's treasury and transferred to Washington, Bandar would often hold on to the funds for weeks. Near East Division officers speculated that Bandar used the delays to enrich his embassy or himself with "the float," the millions of dollars of interest that piled up daily from the Saudis' enormous mujahedin-bound bank deposits.<sup>20</sup>

Turki took a personal interest in the Afghan program, traveling to Pakistan up to five times a month. Turki "did not object [to] entering into Afghanistan," Ahmed Badeeb recalled. The Saudi prince made a favorable impression on Pakistan's ISI brigadiers, his main partners on the Afghan frontier. "Although his character was formed by his aristocratic upbringing, he was the most humble and modest Arab prince I ever met," recalled Mohammed Yousaf, who directed ISI operations for four years during the mid-1980s. "His education and experience in the West made him completely free of the common Arab prejudices toward non-Arabs."<sup>21</sup>

ABDURRAB RASUL SAYYAF became the Saudis' most important client among the mujahedin rebels. A hulking former professor of Islamic law at Kabul University who maintained a long white-flecked beard, Sayyaf had lived for years in Cairo, where he acquired florid and impeccable Arabic. Crackdowns by the Afghan secret police, including a lengthy prison sentence, forced him into exile in Pakistan.

As Prince Turki's GID began to penetrate the Afghan jihad in 1980, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, an alliance of Muslim governments, held a major summit in Saudi Arabia, in the resort town of Taif. The Saudis wanted the conference to condemn Soviet interference in Afghanistan. Yasser Arafat, then backing many leftist causes, planned to speak in Moscow's defense. Afghan rebel leaders flew in from Peshawar to appeal for their cause. Ahmed Badeeb was assigned to select just one of the mujahedin leaders to make a speech, right after Arafat, attacking the Soviet invasion as an affront to Islam.

Several Afghan rebel leaders spoke passable Arabic, but Badeeb found that Sayyaf, then an assistant to another leader, was by far the most fluent and effective. "We chose him to give the speech," Badeeb recalled later. Immediately, however, the Afghan leaders began to "fight among themselves. Unbelievable guys. . . . Everyone was claiming that he represents the Afghans and he should give the speech." The scene became so unruly that Badeeb decided to lock all of them in a Taif prison until they agreed on a single speaker.

After six hours of jailhouse debate, the Afghans accepted Sayyaf. Badeeb then decided that his client needed a better stage name. As he recalled it, Sayyaf had been introduced to him as "Abdul Rasur Sayyaf." The first two names, he said, translated to Saudis as "Slave of the Prophet," suggesting that Sayyaf's ancestors had been indentured servants. By adding "Abdur" to the name Badeeb altered its meaning to "Slave of the God of the Prophet," suggesting religious devotion, not low social status. For years Badeeb was proud that Saudi intelligence had literally given Sayyaf his name.<sup>22</sup>

An emboldened Sayyaf returned to Peshawar and formed his own Afghan rebel party, drawing on Saudi cash. Sayyaf promoted Wahhabi doctrine among the rebels and provided GID with access to the war independent of ISI control.

Sayyaf also offered GID a means to compete for Afghan influence against Saudi Arabia's wealthy Wahhabi clerics. Sheikh Abdul bin Baz, the head of the kingdom's official religious establishment and a descendant of the Wahhabi sect's founder, had his own mujahedin clients. Bin Baz managed charities that sent millions of dollars and hundreds of volunteer Arab fighters to help an austere Afghan religious leader, Jamil al-Rahman, who had set up a small Wahhabi-inspired "emirate" in an isolated valley of Afghanistan's Kunar province. Badeeb saw Sayyaf as the GID-backed alternative to this and other rival Wahhabi groups.

The Saudi spy service's murky mix of alliance and rivalry with the kingdom's Islamic *ulama* (scholars of Islamic law) became a defining feature of the Afghan jihad as it swelled during the 1980s.

Middle-class, pious Saudis flush with oil wealth embraced the Afghan cause as American churchgoers might respond to an African famine or a Turkish earthquake. Charity is a compulsion of Islamic law. The money flowing from the kingdom arrived at the Afghan frontier in all shapes and sizes: gold jewelry dropped on offering plates by merchants' wives in Jeddah mosques; bags of cash delivered by businessmen to Riyadh charities as *zakat*, an annual Islamic tithe; fat checks written from semiofficial government accounts by

minor Saudi princes; bountiful proceeds raised in annual telethons led by Prince Salman, the governor of Riyadh; and richest of all, the annual transfers from GID to the CIA's Swiss bank accounts.

Prince Turki said years later that GID often controlled who among the Afghans was authorized to receive the semiofficial and unofficial charity funds, but it was never clear how effectively the spy service oversaw the *ulama*-run charities. There was relatively little supervision during the early and mid-1980s, a lack of control that Badeeb later regretted.<sup>23</sup>

Even more ambiguous than the money trail was the legion of Saudis flocking to join or support the Afghan jihad. It was rarely clear who was acting as a formal agent of the kingdom's intelligence service and who was acting as an independent religious volunteer. To the Pakistani generals and American intelligence officers who came to know of him, no Saudi more embodied that mystery than Ahmed Badeeb's former pupil from Jedda, Osama bin Laden.

MOHAMMED BIN LADEN migrated to Jedda in 1931 from a harsh, impoverished valley in Yemen. He arrived just a few years after Abdul Aziz and his fierce Ikhwan took control of the Red Sea coastline. Talented, ambitious, frugal, and determined, bin Laden cobbled together a construction business one project at a time during the sparse years of the 1930s and 1940s. He built houses, roads, offices, and hotels, and he began to cultivate the Saudi royal clan. In the tradition of Saudi and Yemeni sheikhs, bin Laden took multiple young wives. He ultimately fathered about fifty children. By the time his seventeenth son, Osama, was born in 1957 to a young Syrian wife, Mohammed bin Laden had established himself in Jedda, Medina (where Osama lived as a boy), and Riyadh. First under King Saud and then especially under Crown Prince and King Faisal, bin Laden's construction firm became the kingdom's lead contractor for such ambitious and politically sensitive projects as a new highway from Jedda to Taif and the massive refurbishment of the holy cities of Mecca and Medina.<sup>24</sup>

Prince Turki's father and Osama bin Laden's father were friends, business partners, and political allies. Mohammed bin Laden "was a worthy man," as Prince Turki recalled. "He was truly a genuine hero in the eyes of many Saudis, including the royal family, because of what he did for the kingdom. But he was always the construction man. When there was a job to be done, bin Laden would do it."<sup>25</sup> King Faisal appointed Mohammed bin Laden as his minister of public works. The king's patronage crowned the bin Laden family

with open royal support and ensured that their construction fortune would grow into the billions of dollars as the Saudi treasury reaped the oil profits stoked by Faisal's OPEC gambits.

As a child Osama rode his father's bulldozers and wandered his teeming construction sites in the boomtowns of the Hejaz, as the region around the Red Sea is known. But he hardly knew his father. In 1967, just three years into Faisal's reign, Mohammed bin Laden died in a plane crash. Faisal intervened to establish a trust to oversee the operations of the bin Laden construction firm. He wanted to guarantee its stability until the older bin Laden sons, led by Osama's half-brother Salem, could grow up and take charge. In effect, because of the initiative of Prince Turki's father, the bin Laden boys became for a time wards of the Saudi kingdom.

Salem and other bin Ladens paid their way into elite British boarding schools and American universities. On the wings of their wealth many of them moved comfortably and even adventurously between the kingdom and the West. Salem married an English aristocrat, played the guitar, piloted airplanes, and vacationed in Orlando. A photograph of the bin Laden children snapped on a cobbled Swedish street during the early 1970s shows a shaggy, mod clan in bell-bottoms. Perhaps because his mother was not one of Mohammed's favored wives, or because of choices she made about schooling, or because of her boy's own preferences, Osama never slipped into the jetstream that carried his half-brothers and half-sisters to Geneva and London and Aspen. Instead he enrolled in Jedda's King Abdul Aziz University, a prestigious school by Saudi standards but one isolated from world affairs and populated by Islamist professors from Egypt and Jordan—some of them members of the Muslim Brotherhood or connected to its underground proselytizing networks.

Osama bin Laden was an impressionable college sophomore on a \$1 million annual allowance during the first shocking upheavals of 1979. His teachers in Jedda included Abdullah Azzam, a Palestinian who would become a spiritual founder of Hamas, the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, the Islamist rival to the secular-leftist Palestine Liberation Organization. Another of bin Laden's teachers was Mohammed Qutb, the brother of Sayyed Qutb, an Egyptian Islamic radical executed in 1966 for advocating his secular government's violent overthrow. In these classrooms bin Laden studied the imperatives and nuances of contemporary Islamic jihad.<sup>26</sup>

Exactly when bin Laden made his first visit to Pakistan to meet leaders of the Afghan mujahedin isn't clear. In later interviews bin Laden suggested that



he flew to Pakistan "within weeks" of the Soviet invasion. Others place his first trip later, shortly after he graduated from King Abdul Aziz University with a degree in economics and public administration, in 1981. Bin Laden had met Afghan mujahedin leaders at Mecca during the annual *hajj*. (The Afghan guerrillas with Saudi connections quickly learned they could raise enormous sums outside of ISI's control by rattling their tin cups before wealthy pilgrims.) According to Badeeb, on bin Laden's first trip to Pakistan he brought donations to the Lahore offices of Jamaat-e-Islami, Zia's political shock force. Jamaat was the Pakistani offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood; its students had sacked the U.S. embassy in Islamabad in 1979. Bin Laden did not trust the official Pakistan intelligence service, Badeeb recalled, and preferred to funnel his initial charity through private religious and political networks.

From the beginning of the Afghan jihad, Saudi intelligence used religious charities to support its own unilateral operations. This mainly involved funneling money and equipment to favored Afghan commanders outside ISI or CIA control. Badeeb established safehouses for himself and other Saudi spies through Saudi charities operating in Peshawar. Badeeb also stayed frequently at the Saudi embassy in Islamabad. "The humanitarian aid—that was completely separate from the Americans," Badeeb recalled. "And we insist[ed] that the Americans will not get to that, get involved—especially in the beginning," in part because some of the Islamist mujahedin objected to direct contacts with Western infidels.<sup>27</sup>

With Zia's encouragement, Saudi charities built along the Afghan frontier hundreds of *madrassas*, or Islamic schools, where they taught young Afghan refugees to memorize the Koran. Ahmed Badeeb made personal contributions to establish his own refugee school along the frontier. He did insist that his school's curriculum emphasize crafts and practical trade skills, not Koran memorization. "I thought, 'Why does everybody have to be a religious student?'"<sup>28</sup>

In spy lexicon, each of the major intelligence agencies working the Afghan jihad—GID, ISI, and the CIA—began to "compartment" their work, even as all three collaborated with one another through formal liaisons. Working together they purchased and shipped to the Afghan rebels tens of thousands of tons of weapons and ammunition. Separately they spied on one another and pursued independent political agendas. Howard Hart, the CIA station chief in Islamabad until 1984, regarded it as "the worst kept secret in town" that the Saudis were privately running guns and cash to Sayyaf.

The Saudis insisted that there be no interaction in Pakistan between the

CIA and the GID. All such contact was to take place in Riyadh or Langley. GID tried to keep secret the subsidies it paid to the ISI outside of the arms-buying program. For their part, CIA officers tried to shield their own direct contacts with Afghan commanders such as Abdul Haq.<sup>29</sup>

Bin Laden moved within Saudi intelligence's compartmented operations, outside of CIA eyesight. CIA archives contain no record of any direct contact between a CIA officer and bin Laden during the 1980s. CIA officers delivering sworn testimony before Congress in 2002 asserted there were no such contacts, and so did multiple CIA officers and U.S. officials in interviews. The CIA became aware of bin Laden's work with Afghan rebels in Pakistan and Afghanistan later in the 1980s but did not meet with him even then, according to these record searches and interviews. If the CIA did have contact with bin Laden during the 1980s and subsequently covered it up, it has so far done an excellent job.<sup>30</sup>

Prince Turki and other Saudi intelligence officials said years later that bin Laden was never a professional Saudi intelligence agent. Still, while the exact character and timeline of his dealings with GID remains uncertain, it seems clear that bin Laden did have a substantial relationship with Saudi intelligence. Some CIA officers later concluded that bin Laden operated as a semiofficial liaison between GID, the international Islamist religious networks such as Jamaat, and the leading Saudi-backed Afghan commanders, such as Sayyaf. Ahmed Badeeb describes an active, operational partnership between GID and Osama bin Laden, a relationship more direct than Prince Turki or any other Saudi official has yet acknowledged. By Badeeb's account, bin Laden was responsive to specific direction from both the Saudi and Pakistani intelligence agencies during the early and mid-1980s. Bin Laden may not have been paid a regular stipend or salary; he was a wealthy man. But Badeeb's account suggests that bin Laden may have arranged formal road-building and other construction deals with GID during this period—contracts from which bin Laden would have earned profits. Badeeb's account is incomplete and in places ambiguous; he is known to have given only two interviews on the subject, and he does not address every aspect of his history with bin Laden in depth. But his description of the relationship, on its face, is one of intimacy and professional alliance. "I loved Osama and considered him a good citizen of Saudi Arabia," Badeeb said.

The Badeeb family and the bin Ladens hailed from the same regions of Saudi Arabia and Yemen, Badeeb said. When Ahmed Badeeb first met Osama at school in Jeddah, before Badeeb became Turki's chief of staff, bin Laden

had "joined the religious committee at the school, as opposed to any of the other many other committees," Badeeb recalled. "He was not an extremist at all, and I liked him because he was a decent and polite person. In school and academically he was in the middle."<sup>31</sup>

As the Afghan jihad roused Saudis to action, bin Laden met regularly in the kingdom with senior princes, including Prince Turki and Prince Naif, the Saudi minister of the interior, "who liked and appreciated him," as Badeeb recalled it. And as he shuttled back and forth to Afghanistan, bin Laden developed "strong relations with the Saudi intelligence and with our embassy in Pakistan." The Saudi embassy in Islamabad had "a very powerful and active role" in the Afghan jihad. The ambassador often hosted dinner parties for visiting Saudi sheikhs or government officials and would invite bin Laden to attend. He "had a very good rapport with the ambassador and with all the Saudi ambassadors that served there."<sup>32</sup>

Prince Turki has acknowledged meeting bin Laden "several times" at these embassy receptions in Islamabad. "He seemed to be a relatively pleasant man," Turki recalled, "very shy, soft spoken, and as a matter of fact, he didn't speak much at all." But Turki has suggested these meetings were passing encounters of little consequence. He has also said they were his only dealings with bin Laden during the early and mid-1980s.<sup>33</sup>

Badeeb has said that he met with bin Laden only "in my capacity as his former teacher." Given that Badeeb was working full-time as the chief of staff to the director of Saudi intelligence, this description strains credulity. Badeeb described a relationship that was far more active than just a series of casual chats at diplomatic receptions. The Saudi embassy in Islamabad "would ask [bin Laden] for some things, and he would respond positively," Badeeb recalled. Also, "The Pakistanis saw in him one who was helping them do what they wanted done there." As Badeeb organized safehouses through Saudi religious charities, bin Laden's "role in Afghanistan—and he was about twenty-four, twenty-five years old at the time—was to build roads in the country to make easy the delivery of weapons to the mujahedin." The Afghans regarded bin Laden as "a nice and generous person who has money and good contacts with Saudi government officials."

The chief of staff to the director of Saudi intelligence put it simply: "We were happy with him. He was our man. He was doing all what we ask him."<sup>34</sup> For now.

## 5

## "Don't Make It Our War"

IN JANUARY 1984, CIA director William Casey briefed President Reagan and his national security cabinet about the progress of their covert Afghan war. It had been four years since the first Lee Enfield rifles arrived in Karachi. Mujahedin warriors had killed or wounded about seventeen thousand Soviet soldiers to date, by the CIA's classified estimate. They controlled 62 percent of the countryside and had become so effective that the Soviets would have to triple or quadruple their deployments in Afghanistan to put the rebellion down. Soviet forces had so far lost about 350 to 400 aircraft in combat, the CIA estimated. The mujahedin had also destroyed about 2,750 Soviet tanks and armored carriers and just under 8,000 trucks, jeeps, and other vehicles. The war had already cost the Soviet government about \$12 billion in direct expenses. All this mayhem had been purchased by U.S. taxpayers for \$200 million so far, plus another \$200 million contributed by Prince Turki's GID, Casey reported. Islamabad station chief Howard Hart's argument that covert action in Afghanistan was proving cost effective had never been laid out so starkly for the White House.<sup>1</sup>

By early 1984, Casey was among the most ardent of the jihad's true believers. After arriving at CIA headquarters in a whirlwind of controversy and am-