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**THE CELL: Inside the 9/11 Plot, and Why the FBI and CIA Failed to Stop It.
CHAPTER 18: THE FOREST FOR THE TREES**

By December of that year, bin Laden's forces had been traced to a network of caves at Tora Bora. The U.S. advisors stayed in the background while Northern Alliance troops went in after him, but bin Laden was able to escape. Ibn Sheik al Libby, one of bin Laden's ranking men who was captured there, told the FBI that bin Laden was in the Tora Bora caves throughout the battle. He said bin Laden had instructed him to take command of the battle, and then he'd fled.

The CIA felt al-Libby was holding back vital information. The CIA suggested that the FBI turn al-Libby over to the Egyptians, who have often been accused of using torture to speed up arduous interrogations. The FBI was opposed to the idea. If a suspect was tortured, then any statement he gave would be damaged goods in any American courtroom. The Bureau wanted to preserve al-Libby so he could testify in a trial. However, the CIA believed the criminal case was secondary to the need to answer two questions as quickly as possible: Where was bin Laden and what was he next planning against America?

In the end, CIA Director George Tenet and FBI Director Bob Mueller went head to head on al-Libby. Sources say the al-Libby matter was settled by the president, who said that al-Libby would be shipped to the Egyptians. It was a defining moment. The U.S. had drifted from the comfortable moral high ground that made things like torture unacceptable. Now, it seemed, it was okay to use a surrogate to do our dirty work. Al-Libby was handed over to the Egyptians for interrogation. Later, FBI sources complained to me that the Egyptians didn't learn any more from the prisoner than they had.

Miller, Stone, & Mitchell, THE CELL, P. 321 (Hyperion, NY 2002)

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