

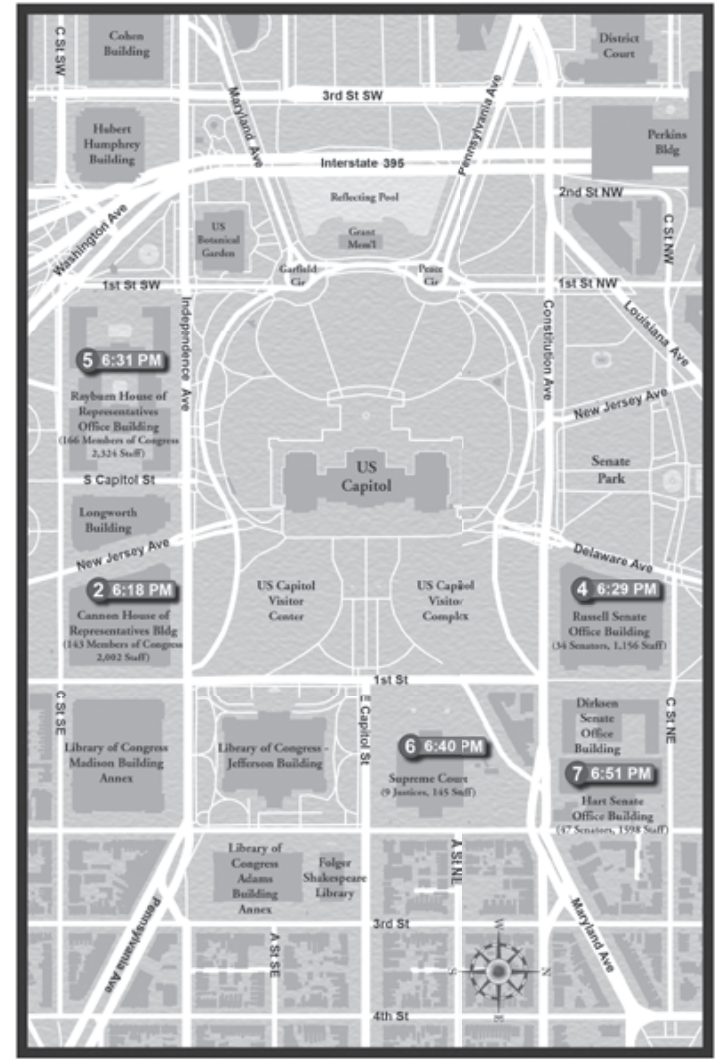
PRESIDENTIAL



DECLARATIONS

Washington, DC
April 11, 2019

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CHAPTER THIRTY



President Clinton may have inherited Obama's failed health care policy, but unlike Obama, she cannot blame another political party for past history. Obamacare falls on her desk. It is her problem. Our health care system has not improved. Providing more people with less care is not a solution. It's a disaster. Stealing away choice is not a justification for bad policies—it's a capitulation to failure. Some say it's too late to fix the problem. They say Obamacare is buried too deep in bureaucracy and paperwork to dig our way out. Such views could not be more foreign to America's ideals. We believe in the individual and his or her rights, not centralized control. Obamacare has taken those rights away. Nothing will get in my way of restoring those rights.

Samantha Harrison, Campaign Speech for Senate
Emporia, Virginia, November 1, 2018

Washington, D.C.
April 11, 2019

The speed of light is almost 35,000 times faster than the speed of sound. That is why lightning is often seen before the clap of thunder accompanying it is heard. The only exception is when someone is at ground zero when the lightning hits—the sound of its thunder happens at the same time. In the case of Maalouff's bombs, anyone so close would be dead before they understood what was happening. Those within a mile would have about ten seconds before the light and sound merged and death enveloped them. For each mile farther, another ten seconds would elapse until the sound was heard. Those farther out

would probably survive the blast but would likely die slowly from the radiation. Those more than five miles from the explosion would survive, only to watch thousands die in news reports broadcast every day, wondering if they, too, were going to die. Worse, they'd wonder if there were other bombs near where they lived and worked, ready to kill them and their loved ones just like those first exploded in Washington.

When Maalouff gave Daa'ood his order to pick up the mechanism for one of the bombs and drive it to a target, he gave the same order to eleven others, none of whom had any idea what they were carrying, let alone what it was for. On delivery, two members of an assembly team, one with a suitcase filled with the explosive and the other with the radioactive ball bearings, were given orders to meet at the location of the mechanism and assemble the bomb, timing them to go off in a sequence spanning a half hour. To Maalouff, it was important all of the bombs not detonate at the same time. Spacing out the explosions assured greater panic and fear. It would take hours before anyone could react with a plan. Authorities would be running amok trying to decide what to do before the next bomb exploded. Fire departments and police would scramble. They'd get near one location only to hear another bomb explode. In Maalouff's eyes, the resulting chaos would be beautiful.

The plan on how the bombs would be delivered to their targets was Maalouff's pride and joy. In 2012, Maalouff had quietly purchased the Elite Armored Car Company, a trusted transportation firm with dozens of accounts in the District, including many government agencies. Over the first four years of its operations, Maalouff did nothing and left the management intact. In 2016, he started changing the company's staff. By 2017, he had placed his loyalists in every major role in the company. No one would question why an Elite armored car was in front of a building in Washington or entering one of the garages. It happened every day without incident as cash was picked up and dropped off. Daily, people saw Elite armored cars all over the District. They were barely noticed.

In 2014, Maalouff noticed food trucks had become very popular in Washington and were able to park near key government buildings. They were

becoming as ubiquitous as armored cars. So Maalouff bought a food truck and staffed it with his loyalists, ready to take his orders.

Finally, in 2015, he added a pushcart hot dog vendor to his fleet. Such a vendor could quietly move just about anywhere in the District without the slightest suspicion.

Sequestered in the company's headquarters garage in Falls Church were a dozen trucks. By their outward appearance, they were like every other armored truck Elite owned—except these trucks weren't armored at all. Their sides and roofs were sheet metal, easily punctured by a screwdriver or blown into a thousand pieces by a bomb set off from inside the truck. Hot dog cart and food trucks were also in the garage.

By April 11, 2019, Maalouff's armored cars, food truck, and pushcart were commonplace, just part of the neighborhoods where they blended in. No one knew what they were capable of becoming. No one knew they were now all dirty bombs.

Yosef El-Amin pushed his hot dog and pretzel cart toward Dupont Circle, as he'd been instructed to do. Trained by Maalouff before coming to America and becoming a citizen, he knew what he needed to do. Finally, after years of waiting, the day of revenge had arrived. He would be able to stop selling hot dogs, sweating in the summer and freezing in the winter. Never again. On this day, El-Amin's cart did not have any hot dogs or pretzels. As he approached the Firefly Restaurant, he shouted, "Praise to Allah," and flipped the switch.

El-Amin's bomb exploded at 6:08 p.m. one block from where President Clinton was enjoying a cup of tea after a meal with friends.

The bomb sent thousands of tiny ball bearings through the air at nearly the speed of sound. They ripped through anything in their path. Anyone in the way was either immediately killed or disfigured, some beyond recognition.

Building walls that remained standing were covered with blood. Body parts were strewn everywhere, impossible to piece together. The devastation was overwhelming. More than one hundred innocents were killed instantly. Another ninety-six of the more than two hundred people who suffered serious injuries died soon after, either as they lay bleeding in the streets or after arriving at nearby hospitals. At 6:15 p.m., an armored car carrying a second bomb approached the Cannon Building where members of Congress and their staffs, including the Speaker of the House and Sam's entourage, awaited a call from the Capitol to come to the legislative chambers for a vote.

As the car entered the garage, the security guard greeted the driver. "Marla, I hope you've got some money in that car for me!" the guard joked as he lowered the spikes in the driveway and allowed the van to enter the garage. He'd done the same thing for Marla Guttman, the driver, for years. But "Marla Guttman" was never her real name.

"I'm happy to give you everything in the car, Steve," Marla responded with a sly smile. It was finally the last day she had to play the charade. Time for revenge had arrived. As soon as she was past the security and under the building, she detonated the bomb. It was 6:18 p.m. Built in 1908, the building literally crumbled, leaving 497 dead and many more maimed or injured.

The third bomb in the food truck exploded at 6:20 p.m. outside the American Petroleum Institute, where the vice president was meeting with lobbyists. It virtually obliterated the building. Maalouff was particularly proud of this bomb. It had taken a crew from one of Maalouff's cells weeks of snooping and following the vice president to anticipate where he'd be on April 11. None of the 92 souls in the building survived the blast, and another 133 pedestrians and people in nearby stores met the same fate. Dozens more lost either limbs or their eyesight—some both. Many more later died in hospitals.

At 6:25 p.m., the vans holding two of the remaining four bombs entered the garages of the Russell Senate Office Building where senators occupied their

offices, and the Rayburn House Office Building where more members of Congress waited for a call to vote. They arrived just before the bomb at the Cannon Building detonated.

Once under the buildings, the drivers detonated their bombs at 6:29 p.m. and 6:31 p.m. Hundreds died and many more were injured.

At 6:40 p.m., the sixth bomb exploded outside the Supreme Court, tearing off the front of the building and crushing almost everyone inside, including six Supreme Court justices. Outside, the ball bearings did their carnage. The chambers of most of the justices crumbled under the force of the explosion, leaving debris-covered bodies everywhere. In total, 225 people died, and hundreds more were injured in and around the courthouse.

At 6:51 p.m., the driver with the last bomb pulled up to the security gate at the Hart Senate Office Building. The guard, suspicious from hearing nearby explosions and sirens, asked the driver to open the back of the van to inspect it. The driver panicked and detonated the bomb at the security gate. The damage was extensive but didn't remotely approach the devastation at the three other office buildings. Another 165 people perished.

Outside at the sites where the bombs exploded, survivors were wandering the streets dazed, many covered in blood. Screams could be heard everywhere. Sirens started to wail. Smoke rose into the sky, seemingly from everywhere. The devastation and loss of life were overwhelming. In the days following the attack, the total death toll was determined to be 2,224, though hundreds more were forever scarred and disabled.

It all happened in less than forty-five minutes, too short a time period to mount any effective countermeasures. Washington was enveloped in panic. On an order from Secretary of Homeland Security Elmer Whitting, the Emergency Alert System went into operation.

Sirens were heard throughout the United States as radios, televisions, and mobile phones were interrupted at 8:30 p.m. with a shrill tone and a sobering announcement:

We interrupt our service; this is a national emergency. This is not a test.

This is the Emergency Alert System. All normal programming has been discontinued during this emergency. It is important that you listen carefully.

During this emergency, most stations will remain on the air providing news and information to the public in assigned areas.

Do not use your telephone but keep it near you. The telephone lines should be kept open for emergency use only.

The United States is under attack. We will bring you further information as soon as possible. Meanwhile, stay tuned to this station. Keep your cell phone near you. Remain calm and stay wherever you are. Do not panic. By leaving where you are, you could be exposing yourself to greater danger.

The safest place is indoors. Make sure gas and other fuel supplies are turned off and that all fires are extinguished. You should fill all your containers for drinking water because water supply may become unavailable.

When the immediate danger has passed, the sirens will sound a steady note. The all-clear message will also be given on this wavelength and on your cell phone.

We shall be on the air every hour on the hour. Stay tuned to this wavelength, but switch your radios off now to save your batteries.