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MFR 646/7347
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MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Event: Richard A. Clarke
Type of Event: Interview
Date: February 3, 2004
Time: 9:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
Special Access Issues: Treat as ~~TOP SECRET~~ 25X1 a ~~TS~~ version is also
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Team Number: Three (Counterterrorism Policy)
Location: 2100 K Street NW
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Note: Clarke was placed under oath by Commissioner Roemer at the start of his first interview on Dec. 18, 2003. At the start of this interview—his third session with the Commission—Clarke was reminded that he was still under oath.

The Aftermath of the Millennium

The USG had been disrupting al-Qa'ida cells for four or five years by 2000.
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25X1 After the Millennium, Clarke thinks he probably wanted to increase the amount of US CT assistance to foreign governments. 25X1

25X1 Countries were usually willing to go along if the US trained 25X1

(~~TS~~ 25X1)

After the March 8, 2000 PC, Clarke thinks that he called a meeting in Tampa of FBI field offices and JTTF heads. They asked the 56 special agents in charge (SACs) to either come or send their deputies. With FBI Director Freeh's approval, Clarke and Dale Watson told them that their number one CT priority was al-Qa'ida. Watson added that al-Qa'ida was the director's top CT priority as well and noted that the agents would be evaluated on their performance in this area, which would affect their bonuses and promotions. Watson was "trying to move this aircraft carrier," Clarke said. (~~LES~~)

They also expanded the number of JTTFs—from 28 to 56, Clarke thinks—and added IRS personnel to those task forces. FBI was incapable of finding

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terrorist financiers inside the US, Clarke said. They also added INS to the JTTFs [CK—Alexis, is this right?] out of concern that al-Qa'ida associates might be exportable [Alexis: that's what I've got in my notes; presume it means "might come into America," but lemme know what you have...] ~~(C)~~

The administration also moved to centralize the translation of material collected by FISA wiretaps. Before, the translation had been done locally, which meant that FISA taps often weren't listened to—after waiting six to nine months to get the warrant approved in the first place. ~~(LES)~~

This all meant a marked increase in domestic CT measures. By FY2001, the USG had already raised the FBI's CT budget some 400 percent over FY1993. "In retrospect, I'd love to know where that money went," Clarke added. They asked the FBI how it was spending its money and got presentation discussing new agents, more support for JTTFs, and other steps Clarke doesn't remember. ~~(LES)~~

Several times, Clarke used the CSG to solicit agencies' suggestions for CT legislation. In 1995-96, they tried to get legislation passed on CT, such as a post-Oklahoma City proposal to tag explosives so they can be identified. They tried this at least twice, Clarke said. [AA: do I have this right?] Clarke doesn't recall anyone raising the question of the FISA versus criminal barrier. ~~(C)~~

Clarke said the Millennium after-action review (AAR) involved about 28 proposals, including joint patrols of the US-Canadian border, more FBI agents in Canada, and a reciprocal method for screening people trying to enter both the US and Canada. The first two elements—the joint patrols and the boosted FBI liaison presence, including at consulates in Canadian cities—were adopted. ~~(S)~~

In February 2000, Clarke traveled to Ottawa, where he asked the Privy Council—a Canadian government coordinating body somewhat analogous to the NSC—to start talks about a joint visa program in which both countries would share databases to avoid the problem of bad actors going "visa shopping." There were technical problems with sharing databases; Clarke suggested exchanging hard copies of data lists. The idea of joint visas was subsequently discussed with OMB and probably the White House chief of staff's office, and the administration decided against supporting it. ~~(S)~~

They also did an airport program on visas, asking noncitizens to show their visas on the way out of America. But that didn't get far because you would have needed a huge number of new INS staff. [Alexis: my notes also have "and Amcits show ID too"—can you make sense of that point?] ~~(S)~~

The Question of Foreign Students

We tried two or three times to establish a program to track the visas of foreign students, Clarke said. The context was a proliferation concern, not necessarily a terrorism one; Clarke worried that a student could come to America from Tehran, apply to MIT's English lit program, get a student visa, come to Cambridge, and take nuclear physics instead. But neither State, INS, nor Congress were excited about this initiative. ~~(S)~~

During a US-Russian dialogue in which the US side complained that Russia was helping equip students from rogue states with WMD knowledge, Russia complained that America was training foreign students, too. Vice President Gore, one of the administration's principal interlocutors with the Russians, asked to look into this. They concluded that the USG had no way to know what foreign students were learning. INS didn't even know if such students were out-of-status on their visas; many of the students had open-ended visas good until the end of their degree, which could mean years for Ph.D. candidates. Clarke suggested an annual visa, so that universities would have to certify that their foreign students had been attending classes. But American universities hated this idea and refused to do it; State and INS felt the same way. Foreign students were cash payers for the universities, Clarke said. The most he ever got here was a pilot program that expired in 1998 or 1999. ~~(S)~~

Funding the Millennium Initiatives

Many of these initiatives were raised early enough to be funded by changing the FY2001 budget while it was still on the Hill; others were put into the FY2002 budget. Some items were funded right away, some the following year, and some not at all. (U)

Among the items from the Millennium AAR that weren't funded was the centralized FISA translation center. "DOJ won't ask for the money," Clarke said. ~~(C)~~

Meanwhile, the CSG got more involved in the budget game. The CSG began as a crisis response group, then became a policy group, then became a policy-and-budget group, Clarke said. Clarke and OMB Deputy Director Josh Gotbaum co-chaired a process of asking the CSG representatives what budget dollars they wanted; the CSG reps were asked to forget their own agency's budget process and just lay out what they'd want for their agency's CT programs, which Clarke conceded was a bureaucratically risky move for the individual CSG members. Then they'd send the CSG proposal to the departments early on so that the departments could include the CT funding requests in their July budget submissions. Clarke and Gotbaum would then review the department proposals and ask the departments to restore any CT-related items that had been dropped in the "passback." If a department declined to do so, APNSA Berger had an informal pool of money—through a prior arrangement with OMB—that he could use. This whole arrangement set up a September-November bargaining process to see how much CSG items would get from Berger's pool. (U)

CIA Funding

We did an audit of CIA's al-Qa'ida programs, done by OMB and the CIA's comptroller at Clarke's request. Both OMB and the CIA comptroller agreed that the resultant figures were correct. It turned out that virtually the entire CIA CT program was based on White House supplementals that we got for them, Clarke said. We got the only money that CIA was willing to spend on al-Qa'ida, the agency's supposed number-one priority. ~~(S)~~

Clarke had prepared Hadley to fight on this. In February/March 2001, the new deputy national security adviser read Tenet the DCI's congressional testimony that al-Qa'ida was America's gravest threat. As Clarke recalls the exchange, Hadley turned to Tenet and asked, How come we're unwilling to spend a penny on this? Tenet said that the CIA had been bled dry. They were running on fumes; he couldn't find so much as a dollar. ~~(G)~~

Clarke took the view that if the CIA wasn't willing to take \$1 from any other agency program—from the cafeteria, from FBIS—then it was saying that those functions were all more important than fighting al-Qa'ida. (U)

The DCI resisted the CSG's inclusion in the budget process. CIA funding was also reviewed by the assistant to the president for intelligence, and the White House agreed to a CIA/NSC channel to do a budget review rather than using the CSG channel. The covert action budget process was even more convoluted; an internal CIA review had to be held before asking for funds. They never got a decent CA program vetted through this, Clarke said. ~~(G)~~

The CIA claimed that it had been bled white and complained that the White House was insensitive to that, Clarke said. But the record shows that the White House got supplementals on al-Qa'ida for the CIA. Moreover, every time Clarke appeared before SSCI or HPSCI, the message from the congressional intel committees was always, If you want funding for al-Qa'ida, tell us, and we'll give it. (U)

As Clarke saw it, there were two structural problems inherent in handling CT funding. First was the question of what constituted CT funding. The focus on the IC overlooked homeland defenses; to redress that, the USG needed an integrated CT budget. In 1996, Clarke asked how much the USG spent annually on CT but nobody knew. We created a cross-cut budget process to fill this need and did baseline projections going back to 1993. (U)

Clarke recommended that the Commission endorse an integrated CT budget with someone in charge of it. "I couldn't spend a penny," Clarke recalls. He doesn't know who is in charge of the CT budget today; it's not DHS Secretary Ridge, and it's certainly not Homeland Security Adviser John Gordon, who has less budget control than Clarke did. With no one running the overall CT

budget. there's no one making trade-offs between, say, student visas and
25X1 Nobody is doing holistic CT management. (S)

The second structural problem about the IC budget is that the DCI has statutory authority to raid other agencies' budgets—but won't do it. We could boost that authority by creating a director of national intelligence. Clarke thinks a DNI is probably a good idea. Tenet never once used his statutory authority to get money from other IC agencies. CIA was *not* bled dry; congressional committees always signed off on other requests. (U)

Predator

In March 2000, TNT sent President Clinton a lengthy memo about efforts to kill UBL, which reported that the USG hadn't succeeded in using the authorities that the president had granted. President Clinton scrawled a note of dissatisfaction in the margins, saying we can do better. Clarke used this to drive new ideas, including Predator. He convened a small cell consisting of CIA's Charlie Allen and Scott Fry of DOD to look at an ongoing problem: all three times the administration had thought UBL had been spotted, the DCI had only been able to provide single-threaded intel about his location. Allen and Fry considered this problem and came back with an idea we hadn't thought of to get better actionable intel: using Predator drones to fly CT missions. (TS 25X1

There was a lot of DO resistance to deploy Predator, Clarke said. DDO Jim Pavitt said they should give the funds that would be spent on Predator to him instead to spend on more HUMINT, which Clarke considered throwing good money after bad. Pavitt was also concerned, Clarke said, about possible
25X1 subject to the "not invented here" syndrome. Finally, there was some personal disrespect for Allen at the CIA. Berger resolved all this by telling the CIA to fly it. (TS 25X1

Due to CIA resistance, Clarke said, Predator was flown in fall 2000 as an experiment to see if it worked; submarines with TLAMs were not standing by to shoot at UBL. On 3 of the 11 Predator reconnaissance flights, Clarke said, it videotaped UBL. Clarke recalls passive-aggressive behavior from Pavitt, who "nickel and dined the program." When one of the UAVs broke, the CIA feared having to pay several hundred thousand dollars. When the Taliban's air defenses spotted one Predator, the CIA wanted to stop the flights [AA: do I have that right? Notes are murky]. Clarke dryly replied that the drone's pilot was in 25X1 and would survive being shot down. For each flight, CIA put up a fight. (TS 25X1

25X1, X4 the USG stood down the operation until spring. Gen. Jumper then suggested accelerating the program to arm Predator, which would take an estimated two or three months to do. The USG fired Hellfire missiles from a Predator platform in tests in

Nevada, and the arrangement worked. The USG even built a mock-up of UBL's house at Tarnak and fired a Hellfire at it; the missile destroyed it, Clarke said. ~~(TS 25X1)~~

CIA was less impressed. The agency said that Hellfire missiles were too small and might let UBL survive a Predator attack. Clarke noted that the Navy had a different type of Hellfire—designed to kill people, not tanks. Perhaps that could be used instead. ~~(TS 25X1)~~

While the debate on arming Predator continued, Clarke wanted to resume recon flights in the meantime. If a drone saw an al-Qa'ida commander enter a villa compound in an Afghan town, it could surveil the compound and send back information on who was coming in and out. Clarke thought highly of the intel Predator garnered. It found a previously unknown jihadist training camp southwest of Kandahar, he noted. Moreover, American satellites could offer just one second over a target; Predator could image a target ~~(TS 25X1, X4)~~
~~25X1, X4 (TS 25X1)~~

But CIA opposed further recon flights, Clarke said, arguing that such missions would foul the US ability to successfully use the armed bird. We agreed, Clarke said, and agreed to wait for weaponized Predators. But then, once the armed Predator was ready, [AA: this OK? After all, the armed bird's not ready till post-9/11] CIA decided in July 2001 that it wanted nothing to do with it. ~~(TS 25X1)~~

In May/June 2001, they tested Predator with both types of Hellfire missile. The USAF signed off, with a waiver because of the unusual nature of the testing. Clarke's deputy, Roger Cressey, had a thick file of the technical details. ~~(TS 25X1)~~

The Bush NSC wanted to put recon Predator back up and to fly the armed version when it was ready. It later acquiesced to the CIA's position of dropping recon flights and waiting for the armed Predator. CIA then decided it wanted nothing to do with the armed Predator, Clarke said. ~~(TS 25X1)~~

CIA's aversion to armed Predator stemmed from more than just the issue of who would pull the trigger, Clarke said. They could have Tenet fire it, or Pavitt, or the mission commander. The USG had to resolve this issue and lay rules down, but the problem was "not overly complicated," in Clarke's view. But CIA, from the DCI on down, insisted that it shouldn't fly armed aircraft; it never had and didn't want to start. ~~(TS 25X1)~~

In winter 1999, the Navy started asking to remove the subs off the coast of South Asia designed to provide a TLAM option to kill UBL. Clarke thinks the subs were removed by summer 2000. The Navy argued that tying up the two subs was not the best use of a limited asset, hurt morale among the sailors, and complicated the Navy's overall rotation. Clarke was involved in these

discussions. In the months after the 1998 strikes, the USG got intel about UBL's location a few times, but the intel was inadequate. Nothing had changed to get better intel, so the chances of an alert to fire TLAMs was pretty small. ~~(TS)~~ 25X1

Recon Predator flights were an experiment, under the terms of a deal between 25X1 and Berger. The fall 2000 flights were not linked to subs that were ready to fire. By the time we considered using subs after seeing UBL by Predator in 2000, 25X1, X4 ~~(TS)~~ 25X1

Clarke wanted recon Predator flights in 2001—both for a possible sub strike to kill UBL. 25X1 If they saw UBL from a Predator, you could fire TLAMs at him, and *that* type of single-threaded intel would be fine. They also briefly considered trying to kill UBL. 25X1, X4 25X1, X4 ~~(TS)~~ 25X1

The drones also offered another advantage in the quest to get UBL, Clarke said: "Predator allows you to see him blowing up." You would *know* that you'd gotten him, which meant he couldn't become some shadowy hero like Che Guevara. ~~(TS)~~ 25X1 Clarke urged the Commission to make sure it viewed the video that Predator shot. ~~(TS)~~ 25X1

Asked about CINCENTCOM Zinni's concerns about collateral damage from TLAM strikes, Clarke said he'd never thought that attacking Tarnak could cause collateral damage. There were no innocents there; despite talk of women and children at the camp, repeated Predator flights had shown no women or children and burst this myth, Clarke said. ~~(TS)~~ 25X1

CIA tried to pull all of the Predator infrastructure. 25X1 25X1 Clarke said. He argued that doing so would prejudice the September/October 2000 experiment. Behind that concern was Clarke's knowledge that if the infrastructure was pulled out, he'd never be able to get it back. ~~(TS)~~ 25X1

Other Military Options

They had also thought about TLAM strikes on several of UBL's camps, Clarke said. But the military protested against using a missile that cost a few million dollars to destroy a building that cost just a few hundred thousand dollars. DOD didn't want the mission in the first place, but if it was ordered to destroy places such as Tarnak. 25X1 it would prefer to use B-52 or B-1 bombers to carpet-bomb the camps. ~~(TS)~~ 25X1

Zelikow asked about the idea of hitting the camps through forward-deployed AC-130s. Clarke pointed out that the Afghan air force was still un. 25X1
25X1

25X1 So sending in AC-130s also meant sending fighters to protect the AC-130s, which meant an even larger footprint. The AC-130s were never deployed for CT missions.

~~(TS)~~ 25X1

The Attack on the *USS Cole*

25X1 The day of the attack, 'TNT' pulled up 25X1
25X1 on Yemen. They did a 36-hour crash on all of this raw data and convinced themselves that al-Qa'ida was the culprit. They told Berger about their work and conclusions. (C)

But the CIA and FBI never offered that conclusive a judgment. The FBI was working on a criminal case in Yemen, and Amb. Bodine was obstructing the bureau's work, Clarke said. CIA staff probably concluded in November that al-Qa'ida was the perpetrator. Clarke doesn't remember ever seeing a document saying definitively that it was al-Qa'ida, even though that was pretty obvious to him within hours of the attack. The first time that a USG official said that al-Qa'ida had been behind the Cole attack came when President Bush said it in his September 2001 speech to Congress after 9/11, when Clarke put it in.

[Commission note: Roger Cressey, Clarke's deputy, used almost exactly this same formulation.]

~~(LES)~~

We had the impression that CIA and FBI were "holding back," Clarke said. Tenet never said he'd reached a conclusion. By contrast, in 1993, DCI Woolsey put together a very formal evidence package about the attempted assassination of former President George H.W. Bush and sent it to President Clinton with a formal conclusion that the operation had been the work of the Iraqi Mukhabarat. The DCI also said very distinctly that Khobar had been an Iranian op, although that judgment came well after the attack. In 1998, Tenet said at an NSC meeting that he was 100 percent convinced that UBL was behind the embassy bombings. Nothing like that happened in the case of the Cole. (C)

It's possible, Clarke said, that the DCI and AG "had the impression" that the White House didn't want to know about the Cole. By November 2000, there wasn't much White House interest in further military action against al-Qa'ida in Afghanistan for something like the Cole, Clarke said. The administration was ending, and it was trying to reach an Arab-Israeli peace agreement; indeed, they came very close to succeeding, and Clarke can justify the importance of such a deal. They hadn't given up on the peace process after the outbreak of the al-Aqsa intifada. (C)

The military plans for Operation Infinite Resolve offered options. There were no plans for invading or occupying Afghanistan, but there were options involving bombing, cruise missiles, AC-130s, and commandos. ~~(TS)~~

Zelikow asked Clarke about the account of a PC on the Cole offered by Richard Miniter on pp. 223-27 of his book *Losing Bin Laden: How Bill Clinton's Failures Unleashed Global Terror* (Washington, DC: Regnery, 2003), which includes quotations from Clarke. Miniter had done a synthesis of Clarke and then-S/CT Mike Sheehan's accounts, Clarke said. It was largely correct, but he suspects that Reno said the FBI had just started work on its case, not that the USG needed an FBI case to act. Clarke also does not remember Albright saying it would be unhelpful to bomb Muslims at that point, as Miniter's account has it; still, Clarke said that Sheehan confronted that view every day at State, where Sheehan was viewed as a "madman" by his colleagues at the assistant-secretary level for wanting to get UBL. Clarke did largely concur with Miniter's p. 226 account of Defense Secretary Cohen's reported remark that the Cole "was not sufficient provocation" for a retaliatory strike.

[Commission note: Berger hotly disputed Miniter's reporting about Cohen, calling it insulting and defamatory.] Cohen did say something like that, Clarke said—a comment that the Cole was not enough to trigger Infinite Resolve plus and clear out Afghanistan. (U) That State and DOD were never actually asked to state their views on retaliation. Both agencies had policy reservations about strikes. The FBI and CIA both said that the issue was not yet ready for discussions of retaliation, and the principals accepted that. They first needed FBI and CIA to say who was responsible and then consider retaliation; that meant the issue never came to a head for decision. ~~(C)~~

Clarke doesn't remember specifically pushing for an evidence package on the Cole. C/CTC Black didn't dispute Clarke's view that it was al-Qa'ida. Berger did ask Tenet about progress in his investigation. Clarke never heard President Clinton telling Tenet that we needed a decision about Cole responsibility. ~~(C)~~

Berger's reaction to the Cole attack was "angry," which was uncharacteristic for him. Clarke recalled a very uncomfortable scene at a PC—either on the day of the attack or shortly thereafter—when Berger looked at Tenet and demanded, Why the hell haven't we done something about this? Why do we have to put up with this? Tenet walked out of the PC. Clarke had never seen something like this before—the national security adviser yelling at the DCI, and the DCI walking out of the White House. (U)

This confrontation probably led to Ben Bonk's paper [Commission note: the "blue-sky" memo] paper and to the Shelton options, Clarke said. ~~(C)~~

In 2000, Clarke worked up a second pol-mil plan on al-Qa'ida—an updated version of his earlier Delenda plan. ~~(C)~~

Al-Qa'ida in America

Virtually no evidence was presented to the CSG of an al-Qa'ida presence in America, Clarke said, with the exception of the Millennium period. They talked about it a lot, but there was a real paucity of reporting on this. The CSG repeatedly tasked the FBI, via Dale Watson, to find terrorist sleeper cells; Clarke assumed such cells were here already. FBI representatives to the CSG would concur with that assessment. ~~(LES)~~

Terrorist Financing

They tried about three times in the CSG and PC to go up the mountain of terrorist financing (TF), Clarke said. Berger frequently asked Tenet about TF in their weekly meetings. They had no evidence that UBL got money from the bin Ladin family, so they tried to find out what resources UBL actually had.

~~(C)~~

The few CIA people who were capable of doing fund analysis weren't in CTC. They were, however, good at looking at drug money and dictator money. CTC leaders never really called upon what limited ability the agency had. Clarke was asked why he was bothering with wasting time on going after the money; bombs or an operation like the 1998 attacks were cheap. Moreover, the CIA didn't know how to do TF work. [AA—this OK?] They [who--CIA??] were given authority 25X1 ~~(TS)~~

The NSC asked CIA and JCS for options to destroy an 25X1
25X1 involved with UBL. Treasury Secretary Rubin took a careful line,
25X1

~~(TS)~~ 25X1

The USG's interest in TF went back to 1995, when CIA was calling UBL a terrorist financier. They heard of UBL using the 25X1 and Islamic NGOs in the Balkans for TF purposes but could never quantify this. They suspected that wealthy Arabs in the Gulf were donating to UBL's organization, but the USG never got these donors' names—or, indeed, worked out whether the donors knew they were donating to al-Qa'ida or thought they were just giving to a Muslim charity. ~~(TS)~~

Shortly after the August 1998 bombings, the CIA told the CSG that the Saudis were holding al-Tayyib, whom CIA said was al-Qa'ida's chief financial officer. Clarke was eager to get access to al-Tayyib and wrote that if we did not, one of the four pillars of the USG's post-East Africa CT strategy would collapse. But Saudi cooperation left much to be desired. We gave the Saudis information, and they said they were acting on it. Eventually, we got the impression the Saudis were doing nothing, Clarke said. We gave them phone numbers and noms de guerre for al-Qa'ida suspects, and the Saudis would say that the numbers didn't exist and that they couldn't find or identify the operative. The Saudis "gave us lip service" by way of cooperation, Clarke said. In the end, the USG never got to question al-Tayyib. ~~(C)~~

Thinking the Worst: WMD Issues

If you read all 25X1 about WMD, Clarke said, you'd believe that al-Qa'ida had a lot of doomsday weapons and were ready to use them. CIA's reaction, however, stood in marked contrast; the agency was not at battle stations over the stream of scary intel. (S)

The CIA never gave actionable intel about UBL's WMD programs, Clarke said—with a very few exceptions, such as 25X1 CW experiments at Derunta. 25X1 Derunta; this person saw nothing and took a soil sample, which came back negative. It wasn't clear what buildings at Derunta were doing. They got reports of a Soviet-era uranium mine near Herat that became the subject of a May 1999 CSG task force, but they never found the mine or confirmed its existence. A reported ammonia plant turned out to make fertilizer. They got reports of a nuclear lab at Tora Bora and were then told by the IC that there were five or six places by that name in Afghanistan. They finally settled on the now-famous Tora Bora canyon 25X1 but saw only the entranceways to caves. (TS)—What was left, Clarke said, was 25X1 and his high-school chemical lab at Derunta. UBL was clearly interested in nuclear weapons, and a few 25X1 scientists may have done some high-school physics drawings. But US intel provided little specificity about UBL's WMD programs, beyond the alarming reporting. (TS)—

Boy, we tried to drill down on this, Clarke sighed. Frustrated by the IC's failure to give answers about UBL and WMD, he convened the March 2001 Westfields conference, bringing together IC representatives to split into one team that would red-team how al-Qa'ida would hide WMD and another team to work out how the USG would try to find those weapons. Westfields showed that it was a hell of a lot easier to develop something and hide it than to spot something that al-Qa'ida was trying to hide—a “blinding flash of the obvious,” as Clarke put it. (S)

Al-Qa'ida could either develop WMD or buy it, Clarke said. UBL's network was months, they hoped, away from developing WMD but always a day away from buying it. They received lots of reports of attempted WMD sales to al-Qa'ida; this was noise, not hard evidence, although the USG did receive some evidence that al-Qa'ida had been scammed in some of its purchase attempts.

(S)

There was one or one-and-a-half staffers at CTC working full-time on WMD issues, Clarke said, including one very good young analyst. NIMA also had a good analyst on the problem. In total, there were about four people in the USG working full-time on al-Qa'ida's WMD ambitions, including Lisa Gordon-Hagerty from Clarke's own staff. (TS)—

They knew that Libya and Iran were both in the nuclear market. That helped spur a pretty large USG effort to monitor scientists in the former Soviet Union. (TS)

Clarke remembered working in the George H.W. Bush administration—with then-Defense Secretary Cheney, among others—on Iraqi WMD issues. After Desert Storm, UNSCOM (the UN weapons inspectors) found what Clarke called “Los Alamos”—a huge Iraqi nuclear facility, some 50 square miles, unscathed after the war. Iraq may have been 9-15 months from nuclear detonation. The CIA missed this completely, Clarke said. This memory of the intelligence community’s failure drove him on al-Qa’ida’s WMD programs. “I firmly believed that they [the IC] could miss it,” Clarke said. Gordon-Hagerty, Clarke’s nuclear expert, agreed; neither of them would have been surprised to come into the office on any given morning and hear that al-Qa’ida had a nuke—and that the IC had missed it. ~~(TS)~~

The Transition

[Commission note: At this point, Zelikow left the room; the lead questioner for this section was General Counsel Dan Marcus.]

Clarke said he did four substantive briefings on al-Qa’ida during the Clinton-Bush transition, for Vice President-elect Cheney, National Security Advisor-designate Rice, Deputy National Security Advisor-designate Hadley, and Secretary of State-designate Powell. The new secretary of state asked all of the CSG representatives to brief him together as one committee. The Rice and Hadley briefings took about an hour. (U)

Clarke gave the same briefing all four times, described al-Qa’ida as both a network of organizations with different names and a core organization called al-Qa’ida. He said that CIA had estimated that al-Qa’ida had trained 25X1 25X1 jihadis in its camps over about ten years, some of whom now belonged to sleeper cells 25X1. Clarke also laid out the group’s ideological and philosophical goals. He walked the new policymakers through the Dec. 2000 pol-mil plan he had prepared as an update to his September 1998 Pol-Mil Plan Delenda and explained the state of play on policy. Clarke may also have shown video footage from the 2000 Predator flights at a few of the briefings. He also politely outlined a critique of CT failings. ~~(G)~~

Clarke discussed the Cole in the briefings; he said that the USG thought al-Qa’ida was the perpetrator and said the FBI’s investigation was ongoing. Clarke’s deputy, Roger Cressey, added that deciding on retaliation for the Cole was an open issue. Clarke thinks Cressey told Hadley that the Cole was still an open issue. (U)

One line in the briefing mentioned that al-Qa’ida had sleeper cells inside the United States. Cheney and Powell asked how we knew this; Clarke replied that it stood to reason. (U)

After his briefing, Vice President-elect Cheney—who Clarke said was very much in “listen mode”—asked for an additional CT briefing from the CIA. Rice’s reaction was that all of this was new to her, Clarke said. (U)

The briefing led to a discussion with Rice, who noted that the NSC structure looked much as it has when she left government in 1992 with the exception of Clarke's directorate—an odd animal dealing with non-NSC matters. She raised the concern that Clarke's shop sounded operational. Clarke said that he'd never found out where it says the NSC cannot be operational or, indeed, what "operational" means; there was nowhere else in the USG to do this type of work. Rice asked Clarke to find a location outside of the NSC for domestic preparedness for terrorism and such other homeland-defense issues as critical-infrastructure protection, cybersecurity, and continuity of government. She saw the NSC as a foreign policy coordination organization, not a place for domestic issues. Rice asked Clarke for options on reorganization to meet these guidelines. Rice wanted a smaller NSC. TNT had 12 officials, Clarke said; other directorates had three. Rice also wanted a less operational NSC, like Brent Scowcroft's. ~~(C)~~

Berger had a meeting with Rice on CT issues, but Clarke thinks that was not this particular meeting, which Clarke thinks was held in his own office. Clarke wasn't present for Berger's comment to Rice that the new administration would be surprised by how much more time it would spend on CT, but Rice did repeat Berger's remark back to Clarke. Rice seemed to find Berger's "level of excitement" about CT surprising, Clarke said. (U)

At the briefing for Hadley, Clarke knew that Hadley would become Rice's deputy. Hadley's impression was that the CSG skipped the DC and reported straight to the principals. Hadley said that the new administration's PC wanted the DC to vet the issues first. He added that all of Clarke's staff were career people, so the new administration wanted to keep all of them on for an indefinite period. Rice had already said that she was keeping Clarke on staff; Hadley said they were unsure whether they'd retain the title of national coordinator. (U)

Clarke pushed back with Hadley on organization, including the decision to report up through the DC. To Clarke, the breakthrough of the 1998 reorganization was making the newly created national coordinator position a member of the PC on CT issues. In the Clinton administration, Clarke had attended dozens of PCs, at his own choice, on regional crises with CT implications; he could decide whether a topic had security implications that made it important for him to attend. Now he was being shut out. The DC will never decide these issues, Clarke warned; they were either too sensitive or too urgent. Hadley said that obviously, if an issue went to the PC, Clarke could come to the meeting—but sitting by the wall as staff, not at the table. Clarke would also attend DC meetings as a staff resource, not a de facto deputy. We created the fiction of a terrorism czar who could command only influence, Clarke said, and now he was losing even that. (U)

Clarke fought to retain the 1998 structure. He considered Rice's distinction between foreign and domestic to be artificial. The National Security Act of 1947 called for the NSC to look at domestic security, too, not just to coordinate foreign policy. (U)

Ultimately, Clarke did attend DCs and PCs in the Bush administration but only as a staff resource, he said. Rice took the same position as Hadley on this. Zelikow, who was helping Hadley run the NSC transition, was at both meetings where this issue was discussed, Clarke recalled. Clarke also confirmed Cressey's account of saying, "There goes our ability to get quick decisions." Deputies rarely thought they had much policymaking authority. (U)

The job offer that the new team made to Clarke was along the lines of, Why don't you hang around, let's get to know each other, and we'll see if this works. That was fine by Clarke, who said he'd heard something similar from the incoming Clinton-Gore team eight years ago. (U)

Rice and Hadley took office "somewhat preserved in amber," Clarke said. They had held distinctly Cold War jobs during their previous government stints; in a post-Cold War world, you now had two specialists on the Soviet military running the NSC. At the daily meetings of the NSC senior directors, they were discussing issues from eight years ago, like the ABM Treaty. (U)

Clarke offered his first policy recommendations in a January 25, 2001 memo that urgently called for a PC on al-Qa'ida. (U)

Clarke was told that TNT would probably be restructured over summer 2001 to spin off the homeland security issues; the detailees on TNT's staff handling those issues would either go off to any new structure built to handle these areas or return to their home agencies. The spin-off wound up being delayed until fall 2001. (U)

Rice and Hadley made it clear to Clarke that if there was a terrorist threat that required their attention, he could see them no matter what else was going on, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Their assistants were to put Clarke's calls through to Rice or Hadley if Clarke insisted. This arrangement was retained from the Clinton period. (U)

Targeting the network rather than just UBL himself was not a new idea, Clarke said. The PC agreed to that in August 1998, though he ruefully added that the principals, of course, then went on TV and talked only about UBL. The Bush administration took this idea—target the network, not just the man—on board as well, Clarke said. He saw the new administration as an opportunity to decide on some issues left over from the fall of 2000 where the staff work was already done: aid to the NA, aid to the Uzbeks, and reflying Predator. ~~(TS 25X1)~~

The Bush Administration and the Cole

Clarke got the impression early on that the Bush administration felt that the Cole was not their problem. He doesn't know if it was ever said like that, but the impression conveyed was: the Cole was Clinton's problem, he should've retaliated, he didn't, and it's not our problem. (U)

Clarke argued that the USG *never* needed a specific provocation to hit al-Qa'ida. UBI had declared war on America; Clarke wanted systematic strikes, not tit-for-tat retaliation. So he was pushing military strikes on Afghanistan in general, not necessarily a reprisal for the Cole. *[Commission note: This may be too neat; NSC documents show Clarke pointedly putting responses to the Cole forward as an issue for decision for the new team.]* ~~(TS)~~

Clarke doesn't remember whether the late January 2001 PDB item on responsibility for the Cole moved things along. ~~(S)~~

The Early Months of the Bush Administration

Hadley said he favored holding DCs before PCs to educate the deputies and reach consensus. They then had to wait until all the deputies were confirmed. (U)

Clarke wanted as large an aid program to the NA as possible; in early 2001, it totaled just a few hundred thousand dollars. True, the NA probably ran drugs and was guilty of atrocities during the civil war, but over the near term, it was the only game in town. They also discussed training ^{25X1}

^{25X1} operations, either to help the NA or to hit al-Qa'ida. They were also looking for people in the south to break with the Taliban. ~~(TS)~~ ^{25X1}

Invasion was not on the table. Bombing was discussed, but it was not really considered seriously, Clarke said. On the use of force, it was the same discussion as the Clinton administration had had in October/November 2000; they weren't breaking new ground. ~~(TS)~~

As he had before, Clarke argued for a constant campaign of strikes on Afghanistan. If the USG suffered another attack from al-Qa'ida in February 2001, Clarke said, we'd have used it to bring authorization for a constant military campaign to the PC and President Bush. That ongoing series of strikes would seek to end the Afghan sanctuary not by invading it but by bombing it whenever the hell the USG felt like it, Clarke said. If we knew a building belonged to al-Qa'ida, we'd blow it up. We'd bomb every week, as we did in Iraq. Clarke suggested this in both administrations. ~~(TS)~~

For the first three or four months of the administration, the al-Qa'ida issue was just not addressed, Clarke said. Then they held a DC, whereupon India-Pakistan policy was rolled into the mix. The DC decided that al-Qa'ida policy

shouldn't move ahead in isolation from USG policy on India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. It took May and June to get through that. (U)

In private, Clarke recommended against this course, including three or four discussions with Hadley. The al-Qa'ida policy was done, while the South Asia policy people hadn't even started yet. Moreover, the range of options on South Asia wouldn't affect what's done on al-Qa'ida. We could stipulate that the Pakistanis had created the Taliban and would be unhappy if we moved against it. Clarke told Hadley there was no need for a parallel exercise reviewing South Asia policy when we could already tell where we'll come out. Pakistan would have to live with it if the USG gave major aid for Afghan rebels to go after al-Qa'ida; the Pakistanis would be mad, but they'd deal with it. Clarke couldn't imagine anyone would say we shouldn't go whole-hog against al-Qa'ida because it would upset the Pakistanis. (U)

Clarke asked permission from Hadley and Rice to brief President Bush on CT, cybersecurity, and domestic preparedness. He did wind up briefing the president on cyber issues; in May or June 2001, Clarke was told that he would brief the president on CT after the PC had decided on CT issues. (U)

Tenet shaped the PDBs so that al-Qa'ida was often discussed with the president. At some point—around June 2001, Clarke thinks—President Bush told Rice something like, Let's stop swatting flies and come up with an overall strategy to go after al-Qa'ida. Rice called Clarke to report this exchange, and he thought, Good, George's briefings are getting through. Clarke, whose staff had already drafted an NSPD, told Rice that we already *have* an overall strategy, "and it's sitting here waiting for you." Rice said she'd ask Hadley to move the deputies along. ~~(C)~~

Clarke wrote the NSPD as a standard part of a policy review; producing such a document was standard operating procedure. He doesn't recall Rice or Hadley specifically tasking him to produce the NSPD; it's just what you do. (U)

Clarke doesn't recall seeing Vice President Cheney after the transition briefing. (U)

The military did not additional planning beyond Operation Infinite Resolve, Clarke said. ~~(S)~~

There was no discussion of a presidential speech on CT. (U)

Al-Qa'ida in America?

Clarke also asserted that al-Qa'ida posed a domestic threat, but he had no proof except for the Millennium plot. The FBI didn't know of any sleeper cells, either. Rather, this view came from the 1993 WTC attack, the landmarks plot, and the Millennium. The FBI's CSG representative, Dale Watson, had

also come to conclude that al-Qa'ida was mounting a domestic threat; after the Millennium, Watson said, "The scales have fallen from my eyes." (U)

Watson was a true believer, but there were few like him at the FBI. We discussed CT with Freeh, Clarke said. He and Lisa Gordon-Hagerty also met Attorney General Ashcroft in February 2001 to provide a get-to-know-each-other briefing on what TNT did. Clarke also told Ashcroft about FBI's CT shortcomings; Ashcroft was in listening mode. (U)

The Cost of Doing Business?

Coming to Terms with the UBL Threat

Clarke's impression was that some senior Bush administration officials did not have terrorism on their agenda—just as the whole Clinton administration hadn't had terrorism on its agenda when it took office. Clarke heard that they saw terrorism as a nuisance and felt that he and his allies were overreacting. So Clarke pushed for a PC to get the administration to see that al-Qa'ida represented a different kind of terrorism. If one saw al-Qa'ida as just a nuisance, just the cost of doing business, one set of responses flowed from that; if al-Qa'ida was not just an ankle-biter, if it was a big deal, that changed the whole policy approach. Clarke wanted a consensus about the level of the problem first, lest they get wrong tactical decisions. (U)

Clarke said he didn't get a consensus that al-Qa'ida was a first-order threat at the September 4, 2001 PC. Rice didn't follow the roadmap that Clarke had prepared for her to run the meeting. Trusted friends of Clarke told him that the view of al-Qa'ida as the cost of doing business was the view of much of the new administration. (U)

It wasn't Clarke's, but he said he understood that his position was a "hard sell." More Americans had been killed in Beirut or on Pan Am 103 without any US retaliation, and yet Clarke was running around with his hair on fire about a group named al-Qa'ida that nobody had ever heard of and that had killed about 30-40 Americans. Clarke was warning that al-Qa'ida had sleeper cells inside America that were likely to attack us, but he couldn't prove it. They had a case against the Holy Land Foundation, but Clarke didn't know of any cells here. (U)

Clarke suspects that both CIA and DOD concluded that he had less influence in the Bush administration than he'd had under Clinton and Berger. Clearly, the NSC was not going to deal with CT issues until the fall of 2001. (U)

Covert Action Issues

They had all the authorities they needed, Clarke said. Still, Hadley wanted to consolidate the existing five Clinton-era MONs into one. Clarke urged Hadley not to waste time doing this. Clarke remembers a discussion about consolidating the MONs, as well as a discussion by the lawyers' subgroup. Hadley or Rice gave the lawyers' group authority to work on the CIA on this.

Clarke doesn't recall that discussion mentioning expanding the authorities. The new version didn't come out of the lawyers' group until September.

(TS 25X1)

Clarke asked for the draft March 2001 finding on CA in Afghanistan in order to implement the policy included in his draft NSPD paper for aid to the NA and Uzbekistan. But CIA, as it has for decades, wanted a policy set before new authorities were drawn up. (TS 25X1)

In March, Clarke, Hadley, and Rice were all asking for changes in the authorities—both a new MON for clean-up purposes and a new finding and MON for aid to the NA. (TS 25X1)

No decision was taken to undo things from the Clinton period, Clarke said. Clarke asked Hadley about the current five MONs; Clarke's [AA—that right?] impression was that CIA was not using them, which meant that CIA had essentially stopped a part of the past CT policy. CIA was reluctant to act upon the last administration's MONs. (TS 25X1)

The CIA was still paying the tribals, although they hadn't done anything for years but take our money. In the real world, nobody was doing anything on the CA side. (TS 25X1)

One of Clarke's emails suggests that he tried to find out how President Bush reacted to being shown Predator video by Tenet at Camp David in May 2001; Clarke said he never heard about President Bush's reaction, if any. But he thought it was entirely plausible that the president saw the video; Tenet was showing that Predator footage to everyone else in town. (TS 25X1)

Tenet and I had "a little conspiracy" to influence the administration by putting the al-Qa'ida problem before Rice and the president as often as possible, Clarke said. The discussion at Rice and Tenet's May 29, 2001 weekly was part of this. That meeting referred to Abu Zubaydah to press the CIA to find this important al-Qa'ida leader 25X1 starting in fall 2000, Berger and Clarke had been pushing the CIA to get him, thus far without success. 25X1 which Clarke took as an indication of the CIA's inability to operate 25X1. In July, they had the same type of let's-get-something-done meeting again. Predator would not have been discussed with the larger group who attended the Rice-Tenet weeklies but in a smaller group clustered after the meeting. (TS 25X1)

The CIA and Armed Predator

The DO undoubtedly slowed the deployment of armed Predator, Clarke said. The DO raised technical problems, saying they felt that the Hellfire was the wrong missile to mount on the drones. Those concerns vanished after 9/11,

Clarke noted, and a Hellfire missile fired from an armed Predator killed Muhammad Atef weeks later. If we'd have had the DDO behind the Predator program, the bird would have flown earlier—both in armed and recon versions. But the CIA got the message that the boss didn't want the Predator; first the CIA said that recon flights would scare al-Qa'ida to move, then it said that Predator was armed with the wrong missile, then they won't fly Predator. The CIA raised a constantly changing series of objections. ~~(TS)~~ 25X1

Clarke talked with Rice (from about May to July 2001) and Tenet (from about February to September) about Predator. Tenet said the problem was with the DO; Rice said they'd get to it at the overall PC. The Predator wrangling left hard feelings on Clarke's part. Let's say we flew armed Predator in June and killed UBL with it, Clarke said. When the World Trade Center was destroyed in September, my friends in CIA would blame me and say, That damn cowboy killed UBL, and here's the revenge. ~~(TS)~~ 25X1

The Summer of Threat

Clarke noted one key difference between the summer 2001 threat spike and the Millennium alert: there had been no drum beating in November 1999. The USG didn't find a spike in COMINT in December 1999; they found a cell in Jordan with tons of explosives, which triggered the alert. In the Millennium, they knew the targets the terrorists wanted to hit, had suspects in custody, interdicted arms, and so on. In June and July 2001, by contrast, the USG had only a nonspecific threat, mostly in the form of intercepted communications among people thought to be al-Qa'ida operatives saying in a form of semi-code that something big was coming. Moreover, CIA thought that any attack would probably target ~~25X1~~. ~~(S)~~

Clarke was also worried about an attack inside America, as well as a possible strike on US Navy targets in Bahrain. They moved some of the Fifth Fleet out of harbor when the Bahrainis arrested two Saudis with al-Qa'ida ties. CIA officials went to Bahrain to interrogate the suspects. ~~(S)~~

The USG also worried about attacks on the Genoa G-8 summit or on Fourth of July celebrations. But both events passed without incident. On July 5, the CSG met again to call on the core CT agencies to stay alert. In parallel, they held another meeting with INS, Customs, FAA, USSS, and the Federal Protection Service. These agencies were told that the USG still thought it would be attacked by al-Qa'ida; the CIA thought the attacks would occur abroad, but the FBI could not rule out attacks inside America, so these agencies should act like it. The agencies went on alert and issued warnings: DOD went to Threatcon Charlie, FBI issued MLAT's to police departments, and FAA sent out two messages to the airlines. INS was asked to look for suspicious names. Local police departments were told to behave as if the attack could happen at home, even though CIA said the targets would probably be ~~25X1~~.

~~25X1~~ (C)

FBI and CIA told the homeland defense agencies what to look out for, even though they didn't know exactly what to look for. "We're also sensitive to not sending a 'be on the lookout for Arabs' message," Clarke added. FBI and CIA did tell the homeland agencies that the threat was from al-Qa'ida. But without knowing when or where the attacks might come, "warning fatigue sets in," Clarke said. Our challenge was keeping the agencies alert. (U)

CIA and FBI never warned the CSG about hijackings or a threat to commercial airplanes. The Zacarias Moussaoui case also never came to Clarke's attention, even though Clarke was telling all the agencies that he wanted to know anything unusual. The CSG was really on tiptoes in summer 2001, so hearing of Moussaoui in this context probably would have had an effect, Clarke said; he added that hearing about Moussaoui probably would not have had the same effect in a quiet period. (U)

FBI knew that two al-Qa'ida operatives had entered the US and then been lost, and it also knew that Moussaoui was interested in learning how to fly jets. If you put one and one together, Clarke said, the logical conclusion is better airline security. Clarke guesses that, if he'd known these two threads, he might have asked to augment the federal air marshal program and put armed marshals on planes. Another logical conclusion would have been to go on the nightly news with the pictures of Midhar and Hazmi. (U)

The Policy Review Redux

Meanwhile, Clarke was warning Hadley that if we didn't help the Northern Alliance soon, there wouldn't be a Northern Alliance. CA aid had a lag time of several months, and the NA was losing ground; while its losses weren't steady, the overall pattern was bad. ~~(C)~~

Clarke asked Rice and Hadley to speed up the DC and PC process. Clarke tried for a PC in August, but the principals were out of town. Clarke credited Hadley with getting them the September 4 date—the first time all the principals were back in town. (U)

Separately, they would do a joint OMB-CIA push to fund covert actions chosen by the PC. That would have meant an appropriation from the Hill, and nobody knew what would happen there—or when. In the best-case scenario, Clarke said, money might start flowing to Masood in November 2001. ~~(S)~~

The September 4, 2001 PC: Clarke's Frustrations

At the first Bush administration PC on terrorism, Clarke wanted the NSPD approved; he recalls some discussion about where its goal of trying to "eliminate" al-Qa'ida was too ambitious. Clarke wanted aid to Masood, Uzbekistan, and Afghans in the south; they got that in principle, with a

separate track to work out the money. Clarke also wanted the PC to approve the armed Predator program; Clarke said the PC made no decision on either the armed or recon Predator. The issue was kicked down the road, he said. Neither CIA nor DOD would fly the armed bird. Clarke's impression was that the issues would not be resolved in time for Predator to fly in 2001. ~~(TS)~~ 25X1

Asked for his feelings about the PC, Clarke said, "How glad I was quitting." As he left the meeting, he was very happy he was getting out. He planned to leave the CT job on October 1 to take over the new cybersecurity portfolio. Clarke said he'd intended to leave by July, and he thinks he probably asked to do so in writing. He was frustrated that it took too long to get decisions made and that he seemed not to have the credibility with the Bush team to do his job. The president and Rice didn't run as if the sky was falling when the national coordinator for CT said that it was. They weren't behaving the way that was needed, Clarke said. (U)

When Rice and Hadley asked Clarke for a name to take on the cybersecurity assignment, Clarke named himself. They asked why he wanted to move. Clarke said he felt no need for a rancorous conversation and limited himself to saying that he was tired and becoming obsessed after years working on terrorism. He suggested having Gen. Canavan take over running the CSG, and that suggestion was approved. (U)

Clarke said he felt that his September 4 "personal note" to Rice—arguing that the underlying question of the PC was whether the USG was serious about al-Qa'ida or not, excoriating DOD and the DO for foot-dragging, warning that the NSPD would be a hollow shell without funding, and urging policymakers to imagine asking what they'd wish they'd done earlier on the day when the CSG process failed to prevent an attack and hundreds of Americans lay dead at home and abroad—was very similar to his January 25 memo outlining steps he wanted taken on al-Qa'ida. He was just writing what the guy in his job should. He discussed the note with Rice, but he doesn't remember specifics about that conversation. (U)

Eve of Destruction: September 10, 2001

Clarke was also unimpressed by the results of the September 10 DC. *[Commission note: the DC meeting approved a phased plan on the Taliban: first, seeking a deal with the Taliban while building US capacity to pressure them; second, increasing pressure on the Taliban to end Mullah Omar's backing of terrorism; and third, if these steps don't work, trying to oust the Taliban's leadership by a coup against Mullah Omar or backing opposition groups.]* We'd already spent the past three years on phases one and two, Clarke argued; he wanted to go right to regime change. Clarke hoped to buy off some Pashtuns from the south under the terms of the finding he'd pushed for in March; if the USG could buy off some tribal leaders from the Pashtun south who had aligned themselves with the Taliban out of a desire for power rather than deep-seated religious motivations, you might have assets who could be used in a coup. ~~(S)~~

Clarke doesn't remember hearing anything about Hadley's September 10 memo to Tenet directing him to draw up new CA authorities pursuant to the NSPD or any talk of expanded covert action authorities. ~~(TS)~~ 25X1

"Everything that's been done since September 11 could have been done before September 11," Clarke said. (U)

Recommendations

Clarke recommended getting rid of the Homeland Security Council and the homeland security adviser. As great as Gen. Gordon is, the structure is totally artificial. Having directorates in both the HSC and NSC is a big mistake. (U)

Instead, Clarke suggested creating a deputy national security adviser for both CT and homeland security. That person would have the rank of assistant to the president, some operational authority, a staff, funding, control over others' funding, regular meetings with the president, and the ability to walk in on the president. The new deputy should also have the authority to order people to do things such that a department head knows that the only court of appeal is to go to the president. The deputy wouldn't be able to pull triggers, but they would be able to reach into DOD for planning and budgeting military operations. (U)

You need someone in charge, and now, we don't have it. "Who's in charge today?" Clarke asked. It's not Gordon, and it's not Fran Townsend, the deputy national security adviser running OCT and the CSG. We have too many cooks and too little clarity about who's responsible for what; hence the frequent turnover in the homeland security adviser job. Gordon functions mainly as a White House shadow for Homeland Security Secretary Ridge. Under Clarke's system, you'd still have a process, but you'd have someone who'd been empowered to move things along once views had been aired. President Nixon didn't see most of the papers in which National Security Adviser Kissinger gave orders, but people listened to Kissinger's directives. (U)

Clarke felt they'd gotten pretty close to this model in the Clinton administration, but Clarke still hadn't been able to order anything. Still, they'd been moving in the right direction. Things had been significantly diluted in the Bush administration; you now have more players, not less. (U)

Clarke said more work is required to keep fixing the FBI, law enforcement, the IC, and homeland security structures. But we must also remember that this is about ideology. We won the battle of ideas in the Cold War. As a government, we're uncomfortable with talk of religion. But we were quite willing to set up Christian Democratic parties in Europe during the Cold War. We need to get over that barrier and start talking about religion—and about how al-Qa'ida is hijacking one of the great world faiths. (U)

To complicate matters, Clarke said, "the governments in the region suck." Still, the USG must find Muslim partners. (U)

The Evolution of al-Qa'ida

Clarke said he hadn't come to a conclusion about al-Qa'ida's possible link to the October 1993 "Black Hawk Down" attack on US troops in Somalia; he does know they claimed credit for it. (U)

Asked about possible UBL links to Hizballah, Clarke said that there was a lot of smoke and therefore probably some fire—probably more UBL-Hizballah cooperation than we were seeing. He'd asked what it would look like if Hizballah and al-Qa'ida were trying to cover up a relationship and concluded that it would look a lot like what we're seeing now. Despite the religious differences between the Sunni al-Qa'ida and the Shia Hizballah, Clarke thinks it's entirely credible to think there may be ties between the two groups. (U)

Clarke doesn't recall hearing 25X1 had a 1996 warrant for UBL. He does remember a discussion in which NSC said that it was the White House's call where UBL would go if he were caught; just because the US had indicted UBL didn't mean he had to come here. (S)

CIA has estimated that al-Qa'ida trained 25X1 jihadists over several years, but nobody knows how many people went through the Afghan camps. (S)

Some al-Qa'ida-linked groups are clearly UBL-created 25X1
25X1 EIJ was a preexistent group that later merged with al-Qa'ida. At one point, he did a chart of the network, including preexisting groups, UBL-created groups, and the core al-Qa'ida organization. (S)

There's no way to know what the impact of UBL's death would be, Clarke said. Ayman al-Zawahiri might well step in to replace him. Indeed, both Muhammad Atef (killed after 9/11 by a Predator in Afghanistan) and Zawahiri may be smarter than UBL, but Zawahiri hasn't been *packaged* yet. After all, UBL spent time in his 20s "whoring in Beirut," and they packaged him as a saintly Islamist leader. (U)

Nobody knows why there hasn't yet been another attack inside America since 9/11, Clarke said. Al-Qa'ida *seems* to lack action sleeper cells in the United States; after all, they had to bring the 9/11 attackers in from abroad. FBI Director Mueller's statement that the 19 hijackers had no support inside the United States was "ridiculous on its face," Clarke said. There's no doubt that al-Qa'ida had non-action cells in America to support the hijackers. (S)

It's possible that al-Qa'ida hasn't been able to get more action cells into the United States. The network may also be finding it harder to move money or communicate as freely as it could before 9/11, so it may take them longer to plan operations, surveil targets, and stage attacks. They now want to use people who have totally clean US records. Al-Qa'ida is meticulous and patient, and it has "rather good tradecraft." ~~(S)~~

Al-Qa'ida evidently didn't have another operation in the can after 9/11, Clarke said. Conventional wisdom holds that UBL didn't expect us to invade Afghanistan after 9/11, but Clarke wonders, what if al-Qa'ida *did* expect an invasion? What if the central al-Qa'ida organization knew it would have to hibernate after 9/11? What if it planned to become the seed pod that, in a new post-9/11 phase, would wage jihad through a "devolved, hydra-headed network"? (U)

Al-Qa'ida definitely thought that if it was going to attack America inside America, it had better be a spectacular. The network still has what Clarke called an "edifice complex"; they don't want their next attack to be less spectacular than 9/11. (U)

The bottom line is that nobody knows why there hasn't been another attack inside America. Since 9/11, we've "very, very badly damaged" the small core al-Qa'ida organization of 400 key members, but the wider al-Qa'ida network is now far stronger. Al-Qa'ida may simply see 9/11 as the start of Phase Two. ~~(S)~~

Day of 9/11 [cf. Alexis's notes]

TK