



The Military

Staff Statement No. 6

Members of the Commission, with your help your staff has developed initial findings to present to the public on the use of America's armed forces in countering terrorism before the 9/11 attacks. These findings may help frame some of the issues for this hearing and inform the development of your judgments and recommendations.

This report reflects the results of our work so far. We remain ready to revise our understanding of these topics as our investigation progresses. This staff statement represents the collective effort of a number of members of our staff. Bonnie Jenkins, Michael Hurley, Alexis Albion, Ernest May, and Steve Dunne did much of the investigative work reflected in this statement.

The Department of Defense (DOD) and Central Intelligence Agency have cooperated fully in making available both the documents and interviews that we have needed for our work on this topic.

The Role of the Military in Counterterrorism Strategy

Beginning in the 1970s, the U.S. government asked the armed forces to develop a capability for combating terrorism. Though this was initially conceived narrowly for hostage rescue, the failure of the 1980 Iran hostage rescue mission demonstrated the need to build more robust forces. By the mid-1980s the U.S. government also began considering capabilities for offensive counterterrorism missions that would use military forces to attack terrorist organizations on their home ground. These were the years in which the organization now known as the Joint Special Operations Command was created. As the international terrorism danger subsided at the end of the 1980s, little additional effort seemed needed for an offensive counterterrorism capability. In George H.W. Bush's presidency and the early years of the Clinton administration, the DOD was a secondary player in counterterrorism efforts which focused on the apprehension and rendition of wanted suspects.

After the 1996 attack on an Air Force residential complex in Saudi Arabia, Khobar Towers, the Department of Defense and the military gave particular attention to defending against attack. In their lexicon, "anti-terrorism" means defensive force protection. "Counter-terrorism" refers to offensive operations. After Khobar Towers, anti-terrorism had the priority claim on attention and resources.

Under the directive on counterterrorism policy issued by President Clinton in May 1998, Presidential Decision Directive 62, there were ten program areas. The only one that highlighted a DOD role was the tenth, on the protection of Americans overseas. The directive stated that the Defense Department, through the unified regional commanders, was responsible for the protection of U.S. forces stationed abroad. The Joint Chiefs of Staff also established a special office dedicated to what DOD officials describe as a decades-old, high-priority mission to protect U.S. troops from unconventional attack.

At home, the military's role was specialized support to state and local authorities for dealing with the consequences of terrorist attack, and security support for special events, such as the Olympics. Defense Secretary William Cohen and his deputy, John Hamre, gave significant attention to the danger of an attack with unconventional weapons and took some initial, innovative steps to develop a domestic military capability to assist civil authorities in the event of such an attack.

Abroad, the role of the military was to provide support for law enforcement, such as military transport for terrorist renditions, or support for other agencies as they responded to a terrorist attack. The undersecretary of defense for policy at the time, Walter Slocombe, told us that it would have been extraordinary to assign the military a leading role in counterterrorism efforts abroad since military force was not the primary counterterrorism instrument.

Operation Infinite Reach

After the U.S. embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam were attacked on August 7, 1998, President Clinton directed his advisers to consider military options. The difficult relationship between evidence and action, mentioned earlier today, was soon clarified with extraordinary intelligence that fixed responsibility quickly and authoritatively on Usama Bin Ladin personally, as well as his organization.

Focused by intelligence suggesting that terrorist leaders, including Bin Ladin, would be meeting at a terrorist camp in Afghanistan, President Clinton organized a tightly compartmented planning effort to prepare a set of strikes, code-named "Operation Infinite Reach." He and his advisers agreed on a set of targets in Afghanistan. His advisers recommended that the U.S. government should strike whether or not there was firm evidence that the terrorist commanders were at these facilities. Secretary Cohen told us it was also important to send a signal that the United States was coming and was not going to tolerate terrorist activity against America.

More difficult was the question of whether to strike other al Qaeda targets in Sudan. Two possible targets were identified in Sudan, including a pharmaceutical plant at which, the President was told by his aides, they believed VX nerve gas was manufactured with Usama Bin Ladin's financial support. Indeed, even before the embassy bombings, NSC counterterrorism staff had been warning about this plant. Yet on August 11, the NSC staff's senior director for intelligence advised National Security Adviser Berger that the "bottom line" was that "we will need much better intelligence on this facility before we

seriously consider any options.” By the early morning hours of August 20, when the President made his decision, his policy advisers concluded that enough evidence had been gathered to justify the strike. The President approved their recommendation on that target, while choosing not to proceed with the strike on the other target in Sudan—a business believed to be owned by Bin Ladin. DCI Tenet and National Security Adviser Berger told us that, based on what they know today, they still believe they made the right recommendation and that the President made the right decision. We have encountered no dissenters among his top advisers.

This strike was launched on August 20. The missiles hit their intended targets, but neither Bin Ladin nor any other terrorist leaders were killed. The decision to destroy the plant in Sudan became controversial. Some at the time argued that the decisions were influenced by domestic political considerations, given the controversies raging at that time. The staff has found no evidence that domestic political considerations entered into the discussion or the decision-making process. All evidence we have found points to national security considerations as the sole basis for President Clinton’s decision.

The impact of the criticism lingered, however, as policymakers looked at proposals for new strikes. The controversy over the Sudan attack, in particular, shadowed future discussions about the quality of intelligence that would be needed about other targets.

Operation Infinite Resolve and Plan Delenda

Senior officials agree that a principal objective of Operation Infinite Reach was to kill Usama Bin Ladin, and that this objective obviously had not been attained. The initial strikes went beyond targeting Bin Ladin to damage other camps thought to be supporting his organization. These strikes were not envisioned as the end of the story. On August 20, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), General Hugh Shelton, issued a planning order for the preparation of follow-on strikes. This plan was later code-named Operation Infinite Resolve. The day after the strikes the President and his principal advisers apparently began considering follow-on military planning. A few days later the NSC staff’s national coordinator for counterterrorism, Richard Clarke, informed other senior officials that President Clinton was inclined to launch further strikes sooner rather than later.

On August 27 Undersecretary Slocombe advised Secretary Cohen that the available targets were not promising. There was, he said, also an issue of strategy, the need to think of the effort as a long-term campaign. The experience of last week, he wrote, “has only confirmed the importance of defining a clearly articulated rationale for military action” that was effective as well as justified.

Active consideration of follow-on strikes continued into September. In this context Clarke prepared a paper for a political-military plan he called “Delenda,” from the Latin “to destroy.” Its military component envisioned an ongoing campaign of regular, small strikes, occurring from time to time whenever target information was ripe, in order to underscore the message of a concerted, systematic, and determined effort to dismantle the

infrastructure of the Bin Ladin terrorist network. Clarke recognized that individual targets might not have much value. But, he wrote to Berger, we will never again be able to target a leadership conference of terrorists, and that should not be the standard.

Principals repeatedly considered Clarke's proposed strategy, but none of them agreed with it. Secretary Cohen told us that the camps were primitive, easily constructed facilities with "rope ladders." The question was whether it was worth using very expensive missiles to take out what General Shelton called "jungle gym" training camps. That would not have been seen as very effective. National Security Adviser Berger and others told us that more strikes, if they failed to kill Bin Ladin, could actually be counterproductive—increasing Bin Ladin's stature.

These issues need to be viewed, they said, in a wider context. The United States launched air attacks against Iraq at the end of 1998 and against Serbia in 1999, all to widespread criticism around the world. About a later proposal for strikes on targets in Afghanistan, Deputy National Security Adviser James Steinberg noted that it offered "little benefit, lots of blowback against [a] bomb-happy U.S."

In September 1998, while the follow-on strikes were still being debated among a small group of top advisers, the counterterrorism officials in the Office of the Secretary of Defense were also considering a strategy. Unaware of Clarke's plan, they developed an elaborate proposal for a "more aggressive counterterrorism posture." The paper urged Defense to "champion a national effort to take up the gauntlet that international terrorists have thrown at our feet." Although the terrorist threat had grown, the authors warned that "we have not fundamentally altered our philosophy or our approach." If there were new "horrific attacks," they wrote that then "we will have no choice nor, unfortunately, will we have a plan." They outlined an eight-part strategy "to be more proactive and aggressive." The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict, Allen Holmes, brought the paper to Undersecretary Slocombe's chief deputy, Jan Lodal. The paper did not go further. Its lead author recalls being told by Holmes that Lodal thought it was too aggressive. Holmes cannot recall what was said, and Lodal cannot remember the episode or the paper at all.

The President and his advisers remained ready to use military action against the terrorist threat. But the urgent interest in launching follow-on strikes had apparently passed by October. The focus shifted to an effort to find strikes that would clearly be effective, to find and target Bin Ladin himself.

Military Planning Continues

Though plans were not executed, the military continued to assess and update target lists regularly in case the military was asked to strike. Plans largely centered on cruise missile and manned aircraft strike options, and were updated and refined continuously through March 2001.

Several senior Clinton administration officials, including National Security Adviser Berger and the NSC staff's Clarke, told us that President Clinton was interested in additional military options, including the possible use of ground forces. As part of Operation Infinite Resolve, the military produced them.

In December 1998 General Shelton ordered planning for the use of Special Operations Forces to capture UBL network leaders and transport them away from Kandahar. A second order issued on the following day examined the possible interception of aircraft. Plans refined throughout 1999 added successive options within the Infinite Resolve plan, including the possible use of strike aircraft, as well as Special Operations Forces. The targets included not only terrorist training camps, but also many other targets associated with Bin Laden and the known infrastructure of his organization.

The relationship of the White House and the Pentagon was complex. As Lieutenant General Gregory Newbold, director of operations for the Joint Staff, put it, the military was often frustrated by civilian policymakers whose requests for military options were too simplistic. For their part, White House officials were often frustrated by what they saw as military unwillingness to tackle the counterterrorism problem.

General Shelton told us that he was aware of criticism that the Pentagon was too reluctant to engage the military against al Qaeda and UBL before 9/11. He said that, when he provided military advice to policymakers, he wanted to ensure they understood that military force is not "magic." He remarked that while the U.S. military is a great force, risks associated with using that force must be explained, though such cautions may be frustrating to those eager to conduct a military operation.

General Shelton said that "given sufficient actionable intelligence, the military can do the operation." But he explained that a tactical operation, if it did not go well, could turn out to be an international embarrassment for the United States. Shelton and many other military and civilian DOD officials we interviewed recalled their memories of episodes such as the failed hostage rescue in Iran in 1980, and the "Black Hawk Down" events in Somalia in 1993. General Shelton made clear, however, that upon direction from policymakers the military would proceed with an operation and carry out the order.

Secretary Cohen said the Pentagon was always ready to capture Bin Ladin if it could and to kill him if necessary. Cohen says he told other policymakers, "We can do this. It's high risk, but if you've got the information to tell us where he is, we will be prepared to recommend that we use force."

Another set of concerns came from the commander-in-chief of the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), General Anthony Zinni. Before 9/11 any military action in Afghanistan would be carried out by CENTCOM. The Special Operations Command did not have the lead; it provided forces that could be used in a CENTCOM-led operation. The views of the key field commander carried great weight. General Zinni told us he did not believe that some of the options his command was ordered to develop would be effective, particularly missile strikes. Zinni thought a better approach would have been a

broad strategy to build up local counterterrorism capabilities in neighboring countries, using military assistance to help countries like Uzbekistan. This strategy, he told us, was impeded by a lack of funds and limited interest in countries, like Uzbekistan, that had dictatorial governments.

As for the strike options, Zinni thought they would have little military effect and might threaten regional stability. Zinni told us that he advised the JCS chairman, General Shelton, about his reservations. Planning updates were generally not briefed to the policymakers. When they were briefed, the military carefully laid out the pros and cons of each option.

Military officers explained to us that sending Special Operations Forces into Afghanistan would have been complicated and risky. Such efforts would have required bases in the region; however, the basing options in the region were unappealing. Pro-Taliban elements of Pakistan's military might warn Bin Ladin or his associates of pending operations. The U.S. government had information that the former Pakistan Interservices Intelligence Directorate (ISID) head Hamid Gul, as a private citizen, contacted Taliban leaders in July 1999 and advised them that the United States was not planning to attack Afghanistan. He assured them that, as he had "last time," he would provide three or four hours of warning should there be another missile launch.

With nearby basing options limited, an alternative was to fly from ships in the Arabian Sea or from land bases in the Persian Gulf, as was later done after 9/11. Such operations would then have to be supported from long distances, overflying the airspace of nations that might not be supportive or aware of the U.S. efforts.

Finally, military leaders again raised the problem of "actionable intelligence," warning that they did not have information about where Bin Ladin would be by the time forces would be able to strike him. If they were in the region for a long period, perhaps clandestinely, the military might attempt to gather intelligence and wait for an opportunity. One special operations commander said his view of actionable intelligence was that if "you give us the action, we'll give you the intelligence." But this course would be risky, both in light of the difficulties already mentioned and the danger that U.S. operations might fail disastrously—as in the 1980 Iran rescue failure.

Cruise Missiles as the Default Option

Cruise missiles became the "default option" because it was the only option left on the table after the rejection of others. The Tomahawk's long range, lethality, and extreme accuracy made it the missile of choice. However, as a means to attack al Qaeda and UBL-linked targets pre-9/11, cruise missiles were problematic.

Tomahawk cruise missiles had to be launched after the vessels carrying them moved into position. Once these vessels were in position, there was still an interval as decision-makers authorized the strike, the missiles were prepared for firing, and they flew to their

targets. Officials worried that Bin Laden might move during these hours from the place of his last sighting, even if that information had been current.

Moreover, General Zinni told Commission staff that he had been deeply concerned that cruise missile strikes inside Afghanistan would kill numerous civilians. Zinni pointed out that most of the places where Bin Laden was likely to be found were populated areas, and a percentage of the missiles would also simply go awry. Zinni estimated that a cruise missile strike might kill up to 2,000 innocent Afghans. In discussing the potential repercussions of missile strikes in his region of military responsibility, he warned, "It was easy to take the shot from Washington and walk away from it. We had to live there."

No Actionable Intelligence

The paramount limitation cited by senior officials on every proposed use of military force was the lack of "actionable intelligence." By this, they meant precise intelligence on where Bin Laden would be, and how long he would be there.

National Security Adviser Berger said that there was never a circumstance where the policymakers thought they had good intelligence but declined to launch a missile at UBL-linked targets for fear of possible collateral damage. He told us the deciding factor was whether there was actionable intelligence. If the shot missed Bin Laden, the United States would look weak, and Bin Laden would look strong.

There were frequent reports about Bin Laden's whereabouts and activities. The daily reports regularly described where he was, what he was doing, and where he might be going. But usually, by the time these descriptions were landing on the desks of DCI Tenet or National Security Adviser Berger, Bin Laden had already moved. Nevertheless, on occasion, intelligence was deemed credible enough to warrant planning for possible strikes to kill Usama Bin Laden.

Kandahar, December 1998

The first instance was in December 1998, in Kandahar. There was intelligence that Bin Laden was staying at a particular location. Strikes were readied against this and plausible alternative locations. The principal advisers to the President agreed not to recommend a strike. Returning from one of their meetings, DCI Tenet told staff that the military, supported by everyone else in the room, had not wanted to launch a strike because no one had seen Bin Laden in a couple of hours. DCI Tenet told us that there were concerns about the veracity of the source and about the risk of collateral damage to a nearby mosque. A few weeks later, Clarke described the calculus as one that had weighed 50 percent confidence in the intelligence against collateral damage estimated at, perhaps, 300 casualties.

After this episode Pentagon planners intensified efforts to find a more precise alternative to cruise missiles, such as using precision strike aircraft. This option would greatly reduce the collateral damage. Not only would it have to operate at long ranges from

home bases and overcome significant logistical obstacles, but the aircraft might be shot down by the Taliban. At the time, Clarke complained that General Zinni was opposed to the forward deployment of these aircraft. General Zinni does not recall blocking such an option. The aircraft apparently were not deployed for this purpose.

The Desert Camp, February 1999

During the winter of 1998-99, intelligence reported that Bin Ladin frequently visited a camp in the desert adjacent to a larger hunting camp in Helmand province of Afghanistan, used by visitors from a Gulf state. Public sources have stated that these visitors were from the United Arab Emirates. At the beginning of February, Bin Ladin was reportedly located there, and apparently remained for more than a week. This was not in an urban area, so the risk of collateral damage was minimal. Intelligence provided a detailed description of the camps. National technical intelligence confirmed the description of the larger camp and showed the nearby presence of an official aircraft of the UAE. The CIA received reports that Bin Ladin regularly went from his adjacent camp to the larger camp where he visited with Emiratis. The location of this larger camp was confirmed by February 9, but the location of Bin Ladin's quarters could not be pinned down so precisely. Preparations were made for a possible strike at least against the larger camp, perhaps to target Bin Ladin during one of his visits. No strike was launched.

According to CIA officials, policymakers were concerned about the danger that a strike might kill an Emirati prince or other senior officials who might be with Bin Ladin or close by. The lead CIA official in the field felt the intelligence reporting in this case was very reliable; the UBL unit chief at the time agrees. The field official believes today that this was a lost opportunity to kill Bin Ladin before 9/11.

Clarke told us the strike was called off because the intelligence was dubious, and it seemed to him as if the CIA was presenting an option to attack America's best counterterrorism ally in the Gulf. Documentary evidence at the time shows that on February 10 Clarke detailed to Deputy National Security Adviser Donald Kerrick the intelligence placing UBL in the camp, informed him that DOD might be in position to fire the next morning, and added that General Shelton was looking at other options that might be ready the following week.

Clarke had just returned from a visit to the UAE, working on counterterrorism cooperation and following up on a May 1998 UAE agreement to buy F-16 aircraft from the United States. On February 10, Clarke reported that a top UAE official had vehemently denied that high-level UAE officials were in Afghanistan. Evidence subsequently confirmed that high-level UAE officials had been hunting there.

By February 12 Bin Ladin had apparently moved on and the immediate strike plans became moot. In March the entire camp complex was hurriedly disassembled. We are still examining several aspects of this episode.

Kandahar, May 1999

In this case sources reported on the whereabouts of Bin Ladin over the course of five nights. The reporting was very detailed. At the time CIA working-level officials were told that strikes were not ordered because the military was concerned about the precision of the source's reporting and the risk of collateral damage. Replying to a frustrated colleague in the field, the UBL unit chief wrote that "having a chance to get UBL three times in 36 hours and foregoing the chance each time has made me a bit angry. ...the DCI finds himself alone at the table, with the other princip[als] basically saying 'we'll go along with your decision Mr. Director,' and implicitly saying that the Agency will hang alone if the attack doesn't get Bin Ladin." These are working-level perspectives.

According to DCI Tenet the same circumstances prevented a strike in each of the cases described above: the intelligence was based on a single uncorroborated source, and there was a risk of collateral damage. In the first and third cases, the cruise missile option was rejected outright, and in the case of the second, never came to a clear decision point. According to National Security Adviser Berger, the cases were "really DCI Tenet's call." In his view, in none of the cases did policymakers have the reliable intelligence that was needed. In Berger's opinion, this did not reflect risk aversion or a lack of desire to act on DCI Tenet's part. The DCI was just as stoked up as he was, said Berger. Each of these times, Berger told us, "George would call and say, 'We just don't have it.'" There was a fourth episode involving a location in Ghazni, Afghanistan, in July 1999. We are still investigating the circumstances.

There were no occasions after July 1999 when cruise missiles were actively readied for a possible strike against Bin Ladin. The challenge of providing actionable intelligence could not be overcome before 9/11.

Millennium Plots

In late 1999, the military engaged in substantial preparations in anticipation of possible terrorist attacks around the Millennium. The Joint Chiefs of Staff developed a plan to react as rapidly as possible to an al Qaeda strike anywhere in the world. The Pentagon was also prepared to provide assistance within the United States to other federal agencies in response to an act or threatened act of terrorism.

In the summer of 2000, the Joint Chiefs of Staff refined its list of strikes and special operations possibilities to a set of thirteen options within the Operation Infinite Resolve plan. Planning by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and CENTCOM also focused primarily on the development of the Predator unmanned aerial vehicle for the purposes of intelligence collection and targeting of Bin Ladin and al Qaeda leaders. That story, involving the CIA and the military, will be treated in detail in tomorrow's staff statement.

The Attack on the *U.S.S. Cole*

On October 12, 2000, suicide bombers in an explosives-laden skiff rammed into a Navy destroyer, the *U.S.S. Cole*, in the port of Aden, Yemen, killing 17 U.S. sailors and almost sinking the vessel. In January 2000, jihadists had also tried to bomb the *U.S.S. The Sullivans* using identical tactics, but the plot failed when the skiff carrying the explosives sank under their weight—something unknown to the U.S. government until after the attack on the *Cole*. The FBI, the CIA, and the Yemeni government all launched investigations to determine who had attacked the *Cole*. DOD's role was primarily the provision of aircraft for the interagency emergency response team kept on standby for such occasions.

After the attack on the *U.S.S. Cole*, National Security Adviser Berger asked General Shelton for military plans to act quickly against Bin Ladin. General Shelton tasked General Tommy Franks, the new commander of CENTCOM, to look again at the options. According to Director for Operations Newbold, Shelton wanted to demonstrate that the military was imaginative and knowledgeable enough to move on an array of options, and to show the complexity of the operations. Shelton briefed Berger on the thirteen options. CENTCOM also developed a "Phased Campaign Concept" for wider-ranging strikes, including against the Taliban, and without a fixed endpoint. The new concept did not include contingency plans for an invasion of Afghanistan. The concept was briefed to Deputy National Security Adviser Kerrick and other officials in December 2000.

Neither the Clinton administration nor the Bush administration launched a military response for the *Cole* attack. Berger and other senior policymakers said that, while most counterterrorism officials quickly pointed the finger at al Qaeda, they never received the sort of definitive judgment from the CIA or the FBI that al Qaeda was responsible that they would need before launching military operations. Documents show that, in late 2000, the President's advisers received a cautious presentation of the evidence showing that individuals linked to al Qaeda had carried out or supported the attack, but that the evidence could not establish that Bin Ladin himself had ordered the attack. DOD prepared plans to strike al Qaeda camps and Taliban targets with cruise missiles in case policymakers decided to respond.

Essentially the same analysis of al Qaeda's responsibility for the attack on the *U.S.S. Cole* was delivered to the highest officials of the new administration five days after it took office. The same day, Clarke advised National Security Adviser Rice that the government "should take advantage of the policy that 'we will respond at a time, place and manner of our own choosing' and not be forced into knee-jerk responses." Deputy National Security Adviser Stephen Hadley told us that "tit-for-tat" military options were so inadequate that they might have emboldened al Qaeda. He said the Bush administration's response to the *Cole* would be a new, more aggressive strategy against al Qaeda.

Pentagon officials, including Vice Admiral Scott Fry and Undersecretary Slocombe, told us they cautioned that the military response options were limited. Bin Ladin continued to

be elusive. They were still skeptical that hitting inexpensive and rudimentary training camps with costly missiles would do much good. The new team at the Pentagon did not push for a response for the *Cole*, according to Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld and Paul Wolfowitz, his deputy. Wolfowitz told us that by the time the new administration was in place, the *Cole* incident was “stale.” The 1998 cruise missiles strikes showed UBL and al Qaeda that they had nothing to fear from a U.S. response, Wolfowitz said. For his part, Rumsfeld also thought too much time had passed. He worked on the force protection recommendations developed in the aftermath of the *U.S.S. Cole* attack, not response options.

The Early Months of the Bush Administration

The confirmation of the Pentagon’s new leadership was a lengthy process. Deputy Secretary of Defense Wolfowitz was not confirmed until March 2001, and Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Douglas Feith did not take office until July 2001. Secretary Cohen said he briefed Secretary-designate Rumsfeld on about 50 items during the transition, including Bin Ladin and programs related to domestic preparedness against terrorist attacks using weapons of mass destruction. Rumsfeld told us he did not recall what was said about Bin Ladin at that briefing. On February 8, General Shelton briefed Secretary Rumsfeld on the Operation Infinite Resolve plan, including the range of options and CENTCOM’s new phased campaign plan. These plans were periodically updated during the ensuing months.

Brian Sheridan—the outgoing Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict (SOLIC), the key counterterrorism policy office in DOD—never briefed Rumsfeld. Lower-level SOLIC officials in the Office of the Secretary of Defense told us that they thought the new team was focused on other issues and was not especially interested in their counterterrorism agenda. Undersecretary Feith told the Commission that when he arrived at the Pentagon in July 2001, Rumsfeld asked him to focus his attention on working with the Russians on agreements to dissolve the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty and preparing a new nuclear arms control pact. Traditionally, the primary DOD official responsible for counterterrorism policy had been the assistant secretary of defense for SOLIC. The outgoing assistant secretary left on January 20, 2001, and had not been replaced when the Pentagon was hit on September 11.

Secretary Rumsfeld said that transformation was a focus of the administration. He said he was interested in terrorism, arranging to meet regularly with DCI Tenet. But his time was consumed with getting new officials in place, preparing the Quadrennial Defense Review, the Defense Planning Guidance, and reviewing existing contingency plans. He did not recall any particular counterterrorism issue that engaged his attention before 9/11, other than the development of the Predator unmanned aircraft system for possible use against Bin Ladin. He said that DOD, before 9/11, was not organized or trained adequately to deal with asymmetric threats.

As recounted in the previous staff statement, the Bush administration’s NSC staff was drafting a new counterterrorism strategy in the spring and summer of 2001. National

Security Adviser Rice and Deputy National Security Adviser Hadley told us that they wanted more muscular options. In June 2001 Hadley circulated a draft presidential directive on policy toward al Qaeda. The draft came to include a section that called for development of a new set of contingency military plans against both al Qaeda and the Taliban regime. Hadley told us that he contacted Deputy Secretary Wolfowitz to advise him that the Pentagon would soon need to start preparing fresh plans in response to this forthcoming presidential direction.

The directive was approved at the Deputies level in July and apparently approved by top officials on September 4 for submission to the President. With this directive still awaiting the president's signature, Secretary Rumsfeld did not order the preparation of any new military plans against either al Qaeda or the Taliban before 9/11. Rumsfeld told us that immediately after 9/11, he did not see a contingency plan he wanted to implement. Deputy National Security Adviser Hadley and Deputy Secretary Wolfowitz also told us the military plans presented to the Bush administration immediately after 9/11 were unsatisfactory.

Roads Not Taken

Officials we interviewed flatly said that neither Congress nor the American public would have supported large-scale military operations in Afghanistan before the shock of 9/11—despite repeated attacks and plots, including the embassy bombings, the Millennium plots, concerns about al Qaeda to acquire WMD, the *U.S.S. Cole*, and the summer 2001 threat spike. Deputy Secretary Wolfowitz warned that it would have been impossible to get Congress to support sending 10,000 U.S. troops into Afghanistan to do what the Soviet Union failed to do in the 1980s. Vice Admiral Scott Fry, the former operations director for the JCS, noted that “a two-or-four division plan would require a footprint [troop level] and force that was larger than the political leadership was willing to accept.”

Special Operations Forces always saw counterterrorism as part of their mission and trained for counterterrorist operations. “The opportunities were missed because of an unwillingness to take risks and a lack of vision and understanding of the benefits when preparing the battle space ahead of time,” said Lieutenant General William Boykin, the current deputy undersecretary of defense for intelligence and a former founding member of Delta Force. Before 9/11, the U.S. Special Operations Command was a “supporting command,” not a “supported command.” That meant it supported General Zinni and CENTCOM, and did not independently prepare plans itself. General Pete Schoomaker, the chief of staff of the U.S. Army and former Commander of the U.S. Special Operations Command, said that if the Special Operations Command had been a supported command before 9/11, he would have had the al Qaeda mission rather than deferring to CENTCOM's lead. Schoomaker said he spoke to Secretary Cohen and General Shelton about this proposal. It was not adopted.

There were also activists in the most senior levels of the uniformed military, the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Noting the frustration of others in DOD and elsewhere grappling with the al Qaeda problem, General Newbold, the JCS operations director, prepared a

comprehensive plan designed to incorporate military, economic and political activities to influence and pressure the Taliban to expel UBL, and follow with massive strikes if necessary. Newbold said he briefed this plan at the end of 2000 to General Shelton and NSC counterterrorism coordinator Clarke. Much of it was beyond the scope of the Defense Department to implement. Like other options produced by the military before 9/11, this plan too was eventually given back to the Joint Chiefs with no direction for further action. The military continued to develop and refine this plan.

Conclusions

In summary, our key findings to date include the following:

- In response to the request of policymakers, the military prepared a wide array of options for striking Bin Ladin and his organization from May 1998 onward;
- When they briefed policymakers, the military presented both the pros and cons of those strike options, and briefed policymakers on the risks associated with them;
- Following the August 20, 1998 missile strikes, both senior military officials and policymakers placed great emphasis on actionable intelligence as the key factor in recommending or deciding to launch military action against Bin Ladin and his organization;
- Policymakers and military officials expressed frustration with the lack of actionable intelligence;
- Some officials inside the Pentagon, including those in the Special Forces and the counterterrorism policy office, expressed frustration with the lack of military action;
- The new Administration began to develop new policies toward al Qaeda in 2001, but there is no evidence of new work on military capabilities or plans against this enemy before September 11; and
- Both civilian and military officials of the Defense Department state flatly that neither Congress nor the American public would have supported large-scale military operations in Afghanistan before the shock of 9/11.