

# 2001 memo to Rice contradicts statements about Clinton, Pakistan

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A [memo received](#) by United States Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice shortly after becoming National Security Advisor in 2001 directly contradicts statements she made to reporters yesterday, RAW STORY has learned.

"We were not left a comprehensive strategy to fight al Qaeda," Rice told a reporter for the *New York Post* on Monday. "Big pieces were missing," Rice added, "like an approach to Pakistan that might work, because without Pakistan you weren't going to get Afghanistan."

Rice made the comments in response to claims made Sunday by former President Bill Clinton, who argued that his administration had done more than the current one to address the al Qaeda problem before the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. She stopped short of calling the former president a liar.

However, RAW STORY has found that just five days after President George W. Bush was sworn into office, a memo from counter-terrorism expert Richard A. Clarke to Rice included the 2000 document, "[Strategy for Eliminating the Threat from the Jihadist Networks of al-Qida: Status and Prospects.](#)" This document devotes over 2 of its 13 pages of material to specifically addressing strategies for securing Pakistan's cooperation in airstrikes against al Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan.

## The Pakistan obstacle

The strategy document includes "three levers" that the United States had started applying to Pakistan as far back as 1990. Sanctions, political and economic methods of persuasion are all offered as having been somewhat successful. Other portions of the passages relating to Pakistan – marked as "operational details" – have been redacted from the declassified memo at the CIA's request.

The document also explores broader strategic approaches, such as a "need to keep in mind that Pakistan has been most willing to cooperate with us on terrorism when its role is invisible or at least plausibly deniable to the powerful Islamist right wing."

But Clarke also made it clear that the Clinton Administration recognized the problem that Pakistan posed in mounting a more sweeping campaign against bin Laden: "Overt action against bin Laden, who is a hero especially in the Pushtun-ethnic border areas near Afghanistan," Clarke speculated in late 2000, "would be so unpopular as to

threaten Musharraf's government." The plan notes that, after the attack on the USS Cole, Pakistan had forbidden the United States from again violating its airspace to attack bin Laden in Afghanistan.

The memo sent by Clarke to Rice, to which the Clinton-era document was attached, also urges action on Pakistan relating to al Qaeda. "First [to be addressed,]" wrote Clarke in a list of pending issues relating to al Qaeda, is "what the administration says to the Taliban and Pakistan about ending al Qida sanctuary in Afghanistan. We are separately proposing early, strong messages on both."

### **A disputed history**

The documents have been a source of controversy before. Rice contended in a March 22, 2004 Washington Post piece that "no al Qaeda plan was turned over to the new administration."

Two days later, Clarke insisted to the 9/11 Commission that the plan had in fact been turned over. "There's a lot of debate about whether it's a plan or a strategy or a series of options, but all of the things we recommended back in January," he told the commission, "were done after September 11th."

The memo was declassified on April 7, 2004, one day before Rice herself testified before the 9/11 Commission. Excerpts from documents relating to the situation follow:

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Pages 11-13 of the Clinton-era document sent to Rice from Clarke, detailing Pakistan's role in the al Qaeda problem. The plan was referred to by Clarke, and later by Rice in public statements:

the al Qida threat. These policy decisions relate to attacking al Qida's center of gravity: sanctuary in Afghanistan under Taliban sponsorship.

-- Covert US assistance to the Northern Alliance to oppose the Taliban militarily. Such assistance could include funding, intelligence support, and [REDACTED] equipment. [REDACTED] proposed a twelve month program [REDACTED] that would allow Masood to stay in the fight with the Taliban and al-Qida as a credible, conventional threat;

-- Covert US assistance to Uzbekistan [REDACTED]

Operational detail, removed at the request of the CIA

--Continued Predator UAV operations, resuming in March.

--Overt US military action to destroy al Qida command/control and infrastructure and Taliban military and command assets.

#### Considerations with Pakistan

These decisions involve consideration of US policy toward Pakistan. Like almost all of Pakistan's foreign and security policy, their approach to the Taliban and to terrorism flows from [REDACTED] concerns [REDACTED] with seizing Kashmir and redressing its defeat by India in three wars. Support for the Taliban has run through three Pakistani governments – Bhutto, Sharif, and now Musharraf – and is predicated on the concept of "strategic depth," i.e. ensuring a friendly government in Kabul that will not pose a threat in the event of another war with India. The Pakistani military has consistently believed the Taliban was the best means of achieving that goal. Russian and Indian support for the Taliban's only remaining military opponent reinforces Pakistan's tendency to view Afghanistan through an Indo-Pakistani lens.

Pakistan's acquiescence in the Taliban's hosting of terrorist camps and bin Laden is a product of the nexus between Afghanistan and Pakistan's proxy war in Kashmir.

Operational detail, removed at the request of the CIA

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Support for bin Laden comes also from a small but dedicated cadre of Islamist leaders whose electoral influence in Pakistan is minimal but whose street power has intimidated successive governments into fostering Islamic causes. Bin Laden has benefited as he ostentatiously supports Islamic causes as far afield as Bosnia and Chechnya.

As we seek Pakistani cooperation, we need to keep in mind that Pakistan has been most willing to cooperate with us on terrorism when its role is invisible or at least plausibly deniable to the powerful Islamist right wing. Pakistan's rendition to the US of Ramzi Yousef and Mir Aimal Kansi and to Jordan last year of Khalil Deck were sharply criticized by the Islamic parties. Overt Pakistani support for U.S. action against bin Laden, who is a hero especially in the Pushtun-ethnic border areas near Afghanistan, would be so unpopular as to threaten Musharraf's government.

We do have levers with the Pakistanis, despite the deleterious effect of overlapping sanctions (Pressler, Glenn, military coup, MTCR) that we imposed beginning in 1990:

- The blunt instrument of UNSC sanctions – Pakistan wants to be seen as a responsible member of the international community and will attempt to comply, in whole or in part
- Increasing domestic opposition to [redacted] clandestine campaigns. The Afghan camps train Sunni extremists whose bloody warfare against Pakistan's Shi'a community ultimately threatens the nation's future. Similarly, the fundamentalism fed by the madrassas of Pakistan and by Taliban hard-liners is anathema to the moderate military and civilian leaders of Pakistan
- Economic leverage. As Musharraf implements the economic rescue policies he hopes will pull Pakistan out of its steep decline, he needs our moral and practical support in the IMF for a medium-term economic support package.

We are already pursuing policies that have the effect – but only over a very long term – of encouraging Pakistan's distaste for its Taliban adventure:

- Lending our support to a fair but non-violent settlement of Kashmir;

- Demonstrating that there are alternatives to the Taliban (e.g., traditional leaders chosen through the Loya Jirga process) that serve Pakistan's national interests; and
- Helping to build up a secular educational system that ends rural Pakistan's exclusive reliance on the fundamentalist madrassas.

Chief Executive Musharraf has been clear in his discussions with American officials that:

--he opposes terrorism and al Qida and believes that the spread of such fundamentalism threatens Pakistani internal stability;

--Pakistan requires a Pashtun majority government in Afghanistan and the repatriation of refugees, which can best be achieved through support to Taliban;

--but there are influential radical elements in Pakistan that would oppose significant Pakistani measures against al Qida or the Taliban;

--Pakistan has been unable to persuade the Taliban to yield up bin Ladin and close the sanctuary and is unwilling to do more to persuade them.

In the wake of the attack on the USS Cole, Pakistan has called upon the US not to violate Pakistani airspace (again) to launch punitive strikes in Afghanistan.

Page 2 of memo from Clarke to Rice, urging "early, strong messages" to Pakistan on the al Qaeda problem. The Clinton "plan" was attached to this memo:

[REDACTED]

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policies, including Iraq policy and the Peace Process. We would make a major error if we underestimated the challenge al Qida poses, or over estimated the stability of the moderate, friendly regimes al Qida threatens.

Pending Time Sensitive Decisions

At the close of the Clinton Administration, two decisions about al Qida were deferred to the Bush Administration.

-- First, should we provide the Afghan Northern Alliance enough assistance to maintain it as a viable opposition force to the Taliban/al Qida? If we do not, I believe that the Northern Alliance may be effectively taken out of action this Spring when fighting resumes after the winter thaw. The al Qida 55<sup>th</sup> Brigade, which has been a key fighting force for the Taliban, would then be freed to send its personnel elsewhere, where they would likely threaten US interests. For any assistance to get there in time to effect the Spring fighting, a decision is needed now.

-- Second, should we increase assistance to Uzbekistan to allow them to deal with the al Qida/ IMU threat?

[REDACTED]

Operational detail, removed at the request of the CIA

Three other issues awaiting addressal now are:

--First, what the new Administration says to the Taliban and Pakistan about the importance we attach to ending the al Qida sanctuary in Afghanistan. We are separately proposing early, strong messages to both.

--Second, do we propose significant program growth in the FY02 budget for anti-al Qida operations by CIA and counter-terrorism training and assistance by State and CIA?

--Third, when and how does the Administration choose to respond to the attack on the USS Cole. That decision is obviously complex. We can make some decisions, such as the those above, now without yet coming to grips with the harder decision about the Cole. On the Cole, we 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.