

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20504

January 25, 2001

INFORMATION

MEMORANDUM FOR CONDOLEEZZA RICE

FROM: RICHARD A. CLARKE *RA*

SUBJECT: Presidential Policy Initiative/Review -- The Al-Qida Network

Crd;
Steve asked today that we propose major Presidential policy reviews or initiatives. We urgently need such a Principals level review on the al Qida network.

Just some Terrorist Group?

As we noted in our briefings for you, al Qida is not some narrow, little terrorist issue that needs to be included in broader regional policy. Rather, several of our regional policies need to address centrally the transnational challenge to the US and our interests posed by the al Qida network. By proceeding with separate policy reviews on Central Asia, the GCC, North Africa, etc. we would deal inadequately with the need for a comprehensive multi-regional policy on al Qida.

al Qida is the active, organized, major force that is using a distorted version of Islam as its vehicle to achieve two goals:

--to drive the US out of the Muslim world, forcing the withdrawal of our military and economic presence in countries from Morocco to Indonesia;

--to replace moderate, modern, Western regime in Muslim countries with theocracies modeled along the lines of the Taliban.

al Qida affects centrally our policies on Pakistan, Afghanistan, Central Asia, North Africa and the GCC. Leaders in Jordan and Saudi Arabia see al Qida as a direct threat to them. The strength of the network of organizations limits the scope of support friendly Arab regimes can give to a range of US

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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 55th 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?

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.

Attached is the year-end 2000 strategy on al Qida developed by the last Administration to give to you. Also attached is the 1998 strategy. Neither was a "covert action only" approach. Both incorporated diplomatic, economic, military, public diplomacy and intelligence tools. Using the 2000 paper as background, we could prepare a decision paper/guide for a PC review.

I recommend that you have a Principals discussion of al Qida soon and address the following issues:

1. Threat Magnitude: Do the Principals agree that the al Qida network poses a first order threat to US interests in a number of regions, or is this analysis a "chicken little" over reaching and can we proceed without major new initiatives and by handling this issue in a more routine manner?

2. Strategy: If it is a first order issue, how should the existing strategy be modified or strengthened?

Two elements of the existing strategy that have not been made to work effectively are a) going after al Qida's money and b) public information to counter al Qida propaganda.

3. FY02 Budget: Should we continue the funding increases into FY02 for State and CIA programs designed to implement the al Qida strategy?

4. Immediate Decisions: Should we initiate funding to the Northern Alliance and to the Uzbek's?

Please let us know if you would like such a decision/discussion paper or any modifications to the background paper.

Concurrences by: Mary McCarthy, Dan Fried, Bruce Reidel, Don Camp) PC
JR

Attachment

Tab A December 2000 Paper: Strategy for Eliminating the Threat from the Jihadist Networks of al-Qida: Status and Prospects

Tab B September 1998 Paper: Pol-Mil Plan for al-Qida