

Northern Alliance with Pashtun groups. One U.S. diplomat later told us that the exile groups were not ready to move forward and that coordinating fractious groups residing in Bonn, Rome, and Cyprus proved extremely difficult.⁸⁵

Frustrated by the Taliban's resistance, two senior State Department officials suggested asking the Saudis to offer the Taliban \$250 million for Bin Ladin. Clarke opposed having the United States facilitate a "huge grant to a regime as heinous as the Taliban" and suggested that the idea might not seem attractive to either Secretary Albright or First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton—both critics of the Taliban's record on women's rights.⁸⁶ The proposal seems to have quietly died.

Within the State Department, some officials delayed Sheehan and Clarke's push either to designate Taliban-controlled Afghanistan as a state sponsor of terrorism or to designate the regime as a foreign terrorist organization (thereby avoiding the issue of whether to recognize the Taliban as Afghanistan's government). Sheehan and Clarke prevailed in July 1999, when President Clinton issued an executive order effectively declaring the Taliban regime a state sponsor of terrorism.⁸⁷ In October, a UN Security Council Resolution championed by the United States added economic and travel sanctions.⁸⁸

With UN sanctions set to come into effect in November, Clarke wrote Berger that "the Taliban appear to be up to something."⁸⁹ Mullah Omar had shuffled his "cabinet" and hinted at Bin Ladin's possible departure. Clarke's staff thought his most likely destination would be Somalia; Chechnya seemed less appealing with Russia on the offensive. Clarke commented that Iraq and Libya had previously discussed hosting Bin Ladin, though he and his staff had their doubts that Bin Ladin would trust secular Arab dictators such as Saddam Hussein or Muammar Qadhafi. Clarke also raised the "remote possibility" of Yemen, which offered vast uncontrolled spaces. In November, the CSG discussed whether the sanctions had rattled the Taliban, who seemed "to be looking for a face-saving way out of the Bin Ladin issue."⁹⁰

In fact none of the outside pressure had any visible effect on Mullah Omar, who was unconcerned about commerce with the outside world. Omar had virtually no diplomatic contact with the West, since he refused to meet with non-Muslims. The United States learned that at the end of 1999, the Taliban Council of Ministers unanimously reaffirmed that their regime would stick by Bin Ladin. Relations between Bin Ladin and the Taliban leadership were sometimes tense, but the foundation was deep and personal.⁹¹ Indeed, Mullah Omar had executed at least one subordinate who opposed his pro-Bin Ladin policy.⁹²

The United States would try tougher sanctions in 2000. Working with Russia (a country involved in an ongoing campaign against Chechen separatists, some of whom received support from Bin Ladin), the United States persuaded the United Nations to adopt Security Council Resolution 1333, which included an embargo on arms shipments to the Taliban, in December 2000.⁹³ The aim of the resolution was to hit the Taliban where it was most sensitive—