

on the battlefield against the Northern Alliance—and criminalize giving them arms and providing military “advisers,” which Pakistan had been doing.⁹⁴ Yet the passage of the resolution had no visible effect on Omar, nor did it halt the flow of Pakistani military assistance to the Taliban.⁹⁵

U.S. authorities had continued to try to get cooperation from Pakistan in pressing the Taliban to stop sheltering Bin Ladin. President Clinton contacted Sharif again in June 1999, partly to discuss the crisis with India but also to urge Sharif, “in the strongest way I can,” to persuade the Taliban to expel Bin Ladin.⁹⁶ The President suggested that Pakistan use its control over oil supplies to the Taliban and over Afghan imports through Karachi. Sharif suggested instead that Pakistani forces might try to capture Bin Ladin themselves. Though no one in Washington thought this was likely to happen, President Clinton gave the idea his blessing.⁹⁷

The President met with Sharif in Washington in early July. Though the meeting’s main purpose was to seal the Pakistani prime minister’s decision to withdraw from the Kargil confrontation in Kashmir, President Clinton complained about Pakistan’s failure to take effective action with respect to the Taliban and Bin Ladin. Sharif came back to his earlier proposal and won approval for U.S. assistance in training a Pakistani special forces team for an operation against Bin Ladin. Then, in October 1999, Sharif was deposed by General Pervez Musharraf, and the plan was terminated.⁹⁸

At first, the Clinton administration hoped that Musharraf’s coup might create an opening for action on Bin Ladin. A career military officer, Musharraf was thought to have the political strength to confront and influence the Pakistani military intelligence service, which supported the Taliban. Berger speculated that the new government might use Bin Ladin to buy concessions from Washington, but neither side ever developed such an initiative.⁹⁹

By late 1999, more than a year after the embassy bombings, diplomacy with Pakistan, like the efforts with the Taliban, had, according to Under Secretary of State Thomas Pickering, “borne little fruit.”¹⁰⁰

4.4 COVERT ACTION

As part of the response to the embassy bombings, President Clinton signed a Memorandum of Notification authorizing the CIA to let its tribal assets use force to capture Bin Ladin and his associates. CIA officers told the tribals that the plan to capture Bin Ladin, which had been “turned off” three months earlier, was back on. The memorandum also authorized the CIA to attack Bin Ladin in other ways. Also, an executive order froze financial holdings that could be linked to Bin Ladin.¹⁰¹

The counterterrorism staff at CIA thought it was gaining a better understanding of Bin Ladin and his network. In preparation for briefing the Senate