

in a destroyer and 17 dead sailors, the Pentagon might have wanted to respond. Instead, they have often talked about the fact that there is ‘nothing worth hitting in Afghanistan’ and said ‘the cruise missiles cost more than the jungle gyms and mud huts’ at terrorist camps.” Clarke could not understand “*why we continue to allow the existence of large scale al Qida bases where we know people are being trained to kill Americans.*”²⁴⁸

Turning to the CIA, Clarke warned that its bureaucracy, which was “mas=terful at passive aggressive behavior,” would resist funding the new national security presidential directive, leaving it a “hollow shell of words without deeds.” The CIA would insist its other priorities were more important. Invok=ing President Bush’s own language, Clarke wrote, “*You are left with a modest effort to swat flies*, to try to prevent specific al Qida attacks by using [intelligence] to detect them and friendly governments’ police and intelligence officers to stop them. *You are left waiting for the big attack*, with lots of casualties, after which some major US retaliation will be in order[.]”²⁴⁹

Rice told us she took Clarke’s memo as a warning not to get dragged down by bureaucratic inertia.²⁵⁰ While his arguments have force, we also take Clarke’s jeremiad as something more. After nine years on the NSC staff and more than three years as the president’s national coordinator, he had often failed to persuade these agencies to adopt his views, or to persuade his superiors to set an agenda of the sort he wanted or that the whole government could support.

Meanwhile, another counterterrorism veteran, Cofer Black, was preparing his boss for the principals meeting. He advised Tenet that the draft presidential directive envisioned an ambitious covert action program, but that the author=ities for it had not yet been approved and the funding still had not been found. If the CIA was reluctant to use the Predator, Black did not mention it. He wanted “a timely decision from the Principals,” adding that the window for missions within 2001 was a short one. The principals would have to decide whether Rice, Tenet, Rumsfeld, or someone else would give the order to fire.²⁵¹

At the September 4 meeting, the principals approved the draft presidential directive with little discussion.²⁵² Rice told us that she had, at some point, told President Bush that she and his other advisers thought it would take three years or so for their al Qaeda strategy to work.²⁵³ They then discussed the armed Predator.

Hadley portrayed the Predator as a useful tool, although perhaps not for immediate use. Rice, who had been advised by her staff that the armed Preda=tor was not ready for deployment, commented about the potential for using the armed Predator in the spring of 2002.²⁵⁴

The State Department supported the armed Predator, although Secretary Powell was not convinced that Bin Ladin was as easy to target as had been sug=gested. Treasury Secretary Paul O’Neill was skittish, cautioning about the impli=cations of trying to kill an individual.²⁵⁵