

E. Competing Priorities

[Counterterrorism was only one of many priorities for both the Clinton and Bush Administrations. Although a complete review of their policy priorities is beyond the scope of this inquiry, several senior officials have suggested the wide range of concerns that faced both administrations:

- Intelligence Community officials with responsibility for resource management noted that a range of regional and global issues were important concerns that policymakers emphasized in allocating resources.
- Mr. Clarke explained that he faced resistance to using military force in Afghanistan, in part because the United States was already bombing Iraq and Serbia.
- Former Clinton Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia Karl Inderfurth noted in an interview that the East Africa embassy bombings made counterterrorism the top U.S. priority in its dealings with the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. Before then, ending the civil war, advancing women's rights, and establishing a broad-based government were U.S. priorities for that country.
- Mr. Inderfurth also noted that concerns about an Indian-Pakistani conflict, or even nuclear confrontation, competed with efforts to press Pakistan on terrorism.

[Page 230]

- Mr. Hadley noted that Bush Administration concerns before September 11 included the P-3 aircraft incident with China and the June 2001 G-8 Summit].

Even those involved directly in counterterrorism efforts focused much of their attention on groups other than al-Qa'ida and its affiliates. Mr. Clarke told the Joint Inquiry that Iran and the Lebanese Hizbollah were the most important terrorist concerns during the first Clinton Administration. This was corroborated by Mr. Lake, who noted that the Administration's "primary preoccupation was on state sponsors of terrorism and such organizations as Hizbollah."