

The terrorist plotting, planning, recruiting, and training in the late 1990s were aided immeasurably by the sanctuary the Taliban provided.

- Afghanistan had served as a place of refuge for international terrorists since the 1980s. The Taliban actively aided Bin Ladin by assigning him guards for security, permitting him to build and maintain terrorist camps, and refusing to cooperate with efforts by the international community to extradite him.
- In return, Bin Ladin invested vast amounts of money in Taliban projects and provided hundreds of well-trained fighters to help the Taliban consolidate and expand their control of the country.
- While we often talk of two trends in terrorism – state supported and independent -- in Bin Ladin’s case with the Taliban what we had was something completely new: a *terrorist* sponsoring a *state*]. (Emphasis in original.)

Some CIA analysts and operators told Joint Inquiry staff that they recognized as early as 1997 that Bin Ladin’s terrorist organization would continue to train cadres of Islamic extremists and generate numerous terrorist operations, as long as the Taliban granted al-Qa’ida sanctuary in Afghanistan.

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Failure to eliminate Afghanistan as a terrorist sanctuary had practical operational consequences. In describing to the Joint Inquiry the CIA’s 1999 plan to capture and bring Bin Ladin and his principal lieutenants to justice, DCI Tenet explained that, because “U.S. policy stopped short of replacing the Taliban regime, . . . the ability of the U.S. Government to exert pressure on Bin Ladin” was seriously limited. Because our government had “no official presence in Afghanistan, and relations with the Taliban were seriously strained,” the DCI asserted, it became much “more difficult to gain access to Bin Ladin and al-Qa’ida personnel.”

Between 1999 and 2001, the government did undertake some efforts to address the problem of Afghanistan as a terrorist sanctuary. In 1999, senior CIA and State Department officials began to focus on the Taliban as an integral part of the terrorist problem. In 1999 and 2000, the State Department worked with the United Nations Security Council to obtain resolutions rebuking the Taliban for harboring Bin Ladin and allowing terrorist training. The Defense Department began to focus on this issue in late 2000 after the *Cole* bombing and formulated military options for dealing with the Taliban.