

According to Steve Hadley, President Bush's Deputy National Security Advisor, the Bush Administration initiated shortly after taking office a senior-level review of al-Qa'ida policy. In Summer 2001, the State Department sent a démarche to Taliban representatives in Pakistan, which noted threats to Americans emanating from Afghanistan and declared that the United States would hold the regime responsible for actions by terrorists the Taliban harbored. None of these actions appears to have restrained terrorist training or al-Qa'ida's ability to operate in Afghanistan.

Despite the Intelligence Community's growing recognition that Afghanistan was churning out thousands of radicals, the Joint Inquiry found little effort to integrate the instruments of national power - diplomatic, intelligence, economic, and military - to address the problem effectively. [_____

_____]. Little effort was made to use the full force of the U.S. military before September 11, with the exception of August 1998 cruise missile strikes. Former National Security Advisor Sandy [page 239] Berger testified that there was little public or Congressional support for an invasion of Afghanistan before September 11.

Permitting the sanctuary in Afghanistan to exist allowed Bin Ladin's key operatives to meet, plan, train recruits, and ensure that al-Qa'ida's masterminds remained beyond the reach of international justice. In testimony before the Joint Inquiry, the DCI explained:

Nothing did more for our ability to combat terrorism than the President's decision to send us into the terrorists' sanctuary. By going in massively, we were able to change the rules for the terrorists. Now they are the hunted. Now they have to spend most of their time worrying about their survival. Al-Qa'ida must never again acquire a sanctuary.

In response to a question about what he would have done differently in hindsight before September 11, the DCI reiterated this point about sanctuary:

[W]e should have taken down that sanctuary a lot sooner. The circumstances at the time may have not warranted, the regional situation may have been different, and after 9/11 all I can tell you is we let a sanctuary fester, we let Bin Ladin build capability. And there may have been lots of good reasons why in hindsight it couldn't have been done earlier or sooner. I am not challenging it, because hindsight is always perfect, but we let him operate with impunity for a long time without putting the full force and muscle of the United States against it.