

III. Covert Action and Military Operations Against Bin Ladin

[The Joint Inquiry examined whether the Intelligence Community might have missed opportunities to disrupt the September 11 attacks through covert action or military operations directed against Usama Bin Ladin. To answer that question, the Joint Inquiry reviewed covert action documents and interviewed twenty-six persons with first-hand knowledge of U.S. efforts to capture Bin Ladin before September 11. The review included documents authorizing covert action [_____, _____], and information related to 13 military options formulated by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in late 2000. Interviews included CIA personnel involved in covert action to capture Bin Ladin and his principal lieutenants; senior military officers responsible for planning contingency operations; [_____, _____]; senior CIA and NSC officials and senior military officers involved in [page 294] authorizing and implementing covert action and the use of military force; and State Department counterterrorism officials.

A. Background

The National Security Act of 1947, as amended, defines “covert action” as “activities of the United States Government to influence political, economic, or military conditions abroad, where it is intended that the role of the United States Government will not be apparent or acknowledged publicly.” Covert action does not include activities whose primary purpose is to acquire intelligence; traditional diplomatic or military activities; traditional law enforcement activities; or routine support to these activities or the activities of other government agencies abroad.

[In spring 1986, President Reagan signed a directive authorizing CIA to conduct certain counterterrorism operations abroad]. [_____, _____]

