Extent

272 folders, approximately 16,595 pages

Summary

This collection consists of related to efforts by the American government to locate and capture Usama bin Laden. This is the second segment of this FOIA request to be processed and open. This segment included only electronic records and contains cables dated from 1997 to 2001. The collection also contains e-mail from the Exchange-Record and Exchange-Non-Record e-mail systems. These e-mail range in date from March 1997 to January 2001. Open records in the collection consist largely of talking points and question-and-answer documents. The collection also includes: quarterly reports to Congress, public speeches and speech drafts; open press reports, and press materials.

Scope and Content Note

The materials in FOIA 2006-0228-F are a selective body of documents responsive to the topic of the FOIA. Researchers should consult the archivist about related materials. Given the subject of this FOIA and the nature of intelligence work much of this collection is closed for reasons of National Security. Researchers interested in Usama bin Laden should see 2006-0228-F (segment 1). They should also see: 2006-0191-F (Selected records referenced in Chapter 4, The 9/11 Commission Report “Responses to Al Qaeda’s Initial Assaults.”), 2006-1700-F (Records dated March 3, 1997 to January 20, 2001 between Richard Clarke, Samuel Berger, and the President referring to Osama bin Laden, al-Qaeda, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and the Taliban.), 2006-1171-F (Records on Sudan, January 1996 through June 1996), 2006-1985-F (Records on Usama bin Laden and Executive Order 12333), 2007-1551-F (All documents from January 1, 1994 to January 1, 2002 related to policy, plans, proposals, requests, or strategies to expel Osama bin Ladin (also Usama bin Ladin) to Iran), 2007-1596-F (Records on the Nairobi and Dar es Salaam Embassy Bombings

on August 7, 1998 and the Air Strikes against Afghanistan and Sudan on August 20, 1998), 2007-1634-F (Records on Pakistan's relationship with the Taliban and other militant groups, 1994 thru 2001), and 2008-0431-F (Records from Bruce Riedel Concerning the Taliban, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Mullah Omar, Usama bin Ladin, al-Qaeda, or Iraq and Terrorism). Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request 2006-0228-F was for records related to efforts by the American government to locate and capture Usama bin Laden. This is the second segment of this FOIA request to be processed and open. This segment processed only electronic records and contains cables dated from 1997 to 2001. It also includes e-mail from the Exchange-Record and Exchange-Non-Record e-mail systems. These e-mail range in date from March 1997 to January 2001. Open records in the collection consist largely of talking points and question-and-answer documents. The collection also includes: quarterly reports to Congress, public speeches and speech drafts; open press reports, and press materials. When President William J. Clinton took office Usama bin Laden was only a name frequently seen in raw intelligence reports. According to Richard Clarke, in 1993 and 1994, bin Laden's role in a growing terrorist movement was only beginning to come to light. The CIA regularly referred to him as "terrorist financier Usama bin Laden" but seemed to know few details about him. By 1993, however, the thirty-six year old had already devoted more than a decade to fighting jihad and supporting his conservative and, some would say radical, views of Islam. He would soon become well known to the American government and to the world. Usama bin Laden was the seventeenth son of Mohammed bin Awad bin Laden; he was born in 1957. Mohammed bin Laden amassed a fortune believed to be in excess of $5 billion dollars before his death yet he lived a devout and austere life, demanding that his children observe a strict moral and religious code. According to most biographies of Usama bin Laden, he followed closely these same beliefs. Bin Laden was raised in Saudi Arabia and attended King Abdulaziz University. At university he met Abdullah Azzam and was introduced to the Muslim Brotherhood. As early as 1980, he traveled to Afghanistan and met with mujahidin fighting Russian occupation. Bin Laden would later finance and carry out operations in support of this jihad effort. Contacts made in Afghanistan in the 1980s and the Islamic teaching bin Laden received led him to organize a group he called al-Qaeda, or the Base. The United States Finally made the connection between bin Laden and terrorism following the defection of Jamal al-Fadl. Al-Fadl was a member of al-Qaeda who had been siphoning al-Qaeda funds for his own benefit. In 1996, he sought protection in the United States. According to Clarke it was through alFadl that the U.S. finally established the connection between bin

Laden and al-Qaeda; that bin Laden was the head of al-Qaeda and the mastermind of terrorist plans. Daniel Benjamin and Steven Simon note that the CIA was, as early as the late 1980s, aware of a wealthy Saudi Arabian named Usama bin Laden who was actively funding the efforts of the mujahedeen in Afghanistan. They note too that following his 1989 return to Saudi Arabia his verbal attacks on the Saudi royal family also brought him greater attention. These attacks would grow more vitriolic and furious following King Fahd's agreement to receive U.S. military assistance during the first Gulf War. Bin Laden offered his fighters, money, and equipment to defend his homeland and considered it a serious violation of Islam to allow Americans into Saudi Arabia. This firm belief by bin Laden that Americans were the antithesis of Islam likely stems from the writings of Sayyid Qutb. Qutb, an Egyptian who traveled to the United States in the late 1940s, saw the western world as completely material and lacking in any substance. He felt that the world outside of Islam was barbarous and licentious. There were, in his mind, only two ways to live, within Islam or outside of Islam. During compulsory religious education at university, bin Laden studied under Muhammed Qutb, brother of Sayyid. Bin Laden's relationship with Abdullah Azzam further solidified the belief that jihad was integral to faith and that reformation of mankind was necessary and the truth must be made dominate. The continued presence of the American military and the perceived influence of Americans on the Saudi government seemingly fueled further resentment and anger in bin Laden. He continued to speak out against King Fahd and government of Saudi Arabia. The Saudis restricted bin Laden's travel and watched his contacts closely. With bin Laden well warned they reduced their efforts to persuade him to stop his criticism of the royal family and its military alliance with the United States. However, when he began using Friday prayers at mosques to speak against the royal family, the Government of Saudi Arabia, fed up with his anti-regime propaganda expelled bin Laden from the country in 1991 and revoked his citizenship in 1994. After leaving Saudi Arabia, bin Laden ultimately settled in Sudan where he established a network of businesses to support his al-Qaeda operation. In 1996, bin Laden claimed in the British press that attacks on American personnel in Saudi Arabia would be the beginning of a war "between Muslims and the United States." He claimed that he had been given fatwa "to drive out the Americans." He followed this interview in August 1996, with the issuance of a fatwa—his Declaration of War Against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Hold Places—ordering Muslims to drive Americans out of Saudi Arabia. In February 1998, bin Laden and Ayman al Zawahiri issued a second fatwa—Jihad Against Jews and Crusaders—calling

for Muslims to “fight the pagans all together” and to “fight them until there is no more tumult.” With these fatwa and with a number of television and press interviews bin Laden made clear that he was, and had been at war, with the United States. It is believed that Usama bin Laden and his al-Qaeda organization are responsible for: the December 1992 attack on the Aden and Goldmore Hotels in Yemen, the World Trade Center bombing in 1993, a 1995 attack on a Saudi Arabian National Guard center, a June 1996 attack on a U.S. military base dormitory, the Khobar Towers bombing (it is interesting to note that Benjamin and Simon say that alQaeda is not responsible for Khobar towers); the 1998 embassy bombings in Tanzania and Kenya, the bombing of the U.S.S. Cole at port in Yemen in 2000, and culminating the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Other attacks were foiled and it is assumed by national security observers that others were planned that were never carried to completion. The United States Department of Justice indicted bin Laden on charges of conspiring against the United States in 1998. Bin Laden remained on the Federal Bureau of Investigations most wanted list until he was killed by American special operation forces in Abbottabad, Pakistan May 2, 2011.

Record Type

Textual

System of Arrangement

Records that were responsive to this request were found in these collection areas—Clinton Presidential Records: NSC Cables, Emails, and Records Management System.

Access

Collection is open to all researchers. Access to Clinton Presidential Records is governed by the Presidential Records Act (PRA) (44 U.S.C. Chapter 22, as amended) and the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) (5 U.S.C. 552, as amended) and therefore records may be restricted in whole or in part in accordance with legal exemptions.

Copyright

Documents in this collection that were prepared by officials of the United States government as part of their official duties are in the public domain. Researchers are advised to consult the copyright law of the United States (17 U.S.C. Chapter 1) which governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material.

Provenance

Official records of William Jefferson Clinton’s presidency are housed at the Clinton Presidential Library and administered by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) under the provisions of the Presidential Records Act (PRA).

Processed by

Staff Archivist, 2016. Previously restricted materials are added as they are released.

Last Modified Date

2016-06-15

Container List

The following is a list of documents and folders processed in response to 2006-0228-F:
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Clinton Presidential Records: NSC Cables, Emails, and Records Management System
NSC Cable (continued)
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Clinton Presidential Records: NSC Cables, Emails, and Records Management System
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Jan 1999-Dec 2000 [OA/ID 530000]

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Clinton Presidential Records: NSC Cables, Emails, and Records Management System
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