Extent

3 folders, approximately 109 pages

Summary

This collection deals wholly with issues of foreign policy and national security. Only one document from this collection is open: a declassified Department of State cable summarizing Assistant Secretary of State Rick Inderfurth’s December 8, 1996 meeting with the Taliban. The remaining documents are closed for national security reasons.

Scope and Content Note

The materials in FOIA 2007-1551-F are a selective body of documents responsive to the topic of the FOIA. Researchers should consult the archivist about related materials. This collection deals wholly with issues of foreign policy and national security. Only one document from this collection is open: a declassified Department of State cable summarizing Assistant Secretary of State Rick Inderfurth’s December 8, 1996 meeting with the Taliban. The remaining documents are closed for national security reasons. In a September 1996 statement published in the London monthly, Al-Islah, Usama bin Ladin noted that he was declaring jihad on Americans occupying the land of the two holy mosques. That he and the ulema were pursued in Pakistan, Sudan, and Afghanistan. This pursuit kept him from addressing Muslims and led to a long absence. He and the ulema were however, able to find a safe base in Afghanistan. In the Hindu Kush, “thanks be to God,” Usama noted, “I meet with you today after a long absence dictated by the unjust crusade campaign led by the United States against the ulema and advocates of Islam to prevent them from instigating the Islamic nation against its enemies.” Usama moved to Sudan in April 1991. Following the bombing of the World Trade Center in 1993, the United States began a gradually escalating campaign to isolate bin Ladin. The goal of this isolation was to prevent him from operating and financing terrorist networks. By March of

1996 the United States was offering demands to Sudan to expel bin Ladin. According to author Steve Coll, Sudanese General Elfaith Erwa traveled to the United States for meetings on March 8, 1996. In these meetings Erwa was told that the United States wanted Usama “anywhere but Somalia." Bin Ladin began to feel the pressure grow for his expulsion from Sudan. In May 1996, he noted in the al-Quds al-Arabi newspaper that moving to “Iraq [was] out of the question” and that the only choice was “between Yemen and Afghanistan.” Bin Ladin left Sudan, presumably at the request of Sudanese authorities, for Afghanistan May 18, 1996. The Taliban were apparently welcoming and willing to host bin Ladin, his family, and his associates. In November 1996 in another interview with al-Quds al-Arabi, bin Ladin noted, “Our relations with the Taliban are good.” He stated further, “It is a relationship based on piety and righteousness. We feel completely comfortable with cooperating with the Taliban.” When asked if he would ever return to Sudan, bin Ladin replied that “he could never return to Sudan” noting that the “mountains are our natural place.” Even as early as 1996 countries were beginning to look at bin Ladin as a liability. Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Jordan all refused to have him in custody. The Muslim newspaper in Islamabad noted in a March 1997 article that because of U.S. influence no one would have Usama bin Ladin, not even Iran. Declassified Department of State cables show a consistent message from the United States beginning in 1997 that bin Ladin be expelled from Afghanistan and sent to a country where he could face charges. Through 2001, the Clinton administration continued to pursue bin Laden through diplomatic channels supporting three United Nations Security Council Resolutions arguing for his expulsion from Afghanistan. Following the Clinton administration there were rumors in the news—though after his departure from Sudan there were constantly rumors of bin Ladin’s location (or death)—that he was in Iran. A 2003 documentary called “Feathered Cocaine” featured a falconer by the name of Alan Parrot who claimed that bin Ladin was living in a compound north of Tehran. As late as January 2011 though, it seems that the United States government did not think this a possibility. The Combating Terrorism Center (CTC) at West Point seemed to support the theory that Iran was not a likely destination for bin Ladin in noting that the relationship between Iran and al-Qaeda and bin Ladin was fraught with difficulty and at times antagonistic. The CTC notes that division was caused as much by the detention of a number of bin Ladin’s family as any political or religious ideology.

Record Type

Textual

System of Arrangement

Records that were responsive to this request were found in this collection area—Clinton Presidential Records: NSC Cable, Email, 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

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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, August 2014. Previously restricted materials are added as they are released.

Last Modified Date

2015-06-16

Container List

The following is a list of documents and folders processed in response to 2007-1551-F:
Box 1
Clinton Presidential Records: White House Staff and Office Files
National Security Council
NSC Cables
Jan 1995-Dec 1996 [OA/ID 510000]
[Bin Ladin, UBL, Iran]
[06/10/1996-10/15/1996]
Jan 1997-Dec 1998 [OA/ID 520000]
[Bin Ladin, UBL, Iran]
[07/23/1997-08/31/1998]
Jan 1999-Dec 2000 [OA/ID 530000]
[Bin Ladin, UBL, Iran]
[02/17/1999-01/07/2000]