

9/11, Osama bin Laden, the CIA and “Continuity of Government” (COG)

Getting Real About Richard Clarke

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President Obama’s 2013 advisory panel on NSA spying included some interesting people considering that the justification for such crimes against democracy always go back to 9/11. One member was Cass Sunstein, who had previously [advised the president to “cognitively infiltrate”](#) citizen groups that sought the truth about 9/11. Another panel member was Richard Clarke, the former “counterterrorism czar,” whose opinions on the subject continue to be widely publicized despite suspicions that Clarke might have been in league with the 9/11 terrorists.



In one of several interviews with TV host Bill Maher, a supporter of NSA spying, Clarke suggested that Osama bin Laden was never worried about being caught before he was killed because he [“thought he’d get tipped.”](#) Clarke meant that Bin Laden was helped by retired intelligence officials and would be tipped off to any operation. In the same interview, Clarke told Maher that Afghanis were pathetic and that Pakistanis were “pathological liars.”

However, there are good reasons to believe that it is Clarke who is a untruthful. Those reasons include that it was Clarke who tipped off Bin Laden’s friends in the years before 9/11, effectively preventing the capture or killing of that alleged terrorist mastermind. Clarke later promoted lies about a man called Abu Zubaydah, whose torture testimony is behind much of the *9/11 Commission Report*.

People need to know more about Richard Clarke before taking any more of his comments at face value. The following excerpts from my book [Another Nineteen](#) might make that point a little more obvious.

Not Just Another COG

Clarke began his government career in the Ford Administration. He worked as a defense department nuclear weapons analyst and shared a Pentagon office with Wayne Downing, who later became a leader of Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC). Clarke went on to become President Reagan's Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Intelligence. In that role, Clarke negotiated for a U.S. military presence in Arab countries including Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar, and Saudi Arabia.

In 1984, Clarke was selected to take part in one of the most highly classified projects of the Reagan Administration. This was the secret Continuity of Government (COG) program run by the National Program Office that continued up to and after the attacks of September 11. Other than Clarke, the members of the COG group included Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, George H.W. Bush, Kenneth Duberstein, and James Woolsey. If not a formal member of the group, Oliver North reported to it and acted on its behalf. Although Cheney and Rumsfeld were not government employees throughout the twenty years that Clarke participated in this official government program, they both continued to participate.

COG was developed to install a shadow "government in waiting" to replace the U.S. Congress and the U.S. Constitution in the event of a national emergency like a nuclear war. In 1998, Clarke revised the COG plan for use as a response to a terrorist attack on American soil. The first and only time that COG was put into action was when Richard Clarke activated it during the 9/11 attacks. As of 2002, that shadow government [continued to be in effect as an "indefinite precaution."](#)

George H.W. Bush had appointed Clarke to be his Assistant Secretary of State for Politico-Military Affairs, under James Baker. Clarke was in that position until 1992. According to his book, Clarke remembers that Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney specifically asked him to coordinate relations with the UAE. Over the following decade, Clarke negotiated many deals with the Emirates, essentially becoming an agent of the UAE, and he was particularly close to the UAE royal family.

Not long after Clarke began going there, the royal family of Abu Dhabi took over full ownership of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI). BCCI is significant relative to 9/11 because it was involved in funding terrorists and was in partnership with the Pakistani intelligence network from which several alleged 9/11 conspirators came, including KSM. In fact, *TIME* magazine reported in September 1991 that, relative to BCCI, "You can't draw a line separating the bank's black operatives and Pakistan's intelligence services."

More importantly, authors Peter Truell and Larry Gurwin noted in their historic book *False Profits* that the CIA was involved in the founding of BCCI. The CIA connection to the origins of the BCCI terrorist network is revealing because the royal family of the UAE was also said to have played a primary role in the creation of BCCI. As the official U.S. government report on the subject pointed out, that there was no relationship more central to BCCI's existence than that between BCCI and the ruling family of Abu Dhabi.

Clarke's friends in the UAE royal family not only created the BCCI terrorist network, they took it over when the Bank of England shut it down. Soon after, Bush named Clarke to the National Security Council staff as Special Assistant to the President and he became chairman of the Interagency Counterterrorism Committee. One might think that Richard Clarke's close relationship to the royal family of the UAE, and this new role as the NSC head of counterterrorism, might have posed a slight conflict of interest. But no one seemed to notice.

Likewise, few have noticed that the attacks attributed to al Qaeda began just after the UAE gained full control of BCCI, when the first Bush Administration left office. It was in December of 1992 that al Qaeda is said to have first committed an act of terrorism by bombing U.S. troops in Yemen. Attacks and plots in Somalia, Saudi Arabia, and many others places located near the production and transport routes of fossil fuels have been attributed to al Qaeda since that time.

Continuing as “counterterrorism czar” in the Clinton Administration, Clarke was not interested in pursuing the remnants of the BCCI terrorist network. Instead, he had a different approach to combating terrorism. In 1993, the United States began a practice known as “rendition.” Throughout the rest of the world, rendition is known as torture. The policy behind this program was proposed by Clarke, who worked to get “snatch teams” in place to kidnap suspects for torture. The success of Clarke’s rendition proposal led to the post-9/11 U.S. program of secret kidnappings and torture around the world.

In the summer of 1994, Clarke played a leading role in the international failure to intervene in the Rwandan genocide. People who worked to stop the slaughter before it happened cite Clarke as a [heartless, malicious man who was “scandalously oblivious”](#) to the evidence of the looming genocide. Although the U.S. could have taken many steps to prevent the tragedy, it did not due to Clarke’s “structurally empowered skepticism and stonewalling.” Instead, over a period of 100 days, approximately 800,000 people were killed.

In September 1994, high-ranking UAE and Saudi government ministers, such as Saudi Intelligence Minister Prince Turki al-Faisal, began frequent bird hunting expeditions in Afghanistan. It was reported that, “They would go out and see Osama, spend some time with him, talk with him, you know, live out in the tents, eat the simple food, engage in falconing, some other pursuits, ride horses.” Two members of [the UAE royal family that participated in these trips](#) were Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum and Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, ruler of the UAE.

As these UAE meetings with OBL occurred, Clarke’s relationship with the UAE royals blossomed. At the same time, he engaged in preparations for terrorist events on U.S. soil. In 1998, he chaired a tabletop exercise in which a Learjet filled with explosives would be flown on a suicide mission into a target in Washington, DC. At a conference [in October 1998, Clarke predicted](#) that America’s enemies “will go after our Achilles’ heel” which is “in Washington. It is in New York.”

Clarke updated the COG plans, in early 1998, so that they could be utilized in the event of a terrorist attack like the one that he predicted that year (and that occurred in 2001). National Security Advisor Sandy Berger, who was later caught stealing documents that had been requested by the 9/11 Commission, was the one to suggest that Clinton create the new Counterterrorism Czar position that Clarke would fill at the time of his prediction. Berger was also the one to introduce Clarke’s COG partner, James Woolsey, to Clinton. Woolsey went on to become Clinton’s CIA director.

In early February 1999, Clarke met with Al-Maktoum, one of the UAE royals known to hunt with Bin Laden, in the UAE. Al-Maktoum was a big supporter of the Taliban and al-Qaeda. And although people often forget, two of the 9/11 hijackers were citizens of the UAE and the funding that supported the attacks flowed through the UAE, according to the official account.

Just a few months after Clarke's UAE visit, in July 1999, the CIA claimed that Bin Laden had "been [allowed to funnel money through the Dubai Islamic Bank in Dubai](#), which the United Arab Emirates Government effectively controls." Apparently Bin Laden "had a relationship with the bank, which they believed had been arranged with the approval of the officials who control the bank."

Bin Laden was not the only al Qaeda link to Clarke's friends in the UAE. Reportedly, KSM was living in the city of Sharjah, UAE at the time of Clarke's trip. Sharjah was reportedly a major center of al Qaeda activity then. The plot's alleged money man Mustafa Ahmed al-Hawsawi was also based in Sharjah. Saeed Sheikh, known as the 9/11 paymaster, was said to have established an al Qaeda base in the UAE while openly working with the Pakistani ISI. Some have suggested that Hawsawi and Sheikh were the same man.

Al-Maktoum, whom Clarke met with in 1999, later tried to take over the management of six major U.S. ports. [George W. Bush lobbied on his behalf](#) but the deal fell through.

The *9/11 Commission Report* has six references to the UAE, most of which can be found on page 138. One of these suggests that "but for the cooperation of the UAE, we would have killed Bin Ladin two years in advance of September 11."

Therefore it is difficult to understand why the leading authority on counterterrorism in the U.S. would be meeting, and maintaining close personal relationships, with the UAE friends of Bin Laden just two years before 9/11. This was three years after Bin Laden had first declared holy war against the United States, and one year after his more recent such proclamation.

Clarke's Tips Helped Bin Laden And Misled Americans

It is far more difficult to understand why Clarke was personally behind the failure of two CIA attempts to kill or capture Bin Laden in 1999. The first of these occurred just a few days after Clarke's visit to the UAE. The CIA obtained information that OBL was hunting with UAE royals in Afghanistan at the time, and President Clinton was asked for permission to attack the camp. According to author Steve Coll in his book *Ghost Wars*, Clarke voted down that plan and others within the U.S. government speculated that his ties to the UAE were behind his decision.

The next month, when the CIA had tracked Bin Laden's location again and was prepared to take him out during another of the Afghanistan hunting trips, Clarke took it upon himself to alert his UAE friends about the CIA monitoring their meetings with Bin Laden. Of course, the UAE royals tipped off Bin Laden and the U.S. lost another opportunity to kill or capture its number one enemy. Considering that CIA plans are top secret national security priorities, and that OBL was wanted for the bombings in East Africa, Clarke's action should have been seen as treason.

When questioned by Congressman Richard Burr as part of the Joint Congressional Inquiry into 9/11, Clarke was evasive about his actions to protect his UAE friends and bin Laden. The fact that Clarke was allowed to testify without being under oath, in a special agreement in which [his comments were considered only a "briefing,"](#) was itself telling.

Regarding the second attempt that Clarke had foiled, Burr asked, "Did the CIA, in fact, brief you that the camp was an ideal situation, that they did have real time intelligence, that the collateral damage would be extremely limited, involving only the camp facility? And as a

follow-up [to] my last question, Mr. Clarke, did, in fact, you call the royal family and inform them of the information we had about the intelligence of that camp and that exercise?" Clarke replied, "I think those facts are slightly wrong," clarifying that the information the CIA had was not exactly real-time yet essentially admitting that he tipped off the UAE royals.

Somehow, Clarke's two efforts to keep OBL from being captured or killed in 1999 slipped his mind when he testified to the 9/11 Commission. Apparently, those events were also not important enough to mention to Bill Maher when suggesting that Bin Laden relied on such tips from rogue, retired intelligence officials.

Whether he was protecting his UAE friends or not, Clarke failed to act on information about al Qaeda operatives living in the United States. After an al Qaeda "millennium plot" was said to be broken up in Jordan, Clarke authorized an investigation of one of the plotters, Khalil Deek, who lived in Anaheim, California for most of the 1990s. The investigative team reported to Clarke and the NSC directly in December, 1999, stating that Deek's next door neighbor was operating an al Qaeda sleeper cell in Anaheim. No action was taken by Clarke or the NSC.

A few months later, in April 2000, Clarke was quoted in the *Washington Post* as saying that terrorists "will come after our weakness, our Achilles Heel, which is largely here in the United States." Although this was a bold statement, it was unfortunate that Clarke did not have time to arrest the terrorists that he knew were living and plotting in the United States.

In late May 2001, Clarke wrote a memorandum to Condoleezza Rice and her assistant, Stephen Hadley. The title of the memo was "Stopping Abu Zubaydah's Attacks." Cited as part of the evidence that the "System was Blinking Red," the 9/11 Commission said the memo claimed that Zubaydah was preparing to launch "a series of major terrorist attacks" and, when they occurred, "we will wonder what more we could have done to stop them."

Clarke went on to write in his 2004 book *Against All Enemies* that Zubaydah, whose torture testimony presumably led to the capture of KSM and others, was one of "al Qaeda's top operational managers."

Apparently, all of those claims were false as the U.S. government said in 2009 that [Zubaydah was never associated with al Qaeda](#) in any way. Clarke has not said a word about Zubaydah since that time.

Some might wonder why Clarke never thought of his good friends within the UAE royal family, who met with OBL regularly, as sources on al Qaeda. Surely people who met with OBL personally in the two years before 9/11, and were big supporters of al Qaeda like Clarke's friend Al-Maktoum, might have had some information to provide. Another reason to suspect such knowledge is that, although only two of the alleged 9/11 terrorists were said to be citizens of the UAE, nearly all of the alleged hijackers arrived in the United States by traveling through the UAE.

These days Clarke works with his COG partner, former CIA Director James Woolsey, at Paladin Capital, which has offices in New York and the UAE. Clarke is also the chairman of Good Harbor Consulting, where he is in partnership with many people who are making a fortune off the War on Terror. Good Harbor Consulting has an office in Abu Dhabi as well, and [Clarke is known to have a "big footprint" in the UAE.](#)

Meanwhile many Americans remain blissfully ignorant of real threats to civil rights and national security, like having terrorism suspects advise the president on protecting us from terrorism. But here's some advice for the rest of us. Before we accept any more "Real Time" wisdom about terrorism and NSA spying from Bill Maher's guests, maybe we should take a closer look at those guests, starting with Clarke and his colleagues.

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