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MFR 04014514

Event: **Madeleine Albright**

Type of Event: Interview

Date: January 7, 2004

Special Access Issues: Treat as ~~SECRET-NOFORN~~

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Reviewed by: Mike Hurley

Team Numbers: Front Office and Team Three (Counterterrorism Policy)

Location: 2100K

Participants – Commission: Slade Gorton, Tim Roemer, Philip Zelikow, Ernest May, Mike Hurley and Scott Allan

**Background:**

In 1992, Secretary Albright, then a Georgetown University professor, accepted a position to head Clinton's transition team for the NSC. Later, in February of 1993, she was selected as the United States Representative to the United Nations. She served in that post until January 1997, when she became Secretary of State. Since leaving office in January of 2001, Albright returned to Georgetown University and started a consulting firm called The Albright Group. [U]

As Secretary, she frequently traveled and therefore Undersecretary for Policy Tom Pickering would often attend the PC/UBL small group meetings in her place. She considered Pickering to be her alter-ego in those meetings and indicated that the two "had a seamless relationship." [U]

**South Asia:**

Secretary Albright began by discussing concerns she had towards Pakistan and the Taliban. She explained how, upon taking office, Pakistan was an incredibly complicated country for the US. Dealing with Pakistan was a necessity, she said, because of its geographic position, its importance in the Islamic world, Indo-Pak tensions generally and Kashmir specifically. And, as time went on, Islamabad's relationship with the Taliban became increasingly important. [U]

She also noted a personal interest with the country resulting from her relationship with her Pakistani counterpart at the UN. The two would often discuss Pakistani peacekeepers, the Pressler amendment and her father's connection to the UN Commission on Pakistan. [U]

She specifically knew the US had to "have a more robust approach to South Asia." As a result, she named longtime confidant Rick Inderfurth as Assistant Secretary for South Asian Affairs. She also put another trusted aide, Mike Sheehan, in charge of counterterrorism in the fall of 1998. Albright indicated that she had total trust in these two to manage the complexities arising out of South Asia. [U]

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Dealing with Pakistan required serious balancing. During the early part of her tenure, she wanted the Pakistanis to be on notice that we were aware of their risky Afghan policy. We had great concerns for their relationship with the Taliban, but also needed them to assist us with other counterterrorism [redacted] and regional issues. The

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Zelikow discussed the POTUS visit to Islamabad in March 2000 and asked what the most important issues were at that time. She said "there was no question that fighting terrorism was a top priority of the Clinton administration; it was something that was systematically elevated and we knew more and more about a variety of terrorist activities...but it was not our only priority." Other priorities with Pakistan included the nuclear situation, Kashmir, democratization, as well as the getting the Pakistanis to focus on the negatives associated with the Taliban. She qualified this by saying that the two highest priorities, which became increasingly interconnected, were the terrorism and nuclear proliferation issues. [S]

The Secretary noted that we constantly pushed the Pakistanis to pressure the Taliban to give up UBL. Unfortunately, the Taliban were very important for the Pakistanis and Islamabad became more reliant on them. [redacted]

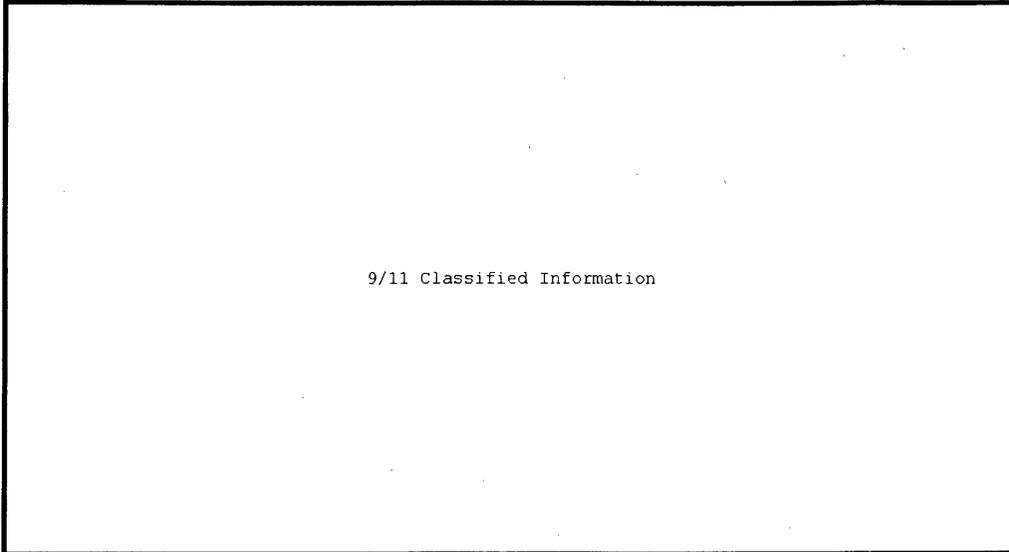
**Spring 1998 UBL Strategy:**

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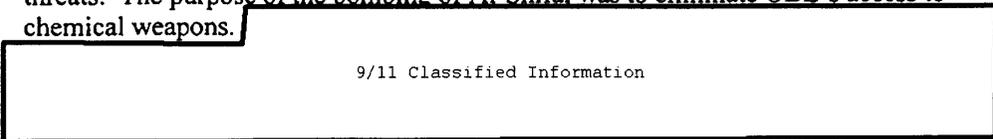
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She did not think we had a clear picture of the problems with Saudi charities, but added that we did raise terrorism funding and finance issues with the Crown Prince Abdullah. [U]

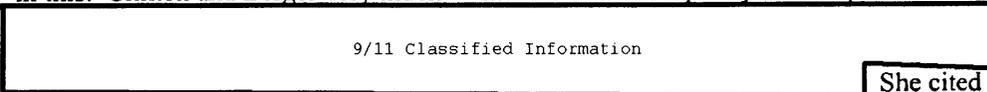
**The 1998 East Africa Attacks:**

Albright stated the first objective of Operation Infinite Reach was [redacted] UBL. Secondary objectives included disrupting the Al-Qaeda network and reducing future threats. The purpose of the bombing of Al-Shifa, was to eliminate UBL's access to chemical weapons.



She recalled that many considered the strikes an overreaction and noted that before 9-11 the level of public concern for terrorism was an issue. She was critical of an American public that did not appreciate the significance of twelve dead Americans and scores of Africans. She added that the administration attempted to raise the level of public focus on the issue. [U]

Albright discussed a sustained military campaign against Al-Qaeda and considered herself the hawk of the Administration after the embassy bombings. She was a strong believer in the effectiveness of the mixture of force and diplomacy, and she was not alone in this. Clinton and Berger very much wanted to continue a policy of disruption.



She cited an *Economist* article which argued that every time the US struck the Islamic world, it

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created "more Osamas." It was not, she mentioned, "a matter of having a willingness, but it had to be effective." She said we wanted to do everything we could without creating a counterforce that would worsen the situation and reduce our international credibility. [U]

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**Spring 1999 Strategy:**

Zelikow asked to what extent there was a new strategy in the winter and spring of 1999.

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Albright noted that there was a general disdain towards coups, citing Musharraf's takeover in October 1999. The Secretary said she and many others were concerned about this event. She continued by saying the coup brought an additional set of sanctions which took away additional leverage in the relationship. [U]

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Albright confirms that from December 1999 through May of 2000 there was tremendous diplomatic focus on South Asia. At the time, she felt that there were few pressure points

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and we had to try "a maximum effort where you could." She said that policymakers felt that since we were making some progress at this time, we should try to stress the benefits of working with us. Albright noted that she "put her best people on this issue...Strobe [Talbot], Mike [Sheehan], Rick [Inderfurth] and Tom [Pickering]." Albright stressed that such efforts made the post 9-11 relationship easier to establish and maintain. [U]

Albright described herself as an optimist and hoped the strategy and escalated focus would succeed. Specifically, she hoped that Musharraf would realize the gravity of the situation and cooperate with the US. [U]

Zelikow asked what the US could have tabled in order to force Islamabad to stop supporting the Taliban. Albright said we had sticks and we tried carrots by temporarily lifting some sanctions, not to mention the President's visit. She believed that we understood the relationship between the Taliban and the Pakistanis, however, she believed that we underestimated the tight relationship between UBL and the Taliban. [U]

Albright said sanctioning the Taliban was the most pragmatic diplomatic way to push the issue, though she admitted that they were not airtight. Albright said that the Clinton Administration was developing a new round of sanctions which would go after terrorist finances, an issue of growing importance. [S]

**USS Cole:**

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She added that 9-11 changed the way we looked at using force. [U]

**Covert Action:**

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<sup>1</sup> During the interview, Albright briefly reviewed copies of the MoN's. [U]

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~~S/NF~~**Leaving Office:**

Zelikow asked whether the USG had a policy that was on a track to succeed in solving the Al-Qaeda problem. She replied that the policy "was activist enough [and] given that if we [ever] had the targets [it] was likely to succeed." She recalled Al-Qaeda as a constant issue that was discussed hourly. [U]

**Miscellaneous:**

She said we need better interagency cooperation, especially dialogue between the FBI and the CIA. However, she believed that the NSC-State relationship was one of the best in the last thirty years and reiterated that the closeness of the relationship cannot always be analyzed by document reviews. [U]

Albright said she had a number of meetings with then incoming Secretary Powell during the transition period. She and Berger told their incoming counterparts that terrorism would take a large amount of their time. Berger informed Albright that incoming National Security Director Rice was surprised by the amount of time terrorism would consume. [U]

Albright spent a tremendous amount of time on Sudan. The embassy was closed for security reasons, but the closing did not restrict communications. The Sudanese, she said, were not offering anything of value. She said those perpetrating stories that the USG lost opportunities by taking a hard-line approach to Khartoum were doing so to further their own agendas. She believed that we had the right Sudanese policy in the late 1990's. [U]

Albright discussed the standard of proof needed to retaliate against terrorists. She indicated that the approach inherited from the first Bush administration was that law enforcement was the way to punish terrorists. [U]

The Secretary said the USG was most concerned about Al-Qaeda bringing chem/bio agents or a dirty bomb into the country. The USG also discussed planes and ships, but the sophisticated nature of the 9-11 attacks was never envisioned. [U]

She noted that two research assistants reviewed DoS documents in preparation for her book. Albright indicated that she would check with them as to whether they reviewed PC level memcons. [U]

  
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