

Event: **Richard Armitage**  
Type of Event: Interview  
Date: January 12, 2004  
Special Access Issues: Treat as ~~SECRET-NOFORN~~  
Prepared by: Scott Allan  
Reviewed by: Philip Zelikow  
Team Numbers: Front Office and Team Three (Counterterrorism Policy)  
Location: Main State  
Participants – Commission: Philip Zelikow and Scott Allan  
Participants-State: Richard Armitage, Karl Hoffman, Will Taft and Jami Borek

**Background:**

Richard Armitage became Deputy Secretary of State on March 26, 2001. Armitage confirmed that prior to his confirmation, he was a member of the "Vulcans", a group of influential foreign policy advisors assisting President George W. Bush during his campaign. Armitage noted that he was not part of the transition team. [U]

In the mid 1980's, Armitage worked a number of counterterrorism issues which included the establishment of the CIA's Counterterrorism Center. During the first Bush administration, he was not involved in any substantive counterterrorism policy work; however, during the Clinton administration he was a member of the National Defense Panel which addressed the concept of homeland security. [U]

When he was asked to be Deputy Secretary he had a read-in with State's office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism and was very impressed with the progress that had taken place from 1989 to 2001. Armitage was particularly impressed with the increases in manpower and the high degree of awareness of the terrorist problem. [U]

During the initial days of the Bush administration (early January – late February 2001) he did not recall being briefed by Richard Clarke. He also noted that he received no CIA briefings on counterterrorism efforts. Armitage qualified this by indicating that elements of the USG are reluctant to brief unconfirmed deputies.<sup>1</sup> [U]

Armitage came to the job with an interest in South Asia because of prior work with Pakistan during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. It soon became apparent that the US would not be able to have a positive relationship with the Pakistanis until the UBL problem was solved. It also became clear that the USG could not address Afghan issues until UBL was out of the country. [U]

**Early 2001 Deputies' Committee Meetings:**

9/11 Classified Information

<sup>1</sup> In a subsequent call, Jami Borek said that while transition team members are given highly classified briefings, this is not the case for unconfirmed nominees. [U]

9/11 Classified Information

As the interagency process continued through the summer, Armitage said he was “getting much more lusty and bold” on tackling the UBL problem. The Deputy Secretary became increasingly frustrated with the “ever more hardening of the Taliban” on the UBL issue and feared that the USG would not be able to make positive progress in South Asia while UBL remained in Afghanistan. [U]

Armitage noted that he was probably not at the late June 29<sup>th</sup> DC meeting but would probably have been at the June 27<sup>th</sup> meeting. Zelikow mentioned the two possible July 2001 DC meetings on Afghanistan and Pakistan but Armitage could not recall the specific meetings and noted that there “were a fair number” of DCs on Afghanistan and Pakistan during the summer. [U]

Generally, Armitage noted that during the spring and summer of 2001, the interagency process was working better on terrorism issues than on many other issues. There were no “wildly divergent views” on counterterrorism objectives, but there was debate on how to achieve them from an operational standpoint. ~~[S]~~

9/11 Classified Information

**Afghan Policy:**

*Afghanistan Pre 9-11*

In the late spring and summer of 2001, the USG was still attempting to separate UBL from the Taliban. Armitage said “we were still trying to figure out if there was a way to not have to go after the Taliban [in order to remove UBL from Afghanistan].”

9/11 Classified Information

9/11 Classified Information

Zelikow asked whether the Bush administration's Afghan strategy was a linear extension of the Clinton strategy. Armitage responded that "in the initial months [of the Bush administration] there was no departure...none." [U]

But as time went on, the DoS was fine tuning the inherited policy. For example, by April of 2001, the DoS was becoming more diplomatically active on the Afghan issue

9/11 Classified Information

9/11 Classified Information

9/11 Classified Information

*Afghanistan Post 9-11*

Armitage felt that our current Afghan policy is moving in the right direction. He stressed that is important to keep the Tajiks onboard with Karzai and that stability in the months leading up to this summer's election will be critical. [U]

The big problem today is the drug issue. Armitage said this is very difficult and that it will not be solved by an alternative crop program. Consequently, Armitage felt that poppy eradication should be part of the military's mission but noted that the Pentagon wants no part of this, and understandably so. [C]

Congress is expanding the budget for State's Afghan programs, but there are some problems. For example he noted that much of the money is strictly controlled by Congress and that the amount is not sufficient to meet all of State's needs. [C]

**Pakistan:**

*Pakistan Pre 9-11*

9/11 Classified Information

9/11 Classified Information

**Saudi Arabia:**

9/11 Classified Information

Prior to 9-11, he could not recall working with the Saudis directly on counterterrorism. Such discussions were usually conducted by Assistant Secretaries Bill Burns or Ned Walker during their discussions with Prince Bandar. [U]

9/11 Classified Information

Armitage said that he was not involved with the Saudi flight which departed shortly after 9-11. He was not sure if the Secretary was aware of or involved with this. [U]

9/11 Classified Information

9/11 Classified Information

**Immediate Post 9-11 Environment:**

9/11 Classified Information

**Miscellaneous:**

The Deputy Secretary mentioned that he would not keep records of the DC meetings because there were always summaries of conclusions. If he disagreed with the summary, he would call the NSC and discuss it with them. [U]

Armitage said that the views he expressed at DCs were consistent with those of the Secretary. If he needed to, Armitage would meet with the Secretary before a DC meeting, but this was rare because the two were in constant contact and he knew where the Secretary stood on most issues. [U]

He recalled that as of March 2001, he had suspicions about Al-Qaeda responsibility for the *Cole*. However, he noted that there was not a "smoking gun." Armitage believed that if the FBI had evidence of Al-Qaeda involvement in early 2001, it was not shared with State Department personnel. [C]

9/11 Classified Information

He acknowledged that the battle for Arab minds is going poorly. He said the lack of progress on the Palestinian problem has a bearing on this as does jealousy of America's

uncontested power. Furthermore, some countries are upset with their own internal situations and in turn blame the US for their troubles. [U]

9/11 Classified Information

Armitage said that in connection with the Clinton's administration's Afghan policy, "you heard me make no complaint or criticism of the previous administration...when you take something over, after about thirty days it's all yours...it doesn't matter what went on before you." He said the same was true for the overall counterterrorism policy which the Bush administration inherited. [U]

9/11 Classified Information

SHA

