

You know, it occurs to me that if a President sets his agenda in his “first 100 days,” as one Bush ad claims, then the claims of Richard Clarke and Paul O’Neill are pretty telling. Do I smell a response ad brewing...

An interesting bit of back-and-forth is happening vis-a-vis the Bush administration's bizarre attempt to paint the Clinton White House as unresponsive to terrorism, while simultaneously claiming to have

This schizophrenia has been a recurrent theme since 9/11, as the Bushies cannot seem to make up their minds whether to attack the Clintonistas as laying a red carpet for al Qaeda or not.

...also did another important step and that was to keep Dick Clarke and his counter intelligence team in place for the very reason of having the continuity, institutional knowledge necessary to make sure that there was no effort to drop the ball in the middle of a transition. That's highly unlikely to happen in an administration to keep such a large organization intact in the White House.

The fact is, what the President did not want to do is to have an ineffective response with respect to al Qaeda. And we felt that up until that point that much of what had been done vis-a-vis al Qaeda had been totally ineffective: some cruise missiles fired at some training camps in Afghanistan that basically didn't hit anything. And it made the U.S. look weak and ineffective. And he wanted a far more effective policy for trying to deal with that. And that process was in motion throughout the spring.

Back in 2002 ... Vice President Cheney's chief aide, Lewis "Scooter" Libby ... in a New Yorker interview ... listed terrorist attacks on U.S. or allied interests going back to 1993 and concluded that America had shown only weakness in response. "The Americans don't have the stomach to defend themselves," he quoted an imaginary Osama bin Laden as saying. "They won't take casualties to defend their interests. They are morally weak."

In the Reagan Administration, 300 Americans died in Lebanon and there was no retaliation. In the Bush I Administration, almost 300 Americans died on Pan Am 103 and no retaliation. Yet for this much smaller threat, we had done a great deal.

This promises to be a very interesting election year.