

DICK CHENEY MADE NO MENTION OF MILLENIUM PLOT IN HIS BOOK

I'm still slogging through Dick Cheney's awful book—I will write some more comprehensive things when I finish.

But I found this passage particularly curious given recent claims by Ali Soufan and Richard Clarke that we might have been able to prevent 9/11:

They had struck us before, blowing a crater five stories deep in the World Trade Center in New York in 1993. Al Qaeda had attacked our embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998, killing hundreds, including twelve Americans. Osama bin Laden, al Qaeda's leader, had personally chosen the operatives who bombed the U.S.S. Cole in a Yemeni harbor in 2000. Seventeen crew members had died. During the nineties, the United States had treated terrorist attacks primarily as law enforcement matters, indicting terrorists when we could, trying them, and sending some of them to prison. But that approach hadn't stopped the attacks. Al Qaeda had just delivered the most devastating blow to our homeland in its history.

We needed a new way forward, one based on the recognition that we were at war.

In this abbreviated passage, Cheney makes his case that we had to combat al Qaeda with a wartime approach, something different that had been used up to that point.

There's a lot else he misses in the lead up to 9/11. He makes no mention of Richard Clarke and his efforts to do something about al Qaeda. That's not surprising given Cheney's churlish approach to mentions of others in this book.

Cheney also lays no blame for the Cole bombing—not on the Navy and not on Clinton. This, in spite of the fact that he attacked similar military errors contributing to the 1983 Marine barracks attack in Beirut and the Blackhawk attack in Somalia, and in spite of his almost gleeful joy at blaming Carter and Clinton for the failed Desert One rescue and Somalia, respectively.

But the failure to mention that law enforcement had discovered and prevented a plot is really telling. Because, of course, alert law enforcement had “stopped the attacks” on one occasion, but it’s that occasion he completely ignores in his recitation of past al Qaeda attacks.

So there it is—the bulk of the justification for Cheney’s One Percent Doctrine, omitting all mention that sound counter-terrorism policy might have prevented the USS Cole or at least the casualties, that our counter-terrorism efforts had successfully interdicted a plot, and that Richard Clarke (and George Tenet) had been issuing shrill warnings in the days leading up to 9/11.

Sure, he needs to omit those details to make his logic work. He needs to present war as the only option.

But it also makes you wonder whether he knows, too, that we could, and should, have prevented 9/11.