



Clinton on Sept. 10, 2001: I could have killed bin Laden but 'I didn't'

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Former President Bill Clinton, mere hours before the 9/11 terror attack, openly acknowledged that he turned down a chance to kill Usama bin Laden, according to a newly released recording.

The former president can be heard admitting this in a speech to Australian business leaders on Sept. 10, 2001.

Until now, Clinton's eerie words had not been made public. But a businessman who had access to the nearly 13-year-old recording handed it over to [Sky News Australia, which broadcast it in a report Monday](#).

"I'm just saying, you know, if I were Usama bin Laden -- he's a very smart guy, I've spent a lot of time thinking about him -- and I nearly got him once," Clinton said on the recording.

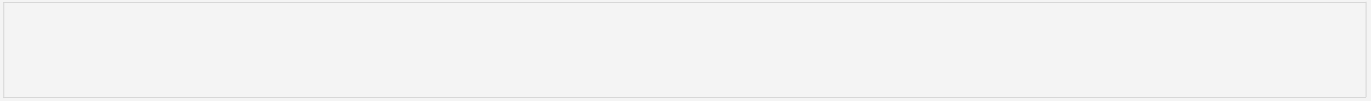
"I nearly got him. And I could have killed him, but I would have to destroy a little town called Kandahar in Afghanistan and kill 300 innocent women and children, and then I would have been no better than him."

"And so I didn't do it," he added.

Clinton had recently left office at the time of the speech.

This is not the first time that the notion was raised that the Clinton administration had the opportunity to detain or even kill bin Laden, but chose not to. Leading up to the final report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, otherwise known as the 9/11 Report, there were conflicting testimonies and information about whether the administration had taken Al Qaeda threats seriously and had turned down a chance to have bin Laden extradited to the U.S. on terrorism charges.

In the end, the 9/11 panel found that there were several missed opportunities to go after bin Laden and Al Qaeda, including a point in which the Central Intelligence Agency had tracked bin Laden to a hunting camp in Afghanistan in 1999. The Clinton administration declined to launch an attack for fear of hitting officials from the United Arab Emirates, who were at the camp on a hunting trip.



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