

Obama Fudges History

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In his speech justifying his escalation of the war in Afghanistan, President Obama reminded us why the US was fighting there in the first place. After 9-11, he recalled, the United Nations Security Council "endorsed the use of all necessary steps to respond to the 9/11 attacks." And then, "only after the Taliban refused to turn over Osama bin Laden," did the United States send its troops into Afghanistan. This account is doubly wrong. First, the UN Security Council did not endorse the use of all necessary steps. Rather, it expressed "its readiness to take all necessary steps to respond to the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001" (UN SC Res. 1368, [linked from here](#)), which is not an endorsement of unilateral U.S. action, but an invitation to Washington to ask the UN for authorization for any military measures it might seek. The Bush administration pointedly did not ask the UN for any such authorization. Second, the Taliban didn't refuse to turn over bin Laden. Rather, they insisted that the United States first provide evidence that bin Laden was involved in the 9-11 attacks; this, the Bush administration refused to do. One doesn't know, of course, what the Taliban would have done had Washington presented them with evidence as is standard practice in extradition cases. But we do know that the Bush administration refused to present that evidence. "[W]e did make very clear to the Taliban which kept asking—publicly ... about proof, that we didn't see this as a regime that was that concerned with western jurisprudence," declared National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice in an Oct. 8, 2001 press briefing, showing her lack of concern for western jurisprudence. Told that the United States had presented evidence to U.S. allies, the Taliban ambassador remarked, "They haven't given it to us." (Laura King, AP, Oct. 2, 2001) When White House press secretary Ari Fleischer was asked how he responded to this Taliban complaint, Fleischer replied, "I don't respond to Taliban complaints." Indeed.