

# William Jefferson Clinton

- U.S. President, 1993-2001
- On December 19, 1998, became the second President in American history to be impeached
- His presidency was filled with foreign policy debacles that would compromise American national security for years to come

The forty-second President of the United States was born William Jefferson Blythe on August 19, 1946, in Hope, Arkansas. His father, William Blythe, died in an automobile accident three months before the birth of the baby, who was adopted by his stepfather, Roger Clinton. Bill Clinton attended Georgetown University, then Oxford, and eventually graduated from **Yale Law School** in 1973. Two years later he married **Hillary Rodham**, whom he had met at Yale. From 1977 to 1979 Clinton was the Attorney General of Arkansas. He was elected Governor of the state in 1978, lost a re-election bid in 1980, and then won back the office in 1982. He was thereafter re-elected in 1984, 1986, and 1990. In 1992 he defeated incumbent George H.W. Bush in the race for U.S. President, and in 1996 was elected to a second term when he defeated Republican Senator Bob Dole. Clinton's presidency was marred by a long succession of scandals, including sexual harassment allegations, lawsuits, an accusation of rape, and, most famously, revelations that he had carried on a sexual affair with 21-year-old White House intern Monica Lewinsky. On December 19, 1998, after having perjured himself repeatedly before a grand jury, Clinton - on charges of perjury and obstruction of justice - became only the second President (after Andrew Johnson in 1868) in American history to be impeached, though he was not removed from office. In October 2001 he was disbarred from practicing law before the United States Supreme Court. He had previously had his Arkansas law license suspended for five years as a result of a disbarment lawsuit brought by a committee of the Arkansas State Supreme Court.

While the aforementioned scandals made bold headlines, Clinton's most significant failings as President concerned less publicized but far more ominous matters of national security. Clinton's loathing of the American military led to his failure in his primary responsibility: the protection of the American people. His actions with regard to military preparedness speak for themselves. In less than three years, deployments increased while manpower decreased from 2.1 million to 1.6 million. That decrease was the foundation upon which stood Al Gore's purported "reinvention" of government. Of the 305,000 employees removed from the federal payroll, 286,000 (or 90%) were military cuts. The statistics for America's defense during the Clinton years reveal the deep-seated animosity of the administration toward those who served in the military. The Army was cut from 18 divisions to 12. The Navy was reduced from 546 ships to 380. Air Force flight squadrons were cut from 76 to 50.

While the U.S. military was used as a 'meals on wheels' service by the Clinton administration in its nation building adventures, the military had its own humanitarian crises at home on its own bases. The pay freeze instituted by Clinton was imposed on a military in which 80 percent of all troops earned \$30,000 per year or less. Food stamp applications soared and re-enlistment rates dropped.

In May 1996, Lt. Col. Robert Patterson was appointed Senior Military Aide to President Clinton, a role which required him to accompany Clinton at all times and carry (handcuffed to his wrist) what is known colloquially as the "nuclear football" - a black bag which contains the top-secret codes needed in case of nuclear war. Patterson fulfilled this role from 1996 to 1998. In addition, he was the operational commander for all military units assigned to the White House, including Air Force One, Marine One, Camp David, White House Transportation Agency and White House Mess. In his book *Derelection of Duty*, Patterson writes that "[d]amn near all" of his military associates viewed the administration's military policies as "open-ended" and "rudderless."

As the carrier of the nuclear football, Patterson was astounded that Clinton repeatedly said on the campaign trail no American children would have to go to sleep with nuclear missiles pointed at them. Such a statement was patently untrue. Conversations he overheard in the car transporting the President most often did not revolve around foreign policy issues but subpoenas, lawyers, and executive privilege. The Clintonites had priorities, and national security was not one of them.

The nuclear football goes everywhere with the President. Several days after testifying in the Paula Jones deposition, Patterson went to exchange the codes for the football with Mr. Clinton, only to find that Clinton did not have them. "I don't have mine on me," said the President. "I'll track it down, guys, and get back to you." The codes could not be found that day.

Patterson notes that in the wake of the President's well-publicized troubles with women, the White House staff referred to attractive females as "security risks." It was then that he realized, "The biggest security risk was the President himself." In the aforementioned case of the lost security codes, for instance, one would think the administration's top priority would have been to locate them. But instead, the chief worry for **John Podesta** and White House deputy counsel Bruce Lindsey was that this story might find its way to the press.

One of Clinton's distinct talents was the empathetic "I feel your pain" charade. Consider, for instance, the 1998 flight above tornado-ravaged Florida as Clinton, White House spokesman Joe Lockhart, and Bruce Lindsey played cards aboard Marine One. Patterson recalls, "When it was time to align Marine One with the press helicopter for a picture, the President quickly peered out the window, feigning an interested and grief-stricken expression. The sole reason for the trip, in his mind apparently, was for that photograph."

Along with the lack of respect for the military went a failure to understand its purpose. One of Hillary Clinton's staffers remarked, during a drive through South Africa, that the First Lady was appalled by the poverty and wondered aloud whether the country did not have a military to do something about it. The Clintons saw the military primarily as a humanitarian organization, not as a professional force to defend the country.

**Osama bin Laden** and his terrorist-related activities were well known to the United States by 1995. Clinton had an opportunity to capture him in the fall of 1998, but was unavailable. When he was finally reached, further consultation was needed with various secretaries. The two-hour

window in which bin Laden could have been caught was lost. Says Patterson, "This lost bin Laden hit typified the Clinton administration's ambivalent, indecisive way of dealing with terrorism. Ideologically, the Clinton administration was committed to the idea that most terrorists were misunderstood, had legitimate grievances, and could be appeased, which is why such military action as the administration authorized was so halfhearted, and ineffective, and designed more for 'show' than for honestly eliminating a threat."

Hits on Americans by Islamic fundamentalists associated bin Laden continued through the decade as the price for an administration that was derelict in its duties and traitorous in its effect. The nation was at risk while the commander-in-chief golfed, cavorted, dialogued or was otherwise unavailable for the ultimate task of defense against a foreign enemy.

Clinton chose not to support research and development for a Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) system to shield the United States against the specter of a missile attack by any of the world's numerous unstable, nuclear-capable regimes - in spite of a Donald Rumsfeld-headed commission's 1997 determination that nuclear threats to the American mainland from Russia, China, North Korea, and Iran were grave enough to warrant an immediate push to develop an effective defense system. Even the threat of an accidental first-strike ought to be of great concern to those entrusted with overseeing national security. As Bill Gertz reported in his 1999 book *Betrayal: How the Clinton Administration Undermined American Security* (which is the source for the information that fills out the remainder of this profile), on January 25, 1995 America came within a hairsbreadth of a Russian-launched nuclear attack - when Russian military forces temporarily mistook a Norwegian scientific rocket for an American ballistic missile headed for Russia. President Boris Yeltsin, for the first time in Russian history, went so far as to activate his *Cheget*, the display screen showing attack assessment data and containing the infamous button which, when pressed, authorizes the Russian military to initiate nuclear retaliation. Rep. Curt Weldon observed that Yeltsin was "one decision point away - less than several minutes away - from launching an all-out nuclear attack on the United States." Nevertheless, Clinton refused to deal with the unpleasant reality of nuclear threats from abroad. **As columnist David Limbaugh observed**, Clinton sought "to pacify truly dangerous nations with unilateral concessions, under the flawed notion that totalitarian regimes will return kindness for kindness." Moreover, wrote Limbaugh, Clinton was "afraid of rocking the international boat and mucking up his legacy again," and thus preferred to leave the nuclear dilemma for future administrations to address.

Clinton dismantled the Energy Department's Russian Fission monitoring program which had kept tabs on Russia's nuclear arsenal - at a time when CIA reports showed that Russia's alarmingly poor control over its 21,900 nuclear warheads made it more possible than ever that an accidental Russian strike could occur. Colonel Robert Bykov, a career strategic missile officer and member of the Russian parliament, candidly lamented that Russia "could launch an accidental nuclear strike on the United States in the matter of seconds it takes you to read these lines." Clinton boasted about his diplomatic success in having persuaded the Russian military to detarget its intercontinental missiles away from American sites - the alleged crowning achievement of his 1994 summit with President Yeltsin. But in point of fact, the detargeting he lauded was an unverifiable, purely symbolic gesture that could easily be undone within a matter of fifteen minutes and provided not a scintilla of added safety for the American people. Moreover (notwithstanding Clinton's glowing reports of improved safeguards), Russia, in

violation of its every diplomatic pledge, was engaged in a major arms buildup and the construction of a massive underground network of bunkers and command centers for waging nuclear war. In fact, Russia had already signed contracts to illegally sell advanced nuclear defense systems to such nations as India, China, and the United Arab Emirates. CIA Director George Tenet testified in 1998 that Russia was illegally giving enormous assistance to Iran's missile program as well. On July 22, 1998, Iran stunned the world by conducting the first test flight of its new Shahab-3 medium-range missile capable of carrying nuclear or biological weapons. Yet Clinton vetoed a 1998 piece of legislation that would have brought retaliatory sanctions against Russia. Russia was by no means the only front where Clinton policies created conditions that left Americans in greater, rather than lesser, danger. For example, the President loosened America's longstanding ban on the export of supercomputers and other high-technology products to Communist China; this allowed Beijing to dramatically improve the potential accuracy of its intercontinental missiles, vaulting the Chinese missile program forward by at least ten years. A prime American beneficiary of this Clinton policy was Loral Space & Communications chairman Bernard Schwartz, the single largest contributor to the Clinton campaign and to the **Democratic Party**. In 1996 it was discovered that Chinese spies had stolen nuclear design secrets from the Los Alamos National Laboratory, the most damaging security breach in American history - giving China the ability to produce and deliver nuclear warheads via submarines, mobile missiles, and long-range missiles. Yet a 1998 Senate Governmental Affairs Committee concluded that foreign campaign contributions Clinton had received "were facilitated by individuals with extensive ties to China." A July 1997 Energy Department report, which detailed even more comprehensively China's ongoing espionage, came to light on the eve of Clinton's scheduled summit with the Chinese president. Because this meeting was designed to dramatize his purported success in improving relations with Beijing, Clinton ordered the Energy Department to conceal from Congress its findings about the espionage. Unhappily for Clinton, the new information came to light while Congress was examining how sources tied to China's intelligence agency and military had helped him win the 1996 election - by illegally pouring rivers of money into his campaign coffers. Nevertheless, he boasted that, thanks to his administration's diplomacy, "there are no more nuclear missiles pointed at any children in the United States. I'm proud of that." But in April 1998 the CIA revealed that 13 of China's 18 intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) were in fact targeted on the United States. This was an ominous revelation, particularly against the backdrop of Chinese General Xiong Guangkai's 1995 warning that Beijing was prepared to respond to any American interference in Chinese-Taiwanese conflicts by actually bombing the city of Los Angeles. Moreover, as the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency revealed, China was - in direct violation of U.S.-Russian agreements - trying to buy advanced ICBM technology from Russia and colossal ten-warhead missiles from Ukraine. China was also continuing its illegal transfer of missile technology and equipment to Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Libya, Syria, Pakistan, and Turkey. In 1998, U.S. intelligence reports warned of China's rapid progress in developing missiles capable of hitting targets 7,500 miles away. Clinton mandated that no official White House spokesmen tell the public about the menacing Chinese buildup. A military analyst at the Heritage Foundation eventually discovered it and went public with the information. Another dismal chapter of Clinton administration foreign policy was the growing crisis in North Korea, whose military had already amassed enough plutonium to build nuclear weapons as early as 1994. When Korean leaders denied outside inspectors access to suspected weapons-production sites, Clinton negotiated a plan giving them ten years to dismantle their weapons program and five years to surrender their existing plutonium stockpile.

He thereby shifted to a future President's administration the burden of eventually dealing with the potentially horrific consequences of a Korean buildup. In the spring of 1997, U.S. intelligence satellite photographs showed some 15,000 Korean workers building an immense underground nuclear facility in an area called Kumchangni. Clinton waited for more than a year, until July 1998, before informing Congress about the Kumchangni construction. Clinton remained opposed to SDI when even when America's National Security Agency learned in 1999 that Chinese scientists were aiding North Korea's satellite program for the guidance of long-range missiles. Then there was the case of Iraq, which Defense Secretary William Cohen estimated to have "produced as much as 200 tons of VX [nerve gas], theoretically enough to kill every man, woman, and child on the face of the earth." Notwithstanding Cohen's sobering estimate, Clinton assented to a U.N.-brokered deal in the mid-1990s that greatly restricted inspectors' access to **Saddam Hussein's** "sensitive presidential locations" that were suspected of housing nuclear and biological weapons production plants. Afraid of being cornered into a potentially embarrassing public showdown with Saddam, Clinton elected to pacify the Iraqi dictator by intervening to dissuade U.N. inspectors from making surprise visits to the suspected weapons sites.

In short, Clinton placed his preoccupation with his own public image above the safety of his countrymen and the world at large. This was the most enduring legacy of Bill Clinton's presidency.

A longtime avid supporter of **Al Sharpton**, Clinton in April 2007 **attended** annual National Action Network convention in New York.

*Part of this profile is adapted from the article "**Dereliction of Duty**," written by Mary Walsh and published by **FrontPageMagazine.com** on April 2, 2003.*