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1996: British Intelligence and Al-Qaeda Allegedly Cooperate in Plot to Assassinate Libyan Leader



Al-Muqatila, a cover for a Libyan al-Qaeda cell, tries to kill Libyan leader Colonel Mu'ammarr al-Qadhafi. Al-Qadhafi survives, but several militants and innocent bystanders are killed. [DAWN (KARACHI), 10/30/2002] According to David Shayler, a member of the British intelligence agency MI5, and Jean-Charles Brisard and Guillaume Dasquié, authors of the controversial book The Forbidden Truth, the British intelligence agency MI6 pays al-Qaeda the equivalent of \$160,000 to help fund this assassination attempt. Shayler later goes to prison for revealing this information and the British press is banned from discussing the case (see November 5, 2002). [NEW YORK TIMES, 8/5/1998; OBSERVER, 11/10/2002] Anas al-Liby, a member of the group, is given political asylum in Britain and lives there until May 2000 despite suspicions that he is an important al-Qaeda figure (see 1995-May 2000). He is later implicated in the al-Qaeda bombing of two US embassies in Africa in 1998 (see Late 1993-Late 1994; 10:35-10:39 a.m., August 7, 1998). [FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION, 2002; OBSERVER, 11/10/2002]

Entity Tags: Al-Muqatila, UK Secret Intelligence Service (MI6), Mu'ammarr al-Qadhafi, United Kingdom, Al-Qaeda, UK Security Service (MI5)

Category Tags: Counterterrorism Action Before 9/11, 1998 US Embassy Bombings, Londonistan - UK Counterterrorism

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1996: Radical London Imam Bakri Establishes Organization Later Linked to Terror Attacks



London imam Sheikh Omar Bakri Mohammed establishes the radical Islamist organization Al-Muhajiroun, which will go on to be linked to several terror attacks (see Early 2003-April 6, 2004 and April 30, 2003). Bakri, who works as an informer for British intelligence at some point (see Spring 2005-Early 2007), had fled Syria in 1982 after taking part in a failed Muslim Brotherhood rising against the government and had been expelled from Saudi Arabia as an Islamist dissident in 1985. He had previously headed the British branch of the international movement Hizb ut Tahrir, but had split with its international leaders. Al-Muhajiroun becomes known for touring university campuses and shopping precincts to look for recruits and also for holding marches and rallies across Britain. In addition, Bakri establishes Britain's first Shariah court,

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which has no legal standing, but which enables him to settle disputes for a fee. [O'NEILL AND MCGRORY, 2006, PP. 105-107]

Entity Tags: Al-Muhajiroun, Sheikh Omar Bakri Mohammed

Category Tags: Omar Bakri & Al-Muhajiroun, Londonistan - UK Counterterrorism
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1996: Asian Countries Unite to Counter US Influence

The “Shanghai Five” is formed in Shanghai with China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan as its founding members. Its purpose is to resolve old Soviet-Chinese border disputes between the countries and ease military tension in the border regions. An agreement titled “Treaty on Deepening Military Trust in Border Regions” is signed at this time. The five members are said to be bound together by mutual distrust of US hegemony in the region.

[BBC, 6/21/2001; JANE'S INTELLIGENCE, 7/19/2001; GLOBALSECURITY (.ORG), 7/4/2005] In early 2001 the group will morph into the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (see June 14, 2001).

Entity Tags: Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)

Timeline Tags: US confrontation with Iran

Category Tags: US Dominance

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1996-2000: Bin Laden Visits Friendly Government Officials in Qatar

Bin Laden reportedly visits Qatar at least twice between the years of 1996 and 2000. He visits Abdallah bin Khalid al-Thani, the country's religious minister who later becomes the interior minister. [NEW YORK TIMES, 6/8/2002; ABC NEWS, 2/7/2003] In 1999, the New York Times reports that bin Laden visited al-Thani “in Qatar twice in the mid-1990s.” [NEW YORK TIMES, 7/8/1999] Presumably one of these times is in May 1996, when bin Laden stops by Qatar while moving from Sudan to Afghanistan, and is reportedly warmly greeted by officials there (see May 18, 1996). Former CIA officer Robert Baer will later claim that one meeting between bin Laden and al-Thani takes place on August 10, 1996. [BAER, 2003, PP. 195] Al-Thani is known to shelter Muslim extremists. For instance, the CIA narrowly missed catching al-Qaeda leaders Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM), Ayman al-Zawahiri, and Mohammed Atef at his farm in May 1996 (see January-May 1996). Al-Thani is a member of Qatar's royal family, but ABC News will later report, “One former CIA official who preferred to remain anonymous said the connection went beyond al-Thani and there were others in the Qatari royal family who were sympathetic and provided safe havens for al-Qaeda.” [NEW YORK TIMES, 6/8/2002; ABC NEWS, 2/7/2003] Al-Thani will reportedly shelter al-Qaeda leaders like KSM even after 9/11 (see March 28, 2003), but the US has not taken any action against him, such as officially declaring him a terrorism financier.

Entity Tags: Osama bin Laden, Al-Qaeda, Abdallah bin Khalid al-Thani, Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, Robert Baer

Category Tags: Hunt for Bin Laden, Osama Bin Laden, Other Government-Militant Collusion

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1996-1997: Ptech Begins to Get US Government Contracts



Ptech is a Boston computer company connected to a number of individuals suspected of ties to officially designated terrorist organizations (see 1994). These alleged ties will be of particular concern because of Ptech's potential access to classified government secrets. Ptech specializes in what is called enterprise

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Ptech logo. [Source: Ptech]

architecture. It is the design and layout for an organization's computer networks. John Zachman, considered the father of enterprise architecture, later will say that Ptech could collect crucial information from the organizations and agencies with which it works. "You would know where the access points are, you'd know how to get in, you would know where the weaknesses are, you'd know how to destroy it." Another computer expert will say, "The software they put on your system could be collecting every key stroke that you type while you are on the computer. It could be establishing a connection to the outside terrorist organization through all of your security measures." [WBZ 4 (BOSTON), 12/9/2002] In late 1996, an article notes that Ptech is doing work for DARPA, a Defense Department agency responsible for developing new military technology. [GOVERNMENT EXECUTIVE, 9/1/1996] In 1997, Ptech gains government approval to market its services to "all legislative, judicial, and executive branches of the federal government." Beginning that year, Ptech will begin working for many government agencies, eventually including the White House, Congress, Army, Navy, Air Force, NATO, FAA, FBI, US Postal Service, Secret Service, the Naval Air Systems Command, IRS, and the nuclear-weapons program of the Department of Energy. For instance, Ptech will help build "the Military Information Architecture Framework, a software tool used by the Department of Defense to link data networks from various military computer systems and databases." Ptech will be raided by US investigators in December 2002 (see December 5, 2002), but not shut down. [WALL STREET JOURNAL, 12/6/2002; CNN, 12/6/2002; NEWSWEEK, 12/6/2002; BOSTON GLOBE, 12/7/2002] A former director of intelligence at the Department of Energy later will say he would not be surprised if an al-Qaeda front company managed to infiltrate the department's nuclear programs. [UNLIMITED (AUCKLAND), 12/9/2002] Ptech will continue to work with many of these agencies even after 9/11. After a Customs Department raid of Ptech's offices in late 2002, their software will be declared safe of malicious code. But one article will note, "What no one knows at this point is how much sensitive government information Ptech gained access to while it worked in several government agencies." [WBZ 4 (BOSTON), 12/9/2002]

Entity Tags: White House, US Department of Defense, US Department of the Air Force, US Department of the Navy, Secret Service, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, US Postal Service, Federal Aviation Administration, US Department of the Marines, Internal Revenue Service, US Congress, Ptech Inc., John Zachman, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, US Congress

Category Tags: BMI and Ptech, Terrorism Financing

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1996-1997 and After: Bin Laden's Brother-in-Law Khalifa Said to Fund Al-Qaeda Linked Group in Yemen



Osama bin Laden's brother-in-law, Mohammed Jamal Khalifa, helps fund a militant group in Yemen that will later take credit for the 2000 USS *Cole* bombing. The group, the Islamic Army of Aden, is apparently formed in 1996 or 1997, but is not heard from until May 1998, when it issues the first of a series of political statements. The group will kidnap 16 mainly British tourists in December 1998 and four of the tourists will be killed during a shootout with police. The remaining hostages are rescued. [YEMEN GATEWAY, 1/1999] Evidence ties Khalifa to the 1995 Bojinka plot and other violent acts, though he has denied all allegations that he is linked to terrorist groups. Vincent Cannistraro, former head of the CIA's Counterterrorist Center, later claims that not only did Khalifa fund the Islamic Army of Aden, but that 9/11 hijacker Khalid Almihdhar had ties to the group as well. (A San Diego friend of Almihdhar's will later say that Almihdhar told him he was a member of the

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group (see Around October 12, 2000).) [WALL STREET JOURNAL, 9/19/2001] Cannistraro further notes that Khalifa went on to form the group after being deported from the US in 1995. “He should never have been allowed to leave US custody.” [SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE, 10/24/2001] The group praises bin Laden and uses a training camp reportedly established by him in southern Yemen. But the group is more clearly tied to Sheikh Abu Hamza al-Masri, a handless, one-eyed Afghan war veteran living and preaching openly in London. [WASHINGTON POST, 9/23/2001]

Entity Tags: Vincent Cannistraro, Abu Hamza al-Masri, Islamic Army of Aden, Mohammed Jamal Khalifa, Khalid Almihdhar

Category Tags: Abu Hamza Al-Masri, Mohammed Jamal Khalifa, 2000 USS Cole Bombing, Terrorism Financing, Yemeni Militant Collusion, Bin Laden Family
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1996-2001: 1989 Speech by Milosevic Wildly Distorted by Western Media



Slobodan Milosevic speaking in Kosovo on June 28, 1989, to commemorate the 600th anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo. [Source: Tomislav Peternek/ Polaris] (click image to enlarge)

Professor Gil White will point out in 2002 that Slobodan Milosevic’s 1989 speech in Kosovo in front of a huge crowd is consistently misrepresented as a call to ethnic war, when in fact it was the exact

opposite—a call for racial tolerance and reconciliation. [GIL-WHITE, 2/9/2002] In the speech itself, Milosevic said, “Equal and harmonious relations among Yugoslav peoples are a necessary condition for the existence of Yugoslavia... Serbia has never had only Serbs living in it. Today, more than in the past, members of other peoples and nationalities also live in it. This is not a disadvantage for Serbia. I am truly convinced that it is its advantage. The national composition of almost all countries in the world today, particularly developed ones, has also been changing in this direction. Citizens of different nationalities, religions and races have been living together more and more frequently and more and more successfully... Yugoslavia is a multinational community and it can survive only under the conditions of full equality for all nations that live in it.” Milosevic ended the speech, saying “Long live peace and brotherhood among peoples!” [NATIONAL TECHNICAL INFORMATION SERVICE, 6/28/1989; BBC, 6/28/1989] In 1996, the New York Times describes this speech as follows: “In a fervent speech before a million Serbs, [Milosevic] galvanized the nationalist passions that two years later fueled the Balkan conflict” [NEW YORK TIMES, 7/28/1996] On the anniversary of the speech in 1998 the Washington Post reports, “Nine years ago today, Milosevic’s fiery speech [in Kosovo] to a million angry Serbs was a rallying cry for nationalism and boosted his popularity enough to make him the country’s uncontested leader.” [WASHINGTON POST, 7/29/1998] In 1999, the Economist described this as “a stirringly virulent nationalist speech.” [ECONOMIST, 6/5/1999] In 2001, Time Magazine reported that with this speech, “Milosevic whipped a million Serbs into a nationalist frenzy in the speech that capped his ascent to power.” [TIME (EUROPE), 7/9/2001] Also in 2001, the BBC, which in 1989 provided the translation of Milosevic’s speech quoted above, claims that in 1989, “on the 600-year anniversary of the battle of Kosovo Polje, [Milosevic] gathered a million Serbs at the site of the battle to tell them to prepare for a new struggle.” [BBC, 4/1/2001] Richard Holbrooke

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repeats these misrepresentations in his 1999 book, referring to the speech as “racist” and “inflammatory.” Holbrooke even calls Milosevic a liar for denying the false accusations. [HOLBROOKE, 1999, PP. 29]

Entity Tags: Slobodan Milosevic, Richard Holbrooke

Category Tags: Al-Qaeda in Balkans

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1996-1999: Albanian Mafia and KLA Take Control of Balkan Heroin Trafficking Route



Albanian Mafia and KLA take control of Balkan route heroin trafficking from Turkish criminal groups. In 1998, Italian police are able to arrest several major traffickers. Many of the criminals involved are also activists for the Kosovo independence movement, and some are KLA leaders. Much of the money is funneled through the KLA (see 1997), which is also receiving support and protection from the US. The Islamic influence is obvious in the drug operations, which for example shut down during the month of Ramadan. Intercepted telephone messages speak of the desire “to submerge Christian infidels in drugs.” [AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, 6/9/1998; CORRIERE DELLA SERA (MILAN), 10/15/1998; CORRIERE DELLA SERA (MILAN), 1/19/1999] Testifying to Congress in December 2000, Interpol Assistant Director Ralph Mutschke states that “Albanian organized crime groups are hybrid organizations, often involved both in criminal activity of an organized nature and in political activities, mainly relating to Kosovo. There is evidence that the political and criminal activities are deeply intertwined.” Mutschke also says that there is also strong evidence that bin Laden is involved in funding and organizing criminal activity through links to the Albanian mafia and the KLA.(see Early 1999) [US CONGRESS, 12/13/2000

Entity Tags: Kosovo Liberation Army, Ralph Mutschke, Osama bin Laden

Category Tags: Al-Qaeda in Balkans, Drugs

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1996-2001: Moussaoui Recruits Muslims to Fight in Kosovo and Chechnya



In 1996, Zacarias Moussaoui begins recruiting other young Muslims to fight for Islamic militant causes in Chechnya and Kosovo. [TIME, 9/24/2001] He recruits for Chechen warlord Ibn Khattab, the Chechen leader most closely linked to al-Qaeda (see August 24, 2001). Details on his Kosovo links are still unknown. For most of this time, he is living in London and is often seen at the Finsbury Park mosque run by Abu Hamza al-Masri. For a time, Moussaoui has two French Caucasian roommates, Jerome and David Courtailler. The family of these brothers later believes that Moussaoui recruits them to become radical militants. The brothers will later be arrested for suspected roles in plotting attacks on the US embassy in Paris and NATO’s headquarters in Brussels. [SCOTSMAN, 10/1/2001] David Courtailler will later confess that at the Finsbury Park mosque he was given cash, a fake passport, and the number of a contact in Pakistan who would take him to an al-Qaeda camp. [LONDON TIMES, 1/5/2002] French intelligence later learns that one friend he recruits, Masooud Al-Benin, dies in Chechnya in 2000 (see Late 1999-Late 2000). Shortly before 9/11, Moussaoui will try to recruit his US roommate at the time, Hussein al-Attas, to fight in Chechnya. Al-Attas will also see Moussaoui frequently looking at websites about the Chechnya conflict. [DAILY OKLAHOMAN, 3/22/2006] Moussaoui also goes to Chechnya himself in 1996-1997 (see 1996-Early 1997).

Entity Tags: Abu Hamza al-Masri, Masooud Al-Benin, Hussein al-Attas, Ibn Khattab, David Courtailler, Jerome Courtailler, Zacarias Moussaoui

Category Tags: Al-Qaeda in Balkans, Zacarias Moussaoui, Londonistan - UK Counterterrorism, Abu Hamza Al-Masri, Islamist Militancy in Chechnya

1996 and After: Al-Qaeda Revives Bosnia Connections through Saudi Government Charity; US Fails to Shut Charity Down



Saber Lahmar.
[Source: Public domain]

Author Roland Jacquard will later claim that in 1996, al-Qaeda revives its militant network in Bosnia in the wake of the Bosnian war and uses the Saudi High Commission (SHC) as its main charity front to do so. [JACQUARD, 2002, PP. 69] This charity was founded in 1993 by Saudi Prince Salman bin Abdul-Aziz and is so closely linked to and funded by the Saudi government that a US judge will later render it immune to a 9/11-related lawsuit after concluding that it is an organ of the Saudi government.

[NEW YORK LAW JOURNAL, 9/28/2005]

- In 1994, British aid worker Paul Goodall is killed in Bosnia execution-style by multiple shots to the back of the head. A SHC employee, Abdul Hadi al-Gahtani, is arrested for the murder and admits the gun used was his, but the Bosnian

government lets him go without a trial. Al-Gahtani will later be killed fighting with al-Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan. [SCHINDLER, 2007, PP. 143-144]

- In 1995, the Bosnian Ministry of Finance raids SHC's offices and discovers documents that show SHC is "clearly a front for radical and terrorism-related activities." [BURR AND COLLINS, 2006, PP. 145]

- In 1995, US aid worker William Jefferson is killed in Bosnia. One of the likely suspects, Ahmed Zuhair Handala, is linked to the SHC. He also is let go, despite evidence linking him to massacres of civilians in Bosnia. [SCHINDLER, 2007, PP. 263-264]

- In 1997, a Croatian apartment building is bombed, and Handala and two other SHC employees are suspected of the bombing. They escape, but Handala will be captured after 9/11 and sent to Guantanamo prison. [SCHINDLER, 2007, PP. 266]

- In 1997, SHC employee Saber Lahmar is arrested for plotting to blow up the US embassy in Sarajevo. He is convicted, but pardoned and released by the Bosnian government two years later. He will be arrested again in 2002 for involvement in an al-Qaeda plot in Bosnia and sent to Guantanamo prison (see January 18, 2002).

- By 1996, NSA wiretaps reveal that Prince Salman is funding Islamic militants using charity fronts (Between 1994 and July 1996).

- A 1996 CIA report mentions, "We continue to have evidence that even high ranking members of the collecting or monitoring agencies in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Pakistan - such as the Saudi High Commission - are involved in illicit activities, including support for terrorists" (see January 1996).

- Jacquard claims that most of the leadership of the SHC supports bin Laden. The SHC, while participating in some legitimate charitable functions, uses its cover to ship illicit goods, drugs, and weapons in and out of Bosnia. In May 1997, a French military report concludes: "(T)he Saudi High Commission, under cover of humanitarian aid, is helping to foster the lasting Islamization of Bosnia by acting on the youth of the country. The successful conclusion of this plan would provide Islamic fundamentalism with a perfectly positioned platform in Europe and would provide cover for members of the bin Laden organization." [JACQUARD, 2002, PP. 69-71]

However, the US will take no action until shortly after 9/11, when it will lead a raid on the SHC's Bosnia offices. Incriminating documents will be found, including information on how to counterfeit US State Department ID badges, and handwritten notes about meetings with bin Laden. Evidence of a planned attack using crop duster planes is found as well. [SCHINDLER, 2007, PP. 129, 284] Yet

even after all this, the Bosnian government will still refuse to shut down SHC's offices and they apparently remain open (see January 25, 2002).

Entity Tags: Salman bin Abdul-Aziz, Al-Qaeda, Paul Goodall, Ahmed Zuhair Handala, Central Intelligence Agency, William Jefferson, Abdul Hadi al-Gahtani, Saber Lahmar, Saudi High Commission

Category Tags: Al-Qaeda in Balkans, Counterterrorism Action Before 9/11, Saudi Arabia, Terrorism Financing

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Early 1996: KSM Said to be Building a Bomb

In early 1996, while US officials are waiting for approval from officials in Qatar so they can arrest Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM) there, the Qatari government tells the US that it fears KSM is constructing an explosive device. They also say that he possesses more than 20 different passports. [LOS ANGELES TIMES, 12/22/2002] By this time, the US is aware of KSM's involvement in the 1995 Bojinka plot involving explosives (see January 6, 1995) and his role in the 1993 WTC bombing (see March 20, 1993).

Entity Tags: Qatar, Khalid Shaikh Mohammed

Timeline Tags: 9/11 Timeline

Category Tags: Warning Signs, Khalid Shaikh Mohammed

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January 1996: CIA Report Exposes Militant Charity Fronts in Bosnia; Ties to Saudi Arabia and Other Governments Discovered



International Islamic Relief Organization logo. [Source: International Islamic Relief Organization]

The CIA creates a report for the State Department detailing support for terrorism from prominent Islamic charities. The report, completed just as the Bosnian war is winding down, focuses on charity fronts that have helped the mujaheddin in Bosnia. It concludes that of more than 50 Islamic nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in existence, "available information indicates that approximately one-third... support terrorist groups or employ individuals who are suspected of having terrorist connections." The report notes that most of the offices of NGOs active in Bosnia are located in Zagreb, Sarajevo, Zenica, and

Tuzla. There are coordination councils there organizing the work of the charity fronts. The report notes that some charities may be "backed by powerful interest groups," including governments. "We continue to have evidence that even high ranking members of the collecting or monitoring agencies in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Pakistan - such as the Saudi High Commission - are involved in illicit activities, including support for terrorists." The Wall Street Journal will later comment, "Disclosure of the report may raise new questions about whether enough was done to cut off support for terrorism before the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001... and about possible involvement in terrorism by Saudi Arabian officials." [CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY, 1/1996; WALL STREET JOURNAL, 5/9/2003] The below list of organizations paraphrases or quotes the report, except for informational asides in parentheses.

- The International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO). "The IIRO is affiliated with the Muslim World League, a major international organization largely financed by the government of Saudi Arabia." The IIRO has funded Hamas, Algerian radicals, Al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya (a.k.a. the Islamic Group, an Egyptian radical militant group led by Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman), Ramzi Yousef, and six militant training camps in Afghanistan. "The former head of the IIRO office in the Philippines, Mohammad Jamal Khalifa, has been linked to

Manila-based plots to target the Pope and US airlines; his brother-in-law is Osama bin Laden.”

- Al Haramain Islamic Foundation. It has connections to Al-Gama’a al-Islamiyya and helps support the mujaheddin battalion in Zenica. Their offices have been connected to smuggling, drug running, and prostitution.

- Human Concern International, headquartered in Canada. Its Swedish branch is said to be smuggling weapons to Bosnia. It is claimed “the entire Peshawar office is made up of [Al-Gama’a al-Islamiyya] members.” The head of its Pakistan office (Ahmed Said Khadr) was arrested recently for a role in the bombing of the Egyptian embassy in Pakistan (see November 19, 1995). (It will later be discovered that Khadr is a founder and major leader of al-Qaeda (see Summer 2001 and January 1996-September 10, 2001).)

- Third World Relief Agency (TWRA). Headquartered in Sudan, it has ties to Al-Gama’a al-Islamiyya. “The regional director of the organization, Elfatih Hassanein, is the most influential [charity] official in Bosnia. He is a major arms supplier to the government, according to clandestine and press reporting, and was forced to relocate his office from Zagreb in 1994 after his weapons smuggling operations were exposed. According to a foreign government service, Hassanein supports US Muslim extremists in Bosnia.” One TWRA employee alleged to also be a member of Al-Gama’a al-Islamiyya carried out a suicide car bombing in Rijeka, Croatia (see October 20, 1995).

- The Islamic African Relief Agency (IARA). Based in Sudan, it has offices in 30 countries. It is said to be controlled by Sudan’s ruling party and gives weapons to the Bosnian military in concert with the TWRA. (The US government will give the IARA \$4 million in aid in 1998 (see February 19, 2000).)

- Benevolence International Foundation (BIF) (the report refers to it by an alternate name, Lajnat al-Birr al-Islamiyya (LBI)). It supports mujaheddin in Bosnia. It mentions “one Zagreb employee, identified as Syrian-born US citizen Abu Mahmud,” as involved in a kidnapping in Pakistan (see July 4, 1995).

[CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY, 1/1996] (This is a known alias (Abu Mahmoud al Suri) for Enaam Arnaout, the head of BIF’s US office.) [USA V. ENAAM M. ARNAOUT, 10/6/2003, PP. 37] This person “matches the description... of a man who was allegedly involved in the kidnapping of six Westerners in Kashmir in July 1995, and who left Pakistan in early October for Bosnia via the United States.”

- Maktab al-Khidamat (MAK), a.k.a. Al-Kifah. This group has ties to Ramzi Yousef, Osama bin Laden, Al-Gama’a al-Islamiyya, and possibly Hezbollah. Both the former director of its Zagreb office [Kamer Eddine Kherbane] and his deputy [Hassan Hakim] were senior members of Algerian extremist groups. Its main office in Peshawar, Pakistan, funds at least nine training camps in Afghanistan. “The press has reported that some employees of MAK’s New York branch were involved in the World Trade Center bombing [in 1993].” (Indeed, the New York branch, known as the Al-Kifah Refugee Center, is closely linked to the WTC bombing and the CIA used it as a conduit to send money to Afghanistan (see January 24, 1994).

- Muwafaq Foundation. Registered in Britain but based in Sudan, it has many offices in Bosnia. It has ties to Al-Gama’a al-Islamiyya and “helps fund the Egyptian Mujahedin Battalion in Bosnia” and “at least one training camp in Afghanistan” (see 1991-1995).

- Qatar Charitable Society, based in Qatar. It has possible ties to Hamas and Algerian militants. A staff member in Qatar is known to be a Hamas operative who has been monitored discussing militant operations. (An al-Qaeda defector will later reveal that in 1993 he was told this was one of al-Qaeda’s three most important charity fronts (see 1993)).

- Red Crescent (Iran branch). Linked to the Iranian government, it is “Often used by the Iranian [intelligence agency] as cover for intelligence officers, agents, and arms shipments.”

- Saudi High Commission. “The official Saudi government organization for collecting and disbursing humanitarian aid.” Some members possibly have ties to Hamas and Algerian militants (see 1996 and After).

- Other organizations mentioned are the Foundation for Human Rights, Liberties, and Humanitarian Relief (IHH) (a.k.a. the International Humanitarian Relief Organization), Kuwait Joint Relief Committee (KJRC), the Islamic World Committee, and Human Appeal International. [CENTRAL

INTELLIGENCE AGENCY, 1/1996]

After 9/11, former National Security Council official Daniel Benjamin will say that the NSC repeatedly questioned the CIA with inquiries about charity fronts. “We knew there was a big problem between [charities] and militants. The CIA report “suggests they were on the job, and, frankly, they were on the job.” [WALL STREET JOURNAL, 5/9/2003] However, very little action is taken on the information before 9/11. None of the groups mentioned will be shut down or have their assets seized.

Entity Tags: Muwafaq Foundation, Muslim World League, National Security Council, Saudi High Commission, Red Crescent (Iran branch), Qatar Charitable Society, US Department of State, Third World Relief Agency, Mohammed Jamal Khalifa, Islamic World Committee, Islamic African Relief Agency, Al-Gama’a al-Islamiyya, Al Haramain Islamic Foundation, Ahmed Said Khadr, Benevolence International Foundation, Central Intelligence Agency, Daniel Benjamin, Elfatih Hassanein, International Islamic Relief Organization, Kuwait Joint Relief Committee, Human Appeal International, Foundation for Human Rights, Hamas, Saudi Arabia

Category Tags: Al-Qaeda in Balkans, Counterterrorism Action Before 9/11, Mohammed Jamal Khalifa, Robert Wright and Vulgar Betrayal, Saudi Arabia, Terrorism Financing, Al-Kifah/MAK, BIF

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Between 1996 and August 1998: FBI Squad Threatens to Build Antenna Because NSA Won’t Share Monitoring of Bin Laden’s Phone Calls



I-49, a squad of FBI agents and Justice Department prosecutors that began focusing on bin Laden in 1996 (see January 1996), is upset that the NSA is not sharing its monitoring of bin Laden’s satellite phone with other agencies (see December 1996). The squad develops a plan to build their own antennas near Afghanistan to capture the satellite signal themselves. As a result, the NSA gives up transcripts from 114 phone calls to prevent the antennas from being built, but refuses to give up any more. Presumably, this must have happened at some point before bin Laden stopped regularly using his satellite phone around August 1998 (see December 1996). [WRIGHT, 2006, PP. 344] Also presumably, some of these transcripts will then be used in the embassy bombings trial that takes place in early 2001 (see February-July 2001), because details from bin Laden’s satellite calls were frequently used as evidence and some prosecutors in that trial were members of I-49. [CNN, 4/16/2001]

Entity Tags: Federal Bureau of Investigation, National Security Agency, I-49, Osama bin Laden

Category Tags: Remote Surveillance

Bookmark and Share

January 1996: Muslim Extremists Plan Suicide Attack on White House



US intelligence obtains information concerning a suicide attack on the White House planned by individuals connected with Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman and a key al-Qaeda operative. The plan is to fly from Afghanistan to the US and crash into the White House. [US CONGRESS, 9/18/2002]

Entity Tags: US intelligence, Al-Qaeda

January 1996: Squad Uniting Prosecutors and FBI Agents Begins Focusing on Bin Laden



Jack Cloonan. [Source: PBS]

The Justice Department directs an existing unit called Squad I-49 to begin building a legal case against bin Laden. This unit is unusual because it combines prosecutors from the Southern District of New York, who have been working on bin Laden related cases, with the FBI's New York office, which was the FBI branch office that dealt the most with bin Laden -related intelligence. Patrick Fitzgerald effectively directs I-49 as the lead prosecutor. FBI agent Dan Coleman becomes a key member while simultaneously representing the FBI at Alec Station, the CIA's new bin Laden unit (February 1996) where he has access to the CIA's vast informational database. [LANCE, 2006, PP.

218-219] The other initial members of I-49 are: Louis Napoli, John Anticev, Mike Anticev, Richard Karniewicz, Jack Cloonan, Carl Summerlin, Kevin Cruise, Mary Deborah Doran, and supervisor Tom Lang. All are FBI agents except for Napoli and Summerlin, a New York police detective and a New York state trooper, respectively. The unit will end up working closely with FBI agent John O'Neill, who heads the New York FBI office. Unlike the CIA's Alec Station, which is focused solely on bin Laden, I-49 has to work on other Middle East -related issues. For much of the next year or so, most members will work on the July 1996 crash of TWA Flight 800, because it crashed near New York and is suspected to have been carried out by Middle Eastern militants (July 17, 1996-September 1996). However, in years to come, I-49 will grow considerably and focus more on bin Laden. [WRIGHT, 2006, PP. 240-241] After 9/11, the "wall" between intelligence collection and criminal prosecution will often be cited for the failure to stop the 9/11 attacks. But as author Peter Lance will later note, "Little more than ten months after the issuance of Jamie Gorelick's 'wall memo,' Fitzgerald and company were apparently disregarding her mandate that criminal investigation should be segregated from intelligence threat prevention. Squad I-49... was actively working both jobs." Thanks to Coleman's involvement in both I-49 and the CIA's Alec Station, I-49 effectively avoids the so-called "wall" problem. [LANCE, 2006, PP. 220]

Entity Tags: Mike Anticev, Tom Lang, US Department of Justice, Patrick Fitzgerald, Kevin Cruise, Dan Coleman, Carl Summerlin, Alec Station, Louis Napoli, Mary Deborah Doran, John Anticev, Jack Cloonan, I-49, Federal Bureau of Investigation

Category Tags: Counterterrorism Action Before 9/11

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Between 1996 and September 11, 2001: FBI Directly Monitors Militants in Afghanistan with Hi-Tech Phone Booth



I-49, a squad of FBI agents and Justice Department prosecutors that began focusing on bin Laden in 1996 (see January 1996), is upset that the NSA is not sharing with them data it has obtained through the monitoring of al-Qaeda. To get around this, the squad builds a satellite telephone booth in Kandahar, Afghanistan, for international calls. The FBI squad not only monitors the calls, but also videotapes the callers with a camera hidden in the booth. [WRIGHT, 2006, PP. 344] It has not been revealed when this booth was built or what information was gained from it. However, the New York Times will later paraphrase an Australian official, who says that in early September 2001, "Just about everyone in Kandahar and the al-Qaeda camps knew that

something big was coming, he said. ‘There was a buzz.’” Furthermore, also in early September 2001, the CIA monitors many phone calls in Kandahar and nearby areas where al-Qaeda operatives allude to the upcoming 9/11 attack (see Early September 2001).

Entity Tags: I-49, National Security Agency, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Osama bin Laden

Category Tags: Remote Surveillance

Bookmark and Share

January 1996: Richard Perle Says Arming of Bosnians Is of ‘Vital Interest’ to US; Suggests Turkey Should Help



Prominent neoconservative Richard Perle tells the Turkish Daily News that the arming and training of Bosnian Muslims is of “vital interest” to the US and suggests that “among the NATO allies Turkey is [the] number one candidate for the job.” He says that Turkey would need perhaps \$50 million in financing to do the work. [TURKISH DAILY NEWS, 1/22/1996]

Entity Tags: Richard Perle

Category Tags: Al-Qaeda in Balkans

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1996-Early 1997: Probe of Suspicious Company with Saudi Ties Is Stalled



A 1996 CIA report shows that US intelligence believes that the International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO), a Saudi charity with strong ties to the Saudi government, is funding a variety of radical militant groups (see January 1996). However, no action is taken against it. Also in 1996, Valerie Donahue, a Chicago FBI agent who is presumably part of Robert Wright’s Vulgar Betrayal investigation, begins looking into Global Chemical Corp., a chemical company that appears to be an investment fraud scheme. The company is jointly owned by the IIRO and Abrar Investments Inc. Suspected terrorism financier Yassin al-Qadi has investments in Abrar Investments and he is also director of its Malaysian corporate parent. Donahue finds that Abrar Investments gave Global Chemical more than half a million dollars, and the IIRO gave it over \$1 million. Further, the Saudi embassy has recently sent \$400,000 to the IIRO. The president of Global Chemical is Mohammed Mabrook, a Libyan immigrant and suspected Hamas operative. Mabrook had previously worked for a pro-Palestinian group led by Hamas leader Mousa Abu Marzouk. (Marzouk is in US detention from 1995 to May 1997, but he is apparently merely held for deportation and not questioned about matters like Global Chemical (see July 5, 1995-May 1997).) Donahue discovers that Global Chemical is keeping a warehouse full of highly toxic chemicals, but they do not seem to be selling them. In late 1996, a chemical weapons expert examines the chemicals and opines that they appear to be meant for a laboratory performing biochemistry or manufacturing explosives. While no direct evidence of bomb making is found, investigators know that a Hamas associate of Marzouk, Mohammad Salah, had previously trained US recruits to work with “basic chemical materials for the preparation of bombs and explosives.” (see 1989-January 1993) In January 1997, the FBI raids Global Chemical and confiscates the chemicals stockpiled in the warehouse. Mabrook is questioned, then let go. He moves to Saudi Arabia. Abrar Investments vacate their offices and cease operations. In June 1999, Mabrook will return to the US and will be prosecuted. He will be tried on fraud charges for illegal dealings with the IIRO and given a four year sentence. Meanwhile, the IIRO ignores an FBI demand for accounting records to explain how it spent several million dollars that seem to have gone to the IIRO and disappeared. In January 1997, Donahue requests a search warrant to find and confiscate the records, saying that she

suspect IIRO officials are engaged in “possible mail and wire fraud... and money laundering.” Apparently, the probe stalls and the financial records are never maintained. Some investigators believe the probe is dropped for diplomatic reasons. [WALL STREET JOURNAL, 11/26/2002; WALL STREET JOURNAL, 12/16/2002; CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION, 10/29/2003] Investigators will later be prohibited from investigating a possible link between al-Qadi and the 1998 US embassy bombings (see October 1998). After 9/11, the US will apparently have ample evidence to officially label the IIRO a funder of terrorism, but will refrain from doing so for fear of embarrassing the Saudi government (see October 12, 2001).

Entity Tags: Valerie Donahue, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Mohammed Mabrook, Global Chemical Corp., International Islamic Relief Organization, Yassin al-Qadi, Vulgar Betrayal, Abrar Investments

Category Tags: Robert Wright and Vulgar Betrayal, Terrorism Financing
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January-May 1996: US Fails to Capture KSM Living Openly in Qatar



Abdallah bin Khalid al-Thani. [Source: Fethi Belaid/ Agence France-Presse]

Since Operation Bojinka was uncovered in the Philippines (see January 6, 1995), many of the plot’s major planners, including Ramzi Yousef, are found and arrested. One major exception is 9/11 mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM). He flees to Qatar in the Persian Gulf, where he has been living openly using his real name, enjoying the patronage of Abdallah bin Khalid al-Thani, Qatar’s Interior Minister and a member of the royal family (see 1992-1996). [ABC NEWS, 2/7/2003] He had accepted al-Thani’s

invitation to live on his farm around 1992 (see 1992-1995). The CIA learned KSM was living in Qatar in 1995 after his nephew Ramzi Yousef attempted to call him there while in US custody (see After February 7, 1995-January 1996). The Sudanese government also tipped off the FBI that KSM was traveling to Qatar. Some CIA agents strongly urged action against KSM after his exact location in Qatar was determined, but no action was taken (see October 1995). In January 1996, KSM is indicted in the US for his role in the 1993 WTC bombing, and apparently this leads to an effort to apprehend him in Qatar that same month. FBI Director Louis Freeh sends a letter to the Qatari government asking for permission to send a team after him. [LOS ANGELES TIMES, 12/22/2002] One of Freeh’s diplomatic notes states that KSM was involved in a conspiracy to “bomb US airliners” and is believed to be “in the process of manufacturing an explosive device.” [NEW YORKER, 5/27/2002] Qatar confirms that KSM is there and is making explosives, but they delay handing him over. After waiting several months, a high-level meeting takes place in Washington to consider a commando raid to seize him. However, the raid is deemed too risky, and another letter is sent to the Qatari government instead. One person at the meeting later states, “If we had gone in and nabbed this guy, or just cut his head off, the Qatari government would not have complained a bit. Everyone around the table for their own reasons refused to go after someone who fundamentally threatened American interests....” [LOS ANGELES TIMES, 12/22/2002] Around May 1996, Mohammed’s patron al-Thani makes sure that Mohammed and four others are given blank passports and a chance to escape. A former Qatari police chief later says the other men include Ayman al-Zawahiri and Mohammed Atef, al-Qaeda’s number two and number three leaders, respectively (see Early 1998). [LOS ANGELES TIMES, 9/1/2002; ABC NEWS,

2/7/2003] In 1999, the New York Times will report that “Although American officials said they had no conclusive proof, current and former officials said they believed that the Foreign Minister [Sheik Hamed bin Jasim al-Thani] was involved, directly or indirectly” in tipping off KSM. [NEW YORK TIMES, 7/8/1999] KSM will continue to occasionally use Qatar as a safe haven, even staying there for two weeks after 9/11 (see Late 2001).

Entity Tags: Ramzi Yousef, Mohammed Atef, Hamed bin Jasim al-Thani, Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, Abdallah bin Khalid al-Thani, Ayman al-Zawahiri, Louis J. Freeh, Osama bin Laden

Timeline Tags: 9/11 Timeline

Category Tags: Ayman Al-Zawahiri, Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, Counterterrorism Action Before 9/11, Other Government-Militant Collusion

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1996-Early 1997: Moussaoui Fights with Militants in Chechnya

According to British intelligence, Zacarias Moussaoui fights in Chechnya with Islamist militants there. Using previously gained computer skills, he mostly works as an information specialist. He helps militants forge computer links and post combat pictures on radical Muslim websites. It is not known when British intelligence learns this. [USA TODAY, 6/14/2002] Moussaoui also helps recruit militants to go fight in Chechnya (see 1996-2001). He likely assists Chechen warlord Ibn Khattab, the Chechen leader most closely linked to al-Qaeda (see August 24, 2001).

Entity Tags: Ibn Khattab, Zacarias Moussaoui

Timeline Tags: 9/11 Timeline

Category Tags: Zacarias Moussaoui, Islamist Militancy in Chechnya

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1996-August 2000: Ahmed Alghamdi and Other Hijackers Reportedly Connected to US Military Base

After 9/11, there will be media accounts suggesting some of the 9/11 hijackers trained at US military bases (see September 15-17, 2001). According to these accounts, four of the hijackers trained at Pensacola Naval Air Station, a base that trains many foreign nationals. One neighbor will claim that Ahmed Alghamdi lived in Pensacola until about August 2000. This neighbor will claim that Alghamdi appeared to be part of a group of Arab men who often gathered at the Fountains apartment complex near the University of West Florida. She will recount, “People would come and knock on the doors. We might see three or four, and they were always men. It was always in the evening. The traffic in and out, although it was sporadic, was constant every evening. They would go and knock, and then it would be a little while and someone would look out the window to see who it was, like they were being very cautious. Not your normal coming to the door and opening it.” [NEW YORK TIMES, 9/15/2001] It is not known when Alghamdi is first seen in Pensacola. However, he uses the address of a housing facility for foreign military trainees located inside the base on drivers’ licenses issued in 1996 and 1998. Saeed Alghamdi and Ahmed Alnami also list the same address as Ahmed Alghamdi on their drivers license and car registrations between 1996 and 1998. Other records connect Hamza Alghamdi to that same address. However, the Pensacola News Journal reports that “The news articles caution that there are slight discrepancies between the FBI list of suspected hijackers and the military training records, either in the spellings of their names or in their birth dates. They also raise the possibility that the hijackers stole the identities of military trainees.” [WASHINGTON POST, 9/16/2001; PENSACOLA NEWS JOURNAL, 9/17/2001] It is unclear if these people were the 9/11 hijackers or just others with similar names. The US military has never definitively denied that they were

the hijackers, and the media lost interest in the story a couple of weeks after 9/11.

Entity Tags: Hamza Alghamdi, Saeed Alghamdi, Ahmed Alghamdi, Ahmed Alnami

Timeline Tags: 9/11 Timeline

Category Tags: Other 9/11 Hijackers, Alleged Hijackers' Flight Training

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1996-December 2000: Majority of 9/11 Hijackers Attempt to Fight in Chechnya



A young Ahmed Alnami in Saudi Arabia. [Source: Boston Globe]

At least 11 of the 9/11 hijackers travel or attempt to travel to Chechnya between 1996 and 2000 (see 1999-2000):

- Nawaf Alhazmi fights in Chechnya, Bosnia, and Afghanistan for several years, starting around 1995. [OBSERVER, 9/23/2001; ABC NEWS, 1/9/2002; US CONGRESS, 6/18/2002; US CONGRESS, 7/24/2003
- Khalid Almihdhar fights in Chechnya, Bosnia, and Afghanistan for several years, usually with Nawaf Alhazmi. [US CONGRESS, 6/18/2002; LOS ANGELES TIMES, 9/1/2002; US CONGRESS, 7/24/2003
- Salem Alhazmi spends time in Chechnya with his brother Nawaf Alhazmi. [ABC NEWS, 1/9/2002] He also possibly fights with his brother in Afghanistan. [US CONGRESS, 7/24/2003
- Ahmed Alhaznawi leaves for Chechnya in 1999 [ABC NEWS, 1/9/2002] , and his family loses contact with him in late 2000. [ARAB NEWS, 9/22/2001]
- Hamza Alghamdi leaves for Chechnya in early 2000 [WASHINGTON POST, 9/25/2001; INDEPENDENT, 9/27/2001] or sometime around January 2001. He calls home several times until about June 2001, saying he is in Chechnya. [ARAB NEWS, 9/18/2001]
- Mohand Alshehri leaves to fight in Chechnya in early 2000. [ARAB NEWS, 9/22/2001]
- Ahmed Alnami leaves home in June 2000, and calls home once in June 2001 from an unnamed location. [ARAB NEWS, 9/19/2001; WASHINGTON POST, 9/25/2001]
- Fayez Ahmed Banihammad leaves home in July 2000 saying he wants to participate in a holy war or do relief work. [WASHINGTON POST, 9/25/2001; ST. PETERSBURG TIMES, 9/27/2001] He calls his parents one time since. [ARAB NEWS, 9/18/2001]
- Ahmed Alghamdi leaves his studies to fight in Chechnya in 2000, and is last seen by his family in December 2000. He calls his parents for the last time in July 2001, but does not mention being in the US. [ARAB NEWS, 9/18/2001; ARAB NEWS, 9/20/2001]
- Waleed M. Alshehri disappears with Wail Alshehri in December 2000, after speaking of fighting in Chechnya. [ARAB NEWS, 9/18/2001; WASHINGTON POST, 9/25/2001]
- Wail Alshehri, who had psychological problems, went with his brother to Mecca to seek help. Both disappear, after speaking of fighting in Chechnya. [WASHINGTON POST, 9/25/2001]
- Majed Moqed is last seen by a friend in 2000 in Saudi Arabia, after communicating a “plan to visit the United States to learn English.” [ARAB NEWS, 9/22/2001]

Clearly, there is a pattern: eleven hijackers appear likely to have fought in Chechnya, and two others are known to have gone missing. It is possible that others have similar histories, but this is hard to confirm because “almost nothing [is] known about some.” [NEW YORK TIMES, 9/21/2001] Indeed, a colleague later claims that hijackers Mohamed Atta, Marwan Alshehhi, Ziad Jarrah, and would-be hijacker Ramzi Bin al-Shibh wanted to fight in Chechnya but were told in early 2000 that they were needed elsewhere. [WASHINGTON POST, 10/23/2002; REUTERS, 10/29/2002] Reuters later reports, “Western diplomats play

down any Chechen involvement by al-Qaeda.” [REUTERS, 10/24/2002]

Entity Tags: Hamza Alghamdi, Ahmed Alghamdi, Ahmed Alhaznawi, Ahmed Alnami, Marwan Alshehri, Fayez Ahmed Banihammad, Mohand Alshehri, Mohamed Atta, Khalid Almihdhar, Ziad Jarrah, Nawaf Alhazmi, Waleed M. Alshehri, Salem Alhazmi, Wail Alshehri, Majed Moqed, Ramzi bin al-Shibh

Timeline Tags: 9/11 Timeline

Category Tags: Other 9/11 Hijackers, Islamist Militancy in Chechnya

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After 1995: Algerian Militant Group GIA Gains Influence in Key Al-Qaeda Mosque in Italy



The Algerian Groupe Islamique Armé (GIA) gains more influence in the Islamic Cultural Institute, a militant mosque in Milan, Italy, following the death of its former head, Anwar Shaaban. Under the leadership of Shaaban, who died in the Bosnian war, the mosque had been built up into a key European logistics center for militant Islamists. [CHICAGO TRIBUNE, 10/22/2001] The mosque is described as “the main al-Qaeda station house in Europe” (see 1993 and After), but the GIA is said to be infiltrated by government informers at this point and is losing strength in Algeria due to the penetration (see October 27, 1994-July 16, 1996).

Entity Tags: Groupe Islamique Armé, Islamic Cultural Institute

Category Tags: Al-Qaeda in Italy, Algerian Militant Collusion

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Mid-Late 1990s: Pakistani-Based Proliferation Network Begins to Use Turkish Fronts in US



A Pakistani-based proliferation network centered around nuclear scientist A. Q. Khan and the ISI intelligence agency begins to use Turkish fronts to acquire technology in the US. This move is made because it is thought Turks are less likely to attract suspicion than Pakistanis. At one point the operation is headed by ISI Director Lt. Gen. Mahmood Ahmed. According to FBI whistleblower Sibel Edmonds, intercepted communications show Mahmood and his colleagues stationed in Washington are in constant contact with attachés at the Turkish embassy. Edmonds will also say that venues such as the American Turkish Council (ATC), a Washington-based lobby group, are used for handovers, and packages containing nuclear secrets are then delivered by Turkish operatives, using their cover as members of the diplomatic and military community, to contacts at the Pakistani embassy in Washington. Edmonds will also allege: “Certain greedy Turkish operators would make copies of the material and look around for buyers. They had agents who would find potential buyers.” [SUNDAY TIMES (LONDON), 1/6/2008]

Entity Tags: Pakistan Directorate for Inter-Services Intelligence, American-Turkish Council, Mahmood Ahmed, Sibel Edmonds

Timeline Tags: A. Q. Khan's Nuclear Network

Category Tags: Sibel Edmonds, Pakistan and the ISI, Pakistani Nukes & Islamic Militancy, Mahmood Ahmed

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Mid-Late 1990s: French Ask British Authorities to Ban Militant Newsletter, British Decline



At some point in the mid-to-late 1990s, French authorities ask their counterparts in Britain to ban the militant newsletter Al Ansar, which is published in Britain by supporters of the radical Algerian organization Groupe Islamique Armé (GIA). Authors Sean O'Neill and Daniel McGrory will describe the newsletter: “This was handed out at mosques, youth clubs, and restaurants popular with young Arabs. It eulogized atrocities carried out by

mujaheddin in Algeria, recounting graphic details of their operations, and described in deliberately provocative language an attack on a packed passenger train and the hijacking of a French airliner in December 1994 which was intended to be flown into the Eiffel Tower.” They add that its past editors “read like a who’s who of Islamist extremists,” including Abu Hamza al-Masri, an informer for the British authorities (see Early 1997 and Before October 1997), Abu Qatada, another British informer (see June 1996-February 1997), and Rachid Ramda, the mastermind of a series of attacks in France who operated from Britain (see 1994 and July-October 1995). The newsletter is also linked to Osama bin Laden (see 1994 and January 5, 1996). However, British authorities say that the newsletter cannot be banned. [O’NEILL AND MCGRORY, 2006, PP. 112-113]


Entity Tags: Groupe Islamique Armé

Category Tags: Londonistan - UK Counterterrorism, Algerian Militant Collusion

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1996-September 11, 2001: New York Office of Emergency Management Practices for Terrorist Attacks, but Not Using Planes as Missiles



New York City’s Office of Emergency Management (OEM) was created in 1996 by Mayor Rudolph Giuliani to manage the city’s response to catastrophes, including terrorist attacks (see 1996). In the years preceding 9/11, it holds regular interagency training exercises, aiming to carry out a tabletop or field exercise every eight to 12 weeks. Mayor Giuliani is personally involved in many of these. The exercises are very lifelike: Giuliani will later recount, “We used to take pictures of these trial runs, and they were so realistic that people who saw them would ask when the event shown in the photograph had occurred.” Scenarios drilled include disasters such as a sarin gas attack in Manhattan, anthrax attacks, and truck bombs. One exercise, which takes place in May 2001, is based on terrorists attacking New York with bubonic plague (see May 11, 2001). Another, conducted in conjunction with the New York Port Authority, includes a simulated plane crash. Just one week before 9/11, OEM is preparing a tabletop exercise with the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), to develop plans for business continuity in New York’s Financial District—where the World Trade Center is located—after a terrorist attack. Jerome Hauer, OEM director from 1996 to February 2000, later testifies, “We looked at every conceivable threat that anyone on the staff could think of, be it natural or intentional but not the use of aircraft as missiles.” He tells the 9/11 Commission: “We had aircraft crash drills on a regular basis. The general consensus in the city was that a plane hitting a building... was that it would be a high-rise fire.... There was never a sense, as I said in my testimony, that aircraft were going to be used as missiles.” [TIME, 12/22/2001; GIULIANI, 2002, PP. 62-63; JENKINS AND EDWARDS-WINSLOW, 9/2003, PP. 30; 9/11 COMMISSION, 5/19/2004; 9/11 COMMISSION, 5/19/2004 ; 9/11 COMMISSION, 7/24/2004, PP. 283] OEM will be preparing for a bioterrorism exercise the morning of 9/11 (see 8:48 a.m. September 11, 2001) (see September 12, 2001).

Entity Tags: New York City Metropolitan Transportation Authority, New York Port Authority, Jerry Hauer, Office of Emergency Management, Rudolph (“Rudy”) Giuliani

Timeline Tags: 9/11 Timeline

Category Tags: Counterterrorism Action Before 9/11, Military Exercises

Bookmark and Share

1996-September 11, 2001: Enron Gives Taliban Millions in Bribes in Effort to Get Afghan Pipeline Built



The Associated Press will later report that the Enron corporation bribes Taliban officials as part of a “no-holds-barred bid to strike a deal for an

energy pipeline in Afghanistan.” Atul Davda, a senior director for Enron’s International Division, will later claim, “Enron had intimate contact with Taliban officials.” Presumably this effort began around 1996, when a power plant Enron was building in India ran into trouble and Enron began an attempt to supply it with natural gas via a planned pipeline through Afghanistan (see 1995-November 2001 and June 24, 1996). In 1997, Enron executives privately meet with Taliban officials in Texas (see December 4, 1997). They are “given the red-carpet treatment and promised a fortune if the deal [goes] through.” It is alleged Enron secretly employs CIA agents to carry out its dealings overseas. According to a CIA source, “Enron proposed to pay the Taliban large sums of money in a ‘tax’ on every cubic foot of gas and oil shipped through a pipeline they planned to build.” This source claims Enron paid more than \$400 million for a feasibility study on the pipeline and “a large portion of that cost was pay-offs to the Taliban.” Enron continues to encourage the Taliban about the pipeline even after Unocal officially gives up on the pipeline in the wake of the African embassy bombings (see December 5, 1998). An investigation after Enron’s collapse in 2001 (see December 2, 2001) will determine that some of this pay-off money ended up funding al-Qaeda. [ASSOCIATED PRESS, 3/7/2002]

Entity Tags: Atul Davda, Enron, Taliban, Central Intelligence Agency

Category Tags: Pipeline Politics

Bookmark and Share

January 2, 1996: New Republic Editors Say Bosnian Intervention Aimed at Increasing US Influence in Middle East



The New York Times publishes an op-ed piece by Jacob Heilbrunn and Michael Lind titled, “The Third American Empire,” in which the authors assert that US military involvement in the Balkans should not be seen as the assertion of US influence in Europe, but as part of a strategy to exert US dominance in the Middle East and Central Asia. “[W]e should view the Balkans as the western frontier of America’s rapidly expanding sphere of influence in the Middle East,” they write. [NEW YORK TIMES, 1/2/1996]

Entity Tags: Jacob Heilbrunn, Michael Lind

Category Tags: Al-Qaeda in Balkans, US Dominance

Bookmark and Share

January 5, 1996: British Newspaper Links Bin Laden to 1995 Wave of Militant Attacks in France



Rachid Ramda. [Source: Public domain]

The London Times publishes one of the first Western newspaper articles about Osama bin Laden. The article says, “A Saudi Arabian millionaire is suspected of channeling thousands of pounds to Islamic militants in London which may have bankrolled French terrorist bombings.” Bin Laden is referred to as “Oussama ibn-Laden.” It says that he sent money to Rachid Ramda, editor in chief of Al Ansar, the London-based newsletter for the radical Algerian militant group the GIA. However, government sources say that the money ostensibly for the newsletter was really used to fund a wave of militant attacks in France in 1995 (see July-October 1995). Ramda was arrested in London on November 4,

1995 at the request of the French government. [LONDON TIMES, 1/5/1996] Two other people working as editors on the Al Ansar newsletter in 1995, Abu Qatada and Mustafa Setmariam Nasar, will later be found to be important al-Qaeda leaders (see June 1996-1997 and October 31, 2005). It will take ten years for Britain to extradite Ramda to France. He will be tried in France in

2005 and sentenced to life in prison for his role in the 1995 French attacks. [BBC, 10/26/2007] Bin Laden may have met with Ramda while visiting Britain in 1994 (see 1994). It will later be revealed that the 1995 attacks in France were led by an Algerian government mole (see July-October 1995), and the GIA as a whole was run by a government mole (see October 27, 1994-July 16, 1996).

Entity Tags: Mustafa Setmariam Nasar, Osama bin Laden, Groupe Islamique Armé, Rachid Ramda, Abu Qatada

Category Tags: Osama Bin Laden, Londonistan - UK Counterterrorism, Algerian Militant Collusion, Abu Qatada

Bookmark and Share

January 1996-September 10, 2001: Canada Takes No Action Against Founding Al-Qaeda Leader, Despite Evidence Against Him



Ahmed Said Khadr in a hospital bed during his hunger strike, being visited by journalists. [Source: Canadian Broadcasting Corporation]

In late 1995, Ahmed Said Khadr is arrested in Pakistan for a suspected role in the November 1995 bombing of the Egyptian embassy in that country (see November 19, 1995). Khadr was born an Egyptian and became a Canadian citizen, and is an employee of Human Concern International (HCI), a Canadian-based charity. [BURR AND COLLINS, 2006, PP. 276-277]

Smuggling During the Afghan War -

The Canadian government was already aware of Khadr's militant ties before the bombing. In the late 1980s, a

federal Canadian official was asked by a diplomat in Pakistan about Khadr. The official did not know who that was, so the diplomat explained that Khadr was involved in smuggling Saudi money into Afghanistan while using HCI as a cover. This person further said that, "For months, the Afghan scene in Islamabad buzzed with this and other information" about Khadr. This was passed on to other parts of the Canadian government, but no action was taken. [NATIONAL POST, 9/6/2002]


Khadr Released Due to Hunger Strike - After his late 1995 arrest, Khadr begins a hunger strike from within a Pakistani prison. In January 1996, Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien visits Pakistan and, in response to popular pressure caused by the hunger strike, asks the Pakistani government to release him. Khadr is released several months later. He returns to Canada and stops working with HCI, but starts a new charity called Health and Education Project International. [BURR AND COLLINS, 2006, PP. 276-277]

HCI Linked to Al-Qaeda - A January 1996 CIA report claims that the entire Peshawar, Pakistan, HCI branch that Khadr heads is staffed by Islamist militants and that its Swedish branch is smuggling weapons to Bosnia (see January 1996). In a June 1996 interview with an Egyptian weekly, Osama bin Laden surprisingly identifies HCI as a significant supporter of al-Qaeda. [EMERSON, 2006, PP. 398, 423]


Monitoring Khadr's Associates - Also around 1996, the Canadian intelligence agency CSIS begins monitoring several suspected radical militants living in Canada. The CSIS will later call one of them, Mahmoud Jaballah, an "established contact" of Khadr. [CANADIAN SECURITY INTELLIGENCE SERVICE, 2/22/2008]

Another, Mohamed Zeki Mahjoub, will also be called a contact of Khadr.

[CANADIAN SECURITY INTELLIGENCE SERVICE, 2/22/2008] The CSIS has yet to reveal details of when such contacts are made, except in the case of Mohamed Harkat. It will be mentioned that in March 1997 Harkat is recorded saying that

he is about to meet Khadr in Ottawa, Canada. [CANADIAN SECURITY INTELLIGENCE SERVICE, 2/22/2008 

Wanted Again in Pakistan - On September 5, 1998, the Globe and Mail will report that Khadr is wanted in Pakistan again for his role in the Egyptian embassy bombing. A Pakistani official says that Khadr is living in Afghanistan, has contacts with Osama bin Laden, and is using his charity as a cover for smuggling and banking transactions. The executive director of HCI tells the newspaper that Khadr was last seen in Ottawa, Canada, about three months earlier, and, "We do learn once in a while that he was in Pakistan or Canada or moving back and forth." [GLOBE AND MAIL, 9/5/1998]

Listed by UN - In January 2001, the United Nations places Khadr on a list of those who support terrorism associated with bin Laden. [CANADIAN SECURITY INTELLIGENCE SERVICE, 2/22/2008 

But despite all this, there is no evidence the Canadian government attempts to arrest or even indict him before 9/11. (The Egyptian government does pressure the Pakistani ISI to capture him in the summer of 2001 (Summer 2001).) Khadr will be killed in Pakistan in October 2003. It will eventually emerge that he was a founding member of al-Qaeda and an important leader of that group (see October 2, 2003).

Entity Tags: Ahmed Said Khadr, Canadian Security Intelligence Service, Health and Education Project International, Jean Chretien, Al-Qaeda, Mohamed Zeki Mahjoub, Osama bin Laden, Mahmoud Jaballah, Human Concern International, Mohamed Harkat

Category Tags: Counterterrorism Action Before 9/11, Remote Surveillance

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January 14, 1996: Mujaheddin Required to Leave Bosnia by This Date

As part of the peace agreement ending the Bosnian war (see December 14, 1995), all foreign fighters are required to leave Bosnia by this time, which is thirty days after the signing of the peace agreement. Effectively this refers to the mujaheddin who have been fighting for the Bosnian Muslims. [TIME, 12/31/1995] However, Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic kicks out the Serbians living in the small village of Bocinja Donja 60 miles north of the capital of Sarajevo and gives the houses there to several hundred mujaheddin. Most of them marry local women, allowing them to stay in the country (see January 2000). [WASHINGTON POST, 3/11/2000]

Entity Tags: Alija Izetbegovic

Category Tags: Al-Qaeda in Balkans

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Shortly Before February 1996: CIA Already Aware of Term 'Al-Qaeda' as It Sets Up Bin Laden Unit



David Cohen.
[Source: Ting-Li Wang / New York Times]

David Cohen, head of the CIA's Directorate of Operations, wants to test the idea of having a "virtual station," which is a station based at CIA headquarters and focusing on one target. He chooses Michael Scheuer to run it. Scheuer is running the Islamic Extremist Branch of the CIA's Counterterrorist Center at the time and had suggested creating a station to focus just on bin Laden. The new unit, commonly called Alec Station, begins operations in February 1996 (see February 1996). The 9/11 Commission will later comment that Scheuer had already "noticed a recent stream of reports about bin Laden and something called al-Qaeda." [9/11 COMMISSION, 7/24/2004, PP. 109] It has been widely reported that US intelligence was unaware of the term al-Qaeda until after defector Jamal al-Fadl revealed it

later in 1996 (see June 1996-April 1997). But Billy Waugh, an independent contractor hired by the CIA to spy on bin Laden and others in Sudan in 1991 to 1992, will later claim that the CIA was aware of the term al-Qaeda back then (see February 1991- July 1992). And double agent Ali Mohamed revealed the term to the FBI in 1993 (see May 1993). The term will first be used by the media in August 1996 (see August 14, 1996).

Entity Tags: Michael Scheuer, Counterterrorist Center, Central Intelligence Agency, Al-Qaeda, Alec Station, David Cohen

Category Tags: Counterterrorism Policy/Politics, Counterterrorism Action Before 9/11
Bookmark and Share

February 1996: CIA Forms New Counterterrorism Bin Laden Unit



The CIA's Counter Terrorism Center creates a special unit focusing specifically on bin Laden. It is informally called Alec Station. About 10 to 15 individuals are assigned to the unit initially. This grows to about 35 to 40 by 9/11. [US CONGRESS, 9/18/2002] The unit is set up "largely because of evidence linking [bin Laden] to the 1993 bombing of the WTC." [WASHINGTON POST, 10/3/2001] Newsweek will comment after 9/11, "With the Cold War over, the Mafia in retreat, and the drug war unwinnable, the CIA and FBI were eager to have a new foe to fight.... Historical rivals, the spies and G-men were finally learning to work together. But they didn't necessarily share secrets with the alphabet soup of other enforcement and intelligence agencies, like Customs and the Immigration and Naturalization Service, and they remained aloof from the Pentagon. And no amount of good will or money could bridge a fundamental divide between intelligence and law enforcement. Spies prefer to watch and wait; cops want to get their man" [NEWSWEEK, 10/1/2001] Michael Scheuer will lead the unit until 1999. He will later become a vocal critic of the US government's efforts to combat terrorism. He later recalls that while bin Laden is mostly thought of merely as a terrorist financier at this time, "we had run across bin Laden in a lot of different places, not personally but in terms of his influence, either through rhetoric, through audiotapes, through passports, through money-he seemed to turn up everywhere. So when we [created the unit], the first responsibility was to find out if he was a threat." [VANITY FAIR, 11/2004] By the start of 1997, the unit will conclude bin Laden is a serious threat (see Early 1997).

Entity Tags: Osama bin Laden, Michael Scheuer, Al-Qaeda, Counterterrorist Center, Alec Station

Category Tags: Hunt for Bin Laden
Bookmark and Share

February-September 11, 1996: Investigation of Bin Laden Family Members Is Opened; Then Closed



On the left: 5613 Leesburg Pike, address for WAMY's US office. On the right: 5913 Leesburg Pike, the 2001 address for hijackers Hani Hanjour and Nawaf Alhazmi. [Source: Paul Sperry]

The FBI begin an investigation into two relatives of bin Laden in February 1996, then close it on September 11, 1996. The FBI wanted to learn more about Abdullah Awad bin Laden, "because of his relationship with the World Assembly of Muslim Youth [WAMY]—a suspected terrorist organization." [GUARDIAN, 11/7/2001] Abdullah Awad was the US director of WAMY and lived with his brother Omar in

Falls Church, Virginia, a suburb of Washington. They are believed to be nephews of Osama bin Laden. The coding on a leaked FBI document about the case, marked secret, indicates the case related to national security. WAMY's office address is 5613 Leesburg Pike. It will later be determined that at least two of the 9/11 hijackers lived at 5913 Leesburg Pike for much of 2001 at the same time the two bin Laden brothers were working only three blocks away (see March 2001 and After). WAMY has been banned in Pakistan by this time.

[BBC, 11/6/2001; GUARDIAN, 11/7/2001] The Indian and Philippine governments also will cite WAMY for funding Islamic militancy. The 9/11 Commission later will hear testimony that WAMY "has openly supported Islamic terrorism. There are ties between WAMY and 9/11 hijackers. It is a group that has openly endorsed the notion that Jews must be killed.... [It] has consistently portrayed the United States, Jews, Christians, and other infidels as enemies who have to be defeated or killed. And there is no doubt, according to US intelligence, that WAMY has been tied directly to terrorist attacks." [9/11 COMMISSION, 7/9/2003, PP.

66] A security official who will later serve under President Bush will say, "WAMY was involved in terrorist-support activity. There's no doubt about it."

[VANITY FAIR, 10/2003] Before 9/11, FBI investigators had determined that Abdullah Awad had invested about \$500,000 in BMI Inc., a company suspected of financing groups officially designated as terrorist organizations (see 1986-October 1999). [WALL STREET JOURNAL, 9/15/2003] The Bosnian government will say in September 2002 that a charity with Abdullah Awad bin Laden on its board had channeled money to Chechen guerrillas, something that reporter Greg Palast will claim "is only possible because the Clinton CIA gave the wink and nod to WAMY and other groups who were aiding Bosnian guerrillas when they were fighting Serbia, a US-approved enemy." The investigation into WAMY will be restarted a few days after 9/11, around the same time these two bin Ladens will leave the US (see September 14-19, 2001). [PALAST, 2002, PP. 96-99] (Note that Abdullah Awad bin Laden is Osama bin Laden's nephew, and is not the same person as the Abdullah bin Laden who is Osama's brother and serves as the bin Laden family spokesperson.) [PALAST, 2002, PP. 98-99; WALL STREET JOURNAL, 9/15/2003] WAMY's Virginia offices will be raided by US agents in 2004 (see June 1, 2004).

Entity Tags: Abdullah Awad bin Laden, Omar bin Laden, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Central Intelligence Agency, World Assembly of Muslim Youth, Clinton administration

Timeline Tags: 9/11 Timeline

Category Tags: Saudi Arabia, Bin Laden Family, Terrorism Financing

Bookmark and Share

February 1996-May 1998: CIA's Bin Laden Unit Asks NSA for Full Transcripts of Al-Qaeda Communications, NSA Refuses



Barbara McNamara.
[Source: National Security Agency]

Alec Station, the CIA's bin Laden unit, and other senior agency officers repeatedly ask the NSA to provide verbatim transcripts of intercepted calls between al-Qaeda members. Alec Station chief Michael Scheuer will explain, "[V]erbatim transcripts are operationally useful, summaries are much less so." [ATLANTIC MONTHLY, 12/2004] According to PBS, Alec Station believes that "only by carefully studying each word will it be possible to understand [Osama] bin Laden's intentions." This is because al-Qaeda operatives sometimes talk in a simplistic code (see (October 1993-November 2001)).

Scheuer will say: "Over time, if you read enough of these conversations, you first get clued in to the fact that maybe 'bottle of milk' doesn't mean 'bottle of milk.' And if you follow it long enough, you develop a sense of what they're really talking about. But it's not possible to do unless

you have the verbatim transcript.” [PBS, 2/3/2009] Scheuer will also complain that the summaries “are usually not timely.” [ATLANTIC MONTHLY, 12/2004] Author James Bamford will say that the summaries are “brief” and come “once a week or something like that.” [ANTIWAR, 10/22/2008] Alec Station’s desire for verbatim transcripts will intensify when it discovers the NSA is intercepting calls between bin Laden and his operations center in Yemen (see December 1996). However, the NSA constantly rejects its requests. Scheuer will later say: “We went to Fort Meade to ask then the NSA’s deputy director for operations [Barbara McNamara] for the transcripts, and she said, ‘We are not going to share that with you.’ And that was the end.” He will add that McNamara “said that the National Security Act of 1947 gave her agency control of ‘raw’ signals intelligence, and that she would not pass such material to CIA.” [ATLANTIC MONTHLY, 12/2004; ANTIWAR, 10/22/2008; PBS, 2/3/2009] McNamara will tell the 9/11 Commission that “She does not recall being personally [asked] to provide... transcripts or raw data” for counterterrorism, but if people wanted raw data, “then NSA would have provided it.” [9/11 COMMISSION, 12/15/2003, PP. 5]

Entity Tags: National Security Agency, Michael Scheuer, Central Intelligence Agency, Alec Station, Barbara McNamara

Category Tags: Remote Surveillance, Yemen Hub, Counterterrorism Action Before 9/11
Bookmark and Share

Shortly After February 1996: Saudis Fail to Give CIA Bin Laden Documents before 9/11



Bin Laden’s Saudi passport photograph. [Source: Public domain]

Shortly after the CIA’s Alec Station is created to go after bin Laden (see February 1996), the CIA asks the Saudi government to provide copies of bin Laden’s records such as his birth certificate, passports, bank accounts, and so forth. But the Saudis fail to turn over any of the documents. By 9/11, the CIA will still not even be given a copy of bin Laden’s birth certificate. [RISEN, 2006, PP. 185]

Entity Tags: Saudi Arabia, Central Intelligence Agency, Alec Station

Category Tags: Saudi Arabia
Bookmark and Share

Early 1996: Future 9/11 Hijackers Begin Attending Mosque Monitored by German Authorities



Mohamed Atta and other members of the Hamburg cell begin regularly attending the Al Quds mosque and fall under surveillance by the German authorities. Atta becomes a well-known figure both there and at other mosques in the city. He grows a beard at this time, which some commentators interpret as a sign of greater religious

The Al-Quds mosque in Hamburg was monitored by German authorities. [Source: Knut Muller]

devotion. The mosque is home to numerous

radicals. For example, one of the preachers, Mohammed Fazazi, advocates killing non-believers and encourages his followers to embrace martyrdom (see Mid-Late 1990s). After a time, Atta begins to teach classes at the mosque; he is stern with his students and criticizes them for wearing their hair in ponytails and gold chains around their necks, as well as for listening to music, which he says is a product of the devil. If a woman shows up, her father is informed she is not welcome and this is one of the reasons that, of the 80 students that start the classes, only a handful are left at the end. One of Atta's associates, Ramzi bin al-Shibh, also teaches classes and fellow hijackers Marwan Alshehhi and Ziad Jarrah attend and possibly first meet Atta there. Other mosque attendees who interact with the future hijackers at the mosque include Said Bahaji, and al-Qaeda operatives Mamoun Darkazanli and Mohammed Haydar Zammar. According to author Terry McDermott, German investigators notice Bahaji meets frequently with Darkazanli and Zammar at the mosque, so they presumably have a source inside it. [PBS FRONTLINE, 1/2002; BURKE, 2004, PP. 242; MCDERMOTT, 2005, PP. 1-5, 34-37, 72] The German newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* will later report that there was an informer working for the LfV, the Hamburg state intelligence agency, inside the mosque by 1999 and that he appeared to be interested in Atta, Jarrah, Alshehhi, bin al-Shibh, Bahaji and others (see April 1, 1999). [FRANKFURTER ALLGEMEINE ZEITUNG (FRANKFURT), 2/2/2003]

Entity Tags: Ziad Jarrah, Said Bahaji, Ramzi bin al-Shibh, Mohamed Atta, Mohammed Haydar Zammar, Marwan Alshehhi, Mamoun Darkazanli

Timeline Tags: 9/11 Timeline

Category Tags: Marwan Alshehhi, Mohamed Atta, Ziad Jarrah, Mamoun Darkazanli, Other Possible Moles or Informants, Al-Qaeda in Germany, Key Hijacker Events

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Spring 1996: Hani Hanjour Stays in Florida



Hijacker Hani Hanjour, who returned to his native Saudi Arabia after a previous stay in the US (see October 3, 1991-February 1992), now arrives in the US for the second time, and will spend much of the next three years in the country. Hanjour first stays in Miramar, Florida with a couple that are longtime friends with Abulrahman Hanjour, his eldest brother: Adnan Khalil, a Saudi professor at a local college, and his wife Susan. Susan Khalil later remembers Hani Hanjour as socially inept, with "really bad hygiene." She says, "Of all my husband's colorful friends, he was probably the most nondescript. He would blend into the wall." The Washington Post later reports: "Hanjour's meek, introverted manner fits a recurrent pattern in the al-Qaeda network of unsophisticated young men being recruited as helpers in terrorist attacks. FBI agents have told people they have interviewed about Hanjour that he 'fit the personality to be manipulated and brainwashed.'" Yet, Susan Khalil says, "I didn't get the feeling that he hated me or hated Americans." Hanjour, she says, "was very kind and gentle to my son, who was 3 years old." He prays frequently, at their home and at a nearby mosque. After staying for about a month he leaves the Khalil's, having been accepted at a flight school in California (see April 30-Early September 1996). [ASSOCIATED PRESS, 9/21/2001; ST. PETERSBURG TIMES, 10/2/2001; WASHINGTON POST, 10/15/2001; 9/11 COMMISSION, 7/24/2004, PP. 226] Many of the hijackers will later live in this part of Florida. A nearby mosque is run by radical imam Gulshair Shukrijumah, who possibly associates with Mohamed Atta and Marwan Alshehhi in 2000 and 2001 (see 2000-2001 and May 2, 2001). [NEW YORK TIMES, 3/22/2003]

Entity Tags: Hani Hanjour, Gulshair Shukrijumah, Susan Khalil, Adnan Khalil

Timeline Tags: 9/11 Timeline

Early 1996: FBI and Philippine Agents Bungle Capture of KSM



Bandido's bar in Manila. This may be the restaurant frequented by KSM. [Source: Public domain]

In January 1995 the Bojinka plot is foiled in the Philippines and on February 7, 1995, Ramzi Yousef is arrested in Pakistan (see February 7, 1995), but Yousef's uncle Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM) continues to live in the Philippines much of the time. KSM remains confident that he will not be arrested, and eats at a particular restaurant in Manila at roughly the same time almost every night. In early 1996, the FBI and Philippine authorities attempt to arrest KSM at Bandido's

restaurant. But counterterrorism expert Rohan Gunaratna will later claim the "operation failed apparently due to the visibility of the FBI and other agents working on the case." KSM flees to Qatar, where he was been living off and on since 1992 (see 1992-1996). But Gunaratna claims KSM continues to live part of the time in the Philippines as well until about September 1996.

[GUNARATNA, 2003]

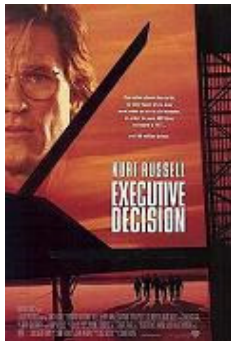
Entity Tags: Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, Ramzi Yousef, Federal Bureau of Investigation

Timeline Tags: 9/11 Timeline

Category Tags: Counterterrorism Action Before 9/11, 1995 Bojinka Plot, Khalid Shaikh Mohammed

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March 1996: Movie Features Planned Suicide Attack with Commercial Jet



Executive Decision.
[Source: Warner Bros.]

Executive Decision, a military action film, has a plot about a group of Arab terrorists who hijack a transatlantic jet to gain the release of their leader, who is imprisoned in the United States. But what looks initially like a traditional hijacking is in fact a suicide mission. The plane carries a huge load of nerve gas that has been smuggled out of Russia, which the terrorists intend to explode over Washington, killing millions. The release demand is a ruse to convince US authorities to let the plane approach Washington unharmed. But thanks to an intelligence analyst who has been following the group's efforts to obtain chemical weapons, the ruse is unraveled and the

Pentagon considers asking the president for permission to shoot down the plane over the Atlantic. However, a Special Ops commander proposes a daring plan to avert a shoot down. Using a new Stealth fighter plane, he offers to board the jet in mid-air and disable the bomb. [NEW YORK TIMES, 3/15/1996] This movie is one of many works of fiction that will be remembered after 9/11 for their eerie similarity to the attacks. [NEW YORK TIMES, 9/13/2001]

Category Tags: Other Pre-9/11 Events

Bookmark and Share

March-May 1996: US, Sudan Squabble over Bin Laden's Fate



US demands for Sudan to hand over its extensive files about bin Laden (see March 8, 1996-April 1996) escalate into demands to hand over bin Laden

himself. Bin Laden has been living in Sudan since 1991, at a time when the Sudanese government's ideology was similar to his. But after the US put Sudan on its list of terrorism sponsors and began economic sanctions in 1993, Sudan began to change. In 1994, it handed the notorious terrorist "Carlos the Jackal" to France. In March 1996, Sudan's defense minister goes to Washington and engages in secret negotiations over bin Laden. Sudan offers to extradite bin Laden to anywhere he might stand trial. Some accounts claim that Sudan offers to hand bin Laden directly to the US, but the US decides not to take him because they do not have enough evidence at the time to charge him with a crime. [WASHINGTON POST, 10/3/2001; VILLAGE VOICE, 10/31/2001; VANITY FAIR, 1/2002] Counterterrorism "tsar" Richard Clarke later will call this story a "fable" invented by the Sudanese and Americans friendly to Sudan. He will point out that bin Laden "was an ideological blood brother, family friend, and benefactor" to Sudanese leader Hassan al-Turabi, so any offers to hand him over may have been disingenuous. [CLARKE, 2004, PP. 142-43] CIA Director George Tenet later will deny that Sudan made any offers to hand over bin Laden directly to the US. [US CONGRESS, 10/17/2002] The US reportedly asks Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Jordan to accept bin Laden into custody, but is refused by all three governments. [COLL, 2004, PP. 323] The 9/11 Commission later will claim it finds no evidence that Sudan offers bin Laden directly to the US, but it does find evidence that Saudi Arabia was discussed as an option. [9/11 COMMISSION, 3/23/2004] US officials insist that bin Laden leave Sudan for anywhere but Somalia. One US intelligence source in the region later will state: "We kidnap minor drug czars and bring them back in burlap bags. Somebody didn't want this to happen." [WASHINGTON POST, 10/3/2001; VILLAGE VOICE, 10/31/2001] On May 18, 1996, bin Laden flies to Afghanistan, and the US does not try to stop him (see May 18, 1996).

Entity Tags: Egypt, Sudan, United States, Jordan, George J. Tenet, Osama bin Laden, Richard A. Clarke, Saudi Arabia, Central Intelligence Agency, Hassan al-Turabi

Category Tags: Hunt for Bin Laden

Bookmark and Share

March 8, 1996-April 1996: US Asks Sudan for Its Files on Al-Qaeda, Then Declines to Accept Them



In 1993, the US put Sudan on its list of nations sponsoring terrorism, which automatically leads to economic sanctions. Sudanese leader Hassan al-Turabi espoused radical militant views, and allowed bin Laden to live in Sudan. But, as the 9/11 Commission later will note, "The Sudanese regime began to change. Though al-Turabi had been its inspirational leader, General Omar al-Bashir, president since 1989, had never been entirely under his thumb. Thus as outside pressures mounted, al-Bashir's supporters began to displace those of al-Turabi." In 1995, the US begins putting serious pressure on Sudan to deal with bin Laden, who is still living there. [OBSERVER, 9/30/2001; 9/11 COMMISSION, 7/24/2004, PP. 61] On March 8, 1996, the US sends Sudan a memorandum listing the measures Sudan can take to get the sanctions revoked. The second of six points listed is, "Provide us with names, dates of arrival, departure and destination and passport data on mujaheddin that Osama Bin Laden has brought into Sudan." [NEW YORK TIMES, 9/21/1998; WASHINGTON POST, 10/3/2001] Sudanese intelligence had been monitoring bin Laden since he'd moved there in 1991, collecting a "vast intelligence database on Osama bin Laden and more than 200 leading members of his al-Qaeda terrorist network." The files



Omar al-Bashir. [Source: PBS]

include information on their backgrounds, families, and contacts, plus photographs. There also is extensive information on bin Laden's world-wide financial network. "One US source who has seen the files on bin Laden's men in Khartoum said some were 'an inch and a half thick.'" [OBSERVER, 9/30/2001] An Egyptian intelligence officer with extensive Sudanese intelligence contacts says, "They knew all about them: who they were, where they came from. They had copies of their passports, their tickets; they knew where they went. Of course that information could have helped enormously. It is the history of those people." To the surprise of US officials making the demands, the Sudanese seem receptive to sharing the file. This leads to a battle within the US government between top FBI officials, who want to engage the Sudanese and get their files, and Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and Susan Rice, her assistant secretary for Africa, who want to isolate them politically and economically. The National Security Council is also opposed. The US decides to increase its demands, and tells Sudan to turn over not just files on bin Laden, but bin Laden himself (see March-May 1996). Ultimately, the US will get Sudan to evict bin Laden in May 1996 (see May 18, 1996), but they will not press for the files and will not get them. [WASHINGTON POST, 10/3/2001; VANITY FAIR, 1/2002] An American involved in the secret negotiations later will say, "I've never seen a brick wall like that before. Somebody let this slip up.... We could have dismantled his operations and put a cage on top. It was not a matter of arresting bin Laden but of access to information. That's the story, and that's what could have prevented September 11. I knew it would come back to haunt us." [VILLAGE VOICE, 10/31/2001] Vanity Fair magazine later will opine, "How could this have happened? The simple answer is that the Clinton administration had accused Sudan of sponsoring terrorism, and refused to believe that anything it did to prove its bona fides could be genuine." [VANITY FAIR, 1/2002] The US will continue to refuse Sudan's offers to take the files (see April 5, 1997; February 5, 1998; May 2000).

Entity Tags: Susan Rice, National Security Council, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Hassan al-Turabi, Omar Al-Bashir, Madeleine Albright

Category Tags: Hunt for Bin Laden

Bookmark and Share

March 13, 1996: Clinton Administration Criticized for Meetings with Radical Muslim Activist



President Clinton meeting with Abdulrahman Alamoudi in the 1990s.
[Source: PBS] (click image to enlarge)

Counterterrorism expert Steven Emerson, head of the Investigative Project on Terrorism, criticizes the Clinton administration for its ties to Abdulrahman Alamoudi in a Wall Street Journal

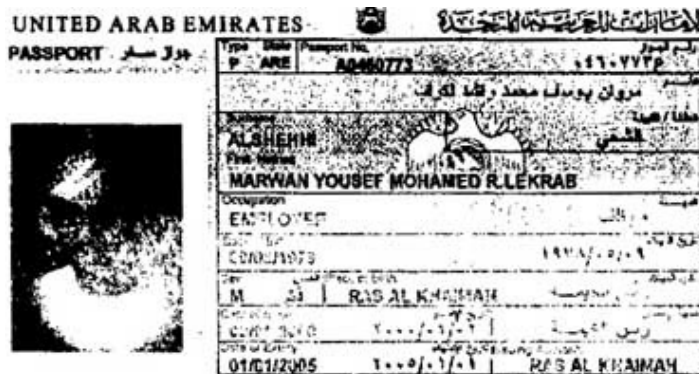
editorial. Alamoudi is a prominent Muslim activist and heads an organization called the American Muslim Council (AMC). Emerson notes that on November 9, 1995, President Clinton and Vice President Al Gore met with Alamoudi as part of a meeting with 23 Muslim and Arab leaders. And on December 8, 1995, National Security Adviser Anthony Lake, met with Alamoudi at the White House along with several other American Islamic leaders. Emerson notes that Alamoudi openly supports Hamas, even though the US government officially designated it a terrorist financier in early 1995 (see January 1995), and he

has been the primary public defender of high ranking Hamas leader Mousa Abu Marzouk, who the US declared a terrorism financier and then imprisoned in 1995 (see July 5, 1995-May 1997). He notes that Alamoudi's AMC also has close ties to other Islamist groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood, and in 1994 the AMC co-sponsored a trip to the US for Sudanese leader Hasan al-Turabi, a well-known radical militant who is hosting Osama bin Laden in Sudan at the time. Emerson concludes, "The president is right to invite Muslim groups to the White House. But by inviting the extremist element of the American Muslim community—represented by the AMC—the administration undercuts moderate Muslims and strengthens the groups committing terrorist attacks." [WALL STREET JOURNAL, 3/13/1996] It will later be reported that in 1994, US intelligence discovered that the AMC helped pass money from bin Laden to Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman, but it is not known if Clinton was aware of this (see Shortly After March 1994). But Alamoudi's political influence in the US will not diminish and he will later be courted by future President Bush (see July 2000). He will eventually be sentenced to a long prison term for illegal dealings with Libya (see October 15, 2004).

Entity Tags: American Muslim Council, William Jefferson ("Bill") Clinton, Al Gore, Muslim Brotherhood, Steven Emerson, Abdurahman Alamoudi, Anthony Lake, Mousa Abu Marzouk, Hassan al-Turabi, Clinton administration, Hamas

Category Tags: Terrorism Financing
Bookmark and Share

Spring 1996-December 23, 2000: United Arab Emirates Army Pays for Hijacker Alshehhi's Studies



P<AREALSHEHHI<<MARWAN<YUSEF<MOHAMED<R<<<<<<<<
A poor photocopy of Marwan Alshehhi's United Arab Emirates passport.
[Source: FBI]

Marwan Alshehhi, a United Arab Emirates (UAE) national, volunteered for the UAE army shortly after leaving high school (presumably in late 1995, based on his age). After going through basic training, in the spring of 1996 he is granted a college scholarship to Germany, paid for by

the UAE army. Alshehhi is to learn German, then study marine engineering. The scholarship is accompanied by a monthly stipend of around \$2,200. The UAE army declares him a deserter in April 2000, shortly before he quits school and moves to the US (see April 1, 2000). It is not clear why. Curiously, Alshehhi will continue to receive this stipend despite being a deserter, and even after he drops out of school in Germany and begins attending flight school in the US. The stipend comes to an end in December 2000. [9/11

COMMISSION, 8/21/2004, PP. 132; MCDERMOTT, 2005, PP. 53-56, 196]

Entity Tags: Marwan Alshehhi, United Arab Emirates
Timeline Tags: 9/11 Timeline
Category Tags: Marwan Alshehhi
Bookmark and Share

March 26-May 21, 1996: French Monks in Algeria Kidnapped and Killed by Algerian Intelligence Working with Compromised Islamic Militants





A photo montage of the seven murdered monks from Tibhirine. [Source: Cistercian Order of the Strict Observance] (click image to enlarge)

On March 26, 1996, a group of armed men break into a Trappist monastery in the remote mountain region of Tibhirine, Algeria, and kidnap seven of

the nine monks living there. They are held hostage for two months and then Djamel Zitouni, head of the Groupe Islamique Armé (GIA), announces that they were all killed on May 21, 1996. The French government and the Roman Catholic church state the GIA is to blame. But years later, Abdelkader Tigha, former head of Algeria's military security, will claim the kidnapping was planned by Algerian officials to get the monks out of a highly contested area. He says government agents kidnapped the monks and then handed them to a double agent in the GIA. But the plan went awry and the militants assigned to carry it out killed the monks. Furthermore, it will later be alleged that Zitouni was a mole for Algerian intelligence (see October 27, 1994-July 16, 1996).

[INDEPENDENT, 12/24/2002; UNITED PRESS INTERNATIONAL, 8/20/2004] In 2004, Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika will reopen the controversy when he says of the monks' deaths, "Not all truth is good to say when [the issue is still] hot." [UNITED PRESS INTERNATIONAL, 8/20/2004] He will also say, "Don't forget that the army saved Algeria. Whatever the deviations there may have been, and there were some, just because you have some rotten tomatoes you do not throw all of them away." [DAILY TELEGRAPH, 4/7/2004]

Entity Tags: Abdelkader Tigha, Abdelaziz Bouteflika, Département du Renseignement et de la Sécurité, Ali Touchent, Groupe Islamique Armé, Djamel Zitouni

Timeline Tags: Alleged Use of False Flag Attacks

Category Tags: Algerian Militant Collusion, Alleged Al-Qaeda Linked Attacks, Other Possible Moles or Informants

Bookmark and Share

April 1996: US Aware of Al-Qaeda Cell in Kenya, Begins Monitoring It



It will later be revealed in a US trial that, by this time, US intelligence agents are aware that an al-Qaeda cell exists in Kenya. (In fact, it may have been aware of this since late 1994 (see Late 1994)). [EAST AFRICAN, 1/1/2001] Further evidence confirming and detailing the cell is discovered in May and June of 1996 (see May 21, 1996). By August 1996, US intelligence is continually monitoring five telephone lines in Nairobi used by the cell members, such as Wadih El-Hage. The tapping reveals that the cell is providing false passports and other documents to operatives. They are sending coded telephone numbers to and from al-Qaeda headquarters in Afghanistan. The surveillance is apparently being conducted without the required approval of either President Clinton or Attorney General Janet Reno. [ASSOCIATED PRESS, 12/19/2000; EAST AFRICAN, 1/1/2001] Prudence Bushnell, the US ambassador to Kenya, will be briefed about the cell in early 1997, but will be told there is no evidence of a specific threat against the embassy or American interests in Kenya. [NEW YORK TIMES, 1/9/1999] Ali Mohamed, an al-Qaeda double agent living in California, will later admit in US court that he had been in long distance contact with Wadih El-Hage, one of the leaders of the cell, since at least 1996. It will also be revealed that US intelligence had been wiretapping Mohamed's California phone calls since at least 1994 (see Late 1994), so presumably US intelligence is recording calls between Mohamed and the Kenya cell from both ends. The Nairobi phone taps continue until at least August 1997, when Kenyan and US agents conduct a joint search of El-Hage's Nairobi house (see August 21,

1997). [UNITED STATES OF AMERICA V. ALI MOHAMED, 10/20/2000; ASSOCIATED PRESS, 12/19/2000; EAST AFRICAN, 1/1/2001]

Entity Tags: Al-Qaeda, Ali Mohamed, Prudence Bushnell, Wadih El-Hage

Category Tags: 1998 US Embassy Bombings, Remote Surveillance, Ali Mohamed, Wadih El-Hage

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April 1996-March 1997: Yousef Communicates with Islamic Militants from within Maximum Security Prison Using Telephone Provided by FBI



Gregory Scarpa Jr.
[Source: Publicity photo (mafiason.com)]

Ramzi Yousef, mastermind along with Khalid Shaikh Mohammed of the 1993 World Trade Center bombing and the Operation Bojinka plots, is in a maximum-security prison, sentenced to hundreds of years of prison time for his plots. However, he can communicate with Gregory Scarpa Jr., a mob figure in the cell next to him. The FBI sets up a sting operation with Scarpa's cooperation to learn more of what and whom Yousef knows. Scarpa is given a telephone, and he allows Yousef to use it.

However, Yousef uses the sting operation for his own ends, communicating with operatives on the outside in code language without giving away their identities. He attempts to find passports to get co-conspirators into the US, and there is some discussion about imminent attacks on US passenger jets. Realizing the scheme has backfired, the FBI terminates the telephone sting in late 1996, but Yousef manages to keep communicating with the outside world for several more months. [NEW YORK DAILY NEWS, 9/24/2000; NEW YORK DAILY NEWS, 1/21/2002; LANCE, 2003, PP. 280-82; HARMON, 2009, PP. 187-188, 199-201]

Entity Tags: Gregory Scarpa Jr., Ramzi Yousef, Federal Bureau of Investigation

Category Tags: Warning Signs, Ramzi Yousef, 1995 Bojinka Plot

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April 11, 1996: Mohamed Atta Makes Will



The al-Quds mosque in Hamburg, where Mohamed Atta made his will. [Source: Der Spiegel]

Mohamed Atta makes his will in Germany. It is not clear that the text of the will is actually written by Atta. For example, author Lawrence Wright will say that Atta merely signs a "standardized will" he gets from the al-Quds mosque in Hamburg, and journalists Yosri Fouda and

Nick Fielding will say that the will is a "printed-out form devised by the mosque." Atta apparently makes it as he is angered by new reports of an Israeli operation against Lebanon, which begins on this day. [FOUDA AND FIELDING, 2003, PP. 81-2; WRIGHT, 2006, PP. 307] Although the act of making a will is not that unusual for a 27-year old Muslim, the content of the will is unusual, perhaps reflecting the radical environment of the mosque (see Early 1996). For example, it says: "... [6] I don't want a pregnant woman or a person who is not clean to come and say good bye to me because I don't approve it... [9] The person who will wash my body near my genitals must wear gloves on his hands so he won't touch my genitals... [11] I don't want any women to go to my grave at all during my funeral or on any occasion thereafter." The will is witnessed by Abdelghani Mouzdi and Mounir El-Motassadeq, who also make wills around the same time. [ATTA, 4/11/1996; BURKE, 2004, PP. 242; MCDERMOTT, 2005,

April 25, 1996: New Anti-Terrorism Law Passed



President Clinton signs the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act, which the New York Times calls “broad legislation that provides new tools and penalties for federal law-enforcement officials to use in fighting terrorism.” The Clinton administration proposed the bill in the aftermath of the Oklahoma City terrorist bombing (see April 19, 1995). In many ways, the original bill will be mirrored by the USA Patriot Act six years later (see October 26, 2001). Civil libertarians on both the left and right opposed the legislation. Political analyst Michael Freeman called the proposal one of the “worst assaults on civil liberties in decades,” and the Houston Chronicle called it a “frightening” and “grievous” assault on domestic freedoms. Many Republicans opposed the bill, and forced a compromise that removed increased wiretap authority and lower standards for lawsuits against sellers of guns used in crimes. CNN called the version that finally passed the Republican-controlled Congress a “watered-down version of the White House’s proposal. The Clinton administration has been critical of the bill, calling it too weak. The original House bill, passed last month, had deleted many of the Senate’s anti-terrorism provisions because of lawmakers’ concerns about increasing federal law enforcement powers. Some of those provisions were restored in the compromise bill.” [CNN, 4/18/1996; NEW YORK TIMES, 4/25/1996; ROBERTS, 2008, PP. 35] An unusual coalition of gun rights groups such as the National Rifle Association (NRA) and civil liberties groups such as the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) led the opposition to the law. [NEW YORK TIMES, 4/17/1996] By the time Congress passed the bill, it had been, in the words of FBI Director Louis Freeh, “stripped... of just about every meaningful provision.” [ROBERTS, 2008, PP. 35] The law makes it illegal in the US to provide “material support” to any organization banned by the State Department. [GUARDIAN, 9/10/2001]

Entity Tags: William Jefferson (“Bill”) Clinton, Louis J. Freeh, National Rifle Association, American Civil Liberties Union, Clinton administration, Michael Freeman, USA Patriot Act, US Congress

Timeline Tags: Civil Liberties

Category Tags: Counterterrorism Policy/Politics, Terrorism Financing

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Late April 1996: US Monitors Al-Qaeda Canceling Singapore Plot



According to counterterrorism expert Rohan Gunaratna, US intelligence monitoring al-Qaeda communications learn that al-Qaeda is canceling an attack on Western targets in Singapore. On April 18, 1996, 108 Lebanese civilians seeking refuge at a UN camp in Qana, Lebanon, are killed by mortars fired by Israeli forces. Bin Laden “was keen not to dissipate what he envisaged as widespread revulsion against Israel’s action and hence called off the strike in Southeast Asia. Al-Qaeda’s team in question was very determined to go ahead, having spent years preparing the attack, and according to the intercepts it proved difficult for Osama to convince it otherwise.” Gunaratna claims the US learned this through the NSA’s Echelon satellite network (see Before September 11, 2001) “and other technical monitoring of their communications traffic.” [GUNARATNA, 2003, PP. 133-134] If true, this case supports other evidence that the US was successfully monitoring bin Laden’s communications from an early date (see Early 1990s) and that al-Qaeda’s Southeast Asia operations were penetrated years before an important

al-Qaeda summit in Malaysia discussing the 9/11 plot (see January 5-8, 2000).

Entity Tags: Echelon, Al-Qaeda, Osama bin Laden, National Security Agency

Category Tags: Remote Surveillance, Al-Qaeda in Southeast Asia

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April 30-Early September 1996: Hani Hanjour Studies English in Northern California; Enrolls at Aeronautics Academy



Hijacker Hani Hanjour moves from Florida to the San Francisco Bay area in California, staying with an unidentified family. He lives with them from late April to early September. For most of this time he takes English lessons in an intensive program requiring 30 hours of class time per week, at the ELS Language Center at Holy Names College in Oakland. He reportedly reaches a level of proficiency sufficient to “survive very well in the English language.” Yet in 2001, managers at an Arizona flight school will report him to the FAA at least five times, partly because they think his level of English is inadequate for him to keep his pilot’s license. Due to his poor English, it will take Hanjour five hours to complete an oral exam meant to last just two hours (see January-February 2001). At the end of this period, Hanjour enrolls on a rigorous one-year flight training program at the renowned Sierra Academy of Aeronautics, in Oakland. However, he only attends the 30-minute orientation class, on September 8, and then never returns. [CBS 5 (SAN FRANCISCO), 10/10/2001; SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE, 10/10/2001; ASSOCIATED PRESS, 10/11/2001; CAPE COD TIMES, 10/21/2001; STAR-TRIBUNE (MINNEAPOLIS), 12/21/2001; ASSOCIATED PRESS, 5/10/2002]

Entity Tags: Hani Hanjour, Sierra Academy of Aeronautics

Timeline Tags: 9/11 Timeline

Category Tags: Hani Hanjour, Alleged Hijackers' Flight Training

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May 1996: US Seeks Stability in Afghanistan for Unocal Pipeline



Robin Raphel. [Source: Mark Wilson / Agence France-Presse]

Robin Raphel, Deputy Secretary of State for South Asia, speaks to the Russian Deputy Foreign Minister about Afghanistan. She says that the US government “now hopes that peace in the region will facilitate US business interests,” such as the proposed Unocal gas pipeline from Turkmenistan through Afghanistan to Pakistan. [COLL, 2004, PP. 330]

Entity Tags: Unocal, Robin Raphel, Russia

Category Tags: Pipeline Politics


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May 1996: Saudis and Al-Qaeda Allegedly Strike a Secret Deal



French intelligence secretly monitors a meeting of Saudi billionaires at the Hotel Royale Monceau in Paris this month with the financial representative of al-Qaeda. “The Saudis, including a key Saudi prince joined by Muslim and non-Muslim gun traffickers, [meet] to determine who would pay how much to Osama. This [is] not so much an act of support but of protection—a payoff to keep the mad bomber away from Saudi Arabia.” [PALAST, 2002, PP. 100]

Participants also agree that bin Laden should be rewarded for promoting Wahhabism (an austere form of Islam that requires literal interpretation of the Koran) in Chechnya, Kashmir, Bosnia, and other places. [FIFTH ESTATE, 10/29/2003] This extends an alleged secret deal first made between the Saudi government and bin Laden in 1991. Later, 9/11 victims’ relatives will rely on the “nonpublished French intelligence report” of this meeting in their lawsuit against important Saudis. [STAR-TRIBUNE (MINNEAPOLIS), 8/16/2002] According to

French counterterrorism expert Jean-Charles Brisard and/or reporter Greg Palast, there are about 20 people at the meeting, including Saudi intelligence head Prince Turki al-Faisal, an unnamed brother of bin Laden and an unnamed representative from the Saudi Defense Ministry. [FIFTH ESTATE, 10/29/2003 ; CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION, 10/29/2003] Palast claims that Saudi businessman Abdullah Taha Bakhsh attends the meeting. Bakhsh also saved Bush Jr.'s Harken Oil from bankruptcy around 1990. Palast claims the notorious Saudi billionaire Adnan Khashoggi also attends the meeting.

[DEMOCRACY NOW!, 3/4/2003; SANTA FE NEW MEXICAN, 3/20/2003] In a somewhat tongue-in-cheek manner, Slate has claimed that Khashoggi is a "shadowy international arms merchant" who is "connected to every scandal of the past 40 years." Amongst other things, he was a major investor in BCCI and a key player in the Iran-Contra affair. [Slate, 12/4/00, Slate, 11/14/01, Slate, 3/12/03] [SLATE, 12/4/2000; SLATE, 11/14/2001; SLATE, 3/12/2003] Palast, noting that the French monitored the meeting, asks, "Since US intelligence was thus likely informed, the question becomes why didn't the government immediately move against the Saudis?" [PALAST, 2002, PP. 100]

Entity Tags: Adnan Khashoggi, Abdullah Bakhsh, Al-Qaeda, France, Greg Palast, Turki al-Faisal

Category Tags: Saudi Arabia, Terrorism Financing, BCCI, Bin Laden Family

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May 1996: Al-Qaeda Begins Using Vital Communications Hub in Yemen

Al-Qaeda begins using an important communications hub and operations center in Yemen. [GUNARATNA, 2003, PP. 2-3, 16, 188] The hub is set up because al-Qaeda is headquartered in Afghanistan, but requires another location that has access to regular telephone services and major air links. It is located in the Yemeni capital of Sana'a, in the neighbourhood of Madbah. Ahmed al-Hada, an associate of Osama bin Laden's who fought in Afghanistan, runs the hub and lives there with his family. [BAMFORD, 2008, PP. 7-8] Terrorism analyst Rohan Gunaratna will say that the hub is used as a switchboard to "divert and receive calls and messages from the [Middle East] region and beyond."

[GUNARATNA, 2003, PP. 2-3, 16, 188] FBI agent Mark Rossini will say, "That house was a focal point for operatives in the field to call in, that number would then contact bin Laden to pass along information and receive instruction back."

[PBS, 2/3/2009] Author James Bamford will add: "[T]he house in Yemen became the epicenter of bin Laden's war against America, a logistics base to coordinate attacks, a switchboard to pass on orders, and a safe house where his field commanders could meet to discuss and carry out operations." Bin Laden himself places many calls to the house, and it is used to coordinate the attacks on US embassies in East Africa in 1998 and the bombing of the USS *Cole* in 2000. Future 9/11 hijacker Khalid Almihdhar also lives at the house at some point in the late 1990s with his wife Hoda, al-Hada's daughter. [BAMFORD, 2008, PP. 8]

Entity Tags: Mark Rossini, Ahmed al-Hada, Al-Qaeda, James Bamford, Rohan Gunaratna

Timeline Tags: 9/11 Timeline

Category Tags: Remote Surveillance, Yemen Hub, Yemeni Militant Collusion, Alhazmi and Almihdhar

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May-June 1996: FEMA Considers Use of Airborne Operations Center at Atlanta Olympics

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) reportedly considers using an E-4B National Airborne Operations Center during the Atlanta Olympics. The reason for this is not known, but it could be related to terrorism fears,

including a possible air attack (see January 20, 1997). [FEDERAL COMPUTER WEEK, 6/2/1996] An aviation website will later show a picture of an E-4B taking off from Dobbins Air Reserve Base in Marietta, Georgia on May 14, “after crew attended meeting with FEMA prior to ‘96 Atlanta Olympics.” [AIRLINERS.NET, 2000] However, there are no reports on whether an E-4B is actually used during the Olympics.

Entity Tags: Federal Emergency Management Agency, E-4B National Airborne Operations Center

Category Tags: Counterterrorism Action Before 9/11

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Between May and December 1996: NSA Discovers Al-Qaeda Communications Hub



The NSA discovers a communications hub al-Qaeda uses to coordinate its global operations. The hub was set up in May 1996 by Ahmed al-Hada, a close associate of Osama bin Laden (see May 1996), and is discovered at some time in the next six months. [BAMFORD, 2008, PP. 16] According to a PBS documentary, the NSA discovers the hub by monitoring bin Laden’s calls from his satellite phone in Afghanistan (see November 1996-Late August 1998): “Once he starts dialing from Afghanistan, NSA’s listening posts quickly tap into his conversations.... By tracking all calls in and out of Afghanistan, the NSA quickly determines bin Laden’s number: 873-682505331.” According to CIA manager Michael Scheuer, bin Laden’s satellite phone is a “godsend,” because “[i]t gave us an idea, not only of where he was in Afghanistan, but where al-Qaeda, as an organization, was established, because there were calls to various places in the world.” As bin Laden’s phone calls are not encrypted, there is no code for the NSA to break. Instead, NSA voice interceptors and linguists translate, transcribe, and write summaries of the calls. In addition, human analysts plot out which numbers are being called from bin Laden’s phone and how frequently. [PBS, 2/3/2009]

Entity Tags: National Security Agency, Michael Scheuer

Category Tags: Remote Surveillance, Yemen Hub, Counterterrorism Action Before 9/11

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May 11, 1996-August 2001: Canadian Intelligence Monitors Islamic Jihad Operative Communicating with High-Ranking Militants



Mahmoud Jaballah. [Source: Public domain via Toronto Star]

Islamic Jihad operative Mahmoud Jaballah enters Canada on May 11, 1996 and applies for refugee status. There is evidence Canadian intelligence, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), begins monitoring him shortly after his arrival. A 2008 CSIS report mentions details of phone calls Jaballah makes to high-ranking Islamic Jihad leaders as early as June 1996. The CSIS will later conclude that his “primary objective incoming to Canada was to acquire permanent status in a country where he would feel secure in maintaining communications with other [Islamic Jihad] members.” Jaballah is wary his calls may be monitored, and uses code words to discuss sensitive topics. But the CSIS is able to figure out many of the code words, for instance the mention of clothes to refer to travel documents.

- Jaballah frequently calls Thirwat Salah Shehata, one of nine members of Islamic Jihad’s ruling council; the Egyptian government will later also call Shehata “a key figure in bin Laden’s organization.” They are in regular contact until August 1998, when Shehata moves to a new location in Lebanon but does not give Jaballah his new phone number.

- Jaballah also stays in frequent contact with Ahmad Salama Mabruk, another member of Islamic Jihad's ruling council. Mabruk is arrested in 1998.
 - Jaballah is also in frequent contact with Ibrahim Eidarous and Adel Abdel Bary, two Islamic Jihad operatives living in London and working closely with Khalid al-Fawwaz, Osama bin Laden's de facto press secretary. He calls them over 60 times between 1996 and 1998. Bin Laden is monitored by Western intelligence agencies as he frequently calls Bary, Eidarous, and al-Fawwaz until all three are arrested one month after the 1998 African embassy bombings (see Early 1994-September 23, 1998). Jaballah presumably becomes more suspicious that he is being monitored in September 1998, when Canadian officials interview him and tell him they are aware of his contacts with the three men arrested in London.
 - The CSIS will later call Jaballah an "established contact" for Ahmed Said Khadr, a founding al-Qaeda member living in Canada. Khadr had been arrested in Pakistan in 1995 for suspected involvement in an Islamic Jihad bombing there, but he was released several months later after pressure from the Canadian government. After returning to Canada, Khadr ran his own non-profit organization, Health and Education Projects International (HEPI), and allegedly used the money he raised to help fund the Khaldan training camp in Afghanistan. If the CSIS was aware of Khadr's activities through Jaballah, it is not clear why no action was taken against him or his charity before 9/11.
 - Essam Marzouk is an al-Qaeda operative living in Vancouver, Canada. During one call, Jaballah is asked for Marzouk's phone number. He says he does not have it, but gives the name of another operative, Mohamed Zeki Mahjoub, who is known to be in contact with Marzouk. Marzouk will later leave Canada to train the African embassy bombers, stopping by Toronto to visit Mahjoub on the way out of the country.
 - Jaballah is monitored communicating with other Islamic Jihad operatives, including ones in Germany, Yemen, and elsewhere in Canada. He is arrested in March 1999, but after his arrest his wife warns him to reduce his communications and offers to help obtain information from his associates. He acquires a post office box in August 1999 and uses it to continue communicating with militants overseas. He is released in November 1999 and the CSIS will later claim he continues to communicate with other militants until he is arrested again in August 2001. [CANADIAN SECURITY INTELLIGENCE SERVICE, 2/22/2008 
- Entity Tags:** Khaldan training camp, Thirwat Salah Shehata, Mohamed Zeki Mahjoub, Osama bin Laden, Khalid al-Fawwaz, Ahmad Salama Mabruk, Ahmed Said Khadr, Canadian Security Intelligence Service, Mahmoud Jaballah, Adel Abdel Bary, Ibrahim Eidarous, Islamic Jihad, Essam Marzouk
- Category Tags:** Counterterrorism Action Before 9/11, Remote Surveillance
- Bookmark and Share**

May 18, 1996: Sudan Expels Bin Laden; US Fails to Stop His Flight to Afghanistan

After pressure from the US (see March-May 1996), the Sudanese government asks bin Laden to leave the country. He decides to go to Afghanistan. He departs along with many other al-Qaeda members, plus much money and resources. Bin Laden flies to Afghanistan in a C-130 transport plane with an entourage of about 150 men, women, and children, stopping in Doha, Qatar, to refuel, where governmental officials greet him warmly. [LOS ANGELES TIMES, 9/1/2002; COLL, 2004, PP. 325] The US knows in advance that bin Laden is going to Afghanistan, but does nothing to stop him. Sudan's defense minister Elfatih Erwa later says in an interview, "We warned [the US]. In Sudan, bin Laden and his money were under our control. But we knew that if he went to

Afghanistan no one could control him. The US didn't care; they just didn't want him in Somalia. It's crazy." [WASHINGTON POST, 10/3/2001; VILLAGE VOICE, 10/31/2001] US-al-Qaeda double agent Ali Mohamed handles security during the move. [RALEIGH NEWS AND OBSERVER, 10/21/2001]

Entity Tags: Somalia, Osama bin Laden, Sudan, Elfatih Erwa, Al-Qaeda, Ali Mohamed

Category Tags: Hunt for Bin Laden, Ali Mohamed, Osama Bin Laden

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After May 18, 1996-September 1996: Bin Laden Quickly Aligns With the Taliban After Arrival in Afghanistan



Bin Laden arrives in Afghanistan on May 18, 1996 after being expelled from Sudan (see May 18, 1996). Initially, bin Laden stays in an area not controlled by the Taliban, who are fighting for control of the country. But by the end of September 1996, the Taliban conquer the capital of Kabul and gain control over most of the the country (see September 27, 1996). Bin Laden then becomes the guest of the Taliban. The Taliban, bin Laden, and their mutual ally Gulbuddin Hekmatyar then call for a jihad against Ahmed Shah Massoud, who retains control over a small area along Afghanistan's northern border. As bin Laden establishes a new safe base and political ties, he issues a public fatwa, or religious decree, authorizing attacks on Western military targets in the Arabian Peninsula (see August 1996). [COLL, 2004, PP. 326-328]

Entity Tags: Osama bin Laden, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, Ahmed Shah Massoud

Category Tags: Hunt for Bin Laden

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May 21, 1996: Boat Accident Helps Alert CIA to Al-Qaeda Cell in Kenya



A passenger ferry capsizes on Lake Victoria in East Africa and one of the more than 800 who drown is Abu Ubaidah al-Banshiri, al-Qaeda's military commander (his job will be taken over by Mohammed Atef). Al-Qaeda operatives Wadih El-Hage and Fazul Abdullah Mohammed (a.k.a. Haroun Fazul) show up at the disaster scene to find out if al-Banshiri is still alive. There are many journalists covering the disaster and a Western investigator recognizes Fazul and El-Hage when they happen to appear in some of the widely broadcast footage. [WASHINGTON POST, 11/23/1998] El-Hage sends a computer file about the drowning to double agent Ali Mohamed in California. Mohamed's computer hard drive will be copied by US intelligence in 1997 (see October 1997-September 10, 1998). The CIA already has much of El-Hage's biography on file by this time. It appears this event, along with the defection of Jamal al-Fadl (see June 1996-April 1997), only strengthen knowledge of the Kenya cell gained earlier in the year (see April 1996). By August 1996, if not earlier, the phones of El-Hage and Fazul in Nairobi are bugged and closely monitored by the CIA and NSA. Apparently, not much is learned from these phone calls because the callers speak in code, but the CIA does learn about other al-Qaeda operatives from the numbers and locations that are being called. This information is shared with the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF), and the JTTF becomes "convinced that flipping El-Hage [is] the best way to get to bin Laden." [MILLER, STONE, AND MITCHELL, 2002, PP. 200]

Entity Tags: Fazul Abdullah Mohammed, Central Intelligence Agency, Ali Mohamed, Abu Ubaidah al-Banshiri, Joint Terrorism Task Force, Wadih El-Hage, National Security Agency

Category Tags: Wadih El-Hage, 1998 US Embassy Bombings, Remote Surveillance, Key Captures and Deaths

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Summer 1996-August 1998: British Mole Penetrates Militant Islamic Circles in London





Finsbury Park mosque. [Source: Salim Fadhley / Public Domain]

Omar Nasiri, an agent of the British intelligence services MI5 and MI6, and the French service Direction Générale de la Sécurité Extérieure (DGSE), penetrates radical Islamic circles in London, getting close to leading imams Abu Qatada and Abu Hamza (see Mid 1996-October 1997), learning about the Algerian Groupe Islamique Armé (GIA) (see November 1996), and dealing with al-Qaeda manager Abu Zubaida in Pakistan (see (Mid-1996) and (Mid-1996 and After)). Nasiri's main task is to attend the main locations where radicals gather, Abu Qatada's Four Feathers center and Abu Hamza's Finsbury Park mosque, get close to senior operatives there to obtain information, and identify militants, even though the mosques, as Nasiri

will later put it, are already "crawling with spies." The British services are mostly interested in whether the radicals intend to attack in Britain, but, although they come close to inciting such attacks, they never cross the line. Nasiri will later comment: "[Abu Hamza] was inciting his followers to attack just about everywhere else, but never within England. He came very close to this line many times. He incited his followers to attack anyone who tried to claim Muslim land. He said many times that British soldiers and colonizers were fair game." Nasiri, who previously received explosives training at al-Qaeda camps in Afghanistan (see Mid 1995-Spring 1996), also gets his associates in Afghanistan to send him his notebook from an explosives course and passes this on to his handlers, who are impressed at how sophisticated the formulae are. However, after a couple of years the radicals realize he is an informer. In addition, on the day of the African embassy bombings (see 10:35-10:39 a.m., August 7, 1998) he is so upset that he switches his mobile phone off for the first time since he received it, so MI5 stops trusting him. He will later write: "They must have worried that I was, in fact, a sleeper and that I had disappeared to pursue some mission. I couldn't blame them of course. I was a trained killer. From the very beginning they hadn't trusted me; I knew that." He has to leave Britain and his career as an informer is practically over. [NASIRI, 2006, PP. 259-303]

Entity Tags: UK Security Service (MI5), UK Secret Intelligence Service (MI6), Abu Hamza al-Masri, Finsbury Park Mosque, Omar Nasiri, Direction Générale de la Sécurité Extérieure, Abu Qatada

Category Tags: Abu Hamza Al-Masri, Abu Qatada, Other Possible Moles or Informants, Londonistan - UK Counterterrorism, Algerian Militant Collusion
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June 1996: Informant's Clues Point to KSM



While al-Qaeda operative Jamal al-Fadl gives a treasure trove of useful information on al-Qaeda to US intelligence (see June 1996-April 1997), one person he describes in detail is Wali Khan Amin Shah. Shah was one of the plotters of the Operation Bojinka plot (see February 7, 1995). Al-Fadl reveals that Shah has al-Qaeda ties. Author Peter Lance notes that US intelligence should have concluded that Shah's fellow Operation Bojinka plotter, Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM), also has al-Qaeda ties. However, there is no new effort to



find KSM, and he later goes on to mastermind the 9/11 attacks. [LANCE, 2003, PP. 330-31]

Wali Khan Amin Shah. [Source: Peter Lance]

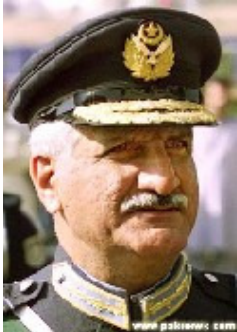
Entity Tags: Peter Lance, Wali Khan Amin Shah, Al-Qaeda, Jamal al-Fadl, Khalid Shaikh Mohammed

Timeline Tags: 9/11 Timeline

Category Tags: 1995 Bojinka Plot, Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, Other Possible Moles or Informants

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June 1996: Bin Laden Meets with Pakistani Military Leaders



Mushaf Ali Mir. [Source: Paknews.com]

According to controversial author Gerald Posner, Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda leader Abu Zubaida meet with senior members of Pakistan's military, including Mushaf Ali Mir, who becomes chief of Pakistan's air force in 2000. Bin Laden moved to Afghanistan the month before, and the Pakistanis offer him protection if he allies with the Taliban. The alliance will prove successful, and bin Laden will call it "blessed by the Saudis," who are already giving money to both the Taliban and al-Qaeda. [POSNER, 2003, PP. 105-06; TIME, 8/31/2003]

Perhaps not coincidentally, this meeting comes only one month after a deal was reportedly made that reaffirmed Saudi support for

al-Qaeda. Bin Laden is initially based in Jalalabad, which is free of Taliban control, but after the deal, he moves his base to Kandahar, which is the center of Taliban power. [ASIA TIMES, 9/17/2003]

Entity Tags: Osama bin Laden, Taliban, Mushaf Ali Mir, Abu Zubaida

Category Tags: Abu Zubaida, Pakistan and the ISI, Saudi Arabia

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June 1996-1997: US Intelligence Learns that Abu Qatada Is Al-Qaeda's Religious Adviser



Abu Qatada. [Source: AFP/Getty Images]

From June 1996 into 1997, highly reliable al-Qaeda defector Jamal al-Fadl is debriefed by US intelligence (see June 1996-April 1997), and presumably he reveals what he knows about British imam Abu Qatada. As al-Fadl will later reveal in early 2001 court testimony, in the early 1990s bin Laden grew concerned about the perception of religious legitimacy of al-Qaeda action. In 1992 and 1993, he formed a fatwa committee, made up of al-Qaeda's more religious leaders, to provide a fatwa (religious sanction) for al-Qaeda's methods. The committee issues a secret fatwa allowing

al-Qaeda to work to evict the US military from the Arabian peninsula. Al-Fadl claims that one of the key members of this fatwa committee is Abu Qatada. In the early 1990s, Abu Qatada is little known, but he moved to Britain in 1994, gained asylum there, and began to gain a public reputation as a radical Islamist preacher. [CORBIN, 2003, PP. 37] Interestingly around the same time the US learns this information from al-Fadl, British intelligence begins using Qatada as an informant (see June 1996-February 1997).

Entity Tags: Jamal al-Fadl, Abu Qatada, US intelligence

Category Tags: Abu Qatada, Londonistan - UK Counterterrorism

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June 1996-April 1997: Highly Trusted Informant Exposes Al-Qaeda





Jamal al-Fadl testifying in a courtroom. Because his identity has been kept secret, his face has been blocked out. [Source: CNN]

Jamal al-Fadl, an al-Qaeda operative from al-Qaeda's first meeting in the late 1980s until 1995, tells the US everything he knows about al-Qaeda. Before al-Fadl's debriefings, US intelligence had amassed thick files on bin Laden and his associates and contacts. However, they had had no idea how the many pieces fit together. But an official says. "After al-Fadl, everything fell into place." [MILLER, STONE, AND

MITCHELL, 2002, PP. 154-65] The New

Yorker will later call al-Fadl "arguably the United States' most valuable informant on al-Qaeda." FBI agent Dan Coleman will later say on al-Fadl, "He's been very, very important to us. When it comes to understanding al-Qaeda, he's the Rosetta Stone." FBI agent Mike Anticev will similarly say, "He spoke to us in great detail, and everything that he told us panned out." CIA officials debrief al-Fadl for a month and a half. Then the CIA hands him, and transcripts of all their interviews with him, over to the FBI. [NEW YORKER, 9/11/2006] Coleman and US prosecutor Patrick Fitzgerald interrogate al-Fadl at a US military base in Germany for months. [LANCE, 2006, PP. 261] Roughly between November 1996 and April 1997, al-Fadl tells the FBI about:

- The historical background of al-Qaeda. Al-Fadl was one of al-Qaeda's founding members (see August 11-20, 1988).
- The structure of al-Qaeda and its leadership composition.
- Al-Qaeda's objectives and direction.
- Its financial infrastructure and networks. Al-Fadl has extensive knowledge of this because he worked as an al-Qaeda financial officer (see December 1996-January 1997).
- Its connections and collaboration with other terrorist groups and supporters.
- Its activities against US soldiers in Somalia (see October 3-4, 1993).
- Its activities in Bosnia. Al-Fadl was sent there on several missions (see Autumn 1992 and Autumn 1992).
- The Al-Kifah Refugee Center, al-Qaeda's most important charity front in the US. Al-Fadl worked there in the 1980s (see 1986-1993).
- Bin Laden's efforts to acquire weapons of mass destruction. Al-Fadl was personally involved in an effort to buy uranium for al-Qaeda (see Late 1993). [9/11 COMMISSION, 7/24/2004, PP. 479]
- Bin Laden's plans to attack either inside the US or US embassies (see Late 1996).

Al-Fadl continues to help US intelligence until current day. For instance, in 2000, he will help US officials capture his brother-in-law, Mohammed Suliman al-Nalfi, who is said to be close to Ayman al-Zawahiri. Al-Nalfi will eventually be sentenced to ten years in prison in the US. Al-Fadl will have no knowledge of the 9/11 plot, but he will continue to identify captured al-Qaeda operatives after 9/11. [NEW YORKER, 9/11/2006] Interestingly, al-Fadl, a Sudanese citizen, will later claim that he worked with the Sudanese intelligence agency with the direct approval of bin Laden. [DAY 2. UNITED STATES OF AMERICA V. USAMA BIN LADEN, ET AL., 2/6/2001]

Entity Tags: Jamal al-Fadl, Mike Anticev, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Central Intelligence Agency, Patrick Fitzgerald, Dan Coleman, Al-Kifah Refugee Center, Al-Qaeda, Osama bin Laden

Timeline Tags: 9/11 Timeline

Category Tags: Key Warnings, Warning Signs, Counterterrorism Action Before 9/11, 1998
US Embassy Bombings, Terrorism Financing, Key Captures and Deaths, Other Possible
Moles or Informants
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June 1996-February 1997: British Intelligence Recruits Prominent Al-Qaeda Imam Abu Qatada




MI5 headquarters in London. [Source: Cryptome]

In June and December 1996, and again in February 1997, a British MI5 agent meets with radical Muslim imam Abu Qatada, hoping he will inform on his fellow extremists. Qatada is a Jordanian national who entered Britain in September 1993 using

a forged United Arab Emirates passport, and was granted asylum in 1994.

Qatada Promises to Look after British Interests - In his meetings with the MI5 agent he claims to “wield powerful, spiritual influence over the Algerian community in London.” He says he does not want London to become a center for settling Islamic scores, and that he will report anyone damaging British interests. He says the individuals he has influence over pose no threat to British security, and promises that “he would not bite the hand that fed him.” He also promises to “report anyone damaging the interests of [Britain].” The MI5 agent records that “surprisingly enough—[Abu Qatada] revealed little love of the methodology and policies pursued by Osama bin Laden. He certainly left me with the impression that he had nothing but contempt for bin Laden’s distant financing of the jihad.” [SPECIAL IMMIGRATION APPEALS COMMISSION, 1/2004  CHANNEL 4 NEWS (LONDON), 3/23/2004; GUARDIAN, 3/24/2004; LONDON TIMES, 3/25/2004]

Links to Al-Qaeda - Yet Qatada is later described as being a “key [British] figure” in al-Qaeda related terror activity. Around 1996, a highly reliable informer told US intelligence that Qatada is on al-Qaeda’s fatwa (religious) committee (see June 1996-1997). Videos of his sermons are later discovered in the Hamburg flat used by Mohamed Atta. Richard Reid, the shoe bomber, and Zacarias Moussaoui, who is later convicted in connection with the 9/11 attacks, are alleged to have sought religious advice from him. [BBC, 8/11/2005; GUARDIAN, 8/11/2005]

Meetings Apparently Continue - Reportedly, after Qatada’s February 1997 meeting with the British agent, no further such meetings occur. [SPECIAL IMMIGRATION APPEALS COMMISSION, 1/2004 ] However, some French officials later allege that Qatada continues to be an MI5 agent, and this is what allows him to avoid arrest after 9/11 (see Early December 2001). [OBSERVER, 2/24/2002] It will later emerge that Bisher al-Rawi, a friend of Qatada, served as an informant and a go-between MI5 and Qatada in numerous meetings between late 2001 and 2002, when Qatada is finally arrested (see Late September 2001-Summer 2002). Furthermore, al-Rawi says he served as a translator between MI5 and Qatada before 9/11, suggesting that Qatada never stopped being an informant. [OBSERVER, 7/29/2007]

Entity Tags: UK Security Service (MI5), Abu Qatada, Bisher al-Rawi

Category Tags: Counterterrorism Action Before 9/11, Abu Qatada, Londonistan - UK
Counterterrorism, US Intel Links to Islamic Militancy

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Many Al-Qaeda Operations



After fleeing Qatar, Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM) travels the world and plans many al-Qaeda operations. He previously was involved in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, and the Operation Bojinka plot. [TIME, 1/20/2003] He is apparently involved in the 1998 US embassy bombings (see 10:35-10:39 a.m., August 7, 1998), the 2000 USS *Cole* bombing (see October 12, 2000), and other attacks. One US official later says, “There is a clear operational link between him and the execution of most, if not all, of the al-Qaeda plots over the past five years.” [LOS ANGELES TIMES, 12/22/2002] He lives in Prague, Czech Republic, through much of 1997. [LOS ANGELES TIMES, 9/1/2002] By 1999, he is living in Germany and visiting with the hijackers there. [NEW YORK TIMES, 6/8/2002; NEW YORK TIMES, 9/22/2002] Using 60 aliases and as many passports, he travels through Europe, Africa, the Persian Gulf, Southeast Asia and South America, personally setting up al-Qaeda cells. [LOS ANGELES TIMES, 12/22/2002; TIME, 1/20/2003]

Entity Tags: USS Cole, Al-Qaeda, Khalid Shaikh Mohammed

Timeline Tags: 9/11 Timeline

Category Tags: Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, 2000 USS Cole Bombing

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Summer 1996 or Shortly After: Moussaoui Meets Future Shoe Bomber at London Mosque



Zacarias Moussaoui meets future shoe bomber Richard Reid at a south London mosque. Moussaoui, who will be arrested in the US shortly before 9/11 for raising suspicions at flight school, is the leader of the radical faction at the mosque and, according to authors Sean O’Neill and Daniel McGrory, Reid “hero-worship[s]” him. Moussaoui also “dominate[s] discussion groups..., shouting down those who dare[...] to criticize his stand that violent jihad [is] the only way to support Islamic communities around the world.” When the moderates at the mosque get together to criticize him, he moves to a more radical mosque, Finsbury Park, where he falls under surveillance by the British authorities (see March 1997-April 2000). Reid goes with him, and by this time he is “mouthing the same radical expressions and insults about America and Tony Blair as his shaven-headed hero.” [O’NEILL AND MCGRORY, 2006, PP. 219]

Entity Tags: Zacarias Moussaoui, Richard C. Reid

Category Tags: Zacarias Moussaoui, 2001 Attempted Shoe Bombing, Londonistan - UK Counterterrorism

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Mid-1996-October 2001: Ariana Airlines Becomes Transport Arm of Al-Qaeda and Taliban



In 1996, al-Qaeda assumes control of Ariana Airlines, Afghanistan’s national airline, for use in its illegal trade network. Passenger flights become few and erratic, as planes are used to fly drugs, weapons, gold, and personnel, primarily between Afghanistan, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Pakistan. The Emirate of Sharjah, in the UAE, becomes a hub for al-Qaeda drug and arms smuggling. Typically, “large quantities of drugs” are flown from Kandahar, Afghanistan, to Sharjah, and large quantities of weapons are flown back to Afghanistan. [LOS ANGELES TIMES, 11/18/2001] About three to four flights run the route each day. Many weapons come from Victor Bout, a notorious Russian arms dealer based in Sharjah. [LOS ANGELES TIMES, 1/20/2002] Afghan taxes on opium production are paid in gold, and then the gold bullion is flown to Dubai, UAE, and laundered into cash. [WASHINGTON POST, 2/17/2002] Taliban officials regularly provide militants with false papers identifying them as Ariana Airlines employees so they can move freely around the world. For instance, one flight on a Ariana small plane in 2000 lists 33 crew members. A former National Security Council official later claims the US is well aware at

the time that al-Qaeda agents regularly fly on Ariana Airlines. (However, US intelligence will not learn of the widespread use of forged Ariana IDs until after 9/11.) The CIA learns of Bout's connection to Ariana and the Taliban in 1998, but takes no action (see 1998). The US presses the UAE for tighter banking controls, but moves "delicately, not wanting to offend an ally in an already complicated relationship," and little changes by 9/11. [LOS ANGELES TIMES, 11/18/2001; FARAH AND BRAUN, 2007, PP. 139] Much of the money for the 9/11 hijackers flows through these Sharjah, UAE, channels. There also are reports suggesting that Ariana Airlines might have been used to train Islamic militants as pilots. The illegal use of Ariana Airlines helps convince the United Nations to impose sanctions against Afghanistan in 1999, but the sanctions lack teeth and do not stop the airline. A second round of sanctions finally stops foreign Ariana Airlines flights, but its charter flights and other charter services keep the illegal network running. [LOS ANGELES TIMES, 11/18/2001] About nine of the 9/11 hijackers work at the Kandahar airport in 2000, which is Ariana's main hub (see Summer 2000).

Entity Tags: Taliban, United Arab Emirates, United Nations, Al-Qaeda, Ariana Airlines, Victor Bout

Category Tags: Hunt for Bin Laden, Victor Bout, Pakistan and the ISI, Drugs
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June 24, 1996: Uzbekistan Cuts a Deal with Enron



Uzbekistan signs a deal with Enron "that could lead to joint development of the Central Asian nation's potentially rich natural gas fields." [HOUSTON CHRONICLE, 6/25/1996] The \$1.3 billion venture teams Enron with the state companies of Russia and Uzbekistan. [HOUSTON CHRONICLE, 6/30/1996] On July 8, 1996, the US government agrees to give \$400 million to help Enron and an Uzbek state company develop these natural gas fields. [OIL & GAS JOURNAL, 7/8/1996]

Entity Tags: Enron, Uzbekistan
Category Tags: Pipeline Politics
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June 25, 1996: Khobar Towers Are Bombed; Unclear Who Culprit Is



Destruction at the Khobar Towers, Dhahran, Saudi Arabia.
[Source: US Air Force]

Explosions destroy the Khobar Towers in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, killing 19 American soldiers and wounding 500. [CNN, 6/26/1996] Saudi officials later interrogate the suspects, declare them guilty, and execute them—without letting the FBI talk to them. [PBS FRONTLINE, 2001; IRISH TIMES, 11/19/2001] Saudis blame Hezbollah, the Iranian-influenced group, but US investigators still believe bin

Laden was involved. [SEATTLE TIMES, 10/29/2001] US intelligence listens when al-Qaeda's number two leader Ayman al-Zawahiri calls bin Laden two days after the bombing to congratulate him on the operation (see June 27, 1996). The New York Times will later report that Mamoun Darkazanli, a suspected al-Qaeda financier with extensive ties to the al-Qaeda Hamburg cell, is involved in the attack. [NEW YORK TIMES, 9/25/2001; NEW YORK TIMES, 9/29/2001] Bin Laden will admit to instigating the attacks in a 1998 interview. [MIAMI HERALD,

9/24/2001] Ironically, the bin Laden family's construction company will be awarded the contract to rebuild the installation. [NEW YORKER, 11/5/2001] In 1997, Canada will catch one of the Khobar Tower attackers and extradite him to the US. However, in 1999, he will be shipped back to Saudi Arabia before he can reveal what he knows about al-Qaeda and the Saudis. One anonymous insider will call it "President Clinton's parting kiss to the Saudis." [PALAST, 2002, PP. 102] In June 2001, a US grand jury will indict 13 Saudis for the bombing. According to the indictment, Iran and Hezbollah were also involved in the attack. [US CONGRESS, 7/24/2003]

Entity Tags: William Jefferson ("Bill") Clinton, Al-Qaeda, Mamoun Darkazanli, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Osama bin Laden, Hezbollah, Ayman al-Zawahiri

Timeline Tags: 9/11 Timeline

Category Tags: Warning Signs, Mamoun Darkazanli, Saudi Arabia, Alleged Al-Qaeda

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After June 25, 1996: CIA Agents Told Not to Track Militants in Saudi Arabia



In the wake of the Khobar Towers bombing in Saudi Arabia (see June 25, 1996), the Saudi government continues to stonewall about their knowledge of radical militants in the country. Official inquiries about bin Laden go unanswered and the Saudis give no help to a US probe about the bombing. But often the US does not even ask the Saudis questions for fear of upsetting the Saudi government. Former US officials will later claim that even after the bombing, the CIA instructed officials at its Saudi station not to collect information on Islamic extremists in Saudi Arabia. [US NEWS AND WORLD REPORT, 12/15/2003] It is not known how long this policy will continue, but there is evidence it continues until 9/11. In August 2001, former CIA agent Robert Baer will attempt to give the CIA a list of hundreds of al-Qaeda operatives in Saudi Arabia and Yemen, but the CIA will show no interest in it (see August 2001). Fifteen of the nineteen 9/11 hijackers will reportedly come from Saudi Arabia.

Entity Tags: Saudi Arabia, Central Intelligence Agency

Category Tags: Counterterrorism Action Before 9/11, Saudi Arabia, Counterterrorism Policy/Politics

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June 27, 1996: US Monitors Bin Laden Taking Credit for Khobar Towers Bombing



In 1999, a retired CIA official will claim that two days after the Khobar Towers bombing in Saudi Arabia (see June 25, 1996), bin Laden is congratulated by colleagues about the bombing. Both Ayman al-Zawahiri, head of Islamic Jihad and al-Qaeda's number two leader, and Ashra Hadi, head of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, are monitored by the NSA as they call bin Laden. This helps confirm that bin Laden was being monitored while using his first satellite phone (see Early 1990s). It will be widely reported that he was monitored after he started using his second satellite phone later in 1996 (see November 1996-Late August 1998). Bin Laden does not exactly publicly take credit for the bombing, but later in the year he will say, "When I got the news about these blasts, I was very happy. This was a noble act. This was a great honor but, unfortunately, I did not conduct these explosions personally." [REEVE, 1999, PP. 187; NEW YORKER, 9/9/2002]

Entity Tags: Ayman al-Zawahiri, National Security Agency, Osama bin Laden, Ashra Hadi

Category Tags: Remote Surveillance, Ayman Al-Zawahiri, Osama Bin Laden

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It Has Been Penetrated by Spies



By 1996, the bombing campaign of the Groupe Islamique Armé (GIA) targeting the civilian population in Algeria shocks even other radical Muslim militants around the world. The GIA has been supported by bin Laden since its inception, but through an associate group al-Qaeda declares: "Due to the deviations and legal mistakes committed by its [leader]... jihad in Algeria, which started almost five years ago, faced a major setback following the massacre of a number of leading scholarly and jihadi figures by the current [leader] of the GIA, who is believed to be surrounded by regime spies and collaborators." [GUNARATNA, 2003, PP. 184] Prominent radical imams Abu Qatada and Abu Hamza are forced to denounce the GIA around the same time due to widespread revulsion about the group's tactics (see Mid 1996-October 1997). The next year, al-Qaeda will make a final public break with the GIA and form a new group to replace it (see September 1997-May 1998).

Entity Tags: Osama bin Laden, Groupe Islamique Armé

Category Tags: Algerian Militant Collusion, Other Possible Moles or Informants

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Mid-1996: French Intelligence Is Aware Potential Islamist Recruits



Transit Turkey

The French intelligence service Direction Générale de la Sécurité Extérieure (DGSE) is aware that radical Muslims appear to be traveling through Turkey on their way to training in a third country, presumably Afghanistan. DGSE informer Omar Nasiri will later comment: "[T]he DGSE had noticed a lot of men were disappearing from France, men who were under surveillance. They would attend the radical mosques every day and then, suddenly, they were gone. They went to Turkey and disappeared. A few months later they would be back at the mosques in France, but no one knew where they had been in the meantime. The DGSE thought they were at the training camps." [NASIRI, 2006, PP. 96] Turkish intelligence is also aware militants transit Turkey at this time and informs German intelligence (see 1996). Several of the 9/11 hijackers will also transit Turkey (see Late November-Early December 1999).

Entity Tags: Direction Générale de la Sécurité Extérieure, Omar Nasiri

Category Tags: Other Possible Moles or Informants

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(Mid-1996): French and British Intelligence Listen in on Al-Qaeda



Communications, Asset Relays Messages for Al-Qaeda

Omar Nasiri, who informs on al-Qaeda for the British intelligence service MI6 and the French service Direction Générale de la Sécurité Extérieure (DSGE), makes contact with al-Qaeda logistics manager Abu Zubaida using a telephone bugged by MI6. Nasiri met Abu Zubaida in Pakistan (see Mid 1995-Spring 1996). Usually, when Nasiri calls the number, he talks to one of Abu Zubaida's associates, but sometimes he talks to Abu Zubaida himself. The phone is used to relay messages between Abu Zubaida in Pakistan and al-Qaeda representatives in London, in particular leading imam Abu Qatada. The French will apparently make great use of this information (see October 1998 and After). [NASIRI, 2006, PP. 270-1, 273, 281]

Entity Tags: Direction Générale de la Sécurité Extérieure, Abu Zubaida, UK Secret Intelligence Service (MI6), Abu Qatada, Omar Nasiri

Category Tags: Remote Surveillance, Londonistan - UK Counterterrorism, Other Possible Moles or Informants, Abu Zubaida, Abu Qatada

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Mid 1996-October 1997: London-Based Imams Denounce GIA over Massacres



Leading London-based imam Abu Qatada denounces the Algerian GIA (Groupe Islamique Armé) over massacres of civilians the group has apparently conducted in Algeria, and severs ties with it. Fellow imam Abu Hamza al-Masri follows suit the next year. Abu Qatada says that support should no longer be provided to the GIA because they are declaring other Muslims infidels and killing them, although they are not learned men and do not have the authority to do this. This is highly controversial in the radical Islamic community in London, as some believe it is the government, not the GIA, that is carrying out the massacres, and Abu Qatada's popularity declines. Abu Hamza initially defends the GIA, but, as the massacres get worse, support for the GIA in London ebbs. Eventually, Abu Hamza calls a GIA commander and asks for an explanation for a massacre. The commander says that the villagers were killed because they supported the moderate Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) and Abu Hamza withdraws his support from the GIA a few weeks later. Omar Nasiri, who informs on Abu Hamza for French and British intelligence and listens in on the call to the commander, will later comment: "More than anything else, this episode proved to me that Abu Hamza was a sham. His objectives shifted with the wind. He needed the GIA to seduce followers away from Abu Qatada. Now, he saw that he might lose more than he gained by continuing to support it. For Abu Hamza, it was all about the zakat, the money he collected every week after the al-Jum'a prayers. The more people attended, the more cash there would be." [NASIRI, 2006, PP. 271-2, 275, 295-6] Bin Laden denounces the GIA around the same time (see Mid-1996).

Entity Tags: UK Security Service (MI5), Groupe Islamique Armé, Omar Nasiri, Abu Qatada, Direction Générale de la Sécurité Extérieure, Abu Hamza al-Masri

Category Tags: Other Possible Moles or Informants, Londonistan - UK Counterterrorism, Algerian Militant Collusion, Abu Qatada, Abu Hamza Al-Masri

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(Mid-1996 and After): French and British Intelligence Send Al-Qaeda \$3,000



The British intelligence service MI6 and the French service Direction Générale de la Sécurité Extérieure (DGSE) send al-Qaeda \$3,000 through one of their assets, Omar Nasiri, who has penetrated al-Qaeda's camps in Afghanistan and its network in London (see Mid 1995-Spring 1996 and Summer 1996-August 1998). The money is sent to al-Qaeda logistics manager Abu Zubaida, whose phone calls they are listening to with Nasiri's help (see (Mid-1996)). The money is wired to a Pakistani bank account whose number Abu Zubaida has given to Nasiri in three instalments of \$1,000. At first, the British and French do not want to send the money, but Nasiri tells them it is essential for his cover and that Zubaida expects it, so they provide it. [NASIRI, 2006, PP. 271-3]

Entity Tags: Abu Zubaida, Omar Nasiri, UK Secret Intelligence Service (MI6), Direction Générale de la Sécurité Extérieure

Category Tags: Counterterrorism Action Before 9/11, Londonistan - UK Counterterrorism, Other Possible Moles or Informants, Abu Zubaida

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July 6, 1996-August 11, 1996: Atlanta Rules Established to Protect Against Attacks Using Planes as Flying Weapons



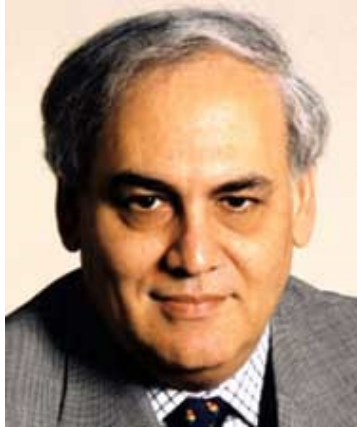
US officials identify crop dusters and suicide flights as potential weapons that could threaten the Olympic Games in Atlanta, Georgia. They take steps to prevent any air attacks. They ban planes from getting too close to Olympic events. During the games, they deploy Black Hawk helicopters and US Customs Service jets to intercept suspicious aircraft over the Olympic venues. Agents monitor crop-duster flights within hundreds of miles of downtown Atlanta. They place armed fighter jets on standby at local air bases. Flights to Atlanta

get special passenger screening. Law enforcement agents also fan out to regional airports throughout northern Georgia “to make sure nobody hijacked a small aircraft and tried to attack one of the venues,” says Woody Johnson, the FBI agent in charge. Counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke will use this same security blanket approach to other major events, referring to the approach as “Atlanta Rules.” (see January 20, 1997) [CHICAGO TRIBUNE, 11/18/2001; CLARKE, 2004, PP. 108-09; WALL STREET JOURNAL, 4/1/2004]

Entity Tags: Woody Johnson, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Richard A. Clarke

Category Tags: Warning Signs, Counterterrorism Policy/Politics, US Air Security
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July 8, 1996: Neoconservative Think Tank Advocates Aggressive Israeli Foreign Policy



Richard Perle. [Source: Public domain]

The Institute for Advanced Strategic and Political Studies, an Israeli think tank, publishes a paper titled “A Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing the Realm.” [WASHINGTON TIMES, 10/7/2002; CHICAGO SUN-TIMES, 3/6/2003] The paper, whose lead author is neoconservative Richard Perle, is meant to advise the new, right-wing Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Other authors include:

- influential neoconservative academic and former Bush adviser Richard Perle, primarily responsible for the content of the paper;
- Meyrav Wurmser, the future director of the neoconservative Hudson Institute’s Center for Middle East Policy;
- her husband David Wurmser, the future chief adviser for Middle East policy for future vice-president Dick Cheney;
- neoconservative Douglas Feith, who will be the prime architect of the Iraq war;
- and a number of lesser-known neoconservatives, including James Colbert, Charles Fairbanks, Jr., Jeffrey T. Bergner, Jonathan Torop, and Robert Loewenberg.

Rebuilding Zionism by Abandoning Past Policies - It advocates making a complete break with past policies by adopting a strategy “based on an entirely new intellectual foundation, one that restores strategic initiative and provides the nation the room to engage every possible energy on rebuilding Zionism....” [GUARDIAN, 9/3/2002]

Aggressive, Militant Israeli Policy towards Arab Neighbors - Much along the lines of an earlier paper by Israeli Oded Yinon (see February 1982), the document urges the Israelis to aggressively seek the downfall of their Arab neighbors—especially Syria and Iraq—by exploiting the inherent tensions within and among the Arab States. The first step is to be the removal of Saddam Hussein in Iraq. A war with Iraq will destabilize the entire Middle East, allowing governments in Syria, Iran, Lebanon, and other countries to be replaced. “Israel will not only contain its foes; it will transcend them,” the paper says. [PERLE, 7/8/1996; GUARDIAN, 9/3/2002; CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE, 3/19/2003] Iraq is first on the list of nations to be transformed. Saddam Hussein must be overthrown, the authors say. But Iraq has long served as a counterweight to the Shi’ite theocracy of Iran; with the two at loggerheads, neither could pose as serious a threat to Israel as it could if not opposed by the other. To counter this, Perle and his co-authors propose restoring the Hashemites (an ancient Arab dynasty; King Faisal I of Iraq was a Hashemite) to power. Instead of the largely Shi’ite Iraqis aligning themselves

with their fellow Shi'a in Iran after Hussein's overthrow, the Hashemite government would align itself with the pro-Western Jordan, long a Hashemite regime. Unfortunately, the authors propose no plan to actually make such an extraordinary regime succession happen, nor do they seem concerned with some Iraqi Shi'ites' alignment with Islamist terrorists or with many Shi'ites' close ties to Iran. [UNGER, 2007, PP. 145-148]

Abandoning Oslo Accords, Militant Palestinian Policy - Other suggestions for Israel include abandoning the Oslo Accords, developing a foreign policy based on a traditional balance of power strategy, reserving its right to invade the West Bank and Gaza Strip as part of a strategy of "self-defense," abandoning any notion of "land for peace," reestablishing a policy of preemptive strikes, forging closer ties to the US while taking steps towards self-reliance, and seeking an alternative to Yasser Arafat as leader of the PLO. [PERLE, 7/8/1996]

'Seeds of a New Vision' - All these questions need not be answered right away, according to co-author Meyrav Wurmser. The document is "the beginning of thought," she says, "... the seeds of a new vision."

Similar to American Christian Right's Vision - According to author Craig Unger, the ideology of "ACB" is, in essence, a secularized version of the theology of the American Christian Right. Christian Zionists insist that Jews were ordained by God to reclaim the Biblical land of Judea and Samaria in the West Bank; the paper asserts that claim as well. The paper echoes Christian fundamentalists by demanding "the unconditional acceptance of Arabs of our rights, *especially* in their territorial dimension." Perle and his fellow neoconservatives want to push the boundaries even further: the Bible can be interpreted to countenance Jewish dominion over all or parts of Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and even Saudi Arabia. Thusly, the authors claim that Israel and the US, by waging war against Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon, would reshape the "strategic environment" in the Middle East and greatly expand Israel's influence in the region.

Influence in Upcoming Bush Administration - Perle will later become chairman of President Bush's influential Defense Policy Board and will be instrumental in moving Bush's US policy toward war with Iraq after the 9/11 attacks, as will Feith and the Wurmser. [UNGER, 2007, PP. 145-148]

Entity Tags: Richard Perle, Robert Loewenberg, Meyrav Wurmser, Jonathan Torop, Richard V. Allen, James Colbert, Charles Fairbanks, Jr., Benjamin Netanyahu, David Wurmser, Institute for Advanced Strategic and Political Studies, Jeffrey T. Bergner, Douglas Feith

Timeline Tags: Events Leading to Iraq Invasion, US International Relations, Neoconservative Influence

Category Tags: US Dominance, Israel

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July 17, 1996-September 1996: TWA Flight 800 Crashes; Counterterrorism Funding Boosted in Response



TWA Flight 800 crashes off the coast of Long Island, New York, killing the 230 people on board. The cause of the crash is debated for a long time afterward, and terrorism is considered a possibility. With this accident in mind, President Clinton requests, and Congress approves, over \$1 billion in counterterrorism-related funding in September 1996. [CLARKE, 2004, PP. 130]

Entity Tags: US Congress, William Jefferson ("Bill") Clinton

Category Tags: Warning Signs, Counterterrorism Policy/Politics

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July 18, 1996: State Department Calls Afghanistan an 'Ideal Haven' for Bin Laden



State Department analysts warn the Clinton administration in a top secret

assessment that bin Laden's move from Sudan to Afghanistan will offer him an "ideal haven." The warning comes exactly one month after he made the move (see May 18, 1996). Analysts say that "his prolonged stay in Afghanistan - where hundreds of 'Arab mujaheddin' receive terrorist training and key extremist leaders often congregate - could prove more dangerous to US interests in the long run than his three-year liaison with Khartoum," in Sudan. Further, bin Laden's public statements suggest an "emboldened" man capable of "increased terrorism." Michael Scheuer, head of the CIA's bin Laden unit at the time, will later comment, "The thinking was that he was in Afghanistan, and he was dangerous, but because he was there, we had a better chance to kill him. But at the end of the day, we settled for the worst possibility - he was there and we didn't do anything." [NEW YORK TIMES, 8/17/2005]

Entity Tags: Osama bin Laden, US Department of State, Clinton administration, Michael Scheuer

Category Tags: Hunt for Bin Laden

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July 31, 1996: Saudi Charity Said to Be Funding Hamas

The New York Daily News reports, "At least \$20 million a year flows out of Saudi Arabia to Hamas, the Palestinian terror group that claimed responsibility for the recent slew of suicide bombings in Israel. Intelligence officials are convinced that the International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO) is a major funnel for this Saudi support.... Western intelligence services have traced IIRO money transfers to bank accounts in London and Amman, Jordan, and from there to front organizations that transferred the money to Hamas-backed groups in the West Bank and Gaza." But the article suggests that little is being done to stop this flow of money. [NEW YORK DAILY NEWS, 7/31/1996] Earlier in the year, a secret CIA report claimed the IIRO is funding Hamas, bin Laden, and other militant groups (see January 1996).

Entity Tags: International Islamic Relief Organization, Hamas

Category Tags: Saudi Arabia, Terrorism Financing

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August 1996: First Chechen War Ends; Chechen Rebels Are Victorious

In August 1996, fighting between Russian forces and Chechen separatists increases as Chechen rebels launch a successful attack on Grozny, which is by far the largest town in Chechnya. Chechen president Dzhokhar Dudayev had been killed in a Russian missile attack in April 1996, after which he was succeeded by Zemlikhan Yandarbiyev. Shortly after the attack on Grozny, Russian and Chechen leaders agree to a ceasefire. A further agreement on Russian troop withdrawals will be signed in November. In January 1997, Aslan Maskhadov wins presidential elections in Chechnya, and Russia recognizes his government. A formal peace treaty will be signed that May. However, the issue of independence for Chechnya will remain unresolved. [BBC, 3/12/2008] Islamist influence in the first Chechen war is minimal, and the number of foreign militants fighting in the war is small. Dudayev is said to be afraid of accepting money from terrorist sources out of fear this would demonize the rebel movement. But after Dudayev's death and the end of the war, the Islamists will grow in power in Chechnya. [WASHINGTON POST, 4/26/2003]

Entity Tags: Dzhokhar Dudayev, Aslan Maskhadov

Category Tags: Islamist Militancy in Chechnya

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August 1996: Bin Laden Calls for Attack on Western Targets in Arabia



Bin Laden issuing his 1996 fatwa.
[Source: PBS]

Secure in his new base in Afghanistan, Osama bin Laden issues a public fatwa, or religious decree, authorizing attacks on Western military targets in the Arabian Peninsula. This eliminates any doubts that bin Laden is merely a financier of attacks, rather than an active militant. [US CONGRESS, 9/18/2002] He made a similar call to attack US troops in Saudi Arabia in an open letter to the Saudi king the year before (see August 1995), which was followed by an actual attack (see November 13, 1995).

The fatwa is published by Khalid al-Fawwaz, who runs bin Laden's European headquarters in London. However, British authorities do not appear concerned. [O'NEILL AND MCGRORY, 2006, PP. 111] He will issue a new fatwa in 1998 authorizing attacks against the US and its allies all over the world (see February 22, 1998).

Entity Tags: Khalid al-Fawwaz, Osama bin Laden

Category Tags: Warning Signs, Osama Bin Laden, Saudi Arabia, Alleged Al-Qaeda Media Statements, Londonistan - UK Counterterrorism

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August 1996: CIA Aware ISI Is Funding Radical Militant Group with Bin Laden and Taliban Links; No Action Taken



A secret CIA report indicates the Pakistani ISI is giving "at least \$30,000 - and possibly as much as \$60,000 - per month" to the Harkat ul-Ansar, a Pakistani radical militant group that will be renamed Harkat ul-Mujahedeen (HUM) one year later. By this time, US intelligence is aware this group kidnapped and killed Americans and other Westerners in 1995 (see July 4, 1995). The CIA reports that Pakistan says it is reducing some of its monetary support to the group, presumably in an effort to avoid being placed on the US list of state sponsors of terrorism. But apparently this is just posturing, because in 2001 the State Department will report that the ISI is continuing to fund HUM (see April 30, 2001). The CIA also notes that HUM "might undertake terrorist actions against civilian airliners." Saeed Sheikh, an alleged 9/11 paymaster, is a leader of the group (see April 1993), and in 1999 an airplane hijacking will free him and another HUM leader from prison (see December 24-31, 1999).

[CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY, 8/1996] Several months later, another secret US report will note the growing ties between HUM, Osama bin Laden, and the Taliban. But the US will not take any serious action against HUM or Pakistan.

[US EMBASSY (ISLAMABAD), 2/6/1997] HUM deputy chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman Khalil will be one of the cosigners to bin Laden's 1998 fatwa declaring it a Muslim duty to kill Americans and Jews (see February 22, 1998). [SCOTT, 2007, PP. 172]

Entity Tags: Saeed Sheikh, Pakistan Directorate for Inter-Services Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency, Harkat ul-Mujahedeen, Osama bin Laden, Taliban, Maulana Fazlur Rehman Khalil

Category Tags: Pakistan and the ISI, Saeed Sheikh

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August 13, 1996: Unocal, Delta Oil Plan Afghan Pipeline



Unocal and Delta Oil of Saudi Arabia reach agreement with state companies in Turkmenistan and Russia to build a natural gas pipeline from Turkmenistan to Pakistan via Afghanistan; the agreement is finalized in 1997. [UNOCAL, 8/13/1996]

Entity Tags: Unocal, Delta Oil

Category Tags: Pipeline Politics

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Significant Terrorism Sponsors in the World

The State Department issues a fact sheet on bin Laden, calling him “one of the most significant financial sponsors of Islamic extremist activities in the world today.” The text ties bin Laden to funding specific attacks, such as the attempt to kill dozens of US soldiers in Yemen in 1992 (see December 29, 1992). The fact sheet also mentions the term “al-Qaeda,” leading to the first media reports using that term the next day (see August 14, 1996). The fact sheet also contains details about bin Laden’s finances, such as the allegation that he co-founded the Al-Shamal Islamic Bank in Sudan in 1990 with a group of wealthy Sudanese and capitalized it with \$50 million of his fortune. [US DEPARTMENT OF STATE, 8/14/1996; NEW YORK TIMES, 8/14/1996] Much of this information appears to come from al-Qaeda defector Jamal al-Fadl. The CIA had just finished debriefing him weeks before (see June 1996-April 1997).

Entity Tags: US Department of State, Al-Shamal Islamic Bank, Osama bin Laden, Jamal al-Fadl

Category Tags: Warning Signs, Hunt for Bin Laden

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August 14, 1996: 'Al-Qaeda' First Mentioned in US Media

Based on a review of the Lexis-Nexus database, the term al-Qaeda is first mentioned in the mainstream media on this day. A “United Press International” article draws from a State Department fact sheet released the same day (see August 14, 1996), and states, “Earlier, during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Usama Bin Ladin drew on his family’s wealth ‘plus donations received from sympathetic merchant families in the Gulf region’ to organize the Islamic Salvation Foundation, or al-Qaida. The group established recruitment centers in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan that enlisted and sheltered thousands of Arab recruits to fight the Soviets. ‘This network remains active,’ the State Department said.” [The spelling is the same as in the original.] [US DEPARTMENT OF STATE, 8/14/1996; UNITED PRESS INTERNATIONAL, 8/14/1996] The term was first used in an overseas article, by the French wire service Agence France-Presse, in May 1993 (see May 30, 1993). The CIA has been aware of the term since at least the start of 1996 (see Shortly Before February 1996), and possibly by 1991, if not earlier (see February 1991- July 1992). However, the term will remain little used and little understood by the media for the next several years. For instance, the New York Times will first mention the term two years later in quoting the courtroom testimony of one of the plotters of the 1998 African embassy bombings (see 10:35-10:39 a.m., August 7, 1998). It is referred to as “al-Qaeda, an international terrorist group, led by Mr. bin Laden.” [NEW YORK TIMES, 8/28/1998]

Entity Tags: Osama bin Laden, Al-Qaeda, US Department of State

Category Tags: Other Pre-9/11 Events

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September 1996-June 2000: Bosnian Intelligence Completely Penetrated by Al-Qaeda

A Bosnian Muslim named Munib Zahiragic joins Bosnia’s Muslim secret police by mid-1995, while he is also working for the Sarajevo office of the US-based charity Benevolence International Foundation (BIF). By September 1996, he is stealing top secret documents and giving them to Enaam Arnaout, the US executive director of BIF and also linked to al-Qaeda. He gives Arnaout hundreds of documents about mujaheddin and al-Qaeda operatives. Arnaout then passes them on to al-Qaeda, allowing many to avoid capture. For instance, high-ranking al-Qaeda leader Mamdouh Mahmud Salim is tipped off that investigators are onto him when he visits Bosnia in 1998 (see May 7,

1998). After Zahiragic leaves the secret police in June 2000, he works full time for BIF. In March 2002, Bosnian police will raid the BIF's Sarajevo office, arrest Zahiragic, and discover weapons, booby traps, fake passports, and bomb making plans. A raid on another BIF office at the same time will uncover the stolen documents. Zahiragic is convicted of espionage in Bosnia a year later but he is only sentenced to two years in prison. [ASSOCIATED PRESS, 6/30/2003; SCHINDLER, 2007, PP. 288-289] Despite his arrest, Bosnian intelligence agencies remain completely penetrated by others. Highly classified Bosnian documents are sometimes found with Islamist militants in Bosnia and are even published in militant newsletters. [SCHINDLER, 2007, PP. 312-313]

Entity Tags: Enaam Arnaout, Al-Qaeda, Benevolence International Foundation, Mamdouh Mahmud Salim

Category Tags: Al-Qaeda in Balkans, BIF

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After September 1996: Journalist Sees US and Taliban Combating Russia over Central Asian Pipeline Issue



Ahmed Rashid. [Source: Jane Scherr/ University of California, Berkeley]

Ahmed Rashid, correspondent for the Far Eastern Economic Review and The Daily Telegraph, conducts extensive investigative research in Afghanistan after the Taliban conquest of Kabul. As he will later write in his 2000 book, *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia*, he sees a “massive regional polarization between the USA, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and the Taliban on one side and Iran, Russia, the Central Asian states and the anti-Taliban alliance on the other. While some focused on whether there was a revival of the old CIA-ISI connection from the Afghan jihad era, it became apparent to me that the strategy over pipelines had become the driving force behind

Washington's interest in the Taliban, which in turn was prompting a counter-reaction from Russia and Iran. But exploring this was like entering a labyrinth, where nobody spoke the truth or divulged their real motives or interests. It was the job of a detective rather than a journalist because there were few clues. Even gaining access to the real players in the game was difficult, because policy was not being driven by politicians and diplomats, but by the secretive oil companies and intelligence services of the regional states.”

[RASHID, 2001, PP. 163]

Entity Tags: Pakistan, Iran, Russia, Ahmed Rashid, Saudi Arabia, Taliban

Category Tags: Pipeline Politics

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September 5, 1996: Bojinka Defendants Convicted; Trial Ignores 9/11 Blueprint Plot



Ramzi Yousef and two other defendants, Abdul Hakim Murad and Wali Khan Amin Shah, are convicted of crimes relating to Operation Bojinka (see January 6, 1995). [CNN, 9/5/1996] In the nearly 6,000-page transcript of the three-month Bojinka trial, there is not a single mention of the “second wave” of Bojinka that closely paralleled the 9/11 plot. Interrogations by Philippine investigator Colonel Rodolfo Mendoza had exposed the details of this plot quite clearly (see January 20, 1995 and February-Early May 1995). However, not only does the FBI not call Mendoza to testify, but his name is not even mentioned in the trial, not even by his assistant, who does testify. “The FBI seemed to be going out of its way to avoid even a hint of the plot that was ultimately carried out on 9/11,” author Peter Lance will later note. [LANCE, 2003, PP. 350-51] Murad was extensively tortured during his imprisonment in the Philippines (see After

January 6, 1995), and some observers such as law professor Alan Dershowitz will assert that Murad's case proves the reliability of torture, claiming that Murad's torture prevented a major disaster. However, others disagree. Law professor Stephanie Athey, in her examination of the case, will write in 2007 that Murad's torture actually produced little useful information. A computer found in Murad's apartment held key details of the plot (see January 7-11, 1995 and Spring 1995). CIA agent Michael Scheuer will later say that the information collected from Murad's apartment, not the information gleaned from Murad's torture, provided actual useful intelligence. [VANITY FAIR, 12/16/2008]

Entity Tags: Rodolfo Mendoza, Ramzi Yousef, Abdul Hakim Murad, Alan M. Dershowitz, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Michael Scheuer, Operation Bojinka, Stephanie Athey, Wali Khan Amin Shah

Category Tags: Warning Signs, Ramzi Yousef, 1995 Bojinka Plot
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**September 27, 1996: Victorious Taliban Supported by Pakistan;
Viewed by US, Unocal as Stabilizing Force**



Taliban forces conquering Afghanistan. [Source: Banded Artists Productions]

The Taliban conquer Kabul [ASSOCIATED PRESS, 8/19/2002] , establishing control over much of Afghanistan. A surge in the Taliban's military successes at this time is later attributed to an increase in direct military assistance from Pakistan's ISI. [NEW YORK TIMES, 12/8/2001] The oil company Unocal is hopeful that the Taliban will stabilize Afghanistan and allow its

pipeline plans to go forward. According to some reports, "preliminary agreement [on the pipeline] was reached between the [Taliban and Unocal] long before the fall of Kabul Oil industry insiders say the dream of securing a pipeline across Afghanistan is the main reason why Pakistan, a close political ally of America's, has been so supportive of the Taliban, and why America has quietly acquiesced in its conquest of Afghanistan." [DAILY TELEGRAPH, 10/11/1996] The 9/11 Commission later concludes that some State Department diplomats are willing to "give the Taliban a chance" because it might be able to bring stability to Afghanistan, which would allow a Unocal oil pipeline to be built through the country. [9/11 COMMISSION, 3/24/2004]


Entity Tags: Taliban, US Department of State, Pakistan Directorate for Inter-Services Intelligence, Unocal, 9/11 Commission

Category Tags: Pipeline Politics, Pakistan and the ISI
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**September 30, 1996: CIA Reports Taliban Are Keeping Bin Laden's
Training Camps Open, Closing Some Other Camps**



Four days after the Taliban conquers Kabul (see September 27, 1996), a classified CIA report notes that as the Taliban advance, they are closing some militant training camps but not others. They have closed the camps controlled by militant leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, militant leader Abdul Rasul Sayyaf, and Jamaat-i-Islami (a religious political party in Pakistan). They have kept open camps controlled by Osama bin Laden, militant leader Yunas Khalis, the Pakistan-based militant group Harkat ul-Mujahedeen, and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (another religious political party in Pakistan). [CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

AGENCY, 9/30/1996 

Entity Tags: Harkat ul-Mujahdeen, Abdul Rasul Sayyaf, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, Yunas Khalis, Osama bin Laden, Jamaat-i-Islami, Taliban, Central Intelligence Agency, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam

Category Tags: Hunt for Bin Laden

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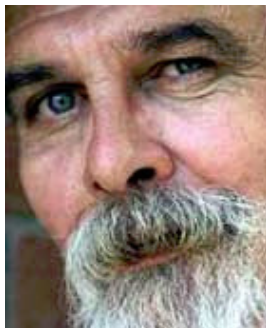
October 1996: Iranian Hijacking Plot Uncovered

US intelligence learns of an Iranian plot to hijack a Japanese plane over Israel and crash it into Tel Aviv. While the plot was never carried out, it is one more example of intelligence agencies being aware that planes could be used as suicide weapons. [US CONGRESS, 9/18/2002]

Category Tags: Warning Signs

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October 1996: Phoenix FBI Agent Has First Suspicions of Local Flight Students



Harry Ellen. [Source: Associated Press]

Harry Ellen, a businessman who converted to Islam, has high credibility with Muslims in Arizona because of his work on behalf of the Palestinian cause. He has had important meetings with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat. In 1994, he began working as an FBI informant. Ken Williams, the Phoenix FBI agent who will later write the July 2001 "Phoenix memo" (see July 10, 2001), is his handler. In October 1996, Ellen tells Williams that he has suspicions about an Algerian pilot who is training other Middle Eastern men to fly. He later recalls, "My comment to Williams was that it would be pitiful if the bad guys were able to gain this

kind of access to airplanes, flight training and crop dusters. I said, 'You really ought to look at this, it's an interesting mix of people.'" Ellen had previously begun spying on a man known as Abu Sief, which apparently is his alias. Sief had come to Arizona from New Jersey in 1993, and bragged about having close ties with al-Qaeda figures Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman and Ramzi Yousef (when Yousef's computer is seized in the Philippines in 1995, there is a mention of a contact in Tucson, Arizona, but it is unknown if this is a reference to Sief or someone else (see January 7-11, 1995)). Sief attended a New Jersey mosque that many of the 1993 World Trade Center bombers also attended. Ellen soon sees the unnamed Algerian pilot meeting with Abu Sief. He tells this to Williams and later will claim, "I told him to be very concerned about air schools." However, Ellen will claim that Williams responds by telling him to "leave it alone." So he does. Ellen later believes that Williams should have sent the gist of his Phoenix memo at this time, instead of four and a half years later. Hani Hanjour is living in Phoenix by this time and taking flight training nearby (see October 1996-Late April 1999). Ellen later will say he did not know Hanjour directly, but he knew some of his friends and relatives. Ellen and Williams will have a falling out in late 1998 on an unrelated manner, and Ellen's flow of information will stop. [WASHINGTON POST, 5/24/2002; NEW YORK TIMES, 5/24/2002; LANCE, 2003, PP. 211, 352-355, INSET 21]

Entity Tags: Ramzi Yousef, Harry Ellen, Ken Williams, Abu Sief, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Omar Abdul-Rahman

Timeline Tags: 9/11 Timeline

Category Tags: Warning Signs, Phoenix Memo, Ramzi Yousef

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October 1996: Security Firm with Connections to Bush Family

Acquires Security Contract for World Trade Center



Marvin Bush. [Source: Eric Draper / White House]

A security company called Stratesec acquires an \$8.3 million contract to help provide security at the World Trade Center. It is one of numerous contractors hired in the upgrade of security at the WTC following the 1993 bombing. Stratesec, which was formerly called Securacom, is responsible for installing the “security-description plan”—the layout of the electronic security system—at the World Trade Center. It has a “completion contract” to provide some of the center’s security “up to the day the buildings fell down,” according to Barry McDaniel, its CEO.

Involved with Airport Security - Another of Stratesec’s biggest security contracts, between 1995 and 1998, is with the Metropolitan Washington

Airport Authority, providing electronic security for Reagan National Airport and Dulles International Airport. Its work includes maintaining the airfield access systems, the CCTV (closed circuit television) systems, and the electronic badging systems. American Airlines Flight 77—one of the planes hijacked on 9/11—takes off from Dulles.

Directors Include Bush Family Member - Marvin P. Bush, the youngest brother of future President George W. Bush, is a director at Stratesec from 1993 to June 2000, when most of its work on these big projects is done. Wirt D. Walker III, a distant relative of George W. Bush, is chairman of the board at Stratesec from 1992, and its CEO from 1999 until January 2002. Another of Stratesec’s directors, from 1991 to 2001, is Mishal Yousef Saud Al Sabah, who is a member of the Kuwaiti royal family. Al Sabah is also chairman of an investment company called the Kuwait-American Corporation (KuWAm), which, between 1993 and 1999, holds a large, often controlling share of Stratesec. In 1996, it owns 90 percent of the company; by 1999 it owns 47 percent.

Other Interests - Walker and Al Sabah are also co-investors in two inter-related aviation companies: Aviation General and Commander Aircraft. According to a 2005 report by freelance journalist Margie Burns: “Aviation General boasted of its international clientele. A 1996 press release announced its sale of airplanes to the National Civil Aviation Training Organization (NCATO) of Giza, Egypt, ‘the sole civilian pilot training organization in Egypt.’ The announcement mentions Al Sabah as chairman of KuWAm and board member of Commander Aircraft Company.” NCATO also has contractual partnerships with several US flight schools, including Embry-Riddle University in Florida.

Connections with Foreign Company a Delicate Matter - According to Wayne Black, the head of a Florida-based security firm, it is delicate for a security company serving international facilities to be so interlinked with a foreign-owned company. He suggests, “Somebody knew somebody.” Black also points out that when a company has a security contract, “you know the inner workings of everything.” Furthermore, if another company is linked to the security company, then “what’s on your computer is on their computer.” After 9/11 Stratesec CEO Barry McDaniel will be asked whether FBI or other agents have questioned him or others at Stratesec about their security work related to 9/11. He answers, “No.” [AMERICAN REPORTER, 1/20/2003; PRINCE GEORGE’S JOURNAL, 2/4/2003; PROGRESSIVE POPULIST, 3/1/2003; PROGRESSIVE POPULIST, 4/15/2003; WASHINGTON SPECTATOR, 2/15/2005] Other companies involved with the security overhaul during this time include Ensec Inc., which is in charge of creating a new parking access control system, E-J Electric Installation Co., and

Electronic Systems Associates, a division of Syska Hennessy. [ACCESS CONTROL & SECURITY SYSTEMS, 7/1/1997; CEE NEWS, 1/1/2001; CEE NEWS, 10/1/2001; BUILDING DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION, 7/1/2002]

Entity Tags: Mishal Yousef Saud Al Sabah, Kuwait-American Corporation (KuwAm), Marvin Bush, Stratesec, Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport, World Trade Center, Wirt D. Walker III, Washington Dulles International Airport, Ensec, Inc., Embry-Riddle University, National Civil Aviation Training Organization, E-J Electric Installation Co., Commander Aircraft, Aviation General, Electronic Systems Associates

Category Tags: US Air Security, WTC Investigation

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October 1996-December 1997: Hani Hanjour Twice Attends Scottsdale Flight School



In late 1996, hijacker Hani Hanjour attends CRM Airline Training Center in Scottsdale, Arizona for three months. This is normally adequate time to earn a private pilot's certificate, but Hanjour fails to accomplish this. [LOS ANGELES TIMES, 9/27/2001] Duncan Hastie, the school's owner, finds Hanjour a "weak student" who is "wasting our resources." According to Hastie, "He was not able to fly solo in a small plane, which is equivalent to getting out of a parking space [in a car] and stopping." Hanjour returns to CRM in December 1997 with two friends: Bandar Al Hazmi, a Saudi like Hanjour, and Rayed Abdullah of Qatar. (There apparently is no family relationship between Bandar Al Hazmi and the two Alhazmi 9/11 hijackers.) Hanjour takes about three lessons, but still fails to complete the coursework necessary for a license to fly a single-engine aircraft. Subsequently, he phones the school about twice per year requesting more lessons, but, according to Hastie, "We didn't want him back at our school because he was not serious about becoming a good pilot." The final time Hanjour calls, in 2000, he requests training on a Boeing 757: the kind of plane he is alleged to have flown into the Pentagon on 9/11. [NEWSDAY, 9/23/2001; LOS ANGELES TIMES, 9/27/2001; CHICAGO TRIBUNE, 10/2/2001; CAPE COD TIMES, 10/21/2001; AVIATION INTERNATIONAL NEWS, 11/2001; WASHINGTON POST, 9/10/2002]

Entity Tags: Rayed Abdullah, Bandar Al Hazmi, Duncan Hastie, Hani Hanjour, Scottsdale Flight School

Timeline Tags: 9/11 Timeline

Category Tags: Hani Hanjour, Alleged Hijackers' Flight Training

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October 1996-Late 2001: Arms Dealer Aligns with Taliban and ISI



Victor Bout. [Source: New York Times]

Russian arms merchant Victor Bout, who has been selling weapons to Afghanistan's Northern Alliance since 1992, switches sides, and begins selling weapons to the Taliban and al-Qaeda instead. [LOS ANGELES TIMES, 1/20/2002; GUARDIAN, 4/17/2002; LOS ANGELES TIMES, 5/19/2002] The deal comes immediately after the Taliban captures Kabul in late October 1996 and gains the upper hand in Afghanistan's civil war. In one trade in 1996, Bout's company delivers at least 40 tons of Russian weapons to the Taliban, earning about \$50 million. [GUARDIAN, 2/16/2002] Two intelligence agencies later confirm that Bout trades with the Taliban "on behalf of the Pakistan government." In late 2000, several Ukrainians sell 150 to 200 T-55 and T-62 tanks to the Taliban in a deal conducted by the ISI, and Bout helps fly the tanks to Afghanistan.

[GAZETTE (MONTREAL), 2/5/2002] Bout formerly worked for the Russian KGB, and now operates the world's largest private weapons transport network. Based in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bout operates freely there until well after

9/11. The US becomes aware of Bout’s widespread illegal weapons trading in Africa in 1995, and of his ties to the Taliban in 1996, but they fail to take effective action against him for years. [LOS ANGELES TIMES, 5/19/2002] US pressure on the UAE in November 2000 to close down Bout’s operations there is ignored. Press reports calling him “the merchant of death” also fail to pressure the UAE. [FINANCIAL TIMES, 6/10/2000; GUARDIAN, 12/23/2000] After President Bush is elected, it appears the US gives up trying to get Bout, until after 9/11. [WASHINGTON POST, 2/26/2002; GUARDIAN, 4/17/2002] Bout moves to Russia in 2002. He is seemingly protected from prosecution by the Russian government, which in early 2002 will claim, “There are no grounds for believing that this Russian citizen has committed illegal acts.” [GUARDIAN, 4/17/2002] The Guardian suggests that Bout may have worked with the CIA when he traded with the Northern Alliance, and this fact may be hampering current international efforts to catch him. [GUARDIAN, 4/17/2002]

Entity Tags: United Arab Emirates, Russia, Taliban, Pakistan Directorate for Inter-Services Intelligence, Al-Qaeda, George W. Bush, Northern Alliance, Victor Bout, Central Intelligence Agency

Category Tags: Victor Bout, Pakistan and the ISI

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Late 1996 or After: Jarrah Associates with Monitored Hamas Fundraiser



Ziad Jarrah on a plane. [Source: NDRTV]

Within a few months of arriving in Germany, hijacker Ziad Jarrah begins to associate with Abdulrahman al-Makhadi, a local hardline Muslim who raises money for the militant Palestinian group Hamas and is monitored by the German intelligence service BfV. The German newspaper Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung will say that al-Makhadi, also known as Abu Mohammed, is “known to the [German security service] BfV as a Hamas activist and ‘instigator,’” and that, “It is therefore difficult to imagine that the 26 year old

Lebanese [Jarrah] was not also registered by the machinery of the intelligence services.” Jarrah later travels around Germany with al-Makhadi and meets other radicals. Al-Makhadi runs the local mosque and makes money by selling special Arab food he purchases in Hamburg there. [FRANKFURTER ALLGEMEINE ZEITUNG (FRANKFURT), 2/2/2003; MCDERMOTT, 2005, PP. 51]

Entity Tags: Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, Ziad Jarrah, Abdulrahman al-Makhadi

Timeline Tags: 9/11 Timeline

Category Tags: Ziad Jarrah, Al-Qaeda in Germany, Key Hijacker Events

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