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inside the terror network

the stories of three al qaeda terrorists who piloted the hijacked planes on sept. 11, and how they so easily eluded u.s. intelligence

introduction

"should we have spotted the conspiracy?"

Hedrick Smith analyzes the U.S. failure to detect the Sept. 11 plot. Plus, interviews with Sen. Bob Graham and FBI counterterrorism experts.

tracking their personal stories

What transformed Mohamed Atta, Marwan al-Shehhi, and Ziad Jarrah into determined suicide terrorists? Biographies, a chronology, and readings.

inside al qaeda

Testimony, analyses, and source documents outlining the origins, structure, and organization of Osama bin Laden's global terrorist network.

reporter's notebook

A conversation with Hedrick Smith about some of the most revealing and surprising elements of this story

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introduction

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"Shy." "Unassuming." "Timid." "Reserved." "Polite." From the descriptions offered by friends, family, and casual acquaintances, one would hardly guess that the three men in question would help plot and execute the most deadly terrorist attack in U.S. history.

Mohamed Atta. Marwan al-Shehhi. Ziad Jarrah. They piloted three of the hijacked planes on Sept. 11. What forces or events transformed these seemingly unremarkable men into fanatical terrorists? And how did their deadly plans for Sept. 11 go undetected for so long?

In "Inside the Terror Network," FRONTLINE correspondent Hedrick Smith explores these and other questions. Interviewing friends, relatives, classmates, and acquaintances, this documentary uncovers the personal histories of the terrorist leaders and traces their movements and plotting in the days, months, and years leading up to Sept. 11.

This report tracks how the hijackers achieved surprise not only by their cunning exploitation of America's open society but also by the failure of intelligence and law enforcement agencies to spot warning signs. Having interviewed top intelligence authorities, Smith reports, "Our side suffered from a failure of imagination. The experts at the CIA, FBI, and INS thought our homeland was safe. They simply did not imagine that foreign terrorists could mount such an attack at long distance and over a long period of time."

Although his name is now infamous, Mohamed Atta, believed to be the plot's ringleader, was just another child growing up in a religiously observant and upwardly mobile household in Egypt. His two sisters were professionals: one a doctor and the other a professor. While pampered by his mother, Atta's father expected him to work hard.

"He studied and he performed his religious duties, just like the rest of the family. We all pray to God and honor our religious duties," his father says.

Atta's family and friends saw nothing unusual or extreme in the young Egyptian. He attended engineering school at home and then, at his father's behest, went to Germany for further study at the age of 24.

"Inside the Terror Network" traces Atta's life in Hamburg -- a magnet for ambitious, young Arabs -- where he later met his future co-conspirators, Marwan al-Shehhi and Ziad Jarrah. It was in Hamburg, authorities believe, that the three students began to become radicalized at the Al Quds mosque.

At his university, Atta organized a prayer group, which included a friendly fellow student with whom he shared an apartment. Marwan al-Shehhi came from the United Arab Emirates, where his father was an imam. Interviewed in the UAE, Royal Highness Sheikh Abdulla bin Zayed said of al-Shehhi, "He was a normal individual until he went to Germany. It seems when he went to Germany, he met these radical fanatics who have a very different understanding of Islam than we do."

This FRONTLINE report chronicles the terrorists' movements from Hamburg to an Al Qaeda terrorist training camp in Afghanistan and eventually to the United States, where they began plotting in earnest the Sept. 11 attack, always operating by Al Qaeda's manual. Along the way the terrorists enlisted the unwitting assistance of numerous Americans: the flight instructor who taught them jet aircraft maneuvers; the fitness trainer who didn't question why a Middle Eastern businessman would need to know hand-to-hand combat techniques for quickly disarming opponents; and the Florida motel manager puzzled by his guests' insistence upon 24-hour Internet access in their room.

"They were very agitated and they said, 'You're wasting our time. We are here on a mission,'" manager Paul Dragomir tells FRONTLINE. "I said, 'What kind of mission is that? A Mission of Islam?' They kind of paused and said, 'No, no, no, we want to stay out of that.'"

"Inside the Terror Network" also tracks the numerous incidents that should have set off alarm bells for authorities: the arrest of an inexperienced flight student in Minnesota, Zacarias Moussaoui, who wanted to learn how to fly a 747 aircraft; wire transfers of large amounts of cash to another terrorist; an incident in which Atta abandoned a small plane on the tarmac of Miami International Airport just days after receiving his pilot license; and Atta's re-entry into the country despite the fact that he had previously overstayed his visa.

"We always had a big problem with the West, convincing them how dangerous these people could be," Sheikh Abdulla bin Zayed says. "Unfortunately, we had to wait until the 11th of September ... for them to understand how dangerous they are."

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should we have spotted the conspiracy?

hedrick smith analyzes the u.s. failure to detect the sept. 11 plot. plus, interviews with sen. bob graham and fbi counterterrorism experts.

» "SHOULD WE HAVE SPOTTED THE CONSPIRACY?"

Correspondent Hedrick Smith outlines U.S. intelligence and law enforcement's many "missed opportunities" to uncover the Sept. 11 plot. Does a fatal "failure of imagination" explain why no alarm bells went off?

» INTERVIEW: ROBERT M. BLITZER

Blitzer was the FBI's chief of domestic terrorism from 1996 to 1998. He reflects on the many factors that enabled the Sept. 11 terrorists to outsmart U.S. intelligence, and questions whether there were warning signs missed by the intelligence and law-enforcement communities.

» INTERVIEW: SEN. BOB GRAHAM

Chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, Graham talks about why the failure to uncover the terror plot was due to a lack of human intelligence resources, as well as poor coordination among intelligence and law-enforcement agencies.

» INTERVIEW: LEWIS D. SCHILIRO

An assistant director with the FBI from 1998 to 2000, Schiliro headed its New York bureau where he supervised counterterrorism investigations, including those of the 1993 World Trade Center bombing and the 1998 U.S. embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania. Here, he analyzes Al Qaeda's network and strategy in planning the Sept. 11 attacks and why the U.S. wasn't able to thwart the plot.

» WHY DID U.S. INTELLIGENCE FAIL ON SEPT. 11?

This section of FRONTLINE's report "Looking For Answers" (Oct. 11, 2001), offers U. S. intelligence authorities' assessments of the specific reasons for the Sept. 11 intelligence catastrophe, as well as larger flaws in the system -- from bureaucratic obstacles and regulatory constraints to agencies' rivalries, lack of resources, and poor coordination in sharing information. It also includes links to significant readings on U.S. intelligence and counterterrorism efforts.

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ATTA JARRAH AL-SHEHHI

tracking their personal stories

what transformed mohamed atta, marwan al-shehhi, and ziad jarrah into determined suicide terrorists? biographies, a chronology, and readings.

» WHO WERE THEY?

Background on Mohamed Atta, Ziad Jarrah, and Marwan al-Shehhi -- where they grew up, what is known about their families, and how their paths led them to Hamburg, Germany, where they formed the core of the terrorist cell behind the Sept. 11 attacks.

» CHRONOLOGY OF A PLOT

From their arrival in Hamburg, Germany, in the 1990s through their final hours counting down to the terror attacks, this timeline traces the movements of Mohamed Atta, Ziad Jarrah, and Marwan al-Shehhi -- the men believed to have piloted three of the four hijacked planes on Sept. 11.

» INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE LAST NIGHT

U.S. authorities found this letter handwritten in Arabic in the suitcase of Mohamed Atta. It includes Islamic prayers, instructions for a last night of life, and a practical checklist of reminders for the final operation. The FBI released an untranslated copy of the letter; the British newspaper The Observer published this translation. Additional copies of the letter were found at the crash site of United Airlines Flight 93 in Pennsylvania, and at a Dulles International Airport parking lot in a car registered to one of the hijackers on American Airlines Flight 77, which crashed into the Pentagon. [Note: According to The Observer web site, this translation was provided for The New York Times by Capital Communications Group, a Washington-based international consulting firm, and by Imad Musa, a translator for the firm.]

» MOHAMED ATTA'S LAST WILL & TESTAMENT

In October 2001, the German magazine Der Spiegel published a copy of Mohamed Atta's will, which was dated April 11, 1996. ABC News provided this English translation.

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testimony, analyses, and source documents outlining the origins, structure, and organization of osama bin laden's global terrorist network.

» AL QAEDA TRAINING MANUAL

During a search of an Al Qaeda member's home, police in Manchester, England, found a document described by the FBI as the Al Qaeda training manual. The manual was found in a computer file described as "the military series" related to the "Declaration of Jihad." These excerpts describe the structure of a military organization whose main mission is the "overthrow of the godless regimes and their replacement with an Islamic regime," and include instructions on counterfeiting and forgery, security measures for undercover activities, and strategies in the case of arrest and indictment. The manual was translated into English and introduced as evidence in the embassy bombing trial in New York in 2001. Further excerpts are available at the Department of Justice website.

» BACKGROUND: AL QAEDA

Excerpts from the U.S. indictment of Zacarias Moussaoui which was filed in December 2001. Moussaoui is the alleged "20th hijacker" in the Sept. 11 attacks and this indictment offers information on what U.S. authorities know to date about bin Laden's Al Qaeda organization. The full indictment is available at the Department of Justice website.

» AHMED RESSAM'S TESTIMONY

After being convicted for his conspiracy to blow up the Los Angeles International Airport in December 1999, Al Qaeda-trained terrorist Ahmed Ressam agreed to cooperate with U.S. prosecutors in hopes of a lighter sentence. In July 2001, he appeared as a witness for the prosecution at the New York trial of co-conspirator Mokhtar Haouari. His testimony offers chilling details of exactly how an Al Qaeda terrorist cell operates and what went on in Osama bin Laden's terrorist training camps in Afghanistan.

» TESTIMONY FROM THE EMBASSY BOMBING TRIAL

U.S. authorities learned a lot about the workings of Al Qaeda in the January 2001 trial of four bin Laden associates for the bombing of the U.S. embassies in East Africa. The government's case against the bin Laden operatives was based on the testimony of two key witnesses -- Jamal Ahmed al-Fadl and L'Houssaine Kherchtou -- who provided detailed testimony about Al Qaeda's structure and inner workings.

» AL QAEDA INTERNATIONAL

Three months after the Sept. 11 terror attacks, J. T. Caruso, acting assistant director of the counterterrorism division of the FBI, testified before Congress on the history of Al Qaeda, its ties to other terrorist organizations, and what U.S. authorities learned about the structure and capabilities of Al Qaeda from the East Africa embassies bombing trial.

» AL QAEDA'S WEB

PBS's NewsHour offers streaming video and a transcript of its report on the intricacies of Al Qaeda, its financial network, its recruiting practices, and its ties to other terrorist groups. The report features interviews with New York Times correspondent Judith Miller and Harvard University lecturer Jessica Stern.

» INTERACTIVE MAP

The Financial Times website provides an interactive map showing what investigators know about Al Qaeda cells and financial centers around the globe, as well as a collection of reports on the terrorist network.

» WHO'S WHO IN THE ENEMY ALLIANCE

Time.com offers a rundown, with pictures, of bin Laden's top lieutenants and their associates.

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reporter's notebook

correspondent **hedrick smith's** thoughts on some of the interesting things he learned in the course of his reporting for "inside the terror network"

In your reporting on the stories of the terrorists who piloted three of the Sept. 11 planes, what did you find most interesting, or surprising?

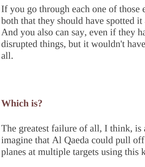
I think that if you follow the track of Mohamed Atta, you see the personification of a growing anger and rage among educated people in these modern Arab countries against their own leaders and against us. And you watch Atta's personal evolution, from a belief in the modernization that the Western world represents -- he's an urban planner, a developer, an architect -- into a disgust at other facets of modernization.

And one interesting aspect of it is, why did these guys get radicalized in Hamburg, Germany? We all operate from the assumption that if they could just see our world, they would all be attracted to it and they'd want to go back and replicate it one way or another in their countries, which is why they came to Hamburg.

But while they are in Hamburg, they become radicalized. They become radicalized because, No. 1, they are outsiders, and No. 2, they lose faith in modernization. They see what modern Western power is doing to their own countries, or helping to do in their own countries through what they see as corrupt or unattractive regimes, and they also see the downside of Western culture. And they feel personally alienated, they feel like outsiders. By the time Atta is done, he neither feels at home in Egypt nor in Hamburg.

You make an interesting point about the role that Hamburg played. What is it like as a city?

It combines the industrial brawn of Detroit or Pittsburgh in the old steel days, the toughness of the New York harbor, because it's a port town, and the bawdiness of New York, New Orleans, San Francisco, and the red light districts. Hamburg has got a rough, seamy side to life, in part because it's a port. You can find anything there; in terms of morals, anything goes.



And so it's the brawn and the strength and the industry that attracts these young Arabs there -- the aircraft industry, urban planning, good universities. But when they get there, it's anonymous, it's impersonal, they feel shut out, they start to band together. If they are at all attracted to Islam, particularly conservative Islam, they are horrified by the seediness, the bawdiness, the open sex that is right out there in a place like Hamburg.

This turn on modernization is absolutely critical, and I don't think people understand that -- that we [the modern Western countries] are both attractive and repulsive. Hamburg kind of combines both that attractive and repulsive element, and they don't know about the repulsive stuff before they go there. They only discover that when they get there, and if they find their niche, and their education goes well, and their position is good at home, and if they are fairly stable, then they are able to sort that out and go home and be productive citizens. But if they are somewhat unstable -- they feel alienated, they feel shut out, they are unhappy with what is going on at home -- that's a combustible combination.

Your report lays out a series of what look to be egregious U.S. intelligence failures. But can we really expect our intelligence and law enforcement agencies to have stopped a sophisticated and determined plot like this?

Well, I think the answer is yes. I think we can. And one reason for saying this is they have stopped others.

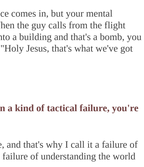
But of this magnitude? A plot this extensive?

No, but they did essentially foil what they expected would be very serious bombings at the time of the millennium in a variety of places. They caught Ahmed Ressam. And it wasn't just Ressam. There were plans for significant attacks on American and Western installations in Europe and in Jordan -- multiple attacks coordinated in multiple countries. So, they have done it.

But I think you have to give the hijackers credit for having been very smart about exploiting the weaknesses of our system: for example, immigration, the pilot training, visas. They knew we were inattentive and they exploited it to the Nth degree.

I think that if you look at the individual episodes -- the failure of the INS to stop Mohamed Atta when he's got an expired visa and he's using his visa improperly -- there's really no excuse for that.

You have this ridiculous episode at the Miami airport where they abandon a plane on the runway and it appears as though the FAA does nothing more than an absolutely cursory kind of report.



You have this arrest of Moussaoui, with alert flight instructors saying to the FBI, "Hey, this guy wants to do something that's really weird," and literally they were saying to the FBI, "Are you guys aware that a fully fueled 747 can be used by a pilot as a bomb?" They are actually prefiguring what happened. And the FBI responds locally, but they don't get the message.

If you go through each one of those episodes, you can say both that they should have spotted it and that might have thrown a monkey wrench into things. And you also can say, even if they had spotted it and did something about it, it might have disrupted things, but it wouldn't have stopped the plot. Which leads you to the greatest failure of all.

Which is?

The greatest failure of all, I think, is an intangible. It's a failure of the imagination, a failure to imagine that Al Qaeda could pull off this kind of an operation in the United States with multiple planes at multiple targets using this kind of sophisticated hijacking and then a suicide mission.

When I first started out reporting on this and talking to intelligence people right after Sept. 11, what they said at the beginning was, "We had no idea that you could motivate and maintain the motivation over a long period of time and over a long distance." What they assumed was, for example, that the USS Cole was attacked by people who were based in Yemen. So you could have your preachers, you could have your motivators, you could have your organizers there, and they could be keeping people pumped up, and then the day they went out on the suicide mission they'd go out and that was it. Same as in Palestine, or when the embassies were attacked in East Africa. The cell was operating out of Somalia and then in Kenya. So the picture that the intelligence people had was of a fairly close proximity to the cell and the terrorist. And this notion that you can operate long distance, over a long period of time, and keep people dedicated, motivated -- they simply didn't understand that there was that kind of capability.

I talked to guys inside and outside the FBI, and to others from the CIA. Essentially they said, "We could not get the FBI's attention to focus on us. And, except for a very small handful of experts, people simply couldn't comprehend that this was a danger that we had to worry about." Now, what that means then is that when the individual tickler comes in from Minnesota, with the arrest of Moussaoui, people who are in decision-making positions are not mentally preconditioned to think in terms of what happened.

So that's what I mean by a failure of imagination. The evidence comes in, but your mental reactions are not geared to thinking in these kind of terms. When the guy calls from the flight school and says they could take a 747 with fuel and plow it into a building and that's a bomb, you hear it but you say, "Ah, that's a wacko idea." You don't say, "Holy Jesus, that's what we've got to worry about."

You're actually talking about something much bigger than a kind of tactical failure, you're talking about a real cultural failure. ...

That's right, I'm talking about a cultural gap, a cultural failure, and that's why I call it a failure of imagination. It's a failure to imagine what the danger is. It's a failure of understanding the world we live in and the nature of the enemy.

After all, there had been a truck bombing at the World Trade Center [in 1993] -- so attacking the World Trade Center, nobody can say they couldn't imagine that. There had been attacks on American embassies and there had been plane hijackings. There was a guy who had been arrested in the Philippines who actually talked in 1995 -- and I know the FBI was informed about it -- and he said that he had a plan to dive a plane into CIA headquarters.

So the specific idea of using a plane against a prime U.S. government target, that was in the bloodstream. But there was a loss of institutional memory. The guys who were around and in important positions in 1995 when that [information] came in, they had left the government. I talked to the guys who were in charge under Clinton in 2000 and basically they hadn't heard it; it hadn't been passed on.

Was there one moment that you remember in reporting this story where the light bulb went on and it became clear to you that this plot should have been stopped?

There was a moment when I was talking to Bob Blitzer -- he was the FBI's chief of counterterrorism from 1996-1998. I asked him what his reaction was when he saw the World Trade buildings attacked, and this is his quote:

> "When I saw those planes hit the World Trade tower, I was not surprised. The first thought on my mind was, 'My god, they finished the job.' I knew it was these guys because they are so committed, they have so much hatred of the West. Incredible determination. Incredible people."

What Blitzer got was the continuity. This didn't come out of the blue. Our failure was to think forward. What I understood from his comment was that we as a nation, and the FBI and the CIA, simply didn't understand that. And that's why we got hit.

They [the terrorists] made mistakes, and what was really stunning about their mistakes is how quick they were to correct them and how clever they are at bulling right through them and faking us out. That's really astonishing. Atta ... gets caught without a driver's license, and within 15 days every one of the hijackers in Florida has gotten a driver's license.

They are very smart. That's what makes them so formidable. They are bright, they think, they learn. And I think killing off the leadership is clearly important, but if we don't do something about our policies and if we don't do something about how we deal with that part of the world we're going to have the same problem in 10 years.

Hedrick Smith, correspondent for FRONTLINE's "Inside the Terror Network," is an award-winning documentary filmmaker, author, and journalist. For 26 years, he was a correspondent for The New York Times, serving in Moscow, Cairo, Saigon, Paris, and the American South, as well as in Washington, D.C., where he was the Times bureau chief and chief correspondent from 1976 to 1988. He shared a 1971 Pulitzer Prize for his work on the Pentagon Papers and won another in 1974 for his reporting from Russia and Eastern Europe. He is the author of several books, including: The Russians; The Power Game: How Washington Works; The New Russians; and Rethinking America. Over the past 12 years, he has produced 13 PBS documentary programs and mini-series.

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chronology of the sept. 11 terror plot

focusing on the men believed to have piloted three of the four planes hijacked on sept. 8 mohamed atta, ziad jarrah, and marwan al-shehhi

1992

At the age of 24, Mohamed Atta, the suspected ringleader of the Sept. 11 plot, travels to Hamburg, Germany, and enrolls at a technical university to do graduate study in urban planning. Shortly after his arrival in Hamburg, Atta, already a qualified architect, took a part time job with a local design firm.

1996

hamburg

Atta begins attending Al Quds mosque, where young men from many Arab countries congregate. Investigators believe Al Quds mosque is where Atta was radicalized, either through meeting extremists or by direct recruitment by an agent of bin Laden. They also believe Atta met two other young Arabs at Al Quds who would become members of the Hamburg terror cell and, later, the suicide pilots on Sept. 11 -- Ziad Jarrah and Marwan al-Shehhi.

Atta grows a beard during this time, a sign of his growing fundamentalism. He also writes out a will, which is witnessed by some of his friends at the mosque. He urges them not to be sad when he dies.

1996-1999

In April 1996, Ziad Jarrah leaves Lebanon for Greifswald, Germany, where he studies German for two semesters before qualifying to take other university courses. After a year in Grieforwald, Jarrah continues his studies at the University of Applied Science in Hamburg, where he stays until 1999. Once in Hamburg, Jarrah rents a room from a German landlady in a genteel suburb. Jarrah begins dating -- and then living with -- a Turkish-German woman, a secular Muslim like himself, who is about to start medical school.

In Hamburg, Jarrah begins a college course in aircraft engineering. After a few months, his landlord, Rosemary Canel, notices small changes that suggest a new commitment to Islam. According to Canel, he grows a beard and keeps a small prayer mat in his room. He also starts spending time at the Al Quds mosque with al-Shehhi and Atta.

1997-1999

Marwan al-Shehhi comes to Germany from the United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.) in 1997. During this time, he studies German at the University of Bonn. According to press reports, al-Shehhi moved to Hamburg sometime in 1999, where he enrolls at the Technical University.

summer 1997

Atta disappears from his university for over a year, giving only a vague explanation for his absence. Western intelligence has established that Atta traveled to Afghanistan, to the camps of Al Qaeda. He is followed by al-Shehhi and Jarrah.

While Atta is in the camps, Osama bin Laden makes his most menacing threat against the United States. He declares all Americans to be legitimate targets of terror. Atta also is in the camps when bin Ladin's men bomb two U.S. embassies in East Africa, killing 224 civilians, including 12 Americans.

oct. 1998

54 marienstrasse

Atta reappears at his university in Hamburg. Observers say he looks more serious, works hard, and doesn't smile as much as before. By now, he has become an operational commander for bin Laden, and is preparing a big attack. Following the blueprint set out in Al Qaeda's manual, he forms a terror cell. He finds an apartment, No. 54 Marienstrasse, that serves as a base for the cell. The apartment becomes the meeting place for at least six Arab students, including al-Shehhi and Jarrah.

winter 1998

German intelligence misses an opportunity to detect the cell and spot their plot. In the aftermath of the Nairobi bombing, the Germans carry out surveillance on one of Atta's roommates who is suspected of having links to bin Laden. The investigators never focus on Atta or the other future pilots.

late 1999

Atta, al-Shehhi, and Jarrah all report their passports stolen. The old ones bore the evidence that they had all been to bin Laden's camps. They apply for and receive new passports.

Meanwhile, Atta's life in Germany is drawing to a close. He submits his master's thesis on urban renewal in an ancient Islamic city. It earns the highest possible grade.

may - june 2000

Al-Shehhi, Atta, and Jarrah arrive separately in the U.S. on tourist visas from Berlin.

Al-Shehhi flies from Europe to Newark, N.J., on May 29, 2000. According to the indictment against Zacarias Moussaoui, an alleged co-conspirator in the Sept. 11 plot, one month after al-Shehhi enters the U.S., $4,790 is wired to him from the U.A.E.

Jarrah arrives in Atlanta, Ga., on a June 27 flight from Munich, Germany.

Atta arrives in Newark on or about June 3, on a tourist visa he had received in Berlin on May 18. Investigators say that Atta, instead of traveling directly to the U.S., traveled to Prague in the Czech Republic, where he stayed for a day before traveling to Newark.

The trio quickly make their way to Florida to learn how to fly. Atta and al-Shehhi enroll at Huffman Aviation. As foreigners, they need student visas to take lessons, but they are accepted even though they both have only tourist visas.

july - dec. 2000

Atta and al-Shehhi receive flight training at Huffman Aviation in Venice, Fla., where they pay $38,000 for lessons. According to the indictment against Moussaoui, from July 19 to September 18, $109,440 is transferred from the U.A.E. to a Florida SunTrust bank account under the names of Atta and al-Shehhi. (The FBI says Atta and al-Shehhi eventually were sent more than $100,000 each -- most of the money coming from Dubai, in the U.A.E., one of the world's busiest and most anonymous banking centers.)

fall 2000

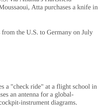
Jarrah begins attending the Florida Flight Training Center in Venice, Fla.

He also tries to enroll another member of the hijacking cell, Ramzi bin al-Shibh, in flight school. At the time, bin al-Shibh is still living in the Marienstrasse apartment. Bin al-Shibh is from Yemen, however, which is considered a hotbed of terrorism, so the U.S. denies his visa four times. The FBI now believes that bin al-Shibh was meant to be the fourth hijacker pilot.

nov. - dec. 2000

According to the indictment against Moussaoui, Atta purchases flight-deck videos for Boeing 747 and 757 aircraft in a pilot store in Ohio on or about Nov. 5, 2000. He purchases more videos a little over a month later, this time for Boeing 767 and Airbus A320 aircraft.

dec. 2000


a flight simulator

Atta and al-Shehhi visit a jet aircraft simulator in Opa-Locka, Fla. For $1,500, they buy six hours of simulator time. They say they want to join an airline and need to familiarize themselves with an airliner cockpit.

On Dec. 26, 2000, Atta and al-Shehhi fly a small plane from Huffman Aviation to Miami International Airport and have a mechanical breakdown on a busy taxiway. They leave the airplane on the taxiway.

jan. 2001

Jarrah arrives at Dubai Airport in the United Arab Emirates. Under questioning, Jarrah tells local authorities that for two months he has been in Pakistan, and -- they presumed -- in Afghanistan, in bin Laden's camps. Jarrah said he was a pilot, headed back to the United States. He had a valid U.S. visa, so Dubai let him go. Dubai authorities say they informed the U.S., but the CIA says the U.S. was not told about this trip until after Sept. 11.

In the months leading up to the attack, Atta makes several trips to Europe. U.S. intelligence believes he was mainly making contacts with the Al Qaeda network.

Atta flies from Miami to Madrid in January 2001 and returns to the U.S. six days later. It is not clear whom he meets, but Spanish police have recently rounded up a major Al Qaeda cell, which has direct links to Atta's Hamburg group.

When he returns to Miami, an alert immigration officer notices that Atta's tourist visa has expired, and that he has violated its terms by taking flight lessons. Atta is held for questioning. Finally, he is granted an eight-month extension.

That same month, the CIA learns that Khalid al-Midhar, who would eventually be identified as one of the hijackers aboard American Airlines Flight 77, which crashed into the Pentagon, was involved in planning the bombing of the USS Cole. His name isn't put on an immigration watchlist until the end of August, after he is already in the United States.

april 2001

Atta travels to Prague, in the Czech Republic, where he was observed in a still unexplained meeting with an Iraqi intelligence agent.

spring 2001

Atta and his lieutenants move to the towns north of Miami. The second wave of the hijack team -- the "foot soldiers" -- begins to arrive from Saudi Arabia. They are conservative young Muslims who speak little English.

Atta receives a ticket in South Florida for driving without a license. He fails to show up for court and a bench warrant is issued for his arrest. He was never picked up.

Jarrah and Atta are both issued Florida driver's licenses on May 2, 2001.

july 4, 2001

Two Saudi members of the hijacking team fly to Newark, N.J., from abroad. They join the other Saudis who are renting an apartment above a convenience store in Patterson, N.J.

july 2001

Atta travels to Spain. Twelve days later, he returns to the U.S. via Atlanta's Hartsfield International Airport. According to the indictment against Moussaoui, Atta purchases a knife in Zurich, Switzerland, on or about July 8, 2001.

Also according to the Moussaoui indictment, Jarrah travels from the U.S. to Germany on July 25 and returns on Aug. 4, 2001.

aug. 2001

According to the indictment against Moussaoui, Jarrah takes a "check ride" at a flight school in Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., on Aug. 17. Five days later, he purchases an antenna for a global-positioning system (GPS), and schematics for Boeing 757 cockpit-instrument diagrams.

aug. 26 - sept. 9, 2001

Al-Shehhi resides at the Panther Motel in Deerfield Beach, Fla. When he checks out, investigators now know, he was on his way to board United Airlines Flight 175, bound from Boston's Logan Airport to Los Angeles.

aug. 2001

Moussaoui, a French Moroccan student, is jailed in Minnesota. He arouses suspicion as an inexperienced pilot seeking advanced jet simulator training for a 747 airliner. The flight school alerts the FBI, noting that a fully fueled 747 could be used as a bomb. The FBI now believes that Moussaoui was tapped to take bin al-Shibh's place as the 20th hijacker.

days before the attack

The three remaining members of Atta's Hamburg terrorist cell -- Said Bahaji, Ramzi bin al-Shibh, and Zakariya Essabar -- flee Germany, evidently headed for Afghanistan.

sept. 9, 2001

At Boston's Logan Airport, Atta watches and takes notes as American Airlines Flight 11 prepares for departure.

sept. 10, 2001

dubai uae

In the United Arab Emirates, a man named Mustafa Ahmed al Hawsawi collects cash sent back from the hijackers in America: $5,000 dollars each from Mohamed Atta and two other hijackers. According to Al Qaeda's rules, the hijackers must return any unused funds in order to finance future missions.

Atta and a young Saudi hijacker drive to Portland, Maine, where they check into the Comfort Inn. Various security cameras capture their images as they spend their final hours wandering around Portland.

early hours of sept. 11, 2001

Jarrah calls his girlfriend from the airport hotel in Newark. He is believed to be the pilot of United Airlines Flight 93, which originated in Newark and crashed in Pennsylvania.

In Portland, Maine, Atta and his Saudi companion catch a short flight to Boston's Logan Airport; they then board American Airlines Flight 11 to Los Angeles, seated in business class.

As Flight 11 is in line for takeoff from Logan, Atta calls al-Shehhi on his cellphone. Al-Shehhi is on the same tarmac aboard United Flight 175.

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al qaeda training manual

In the name of Allah, the merciful and compassionate

PRESENTATION

To those champions who avenged the truth day and night,

And sowed, with their blood and sufferings these phrases...

-* The confrontation that we are calling for with the apostate regimes does not know Socratic debates,... Platonic ideals,... nor Aristotelian diplomacy. But it knows the dialogue of bullets, the ideals of assassination, bombing, and destruction, and the diplomacy of the cannon and machine-gun.

***...

Islamic governments have never and will never be established through peaceful solutions and cooperative conclusts. They are established as they [always] have been

by pen and gun

by word and bullet

by tongue and teeth

...

FIRST LESSON

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

...

Principles of Military Organization:

Military Organization has three main principles without which it cannot be established:

1. Military Organization commander and advisory council
2. The soldiers (individual members)
3. A clearly defined strategy

Military Organization Requirements:

The Military Organization requires a number of requirements to assist it in confrontation and endurance. These are:

1. Forged documents and counterfeit currency
2. Apartments and hiding places
3. Communication means
4. Transportation means
5. Information
6. Arms and ammunition
7. Transport

Missions Required of the Military Organization:

The main mission for which the Military Organization is responsible is:

The overthrow of the godless regimes and their replacement with an Islamic regime. Other missions consist of the following:

1. Gathering information about the enemy, the land, the installations, and the neighbors.
2. Kidnapping enemy personnel, documents, and arms.
3. Assassinating enemy personnel as well as foreign tourists.
4. Freeing the brothers who are captured by the enemy.
5. Spreading rumors and writing statements that instigate people against the enemy.
6. Blasting and destroying the places of amusement, immorality, and sin; not a vital target.
7. Blasting and destroying the embassies and attacking vital economic centers.
8. Blasting and destroying bridges leading into and out of the cities.

...

THIRD LESSON

COUNTERFEIT CURRENCY AND FORGED DOCUMENTS

Financial Security Precautions:

1. Dividing operational funds into two parts: One part is to be invested in projects that offer financial return,and the other is to be saved and not spent except during operations.
2. Not placing operational funds [all] in one place.
3. Not telling the Organization members about the location of the funds.
4. Having proper protection while carrying large amounts of money.
5. Leaving the money with non-members and spending it as needed.

Forged Documents (Identity Cards, Records Books, Passports)

The following security precautions should be taken:

6. Keeping the passport in a safe place so it would not be cristed by the security apparatus, and the brother is belong to would have to negotiate its return (I'll give you your passport if you give me information)
7. All documents of the undercover brother, such as identity card and passport, should be falsified.
8. When the undercover brother is traveling with a certain identity card or passport, he should know all pertinent [information] such as the name, profession, and place of residence.

>> editor's note

For more on terrorists' use of forged identity documents, see FRONTLINE's report Crossing Borders: How Terrorists Use Fake Passports.

...

Security Precautions Related to the Organization' Given Names:

1. The name given by the Organization [to the brother] should not be odd in comparison with other names used around him.
2. A brother should not have more than one name in the area where he lives (the undercover work place)

...

Method of Communication Among Members of the Organization

1. Communication about undercover activity should be done using a good cover; it should also be quick, explicit, and pertinent. That is, just for talking only.
2. Prior to contacting its members, the commander of the cell [2] should agree with each of them separately (the cell members should never meet all in one place and should not know one another) on a manner and means of communication with each other. Likewise, the chief of the Organization should [use a similar technique] with the branch commanders.
3. A higher-ranking commander determines the type and method of communication with lower-ranking leaders.

...

[2] Cell or cluster methods should be adopted by the Organization. It should be composed of many cells whose members do not know one another, so that if a cell member is caught the other cells would not be affected, and work would proceed normally.

...

Defining Members Safety:

This is a set of measures taken by members who perform undercover mission in order to prevent the enemies from getting to them.

It is necessary for any party that adopts Jihad work and has many members to subdivide its members into three groups, each of which has its own security measures. The three groups are:

1.The overt member, 2.The covert member, 3.The commander

Measures that Should be Taken by the Overt Member:

1. He should not be curious and inquisitive about matters that do not concern him.
2. He should not be chatty and boastful about everything he knows or hears.
3. He should not carry on him the names and addresses of those members he knows. If he has so, he should keep them in code.
4. Dealing times of security concerns, such as arrest campaigns and especially if his appearance is not good, he should not go to visits to the areas of trouble and remain at home instead.
5. When conversing on the telephone, he should not talk about any information that might be of use to the enemy.
6. When stopped by the enemy, he should not mention any information that might be of use to the enemy. When receiving letters, he should burn them immediately after reading them and pour water on them to prevent the enemy from reading them. Further, he should destroy any traces of fire so the enemy would not find out that something was burned.

Measures that Should be Taken by the Undercover Member:

In addition to the above measures, the member should...

1. Not reveal his true name to the Organization's members who are working with him, nor to the [Islamic] Ummah [Arab].
2. Have a general appearance that does not indicate Islamic orientation (beard, toothpick, prayer mark, Islamic clothing, etc.).
3. Be careful not to reveal his brothers' common expressions or show their behaviors (special praying appearance, "may Allah reward you", "peace be on you" while arriving and departing,etc.)
4. Avoid visiting famous Islamic places (mosques, libraries, Islamic fairs, etc.)
5. Carry falsified personal documents and know all the information they contain.
6. Have protection preceding his visit to any place while moving about (apartment, previous, means of transportation, etc.).
7. Have complete and accurate knowledge of the security status related to those around him in his place of work and residence, so that no danger or harm would catch him unawares.
8. Maintain his family and neighborhood relationships and should not show any changes in them, so that they would not attempt to bring him back from the Organization[for security reasons].
9. Not resort to utilizing letters and messengers except in an emergency.
10. Not speak loudly.
11. Not get involved in advocating good and denouncing evil in order not to attract attention to himself.
12. Break the daily routine, especially when performing an undercover mission. For example, changing the departure and return routes, arrival and departure times, and the route where he buys his goods.
13. Not causing any trouble in the neighborhood where he lives or at the place of work.
14. Converse on the telephone using a special code so that he does not reveal any information to the enemy in the event members except when necessary. Such contacts should be brief.
15. Not fall into the enemy's treatment trap, either through praising or criticizing his Organization.
16. Performing the exercises to detect surveillance whenever a task is to be performed.
17. Not park in no-parking zones and not take photographs where it is forbidden.
18. Closing all the doors of his house before departing the place where at home in his place of undercover work.
19. Not undergo a sudden change in his daily routine or any relationships that precede his Jihad involvement. For example, there should not be an obvious change in his habits of conversing, weekness, generosity, or disappearance. Likewise, he should not be hasty to sever his previous relationship.
20. Not carry out his activities in place are informers, such as coffee shops, and not live in areas close to the residences of important personalities, government establishments, and police stations.
21. Not write down on any media, specially on paper, that could show the traces and words of the pen by rubbing the paper with lead powder.

Measures that Should be Taken by the Commander:

*The commander, whether in overt or covert work, has special importance for the following reasons:

1. The large amount of information that he possesses.
2. The difficulty of the command in replacing the commander.
3. Therefore,all previously mentioned security precautions regarding members should be heightened for the commander. Many resources should be reserved for protecting the commanders.

Important Note:

*Married brothers should observe the following:

1. Not talking with their wives about Jihad work.

- The members with security risks should not travel with their wives. A wife with an Islamic appearance (veil) attracts attention.

...

An Important Question: How can a Muslim spy live among enemies if he maintains his Islamic characteristics?How can he perform his duties to Allah and not want to appear Muslim?

Concerning the issue of clothing and appearance (appearance of true religion), Ibn Taimia - may Allah have mercy on him - said, "If a Muslim is in a combat or gathering where he is not obligated to have a different appearance from [those around him]. The [Muslim] man may prefer or even be required to wear the clothes, provided his action brings a religious benefit of preaching to them, learning their secrets and informing Muslims, preventing their harm, or some other beneficial goal."

Resembling the polytheist in religious appearance is a kind of "necessity permits the forbidden" [even though they [forbidden acts] are basically prohibited]. As for the visible duties, like fasting and praying, he can but by using any justification not to eat with them [polytheist]. As for prayer, the book (Al-Muthaf Al-Hadeit Lisaiu Al-Nabawiya) quotes Al-Bukhari that "he [the Moslem] may combine the noon and afternoon [prayers], sunset and evening [prayers]. That is based on the fact that the prophet - Allah bless and keep him - combined [prayers] in Madina without fear or hesitation."

Though scholars have disagreed about the interpretation of that tradition, it is possible - though Allah knows best - that the Moslem may combines [prayers]. It is noted, however, that it is forbidden to do the unlawful, such as drinking wine or fornicating. There is nothing that permits those.

Guidelines for Beating and Killing Hostages: Religious scholars have permitted beating. They have quoted in support of it from Mewalim's manuscript, who quotes Thabit Ibn Ant that Allah's prophet - Allah bless and keep him - sought counsel when he was informed about Abou Sufian's arrival. Abou Bakr said, "O prophet, you are the [prophet] of Allah. Omar said, "O prophet, Allah said, "Do you want on, O Allah's prophet, who controls my life? If you order us to subdue the camel we would do it, or beat and follow them to such and such place [Cedar-Ivy beyond Mecca], we would do it, too. "The prophet - Allah bless and keep him - called on the people, who then decended on Badr. They were many Bedouin camels carrying water, during their return was a young black [slave] man belonging to the Al-Hajjaj clan. They took him [as hostage]. The companions of the prophet - Allah bless and keep him - questioned him about Abou Sufian and his companions. He first said, "I know nothing about Abou Sufian but I know about Abou Jahl, Abba, Sheiba, and Omaya Ibn Khalaf. "But when they beat him he said, "O yes, I will tell you. This is the news of Abou Sufian. "Reasonable, the prophet - Allah bless and keep him, who was praying, started to depart saying, "Strike him if he tells you the truth and release him if he lies." Then he said, "That is the death of Quraysh [the hostage]." He said that in the presence of his companions and while moving his hand on the ground.

In this traditions, we find permission to interrogate the hostage for the purpose of obtaining information. It is permitted to strike the noncombatant who has no covenant until he reveals the news, information, and secrets of his people.

The religious scholars have also permitted the killing of a hostage if he insists on withholding information from them. They permitted his killing, so that he does not inform his people of what he learned about the Moslem condition, number, and secrets. In the Shariea book, after one quotes the prophet - Allah bless and keep him - as saying, "Do not torture with fire, do not cut with knives, hitting and keep him - permitted [shedding] his blood and said, "Feed and kill him." Salma Ibn Al-Akwaa followed, caught, and killed him.

The scholars have also permitted the exchange of hostages for money, services, and expertise, as well as secrets of the enemy's army, plans, and numbers. After the Badr attack, the prophet - Allah bless and keep him - showed favor to some hostages, like the poet Abou Izza, by exchanging most of them for money. The rest were released for providing services and expertise to the Muslims.

...

PRISONS AND OPPRESSIVE COUNTERS

IF AN INDICTMENT IS ISSUED AND THE TRIAL BEGINS, THE BROTHER HAS TO PAY ATTENTION TO THE FOLLOWING:

1. At the beginning of the trial, once more the brothers must insist on proving that torture was inflicted on them by State Security [investigators] before the judge.
2. Complain [to the court] of mistreatment while in prison.
3. Make arrangements for the brother's defense with the attorney, whether he was retained by the brother's family or court-appointed.
4. The brother has to do his best to know the names of the state security officers, who participated in his torture and mention their names to the judge. [These names may be obtained from brothers who have dealt with these officers in previous cases.]
5. Some brothers may tell and may be lured by the state security investigators to testify against other brothers in exchange for their release. This is a treacherous action against the same prison during the trials, or by letting them talk to the media. In this case, they have to be treated gently, and should be offered good advice, good treatment, and pray that God may guide them.
6. During the trial, the court has to be notified of any mistreatment of the brothers inside the prison.
7. It is possible to resort to a hunger strike, but it is a tactic that can either succeed or fail.
8. Take advantage of visits to communicate with brothers outside and exchange information that may be helpful to them in their work outside prison [according to what occurred during the interrogation]. The importance of keeping the art of hiding messages is well known here.

The brothers' messages are transported from and to the prison [on their way to the court] they should shout Islamic slogans. Food from inside the prison can be transported to the people and their family the need to support Islam.

- Inside the prison, the brother should not accept any work that may belittle or demean him or his brothers, such as the cleaning of the prison bathrooms or hallways.
11. - The brothers should observe all Islamic program for themselves inside the prison, as well as recreational and educational ones, etc.
12. - The brother in prison should be a role model in selflessness. Brothers should also pay attention to each others needs and should help each other and unite vis a vis the prison officers.
13. - The brothers must take advantage of their presence in prison for educating and worshiping Allah. Some brothers have said that the Organization's members should follow procedures that were contained in the lesson on interrogation and investigation. Lastly, each of us has to understand that we don't achieve victory against our enemies through these actions and methods of prisoners. Rather, victory is achieved by obeying Almighty and Glorious God and because of their many sins. Every brother has to be careful so as not to commit sins and everyone of us has to do his best to obeying Almighty God. Who said in his Holy Book: "We will, without doubt, help Our messengers and those who believe (both) in this world's life and the one Day when the Witnesses will stand forth." May God guide us.

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"should we have spotted the conspiracy?"

by hedrick smith

For all that has been written about Sept. 11, one largely unexamined issue must be confronted if we're going to be more secure in the future.

Simply put: How could a handful of young Arabs outsmart the combined forces of the CIA, FBI, and other Western intelligence agencies? Did the hijackers make any mistakes that should have tipped us off? Were there moments when our side could have and should have spotted these hijackers before they struck?

The answer is yes.

The terrorists certainly succeeded by cunning, deception, and determination, and by taking advantage of our open society. But as you see in FRONTLINE'S "Inside the Terror Network," there were also times when alarm bells should have gone off.

- The failure of the INS to stop the attack's ringleader, Mohamed Atta, from entering the U.S. three times on a tourist visa in 2001, even though officials knew the visa had expired in 2000 and Atta had violated its terms by taking flight lessons.
- The CIA's failure to put another of the hijackers, Khalid al-Midhar, who had been filmed at a meeting to plot the bombing of the USS Cole in October 2000, on a terrorist watch list until August 2001, after he had already entered the United States to prepare for Sept. 11.
- The mystery of why U.S. authorities blocked the entry of a would-be hijacker pilot from Yemen but then failed to investigate his buddies, future hijackers Ziad Jarrah and Mohamed Atta, who had openly worked to get their Yemeni friend into a U.S. flight school.
- The FAA's failure to investigate hijackers Mohamed Atta and Marwan al-Shehhi after they abandoned a small plane on a busy taxiway at Miami International Airport in December 2000.
- The failure of the FBI in August 2001 to aggressively pursue a warning from a U.S. flight school that a very poor student pilot, Zacarias Moussaoui, had a peculiar interest in learning how to fly a 747 -- underlined by the pointed warning that a hijacker piloting a fully fueled airliner could use it as a bomb against ground targets.

There were other missed opportunities abroad. In Hamburg, German intelligence put a roommate of Mohamed Atta under surveillance in 1998-99, but they didn't realize that they had stumbled into Al Qaeda's Hamburg cell. At that time, Atta, the cell's leader, was gathering his hijack team and hatching the plot. But the Germans saw nothing suspicious and dropped their investigation.

Probably the greatest intelligence failure of all was a failure of imagination, a failure to conceive that Al Qaeda could recruit people smart enough to carry out such a deadly and sophisticated attack in the United States -- in short, a fundamental failure to understand the enemy well enough to gear up the necessary defenses.

"We're very good at listening on satellites or taking pictures from the sky of the former Soviet Union," asserts Sen. Bob Graham of Florida, chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence. "Where we have fallen down is the ability to deal with these much smaller, more flexible, and more violent terrorist groups that are now our enemy. ... There were serious breakdowns. ... We'd not been attacked in our homeland since Pearl Harbor. We did not feel that America itself was a target of terrorist activities. We were somewhat lax in that regard."

"We had lots of scenarios about what terrorists might try to do," former Assistant FBI Director Lew Schiliro told me, "But not that -- not what happened Sept. 11."

That's surprising because of a confession wrung out of an Al Qaeda terrorist named Abdul Hakim Murad, arrested in 1995 by Philippine investigators. Murad, a pilot trained in the U.S., confessed he had a plan for dive-bombing a plane into CIA headquarters. That report was passed on to U.S. authorities, but the FBI and CIA discounted this as the hare-brained scheme of a single terrorist.

It's also surprising because, as Lew Schiliro reports, the FBI and CIA had noticed a trend of steadily escalating and increasingly sophisticated Al Qaeda attacks against American targets, dating from the truck-bombing of the World Trade Towers in 1993. Osama bin Laden openly declared war on the United States -- on civilian as well as military targets.

"Our experts' mindset was that terrorist cells had to operate close to their bases ...by that mistaken theory, the U.S. was safe."

In the mid 1990s, the FBI blocked a plot to bomb the World Trade Center and other economic targets in New York. But in 1998, Al Qaeda pulled off the bombing of two U.S. embassies in East Africa, and later, an attack on the American destroyer USS Cole in Yemen. In 2000, an Al Qaeda-backed terrorist, Ahmed Ressam, was caught sneaking into America, planning to bomb the Los Angeles airport.

It's also surprising because American intelligence knew that Al Qaeda had its sights on destroying the World Trade towers, as a symbol of America's wealth and economic might. In fact, on Sept. 11, Bob Blitzer, longtime chief of FBI counterterrorism until 1998, immediately understood the connection to two earlier Al Qaeda attacks.

"When I saw those planes hit the World Trade towers, I was not surprised," Blitzer told me. "The first thought on my mind was, 'My God, they finished the job.' I knew it was these guys because they are so committed. They have so much hatred of the West. Incredible determination. Incredible people."

But broadly speaking, Al Qaeda's determination and bin Laden's obsession with the World Trade towers were underestimated by U.S. intelligence. After the attack, I kept hearing from U.S. terrorism specialists that prior to Sept. 11, they were convinced that terrorism could not be "exported" over long distances and long periods of time.

In short, our experts' mindset was that terrorist cells had to operate close to their bases -- as in the case of Palestinian suicide bombers, recruited, trained and kept motivated right at home. Or the bombers who attacked the U.S. embassies in East Africa, operating out of nearby Somalia. Or the Yemeni terrorists who attacked the USS Cole, encamped near the harbor in Aden.

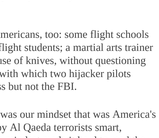
By that mistaken theory, the U.S. was safe.

In that mindset, our intelligence experts were predisposed to look for bin Laden to strike once again overseas. They did not imagine that Al Qaeda could recruit, train, and send to the U.S. a handful of well-educated Arabs in their 20s and 30s for 15 months, who would learn to fly small planes, get familiar with jet airliners, scout the actual flights they were going to hijack, slip in and out of the U.S., and use the Internet to communicate with each other and Al Qaeda, without our detecting them or their defecting.

That failure of imagination may have persuaded the FBI there was no need to comb the rosters of U.S. flight schools for potential hijackers. It may have made high FBI officials in August 2001 less keen to push to the hilt an investigation of a tip from the Pan Am Flight School in Minnesota that Zacarias Moussaoui had the earmarks of a potential hijacker planning to ram a fully fueled jet airliner into a big building.

The FBI arrested Moussaoui but did not aggressively probe his motives or connections, even though French intelligence supplied Washington a dossier connecting Moussaoui to known terrorist groups -- before Sept. 11.

A similar failure to understand the world we live in led the immigration service to take an over-simplified view of our friends and foes in the Middle East. It kept a wary eye on young men from Iraq, Iran, Syria, Algeria, and Yemen, but was lenient about visas for others from Egypt, Lebanon, and Saudi Arabia. Al Qaeda knew the holes in our system and exploited them.


a flight simulator

Also, when U.S. flight schools reported oddities about Arabic student pilots, the FAA showed little concern. When the FAA was told that future hijacker pilot Hani Hanjour was so poor in English that it was dangerous to let him fly aircraft, the FAA suggested providing Hanjour with an English language tutor.

Equally puzzling was the FAA's seeming disinterest when two of the future hijackers, barely out of flight school, left their plane in the busy traffic at Miami airport. The FAA bawled out the plane's owner but did not investigate the pilots.

"The fact that that incident didn't cause some bells to ring is hard to believe," Sen. Graham asserts in hindsight. "If those bells had rung, it might have led to a series of investigations that would have peeled back the plot that was beginning to develop and potentially could have avoided Sept. 11."

That same failure to perceive real danger afflicted ordinary Americans, too: some flight schools not bothering to demand the right kind of visas from foreign flight students; a martial arts trainer instructing a hijacker in hand-to-hand combat, including the use of knives, without questioning the motive; a motel manager suspicious of the tense urgency with which two hijacker pilots demanded untraceable, 24-hour Internet access telling his boss but not the FBI.

In short, as the Sept. 11 plot built to its horrendous climax, it was our mindset that was America's Achilles Heel -- our disbelief that the U.S. could be reached by Al Qaeda terrorists smart, sophisticated, and dedicated enough to strike us at home. This mindset made it hard to read the warning signs.

We can only hope now that part of what lies buried beneath the ashes at Ground Zero are America's illusions that we can be safe while continuing to ignore large parts of the world and without working to understand what kind of people are so alienated from America -- and why -- that they would die to destroy us.

Hedrick Smith, correspondent for FRONTLINE's "Inside the Terror Network," is an award-winning documentary filmmaker, author, and journalist. For 26 years, he was a correspondent for The New York Times, serving in Moscow, Cairo, Saigon, Paris, and the American South, as well as in Washington, D.C., where he was the Times bureau chief and chief correspondent from 1976 to 1988. He shared a 1971 Pulitzer Prize for his work on the Pentagon Papers and won another in 1974 for his reporting from Russia and Eastern Europe. He is the author of several books, including: The Russians; The Power Game: How Washington Works; The New Russians; and Rethinking America. Over the past 12 years, he has produced 13 PBS documentary programs and mini-series.

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Blitzer was the FBI's counterterrorism coordinator from 1980 to 1994. In this interview, he reflects on the major factors that enabled Iraq 11 terrorists to outsmart U.S. intelligence. FRONTLINE interviewed Blitzer on Nov. 15, 2001.

... What is it that made them [the Sept. 11 hijackers] do it? ... Was it their commitment? What is it?

It's their version of the Islamic faith and their view of the world. When I first began to work against these guys, really, in post-1980 along with a lot of other FBI and CIA people ... I did a lot of reading, like a lot of other guys. But I really came to understand that they're thinking back 1,000 years. They're thinking back to the Crusades. They view the world in those kinds of terms. They are very fanatically committed to their religion. It's not the Muslim religion; it's their religion, their view of Islam -- and that view of Islam is world domination, the whole world being an Islamic republic, with them at the helm of that world.

So it's pretty frightening, and I don't think there's anything worse in terms of terrorism. ... So I was not shocked in terms of the fact that they conducted this attack. I wasn't surprised that they would do an attack of this magnitude. I just don't think like a lot of guys that had worked against them, just a sense of "God, what could we have done better?" What else was there to do that could have prevented this thing? ...

Did we underestimate Al Qaeda?

I don't think we underestimated Al Qaeda in terms of the lethality of the organization and roughly the goals and objectives of the organization. But in terms of having the kind of knowledge we needed, the kind of key intelligence that would have prevented that thing, we didn't have it. Is that underestimation? I don't think it is. I just don't think we have the information that we needed.

Is it an intelligence failure? I've certainly thought about that a lot. I don't know, because I don't know what we actually had in terms of what we could have done to this happening. This was a long-planned operation and, as we're seeing now, a lot of it was done in Germany. I just can't understand clearly how an isolated small group, very, very conscious of operational security, could do this.

How did they slip under our radar screen?

A lot of these guys came here illegally on visas. They certainly were very careful people; they blended into the community. Obviously, they knew essentially how the U.S. works. They know how to travel, they know how to use ATM machines, they know how to find things. And they kept to themselves. They were careful. They did things that normal 20- and 30-year-old people would do, seem to places that were very normal for that age group. They just blended in very, very well. They had obviously been trained well. So unless they did something that would come to the attention of law enforcement or unless there was credible intelligence developed through information abroad or sources here, they could operate pretty freely -- and they certainly did.

They seemed to be very cunning about their knowledge of our weaknesses and how to exploit our society. Talk about that for a moment.

... I think it goes back to the time when, during the Afghan war, people from many countries were recruited, trained, and fought in Afghanistan and then returned to their countries. And certainly the United States was one of those countries. And there were a number of places where people were recruited like the Al Farooq Mosque up in the New York area, the Al Kifah Refugee Center, another place up on the New York area where people were identified, recruited and again sent over and came back.

> The 19 hijackers weren't criminals. They had clean records; they had clean paper. There were no significant warning signs in their backgrounds.

So there have been people here in the United States for a long period of time who clearly understand the country, are citizens of the country, are residents of the country. So there is that kind of information flow available to Al Qaeda, and has been available to them for some time.

You talk about cunning; yes, they're cunning because they understand it. They understand (a) how to get in here, (b) how to blend in, (c) how to find flight schools. I mean, all these things they understand. I think one of the leaders, Mohamed Atta, spoke English. I'm sure others spoke English. So they just know how to work the system.

Are you saying that this group of 19 hijackers had a support network? ...

I think that's a strong possibility. But even if that support network wasn't here, even if they didn't tell them where to go and how to do it, what I'm saying to you is that there was enough intelligence gathered by Al Qaeda through people who had lived here over many years that they could have figured out how to do things pretty easily. ...

What do you make of the way the INS handled [Mohamed Atta], who is in and out on a tourist visa, even one that was expired?

Well, you know what -- I'm not surprised. And I'm not trying to be critical of the immigration service. But when you're an immigration officer and you're sitting there and you've got your three 747s that have just landed and you're processing 1,200-1,500 passengers at a crack and a guy presents that looks good, is dressed well, good personality, you look at his passport and he just looks like a young businessman to you, and he comes in.

Did they good?

I don't think they goofed. I just think it's an impossible situation.

This is an expired visa. And he says he's a tourist, but he's going to go and be a student.

When a guy comes in on an expired visa, that is a goof. But you know, even going back to Ramzi Yousef, I think he came in on no paper and they had so many people in the holding facility that night that they let him go with a notice to appear on a certain date. Of course, he never appeared. [**Editor's Note:** Ramzi Yousef was sentenced to life in prison in 1997 for masterminding the 1993 World Trade Center bombing.]

So the kind of controls that we would like to see there, the kind of capability just to hold people -- they're not in place. I'm hopeful that with this new proposal to split INS into an enforcement branch and an immigration branch, that it might get harder. But I'll tell you, it's not easy. And there hasn't been a whole lot of attention, hard attention, placed on this over the last many, many years, in my view. ...

You keep saying this is Al Qaeda. What are the two, three, four pieces of key evidence that say to you without question [that] this is Al Qaeda?

... When I saw the attack, I instinctively felt it was bin Laden, but mainly because I think I understand those guys a little bit. ... The twin towers, to them, are the symbol of our economic society. It was always that way, and the symbol that our support to Israel, which they hate. So for them that was always a big thing, and that was why they wanted to hit it the first time in 1993. The Pentagon, the White House, again the Capitol, the symbol of our government, the symbols of our way of life, these were symbols of our government, the government they wanted to bring down. They're very symbolic people, and have been throughout my experience with them. ...

Was [there] something that surfaced that could have rung alarm bells, that might have led to a chain of events that would have unravelled this, or at least unravelled part of it? I'm thinking specifically of the arrest in Minnesota of Zacarias Moussaoui. ... If a flight school had called you and said, "Here's a guy who wants to fly modern jets and he's not even qualified as a pilot," -- what does that say to you, and how do you read it?

Had that information come to me in either one of my old jobs, I would have jumped. I would have just very, very immediately seized on that and had absolutely a full-court, extremely intensive investigation of that person and certainly checked him with everybody that we knew at CIA and would have asked CIA to run checks on him to see who the heck he is. I mean, that would have been our worst nightmare. Certainly my worst nightmare is somebody hijacking a plane, just even hijacking a plane and taking hostages. So that's probably the first thing that would have entered my mind: this guy is trying to set up a hijack.

In terms of crashing a jet into a building, it might have been in the recesses of my mind. But I would have immediately thought "hijack" and gone into the present mode in terms of finding out who is he, who is he with? Does he work? Does he have contacts here in the United States? I'd want to know everything about him from the day he was born.

Then the French come in, 10 days later. ... They hand you a bundle of information -- you the FBI -- which says this guy is connected with Islamic militants and terrorists, if not Al Qaeda directly. What does that say to you? How do you react to that?

... I think with the French providing more details in terms of the activities of Moussaoui, that would have ratcheted me up even higher in terms of this guy. Again, I would have wanted to know everybody he knows, particularly everybody he knows in the United States right now. What has he been doing here? How long has he been here? What are his contacts? Who has he been in contact with? Does he have a telephone at his residence? Are there toll records? These kinds of things. ... Are there others taking flight lessons like him? Are they, as we say, where are the schools? Those are all the things that would just rattle right through your brain almost immediately. I'd certainly think within an hour you'd be thinking about all these things. Now, whether that was done or not, I don't know. ...

Tell me about what you knew about Murad and that interrogation. [Editor's Note: Abdul Hakim Murad was convicted of plotting in January 1995 to bomb 11 airliners from the U.S. over the Far East.]

I do know that back in 1995, one of the subjects in what the FBI calls Manila Air -- the plot to blow up about a dozen airliners in the Philippines -- when he was interviewed, he talked about himself crashing a plane into CIA headquarters. But my recollection of this wasn't a major passenger airline. This was an extemporaneous statement by this guy. It's something he wanted to do. But I never had any information back at that time that anyone else was thinking about doing it. I think we all thought it was just this one guy talking. ...

What about Mohamed Atta as an operational commander? How much discretion do you think that he had? ... How might he have related to others higher up and perhaps had the overall strategic view? ...

He would have had limited discretion, in my view. He would have been charged by the leadership to go and do this. They would have talked about it extensively. They would have spent a lot of time thinking about this, how to do it, how to get into the United States, how to live in the United States. There would have been a lot of pre-operational discussion and planning to pull off an operation like this and to be successful.

So while I think he probably had some operational discretion in terms of logistics like apartments and selecting places to live and selecting rental car companies and these kind of things, I think when it came down to the nuts and bolts of actually doing the operation, he would have had to have gone someplace, met, discussed, agreed. They had to agree on the timing of it. A lot of these variables, I think, would have been discussed down. But he probably would have had discretion to about it, if something happened. Let's say that they had gone to the airport that morning and they didn't make it through security, there was a major problem with them. He probably would have given someone the high sign to get in touch with everybody else and say, "Stand down. Do it another day." ...

We know that Mohamed Atta made many trips back to Europe, even once he was here in the United States learning how to be a pilot. What is the significance do you think of those trips back to Europe, particularly in the weeks immediately preceding this?

... I think he was getting direction. I think he was going back to report on the status of where they were in the operation to make sure that they were secure in terms of their operational security, and think he was getting direction to move ahead, and probably authorization to move ahead.

From some key figure?

Yes, from somebody that was involved in this thing that he was reporting back to.

And this would have been done in person rather than ...

Definitely in person, rather than the telephone and risking discovery. It's, again, good operational security face to face, probably in an area where they couldn't be overheard. Some secure location that they were convinced were secure and again this one-on-one exchange.

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And what does that tell us about the importance of Europe in general to the Al Qaeda network? ...

Well, what it tells me is that there certainly is an infrastructure in place, a support infrastructure, maybe even somewhat of a command infrastructure. And Al Qaeda and their associates have been able to establish an excellent network in Europe, certainly in Germany, certainly in the U.K., probably Spain, probably other countries. I think Italy is also another place where we've had this kind of activity in the past. So there's a pretty well-established network of support. ...

Ultimately a group of 19 were together here in the United States for this operation. What are your views about the way that group broke down? ... How would you describe them? Would you lump them roughly into two groups? ...

In terms of their structure here in the United States, I really see it as a leadership element and then a follower element. The leadership element controlled the operation and the rest of the guys followed. ... Probably if you look at the educational background and sophistication of the leaders versus the others, you'll find a pretty sharp demarcation line. Some guys were well educated, fluent in English, really were sharp; other guys weren't. ...

Without question, all of these guys were handpicked people for various reasons. Obviously their leadership and intelligence, the ability to learn to fly these multiengine aircraft. That's a pretty sophisticated individual. I think everyone recognizes that. In terms of the rest of them, they had to be very fervently committed to their religion and to the mission and they had to be convinced that giving up their lives was the best thing for them in this particular operation. Nineteen of them? I mean, 19 of them volunteered to kill themselves? ... And no one cracked. Of these people, no one came in and said to the law enforcement, "Hey, I'm part of this group, and I'm not going to do this." They all did it, which really, to me, tells me that their selection process was very good. ...

What was specific to the 19 who were chosen by and large was their clean records. Reflect on that a bit, if you like. ...

The 19 hijackers were clean. They didn't have criminal records; they had clean records; they had clean paper. There were no significant warning signs in their backgrounds that would have focused law enforcement or the immigration people on them specifically. ... Even if one or two of them had been focused on significantly, again, in checking them out, you would have found nothing, so you had really nothing to go on. So they've been able to get many of them here legally, some here not legally. But I think the majority of them came in on good paper. There's thousands and thousands of people that come in here every single day from around the world, and how can you focus in laser like on people that are here on clean paper? It's impossible. ...

We know that Mohamed Atta went to Prague on at least two occasions and met a known member of the Iraqi intelligence services. What might that suggest?

You know, that's really interesting to me. First of all, because the intelligence service representative ... wasn't an underling; he was the head guy of Iraqi intelligence in Prague, probably for a wide operational area, and that's a pretty big deal. Why would he have any colleagues would see that as just a very, very important meeting. What was it about? Why is this guy in contact? Multiple times he's in contact with him, which says to me (a) relationship -- probably either he's trying to develop him as a source, a human source, or he already is a human source for the Iraqi intelligence service.

The question is, what is he? Was he an Al Qaeda guy who had been recruited by the Iraqis and providing intelligence to the Iraqis about Al Qaeda? Maybe. It's not logical to me, because the guy ultimately killed himself for Al Qaeda. So it's a real big issue, at least for me, to know what that relationship was. ...

We know that Mohamed Atta was interested in crop sprayers. He went to Florida. He was very interested, very persistent, he wanted to get in and find out what they could do, what their capabilities were. What does this suggest about plans that he had and that the group had?

Well, certainly when Mohamed Atta was looking at crop-dusting planes, you have to immediately figure that he's going to want to spray some kind of agent on people and do a lot of damage. It had to be that. I mean, there's no other logical conclusion you can reach now. ... His interest in a crop duster could have been intelligence gathering for the future, rather than right now, because he's obviously got his orders. He's obviously fully engaged in planning the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and something else attacks. But for some reason, he's out there looking at these other aircraft, so I think that's very significant. ...

We know also at about that time he was looking possibly in Norfolk, Va., at American warships; snooping again. Is there a sense that Mohamed Atta was the man on the ground? ... That he was a real gatherer of intelligence?

I'd have to conclude that, based upon the fact that he did look at crop dusters, he did look at Norfolk; he was very active scoping things out. They could have been planning another attack against a warship here, ... getting the feel of the land and whether or not they could do it. There is tremendous pre-operational planning that goes into any of these things, but particularly these guys, they spend a lot of time scoping things out. So, yes, he may have just been gathering intel to send back or to report on in response to a task.

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INSIDE THE TERROR NETWORK

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Graham is the chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence. He believes that the failure to prevent the Sept. 11 attacks was due to a lack of human intelligence resources and the failure of the intelligence agencies to effectively coordinate with each other. FRONTLINE interviewed Graham on Nov. 15, 2001.

Mohamed Atta gets a visa to come to the United States as a tourist. He very quickly becomes a student at a flight school. He leaves the country three times on that first tourist visa which has expired and he re-enters three times -- without having renewed that tourist visa -- and never gets himself a student visa to study at the flight school. I just wonder -- without going into anything classified, Senator -- what do you make of the way the INS handled Mohamed Atta?

... The fact that Atta was able to get a visa in the first place and then to abuse it by leaving the country and coming back even though it had expired is an indication of the atrocious way in which our INS operates. Unfortunately, it's not a singular or even unusual case. We have a dysfunctional system between the State Department, which is responsible for issuing visas, and the INS, which is responsible for processing people and determining that they have a legal right of entry into the United States. Then nobody deals with people once they're inside the United States to determine if they are complying with the conditions of the visa. ...

So do you think the INS should have stopped Mohamed Atta?

The INS should have stopped Atta when he kept leaving and coming back into the country with an expired visa. The State Department should have done a better job of tracking the visa that it had granted, and alerting the INS and other appropriate enforcement agencies that there was a person in the United States who had overstayed the visa and maybe, in his case, had misused the visa. If he came here under representations that he was going to be a tourist and ended up at a flight school, that in itself is a violation of his visa commitment.

Now, you're a licensed pilot, isn't that right?

Yes.

There was an incident when Mohamed Atta and Marwan al-Shehhi flew a rented plane to the airport in Miami. They had engine trouble, the plane stalled, they left the plane on the taxiway, and other planes had to go around it. I just want to get your reaction to that as a pilot.

... This is one of the busiest airports in the world. The plane stayed there. He rented a car and drove back to the West Coast [of Florida] and no one did anything about it. What in the world was going on among the officials at the airport, the FAA, and law enforcement that would not have raised some alarm bells when a situation as bizarre as this had just occurred? ... When you have a trainee pilot who flies a plane into one of the busiest airports in America, it has a mechanical defect and he abandons the plane on the side of the runway -- that ought to send a signal to somebody that this needs to be investigated. ...

[T]his is one of the fundamental weaknesses of American intelligence. We collect literally millions of pieces of information every day. Some of those pieces of information should be signals as to an untoward event about to occur. Yet our ability to sift through all of the wheat to get down to the needles of value in there has proven to be inadequate. ...

And in that same vein -- and without disclosing any classified information and any details that you feel uncomfortable discussing -- do you think that the FBI was aggressive enough ... in the way it handled the arrest of Moussaoui in Minnesota?

From the information that we have today, it does not appear as if the FBI put a high enough priority on the Moussaoui case. Here you've got a dossier from the French indicating that this person has been associated with known terrorists. You have an experience in Minnesota where he goes to a flight simulator school; doesn't ask for training as to how you take the plane off or how you land the plane, only how you manipulate a large commercial jet in the air. That was sufficient to cause the operator of the simulator to bring it to the attention of the local FBI, but it wasn't sufficient to cause central FBI to say, "We need to conduct an aggressive investigation to find out what Moussaoui is up to."

> "[Atta] left the U.S. and returned three times with this expired visa. ... It is a gross collapse of our Immigration Service's responsibility that he was allowed entry."

If we had done that investigation, it might have been the beginning domino of a whole chain that would have led back to the plot that hit us on Sept. 11. ... This is part of its [the FBI's] culture, which is to wait until a crime has been committed, and then to undertake an investigation with the goal of finding out who committed the crime, bringing that person to trial and eventually to justice. We've got to change the orientation of our law enforcement agencies, and particularly the FBI, to be one of how to avoid the crime, the terrorist assault, occurring in the first place.

That's going to require more aggression. It's going to require the use of some of the new tools that were granted to the FBI in late October through the Anti-Terrorism Act relative to gathering information off the telephone, off the computer, tracking people more effectively once they get into the United States. All those are going to be critical if we're going to move from defense to offense in dealing with terrorists.

... [Imagine] you're sitting there in Minnesota. You're the head of the flight school there, or you're the head of the FBI office when the [report about Moussaoui] comes in. You've a licensed pilot and this guy wants to do that and you're saying, "What is going on here?"

... [Moussaoui's behavior] was sufficiently out of the ordinary to cause that flight simulator school to do a very unordinary thing, and that is to get on the phone and call the FBI and say, "I've got somebody in here -- Mr. Moussaoui -- who's asking for some very unusual flight instruction. I think you ought to check this guy out."

Does that say to you "hijacking"?

It doesn't necessarily say "hijacking," but it says, "This person is asking for a highly unusual use of the simulator." Most people who use simulators are already well-trained pilots and they are doing this to maintain their skills. You don't normally have a person who is as much a neophyte as Moussaoui was asking to come in and fly a 757 on a simulator.

Senator, let me change the subject. Are you confident that this Sept. 11 plot has links to bin Laden?

There were things that the CIA said immediately after Sept. 11: that the evidence was pointing increasingly towards bin Laden as the perpetrator; that the evidence was also indicating that he was not acting alone; that there were other global terrorist groups that were complicit in this; and, most alarming, that Sept. 11 was not intended to be a singular act but it was part of a larger plan and that there were other terrorist acts yet to be committed. And most of our attention for the past several weeks has been focused on trying to understand what those future acts of terrorist assault might be, and to disrupt them.

This is what the CIA said, but I'm asking you, Senator, as an independent political figure with an extremely important position in the Congress. If you're confident that this plot was linked to bin Laden, then what makes you confident that it was? Is it the money trail? Is it the communications? Is it the warnings bin Laden gave in advance? I'm ticking off a bunch of things. But what is it that convinces you personally that this was a plot run from Afghanistan by bin Laden's organization?

There's more than circumstantial evidence. There is an accumulation of past events which point directly at bin Laden as the principal perpetrator. He'd done this before. He had involved in attacks against U.S. interests in Africa, in the Middle East, as well as in the United States. Second, that he had provided the training that would have been necessary to carry out a complicated transaction such as this. Third, his own personal assumption almost is a celebratory way of responsibility for this are all key pieces of the evidence that point the finger at bin Laden as being the principal culprit. He might not have been the only culprit. There may have been other groups which had joined with him to carry this out. But that he was the prime instigator.

You keep referring to training. ... Are you convinced that some or all of these 19 hijackers were trained in Afghanistan by bin Laden's people?

There is evidence that many, if not most, of the people who were involved in this had had previous experience with bin Laden in Afghanistan in his training camps.

What about their communications? One of the things that has been impressive -- and depressive -- to people who have tried to understand and follow this case is the fact that they were able to do the communications they needed to do -- communications with Afghanistan, communications with people in Europe and communications among each other. ... Talk for a moment about this communications ability of theirs, what it says about their sophistication, and what it says about the problems we have penetrating that.

The hijackers had a phenomenal ability to be able to act together with, apparently, a limited amount of face-to-face or long-distance communication, which would indicate that there was a substantial amount of pre-planning before they came to the United States. ...

[T]hey're walking in the public libraries, they're going into the CyberZone Café in Las Vegas. They're using cell phones by the dozen. What does it say about what's changed? We're almost muscle-bound [in] dealing with people that are this agile?

Well, yes, our intelligence communication has been developed for a Cold War application. We're very good at listening on satellites or taking pictures from the sky of the former Soviet Union. Where we have fallen down is the agility to deal with these much smaller, more flexible and more violent terrorist groups that are now our enemy. ... [O]ur inability to intercept the communications that they were doing is an indication of how out of sync our current intelligence capability is with the challenges that we are facing. ...

In my judgment, the heart of our problem is that we're muscle-bound. We are very good if our enemy is the Soviet Union. But we have not developed the flexibility, the alacrity, the imagination, creativity of how to get inside the minds of these terrorists to determine what their motivations are, what their likely forms of attack will be, and to use that information both to defend ourselves against them but, more importantly, use that information to go after them aggressively.

The only way, in my judgment, that we're going to deal with terrorism is at the source, by an effective offensive effort to eliminate terrorism. We're too open and vulnerable a society to be able to protect ourselves against all the potential threats and assaults that they might launch against us. ...

[B]oth Murad and Ramzi went to jail; ... These guys said ... "One of the things we're thinking about is putting bombs on 11 airplanes and blowing them up, and another thing we're thinking about is dive bombing a plane." ...

How does that get lost? Let me ask you, do you take that idea seriously that they had thought six years ago about dive bombing planes into important buildings? And should it have been remembered? [Editor's Note: Abdul Hakim Murad was convicted of plotting in January 1995 to bomb 11 airliners from the U.S. over the Far East; Ramzi Yousef, Murad's accomplice in the airliner bombing plot, was convicted of masterminding the 1993 World Trade Center bombing.]

Yes, it was a serious proposal that diving planes into buildings would be a form of terrorist assault, and it should have been taken seriously. But to put that in context, there probably were 100,000 other ideas that some terrorist had suggested on his or her computer or in a telephone conversation that we intercepted. There are an infinite number of vulnerabilities in a country as open as the United States. The only way you can really fight terrorism is not by retreating into your castle and playing defense. You've got to go out offensively and eliminate the terrorists, and that's what we're committed to do. ...

I'd like to get your assessment, looking back over the past decade, as to whether or not the CIA did a good enough job ferreting out the human intelligence that would have been necessary to tell us the specifics of Sept. 11.

There's no question that, over the last 15 or more years, the CIA's human intelligence has significantly degraded. It's degraded both in the number of our agents ... [and] in the lack of diversity of our agents. For most of the CIA's experience, our agents were trained to speak Russian. They understood Russian culture. They were reasonably effective against that one big enemy. But we don't have very many agents who speak Tajik or Pashtu or the kind of languages that are common in Central Asia. We don't have agents who are from that cultural background and understand the motivations and the attitudes of the people. And we have had to rely excessively on other countries' intelligence services to do what we should be doing for ourselves. ...

Are you saying that in a lot of ways, the intelligence failure here on the part of the CIA was that it was stuck in a Cold War mentality and a Cold War mode of operation, and it didn't attach high enough priority to terrorism as the threat?

Yes. The CIA is a product of the Cold War. It's still largely culturally oriented towards fighting the kind of intelligence war of the Cold War. It has not developed the alacrity, the flexibility, the smaller unit capability, the diversity of language and cultural understanding that's going to be necessary to conduct an effective intelligence war against terrorists. ...

Now, let me ask you about bin Laden's warnings. Bin Laden has made a number of statements about penetrating America. Interesting, that in the summer of 2001, he did say he wanted to create a sensational event. Substantial attacks in America. Now, I'm just wondering [whether you're] aware of those warnings, what you make of them and whether or not our intelligence and law enforcement people missed something very important.

Bin Laden has been making increasingly hostile statements towards America for a number of years and including through until today. So the fact that he was making these statements raised the general sense that we were under a heightened threat risk, but without the specificity to determine just what that risk might be. Was he talking about attacking another embassy in a foreign country? Was he talking about attacking a railroad system or an American seaport or a nuclear plant? What was this great new event that he was celebrating with his statements in the summer? What we've got to do is increase our intelligence capability, so that we can convert these general threat assessments into enough specificity to be able to respond. That means that you've got to have a human being who's close enough to bin Laden to understand what his capability is, what his plans of intentions are, communicate that information back with enough time to interdict it. ...

What are the breakdowns that you see in our intelligence and law enforcement operation? ...

When we've completed the diagnosis of Sept. 11, these are the things that I believe we'll find to be the contributors to what happened: lack of coordination among critical agencies such as the CIA, the [INS], and the FBI; failure to analyze the information that we were collecting, such as a number of suspicious events and activities that were occurring in the spring and summer of 2001; the fact that we don't have an adequate human intelligence capability within our intelligence service -- we do not have someone who's close enough to bin Laden to be able to understand what his capabilities and intentions are; and the fact that our technology -- which works so well against the Soviet Union -- is less capable of dealing with the small, distributed, highly flexible, extremely violent terrorist groups that we're now trying to understand and control around the world.

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interview lewis d. schiliro

... People will say, "Well, we didn't think we were vulnerable in our homeland. We didn't think you could export terrorists. We didn't think you could put people in the field as they did for 15, 16, 18 months." Were there elements of this that were a surprise to you?

Oh, I think for sure. The ability to coordinate an attack of that nature and to provide the logistics for it for an extended period of time to me is shocking. The fact that they went undetected, were able to go into flight schools and learn how to fly planes without the necessity of taking off and landing, the ability to infiltrate and to communicate amongst one another certainly does come as a surprise. But I think it's the magnitude of the devastation that they caused as opposed to their ability to carry out violence. ...

So what was the problem? We didn't anticipate the kind of attack?

I think precisely -- the inability to anticipate the hijacking of large airliners fully loaded with fuel and fly them into the upper towers of the Trade Center was not something that was anticipated. ...

When you reviewed the potential threats that terrorists wreak on a city like New York, where you were based -- whether it's bioterrorism, traditional explosives, truck bombings, what have you -- did the repertoire of potential threats that you worked over with your office and staff include something like this?

We in New York were very, very fortunate to have one of the largest, and I think the oldest terrorist task forces in the country. ... That task force worked several bombing cases to include the Trade Center, East Africa, and several catastrophic airline events to include Egypt Air and TWA 800. So it was a group of people that unfortunately had tremendous experience in these types of disasters. ... [I]n my time here, we went through a lot of pains to prepare for the host of different eventualities. And I can assure you we did not anticipate nor plan for the type of event that occurred on Sept. 11. ...

If you look at the hijackers' operation, when you look at their tradecraft, what are the secrets of their success from their standpoint? What was it they did that enabled them to pull off this simultaneous coordinated terrorist attack?

I think there were several things that the terrorists were able to do. One is they were able to sustain themselves in the United States for a period of time. They went to ground in the community without drawing excessive attention to themselves. They were able to provide the logistic support necessary to keep them here for the period of time to train to get that kind of training, and they were able to do it under the veil of law enforcement for a period of time and they went undetected.

> "Sure, there were clues. But they occurred over years. There wasn't a week that went by [that there wasn't] some thing out of bin Ladin ... and we took those very seriously."

I think if there's any surprise to me, it's their ability to communicate that we did not pick up on, because it did require a fair amount of communication and coordination to be able to do that. So it is my belief -- and I'm speculating, to some extent -- that if there was a failure, it was a failure to intercept the communications that perhaps could have been a warning to this event.

But they obviously were very successful in their ability to hide for almost a year while they were here, and to, again, develop the logistical support that led to the events of Sept. 11.

I wonder if you see them as experts of finding our weaknesses and exploiting them. We run into them going to car rental agencies that don't have sophisticated enough records of traffic violations. We find them going to flight schools that don't seem to check into their background. We find them slipping through the INS with explanations that seemed to satisfy people on the spot. ... They seem to know a great deal about our vulnerabilities and where they can exploit them, and we have a great deal of difficulty finding their vulnerabilities.

Certainly we are, as a nation, vulnerable. But that vulnerability is really born of the freedoms that we enjoy here. We do not live in a society that closes its borders. We have very porous borders. We allow people into the United States on relatively easy access, both legally and illegally. We keep our institutions open in terms of information and freedom of information. We allow people to basically come into the United States and travel freely about without any national identification card, without the ability to track people as they move about. ...

What kind of training do Al Qaeda terrorists get, for example, that would be relevant to the operation that we saw here on Sept. 11? ...

Certainly the type of training that they would receive, again in Afghanistan and in other places, would be compartmentalized. Somebody would be responsible for logistics. Others would be responsible for the tactical deployment. Others would be responsible for flying the plane, and they would be done for a purpose. ...

For example, those that were responsible for gaining access to the plane by overpowering the passengers would have received training in that regard. If explosives were to be used in additional attacks, they would have received training in that regard. Those that were to be responsible for the financial support of the group and their ability to blend in would be directed in that regard. So it is a very, very unique and complex system. But unfortunately, it has been successful in several attacks that we've had to deal with.

Afghanistan looks like a fairly primitive place; this looks like a fairly sophisticated operation. Does this training that they get in Afghanistan include handling finances, the international banking system, how to get along in a Western country, the whole business of shaving your beard and going local and looking modern? ...

I think [it would be] a terrible mistake on our part to underestimate their ability and their resolve. We're talking about a group of people that were really born in the conflict with the Soviet Union in the 1980s, a group of people that really get their history from fighting with the mujahedeen and expelling from their country the largest military force in the world. To me that represents, I think, a tremendous amount of resolve, a tremendous amount of imagination and a tremendous fortitude. So when you look at training, when you look at their ability to assimilate into the United States and their commitment to the extremist movement, I think it's important to understand the history of Afghanistan and the history of the people that came out of that. ...

Their ability to assimilate into the United States and into societies around the flight schools and around the logistics of that were also done in a way that avoided detection. And the other thing that they do is they understand our techniques. Every time we have a trial -- and we've had several terrorist trials -- the government, through discovery and through the nature of our court system, educates them in very minute detail as the techniques we employ to overcome their efforts and to gain detection of the events that are surrounding them. So I would not underestimate them for one minute.

If you could quickly, for a general audience, tick off what you see are the trademarks and the connections of Al Qaeda and bin Laden with this bombing attack on Sept. 11, what were the key elements? ...

One is their ability to operate in compartmentalized cells; their ability to travel back into Germany, back into London, in order to receive both instructions and money. ... Their ability to operate in secrecy, and their ability to establish communications amongst one another in a rather surreptitious way to avoid detection. So a number of things that I would point to. Certainly their ability to coordinate their efforts on Sept. 11 to cause the kind of casualties that they did, very similar to the coordinated attacks that occurred in East Africa against the two U.S. embassies. I think that there are many similarities in terms of the types of tradecraft and the logistics employed both on Sept. 11 and in the East Africa and USS Cole disaster.

When you see Mohamed Atta returning to Germany in the spring of 2001, or going to Spain in July of 2001, what do you see him doing there?

I think when Atta travelled both to Germany and travelled to Spain -- again, I rely on what has been historically the reason for these type of trips -- they're receiving instructions; they're gaining intelligence information; they're certainly understanding the logistical support to receive support and developing financial contacts for the rest of the people that are in their cell. So I think that type of travel and the ability of law enforcement to go back and understand who was contacted on these trips and what type of support was gained is critical to an understanding of the network that Al Qaeda employs.

So who, or what type of people is Atta meeting in Germany or Spain?

Again, I will speak in very general terms as far as what my belief on those trips. More than likely, when he travelled, he probably met either directly or indirectly members of Al Qaeda. He probably received instructions from the hierarchy associated with Osama bin Ladin from his emissaries. He probably received instructions on who to contact for financial and logistical support. Those trips were critical, in my mind, to the success that they unfortunately had on Sept. 11.

You mentioned the communications several times. One of the things we noticed is they're going to public libraries. ... They go to Kinko's. They go to all kinds of anonymous places to book themselves up to the Internet. What's going on here? What's happening? ...

Assuming that they get on the Internet and have the ability to communicate amongst one another, it's my belief that that's what they did -- established e-mail communication. And I speculate as to that. But they are providing instructions. They're providing timing instructions. They're providing instructions as far as financial support, and they're providing overall direction to the nature of the operation that was to occur on Sept. 11.

Why can't we find that out? Why can't we spot that? Do they have codes? I've heard they had software that actually erases their tracks when they finish. What is it that makes that so hard to crack?

Again, I'm not a technical expert, but you have to understand the number of e-mails and communications that are sent in this country every day. There is no one in cyberspace that's monitoring each one of these things on a real-time or on a minute-by-minute basis. And certainly they understand that. The ability to change direction, and the ability to change the way they communicate, is certainly different than it was even five years ago. When you look at cellular technology and the ability to go into a store and get a digital phone, use it for 30 days and get rid of it, certainly makes the ability of law enforcement to intercept critical communications almost impossible.

You tie that in to the ability to walk into a Kinko's and get on a computer and communicate via e-mail for a short period of time and walk away from it, and perhaps have the ability to ensure that communication from ever having occurred, and they're providing overall direction to the nature of the operation that was to occur on Sept. 11.

You have a flight school in Minnesota. A guy by the name of Moussaoui shows up. He wants to fly a plane but he doesn't care about landing and take off. He wants to know how to get into a cockpit. An alert flight schools says, "Wait a second, this is unusual." [and] it gets in touch with the FBI. Does that ring alarm bells that something unusual is going on?

It certainly should have. And as my understanding is, they did detain Moussaoui as a result of that information. But again, to tie that into a broader conspiracy, to tie that information into directly affecting the events of Sept. 11 was not something that they were able -- again from what I've read -- to complete. ...

I'm going to take you back to the days when you were an agent and very involved in this, right back to fact to 1993 and the World Trade Center bombing that time. From the work that you did in the wake of that in trying to solve that, and the associated plots which came out of it, what would you say is the significance of that particular target and their determination to get to grips with it?

I think certainly when you look at the Trade Center, both in February 1993 and as of Sept. 11 of this year, they stood as symbols of really the free world [strength] and freedom that the U.S. enjoyed. They were hallmarks in New York City. They were landmarks for people that saw them every day. The attempts that they had in 1993, I think, were really an attempt to strike at the very fabric of the freedoms that we enjoy, and to topple what I think stood as really the symbols of U. S. industry, and to really send that message back that terrorism has reached our shores. ...

It was ironic ... that one of the individuals involved in the plot in February of 1993 was an individual by the name of Ramzi Yousef. Unfortunately, he was able to escape after the bombings occurred, and we located him in Manila in the Philippines in a flat in the middle of a plot to bomb 11 U.S. airliners over the Pacific Ocean. Fortunately, he was apprehended.

We brought him back into New York and had the responsibility of transporting him down to the Metropolitan Correctional Center in Lower Manhattan on the day he was brought back. And I'll never forget this. He came off the plane. He was blindfolded and in handcuffs, and we put him on a helicopter to fly him down the Hudson River towards the jail. We took the blindfold off to allow him to focus his eyes, and it was ironic, because he finally focused as the helicopter flew in front of the Trade Center.

One of the agents on board that night said to him, "Do you see? It still stands." And he said, in very exciting terms, "It would have been bad we had more money." And I took that in a very, very significant way to mean that they were very dedicated to the extremist cause that they represented, almost to the extent that it became something that I didn't think we, in the culture that I grew up in, could really understand.

Do you think it was a sense of unfinished business, the World Trade Center?

Very much so. ...

So do you think, for Al Qaeda, bringing down the World Trade Center was something that fostered, as it were? Something they felt they had to achieve long term, and that was the ultimate goal?

I'm not certainly a cultural expert on Al Qaeda. But from what I would gather, the purpose of this really was to unite the Muslim community in a so-called jihad or holy war against the United States. ... I'm convinced that the purpose in the attack on the Trade Center was to galvanize the so-called extremist movement in the Middle East against the United States. And if that should happen, then they may have succeeded. ...

Obviously we know that they came here to America but that they, if you like, had their ideological spark, their training, in Germany. Do you have any views at all on the way that Europe factored into this?

... I think it's important as the case unfolds and for a better understanding of how it actually did develop, to understand what contacts [Atta] did make when he made his trips into Germany and into Spain. And that would be critical to understand what role those contacts played. More than likely -- and I'll speculate for a minute -- his visits to Germany probably involved some direction from the hierarchy in Afghanistan and their ability to communicate with him while he was in Germany.

That's a very, very difficult question. I think it's also important to understand that, as far as Osama bin Laden is concerned, he made no secret about his hatred of the United States and his ability to promote a jihad that called for the killing of Christians and Jews associated with supporting the United States and its role in the Middle East.

So I don't think it should come as any surprise that there was a war that he had declared on the United States. It was directed to destroy U.S. institutions. That was a very public proclamation on his part. We saw it after East Africa. We saw it after the USS Cole. So I think as you understand his teachings and his so-called extremist views, the fact that they came back for a second time and attacked the Trade Center, successfully in bringing it down, was probably more a failure of our ability to react proactively to that than it was, in a failure of intelligence. To the extent that any law enforcement agency had specific and credible information on an attack of that nature, it would have been prevented.

It's now easy to sit back five weeks later and say, "There were clues." Sure, there were clues. But those clues occurred over years. There wasn't a week that went by [that there wasn't] some threat that would come out of either bin Laden or associated people with him, and we took those very seriously.

But you could really only react when it came together in terms of specific targets and a time frame that would allow law enforcement the ability to neutralize that threat, and that did occur. It occurred in Manila. Those airlines were prevented from the kind of attacks that occurred. It occurred during the millennium celebration and the role in Seattle. So we did have some successes in preventing the kinds of acts that were designed to kill and maim people. It did not occur on Sept. 11 for a lot of different reasons.

So where were the weaknesses in the system?

... There are a lot of things that, as we look at putting additional resources in this, probably will happen from this point forward. And there very well may have been an inability to assimilate information in a timely fashion, disseminate it and use it. But again, understanding the amount of intelligence that's developed out there on a daily basis, this was something that just probably went through the cracks.

Schiliro was an FBI assistant director from 1998 to 2000, and headed its New York Bureau, where he supervised counterterrorism investigations, including the 1993 World Trade Center bombing and the 1998 U.S. embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania. Here, he analyzes Al Qaeda's organizational strategy in planning the attacks and discusses why the U. S. wasn't able to thwart the plot. FRONTLINE interviewed Schiliro on Nov. 14, 2001.

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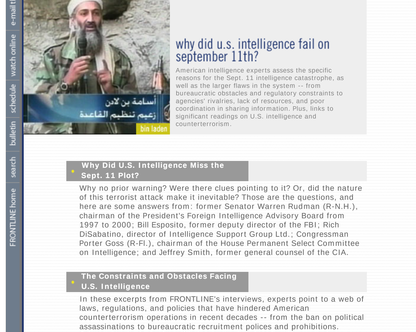

why did u.s. intelligence fail on september 11th?

American intelligence experts assess the specific reasons for the Sept. 11 intelligence catastrophe, as well as the larger flaws in the system -- from bureaucratic obstacles and regulatory constraints to agencies' rivalries, lack of resources, and poor coordination in sharing information. Plus, links to significant readings on U.S. intelligence and counterterrorism.

Why Did U.S. Intelligence Miss the Sept. 11 Plot?

Why no prior warning? Were there clues pointing to it? Or, did the nature of this terrorist attack make it inevitable? Those are the questions, and here are some answers from: former Senator Warren Rudman (R-N.H.), chairman of the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board from 1997 to 2000; Bill Esposito, former deputy director of the FBI; Rich DiSabatino, director of Intelligence Support Group Ltd.; Congressman Porter Goss (R-Fl.), chairman of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence; and Jeffrey Smith, former general counsel of the CIA.

The Constraints and Obstacles Facing U.S. Intelligence

In these excerpts from FRONTLINE's interviews, experts point to a web of laws, regulations, and policies that have hindered American counterterrorism operations in recent decades -- from the ban on political assassinations to bureaucratic recruitment polices and prohibitions. Others cite the lack of qualified personnel and an intelligence culture that has not adapted to a post-Cold War world. Here are the views of Jeffrey Smith, former general counsel of the CIA; Lewis Schiliro, former assistant director of the FBI from 1998 to 2000; Congressman Porter Goss (R-Fl.), chairman of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence; and Bill Esposito, former deputy director of the FBI.

Rich DiSabatino

Rich DiSabatino is the director of Intelligence Support Group Ltd., a private company providing counterterrorist training, transport, and equipment to government, military, and law enforcement agencies within the U.S. and approved foreign countries. Here, he warns of the limitations of electronic intelligence, arguing that it can only augment human intelligence, not replace it. This interview was conducted mid-September 2001.

Bill Esposito

A former deputy director of the FBI in the Clinton administration, Bill Esposito talks about the need for better working relations between the FBI and CIA, and the lack of agents skilled in Arabic languages. Esposito doesn't believe that the Sept. 11 attacks were the result of intelligence failures. Despite the sophistication and reach of U.S. intelligence, he tells FRONTLINE, it is still very difficult to detect some of the more stealthy terrorist groups. This interview was conducted mid-September 2001.

Porter Goss

The chairman of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence and a former CIA officer, Porter Goss (R-Fl.) says the intelligence community was unprepared for the new terrorist threat. He calls for a new emphasis on qualified personnel to infiltrate terrorist organizations and analysts who can decode and understand the information gathered by electronic and other surveillance methods. This interview was conducted mid-September 2001.

Warren Rudman

A former U.S. senator, Warren Rudman (R-N.H.) chaired the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board from 1997 to 2000. Together with former Senator Gary Hart (D-Colo.), he also chaired a bipartisan commission that studied issues of national security for more than two years and issued its findings in January 2001. Rudman tells FRONTLINE he was not surprised by the Sept. 11 attacks and points to a failure of U. S. intelligence. However, he argues that although intelligence agencies may be able to assess security threats, they are rarely able to predict terrorists' intentions. This interview was conducted mid-September 2001.

Lewis Schiliro

Until his retirement in 2000, Lewis Schiliro headed the FBI's New York bureau, where he supervised several counterterrorism investigations, including the 1993 World Trade Center bombing and the 1998 embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania. He questions whether the U.S. has had enough resources for intelligence operations and whether it has the will and the technical ability today to infiltrate terrorist groups. This interview was conducted mid-September 2001.

Michael Sheehan

From 1998 to 2001, Michael Sheehan was the coordinator for counterterrorism at the U.S. Department of State. He calls the Sept. 11 attacks a failure of intelligence and says that the scale of the attack was completely unexpected. Sheehan offers insight into the structure of Al Qaeda, as well as Osama bin Laden's relationship with the Taliban and his role as psychological leader of an international organization. This interview was conducted mid-September 2001.

Jeffrey Smith

Jeffrey Smith was general counsel of the CIA from 1995 to 1996, during which time he was instrumental in drafting new regulations governing the conduct of U.S. intelligence activities. Here, he reflects on claims that those regulations -- as well as regulations prohibiting political assassinations and governing the surveillance of foreign agents -- have hamstrung the intelligence community. Although some procedures and policies may need review, he concludes those policies did not necessarily lead to the intelligence failure of Sept. 11, 2001. He warns that the regulations were put in place for good reasons and should not "be thrown out just because of this one terrible intelligence failure." This interview was conducted mid-September 2001.

links & readings

"U.S. Commission on National Security Report"

Former Senators Gary Hart (D-Colo.) and Warren Rudman (R-N.H.) co-chaired the U.S. Commission on National Security, whose mandate was to examine issues of national security facing the U.S. in the 21st century. The final section of its three-part report, delivered on Feb. 15, 2001, is punctuated by some 50 recommendations for strengthening the country's defense. One of those recommendations calls for the establishment of a cabinet-level agency to coordinate homeland defense, much like the one created by President George W. Bush in the aftermath of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. (Click here to download a PDF version of the report.)

"Countering the Changing Threat of International Terrorism"

This is the 2000 report of the National Commission on Terrorism, which was set up by Congress in the aftermath of the 1998 bombings of the U. S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. Recent commentators have called the report prescient; the commission predicted that there would be a terrorist attack on the United States on the scale of Pearl Harbor. It also noted that our multibillion-dollar counterterrorism effort designed to thwart and warn against such an attack is plagued by procedures that have made it difficult for the CIA to employ "the services of clandestine informants" while the FBI "suffers from bureaucratic and cultural obstacles in obtaining terrorism information."

"Combating Terrorism: Issues in Managing Counterterrorist Programs" (PDF Only)

In a statement before a subcommittee of the U.S. House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure in April 2000, Norman Rabkin, director of the U.S. General Accounting Office's National Security and International Affairs Division, says that much of the federal efforts to combat terrorism have been "based upon vulnerabilities rather than an analysis of credible threats." He summarizes the obstacles facing U.S. counterterrorism issues, including the need for more cooperation between government entities at the state and federal levels.

"Navigating Through Turbulence: America and the Middle East in a New Century" (PDF Only)

This January 2001 report from the Washington Institute for Near East Policy -- by a bipartisan group of policymakers and experts including former CIA Director R. James Woolsey, U.S. Senator Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.), and other notables -- includes a section titled "Terrorism: Strengthen Response to New Threats." (Click here to download it in PDF.)

"Terrorism and U.S. Policy"

This April 2001 panel discussion hosted by the Brookings Institution featured Paul R. Pillar, former deputy chief of the CIA's Counterterrorist Center and author of Terrorism and U.S. Foreign Policy (Brookings, 2001). "In this critical study, a career CIA officer provides a guide to constructing and executing counterterrorist policy, urging that it be formulated as an integral part of broader U.S. foreign policy." (Click here for an overview of Pillar's book, and the full text of the first chapter, available on the Brookings site.) Also on the panel were: Patrick L. Clawson, director for research at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy; John Parachini, executive director of the Center for Nonproliferation Studies' Washington Office; and R. James Woolsey, former director of Central Intelligence.

"The CIA's Weakest Link"

In this article from the July/August 2001 issue of The Washington Monthly, Loch Johnson, professor of political science at the University of Georgia, argues that "the nation's spy agencies are still relying on a technological edge to keep the country abreast of looming international crises, and are giving short shrift to the people who synthesize and interpret the mounds of intelligence pouring in from around the globe."

"The Counterterrorist Myth"

Writing in The Atlantic Monthly for July/August 2001, Reuel Marc Gerecht, a former official in the CIA's Directorate of Operations, argued that the U.S. counterterrorism program in the Middle East and its environs is virtually nonexistent.

"The Intelligence Gap"

Seymour M. Hersh, in the Dec. 6, 1999, issue of The New Yorker, takes a critical look at the National Security Agency, which during the Cold War "played a dominant role in American intelligence gathering behind the Iron Curtain and elsewhere." As Hersh reports, "the decline of the N.S.A. is widely known in Washington's national-security community."

"Countering the New Terrorism"

A 1999 RAND study "traces the recent evolution of international terrorism against civilian and U.S. military targets, looks ahead to where terrorism is going, and assesses how it might be contained."

"The New Threat of Mass Destruction"

Writing in the January/February 1998 issue of Foreign Affairs, Richard K. Betts, director of national security studies at the Council on Foreign Relations and professor of political science at Columbia University, offered "a prescient discussion of the dangers of terrorist attacks on the U.S. homeland and our failure to protect against them."

"Can't Anybody Here Play This Game?"

In 1998, four years after the CIA's discovery that one of its top agents, Aldrich H. Ames, had been spying for the Soviet Union, "Edward Shirley," a pseudonymous former officer for the CIA's Directorate of Operations, detailed how and why the agency's shadow had been severely foreshortened in crucial intelligence areas. (From The Atlantic Monthly, February 1998.)

"Think Again: Terrorism"

In the Fall 1997 issue of Foreign Policy, former CIA director John Deutch argued that "controlling terrorism will require new mechanisms of cooperation -- both nationally and internationally -- between intelligence and law enforcement agencies. Effective action must be simultaneously defensive and offensive and inevitably requires some compromise of civil liberties."

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who were they?

Mohamed Atta

He piloted the first plane, American Airlines Flight 11, into the World Trade Center. Investigators say that he was the ringleader of the Sept. 11 plot.

Mohamed Atta was born in Egypt, in a city on the Nile delta named Kafr el Sheikh. Investigators say Atta listed Sept. 1, 1968, as his birthdate. Atta's father, an attorney, was a domineering figure and a strict disciplinarian; his mother doted on him. Atta's siblings, two older sisters, are both successful and educated: one is a medical doctor and the other is a professor of zoology. After Atta was born, his family moved from Kafr el Sheikh to Cairo, where his father still practices law.

Atta's father told The New York Times that his son began praying around 1980, when he was 12 or 13. "He was not ordinary," says the senior Atta. "He was exceptional. He was a gentle person, very shy, unassuming, and highly sensitive."

Atta studied architecture in the Engineering Faculty at Cairo University from 1985 to 1990. As he and his generation reached their early 20s, they were exposed to the angry passions and resentments swirling through Cairo. Egyptians were angry at a ruling elite that was seen as corrupt and undemocratic -- and angry at America for supporting such a regime, and for being Israel's strongest ally.

Atta became a member of an "engineering syndicate," a trade or professional group, after he graduated from Cairo University. The Washington Post reported that Atta's syndicate was an "unofficial base" for the Muslim Brotherhood, an Islamic political organization, where it recruited members and propagated its ideas -- one of which was the demonization of the U.S. for its support of the Egyptian government.
After graduation, Atta worked at a German company in Cairo until he obtained a visa to continue his studies in urban planning in Germany. He enrolled at a technical university near Hamburg in October 1992.

>> See the chronology for details on Atta's life from 1992-2001.

Background on three of the suicide pilots -- Mohamed Atta, Ziad Jarrah, and Marwan al-Shehhi -- who planned and executed the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks on the United States. This summary of their personal histories ends with their arrival in Hamburg, Germany, for university studies. See a chronology of what happened thereafter in Hamburg that led them to Osama bin Laden's Al Qaeda organization and for the details of their activities leading up to Sept. 11, 2001.

Marwan al-Shehhi

He flew the second plane, United Airlines Flight 175, into the World Trade Center.

Marwan al-Shehhi was born on May 9, 1978, in the United Arab Emirates. Details about al-Shehhi's life in the UAE are difficult to acquire. According to an October 2001 article in the New York Times, "If residents of Mr. Shehhi's hometown had heard of him before now, they were certainly not telling strangers. Four hours spent in the community yielded no address and no one -- policemen, firemen, pedestrians or local officials -- who did anything more than shrug at the mention of his name."

Press reports indicate that al-Shehhi's family lives in a village in Ras al-Khaimah, one of the seven emirates that make up the UAE. Al-Shehhi's father, who is now deceased, reportedly was the muezzin, the person who called the faithful to prayer at the local mosque. In 1997, al-Shehhi left the UAE after a family crisis and moved to Germany, where he first studied German at the University of Bonn before moving to Hamburg, where he enrolled at the same school as Mohamed Atta.

>> For more about how Hamburg was likely a factor in radicalizing al-Shehhi, Atta, and Jarrah, read the Q&A with correspondent Hedrick Smith.

Ziad Jarrah

He piloted United Flight 93 to its fiery crash in Pennsylvania.

Ziad Jarrah was born on May 11, 1975, in Al Marj, a town in Lebanon east of the Bekaa Valley. An only son, Jarrah's father is a civil servant and his mother is a school teacher. Though Jarrah was a Sunni Muslim, his parents sent him to a Catholic school in Beirut. In 1996, a year after he graduated, he left Lebanon for Greifswald, Germany, where he studied German for two semesters before continuing his studies in aviation engineering at the University of Applied Science in Hamburg.

In an interview with the Canadian Broadcasting Corp., Jarrah's uncle, Jamal Jarrah, says, "[Jarrah] was the kind of boy that was raised well and was treated in a very good manner. ... He was a happy boy." When he was young, Jarrah, according to his uncle, espoused none of the extremist beliefs that would become synonymous with the Sept. 11 attacks. "He never cared about politics. ... He was not interested in religion," says Jamal Jarrah. "Twenty-one years, we know Ziad closely. ... He's the person who loves life."

>> See the chronology for details on Jarrah's life from 1996-2001.

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instructions for the last night

THE LAST NIGHT

1. Make an oath to die and renew your intentions.
   - Shave excess hair from the body and wear cologne.
   - Shower
2. Make sure you know all aspects of the plan well, and expect the response, or a reaction, from the enemy.
3. Read al-Tawba and Anfal [traditional war chapters from the Qur'an] and reflect on their meanings and remember all of the things God has promised for the martyrs.
4. Remind your soul to listen and obey [all divine orders] and remember that you will face decisive situations that might prevent you from 100 per cent obedience, so tame your soul, purify it, convince it, make it understand, and incite it. God said: 'Obey God and His Messenger, and do not fight amongst yourselves or else you will fail. And be patient, for God is with the patient.'
5. Pray during the night and be persistent in asking God to give you victory, control and conquest, and that He may make your task easier and not expose us.
6. Remember God frequently, and the best way to do it is to read the Holy Qur'an, according to all scholars, as far as I know. It is enough for us that it [the Qur'an] are the words of the Creator of the Earth and the plants, the One that you will meet [on the Day of Judgment].
7. Purify your soul from all unclean things. Completely forget something called 'this world' [or 'this life']. The time for play is over and the serious time is upon us. How much time have we wasted in our lives? Shouldn't we take advantage of these last hours to offer good deeds and obedience?
8. You should feel complete tranquility, because the time between you and your marriage [in heaven] is very short. Afterwards begins the happy life, where God is satisfied with you, and eternal bliss 'in the company of the prophets, the companions, the martyrs and the good people, who are all good company'. Ask God for his mercy and be optimistic, because [the Prophet], peace be upon him, used to prefer optimism in all his affairs.
9. Keep in mind that, if you fall into hardship, how will you act and how will you remain steadfast and remember that you will return to God and remember that anything that happens to you could never be avoided, and what did not happen to you could never have happened to you. This test from Almighty God is to raise your level [levels of heaven] and erase your sins. And be sure that it is a matter of moments, which will then pass, God willing, so blessed are those who win the great reward of God. Almighty God said: 'Did you think you could go to heaven before God knows whom amongst you have fought for Him and are patient?'
10. Remember the words of Almighty God: 'You were looking to the battle before you engaged in it, and now you see it with your own two eyes.' Remember: 'How many small groups beat big groups by the will of God.' And His words: 'If God gives you victory, no one can beat you. And if He betrays you, who can give you victory without Him? So the faithful put their trust in God.'
11. Remind yourself of the supplications and of your brethren and ponder their meanings. (The morning and evening supplications, and the supplications of [entering] a town, and the [unclear] supplications, and the supplications said before meeting the enemy.)
12. Bless your body with some verses of the Qur'an [done by reading verses into one's hands and then rubbing the hands over whatever is to be blessed], the luggage, clothes, the knife, your personal effects, your ID, passport, and all your papers.
13. Check your weapon before you leave and long before you leave. (You must make your knife sharp and must not discomfort your animal during the slaughter).
14. Tighten your clothes [a reference to making sure his clothes will cover his private parts at all times], since this is the way of the pious generations after the Prophet. They would tighten their clothes before battle. Tighten your shoes well, wear socks so that your feet will be solidly in your shoes. All of these are worldly things [that humans can do to control their fate, although God decrees what will work and what won't] and the rest is left to God, the best One to depend on.
15. Pray the morning prayer in a group and ponder the great rewards of that prayer. Make supplications afterwards, and do not leave your apartment unless you have performed ablution before leaving, because the angels will ask for your forgiveness as long as you are in a state of ablution, and will pray for you. This saying of the Prophet was mentioned by An-Nawawi in his book, The Best of Supplications. Read the words of God: 'Did you think that We created you for no reason ...' from the Al-Mu'minun Chapter.

U.S. authorities found this letter handwritten in Arabic in the suitcase of Mohamed Atta. It includes Islamic prayers, instructions for a last night of life, and a practical checklist of reminders for the final operation. The FBI released an unfransfated copy of the letter; the British newspaper The Observer published this translation. Additional copies of this letter were found at the crash site of United Airlines Flight 93 in Pennsylvania and at a Dulles International Airport parking lot in a car registered to one of the hijackers on American Flight 77. [Note: According to The Observer website, this translation was provided for The New York Times by Capital Communications Group, a Washington-based international consulting firm, and by Imad Musa, a translator for the firm.]

THE SECOND STEP

When the taxi takes you to (M) [this initial could stand for matar, airport in Arabic] remember God constantly while in the car. (Remember the supplication for entering a car, for entering a town, the supplication of place and other supplications).

When you have reached (M) and have left the taxi, say a supplication of place ['Oh Lord, I ask you for the best of this place, and ask you to protect me from its evils'], and everywhere you go say that prayer and smile and be calm, for God is with the believers. And the angels protect you without you feeling anything. Say this supplication: 'God is more dear than all of His creation.' And say: 'Oh Lord, protect me from them as You wish.' And say: 'Oh Lord, take your anger out on [the enemy] and we ask You to protect us from their evils.' And say: 'Oh Lord, block their vision from in front of them, so that they may not see.' And say: 'God is all we need, He is the best to rely upon.' Remember God's words: 'Those to whom the people said, "The people have gathered to get you, so fear them," but that only increased their faith and they said, God is all we need, He is the best to rely upon.' After you say that, you will find [unclear] as God promised this to his servants who say this supplication:

1. They will come back [from battle] with God's blessings
2. They were not harmed
3. And God was satisfied with them.

God says: 'They came back with God's blessings, were not harmed, and God was satisfied with them, and God is ever-blessing.'

All of their equipment and gates and technology will not prevent, nor harm, except by God's will. The believers do not fear such things. The only ones that fear it are the allies of Satan, who are the brothers of the devil. They have become their allies, God save us, for fear is a great form of worship, and the only one worthy of it is God. He is the only one who deserves it. He said in the verses: 'This is only the Devil scaring his allies' who are fascinated with Western civilisation, and have drunk the love [of the West] like they drink water [unclear] and have become afraid of their weak equipment, 'so fear them not, and fear Me, if you are believers.'

> "Open your heart and welcome death for the sake of God. Always, remember to pray if possible before reaching the target"

Fear is a great worship. The allies of God do not offer such worship except for the one God, who controls everything. [unclear] with total certainty that God will weaken the schemes of non-believers. God said: 'God will weaken the schemes of the non-believers.'

You must remember your brothers with all respect. No one should notice that you are making the supplication, 'There is no God but God,' because if you say it 1,000 times no one will be able to tell whether you are quiet or remember God. And among its miracles is what the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: 'Whoever says, "There is no God but God," with all his heart, goes to heaven.' The prophet, peace be upon him, said: 'If you put all the worlds and universes on one side of the balance, and "No God but God" on the other, "No God but God" will weigh more heavily.' You can repeat these words confidently, and this is just one of the strengths of these words. Whoever thinks deeply about these words will find that they have no dots [in the Arabic letter] and this is just one of its greatnesses, for words that have dots in them carry less weight than those that do not. And it is enough that these are the words of monotheism, which will make you steadfast in battle [unclear] as the prophet, peace be upon him, and his companions, and those who came after them, God willing, until the Day of Judgment.

Do not seem confused or show signs of nervous tension. Be happy, optimistic, calm because you are heading for a deed that God loves and will accept. It will be the day, God willing, you spend with the women of paradise.

[poetry] Smile in the face of hardship young man/For you are heading toward eternal paradise

You must remember to make supplications wherever you go, and anytime you do anything, and God is with his faithful servants. He will protect them and make their tasks easier, and give them success and control, and victory, and everything ...

THE THIRD PHASE

When you ride the (T) [probably for tayyara, aeroplane in Arabic], before your foot steps in it, and before you enter it, you make a prayer and supplications. Remember that this is a battle for the sake of God. As the prophet, peace be upon him, said, 'An action for the sake of God is better than all of what is in this world.' When you step inside the (T), and sit in your seat, begin with the known supplications that we have mentioned before. Be busy with the constant remembrance of God. God said: 'Oh ye faithful, when you find the enemy be steadfast, and remember God constantly so that you may be successful.' When the (T) moves, even slightly, toward (Q) [unknown reference], say the supplication of travel. Because you are traveling to Almighty God, so be attentive on this trip.

Then [unclear] it takes off. This is the moment that both groups come together. So remember God, as He said in His book: 'Oh Lord, pour your patience upon us and make our feet steadfast and give us victory over the infidels.' And His words: 'And the only thing they said Lord, forgive our sins and excesses and make our feet steadfast and give us victory over the infidels.' And His prophet said: 'Oh Lord, You have revealed the book, You move the clouds, You gave us victory over the enemy, conquer them and give us victory over them.' Give us victory and make the ground shake under their feet. Pray for yourself and all your brothers that they may be victorious and hit their targets and ask God to grant you martyrdom facing the enemy, not running away from it, and for Him to grant you patience and the feeling that anything that happens to you is for Him.

Then every one of you should prepare to carry out his role in a way that would satisfy God. You should clench your teeth, as the pious early generations did.

When the confrontation begins, strike like champions who do not want to go back to this world. Shout, 'Allahu Akbar,' because this strikes fear in the hearts of the non-believers. God said: 'Strike above the neck, and strike at all of their extremities.' Know that the gardens of paradise are waiting for you in all their beauty, and the women of paradise are waiting, calling out, 'Come hither, friend of God.' They have dressed in their most beautiful clothing.

If God decrees that any of you are to slaughter, dedicate the slaughter to your fathers and [unclear], because you have obligations toward them. Do not disagree, and obey. If you slaughter, do not cause the discomfort of those you are killing, because this is one of the practices of the prophet, peace be upon him. On one condition: that you do not become distracted by [unclear] and neglect what is greater, paying attention to the enemy. That would be treason, and would do more damage than good. If this happens, the deed at hand is more important than doing that, because the deed is an obligation, and [the other thing] is optional. And an obligation has priority over an option.

Do not seek revenge for yourself. Strike for God's sake. One time Ali bin Abi Talib [a companion and close relative of the prophet Muhammad], fought with a non-believer. The non-believer spit on Ali, may God bless him. Ali [unclear] his sword, but did not strike him. When the battle was over, the companions of the prophet asked him why he had not smitten the non-believer. He said, 'After he spat at me, I was afraid I would be striking at him in revenge for myself, so I lifted my sword.' After he renewed his intentions, he went back and killed the man. This means that before you do anything, make sure your soul is prepared to do everything for God only.

Then implement the way of the prophet in taking prisoners. Take prisoners and kill them. As Almighty God said: 'No prophet should have prisoners until he has soaked the land with blood. You want the bounties of this world [in exchange for prisoners] and God wants the other world [for you], and God is all-powerful, all-wise.'

If everything goes well, every one of you should put the other on the shoulder in confidence that (M) and (T) number (K). Remind your brothers that this act is for Almighty God. Do not confuse your brothers or distract them. He should give them glad tidings and make them calm, and remind them [of God] and encourage them. How beautiful it is for one to read God's words, such as: 'And those who prefer the afterlife over this world should fight for the sake of God.' And His words: 'Do not suppose that those who are killed for the sake of God are dead; they are alive ...' And others. Or they should sing songs to boost their morale, as the pious first generations did in the throes of battle, to bring calm, tranquillity and joy to the hearts of his brothers.

Do not forget to take a bounty, even if it is a glass of water to quench your thirst or that of your brothers, if possible. When the hour of reality approaches, the zero hour, [unclear] and wholeheartedly welcome death for the sake of God. Always be remembering God. Either end your life while praying, seconds before the target, or make your last words: 'There is no God but God, Muhammad is His messenger'.

Afterwards, we will all meet in the highest heaven, God willing.

If you see the enemy as strong, remember the groups [that had formed a coalition to fight the prophet Muhammad]. They were 10,000. Remember how God gave victory to his faithful servants. He said: 'When the faithful saw the groups, they said, this is what God and the prophet promised, they said the truth. It only increased their faith.'

And may the peace of God be upon the prophet.

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mohamed atta's last will & testament

In October 2001, the German magazine Der Spiegel published a copy of Mohamed Atta's will, which was dated April 11, 1996. ABC News provided this English translation.

In the name of God all mighty

Death Certificate

This is what I want to happen after my death. I am Mohamed the son of Mohamed Elamir awad Elsayed. I believe that prophet Mohamed is God's messenger and time will come, no doubt about that, and God will resurrect people who are in their graves. I wanted my family and everyone who reads this will to fear the Almighty God and don't get deceived by what is in life and to fear God and to follow God and his prophets if they are real believers. In my memory, I want them to do what Ibrahim (a prophet) told his son to do, to die as a good Muslim. When I die, I want the people who will inherit my possessions to do the following:

1. The people who will prepare my body should be good Muslims because this will remind me of God and his forgiveness.
2. The people who are preparing my body should close my eyes and pray that I will go to heaven and to get me new clothes, not the ones I died in.
3. I don't want anyone to weep and cry or to rip their clothes or slap their faces because this is an ignorant thing to do.
4. I don't want anyone to visit me who didn't get along with me while I was alive or to kiss me or say good-bye when I die.

"When you bury me the people with whom I will be buried should be good Muslims. I want to face East toward Mecca."

5. 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.
6. I don't want women to come to my house to apologize for my death. I am not responsible for people who will sacrifice animals in front of my lying body because this is against Islam.
7. Those who will sit beside my body must remember Allah, God, and pray for me to be with the angels.
8. The people who will clean my body should be good Muslims and I do not want a lot of people to wash my body unless it is necessary.
9. The person who will wash my body near my genitals must wear gloves on his hands so he won't touch my genitals.
10. I want the clothes I wear to consist of three white pieces of cloth, not to be made of silk or expensive material.
11. I don't want any women to go to my grave at all during my funeral or on any occasion thereafter.
12. During my funeral I want everyone to be quiet because God mentioned that he likes being quiet on occasions when you recite the Koran, during the funeral, and when you are crawling. You must speed my funeral procession and I would like many people there to pray for me.
13. When you bury me the people with whom I will be buried should be good Muslims. I want to face East toward Mecca.
14. I should be laying on my right side. You should throw the dust on my body three times while saying from the dust, we created you from dust and to dust you will return. From the dust a new person will be created. After that everyone should mention God's name and that I died as a Muslim which is God's religion. Everyone who attends my funeral should ask that I will be forgiven for what I have done in the past (not this action).
15. The people who will attend my funeral should sit at my grave for an hour so that I will enjoy their company and slaughter animals and give the meat to the needy.
16. The custom has been to memorialize the dead every 40 days or once a year but I do not want this because it is not an Islamic custom.
17. I don't want people to take time to write things on paper to be kept in their pockets as superstition. Time should be taken to pray to God instead.
18. All the money I left must be divided according to the Muslim religion as almighty God has asked us to do. A third of my money should be spent on the poor and the needy. I want my books to go to any one of the Muslim mosques. I wanted the people who look at my will to be one of the heads of the Sunna religion. Whoever it is, I want that person to be from where I grew up or any person I used to follow in prayer. People will be held responsible for not following the Muslim religion. I wanted the people who I left behind to hear God and not to be deceived by what life has to offer and to pray more to God and to be good believers. Whoever neglects this will or does not follow the religion, that person will be held responsible in the end.

This was written on April 11, 1996; the Islamic calendar of zoelqada is 1416.

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"background: al qaeda"

1. At all relevant times from in or about 1989 until the date of the filing of this Indictment, an international terrorist group existed which was dedicated to opposing non-Islamic governments with force and violence. This organization grew out of the "mekhtab al khidemat" (the "Services Office") organization which had maintained offices in various parts of the world, including Afghanistan, Pakistan (particularly in Peshawar), and the United States. The group was founded by Usama Bin Laden and Muhammad Atef, a/k/a "Abu Hafs al Masry," together with "Abu Ubaidah al Banshiri," and others. From in or about 1989 until the present, the group called itself "al Qaeda" ("the Base"). From 1989 until in or about 1991, the group (hereafter referred to as "al Qaeda") was headquartered in Afghanistan and Peshawar, Pakistan. In or about 1991, the leadership of al Qaeda, including its "emir" (or prince) Usama Bin Laden, relocated to the Sudan. Al Qaeda was headquartered in the Sudan from approximately 1991 until approximately 1996 but still maintained offices in various parts of the world. In 1996, Usama Bin Laden and other members of al Qaeda relocated to Afghanistan. At all relevant times, al Qaeda was led by its emir, Usama Bin Laden. Members of al Qaeda pledged an oath of allegiance (called a "bayat") to Usama Bin Laden and al Qaeda. Those who were suspected of collaborating against al Qaeda were to be identified and killed.

2. Bin Laden and al Qaeda violently opposed the United States for several reasons. First, the United States was regarded as an "infidel" because it was not governed in a manner consistent with the group's extremist interpretation of Islam. Second, the United States was viewed as providing essential support for other "infidel" governments and institutions, particularly the governments of Saudi Arabia and Egypt, the nation of Israel, and the United Nations organization, which were regarded as enemies of the group. Third, al Qaeda opposed the involvement of the United States armed forces in the Gulf War in 1991 and in Operation Restore Hope in Somalia in 1992 and 1993. In particular, al Qaeda opposed the continued presence of American military forces in Saudi Arabia (and elsewhere on the Saudi Arabian peninsula) following the Gulf War. Fourth, al Qaeda opposed the United States Government because of the arrest, conviction and imprisonment of persons belonging to al Qaeda or its affiliated terrorist groups or those with whom it worked. For these and other reasons, Bin Laden declared a jihad, or holy war, against the United States, which he has carried out through al Qaeda and its affiliated organizations.

Excerpts from the U. S. indictment of Zacarias Moussaoui, filed in December 2001. Moussaoui is the alleged "20th hijacker" in the Sept. 11 attacks and this indictment offers information on what U. S. authorities know to date about bin Laden's Al Qaeda organization.

The following excerpts from the Moussaoui indictment outline Al Qaeda's origins, why it violently opposes the U. S., its goals, structure, organization, and affiliated groups, its training camps and business dealings, and its fatwahs and declarations of war against its enemies. (Note: the full indictment is available at the Department of Justice website.)

3. One of the principal goals of al Qaeda was to drive the United States armed forces out of Saudi Arabia (and elsewhere on the Saudi Arabian peninsula) and Somalia by violence. Members of al Qaeda issued fatwahs (rulings on Islamic law) indicating that such attacks were both proper and necessary.

4. Al Qaeda functioned both on its own and through some of the terrorist organizations that operated under its umbrella, including: Egyptian Islamic Jihad, which was led by Ayman al-Zawahiri, and at times, the Islamic Group (also known as "el Gamaa Islamia" or simply "Gamaa\"), and a number of jihad groups in other countries, including the Sudan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Somalia, Eritrea, Djibouti, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bosnia, Croatia, Albania, Algeria, Tunisia, Lebanon, the Philippines, Tajikistan, Azerbaijan, and the Kashmiri region of India and the Chechnyan region of Russia. Al Qaeda also maintained cells and personnel in a number of countries to facilitate its activities, including in Kenya, Tanzania, the United Kingdom, Germany, Canada, Malaysia, and the United States.

5. Al Qaeda had a command and control structure which included a majlis al shura (or consultation council) which discussed and approved major undertakings, including terrorist operations. Al Qaeda also had a "military committee" which considered and approved "military" matters.

6. Usama Bin Laden and al Qaeda also forged alliances with the National Islamic Front in the Sudan and with representatives of the government of Iran, and its associated terrorist group Hizballah, for the purpose of working together against their perceived common enemies in the West, particularly the United States.

7. Since at least 1989, until the filing of this Indictment, Usama Bin Laden and the terrorist group al Qaeda sponsored, managed, and/or financially supported training camps in Afghanistan, which camps were used to instruct members and associates of al Qaeda and its affiliated terrorist groups in the use of firearms, explosives, chemical weapons, and other weapons of mass destruction. In addition to providing training in the use of various weapons, these camps were used to conduct operational planning against United States targets around the world and experiments in the use of chemical and biological weapons. These camps were also used to train others in security and counterintelligence methods, such as the use of codes and passwords, and to teach members and associates of al Qaeda about traveling to perform operations. For example, al Qaeda instructed its members and associates to dress in "Western" attire and to use other methods to avoid detection by security officials. The group also taught its members and associates to monitor media reporting of its operations to determine the effectiveness of their terrorist activities.

8. Since in or about 1996, Usama Bin Laden and others operated al Qaeda from their headquarters in Afghanistan. During this time, Bin Laden and others forged close relations with the Taliban in Afghanistan. To that end, Bin Laden informed other al Qaeda members and associates outside Afghanistan of their support of, and alliance with, the Taliban. Bin Laden also endorsed a declaration of jihad (holy war) issued by the "Ulema Union of Afghanistan." ...

Overt Acts

In furtherance of the conspiracy, and to effect its objects, the defendant, and others known and unknown to the Grand Jury, committed the following overt acts:

The Provision of Guesthouses and Training Camps

1. At various times from at least as early as 1989, Usama Bin Laden, and others known and unknown, provided training camps and guesthouses in Afghanistan, including camps known as Khalden, Derunta, Khost, Siddiq, and Jihad Wal, for the use of al Qaeda and its affiliated groups.

The Training

2. At various times from at least as early as 1990, unindicted co-conspirators, known and unknown, provided military and intelligence training in various areas, including Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the Sudan, for the use of al Qaeda and its affiliated groups, including the Egyptian Islamic Jihad.

Financial and Business Dealings

3. At various times from at least as early as 1989 until the date of the filing of this Indictment, Usama Bin Laden, and others known and unknown, engaged in financial and business transactions on behalf of al Qaeda, including, but not limited to: purchasing land for training camps; purchasing warehouses for storage of items, including explosives; purchasing communications and electronics equipment; transferring funds between corporate accounts; and transporting currency and weapons to members of al Qaeda and its associated terrorist organizations in various countries throughout the world.

The Efforts to Obtain Nuclear Weapons and Their Components

4. At various times from at least as early as 1992, Usama Bin Laden, and others known and unknown, made efforts to obtain the components of nuclear weapons.

The Fatwahs Against American Troops in Saudi Arabia and Yemen

5. At various times from in or about 1992 until the date of the filing of this Indictment, Usama Bin Laden, working together with members of the fatwah committee of al Qaeda, disseminated fatwahs to other members and associates of al Qaeda that the United States forces stationed on the Saudi Arabian peninsula, including both Saudi Arabia and Yemen, should be attacked.

The Fatwah Against American Troops in Somalia

6. At various times from in or about 1992 until in or about 1993, Usama Bin Laden, working together with members of the fatwah committee of al Qaeda, disseminated fatwahs to other members and associates of al Qaeda that the United States forces stationed in the Horn of Africa, including Somalia, should be attacked.

The Fatwah Regarding Deaths of Nonbelievers

7. On various occasions, an unindicted co-conspirator advised other members of al Qaeda that it was Islamically proper to engage in violent actions against "infidels" (nonbelievers), even if others might be killed by such actions, because if the others were "innocent," they would go to paradise, and if they were not "innocent," they deserved to die.

The August 1996 Declaration of War

8. On or about August 23, 1996, a Declaration of Jihad indicating that it was from the Hindu Kush mountains in Afghanistan entitled, "Message from Usamah Bin-Muhammad Bin-Laden to His Muslim Brothers in the Whole World and Especially in the Arabian Peninsula: Declaration of Jihad Against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Mosques; Expel the Heretics from the Arabian Peninsula" was disseminated.

The February 1998 Fatwah Against American Civilians

9. In February 1998, Usama Bin Laden endorsed a fatwah under the banner of the "International Islamic Front for Jihad on the Jews and Crusaders." This fatwah, published in the publication Al-Quds al-'Arabi on February 23, 1998, stated that Muslims should kill Americans -- including civilians -- anywhere in the world where they can be found.

10. In an address in or about 1998, Usama Bin Laden cited American aggression against Islam and encouraged a jihad that would eliminate the Americans from the Arabian Peninsula.

Bin Laden Endorses the Nuclear Bomb of Islam

11. On or about May 29, 1998, Usama Bin Laden issued a statement entitled "The Nuclear Bomb of Islam," under the banner of the "International Islamic Front for Fighting the Jews and the Crusaders," in which he stated that "it is the duty of the Muslims to prepare as much force as possible to terrorize the enemies of God."

Usama Bin Laden Issues Further Threats in June 1999

12. In or about June 1999, in an interview with an Arabic-language television station, Usama Bin Laden issued a further threat indicating that all American males should be killed.

Usama Bin Laden Calls for "Jihad" to Free Imprisoned Terrorists

13. In or about September 2000, in an interview with an Arabic-language television station, Usama Bin Laden called for a "jihad" to release the "brothers" in jail "everywhere."

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A Terrorist's Treasury

Within hours of the September 11th attacks on America, the Administration began to track the financial assets of terrorists and their supporters. Since then, the Administration has frozen the assets of 27 terrorists and terrorist organizations, and has worked with our allies around the world to block the assets of 62 more terrorists and terrorist organizations. Our efforts have disrupted the operations of terrorists and their supporters around the world, and have sent a powerful message that the United States and its allies will not tolerate the use of their financial systems by those who support terrorism.

- **How Did an Afghanistan-Centered Aid Ring Conceal Its Ties?**
  - Who Supported Al-Qaeda's 1998 Attacks?
  - Crescent-Front Donor Is Charity
  - Ties to Bin Laden
  - To Congress: Get Al-Qaeda and Imposters Out. This is personal.
  - Who is a group of Islamic Extremists that serves our war against Terrorism?
  - Al-Ghi Friends passport
  - Who is Al-Ghi Friends?
  - Who is Al-Ghi Friends?
  - Who Supported Attacks on America? Bombers?
  - Immigration complaint
  - Al-Ghi Friends?
  - Immigration complaint on the suspect. At this time, it is
  - Who is Al-Ghi Friends?
  - Al-Ghi Friends?
  - Terrorists Hide Cash Under Guise of Charity. Some of the money used in the attacks. They may at times assist, knowl and they like the aid ga.
  - Who Supported Attacks on America? Bombers?
  - Who is Al-Ghi Friends?
  - Who is Al-Ghi Friends?
  - Who is Al-Ghi Friends

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Total Questions: 100 Total Marks: 100 Duration: 1 hr 0 min 0 sec

Sec. 1, 99. ANNEXE de Canada-U.S. Forum

1. Who left and moved to Canada when Gold rushes began?

a. Yes.

b. Many Chinese people who were coming to the American side, did not and left to the Canadian side.

c. Yes, to cover Alaska/gold fields

d. Alaska/gold

2. Which Canadian Province bought the Alaska territory from Russia?

a. Yes.

b. Since, observing your attention to Question 1, 1896, the day of your arrival, you can see that Canadian Province bought Alaska territory.

c. Canadian

d. Yes, to Alaska/gold. Yes, 1896, Canadian Province bought Alaska territory.

3. Which Canadian Province bought the Alaska territory?

a. Yes.

b. Yes, 1896, Canadian Province bought Alaska territory.

c. Yes, to Alaska/gold. Yes, 1896, Canadian Province bought Alaska territory.

d. Yes.

4. Which Canadian Province bought the Alaska territory?

a. Yes.

b. Yes, 1896, Canadian Province bought Alaska territory.

c. Yes, 1896, Canadian Province bought Alaska territory.

d. Yes.

5. Which Canadian Province bought the Alaska territory?

a. Yes.

b. Yes, 1896, Canadian Province bought Alaska territory.

c. Yes, 1896, Canadian Province bought Alaska territory.

d. Yes.

6. Which Canadian Province bought the Alaska territory?

a. Yes.

b. Yes, 1896, Canadian Province bought Alaska territory.

c. Yes, 1896, Canadian Province bought Alaska territory.

d. Yes.

7. Which Canadian Province bought the Alaska territory?

a. Yes.

b. Yes, 1896, Canadian Province bought Alaska territory.

c. Yes, 1896, Canadian Province bought Alaska territory.

d. Yes.

8. Which Canadian Province bought the Alaska territory?

a. Yes.

b. Yes, 1896, Canadian Province bought Alaska territory.

c. Yes, 1896, Canadian Province bought Alaska territory.

d. Yes.

9. Which Canadian Province bought the Alaska territory?

a. Yes.

b. Yes, 1896, Canadian Province bought Alaska territory.

c. Yes, 1896, Canadian Province bought Alaska territory.

d. Yes.

10. Which Canadian Province bought the Alaska territory?

a. Yes.

b. Yes, 1896, Canadian Province bought Alaska territory.

c. Yes, 1896, Canadian Province bought Alaska territory.

d. Yes.

11. Which Canadian Province bought the Alaska territory?

a. Yes.

b. Yes, 1896, Canadian Province bought Alaska territory.

c. Yes, 1896, Canadian Province bought Alaska territory.

d. Yes.

12. Which Canadian Province bought the Alaska territory?

a. Yes.

b. Yes, 1896, Canadian Province bought Alaska territory.

c. Yes, 1896, Canadian Province bought Alaska territory.

d. Yes.

13. Which Canadian Province bought the Alaska territory?

a. Yes.

b. Yes, 1896, Canadian Province bought Alaska territory.

c. Yes, 1896, Canadian Province bought Alaska territory.

d. Yes.

14. Which Canadian Province bought the Alaska territory?

a. Yes.

b. Yes, 1896, Canadian Province bought Alaska territory.

c. Yes, 1896, Canadian Province bought Alaska territory.

d. Yes.

15. Which Canadian Province bought the Alaska territory?

a. Yes.

b. Yes, 1896, Canadian Province bought Alaska territory.

c. Yes, 1896, Canadian Province bought Alaska territory.

d. Yes.

16. Which Canadian Province bought the Alaska territory?

a. Yes.

b. Yes, 1896, Canadian Province bought Alaska territory.

c. Yes, 1896, Canadian Province bought Alaska territory.

d. Yes.

17. Which Canadian Province bought the Alaska territory?

a. Yes.

b. Yes, 1896, Canadian Province bought Alaska territory.

c. Yes, 1896, Canadian Province bought Alaska territory.

d. Yes.

18. Which Canadian Province bought the Alaska territory?

a. Yes.

b. Yes, 1896, Canadian Province bought Alaska territory.

c. Yes, 1896, Canadian Province bought Alaska territory.

d. Yes.

19. Which Canadian Province bought the Alaska territory?

a. Yes.

b. Yes, 1896, Canadian Province bought Alaska territory.

c. Yes, 1896, Canadian Province bought Alaska territory.

d. Yes.

20. Which Canadian Province bought the Alaska territory?

a. Yes.

b. Yes, 1896, Canadian Province bought Alaska territory.

c. Yes, 1896, Canadian Province bought Alaska territory.

d. Yes.

21. Which Canadian Province bought the Alaska territory?

a. Yes.

b. Yes, 1896, Canadian Province bought Alaska territory.

c. Yes, 1896, Canadian Province bought Alaska territory.

d. Yes.

22. Which Canadian Province bought the Alaska territory?

a. Yes.

b. Yes, 1896, Canadian Province bought Alaska territory.

c. Yes, 1896, Canadian Province bought Alaska territory.

d. Yes.

23. Which Canadian Province bought the Alaska territory?

a. Yes.

b. Yes, 1896, Canadian Province bought Alaska territory.

c. Yes, 1896, Canadian Province bought Alaska territory.

d. Yes.

24. Which Canadian Province bought the Alaska territory?

a. Yes.

b. Yes, 1896, Canadian Province bought Alaska territory.

c. Yes, 1896, Canadian Province bought Alaska territory.

d. Yes.

25. Which Canadian Province bought the Alaska territory?

a. Yes.

b. Yes, 1896, Canadian Province bought Alaska territory.

c. Yes, 1896, Canadian Province bought Alaska territory.

d. Yes.

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Testimony From bin Laden's Associates

The trial testimony of former bin Laden aides and government sources paints a picture of the development of an international terrorism organization, which originated in the jihad (holy war) effort against the Soviets in Afghanistan. According to the testimony, bin Laden appears to control a sophisticated international network of operatives and has developed links to other terrorism organizations around the world.

Bin Laden in Afghanistan

Former bin Laden Associate Jamal Ahmed Al-Fadl describes his first meeting with Osama bin Laden during Afghanistan Jihad.

Extended transcripts from the trial testimony, as well as other key documents, are available at CNN.com Law Center.

Al-Fadl Testimony Day One

p. 176 - 177, 166

Q. Can you tell us what happened, the circumstance under which you met Abu Hajer al Iraqi and Usama Bin Laden at this guesthouse?

A. I met them during the prayer, after prayer and usually they talk with new people and they tell them about jihad and what's going on with that...

Q. If you can identify what you recall that Usama Bin Laden told you about jihad after the prayer during that meeting.

A. He talk about the Soviet Union army come to Afghanistan and kill people and we have to help them, we have to make jihad out of them and you have to be patient, you have to follow the rule of the emir....

Q. You mentioned that the money was for jihad. Can you explain to the jury what jihad is?

A. Jihad, it's war for Muslim. It means fighting the enemy.

Q. And at the time that you were raising this money for jihad, who was the enemy that was being fought?

A. At that time it's Soviet Union.

The full testimony is available in PDF format from CNN. com.

Smuggling Weapons

Former bin Laden Associate Jamal Ahmed Al-Fadl describes efforts by Al Qaeda to smuggle weapons into Egypt for delivery to Jihad group.

Al-Fadl Testimony Day One

p. 320-322

Q. During the time you were in Khartoum working with al Qaeda, did you ever smuggle anything to Egypt?

A. Yes.

Q. What did you do?

A. We buy camels to send them to Egypt because we use camels to smuggle Kalashnikov to Egypt.

Q. And did you do that on one occasion or more than one occasion that you used camels to smuggle weapons into Egypt?

A. I remember twice.

Q. And how did you get the camels from Khartoum to Egypt?

A. We buy from market for camels over there in Umdurhman City.

Q. Where is Umdurhman City?

A. It's near the Nile River.

Q. How far is it from Khartoum?

A. It's only a village between them.

Q. And approximately how many camels did you take with each trip?

A. I don't remember the number exactly, but around 50 each trip.

Q. Do you recall how many weapons were brought on these trips by camels from Sudan to Egypt?

A. I don't remember how many exactly.

Q. And who did you understand the weapons were going to in Egypt?

A. The weapons I remember go to jihad group.

The full testimony is available in PDF format from CNN. com.

Attempts to Buy Uranium

Former bin Laden Associate Jamal Ahmed Al-Fadl describes efforts by Al Qaeda to purchase uranium.

Al-Fadl Testimony, Day 2

p. 357-358

Q During the time you were involved with al Qaeda, did there come a time when you became involved in an attempt to purchase uranium?

A Yes.

Q Can you tell us when that was?

A That's area of '94 or end of '93.

Q Can you tell us how you came to be involved in the purchase of uranium?

A I remember Abu Fadhl al Makkee, he call me and he told me we hear somebody in Khartoum, he got uranium, and we need you to go and study that, is that true or not.

Q The person who told you was Abu Fadhl al Makkee?

A Yes.

Q What did you do after he told you this?

A He told me go to Abu Abdullah al Yemeni and he talk more about that with you. Also go by Abu Dijana.

Q Abu Abdullah al Yemeni and Abu Dijana, are they the same or different person?

A Same person.

Q Did you go see Abdullah al Yemeni?

A Yes.

Q What happened when you saw him?

A He told me somebody's name, Moqadem Salah Abdel al Mobruk. He is a minister during Numeiri time.

Q Is he a former president of the Sudan?

A Yes, '69 to '83.

Q You said he is Moqadem. Is that a title?

A He is army, one eagle and one star.

Q Tell us what happened next.

A Abu Dijana, he say we know this guy, we hear he got uranium and we need you to go and make sure that's right, maybe we need to buy that.

Q Did you go to see this officer named Mobruk?

A I went to one of my cousins, his name Faisal, and I ask him if he know Moqadam Salah Abdel al Mobruk.

Q What happened then?

A He told me, I know him but I don't have relationship with him, but I tell you I know somebody, he know him better than me. And he told me go to al Fadl al Shahideen. I went to avenue Shahideen because I know him and I worked with him before, and I told him we want to see Salah Abdel al Mobruk. And he ask me what you want from him. I tell him we hear he got uranium and we want to know, if that true we want president to buy it.

Q Did you actually then go see Mr. Mobruk?

A Yes. He tell me give me few days and I call you back. After week or so he call me and he say I need to meet with you. And I sit down with him and he say I going to make appointment with you and Salah Abdel al Mobruk and you can talk to him face to face.

Q Did you have, did you actually have a meeting with Salah Abdel al Mobruk?

A Yes.

Q Tell us what happened at the meeting.

A I went, and this is first time I meet him, and he told me this guy, his name Basheer, he going to help you, and go with him and discuss everything with him.

Q Had you ever met this person named Basheer before?

A No.

Q Did you go with Basheer?

A Yes.

Q Tell the jury what you did.

A We went to another office in Jambouria Street in Khartoum City.

Q What happened when you went to that street in Khartoum?

A Basheer, he told me, are you serious? You want uranium? I tell him yes. I know people, they very serious, and they want to buy it. And he told me did the money ready, and I say what they need. They need the information about uranium, they want to know which quality, which the country make it, and after that we going to talk with you about the price. He say I going to give you this information in a paper, and we need $1,500,000, and everything go well we need it outside. We need the money outside of Sudan.

Q And the price was how much?

A He say he need $1,500,000. And he say this is for the uranium. But he need commission for himself, and he need commission for Salah Abdel al Mobruk.

The full testimony is available in PDF format from CNN. com.

Transporting Stinger Missiles

Testimony of Pilot and former bin Laden Associate Essam Al-Ridi Describing efforts by Al Qaeda to purchase an airplane in order to fly Stinger missiles from Peshawar to Khartoum

Al-Ridi testimony

p. 562 - 564

Q. Can you tell us what Wadih El Hage told you when he first contacted you?

A. The interests of Usama Bin Laden in aquiring an airplane for Khartoum.

Q. And did you, did he tell you where Usama Bin Laden was living at the time?

A. Yes.

Q. Where was he living?

A. In Khartoum, Sudan.

Q. And what did he tell you about the airplane that he wished you to purchase for Usama Bin Laden?

A. The price range within 350,000 US, and that is a range of about a little bit over two thousand miles.

Q. And did you have any further discussions with him about the financial arrangements for purchasing this airplane?

A. Yes.

Q. What was that discussion?

A. Once I located an airplane with that price and that range, I've called Wadih and specifically told him, it's 350,000 and I'll be offered 9 percent from the dealer, the owner of the airplane. [Discussions about price etc.] ...

Q. Was there any discussion of the reason why the range for the plane had to be two thousand miles?

A. Yes.

Q. Can you tell us what was said

?

A. They have some goods of their own they want to ship from Peshawar to Khartoum.

Q. And first of all, who is "they"?

A. Again, I'm referring to Wadih and Usama.

Q. And did he tell you what the goods were that he wanted to ship from Peshawar to Khartoum?

A. Yes.

Q. What were they?

A. Stinger missiles.

Q. And when he told you they wanted to ship Stinger missiles from Peshawar to Khartoum, what did you say?

A. I said it's possible as long as we have arrangements from the departing country to the arriving country.

Q. And what do you mean by that?

A. I meant the legality, because it's clearly air policy.

Q. Did you discuss this with Wadih?

A. Yes.

Q. Tell us what you told him about the legality of shipping the Stingers from Peshawar to Khartoum?

A. That we have to have a legal permit to depart Peshawar with that equipment on board, and the legal permit to land in Khartoum, which is not a problem because they could ally people in Peshawar and also in Khartoum. However, the problem with allies, once we have to divert or land for any fuel or any emergency in the countries in between, then it will be definitely exposed and then it will be absolutely a chaos.

Q. And what, if anything, did he say in response?

A. Nothing in particular. I was just explaining to them technicalities.

The full testimony is available in PDF format from CNN. com.

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