

(10:42 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Andrews Fighters Finally Take Off, but Without Missiles



Capt. Heather Penney Garcia. [Source: ABC] Two F-16s take off from Andrews Air Force Base lightly armed with nothing more than “hot” guns and non-explosive training rounds. Lead pilot Lt. Col. Marc Sasseville flies one; the other pilot is Capt. Heather Penney Garcia, also known by the codename Lucky. ([Scott 9/9/2002](#)) These fighters had been at another base that morning, waiting to be armed with AIM-9 missiles, a process that takes about an hour. ([Scott 6/3/2002](#)) Since they took off without the missiles, presumably they could have taken off unarmed much earlier. (The first call for them to scramble came not long after 9:00 a.m.). Two more F-16s, armed with AIM-9 missiles, take off twenty-seven minutes later, at 11:09 a.m. These are apparently piloted by Major Dan Caine and Captain Brandon Rasmussen. ([Scott 9/9/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) F-16s from Richmond, Virginia, and Atlantic City, New Jersey, arrive over Washington a short time later. ([Scott 9/9/2002](#)) The Andrews fighters are apparently the only fighters in the US scrambled before 11:00 with official shootdown authorization, but the first Andrews fighters into the air have no missiles. It is unclear if the Andrews fighters relaunching a few minutes earlier had shootdown orders, but they had no weapons either. It appears the Andrews fighters launching at 11:09 a.m. are the first fighters in the US with both shootdown orders and missiles to use.

(10:42 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Status of Three Planes Unknown; False Rumors Persist of More Terrorist Activity

Around this time (roughly), the FAA tells the White House that it still cannot account for three planes in addition to the four that have crashed. It takes the FAA another hour and a half to account for these three aircraft. ([Donnelly 9/14/2001](#)) Vice President Cheney later says, “That’s what we started working off of, that list of six, and we could account for two of them in New York. The third one we didn’t know what had happened to. It turned out it had hit the Pentagon, but the first reports on the Pentagon attack suggested a helicopter and then later a private jet.” ([Gerstenzang and Richter 9/17/2001](#)) Amongst false rumors during the day are reports of a bomb aboard a United Airlines jet that just landed in Rockford, Illinois. “Another plane disappears from radar and might have

crashed in Kentucky. The reports are so serious that [FAA head Jane] Garvey notifies the White House that there has been another crash. Only later does she learn the reports are erroneous.” ([Adams, Levin, and Morrison 8/13/2002](#))

(10:43 a.m.) September 11, 2001: 9/11 Commission Report Describes Rumsfeld Deciding to Put Military on High Alert; Time Conflicts With Other Accounts

According to the 9/11 Commission, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld makes the decision to go to Defcon Three, the “highest alert for the nuclear arsenal in 30 years.” ([ABC News 9/11/2002](#)) His decision is broadcast on the air threat conference call. Then, according to the Commission, “A minute later, Secretary Rumsfeld spoke to the Vice President, and he asked Rumsfeld to run the issue by the President. At 10:45 conferees were told to ‘hold off’ on Defcon 3, but a minute later the order was reinstated. Rumsfeld believed the matter was urgent and, having consulted DOD directives, concluded he had the authority to issue the order and would brief the President. Rumsfeld briefed the President on the decision at 11:15.” ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 326 and 554](#)) According to other accounts, the US military is put on high alert about 35 minutes earlier than the 9/11 Commission states (see [\(10:10 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)).

After 10:42 a.m. September 11, 2001: Langley and Andrews Pilots Hear Warning Over Radio



Lt. Col. Marc Sasseville. [*Source: CBC*] After taking off from Andrews Air Force Base, Lt. Col. Marc Sasseville and Captain Heather Penney Garcia (also known by the codename Lucky) are flying at low altitudes over Washington, DC. The three fighters launched from Langley Air Force Base at 9:30 a.m. are flying above them at around 20,000 feet. The Langley pilots are communicating with controllers at NEADS, while the Andrews pilots are communicating with civilian controllers at the FAA. However, both sets of pilots hear a message over a shared

channel: “Attention all aircraft monitoring Andrews tower frequency. Andrews and Class Bravo airspace is closed. No general aviation aircraft are permitted to enter Class Bravo airspace. Any infractions will be shot down.” ([Filson 2004, pp. 82](#))

(10:45 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Bush Heads for Louisiana on Air Force One, Following Warning From Cheney and Rice



Bush's travels on 9/11. [Source: Yvonne Vermillion/ MagicGraphix.com] After Vice President Dick Cheney had alerted the president to a possible threat to Air Force One (see [10:32 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)), Bush and his aides had begun discussing whether to change directions. They are currently flying off the coast of South Carolina, about half way on their 900-mile journey from Florida back to Washington, DC. Bush had suggested diverting to Camp David, the presidential retreat in Maryland, but Cheney favored him heading to a military base, such as Offutt Air Force Base in Nebraska. At 10:41, Cheney had called the president again, telling him that both National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice and himself agreed that Washington was no longer safe enough for Bush's return. The president therefore gives the order for his plane to divert. Within minutes, Air Force One turns sharply to the left, and heads toward Barksdale Air Force Base near Shreveport, Louisiana, a distance of about 800 miles away. ([Sammon 2002, pp. 106-109](#); [Balz and Woodward 1/27/2002](#))

10:45 a.m. September 11, 2001: Coroner Unable to Find Human Remains at Flight 93 Crash Site



Wallace Miller. [Source: Steve Mellon / *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*] Wallace Miller, the coroner of Somerset County, is one of the first people to arrive at the Flight 93 crash scene. However, he is surprised by the absence of human remains there. He later says, “If you didn’t know, you would have thought no one was on the plane. You would have thought they dropped them off somewhere.” ([Longman 2002, pp. 217](#)) The only recognizable body part he sees is a piece of spinal cord with five vertebrae attached. He will later tell Australian newspaper *The Age*, “I’ve seen a lot of highway fatalities where there’s fragmentation. The interesting thing about this particular case is that I haven’t, to this day, 11 months later, seen any single drop of blood. Not a drop.” ([Wright 9/9/2002](#)) Dave Fox, a former firefighter, also arrives early at the crash scene, but sees just three chunks of human tissue. He says, “You knew there were people there, but you couldn’t see them.” ([Frederick 9/11/2002](#)) Yet, in the following weeks, hundreds of searchers are able to find about 1,500 scorched human tissue samples, weighing less than 600 pounds—approximately eight percent of the total body mass on Flight 93. Months after 9/11, more remains are found in a secluded cabin, several hundred yards from the crash site. ([Perl 5/12/2002](#))

10:53 a.m. September 11, 2001: Election Postponed

New York’s primary elections, already in progress, are postponed. ([CNN 9/12/2001](#))

(Between 10:55 a.m. and 11:41 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Fighter Escort Finally Reaches Air Force One? Reports Conflict



President Bush (center, bending) and others look out the windows of Air Force One as their fighter escort arrives. [Source: *White House*] No fighters escort President Bush's Air Force One until around this time, but accounts conflict. At 10:32 a.m., Vice President Cheney said it would take until about 11:10 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. to get a fighter escort to Air Force One. ([Balz and Woodward 1/27/2002](#)) However, according to one account, around 10:00 a.m., Air Force One "is joined by an escort of F-16 fighters from a base near Jacksonville, Florida." ([Langley 12/16/2001](#)) Another report states, "At 10:41 [am.]... Air Force One headed toward Jacksonville to meet jets scrambled to give the presidential jet its own air cover." ([Sack 9/16/2001](#)) But apparently, when Air Force One takes evasive action around 10:55 a.m., there is still no fighter escort. NORAD commander Major General Larry Arnold later says, "We scrambled available airplanes from Tyndall [near Tallahassee and not near Jacksonville, Florida] and then from Ellington in Houston, Texas," but he does not say when this occurs. ([Code One Magazine 1/2002](#) Sources: [Larry Arnold](#)) In yet another account, two F16s eventually arrive, piloted by Shane Brotherton and Randy Roberts, from Ellington, not from any Florida base. ([CBS News 9/11/2002](#)) The St. Petersburg Times, after interviewing people on Air Force One, estimate the first fighters, from Texas, arrive between 11:00 and 11:20. ([Martin 7/4/2004](#)) By 11:30 a.m., there are six fighters protecting Air Force One. ([Plunket 9/19/2001](#)) The BBC, however, reports that the Ellington, Texas, fighters are scrambled at 11:30 a.m., and quotes ABC reporter Ann Compton, inside Air Force One, saying fighters appear out the windows at 11:41 a.m. ([BBC 9/1/2002](#)) Given that two of the seven bases said to have fighters on alert on 9/11 are in Florida (Homestead Air Station, 185 miles from Sarasota; and Tyndall Air Station, 235 miles from Sarasota), why a fighter escort does not reach Air Force One earlier remains unclear. Philip Melanson, author of a book on the Secret Service, comments, "I can't imagine by what glitch the protection was not provided to Air Force One as soon as it took off. I would have thought there'd be something in place whereby one phone call from the head of the security would get the fighters in the air immediately." ([Martin 7/4/2004](#))

(10:55 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Air Force One Takes Evasive Action from False Alarm



Colonel Mark Tillman in the cockpit of Air Force One. [Source: CBS News] Col. Mark Tillman, pilot of Air Force One, is told there is a threat to President Bush's plane. Tillman has an armed guard placed at his cockpit door while the Secret Service double-checks the identity of everyone on board. Air traffic controllers warn that a suspect airliner is dead ahead, according to Tillman: "Coming out of Sarasota there was one call that said there was an airliner off our nose that they did not have contact with." Tillman takes evasive action, pulling his plane high above normal traffic. ([Minutes 9/11/2002](#)) Reporters on board notice the rise in elevation. ([Tapper 9/12/2001](#); [Dallas Morning News 8/28/2002](#)) The report is apparently a false alarm.

September 11, 2001: FBI Agents Obtain Warrant for Moussaoui Too Late



Two pages from Moussaoui's notebooks mentioning Ahad Sabet (Ramzi bin al-Shibh's alias), plus phone number and mention of his residence in Germany. [Source: FBI] Within an hour of the attacks of 9/11, the Minnesota FBI uses a memo written to FBI headquarters shortly after Moussaoui's arrest to ask permission from a judge for the search warrant they have been desperately seeking. After the WTC is hit for the first time, Mike Maltbie of the Radical Fundamentalist Unit (RFU) at FBI

headquarters calls the Minneapolis field office and talks to Coleen Rowley. When Rowley says it is essential they get a warrant to search Moussaoui's belongings, Maltbie instructs her to take no action, because it could have an impact on matters of which she is not aware. Rowley replies that it would have to be the "hugest coincidence" if Moussaoui were not related to the attack. She says that Maltbie replies that coincidence is the right word. Maltbie will later say he does not recall using the word "coincidence" in the conversation. Maltbie then consults an FBI attorney, who says Minneapolis should seek the warrant. While Rowley is waiting for Maltbie to call back, one of her colleagues, Chris Briese, talks to RFU chief Dave Frasca. According to Briese, Frasca initially says there is not enough evidence for a criminal warrant, but when they find out the Pentagon has been hit Frasca consents. Frasca says that he consents immediately. ([Time 5/21/2002](#); [US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 178-9](#)) Briese later tells Samit that Frasca also initially claims it was just "a coincidence." ([Gordon 6/4/2006](#)) A federal judge approves a criminal search warrant that afternoon. ([Hersh 9/30/2002](#); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 3/9/2006](#)) The Radical Fundamentalist Unit at FBI headquarters had previously blocked requests for criminal and intelligence search warrants (see [August 21, 2001](#) and [August 28, 2001](#)). Minnesota FBI Agent Coleen Rowley notes that this very memo was previously deemed insufficient by FBI headquarters to get a search warrant, and the fact that they are immediately granted one when finally allowed to ask shows "the missing piece of probable cause was only the [FBI headquarters'] failure to appreciate that such an event could occur." ([Time 5/21/2002](#)) After the warrant is granted, the belongings are then rushed to an evidence response team, which discovers documents linking Moussaoui to eleven of the hijackers (see August 16, 2001). Rowley later suggests that if they had received the search warrant sooner, "There is at least some chance that... may have limited the September 11th attacks and resulting loss of life." ([Ratnesar and Weisskopf 5/27/2002](#))

After 11:00 a.m. September 11, 2001: INS Employee Tells Journalist Airport Workers Put Guns on Planes

An INS employee tells journalist Seymour Hersh that the 9/11 hijackings were accomplished with guns put on the planes by airport employees. Hersh then calls Rear Admiral Cathal Flynn, associate administrator of security at the Federal Aviation Administration, and tells him, "The guns were put onto the plane by the ramp workers." When Flynn argues that there are no reports of this, Hersh replies that, "Those ramp workers aren't even checked," and insists, "There were pistols and they were put onto the plane by the ramp workers." ([Trento and Trento 2006, pp. 47-8](#)) Although there are some reports of guns being used on the flights (see [\(9:27 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#) and [\(8:20 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), the 9/11 Commission, for example, will not say that guns were used. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004](#))

(11:00 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Skyscrapers, Tourist Attractions Closed

More skyscrapers and tourist attractions are evacuated, including Walt Disney World, Philadelphia's Liberty Bell and Independence Hall, Seattle's Space Needle, and the Gateway Arch in St. Louis. ([Times Union \(Albany\) 9/11/2001](#))

(11:00 a.m.) September 11, 2001: All Flights over US Soil Complying with Controllers

The FAA Command Center is told that all the flights over the United States are accounted for and pilots are complying with controllers. There are 923 planes still in the air over the US. Every commercial flight in US airspace—about a quarter of the planes still in the air—is within 40 miles of its destination. Others are still over the oceans, and many are heading toward Canada. ([Adams, Levin, and Morrison 8/13/2002](#))

(11:00 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Customs Claims to Determine the Names of All 19 Hijackers

Robert Bonner, the head of Customs and Border Protection, later testifies, “We ran passenger manifests through the system used by Customs—two were hits on our watch list of August 2001.” (This is presumably a reference to hijackers Khalid Almihdhar and Nawaf Alhazmi, watch-listed on August 23, 2001.) “And by looking at the Arab names and their seat locations, ticket purchases and other passenger information, it didn’t take a lot to do a rudimentary link analysis. Customs officers were able to ID 19 probable hijackers within 45 minutes. I saw the sheet by 11 a.m. And that analysis did indeed correctly identify the terrorists.” ([Sheehy 2/11/2004](#)) However, Bonner appears to be at least somewhat incorrect: for two days after the attacks (see [September 13, 2001-September 14, 2001](#)), the FBI believes there are only 18 hijackers, and the original list contains some erroneous Arab-sounding names on the flight manifests, such as Adnan Bukhari and Ameer Bukhari. ([CNN 9/13/2001](#)) Some hijacker names, including Mohamed Atta's, were identified on a reservations computer around 8:30 a.m. (see [\(Before 8:26 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), and Richard Clarke was told some of the names were al-Qaeda around 10:00 a.m. (see [\(9:59 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#))

(11:00 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Boston Air Traffic Control Temporarily Evacuates Following Phone Threat

The FAA's Boston Center, located in Nashua, New Hampshire, is evacuated. The center manages air traffic above New England, and had monitored Flight 11 and Flight 175 earlier on. Reportedly, someone spotted an unidentified aircraft heading toward the facility and managers had subsequently ordered the evacuation. However, FAA officials will later state that there was a telephoned threat, falsely reporting that a plane would crash into the center. After about an hour in a nearby Holiday Inn, some of the center's

personnel return to work. ([Reid and Lengel 9/27/2001](#); [Levin 8/11/2002](#); [LeBlanc 8/12/2002](#); [Cousineau 9/11/2006](#))

(11:00 a.m.) September 11, 2001: NORAD Implements Cold-War Era Plan to Clear Skies

At the NORAD operations center in Cheyenne Mountain, Colorado, NORAD Commander-in-Chief Ralph Eberhart orders a limited version of a little known plan to clear the skies and give the military control over US airspace. ([Scott 6/3/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) The plan, Security Control of Air Traffic and Navigation Aids (SCATANA), was developed in the 1960s as a way to clear airspace above the US and off the US coast in the event of a confirmed warning of a nuclear attack by the Soviet Union. Once it is activated a wartime air traffic priority list is established, allowing essential aircraft and personnel to use the airspace. Among others, this list includes the US president, essential national security staff, aircraft involved in continental defense missions, and airborne command posts. ([Schwartz 1998](#)) Eberhart and his staff suggest implementing the limited version of SCATANA over the air threat conference call. Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta immediately concurs. ([Scott 6/3/2002](#); [Filson 2004, pp. 73](#)) Unlike a full SCATANA, this modified version allows ground navigation aids to stay on, for the benefit of aircraft that are still airborne. Under the plan, for about the next three days all flights other than military, law enforcement, fire fighters, and medevac, will require approval from the national Defense Dept./FAA Air Traffic Services Cell (ATSC), located within the FAA's Herndon Command Center. ([Schwartz 11/2001](#); [Scott 6/10/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) The SCATANA order is issued over an hour after the FAA ordered all planes down (see [\(9:45 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), and after at least three-quarters of them have already landed. ([Adams, Levin, and Morrison 8/13/2002](#)) Eberhart says the delay is due to safety concerns, because NORAD would have been unable to control US airspace—with over four thousand planes airborne at the time of the attacks—with its radar capabilities. ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) Defense Week magazine suggests SCATANA is not implemented until even later, at around 2 p.m. It says NORAD issues a “notice to airmen” implementing the modified version of SCATANA about five hours after Flight 11 hit the WTC. ([Schwartz 11/2001](#))

11:08 a.m. September 11, 2001: Korean Air Flight Mistakenly Believed Hijacked

A message sent from Korean Air Flight 85 is misinterpreted to indicate a possible hijacking. At 1:24 p.m., the pilots accidentally issue a hijacking alert as the plane nears Alaska on its way to Anchorage. Two fighters tail the plane, and notify it that it will be shot down unless it avoids populated areas. Strategic sites are evacuated across Alaska. The plane eventually lands safely in Whitehorse, Canada, at 2:54 p.m. ([Levin 8/12/2002](#))

11:15 a.m. September 11, 2001: Rumsfeld Speaks with Bush

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld speaks with President Bush, and tells him that the Department of Defense is working on refining the rules of engagement, so pilots will have a better understanding of the circumstances under which an aircraft can be shot down. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 465](#)) He also briefs the president on the earlier decision to go to Defcon Three (see [\(10:10 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 554](#))

(After 11:15 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Vladimir Putin Speaks with President Bush

Russian President Vladimir Putin phones President Bush while he is aboard Air Force One. Putin is the first foreign leader to call Bush following the attacks. He earlier called the White House to speak with the president, but had to speak with Condoleezza Rice instead (see [Between 10:32 a.m. and 11:45 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). Putin tells Bush he recognizes that the US has put troops on alert, and makes it clear that he will stand down Russian troops. US forces were ordered to high alert some time between 10:10 and 10:46 a.m. (see [\(10:10 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)) Bush later describes, “In the past... had the President put the—raised the DEF CON levels of our troops, Russia would have responded accordingly. There would have been inevitable tension.” Bush therefore describes this phone call as “a moment where it clearly said to me, [President Putin] understands the Cold War is over.” ([US President 10/1/2001](#); [US President 11/19/2001](#); [Dougherty 9/10/2002](#)) Putin also sends a telegram to Bush today, stating: “The series of barbaric terrorist acts, directed against innocent people, has evoked our anger and indignation.... The whole international community must rally in the fight against terrorism.” ([Russian Embassy 9/17/2001](#))

11:28 a.m.-11:50 a.m. September 11, 2001: Reports Suggest Plane Shot Down by Military

Several early news reports suggest that US military fighter jets may have shot down an aircraft, perhaps Flight 93. Ireland’s Thomas Crosbie Media reports, “A Boeing 767 has crashed near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.... US anti-aircraft fighters are in place—unconfirmed reports say this plane was shot out of the sky by US defense.” ([TCM Breaking News 9/11/2001](#)) Forbes states, “There are reports of a fourth airliner [having] been brought down near Camp David, the presidential retreat in Maryland, by US military fighters.” ([Dukceovich 9/11/2001](#)) And the Northwestern Chronicle states, “Air Force officials say an airliner has been forced down by F-16 fighter jets near Camp David.” ([Hoes 9/11/2001](#)) However, according to later reports, military officials say US aircraft did not shoot down any of the hijacked planes. ([CNN 9/11/2001](#))

11:30 a.m. September 11, 2001: Top US General Already Speculates on Television Al-Qaeda Is Responsible for Attacks

General Wesley Clark, former Supreme Commander of NATO, says on television, “This is clearly a coordinated effort. It hasn’t been announced that it’s over.... Only one group has this kind of ability and that is Osama bin Laden’s.” ([Ottawa Citizen 9/11/2001](#))

(11:30 a.m.) September 11, 2001: 84th Radar Evaluation Squadron Begins Reconstructing Radar Data

Within two hours of the attacks the 84th Radar Evaluation Squadron (RADES) based at Hill Air Force Base, Utah begins reviewing the radar trails of the four earlier hijacked aircraft, after Pentagon officials have turned to them to find out exactly what happened. Using their own software, the unit has the unique ability to create a “track of interest analysis,” singling out and zooming in on each of the planes. The unit has captured most of the flights of the four planes, but lost sight of Flight 93 at some point. ([Desjarlais 12/2003](#)) The FBI also contacts RADES within hours of the attacks, requesting detailed information on the hijacked planes. ([Garbarino 4/15/2004](#)) NORAD official Colonel Alan Scott later will tell the 9/11 Commission that much of his radar data for the “primary targets” on 9/11 was not seen that day. He will say, “It was reconstructed days later by the 84th Radar Evaluation Squadron, and other agencies like it who are professionals at going back and looking at radar tapes and then given that they are loaded with knowledge after the fact, they can go and find things that perhaps were not visible during the event itself.” ([9/11 Commission 5/23/2003](#)) Data reconstructed by RADES will be used as a source several times in the account of the hijackings and military response to them in the 9/11 Commission’s final report. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 457-459](#))

(11:30 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Congressmen Meet with Bush

Two congressmen, Dan Miller (R) and Adam Putnam (R), are on Air Force One. they’ve been receiving periodic updates on the crisis from President Bush’s adviser Karl Rove. At this time, they’re summoned forward to meet with the president. Bush points out the fighter escort, F-16s from a base in Texas, has now arrived. He says that a threat had been received from someone who knew the plane’s code name. However, there are doubts that any such threat ever occurred (see [10:32 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). ([Martin 7/4/2004](#))

(11:30 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Fire Chief Ordered to Put Out Fires in WTC 7, But Does Not Do So

The New York Fire Department (FDNY) assigns a chief officer to take charge of operations at WTC Building 7. The chief is initially ordered to put out the fires there. It is determined around this time that there are fires on floors 6-8, 17, 21 and 30. However, there are problems with the water supply: There is no water coming out of the hydrant system nearby, and an FDNY chief officer who has been in WTC 7 says he opened a standpipe on the 4th floor of one stairway, but found no water in the standpipe system. This should not be a problem though, as two or three FDNY fireboats have been tied up on the Hudson shore, specifically to provide water to the site, and lines are already being stretched up to the WTC area. However, as the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) will later report, “According to the FDNY first-person interviews, water was never an issue at WTC 7 since firefighting was never started in the building. When the Chief Officer in charge of WTC 7 got to Barclay Street and West Broadway, numerous firefighters and officers were coming out of WTC 7. These firefighters indicated that several blocks needed to be cleared around WTC 7 because they thought that the building was going to collapse.” ([Gill 9/17/2001](#); [Seitz 9/27/2001](#); [National Institute of Standards and Technology 9/2005, pp. 110-111](#).) However, one fire captain later claims to have seen numerous firefighters trying to extinguish fires in WTC 7 at some unspecified time after the North Tower collapsed, until they were instructed to stop doing so (see [After 10:28 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)).

11:45 a.m. September 11, 2001: Air Force One Lands at Louisiana Air Force Base



Air Force One at Barksdale Air Force Base. [Source: *Win McNamee/ Reuters*] Air Force One lands at Barksdale Air Force Base near Shreveport, Louisiana. “The official reason for landing at Barksdale was that President Bush felt it necessary to make a further statement, but it isn’t unreasonable to assume that—as there was no agreement as to what the president’s movements should be—it was felt he might as well be on the ground as in the air.” ([Tapper 9/12/2001](#); [Sack 9/16/2001](#); [Langley 12/16/2001](#); [CBS News 9/11/2002](#))

September 11, 2001: Former Israeli Prime Minister: 9/11 Very Good for Israeli-US Relations

Former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, when asked what the 9/11 attacks means for relations between the US and Israel, replies, “It’s very good.” Then he edits

himself: “Well, not very good, but it will generate immediate sympathy.” ([Bennet 9/12/2001](#)) A week later, the Village Voice states, “From national networks to small-town newspapers, the view that America’s terrible taste of terrorism will finally do away with even modest calls for the restraint of Israel’s military attacks on Palestinian towns has become an instant, unshakable axiom.... Now, support for Israel in America is officially absolute, and Palestinians are cast once again as players in a global terrorist conspiracy.” ([Solomon 9/19/2001](#))

September 11, 2001: Suspected Militants Found with Calling Cards

An unnamed, young, Middle Eastern man flying from Amsterdam, Netherlands, to Detroit, Michigan, is arrested after his plane is diverted to Toronto, Canada. He is apparently found to be carrying a flight jacket, Palestinian Authority travel documents, and a picture of himself in a flight crew uniform in front of a fake backdrop of the WTC. ([Gombu 9/15/2001](#); [Godfrey and Christopoulos 9/15/2001](#); [Jaimet 9/17/2001](#))

Apparently, the man, who identifies himself as an aircraft maintenance engineer in Gaza, Palestine, was supposed to have arrived in the US a few days before but was delayed for unknown reasons. ([CBS News 9/14/2001](#)) A second man was arrested a few days earlier while trying to enter Canada carrying a similar photo. He also possessed maps and directions to the WTC. Both men are soon handed over to the US. ([Gombu 9/15/2001](#)) A similar picture of suspected Egyptian al-Qaeda operative Mohammad Zeki Majoub, arrested in Canada in June 2000, in front of a fake WTC backdrop was found in the luggage of one of the US hijackers. ([Associated Press 3/1/2001](#); [Godfrey and Christopoulos 9/15/2001](#)) Canadian officials “believe the photos could be calling cards used by the terrorists to identify those involved in plotting the attacks.” ([Godfrey and Christopoulos 9/15/2001](#))

September 11, 2001: Existing Files on Hijackers Enables Investigation to Start Within Hours of Attacks

One day after 9/11, the New York Times will report that FBI agents in Florida investigating the hijackers quickly “descended on flight schools, neighborhoods and restaurants in pursuit of leads.” At one flight school, “students said investigators were there within hours of Tuesday’s attacks.” ([Canedy and Sanger 9/13/2001](#)) Also on September 12, the Times will report, “Authorities said they had also identified accomplices in several cities who had helped plan and execute Tuesday’s attacks. Officials said they knew who these people were and important biographical details about many of them. They prepared biographies of each identified member of the hijack teams, and began tracing the recent movements of the men.” ([Johnston and Risen 9/13/2001](#)) In September 2002, 9/11 victim’s relative Kristen Breitweiser, testifying before the 9/11 Congressional Inquiry, will cite these news reports and will ask, “How did the FBI know exactly where to go only a few hours after the attacks? How did they know which neighborhoods, which flight schools and which restaurants to investigate so soon in the

case?... How are complete biographies of the terrorists, and their accomplices, created in such short time? Did our intelligence agencies already have open files on these men? Were they already investigating them? Could the attacks of September 11th been prevented?" ([US Congress 9/18/2002](#)) In at least some cases, it appears that US intelligence did quickly access existing files on the hijackers. The Washington Post reports, "In the hours after Tuesday's bombings, investigators searched their files on [Satam] Al Suqami and [Ahmed] Alghamdi, noted the pair's ties to [Nabil] al-Marabh and launched a hunt for him." A top Customs official claims that by checking flight manifests and comparing them with other information such as watch lists, he is able to determine the names of all 19 hijackers by 11:00 a.m.(see [\(11:00 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([Mintz and Lengel 9/21/2001](#))

September 11, 2001: Germans Learn of 30 People Traveling for 9/11 Plot

A few hours after the attacks, German intelligence intercepts a phone conversation between followers of bin Laden that leads the FBI to search frantically for two more teams of suicide hijackers, according to US and German officials. The Germans overhear the operatives refer to "the 30 people traveling for the operation." The FBI scours flight manifests and any other clues for more conspirators still at large. ([Tagliabue and Bonner 9/29/2001](#)) Two days later, authorities claim to have identified teams of as many as 50 infiltrators who supported or carried out the strikes. About 40 are accounted for as dead or in custody; ten are missing. They also believe a total of 27 suspected operatives received some form of pilot training. This corresponds with many analyses that the attacks required a large support network. ([Rempel and Serrano 9/13/2001](#)) Yet there is no evidence that any accomplices in the US shortly before 9/11 have since been arrested or charged.

September 11, 2001: Television News Footage of Gleeful Palestinians Shown out of Context



Men in the Palestiani Shatila refugee camp, Lebanon, celebrating the 9/11 attacks. [*Source: Associated Press / Mohamed Zatari*] Television news coverage on 9/11 repeatedly shows images of Palestinians

rejoicing over the 9/11 attack. According to Mark Crispin Miller, a professor of media studies at New York University who investigated the issue, the footage was filmed during the funeral of nine people killed the day before by Israeli authorities. He said, “To show it without explaining the background, and to show it over and over again is to make propaganda for the war machine and is irresponsible.” ([Holloway 9/18/2001](#); [Dodd 9/27/2001](#))

(12:00 Noon) September 11, 2001: Bush Provided Tight Security in Louisiana



Bush escorted into Barksdale Air Force Base. [*Source: White House*] President Bush arrives at the Barksdale Air Force Base headquarters in a Humvee escorted by armed outriders. Reporters and others are not allowed to say where they are. Bush remains in this location for approximately one hour, recording a brief message and talking on the phone. ([Langley 12/16/2001](#))

(12:00 Noon) September 11, 2001: Senator Hatch Repeats Intelligence Community’s Conclusion That Osama Bin Laden Is Responsible

Senator Orrin Hatch (R), a member of both the Senate Intelligence and Judiciary Committees, says he has just been “briefed by the highest levels of the FBI and of the intelligence community.” He says, “they’ve come to the conclusion that this looks like the signature of Osama bin Laden, and that he may be the one behind this.” ([Tapper 9/12/2001](#))

After 12:00 Noon September 11, 2001: Larry Silverstein Tells Fire Department Commander to ‘Pull’ WTC 7

At some point during the afternoon of 9/11, WTC leaseholder Larry Silverstein receives a phone call from the Fire Department commander, where they discuss the state of Building 7 of the WTC complex. Silverstein will discuss this call in a PBS documentary broadcast in 2002, saying that he told the commander, “You know, we’ve had such terrible loss of life, maybe the smartest thing to do is pull it. And they made that decision to pull and then we watched the building collapse.” ([PBS 9/10/2002](#)) Some people suggest that by “pull it” Silverstein meant the deliberate demolition of the building. But a spokesman for Silverstein states that he was expressing “his view that the most important thing was to protect the safety of those firefighters, including, if necessary, to have them withdraw from the building.” ([US Department of State 9/16/2005](#)) Yet this claim is contradicted by some accounts, according to which firefighters decided early on not to attempt fighting the fires in WTC 7 (see [After 10:28 a.m. September 11, 2001](#))(see [\(11:30 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). Building 7 eventually collapses at around 5:20 in the afternoon (see [\(5:20 p.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)).

(Shortly After 12:00 p.m.) September 11, 2001: Pentagon Finally Informs White House that Flight 93 Was Not Shot Down

The Pentagon finally informs those inside the Presidential Emergency Operations Center (PEOC) below the White House that Flight 93 was not shot down by the US military. When they’d first learned of a plane going down in Pennsylvania, many of the people in the PEOC thought the military might have shot it down (see [\(10:25 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([Thomas 12/31/2001](#); [Balz and Woodward 1/27/2002](#)) However, National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice later recalls, “We couldn’t get an answer from the Pentagon” as to what had happened. In one call to the Pentagon, she’d insisted, “You must know. I mean, you must know!” ([Hayes 2007, pp. 339](#)) It takes until about two hours after Flight 93 crashed for the Pentagon to confirm there was no shoot down. ([Balz and Woodward 1/27/2002](#); [Mineta 9/11/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 5/23/2003](#)) Several early news reports suggested that military fighter jets might have shot down an aircraft, perhaps Flight 93 (see [11:28 a.m.-11:50 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). And when F-15 pilot Daniel Nash returns to his base later in the afternoon after flying a combat air patrol over New York, he will be told that a military F-16 had shot down an airliner in Pennsylvania (see [\(2:00 p.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([Dennehy 8/21/2002](#))

(After 12:00 p.m.) September 11, 2001: FAA Begins Analysis of 9/11 Attacks

At FAA headquarters in Washington, DC, David Canoles, the FAA’s manager of air traffic evaluations and investigations, and his staff begin coordinating the collection of forensic evidence that might clarify how the morning’s attacks unfolded. They coordinate the capture and copying of radar track data showing the paths of the four hijacked planes, and obtain air traffic control voice tapes from every facility that had spoken with these planes. FAA Assistant Investigations Manager Tony Mello and other employees will work

for most of the afternoon, all night, and part of the following day, gathering data and coordinating with the FBI, Secret Service, Defense Department, White House, and National Transportation Safety Board, making sure these other agencies receive as much evidence as is available. Radar tracks are crudely plotted, showing the flight paths of the four jets, and voice tapes are transcribed. Having been stuck in Chicago when the attacks occurred, (see [8:30 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)), Tony Ferrante, the manager of FAA investigations, will finally arrive at FAA headquarters at 5:00 a.m. on September 12. His first priority is “to ensure that the radar data and voice tapes from every location involved in the attack [are] put under lock and key as soon as possible,” presumably to be kept safe for any investigations. He looks at and listens to the relevant controller tapes, and begins constructing a detailed timeline of the four hijacked aircraft. Along with Tony Mello and others of his staff, Ferrante will spend several days working out the movements of the four planes. FAA radar experts Dan Diggins and Doug Gould will also spend days interpreting the radar tracks of the four planes, piecing together a detailed timeline of their actions from takeoff to crash. ([Freni 2003, pp. 74 and 76-77](#)) The FAA will publish a fairly comprehensive chronology of the hijackings on September 17, though this will not be made public until September 2005. ([Federal Aviation Administration 9/17/2001](#); [National Security Archive 9/9/2005](#)) Presently, it refers any media requests for flight patterns to Flight Explorer, a software company that makes charts of plane routes using information from the FAA’s radar system (see [After 8:46 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). ([McCarthy 9/13/2001](#)) The US military has also started doing its own reconstructions of the radar data for the hijacked aircraft (see [\(11:30 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)).

12:05 p.m. September 11, 2001: Rumsfeld Finds Evidence of Al-Qaeda Role Not Good Enough

CIA Director Tenet tells Defense Secretary Rumsfeld about an intercepted phone call from earlier in the day at 9:53 a.m. An al-Qaeda operative talked of a fourth target just before Flight 93 crashed. Rumsfeld’s assistant Stephen Cambone dictates Rumsfeld’s thoughts the time, and the notes taken will later be leaked to CBS News. According to CBS, “Rumsfeld felt it was ‘vague,’ that it ‘might not mean something,’ and that there was ‘no good basis for hanging hat.’ In other words, the evidence was not clear-cut enough to justify military action against bin Laden.” ([CBS News 9/4/2002](#)) A couple of hours later, Rumsfeld will use this information to begin arguing that Iraq should be attacked, despite the lack of verified ties between al-Qaeda and Iraq (see [\(2:40 p.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)).

12:10 p.m.-12:15 p.m. September 11, 2001: Firefighters Rescue Three People Trapped in WTC 7



Mike Hess. [Source: *Harvard Law Bulletin*] Most of Building 7 of the World Trade Center was evacuated around the time the South Tower was hit (see [\(9:03 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). However, firefighters find three individuals who have become trapped inside it. Among them are Barry Jennings, a City Housing Authority worker, and Mike Hess, New York's chief lawyer who is also a longtime friend of Mayor Rudolph Giuliani. The two had gone up to the 23rd floor headquarters of the Mayor's Office of Emergency Management some time before 10 a.m., but found it empty. (It was evacuated at 9:30 a.m.; see [\(9:30 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#).) They headed downstairs but became trapped around the sixth floor by smoke and debris that filled the staircase as a result of the North Tower collapsing at 10:28 a.m. After breaking a window and calling for help, they were spotted by firefighters outside. When the firefighters go in, they also find a security officer for one of the businesses based in the building, who is trapped on the 7th floor by the smoke in the stairway. Why this guard did not evacuate earlier, along with the rest of WTC 7, is unknown. All three men are escorted out of the building. ([Firestone 11/21/1997](#); [Associated Press 9/11/2001](#); [Giuliani 2002](#), pp. 20-21 and 244; [Penn State Public Broadcasting 3/1/2002](#); [National Institute of Standards and Technology 6/2004](#), pp. L-18^٥; [National Institute of Standards and Technology 9/2005](#), pp. 109-110^٥)

12:15 p.m. September 11, 2001: Border Crossings Security Tightened

It is announced that US borders with Canada and Mexico are on the highest state of alert, but no decision has been made about closing borders. ([CNN 9/12/2001](#))

12:16 p.m. September 11, 2001: US Airspace Cleared of All Civilian Aircraft

US airspace is clear of aircraft except for military and emergency flights. Only a few transoceanic flights are still landing in Canada. ([Levin 8/12/2002](#)) At 12:30 p.m., the FAA reports about 50 (non-civilian) planes still flying in US airspace, but none are reporting problems. ([CNN 9/12/2001](#); [New York Times 9/12/2001](#))

(Shortly Before 12:30 p.m.) September 11, 2001: Clarke Heads to White House Bunker; Told That Vice President Keeps Hanging up Clarke Telephone, and Wife of Vice President is Interfering

Counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke, who is in the White House Situation Room, is informed that Vice President Dick Cheney wants him to come down to the Presidential Emergency Operations Center (PEOC), located below the East Wing of the White House. Clarke heads down and, after being admitted by Cheney’s security detail, enters the PEOC. In addition to the vice president and his wife Lynne Cheney, the PEOC contains National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice, political adviser Mary Matalin, Cheney’s chief of staff I. Lewis “Scooter” Libby, deputy White House chief of staff Josh Bolten, and White House counselor Karen Hughes. Clarke can see the White House Situation on a screen. But Army Major Mike Fenzel, who is also in the PEOC, complains to him, “I can’t hear the crisis conference [that Clarke has been leading] because Mrs. Cheney keeps turning down the volume on you so she can hear CNN... and the vice president keeps hanging up the open line to you.” Clarke later describes that Lynne Cheney is, like her husband, “a right-wing ideologue,” and is offering her advice and opinions while in the PEOC. When Clarke asks the vice president if he needs anything, Cheney replies, “The [communications] in this place are terrible.” His calls to President Bush keep getting broken off. By the time Clarke heads back upstairs to the Situation Room, it is 12:30 p.m. ([Clarke 2004, pp. 17-19](#))

(12:30 p.m.-7:30 p.m.) September 11, 2001: Powell Unable to Communicate With Colleagues in Washington

Secretary of State Colin Powell learned of the attacks on the US while away in Peru, Lima (see [\(9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). During his seven-hour flight back to Washington, he is frustrated at being unable to communicate with other senior government leaders. In a March 2002 speech at the State Department, Powell will recall, “I never felt more useless in my life than on the morning of the 11th of September. Phones [were] gone because of what happened here and what happened to the [communications] system here in Washington. They couldn’t get a phone line through. I was able to get some radio communications—two radio spots on the way back—but for most of that seven-hour period, I could not tell what was going on here in my capital, and I’m the secretary of state!” ([Barrett 2002, pp. 4-5](#); [Verton 2003, pp. 149-150](#)) Powell is able to talk by radio with Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage. But, according to journalist Bob Woodward, any “real talk” between them “was hopeless.” ([Woodward 2002, pp. 10](#)) Yet, in a 7:40 p.m. press briefing, State Department Deputy Spokesman Philip Reeker will claim that Powell “has been kept in the loop and informed all day.” ([US Department of State 9/11/2001](#))

12:36 p.m. September 11, 2001: Bush Records Second Speech; Aired About 30 Minutes Later



Bush records a speech at Barksdale Air Force Base. [Source: Win McNamee/ Reuters] President Bush records a short speech that is played by the networks at 1:04 p.m. ([Tapper 9/12/2001](#); [Sammon 10/8/2002](#)) In a speech at the Louisiana base, President Bush announces that security measures are being taken and says: “Make no mistake, the United States will hunt down and punish those responsible for these cowardly acts.” ([CNN 9/12/2001](#); [New York Times 9/12/2001](#); [MSNBC 9/22/2001](#)) He also states, “Freedom itself was attacked this morning by a faceless coward. And freedom will be defended.” ([ABC News 9/11/2002](#))

(12:58 p.m.-1:25 p.m.) September 11, 2001: Bush Argues with Cheney and Others About Where He Should Go Next; Agrees to Stay Away From Washington

President Bush spends most of his time at Barksdale Air Force Base arguing on the phone with Vice President Dick Cheney and others over where he should go next. The media are now starting to ask about the president’s whereabouts, and why he has not returned to Washington. “A few minutes before 1 p.m.,” Bush agrees to fly to Nebraska. As earlier, there are rumors of a “credible terrorist threat” to Air Force One that are said to prevent his return to Washington. ([Langley 12/16/2001](#)) At 1:25, Bush speaks with his chief of staff Andrew Card and the head of the Secret Service detail. He tells them, “I want to go back home ASAP. I don’t want whoever this is holding me outside of Washington.” But the Secret Service agent replies, “Our people say it’s too unsteady still,” and Card adds, “The right thing is to let the dust settle.” Bush acquiesces. ([Sammon 2002, pp. 119](#)) In a book about the Secret Service, author Philip Melanson will later comment on the president’s failure to promptly return to Washington: “If the president appeared less than resolute at any point... it was the fault of agents who were overzealous in their desire to protect him, administration sources have offered.” Yet, “The Service, whose first duty that day or any other day is to protect the president, has never publicly pointed out that Bush could have overruled them at any time and ordered Air Force One to Washington, DC.” ([Melanson 2002, pp. 326](#))

September 11-16, 2001: Pakistan Threatened; Promises to Support US

ISI Director Lt. Gen. Mahmood Ahmed, extending his Washington visit because of the 9/11 attacks, meets with US officials and negotiates Pakistan's cooperation with the US against al-Qaeda. It is rumored that later in the day of 9/11 and again the next day, Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage visits Mahmood and offers him the choice: "Help us and breathe in the 21st century along with the international community or be prepared to live in the Stone Age." ([Deutsche Presse-Agentur \(Hamburg\) 9/12/2001](#); [Japan Economic Newswire 9/17/2001](#); [Rind 11/9/2001](#)) Pakistan's President Pervez Musharraf will write in a 2006 book (see [September 25, 2006](#)) that Armitage actually threatens to bomb Pakistan "back to the stone age." However, Armitage will deny using this wording and say he did not threaten military force. ([Bloc 9/22/2006](#)) Secretary of State Powell presents Mahmood seven demands as an ultimatum and Pakistan supposedly agrees to all seven. ([Balz, Woodward, and Himmelman 1/29/2002](#)) Mahmood also has meetings with Senator Joseph Biden (D), Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and Secretary of State Powell, regarding Pakistan's position. ([Perlez 9/13/2001](#); [Redden 9/13/2001](#); [Associated Press 9/13/2001](#); [Davies 9/16/2001](#)) On September 13, the airport in Islamabad, the capital of Pakistan, is shut down for the day. A government official later says the airport had been closed because of threats made against Pakistan's "strategic assets," but does not elaborate. The next day, Pakistan declares "unstinting" support for the US, and the airport is reopened. It is later suggested that Israel and India threatened to attack Pakistan and take control of its nuclear weapons if Pakistan did not side with the US. ([Rind 11/9/2001](#)) It is later reported that Mahmood's presence in Washington was a lucky blessing; one Western diplomat saying it "must have helped in a crisis situation when the US was clearly very, very angry." ([Bokhari 9/18/2001](#))

After 1:00 p.m. September 11, 2001: FBI Tells GTE Supervisor to Keep Todd Beamer Call Secret

GTE customer service supervisor Lisa Jefferson had spoken with Flight 93 passenger Todd Beamer for 13 minutes before his plane crashed (see [9:45 a.m.-9:58 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). Before heading home from work at 1 p.m., she is questioned by phone by three FBI agents, who asked her scores of questions about her conversation with Beamer. Later in the afternoon, an FBI agent phones her at home. He provides her with several numbers to call, should she remember further details about her conversation with Beamer. He also tells her to maintain secrecy about the call. Jefferson later describes, "In fact, he stressed the importance of keeping the matter under wraps." ([Jefferson and Middlebrooks 2006, pp. 61-62 and 69](#)) It is not until three days later that the FBI first releases information on the call, and that Beamer's wife learns of it (see [September 14, 2001](#)). ([Beamer and Abraham 2002, pp. 185-186](#)) It is unclear why the FBI wants it kept secret until then. Phone calls made by several other passengers from Flight 93 will be reported within a

day of the attacks. ([Associated Press 9/11/2001](#); [van Derbeken 9/12/2001](#); [Goldstein and Thompson 9/12/2001](#))

1:02 p.m. September 11, 2001: Rumsfeld Calls for War; Bush Says There Will be a Counterattack

From Barksdale Air Force Base, President Bush speaks with Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. Rumsfeld informs the president that it had been an American Airlines plane that hit the Pentagon. Previously, there had been a question as to whether it was hit by a smaller plane or a helicopter. ([Lemann 9/25/2001](#); [Langley 12/16/2001](#); [Sammon 2002, pp. 116](#)) Rumsfeld also tells Bush, “This is not a criminal action. This is war.”

Washington Times reporter Rowan Scarborough later reflects, “Rumsfeld’s instant declaration of war... took America from the Clinton administration’s view that terrorism was a criminal matter to the Bush administration’s view that terrorism was a global enemy to be destroyed.” ([Scarborough 2/23/2004](#)) Bush reportedly tells Rumsfeld that there will “be a counterattack and that the military [will] not be hamstrung by politics the way it had been in Vietnam.” He says to Rumsfeld, “It’s a day of national tragedy and we’ll clean up the mess. And then the ball will be in your court and [incoming chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff] Dick Myers’s court to respond.” ([Sammon 2002, pp. 116](#))

(1:02 p.m.) September 11, 2001: Giuliani Orders Evacuation of Southern Manhattan

New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani orders an evacuation of Manhattan south of Canal Street. ([MSNBC 9/22/2001](#); [Associated Press 8/19/2002](#))

1:04 p.m. September 11, 2001: Military on High Alert Worldwide

President Bush announces that the US military has been put on high alert worldwide. ([CNN 9/12/2001](#); [Associated Press 8/19/2002](#)) Apparently, this occurs in a televised speech that was actually recorded half an hour earlier.

1:05 p.m. September 11, 2001: Report of Jet Approaching Bush’s Ranch Turns Out to be False Alarm

While he is at Barksdale Air Force Base in Louisiana, President Bush receives an intelligence report from the US Strategic Command (Stratcom), informing him that a high-speed object is heading for his ranch in Crawford, Texas. It is already more than 45 minutes since US airspace had been cleared of all aircraft except military and emergency flights (see [12:16 p.m. September 11, 2001](#)). Bush orders an underling to notify everyone

at the ranch about this. However, the report turns out to be a false alarm. ([Lemann 9/25/2001](#); [Sammon 2002, pp. 117](#); [CBS News 9/11/2002](#)) A threat to Air Force One had allegedly been received earlier on (see [10:32 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)), but this too is later deemed to have been a false alarm. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 554](#))

1:27 p.m. September 11, 2001: State of Emergency in Washington

A state of emergency is declared in Washington. ([CNN 9/12/2001](#); [New York Times 9/12/2001](#))

(Between 1:30 p.m. and 3:30 p.m.) September 11, 2001: Non-Essential Staff Removed From White House Bunker

In the Presidential Emergency Operations Center (PEOC) below the East Wing of the White House, numerous key officials are assembled, including Vice President Dick Cheney, his chief of staff I. Lewis “Scooter” Libby, National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice, White House counselor Karen Hughes, and others. ([Clarke 2004, pp. 18-19](#)) A technician informs Libby that levels of carbon dioxide in the room have climbed too high. Libby remembers that excessive carbon dioxide can affect a person’s judgment, and arranges to have any non-essential personnel—comprising various lower-level aides—removed from the room. ([Thomas 12/31/2001](#)) According to journalist and author Stephen Hayes, it is in fact David Addington, the vice president’s general counsel, who asks the lower-level officials to leave. ([Hayes 2007, pp. 343](#))

(1:30 p.m.) September 11, 2001: Air Force One Leaves Louisiana; Flies to Nebraska

President Bush leaves Louisiana on Air Force One, and flies to Nebraska’s Offutt Air Force Base, where the US Strategic Command is located. ([Tapper 9/12/2001](#); [CNN 9/12/2001](#); [MSNBC 9/22/2001](#); [Langley 12/16/2001](#)) He travels with Chief of Staff Andrew Card, senior adviser Karl Rove, communications staffers Dan Bartlett, Ari Fleischer, and Gordon Johndroe, and a small group of reporters. ([Tapper 9/12/2001](#))

(Between 1:30 p.m. and 2:50 p.m.) September 11, 2001: President’s CIA Briefer Blames Bin Laden for Attack

After taking off from Barksdale Air Force Base (see [\(1:30 p.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), President Bush calls Mike Morell, his CIA briefer, to his cabin near the front of the plane. He asks Morell who he thinks is responsible for the attack. Morell replies, “I would bet everything on bin Laden.” He lists some of bin Laden’s previous attacks: the 1998 attacks

on the American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, and the 2000 attack on the USS *Cole* in Yemen. Bush asks about the Palestinian extremist group, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). Morell says it is unlikely this group could be responsible for the day's attack, as PFLP simply doesn't have the capability for something like this. Bush asks how long it will take to know if bin Laden is to blame. Based on previous attacks, Morell says, it will probably be a matter of days. Bush says that if anything definitive is learned about the attack, he wants to be the first to know. ([Kessler 2003, pp. 195](#); [Tenet 2007, pp. 165-166](#))

1:44 p.m. September 11, 2001: US Military Deployed at Sea, in Skies

The Pentagon announces that aircraft carriers and guided missile destroyers have been dispatched toward New York and Washington. Around the country, more fighters, airborne radar (AWACs), and refueling planes are scrambling. NORAD is on its highest alert. ([CNN 9/12/2001](#); [MSNBC 9/22/2001](#))

September 11, 2001: FBI Agents Able to Quickly Find Alhazmi and Almihdhar Once 9/11 Attacks Are Over

On September 11—after the 9/11 attacks are over—the New York FBI office learns that one of the hijackers was Khalid Almihdhar. One of these FBI agents had attempted to get permission to search for Almihdhar in late August, but was not allowed to do so. He wrote an e-mail on August 28 predicting that “someday someone will die... the public will not understand why we were not more effective and throwing every resource we had at certain ‘problems.’” (see [August 29, 2001](#)). He later testifies that upon seeing Almihdhar's name on one of the passenger flight manifests, he angrily yells “This is the same Almihdhar we've been talking about for three months!” In an attempt to console him, his boss replies, “We did everything by the book.” Now that this upset agent is allowed to conduct a basic Internet search for Almihdhar that he had been denied permission to conduct before 9/11, he finds the hijacker's address “within hours.” ([Eggen and Priest 9/21/2002](#); [US Congress 12/11/2002](#)) The FBI field office in San Diego also had not been notified before 9/11 that Almihdhar and Nawaf Alhazmi had been put on a no-fly watch list on August 24, 2001 (see [September 4, 2001](#)). Bill Gore, the FBI agent running the San Diego office on this day, later makes reference to that fact that Alhazmi's correct phone number and address was listed in the San Diego phone book and says, “How [we] could have found these people when we didn't know we were looking for them? The first place we would have looked is the phone book.... I submit to you we would have found them.” ([US Congress 12/11/2002](#))

(2:00 p.m.) September 11, 2001: All-Republican US Shadow Government is Formed



The emergency operations facility in Mount Weather, Bluemont, Virginia (the entrance is shown on the left and the interior blast door is shown on the right). This is one of the continuity of government bunkers used on 9/11. [Source: *ABC News*] (click image to enlarge) It is later revealed that only hours after the 9/11 attacks, a US “shadow government” is formed. Initially deployed “on the fly,” executive directives on continuity of government in the face of a crisis that date back to the Reagan administration are put into effect. Approximately 100 midlevel officials are moved to underground bunkers and stay there 24 hours a day. Presumably among them are a number of FAA managers, members of a designated group of “shadow” managers, who slip away from their usual activities around midday. Officials rotate in and out of the shadow government on a 90-day cycle. While the measure is initially intended only as a temporary precaution, due to further assessment of the risk of terrorism, the White House will decide to make it a permanent feature of “the new reality.” A senior official tells CNN that major factors are the concern that al-Qaeda could have gained access to a crude nuclear device, and the “threat of some form of catastrophic event.” However, this same official will admit that the US has no confirmation, and “no solid evidence,” that al-Qaeda has such a nuclear device, and says that the consensus among top US officials is that the likelihood of this is “quite low.” When the existence of the shadow government is later revealed, some controversy will arise because it includes no Democrats. In fact, top congressional Democrats will remain unaware of it until journalists break the story months later. ([CNN 3/1/2002](#); [Gellman and Schmidt 3/1/2002](#); [CBS News 3/2/2002](#); [Freni 2003, pp. 75](#))

(2:00 p.m.-2:30 p.m.) September 11, 2001: Decision Made to Abandon WTC 7

The chief fire officer who has been assigned to take charge of operations at WTC Building 7 meets with his command officer, to discuss the condition of this building and the fire department’s capabilities for controlling the fires in it. A deputy fire chief who has just been in WTC 7, inspecting up to its 7th or 8th floor, reports that there was a lot of fire inside and the stairway was filling with smoke. The fire chiefs discuss the situation and identify the following conditions:

- WTC 7 has suffered damage caused by falling debris from the Twin Towers, and they are uncertain about its structural stability.
- There are large fires on at least six floors.
- They do not have enough equipment available for conducting operations in the building,

such as hoses, standpipe kits, and handie-talkies.

■There is no water immediately available for fighting the fires. (However, this concern is apparently contradicted by reports that two or three fireboats are moored nearby, specifically to provide water-pumping capacity for the WTC site.)

Therefore, at around 2:30 p.m., fire officers decide to completely abandon WTC 7 and a final order is given to evacuate the site. Firefighters and other emergency workers will be withdrawn from the surrounding area (see [\(4:30 p.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), and Building 7 collapses later in the afternoon (see [\(5:20 p.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([Gill 9/17/2001](#); [National Institute of Standards and Technology 9/2005, pp. 110-111](#) ^A)

September 11-12, 2001: FBI Agents Denied Permission to Interview Moussaoui, Due to Lack of Emergency

The FBI's Minneapolis office asks for permission to interview Zacarias Moussaoui a few hours after the end of the 9/11 attacks, but permission is denied, apparently on the grounds that there is no emergency. On 9/11, the office's counsel, Coleen Rowley, seeks permission from the Acting US Attorney to question Moussaoui about whether al-Qaeda has any further plans to hijack airliners or otherwise attack the US. The next day she asks again; this time the request is sent to the Justice Department. Such questioning would not usually be permitted, but Rowley argues that it should be allowed under a public safety exception. However, permission is denied and Rowley is told that the emergency is over so the public safety exception does not apply. Rowley will later comment: "We were so flabbergasted about the fact we were told no public safety emergency existed just hours after the attacks that my boss advised me to document it in a memo which became the first document in the legal subfile of the FBI's 'Penttbom' case." ([Rowley 5/2/2007](#))

Some sources will suggest that Moussaoui was to be part of a second wave of attacks (see [September 5, 2002](#)). He is also an associate of shoe bomber Richard Reid, who will attempt to blow up an airliner later this year (see [Mid-2000-December 9, 2000](#) and [December 22, 2001](#)).

(2:00 p.m.) September 11, 2001: Fighter Pilot Told Flight 93 Was Shot Down

F-15 fighter pilot Major Daniel Nash returns to base around this time, after chasing Flight 175 and patrolling the skies over New York City. He says that when he gets out of the plane, "he [is] told that a military F-16 had shot down a fourth airliner in Pennsylvania." ([Scott 6/3/2002](#); [Dennehy 8/21/2002](#))

(2:40 p.m.) September 11, 2001: Rumsfeld Is Told Al-Qaeda Was Behind 9/11 Attacks But Wants to Blame Iraq

Resume Stokard:
 Best info fast
 judge whether good enough
 judge whether
 Hit S.H. @ same time -
 Not only UBL
 - Need to move swiftly -
 - Near term target needs -
 - Go massive - sweep it all up
 - Thing related & not

Two sections from Rumsfeld's™s notes, dictated to Stephen Cambone. [Source: *Defense Department*] Defense Secretary Rumsfeld aide Stephen Cambone is taking notes on behalf of Rumsfeld in the National Military Command Center. These notes will be leaked to the media nearly a year later. According to the notes, although Rumsfeld has already been given information indicating the 9/11 attacks were done by al-Qaeda (see [12:05 p.m. September 11, 2001](#)) and he has been given no evidence so far indicating any Iraqi involvement, he is more interested in blaming the attacks on Iraq. According to his aide's notes, Rumsfeld wants the "best info fast. Judge whether good enough hit S.H. [Saddam Hussein] at same time. Not only UBL [Osama bin Laden].... Need to move swiftly.... Go massive. Sweep it all up. Things related and not." ([CBS News 9/4/2002](#); [Bamford 2004, pp. 285](#)) In a 2004 book, author James Moore will write, "Unless Rumsfeld had an inspired moment while the rest of the nation was in shock, the notes are irrefutable proof that the Bush administration had designs on Iraq and Hussein well before the president raised his hand to take the oath of office." ([Moore 3/15/2004, pp. 18](#))

[2:50 p.m. September 11, 2001: Bush Arrives in Nebraska; Enters Strategic Command Center](#)



The entrance to the Offutt Air Force

Base's bunker, very far underground. Bush officials are seen here entering it on 9/11. [Source: CBC] Having left Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana at around 1:30 p.m. (see [\(1:30 p.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), Air Force One lands at Offutt Air Force Base near Omaha, Nebraska. President Bush stays on the plane for about ten minutes before entering the United States Strategic Command bunker at 3:06 p.m. ([Tapper 9/12/2001](#); [Langley 12/16/2001](#)) Offutt Air Force Base appears to be the headquarters of the US Strategic Command (Stratcom) exercise Global Guardian that was "in full swing" at the time the attacks began (see [8:30 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). While there, the president spends time in the underground Command Center from where Global Guardian was earlier being directed, being brought up to date on the attacks and their aftermath. ([Langley 12/16/2001](#); [Dejka 2/27/2002](#); [Sammon 10/8/2002](#))

(3:15 p.m.) September 11, 2001: Bush Meets with Top Officials via Video Conference Call



President Bush takes part in a video teleconference at Offutt Air Force Base. Chief of Staff Andrew Card sits on his left, and Admiral Richard Mies sits on his left. [Source: White House] At Offutt Air Force Base in Nebraska, President Bush convenes the first meeting of the National Security Council since the attacks occurred. ([Woodward 2002, pp. 26](#)) He begins the video conference call from a bunker beneath the base. He and Chief of Staff Andrew Card

visually communicate directly with Vice President Cheney, National Security Adviser Rice, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld, Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage, CIA Director Tenet, Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta, counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke, and others. ([Langley 12/16/2001](#); [ABC News 9/11/2002](#); [Sammon 10/8/2002](#)) According to Clarke, Bush begins the meeting by saying, “I’m coming back to the White House as soon as the plane is fueled. No discussion.” But according to Condoleezza Rice, he begins with the words, “We’re at war.” Clarke leads a quick review of what has already occurred, and issues that need to be quickly addressed. Bush asks CIA Director Tenet who he thinks is responsible for the day’s attacks. Tenet later recalls, “I told him the same thing I had told the vice president several hours earlier: al-Qaeda. The whole operation looked, smelled, and tasted like bin Laden.” Tenet tells Bush that passenger manifests show that three known al-Qaeda operatives had been on Flight 77. According to Tenet, when he tells the president in particular about Nawaf Alhazmi and Khalid Almihdhar (two of the alleged Flight 77 hijackers), Bush gives Mike Morell, his CIA briefer, “one of those ‘I thought I was supposed to be the first to know’ looks.” (Other evidence indicates the third al-Qaeda operative whose name is on the passenger manifest would be Salem Alhazmi (see [9:53 p.m. September 11, 2001](#).) Tenet tells the meeting that al-Qaeda is “the only terrorist organization capable of such spectacular, well-coordinated attacks,” and that “Intelligence monitoring had overheard a number of known bin Laden operatives congratulating each other after the attacks. Information collected days earlier but only now being translated indicated that various known operatives around the world anticipated a big event. None specified the day, time, place or method of attack.” Richard Clarke later corroborates that Tenet had at this time told the president he was certain that al-Qaeda was to blame. Yet only six weeks later, in an October 24, 2001 interview, Rice will claim differently. She will say, “In the first video conference, the assumption that everybody kind of shared was that it was global terrorists.... I don’t believe anybody said this is likely al-Qaeda. I don’t think so.” Tenet also relays a warning the CIA has received from French intelligence, saying another group of terrorists is within US borders and is preparing a second wave of attacks. Defense Secretary Rumsfeld briefs on the status of US forces, and states that about 120 fighters are now above US cities. ([Woodward 2002, pp. 26-27](#); [Clarke 2004, pp. 21-22](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 326 and 554](#); [Tenet 2007, pp. 169](#)) The meeting reportedly ends around 4:00-4:15 p.m. ([Langley 12/16/2001](#); [Sammon 10/8/2002](#))

3:31 p.m. September 11, 2001: FBI Issues Lookout Warning for White Van Possibly Connected to 9/11 Attacks

The FBI issues a BOLO (be on lookout) bulletin for three suspicious men who were seen leaving the New Jersey waterfront minutes after the first hijacked plane hit the WTC (see [Shortly After 8:46 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). Law enforcement officers in the greater New York City area are warned in a radio dispatch to watch for a “vehicle possibly related to New York terrorist attack.” The bulletin reads, in part: “White, 2000 Chevrolet van...with ‘Urban Moving Systems’ sign on back seen at Liberty State Park, Jersey City, NJ, at the time of first impact of jetliner into World Trade Center.... Three individuals

with van were seen celebrating after initial impact and subsequent explosion. FBI Newark Field Office requests that, if the van is located, hold for prints and detain individuals.” The van is located a short time later and five men inside it are arrested (see [3:56 p.m. September 11, 2001](#)). ([Ketcham 2/7/2007](#))

3:55 p.m. September 11, 2001: Bush Said to Be at Undisclosed Location

White House adviser Karen Hughes briefly speaks to the media and says President Bush is at an undisclosed location, taking part in a video conference. This is possibly the only in-person media appearance by any Bush administration official since the attacks and until a news conference by Defense Secretary Rumsfeld at 6:40 p.m. ([CNN 9/12/2001](#))

3:56 p.m. September 11, 2001: Five Apparent Israeli Spies Arrested for Puzzling Behavior at Time of First WTC Attack



The white van used by five Israeli agents as they were leaving New York on 9/11. Five Israelis are arrested for “puzzling behavior” related to the WTC attacks. Shortly after an FBI lookout bulletin was issued for a van with the words “Urban Moving Systems” written on the side, officers with the East Rutherford Police Department in New Jersey stop the van after matching the license plate number with the one given in the bulletin. According to the police report, Officer Scott DeCarlo and Sgt. Dennis Rivelli approach the van and demand the driver exit the vehicle. The driver, Sivan Kurzberg, does not obey after being asked several more times, so the police physically remove Kurzberg and four other men from the van and handcuff them. They have not been told the reasons for their arrest, but Kurzberg tells them, “We are Israeli. We are not your problem. Your problems are our problems. The Palestinians are the problem.” Again before the police have made any mention of the 9/11 attacks, another one of the arrested men says, “[W]e were on the West Side Highway in New York City during the incident.” In fact, it will later be determined they were on the roof of a building at Liberty State Park, watching and videotaping the first crash into the WTC (see [Shortly After 8:46 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). ([Lima 9/12/2001](#); [Melman 9/17/2001](#); [Ketcham 2/7/2007](#)) The FBI and additional police quickly arrive. They shut down the section of Route 3 in East Rutherford where the van was stopped and evacuate a nearby hotel as a security precaution. ([Lima 9/12/2001](#)) One man is found with \$4,700 in cash hidden in his sock, another has two foreign passports on him, and a box cutter is found in the van. ([ABC News 6/21/2002](#)) Another has pictures of the men standing with the burning wreckage of

the WTC in the background. ([Perelman 3/15/2002](#)) All five identify themselves as Israeli citizens and claim to be working for the New Jersey-based Urban Moving Systems company. In addition to the driver Sivan Kurzberg, the others are identified as Paul Kurzberg (Sivan's brother), Oded Ellner, Omer Marmari, and Yaron Shmuel. The men are detained but not charged. ([Perelman 3/15/2002](#); [ABC News 6/21/2002](#)) The next day it will be reported that "bomb-sniffing dogs reacted as if they had detected explosives." An investigator high up in the Bergen County law enforcement hierarchy will say in 2006, "There are maps of the city in the car with certain places highlighted.... It looked like they're hooked in with this [referring to the 9/11 attacks]. It looked like they knew what was going to happen.... It looked like they knew what was going to happen when they were at Liberty State Park." ([Lima 9/12/2001](#)) The FBI will later conclude at least two of the five are Mossad agents and that all were on a Mossad surveillance mission. The FBI interrogates them for weeks. ([Perelman 3/15/2002](#)) They are held on immigration violation charges, but will be released 71 days later (see [November 20, 2001](#)). ([ABC News 6/21/2002](#))

September 11, 2001: Weapons Found on Additional Planes: Inside Jobs?

Later in the day, weapons are found planted on board three other US airplanes. A US official says of the hijackings: "These look like inside jobs." Time magazine reports, "Sources tell Time that US officials are investigating whether the hijackers had accomplices deep inside the airports' 'secure' areas." ([Donnelly 9/22/2001](#)) Penetrating airport security does not appear to have been that difficult: Argenbright, the company in charge of security at all the airports used by the 9/11 hijackers, had virtually no security check on any of their employees, and even hired criminals and illegal immigrants. Security appears to have particularly abysmal at Boston's Logan Airport, even after 9/11. ([Ranalli 10/1/2001](#); [CNN 10/12/2001](#))

4:00 p.m. September 11, 2001: CNN Blames bin Laden for Attacks

CNN reports US officials say there are "good indications" that bin Laden is involved in the attacks, based on "new and specific" information developed since the attacks. ([CNN 9/12/2001](#))

(4:00 p.m.) September 11, 2001: Bush Determined to Return to Washington, Despite Advice of Secret Service



Brian Stafford. [Source: Publicity photo] President Bush reportedly had begun his video conference call with the National Security Council (see [\(3:15 p.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)) by announcing, “I’m coming back to the White House as soon as the plane is fueled. No discussion.” ([Clarke 2004, pp. 21](#)) Toward the end of this meeting, around 4 p.m., Secret Service Director Brian Stafford tells Bush, “Our position is stay where you are. It’s not safe.” The Secret Service reportedly wants to keep the president where he is, at Offutt Air Force Base, overnight, and—according to some later accounts—indefinitely. To Stafford’s surprise, Bush ignores his advice and tells him, “I’m coming back.” Leaving the meeting, Bush tells his staff, “We’re going home.” ([Langley 12/16/2001](#); [Sammon 2002, pp. 123](#); [Woodward 2002, pp. 28](#)) Bush adviser Karl Rove later claims that, around this time, there are concerns that several planes still remain unaccounted for (see [\(4:00 p.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)).

(4:00 p.m.) September 11, 2001: Rove Concerned About Still Unaccounted-for Planes

While President Bush is conducting a video conference with his principal advisers from a bunker beneath Offutt Air Force Base (see [\(3:15 p.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), most of the people accompanying him are waiting in a conference room across the hallway. Among this group is Bush’s senior adviser Karl Rove. Rove later claims that, around this time, there are rumors that more planes remain unaccounted for. He says that, while “they’ve accounted for all four [hijacked] planes,” there are still concerns that “they’ve got another, I think, three or four or five planes still outstanding.” ([Lemann 9/25/2001](#)) However, according to the FAA, there are no such reports, and the White House and Pentagon had been quickly informed when US skies were completely cleared at 12:16 p.m. White House Communications Director Dan Bartlett later says he does not know from where Rove got the information about the additional unaccounted-for planes. ([Paltrow 3/22/2004](#)) But according to tapes of the operations floor at NORAD’s Northeast Air Defense Sector later obtained by Vanity Fair, “False reports of hijackings, and real responses, continue well into the afternoon, though civilian air-traffic controllers had managed to clear the skies of all commercial and private aircraft by just after 12 p.m.” (See [10:15 a.m. and After September 11, 2001](#)). ([Bronner 8/1/2006](#)) Despite the Secret Service’s advice that he should remain at Offutt, the president announces around this time that he is returning to Washington (see [\(4:00 p.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)).

4:10 p.m. September 11, 2001: WTC Building 7 Burning



Several small fires burn inside World Trade Center Building 7. [Source: New York City Police Department] World Trade Center Building 7 is reported to be on fire. ([CNN 9/12/2001](#))

(4:15 p.m.-4:27 p.m.) September 11, 2001: CNN and Others Report WTC 7 May Have Collapsed

Building 7 of the World Trade Center, located across the street from the Twin Towers, caught fire after the initial attacks on the WTC. ([McMillan 9/12/2001](#)) By 4:10 in the afternoon, CNN had reported it being on fire (see [4:10 p.m. September 11, 2001](#)). Subsequently it is reported that WTC 7 is in danger of collapsing or may have already collapsed. At around 4:15 p.m., CNN reports, “We’re getting information that one of the other buildings... Building 7... is on fire and has either collapsed or is collapsing... now we’re told there is a fire there and that the building may collapse as well.” About 12 minutes later, BBC reporter Greg Barrow, who is in New York, appears on the BBC radio channel Five Live and says, “We are hearing reports from local media that another building may have caught light and is in danger of collapse.” He adds, “I’m not sure if it has yet collapsed but the report we have is talking about Building 7.” Around this time, the area around Building 7 is being evacuated, apparently because senior firefighters have determined it is in danger of collapsing (see [4:30 p.m. September 11, 2001](#)). At 4:53, based on the earlier reports, the Radio Five Live show’s presenter will incorrectly claim that Building 7 has already collapsed, saying, “25 minutes ago we had reports from Greg Barrow that another large building has collapsed just over an hour ago.” ([Porter 3/2/2007](#)) Starting at 4:54, BBC television will also begin reporting that Building 7 has already collapsed (see [4:54 p.m.-5:10 p.m. September 11, 2001](#)). In fact, it does not do so until 5:20 (see [5:20 p.m. September 11, 2001](#)).

(After 4:15 p.m.) September 11, 2001: Leaders Determine to Crush Taliban

After President Bush leaves his video conference, other top leaders continue to discuss what steps to take. Counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke asks what to do about al-Qaeda, assuming they are behind the attacks. Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage states, “Look, we told the Taliban in no uncertain terms that if this happened, it’s their ass. No difference between the Taliban and al-Qaeda now. They both go down.”

Regarding Pakistan, the Taliban's patrons, Armitage says, "Tell them to get out of the way. We have to eliminate the sanctuary." ([Clarke 2004, pp. 22-23](#))

(4:30 p.m.) September 11, 2001: WTC Building 7 Area Is Evacuated Due to Anticipated Collapse

According to numerous rescue and recovery workers, the area around WTC Building 7 is evacuated at this time. ([Hayes 3/28/2004](#)) For example:

- Emergency medical technician Joseph Fortis says, "They pulled us all back at the time, almost about an hour before it, because they were sure—they knew it was going to come down, but they weren't sure." ([Fortis 11/9/2001](#))
 - Firefighter Edward Kennedy says, "I remember [Chief Visconti] screaming about 7, No. 7, that they wanted everybody away from 7 because 7 was definitely going to collapse." ([Kennedy 1/17/2002](#))
 - Firefighter Vincent Massa: "They were concerned about seven coming down, and they kept changing us, establishing a collapse zone and backing us up." ([Massa 12/4/2001](#))
 - Firefighter Tiernach Cassidy: "[B]uilding seven was in eminent collapse. They blew the horns. They said everyone clear the area until we got that last civilian out." ([Cassidy 12/30/2001](#))
 - Battalion Fire Chief John Norman: "I was detailed to make sure the collapse zone for 7 WTC had been set up and was being maintained." ([Norman 10/2002](#))
- Several New York Fire Department chief officers, who have surveyed Building 7, have apparently determined it is in danger of collapsing. ([Fire Engineering 9/2002](#)) For example, Fire Chief Daniel Nigro explains their decision-making process, saying, "A number of fire officers and companies assessed the damage to the building. The appraisals indicated that the building's integrity was in serious doubt. I issued the orders to pull back the firefighters and define the collapse zone." ([Nigro 9/2002](#)) Fire Chief Frank Fellini says, "We were concerned that the fires on several floors and the missing steel would result in the building collapsing." ([Fellini 12/3/2001](#)) And Fire Captain Ray Goldbach says, "[W]e made a decision to take all of our units out of 7 World Trade Center because there was a potential for collapse." ([Goldbach 10/24/2001](#)) However, some firefighters seem surprised at this decision. When Fire Commissioner Thomas Von Essen is making his way through hundreds of firefighters who are being held away from the WTC site, he hears complaints like, "It could take days for that building to come down," and, "Why don't they let us in there?" ([Essen 2002, pp. 45](#)) When Deputy Fire Chief Nick Visconti is instructing firefighters to evacuate the area, one comment he receives is, "[O]h, that building is never coming down, that didn't get hit by a plane, why isn't somebody in there putting the fire out?" ([Visconti 8/2002](#))

(4:33 p.m.) September 11, 2001: Air Force One Leaves Nebraska; Heads Toward Washington



This photo of Bush speaking to Cheney shortly after leaving Offutt will later be used for Republican fundraising purposes. [Source: *White House*] President Bush leaves Offutt Air Force Base in Nebraska for Washington. ([CNN 9/12/2001](#); [MSNBC 9/22/2001](#); [Langley 12/16/2001](#); [Sammon 10/8/2002](#)) He calls his wife Laura on the phone and tells her, “I’m coming home. See you at the White House. Love you, go on home.” ([Sammon 2002, pp. 123](#); [Woodward 2002, pp. 28](#))

4:54 p.m.-5:10 p.m. September 11, 2001: BBC Reports WTC 7 Collapse, Well before it Happens



The BBC’s Jane Standley, reporting the collapse of WTC 7 while it is visible still standing behind her. [Source: *BBC*] Several times, the BBC reports that Building 7 of the World Trade Center has collapsed, when it is in fact still standing. At 4:54 p.m., its domestic television news channel, BBC News 24, reports, “We’re now being told that yet another enormous building has collapsed... it is the 47-story Salomon Brothers building [i.e. WTC 7].” Three minutes later, its international channel, BBC World, reports, “We’ve got some news just coming in actually that the Salomon brothers building in New York right in the heart of Manhattan has also collapsed.” Then, at about 5:10 p.m., BBC World repeats the claim: “I was talking a few moments ago about the Salomon building collapsing and indeed it has... it seems this wasn’t the result of a new attack but because the building had been weakened during this morning’s attack.” Yet WTC 7 does not collapse until 5:20 p.m., over 25 minutes after the BBC first reported it (see [\(5:20 p.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). The BBC’s live shot even shows the building still standing in the background, while its collapse is

being reported. When these reports come to light early in 2007, Richard Porter, the head of news for BBC World, will suggest the error was due to the “confusing and chaotic situation on the ground” on 9/11. ([Porter 3/2/2007](#)) Starting around 4:15 p.m., CNN and other news outlets had been reporting that WTC 7 was in danger of collapsing or may already have collapsed (see [\(4:15 p.m.-4:27 p.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)).

(5:00 p.m.) September 11, 2001: Parallels Drawn Between 9/11 Attacks and Tom Clancy Bestseller



Tom Clancy. [Source: UPI] CNN’s Judy Woodruff remarks, “People in our newsroom have been saying today that what is happening is like right out of a Tom Clancy novel.” ([CNN 9/11/2001](#)) James Lindsay, a former member of the Clinton administration’s national security team, subsequently comments on the attacks, “People both inside and outside the government would think this is more the stuff of a Tom Clancy novel than reality.” ([Washington Post 9/12/2001](#)) Clancy had in fact written a book called *Debt of Honor*, released in 1994, that included a plotline of a suicide pilot deliberately crashing a Boeing 747 into the US Capitol building (see [August 17, 1994](#)). Presumably influenced by this book, Senator Sam Nunn (D) had outlined a similar scenario the following year, which he’d said was “not far-fetched” (see [April 3, 1995](#)). Some commentators will later refer to Clancy’s book when criticizing official claims of surprise at the nature of the 9/11 attacks. Air Force Lt. Col. Karen Kwiatkowski, who was in the Pentagon when it was struck, will write, “I thought most people in the military read Tom Clancy novels in the 1990s. And yet, military leaders and spokespersons consistently expressed shock and surprise at such a possibility.... Was Tom Clancy really more savvy than the entire Pentagon?” ([Griffin and Scott 2006, pp. 27](#)) Newsday columnist James Pinkerton later comments, “insofar as Clancy is one of the best-selling authors in the country with a particularly large following among military types, it’s a depressing commentary on military intelligence that Air Force Gen. Richard Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, could say, a month [after 9/11], to the American Forces Radio and Television Service, ‘You hate to admit it, but we hadn’t thought about this.’” ([Pinkerton 5/20/2002](#))

(5:15 p.m.) September 11, 2001: Firefighter Tells Reporter That WTC Building 7 Will Collapse Soon

Mark Jacobson, a reporter for New York Magazine, later recounts an encounter he has about this time. Walking through the ruins of the World Trade Center complex, he sits down next to a weary and dust covered firefighter. The firefighter points to WTC Building 7, perhaps 400 yards away, and says, “That building is coming down.” Jacobson asks when and the firefighter responds, “Tonight. Maybe tomorrow morning.” Jacobson watches as the building collapses about five minutes later. ([Jacobson 3/20/2006](#))

(5:20 p.m.) September 11, 2001: WTC Building 7 Collapses; Cause Remains Unclear



World Trade Center Building 7 collapses down into its footprint. [*Source: unknown*] (click image to enlarge) Building 7 of the WTC complex, a 47-story tower, collapses. No one is killed. ([CNN 9/12/2001](#); [Washington Post 9/12/2001](#); [MSNBC 9/22/2001](#); [Associated Press 8/19/2002](#)) It collapses in 6.6 seconds, which is just 0.6 of a second longer than it would have taken a free-falling object dropped from its roof to hit the ground. ([Jarvik 11/10/2005](#)) Many questions will arise over the cause of this collapse in the coming weeks and months. Building 7, which was not hit by an airplane, is the first modern, steel-reinforced high-rise to collapse because of fire. ([Glanz 11/29/2001](#); [Shwartz 12/5/2001](#); [Glanz and Lipton 3/2/2002](#)) Some later suggest that the diesel fuel stored in several tanks on the premises may have contributed to the building's collapse. The building contained a 6,000-gallon tank between its first and second floors and another four tanks, holding as much as 36,000 gallons, below ground level. There were also three smaller tanks on higher floors. ([Glanz 11/29/2001](#); [Glanz and Lipton 3/2/2002](#); [Rice 3/25/2002](#); [Federal Emergency Management Agency 5/1/2002, pp. 1-17](#)) However, the cause of the collapse is uncertain. A 2002 government report concludes: “The specifics of the fires in WTC 7 and how they caused the building to collapse remain unknown at this time. Although the total diesel fuel on the premises contained massive potential energy, the best hypothesis has only a low probability of occurrence.” ([Federal Emergency Management Agency 5/1/2002, pp. 1-17](#)) Some reports indicate that the building may have been deliberately destroyed. Shortly after the collapse, CBS News anchor Dan Rather comments that the collapse is “reminiscent of... when a building was deliberately destroyed by well-placed dynamite to knock it down.” ([CBS News 9/11/2001](#))

September 11-12, 2001: Senior US Officials Claim No Specific Warnings or High Threat Recently

The Washington Post reports, “Several US officials said there was no warning in the days before the attacks that a major operation was in the works. ‘In terms of specific warning that something of this nature was to occur, no,’ one official said.” ([Eggen and Loeb 9/11/2001](#)) An anonymous “senior US official” tells ABC News, “There were no warnings regarding time or place. There are always generic threats now but there was nothing to indicate anything specific of this nature. In fact, in recent weeks, we were not in all that high a period of threat warning.” ([Ruppe 9/12/2001](#))

Before 6:42 p.m. September 11, 2001: Unknown Aircraft Racing Toward Air Force One

As Air Force One is approaching Andrews Air Force Base, just outside Washington, with the president on board, the FAA reports an aircraft racing towards it. Fighters quickly intercept the aircraft, which turns out to be a Lear business jet, “in the wrong place at the wrong time.” ([Filson 2004, pp. 88](#))

(6:15 p.m.) September 11, 2001: Bush Makes Brief, Secret Visit to Pentagon?

Deputy Secretary of Defense Gordon England will later claim that President Bush makes an unpublicized visit to the Pentagon at this time. In 2007, England will recall in a speech, “Then that night, on 9/11, we had a meeting in the Pentagon—and I remember this well, because the president came to the Pentagon that evening, at 6:15 in the evening... And the president came and met in the conference room right next to Secretary Rumsfeld’s office. And he came and he said, ‘Get ready.’ He said, ‘Get ready.’ He said, ‘This is going to be a long war.’” ([England 1/22/2007](#)) If this account is true, then Air Force One must have flown very quickly from Nebraska (if reports are true Bush left at 4:33 (see [\(4:33 p.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), the plane would have travelled at about 700 mph, faster than its official top speed of 600 mph), and Bush must have stayed at the Pentagon briefly before arriving live on camera at the White House around 6:45 (see [\(6:54 p.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). If Bush did go to the Pentagon, is it not exactly clear why or why no account would mention it until 2007.

(6:54 p.m.) September 11, 2001: Bush Returns to White House

President Bush arrives at the White House, after exiting Air Force One at 6:42 p.m. and flying across Washington in a helicopter. ([Tapper 9/12/2001](#); [CNN 9/12/2001](#); [Langley 12/16/2001](#); [Associated Press 8/19/2002](#); [ABC News 9/11/2002](#); [Sammon 10/8/2002](#))

(Between 7:00 and 11:00 p.m.): Pakistani President Assures Unconditional Support for US Fight Against Taliban

According to journalist Kathy Gannon, President Bush calls Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf at some point during the evening of 9/11. Bush tells Musharraf he has to choose between supporting or opposing the US. “Musharraf promised immediate and unconditional support for the United States and said he could stop Pakistan’s support for the Taliban. Overnight, Musharraf went from pariah to valued friend.” ([Gannon 2005, pp. 146](#)) Similar conversations will take place between US officials and the ISI Director who happens to be in Washington (see [September 11-16, 2001](#)). But despite these promises, the Pakistani ISI will continue to secretly help the Taliban (see for instance [Mid-September-October 7, 2001](#), [September 17-18 and 28, 2001](#) and [Early October 2001](#)).

(Between 7:40 p.m. and 8:40 p.m.) September 11, 2001: Colin Powell Arrives Back in Washington, Too Late to Contribute to New Foreign Policy Direction

Secretary of State Colin Powell arrives back in Washington, DC. He had been away in Peru at the time of the attacks, and his flight back to the US had only taken off at around 12:30 p.m. EDT. The exact time he arrives in the capital is unclear, though a State Department spokesman said at 7:40 p.m. that he was due to return “within the hour.” Powell will be at the White House in time for a 9:30 p.m. meeting between the president and his key advisers (see [\(9:00 p.m.-10:00 p.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). By then, Bush will already have delivered his speech to the nation declaring, “We will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them” (see [8:30 p.m. September 11, 2001](#)). As journalist Bob Woodward will comment, “The president, [National Security Adviser Condoleezza] Rice, [White House counselor Karen] Hughes and the speechwriters had made one of the most significant foreign policy decisions in years, and the secretary of state had not been involved.” ([US Department of State 9/11/2001](#); [Woodward 2002, pp. 31-32](#); [Balz and Woodward 1/27/2002](#)) The Daily Telegraph later comments, “In the weeks before September 11 Washington was full of rumors that Powell was out of favor and had been quietly relegated to the sidelines.” ([Langley 12/16/2001](#))

8:30 p.m. September 11, 2001: Bush Gives Third Speech to Nation, Declares Bush Doctrine



Bush addresses the nation from the White House.

[Source: *White House*] From the White House Oval Office, President Bush gives a seven-minute address to the nation on live television. ([CNN 9/12/2001](#); [Woodward 2002, pp. 31](#)) He says, “I’ve directed the full resources of our intelligence and law enforcement communities to find those responsible and to bring them to justice.” In what will later be called the Bush Doctrine, he states, “We will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them.” ([US President 9/17/2001](#); [Balz and Woodward 1/27/2002](#)) Washington Post reporter Dan Balz will later comment that this “those who harbor them” statement “set the tone for where the administration was going both with Afghanistan and, I think, with Iraq.” Bush’s speechwriter at the time, David Frum, will later say, “When he laid down those principles, I don’t know whether he foresaw all of their implications, how far they would take him. I don’t know if he understood fully and foresaw fully the true radicalism of what he had just said.” Neoconservatives see hope that the words could lead to an invasion of Iraq. Author and former National Security Council staffer Kenneth Pollack will comment, “It does seem very clear that after September 11th, this group seized upon the events of September 11th to resurrect their policy of trying to go after Saddam Hussein and a regime change in Iraq.” ([PBS Frontline 2/20/2003](#)) Secretary of State Colin Powell arrived back from Peru too late to influence the content of this pivotal speech (see [\(Between 7:40 p.m. and 8:40 p.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)).

(9:00 p.m.-10:00 p.m.) September 11, 2001: Bush Meets with Advisers, Declares War Without Barriers



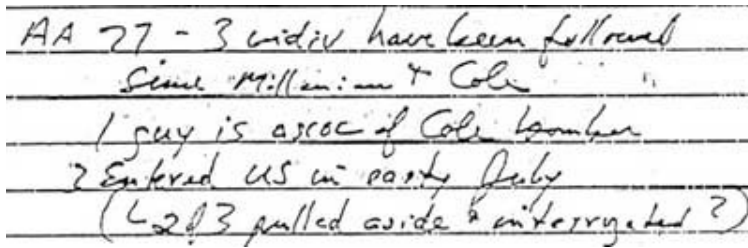
President Bush (below television screen) meeting with the National Security Council in a bunker below the White House. In the far row from left to right, are Attorney General Ashcroft, President Bush, Chief of Staff Card, CIA Director Tenet, and counterterrorism “tsar” Ckarke. In the near row, Secretary

of State Powell can be seen waving his hand, and National Security Advisor Rice sits to his right. [Source: *Eric Draper/ White House*] President Bush meets with his full National Security Council. According to journalist Bob Woodward, this meeting turns out to be “unwieldy.” So at 9:30 p.m., Bush follows it with a meeting with a smaller group of his most senior principal national security advisers in the Presidential Emergency Operations Center (PEOC) beneath the White House. Bush and his advisers have already decided bin Laden is behind the attacks. As the president later recalls, in these meetings, “That’s when we first got the indication... we’ve identified, we think it’s al-Qaeda.” He says the FBI now thinks that “it’s al-Qaeda, and we start to develop our plans to get them. I mean, there wasn’t any hesitation. We’re starting the process of coalition-building and how to get ‘em.” (According to other accounts, though, the CIA had informed Bush hours earlier that it was virtually certain al-Qaeda was to blame for the attacks (see [\(3:15 p.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)).) CIA Director George Tenet says that al-Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan are essentially one and the same. Tenet says, “Tell the Taliban we’re finished with them.” ([Sammon 2002, pp. 133](#); [Woodward 2002, pp. 31-33](#); [Balz and Woodward 1/27/2002](#)) The president says, “I want you all to understand that we are at war and we will stay at war until this is done. Nothing else matters. Everything is available for the pursuit of this war. Any barriers in your way, they’re gone. Any money you need, you have it. This is our only agenda.” When, later in the discussion, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld points out that international law only allows force to prevent future attacks and not for retribution, Bush yells, “No. I don’t care what the international lawyers say, we are going to kick some ass.” ([Clarke 2004, pp. 23-24](#)) Bush will subsequently announce a new US doctrine of preemptive attack the following June (see [June 1, 2002](#)). ([Elliott 6/23/2002](#)) During the meeting, the president refers to the present political situation as a “great opportunity” (see [\(Between 9:30 p.m. and 10:00 p.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). By the time the meeting ends, it is after 10 p.m. ([Sammon 2002, pp. 133](#))

(Between 9:30 p.m. and 10:00 p.m.) September 11, 2001: Bush on 9/11: ‘This is a Great Opportunity’

President Bush is meeting with his key advisers in the Presidential Emergency Operations Center below the White House (see [\(9:00 p.m.-10:00 p.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). Referring to the attacks and the present political situation, Bush tells the meeting, “This is a great opportunity. We have to think of this as an opportunity.” According to journalist Bob Woodward, he means this is a chance to improve relations, especially with major powers such as Russia and China. ([Woodward 2002, pp. 31-32](#); [Balz and Woodward 1/27/2002](#))

9:53 p.m. September 11, 2001: Rumsfeld’s Assistant Notes Three 9/11 Hijackers Were Followed



AA 77 - 3 indiv have been followed
since Millennium + Cole
1 guy is assoc of Cole bomber
2 Entered US in early July
(2 of 3 pulled aside & interrogated?)

A section from Rumsfeld's notes, dictated to Stephen Cambone. [Source: Defense Department] (click image to enlarge) Stephen Cambone, the Principal Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, makes the following note for Defense Secretary Rumsfeld at an emergency policy meeting, "AA 77—3 indiv have been followed since Millennium + Cole. 1 guy is assoc of Cole bomber. 2 entered US in early July (2 of 3 pulled aside and interrogated?)." Although four of the subsequently alleged Flight 77 hijackers were known to the authorities in connection with terrorism before 9/11, it appears that the three referred to here as being followed are Nawaf Alhazmi, Khalid Almihdhar, and Salem Alhazmi, due to their ties to an al-Qaeda Malaysia summit around the Millennium (see January 5-8, 2000) and ties to the USS *Cole* bombing (see [October 12, 2000](#)). Nawaf Alhazmi and Khalid Almihdhar initially arrived in the US shortly before or after the Millennium plot was due to come to fruition (see [November 1999](#) and [January 15, 2000](#)), even entering at Los Angeles Airport (LAX), a target of the plot. If the note is literally correct that some US authorities were following these three since the Millennium, this would contradict the 9/11 Commission's position that the trail of the three was lost shortly after the Millennium. The comment that one of the hijackers is an associate of a *Cole* bomber could refer to photos the CIA had before 9/11 identifying Almihdhar standing next to *Cole* bomber Fahad al-Quso (see [Early December 2000](#)) or photos of him standing next to *Cole* bomber Khallad bin Attash (see [January 4, 2001](#)). The note's mention that two of them entered the US in July is also accurate, as Salem Alhazmi entered the US on June 29 (see [April 23-June 29, 2001](#)) and Khalid re-entered on July 4 (see [July 4, 2001](#)). ([US Department of Defense 9/11/2001](#); [US Department of Defense 2/6/2006](#)) Earlier in the day, Cambone took notes for Rumsfeld that indicate Rumsfeld is keen to move against Iraq following the 9/11 attacks, even though he was aware there may be no connection between Iraq and 9/11 (see [\(2:40 p.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([US Department of Defense 9/11/2001](#); [Borger 2/24/2006](#))

[10:00 p.m. September 11, 2001: Bush Looks Beyond Attacking Just Al-Qaeda; Rumsfeld Sees 9/11 Attacks as Opportunity to Attack Iraq](#)

After a meeting with the full National Security Council from 9:00 to 10:00 p.m. (see [\(9:00 p.m.-10:00 p.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), President Bush continues meeting with a smaller group of advisers. During this meeting, Bush says the US will punish not just the perpetrators of the 9/11 attacks, but also those who harbored them (this closely echoes the rhetoric he used in a speech that evening (see [8:30 p.m. September 11, 2001](#))). Secretary of State Colin Powell suggests the US needs to build a coalition of other nations. But according to the 9/11 Commission, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld urges Bush to

“think broadly about who might have harbored the attackers, including Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Sudan, and Iran. He wonder[s] aloud how much evidence the United States would need in order to deal with these countries, pointing out that major strikes could take up to 60 days to assemble.” ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 330](#)) According to journalist Bob Woodward, at this meeting, “Rumsfeld actually puts Iraq on the table and says, ‘Part of our response maybe should be attacking Iraq. It’s an opportunity.’” ([Kirk 6/20/2006](#)) Earlier in the day, notes by a Rumsfeld aide indicate Rumsfeld was aware that evidence was already suggesting al-Qaeda was behind the 9/11 attacks, but he wanted to use 9/11 as an excuse to attack Iraq as well (see [\(2:40 p.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)).

(Shortly After 10:00 p.m.) September 11, 2001: President Refuses to Sleep in White House Bunker, Against Advice of the Secret Service

After meeting with a small group of his key advisers in the Presidential Emergency Operations Center (PEOC) below the White House (see [\(9:00 p.m.-10:00 p.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), President Bush is heading for the elevator to go back upstairs, when he is stopped by a Secret Service agent. The agent tells him, “You’ll be sleeping down here tonight.” Bush says no. When the agent tries to argue about it, Bush repeats, “No, I’m not going to.” He later says his reasons for refusing the Secret Service agent’s instruction are, firstly, “the bed [in the PEOC] looked unappetizing. Secondly, it was a little stale in there. And I needed sleep.” The agent acquiesces, but warns, “If we have any threats, we will come and get you.” Bush then heads up to his bedroom. ([Fineman and Brant 12/3/2001](#); [Sammon 2002, pp. 133-134](#)) But, shortly after going to bed, the president and first lady will be rushed down to the PEOC due to a false alarm over an approaching plane (see [11:08 p.m. September 11, 2001](#)).

Shortly After 10:00 p.m. September 11, 2001: Vice President Cheney and Family Spend Night at Camp David



Liz Cheney. [*Source: US Department of State*] After attending President Bush’s meeting with his principal advisers in the Presidential Emergency Operations Center beneath the White House, Vice President Dick Cheney heads back

upstairs, accompanied by his wife Lynne Cheney and his two top aides, I. Lewis “Scooter” Libby and David Addington. They all head out onto the White House’s South Lawn and get onto Marine Two, the vice president’s helicopter, being joined on it by a military aide, a communications expert, three Secret Service agents, and Cheney’s doctor. They take off, in violation of long-standing protocol, according to which only the president takes off from the South Lawn. Only a few of the most senior White House officials are informed of their destination. About 30 minutes later they arrive at Camp David, the presidential retreat in the Catoctin Mountains, about 70 miles from the White House. Again going against tradition, Cheney and his family settle into the cabin usually reserved for the president, Aspen Lodge. Liz Cheney, the vice president’s eldest daughter, and her young family, joins them there. This is the first of many nights that Cheney spends in “secure, undisclosed locations” in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks (see [September 12, 2001-2002](#)). ([Federation of American Scientists 10/2/2000](#); [Hayes 2007, pp. 345-346](#)) He will return to Washington the following morning for an 8 a.m. meeting at the White House (see [September 12, 2001](#)). ([Woodward and Balz 1/28/2002](#))

10:49 p.m. September 11, 2001: Ashcroft Claims to Already Understand Hijacking Procedure

It is reported that Attorney General Ashcroft has told members of Congress that there were three to five hijackers on each plane armed only with knives. ([CNN 9/12/2001](#))

Evening, September 11, 2001: Police Raid Moussaoui’s Old London Flat, but Cannot Find Girlfriend

British police raid a flat previously used by Zacarias Moussaoui in Brixton, London. ([Boulden 12/11/2001](#)) The flat was also used by Moussaoui’s North-African girlfriend, but little is known about her. She is said to be wanted for questioning in connection with “terror-related activities,” but it is unclear if she is ever found or why the police would think she was involved in “terror-related activities.” ([Woodward 10/6/2001](#); [Los Angeles Times 12/13/2001](#)) The Independent will report that the police are still looking for her three months later. ([Burrell, Gumbel, and Sengupta 12/11/2001](#)) Some accounts say the girlfriend was one of his cousins. ([Los Angeles Times 12/13/2001](#)) There has been no word or public interview of the girlfriend since.

11:08 p.m. September 11, 2001: False Alarm Over Unidentified Plane Leads to Temporary Evacuation of President to White House Bunker

After refusing the Secret Service’s instruction to sleep in the Presidential Emergency Operations Center (PEOC) below the White House, and going instead to his bedroom (see [Shortly After 10:00 p.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), President Bush is awoken by someone telling him, “Mr. President, Mr. President! Incoming plane! We could be under

attack! Come on! Right now!” Bush and the first lady get out of bed, and join everybody else heading to the PEOC. On the way down, they run into Andrew Card, Condoleezza Rice, and also Neil Bush—one of the president’s younger brothers—who apparently is staying at the White House at this time. About a minute after arriving at the PEOC, though, someone comes in and says, “Mr. President, good news! It’s one of our own!” Bush later says the incoming plane was just an F-16 fighter jet. The Secret Service still wants him to spend the night in the PEOC, but Bush refuses and goes back to the residence for the rest of the night. ([Fineman and Brant 12/3/2001](#); [Sammon 2002, pp. 134-135](#); [Woodward 2002, pp. 36](#))

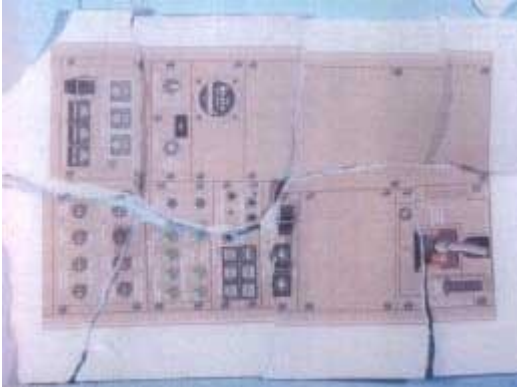
11:30 p.m. September 11, 2001: FBI Uninterested in Flight 93 Witness’s Evidence

Susan Mcelwain, who lives two miles from the Flight 93 crash site, had seen a small jet plane flying very low overhead as she was driving home. She later recalls that it had been “heading right to the point where Flight 93 crashed and must have been there at the very moment it came down.” But it was only later in the afternoon, after returning home and turning on the TV, that she’d realized what she’d seen was connected to the attacks in New York and Washington. While she was confused that a Boeing 757—not a small jet plane—was being reported as having gone down near where she’d been, she’d then realized that the small plane was flying in a different direction to that being described for Flight 93. So she got her husband to tell the police about what she’d witnessed. Consequently, late in the evening, the FBI turns up to talk to her about it. Yet, as Mcelwain later recalls, “They did not want my story.” They keep asking her how big the plane she’d seen was. When she tells them it was small, not much bigger than her van, one of the agents tells her, “You don’t know what a 757 looks like.” She retorts, “Don’t be condescending towards me. If you don’t want to believe me, that’s fine, but I thought I should report what I saw. You ought to know there was something else in the air at the same time this was going on. We want to make sure it was ours and not somebody else’s.” After this, she will recall, the agent “did seem to get a little nicer. Told me that it was a white Learjet. Somebody was taking pictures. And I said, ‘Before the crash?’ and he says, ‘Well, we’ve got to go,’ and that was the end of it.” ([Pillels 9/14/2001](#); [Wallace 9/12/2002](#); [Lappe and Marshall 2004, pp. 38-40](#)) Numerous other witnesses also saw a small jet plane flying above the crash site around the time Flight 93 reportedly went down (see [\(Before and After 10:06 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)).

(11:30 p.m.) September 11, 2001: Bush Sees New Pearl Harbor

Before going to sleep, President Bush writes in his diary, “The Pearl Harbor of the 21st century took place today.... We think it’s Osama bin Laden.” ([Balz and Woodward 1/27/2002](#))

September 11-13, 2001: Hijackers Leave a Clear Trail of Evidence



One page of a torn up 757 cockpit poster used by the hijackers. It was found in a trash compactor at the Days Inn, near the Newark Airport. [Source: FBI] Investigators find a remarkable number of possessions left behind by the hijackers:

- Two of Mohamed Atta's bags are found on 9/11. They contain a handheld electronic flight computer, a simulator procedures manual for Boeing 757 and 767 aircraft, two videotapes relating to "air tours" of the Boeing 757 and 747 aircraft, a slide-rule flight calculator, a copy of the Koran, Atta's passport, his will, his international driver's license, a religious cassette tape, airline uniforms, a letter of recommendation, "education related documentation" and a note (see [September 28, 2001](#)) to other hijackers on how to mentally prepare for the hijacking. ([NPA 9/15/2001](#); [Cullen and Ranalli 9/18/2001](#); [Fisk 9/29/2001](#); [Harkavy 10/5/2001](#))
- Marwan Alshehhi's rental car is discovered at Boston's Logan Airport containing an Arabic language flight manual, a pass giving access to restricted areas at the airport, documents containing a name on the passenger list of one of the flights, and the names of other suspects. The name of the flight school where Atta and Alshehhi studied, Huffman Aviation, is also found in the car. ([Rempel and Serrano 9/13/2001](#))
- A car registered to Nawaf Alhazmi is found at Washington's Dulles Airport on September 12. Inside is a copy of Atta's letter to the other hijackers, a cashier's check made out to a flight school in Phoenix, four drawings of the cockpit of a 757 jet, a box cutter-type knife, maps of Washington and New York, and a page with notes and phone numbers. ([Arizona Daily Star 9/28/2001](#); [King and Bhatt 10/21/2001](#); [Schrom 10/1/2002](#))
- A rental car is found in an airport parking lot in Portland, Maine. Investigators are able to collect fingerprints and hair samples for DNA analysis. ([Portland Press Herald 10/14/2001](#))
- A Boston hotel room contains airplane and train schedules. ([NPA 9/15/2001](#))
- FBI agents carry out numerous garbage bags of evidence from a Florida apartment where Saeed Alghamdi lived. ([CNN 9/17/2001](#))
- Two days before 9/11, a hotel owner in Deerfield Beach, Florida, finds a box cutter left in a hotel room used by Marwan Alshehhi and two unidentified men. The owner checks the nearby trash and finds a duffel bag containing Boeing 757 manuals, three illustrated martial arts books, an 8-inch stack of East Coast flight maps, a three-ring binder full of

handwritten notes, an English-German dictionary, an airplane fuel tester, and a protractor. The FBI seizes all the items when they are notified on September 12 (except the binder of notes, which the owner apparently threw away). ([Davies 9/16/2001](#); [Wilson 9/16/2001](#))

- In an apartment rented by Ziad Jarrah and Ahmed Alhaznawi, the FBI finds a notebook, videotape, and photocopies of their passports. ([Viglucchi and Garcia 9/15/2001](#))

- In a bar the night before 9/11, after making predictions of a attack on America the next day, the hijackers leave a business card and a copy of the Koran at the bar. The FBI also recovers the credit card receipts from when they paid for their drinks and lap dances. ([Associated Press 9/14/2001](#))

- A September 13 security sweep of Boston airport's parking garage uncovers items left behind by the hijackers: a box cutter, a pamphlet written in Arabic, and a credit card. ([Gugliotta 9/16/2001](#))

- A few hours after the attacks, suicide notes that some of the hijackers wrote to their parents are found in New York. Credit card receipts showing that some of the hijackers paid for flight training in the US are also found. ([Rempel and Serrano 9/13/2001](#))

- A FedEx bill is found in a trash can at the Comfort Inn in Portland, Maine, where Atta stayed the night before 9/11. The bill leads to Dubai, United Arab Emirates, allowing investigators to determine much of the funding for 9/11. ([Klaidman and Hosenball 11/11/2001](#); [McGrory 12/1/2001](#)) The hijackers past whereabouts can even be tracked by their pizza purchases. An expert points out: "Most people pay cash for pizza. These [hijackers] paid with a credit card. That was an odd thing." ([Bigelow 9/3/2002](#)) "In the end, they left a curiously obvious trail—from martial arts manuals, maps, a Koran, Internet and credit card fingerprints. Maybe they were sloppy, maybe they did not care, maybe it was a gesture of contempt of a culture they considered weak and corrupt." ([Morgan, Kidwell, and Corral 9/22/2001](#)) Note The New Yorker's quote of a former high-level intelligence official: "Whatever trail was left was left deliberately—for the FBI to chase" (see [Late September 2001](#)). ([Hersh 10/8/2001](#))

September 11, 2001 and After: Bush Administration Misses Dozens of Counterterrorism Deadlines Set by Congress

On October 31, 2005, the Associated Press will report that the Bush administration has missed dozens of deadlines set by Congress since 9/11 to help protect the US from terrorist attacks. For instance, a plan to defend ships and ports from attack is overdue, as are rules to protect air cargo. There still is no comprehensive plan to protect vital infrastructure. Part of the problem is that Congress set so many deadlines, some for minor projects. ([Associated Press 10/31/2005](#))

Shortly After September 11, 2001: Al-Qaeda Accomplices Flee East Coast?

It is later reported that FBI officials believe that a second grouping or cell of "perhaps 20 al-Qaeda terrorists [are] in the United States on Sept. 11 to carry out another attack.

Members of this second cell, one official [says], apparently [abandon] apartments they... rented in Paterson, New Jersey, and Fairfax, Virginia, just outside Washington, D.C., after Sept. 11, leaving rented furniture and other possessions behind in their haste.” ([Walcott 10/7/2002](#)) Another article notes, “Police always have had concerns about sleeper agents in the [Brooklyn, New York] area. They particularly were concerned by a story... from several NYPD sources about an abandoned rental car that was parked in front of a mosque only a few blocks from New Utrecht. The car had been rented under the phony name ‘Bomkr’ from Logan International Airport in Boston shortly before the attacks. Investigators thought the name sounded a lot like ‘bomb car.’ The anonymous party rented several other cars from Logan, all of which either have disappeared or been abandoned. Police suspect the cars were used by al-Qaeda operatives to return to their home bases after the attacks.” ([Shapiro 9/10/2002](#))

Shortly After September 11, 2001: City Officials Make Decision to Scrap Remaining WTC Steel



Michael Burton. [*Source: PBS*] Following the World Trade Center collapses, a decision is made to quickly transport the remaining structural steel to scrap yards, to be shipped abroad and melted down for reuse. Consequently, virtually all of it is disposed of before investigators trying to assess why the WTC collapsed can examine it. Michael Burton and other officials at the Department of Design and Construction—the New York City agency overseeing the cleanup operation (see [September 11, 2001-May 2002](#))—are responsible for making this decision. Burton clears it with Richard Tomasetti of Thornton-Tomasetti Engineers, the prime consultant on the cleanup job. However, referring to the subsequent WTC investigation by the National Institute of Standards and Technology (see [August 21, 2002](#)), Tomasetti will later admit that had he known the direction that investigations into the collapses would take, he would have taken a different stand. ([Langewiesche 2002, pp. 30](#); [Glanz and Lipton 2004, pp. 330 and 396](#)) Authors and New York Times reporters James Glanz and Eric Lipton write that Michael Burton, “who had become the effective czar for the cleanup job, had made it clear that he cared very little about engineering subtleties like the question of why the towers first stood, then collapsed on September 11. ‘We know why they fell,’ he said. ‘Because they flew two planes into the towers.’ But he was deeply immersed in the details of hauling steel out of the debris pile.” ([Glanz and Lipton 2004, pp. 299](#)) Much of the WTC steel will be shipped to India, China, and other Asian countries for recycling (see [September 12-October 2001](#)).

Shortly After September 11, 2001: US Decides Not to Bomb Drug-Related Targets in Afghanistan

Before 9/11, US intelligence had collected a list of potential bombing targets in Afghanistan (see [Late August 1998-2001](#)). The list is said to include 20 to 25 major drug labs and other drug-related facilities. But according to a CIA source, when the list is turned over to the US military after 9/11, the Pentagon and White House refuse to order the bombing of any of the drug-related targets. This CIA source complains, “On the day after 9/11, that target list was ready to go, and the military and the [National Security Council] threw it out the window. We had tracked these [targets] for years. The drug targets were big places, almost like small towns that did nothing but produce heroin. The British were screaming for us to bomb those targets, because most of the heroin in Britain comes from Afghanistan. But they refused.” This source believes that if the US had bombed those targets, “it would have slowed down drug production in Afghanistan for a year or more.” ([Risen 2006, pp. 154](#)) The US will continue to avoid taking action against drug operations in Afghanistan (see [February 2002](#)).

Shortly After September 11, 2001: Three More 9/11 Hijacker Passports Recovered



The Saudi passport of Saeed

Alghamdi, said to be discovered in the wreckage of Flight 93. [Source: FBI] According to the 9/11 Commission, the passports of two hijackers are discovered in the wreckage of Flight 93. One passport, belonging to Saeed Alghamdi, is damaged but still readable. The other passport, belonging to Ziad Jarrah, is burned most of the way through, but part of his photograph is still visible. In addition, the passport of hijacker Abdulaziz Alomari is recovered because apparently it was put in Mohamed Atta's luggage and the luggage did not get put on the flight Alomari and Atta were hijacking before it took off (see [September 11-13, 2001](#)). The recovery of these passports will not be made public at the time and will only be mentioned in passing in 2004 by the 9/11 Commission. A fourth passport, that of Satam Al Suqami, was also recovered on a street near the WTC. That did become immediate news and caused skepticism by many who wondered how a paper document could survive such a crash (see [September 12, 2001](#)). ([9/11 Commission 1/26/2004](#))

September 12, 2001: Powell Claims No Evidence Specific Intelligence of Attack Was Missed

Secretary of State Colin Powell states, “In the first 24 hours of analysis, I have not seen any evidence that there was a specific signal that we missed.... In this case, we did not have intelligence of anything of this scope or magnitude.” ([Aita 9/12/2001](#))

September 12, 2001: US Denies Any Hints of Bin Laden Plot to Attack in US

The government’s initial response to the 9/11 attacks is that it had no evidence whatsoever that bin Laden planned an attack in the US “There was a ton of stuff, but it all pointed to an attack abroad,” says one official. Furthermore, in the 24 hours after the attack, investigators would have been searching through “mountains of information.” However, “the vast electronic ‘take’ on bin Laden, said officials who requested anonymity, contained no hints of a pending terror campaign in the United States itself, no orders to subordinates, no electronic fund transfers, no reports from underlings on their surveillance of the airports in Boston, Newark, and Washington.” ([Walcott and Strobel 9/12/2001](#))

September 12, 2001: Threat to Air Force One? Stories Conflict

White House Press Secretary Ari Fleischer explains that President Bush went to Nebraska because “[t]here was real and credible information that the White House and Air Force One were targets.” The next day, William Safire of the New York Times writes, and Bush’s political strategist, Karl Rove, confirms, that the Secret Service believed “‘Air Force One may be next,’ and there was an ‘inside’ threat which ‘may have broken the secret codes [i.e., showing a knowledge of presidential procedures].’” ([Perlez 9/13/2001](#)) By September 27, Fleischer begins to backpedal on the claim that there were specific threats against Air Force One and/or the president, and news stories flatly contradict it. ([Allen 9/27/2001](#)) A well-informed, anonymous Washington official says, “It did two things for [Cheney]. It reinforced his argument that the president should stay out of town, and it gave George W. an excellent reason for doing so.” ([Langley 12/16/2001](#)) By 2004, a Bush spokesperson says there was no threat, but Cheney continues to maintain that there may have been. Cheney also claims the Secret Service passed him word of the threat, but two Secret Service agents working that day deny their agency played any role in receiving or passing on such a threat. The threat was allegedly based on the use of the word “Angel,” the code word for Air Force One, but Secret Service agents later note that the code word was not an official secret, but a radio shorthand designation that had been made public well before 2001. ([Paltrow 3/22/2004](#))

September 12, 2001: FEMA Assembles Team to Analyze WTC Collapses, but Investigation Is Severely Hampered



W. Gene Corley. [Source: ASCE] The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and its contractor, Greenhorne and O'Mara, Inc., from Greenbelt, Maryland, begin putting together a Building Performance Assessment Team (BPAT), to conduct a formal analysis of the World Trade Center collapses, and produce a report of its findings. FEMA routinely deploys such teams following disasters, like floods or hurricanes. The 23-member BPAT team set up at the WTC collapse site is assembled by the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE), and headed by Dr. W. Gene Corley of Construction Technologies Laboratories in Skokie, Illinois. Corley was previously the principal investigator for FEMA's study of the Murrah Building, in Oklahoma City in 1995. ([Seabrook 11/12/2001](#)) BPAT team members are based nationwide and have to communicate with each other mostly by phone, as they continue with their regular jobs. While some of them are being paid for their efforts, others are working on the investigation voluntarily. They are told not to speak with reporters, under threat of dismissal from the team, supposedly because of the delicacy of the subject with which they are dealing. The BPAT team receives \$600,000 of funding from FEMA, plus approximately \$500,000 in ASCE in-kind contributions. ([Glanz and Lipton 12/25/2001](#); [Kugler 1/14/2002](#); [US Congress 3/6/2002](#)) The team will have great difficulty accessing the collapse site and evidence they want to see (see [March 6, 2002](#)). They will be unable to get FEMA to obtain such basic data as detailed blueprints of the WTC buildings. FEMA will also refuse to allow them to make appeals to the public for photos and videos of the towers that might aid their investigation. Bureaucratic restrictions will often prevent them from making forensic inspections at Ground Zero, interviewing witnesses, or getting important evidence, like recorded distress calls from people who were trapped in the towers. ([Glanz and Lipton 2004, pp. 330](#)) The end product of their investigation is the FEMA World Trade Center Building Performance Study, released in May 2002 (see [May 1, 2002](#)).

September 12, 2001: Inside Help for Terrorists at Airports?

Billie Vincent, a former FAA security director, suggests the hijackers had inside help at the airports. "These people had to have the means to take control of the aircrafts. And that means they had to have weapons in order for those pilots to relinquish control. Think about it, they planned this thing out to the last detail for months. They are not going to take any risks at the front end. They knew they were going to be successful before they started... It's the only thing that really makes sense to me." ([Kidwell 9/12/2001](#)) The

same day, the Boston Globe reports, “A former TWA official said he knew of at least two cases in which members of a cleaning crew smuggled weapons on board which were later used to hijack planes.... One source familiar with the airline industry said that, given enough time and money, it would not be difficult for terrorists to smuggle weapons onto a domestic flight. He said terrorists could arrange to have weapons moved onto an airliner by having terrorists or sympathizers hired as air cargo handlers or airline cleaners. The weapons could then be brought on board and concealed without ever having to pass through a security checkpoint. ‘If you have a year or more to plan, how hard can it be to get someone hired to clean the trash out of an airplane,’ the source said.” ([Cullen 9/12/2001](#))

September 12, 2001: Hijacker’s Passport Found Near WTC



Satam Al Suqami’s remarkably undamaged passport, marked and wrapped in plastic. It was shown as evidence in the 2006 Zacarias Moussaoui trial. [Source: *FBI*] It is reported that the passport of hijacker Satam Al Suqami has been found a few blocks from the WTC. ([ABC News 9/12/2001](#); [Neumeister 9/16/2001](#); [ABC News 9/16/2001](#)) Barry Mawn, the director of the FBI’s New York office, says police and FBI found it during a “grid search” of the area. ([CNN 9/18/2001](#)) However a senior counsel to the 9/11 Commission later claims it was actually discovered by a passerby and given to an NYPD detective, “shortly before the World Trade Center towers collapsed.” ([9/11 Commission 1/26/2004](#)) The Guardian says, “The idea that Mohamed Atta’s passport had escaped from that inferno unsinged [tests] the credulity of the staunchest supporter of the FBI’s crackdown on terrorism.” ([Karpf 3/19/2002](#)) (Note that, as in this Guardian account, the passport is frequently mistakenly referred to as Atta’s passport.)

September 12, 2001: Unidentified Plane Causes NEADS Evacuation



NEADS Headquarters in Rome, New York [*Source: Vanity Fair*] (click image to enlarge) Staff at the Northeast Air Defense Sector (NEADS) in Rome, NY, notice an unidentified, low-flying plane heading slowly and directly toward their building. Yet all civilian aircraft are supposed to be grounded, with only military or emergency aircraft allowed to fly over the US. According to NEADS Commander Robert Marr, “We thought anyone in the air was either a terrorist or a criminal.” Fighters from the Vermont Air National Guard are diverted towards Rome, and Marr orders the evacuation of the NEADS building, with only himself and a small crew remaining inside. Just miles away from them, the plane suddenly changes course and is forced to land nearby by the pursuing fighters. Robert Marr later says he never found out who the culprit was, but he’d heard it was a local pilot with a seaplane. ([Filson 2004, pp. 73](#))

September 12, 2001: Planned Terrorism Exercise May Have Sped Up Response to 9/11 Attack

Before 9/11, New York City was scheduled to have a major terrorism training exercise on this day, in a large commercial warehouse on the Hudson River. Called Tripod, it was intended to test how well the city’s Office of Emergency Management (OEM) could administer treatment in the event of a biological-terrorism attack. More than 1,000 Police Academy cadets and Fire Department trainees were recruited to act the parts of terrified civilians afflicted with a range of medical conditions. Various individuals were invited to watch, including Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, the police and fire commissioners, and representatives of the FBI and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Presumably many have already arrived for the exercise when the 9/11 attacks occur. Because Pier 92, where Tripod was due to take place, has been set up ready for the exercise, OEM staff are able to move there and quickly convert it into a large emergency operations center when their original command center (in WTC Building 7) is evacuated and later destroyed during 9/11. Thus, within 31 hours of the attacks, OEM has a functional facility able to manage the search and rescue effort, just four miles north-northwest of the WTC site. ([Griscom 10/15/2001](#); [Jenkins and Edwards-Winslow 9/2003, pp. 20](#); [9/11 Commission 5/19/2004](#)) Tripod is the follow-up to a previous training exercise in New York, called RED Ex (see [May 11, 2001](#)). ([Miner 12/20/2003](#)) Due to the 9/11 attacks, Tripod is called off, but will eventually take place on May 22, 2002. ([City of New York 5/22/2002](#))

After September 11, 2001: Propaganda Campaign to Tie 9/11 to Iraq Is Said to Begin

Soon after September 11, a concerted effort begins to pin the blame for the attacks on Saddam Hussein. Retired General Wesley Clark will later say on NBC's Meet the Press in June 2003 and in a letter published by the New York Times that "immediately after 9/11" there was a "concerted effort... to pin 9/11 and the terrorism problem on Saddam Hussein" and use the attacks as an excuse to go after the Iraqi dictator. When asked by NBC's Tim Russert, who was behind the concerted effort, Clark will respond: "Well, it came from the White House, it came from people around the White House. It came from all over." Clark also says, "I got a call on 9/11. I was on CNN, and I got a call at my home saying, 'You got to say this is connected. This is state-sponsored terrorism. This has to be connected to Saddam Hussein.' I said, 'But—I'm willing to say it, but what's your evidence?' And I never got any evidence." He says the phone call came from a Middle Eastern think tank outside of the country. ([MSNBC 6/15/2003](#); [Clark 7/18/2003](#))

September 12, 2001: Bush to Clarke: 'Look into Iraq'

US President George Bush speaks privately with White House counterterrorism "tsar" Richard Clarke in the White House Situation Room. According to Clarke, Bush tells him to investigate the possibility that Iraq was involved in the attacks. "I want you, as soon as you can, to go back over everything, everything," Bush says. "See if Saddam did this." When Clarke responds, "But Mr. President, al-Qaeda did this," Bush replies, "I know, I know, but... see if Saddam was involved. Just look. I want to know any shred." Clarke insists that the CIA, FBI, and White House already concluded that there were no such links. As he exits the room, Bush "testily" says again, "Look into Iraq, Saddam." ([Gellman 3/22/2004](#) Sources: [Richard A. Clarke](#)) During a "60 Minutes" interview, Clarke will say that Bush's instructions were made in a way that was "very intimidating," and which hinted that Clarke "should come back with that answer." "Now he never said, 'Make it up.' But the entire conversation left me in absolutely no doubt that George Bush wanted me to come back with a report that said Iraq did this." ([CBS News 3/21/2004](#); [Purdum 3/23/2004](#)) Clarke's account is later confirmed by several eyewitnesses. ([CBS News 3/21/2004](#); [BBC 3/23/2004](#); [James 3/26/2004](#)) After his meeting with Bush, Clarke works with CIA and FBI experts to produce the report requested by Bush (see [September 18, 2001](#)).

September 12, 2001: Bush Meeting Raises Iraq Attack Possibility

White House counterterrorism advisor Richard Clarke meets with Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, President Bush, and Secretary of State Colin Powell. Rumsfeld suggests that the US should bomb Iraq in retaliation for the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. "Rumsfeld was saying we needed to bomb Iraq," Clarke will later recall in his book, *Against All Enemies*. "... We all said, 'But no, no. Al-Qaeda is in

Afghanistan,’ and Rumsfeld said, ‘There aren’t any good targets in Afghanistan and there are lots of good targets in Iraq.’” ([Clarke 2004](#); [Reuters 3/19/2004](#); [Bridis 3/20/2004](#); [CBS News 3/21/2004](#); [Gellman 3/22/2004](#) Sources: [Richard A. Clarke](#)) Powell agrees with Clarke that the immediate focus should be al-Qaeda. However, Powell also says, “Public opinion has to be prepared before a move against Iraq is possible.” Clarke complains to him, “Having been attacked by al-Qaeda, for us now to go bombing Iraq in response would be like our invading Mexico after the Japanese attacked us at Pearl Harbor.” President Bush notes the goal should be replacing the Iraqi government, not just bombing it, but the military warns an invasion would need a large force and many months to assemble. ([Clarke 2004](#)) Rumsfeld’s view is said to be closely aligned with that of his deputy, Paul Wolfowitz, who believes Saddam, not Osama bin Laden or al-Qaeda, should be the principal target of the “war on terrorism.” ([Woodward 2002, pp. 49](#)) Commenting on his feelings after the meeting, Clarke will later write: “At first I was incredulous that we were talking about something other than getting al-Qaeda. I realized with almost a sharp physical pain that (Defense Secretary Donald) Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz were going to try to take advantage of this national tragedy to promote their agenda about Iraq.” ([Gellman 3/22/2004](#); [Raum 3/22/2004](#); [Clarke 3/28/2004](#)) “They were talking about Iraq on 9/11. They were talking about it on 9/12.” ([Clarke 2004](#); [Reuters 3/19/2004](#); [Bridis 3/20/2004](#) Sources: [Richard A. Clarke](#))

Shortly After September 11, 2001: Wolfowitz and Feith Set Up the Counter Terrorism Evaluation Group



David Wurmser (left) and Michael Maloof (right). [Source: *ThinkProgress.org* (left) and *PBS* (right)] Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz and Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Douglas Feith set up a secret intelligence unit, named the Counter Terrorism Evaluation Group, to sift through raw intelligence reports and look for evidence of a link between Iraq and al-Qaeda. ([Risen 2006, pp. 183-184](#)) The four to five -person unit, a “B Team” commissioned by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, uses powerful computers and software to scan and sort already-analyzed documents and reports from the CIA, the Defense Intelligence Agency, the National Security Agency, and other agencies in an effort to consider possible interpretations and angles of analysis that these agencies may have missed due to deeply ingrained biases. Middle East specialist Harold Rhode recruits David Wurmser to head the project. Wurmser, the director of Middle East studies for the American Enterprise Institute, is a known advocate of regime change in Iraq, having expressed his views in a 1997 op-ed piece published in the *Wall Street Journal* (see [November 12, 1997](#)) and having participated in the drafting of the 1996 policy paper for Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, *A Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing the Realm* (see [July 8,](#)

1996). F. Michael Maloof, a former aide to Richard Perle, is also invited to take part in the effort, which becomes known internally as the “Wurmser-Maloof” project. Neither Wurmser nor Maloof are intelligence professionals. ([Scarborough 1/14/2002](#); [Schmitt and Shanker 10/24/2002](#); [Dreyfuss and Vest 1/2004](#); [Arkin 2/8/2004](#); [Reuters 2/19/2004](#)) The Pentagon unit’s activities cause tension within the intelligence community. Critics claim that its members manipulate and distort intelligence, “cherry-picking” bits of information that support their preconceived conclusions. “There is a complete breakdown in the relationship between the Defense Department and the intelligence community, to include its own Defense Intelligence Agency,” a defense official will tell the New York Times. “Wolfowitz and company disbelieve any analysis that doesn’t support their own preconceived conclusions. The CIA is enemy territory, as far as they’re concerned.” ([Schmitt and Shanker 10/24/2002](#) Sources: Unnamed defense official) At the request of Wolfowitz, the office will intentionally ignore the intelligence community’s view that al-Qaeda and Iraq were unlikely allies. ([Agence France-Presse 2/9/2007](#)) Defending the project, Paul Wolfowitz will tell the New York Times that the team’s purpose is to circumvent the problem “in intelligence work, that people who are pursuing a certain hypothesis will see certain facts that others won’t, and not see other facts that others will.” He insists that the special Pentagon unit is “not making independent intelligence assessments.” ([Schmitt and Shanker 10/24/2002](#)) One of the cell’s projects includes sorting through existing intelligence to create a map of relationships demonstrating links between militant Islamic groups and state powers. This chart of links, which they call the “matrix,” leads the intelligence unit to conclude that Hamas, Hezbollah, Islamic Jihad, and other groups with conflicting ideologies and objectives are allowing these differences to fall to the wayside as they discover their shared hatred of the US. The group’s research also leads them to believe that al-Qaeda has a presence in such places as Latin American. For weeks, the unit will attempt to uncover evidence tying Saddam Hussein to the 9/11 attacks, a theory advocated by both Feith and Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz. ([Scarborough 1/14/2002](#); [Dreyfuss and Vest 1/2004](#); [Arkin 2/8/2004](#)) The group is later accused of stovepiping intelligence directly to the White House. Former DIA chief of Mideast operations, Pat Lang, later tells the Washington Times: “That unit had meetings with senior White House officials without the CIA or the Senate being aware of them. That is not legal. There has to be oversight.” According to Lang and another US intelligence official, the two men go to the White House several times to brief officials, bypassing CIA analysts whose analyses they disagreed with. They allegedly brief White House staffers Stephen Hadley, the deputy national security adviser, and Lewis “Scooter” Libby, chief of staff for Vice President Richard Cheney, according to congressional staffers. ([Sale 7/29/2004](#)) According to unnamed Pentagon and US intelligence officials, the group is also accused of providing sensitive CIA and Pentagon intercepts to the US-funded Iraqi National Congress, which then pass them on to the government of Iran. ([Sale 7/29/2004](#)) David Wurmser will later be relocated to the State Department where he will be the senior adviser to Undersecretary Of State for Arms Control John Bolton.(see [September 2002](#)). ([Kwiatkowski 12/1/2003](#); [Dreyfuss and Vest 1/2004](#))

September 12, 2001: Virginia Chief Medical Examiner in ‘Tug of War’ Over Who Should do Autopsies of Pentagon Victims



Dr. Marcella Fierro [*Source: Ernie Branson*]/Virginia Chief Medical Examiner Dr. Marcella Fierro, believing that state forensic pathologists have jurisdiction over the Pentagon’s land, reassigns staff from three other regional offices to the Northern Virginia office in order to conduct postmortem examinations on victims of the Pentagon attack. However, following what the Washington Post calls a “behind-the-scenes tug of war,” after FBI and Defense Department officials meet with her they instead opt to conduct forensic and mortuary activities at Defense Department facilities. Fierro requests and later receives a letter from Attorney General John Ashcroft relieving her department of its responsibilities. ([Goldstein 9/13/2001](#); [US Department of Health and Human Services 7/2002, pp. A-47](#))

September 12, 2001: FBI Seizes Records From Flight School Attended by Hijackers

Around 2:30 a.m., the FBI arrives at Huffman Aviation flight school in Venice, Florida, inquiring about suspected hijackers Mohamed Atta and Marwan Alshehhi, who attended the school (see [July 6-December 19, 2000](#)). Huffman Aviation has around 200 students, about half of them foreigners. The FBI takes away all its records on former students, including photocopies of Atta and Alshehhi’s passports, as well as two computers. ([Moore 9/12/2001](#); [Canedy and Sanger 9/13/2001](#); [US Congress 3/19/2002](#)) Students at another Florida flight school say the FBI arrived at their school within hours of the attacks (see [September 11, 2001](#)).

Shortly After September 11, 2001: Wolfowitz More Interested in Going after Iraq than Bin Laden

According to counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke, Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz asks during a meeting, “Why we are [sic] beginning by talking about this one man, bin Laden?” Clarke responds with an explanation that only al-Qaeda “poses an

immediate and serious threat to the United States.” Wolfowitz then claims that Iraq poses “at least as much” a danger. According to Clarke, FBI and CIA representatives who are present at the meeting agree that there is no evidence to support Wolfowitz’s assertion. ([Gellman 3/22/2004](#) Sources: [Richard A. Clarke](#))

Between September 12 and Late November 2001: US Intelligence Not Interested in Inside Information on Whereabouts of Mullah Omar and Al-Qaeda

The US is not interested in help from a high-level Taliban informant. Mullah Mohammed Khaksar was the Taliban’s intelligence minister and is currently their deputy interior minister. He is in charge of security in the Afghan capital of Kabul and regularly meets with other high ranking Taliban leaders. But since 1997, he has also been secretly providing a steady stream of intelligence to the Northern Alliance, the enemies of the Taliban. Further, he had offered to help the US defeat the Taliban, and several times before 9/11 CIA agents disguised as journalists visited him to solicit inside information (see [April 1999](#)). ([Baker 11/30/2001](#)) However, in the weeks after 9/11, he passes letters to get in contact with US intelligence, but never hears back from them. Time magazine will later report, “Khaksar said he was ready to pass on information that might lead to the capture of the fugitive Taliban leader Mullah Omar and to some al-Qaeda hideouts in Afghanistan. But he waited days, weeks, months, and nobody contacted him.” ([Time 2/25/2002](#)) Finally in late November 2001, he will publicly defect to the Northern Alliance, thus ending his ability to get real-time information on the movements of Omar and others. ([Raghavan 11/29/2001](#)) The US will continue to remain uninterested in what Khaksar has to say (see [February 25, 2002](#)).

September 12, 2001: Former CIA Bin Laden Unit Chief Returns, But Not Given Much to Do

Mike Scheuer, former head of Alec Station, the CIA’s bin Laden unit (see [February 1996](#)), returns to the unit to serve as an adviser, but is not allowed to debrief detainees. Scheuer, who was fired from the unit in 1999 (see [June 1999](#)), remains with Alec Station until 2004, when he resigns from the CIA and authors *Imperial Hubris*, a book critical of the CIA and the US government’s fight against terrorism in general. He had finished his first book, *Through Our Enemies’ Eyes*, before 9/11, and it is released in 2002. He will later complain that he is given a job title but no official duties. Other CIA officers seek out his services, but these requests are blocked, apparently by James Pavitt, the Deputy Director of Operations. Scheuer comments: “The CIA knew that *Through Our Enemies’ Eyes* was respected by Islamists and that, as the author, I would be an effective debriefer. Mr. Pavitt, however, put burying my career above using me to elicit information to defend America.” ([Scheuer 2005, pp. 264](#); [Scheuer 2006, pp. xvii](#))

September 12, 2001: Russian Air Force Commander Says it is Generally Impossible to Carry out Attack Like 9/11



Anatoly Kornukov. *[Source: Pravda]* General Anatoly Kornukov, the commander in chief of the Russian air force, says that “Generally it is impossible to carry out an act of terror on the scenario which was used in the USA yesterday.” He recently complained that, due to underfunding and cutbacks, his own air force was so run-down that it was no longer effective as a fighting force. Yet, he says, “The notification and control system for the air transport in Russia does not allow uncontrolled flights and leads to immediate reaction of the anti-missile defense. As soon as something like that happens here, I am reported about that right away and in a minute we are all up.” ([BBC 8/7/2001](#); [Peterson 8/24/2001](#); [Pravda 9/12/2001](#))

September 12, 2001: WTC Leaseholder Already Wants to Claim Double Insurance for Attacks and Rebuild



David Childs. *[Source: Publicity photo]* Developer Larry Silverstein, who recently took over the lease of the World Trade Center (see [July 24, 2001](#)), later tells journalist Steven Brill that he’d been so sickened by the destruction on 9/11, and by the deaths of four of his employees in the WTC, that he did not focus on insurance or financial matters until “perhaps two weeks later.” But according to two

people who call him this morning to offer their sympathy, Silverstein soon changes the subject: “He had talked to his lawyers... and he had a clear legal strategy mapped out. They were going to prove, Silverstein told one of the callers, that the way his insurance policies were written the two planes crashing into the two towers had been two different ‘occurrences,’ not part of the same event. That would give him more than \$7 billion to rebuild, instead of the \$3.55 billion that his insurance policy said was the maximum for one ‘occurrence.’ And rebuild was just what he was going to do, he vowed.” By mid-morning, he calls his architect David Childs, and instructs him to start sketching out a plan for a new building. He tells Childs to plan to build the exact same area of office space as has been destroyed. In fact, Silverstein’s lawyers claim the developer had been on the phone to them on the evening of 9/11, wondering “whether his insurance policies could be read in a way that would construe the attacks as two separate, insurable incidents rather than one.” ([Brill 2003, pp. 18-19 and 39-40](#); [Elliott 1/2004](#)) Yet Jerome Hauer, the former director of New York’s Office of Emergency Management, had gone to Silverstein’s office on 9/11, and later claims that Silverstein’s primary concern that day had been his employees, and whether they had gotten out of the WTC. “Larry was absolutely devastated,” he says. ([Weiss 2003, pp. 374](#)) Following a lengthy legal dispute, Silverstein will eventually receive \$4.55 billion in insurance payouts for the destruction of the WTC (see [May 23, 2007](#)). ([Topousis 5/24/2007](#))

September 12, 2001: CIA Briefing to the President Lays Out Evidence of Bin Laden Responsibility for Attacks

CIA Director George Tenet arrives at the White House to give the president his daily intelligence briefing. With him is Mike Morell, the president’s regular CIA briefer. They meet with Bush at 8 a.m. in the Oval Office, joined by Vice President Dick Cheney and National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice. The Presidential Daily Briefing (PDB) on this day is about ten to twelve pages long, and a further twelve pages includes full reports from case officers, the Directorate of Intelligence, and the National Security Agency. The PDB includes a review of the available intelligence tracing the previous day’s attacks back to Osama bin Laden and his top al-Qaeda associates. Among the evidence presented:

- Several reports identify Capitol Hill and the White House as intended targets of the attacks.
- One report says a bin Laden associate incorrectly “gave thanks for the explosion in the Congress building.”
- A key figure in the bin Laden financing organization Wafa had initially claimed that “The White House has been destroyed,” but then had to correct himself.
- A report shows that al-Qaeda members in Afghanistan had said at 9:53 a.m. the previous day that the attackers were following through with “the doctor’s program” (see [9:53 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). This is thought to be a reference to the second-ranking member of al-Qaeda, Ayman al-Zawahiri, an Egyptian physician often referred to as “the Doctor.”
- The CIA and the FBI have evidence connecting at least three of the alleged hijackers to Osama bin Laden and his training camps in Afghanistan. The attacks were also consistent with intelligence reports throughout the summer that indicated bin Laden was planning

“spectacular attacks” against US targets.

- A report out of Kandahar, Afghanistan shows the attacks were “the results of two years’ planning.”

- Another report says the attacks were “the beginning of the wrath.”

- A key piece of evidence involves Abu Zubaida, who has been identified as the chief field commander for the October 2000 attack on the USS *Cole* in Yemen. A supposedly reliable report received after the 9/11 attacks stated that Zubaida had referred to September 11 as “zero hour.”

According to Washington Post reporter Bob Woodward, “For Tenet, the evidence on bin Laden was conclusive—game, set, match.” Though Tenet, along with Rice and other officials, has already spent several months working on a plan to vastly expand covert action in Afghanistan and worldwide, he tells Bush that an even more extensive plan will soon be presented for approval, and this will be very expensive. The president tells him, “Whatever it takes.” ([Woodward 2002, pp. 39-41](#); [Woodward and Balz 1/28/2002](#); [Kessler 2003, pp. 231-233](#); [Tenet 2007, pp. 165](#)) Bush will approve Tenet’s plan by the following Monday (see [September 17, 2001](#)).

Between September 12, 2001 and October 17, 2002: CIA Officer Gives Conflicting Accounts of His Conduct at Crucial Meeting with FBI

CIA officer Clark Shannon gives conflicting accounts of his conduct in the failed search for Khalid Almihdhar to the 9/11 Congressional Inquiry’s staff and CIA director George Tenet. Shannon attended a meeting at which the CIA and FBI discussed the investigation into the bombing of the USS *Cole* and failed to disclose information about hijackers Khalid Almihdhar and Nawaf Alhazmi to the *Cole* investigators (see [June 11, 2001](#)).

Shannon tells the Congressional Inquiry’s staff that he was aware that Almihdhar had a US visa and Alhazmi had traveled to the US, but did not disclose this to the FBI, as he would not share such information outside the CIA unless authorized to do so. However, CIA director George Tenet tells the Congressional Inquiry that Shannon told him something different and that Almihdhar is not who they were talking about at the meeting. ([New York Times 10/17/2002](#); [US Department of Justice 11/2004](#).)

September 11-22, 2001: Location of Remains at Pentagon Indicates Plane Turned ‘Inside Out’ After Impact

After arriving at the Pentagon on September 11 (see [9:42 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)), the FBI is involved in removing bodies and body parts from the crash site. It works closely with Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Urban Search and Rescue (US&R) teams and fire department Technical Rescue Teams (TRT). Members of these teams hunt through the debris, searching for survivors. When they find bodies or body parts, they call upon the FBI to photograph, number, and tag these remains. ([US](#)

[Department of Health and Human Services 7/2002, pp. C-54](#)) Though the Flight 77 passengers had been in the back of the plane at the time of the crash, most of their remains are found deep inside the building, near the end of the area traveled by the aircraft debris. Conversely, the remains of the suspected hijackers, who would have been at the front of the plane, are found relatively close to the front of the building, where the plane first impacted it. (However, these remains will be identified as belonging to the hijackers only through a process of elimination, as they do not match DNA samples of the victims of the attack.) According to the American Society of Civil Engineers' Pentagon Building Performance Report, the location of the remains as such indicates that "the front of the aircraft disintegrated essentially upon impact but, in the process, opened up a hole allowing the trailing portions of the fuselage to pass into the building." Journalist Steve Vogel concludes, "The fuselage in essence turned inside out as it passed through the Pentagon." The search and rescue operations at the Pentagon come to an end on the morning of September 22, and the Arlington County Fire Department then turns command of the crash site over to the FBI. ([Vogel 11/21/2001](#); [Mlakar et al. 1/2003, pp. 40](#); [Vogel 2007, pp. 432 and 467](#))

(September 12, 2001-2002): FBI Intimidates Witnesses Who Saw Atta in Venice; Tells Them to Keep Quiet

A number of witnesses who claim they saw Mohamed Atta living in Venice, Florida in early 2001 later allege that, in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, they are intimidated by the FBI and told to keep quiet about what they knew. Amanda Keller, who claims to have lived with Atta during early 2001 (see [\(February-April 2001\)](#)), later says that, even after she moved away from Venice, FBI agents called her every other day for several months after the attacks. She tells investigative reporter Daniel Hopsicker about "intimidation by the FBI" that she suffered, adding, "They told me not to talk to anybody, to keep my mouth shut." Stephanie Frederickson, who remembers Keller and Atta living next door to her in the Sandpiper Apartments in Venice, later recalls, "At first, right after the attack, [the FBI] told me I must have been mistaken in my identification. Or they would insinuate that I was lying. Finally they stopped trying to get me to change my story, and just stopped by once a week to make sure I hadn't been talking to anyone. Who was I going to tell? Most everyone around here already knew." Charles Grapentine, the manager of the Sandpiper Apartments, also confirms Atta having lived with Keller. He says that, after 9/11, the FBI "called me a liar, and told me to keep my mouth shut." ([Hopsicker 2004, pp. 62-63, 65 and 88-89](#)) According to the FBI's account of events, Atta had left Venice by late December 2000 or early January 2001. Its account makes no mention of him returning there later. ([US Congress 9/26/2002](#)) A former manager at Huffman Aviation, the Venice flight school attended by Atta in late 2000 (see [July 6-December 19, 2000](#)), also later alleges that the FBI intimidated him and told him to keep quiet. He says the FBI was "outside my house four hours after the attack." He claims his phones were bugged after 9/11, and adds, "I thought these guys [Atta and his associates] were double agents. Why is that so incriminating?" ([Hopsicker 2004, pp. 149-150](#))

After September 11, 2001: Unlike Previous Incidents, NTSB Does Not Investigate 9/11 Plane Crashes

In the weeks following 9/11, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) assists the FBI in its response to the attacks. Over 60 NTSB employees work at the scenes of the crashes—the Pentagon, Pennsylvania, and New York—and at the board’s headquarters in Washington, DC, helping to identify aircraft parts, searching for and analyzing the flight recorders, and assisting the victims’ families. ([National Transportation Safety Board 9/13/2001](#); [US Congress. Senate. Committee on Commerce 6/25/2002](#)) However, unusually, none of the four planes that crashed are the subject of formal NTSB investigations. According to Vern Grose, a highly respected air disaster analyst and former NTSB member, “First of all, after any aircraft crash, the NTSB [normally] launches what they call a ‘go team’ within two hours and that go team will have up to twelve people on it. Specialists in airframe, in engines, in electronics, in human factors. And these folks all go to the scene—they isolate the scene. From that point on, it’s the NTSB’s responsibility.” But with the crashes on 9/11, Grose says, “it’s my understanding that it did not occur exactly like that. They may have launched an NTSB crew, but it never took the same course a normal investigation would have.” ([Lappe and Marshall 2004, pp. 40-41](#)) The NTSB says that, because the four crashes were “criminal acts,” the FBI is consequently the “lead investigative agency.” ([National Transportation Safety Board 9/13/2001](#)) Therefore, the NTSB will later state that it “did not determine the probable cause” of any of the four crashes, “and does not plan to issue a report or open a public docket.” ([National Transportation Safety Board 3/7/2006](#); [National Transportation Safety Board 3/7/2006](#); [National Transportation Safety Board 3/7/2006](#); [National Transportation Safety Board 3/7/2006](#)) However, even under these circumstances, Grose calls the lack of NTSB investigation “unacceptable.” He says, “Though the NTSB statute states the leadership of the investigation will defer to the FBI, the NTSB has still completed formal investigations into crashes deemed criminal acts.” It previously did so, for example, in the case of EgyptAir Flight 990, in which a pilot crashed a plane in an apparent suicide attempt (see [October 31, 1999](#)). ([Lappe and Marshall 2004, pp. 41](#)) The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette complains about the unconventional investigative process, specifically in relation to Flight 93, which crashed in Pennsylvania. It says that, while the NTSB is “a small government agency whose procedures are fairly open,” with the FBI instead handling the investigation, “everything, even the most minute details, are being kept under strict lock and key.” ([Silver 11/4/2001](#)) As well as the lack of an NTSB investigation, attempts at conducting a precise grid search of the Flight 93 crash site will be overruled by the FBI (see [September 16, 2001](#)). ([Longman 2002, pp. 262](#))

September 12, 2001-2002: Cheney Moves between Secure Locations to Preserve ‘Continuity of Government’

In the months following 9/11, Vice President Dick Cheney spends large portions of his time in what are referred to as “secure and undisclosed” locations. ([CNN 3/1/2002](#)) He is

accompanied to these locations by those considered his “essential staff.” This includes his chief of staff, I. Lewis “Scooter” Libby, and Libby’s assistant, Jennifer Mayfield; Cheney’s personal secretary, Debbie Heiden; his personal aide, Brian McCormack; one of his military aides; and either his counsel, David Addington, or his staff secretary, Neil Patel. Cheney’s personnel are ordered not to mention the vice president’s name or title on the phone; his schedule is to go out only over secure fax or classified e-mail; and all members of his staff must always keep a packed bag ready at the office. According to journalist and author Stephen Hayes, the “secure undisclosed location” the vice president goes to is usually Camp David, the presidential retreat in Maryland, although there are other locations. ([Hayes 2007, pp. 349](#)) Cheney explains to PBS the reasoning behind his going to these locations: “[W]ith the possibility that the White House or the Capitol or other facilities here [in Washington] could be targeted in a terrorist attack... it’s not a good practice for the president and I to spend a lot of time together.... [I]t’s important from the standpoint of our responsibility to maintain the continuity of government to always see to it that nobody—no adversary or enemy would have the capacity of, in effect, decapitating the federal government by taking out the president and the vice president and other senior management, senior leadership.” ([PBS 10/12/2001](#)) Yet, despite the supposed danger, he still goes ahead with a pre-planned pheasant-hunting trip in early November (see [November 4-5, 2001](#)). Cheney’s time at the “secure and undisclosed” locations is part of “shadow government” procedures that are implemented following the 9/11 attacks (see [\(2:00 p.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([CNN 3/1/2002](#)) In interviews, he never mentions that he had similarly gone away to undisclosed locations on a regular basis throughout the 1980s, during a series of continuity of government exercises (see [1981-1992](#)). ([Mann 2004, pp. 138-139 and 296](#); [Mann 3/2004](#))

September 12, 2001: Top Bush Officials Privately Decide to Focus on Al-Qaeda First, then State Sponsors of Terrorism

After concluding a National Security Council meeting (see [September 12, 2001](#)), President Bush continues meeting with about six top principal cabinet members. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld poses the question, “Do we focus on bin Laden and al-Qaeda or terrorism more broadly?” Secretary of State Colin Powell suggests the US should focus on terrorism generally, but focus first on al-Qaeda. Vice President Cheney brings up the issue of state sponsorship. “To the extent we define our task broadly, including those who support terrorism, then we get at states. And it’s easier to find them than it is to find bin Laden.” President Bush concludes, “Start with bin Laden, which Americans expect. And then if we succeed, we’ve struck a huge blow and can move forward.” He called the terrorism threat “a cancer” and adds, “We don’t want to define [it] too broadly for the average man to understand.” This is according to journalist Bob Woodward, who later interviews some participants in the meeting. ([Woodward 2002, pp. 43](#)) The main alleged state sponsor that interests many top Bush officials is Iraq. For instance, five days later Bush will state he believes Iraq was involved in the 9/11 attacks, but that an attack on Iraq will have to wait (see [September 17, 2001](#)).

Shortly After September 11, 2001: Bush Thinks Iraq Might Be Behind 9/11

In 2004, the 9/11 Commission will ask President Bush his early thoughts on who might have been responsible for the 9/11 attacks. The Commission will summarize his answer: “President Bush had wondered immediately after the attack whether Saddam Hussein’s regime might have had a hand in it. Iraq had been an enemy of the United States for 11 years, and was the only place in the world where the United States was engaged in ongoing combat operations. As a former pilot, the President was struck by the apparent sophistication of the operation and some of the piloting, especially [Hani] Hanjour’s high-speed dive into the Pentagon. He told us he recalled Iraqi support for Palestinian suicide terrorists as well. Speculating about other possible states that could be involved, the President told us he also thought about Iran.” ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 333](#))

September 12, 2001: Bush Calls 9/11 Attacks ‘Acts of War’

President Bush publicly comments, “The deliberate and deadly attacks which were carried out yesterday against our country were more than acts of terror, they were acts of war.” Bush’s speech writer at the time, David Frum, will later refer to this comment and Bush’s “we will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them” comment from the night before (see [8:30 p.m. September 11, 2001](#)), and say, “Within 48 hours, [Bush] had made the two key decisions that have defined the war on terror. First, this is a war, not a crime. And second, this war is not going to be limited to just the authors of the 9/11 attack but to anyone who assisted them and helped them and made their work possible, including states. And that is a dramatic, dramatic event. And that defines everything.” ([PBS Frontline 2/20/2003](#))

September 12, 2001: Ashcroft Not Highly Concerned about Following Procedures So Captured Terrorists Can Be Put on Trial

During a National Security Council meeting, FBI Director Robert Mueller begins to describe the investigation under way to identify the 9/11 hijackers. According to journalist Bob Woodward, “He said it was essential not to taint any evidence so that if accomplices were arrested, they could be convicted.” But Attorney General John Ashcroft interrupts. Woodward will paraphrase Ashcroft saying, “The chief mission of US law enforcement... is to stop another attack and apprehend any accomplices or terrorists before they hit us again. If we can’t bring them to trial, so be it.” Woodward will comment, “Now, Ashcroft was saying, the focus of the FBI and the Justice Department should change from prosecution to prevention, a radical shift in priorities.” President Bush is at the meeting and apparently does not challenge Ashcroft’s suggestion. ([Woodward 2002, pp. 42-43](#))

September 12, 2001-January 2002: Saeed Sheikh Lives Openly in Pakistan



Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh, partying in Pakistan after 9/11. [Source: *Associated Press*] After probably completing last-minute financial transactions with some 9/11 hijackers, Saeed Sheikh flies to Pakistan. ([Rudin 10/7/2001](#)) He meets with bin Laden in Afghanistan a few days later. ([Khan and Moore 2/18/2002](#); [Hussain and Whitworth 2/25/2002](#); [McCarthy 7/16/2002](#)) The US government claims Saeed fights for the Taliban in Afghanistan in September and October 2001. ([Ressa 3/14/2002](#)) Some reports indicate that after the defeat of the Taliban in Afghanistan, Saeed acts as a go-between with bin Laden and the ISI seeking to hide bin Laden. ([Pittsburgh Tribune-Review 3/3/2002](#)) He also helps produce a video of a bin Laden interview. ([Pittsburgh Tribune-Review 3/3/2002](#)) Sometime in October 2001 ([McCarthy 7/16/2002](#)) , Saeed moves back to his home in Lahore, Pakistan, and lives there openly. He is frequently seen at local parties hosted by government leaders. In January 2002, he hosts a party to celebrate the birth of his newborn baby. ([Smith 2/25/2002](#); [Pittsburgh Tribune-Review 3/3/2002](#)) He stays in his well-known Lahore house with his new wife and baby until January 19, 2002—four days before reporter Daniel Pearl is kidnapped. ([Abbas 7/16/2002](#))

September 12-October 2001: Steel Debris From WTC Shipped Out of US for Recycling



Steel beams from the WTC were already being removed and recycled on September 20, 2001. *[Source: Associated Press]* In the month following 9/11, a significant amount of the steel debris from the WTC collapses is removed from the rubble pile, cut into smaller sections, and either melted at a recycling plant or shipped out of the US. ([US Congress 3/6/2002](#)) Each of the Twin Towers contained 78,000 tons of recyclable steel. Much of this is shipped to India, China, and other Asian countries, where it will be melted down and reprocessed into new steel products. Asian companies are able to purchase the steel for just \$120 per ton, compared, for example, to a usual average price of \$150 per ton in China. Industry officials estimate that selling off the steel and other metals from the WTC for recycling could net a few tens of million dollars. ([Glanz 10/9/2001](#); [Reuters 1/21/2002](#); [Reuters 1/22/2002](#); [Eastday 1/24/2002](#); [Jayaraman and Bruno 2/6/2002](#)) 9/11 victims' families and some engineers are angered at the decision to quickly discard the steel, believing it should be examined to help determine how the towers collapsed. A respected fire fighting trade magazine comments, "We are literally treating the steel removed from the site like garbage, not like crucial fire scene evidence." ([Fire Engineering 1/2002](#)) Rep. Joseph Crowley (D) will later call the loss of this evidence "borderline criminal." By March 2002, 150 pieces of steel from the WTC debris will have been identified by engineers for use in future investigations (see [March 6, 2002](#)). ([Federal Emergency Management Agency 5/1/2002, pp. D-13](#)) A study by the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), which commences in August 2002 ([National Institute of Standards and Technology 8/21/2002](#); [Associated Press 8/21/2002](#)), will have 236 pieces of recovered steel available to it. Of these, 229 pieces are from WTC 1 and 2, representing "roughly 0.25 percent to 0.5 percent of the 200,000 tons of structural steel used in the construction of the two towers." ([National Institute of Standards and Technology 9/2005, pp. 85](#)) New York Mayor Mike Bloomberg defends the decision to quickly get rid of the WTC steel, saying, "If you want to take a look at the construction methods and the design, that's in this day and age what computers do. Just looking at a piece of metal generally doesn't tell you anything." Officials in the mayor's office decline to reply to requests by the New York Times regarding who decided to have the steel recycled. ([Glanz and Lipton 12/25/2001](#); [Eastday 1/24/2002](#))

[September 12, 2001-February 2002: Witnesses See Molten Metal in the Remains at Ground Zero](#)



A chunk of hot metal being removed from the North Tower rubble about eight weeks after 9/11. *[Source: Frank Silecchia]* In the weeks and months after 9/11, numerous individuals report seeing molten metal in the remains of the World Trade Center:

- Ken Holden, who is involved with the organizing of demolition, excavation and debris removal operations at Ground Zero, later will tell the 9/11 Commission, “Underground, it was still so hot that molten metal dripped down the sides of the wall from [WTC] Building 6.” ([9/11 Commission 4/1/2003](#))
- William Langewiesche, the only journalist to have unrestricted access to Ground Zero during the cleanup operation, describes, “in the early days, the streams of molten metal that leaked from the hot cores and flowed down broken walls inside the foundation hole.” ([Langewiesche 2002, pp. 32](#))
- Leslie Robertson, the structural engineer responsible for the design of the WTC, describes fires still burning and molten steel still running 21 days after the attacks. ([Williams 10/2001](#) ^{AS})
- Alison Geyh, who heads a team of scientists studying the potential health effects of 9/11, reports, “Fires are still actively burning and the smoke is very intense. In some pockets now being uncovered, they are finding molten steel.” ([Johns Hopkins Public Health Magazine 2001](#))
- Ron Burger, a public health advisor who arrives at Ground Zero on September 12, says that “feeling the heat” and “seeing the molten steel” there reminds him of a volcano. ([Lyman 9/2003, pp. 40](#) ^{AS})
- According to a member of New York Air National Guard’s 109th Air Wing, who is at Ground Zero from September 22 to October 6, “One fireman told us that there was still molten steel at the heart of the towers’ remains. Firemen sprayed water to cool the debris down but the heat remained intense enough at the surface to melt their boots.” ([Lounsbury 12/2001](#))
- New York firefighters recall “heat so intense they encountered rivers of molten steel.” ([Lumenick 3/3/2004](#))
- As late as five months after the attacks, in February 2002, firefighter Joe O’Toole sees a

steel beam being lifted from deep underground at Ground Zero, which, he says, “was dripping from the molten steel.” ([Lin 5/29/2002](#)) Steven E. Jones, a physics professor from Utah, later will claim this molten metal is “direct evidence for the use of high-temperature explosives, such as thermite,” used to deliberately bring down the WTC towers. ([MSNBC 11/16/2005](#)) He will say that without explosives, a falling building would have “insufficient directed energy to result in melting of large quantities of metal.” ([Jarvik 11/10/2005](#)) There is no mention whatsoever of the molten metal in the official reports by FEMA, NIST, or the 9/11 Commission. ([Federal Emergency Management Agency 5/1/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004](#); [National Institute of Standards and Technology 9/2005](#)) But Dr. Frank Gayle, who leads the steel forensics aspects of NIST’s investigation of the WTC collapses, is quoted as saying, “Your gut reaction would be the jet fuel is what made the fire so very intense, a lot of people figured that’s what melted the steel. Indeed it didn’t, the steel did not melt.” ([Field 2/7/2004](#)) As well as the reports of molten metal, data collected by NASA in the days after 9/11 finds dozens of “hot spots” (some over 1300 degrees) at Ground Zero (see [September 16-23, 2001](#)).

September 12-14, 2001: Gruesome WTC Remains Found, But Supposedly No Black Boxes



John McCole [*Source: Robson Books*] Some gruesome remains are discovered in the WTC ruins. Investigators find a pair of severed hands bound together with plastic handcuffs on a nearby building. They are believed to have belonged to a flight attendant. ([Gardiner and Rayman 9/15/2001](#)) There are reports of whole rows of seats with passengers in them being found, as well as much of the cockpit of one of the planes, complete with the body of one of the hijackers, and the body of another stewardess, whose hands were tied with wire. ([Ananova 9/13/2001](#); [Sachs 9/15/2001](#)) Fire Lieutenant John McCole sees a body bag with a tag on it saying, “Possible Perp - pilot.” McCole later comments, “I found it pretty amazing that someone’s body could remain so intact after crashing through a skyscraper into the middle of an inferno.” ([McCole 2002, pp. 57](#)) Yet, contradicting the claim that a hijacker’s body was found, only in February 2003 are the remains of two hijackers identified (see [Late February 2003](#)). While all of these bodies and plane parts are supposedly found, not one of the four black boxes for these two airplanes is ever found. A

National Transportation Safety Board spokesperson says, “It’s extremely rare that we don’t get the recorders back. I can’t recall another domestic case in which we did not recover the recorders.” ([CBS News 2/23/2002](#)) The black boxes are considered “nearly indestructible,” are placed in the safest parts of the aircraft, and are designed to survive impacts much greater than the WTC impact. They can withstand heat of up to 2,000 degrees Fahrenheit for one hour, and can withstand an impact of an incredible 3,400 G’s. ([ABC News 9/17/2001](#)) In 2004, it will be reported that some of the black boxes are found in the weeks after 9/11, but that their discovery is kept secret (see [October 2001](#)).

September 11, 2001-Autum 2002: FBI’s Saudi Office Fails to Follow Up Thousands of 9/11 Leads; Unprocessed Documents Are Destroyed

At the time of 9/11, the FBI’s Saudi Arabia office was comprised of only legal attache Wilfred Rattigan and his assistant Gamal Abdel-Hafiz. Abdel-Hafiz, the FBI’s only Muslim agent at the time, had been appointed to the position in February 2001 despite a controversy with his FBI work back in the US (see [Early 1999-March 21, 2000](#)). Some fellow FBI agents accused him of refusing to secretly record conversations with Muslim suspects. Time will report, “The FBI sent reinforcements [to the Saudi Arabian office] within two weeks of 9/11, but it appears that the bureau’s team never got on top of the thousands of leads flowing in from the US and Saudi governments.... According to several former employees of the US embassy in Riyadh, the FBI legal attache’s office housed within the embassy was often in disarray during the months that followed 9/11. When an FBI supervisor arrived [nearly a year after 9/11] to clean up the mess, she found a mountain of paper and, for security reasons, ordered wholesale shredding that resulted in the destruction of unprocessed documents relating to the 9/11 investigations.” In June 2005, the Senate Judiciary Committee will begin investigating allegations that the FBI’s Saudi office was “delinquent in pursuing thousands of leads” related to 9/11. Piles of time-sensitive leads still had not been followed up when the supervisor arrives. The FBI will claim that the thousands of shredded documents were duplicated elsewhere. But the Judiciary Committee will assert some material is lost. One employee will claim that some of the lost information “was leads, suspicious-activity material, information on airline pilots.” Rattigan, who has converted to Islam, later will sue the FBI for discrimination and will claim that the FBI refused to provide him with adequate resources to cope with the workload after 9/11. ([Telvick 10/16/2003](#); [Zagorin 6/27/2005](#))

September 11, 2001-October 2001: FBI Agent Wright Gagged by FBI in Wake of 9/11

FBI agent Robert Wright will later claim that the FBI takes extraordinary efforts to gag him in the wake of the 9/11 attacks. According to Wright, “On September the 11th, as I watched the World Trade Center towers burn, I did not initially share the same feelings of surprise and shock and dismay most Americans felt. I just thought to myself, ‘It has begun.’” On the afternoon of 9/11, he claims that he is called by reporters from the New

York Times and 60 Minutes who already are aware of his issues with FBI management (see [June 9, 2001-July 10, 2001](#)). They ask if he would be willing to go public with his story. He declines. "I'm confident if I had gone public at that time I would have been fired. I realized my termination would only aid the FBI by allowing management to claim I was simply a former employee who was disgruntled over his termination." Over the next few days, his former supervisor prohibits him from working with the 9/11 investigation. He is not allowed to answer any incoming telephone calls from the general public. The FBI prohibits him from publishing his recently completed book on FBI failures (see [May 11, 2002](#)). His lawyers contact a congressman who invites him to come to Washington and present his information to Congress. Wright is immediately prohibited from traveling outside of Chicago without FBI approval. Larry Klayman, one of two lawyers now representing Wright, later says he calls the Justice Department a few days after 9/11 and asks that Wright be allowed to present his issues to Attorney General John Ashcroft. Klayman claims he receives a reply from Michael Chertoff, then head of the Criminal division, who refuses to meet with Wright and says, "We are tired of conspiracy theories." ([Federal News Service 5/30/2002](#); [Federal News Service 6/2/2003](#)) On September 20, Wright's legal representatives publish a list of 20 entities described as "Tax Exempt and Other Entities to Investigate Immediately." The US will later shut down many of these entities. ([Judicial Watch 9/20/2001](#)) The restrictions placed on Wright will largely continue to hold in the years afterwards. For instance, as of the end of 2005, his book still has not been approved for publication (see [May 11, 2002](#)).

September 11-November 16, 2001: Pentagon Victims Taken to Dover Air Force for Mortuary Operations

Under the authority of the FBI, remains of 9/11 victims at the Pentagon are taken to a temporary morgue in the Pentagon's north parking lot, where they are photographed, labeled, and then placed in refrigeration. ([Jontz 9/17/2001](#); [US Department of Health and Human Services 7/2002, pp. A-47](#); [Arrington 3/2005](#)) They are then transported to Davison Army Airfield at nearby Fort Belvoir, and from there to Dover Air Force Base, Delaware, where there is a large mortuary created for use in wartime. FBI agents accompany the remains at all points during transportation. ([Gilmore 9/15/2001](#); [PBS 9/21/2001](#); [Soldiers 10/2001](#); [US Department of Health and Human Services 7/2002, pp. C-55](#)) About 250 people, including 50 medical examiners and 50 members of the FBI's 'disaster team,' work at the mortuary to identify the remains. ([Jontz 9/17/2001](#)) Remains are first scanned for the presence of unexploded ordnance or metallic foreign bodies. FBI experts then collect trace evidence to find any chemicals from explosives, and also conduct fingerprint identifications. ([Kelly 11/30/2001](#)) Other techniques used include dental records and X-rays. Tissue samples are sent to an Armed Forces laboratory in Rockville, Maryland, for DNA analysis. ([PBS 9/21/2001](#)) Identification is problematic because specimens are often unrecognizable body parts, and are nearly always mixed with debris composed of aircraft and building materials. ([Harcke, Bifano, and Koeller 4/2002](#)) However, by the time Dover staff formally end their identification effort, on November 16, they have identified remains of 184 of the 189 people who died in the

Pentagon or aboard Flight 77, including the five hijackers (see [November 21, 2001](#)). ([Vogel 11/21/2001](#))

September 11-25, 2001: Resident Near Flight 93 Crash Site Put Under ‘House Arrest’

Roxanne Sullivan is out shopping when Flight 93 crashes just a quarter of a mile from where she lives. Heading home, she is stopped by police and has to convince them to allow her to her house. She is told she can only have two hours there to pack her bags, and then must leave. Two hours later, the police visit and say she can stay. But, according to Sullivan, they tell her she and her husband “must check in and out each time we left. No one was allowed to visit us, nor could we visit others in the area. The rules had been set and would remain in force for two weeks. We could not go down to the site, even though our property line is adjacent to the crash site property.” No explanation is reported as to why they are placed under this “house arrest.” ([McCall 2002, pp. 39-40](#); [Robinson 3/28/2003](#); [Pickels 7/4/2004](#))

September 12-October 29, 2001: Cars Belonging to 9/11 Hijackers Recovered; Suspicious Powder Found in Car Rented to Atta

On September 12, the FBI in Miami issues a national bulletin for law enforcement agencies to be on the lookout for two cars connected with the 9/11 attacks. One is a red 1989 Pontiac registered to Mohamed Atta, presumably the car he bought in July 2000 (see [Early July 2000](#)). The other is an Oldsmobile Alero, leased from a company in Boca Raton, but this is located later in the day. ([Babington 9/12/2001](#); [WESH 2 \(Orlando/Daytona\) 9/12/2001](#); [CNN 9/13/2001](#)) About six weeks later, the Pontiac and another unspecified car that belonged to Atta and Marwan Alshehhi are found at a used car dealership in Tamarac, Florida, near Fort Lauderdale. The hijackers reportedly sold them a week before 9/11. ([CNN 10/26/2001](#); [CNN 10/28/2001](#); [Grech 10/29/2001](#)) Also around this time, Brad Warrick, the owner of a Florida company that rented cars to Atta (see [August 6-September 9, 2001](#)), reports finding about a teaspoon of an unidentified white powder in the trunk of a Ford Escort used by Atta in the days before the attacks. The FBI had impounded the car for two weeks after 9/11, and it has not been used since. An FBI spokeswoman says it is unlikely that agents would have missed a suspicious powder and suggests it could be fingerprinting dust. ([Grech 10/29/2001](#); [Reuters 10/29/2001](#); [Weiss 10/30/2001](#))

September 12-Late September, 2001: FBI Agent Disgusted about Information CIA Hid from Him that Could Have Stopped 9/11 Attacks



Abu Jandal. [Source: CNN] On the day of 9/11, FBI agent Ali Soufan happens to be in Yemen, working on the recently reopened USS *Cole* bombing investigation there. For nearly a year, the CIA had hidden all information about the January 2000 al-Qaeda summit in Malaysia from Soufan (see [Late October-Late November 2000](#) and [Early December 2000](#)). On September 12, 2001, he is sent a packet of information containing a complete report about the Malaysia summit and three surveillance photos from it. According to author Lawrence Wright, “When Soufan realized that the [CIA] and some people in the [FBI] had known for more than a year and a half that two of the hijackers were in the [US], he ran into the bathroom and retched.” Using the new information, he interrogates Fahad al-Quso, an attendee of the Malaysia summit, and after a few days al-Quso admits to recognizing 9/11 hijacker Marwan Alshehhi, whom he met in Kandahar, Afghanistan near the end of 1999. Abu Jandal, bin Laden’s bodyguard, happens to be in custody in Yemen as well. After some more days, Jandal tells Soufan everything that he knows about al-Qaeda. He recognizes photos of Alshehhi, Mohamed Atta, Khalid Almihdhar, and four other 9/11 hijackers, from when they were in al-Qaeda camps in Afghanistan. ([Wright 2006, pp. 362-367](#))

September 12, 2001-September 2005: Duration of WTC Collapse in Dispute

Following the attacks, there is no agreement on the speed with which the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center collapsed on 9/11 (see [9:59 a.m. September 11, 2001](#) and [10:28 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). The 9/11 Commission says that the South Tower collapsed in “ten seconds” and the National Institute of Standards and Technology says that tops of the buildings came down “essentially in free fall.” ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 305](#); [National Institute of Standards and Technology 9/2005, pp. 146](#).) In the dispute over the reason for the WTC’s collapse after 9/11, it is claimed that, if the towers fell in ten seconds, then this is evidence they were destroyed by explosives. For example, David Ray Griffin, a theologian and outspoken critic of commission’s report, writes, “For a 1,300-foot building, however, ten seconds is almost free-fall speed. But if each floor produced just a little resistance, so that breaking through each one took half a second, the collapse of all those floors—80 or 95 of them—would have taken 40 to 47 seconds. Can we really believe that the upper part of the buildings encountered virtually no resistance from the lower part?” ([Griffin 2004, pp. 16](#)) But according to Canadian scientist Frank Greening, who studies the Twin Towers’ collapse, the freefall time would be about 9.6 seconds, and he calculates that it takes longer for the buildings to fall—twelve to thirteen

and a half seconds—and states this does not indicate that explosives were used.
([Canadian Broadcasting Corporation 8/25/2005](#))

September 12, 2001-September 2005: Weight of WTC Towers in Dispute



Ronald Hamburger, a member of NIST's WTC team and advocate of the 'piledriver' theory. [*Source: National Council of Structural Engineers' Associations*] After 9/11, the scientists investigating the WTC collapse give very different figures for the buildings' weight. Some sources say that each building weighed 500,000 tons. For example, MIT professor Thomas Eager writes, "The total weight of each tower was about 500,000 t." ([Ashley 10/9/2001](#); [Eagar and Musso 12/2001](#); [Frank Greening 2/16/2006, pp. 23](#) ³; [Tyson 8/2006](#)) However, the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) states that the buildings weighed only 250,000 tons each. ([National Institute of Standards and Technology 9/2005, pp. 32](#) ³) One theory explaining the building's total collapse is that the upper section acts as a "piledriver" and smashes through the floors below it. ([Barter 9/13/2001](#); [Shwartz 12/5/2001](#)) The heavier the upper block above the impact zone, the more likely it is to be able to destroy the other floors as it falls.

September 12-November 9, 2001: Two More Movers Arrested in US; Suspected to Be Israeli Spies

Five Israeli men working for the Urban Moving Systems company had been arrested on 9/11 over suspicions that they had foreknowledge of the 9/11 attacks (see [3:56 p.m. September 11, 2001](#)), and now two more Israeli men working for the same company are arrested. The two men, Roy Barak and Motti Butbul, are driving one of their company's moving vans in northern Pennsylvania when they are pulled over and arrested at around noon on September 12, 2001. Barak has overstayed his six-month visa and Butbul has no work permit. Both were in the Israeli military, Barak as an ex-paratrooper and Butbul as a cook. Barak says he worked for Urban Moving Systems since the summer of 2000. The two are detained and sometimes kept in solitary confinement, but they later claim no ill

treatment. Barak will later recall that US interrogators were most interested if he was connected to the Mossad, the Israeli intelligence agency. “They asked if someone sent me to the United States. They asked me if I worked in a moving company so I could monitor people’s movements.” He is given polygraph tests and claims to have satisfied his questioners except on the issue of who sent him to the US. On November 9, 2001, both are deported back to Israel. ([Galloway 11/18/2001](#))

(September 11-27, 2001): FBI Leads Examination of Flight 93 Crash Scene; Supposedly Recovers 95 Percent of Plane

The first FBI agents arrive at the Flight 93 crash scene soon after it goes down. ([Kashurba 2002, pp. 60](#)) Due to the criminal nature of the crash, the FBI becomes lead authority for the investigation of the site. Attempts are made to have the area declared a federal disaster, but these are unsuccessful. ([Shepardson 1/2002](#)) For about two weeks, the FBI’s evidence recovery team of about 150 agents goes over the site with sifters, filtering evidence from the soil. It recovers about 510 pounds of human remains. ([Longman 2002, pp. 259](#); [Wright 9/9/2002](#)) Despite the lack of wreckage reported by those first at the crash scene (see [\(After 10:06 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), the FBI claims that it recovers 95 percent of the plane. The largest piece found, it says, is a seven-foot-long piece of the fuselage skin, including four windows. With the exception of the two black boxes, all wreckage is passed on to United Airlines. Asked what United will do with this, a spokeswoman says, “I don’t think a decision has been made... but we’re not commenting.” ([CNN 9/24/2001](#); [Gibb 9/25/2001](#)) While conducting its investigation of the crash site, the FBI overrules a plan to carefully map the area and mark the positions of debris so as to determine exactly how Flight 93 crashed, claiming this would be too time-consuming (see [September 16, 2001](#)). ([Longman 2002, pp. 262](#)) After it completes its work, the site becomes the responsibility of the county coroner, who continues the search for remains. ([Longman 2002, pp. 258-259](#))

(September 11, 2001-May 2002): Little-Known City Agency Takes Charge of Ground Zero Cleanup Operation



Kenneth Holden. [Source: Public domain] The New York City agency that oversees the Ground Zero cleanup operation following the 9/11 attacks is the Department of Design and Construction (DDC). ([Glanz and Lipton 2004, pp. 299](#)) This obscure 1,300-man bureaucracy is normally responsible for overseeing municipal construction contracts, such as street repairs and jails. Its two top officials are Kenneth Holden and his lieutenant, Michael Burton. ([Langewiesche 2002, pp. 9](#)) Burton is in lower Manhattan the morning of 9/11, instead of in his office in Queens, for a meeting at City Hall, just a few blocks away from the World Trade Center. ([Rubin 4/22/2002](#)) That afternoon, he meets Holden and together they begin organizing the cleanup operation. By 5:30 p.m., the group of workers they have assembled gains permission to explore the WTC ruins. Under Burton's direction, the team of "unbuilders" subsequently undertakes what journalist William Langewiesche describes as "the most aggressive possible schedule of demolition and debris removal." Yet this appears to go against established procedures. On previous occasions the standard emergency response to natural or man-made disasters in the US, such as the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing, was to rapidly nationalize efforts on the ground, under the direction of FEMA and the Army Corps of Engineers. ([Langewiesche 2002, pp. 66, 90, 94, 146](#)) New York's official emergency plans, which were written before 9/11, in fact require the Department of Sanitation to remove debris after a building collapse. A mid-level official who was involved in writing the latest plans mentions a week after 9/11 that she doesn't even know quite what the DDC is. DDC's only previous experiences of dealing with emergencies are a sinking EMS station in Brooklyn, caused by a water leak, and a structural failure at Yankee Stadium. According to Langewiesche, there is no specific moment when Holden and Burton are placed in charge of the Ground Zero cleanup effort. "Rather, there was a shift of power in their direction that was never quite formalized and, indeed, was unjustified by bureaucratic logic or political considerations." Reportedly, at some point, Mayor Rudolph Giuliani made a "back-room decision to scrap the organization charts, to finesse the city's own Office of Emergency Management (OEM), and to allow the DDC to proceed." ([Langewiesche 2002, pp. 66, 88 and 118](#); [Rubin 4/22/2002](#)) The Ground Zero cleanup operation officially ends in May 2002. ([CBS News 5/16/2002](#); [LeDuff 5/29/2002](#))

(September 12-17, 2001): FAA Investigator Astonished at Precision of Four Hijacked Planes

After arriving at FAA headquarters on September 12, Tony Ferrante, the manager of FAA investigations, spends several days working out the movements of the four hijacked

planes. He is astonished at the precision with which they were flown towards their targets, later saying, “[I]t was almost as though it was choreographed.... It’s not as easy as it looks to do what they did at 500 miles an hour.” He concludes that either the hijackers were better pilots than originally thought, or they were aided by additional equipment such as radios to communicate among the four planes or handheld Global Positioning System (GPS) equipment. ([Freni 2003, pp. 74 and 76](#))

(September 12, 2001-May 2002): Recovery Workers Find WTC Pulverized to Dust from Collapses

Workers involved in the cleanup at Ground Zero find that much of the World Trade Center towers and their contents have been pulverized to dust. Charlie Vitchers, a construction superintendent who oversees the operation, says, “Apart from recoveries, we didn’t find one thing. Nothing. Not even a file cabinet.... As we were working on the pile, people were saying, ‘We’re not finding anything.’” He adds, “We weren’t going to find anything that was made out of wood. But you think we would have found a computer.... We found cell phones. We found shoes. But with regard to furniture, nothing, not a thing, not a desk, not a wall panel.... [F]or the most part there was nothing in the pile of debris that was recognizable.” Crane operator Bobby Gray says, “I don’t remember seeing carpeting or furniture. You’d think a metal file cabinet would make it, but I don’t remember seeing any, or phones, computers, none of that stuff. There were areas where there were no fires, which is not to say that they didn’t experience tremendous heat anyway. But even in areas that never burned we didn’t find anything.” He comments, “It was just so hard to comprehend that everything could have been pulverized to that extent. How do you pulverize carpet or filing cabinets?” ([Stout, Vitchers, and Gray 2006, pp. 143-144](#)) According to Greg Meeker of the US Geological Survey, “Six million sq ft of masonry, 5 million sq ft of painted surfaces, 7 million sq ft of flooring, 600,000 sq ft of window glass, 200 elevators, and everything inside came down as dust” when the towers collapsed. “The only thing that didn’t get pulverized was the WTC towers’ 200,000 tons of structural steel.” ([Dalton 10/20/2003](#)) Some people will later claim that this complete pulverization of the WTC is evidence of the towers having been brought down deliberately, using explosives. ([Griffin 2004, pp. 26](#); [Griffin and Scott 2006, pp. 46-47](#))

Shortly After September 11, 2001: Perle Says Iraq ‘Has to Pay a Price for’ 9/11

According to a later account provided by CIA Director George Tenet, he bumps into Pentagon adviser Richard Perle in the White House who tells him, “Iraq has to pay a price for what happened yesterday, they bear responsibility.” Tenet, recalling his reaction to Perle’s statement, later says, “I’ve got the manifest with me that tells me al-Qaeda did this. Nothing in my head that says there is any Iraqi involvement in this in any way shape or form and I remember thinking to myself, as I’m about to go brief the president, ‘What the hell is he talking about?’” (Note: Tenet says in his book that this incident happened on

September 12; however, after Perle insists that he was not in the country that day, Tenet concedes that it may have happened a little later). ([Tenet 2007](#); [CBS News 4/29/2007](#); [CNN 4/30/2007](#)) On September 16, 2001, Perle will hint in a CNN interview that Iraq should be punished for the 9/11 attacks (see [September 16, 2001](#)).

Shortly After September 11, 2001: Taliban's Main Arms Dealer Switches Sides Again, Works with US Against Taliban

In 2007, Los Angeles Times journalist Steven Braun, coauthor of a book on arms dealer Victor Bout, will claim, "We now know that one of Bout's pals approached an American intelligence agent soon after the [9/11] attacks, suggesting that the US use his operation in arming the Northern Alliance against the Taliban and al-Qaeda. We don't know for sure if the US accepted, but European intelligence officials believe a relationship blossomed. Within two years, Bout was flying for us not only in Iraq, but also in Afghanistan." ([Silverstein 7/26/2007](#)) Prior to 9/11, Bout was the main arms dealer for the Taliban, greatly assisting al-Qaeda in the process. He had been supplying weapons to the Northern Alliance until about 1996, but switched sides once the Taliban gained the upper hand in the conflict (see [October 1996-early 2002](#)). Braun will claim, "The US military insisted they had no responsibility for Bout's hiring, because, as [Deputy Defense Secretary] Paul Wolfowitz said, he was a 'second-tier contractor'-in other words, hired by, say, [Kellogg, Brown, and Root] or FedEx, not directly by the Army or the Marines. But there were other reports of direct contracts. [The Defense Department] made no effort to put Bout on a no-fly list early on, and made only perfunctory follow-up efforts to find out the backgrounds of the companies flying for them." ([Silverstein 7/26/2007](#)) But despite these alleged US ties, it will also be reported that Bout will help al-Qaeda and the Taliban transport gold in 2002 (see [Summer 2002](#)).

6:00 p.m. September 12, 2001: Bush Tells Pentagon Audience that US Is at War; Urges Broad Military Response

President Bush gives a private speech at the Pentagon to military leaders. Accompanied by Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Bush instructs his military audience to think about a response to 9/11 in the broadest possible terms. Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Douglas Feith will later recall, "The president said that this was a war, and that it was the Pentagon's responsibility. He wanted it fought in the right spirit. People came away saying it was clear he wasn't talking about half-measures." ([Burrough et al. 5/2004](#))

September 13, 2001: Bush and Saudi Ambassador Discuss Evacuating Saudis and Terrorist Renditions

President Bush and Prince Bandar, the Saudi ambassador to the US, hold a private meeting at the White House. Vice President Cheney, National Security Adviser Rice, and Bandar's aide Rihab Massoud also attend. ([Woodward 2006, pp. 80](#)) Bandar is so close to the Bush family that he is nicknamed "Bandar Bush." Sen. Bob Graham (D) later will note that while little is known about what is discussed in the meeting, mere hours later, the first flights transporting Saudi royals and members of the bin Laden family are in the air (see [September 13, 2001](#)). Over the next week, they will be taken to several gathering points, and then flown back to Saudi Arabia, apparently without first being properly interviewed by the FBI (see [September 14-19, 2001](#)). Graham will say, "Richard Clarke, then the White House's counterterrorism tsar, told me that he was approached by someone in the White House seeking approval for the departures. He did not remember who made the request... The remaining question is where in the White House the request originated, and how." Graham will imply that, ultimately, the request originated from this meeting between Bush and Bandar. ([Graham and Nussbaum 2004, pp. 105-107](#)) Others also will later suggest that it was Bandar who pushed for and helped arrange the flights. ([Unger 10/2003](#); [Baer 10/29/2003](#)) Bob Woodward will mention in a 2006 book that during the meeting, Bush tells Bandar, "If we [capture] somebody and we can't get them to cooperate, we'll hand them over to you." Woodward will later comment, "With these words, the president casually expressed what became the US government's rendition policy-the shifting of terrorist suspects from country to country for interrogation.... Though the Saudis denied it, the CIA believe the Saudis tortured terrorist suspects to make them talk." ([Woodward 2006, pp. 80](#))

September 13, 2001: Saudi Royals Fly to Kentucky in Violation of Domestic Flight Ban

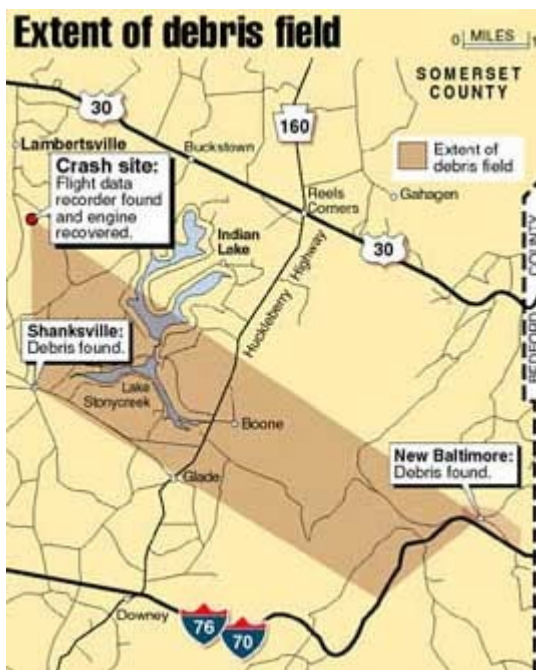
After a complete air flight ban in the US began during the 9/11 attacks, some commercial flights begin resuming this day. However, all private flights are still banned from flying. Nonetheless, at least one private flight carrying Saudi royalty takes place on this day. And in subsequent days, other flights carry royalty and bin Laden family members. These flights take place even as fighters escort down three other private planes attempting to fly. Most of the Saudi royals and bin Ladens in the US at the time are high school or college students and young professionals. ([Tyler 9/30/2001](#); [Unger 10/2003](#)) The first flight is a Lear Jet that leaves from a private Raytheon hangar in Tampa, Florida, and takes three Saudis to Lexington, Kentucky. ([Steele 10/5/2001](#)) This flight apparently takes place several hours after a private meeting between President Bush and Prince Bandar, the Saudi ambassador to the US. Some think the idea of the flights were approved at that meeting (see [September 13, 2001](#)). For two years, this violation of the air ban is denied by the FAA, FBI, and White House, and decried as an urban legend except for one article detailing them in a Tampa newspaper. ([Steele 10/5/2001](#)) Finally, in 2003, counterterrorism "tsar" Richard Clarke confirms the existence of these flights, and Secretary of State Powell confirms them as well. ([MSNBC 9/7/2003](#); [Unger 10/2003](#)) However, the White House remains silent on the matter. ([Lichtblau 9/4/2003](#)) Officials at the Tampa International Airport finally confirm this first flight in 2004. But whether the flight violated the air ban or not rests on some technicalities that remain unresolved.

([Lexington Herald-Leader 6/10/2004](#)) The Saudis are evacuated to Saudi Arabia over the next several days (see [September 14-19, 2001](#)).

September 13, 2001: White House Announces Bin Laden-9/11 Connection

The White House announces that there is “overwhelming evidence” that Bin Laden is behind the attacks. ([MSNBC 9/13/2001](#))

September 13, 2001: Wide Flight 93 Debris Field Spurs Rumors Flight Was Shot Down



A map of the Flight 93 debris field. [Source: *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*] Investigators say they have found debris from the Flight 93 crash far from the main crash site. A second debris field centers around Indian Lake about three miles from the crash scene, where eyewitnesses report seeing falling debris only moments after the crash. More debris is found in New Baltimore, some eight miles away. Later in the day, the investigators say all that debris likely was blown there. ([NPA 9/13/2001](#); [Gibb, O'Toole, and Lash 9/13/2001](#)) Another debris field is found six miles away, and human remains are found miles away. State police and the FBI have cordoned off an area where there is plane debris, about six to eight miles from the main crash site. After all of this is discovered, the FBI still “stresses” that “no evidence [has] surfaced” to support the idea that the plane was shot down. ([CNN 9/13/2001](#); [Gibb, O'Toole, and Lash 9/13/2001](#)) A half-ton piece of one of the engines is found 2,000 yards away from the main crash site. This was the single heaviest piece recovered from the crash. ([Irvine 12/28/2001](#); [Carlin 8/13/2002](#)) Days later, the FBI says the wide debris field was probably the result of the explosion on impact. The Independent nevertheless later cites

the wide debris field as one of many reasons why widespread rumors remain that the plane was shot down. ([Gumbel 9/20/2001](#))

September 13, 2001: Series of Unusual Circumstances Said to Make Hijacked Passenger Cell Phone Calls Possible

It is reported that the many phone calls made by passengers from the hijacked flights are normally technically impossible to make. A major cell phone carrier spokeswoman claims, “Those were a series of circumstances that made those calls go through, which would not be repeated under normal circumstances.” Supposedly, the calls worked because they were made when the planes were close to the ground and they were kept short. ([Batista 9/13/2001](#)) However, many of the cell phone calls were made from high cruising altitudes and lasted ten minutes or more. The New York Times later reports, “According to industry experts, it is possible to use cell phones with varying success during the ascent and descent of commercial airline flights, although the difficulty of maintaining a signal appears to increase as planes gain altitude. Some older phones, which have stronger transmitters and operate on analog networks, can be used at a maximum altitude of ten miles, while phones on newer digital systems can work at altitudes of five to six miles. A typical airline cruising altitude would be 35,000 feet, or about 6.6 miles.” ([Suellentrop 9/14/2001](#)) A spokesperson for the AT&T phone company notes that cell phone networks are not designed for calls from high altitudes. She suggests that “it was almost a fluke that the calls reached their destinations.” ([Harter 11/1/2001](#))

September 13-14, 2001: Flight 93 Black Boxes Found



Flight 93's flight data recorder, found at the crash site in Shanksville. [Source: *US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division*] Around 4:50 p.m. on September 13, investigators discover the flight data recorder from Flight 93, one of the plane's two "black boxes." It is buried about 15 feet down in the main crater at the crash site, near Shanksville, Pennsylvania. Around 8:25 p.m. the following evening, the other 'black box'—the plane's cockpit voice recorder—is found about 25 feet below ground in roughly the same spot. ([Gibb, O'Toole, and Lash 9/13/2001](#); [Smith 9/15/2001](#); [Longman 2002, pp. 217](#)) The flight data recorder monitors

airplane functions like its speed and altitude, while the cockpit voice recorder picks up conversations in the plane's cockpit. ([Silver 9/14/2001](#)) Both are mounted in a plane's tail. They are encased in very strong materials, like titanium, and insulated so as to withstand a crash impact. ([NPA 9/15/2001](#)) Wells Morrison, the FBI's second in command at the Flight 93 crash scene, later comments, "It was strange. The black boxes are right next to each other on the aircraft, but one was found thirteen feet deeper into the crater than the other... We were surprised, quite honestly, that we didn't find them sooner." ([Kashurba 2002, pp. 109 and 115](#)) The cockpit voice recorder is sent to the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) in Washington, and then on to its manufacturer, Honeywell, to try to extract information from it. ([CBS News 9/16/2001](#); [Silver 11/4/2001](#)) It is supposedly the only one from the four hijacked flights to have survived the crash impact and ensuing fire. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 456](#)) In April 2002, the 31-minute recording from it is played in private to victims' relatives (see [April 18, 2002](#)). It will be played in public for the first time in April 2006, during the trial of Zacarias Moussaoui (see [April 12, 2006](#)). ([Hirschhorn 4/13/2006](#))

September 13, 2001: French Intelligence Report Indicates Connections Between Osama and Bin Laden Family

A secret French intelligence report from this date is skeptical of the Saudi Binladin Group, the bin Laden family company. Called "Elements on the Financial Resources of bin Laden," the report discusses a powerful banker apparently connected to the company who was once close to the Saudi royal family and is the chief architect of a plan "that seems to have been used for the transfer to the terrorist of funds that came from the Gulf countries." The report also lists assets believed to be under Osama bin Laden's direct control. In addition to businesses in Sudan, Yemen, Malaysia, and Bosnia, he apparently still owns a hotel in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. Other French reports from before 9/11 also question his ties to the Saudi royal family. One French intelligence official will later say that he and other top French officials "had a lot of difficulty believing that [bin Laden] didn't have any relations with the Saudi monarchy just because he was banished. It was hard to accept." ([Dasquié 4/15/2007](#)) Ironically, the same day this French report is completed, the US allows Saudi royals and members of the bin Laden family to fly out of the US after only cursory FBI checks (see [September 13, 2001](#) and [September 14-19, 2001](#)).

September 13, 2001: CIA Presents President with Plan to Confront Global Terrorism; Claims Victory Can Be Achieved in Weeks

CIA Director George Tenet and Cofer Black, the director of the CIA's Counterterrorist Center, meet at 9:30 a.m. in the White House Situation Room with President Bush and the National Security Council. Tenet presents a plan for tracking down Osama bin Laden,

toppling the Taliban in Afghanistan, and confronting terrorism worldwide. According to journalist Bob Woodward, the plan involves “bringing together expanded intelligence-gathering resources, sophisticated technology, agency paramilitary teams and opposition forces in Afghanistan in a classic covert action. They would then be combined with US military power and Special Forces into an elaborate and lethal package designed to destroy the shadowy terrorist networks.” A key concept is to utilize the Northern Alliance, which is the main opposition force in Afghanistan. Despite being “a strained coalition of sometimes common interests,” Tenet says that along with the CIA teams “and tons of money, the Alliance could be brought together into a cohesive fighting force.” Black gives a presentation describing the effectiveness of covert action. He says they will need to go after the Taliban as well as al-Qaeda, as the two are joined at the hip. He wants the mission to begin as soon as possible, and adds, “When we’re through with them, they will have flies walking across their eyeballs.” Black claims that once they are on the ground, victory could be achieved in weeks. According to Bob Woodward, “No one else in the room, including Tenet, believed that was possible.” Black also warns the president, “Americans are going to die.... How many, I don’t know. Could be a lot.” Bush responds, “That’s war. That’s what we’re here to win.” This is the second presentation laying out an increasingly detailed set of CIA proposals for expanding its fight against terrorism. (George Tenet had given the first when he met with the president the day before (see [September 12, 2001](#)).) Tenet will give a more detailed presentation of the CIA’s covert action plan two days later, at Camp David (see [September 15, 2001](#)). ([Woodward 2002, pp. 50-53](#); [Balz, Woodward, and Himmelman 1/29/2002](#); [Kessler 2003, pp. 233-234](#))

September 13, 2001: Company Head Possibly Aware of Todd Beamer Phone Call Before it is Made Public



Larry Ellison. [*Source: Mike Kepka / San Francisco Chronicle*]The head of the company for which Flight 93 passenger Todd Beamer worked appears to be aware of Beamer’s call from the plane before its existence has been made public, and before even Beamer’s wife has been informed of it. Larry Ellison is the CEO of software company Oracle Corporation. In a memo sent out to the company’s employees, he writes, “We know Todd Beamer is dead. We believe he died when he and other passengers aboard Flight 93 tried to recover the hijacked airplane from the terrorists.... Considering the devastation wrought by the other aircraft, it is unquestionable that Todd’s brave actions, and [those] of his fellow passengers, saved countless lives on the ground.” Beamer’s wife Lisa later writes, “Clearly Larry was convinced that Todd had been

involved. How did Larry know that? The FBI hadn't made any announcement to that effect. Todd's name had not shown up in any reports indicating that he might have been involved in some way." The explanation she proposes is that "Larry, like many of us, couldn't imagine Todd Beamer sitting idly by while terrorists threatened to hurt others." ([Cowley 9/13/2001](#); [Associated Press 9/14/2001](#); [Beamer and Abraham 2002, pp. 184-185](#)) Todd Beamer had spoken for 13 minutes to GTE supervisor Lisa Jefferson before Flight 93 crashed (see [9:45 a.m.-9:58 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). Yet the FBI has instructed Jefferson not to inform Beamer's wife of the call, and only lifts this restriction on September 14. Lisa Beamer first learns of her husband's call from Flight 93 on September 14, in a phone call from United Airlines (see [September 14, 2001](#)). ([McKinnon 9/22/2001](#); [Breslau, Clift, and Thomas 11/26/2001](#); [Jefferson 2006](#)) Ellison and Oracle long have had close ties to US intelligence agencies, and in fact the company's name originated from a CIA project code-named "Oracle." ([Wallack 5/20/2002](#))

September 13, 2001: Wolfowitz Hints at Invading Iraq, but Is Publicly Rebuked by Powell

At a public briefing, Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz says, "I think one has to say it's not just simply a matter of capturing people and holding them accountable, but removing the sanctuaries, removing the support systems, ending states who sponsor terrorism. And that's why it has to be a broad and sustained campaign." Secretary of State Colin Powell is alarmed by Wolfowitz's "ending states" comment and thinks it is a reference to invading Iraq. Hours later, Powell responds during another press briefing: "We're after ending terrorism. And if there are states and regimes, nations that support terrorism, we hope to persuade them that it is in their interest to stop doing that. But I think ending terrorism is where I would like to leave it, and let Mr. Wolfowitz speak for himself." According to journalist Dan Balz, that afternoon there is another National Security Council meeting. Powell says to Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman General Shelton in a private moment, "You've got to keep these guys [neoconservatives like Wolfowitz] in a box. I don't know what's going on over there, but this whole—all of this Iraq stuff is a problem." According to Balz, General Shelton agrees that attacking Iraq is not a smart thing to do, but Shelton has already submitted his resignation and will not have a role in the decision. ([PBS Frontline 2/20/2003](#))

September 13, 2001-September 14, 2001: 18 Hijackers Named, Mysterious Name and Then Hanjour's Name Follows One Day Later

G*L11805/DN									
RA	11 11SEP	BOS B32	745R 757 ON LIST	F9C19Y53					
1	ALSHERRY	WILL	P LAX 2A-F	1	80	LF	CLUB	ET	
2	ALSHERRY	WILL	P LAX 2B-F	NB	50	LF	CLUB	ET	
3	MORRITO	LAURA	P LAX 2D-F	0	50	LF	TKT	PS	
4	RETTK	DAVID	X LAX 2H-F	NB	50	LF	CLUB	AB	
							ET	PPR	
5	ROSS	RICHA	P LAX 2J-F						
6	NEWELL	RENEE	P LAX 3A-F						SUNSHINE P O BOX ORLANDO
7	BOUCHARD	CAROL	P LAX 3B-E						
8	FLYZIK	CAROL	X LAX 3H-F						
9	PUDPOLO	SONIA	P LAX 3J-F						
10	HACKEL FAR	PAGE	U LAX 7A-F						
11	ANGELL	DAVID AG2	U LAX 8A-F						
12	ANGELL	LYNN AG2	U LAX 8B-F						
13	ATTA	MOHAM AG2	J LAX 8D-F						
14	ALOMARI	ABDUL AG2	J LAX 8G-F						
15	GLAZER	EDMUN	R LAX 9A-F						
16	LEVIN	DANIE	R LAX 9D-F						
17	DAY	PETER	R LAX 9H-F						
18	HAYES	ROBER	M LAX 9J-F						
19	HENNESSY	EDUAR	R LAX 10A-F						
20	AL SUQARI	SATAM	J LAX 10B-F						
21	WALSTROM	MARY AG2	C LAX 10H-F						
22	CURRYVAN	PATRI	J LAX 10J-F						
23	CURRYGREEN	ANDRE	R LAX 11A-F						
24	MELLO	CHRIS	R LAX 11B-F						
25	DEUG	CAROL AG2	C LAX 11D-F						
26	ROSENZWEIG	PHILI	R LAX 11G-F						

None of the manifests for the hijacked flights have ever been released, except for this partially obscured page which appears in Terry McDermott's 2005 book, *Perfect Soldiers*. McDermott has not explained how or where he got this document. Names of the five hijackers are highlighted. [Source: *Terry McDermott*] On September 13, the FBI says there were 18 hijackers, and releases their names. Hani Hanjour's name is not on the list. ([CNN 9/13/2001](#)) On the morning of the next day, CNN announces on the air that "CNN managed to grab a list of the names of the 18 suspected hijackers that is supposed to be officially released by justice sometime later today." An announcer reads the list, which actually contains 19 names. It is the same list as the day before, except for one new name: Mosear Caned. (Note that the name is a very rough phonetic spelling from a CNN transcript.) ([CNN 9/14/2001](#)) Later in the day, the list is revised. Caned is gone and is replaced by Hani Hanjour. It is never explained who Caned is, how he got on the list, or even how his name is correctly spelled. No name even remotely similar to his appears on any of the released manifests of the hijacked 9/11 flights. ([CNN 9/14/2001](#); [Barakat 9/14/2001](#)) A few days later, it is reported that Hanjour's "name was not on the American Airlines manifest for [Flight 77] because he may not have had a ticket." ([Washington Post 9/16/2001](#))

[September 13-December 19, 2001: Investigators Work to Identify Flight 93 Victims](#)

Human remains from the Flight 93 crash site are moved to a temporary morgue that has been set up at the Pennsylvania National Guard Armory, several miles away in Friedensburg. High-tech mortuary equipment has been brought to the armory in a tractor-trailer. ([Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency 9/12/2001](#); [WTAE-TV 9/13/2001](#)) 75 to 100 specialists, including pathologists and fingerprint experts, are involved in the attempt to identify the remains. Forensic anthropologist Dennis Dirkmaat says that

because the remains have suffered “extreme fragmentation,” most will need to be identified using DNA analysis. ([Snyder and Shaver 9/14/2001](#)) When remains cannot be identified at the temporary morgue, samples are sent on to the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory in Rockville, Maryland, where samples from the Pentagon crash are also being analyzed (see [September 11-November 16, 2001](#)). ([Lash 9/25/2001](#); [Oliva 10/8/2001](#); [KCRA 12/20/2001](#)) By December 19, the remains of all 40 passengers and crew from Flight 93 have been identified, using fingerprints, dental records, and DNA. Investigators have, by a process of elimination, also been able to isolate genetic profiles of the four hijackers. ([Levin 12/30/2001](#); [Shepardson 1/2002](#); [Associated Press 2/26/2002](#); [Stripe 9/20/2002](#)) Searchers recovered about 510 pounds of human remains at the crash scene, equaling about eight percent of the total bodyweight on the plane. According to Somerset County Coroner Wallace Miller, everything else was vaporized. ([Perl 5/12/2002](#); [Wright 9/9/2002](#); [Crawford 3/28/2004](#))

September 13, 2001-June 2002: Conflicting Reports Describe Plane Wreckage Found at Ground Zero

In February 2002, the Associated Press reports that the only remaining pieces of the planes that hit the WTC at the Staten Island landfill, where workers are sorting through the debris from Ground Zero, are some pieces of landing gear and a piece of Flight 175's fuselage. FBI spokesman Joseph Valiquette says, “So little (airplane) debris has been recovered that there's really no way to quantify it.” ([CBS News 2/23/2002](#); [Associated Press 2/24/2002](#)) Yet other reports contradict this. According to the New York Times, soon after 9/11, rescue workers find “large sections of one of the airplanes, including passenger seats,” which had landed on the roof and scaffolding on a small skyscraper at 90 West Street. ([Lipton and Glanz 6/8/2002](#); [Collins 3/5/2004](#)) Some early reports even claim that a cockpit of one of the planes and some plane seats with the remains of passengers strapped into them have been found in the WTC debris (See [September 12-14, 2001](#)). Other recovered plane wreckage includes life jackets and portions of seats found on the roof of the nearby Bankers Trust building. One of the planes' jet engines and a landing gear from Flight 175 are found in streets nearby. ([Civil Engineering 5/2002](#); [Federal Emergency Management Agency 5/1/2002, pp. 2-16, 2-31](#)) In June 2002, parts of one plane's luggage racks are found among debris in adjacent buildings. ([Associated Press 6/8/2002](#); [Lipton and Glanz 6/8/2002](#))

September 13, 2001-Mid 2002: 9/11 Hijackers' Associate Cooperates with FBI



Mohamed el-Atriss produced fake ID cards for the 9/11 hijackers. *[Source: Associated Press]* Mohamed el-Atriss, who supplied some of the hijackers with fake IDs (see [July-August 2001](#)), is visited by FBI agents and begins to help them with their inquiries. ([Russakoff 2/5/2003](#); [Schwanberg 10/20/2003](#)) El-Atriss turns over his files to the FBI and, according to his lawyer, promises to “keep his eyes and ears open” for other Islamic militants. He tells the FBI he did not know the hijackers’ intentions when he sold them the ID cards. ([Kelly 9/11/2006](#)) He is interviewed extensively by federal authorities over the next few months and successfully passes a lie detector test confirming he did not know they intended to hijack a plane. ([Schwanberg 10/20/2003](#)) However, authorities plant an electronic surveillance device inside a printer he orders, to monitor who he is making documents for. ([Kelly 9/11/2006](#)) El-Atriss’ usefulness suffers a setback when a local sheriff raids his business and arrests him in 2002 (see [July 31, 2002](#)), apparently without the FBI’s approval (see [July 31, 2002 and After](#)).

(September 13-27, 2001): ‘Hot Spots’ Found in the Ground at Flight 93 Crash Scene

At the Flight 93 crash site, an excavator digs through the soil where the plane impacted. ([Dangel 9/6/2006](#)) It takes scoops of dirt and dumps them into a high-lift bucket, which takes the dirt to a flagged off area and slowly dumps it there. A couple of FBI men then search through it with their hands. Occasionally, the excavator digs into a “hot spot” in the earth, causing a small fire. The Shanksville Volunteer Fire Department has to be called in to extinguish these fires. ([Kashurba 2002, pp. 56 and 128](#)) The cause of the ‘hot spots’ is unknown.

September 12, 2001 and Shortly After: 9/11 Hijackers’ IDs Are Found in Pentagon Rubble



Majed Moqed's identification card found in the rubble. *[Source: FBI]* Two or three documents belonging to the Flight 77 hijackers are found in the rubble at the Pentagon. One is a "Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Student Identity Card" with Majed Moqed's name on it. Forensic examination will later indicate that the card may have been fraudulent. ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 44](#)) Another is Nawaf Alhazmi's USA ID card. ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 27, 42](#); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#)) The 9/11 Commission will say that Salem Alhazmi's USA ID is also found, although this will not be mentioned at the trial of Zacarias Moussaoui, where an otherwise exhaustive list of the hijackers' ID found at the crash sites is submitted. ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 27, 42](#); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#)) In addition, the Commission will say that Salem Alhazmi was unable to produce a photo ID when checking in for his flight on 9/11 (see [\(7:25 a.m.-7:36 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), so it is unclear how the document could have come to be at the Pentagon. Based on report from the Secret Service, the 9/11 Commission will say these two documents appear genuine. However, they may actually be fakes (see [\(July-August 2001\)](#)). ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 27](#)) There are at least a couple of other reported instances of other similar paper-based objects surviving the same plane crash, as well as that of Flight 93 in Pennsylvania (see [After 10:06 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). ([Hatcher 9/10/2004](#))

September 12, 2001 and Shortly After: 9/11 Hijackers' Effects Found at Flight 93 Crash Site



A business card of Assem Jarrah, Ziad's uncle. *[Source: FBI]* Several effects apparently belonging to Flight 93 hijackers are recovered from the crash site in Somerset County. They are:

- A Saudi Arabian ID card of Ahmed Alnami; ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#))

- A Saudi Arabian Youth Hostel Association card of Ahmed Alnami; ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#))
- Two passport sized photographs of Ahmed Alnami; ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#))
- A charred section of Ziad Jarrah's passport; ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#))
- Saeed Alghamdi's Saudi Arabian passport; ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#))
- A business card of Assem Jarrah, Ziad's uncle. It has Ramzi bin al-Shibh's Hamburg address written on the back; ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 3/7/2006](#); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#))
- Part of Ahmed Alnami's Florida driving license; ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#))
- A red bandana (a passenger on Flight 93 described the hijackers as using red bandanas, though this could have been someone else's bandana (see [\(9:37 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#))

September 14, 2001: FBI Director Caught in Whopper



FBI Director Robert Mueller. [*Source: FBI*] FBI Director Mueller describes reports that several of the hijackers had received flight training in the US as “news, quite obviously,” adding, “If we had understood that to be the case, we would have—perhaps one could have averted this.” It will later be discovered that contrary to Mueller's claims, the FBI had interviewed various flight school staffs about Middle Eastern militants on numerous occasions, from 1996 until a few weeks before 9/11. ([Cullen and Ranalli 9/18/2001](#); [Fainaru and Grimaldi 9/23/2001](#)) Three days later, he says, “There were no warning signs that I'm aware of that would indicate this type of operation in the country.” ([US Department of Justice 9/17/2001](#)) Slate magazine will

contrast this with numerous other contradictory statements and articles, and will award Mueller the “Whopper of the Week.” ([Noah 5/17/2002](#))

September 14, 2001: Deutsche Bank Exec Resigns, Prompting Speculations of 9/11 Connection

Mayo Shattuck III resigns, effective immediately, as head of the Alex Brown unit of Deutsche Bank. No reason is given. Some speculate later that this could have to do with the role of Deutsche Bank in the pre-9/11 purchases of put options on the stock of companies most affected by 9/11. Deutsche Bank is also one of the four banks most used by the bin Laden family. ([New York Times 9/15/2001](#); [Golden, Bandler, and Walker 9/27/2001](#))

September 14, 2001: Revealed: Saudi Students May Attend Florida Flight Schools Without Background Checks

In interviews with the Boston Globe, flight instructors in Florida say that it was common for students with Saudi affiliations to enter the US with only cursory background checks and sometimes none. Some flight schools, including some of those attended by the hijackers, have exemptions that allow the schools to unilaterally issue paperwork that students can present at US embassies and consulates so they can obtain visas. Saudi Arabia is possibly the only Arab country with such an exemption. ([Socolovsky 7/17/2002](#))

September 14, 2001: Head of Shadowy Company Flees US

Dominick Suter, owner of the company Urban Moving Systems, flees the country to Israel. The FBI later tells ABC News, “Urban Moving may have been providing cover for an Israeli intelligence operation.” Suter has been tied to the five Israeli agents caught filming the WTC attack. The FBI had questioned Suter around September 12, removing boxes of documents and a dozen computer hard drives. However, when the FBI returns a few days later, he is gone. ([New Jersey Department of Law and Public Safety 12/13/2001](#); [Perelman 3/15/2002](#); [ABC News 6/21/2002](#))

September 14, 2001: Account of Fighter Response Times Changes Significantly

CBS News announces that “contrary to early reports, US Air Force jets did get into the air on Tuesday while the attacks were under way.” According to this new account, the first fighters got airborne toward New York City at 8:52 a.m. ([CBS News 9/14/2001](#)) The

day before this announcement, acting Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Richard Myers in congressional testimony stated that the first fighters got airborne only after the Pentagon was hit at 9:37 a.m. ([US Congress 9/13/2001](#)) NORAD spokesman Marine Corps Major Mike Snyder also claimed no fighters launched anywhere until after the Pentagon was hit. ([Johnson 9/15/2001](#)) Four days later, the official NORAD timeline is changed to include this new account. ([North American Aerospace Defense Command 9/18/2001](#)) New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani later testifies before the 9/11 Commission that he found out from the White House at about 9:58 a.m. that the first fighters were not launched toward New York City until twelve minutes earlier—9:46 a.m. ([9/11 Commission 5/19/2004](#)) This would correspond to Myers' and Snyder's accounts that no fighters are scrambled until after the Pentagon is hit. But the 9/11 Commission later agrees with this CBS report and by their account the first fighters launch around 8:52. ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#))

September 14, 2001: Officials Deny Flight 93 Shot Down

Officials deny that Flight 93 was shot down, but propose the theory that the hijackers had a bomb on board and blew up the plane. ([Gazarik and Acton 9/14/2001](#)) Later in the month, it is reported that the “FBI has determined from the on site investigation that no explosive was involved.” ([Gullo 9/25/2001](#))

September 14, 2001: Conflicting Accounts About Planes Near Flight 93's Crash

Officials admit that two planes were near Flight 93 when it crashed, which matches numerous eyewitness accounts. For example, local man Dennis Decker says that immediately after hearing an explosion, “We looked up, we saw a midsize jet flying low and fast. It appeared to make a loop or part of a circle, and then it turned fast and headed out. If you were here to see it, you'd have no doubt. It was a jet plane, and it had to be flying real close when that 757 went down... If I was the FBI, I'd find out who was driving that plane.” ([Pillets 9/14/2001](#)) Later the same day, the military says it can “neither confirm nor deny” the nearby planes. ([Gazarik and Acton 9/14/2001](#)) Two days later, they claim there were two planes near, but that they were a military cargo plane and business jet, and neither had anything to do with the crash. ([Heltzel and Gibb 9/16/2001](#)) Supposedly, the business jet was requested to fly low over the crash site to help rescuers find the crash site, 25 minutes after all aircraft in the US had been ordered to land. However, the story appears physically impossible since the FBI says this jet was at 37,000 feet and asked to descend to 5,000 feet. ([Pittsburgh Channel 9/15/2001](#)) That would have taken many minutes for that kind of plane, and witnesses report seeing the plane flying very low even before the crash. ([Pillets 9/14/2001](#)) Another explanation of a farmer's plane 45 minutes later is put forth, but that also does not fit the time at all. ([Pittsburgh Channel 9/15/2001](#)) Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz states: “We responded awfully quickly, I might say, on Tuesday [9/11], and, in fact, we were already

tracking in on that plane that crashed in Pennsylvania. I think it was the heroism of the passengers on board that brought it down. But the Air Force was in a position to do so if we had had to.” ([Wolfowitz 9/14/2001](#)) The next day, Maj. Gen. Paul Weaver, the director of the Air National Guard denies that any plane was scrambled after Flight 93. ([Seattle Times 9/16/2001](#)) That in turn contradicts what Vice President Cheney will say later. ([Balz and Woodward 1/27/2002](#))

September 14, 2001: Contrary Accounts of Flight 93’s Speed Raises Questions

It is initially reported that Flight 93 is traveling fairly slowly when it crashed. “It slammed into the ground at a speed law enforcement authorities said might have approached 300 mph.” ([New York Times 9/14/2001](#)) “Flight 93 slammed into the earth nose-first at over 200 mph, according to estimates by the National Transportation Safety Board and other experts.” ([Billington 9/16/2001](#)) However, by 2002 it is being reported that the plane crashed going nearly 600 mph. ([Longman 2002, pp. 212](#)) “It could have even broken the sound barrier for a while,” says Hank Krakowski, director of flight operations control at United’s system control center on September 11. ([Longman 3/27/2002](#)) The design limits of the plane are 287 mph when flying below 10,000 feet. ([Longman 2002, pp. 208](#))

September 14, 2001: Lack of Debate About Poor Fighter Response on 9/11

The Miami Herald reports, “Forty-five minutes. That’s how long American Airlines Flight 77 meandered through the air headed for the White House, its flight plan abandoned, its radar beacon silent... Who was watching in those 45 minutes? ‘That’s a question that more and more people are going to ask,’ said one controller in Miami. ‘What the hell went on here? Was anyone doing anything about it? Just as a national defense thing, how are they able to fly around and no one go after them?’” ([Tanfani and Chardy 9/14/2001](#)) In the year after this article and a similar one in the Village Voice ([Ridgeway 9/13/2001](#)), there will be only one other US article questioning slow fighter response times, and that article notes the strange lack of articles on the topic. ([Shuger 1/16/2002](#)) The fighter response issue finally makes news in 9/11 Commission hearings in 2004.

September 14, 2001: President Bush Declares a State of Emergency

President Bush issues a proclamation declaring, “A national emergency exists by reason of the terrorist attacks at the World Trade Center, New York, New York, and the Pentagon, and the continuing and immediate threat of further attacks on the United States.” The national emergency, he states, has existed since September 11. ([US President](#)

[9/17/2001](#)) In furtherance of this proclamation, he authorizes the Pentagon to call up 50,000 reservists to active duty for homeland defense and recovery missions. ([McCaleb 9/14/2001](#); [Associated Press 9/15/2001](#); [US President 9/17/2001](#)) On September 12, 2002, Bush will announce that, “[b]ecause the terrorist threat continues,” this national emergency will continue for an additional year. ([US President 9/16/2002](#)) It does not appear to have been renewed again.

September 14, 2001: Atta-Iraq Spy Meeting Story Begins with Dubious Tip

The CIA intelligence liaison in Prague is told by the Czech intelligence agency (BIS) that one of its informants in the local Prague Arab community believes the Hamburg “student” he had seen meeting with Iraqi diplomat Ahmed Khalil Ibrahim Samir al-Ani on April 8, 2001 in a restaurant outside of Prague was 9/11 plotter Mohamed Atta. (see [April 8, 2001](#)) Czech intelligence treats the claim skeptically because it comes only after Atta’s picture has been broadcast on television and after the Czech press reported that records showed Atta had traveled to Prague. FBI agents go to the Czech Republic and are given full access to Czech intelligence material. This information leads hawks to come up with the so-called “Prague Connection” theory, which holds that 9/11 plotter Mohamed Atta flew to Prague on April 8, met with al-Ani to discuss the planning and financing of the 9/11 attacks, and returned to the US on either April 9 or 10. The theory will be widely debated but generally discounted by the end of 2004. ([Risen 10/21/2002](#); [Safire 11/19/2003](#) Sources: [Jan Kavan](#))

September 14, 2001: Investigators Find Flight 77 Black Boxes, But Accounts Conflict Over Details



✒ Flight 77’s damaged cockpit voice recorder. [*Source: FBI*] At around 3:40 a.m., investigators at the Pentagon recover the two

“black boxes” from Flight 77. ([Drummond 9/14/2001](#)) These boxes are the plane’s flight data recorder and its cockpit voice recorder. ([NPA 9/15/2001](#)) According to Arlington County spokesman Dick Bridges, members of the FBI’s evidence response team found them. ([PBS 9/14/2001](#); [Smith 9/14/2001](#)) But some news reports claim they were found by two Fairfax County firefighters, Carlton Burkhammer and Brian Moravitz, as they combed through debris near the impact site. ([Jackman and Becker 9/19/2001](#); [Newsweek 9/28/2001](#)) And Allyn Kilsheimer, a structural engineer who helps coordinate the emergency response at the Pentagon, later claims he’d “found the black box,” which, he says, he’d “stepped on... by accident.” ([Milke 3/2002](#); [Chertoff et al. 3/2005](#)) According to Dick Bridges, the two recorders are discovered “right where the plane came into the building.” ([Associated Press 9/14/2001](#)) But the American Society of Civil Engineers’ Pentagon Building Performance Report, released in 2003, will claim that the flight data recorder was found “nearly 300 ft into the structure.” ([Mlakar et al. 1/2003, pp. 40](#)) Washington FBI agent Christopher Combs says, “Somebody almost threw [the black boxes] away because they didn’t know what they looked like.” ([Kim 10/30/2002](#)) The boxes are taken to the National Transportation Safety Board’s office in Washington, but are reclaimed by the FBI later on in the morning. ([Drummond 9/14/2001](#)) A flight data recorder tracks an airplane’s flight movements for the last 25 hours, while the cockpit voice recorder contains radio transmissions and sounds from the cockpit for the last 30 minutes of its flight. Both are mounted in the tail of an aircraft and are encased in very strong materials like titanium. According to American Airlines and United Airlines, the black boxes aboard Flight 77 and the other hijacked planes were modern solid-state versions, which are more resistant to damage than older magnetic tape recorders. ([Associated Press 9/15/2001](#); [NPA 9/15/2001](#)) FBI Director Robert Mueller later says that Flight 77’s data recorder has provided altitude, speed, and other information about the flight, but the voice recorder contained “nothing useful.” ([CBS News 2/23/2002](#)) The 9/11 Commission will describe the cockpit voice recorder as being “badly burned and not recoverable.” ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 456](#)) According to CBS News, preliminary information shows that the cockpit voice tape “appears to be blank or erased.” ([CBS News 9/16/2001](#)) The two black boxes from Flight 93 are also recovered around this time (see [September 13-14, 2001](#)).

September 14-October 25, 2001: Egyptian President Reveals Doubts About 9/11 Perpetrators

In interviews, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak raises questions about who was behind the 9/11 attacks, in particular questioning whether the alleged perpetrators had the necessary flying skills to carry out the attacks. Before becoming president, Mubarak had a successful career in the Egyptian Air Force, having been a pilot, instructor, and squadron leader. He’d eventually become director of the Air Force Academy, Air Force chief of staff, commander of the Air Force, and deputy minister for military affairs. ([Egyptian Presidency 1997](#); [George Washington University 6/29/1999](#)) Just days after 9/11, he discusses the attack on the Pentagon, saying, “The Pentagon is not very high, a pilot could come straight to the Pentagon like this to hit, he should have flown a lot in this area to know the obstacles which could meet him when he is flying very low with a

big commercial plane to hit the Pentagon in a special place.” He adds, “Somebody has studied this very well, someone has flown in this area very much.” When asked, “Are you suggesting it was an inside operation?” he replies, “Frankly speaking, I don’t want to jump to conclusions.” ([Egyptian Presidency 9/15/2001](#)) In an interview six weeks later, he repeats his concerns, saying, “I find it hard to believe that people who were learning to fly in Florida could, within a year and a half, fly large commercial airlines and hit with accuracy the towers of the World Trade Center which would appear, to the pilot from the air, the size of a pencil. Only a professional pilot could carry out this mission, not someone who learned to fly for 18 months in Florida.” ([Egyptian Presidency 10/25/2001](#)) Mubarak also later claims that Egyptian intelligence had warned American officials 12 days before 9/11 that al-Qaeda was in the advance stages of conducting a significant operation against a US target (see [August 30, 2001-September 4, 2001](#)). ([Panossian 12/7/2001](#); [Tyler and MacFarquhar 6/4/2002](#))

September 14, 2001: Lisa Beamer First Informed of Husband’s Phone Call From Flight 93



Lisa Beamer. [*Source: NBC*] Since 9/11, Lisa Beamer—whose husband Todd Beamer died on Flight 93—has reportedly had one “nagging question.” According to Newsweek, she’d wondered, “Why had her husband, a man so attached to his cell phone that [she] had to confiscate it when they went on vacation, not called her from the plane? Other passengers had called home from Flight 93 to say goodbye and talk to their loved ones. Why not Todd?” ([Breslau, Clift, and Thomas 11/26/2001](#)) This evening, she receives a call from her family liaison with United Airlines, informing her that the FBI has released information that Todd made a call from the flight: Using a GTE Airfone, he’d spoken to an operator in the Chicago area. The FBI had been keeping the information private until it reviewed the material. The liaison reads her a summary of the call written by Lisa Jefferson, the GTE supervisor with whom Todd had spoken (see [9:45 a.m.-9:58 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). ([Beamer and Abraham 2002, pp. 185-186](#)) During the call, Jefferson had asked Todd if he’d wanted to be connected to his wife. However, as Jefferson later recalls, he’d “said no, that he did not want to upset her as they were expecting their third child in January.” ([Smith 9/5/2002](#)) Instead, he’d asked Jefferson to contact his family if he didn’t “make it out of this.” ([Longman 2002,](#)

pp. 200) In her book, published in 2002, Lisa Beamer writes that she was “so glad he didn’t” contact her from the plane, because, “Had I learned about Todd’s circumstances by hearing his voice from the plane, I no doubt would have lost it.” While Lisa Beamer only learns of her husband’s call from Flight 93 on this day, the CEO of the company for which he’d worked appears to have been aware of its details a day earlier (see [September 13, 2001](#)). (Beamer and Abraham 2002, pp. 184-185 and 201-202)

September 14, 2001: Defense Department Pushes for Invasion of Iraq

A Defense Department paper for a Camp David meeting with top Bush administration officials to take place the next day (see [September 15, 2001](#)) specifies three priority targets for initial action in response to the 9/11 attacks: al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and Iraq. It argues that of the three, al-Qaeda and Iraq pose a strategic threat to the US. Iraq’s alleged long-standing involvement in terrorism is cited, along with its interest in WMDs. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 335, 559](#))

September 14-19, 2001: Bin Laden Family Members, Saudi Royals Quietly Leave US



Khalil bin Laden at the Orlando, Florida, airport, about to be flown out of the country in the days after 9/11. [Source: *Lions Gate Films*] Following a secret flight inside the US that is in violation of a national private airplane flight ban, members of the bin Laden family and Saudi royalty quietly depart the US. The flights are only publicly acknowledged after all the Saudis have left. ([Cullen and Estes 9/21/2001](#); [Tyler 9/30/2001](#)) About 140 Saudis, including around 24 members of the bin Laden family, are passengers in these flights. The identities of most of these passengers are not known. However, some of the passengers include:

- The son of the Saudi Defense Minister Prince Sultan. Sultan is sued in August 2002 for alleged complicity in the 9/11 plot. ([Steele 10/5/2001](#)) He is alleged to have contributed at least \$6 million since 1994 to four charities that finance al-Qaeda. ([Unger 10/2003](#))
- Khalil bin Laden. He has been investigated by the Brazilian government for possible terrorist connections. ([Unger 10/2003](#))
- Abdullah bin Laden and Omar bin Laden, cousins of bin Laden. Abdullah was the US director of the Muslim charity World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY). The governments of India, Pakistan, Philippines, and Bosnia have all accused WAMY of funding terrorism. These two relatives were investigated by the FBI in 1996 (see [February-September 11, 1996](#)) in a case involving espionage, murder, and national

security. Their case is reopened on September 19, right after they leave the country. ([Unger 10/2003](#)) Remarkably, four of the 9/11 hijackers briefly live in the town of Falls Church, Virginia, three blocks from the WAMY office headed by Abdullah bin Laden. ([BBC 11/6/2001](#))

■Saleh Ibn Abdul Rahman Hussayen. He is a prominent Saudi official who is in the same hotel as three of the hijackers the night before 9/11. He leaves on one of the first flights to Saudi Arabia before the FBI can properly interview him about this. ([Schmidt 10/2/2003](#))

■Akberali Moawalla. A Pakistani and business partner of Osama's brother Yeslam bin Laden. In 2000, a transfer of over \$250 million was made from a bank account belonging jointly to Moawalla and Osama bin Laden.(see [2000](#)). ([Harris and Schmidt 7/22/2004](#))

There is a later dispute regarding how thoroughly the Saudis are interviewed before they leave and who approves the flights. Counterterrorism "tsar" Richard Clarke says he agrees to the flights after the FBI assures him none of those on board has connections to terrorism and that it is "a conscious decision with complete review at the highest levels of the State Department and the FBI and the White House." ([US Congress 9/3/2003](#)) Clarke says the decision to approve the flights "didn't get any higher than me." ([Bolton 5/18/2004](#))

According to Vanity Fair, both the FBI and the State Department "deny playing any role whatsoever in the episode." However, Dale Watson, the head of the FBI's Counterterrorism Division, says the Saudis on the planes "[are] identified, but they [are] not subject to serious interviews or interrogations" before they leave. ([Unger 10/2003](#))

An FBI spokesperson says the bin Laden relatives are only interviewed by the FBI "at the airport, as they [are] about to leave." ([York 9/11/2002](#)) There are claims that some passengers are not interviewed by the FBI at all. ([Unger 10/2003](#)) Abdullah bin Laden, who stays in the US, says that even a month after 9/11, his only contact with the FBI is a brief phone call. ([Cullen and Estes 9/21/2001](#); [Mayer and Szechenyi 11/5/2001](#))

The FBI official responsible for coordinating with Clarke is Assistant Director Michael Rolince, who is in charge of the Bureau's International Terrorism Operations Section and assumes responsibility for the Saudi flights. Rolince decides that the Saudis can leave after their faces are matched to their passport photos and their names are run through various databases, including some watch lists, to check the FBI has no derogatory information about them." ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 196-197, 209](#).)

Numerous experts are surprised that the bin Ladens are not interviewed more extensively before leaving, pointing out that interviewing the relatives of suspects is standard investigative procedure. ([York 9/11/2002](#); [Unger 10/2003](#)) MSNBC claims that "members of the Saudi royal family met frequently with bin Laden—both before and after 9/11" ([Mitchell 9/5/2003](#)) , and many Saudi royals and bin Laden relatives are being sued for their alleged role in 9/11.

The Boston Globe opines that the flights occur "too soon after 9/11 for the FBI even to know what questions to ask, much less to decide conclusively that each Saudi [royal] and bin Laden relative [deserve] an 'all clear,' never to be available for questions again." ([Connaughton 9/30/2003](#)) Senator Charles Schumer (D) says of the secret flights, "This is just another example of our country coddling the Saudis and giving them special privileges that others would never get. It's almost as if we didn't want to find out what links existed." ([Lichtblau 9/4/2003](#)) Judicial Watch has disclosed FBI documents that say, "Osama bin Laden may have chartered one of the Saudi flights."

([Judicial Watch 6/20/2007](#))

September 14-18, 2001: Congress to Bush: Use All Necessary Military Force

The US Congress adopts a joint resolution, the Authorization to Use Military Force (AUMF), that determines that “the president is authorized to use all necessary and appropriate force against those nations, organizations, or persons he determines planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001, or harbored such organizations or persons, in order to prevent any future acts of international terrorism against the United States by such nations, organizations or persons.” Congress also states that the “grave acts of violence” committed on the US “continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to [its] national security and foreign policy.” ([US Congress 9/14/2001](#)) President Bush signs the resolution into law on September 18. ([White House 9/18/2001](#)) The passage of the AUMF served another purpose: to extend presidential power. While the Defense Department and the Joint Chiefs of Staff intended the AUMF to define the conflict in narrow terms, and authorize the US to move militarily against al-Qaeda and its confederates, and the Taliban, Vice President Dick Cheney and his chief of staff, David Addington, had a larger goal. Attorney Scott Horton, who has written two major studies on interrogation of terrorism suspects for the New York City Bar Association, says in 2005 that Cheney and Addington “really wanted [the AUMF defined more broadly], because it provided the trigger for this radical redefinition of presidential power.” Addington helped draft a Justice Department opinion in late 2001, written by lawyer John Yoo (see [September 2001](#)), that asserted Congress cannot “place any limits on the president’s determinations as to any terrorist threat, the amount of military force to be used in response, or the method, timing, and nature of the response.” ([Ravagan 5/21/2006](#))

September 14-26, 2001: Bush Makes Public Appearances with Suspected Terrorism Supporters



President Bush in front of the Islamic Center on September 17, 2001. Alamoudi is on the far right. [*Source: Martin H. Simon/Corbis*] In the weeks after 9/11, President Bush makes a number of public appearances with Muslim leaders in an attempt to reach out to what is perceived as the moderate Muslim community. However, some leaders invited to appear with Bush are actually radical Islamists with suspected terrorism ties. For instance, on September 14, 2001, Bush appears at a prayer service dedicated to the victims of the 9/11 attacks with Abdurahman

Alamoudi, the president of the American Muslim Council. US intelligence had suspected Alamoudi of ties with bin Laden and other terrorist leaders since 1994 (see [Shortly After March 1994](#)), and in late 2000 the Bush campaign returned a campaign contribution from Alamoudi because of his controversial ties (see [July 2000](#)). Alamoudi also proclaimed his support for Hamas and Hezbollah, both officially designated terrorist groups by the US, at a 2000 public rally in Washington. Another invited attendee at the prayer service is Muzammil Siddiqi, the spiritual leader of the Islamic Society of Orange County. Siddiqi said of the US government a year earlier, "If you remain on the side of injustice the wrath of God will come." ([Fox News 10/1/2001](#)) In the early 1990s, the "Blind Sheikh," Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman, lectured about violent jihad at Siddiqi's mosque while Siddiqi sat beside him to translate. Several members of an al-Qaeda sleeper cell, including Khalil Deek and Adam Gadahn, were regular attendees at his mosque. ([Khatchadourian 1/22/2007](#)) "Former Secret Service officer Ron Williams says, "The intelligence community has known for sometime the association of Dr. Muzammil Siddiqi and Mr. Alamoudi and their association with terrorist organizations." ([Fox News 10/1/2001](#)) Agha Jafri, a Shia Muslim leader, calls Siddiqi part of a Saudi-backed "mafia" intent on crushing moderate Sufi and Shiite Muslims in the US and says, "They hate us." ([Jacoby 3/11/2003](#)) On September 17, 2001, Bush speaks before the Islamic Center, a Washington mosque. Alamoudi is again pictured with Bush. On September 26, Bush meets with 15 prominent Muslim leaders at the White House. Siddiqi sits next to Bush. Other Muslim leaders at these meetings have expressed support for Hamas and other officially designated terrorist groups. Influential Republican lobbyist Grover Norquist has been working to build a political alliance between the Republican Party and Muslim Americans since at least 1998 (see [1998-September 2001](#)), and he is allegedly responsible for arranging these meetings and vouching for the attendees. ([Foer 11/1/2001](#)) Bush apparently does not make any more public appearances with Alamoudi or Siddiqi after a Fox News report in early October 2001 regarding their appearances with him. ([Fox News 10/1/2001](#)) It will later come out that Alamoudi met with two of the 9/11 hijackers' suspected associates in 2000 (see [October-November 2000](#)), and in 2004, Alamoudi will be sentenced to a long prison term for illegal dealings with Libya (see [October 15, 2004](#)). Siddiqi remains an imam in Orange County and denies any terrorism links. An FBI official will say in 2007, "We have a very strong relationship with Dr. Siddiqi." ([Khatchadourian 1/22/2007](#))

September 14, 2001-April 2002: Engineers Study Flight 77 Crash, But Are Granted Only Limited Access to Crash Site

The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) studies the crash of Flight 77 into the Pentagon and the building's architectural response to the impact, blast, and subsequent fires. ([American Society of Civil Engineers 1/17/2003](#)) The six-member Pentagon Building Performance Study team is headed by Lead Technical Director Paul F. Mlakar, and also includes Mete A. Sozen. Mlakar and Sozen had previously worked together on the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) investigation into the Oklahoma City bombing under W. Gene Corley, who is now assigned as FEMA/ASCE's team leader

for the World Trade Center investigation (see [September 12, 2001](#)). ([Corley et al. 10/1997](#); [Mlakar et al. 1/2003, pp. i](#)) Some aspects of the Oklahoma City investigation were controversial. ([Ronson 5/5/2001](#)) Sozen is also tasked with “project conception” for Purdue University’s computer simulation of the Pentagon attack, images from which are also used in the Performance Report, when it is issued later (see [January 23, 2003](#)). ([Purdue University Department of Computer Science 9/11/2002](#)) The Building Performance Study team only inspects the Pentagon on two occasions. Team leader Mlakar is granted “limited access” to the site for a week from September 14-21, and on October 4, “controlled access” is granted to the full team, which meets with Corley and inspects the site “for approximately four hours.” All airplane debris has been removed by this time, as well as most of the loose debris from the impact and collapse. Along with interviews and technical information provided by the Pentagon Renovation Project, the photos and data gleaned on these visits are the basis of the team’s analysis of the building’s response to the impact of Flight 77. The study is completed in April 2002, though the report will not be released for another nine months. ([Mlakar et al. 1/2003, pp. 1, 18](#))

Mid-September 2001: Pakistani Leaders Side with Taliban

The Guardian later claims that Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf has a meeting with his 12 or 13 most senior officers. Musharraf proposes to support the US in the imminent war against the Taliban and al-Qaeda. Supposedly, four of his most senior generals oppose him outright in “a stunning display of disloyalty.” The four are ISI Director Lt. Gen. Mahmood Ahmed, Lt. Gen. Muzaffar Usmani, Lt. Gen. Jamshaid Gulzar Kiani, and Lt. Gen. Mohammed Aziz Khan. All four are removed from power over the next month. If this meeting took place, it is hard to see when it could have happened, since the article states it happened “within days” of 9/11, but Mahmood was in the US until late September 16, then flew to Afghanistan for two days, then possibly to Saudi Arabia. ([McCarthy 5/25/2002](#))

Mid-September 2001: Israel and US Plan Contingency to Steal Nuclear Weapons from Pakistan

According to Seymour Hersh of The New Yorker, a few days after 9/11 members of the elite Israeli counterterrorism unit Sayeret Matkal arrive in the US and begin training with US Special Forces in a secret location. The two groups are developing contingency plans to attack Pakistan’s military bases and remove its nuclear weapons if the Pakistani government or the nuclear weapons fall into the wrong hands. ([Hersh 10/29/2001](#)) There may have been threats to enact this plan on September 13, 2001. The Japan Times later notes that this “threat to divest Pakistan of its ‘crown jewels’ was cleverly used by the US, first to force [Pakistani President] Musharraf to support its military campaign in Afghanistan, and then to warn would-be coup plotters against Musharraf.” ([Chellaney 11/10/2001](#))

September 15, 2001: CIA Director Presents Bush and his Cabinet with Extensive Plan for Combating Terrorism Worldwide

President Bush meets with his advisers at Camp David for a day of intensive discussions about how to respond to the 9/11 attacks. CIA Director George Tenet has arrived there “with a briefcase stuffed with top-secret documents and plans, in many respects the culmination of more than four years of work on bin Laden, the al-Qaeda network and worldwide terrorism.” With him is his deputy, John McLaughlin, and counterterrorism chief Cofer Black. Also in the conference room with them, among others, are Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz, Dick Cheney, and Colin Powell. For his 30-minute presentation, Tenet gives out a briefing packet titled “Going to War.” His presentation covers several key components for the fight against terrorism:

- Tenet advocates substantially stepping up “direct support of the Northern Alliance,” the main Afghan opposition group, as part of a strategy to create “a northern front, closing the safe haven” of Afghanistan. His idea is that “Afghan opposition forces, aided by the United States, would move first against the northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif, try to break the Taliban’s grip on that city and open up the border with Uzbekistan. From there the campaign could move to other cities in the north.” Tenet also explains that the CIA had begun working with a number of tribal leaders in the south of Afghanistan the previous year, and these could be enticed to join a US-led campaign.

- The plan includes “a full-scale covert attack on the financial underpinnings of the terrorist network, including clandestine computer surveillance and electronic eavesdropping to locate the assets of al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups.”

- The CIA and FBI would work together to track down bin Laden supporters in the US.

- A key proposal is a recommendation that the president give the CIA “exceptional authorities” to destroy al-Qaeda. Tenet wants a broad intelligence order allowing the agency to conduct covert operations without requiring formal approval for each specific operation, thus authorizing it to operate without restraint. Tenet and his senior deputies would be permitted to approve “snatch” operations abroad. Journalist Bob Woodward calls this “truly exceptional power.”

- Tenet has with him a draft of a presidential intelligence order—a “finding”—that would give the CIA power “to use the full range of covert instruments, including deadly force.”

- Another proposal is that, with additional hundreds of millions of dollars for new covert action, the CIA could “buy” intelligence services of key Arab nations including Egypt, Jordan, and Algeria. These could act as surrogates for the US. As Bob Woodward points out, this “would put the United States in league with questionable intelligence services, some of them with dreadful human rights records. Some had reputations for ruthlessness and using torture to obtain confessions.”

- Tenet calls for the initiation of intelligence contact with certain rogue states, such as Libya and Syria, so as to obtain helpful information about the terrorists. (Subsequently, by early 2002, Syria will have emerged as one of the CIA’s most effective allies in the fight against al-Qaeda (see [Early 2002-January 2003](#)).)

- He has with him a top-secret document called the “Worldwide Attack Matrix.” This details covert operations in 80 countries that he is recommending or are already

underway. “Actions ranged from routine propaganda to lethal covert action in preparation for military attacks.” As Woodward describes, this proposal represents “a striking departure for US policy. It would give the CIA the broadest and most lethal authority in its history.”

The president reportedly is much pleased with Tenet’s proposals, “virtually shouting ‘Great job!’” ([Woodward 2002, pp. 74-78](#); [Woodward and Balz 1/31/2002](#); [Kessler 2003, pp. 234](#)) He will grant all Tenet’s requests by the following Monday (see [September 17, 2001](#)). Tenet had presented a cruder version of the CIA plan at the White House two days earlier (see [September 13, 2001](#)).

September 15-17, 2001: Did Some Hijackers Get US Military Training?

A series of articles suggests that at least six of the 9/11 hijackers trained at US military bases. ([New York Times 9/15/2001](#); [Wehrfritz, Skipp, and Barry 9/15/2001](#); [Gugliotta 9/16/2001](#))

■Three of the alleged hijackers—Ahmed Alnami, Ahmed Alghamdi, and Saeed Alghamdi—are revealed as having listed the Naval Air Station in Pensacola, Florida, as their permanent address on their driver’s licenses and car registrations, between 1996 and 1998. According to military records, the three used 10 Radford Boulevard as their address. This is a base roadway where residences for foreign-military flight trainees are located. Hamza Alghamdi was also connected to the Pensacola base (see [1996-August 2000](#)). ([Wehrfritz, Skipp, and Barry 9/15/2001](#); [Gugliotta 9/16/2001](#); [Wheeler, Streater, and Graybiel 9/17/2001](#))

■Air Force spokesman Colonel Ken McClellan states that Saeed Alghamdi also attended the Defense Language Institute in Monterey, California. The Washington Post and Time magazine say he graduated from the Defense Language Institute at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas. (It is unclear whether Alghamdi therefore attended both Defense Language Institutes, or if this is simply a reporting error.) ([Gugliotta 9/16/2001](#); [Radelat 9/17/2001](#); [Cloud 10/1/2001](#))

■According to a high-ranking Pentagon official, another alleged hijacker was a former Saudi Air Force pilot who may have received training in strategy and tactics at the Air War College at Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery, Alabama. ([Schrader and Richter 9/15/2001](#); [Wehrfritz, Skipp, and Barry 9/15/2001](#))

■A further hijacker—also said to be a former Saudi Air Force pilot—may have been given language instruction at Lackland Air Force Base. ([Schrader and Richter 9/15/2001](#); [Wehrfritz, Skipp, and Barry 9/15/2001](#))

■A man called Abdulaziz Alomari (the same name as one of the suspected Flight 11 hijackers) attended Brooks Air Force Base Aerospace Medical School in San Antonio, Texas. ([Gugliotta 9/16/2001](#); [Radelat 9/17/2001](#))

■Ken McClellan says a man with the name Mohamed Atta once attended the US International Officers School at Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama (see [1998](#)). ([Gugliotta 9/16/2001](#); [Radelat 9/17/2001](#))

According to Newsweek, it is not unusual for foreign nationals to train at US military facilities. A former Navy pilot tells the magazine that during his years at the Naval Air

Station in Pensacola, “we always, always, always trained other countries’ pilots. When I was there two decades ago, it was Iranians. The shah was in power. Whoever the country *du jour* is, that’s whose pilots we train.” Newsweek adds that the “US has a long-standing agreement with Saudi Arabia... to train pilots for its National Guard.” ([Wehrfritz, Skipp, and Barry 9/15/2001](#)) The media stops looking into the hijackers’ possible US military connections after the Air Force makes a less than definitive statement, saying, “Some of the FBI suspects had names similar to those used by foreign alumni of US military courses. However discrepancies in their biographical data, such as birth dates 20 years off, indicate we are probably not talking about the same people.” ([Gugliotta 9/16/2001](#))

September 15, 2001-February 19, 2002: Significant Contradictions Given in Accounts of Flight 77’s Impact Speed

After Flight 77’s flight data recorder is recovered from the Pentagon wreckage (see [September 14, 2001](#)), Fox News reports that investigators say they are getting “good, solid readings” from it. According to this data, “the plane was going 345 miles per hour when it crashed.” ([Fox News 9/15/2001](#)) Firefighters involved in the Pentagon recovery effort are also told the flight data recorder showed Flight 77 was traveling at 345 mph when it hit the Pentagon. ([Jackman and Becker 9/19/2001](#)) However, days later, CBS News reports that it has seen “new radar evidence” pertaining to Flight 77, and quotes unnamed sources describing the plane’s descent toward the Pentagon. CBS says the aircraft had “plowed into the Pentagon at 460 mph.” ([CBS News 9/21/2001](#)) But when the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) publishes its “Flight Path Study” for Flight 77 in February 2002, this gives a significantly higher speed. The NTSB study is “based on information obtained from various sources of recorded radar of the subject aircraft,” along with “information from the flight data recorder.” It states, “The airplane accelerated to approximately 460 knots (530 miles per hour) at impact with the Pentagon.” ([National Transportation Safety Board 2/19/2002, pp. 2](#)) The 9/11 Commission will later accept this figure in its final report. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 10 and 455](#)) Yet this is 185 mph faster than the speed earlier claimed to have been revealed by the flight data recorder. The reason for this discrepancy is unknown. All of these alleged speeds are above the Federal Aviation Administration’s speed limit of 287.5 mph for aircraft flying below 10,000 feet. ([Milwaukee Journal Sentinel 2/24/2002](#))

September 15, 2001: Wolfowitz Suggests Striking Iraq Immediately; Bush Decides to Focus on Afghanistan First



George Tenet pointing at a map and describing CIA operations in Afghanistan on September 30, 2001. Also at the table are George Bush, Condoleezza Rice, and Andrew Card. [Source: *White House*] President Bush and his top advisers meet at Camp David to discuss how to respond to the 9/11 attacks. Attendees include: CIA Director George Tenet, Vice President Cheney, Secretary of State Colin Powell, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill, National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice, FBI Director Robert Mueller, and Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz. ([Woodward and Balz 1/31/2002](#); [Burrough et al. 5/2004, pp. 232](#)) There is discussion on a paper submitted by the Defense Department submitted the day before depicting Iraq, the Taliban, and al-Qaeda as priority targets (see [September 14, 2001](#)). Rumsfeld has already suggested that the US should use 9/11 as an excuse to attack Iraq (see [10:00 p.m. September 11, 2001](#) and [September 12, 2001](#)). Now Wolfowitz pushes for regime change in Iraq, claiming that there is a 10 to 50 percent chance that Iraq was involved in the attacks. ([Woodward 2002, pp. 83](#); [Burrough et al. 5/2004](#); [Smith 7/23/2004](#)) Powell will later recall that Wolfowitz argues that Iraq should be attacked because it is ultimately the source of the terrorist problem. Wolfowitz "was always of the view that Iraq was a problem that had to be dealt with. And he saw this as one way of using this event as a way to deal with the Iraq problem." ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 335](#)) Deputy CIA Director John McLaughlin will later recall that the discussion about possible Iraqi involvement in 9/11 "went back and forth, back and forth, back and forth. The [CIA] argued that that was not appropriate, not the right conclusion to draw at this point." Secretary of State Colin Powell supports the CIA on this. Then, according to McLaughlin, "At the end of all this deliberation, the president says, 'Thank you all very much. This has been a very good discussion. I'm going to think about all of this on Sunday, and I'll call you together Monday [September 17] and tell you what I've concluded.'" ([Kirk 6/20/2006](#)) Bush will later tell reporter Bob Woodward that, in his own mind, he made the decision not to immediately attack Iraq in the morning on this day. He wants to focus on Afghanistan first. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 335](#)) Wolfowitz will later recall in an interview with *Vanity Fair*: "On the surface of the debate it at least appeared to be about not whether but when. There seemed to be a kind of agreement that yes it should be, but the disagreement was whether it should be in the immediate response or whether you should

concentrate simply on Afghanistan first. To the extent it was a debate about tactics and timing, the president clearly came down on the side of Afghanistan first. To the extent it was a debate about strategy and what the larger goal was, it is at least clear with 20/20 hindsight that the president came down on the side of the larger goal.” ([Wolfowitz 5/9/2003](#))

September 15, 2001: President Bush Tells Neoconservative Adviser that US Will Attack Iraq after Afghanistan

During a morning meeting with advisers at Camp David, President Bush indicated that he wanted to focus on attacking Afghanistan first, and then look at the issue of attacking Iraq later (see [September 15, 2001](#)). During the lunch break, he sends a message to the neoconservatives in attendance that he does not want to hear any more about Iraq that day. But one of the neoconservatives there is Richard Perle, who holds no government position but heads the Defense Policy Board advising the Pentagon. According to Vanity Fair, Perle will later claim that the morning discussion about Iraq “had planted a seed. Bush told Perle at Camp David that once Afghanistan had been dealt with, it would be Iraq’s turn.” ([Burrough et al. 5/2004](#))

September 15, 2001-April 6, 2002: Bush Shifts Public Focus from Bin Laden to Iraq

On September 15, 2001, President Bush says of bin Laden: “If he thinks he can hide and run from the United States and our allies, he will be sorely mistaken.” ([Gerstenzang and Miller 9/16/2001](#)) Two days later, he says, “I want justice. And there’s an old poster out West, I recall, that says, ‘Wanted: Dead or Alive.’” ([ABC News 9/17/2001](#)) On December 28, 2001, even as the US was declaring victory in Afghanistan, Bush says, “Our objective is more than bin Laden.” ([Associated Press 8/19/2002](#)) Bush’s January 2002 State of the Union speech describes Iraq as part of an “axis of evil” and fails to mention bin Laden at all. On March 8, 2002, Bush still vows: “We’re going to find him.” ([Washington Post 10/1/2002](#)) Yet, only a few days later on March 13, Bush says, “He’s a person who’s now been marginalized.... I just don’t spend that much time on him.... I truly am not that concerned about him.” Instead, Bush is “deeply concerned about Iraq.” ([US President 3/18/2002](#)) The rhetoric shift is complete when Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Richard Myers states on April 6, “The goal has never been to get bin Laden.” ([Myers 4/6/2002](#)) In October 2002, the Washington Post notes that since March 2002, Bush has avoided mentioning bin Laden’s name, even when asked about him directly. Bush sometimes uses questions about bin Laden to talk about Saddam Hussein instead. In late 2001, nearly two-thirds of Americans say the war on terrorism could not be called a success without bin Laden’s death or capture. That number falls to 44 percent in a March 2002 poll, and the question has since been dropped. ([Washington Post 10/1/2002](#)) Charles Heyman, editor of Jane’s World Armies, later points out: “There appears to be a real disconnect”

between the US military's conquest of Afghanistan and "the earlier rhetoric of President Bush, which had focused on getting bin Laden." ([Smucker 3/4/2002](#))

September 15, 2001 and After: Various Explanations Offered for Pentagon 'Exit Hole'

Various explanations are offered for the "exit hole" that appeared in an internal wall in the Pentagon following the attack on 9/11 (see [May 3, 2002](#)):

- As the hole is near the end of the plane's trajectory through the building, it is suggested it was made by a piece of the plane. Pentagon Renovation Program spokesman Lee Evey explains on September 15, "the nose of the plane just barely broke through the inside of the C Ring, so it was extending into A-E Drive a little bit." ([US Department of Defense 9/15/2001](#))

- Eleven days later, another military source claims that an engine of the plane was responsible for creating the hole. ([Orme 9/26/2001](#))

- Photos, video, and some eyewitness accounts agree on landing gear elements at or near the hole, indicating one of the three sets of landing gear may have been responsible. Sergeant First Class Reginald Powell recalls seeing "a big 8 by 10... hole in the wall. You could see the tire, the landing gear, were just forward of it." ([Office of Medical History 9/2004, pp. 118](#)) The book *Debunking 9/11 Myths* by *Popular Mechanics* magazine will say in 2006 that the density of the landing gear means it was "responsible for puncturing the wall in Ring C." The book cites Air Force Surgeon General Paul Carlton Jr. and Paul Mlakar, lead author of the American Society of Civil Engineers' (ASCE) Pentagon Building Performance Report, who says "he saw the landing gear with his own eyes." ([Dunbar and Reagan 2006, pp. 70](#)) A wheel hub is found outside the hole in the A-E Drive service roadway and photographed there. ([Jeff Scott and Joe Yoon 1/21/2007](#))

- Another theory put forth in a 2004 National Geographic program is that reverberating shockwaves from the plane's impact were responsible for the hole. ([National Geographic Channel 2004](#))

- Shortly after the attack, rescue workers reportedly "punched a hole" somewhere in the Pentagon "to clean it out," although there are no sources that say that this was the reason for the hole to the A-E Drive. ([US Department of Defense 9/15/2001](#)) Some accounts refer to the hole as a 'punch out' hole, due to the words "punch out" spray painted near it after 9/11. ([Mlakar et al. 1/2003, pp. 30](#)) However, punch out appears to be a construction term referring to a list of problems to be corrected. In this case it may be a call for assessment of the damage inside. ([Home Building Manual 8/25/2007](#))

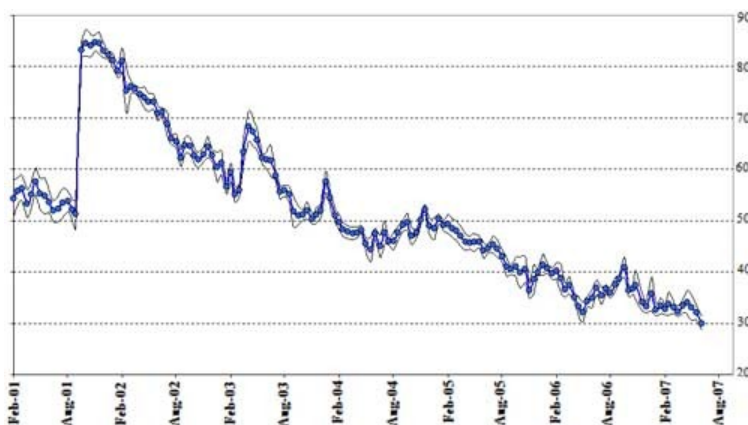
- French author Thierry Meyssan claims that the unusual nature and shape of the hole indicates it was made by a missile, not an airliner (see [Early March 2002](#)). ([Meyssan 2002, pp. 55-63](#))

In addition, the ASCE team's photo of the hole, and its assessment of the damaged support columns nearest to it, are provided by the FBI, suggesting the bureau has special jurisdiction at the exit hole. ([Mlakar et al. 1/2003, pp. 30](#))

Mid-September 2001: Private Consumer Databases Reveal Large Credit Card Debt, Multiple Residences of Hijackers

In a 2002 speech, former President Bill Clinton will relate information he says he learned from a close friend who works at Acxiom, the world's largest processor of consumer data. According to this friend, a couple of days after 9/11, FBI agents arrive at Acxiom and discover information about five of the 9/11 hijackers in Acxiom's computer databases. Clinton relates, "One of the men who flew an airplane into the World Trade Center [presumably either Marwan Alshehhi or Mohamed Atta] had 30 credit cards, a quarter of a million of dollars in debt, and a consolidated payout schedule of \$9,800 a month.... Mohamed Atta, the ring leader, had 12 addresses, two places he lived and 10 safe houses, under the names Mohamed Atta, Mohammed J. Atta, J. Atta, and his middle initial spelled out." ([Clinton 12/3/2002](#); [Behar 2/9/2004](#)) No information like this will be revealed by any subsequent official 9/11 investigations, except for a vague one sentence reference in a 9/11 Commission Report footnote that "Searches of readily available databases could have unearthed" valuable information on at least some of the hijackers. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 539](#)) The chairman of ChoicePoint, another large data brokerage company, will state that his company had data on some of the hijackers before 9/11, but he won't provide any details. After two of the hijackers are put on a no-fly list in late August 2001, an FBI agent will apparently fail to check if their names appear in the ChoicePoint database, though he claims to have done so (see [August 29, 2001](#)). ([Kinkead 11/28/2004](#))

Mid-September 2001: President Bush's Popularity Ratings Soar Over 90 Percent; Journalists Feel Reluctant to Criticize His Handling of 9/11



An average of major US polls ranking Bush's popularity, from February 2001 to June 2007. [*Source: Stuart Eugene Thiel*] (click image to enlarge) Washington Post columnist Mary McGrory writes that since 9/11, "[T]he country has rallied to the president's side. Even those who wished for a little more eloquence from him did not want to hear a word against him. Ask any

journalist who raised questions about his initial handling of the crisis: They have been inundated with furious calls calling them a disgrace to their profession and even traitors. Congress is well aware that George Bush has become a colossus, surpassing his father's 90 percent approval rating after the Persian Gulf War. .. Democratic consternation and misgivings have been expressed behind the scenes. When Bush requested blanket authority for retaliation, some remembered the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, which they unwarily gave to Lyndon Johnson during Vietnam and came to regret. They said the president's current powers give him all the authority he needed to punish the authors of the obscene attacks. But, as one Democrat said disconsolately, 'No one wants to say no to Bush now.'" ([McGrory 9/18/2001](#))

Mid-September 2001: Neoconservatives Look to Tie Iraq to 1993 WTC Bombing, but Evidence Contradicts Their Theory

At the behest of Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, former CIA director James Woolsey and a team of Justice and Defense Department officials fly to London on a US government plane to look for evidence tying Saddam Hussein to the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center. It is the second such mission undertaken by Woolsey this year, as he made a similar trip in February (see [February 2001](#)). Woolsey is looking for evidence to support the theory (see [Late July or Early August 2001](#)) that Ramzi Yousef, the mastermind behind the 1993 WTC bombing, was actually an Iraqi agent who had assumed the identity of a Pakistani student named Abdul Basit. Woolsey visits the Swansea Institute, where Basit studied, to see if Basit's fingerprints match those of Yousef, who is now serving a life sentence in a Colorado prison. Matching fingerprints would discredit the theory. ([Strobel 10/11/2001](#); [Rose and Vulliamy 10/14/2001](#); [Harden 10/26/2001](#)) While in Europe, Woolsey also attempts to link the Iraqi government to 9/11 and the October 2001 anthrax attacks (see [Mid-September-October 2001](#)). But according to Knight Ridder, "Several of those with knowledge of the trips said they failed to produce any new evidence that Iraq was behind the attacks." ([Strobel 10/11/2001](#)) Newsweek will similarly report in 2004 that "the results of the Woolsey mission were exactly what the FBI had predicted: that the fingerprints were in fact identical." ([Isikoff and Hosenball 4/21/2004](#)) The local police in Swansea are curious about Woolsey's visit and they call the US embassy in London to clarify if Woolsey is visiting in an official capacity. This alerts the State Department and CIA of Woolsey's trip for the first time, and apparently both agencies are upset. One intelligence consultant familiar with the trip will say, "It was a stupid, stupid, and just plain wrong thing to do." ([Strobel 10/11/2001](#); [Vest 11/21/2001](#))

Mid-September 2001-October 7, 2001: US Fails to Strike at Bin Laden Despite Good Intelligence

According to author James Risen, at some point after 9/11 but before the start of bombing in Afghanistan, "US intelligence located Osama bin Laden, but the US military was not

prepared to strike him. [US] intelligence officials say that at the time, the US military was developing a plan for an air campaign over Afghanistan that was not flexible enough to take advantage of the sudden windfall of intelligence concerning bin Laden. This little-known opportunity to kill bin Laden came before the terrorist leader fled into the mountains of southeastern Afghanistan, where he became much more difficult to track.” ([Risen 2006, pp. 185](#))

Mid-September-October 7, 2001: ISI Director Gives Military Advice to Taliban

Pakistani ISI Director Lt. Gen. Mahmood Ahmed is periodically meeting and communicating with top Taliban leader Mullah Omar during this time. He is advising him to resist the US and not to hand over bin Laden (see [September 17-18 and 28, 2001](#)). According to journalist Kathy Gannon, he is also giving Omar and other Taliban leaders advice on how to resist the US military. Omar has almost no education and very little understanding of the Western world. Mahmood, by contrast, has just come from meetings with top officials in the US (see [September 11-16, 2001](#)). Gannon will later write that each time Mahmood visited Omar, he gave him “information about the likely next move by the United States. By then, [he] knew there weren’t going to be a lot of US soldiers on the ground. He warned Mullah Omar that the United States would be relying heavily on aerial bombardment and on the Northern Alliance.” Mahmood gives additional pointers on targets likely to be hit, command and control systems, anti-aircraft defense, what types of weapons the US will use, and so forth. ([Gannon 2005, pp. 93-94](#)) Immediately after 9/11, Mahmood had promised Pakistan’s complete support to help the US defeat the Taliban (see [September 11-16, 2001](#)).

Mid-September-October 2001: Neoconservatives Attempt to Link Iraqi Government to 9/11 and Anthrax Attacks

Former CIA Director James Woolsey makes a secret to Europe to find evidence that could link the Iraqi government to various terrorist attacks. Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz funds and supports his trip. He visits Wales in a fruitless search for evidence to link Iraq to the 1993 WTC bombing (see [Mid-September 2001](#)). But he also looks for evidence tying Iraq to 9/11 and the anthrax attacks once they become publicly known in early October (see [October 2001](#)). The Village Voice will later report, “Woolsey was also asked to make contact with Iraqi exiles and others who might be able to beef up the case that hijacker Mohammed Atta was working with Iraqi intelligence to plan the September 11 attacks, as well as the subsequent anthrax mailings.” ([Vest 11/21/2001](#)) In late October, the Iraqi National Congress (INC), the exile group opposed to Saddam Hussein, says it recently held meetings in London with him. ([Harden 10/26/2001](#)) Woolsey is a prominent neoconservative and already has extensive links with the INC (see [2000](#)). It is unknown exactly what Woolsey does in Europe, but his trip has an apparent effect on the media. In addition to numerous articles about Atta’s alleged Prague

visit, some articles appear attempting to tie Atta and the Iraqi government to the anthrax attacks as well. For instance, on October 14, 2001, the Observer will report, “According to sources in the Bush administration, investigators are talking to Egyptian authorities who say members of the al-Qaida network, detained and interrogated in Cairo, had obtained phials of anthrax in the Czech Republic.” ([Rose and Vulliamy 10/14/2001](#)) And in late October, the London Times will not only report that Atta was given a vial of anthrax in Prague, but that he met with Iraqi agents numerous times all over Europe (see [October 27, 2001](#)). But no hard evidence will emerge supporting any of these allegations pushed by Woolsey.

September 16, 2001: Bush Claim That Using Planes as Missiles Was Impossible to Predict Is Contradicted by Former CIA Official

President Bush says, “Never (in) anybody’s thought processes... about how to protect America did we ever think that the evil doers would fly not one but four commercial aircraft into precious US targets... never.” ([US President 9/24/2001](#)) A month later, Paul Pillar, the former deputy director of the CIA’s Counterterrorist Center, will say, “The idea of commandeering an aircraft and crashing it into the ground and causing high casualties, sure we’ve thought of it.” ([Braun et al. 10/14/2001](#))

September 16, 2001: Cheney Says There Was No Warning of ‘Domestic Operation or Involving What Happened’

Vice President Cheney acknowledges that US intelligence officials received threat information during the summer of 2001 “that a big operation was planned” by terrorists, possibly striking the US. But he also says, “No specific threat involving really a domestic operation or involving what happened, obviously—the cities, airliner and so forth.” ([Aita 9/12/2001](#))

September 16, 2001: Taliban Said to Agree to All US Demands in a Secret Meeting

A secret meeting takes place between Taliban and US government representatives in the city of Quetta, Pakistan. Afghan-American businessman Kabir Mohabbat serves as a middleman. US officials deny the meeting takes place, but later in the month Mohabbat explains that the US demands the Taliban hand over bin Laden, extradite foreign members of al-Qaeda who are wanted in their home countries, and shut down bin Laden’s bases and camps. Mohabbat claims that the Taliban agrees to meet all the demands. However, some days later he is told the US position has changed and the Taliban must surrender or be killed. Later in the month, the Taliban again agrees to hand over bin

Laden unconditionally, but the US replies that “the train had moved.” ([CBS News 9/25/2001](#); [Cockburn and Clair 11/1/2004](#))

September 16, 2001: Bin Laden Denies Involvement in 9/11 Attacks

Confirming earlier reports ([Reuters 9/13/2001](#)), bin Laden denies any involvement in the 9/11 attacks. In a statement to Al Jazeera, he states, “I would like to assure the world that I did not plan the recent attacks, which seems to have been planned by people for personal reasons.” ([CNN 9/17/2001](#)) The US claims that he confesses his role in a video message two months later, but the contents of that video are highly disputed.

September 16, 2001: Usual Investigative Procedures Not Followed in Examining Flight 93 Wreckage

A report suggests the crash site of Flight 93 is being searched and recorded in 60 square-foot grids. ([Billington 9/16/2001](#)) This approach is preferred by Wallace Miller, the local coroner, and Dennis Dirkmaat, a forensic anthropologist involved in searching the crash site. According to journalist and author Jere Longman, “The distribution patterns developed from such precise marking of airplane parts, remains and personal effects might have told them such things as exactly how the airplane struck the ground. Theoretically, by associating the location of particular remains with the location of parts of the airplane, they may have also gained some clues about which passengers had rushed the cockpit.” However, almost a year later Longman reports that this approach was not followed: “The FBI overruled them, instead dividing the site into five large sectors. It would be too time-consuming to mark tight grids, and would serve no real investigative purpose, the bureau decided. There was no mystery to solve about the crash. Everybody knew what happened to the plane.” ([Longman 2002, pp. 262](#)) While the FBI claims there is no mystery, some news articles suggest the plane was shot down. (For example, ([Bunch 11/15/2001](#); [Carlin 8/13/2002](#))) In addition, at the time of this decision, investigators are still considering the possibility that a bomb might have destroyed the plane (see [September 14, 2001](#)). Unlike every other major airplane crash in modern history, no National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) investigation is being conducted into the crash of Flight 93 (see [After September 11, 2001](#)). ([Lappe and Marshall 2004, pp. 40-41](#))

September 16, 2001: EPA Misleads Public About Health Risks at WTC Site



Smoke from the WTC tower collapses covers lower Manhattan on the day of 9/11, and for days afterward. [Source: ABC News/Associated Press] The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) release a joint statement asserting that the air in downtown New York City is safe to breathe. “New samples confirm previous reports that ambient air quality meets OSHA standards and consequently is not a cause for public concern,” the agencies claim. ([Environmental Protection Agency 9/16/2001](#)) However, the government’s statements are based on ambient air quality tests using outdated technologies. ([Schneider 1/14/2002](#)) Furthermore, it is later learned that the press release was heavily edited under pressure from the White House’s Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ). Critical passages in the original draft were either deleted or modified to downplay public health risks posed by contaminants that were released into the air during the collapse of the World Trade Center. ([Environmental Protection Agency 8/21/2003](#); [Ramirez 8/26/2003](#)) In late October, the New York Daily News obtains internal EPA documents containing information that had been withheld from the public. One document says that “dioxins, PCBs, benzene, lead and chromium are among the toxic substances detected... sometimes at levels far exceeding federal levels.” ([Gonzalez 10/26/2001](#)) Later, in October, it is reported that thousands of rescue workers and residents are experiencing respiratory problems that experts attribute to the toxic smoke flume and ultra fine dust. ([CNN 10/29/2001](#); [Dreher 10/29/2001](#); [Ramirez 10/30/2001](#); [BBC 10/31/2001](#))

September 16, 2001: Cheney Vows US Will Respond to 9/11 with ‘Dark Side’ of Intelligence Methods

In a television interview, Vice President Cheney is asked how the US will respond to the 9/11 attacks. He first replies that there will be a military response. But he adds, “We also have to work, though, sort of the dark side, if you will. We’ve got to spend time in the shadows in the intelligence world. A lot of what needs to be done here will have to be done quietly, without any discussion, using sources and methods that are available to our intelligence agencies, if we’re going to be successful. That’s the world these folks operate in, and so it’s going to be vital for us to use any means at our disposal, basically, to achieve our objective.” ([Cheney 9/16/2001](#)) In 2006, former CIA official Gary Schroen will be asked about Cheney’s comment and reply, “My impression at the time was that the administration was trying to send a message, and certainly CIA leadership was trying

to send a message, that the gloves were off. I think what [Cheney] was probably saying was, we're going to do things like assassination operations; we were going to go into places and not try to capture these guys, but just kill them, and that... there would be a lot of people who would object to those kind of tactics." ([Schroen 6/20/2006](#))

September 16, 2001: Cheney Says Iraq Is 'Bottled Up,' Not Tied to 9/11

Vice President Dick Cheney is asked on NBC's Meet the Press if the US has evidence that Saddam Hussein is harboring terrorists. Cheney responds: "There is—in the past, there have been some activities related to terrorism by Saddam Hussein. But at this stage, you know, the focus is over here on al-Qaeda and the most recent events in New York. Saddam Hussein's bottled up, at this point, but clearly, we continue to have a fairly tough policy where the Iraqis are concerned." ([Cheney 9/16/2001](#)) When asked if the US has any evidence linking Hussein or any Iraqis to the attacks, Cheney replies, "No." ([White House 9/16/2001](#))

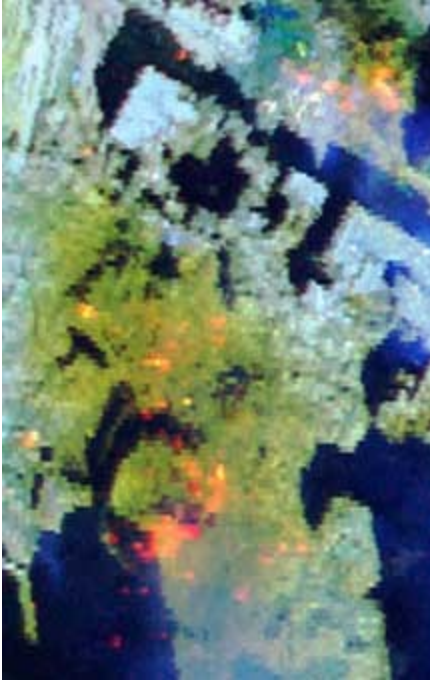
September 16, 2001: Richard Perle Hints Iraq Should Be Punished for 9/11 Attacks

On September 16, 2001, when asked on CNN if countries that harbor terrorists should be punished, prominent neoconservative Richard Perle agrees, saying, "Even if we cannot prove to the standards that we enjoy in our own civil society that they were involved. We do know, for example, that Saddam Hussein has ties to Osama bin Laden. That can be documented." ([CNN 9/16/2001](#))

September 16, 2001: Bush Tells Rice, 'We Won't Do Iraq Now, but It's a Question We Will Return To'

President Bush tells National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice that while the US is going to focus on attacking Afghanistan first, he also wants to do something about Saddam Hussein. Journalist Bob Woodward will later paraphrase what Bush told him: "There's some pressure to go after Saddam Hussein. Don Rumsfeld has said, 'This is an opportunity to take out Saddam Hussein, perhaps. We should consider it.' And the president says to Condi Rice meeting head to head, 'We won't do Iraq now. But it is a question we're gonna have to return to.'" ([CBS News 4/18/2004](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 335](#)) Bush will later claim he made the decision to invade Afghanistan and then go after Iraq one day earlier (see [September 15, 2001](#)).

September 16-23, 2001: Images of Ground Zero Show Thermal Hot Spots



Thermal hot spots detected by satellite on September 16, 2001. Red and orange indicate the hottest locations. The World Trade Center Twin Towers footprint is in the lower center and the center of World Trade Center Building 7 is in the upper right. [Source: USGS] In response to requests from the Environmental Protection Agency, through the US Geological Survey, NASA flies a plane over the site of the WTC complex, equipped with a remote sensing instrument called AVIRIS. AVIRIS is able to remotely record the near-infrared signature of heat. Analysis of the data it collects indicates temperatures at Ground Zero of above 800 degrees Fahrenheit, with some areas above 1,300 degrees. On September 16, dozens of “hot spots” are seen, but by September 23, only four or five remain. ([US Geological Survey 11/27/2001](#); [US Geological Survey 10/2002](#).) Robert Shaler, the scientist who leads the forensic examination by the New York City medical examiner’s office to identify 9/11 victims, later will state that the “DNA in the bodies” of WTC victims “was in pretty bad shape. These bones were exposed to extreme temperatures.” ([Mulrine 12/5/2005](#)) Don Carson, a hazardous materials expert, later will say, “There are pieces of steel being pulled out [of the WTC rubble] that are still cherry red. It’s like the charcoal that you put in your grill.... You light it and it stays hot.” ([Gittrich 11/1/2001](#)) And Dr. Jonathan Barnett, a member of FEMA’s WTC investigation team, will describe steel members in the debris pile that appear to have been partly evaporated in extremely high temperatures. ([Glanz 11/29/2001](#)) Despite the WTC rubble being pumped with an almost constant jet of water, eventually totaling thousands of gallons, almost 12 weeks after 9/11 at least one fire is still burning, making it the longest-burning structural fire in history. ([Beard 12/3/2001](#); [CBS News 12/19/2001](#)) As well as the hot spots, numerous witnesses describe molten metal being found at Ground Zero (see [September 12, 2001-February 2002](#)).

September 16-23, 2001: People with Hijacker Names and Identifying Details Are Still Alive

Reports appear in many newspapers suggesting that some of the people the US initially says are 9/11 hijackers are actually still alive and that the actual hijackers may have used stolen identities:

- Hamza Alghamdi: No media outlet has claimed that Hamza Alghamdi is still alive, but his family says the FBI photo “has no resemblance to him at all.” ([Khashoggi and Al-Nayyef 9/22/2001](#); [Murphy and Ottaway 9/25/2001](#))
- CNN shows a picture of a Saudi pilot called Saeed Alghamdi and claims it is the hijacker of the same name. However, the pilot is alive and working in Tunisia. The FBI listed the hijacker’s possible residence as Delray Beach, Florida, where the pilot trained in 1998, 1999, and 2000, which may be why CNN uses a photograph of the wrong person. The pilot returns to Saudi Arabia to avoid problems and CNN apologises for the error. ([Federal Bureau of Investigation 9/14/2001](#); [Ba-Isa and Al-Towaim 9/18/2001](#); [Getter, Mehren, and Slater 9/21/2001](#); [Harrison 9/23/2001](#); [BBC 9/23/2001](#))
- A man named Salem Alhazmi claims he is the alleged hijacker of the same name, but works in a petrochemical plant and had his passport stolen three years ago in Cairo. He says a picture being used in the media is of him. However, he is a different age to the hijacker, 26 not 21, has a different middle name, Ibrahim not Mohamed, and the photos appear to be of different people. In addition, the FBI does not release official pictures of the hijackers until a week after he makes this claim. The father of the other Salem Alhazmi says his son is missing, as is Salem’s brother and fellow hijacker Nawaf Alhazmi. ([Eggen, Lardner, and Schmidt 9/20/2001](#); [Getter, Mehren, and Slater 9/21/2001](#); [Hopkins 9/21/2001](#); [Harrison 9/23/2001](#); [Federal Bureau of Investigation 9/27/2001](#); [Saudi Gazette 9/29/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 191](#); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#))
- A man named Ahmed Alnami is alive and working as an administrative supervisor with Saudi Arabian Airlines in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. ([Getter, Mehren, and Slater 9/21/2001](#)) He had never lost his passport and found it “very worrying” that his identity appeared to have been stolen. ([Harrison 9/23/2001](#)) However, there is another Ahmed Alnami who is ten years younger, and appears to be dead, according to his father. ([ABC News 3/15/2002](#)) Ahmed Alnami’s family says his FBI picture is correct. ([Murphy and Ottaway 9/25/2001](#))
- A man called Abdulrahman Alomari is alive and works as a pilot for Saudi Arabian Airlines. ([Sack 9/16/2001](#); [Gumbel 9/17/2001](#); [BBC 9/23/2001](#)) He was a neighbour of Adnan Bukhari and Amer Kamfar, who are both wrongly suspected of involvement in the 9/11 attacks at the start of the investigation. He moved out of his home in Vero Beach, Florida, shortly before the attacks. ([Fish 9/14/2001](#)) A man called Abdulaziz Alomari is an engineer with Saudi Telecoms. ([BBC 9/23/2001](#)) He claims that his passport was stolen in 1995 while he was living in Denver, Colorado. ([Getter, Mehren, and Slater 9/21/2001](#)) He says, “They gave my name and my date of birth, but I am not a suicide bomber. I am here. I am alive.” ([Kennedy 9/20/2001](#); [Harrison 9/23/2001](#)) The FBI initially gave two possible birthdates for Abdulaziz Alomari. One is apparently that of the engineer, the other of the alleged hijacker. ([Federal Bureau of Investigation 9/14/2001](#); [Hersh 5/27/2002](#); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#))
- Mohand Alshehri: The Saudi government has claimed that Mohand Alshehri is alive and that he was not in the US on 9/11, but no more details are known. ([Associated Press](#)

[9/29/2001](#))

■The brothers Waleed M. Alshehri and Wail Alshehri are alive. A Saudi spokesman said, “This is a respectable family. I know his sons, and they’re both alive.” The father is a diplomat who has been stationed in the US and Bombay, India. ([Ba-Isa 9/19/2001](#); [Getter, Mehren, and Slater 9/21/2001](#)) There is a second pair of Saudi brothers named Wail and Waleed M. who may have been the real hijackers. Their father says they have been missing since December 2000. ([Al-Buqami 9/17/2001](#); [ABC News 3/15/2002](#)) The still-living Waleed M. Alshehri is a pilot with Saudi Airlines, studying in Morocco. ([Getter, Mehren, and Slater 9/21/2001](#); [Marmie 9/22/2001](#)) He acknowledges that he attended flight training school at Dayton Beach in the United States. ([BBC 9/23/2001](#); [Daily Trust \(Abuja\) 9/24/2001](#)) He was interviewed by US officials in Morocco, and cleared of all charges against him (though apparently the FBI is still using his picture). ([Embry Riddle Aeronautical University 9/21/2001](#)) The still living Waleed Alshehri is also apparently a pilot. ([Getter, Mehren, and Slater 9/21/2001](#)) He claims that he saw his picture on CNN and recognized it from when he studied flying in Florida. But he also says that he has no brother named Wail. ([As-Sharq Al-Awsat \(London\) 9/22/2001](#))

■Mohamed Atta’s father says he spoke to his son on the phone on September 12, 2001. ([MacFarquhar 9/19/2001](#); [Torriero 9/20/2001](#))

■Khalid Almihdhar: On September 19, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. distributes a “special alert” to its member banks asking for information about the attackers. The list includes “Al-Midhar, Khalid. Alive.” The Justice Department later calls this a “typo.” ([Billeaud 9/20/2001](#); [King and Bhatt 10/21/2001](#)) The BBC says, “There are suggestions that another suspect, Khalid Almihdhar, may also be alive.” ([BBC 9/23/2001](#)) The Guardian says Almihdhar is believed to be alive, but investigators are looking into three possibilities. Either his name was stolen for a hijacker alias, or he allowed his name to be used so that US officials would think he died, or he died in the crash. ([Jeffery 9/21/2001](#))

■Majed Moqed was last seen by a friend in Saudi Arabia in 2000. This friend claims the FBI picture does not look like Moqed. ([Khashoggi and Al-Nayyef 9/22/2001](#))

The Saudi government insists that five of the Saudis mentioned are still alive.

([MacFarquhar 9/21/2001](#)) On September 20, FBI Director Mueller says, “We have several others that are still in question. The investigation is ongoing, and I am not certain as to several of the others.” ([Riley and Perlman 9/21/2001](#)) On September 27, after all of these revelations mentioned above are revealed in the media, FBI Director Mueller states, “We are fairly certain of a number of them.” ([Lipka 9/28/2001](#)) On September 20, the London Times reported, “Five of the hijackers were using stolen identities, and investigators are studying the possibility that the entire suicide squad consisted of impostors.” ([Kennedy 9/20/2001](#)) The mainstream media briefly doubted some of the hijackers’ identities. For instance, a story in the Observer on September 23 put the names of hijackers like Saeed Alghamdi in quotation marks. ([Observer 9/23/2001](#)) However, the story will die down after the initial reports, and it is hardly noticed when Mueller states on November 2, 2001, “As I have indicated before, one of the initial responsibilities of that investigation was to determine who the hijackers were. We at this point definitely know the 19 hijackers who were responsible for that catastrophe.” ([Office of the Press Secretary 11/2/2001](#)) A law enforcement source, speaking on condition of anonymity, has confirmed that the hijackers’ names released in late September [on 28] are the true identities of all 19 men. The AP story adds that “the names were those listed on the

planes' passenger manifests and investigators were certain that those were the names the hijackers used when they entered the United States." But the Saudi Institute, an independent human rights watchdog group that has researched the hijackers' identities, maintains that Abdulaziz Alomari used someone else's passport. ([Yost 11/3/2001](#); [Gullo 11/3/2002](#)) The 9/11 Commission will later endorse the hijackers' names published by the FBI around this time. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 231, 238-9](#))

September 16, 2001 and After: Zubaida Continues Making Calls to US

In 2007, former CIA officer Robert Baer will comment in Time magazine, "[A]pparently, when [al-Qaeda leader] Abu Zubaida was captured, telephone records, including calls to the United States, were found in the house he was living in. The calls stopped on September 10, and resumed on September 16. There's nothing in the 9/11 Commission report about any of this, and I have no idea whether the leads were run down, the evidence lost or destroyed." ([Baer 12/7/2007](#)) In fact, it seems likely the calls were monitored at the time by US intelligence and not just discovered after Zubaida's capture in 2002. For instance, it has been reported elsewhere that Zubaida's calls to the US in the week before 9/11 were being monitored by US intelligence (see [Early September 2001](#)) and 70 calls Zubaida made to operatives in Bosnia were monitored in the weeks just after 9/11 (see [October 8, 2001](#)). These calls to the US after 9/11 would suggest that al-Qaeda continues to have operatives there, but there have been no reports of any genuine al-Qaeda operatives arrested in the US in the weeks and months after 9/11 except for Nabil al-Marabh arrested on September 19, 2001 (see [September 19, 2001](#)).

September 17, 2001: Associates of Al-Marabh Arrested on Conspiracy Charges



The Detroit house where Nabil al-Marabh used to live and where Karim Koubriti, Ahmed Hannan, and Farouk Ali-Haimoud are arrested. [*Source: BBC*] Federal agents looking for Nabil al-Marabh fail to find him at an old Detroit address, but they accidentally discover three other possible operatives there. Karim Koubriti, Ahmed Hannan, and Farouk Ali-Haimoud are arrested. They were working as dishwashers at the Detroit airport. Investigators initially believe they were

casing the airport for possible security breaches. ([Washington 11/15/2002](#)) An associate of theirs named Abel Ilah Elmardoudi will be arrested in North Carolina in November 2002. ([Washington 11/15/2002](#)) All four men will be put on trial. Initially, the evidence against them appears strong. For instance, a notebook is found that seems to show a plot to assassinate ex-Defense Secretary William Cohen during a visit to Turkey. ([Eggen, Lardner, and Schmidt 9/20/2001](#); [Associated Press 11/17/2001](#)) A stash of false documents is also found, and the men have false passports, Social Security cards, and immigration papers. Some of these documents connect them to al-Marabh. ([Farmer 9/20/2001](#); [ABC News 1/31/2002](#); [Washington 11/15/2002](#)) Al-Marabh had moved out of the Detroit address and the men moved in about two years earlier. ([Local 4 News \(Detroit\) 9/22/2001](#)) In June 2003, Elmardoudi and Koubriti will be convicted of conspiring to provide material support to terrorists and Hannan will be convicted of document fraud. However, the case against them will later fall apart amidst charges of prosecutorial misconduct. The so-called assassination plot on Cohen, for instance, appears to have been based on random doodles by a mentally unstable friend. All convictions will eventually be overturned and the men will be freed (see [June 2003-August 2004](#)).

September 17-18 and 28, 2001: Taliban Refuses to Extradite Bin Laden



Lieutenant General Mahmood Ahmed. [*Source: Agence France-Presse*] On September 17, ISI Director Lt. Gen. Mahmood Ahmed heads a six-man delegation that visits Mullah Omar in Kandahar, Afghanistan. It is reported he is trying to convince Omar to extradite bin Laden or face an immediate US attack. ([Press Trust of India 9/17/2001](#); [Bokhari 9/18/2001](#); [Hussain 9/18/2001](#)) Also in the delegation is Lt. Gen. Mohammed Aziz Khan, an ex-ISI official who appears to be one of Saeed Sheikh's contacts in the ISI. ([Press Trust of India 9/17/2001](#)) On September 28, Mahmood returns to Afghanistan with a group of about ten religious leaders. He talks with Omar, who again says he will not hand over bin Laden. ([Agence France-Presse 9/28/2001](#)) A senior Taliban official later claims that on these trips Mahmood in fact urges Omar not to extradite bin Laden, but instead urges him to resist the US. ([Gannon 2/21/2002](#); [McGirk 5/6/2002](#)) Another account claims Mahmood does "nothing as the

visitors [pour] praise on Omar and [fails] to raise the issue” of bin Laden’s extradition. ([Zielenziger and Tamayo 11/3/2001](#)) Two Pakistani brigadier generals connected to the ISI also accompany Mahmood, and advise al-Qaeda to counter the coming US attack on Afghanistan by resorting to mountain guerrilla war. The advice is not followed. ([Shazed 9/11/2002](#)) Other ISI officers also stay in Afghanistan to advise the Taliban.

September 17, 2001: Knife Found at Flight 93 Crash Scene

A confidential FBI bulletin states a “badly damaged” commercially manufactured cigarette lighter with a concealed knife blade has been recovered at the Flight 93 crash scene. The knife was about two and three-fourths inches long, with a knife blade of about two and a half inches. ([Getter, Serrano, and Williams 9/18/2001](#)) A 9/11 Commission staff report in 2004 will also mention this knife. ([9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 104³¹](#))

September 17, 2001: White House Meeting Leads to Cover-up?

In a later 9/11 Commission hearing, Commissioner Bob Kerrey says that NORAD gives a briefing at the White House on this day. He adds, “[A]nd it feels like something happened in that briefing that produced almost a necessity to deliver a story that’s different than what actually happened on that day.” ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) The next day, NORAD releases a timeline of 9/11 events detailing fighter response times. The 9/11 Commission later strongly disputes many details from NORAD’s timeline. For instance, the timeline claims that NORAD is notified about the hijacking of Flight 93 at 9:16 a.m., but the commission concludes that when the plane crashes after 10:00 a.m., NORAD still had not been notified. ([North American Aerospace Defense Command 9/18/2001](#); [9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#))

September 17, 2001: Stock Exchange Reopens; Economic Costs of Attack Are High

The New York Stock Exchange, closed since the 9/11 attacks, reopens. During the next five days, the Dow Jones drops nearly 2000 points, but then soon rebounds to above pre-9/11 levels. The attacks caused more than \$20 billion in property damage to buildings in New York City and Washington. According to one estimate, the work stoppage and other loss of economic output costs about another \$47 billion, making the attacks the costliest man-made disaster in US history. ([Schindelheim 9/10/2002](#))

September 17, 2001: Attendee of 2000 Malaysia Summit Is Arrested, but ‘Inexplicably Released’

Police in Qatar arrest Ahmad Hikmat Shakir. US intelligence is very interested in Shakir, partly because he comes from Iraq and thus might be connected to the Iraqi government of Saddam Hussein, and partly because he was seen at the January 2000 al-Qaeda summit in Malaysia attended by at least two of the 9/11 hijackers (see January 5-8, 2000). A search of Shakir's apartment in Qatar yields a "treasure trove" of information, including telephone records linking him to suspects in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing (see [February 26, 1993](#)) and the 1995 Bojinka plot (see [January 6, 1995](#)). Yet, according to a senior Arab intelligence official, when the Qataris ask the US if they want to take custody of him, the US says no. He goes Jordan on October 21 instead. (Accounts differ as to whether Qatar releases him and Jordan captures him or whether Qatar sends him there.) Newsweek implies that the US expects Jordan will torture Shakir and share what they learn. The US is not allowed to directly question him. Three months later, he is "inexplicably released by Jordanian authorities" and vanishes. He has not been caught since. ([Thomas and Isikoff 12/5/2001](#); [Isikoff and Klaidman 9/30/2002](#))

September 17, 2001: Bush Signs Afghanistan War Plan, But Also Includes Order to Prepare for Iraq

President Bush signs a 2 1/2-page "top secret" document that outlines the administration's plan to invade Afghanistan and topple its government. According to administration officials interviewed by the Washington Post, the document also instructs the Pentagon to begin planning for an invasion of Iraq. ([Kessler 1/12/2003](#); [Pilger 9/22/2003](#); [Fallows 10/2004](#) Sources: senior administration officials) The document further orders the military to be ready to occupy Iraq's oil fields if the country acts against US interests. ([Smith 7/23/2004](#))

September 17, 2001: Italian Defense Minister Believes Terrorists 'Behind Speculation on the International Markets'



Antonio Martino. [*Source: US Navy*] Italian Defense Minister Antonio Martino says, "I think that there are terrorist states and organizations behind speculation on the international markets. Those who organized the attacks on New York are clear-minded in their folly. Because everybody knows that money is power." He adds,

“Those who acted certainly tried to cover the tracks of the operation. But if the intelligence services of all countries work together, the financiers who work for the terrorists will not escape the hunt.” ([Agence France-Presse 9/17/2001](#)) The same day, the BBC reports, “Italian stock authorities [are] investigating abnormal movements in share prices on the Milan stock exchange prior to the terrorist attacks.” ([Weinstein 9/18/2001](#)) Further, it is reported that around 1995 several intelligence investigated bin Laden investing in European stock markets through an unnamed broker in Milan (see [1995](#)).

September 17, 2001: Bush Gives CIA Broad Powers to Capture, Kill, or Interrogate Al-Qaeda Leaders

President Bush signs a classified directive on this day giving the CIA the authority to kill or capture suspected al-Qaeda leaders and set up a global network of facilities to detain and interrogate them in secret. Other related directives follow a short time later. ([Weissman 8/27/2004](#)) The directive, known as a memorandum of notification, will become the foundation for the CIA’s secret prison system. But the directive does not spell out specific guidelines for interrogations. ([Johnston 9/10/2006](#)) Around this time, Bush also approves a secret “high-value target list” containing about two dozen names, giving the CIA basic executive and legal authority to either kill or capture those on the list. The president is not required to approve each name added to the list and the CIA does not need presidential approval for specific attacks. Further, a presidential finding gives the CIA broad authority to capture or kill terrorists not on the list. The list is merely the CIA’s primary focus. The CIA will these authorities to hunt for al-Qaeda leaders in Afghanistan during the war there. ([Risen and Johnston 12/15/2002](#))

September 17, 2001: Bush Authorizes Extensive New Powers and Funding for the CIA

Two days earlier at Camp David, CIA Director George Tenet had given a presentation to President Bush and his war cabinet, laying out an extensive plan for combating global terrorism and giving the CIA sweeping new powers (see [September 15, 2001](#)). ([Woodward and Balz 1/31/2002](#)) Bush had thanked Tenet and said he would think about his proposals, as well as those put forward by his other advisers, and would get back with his decisions by the following Monday. By this day, September 17, he has decided to agree to all of Tenet’s requests, which include an extra \$1 billion of funding. Reportedly, Bush wants “the CIA to be first on the ground, preparing the way for the military with both intelligence officers and paramilitary officers.” ([Kessler 2003, pp. 234-235](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 333](#)) Deputy CIA Director John McLaughlin will later recall that “we all assembled in the Cabinet Room, and the president lays down about 12 decisions, just like that, machine-gun fashion.... [T]he thing that stands out in my memory, because it hit me vividly, was he said, ‘I want CIA in there first.’” ([Kirk 6/20/2006](#)) In one of these decisions, Bush gives the CIA broad powers to capture, kill, and/or interrogate high-ranking al-Qaeda figures (see [September 17, 2001](#)).

September 17, 2001: Wolfowitz Sends Memo to Rumsfeld Suggesting Saddam Hussein Had a Role in 9/11

Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz sends a memo to Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld raising the possibility that Saddam Hussein played a role in the 9/11 attacks. In the memo, titled “Preventing More Events,” he argues that if there is even a 10 percent chance Iraq was behind 9/11, maximum priority should be placed on attacking Iraq. But he contends that the odds are “far more” than 10 percent. He also cites a controversial recent book by Laurie Mylroie which argues that Iraq masterminded the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center (see [Late 2000](#)). ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 335](#); [Isikoff and Corn 2006, pp. 80](#))

September 17, 2001: Bush Tells His Advisers ‘I Believe Iraq Was Involved’ in 9/11 Attacks

The issue of possible Iraqi involvement in the 9/11 attacks is debated in a National Security Council meeting. According to journalist Bob Woodward, President Bush ends the debate by saying, “I believe Iraq was involved, but I’m not going to strike them now. I don’t have the evidence at this point.” Bush says wants to keep working on plans for military action in Iraq but indicates there will be plenty of time to do that later. Right now his focus is mainly on Afghanistan. ([Woodward 2002, pp. 99](#)) At the time Bush says this, no evidence has emerged possibly linking Iraq to 9/11. One day later, an account of hijacker Mohamed Atta meeting an Iraqi agent in Prague will become known, but it will ultimately be discredited (see [September 18, 2001](#)).

September 17-18, 2001: CIA Connects Moussaoui to 9/11 Hijackers through Malaysia Summit Host

The CIA is informed that the possessions of Zacarias Moussaoui, which were searched after 9/11, contain a letter from a company called In Focus Tech (see August 16, 2001). The CIA finds that the company’s manager is Yazid Sufaat, who hosted an al-Qaeda summit in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, that was attended by hijackers Nawaf Alhazmi and Khalid Almihdhar. Various al-Qaeda commanders were also present at the meeting, which was monitored by the CIA (see January 5-8, 2000). CIA director George Tenet will later comment: “and with that the circle closed and things started to come together in a hurry... [T]his was the same Yazid Sufaat whose condo in Kuala Lumpur had been the venue for what turned out to be the first operational meeting in the planning for 9/11—the meeting... that was attended by Almihdhar and Alhazmi.” ([Tenet 2007, pp. 204](#))

On and around September 18, 2001: Wolfowitz and Feith Argue that Iraq Should be Target in War on Terrorism

Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz and Undersecretary of Defense Douglas Feith argue in three memos why Iraq should be included as a target in the war on terrorism. One memo, "Were We Asleep?," is dated September 18, and suggests links between Iraq and al-Qaeda. ([Kessler 1/12/2003](#); [Pilger 9/22/2003](#) *Sources*: senior administration officials)

September 18, 2001: 9/11 Grand Jury Convenes, Then Disappears

It is reported that a federal grand jury has been convened in White Plains, New York, to investigate the 9/11 attacks. The grand jury, said to have begun meeting a few days earlier, will be able to issue subpoenas. New York City Police Commissioner Bernard Kerik says it won't be the only 9/11-related grand jury: "You're going to see things like the grand jury in White Plains. You're going to see grand juries around the country, perhaps, looking into matters pertaining to this investigation." White Plains is part of the federal court system's Southern District of New York, which has historically led all investigations related to bin Laden. ([Associated Press 9/18/2001](#)) On October 22, 2001, the Wall Street Journal will report, "The federal grand jury investigating the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks is casting a wide net, seeking information from witnesses about their contacts with the 19 hijackers as well as other suspected terrorists," and it will detail some of the witnesses appearing before the grand jury. ([Markon 10/22/2001](#)) However, thorough searches of the Lexis-Nexus database show no further mention of this grand jury, or any other 9/11-related grand juries. In early October 2001, the Justice Department will take over all 9/11 related prosecutions (see [October 11, 2001](#)).

September 18, 2001: Clarke's Report to Bush Finds No Link between Iraqi Government and Al-Qaeda or 9/11 Attacks

On September 12, 2001, President Bush spoke to counterterrorism "tsar" Richard Clarke and told him to look into possible Iraqi links to the 9/11 attacks (see [September 12, 2001](#)). Clarke works with CIA and FBI experts to make a report on the issue. ([Burrough et al. 5/2004, pp. 238](#)) On September 18, Clarke sends a memo to National Security Adviser Rice entitled, "Survey of Intelligence Information on Any Iraq Involvement in the September 11 Attacks." It passes along a few foreign intelligence reports, including a report just coming out of the Czech Republic alleging that hijacker Mohamed Atta met an Iraqi agent in Prague in April 2001. But it concludes there is no compelling case that Iraq had planned the 9/11 attacks. It further points out that allegations of any ties between al-

Qaeda and the Iraqi government are weak, especially since bin Laden resents the secular nature of Saddam Hussein's government. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 335, 559](#)) Clarke will later claim that the first draft of his memo was returned by National Security Adviser Rice or her deputy Stephen Hadley because it did not find any link between Iraq and al-Qaeda. He says, "It got bounced and sent back, saying 'Wrong answer.... Do it again.'" Rice and Hadley will later deny that they asked to have the memo redone for this reason. Clarke does not know if Bush ever sees his report. "I don't think he sees memos that he doesn't-wouldn't like the answer." ([Burrough et al. 5/2004, pp. 238; 9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 559](#))

September 18, 2001-April 2007: Claims of an Atta-Iraqi Spy Meeting Are Repeatedly Asserted and Denied in Media



William Safire's New York Times editorial published November 12, 2001, in which he calls the alleged meeting between Atta and an Iraqi agent an "undisputed fact." [Source: PBS] Media coverage relating to an alleged meeting between hijacker Mohamed Atta and an Iraqi spy named Ahmed al-Ani took place in Prague, Czech Republic, has changed repeatedly over time:

- September 18, 2001: It is first reported that 9/11 plotter Mohamed Atta met in Prague, Czech Republic, with an Iraqi diplomat in April 2001. The name of the diplomat, Ahmed Khalil Ibrahim Samir al-Ani, is mentioned in follow up articles. ([Gullo 9/18/2001](#); [Lichtblau, Serrano, and McDonnell 9/19/2001](#); [CNN 10/11/2001](#); [Safire 11/19/2003](#))
- October 20, 2001: The story is denied by some Czech officials (see [October 16, 2001](#)). ([Tagliabue 10/20/2001](#))
- October 26, 2001: The story is confirmed by the Czech interior minister (see [October 26, 2001](#)). ([Tyler and Tagliabue 10/27/2001](#))
- October 27, 2001: It is claimed Atta met with Iraqi agents four times in Prague, and was given a vial of anthrax. Atta is alleged to have had further meetings with Iraqi agents in

Germany, Spain, and Italy (see [October 27, 2001](#)). ([McGrory 10/27/2001](#))

■November 12, 2001: Conservative columnist William Safire calls the meeting an “undisputed fact” in a New York Times editorial (see [November 12, 2001](#)). ([Safire 11/12/2001](#))

■December 9, 2001: Vice President Cheney asserts that the existence of the meeting is “pretty well confirmed” (see [December 9, 2001](#)). ([Washington Post 12/9/2001](#))

■December 16, 2001: The identities of both al-Ani and Atta, alleged to have been at the meetings, are disputed by a Czech police chief (see [December 16, 2001](#)). ([Hedges and Mcneil 12/16/2001](#); [Hejma 12/16/2001](#))

■January 12, 2002: It is claimed at least two meetings took place, including one a year earlier. ([Johnston 1/12/2002](#))

■February 6, 2002: It is reported that senior US intelligence officials believe the meeting took place, but they believe it is not enough evidence to tie Iraq to the 9/11 attacks (see [February 6, 2002](#)). ([Risen 2/6/2002](#))

■March 15, 2002: Evidence that the meeting took place is considered between “slim” and “none.” ([Ignatius 3/15/2002](#))

■March 18, 2002: William Safire again strongly asserts that the meeting took place. ([Safire 3/18/2002](#))

■April 28-May 2, 2002: The meeting is largely discredited. For example, the Washington Post quotes FBI Director Mueller stating that, “We ran down literally hundreds of thousands of leads and checked every record we could get our hands on, from flight reservations to car rentals to bank accounts,” yet no evidence that Atta left the country was found. According to the Post, “[a]fter months of investigation, the Czechs [say] they [are] no longer certain that Atta was the person who met al-Ani, saying ‘he may be different from Atta.’” ([Pincus 5/1/2002](#)) Newsweek cites a US official who contends that, “Neither we nor the Czechs nor anybody else has any information [Atta] was coming or going [to Prague] at that time” (see [April 28, 2002](#)). ([Isikoff 4/28/2002](#); [Pincus 5/1/2002](#); [listed 5/2/2002](#))

■May 8, 2002: Some Czech officials continue to affirm the meeting took place. ([Pitkin 5/8/2002](#))

■May 9, 2002: William Safire refuses to give up the story, claiming a “protect-Saddam cabal” in the high levels of the US government is burying the evidence. ([Safire 5/9/2002](#))

■July 15, 2002: The head of Czech foreign intelligence states that reports of the meeting are unproved and implausible. ([Swoger 7/15/2002](#))

■August 2, 2002: With a war against Iraq growing more likely, Press Secretary Ari Fleischer suggests the meeting did happen, “despite deep doubts by the CIA and FBI.” ([Drogin, Richter, and McManus 8/2/2002](#))

■August 19, 2002: Newsweek states: “The sole evidence for the alleged meeting is the uncorroborated claim of a Czech informant.” According to Newsweek, Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz is nonetheless pushing the FBI to have the meeting accepted as fact. ([Isikoff 8/19/2002](#))

■September 10, 2002: The Bush administration is no longer actively asserting that the meeting took place. ([Priest 9/10/2002](#))

■September 17, 2002: Vice President Cheney and Defense Secretary Rumsfeld “accept reports from Czech diplomats” that the meeting took place. ([Diamond 9/17/2002](#))

■September 23, 2002: Newsweek reports that the CIA is resisting Pentagon demands to

obtain pictures of the alleged meeting from Iraqi exiles. One official says, “We do not shy away from evidence. But we also don’t make it up.” ([Hosenball and Lipper 9/23/2002](#))

■October 10, 2002: British officials deny the meeting ever took place (see [October 4-10, 2002](#)). ([Huband 10/4/2002](#); [Norton-Taylor 10/10/2002](#))

■October 20, 2002: Czech officials, including President Vaclav Havel, emphatically deny that the meeting ever took place. It now appears Atta was not even in the Czech Republic during the month the meeting was supposed to have taken place. President Havel told Bush “quietly some time earlier this year” that the meeting did not happen (see [Early 2002, probably May or later](#)). ([Walker 10/20/2002](#); [Risen 10/21/2002](#))

■December 8, 2002: Bush adviser Richard Perle continues to push the story, stating, “To the best of my knowledge that meeting took place.” ([Simon 9/5/2002](#)) He says this despite the fact that in October 2002, Czech officials told Perle in person that the meeting did not take place (see [October 20, 2002](#)).

■July 9, 2003: Iraqi intelligence officer Ahmed al-Ani is captured by US forces in Iraq. ([Schmidt 7/9/2003](#))

■July 10, 2003: In a story confirming al-Ani’s capture, ABC News cites US and British intelligence officials who have seen surveillance photos of al-Ani’s meetings in Prague, and who say that there is a man who looks somewhat like Atta, but is not Atta. ([ABC News 7/10/2003](#))

■September 14, 2003: Vice President Cheney repeats the claims that Atta met with al-Ani in Prague on NBC’s Meet the Press. He says “we’ve never been able to develop anymore of that yet, either in terms of confirming it or discrediting” the meeting, but he also cites the when making the claim that Iraq officially supported al-Qaeda (see [September 14, 2003](#) and [September 14, 2003](#)). ([Milbank and Pincus 9/15/2003](#))

■July 25, 2003: The 9/11 Congressional Inquiry makes public its conclusion that the meeting never took place (see [January-July 2003](#)).

■December 13, 2003: It is reported that al-Ani told interrogators he did not meet Atta in Prague. ([Priest and Kessler 9/29/2003](#); [Reuters 12/13/2003](#))

■February 24, 2004: CIA Director George Tenet says of the meeting: “We can’t prove that one way or another.” ([Jehl 7/9/2004](#))

■June 16, 2004: The 9/11 Commission concludes that the meeting never happened. They claim cell phone records and other records show Atta never left Florida during the time in question (see [June 16, 2004](#)). ([9/11 Commission 6/16/2004](#))

■June 17, 2004: Vice President Cheney says no one has “been able to confirm” the Atta meeting in Prague or to “to knock it down” He calls reports suggesting that the 9/11 Commission has reached a contradictory conclusion “irresponsible,” even though the 9/11 Commission did conclude just that the day before (see [June 17, 2004](#)). ([CNN 6/18/2004](#))

■July 1, 2004: CIA Director Tenet says that the CIA is “increasingly skeptical” the meeting ever took place (see [July 1, 2004](#)). ([Jehl 7/9/2004](#))

■July 12, 2004: The 9/11 Commission publicly concludes the meeting never took place (see [July 12, 2004](#)).

■March 29, 2006: Cheney says of the meeting: “And that reporting waxed and waned where the degree of confidence in it, and so forth, has been pretty well knocked down now at this stage, that that meeting ever took place” (see [March 29, 2006](#)).

■September 8, 2006: A bipartisan Senate report confirms that the meeting never took

place (see [September 8-10, 2006](#)). ([US Senate and Intelligence Committee 9/8/2006](#).)

■September 10, 2006: Cheney still breathes life into reports of the meeting, reversing position and refusing to deny that the meeting took place (see [September 10, 2006](#)). ([Cheney 9/10/2006](#))

■April 2007: In a new book, former CIA Director Tenet claims, “It is my understanding that in 2006, new intelligence was obtained that proved beyond any doubt that the man seen meeting with [a] member of the Iraqi intelligence service in Prague in 2001 was not Mohamed Atta” (see [2006](#)). ([Tenet 2007, pp. 355](#))

September 18-20, 2001: 9/11 Suspect Arrested in Morocco but Returns to Asylum in Britain



Kamar Eddine Kherbane. [*Source: Marco Hebdo*] A militant leader named Kamar Eddine Kherbane is arrested in Morocco, but he has been given political asylum in Britain since 1994 and he is quickly deported to Britain and freed. Agence France-Presse claims that his arrest was “apparently in connection with the [9/11] attacks on the US.” The Moroccan government also questions him about arms smuggling. ([Agence France-Presse 9/20/2001](#)) But by sending him back to Britain, the Moroccan government ignores an extradition request by the Algerian government who claim Kherbane is a wanted criminal and an al-Qaeda operative. ([Bamford 9/21/2001](#)) Kherbane was a founding member of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), an Algerian political party outlawed in the early 1990s. He is also a known al-Qaeda operative said to have met bin Laden on several occasions, most recently in 1998. He appears to have been a key leader of mujaheddin fighting in Bosnia (see [1990](#) and [1991](#)). ([Agence France-Presse 9/20/2001](#)) A Spanish police report will later claim that he was the head of the Al-Kifah Refugee Center’s Zabreb, Croatia, office (see [Early 1990s](#)). Al-Kifah was a US-based al-Qaeda charity front until the early 1990s that had ties to both the 1993 World Trade Center bombing and the CIA (see [1986-1993](#)). ([Goodman 12/8/2002](#)) Counterterrorism expert Rohan Gunaratna says Kherbane is “close to both the [Algerian] GIA and al-Qaeda’s leaderships.” ([Gunaratna 2003, pp. 183](#)) In an interview shortly after the Moroccan incident, Kherbane claims that he was released there because “Britain put a lot of pressure, which reached the point of threatening to expel the Moroccan ambassador from London.” He also admits to having met bin Laden in the 1990s. ([BBC 9/26/2001](#)) It is not known why the British government helps him avoid being sent to Algeria. But a few days after his return to Britain, The London Times will report, “More than 20 Islamic terrorists, including those wanted for the murders of at least 100 people abroad, are living

freely in Britain. Many on the global terror 'wanted list' have been granted political asylum despite being close to Osama bin Laden's organization." ([Leppard and Waterhouse 9/23/2001](#)) A 2005 article will indicate Kherbane is still living openly in Britain. ([BBC 2/24/2005](#))

September 19, 2001: Al-Marabh Arrested; Hazardous Materials Truck Plot Apparently Averted

After being briefly detained in July 2001, Nabil al-Marabh went to Chicago and spent the next two months working for an uncle there. ([Ashenfelter 5/23/2003](#)) In early September, he got a job working the late shift at a quickie market and liquor store. On September 19, his uncle shows up at the store to tell al-Marabh that his face has been on television and that he is wanted by the FBI. He and his uncle are still discussing this when the FBI arrives a few minutes later and takes him away. ([Risen and Engelberg 10/14/2001](#)) He has \$22,000 in cash and \$25,000 worth of amber jewels in his possession when arrested, despite holding only a sporadic series of low-paying jobs. ([Owens 9/4/2002](#)) Al-Marabh appears to have been working on some kind of plot involving hazardous materials and trucks since at least August 2000 (see [August 2000-January 2001](#)). He had just received another duplicate of his Michigan hazardous materials driver's license on September 16 and apparently is waiting for another duplicate to arrive. ([Wilgoren and Miller 9/21/2001](#); [Local 4 News \(Detroit\) 9/22/2001](#)) He has applied for a job at a local trucking company but is arrested before completing the application process. ([Getter, Mehren, and Slater 9/21/2001](#); [ABC News 1/31/2002](#)) In the days after his arrest, about ten Middle Eastern men across the US will be arrested for having similar hazardous materials licenses that have been fraudulently obtained. Mohamad Kamal Elzahabi, an al-Qaeda operative and friend of al-Marabh, began applying for a hazardous materials license in Minnesota in August 2001 (see [Mid-August 2001](#)). ([WCVB 5 \(Boston\) 9/27/2001](#)) In January 2002, it will be reported that "federal authorities now believe al-Qaeda had planted [al-Marabh in Chicago] to help prepare for the next volley of terrorist attacks." ([ABC News 1/31/2002](#))

September 19, 2001: Rumored Meeting Between Saudi Fundamentalists and ISI to Help Taliban



Prince Nawaf bin Abdul Aziz. [*Source: New York Times*] According to the private intelligence service Intelligence Online, a secret meeting between fundamentalist supporters in Saudi Arabia and the ISI takes place in Riyadh,

Saudi Arabia, on this day. Crown Prince Abdullah, the de facto ruler of Saudi Arabia, and Prince Nawaf bin Abdul Aziz, the new head of Saudi intelligence, meet with Gen. Mohamed Youssef, head of the ISI's Afghanistan Section, and ISI Director Lt. Gen. Mahmood Ahmed (just returning from discussions in Afghanistan). They agree "to the principle of trying to neutralize Osama bin Laden in order to spare the Taliban regime and allow it to keep its hold on Afghanistan." There has been no confirmation that this meeting in fact took place, but if it did, its goals were unsuccessful. ([Intelligence Online 10/4/2001](#)) There may have been a similar meeting before 9/11 in the summer of 2001.

September 19, 2001: Unverified Reports of Additional Flights to Be Hijacked

The FBI claims on this day that there were six hijacking teams on the morning of 9/11. ([Johnston and Risen 9/19/2001](#); [Borger and Hooper 10/13/2001](#)) A different report claims investigators are privately saying eight. ([Gumbel 9/25/2001](#)) However, the reports below suggest there may have been as many as nine aborted flights, leading to a potential total of 13 hijackings:

- Knives of the same type used in the successful hijackings were found taped to the backs of fold-down trays on a Continental Airlines flight from Newark. ([Kelso et al. 9/19/2001](#))

- The FBI is investigating American Airlines Flight 43, which was scheduled to leave Boston about 8:10 a.m. bound for Los Angeles but was canceled minutes before takeoff due to a mechanical problem. ([BBC 9/18/2001](#); [Chicago Tribune 9/18/2001](#); [Kelso et al. 9/19/2001](#)) Another version claims the flight left from Newark and made it as far as Cincinnati before being grounded in the nationwide air ban. ([Johnston and Risen 9/19/2001](#))

- Knives and box cutters were found on two separate canceled Delta Airlines planes later that day, one leaving Atlanta for Brussels and the other leaving from Boston. ([Donnelly 9/22/2001](#); [Gumbel 9/25/2001](#))

- On September 14, two knives were found on an Air Canada flight that would have flown to New York on 9/11 if not for the air ban. ([Sieberg 10/15/2001](#))

- Two men arrested on 9/11 may have lost their nerve on American Airlines Flight 1729 from Newark to San Antonio via Dallas that was scheduled to depart at 8:50 a.m., and was later forced to land in St. Louis. Alternately, they may have been planning an attack for September 15, 2001. ([Johnston and Risen 9/19/2001](#))

- There may have been an attempt to hijack United Airlines Flight 23 flying from JFK Airport, New York to Los Angeles around 9:00 a.m. Shortly after 9:00 a.m., United Airlines flight dispatcher Ed Ballinger sent out a warning about the first WTC crash to the flights he was handling (see [After 9:00 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). Because of this warning, the crew of Flight 23 told the passengers it had a mechanical problem and immediately returned to the gate. Ballinger was later told by authorities that six men initially wouldn't get off the plane. When the men finally disembarked, they disappeared into the crowd and never returned. Later, authorities checked their luggage and found copies of the Koran and al-Qaeda instruction sheets. ([Prial 9/14/2001](#); [Davis 4/14/2004](#)) In mid-2002, a NORAD deputy commander says "we don't know for sure" if Flight 23 was to have been hijacked. ([Ha 6/13/2002](#))

■According to anonymous FAA officials, a plane bound for Chicago, home of the Sears Tower, could have been another target for hijacking. The plane landed unexpectedly at the Cleveland airport after the FAA initiated a national ground stop. Four Middle Eastern men had deplaned and left the airport before officials could detain them for questioning.

([Freni 2003, pp. 81](#))

■A box cutter knife was found under a seat cushion on American Airlines Flight 160, a 767 that would have flown from San Diego to New York on the morning of 9/11 but for the air ban. ([Bendavid 9/23/2001](#))

The FBI is said to be seeking a number of passengers who failed to board the same, rescheduled flights when the grounding order on commercial planes in the US was lifted.

([BBC 9/18/2001](#)) The Independent points out suspicions have been fueled “that staff at US airports may have played an active role in the conspiracy and helped the hijackers to circumvent airport security.” They also note, “It is possible that at least some of the flights that have come under scrutiny were used as decoys, or as fallback targets.”

([Gumbel 9/25/2001](#))

September 19, 2001: Atta’s Father Claims Son Was Framed



A teenaged Mohamed Atta with his father, Mohamed al-Amir Awad al-Sayed Atta. [*Source: Family photo*] Mohamed Atta’s father holds a press conference in Cairo and makes a number of surprising claims. He believes that the Mossad, Israel’s spy agency, did the 9/11 attacks, and stole his son’s identity. Mohamed el-Amir claims that his son Atta was a mama’s boy prone to airsickness, a dedicated architecture student who rarely mentioned politics, and a victim of an intricate framing. He says that Atta spoke to him on the phone on September 12 about “normal things,” one day after he was supposed to be dead; but a previous article reports that “he had not heard from his son since the attack, but was confident he had nothing to do with the carnage.” Atta called his family about once a month, yet never told them he was in the US, continuing to say he was studying in Germany. Atta’s family never saw him after 1999, and Atta canceled a trip to visit them in late 2000. His father even shows a picture of his son, claiming he looks similar but not the same as the terrorist Atta. ([MacFarquahar 9/19/2001](#); [Ba-Isa 9/19/2001](#); [Torriero 9/20/2001](#); [Zarembo 9/24/2001](#)) Atta’s father claims that “he has recently received a very loving letter from his son, in which the young man wrote that he would come to Egypt to get married.” ([BBC 9/18/2001](#)) Concerning the flying skills of this son, he asks, “Did he ever learn to fly? Never. He never even had

a kite.” Moreover, “He was afraid of flying.” ([MacFarquahar 9/19/2001](#); [Zarembko 9/24/2001](#)) He also says that the man pictured in published photos from an airport surveillance camera had a heavier build than his son (see [Between 5:45 a.m. and 5:53 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). ([Khalil 9/20/2001](#)) A year later, he still believes his son is alive. He again reiterates this statement at the third anniversary of the 9/11 attacks. ([Connolly 9/2/2002](#); [Associated Press 9/11/2004](#)) But, four years later, he makes a statement (see [July 19, 2005](#)) which can be viewed as a tacit acceptance that his son was involved. ([CNN 7/20/2005](#))

September 19, 2001: Pakistani President Tells His Country He Still Supports the Taliban

Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf gives a speech on Pakistani television in Urdu, the main language of Pakistan. He draws a lengthy analogy between the situation facing Pakistan in the wake of 9/11 and an opportunistic alliance the Prophet Mohammed made to defeat his enemies. This message is widely interpreted in Pakistan as implying that the alliance with the US is only a temporary necessity. He says, “I have done everything for Afghanistan and the Taliban when the whole world was against them. We are trying our best to come out of this critical situation without any damage to them.” These comments are virtually ignored outside Pakistan at the time. ([Harrison 6/24/2003](#); [Harrison 9/5/2006](#))

September 19, 2001-September 2002: Members of the Bush Administration Describe 9/11 as ‘Opportunity’

On numerous occasions, key members of the Bush administration refer to 9/11 as an “opportunity.” ([Pilger 12/16/2002](#))

■ During a news conference on September 19, President Bush says, “[I]n terms of foreign policy and in terms of the world, this horrible tragedy has provided us with an interesting opportunity. One of the opportunities is in the Middle East.” He continues, “[T]his government, working with Congress, are going to seize the moment. Out of our tears, I said I see opportunity, and we will seek opportunity, positive developments from this horrible tragedy that has befallen our nation.” ([White House 9/19/2001](#))

■ Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld tells the New York Times, “[I]s it possible that what took place on September 11th... that maybe out of this tragedy comes opportunity? Maybe... the world will sufficiently register the danger that exists on the globe and have this event cause the kind of sense of urgency and offer the kind of opportunities that World War II offered, to refashion much of the world.” ([Rumsfeld 10/12/2001](#))

■ In March 2002, National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice tells the New Yorker “that she had called together the senior staff people of the National Security Council and asked them to think seriously about ‘how do you capitalize on these opportunities’ to fundamentally change American doctrine, and the shape of the world, in the wake of September 11th.” ([Lemann 4/1/2002](#)) In a speech the following month, she says, “[I]f the collapse of the Soviet Union and 9/11 bookend a major shift in international politics, then

this is a period not just of grave danger, but of enormous opportunity. Before the clay is dry again, America and our friends and our allies must move decisively to take advantage of these new opportunities. This is, then, a period akin to 1945 to 1947, when American leadership expanded the number of free and democratic states—Japan and Germany among the great powers—to create a new balance of power that favored freedom.” ([Rice 4/29/2002](#))

■President Bush’s National Security Strategy, published in September 2002, states, “The events of September 11, 2001, fundamentally changed the context for relations between the United States and other main centers of global power, and opened vast, new opportunities.” ([US President 9/2002](#))

As early as the evening of 9/11 itself, Bush had referred to the political situation resulting from the attacks as a “great opportunity” (see [\(Between 9:30 p.m. and 10:00 p.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([Woodward 2002, pp. 31-32](#))

September 19, 2001: Rumsfeld Memo Emphasizes Global Nature of Conflict

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld writes a memo to Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Gen. Henry Shelton, insisting that initial war plans should emphasize, among other things, the global nature of the conflict. ([Feith 8/7/2004](#))

September 19, 2001-September 20, 2001: Defense Policy Board Meets and Discusses Iraq

The Defense Policy Board (DPB) meets in secrecy in Rumsfeld’s Pentagon conference room on September 19 and 20 for nineteen hours to discuss the option of taking military action against Iraq. ([Sciolino and Tyler 10/12/2001](#)) They also discuss how they might overcome some of the diplomatic and political pressures that would likely attempt to impede a policy of regime change in Iraq. ([Sciolino and Tyler 10/12/2001](#)) Among those attending the meeting are the 18 members of the Defense Policy Board, Paul Wolfowitz, Donald Rumsfeld, Bernard Lewis, Ahmed Chalabi, and Chalabi’s aide Francis Brooke. ([Sciolino and Tyler 10/12/2001](#); [Burrough et al. 5/2004, pp. 236](#); [Mayer 6/7/2004](#))

Secretary of State Colin Powell and other State Department officials in charge of US policy toward Iraq are not invited and are not informed of the meeting. A source will later tell the New York Times that Powell was irritated about not being briefed on the meeting. ([Sciolino and Tyler 10/12/2001](#)) During the seminar, two of Richard Perle’s invited guests, Princeton professor Bernard Lewis and Ahmed Chalabi, the president of the Iraqi National Congress, are given the opportunity to speak. Lewis says that the US must encourage democratic reformers in the Middle East, “such as my friend here, Ahmed Chalabi.” Chalabi argues that Iraq is a breeding ground for terrorists and asserts that Saddam’s regime has weapons of mass destruction. ([Burrough et al. 5/2004, pp. 232](#)) He also asserts “there’d be no resistance, no guerrilla warfare from the Baathists, and [it would be] a quick matter of establishing a government.” ([Mayer 6/7/2004](#)) Attendees write a letter to President Bush calling for the removal of Saddam Hussein. “[E]ven if

evidence does not link Iraq directly to the attack, any strategy aiming at the eradication of terrorism and its sponsors must include a determined effort to remove Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq. Failure to undertake such an effort will constitute an early and perhaps decisive surrender in the war on international terrorism,” the letter reads. The letter is published in the Washington Times on September 20 (see [September 20, 2001](#)) in the name of the Project for a New American Century (PNAC), a conservative think tank that believes the US needs to shoulder the responsibility for maintaining “peace” and “security” in the world by strengthening its global hegemony. ([Project for the New American Century 9/20/2001](#); [Lobe 7/19/2003](#)) Bush reportedly rejects the letter’s proposal, as both Cheney and Powell agree that there is no evidence implicating Saddam Hussein in the attacks. ([Sciolino and Tyler 10/12/2001](#) Sources: Unnamed senior administration officials and defense experts)

September 20, 2001: Not All Passengers on ‘Bin Laden Flight’ Are Properly Interviewed or Accounted For

A private plane picks up Saudis who have gathered in Boston and flies them to Paris, then ultimately to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Because most of the passengers on board are relatives of Osama bin Laden, the 9/11 Commission calls this the “so-called bin Laden flight.” The commission claims there are 26 passengers on board, three of them security personnel. They further report that “22 of the 26... were interviewed by the FBI. Many were asked detailed questions.” However, the commission does not answer how many were not asked detailed questions, or were not questioned at all. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 557](#)) However, Craig Unger, author of the book *House of Bush, House of Saud*, publishes the flight manifest during the same week as the 9/11 Commission’s final report is released, and this list contains 29 names (including the three security personnel), not 26. ([Craig Unger website 7/22/2004](#)) The 2005 book *Al-Qaeda Will Conquer* by Guillaume Dasquié also makes note of this three-person discrepancy. ([Fidler 4/27/2005](#))

September 20, 2001: Tom Ridge Named Homeland Security Secretary



Tom Ridge. [Source: *US State Department*] President Bush announces the new cabinet-level Office of Homeland Security, to be led by Pennsylvania Governor Tom Ridge. ([Kugler 8/19/2002](#)) Accepting the post, Ridge says, “Liberty is the most precious gift we offer our citizens.” Responding to this comment, the *Village Voice* opines, “Could Tom Ridge have said anything scarier or more telling as he accepted the post of homeland security czar? Trying to strike the bell of liberty, he sounds its death knell, depicting government not as the agent of the people’s will, but as an imperious power with the authority to give us our democratic freedoms. Which means, of course, that it can also take them away.” ([Solomon 9/11/2002](#)) In November 2002, Ridge will become secretary of a new Homeland Security Department (see [November 25, 2002](#)).

September 20, 2001: Bush to Blair: After Afghanistan, ‘We Must Come Back to Iraq’

British Prime Minister Tony Blair meets with President George Bush at the White House. During dinner that night, also attended by Colin Powell, Condoleezza Rice, and British ambassador Sir Christopher Meyer, Blair tells Bush that he wants to concentrate on ousting the Taliban in Afghanistan. Bush replies, “I agree with you Tony. We must deal with this first. But when we have dealt with Afghanistan, we must come back to Iraq.” Blair says nothing to disagree. ([BBC 4/3/2003](#); [Rose 4/4/2004](#); [Whitaker 4/4/2004](#); [Burrough et al. 5/2004, pp. 238](#) Sources: [Christopher Meyer](#))

September 20, 2001: PNAC Think Tank Pushes for Iraq War

The Project for the New American Century (PNAC), an influential neoconservative think tank, publishes a letter addressed to President Bush, insisting that the war on terrorism include as one of its objectives the removal of Saddam Hussein from power— “even if evidence does not link Iraq directly to the attack.” “Failure to undertake such an effort will constitute an early and perhaps decisive surrender in the war on international terrorism.” PNAC also says the US should demand that Iran and Syria cease all support of Hezbollah, and if they fail to do so, the US should “retaliate” against those two

countries as well. Israel is praised in the letter as “America’s staunchest ally against international terrorism.” ([Project for the New American Century 9/20/2001](#))

September 20, 2001: FBI Hires Sibel Edmonds as Contract Translator

The FBI hires Turkish-American Sibel Edmonds as a contract translator for Turkish, Azerbaijani, and Farsi. In the wake of the 9/11 attacks, the FBI is desperately seeking qualified individuals to translate backlogged wiretaps and help authorities interview detained suspects. ([Edmonds 7/1/2004](#)) Before 9/11, there was not a single Turkish-language specialist at the bureau. ([Rose 9/2005](#)) Fluent in both Turkish and Azerbaijani, Edmonds works as a “linguist” in those languages. For Farsi, which Edmonds hasn’t spoken in 25 years, she is only a “monitor.” (An FBI translator is either a “linguist” or a “monitor” for any given language. Linguists are more qualified and consequently have broader roles. For example, while linguists can do verbatim translations, monitors may only produce summaries. ([Edmonds 7/1/2004](#))) As a contract translator, Edmonds is given a flexible schedule. On average she will work four evenings a week logging between 10 and 25 hours weekly. Almost 75 percent of her work will relate to pre-9/11 intelligence. ([Edmonds 7/1/2004](#)) The work of FBI translators is very important because the translator is often the bureau’s first filter that incoming intelligence must pass through. It is the responsibility of translators to decide what needs to be translated verbatim, what can simply be summarized, and what can be dismissed as not pertinent. In making these decisions, translators are not required to consult field agents or analysts. ([Edmonds 7/1/2004](#)) In fact, agents can’t even access the translation area unless they are escorted by a translator. ([Sperry 1/7/2004](#); [Waterman 3/31/2004](#)) A translator’s decision to mark a wiretap as “not pertinent” is usually final. Though all documents and transcripts are supposed to be reviewed by at least two translators, this never actually happens, according to Edmonds, even after 9/11. ([Edmonds 7/1/2004](#))

Late-September 2001-August 2004: Reports of Hijackers’ US Spending and Bank Accounts Change over Time

A few weeks after the attacks, US investigators say the hijackers appeared to have spent about \$500,000 while in the US. An official says, “This was not a low-budget operation. There is quite a bit of money coming in, and they are spending quite a bit of money.” ([Eggen and Woodward 9/29/2001](#); [Borger and Hopper 10/1/2001](#); [Eggen and Day 10/7/2001](#)) In a detailed analysis published in the summer of 2002, the FBI will again report that the hijackers had access to a total of \$500,000 to \$600,000, of which \$325,000 flowed through their SunTrust accounts. ([Risen 7/10/2002](#); [CNN 7/10/2002](#) *Sources: [Dennis Lormel](#)*) The same figure is provided by John S. Pistole, FBI Assistant Director, Counterterrorism Division, when he testifies before the Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs. “[T]he 9/11 hijackers utilized slightly over \$300,000 through formal banking channels to facilitate their time in the US. We assess they used another

\$200-300,000 in cash to pay for living expenses.” ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 133](#).) However, officials later back away from this figure and in August 2004 the 9/11 Commission says that the hijackers’ spending in the US was only “more than \$270,000.” ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 143](#).) In addition, the number of bank accounts the hijackers are said to have opened varies. Shortly after the attacks, investigators believe they had about a dozen accounts at US banks. In July 2002, Dennis Lormel, chief of the FBI unit investigating the money behind the attacks, tells the New York Times they had 35 accounts, including 14 with the SunTrust Bank. ([Eggen and Day 10/7/2001](#); [Risen 7/10/2002](#) Sources: [Dennis Lormel](#)) However, a year after the attacks, FBI Director Robert Mueller tells the 9/11 Congressional Inquiry, “In total, the hijackers opened 24 bank accounts at four different US banks.” ([US Congress 9/26/2002](#)) Not only is Mueller’s assertion contradicted by Lormel’s previous statement, but it is also demonstrably false, as the hijackers had at least 25 US bank accounts with at least 6 different banks (SunTrust Bank, Hudson United Bank, Dime Savings Bank, First National Bank of Florida, Bank of America, and First Union National Bank) (see [February 4, 2000](#), [June 28-July 7, 2000](#), [Early September 2000](#), [May 1-July 18, 2001](#), and [June 27-August 23, 2001](#)). ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia: Alexandria Division 7/31/2006, pp. 19](#).) The 9/11 Commission’s Report and its Terrorist Financing Monograph focus on some of the transfers made to the hijackers (see [January 15, 2000-August 2001](#), [June 13-September 25, 2000](#), [June 29, 2000-September 18, 2000](#), and [December 5, 2000](#)), but ignore others (see [June 2000-August 2001](#), [May 2001](#), [Early August-August 22, 2001](#), [Summer 2001 and before](#), and [Late August-Early September 2001](#)). Neither the report nor the monograph gives the total number of bank accounts the hijackers opened. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004](#); [9/11 Commission 8/21/2004](#).) In addition, the identities of the hijackers’ financiers reportedly change over time (see [September 24, 2001-December 26, 2002](#)).

September 20, 2001: Douglas Feith Suggests Targeting a ‘Non-Al-Qaeda Target, Like Iraq’

Douglas Feith suggests in a draft memo ([Feith 8/7/2004](#)) that the US should consider “hitting terrorists outside the Middle East in the initial offensive, perhaps deliberately selecting a non-al-Qaeda target like Iraq.” Other regions he proposes attacking include South America and Southeast Asia. He reasons that an initial attack against such targets would “surprise... the terrorists” and catch them off guard. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 277, 533](#); [Hosenball and Isikoff 8/8/2004](#)) According to Newsweek, the content of Feith’s memo derives from the work of the Counter Terrorism Evaluation Group (see [Shortly After September 11, 2001](#)), a project headed by Michael Maloof and David Wurmser. The group suggested that an attack on the remote Triborder region, where Paraguay, Argentina, and Brazil meet and where Iranian-backed Hezbollah is said to have a presence, would have a ripple effect among international Islamic militant groups. ([Hosenball and Isikoff 8/8/2004](#)) Feith later says his memo merely expands upon ideas put forth by Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld in a memo (see [September 19, 2001](#)) the secretary wrote the day before to Gen. Henry Shelton, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. ([Feith 8/7/2004](#)) The logic behind proposing strikes against targets outside of the

Middle East, Feith says, was based on the need to “cast a wide net” and achieve “additional objectives,” such as creating fissures in the enemy network, highlighting “the global nature of the conflicts,” showing “seriousness of US military purpose,” and demonstrating that the “war would not be limited geographically to Afghanistan.” ([Feith 8/7/2004](#))

Shortly Before September 25, 2001: Atta Reportedly Identified on Pre-9/11 Chart by Able Danger Team Members

Lt. Col. Anthony Shaffer will later claim that he receives a call from Dr. Eileen Preisser, who worked with him on the Able Danger program before 9/11. He claims that they meet and “she shows me a chart she had brought with her—a large desk top size chart. On it she has me look at the ‘Brooklyn Cell’—I was confused at first—but she kept telling me to look—and in the ‘cluster’ I eventually found the picture of [Mohamed] Atta. She pointed out (and I recognized) that this was one of the charts [we] had produced in January 2000, and had a sinking feeling at the pit of my stomach—I felt that we had been on the right track—and that because of the bureaucracy we had been stopped—and that we might well have been able to have done something to stop the 9/11 attack. I ask Eileen what she plans to do with the information/chart—she tells me that she does not know but she plans to do something.” Shaffer claims that Dr. Preisser shows the chart to Deputy National Security Adviser Stephen Hadley and others a few days later. However, as of early 2006, Dr. Preisser herself has never publicly commented on this or any other matter relating to Able Danger. ([US Congress 2/15/2006](#))

September 21, 2001: President Bush Told of No Connection Between Iraq and 9/11

During President Bush’s presidential daily briefing (PDB), Bush is informed that the US intelligence community has found no evidence linking Saddam Hussein’s regime in Iraq to the 9/11 attacks, nor any evidence of links between Hussein and al-Qaeda. The briefing has been prepared at the request of Bush, who is said to be eager to learn of any possible connection between Iraq and al-Qaeda. Yet during the briefing, he is told that the few believable reports of contact between the two were in fact attempts by Hussein to monitor the group, which he considered a threat to his secular regime. Analysts believe that at one point Hussein considered infiltrating al-Qaeda with Iraqi nationals or Iraqi intelligence operatives, so as to learn more about its inner workings. A former US administration official later will state, “What the President was told on September 21 was consistent with everything he has been told since—that the evidence [linking Iraq to 9/11] was just not there.” The existence of the September 21 PDB will not be disclosed to the Senate Intelligence Committee until the summer of 2004, while the committee will be investigating whether the Bush administration misrepresented intelligence information in the period leading up to the March 2003 invasion of Iraq. As of the end of 2005, the Bush administration will still refuse to turn over the briefing, even on a classified basis, and

will say nothing more about it other than the fact that it exists. ([Waas 11/22/2005](#); [MSNBC 11/22/2005](#); [Agence France-Presse 11/23/2005](#)) According to journalist Ron Suskind, during the meeting, CIA Director Tenet tells Bush about the alleged meeting hijacker Mohamed Atta had with an Iraqi agent in Prague, which has been reported in the media in recent days (see [September 18, 2001](#)). However, Tenet says, “Our Prague office is skeptical about the report. It just doesn’t add up.” He points out that credit card and phone records place Atta in Virginia during the time in question. ([Suskind 2006, pp. 23](#))

September 21, 2001: US Denies Plans for Afghanistan Regime Change

A secret report to NATO allies says the US privately wants to hear allied views on “post-Taliban Afghanistan after the liberation of the country.” However, the US is publicly claiming it has no intentions to overthrow the Taliban. ([Traynor and Younge 9/21/2001](#)) For instance, four days later, Press Secretary Ari Fleischer denies that military actions there are “designed to replace one regime with another.” ([US Department of State 12/26/2001](#))

September 21, 2001: Algerian Pilot Arrested then Let Go



Lotfi Raissi. [*Source: Amnesty International*] Lotfi Raissi, an Algerian pilot living in Britain, is arrested and accused of helping to train four of the hijackers. An FBI source says, “We believe he is by far the biggest find we have had so far. He is of crucial importance to us.” ([Las Vegas Review-Journal 9/29/2001](#)) However, in April 2002, a judge dismisses all charges against him, calling the charges “tenuous.” US officials originally said, “They had video of him with Hani Hanjour, who allegedly piloted the plane that crashed into the Pentagon; records of phone conversations between the two men; evidence that they had flown a training plane together; and evidence that Raissi had met several of the hijackers in Las Vegas. It turned out, the British court found, that the video showed Raissi with his cousin, not Mr. Hanjour, that Raissi had mistakenly filled in his air training logbook and had never flown with Hanjour, and that Raissi and the hijackers were not in Las Vegas at the same time. The US authorities never presented

any phone records showing conversations between Raissi and Hanjour. It appears that in this case the US authorities handed over all the information they had..." ([Ford 3/27/2002](#); [Guardian 9/26/2005](#)) Raissi later says he will sue the British and American governments unless he is given a "widely publicized apology" for his months in prison and the assumption of "guilty until proven innocent." ([Reuters 8/14/2002](#)) In September 2003, he does sue both governments for \$20 million. He also wins a undisclosed sum from the British tabloid Mail on Sunday for printing false charges against him. ([Gillan 9/16/2003](#); [BBC 10/7/2003](#); [Wagner 10/14/2003](#)) Declassified documents will later reveal that the British arrested Raissi only days after the FBI requested that the British discretely monitor and investigate him, not arrest him. ([Guardian 9/26/2005](#)) Raissi perfectly matches the description of an individual mentioned in FBI agent Ken Williams' "Phoenix memo" (see [July 10, 2001](#)), whom the FBI had attempted to investigate in May 2001 (see [1997-July 2001](#)).

September 21, 2001: Report Suggests There Are Confiscated Videos of Pentagon Crash

A report in the Washington Times suggests, "Federal investigators may have video footage of the deadly terrorist attack on the Pentagon. A security camera atop a hotel close to the Pentagon may have captured dramatic footage of the hijacked Boeing 757 airliner as it slammed into the western wall of the Pentagon. Hotel employees sat watching the film in shock and horror several times before the FBI confiscated the video as part of its investigation. It may be the only available video of the attack. The Pentagon has told broadcast news reporters that its security cameras did not capture the crash. The attack occurred close to the Pentagon's heliport, an area that normally would be under 24-hour security surveillance, including video monitoring." ([Gertz and Scarborough 9/21/2001](#)) In a later report, an employee at a gas station across the street from the Pentagon that services only military personnel says the gas station's security cameras should have recorded the moment of impact. However, he says, "I've never seen what the pictures looked like. The FBI was here within minutes and took the film." ([McKelway 12/11/2001](#)) In late 2006, the FBI will release the footage from the gas station's cameras, along with footage from atop the Doubletree Hotel near the Pentagon. Whether the Doubletree is the hotel referred to in the Washington Times report is unknown. Neither of the videos will show the impact on the Pentagon, though the Doubletree video shows the subsequent explosion (see [September 13, 2006-Early December 2006](#)). Footage taken by the Pentagon's security cameras and released earlier in 2006 will show that the Pentagon's claim—that its own cameras did not capture the impact on 9/11—was untrue (see [May 16, 2006](#)).

September 21, 2001: Congress Approves Aid Package for Airline Industry, 9/11 Victims

Congress approves a \$15 billion federal aid package for the battered US airline industry, and sets up a government fund to compensate 9/11 victims' relatives. ([Simon 9/22/2001](#))

However, relatives are only allowed to sue US-designated terrorists, and if they sue anyone else, they are not entitled to any compensation money. The law also limits the airlines' liability to the limits of their insurance coverage—around \$1.5 billion per plane. ([Baum 1/17/2002](#)) Nevertheless, some later sue entities that make them ineligible for the fund, such as the Port Authority, owner of the WTC.

September 21-28, 2001: Suspected Hijacker Associate Is Arrested in Britain, Then Released

Omar al-Bayoumi, suspected al-Qaeda advance man and possible Saudi agent, is arrested, and held for one week in Britain. He moved from San Diego to Britain in July 2001 and is studying at Aston University Business School in Birmingham when he is taken into custody by British authorities working with the FBI. ([Gembrowski and Aryan 10/27/2001](#); [Goldstein and Booth 12/29/2001](#); [MSNBC 11/27/2002](#)) During a search of al-Bayoumi's Birmingham apartment (which includes ripping up the floorboards), the FBI finds the names and phone numbers of two employees of the Saudi embassy's Islamic Affairs Department. ([Isikoff and Thomas 11/24/2002](#)) "There was a link there," a Justice Department official says, adding that the FBI interviewed the employees and "that was the end of that, in October or November of 2001." The official adds, "I don't know why he had those names." Nail al-Jubeir, chief spokesperson for the Saudi embassy in Washington, says al-Bayoumi "called [the numbers] constantly." ([Serrano, McManus, and Krikorian 11/24/2002](#)) They also discover jihadist literature, and conclude he "has connections to terrorist elements," including al-Qaeda. ([Schmidt and Drehle 7/25/2003](#)) However, he is released after a week. ([Serrano, McManus, and Krikorian 11/24/2002](#); [Isikoff and Thomas 11/24/2002](#)) British intelligence officials are frustrated that the FBI failed to give them information that would have enabled them to keep al-Bayoumi in custody longer than the seven days allowed under British anti-terrorism laws. ([Ford and McGrory 10/19/2001](#); [KGTV 10 \(San Diego\) 10/25/2001](#)) Even FBI officials in San Diego appear to have not been told of al-Bayoumi's arrest by FBI officials in Britain until after he is released. ([Bassey 10/21/2001](#)) Newsweek claims that classified sections of the 9/11 Congressional Inquiry indicate the Saudi Embassy pushed for al-Bayoumi's release — "another possible indicator of his high-level [Saudi] connections." ([Isikoff and Klaidman 7/28/2003](#)) A San Diego FBI agent later secretly testifies that supervisors fail to act on evidence connecting to a Saudi money trail. The FBI is said to conduct a massive investigation of al-Bayoumi within days of 9/11, which shows he has connections to individuals who have been designated by the US as foreign terrorists. ([Bassey 10/21/2001](#); [US Congress 7/24/2003](#); [Isikoff and Klaidman 7/28/2003](#)) But two years later witnesses connecting him to Saudi money apparently are not interviewed by the FBI. Al-Bayoumi continues with his studies in Britain and is still there into 2002, and yet is still not rearrested. ([Newsweek 10/29/2001](#); [Goldstein and Booth 12/29/2001](#)) He disappears into Saudi Arabia by the time he reenters the news in November 2002. ([Reno 9/2003](#))

September 20, 2001 and After: FBI Translator Sees Pattern of Deliberate Failure

Immediately after beginning her job as an FBI translator, Sibel Edmonds encounters a pattern of deliberate failure in her department. Her supervisor, Mike Feghali, allegedly says, “Let the documents pile up so we can show it and say that we need more translators and expand the department.” She claims that if she was not slowing down enough, her supervisor would delete her work. Meanwhile, FBI agents working on the 9/11 investigation would call and ask for urgently needed translations. In January 2002, FBI officials will tell government auditors that translator shortages are resulting in “the accumulation of thousands of hours of audio tapes and pages” of material that has not been translated. ([Grimaldi 6/19/2002](#)) After she discloses this in an October 2002 interview with CBS’ 60 Minutes, Senator Charles Grassley (R) says of her charges, “She’s credible and the reason I feel she’s very credible is because people within the FBI have corroborated a lot of her story.” He points out that the speed of such translation might make the difference between an attack succeeding or failing. ([CBS News 10/25/2002](#); [Blomquist 10/26/2002](#)) An investigation by the Justice Department’s Inspector General’s Office (see [July 8, 2004](#)) will also find Edmonds credible.

September 22, 2001-December 2001: US Secretly Increases Military Presence in Central Asia



A Mirage 2000-D fighter in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, in February 2002. [Source: [Shamil Zhumatov/ Reuters](#)] Witnesses begin to report US military planes secretly landing at night in the Central Asian nations of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. The US, Tajik, and Uzbek governments initially deny that any US troops have been sent there. ([Sherwell et al. 9/23/2001](#); [Associated Press 9/25/2001](#)) By October 5, witnesses say a “huge military buildup” has already occurred. ([Kleveman 10/4/2001](#)) On October 7, the US and Uzbekistan sign a secret agreement that reportedly is “a long term commitment to advance security and regional stability.” ([Fidler and Stern 10/13/2001](#)) It is later reported that the US military bases here, “originally agreed as temporary and emergency expedients, are now permanent.” ([Tisdall 1/16/2002](#)) The US begins building a military

base in the nearby country of Kyrgyzstan in December 2001. “There are no restrictions” in the agreement on what the US can do with this base, and it will be a “transportation hub” for the whole region. ([Schmitt and Dao 1/9/2002](#)) The base is only 200 miles from China. ([Grier 1/17/2002](#)) The building of these bases is the culmination of the strategy first proposed in 1992 by the men now in power.

September 23, 2001: Experts Say Islamic Militant Groups Linked to Organized Crime

European law enforcement experts claim that numerous links tie major Islamic Militant organizations, including al-Qaeda, with international organized crime groups. For approximately the last decade, mutually benefiting strong ties have developed between the two groups. Organized crime launders an estimated \$900 billion a year, some of it from militant groups that have been designated as terrorist organizations. France’s chief financial crime prosecutor: “The nerve center of war is money . . . Without money, terrorist networks do not exist. They can’t finance their operations overseas or purchase arms.” Militant groups are also deeply involved in the international narcotics trade. ([Viviano 9/23/2001](#))

September 23, 2001: Powell Says White House Will Provide Evidence of Al-Qaeda Role in 9/11, but Powell Contradicted by White House

Secretary of State Colin Powell is asked in a television interview, “Will you release publicly a white paper which links [bin Laden] and his organization to this attack to put people at ease?” Powell responds, “We are hard at work bringing all the information together, intelligence information, law enforcement information. And I think in the near future we will be able to put out a paper, a document that will describe quite clearly the evidence that we have linking him to this attack.” ([Powell 9/23/2001](#)) The next day, the New York Times reports that this report is expected to be published “within days. . . Officials say they are still arguing over how much information to release. . .” ([Perlez and Weiner 9/24/2001](#)) But later that day, White House Press Secretary Ari Fleischer says, “I think that there was just a misinterpretation of the exact words the secretary used on the Sunday shows. . . . I’m not aware of anybody who said white paper, and the secretary didn’t say anything about a white paper yesterday.” ([White House 9/24/2001](#)) The New Yorker will report a short time later that, according to a senior CIA official, US intelligence had not yet developed enough information about the hijackers. “One day we’ll know, but at the moment we don’t know” (see [Late September 2001](#)). ([Hersh 10/8/2001](#)) But no such paper is ever released.

September 23, 2001: Gingrich Wants Iraq War, Says ‘Bombing Some Caves Is Not Something that Counts’

Prominent neoconservative Newt Gingrich tells Newsweek, “When the US loses what may be more than 6,000 people [on 9/11], there has to be reaction so that the world clearly knows that things have changed.... [There is] a recognition that it will be very tough to get bin Laden in the rocky and mountainous terrain of Afghanistan. There’s a feeling that we’ve got to do something that counts—and bombing some caves is not something that counts.” ([Hirsh and Gutman 9/23/2001](#); [Thomas 8/28/2007](#)) Newsweek will comment on the quote in 2007: “Rather than [fight in Afghanistan], the US military wanted to fight on a grander stage, where it could show off its mobility and firepower. To the civilian bosses at the Pentagon and the eager-to-please top brass, Iraq was a much better target. By invading Iraq, the United States would give the Islamists—and the wider world—an unforgettable lesson in American power.” ([Thomas 8/28/2007](#))

September 23, 2001-Present: 9/11 Skeptics Derided as Conspiracy Nuts

The first of many mainstream articles ridiculing 9/11 “conspiracy theories” is published. ([Lashmar 9/23/2001](#)) Early articles of this type generally deride Middle Eastern views blaming Israel. ([Rosenblum 10/3/2001](#); [Dobbs 10/13/2001](#); [Katz 11/19/2001](#)) Later articles mostly deride Western theories blaming President Bush, and criticize the Internet and Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney for spreading these ideas. ([Greeley 2/8/2002](#); [Schabner 4/17/2002](#); [Parker 5/18/2002](#); [Williamson 5/19/2002](#)) The title of one article, “Conspiracy Nuts Feed On Calamity,” expresses the general tone of these articles. ([Tucker 5/22/2002](#)) An Ottawa Citizen article mockingly includes a Do-It-Yourself Conspiracy Theory section, where you can fill in the blanks for your own personal 9/11 theory. The article calls 9/11 conspiracy theories “delirious,” “dangerous,” and “viruses,” while admitting, “[I]t’s true that some of the events surrounding the September 11 attacks are hard to explain.” ([Patterson 9/1/2002](#)) Another article attempts to discredit theories that oil was a motive for the US to attack Afghanistan by interspersing them with theories that space aliens were behind the 9/11 attacks. ([Daily Telegraph 9/5/2002](#))

September 24, 2001: Militants Reportedly Stole Pilot Uniforms, Sat in Cockpits

Fox News claims that up to 12 other Middle Eastern men dressed in pilot uniforms were on other flights scheduled to take off on the morning of 9/11. Hijackings on all these flights were foiled when an unexpected ban on new flights prevented them from taking off. An FBI source says they had been invited into the cockpits under the impression that they were guest pilots from other airlines. It is standard practice to give guest pilots the spare seat in the cockpit known as the jump seat. ([Fox News 9/24/2001](#)) Flight 93’s cockpit voice recording has apparently shown that “one of the four hijackers had been invited into the cockpit area before the flight took off.” Many pilot uniforms had gone missing prior to 9/11. It is claimed that Mohamed Atta was given a guided tour of Boston’s Logan Airport the week before 9/11 when he turned up in a pilot uniform saying he was with Saudi Airlines. ([Giles 9/25/2001](#))

September 24, 2001: Bank Accounts of Suspected Al-Qaeda Supporters Frozen by US

The US freezes the bank accounts of 27 individuals and organizations, alleging that they had channeled money to al-Qaeda.

- The list includes the names of nine Middle Eastern groups that are members of bin Laden's International Islamic Front for Jihad Against Jews and Crusaders alliance announced in 1998 (see [February 22, 1998](#)). Such groups include the Islamic Army of Aden (based in Yemen), the GIA (Algeria), and Abu Sayyaf (the Philippines).
 - Individuals named include obvious al-Qaeda figures such as Osama bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri, al-Qaeda's second-in-command, and Muhammad Atef. ([Miller 9/25/2001](#))
 - Makhtab Al-Khidamat/Al-Kifah, a charity based in Pakistan. A Brooklyn, New York, branch was called the Al-Kifah Refugee Center and had ties to both the 1993 WTC bombing and the CIA (see [1986-1993](#)). It appears it was shut down in Pakistan in late 1995 (see [Shortly After November 19, 1995](#)). The Wall Street Journal notes that it "may be defunct or at least operating in a much-diminished capacity only in Afghanistan." ([Cohen et al. 9/25/2001](#))
 - The Al-Rashid Trust. This is primarily a humanitarian organization that aims to eject western charities from Afghanistan by taking over their activities. The trust is also so closely linked to the Kashmiri-focused jihadist organization Jaish-e-Mohammed that the Asia Times will comment, "It is often difficult to distinguish between the two outfits, as they share offices and cadres." The Jaish-e-Mohammed was founded by Maulana Masood Azhar, an associate of 9/11 financier Saeed Sheikh, with the support of the ISI (see [December 24-31, 1999](#)). In addition, the trust also provides support to the Taliban, and, occasionally, al-Qaeda. The trust works closely with the Arab-run Wafa Humanitarian Organization. It will continue its social and humanitarian projects, as well as its support for militant Islamic activities, under various names and partnerships despite this ban.
 - The Wafa Humanitarian Organization, an Arab-run charity. It is closely tied to the Al-Rashid Trust. ([Escobar 10/26/2001](#); [Farah 12/14/2003](#)) A company belonging to one of the hijackers' associates, the Mamoun Darkazanli Import-Export Company. It is not clear where the Mamoun Darkazanli Import-Export Company is or was based, as it was never incorporated in Hamburg, where Darkazanli lived and associated with some of the 9/11 hijackers. Darkazanli's personal assets are frozen in October (see [September 24-October 2, 2001](#)). ([Crewdson 11/17/2002](#)) However, according to some reports, some of the money transferred to the hijackers in the US in 2001 came through the Al-Rashid Trust (see [Early August 2001](#)) and possibly another account, and some of the money the hijackers received in 2000 may have come through Mamoun Darkazanli's accounts (see [June 2000-August 2001](#)).
- The move is largely symbolic, since none of the entities have any identifiable assets in the US. ([Miller 9/25/2001](#)) Reporter Greg Palast will later note that US investigators likely knew much about the finances of those organizations before 9/11, but took no action. ([Bosse 3/20/2003](#))

September 24-October 2, 2001: US and Germany Freeze Darkazanli's Bank Accounts

On September 24, 2001, the US freezes the accounts of 27 individuals and organizations, alleging that they had channeled money to al-Qaeda (see [September 24, 2001](#)). Included in the list is the Mamoun Darkazanli Import Export Company, which may have been used to funnel money to the hijackers (see [June 2000-August 2001](#)). US officials say Darkazanli took part in the 1996 Khobar Towers bombing in Saudi Arabia (see [June 25, 1996](#)). Darkazanli attended Said Bahaji's wedding in 1999 (see [October 9, 1999](#)). ([Tagliabue and Bonner 9/29/2001](#)) On October 2, 2001, Darkazanli's other accounts are also frozen. The US and German governments suspect Darkazanli of providing financial and logistical support to the Hamburg al-Qaeda cell. ([Agence France-Presse 10/28/2001](#)) Shortly thereafter, Spanish police listening in to Barakat Yarkas' telephone hear Yarkas warn the leader of a Syrian extremist organization that Darkazanli has caught the "flu" going around. This is believed to be a coded reference meaning that communicating with Darkazanli is not safe (see [August 1998-September 11, 2001](#) and [Spring 2000](#)). ([Crewdson 11/17/2002](#))

September 24, 2001-December 26, 2002: Identity of 9/11 Financier Constantly Changes



Mustafa Ahmed Alhawsawi. [*Source: FBI*] In 2000, the 9/11 hijackers receive money from a man using "Mustafa Ahmed al-Hisawi" and other aliases. On September 8-11, 2001, the hijackers send money to a man in the United Arab Emirates who uses the aliases "Mustafa Ahmed," "Mustafa Ahmad," and "Ahamad Mustafa." Soon the media begins reporting on who this 9/11 "paymaster" is, but his reported names and identities will continually change. The media has sometimes made the obvious connection that the paymaster is Saeed Sheikh—a British financial expert who studied at the London School of Economics, undisputedly sent hijacker Mohamed Atta money the month before the attacks, made frequent trips to Dubai (where the money is sent), and is known to have trained the hijackers. However, the FBI consistently deflects attention to other possible explanations, with a highly confusing series of names

vaguely similar to Mustafa Ahmed or Saeed Sheikh:

- September 24, 2001: Newsweek reports that the paymaster for the 9/11 attacks is someone named “Mustafa Ahmed.” ([Thomas 10/1/2001](#)) This refers to Mustafa Mahmoud Said Ahmed, an Egyptian al-Qaeda banker who was captured in Tanzania in 1998 then later released. ([Riley 9/28/2001](#); [Riley and Brune 10/3/2001](#))
- October 1, 2001: The Guardian reports that the real name of “Mustafa Mohamed Ahmad” is “Sheikh Saeed.” ([Whitaker 10/1/2001](#)) A few days later, CNN confirms from a “senior-level US government source” that this “Sheik Syed” is the British man Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh rescued from an Indian prison in 1999. ([CNN 10/6/2001](#); [Ressa 10/8/2001](#)) However, starting on October 8, the story that ISI Director Lt. Gen. Mahmood Ahmed ordered Saeed to give Mohamed Atta \$100,000 begins to break. References to the 9/11 paymaster being the British Saeed Sheikh (and the connections to the ISI Director) suddenly disappear from the Western media (with one exception ([CNN 10/28/2001](#))).
- October 2001: Other articles continue to use “Mustafa Mohammed Ahmad” or “Shaykh Saiid” with no details of his identity, except for suggestions that he is Egyptian. There are numerous spelling variations and conflicting accounts over which name is the alias. There is an Egyptian al-Qaeda financier leader named Mustafa Abu al-Yazid who uses some variant of Saeed Sheikh as an alias. ([Mcgowan 10/1/2001](#); [BBC 10/1/2001](#); [Riley and Brune 10/3/2001](#); [Solomon 10/6/2001](#); [Eggen and Day 10/7/2001](#); [Sunday Times \(London\) 10/7/2001](#); [Fazlollah 10/9/2001](#); [Hoge 10/15/2001](#); [Miller and McDonnell 10/20/2001](#))
- October 16, 2001: CNN reports that the 9/11 paymaster “Sheik Sayid” is mentioned in a May 2001 trial of al-Qaeda members. However, this turns out to be a Kenyan named Sheik Sayyid el Masry. ([Day 7. United States of America v. Usama bin Laden, et al. 2/20/2001](#); [Day 8. United States of America v. Usama bin Laden, et al. 2/21/2001](#); [Hirschhorn 10/16/2001](#))
- November 11, 2001: The identity of 9/11 paymaster “Mustafa Ahmed” is suddenly no longer Egyptian, but is now a Saudi named Sa’d Al-Sharif, who is said to be bin Laden’s brother-in-law. ([United Nations 3/8/2001](#); [Klaidman and Hosenball 11/11/2001](#); [Associated Press 12/18/2001](#))
- December 11, 2001: The federal indictment of Zacarias Moussaoui calls the 9/11 paymaster “Mustafa Ahmed al-Hawsawi a/k/a ‘Mustafa Ahmed,’” and gives him Sa’d’s nationality and birth date. ([MSNBC 12/11/2001](#)) Many articles begin adding “al-Hawsawi” to the Mustafa Ahmed name. ([Eggen 12/13/2001](#); [Eggen and Day 1/7/2002](#); [Pasternak and Braun 1/20/2002](#))
- January 23, 2002: As new information is reported in India, the media returns to the British Saeed Sheikh as the 9/11 paymaster. ([Watson 1/23/2002](#); [Bedi 1/24/2002](#); [Popham 1/24/2002](#); [Syal and Hastings 1/27/2002](#)) While his role in the kidnapping of Daniel Pearl is revealed on February 6, many articles connect him to 9/11, but many more do not. Coverage of Saeed’s 9/11 connections generally dies out by the time of his trial in July 2002.
- June 4, 2002: Without explanation, the name “Shaikh Saiid al-Sharif” begins to be used for the 9/11 paymaster, presumably a combination of Saeed Sheikh and Sa’d al-Sharif. ([Lumpkin 6/5/2002](#); [Buncombe 9/15/2002](#); [Lumpkin 9/26/2002](#); [Terzoeff 11/15/2002](#)) Many of the old names continue to be used, however. ([Risen 7/10/2002](#); [Time 8/4/2002](#); [McDermott 9/1/2002](#); [Crewdson and Simpson 9/5/2002](#); [Knight Ridder 9/8/2002](#); [Rubin](#)

[and Dorgan 9/9/2002](#); [Finn 9/11/2002](#); [Meyer 12/24/2002](#))

■June 18, 2002: FBI Director Mueller testifies that the money sent in 2000 is sent by someone named “Ali Abdul Aziz Ali” but the money in 2001 is sent by “Shaikh Saiid al-Sharif.” The 9/11 Commission will later identify Aziz Ali as Khalid Shaikh Mohammed’s nephew and agree with Mueller that he sent the money in 2000. ([US Congress 9/26/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 1](#))

■September 4, 2002: Newsweek says “Mustafa Ahmad Adin al-Husawi,” presumably Saudi, is a deputy to the Egyptian “Sayyid Shaikh Al-Sharif.” However, it adds he “remains almost a total mystery,” and they are unsure of his name. ([Hosenball 9/4/2002](#))

■December 26, 2002: US officials now say there is no such person as Shaikh Saiid al-Sharif. Instead, he is probably a composite of three different people: “[Mustafa Ahmed] Al-Hisawi, Shaikh Saiid al-Masri, al-Qaeda’s finance chief, and Saad al-Sharif, bin Laden’s brother-in-law and a midlevel al-Qaeda financier.” ([Associated Press 12/27/2002](#)) Shaikh Saiid al-Masri is likely a reference the Kenyan Sheik Sayyid el Masry. Note that, now, al-Hisawi is the assistant to Shaikh Saiid, a flip from a few months before. Saiid and/or al-Hisawi still haven’t been added to the FBI’s official most wanted lists. ([McGrory 12/1/2001](#); [Federal Bureau of Investigation 2002](#); [Minitel 6/17/2002](#)) Despite the confusion, the FBI isn’t even seeking information about them. ([Federal Bureau of Investigation 2/14/2002](#)) Mustafa Ahmed al-Hawsawi is said to be arrested with Khalid Shaikh Mohammed in Pakistan in 2003, but no photos of him are released, and witnesses of the supposed arrest did not see al-Hawsawi or Mohammed there (see [March 1, 2003](#)). ([Zakaria 3/3/2003](#)) A few weeks later, it will be reported that “the man US intelligence officials suspected of being al-Qaeda’s financial mastermind, Sheik Said al-Masri, remains at large.” ([McNamee, Woellert, and Matlack 3/17/2003](#))

September 24, 2001 and After: US Takes No Action Against Bin Laden’s Bank



An operating branch of the Al-Shamal Islamic Bank photographed in Sudan in October 2004. [Source: *Wayne Madsen*] On September 24, 2001, the US freezes the bank accounts of a number of people and businesses allegedly linked to al-Qaeda (see [September 24, 2001](#)). However, no accounts at the Al-Shamal Islamic Bank in Sudan are frozen, despite a 1996 State

Department report that bin Laden co-founded the bank and capitalized it with \$50 million (see [August 14, 1996](#)). As the Chicago Tribune will later note, bin Laden has been more closely linked to this bank than to any other bank in the world. ([Crewdson 11/3/2001](#)) On September 26, Sen. Carl Levin (D) publicly notes that Al-Shamal was able to obtain correspondent accounts with three US banks, as well as many European and Middle East banks, giving Al-Shamal direct or indirect access to US banking. ([Senator Carl Levin 9/26/2001](#)) Al-Shamal claims that it cut ties with bin Laden long ago. However, tipped off by Levin's comments, one day later a group of computer hackers claim to have hacked into Al-Shamal's computers, found evidence of existing al-Qaeda-linked bank accounts, and then turned the information over to the FBI. The FBI neither confirms nor denies getting such information. ([McWilliams 10/12/2001](#)) Several days later, it is reported that European banks are quietly cutting off all dealings with Al-Shamal despite the lack of any formal blacklisting of it. ([Associated Press 10/1/2001](#)) The Los Angeles Times will later report that after 9/11, the Sudanese government greatly increased their cooperation with US intelligence in hopes of improving relations with the US. In November 2001, some FBI agents including Jack Cloonan go to Sudan and are allowed to interview the manager at Al-Shamal. Bank records are made available to US investigators as well. Cloonan will later say, "Until then, the Sudanese had a credibility problem with the US, but they gave us everything we asked for." ([Silverstein 4/29/2005](#)) But multiple sources will later report that, as of late 2002 at least, Saudi multimillionaire Adel Batterjee heads Al-Shamal and is one of its largest shareholders. ([Devon and Mitre 10/28/2002](#); [Gunaratna 2003, pp. 112](#); [Roe, Cohen, and Franklin 2/22/2004](#)) Batterjee had long been suspected of al-Qaeda ties and was even detained by the Saudi government over his al-Qaeda links in 1993 (see [1993](#)). The US will officially designate him a terrorist financier in 2004 (see [December 21, 2004](#)). The Chicago Tribune notes that an official US blacklisting of the bank "could well have diplomatic repercussions that the White House... would rather avoid." A Saudi financial services conglomerate, Dar Al-Maal Al-Islami Trust (DMI), has a major stake in Al-Shamal, and DMI is headed by Prince Mohammed al-Faisal al-Saud, a cousin of the Saudi King Fahd. (His accountant will later be arrested in Spain and accused of being an important al-Qaeda financier (see [April 23, 2002](#)).) Other Saudi royals and prominent businesspeople are also invested in DMI. ([Crewdson 11/3/2001](#)) Furthermore, one of the bank's three founding members and major shareholders is Saleh Abdullah Kamel, a Saudi billionaire and chairman of the Dallah al-Baraka Group. ([Komisar 12/20/2002](#)) Al-Shamal apparently continues to operate and the US apparently has not taken any action against it. It is unclear if Batterjee continues to run it.

September 25, 2001: FAA Head Says No One Imagined Airplanes Used As Lethal Weapons

FAA Administrator Jane Garvey claims that before 9/11, "No one could imagine someone being willing to commit suicide, being willing to use an airplane as a lethal weapon." ([CNN 9/25/2001](#))

September 25, 2001: Several 9/11 Passengers Have Possible Connections to Pilotless Aircraft Program

As details of the passengers on the four hijacked flights emerge, some are shown to have curious connections to the defense company Raytheon, and possibly its Global Hawk pilotless aircraft program. Stanley Hall (Flight 77) was director of program management for Raytheon Electronics Warfare. One Raytheon colleague calls him “our dean of electronic warfare.” ([Gullo 9/25/2001](#)) Peter Gay (Flight 11) was Raytheon’s vice president of operations for Electronic Systems and had been on special assignment to a company office in El Segundo, California. ([Gullo 9/25/2001](#)) Raytheon’s El Segundo’s Electronic Systems division is one of two divisions making the Global Hawk. ([Intelligence Surveillance Reconnaissance Journal 3/2002](#)) Kenneth Waldie (Flight 11) was a senior quality control engineer for Raytheon’s electronic systems. David Kovalcin (Flight 11) was a senior mechanical engineer for Raytheon’s electronic systems. ([CNN 9/2001](#)) Herbert Homer (Flight 175) was a corporate executive working with the Department of Defense. ([CNN 9/2001](#); [Feldscher 12/11/2001](#)) A surprising number of passengers, especially on Flight 77, have military connections. For instance, William E. Caswell was a Navy scientist whose work was so classified that his family knew very little about what he did each day. Says his mother, “You just learn not to ask questions.” ([Chicago Tribune 9/16/2001](#))

September 25, 2001: Congressman Gives Able Danger Chart to White House, Mention of Atta Is Uncertain

Rep. Curt Weldon (R) later claims that about two weeks after 9/11, he is given a chart by friends of his from the Army’s Information Dominance Center, in cooperation with special ops. The chart indicates various al-Qaeda cells that were identified by a military intelligence unit called Able Danger. Early in 2000, this unit identified, amongst others, an al-Qaeda cell based in Brooklyn, New York, which included Mohamed Atta and three other future 9/11 hijackers (see [January-February 2000](#)). Atta’s name is said to be on the chart given to Weldon. Shortly after being given the chart, Weldon meets with Deputy National Security Adviser Stephen Hadley, and shows the chart to him. Weldon claims, “Hadley looked at the chart and said, Congressman, where did you get that chart from? I said, I got it from the military.... Steve Hadley said, Congressman, I am going to take this chart, and I am going to show it to the man. The man that he meant... was the President of the United States. I said, Mr. Hadley, you mean you have not seen something like this before from the CIA, this chart of al-Qaeda worldwide and in the US? And he said, No, Congressman. So I gave him the chart.” ([US Congress. House 6/27/2005](#); [Bender 8/12/2005](#); [Fox News 8/22/2005](#)) However, a spokesman for Hadley later disputes this account, and says, “Mr. Hadley does not recall any chart bearing the name or photo of Mohamed Atta. [National Security Council] staff reviewed the files of Mr. Hadley as well as of all [National Security Council] personnel... That search has turned up no chart.” ([Eggen 9/24/2005](#)) Rep. Dan Burton (R) later recalls attending the meeting and remembers the chart, but can’t recall if Atta was on it or not. ([Jehl 10/1/2005](#)) Curt

Weldon also later claims that the copy of the chart he gives to Hadley is his only one. ([Burger and Bennett 8/29/2005](#)) However, apparently contradicting this, Weldon will give a speech in 2002 showing the chart (see [May 23, 2002](#)).

(September 25, 2001 and after): Ground Zero Workers Find Compressed Floors and Shattered Core Columns of WTC

Two weeks after 9/11, engineers Pablo Lopez and Andrew Pontecorvo are walking in the B2 basement level at the ruins of the World Trade Center, towards where the North Tower stood. They discover a “solid, rocklike mass where the basement levels of the tower had been,” and see “the recognizable traces of twenty floors, very much like geologic strata revealed by a road cut, compressed into a ten-foot vertical span. In one place, the steel decks of half a dozen floors protruded like tattered wallpaper, so close together that they were almost touching where they were bent downward at the edge. Nothing between the decks was recognizable except as a rocky, rusty mishmash. In a few places what might have been carbonized, compressed stacks of paper stuck out edgewise like graphite deposits.” As New York Times reporters James Glanz and Eric Lipton describe, Lopez and Pontecorvo have found “where the vanished floors [of the tower] had gone. They had not just fallen straight down. The forces had been so great and the floors so light that they had simply folded up like deflated balloons.” Furthermore, they see the massive core columns of the tower, which are over two feet wide and made of four-inch thick steel plate, appearing to have suffered “a compound fracture: the upper sections looked as if they had been kicked, with incalculable fury, about a foot south of the sections they were resting on.” Lopez remarks, “Can you imagine the force?” ([Glanz and Lipton 2004, pp. 292-293](#)) At some later time, ironworker Danny Doyle, who is also working at Ground Zero, finds that floors of the South Tower have been compressed into a formation like what happened with the North Tower’s. He discovers “a distinct mound of debris set into the pile, about six feet high, with strands of wire and pieces of rebar sticking out. It looked like layers of sediment that had turned into rock and been lifted up on some mountainside.... Here were ten stories of the South Tower, compacted into an area of about six feet.” ([Glanz and Lipton 2004, pp. 310](#))

September 25, 2001: Justice Department Lawyer Asserts There is No Limit to President’s Authority to Wage War



John Yoo. [Source: *University of California, Berkeley*] In a secret 15-page memo to Deputy White House Counsel Timothy Flanigan, Justice Department lawyer John Yoo reasons that it is “beyond question that the president has the plenary constitutional power to take such military actions as he deems necessary and appropriate to respond to the terrorist attacks” of 9/11. Those actions can be extensive. “The President may deploy military force preemptively against terrorist organizations or the States that harbor or support them,” Yoo writes, “whether or not they can be linked to the specific terrorist incidents of Sept. 11... Force can be used both to retaliate for those attacks, and to prevent and deter future assaults on the nation. Military actions need not be limited to those individuals, groups, or states that participated in the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.” This power of the president, Yoo states, rests both on the US Congress’ Joint Resolution of September 14 and on the War Powers Resolution of 1973. “Neither statute, however, can place any limits on the president’s determinations as to any terrorist threat, the amount of military force to be used in response, or the method, timing, and nature of the response. These decisions, under our Constitution, are for the president alone to make.” He argues further that the September 14 resolution does not represent the limits to the president’s authority. “It should be noted here that the Joint Resolution is somewhat narrower than the president’s constitutional authority,” as it “does not reach other terrorist individuals, groups or states which cannot be determined to have links to the September 11 attacks.” the president’s broad power can be used against selected individuals suspected of posing a danger to the US, even though it may be “difficult to establish, by the standards of criminal law or even lower legal standards, that particular individuals or groups have been or may be implicated in attacks on the United States.” Yoo concludes: “[W]e do not think that the difficulty or impossibility of establishing proof to a criminal law standard (or of making evidence public) bars the president from taking such military measures as, in his best judgment, he thinks necessary or appropriate to defend the United States from terrorist attacks. In the exercise of his plenary power to use military force, the president’s decisions are for him alone and are unreviewable.” ([US Department of Justice 9/25/2001](#)) The contents of this memo are not disclosed until mid-December 2004. ([Isikoff 12/18/2004](#); [Isikoff, Klaidman, and Hirsh 12/27/2004](#))

Before September 26, 2001: FBI Says It Will Be Some Time Before Those Responsible for 9/11 Will be Charged

FBI spokesman Rex Tomb says that it will take time for criminal proceedings to commence against the people thought to be responsible for 9/11: "There's going to be a considerable amount of time before anyone associated with the attacks is actually charged." He continues, "To be charged with a crime, this means we have found evidence to confirm our suspicions, and a prosecutor has said we will pursue this case in court." In mid-August 2007 Zacarias Moussaoui will be the only person charged in connection with 9/11 in the US, being sentenced to life in prison in spring 2006 (see [May 3, 2006](#)), but it is unclear if he was involved in the 9/11 plot or a planned follow up plot (see [January 30, 2003](#)). Osama bin Laden will not be charged in connection with his alleged participation (see [June 6, 2006](#) and [August 28, 2006](#)). ([Clewley 9/27/2001](#))

September 26, 2001: CIA Advance Team Prepares for Afghanistan Bombing Campaign



Gary Schroen. [*Source: CBC*] Long-time CIA operative Gary Schroen is assigned on September 13, 2001 to lead a small team into Afghanistan to link up with the Northern Alliance and prepare for the US bombing campaign. His team totalling seven officers and three air crew land in Afghanistan on this day. This team will be the only US forces in the country for nearly a month, until special forces begin arriving on October 19 (see [October 19, 2001](#)). Schroen will later comment, "I was surprised at how slow the US military was to get themselves in a position where they could come and join us." During this month, Schroen's team gives the Northern Alliance money and assurances that the US is serious with their attack plans. They also survey battlefields with GPS units to determine where opposing forces are located. ([Schroen 6/20/2006](#))

(September 26, 2001): Bin Laden 'Confession' Video Possibly Made as Part of US Sting Operation

According to analyst Maher Osseiran, a home video in which Osama bin Laden admits foreknowledge of 9/11 is made around this date, not on a later date suggested by US officials (see [Mid-November 2001](#)). Osseiran argues that the video was part of a sting operation run by the US (see [January 19, 2001](#)), and that the first part—making the video—was successful, but the second part—capturing or killing bin Laden—failed. ([Osseiran 8/21/2006](#)) This is supported by a report in the *Observer*, which will write that “several intelligence sources have suggested... that the tape, although absolutely genuine, is the result of a sophisticated sting operation run by the CIA through a second intelligence service, possibly Saudi or Pakistani.” ([Vulliamy and Burke 12/16/2001](#)) Osseiran points out that the main person bin Laden talks to in the video, veteran fighter Khaled al-Harbi, actually left Saudi Arabia on September 21, and therefore presumably met bin Laden shortly after. A video expert also finds that two cameras were used to make the tape, on which footage of the confession is recorded over footage of a downed US helicopter, and that only part of the footage was transmitted by phone line or satellite. ([Kohlmann 2004, pp. 28-29](#); [Osseiran 8/21/2006](#)) On the tape, bin Laden and al-Harbi discuss events in Saudi Arabia immediately after 9/11. There are no references to events in October or November of 2001, such as the US attack on Afghanistan, which occurred on October 7 (see [October 7, 2001](#)), or the attack by the Northern Alliance against Kabul in mid-November (see [November 13, 2001](#)). ([US Department of Defense 12/13/2001](#))

September 27, 2001: ISI Has Connections to Taliban, Drug Trade, CIA

The Sydney Morning Herald discusses the connections between the CIA and Pakistan’s ISI, and the ISI’s long-standing control over the Taliban. Drugs are a big part of their operation: “opium cultivation and heroin production in Pakistan’s northern tribal belt and adjoining Afghanistan were a vital offshoot of the ISI-CIA cooperation. It succeeded in turning some of the Soviet troops into addicts. Heroin sales in Europe and the US, carried out through an elaborate web of deception, transport networks, couriers, and payoffs, offset the cost of the decade-long war in Afghanistan.” ([Bedi 9/27/2001](#))

September 27, 2001: Al-Qaeda Operative Arrested, Tortured in Ultra-Secret Facility



Lt. Col. Stuart Couch. [Source: *Wall Street Journal*] Mohamedou Ould Slahi, a Mauritanian businessman and alleged liaison between Islamic radicals in Hamburg and Osama bin Laden with foreknowledge of the 9/11 plot (see [1999](#) and [January-April 2000](#)), is arrested in Mauritania by secret police, his family says. By December, he will be in US custody. He will later be housed at a secret CIA facility within Camp Echo at the Guantanamo Bay Naval Station. ([Priest and Higham 12/17/2004](#)) In 2007, it will be reported that one of Slahi's prosecutors, Lt. Col. Stuart Couch, has refused to continue to prosecute Slahi after learning details of Slahi's tortures at Guantanamo. ([Bravin 3/31/2007](#)) The Nation will later report, "Aside from the beatings, waterboarding, stress positions, and sexual degradation that have been the norm at Guantanamo, Slahi was taunted with details of his mother's incarceration and rape in an elaborate hoax by an officer who claimed to be representing the White House." While Couch believes Slahi is a high-level al-Qaeda operative, he also believes the much of the evidence against him is not credible because of the methods used to obtain it. ([Scheer 4/4/2007](#))

September 28, 2001: Bin Laden Again Denies Involvement in 9/11 Attacks

Bin Laden says in an interview, "I have already said that I am not involved in the September 11 attacks in the United States (see [September 16, 2001](#)). As a Muslim, I try my best to avoid telling a lie. I had no knowledge of these attacks, nor do I consider the killing of innocent women, children and other human beings as an appreciable act. Islam strictly forbids causing harm to innocent women, children and other people. Such a practice is forbidden even in the course of battle.... The United States should try to trace the perpetrators of these attacks within itself; the people who are a part of the US system but are dissenting against it. Or those who are working for some other system; persons who want to make the present century as a century of conflict between Islam and Christianity so that their own civilization, nation, country, or ideology can survive. They may be anyone, from Russia to Israel and from India to Serbia. In the US itself, there are dozens of well-organized and well-equipped groups capable of causing large-scale destruction. Then you cannot forget the American Jews, who have been annoyed with President Bush ever since the Florida elections and who want to avenge him.... Then there are intelligence agencies in the US, which require billions of dollars worth of funds from Congress and the government every year.... They needed an enemy.... Is it not that

there exists a government within the government in the United States? That secret government must be asked who carried out the attacks.” ([Laden 9/28/2001](#))

September 28, 2001: Text of Atta Note Is Made Public, Authenticity Is Disputed

The text of a handwritten, five-page document found in Mohamed Atta’s luggage is made public. ([Observer 9/30/2001](#)) The next day, the Independent strongly questions if the note is genuine. It points out the “note suggests an almost Christian view of what the hijackers might have felt” and is filled with “weird” comments that Muslims would never say, such as “the time of fun and waste is gone.” If the note “is genuine, then the [hijackers] believed in a very exclusive version of Islam—or were surprisingly unfamiliar with their religion.” ([Fisk 9/29/2001](#)) Another copy of the document was discovered in a vehicle parked by a Flight 77 hijacker at Washington’s Dulles airport. A third copy of essentially the same document was found in the wreckage of Flight 93. Therefore, the letter neatly ties most of the hijackers together. ([CBS News 9/28/2001](#)) The Guardian says, “The finds are certainly very fortunate, though some might think them a little too fortunate.” ([Whitaker 10/1/2001](#)) Interestingly, an FBI affidavit of the contents of Atta’s baggage written on September 14, 2001, and released on October 4 fails to mention the how-to letter.

September 28, 2001: Bush Tells His Advisers Iraq ‘Probably Was Behind’ 9/11; Wants to Use Afghanistan War as Warning to Other Countries

During a National Security Council meeting attended by CIA Director Tenet, National Security Adviser Rice, Secretary of State Powell, Vice President Cheney and others, President Bush says of the 9/11 attacks, “Many believe Saddam [Hussein] is involved. That’s not an issue for now. If we catch him being involved, we’ll act. He probably was behind this in the end.” He also says, “What we do in Afghanistan is an important part of our effort. It’s important to be serious and that’ll be a signal to other countries about how serious we are on terror.” He mentions Syria and Iran as countries he wants to warn. This is according to journalist Bob Woodward, who interviews many top officials at the meeting. ([Woodward 2002, pp. 167](#)) One week earlier, the CIA advised Bush that there was no link between al-Qaeda and the Iraqi government. CIA Director Tenet also told Bush that the one alleged connection between Iraq and the 9/11 attack “just doesn’t add up” (see [September 21, 2001](#)).

September 29, 2001: \$2.5 Million in Airline Options Go Unclaimed

\$2.5 million in put options on American Airlines and United Airlines are reported unclaimed. This is likely the result of the suspension in trading on the New York Stock

Exchange after the attacks which gave the SEC time to be waiting if the owners showed up to redeem their put options placed the week before the 9/11 attacks. ([Berthelsen and Winokur 9/29/2001](#))

September 29, 2001: No Video Cameras in Boston's Logan Airport; Footage from Other Airports Remains Classified

It is reported that Boston's Logan Airport has no cameras in its terminals, gate areas, or concourses. It is possibly the only major airport in the US not to have such cameras. The two other airports used by the hijackers to launch the 9/11 attacks had security cameras, but only some footage of the hijackers in the Washington airport is leaked to the press in 2004. ([Hanchett and Washington 9/29/2001](#)) It was previously reported that FBI agents had "examined footage from dozens of cameras at the three airports [including Logan] where the terrorists boarded the aircraft." ([Rempel and Serrano 9/13/2001](#))

September 29-30, 2001: Suspected Mossad Agents Detained, Released

Police in the Midwest stop six men carrying suspicious documents. They possess photos and descriptions of a nuclear power plant in Florida and the Trans-Alaska pipeline, and have "box cutters and other equipment." All six have Israeli passports. They are released the same day after their passports are shown to be valid, but before anyone interviews them. The FBI is reportedly furious about their release. ([Merzer, Morgan, and Savino 10/3/2001](#); [Merzer, Savino, and Chatterjee 10/31/2001](#); [Kay 11/2/2001](#)) The six men may have been Mossad agents. In addition to snooping on the DEA and Islamic militants, some Mossad agents in the "art student spy ring" have been caught trying to break into military bases and other top-secret facilities (see [March 23, 2001](#)). ([Ketcham 5/7/2002](#))

Late September 2001: Saudi Arabia Uncooperative in 9/11 Investigation, Hiding Information about 9/11 Hijackers

President Bush states on September 24, 2001: "Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists. From this day forward, any nation that continues to harbor or support terrorism will be regarded by the United States as a hostile regime." ([US President 9/24/2001](#)) On the same day, he says, "As far as the Saudi Arabians go, they've been nothing but cooperative," and "[Am] I pleased with the actions of Saudi Arabia? I am." But in fact, Saudi Arabia refuses to help the US trace the names and other background information on the 15 Saudi hijackers. One former US official says, "They knew that once we started asking for a few traces the list would grow.... It's better to shut it down right away." Several experts claim the Saudi government is being "completely unsupportive" and is

giving “zero cooperation” to the 9/11 investigation. ([Willman and Miller 10/13/2001](#); [Hersh 10/16/2001](#)) On September 25, it is also reported that the Saudi government “has not granted visas to reporters for major US publications to trace the hijackers’ roots.” ([Murphy and Ottaway 9/25/2001](#)) By mid-October 2001, journalist Seymour Hersh will write in the New Yorker, “Other officials said that there is a growing worry inside the FBI and the CIA that the actual identities of many of those involved in the attacks may not be known definitively for months, if ever.” ([Hersh 10/16/2001](#))

Late September 2001: Bank and Businessman with Saudi Diplomatic Passport Still Funds Al-Qaeda

In January 2002, the US Treasury Department will send a letter to Swiss authorities stating that Youssef Nada and Ali bin Mussalim, two leaders of the Al Taqwa Bank in Switzerland, provided “indirect investment services for al-Qaeda, investing funds for bin Laden, and making cash deliveries on request to the al-Qaeda organization.” Furthermore, the letter will claim that such assistance continued until “late September 2001,” and that Mussalim carries a Saudi diplomatic passport. Mussalim had been known for controversial financial dealings since the early 1980s, when US prosecutors accused him of taking part in attempts to corner the world silver market. In 1994 he was an intermediary in a multi-billion dollar deal between the Saudi and French governments. He will die of cancer in June 2004, one month after reports of the US Treasury letter first publicly emerged. The Financial Times will call *Al-Qaeda Will Conquer*, the 2005 book which will be the first to reveal documentation of these claims about Mussalim, “uncomfortable reading for the Saudi government.” ([Isikoff and Hosenball 4/12/2004](#); [Fidler 4/27/2005](#)) For many years up to and past 9/11, he held Saudi ministerial status as an “advisor at the Royal Court” and was a close confidant of Saudi King Fahd. The Los Angeles Times will comment, “One is left wondering how the Sept. 11 commission could report that ‘we have found no evidence that the Saudi government as an institution or senior Saudi officials individually funded [al-Qaeda].’” ([Henderson 6/26/2005](#)) The US will declare the Al Taqwa Bank a terrorist financier in November 2001 (see [November 7, 2001](#)).

Late September 2001: FBI Confused about 9/11 Hijackers, Suspect They Left Deliberate Trail of Misleading Clues

Journalist Seymour Hersh will write in the New Yorker in late September 2001, “After more than two weeks of around-the-clock investigation into the September 11th attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, the American intelligence community remains confused, divided, and unsure about how the terrorists operated, how many there were, and what they might do next. It was that lack of solid information, government officials told me, that was the key factor behind the Bush Administration’s decision last week not to issue a promised white paper listing the evidence linking Osama bin Laden’s organization to the attacks” (see [September 23, 2001](#)). An unnamed senior official tells

Hersh, “One day we’ll know, but at the moment we don’t know.” Hersh further reports, “It is widely believed that the terrorists had a support team, and the fact that the FBI has been unable to track down fellow-conspirators who were left behind in the United States is seen as further evidence of careful planning. ‘Look,’ one person familiar with the investigation said. ‘If it were as simple and straightforward as a lucky one-off oddball operation, then the seeds of confusion would not have been sown as they were.’” The hijackers left a surprisingly obvious trail of clues, even regularly paying for delivered pizzas using credit cards in their own name (see [September 11-13, 2001](#)). Hersh further reports, “Many of the investigators believe that some of the initial clues that were uncovered about the terrorists’ identities and preparations, such as flight manuals, were meant to be found. A former high-level intelligence official told me, ‘Whatever trail was left was left deliberately—for the FBI to chase.’” ([Hersh 10/8/2001](#)) Many newspaper reports in late September 2001 indicate doubt over the identities of many hijackers (see [September 16-23, 2001](#)). The 9/11 Congressional Inquiry’s 2003 report will strongly suggest that the hijackers at least had numerous accomplices in the US (see [July 24, 2003](#)). But the 9/11 Commission’s 2004 report will downplay any suggestions of US accomplices and will indicate no doubts about the hijackers’ identities. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 231, 238-9](#))

Late September 2001: Cheney’s Chief of Staff Pressures Clarke to Support Alleged Mohamed Atta-Iraq Connection

In the driveway outside the West Wing of the White House, Vice President Dick Cheney’s chief of staff, Lewis “Scooter” Libby, allegedly grabs counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke and says, “I hear you don’t believe this report that Mohamed Atta was talking to Iraqi people in Prague.” Clarke responds, “I don’t believe it because it’s not true.” According to Clarke, Libby replies, “You’re wrong. You know you’re wrong. Go back and find out; look at the rest of the reports, and find out that you’re wrong.” Clarke will later comment, “And I understood what he was saying, which was, ‘This is a report that we want to believe, and stop saying it’s not true. It’s a real problem for the vice president’s office that you, the counterterrorism [‘tsar’], are walking around saying that this isn’t a true report. Shut up.’ That’s what I was being told.” ([Clarke 6/20/2006](#); [Kirk 6/20/2006](#)) While the timing of the incident is not specified, it likely takes place in late September 2001, after allegations that Atta met an Iraqi agent in Prague are made public, but before Clarke resigns as counterterrorism “tsar” at the end of the month.

Late September-November 2001: Pakistani ISI Aids Taliban Against US

The ISI secretly assists the Taliban in its defense against a US-led attack. Between three and five ISI officers give military advice to the Taliban in late September. ([Rashid 10/10/2001](#)) At least five key ISI operatives help the Taliban prepare defenses in Kandahar, yet none are punished for their activities. ([McGirk 5/6/2002](#)) Secret advisers

begin to withdraw in early October, but some stay on into November. ([Zielenziger and Tamayo 11/3/2001](#)) Large convoys of rifles, ammunition, and rocket-propelled grenade launchers for Taliban fighters cross the border from Pakistan into Afghanistan on October 8 and 12, just after US bombing of Afghanistan begins and after a supposed crackdown on ISI fundamentalists. The Pakistani ISI secretly gives safe passage to these convoys, despite having promised the US in September that such assistance would immediately stop. ([Frantz 12/8/2001](#)) Secret ISI convoys of weapons and nonlethal supplies continue into November. ([Bryant 11/1/2001](#); [McGirk 5/6/2002](#)) An anonymous Western diplomat later states, “We did not fully understand the significance of Pakistan’s role in propping up the Taliban until their guys withdrew and things went to hell fast for the Talibs.” ([Frantz 12/8/2001](#))

Late September-Early October 2001: Bin Laden Reportedly Agrees to Face International Tribunal; US Not Interested?

Leaders of Pakistan’s two Islamic parties are negotiating bin Laden’s extradition to Pakistan to stand trial for the 9/11 attacks during this period, according to a later Mirror article. Under the plan, bin Laden will be held under house arrest in Peshawar and will face an international tribunal, which will decide whether to try him or hand him over to the US. According to reports in Pakistan (and the Daily Telegraph), this plan has been approved by both bin Laden and Taliban leader Mullah Omar. ([Pilger 7/8/2002](#)) Based on the first priority in the US’s new “war on terror” proclaimed by President Bush, the US presumably would welcome this plan. For example, Bush had just announced, “I want justice. And there’s an old poster out West, I recall, that says, ‘Wanted: Dead or Alive.’” ([ABC News 9/17/2001](#)) Yet, Bush’s ally in the war on terror, Pakistani President Musharraf, rejects the plan (stating that his reason for doing so was because he “could not guarantee bin Laden’s safety”). Based on a US official’s later statements, it appears that the US did not want the deal: “Casting our objectives too narrowly” risked “a premature collapse of the international effort [to overthrow the Taliban] if by some lucky chance Mr. bin Laden was captured.” ([Pilger 7/8/2002](#))

Late September 2001-November 26, 2001: Theft of WTC Steel Leads to Tight Security Measures

The New York Police and FBI are investigating the theft of over 250 tons of steel from the remains of the collapsed WTC towers. Apparently, the steel was hauled away by trucks involved in the official clear-up operation (see [September 12-October 2001](#)), but instead of being taken to Fresh Kills—the FBI-controlled dump on Staten Island where it was intended to go—the steel was driven to three independently-owned scrapyards, two in New Jersey and one on Long Island. The London Telegraph says the scrap metal value of the stolen steel would have been roughly \$17,500. Investigators believe the theft was organized by one of New York’s Mafia families. ([Sapsted 9/29/2001](#)) Consequently, on November 26, 2001, the city initiates use of an in-vehicle Global Positioning System

(GPS), to monitor the locations of nearly 200 trucks removing steel from the WTC collapse site, at a cost of \$1,000 per unit. This system sends out alerts if any truck travels off course or arrives late at its destination. One driver involved with the clear-up operation is subsequently dismissed simply for taking an extended lunch break. ([Emigh 7/2002](#))

Late September 2001-March 2003: US Intelligence Fails to Catch Apparent Al-Qaeda Sleeper Agent with Ties to Saudi Embassy, KSM, and CIA Charity Front



Aafia Siddiqui. [Source: FBI] In 1993, the Al-Kifah Refugee Center in Brooklyn, New York, disbanded after media reports revealed that it had ties to all of the 1993 WTC bombers as well as the CIA (see [1986-1993](#)), but it quickly reappeared in Boston under the new name Care International. Counterterrorism expert Steven Emerson had warned the government of the name change since 1993 (see [April 1993-Mid-2003](#)). But apparently US investigators only start looking closely at Care International shortly after 9/11, when the FBI interviews several current and former employees. ([Guidera and Simpson 11/21/2001](#)) Around the same time, the Fleet National Bank in Boston files a “suspicious-activity report” (SARS) with the US Treasury Department about wire transfers from the Saudi Embassy in Washington to Aafia Siddiqui, a long-time member of the Al-Kifah Refugee Center and then Care International, and her husband Dr. Mohammed Amjad Khan. Fleet National Bank investigators discover that one account used by the Boston-area couple shows repeated on-line credit card purchases from stores that “specialize in high-tech military equipment and apparel.” Khan purchased body armor, night-vision goggles, and military manuals, and then sent them to Pakistan. The bank also investigates two transfers totaling \$70,000 sent on the same day from the Saudi Armed Forces Account used by the Saudi Embassy at the Riggs Bank in Washington to two Saudi nationals living in Boston. One of the Saudis involved in the transfers lists the same Boston apartment number as Siddiqui’s. The bank then notices that Siddiqui regularly gives money to the Benevolence International Foundation, which will soon be shut down for al-alleged Qaeda ties. They also discover her connection to Al-Kifah. The bank then notices Siddiqui making an \$8,000 international wire transfer on December 21, 2001, to Habib Bank Ltd., “a big Pakistani financial institution that has long been scrutinized by US intelligence officials monitoring terrorist money flows.” ([Isikoff and Hosenball 4/7/2003](#)) In April or May 2002, the FBI questions Siddiqui and Khan for the first time and asks them about their purchases. ([Stockman 9/22/2006](#)) But the two don’t

seem dangerous, as Siddiqui is a neuroscientist who received a PhD and studied at MIT, while Khan is a medical doctor. Plus they have two young children and Siddiqui is pregnant. There are no reports of US intelligence tracking them or watch listing them. Their whole family moves to Pakistan on June 26, 2002, but then Siddiqui and Khan get divorced soon thereafter. Siddiqui comes back to the US briefly by herself from December 25, 2002, to January 2, 2003. On March 1, 2003, Pakistan announces that 9/11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed (KSM) has been captured (see [March 1, 2003](#)). Some days later, Siddiqui drives away from a family house in Pakistan and disappears. Some later media reports will claim that she is soon arrested by Pakistani agents but other reports will deny it. Reportedly, KSM quickly confesses and mentions her name as an al-Qaeda sleeper agent, working as a “fixer” for other operatives coming to the US. On March 18, the FBI puts out a worldwide alert for Siddiqui and her ex-husband Khan, but Khan has completely disappeared as well. ([Scroggins 3/2005](#)) The CIA will later report that Ali Abdul Aziz Ali (a.k.a. Ammar al-Baluchi), a nephew of KSM and a reputed financier of the 9/11 attacks, married Siddiqui not long before her disappearance. Furthermore, in 2002 he ordered Siddiqui to help get travel documents for Majid Kahn (no relation to Siddiqui’s first husband), who intended to blow up gas stations and bridges or poison reservoirs in the US. It will also be alleged that Siddiqui bought diamonds in Africa for al-Qaeda in the months before 9/11. ([Stockman 9/22/2006](#)) The Saudi Embassy will later claim that the wire transfers connected to Siddiqui were for medical assistance only and the embassy had no reason to believe at the time that anyone involved had any connection to militant activity. ([Isikoff and Hosenball 4/7/2003](#)) Although Siddiqui seems to have ties with two key figures in the 9/11 plot and was living in Boston the entire time some 9/11 hijackers stayed there, there are no known links between her and any of the hijackers.

Late September-Late October 2001: US Military Slow in Entering Afghanistan until Rumsfeld Makes Power Grab

By late September 2001, the CIA covert plan to conquer Afghanistan is in place but it needs the US military to work. CIA official Gary Schroen will later recall, “We were there for just about a month by ourselves in the valley. We were the only Americans in the country for almost a month.” According to a PBS Frontline documentary, at some point around the middle of October, “there was a fiery NSC [National Security Council] meeting. The CIA had been complaining [Defense Secretary Donald] Rumsfeld was dragging his feet in Afghanistan. It was said Rumsfeld didn’t like taking orders from the CIA.” Lt. Gen. Michael DeLong will later say, “Rumsfeld went to the president and said, ‘The CIA has to work for me, or this isn’t going to work.’” President Bush finally agrees and places Rumsfeld in charge of the Afghanistan war. A short time later, on October 20, the first US Special Forces are put into action in Afghanistan, calling in precision air strikes. The Taliban fold in the face of the attack and the capital of Kabul will fall in mid-November. But according to Schroen, “I was absolutely convinced that that would happen and that the Taliban would break quickly. That could have happened in October, early October,” had the US military arrived to assist the CIA sooner. ([Kirk 6/20/2006](#))

September 30-October 4, 2001: Tony Blair Claims Seeing ‘Incontrovertible Evidence’ of Bin Laden’s Responsibility for 9/11

British Prime Minister Tony Blair says, “I have seen absolutely powerful incontrovertible evidence of [Osama bin Laden’s] link to the events of the 11th of September.” However, he says that because “much of this evidence comes to us from sensitive sources, from intelligence sources,” there is a question over how much of it can be made public. ([BBC 9/30/2001](#); [Jones 10/1/2001](#)) Three days later, the two British opposition leaders meet for a 45-minute confidential briefing with Blair, where he shows them this evidence. Following this briefing, Liberal Democrat leader Charles Kennedy says he now accepts there is “compelling evidence” of Bin Laden’s guilt. ([Jones 10/4/2001](#); [Wintour 10/4/2001](#)) Blair refers to the evidence he has seen on October 4, 2001, when he presents to Parliament a paper indicating that al-Qaeda is responsible for 9/11 (see [October 4, 2001](#)), but again he says that because of sensitivity issues, “It is not possible without compromising people or security to release precise details.” ([NPA 10/4/2001](#))

September 30-October 7, 2001: US Media Report Hijackers Received \$100,000 from Pakistan

Several media outlets report that, in addition to other transactions, the hijackers received \$100,000 wired from Pakistan to two accounts of Mohamed Atta in Florida (see also [Summer 2001 and before](#) and [Early August 2001](#)). ([ABC News 9/30/2001](#); [CNN 10/1/2001](#); [Fox News 10/2/2001](#); [Margasak 10/2/2001](#)) For example, CNN says, “Suspected hijacker Mohamed Atta received wire transfers via Pakistan and then distributed the cash via money orders bought here in Florida. A senior law enforcement source tells CNN, the man sending the money to Atta is believed to be Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh.” ([CNN 10/6/2001](#); [CNN 10/7/2001](#); [Ressa 10/8/2001](#)) The story will also be mentioned by Congressman John LaFalce at a hearing before the House of Representatives’ Committee on Financial Services. ([US Congress 10/3/2001](#)) However, Pakistan, a nuclear power, has already become a key US ally in the war on terror (see [September 11-16, 2001](#)). ISI Director Mahmood Ahmed, who is found to have had several telephone conversations with Saeed (see [Summer 2000](#)), is replaced (see [October 7, 2001](#)), and the story soon disappears from view (see [September 24, 2001-December 26, 2002](#)).

(After September 14, 2001-October 2001): FBI Translation Supervisor Blocks Agent’s Request to Have Certain 9/11-Related Material Re-Translated

One of Sibel Edmond’s main assignments as a contract FBI translator is to expedite requested translations from field agents. Shortly after she is hired by the FBI, an Arizona

field agent requests that certain material be re-translated. He is concerned that the original translation may not have been thorough enough. When she does the re-translation, she discovers that it contains information extremely relevant to the September 11 attacks, including references to “blueprints, pictures, and building material for skyscrapers being sent overseas” It also “reveals certain illegal activities in obtaining visas from certain embassies in the Middle East, through network contacts and bribery” (see [July-August 2001](#)). ([Edmonds 8/1/2004](#)) After re-translating the documents, she goes to supervisor Mike Feghali and says, “I need to talk to this agent over a secure line because what we came across in this retranslating is gigantic, it has specific information about certain specific activity related to 9/11.” But Feghali refuses to send the retranslation to the same agent, telling her, “How would you like it if another translator did this same thing to you? The original translator is going to be held responsible.” The agent never receives the re-translation he requested from Edmonds. Instead he is told by the Washington field office that the original translation is fine. ([Kornblut 7/5/2004](#); [Edmonds 8/1/2004](#))

October 2001: Report: Bin Laden’s Financial Network Is Successor to the BCCI Bank

A 70-page French intelligence report claims: “The financial network of bin Laden, as well as his network of investments, is similar to the network put in place in the 1980s by BCCI for its fraudulent operations, often with the same people (former directors and cadres of the bank and its affiliates, arms merchants, oil merchants, Saudi investors). The dominant trait of bin Laden’s operations is that of a terrorist network backed up by a vast financial structure.” The BCCI was the largest Islamic bank in the world before it collapsed in July 1991 (see [July 5, 1991](#)). A senior US investigator later says US agencies are looking into the ties outlined by the French because “they just make so much sense, and so few people from BCCI ever went to jail. BCCI was the mother and father of terrorist financing operations.” The report identifies dozens of companies and individuals who were involved with BCCI and were found to be dealing with bin Laden after the bank collapsed. Many went on to work in banks and charities identified by the US and others as supporting al-Qaeda. The role of Saudi billionaire Khalid bin Mahfouz in supporting bin Laden is emphasized in the report. In 1995, bin Mahfouz paid a \$225 million fine in a settlement with US prosecutors for his role in the BCCI scandal. ([Farah 2/17/2002](#)) Representatives of bin Mahfouz later argue that this report is false and that it was in fact prepared by Jean-Charles Brisard and not the French intelligence service. Bin Mahfouz has begun libel proceedings against Mr. Brisard, claiming that he has made unfounded and defamatory allegations, and denies that he has ever supported terrorism. ([Kendall Freeman 5/13/2004](#))

October 2001: US Military Downplays Importance of Targeting Bin Laden

On October 8, 2001, Gen. Tommy Franks, Central Command commander in chief, says of the war in Afghanistan, “We have not said that Osama bin Laden is a target of this

effort. What we are about is the destruction of the al-Qaeda network, as well as the... Taliban that provide harbor to bin Laden and al-Qaeda.” ([Omicinski 10/8/2001](#)) Later in the month, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld makes similar comments, “My attitude is that if [bin Laden] were gone tomorrow, the same problem would exist. He’s got a whole bunch of lieutenants who have been trained and they’ve got bank accounts all over some 50 or 60 countries. Would you want to stop him? Sure. Do we want to stop the rest of his lieutenants? You bet. But I don’t get up in the morning and say that is the end; the goal and the endpoint of this thing. I think that would be a big mistake.” ([Rumsfeld 10/24/2001](#)) One military expert will later note, “There appears to be a real disconnect between what the US military was engaged in trying to do during the battle for Tora Bora - which was to destroy al-Qaeda and the Taliban - and the earlier rhetoric of President Bush, which had focused on getting bin Laden.” ([Smucker 3/4/2002](#)) Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Richard Myers will make a similar comment in April 2002 (see [April 4, 2002](#)). ([Smucker 3/4/2002](#))

October 2001: Three of Four Black Boxes From WTC Crashes Secretly Found?

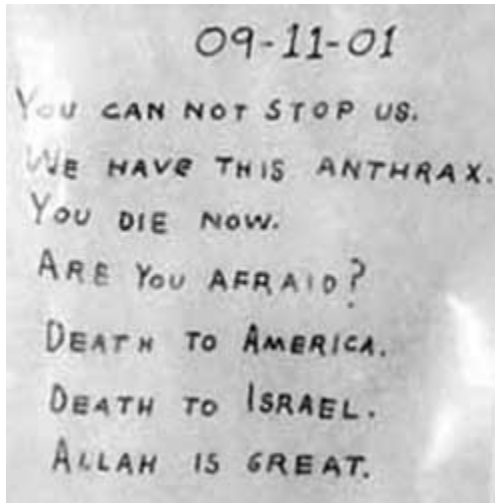
According to two men who work extensively in the wreckage of the WTC, three of the four black boxes from Flight 11 and Flight 175 are actually found during this month, but the public is not told. New York City Firefighter Nicholas DeMasi will mention the finding in a book published in 2003. He claims to drive federal agents on an all-terrain vehicle during their search and to see the found boxes himself. The Philadelphia Daily News will report on the story in 2004 when another rescue worker, volunteer Mike Bellone, backs up DeMasi’s account and claims to have seen one of the boxes as well. Spokesmen for the FBI and the New York City Fire Department deny the claims of these two workers. ([Bunch 10/28/2004](#)) In 2005, it will be reported, “A source at the National Transportation Safety Board, the agency that has the task of deciphering the data from the black boxes retrieved from crash sites-including those that are being handled as crimes and fall under the jurisdiction of the FBI-says the boxes were in fact recovered and were analyzed by the NTSB. ‘Off the record, we had the boxes,’ the source says. ‘You’d have to get the official word from the FBI as to where they are, but we worked on them here.’” An NTSB spokesperson denies that the FBI ever gave them the boxes. ([Lindorff 12/19/2005](#))

October 2001: FBI Recovers Hijacker E-Mails

Reports this month indicate that many hijacker e-mails have been recovered. USA Today reports many unencrypted e-mails coordinating the 9/11 plans written by the hijackers in Internet cafes have been recovered by investigators. ([Johnson 10/1/2001](#)) FBI sources say, “[H]undreds of e-mails linked to the hijackers in English, Arabic and Urdu” have been recovered, with some messages including “operational details” of the attack. ([Lancaster 10/4/2001](#)) “A senior FBI official says investigators have obtained hundreds of e-mails in English and Arabic, reflecting discussions of the planned September 11 hijackings.” ([Wall Street Journal 10/16/2001](#)) However, in April 2002, FBI Director

Mueller says no documentation of the 9/11 plot has been found. By September 2002, the Chicago Tribune reports, "Of the hundreds, maybe thousands, of e-mails sent and received by the hijackers from public Internet terminals, none is known to have been recovered." ([Crewdson and Simpson 9/5/2002](#)) The texts of some e-mails sent by Mohamed Atta from Germany are published a few months later. ([Crewdson, Swanson, and Simpson 2/25/2003](#))

October 2001: Anthrax Letters Kill Five, Heighten Terrorist Fears



The anthrax letter received by Senator Daschle's office. [Source: FBI] A total of four letters containing anthrax are mailed to NBC, the New York Post, and Democratic senators Tom Daschle and Patrick Leahy. The letters sent to the senators both contain the words "Death to America, Death to Israel, Allah is Great." Twenty-three people are infected and five people die. Panic sweeps the nation. On October 16, the Senate office buildings are shut down, followed by the House of Representatives, after 28 congressional staffers test positive for exposure to anthrax. A number of hoax letters containing harmless powder turn up. ([South Florida Sun-Sentinel 12/8/2001](#)) Initially it is suspected that either al-Qaeda or Iraq are behind the anthrax letters. ([Rose 10/14/2001](#); [BBC 10/16/2001](#); [McGrory 10/27/2001](#)) However, further investigation leads the US government to conclude that, "everything seems to lean toward a domestic source.... Nothing seems to fit with an overseas terrorist type operation." ([Washington Post 10/27/2001](#); [St. Petersburg Times 11/10/2001](#)) In August 2002, the FBI names Steven Hatfill, a bioweapons researcher who worked for the US government, as a "person of interest" in the case. ([Associated Press 8/1/2002](#); [Reid 8/2/2002](#)) Though he undergoes intense scrutiny by the FBI, he is never charged with any crime. As of mid-2004, no one has been charged in relation to the anthrax letter attacks.

October 2001: Conference at WTC Would Have Discussed Terrorism and Building Collapses

An emergency preparedness conference was originally scheduled, prior to 9/11, to take place some time this month at the World Trade Center. It was going to include a discussion on terrorism. Reportedly, “One of the topics they were going to talk about was the danger of collapsing buildings.” Further details, such as who was organizing the event, are unknown. ([Florida Times-Union 9/12/2001](#))

October 2001: Secret CIA Interrogation Center Set Up at US Military Base in Afghanistan

According to several press reports, the CIA has set up a secret detention and interrogation center (see [\(October 2001-2004\)](#)) at Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan where US intelligence officers are using aggressive techniques on detainees. The captives—imprisoned in metal shipping containers—are reportedly subjected to a variety of “stress and duress” interrogation tactics. ([Priest and Gellman 12/26/2002](#); [van Natta 3/9/2003](#)) Detainees are often forced to stand or kneel for hours, wear black hoods or spray-painted goggles for long periods of time, and stand or sit in awkward and painful positions. They are also reportedly thrown into walls, kicked, punched, deprived of sleep, and subjected to flashing lights and loud noises. ([Priest and Gellman 12/26/2002](#); [van Natta 3/9/2003](#); [Amnesty International 8/19/2003](#)) Some detainees tell of being “chained to the ceiling, their feet shackled, [and being] unable to move for hours at a time, day and night.” ([Gall 3/4/2003](#); [Gall and Rohde 9/17/2004](#)) Psychological interrogation methods such as “feigned friendship, respect, [and] cultural sensitivity” are reported to be in use as well. For instance, female officers are said to sometimes conduct the interrogations, a technique described as being “a psychologically jarring experience for men reared in a conservative Muslim culture where women are never in control.” ([Priest and Gellman 12/26/2002](#)) Human rights monitors are not permitted to visit the facility. ([Priest and Gellman 12/26/2002](#); [Agence France-Presse 12/29/2002](#)) The US claims that the interrogation techniques used at Bagram do not violate international laws. “Our interrogation techniques are adapted,” Gen. Daniel McNeil claims in early March 2003. “They are in accordance with what is generally accepted as interrogation techniques, and if incidental to the due course of this investigation, we find things that need to be changed, we will certainly change them.” ([Borger 3/7/2003](#))

October 2001: CIA Helps Arrest Egyptian Militant Leader Linked to Bin Laden



Ahmed Refai Taha. *[Source: Al-Ahram]* Ahmed Refai Taha, head of Al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya, an Egyptian militant group, is arrested at the airport in Damascus, Syria, and then quietly extradited to Egypt. He is reportedly executed in Egypt soon thereafter. Taha was one of the signers of bin Laden's 1998 fatwa calling for the killing of Americans and Jews around the world (see [February 22, 1998](#)). He also appeared with bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri in a video in 2000 (see [September 21, 2000](#)). ([MSNBC 6/22/2005](#)) CIA Director George Tenet will later claim that Taha was living in Syria and was arrested on a tip provided by the CIA. ([Tenet 2007, pp. 148](#))

October 2001: Spain-based Al-Qaeda Operative Flees Despite Police Round-up



Amer el-Azizi slipped surveillance after 9/11. *[Source: El Pais]* Amer el-Azizi, an al-Qaeda operative active in Spain, escapes a round-up of suspected al-Qaeda operatives by fleeing the country two weeks before arrests start to be made, even though he is under surveillance. ([Johnson et al. 3/19/2004](#); [Johnson and Crawford 4/7/2004](#); [Rotella 4/29/2004](#)) El-Azizi, who had previously been arrested and released twice (see [October 10, 2000](#)), returns to Spain shortly after this and falls under police surveillance, but his arrest is frustrated by Spanish intelligence (see [Shortly After November 21, 2001](#)). He goes on to play a role in the Madrid train bombings (see [Before March 11, 2004](#) and [March 11, 2004](#)).

October 2001-September 2003: 9/11 Attacks Result in Increased Funding for Pentagon Renovations

The 9/11 attacks result in significant extra funding for the Pentagon. Since 1993, the building has been undergoing major renovations. These were scheduled to be complete by 2014. But in October 2001 this is declared to be too long to leave major areas of the building unprotected, and Congress soon appropriates \$300 million so the renovations will be finished four years sooner. Also that month, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz approves a \$15 million package to protect command centers and other critical areas of the building against chemical, biological, and radiological attack. A road, Route 110, had been considered a security threat, as it ran within 40 yards of some of the most sensitive areas of the Pentagon. Previously, the possibility of moving it had been dismissed as too expensive, but now \$40 million is promptly found to cover the cost of rerouting it, along with making other road-security improvements. Before 9/11, the renovation of the Pentagon was already the largest reconstruction project in the world, costing \$2.1 billion. But, as the Washington Post reports in September 2003, following the attack on the Pentagon, “the renovation mushroomed and now encompasses about \$5.3 billion worth of projects in and around the Pentagon.” In an e-mail on October 1, 2001, Pentagon Renovation Program manager Lee Evey writes, “Recent events have shaken up complacency and there is unprecedented willingness” among the services to do whatever Paul Wolfowitz and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld want. ([Vogel 9/7/2003](#); [Vogel 2007](#), pp. 472-473)

October 2001-September 11, 2002: Army’s History Detachment Conducts Interviews of Witnesses of Pentagon Attack for Book

By September 11, 2002, the US Army’s Military History Detachment is concluding work on the US Department of Defense’s own book recording the 9/11 attack on the Pentagon. Since October 2001, the 305th and 46th Military History Detachments have been interviewing every willing survivor and witness from the Pentagon attack. More than 1,000 witnesses have been interviewed. Their findings are to be published in book form, and kept at the Army Center of Military History in Washington, DC. ([Simonich 12/16/2001](#); [Hume 12/17/2001](#); [Juniata Magazine \(Juniata College\) 9/2002](#); [Simonich 9/11/2002](#)) As of mid-2005 this book has not been released.

October 2001-September 2002: Vital Army Translators Dismissed for Homosexuality

Nine Army linguists, including six trained to speak Arabic, are dismissed from the military’s Defense Language Institute in Monterey, California, because they are gay. At the same time, the military claims it is facing a critical shortage of translators and interpreters for the war on terrorism. ([Mason 11/14/2002](#)) The Miami Herald comments: “The message is unmistakable: We find gay people more frightening than Osama bin Laden, whose stated goal is our destruction.” ([Pitts 11/22/2002](#))

October-Early November 2001: US Attempts Slow Conquest of Afghanistan for Pakistan's Benefit



The main routes al-Qaeda and the Taliban escape US and Northern Alliance forces. [Source: Yvonne Vermillion/MagicGraphix.com] James Risen will report in his 2006 book, *State of War*, there was “a secret debate within the Bush administration over how vigorously to support the Northern Alliance, the Afghan rebel group that had been battling the Taliban for years.” The Northern Alliance was dominated by Tajik ethnic minority in the north while the Pakistani government backed the Pashtun ethnic majority in the south. ([Risen 2006, pp. 169-170](#)) As a result, as *New Yorker* magazine would later note, “The initial American aim in Afghanistan had been not to eliminate the Taliban’s presence there entirely but to undermine the regime and al-Qaeda while leaving intact so-called moderate Taliban [and Pashtun] elements that would play a role in a new postwar government. This would insure that Pakistan would not end up with a regime on its border dominated by the Northern Alliance.” ([Hersh 1/21/2002](#)) On October 17, the *Washington Post* reports that the US and Pakistan are “working together to form a representative government” and Secretary of State Colin Powell says that he hopes moderate Taliban could be persuaded to join such a government. ([Constable 10/17/2001](#)) As a result of these goals, US bombers are “ordered to focus their attacks on Afghan government infrastructure targets in Kabul and elsewhere, far from the battlefields in the north, and the Taliban front lines [are] left relatively unscathed.” This policy not only delays the defeat of the Taliban but also gives al-Qaeda leaders extra time to prepare their escape. However, in early November the US bombing finally begins targeting the Taliban frontlines, especially near the key northern town of Mazar-i-Sharif. The results are immediate and dramatic, allowing the Northern Alliance to conquer the capital of Kabul within days (see [November 13, 2001](#)). ([Risen 2006, pp. 169-170](#))

(October 2001-2004): US Creates Multilayered Secret Overseas Prison System Holding 10,000 Prisoners

The United States government creates a multi-layered international system of detention centers and prison camps where suspected terrorists, enemy combatants, and prisoners of war are detained and interrogated. ([Priest and Stephens 5/11/2004, pp. A01](#)) The Washington Post reports in May 2004: “The largely hidden array includes three systems that only rarely overlap: the Pentagon-run network of prisons, jails, and holding facilities in Iraq, Afghanistan, Guantanamo, and elsewhere; small and secret CIA-run facilities where top al-Qaeda and other figures are kept; and interrogation rooms of foreign intelligence services—some with documented records of torture—to which the US government delivers or ‘renders’ mid- or low-level terrorism suspects for questioning.... The detainees have no conventional legal rights: no access to a lawyer; no chance for an impartial hearing; and... no apparent guarantee of humane treatment accorded prisoners of war under the Geneva Conventions or civilians in US jails.” ([Priest and Stephens 5/11/2004, pp. A01](#)) One administration official tells the New York Times that some high-level detainees may be held indefinitely. ([Risen, Johnston, and Lewis 5/13/2004 Sources: Unnamed administration official](#)) Secrecy permeates the system. For example, renditions are done covertly and the locations of the secret CIA-run interrogation centers are considered “so sensitive that even the four leaders of the House and Senate intelligence committees, who are briefed on all covert operations, do not know them.” ([Priest and Stephens 5/11/2004, pp. A01](#)) In May 2004, it is estimated that there are 10,000 prisoners being held in US facilities around the world. They come from a number of countries including Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Malaysia, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Sweden, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, Britain, the Palestinian territories, and Yemen. ([Buncombe and Sengupta 5/15/2004](#))

Early October 2001: US Launches Attacks on Afghanistan from Pakistani Bases

The US begins using the Shahbaz air force base and other bases in Pakistan in their attacks against Afghanistan. ([Philp, Hussain, and Farrell 10/15/2001](#)) However, because of public Pakistani opposition to US support, the two governments claim the US is there for purely logistical and defensive purposes. Even six months later, the US refuses to confirm it is using the base for offensive operations. ([Cooper 3/6/2002](#)) Such bases in Pakistan become a link in a chain of US military outposts in Central Asia. Other countries also falsely maintain that such bases are not being used for military operations in Afghanistan despite clear evidence to the contrary. ([Reuters 12/28/2001](#))

Early October 2001: General Franks Disregards Advice to Open Second Front in Afghanistan

The Washington Post reports in late 2004 that, shortly after Richard Myers officially becomes Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman on October 1, 2001, he raises doubts about the military plan to topple the Taliban in Afghanistan. General Tommy Franks, the chief of US Central Command, plans a single thrust towards the capital, Kabul, from the north. Myers urges Franks to open a southern front. A brigade of the Army’s 10th Mountain

Division in Uzbekistan and two Marine Expeditionary Forces in the Arabian Sea are prepared and in position for the role. However, Franks does not position a blocking force to meet any retreating forces. The Washington Post reports, "Some Bush administration officials now acknowledge privately they consider that a costly mistake." Franks later claims that it would have taken too much time to put a force into position and would have antagonized the country's Pashtun majority. Most of al-Qaeda and the Taliban's leaders are eventually able to escape the country. "A high-ranking war planner [later] likened the result to throwing a rock at a nest of bees, then trying to chase them down, one by one, with a net." ([Gellman 10/22/2004](#))

Early October 2001: Credit Card Use After 9/11 Hints at Associates of 9/11 Plotters

According to the New York Post, "Credit cards belonging to the suicide hijackers continued to be used after the Sept. 11 attacks—indicating associates of the terrorists remained in the United States weeks after the kamikaze strikes, authorities said..." The cards were used at least until around the start of October 2001. An unnamed official says, "We believe there are additional people out there. Many of the closest associates got out of the country early on, but we also believe there are a number of people here we're still looking at." The hijackers had more than 100 credit cards in their own names, variations of their names, or by using false identities. The credit card transactions were recorded in Florida, New Jersey, and Maryland. While officials believe it is possible that at least some of the credit cards may have been stolen and used by people not connected to the hijackers. In some cases, the credit card use helped investigators detain associates of the hijackers. ([Blomquist and Neuman 10/17/2001](#)) What becomes of these detained people is not clear, because use of hijacker credit cards is not asserted for anyone later charged or released by US authorities. An account six months later will suggest that investigators have only connected 27 credit cards to the hijackers, not more than 100. ([Candiotti 5/22/2002](#))

Early October 2001: Former Prime Minister of Yemen Says 9/11 Hijacker Was Involved in Attacks on USS Cole

Abd al-Karim al-Iryani, who was prime minister of Yemen at the time of the USS *Cole* attacks, tells the Guardian: "Khalid Almihdhar was one of the *Cole* perpetrators, involved in preparations. He was in Yemen at the time and stayed after the *Cole* bombing (see [August 7, 1998](#)) for a while, then he left." ([Whitaker 10/15/2001](#))

Early October 2001: FBI Translation Center Hires Turkish Man Who Is Not Proficient in English

The FBI hires Kevin Taskasen as a Turkish translator, despite him having failed language-proficiency tests for English. The FBI will later send Taskasen to Guantanamo to be the detention center's only Turkish translator. Some time after his return, he is promoted to head of the Turkish department in the FBI translations center. ([Edmonds 7/1/2004](#))

Early October 2001: ISI Director Prevents Key Taliban Leader from Defecting



Jalaluddin Haqqani. [*Source: PBS*] Lt. Gen. Mahmood Ahmed is supposedly helping the US defeat the Taliban (see [September 11-16, 2001](#)) while secretly helping the Taliban resist the US (see [September 17-18 and 28, 2001](#) and [Mid-September-October 7, 2001](#)). Jalaluddin Haqqani is a Taliban leader close to bin Laden who controls the Khost region of eastern Afghanistan where most of bin Laden's training camps and supporters are. Journalist Kathy Gannon will later note, "Had he wanted to, Haqqani could have handed the United States the entire al-Qaeda network." ([Gannon 2005, pp. 94](#)) He also has extensive ties with the ISI, and worked with the CIA in the 1980s. Journalist Steve Coll will later say, "There was always a question about whether Haqqani was really Taliban, because he hadn't come out of Kandahar; he wasn't part of the core group. And it was quite reasonable to believe after 9/11 that maybe he could be flipped.... [US officials] summoned him to Pakistan, and they had a series of meetings with him, the content of which is unknown." ([Coll 10/3/2006](#)) In early October 2001, Haqqani makes a secret trip to Pakistan and meets with Mahmood. Mahmood advises him to hold out and not defect, saying that he will have help. Haqqani stays with the Taliban and will continue to fight against the US long after the Taliban loses power. ([Gannon 2005, pp. 94](#))

Early October-Mid-November, 2001: Air Force Is Repeatedly Denied Permission to Bomb Top al-Qaeda and Taliban Leaders

In mid-November 2001, the Washington Post will report that senior Air Force officials are upset they have missed opportunities to hit top al-Qaeda and Taliban leaders since the start of the bombing of Afghanistan. According to these officials, the Air Force believes it

has the leaders in its crosshairs as many as ten times, but they are unable to receive a timely clearance to fire. Cumbersome approval procedures, a concern not to kill civilians, and a power play between the Defense Department and the CIA contribute to the delays. One anonymous Air Force official later says, "We knew we had some of the big boys. The process is so slow that by the time we got the clearances, and everybody had put in their 2 cents, we called it off." The main problem is that commanders in the region have to ask for permission from General Tommy Franks, based in Central Command headquarters in Tampa, Florida, or even Defense Secretary Rumsfeld and other higher-ups. Air Force generals complain to Franks about the delay problem, but never receive a response. For example, at one point in October, a Taliban military convoy is moving north to reinforce front line positions. Targeters consider it an easy mark of clear military value. But permission from Central Command is denied on the suspicion that the target is so obvious that "it might be a trick." In another example, a target is positively identified by real-time imagery from a Predator drone, but Central Command overrides the decision to strike, saying they want a second source of data. An anonymous official calls this request for independent verification of Predator imagery "kind of ridiculous." ([Ricks 11/18/2001](#)) The London Times paraphrase officials who claim that, "Attempts to limit collateral damage [serve] merely to prolong the war, and force the Pentagon to insert commandos on the ground to hunt down the same targets." ([Fletcher 11/19/2001](#)) By the end of the war, only one top al-Qaeda leader, Mohammed Atef, is killed in a bombing raid (see [November 15, 2001](#)), and no top Taliban leaders are killed.

October 1, 2001: Some Officials Question If Intelligence Service Helped bin Laden in Plot

The New Yorker reports that "a number of intelligence officials have raised questions about bin Laden's capabilities. 'This guy sits in a cave in Afghanistan and he's running this operation?' one CIA official asked. 'It's so huge. He couldn't have done it alone.' A senior military officer told me that because of the visas and other documentation needed to infiltrate team members into the United States a major foreign intelligence service might also have been involved." ([Hersh 10/8/2001](#)) No specific service is named, but the ISI would be one likely candidate.

October 1, 2001: Kashmir Suicide Attack Involves 9/11 Funder Saeed Sheikh

A suicide truck-bomb attack on the provincial parliamentary assembly in Indian-controlled Kashmir leaves 36 dead. It appears that Saeed Sheikh and Aftab Ansari, working with the ISI, are behind the attacks. ([Pittsburgh Tribune-Review 3/3/2002](#); [Anson 8/2002](#)) Indian intelligence claims that Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf is later given a recording of a phone call between Jaish-e-Mohammed leader Maulana Masood Azhar and ISI Director Lt. Gen. Mahmood Ahmed in which Azhar allegedly reports the bombing is a "success." ([United Press International 10/10/2001](#))

October 1, 2001: Taliban Possibly Trained Pilots in Afghanistan

It is reported that “a worldwide hunt is under way for 14 young Muslims said to have been trained in secret to fly Boeing airliners at an air base in Afghanistan. A senior pilot for the Afghan state-owned airline Ariana has told how he and four colleagues were forced by the Taliban regime to train the men who are now thought to be hiding in Europe and the United States. The fourteen men, seven of whom are said to speak fluent English, are described as ‘dedicated Muslim fanatics’ who spoke of being involved in a holy war. They are thought to have left Afghanistan a year ago. All had close links with the Taliban and some had fought for the regime.” ([Mcgowan 10/1/2001](#))

Late 2001 and 2003: Al-Qaeda Operative Whose Arrest Was Frustrated by Spanish Intelligence Reportedly Meets Al-Zarqawi

Amer el-Azizi, a senior al-Qaeda operative whose arrest was frustrated by Spanish intelligence (see [Shortly After November 21, 2001](#)), is said to meet Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who leads a group of foreign fighters in the Iraq war. One meeting may take place after 9/11 in 2001, when el-Azizi reportedly travels to Iran, intending to enter eastern Afghanistan. ([Johnson et al. 3/19/2004](#)) According to communications intercepts, another may take place in Iran in 2003, and some evidence indicates el-Azizi may also go to Iraq around this time. In addition, el-Azizi sponsors two recruits who train at a camp run by al-Zarqawi, according to documents obtained by the Spanish police. ([Johnson and Crawford 4/7/2004](#); [Rotella 4/14/2004](#)) El-Azizi and al-Zarqawi also have a common acquaintance, Abdulatif Mourafiq, an associate of al-Zarqawi’s in Afghanistan whose contact details were found in el-Azizi’s flat when it was raided in October or November 2001. ([Brisard 2005](#))

October 2, 2001: Remote Controlled Passenger Airplane Flew Before 9/11, Despite Claims to the Contrary



A Raytheon 727 lands in New Mexico in August, 2001.

[Source: Associated Press] It is reported that the US company Raytheon landed a 727 six times in a military base in New Mexico without any pilots on board. This was done to test equipment making future hijackings more difficult, by allowing ground control to take over the flying of a hijacked plane. ([Associated Press 10/2/2001](#); [Der Spiegel \(Hamburg\) 10/28/2001](#)) Several Raytheon employees with possible ties to this remote control technology program appear to have been on the hijacked 9/11 flights (see [September 25, 2001](#)). Earlier in the year, a specially designed Global Hawk plane flew from the US to Australia without pilot or passengers. ([Independent Television News 4/24/2001](#)) However, most media reports after 9/11 suggest such technology is currently impossible. For instance, the Observer quotes an expert who says that “the technology is pretty much there” but still untried. ([Vulliamy et al. 9/16/2001](#)) An aviation-security expert at Jane’s Defence Weekly says this type of technology belongs “in the realms of science fiction.” ([Ayling 9/18/2001](#); [Economist 9/20/2001](#)) Even President Bush appears to deny the technology currently exists. He gives a speech after 9/11 in which he mentions that the government would give grants to research “new technology, probably far in the future, allowing air traffic controllers to land distressed planes by remote control.” ([Bumiller 9/28/2001](#))

October 2, 2001: US Intelligence Cables Review 'Hidden Agenda' of ISI Support for Taliban

An agent of the Defense Intelligence Agency sends two classified cables to various US government agencies detailing how Pakistan’s Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI) created the Taliban and helped al-Qaeda. The agent writes that during the Soviet-Afghan War, the “Pakistan government also had a hidden agenda... Pakistan decided to deliberately influence the outcome. Rather than allow the most gifted Afghan commanders and parties to flourish, who would be hard to control later, Pakistan preferred to groom the incompetent ones [because] they would be wholly reliant on Pakistan for support... Pakistan also encouraged, facilitated, and often escorted Arabs from the Middle East into Afghanistan. Eventually a special facility was constructed... with [ISI] funding.” When Ahmed Shah Mossoud captured Kabul in the early 1990s, “Pakistan could not accept this result and the fragile Afghan coalition began another civil war, with the Pakistan stooge (Gulbuddin Hekmatyar) being backed to seize total power. In the end Pakistan was proved right about only one thing, Hekmatyar was incompetent. He was never able to

wrest Kabul from Massoud, despite massive logistical and material (including manpower) support from Pakistan.” When Hekmatyar failed, “[Pakistan] created another force they hoped to have better control over than Hekmatyar’s rabble. It was called Taliban... To lead the Taliban Pakistan chose Mullah Mohammad (Omar), who was willing to do as he was told... Omar’s emergence is credited to Pakistan ISI actions... The fully supported (by Pakistan) Taliban prevailed over the unsupported legitimate government of Afghanistan...” ([Defense Intelligence Agency 10/2/2001](#); [Defense Intelligence Agency 10/2/2001](#))

October 2-3, 2001: No Jet Fuel in Soil and Water at Flight 93 Crash Site

It is reported that soil and groundwater around the spot where Flight 93 crashed show no signs of jet fuel contamination. About a week after 9/11, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) started taking soil samples from the 50-foot hole dug around the crash crater, to check for contamination by the plane’s fuel and other hazardous materials. Three test wells have also been sunk to monitor groundwater. ([Levin and Barnes 9/17/2001](#); [WTAE-TV 10/2/2001](#); [Gibb 10/3/2001](#)) According to the National Transportation Safety Board, Flight 93 had about 37,500 lb of fuel remaining when it crashed. ([National Transportation Safety Board 2/13/2002, pp. 8](#)) Some of the first people who arrived at the crash site reported that there was an “incredibly strong” and “overpowering” smell of jet fuel in the air. ([Longman 2002, pp. 213](#); [Kashurba 2002, pp. 32, 40, 43 and 64](#)) Yet, so far, no contamination has been found in either the soil or the groundwater. Betsy Mallison, a spokeswoman for the DEP, says that whether it burned away or evaporated, much of the jet fuel spilled at the site seems to have dissipated. ([WTAE-TV 10/2/2001](#); [Gibb 10/3/2001](#)) DEP Secretary David Hess says most of the hazardous fluids must have been consumed by the crash’s fire. ([Levin and Barnes 9/17/2001](#)) Yet some of the first people who arrived at the site say they only saw a very small fire, if any at all, at the crash crater. ([Longman 2002, pp. 213](#); [McCall 2002, pp. 30-31](#))

October 3, 2001: FBI List Mistakenly Posted on Internet Reveals Details of Hundreds of Al-Qaeda Suspects

A confidential list of people suspected of helping the al-Qaeda terrorist network leaks out on the Internet. The list of 370 individuals was put together by the FBI and European security agencies, and had been circulated to central banks and government financial authorities cooperating in the fight against terrorism. The 22-page document is posted on the website of Finland’s Financial Supervision Authority, RATA. ([Evans-Pritchard 10/5/2001](#); [United Press International 10/11/2001](#)) It is the most extensive list of its kind yet made public by authorities anywhere in the world. ([Helsingin Sanomat 10/5/2001](#)) Some of its entries include only a name. ([United Press International 10/11/2001](#)) But, in many cases, aliases, last known addresses, dates of birth, and sometimes phone numbers

are given. Many of the addresses are in the United States—with Florida featuring extensively—or Germany, particularly Hamburg. ([Helsingin Sanomat 10/4/2001](#); [Evans-Pritchard 10/5/2001](#)) More than 300 of the names on the list came from US sources, and are listed with US addresses or Social Security numbers. Out of the 370 individuals, all of whom have Arab names, the FBI and other security authorities have identified the nationalities of 163. Saudi Arabians form the largest group, with 59 being on the list. The FBI has been unable to identify the nationality of the other 207 individuals. According to UPI, “With the exception of the two Americans [on the list], all of those listed would have had to apply for American visas in their home countries to enter the United States legally. Yet the spreadsheet’s sparse information seemed to indicate that the FBI apparently had been unable to locate the information that these applications normally would contain.” At least 77 of those on the list lived near flight schools. Many of the individuals have aliases, with some having up to 20. ([United Press International 10/11/2001](#)) The list includes all 19 of the alleged 9/11 hijackers, who are mostly listed as “possibly deceased.” It also includes al-Qaeda conspirator Zacarias Moussaoui. It will be removed from the RATA website within 24 hours, at the recommendation of the Finnish data protection commissioner. The London Daily Telegraph cautions, “Like any police intelligence file,” the list “is based on hearsay and unverified leads, and should have been kept strictly confidential to protect those falsely accused. It is far from clear whether the telephone numbers or email addresses are reliable.” For example, “A random call to a suspect in Vero Beach, Florida, was answered by the receptionist of a commercial law firm, who angrily slammed down the receiver.” ([RATA 10/3/2001](#); [Evans-Pritchard 10/5/2001](#); [Helsingin Sanomat 10/5/2001](#))

October 4, 2001: Blair Presents Case for Al-Qaeda 9/11 Involvement



Tony Blair presenting evidence on October 4, 2001. [Source: Associated Press] British Prime Minister Tony Blair publicly presents a paper containing evidence that al-Qaeda is responsible for the 9/11 attacks. ([Los Angeles Times 10/4/2001](#); [Lichtblau and Meyer 10/5/2001](#)) Secretary of State Powell and other US officials had promised on September 23 that the US would present a paper containing such evidence. ([Kempster 9/24/2001](#)) However, the US paper is never released (see [September 23, 2001](#)). Apparently, the British paper is meant to serve as a substitute.

([Hersh 5/27/2002](#)) It begins, “This document does not purport to provide a prosecutable case against Osama bin Laden in a court of law.” Nevertheless, it continues, “on the basis of all the information available [Her Majesty’s Government] is confident of its conclusions as expressed in this document.” ([BBC 10/4/2001](#)) In his speech, Blair claims, “One of bin Laden’s closest lieutenants has said clearly that he helped with the planning of the September 11 attacks and admitted the involvement of the al-Qaeda organization” and that “there is other intelligence, we cannot disclose, of an even more direct nature indicating guilt” of al-Qaeda in the attacks. ([NPA 10/4/2001](#); [Waller 10/5/2001](#)) There has been no confirmation or details since of these claims. Even though most of the evidence in the British paper comes from the US, pre-attack warnings, such as the August 6, 2001 memo (see [August 6, 2001](#)) to Bush titled “Bin Laden Determined to Strike in US,” are not included. In fact, Blair’s paper states, “incorrectly, that no such information had been available before the attacks: ‘After 11 September we learned that, not long before, bin Laden had indicated he was about to launch a major attack on America.’” ([Hersh 5/27/2002](#))

October 4, 2001: Blair Says 9/11 Hijacker Played ‘Key Role’ in Embassy Bombings

In a key speech about al-Qaeda’s responsibility for the 9/11 attacks, British Prime Minister Tony Blair says that one of the hijackers played a “key role” in the 1998 African embassy bombings (see [August 7, 1998](#)). Though he doesn’t specify which one, he does say the individual was one of the three hijackers who were quickly identified after 9/11 as known al-Qaeda associates (see [9:53 p.m. September 11, 2001](#)) and someone who had also played an important role in the USS *Cole* attacks (see [October 14-Late November, 2000](#)). ([UK Prime Minister 10/4/2001](#)) Blair’s description of this hijacker as being involved in the USS *Cole* and African Embassy attacks strongly suggests the person he is referring to is Khalid Almihdhar. Almihdhar allegedly had a hand in the *Cole* attack (see [Early October 2001](#)) and had links to one of the captured embassy bombers, Mohamed al-Owhali. Before the *Cole* attacks, al-Owhali stayed at an al-Qaeda communications hub in Yemen run by Almihdhar’s father-in-law (see [February 2001 and After](#)). Additionally, al-Owhali met an al-Qaeda operative in Pakistan by the name of Khalid, although this may have been Khallad (aka Tawfiq bin Attash), or even Khalid Shaikh Mohammed. ([United State of America v. Usama bin Laden, et al., Day 14 3/7/2001](#); [Borger, Fodden, and Norten-Taylor 10/5/2001](#); [Hirschhorn 10/16/2001](#); [Burke 2004, pp. 174](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 222](#); [Wright 2006, pp. 309](#)) It is also possible that the person alluded to in Blair’s speech is Nawaf Alhazmi, who also had connections to the embassy bombings (see [1993-1999](#)).

October 4 2001: NATO Meeting Sets Stage for Secret CIA Rendition Flights



One of the executive jets used by the CIA to fly prisoners to Guantanamo. This one, a Gulfstream with tail number N44982 when used by the CIA, is pictured in Geneva, Switzerland in 2005 with a new tail number. *[Source: Public domain via Wikipedia]* A secret arrangement is made in Brussels, Belgium, by all members of NATO. Lord George Robertson, British defence secretary and later NATO's secretary-general, will later explain NATO members agree to provide "blanket overflight clearances for the United States and other allies' aircraft for military flights related to operations against terrorism." ([Grey 11/25/2007](#)) Over 700 prisoners will fly over NATO countries on their way to the US-controlled Guantanamo prison in Cuba beginning in 2002 (see [January 14, 2002-2005](#)).

October 5, 2001: Study Reveals Significant Oil and Gas Deposits in Afghanistan

Contrary to popular belief, Afghanistan "has significant oil and gas deposits. During the Soviets' decade-long occupation of Afghanistan, Moscow estimated Afghanistan's proven and probable natural gas reserves at around five trillion cubic feet and production reached 275 million cubic feet per day in the mid-1970s." Nonstop war since has prevented further exploitation. ([Devraj 10/5/2001](#)) A later article suggests that the country may also have as much copper as Chile, the world's largest producer, and significant deposits of coal, emeralds, tungsten, lead, zinc, uranium ore, and more. Estimates of Afghanistan's natural wealth may even be understated, because surveys were conducted decades ago, using less-advanced methods and covering limited territory. ([Basken 12/23/2001](#))

October 7, 2001: Stolen 9/11 Documents Appear in Mysterious Circumstances

On this day, Zeljko E., a Kosovar Serb, enters a Hamburg, Germany, police station and says he wants to turn himself in. He tells the police that he has robbed a business and stolen piles of paper written in Arabic, with the hopes of selling them. A friend of his told him that they relate to the 9/11 attacks. The 44 pounds of papers are translated and they prove to be a "treasure trove." The documents come from Mamoun Darkazanli's files, which were not in Darkazanli's apartment when police raided it two days after 9/11. "It makes for a great story. A petty thief pilfers files containing critical information about the largest terrorist attack in history and dutifully turns them over to the police. [But German] agents do not buy this story for a minute; they suspect that some other Secret Service was trying to find a way of getting evidence into [their] hands. The question is, whose Secret

Service?” Some German investigators later suggest that the CIA was responsible; there are also reports that the FBI illegally monitored Darkazanli after 9/11. ([Der Spiegel \(Hamburg\) 10/27/2001](#); [Der Spiegel 2002](#), pp. 166-67; [Crewdson 11/17/2002](#))

October 7, 2001: ISI Director Replaced at US Urging; Role in Funding 9/11 Plot Is One Explanation

BY JAMES TARANTO

Wednesday, October 10, 2001 2:10

Our Friends the Pakistanis

Yesterday we noted a report from a Mahmud Ahmad had been fired as h Security agency after U.S. linked him who hijacked an Indian Airlines plan says Ahmad is connected to the Sep

The on-line Wall Street Journal article discussing the connections between Lt. Gen. Mahmood Ahmed, Saeed Sheikh, and Mohamed Atta. [Source: Public domain] ISI Director Lt. Gen. Mahmood Ahmed is replaced in the face of US pressure after links are discovered between him, Saeed Sheikh, and the funding of the 9/11 attacks. Mahmood instructed Saeed to transfer \$100,000 into hijacker Mohamed Atta's bank account prior to 9/11. This is according to Indian intelligence, which claims the FBI has privately confirmed the story. ([Press Trust of India 10/8/2001](#); [Joshi 10/9/2001](#); [Gupta and Mehkri 10/15/2001](#); [Kak 10/18/2001](#)) The story is not widely reported in Western countries, though it makes the Wall Street Journal. ([Zubrzycki 10/10/2001](#); [Agence France-Presse 10/10/2001](#); [Taranto 10/10/2001](#)) It is reported in Pakistan as well. ([Dawn \(Karachi\) 10/8/2001](#)) The Northern Alliance also repeats the claim in late October. ([Federal News Service 10/31/2001](#)) In Western countries, the usual explanation is that Mahmood is fired for being too close to the Taliban. ([Hussain 10/9/2001](#); [Harding 10/9/2001](#)) The Times of India reports that Indian intelligence helped the FBI discover the link, and says, "A direct link between the ISI and the WTC attack could have enormous repercussions. The US cannot but suspect whether or not there were other senior Pakistani Army commanders who were in the know of things. Evidence of a larger conspiracy could shake US confidence in Pakistan's ability to participate in the anti-terrorism coalition." ([Joshi 10/9/2001](#)) There is evidence some ISI officers may have known of a plan to destroy the WTC as early as July 1999. Two other ISI leaders, Lt. Gen. Mohammed Aziz Khan and Lt. Gen. Muzaffar Usmani, are sidelined on the same day as Mahmood. ([Kaplan 10/8/2001](#)) Saeed had been working under Khan. The firings are said to have purged the ISI of its fundamentalists. However, according to one diplomat, "To remove the top two or three doesn't matter at all. The philosophy remains.... [The ISI is] a parallel government of its own. If you go through the officer list, almost all of the ISI regulars would say, of the Taliban, 'They are my boys.'" ([Hersh 10/29/2001](#)) It is believed Mahmood has been living under virtual house arrest in

Pakistan (which would seem to imply more than just a difference of opinion over the Taliban), but no charges have been brought against him, and there is no evidence the US has asked to question him. ([Shahzad 1/5/2002](#)) He also has refused to speak to reporters since being fired ([Gannon 2/21/2002](#)), and outside India and Pakistan, the story has only been mentioned infrequently in the media since. ([Mackay 2/24/2002](#); [Fielding 4/21/2002](#)) He will reemerge as a businessman in 2003, but still will not speak to the media (see [July 2003](#)).

October 7, 2001: US Begins Bombing in Afghanistan



The Afghan village of Darya Khanah is bombed on October 27, 2001. [Source: *Associated Press*] The US begins bombing Afghanistan. ([MSNBC 11/2001](#)) The bombing campaign will taper off around the end of 2001. Some, like counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke, will later criticize the amount of time before the bombings could start. Shortly after 9/11, Clarke was made co-chairman of an interagency committee to devise responses to al-Qaeda. He had advocated a “rapid, no-holds-barred” retaliation in Afghanistan, including sending troops to immediately seal off Afghanistan’s borders and cut off escape routes. But the Bush administration decided to focus on air power. The start of the bombing campaign was delayed until this date mostly because of concerns about US pilots being captured. A network of combat search and rescue teams were set up in neighboring countries first, to allow a rapid response in case a pilot was shot down. ([Fallows 10/2004](#)) Most documentary evidence suggests the US was not planning this bombing before 9/11. However, former Pakistani Foreign Secretary Niaz Naik has claimed that in July 2001 senior US officials told him that a military action to overthrow the Taliban in Afghanistan would, as the BBC put it, “take place before the snows started falling in Afghanistan, by the middle of October at the latest.” ([Arney 9/18/2001](#))

October 7, 2001: US Hesitates, Fails to Kill Mullah Omar

On the first night of the Afghan war, an unmanned Predator drone identifies a convoy of vehicles fleeing Kabul. Mullah Omar, head of the Taliban, is determined to be inside this convoy. The CIA is in control of the Predator attack drone and wants to use it to kill Omar, but they have to ask for permission from military commanders who are based in Florida. General Tommy Franks decides not to fire any missiles or launch an air strike against the building in which Omar takes shelter. Eventually fighters attack and destroy the building, but by then Omar and his associates have moved on. One anonymous senior official later says of this failure to kill Omar, "It's not a f_ckup, it's an outrage." According to one senior military officer, "political correctness" and/or slow bureaucratic procedures are to blame. ([Hersh 10/16/2001](#)) It is later revealed that this is part of a pattern of delays that will hinder many attacks on al-Qaeda and Taliban leaders (see [Early October-Mid-November, 2001](#)).

October 8, 2001: Ex-CIA Director's Meeting With Taliban Leader Is Called Off



Khalid Khawaja. [*Source: CNN*]/Ex-CIA Director James Woolsey, as part of his attempt to gather evidence that could tie Iraq to the 9/11 attacks, contacts the Taliban. He works with Mansour Ijaz, a US businessman of Pakistani origin, who is a lobbyist for Pakistan in the US, an occasional Fox News commentator, and has extensive political ties in the US. Woolsey is also vice-chairman of the board of Ijaz's company. Woolsey and Ijaz work with Khalid Khawaja, a friend of bin Laden and ex-ISI operative. The three plus an unnamed US journalist arrange to meet with Taliban leader Mullah Omar in Kandahar, Afghanistan, on October 8. The Taliban agree to tell Woolsey about a meeting between Iraqi and al-Qaeda officials that took place in 1997, and possibly other similar information. Apparently in return they hope to avert the US invasion of Afghanistan. However, the US bombing begins on October 7, and the meeting is called off. ([Sharif 2/15/2002](#); [Huband 3/6/2003](#)) At least part of this team will later play another behind-the-scenes role. After being given a tip that Mansour Ijaz is connected to leading militant Muslims in Pakistan, reporter Daniel Pearl will connect with Khalid Khawaja, who in turn connects him with militant Muslims who kidnap and eventually kill him. A leading Pakistani newspaper claims that at one point Newsweek is about to accuse Khawaja of involvement in the plot to kidnap Pearl, but Ijaz vouches for Khawaja and convinces Newsweek to pull back their accusations. ([Sharif 2/15/2002](#); [Anson 8/2002](#))

October 8, 2001: US Still Monitoring Zubaida's Phone Calls; Bosnian Plot Possibly Foiled



Bensayah Belkacem. The blotchy nature of the image appears to be an artifact of poor photocopying. [Source: *US Defense Department*] US intelligence intercepts numerous phone calls between Abu Zubaida and other al-Qaeda leaders and Bensayah Belkacem, an operative living in Bosnia. The New York Times will later report that shortly after 9/11, "American intelligence agencies, working closely with the government of neighboring Croatia, listened in as Mr. Belkacem and others discussed plans for attacks." One US official says, "He was apparently on the phone constantly to Afghanistan, with Zubaida and others. There were dozens of calls to Afghanistan." Belkacem, an Algerian, had moved to Bosnia to fight in the early 1990s war there, then obtained Bosnian citizenship and settled in Zenica, working for an Islamic charity. ([Shenon 1/23/2002](#)) On October 8, 2001, Bosnian police detain Belkacem. While searching his home, they find a piece of note listing the name "Abu Zubeida" and Zubaida's phone number. ([Whitlock 8/21/2006](#)) It is later revealed that Belkacem made 70 calls to Zubaida between 9/11 and his arrest and more calls before then. He had repeatedly sought a visa to leave Bosnia for Germany just before 9/11. Phone transcripts show Zubaida and Belkacem discussed procuring passports. ([Purvis 11/12/2001](#)) A US official will later claim that it was believed Zubaida was in Afghanistan with bin Laden at the time of Belkacem's arrest. ([Shenon 1/23/2002](#)) It has not been explained why this knowledge was not used to capture or kill Zubaida and/or bin Laden. It appears that Western intelligence agencies had been monitoring Zubaida's calls as far back as 1996 (see [Mid-1996](#) and [October 1998 and After](#)). Belkacem and five of his associates will be renditioned to Guantanamo Bay prison in 2002 and remain imprisoned there (see [January 18, 2002](#)).

October 9, 2001: Afghan Pipeline Idea Is Revived

US Ambassador Wendy Chamberlin meets with the Pakistani oil minister. She is briefed on the gas pipeline project from Turkmenistan, across Afghanistan, to Pakistan, which

appears to be revived “in view of recent geopolitical developments” —in other words, the 9/11 attacks. ([Frontier Post 10/10/2001](#))

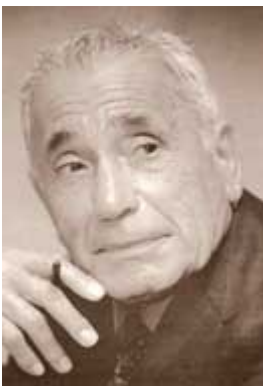
October 9, 2001: Richard Clarke Resigns as Counterterrorism ‘Tsar’

Richard Clarke resigns his position as counterterrorism “tsar,” a position he has held since 1998. Frustrated with the Bush administration’s approach to counterterrorism, he had arranged the date of his retirement back in June 2001 (see [June 2001](#)). He becomes Special Adviser to the President for Cyberspace Security instead. He is replaced by Gen. Wayne Downing, a highly decorated retired military officer. ([Allen and Pianin 10/10/2001](#)) Clarke will quit his cyberspace security job in February 2003 and leave government. He will then become a prominent critic of the Bush administration. ([Krebs 4/8/2003](#))

October 10, 2001: Baggage Handling Company Cleared of Wrongdoing

It is reported that Globe Aviation Services Corp., in charge of the baggage handlers for Flight 11 and all other American Airlines Flights at Boston’s Logan Airport, have been cleared of any wrongdoing. Globe Aviation supervisors claim that none of the employees working that day was in the US illegally. Supposedly, no weapons were detected, but a baggage handler for Globe Aviation and American Airlines has told the FBI that one of the hijackers—believed to be either Wail or Waleed Alshehri—was carrying one wooden crutch under his arm when he boarded Flight 11. Crutches are apparently routinely scanned through X-ray machines. ([Murphy 10/10/2001](#))

October 10, 2001: Famous Arab Commentator Says Al-Qaeda Could Not Have Conducted 9/11 Attacks



Mohammed Heikal. [*Source: Publicity photo*] Mohammed Heikal, longtime Egyptian journalist, former government spokesman, and the “Arab world’s foremost political commentator,” expresses disbelief that bin Laden and al-Qaeda could have conducted the 9/11 attack without the US knowing. “Bin Laden has been under

surveillance for years: every telephone call was monitored and al-Qaeda has been penetrated by American intelligence, Pakistani intelligence, Saudi intelligence, Egyptian intelligence. They could not have kept secret an operation that required such a degree of organization and sophistication.” ([Heikal 10/10/2001](#))

October 10, 2001: US Television Networks Doing Too Much of the Government’s Bidding

The Bush administration asks the major US television networks to refrain from showing unedited video messages taped by Osama bin Laden. They agree. A Newsweek article is critical of the decision, pointing out that “all but one [of these networks] are controlled by major conglomerates that have important pending business with the government.” The article openly questions if the media is “doing too much of the government’s bidding” in reporting on 9/11. Says one expert, “I’m not saying that everything is a horrible paranoid fantasy, but my sense is there’s an implicit quid pro quo here. The industry seems to be saying to the administration, ‘We’re patriotic, We’re supporting the war, we lost all of this advertising, now free us from [business] constraints.’” ([Roberts 10/13/2001](#))

October 10, 2001: Two Israelis Are Detained in Mexican Legislature Building after Behaving Suspiciously and Found To Be Carrying Arms

Two Israelis, Salvador Gersson Smike, 34, and Sar Ben Zui, 27, are arrested in the Mexican Congress Building in Mexico City. Smike is carrying a plastic 9 mm sophisticated Glock 9 mm pistol tucked into his underwear in his lower back. Glock pistols are made with a special plastic material and are very easy to smuggle. ([Bello 10/11/2001](#); [El Herald de Mexico \(Mexico City\) 10/11/2001](#); [Paez and Mejia 10/12/2001](#)) He also has with him a briefcase reported to contain 58 bullets, bomb-making materials, three detonators, and nine grenades. ([El Herald de Mexico \(Mexico City\) 10/11/2001](#)) The two were apprehended after ex-sugarcane workers, who were waiting for a congressional hearing, saw the two Israelis behaving strangely at around 4:00 p.m. They were reportedly photographing the workers below the belt. When the workers demanded that the two men identify themselves, the Israelis said they were press photographers. The workers dismissed their claims, overcame them, and then discovered they were armed with pistols and other high caliber arms. The two men had apparently also been seen the day before taking pictures. ([Paez and Mejia 10/12/2001](#)) Security guards soon arrived, disarmed the men, and took them to the security office. At around 6:00 p.m., it is learned that the two men are Israelis and that one of them, Salvador Gersson, is a former colonel of the Israeli Special Forces. ([Bello 10/11/2001](#); [Diario de Mexico \(Mexico City\) 10/11/2001](#) ﻓ) Soon after, a man claiming to be a supervisor from the company, Desarrollo de Sistemas de Seguridad Privada (Private Security Systems Development), says the two men are employees at the firm and that they were taking pictures because they are “vacationing.” The journalists who are present scoff at the

claim. ([Bello 10/11/2001](#); [El Herald de Mexico \(Mexico City\) 10/11/2001](#)) After October 13, no additional information is reported about the incident.

October 11, 2001: FBI Incorrectly Claims Majority of 9/11 Hijackers Were Unaware They Were on Suicide Mission

According to an FBI report, “FBI investigators have officially concluded that 11 of the 19 terrorists who hijacked the aircraft on September 11 did not know they were on a suicide mission.” “Unlike the eight ‘lead’ attackers, who were all trained pilots, they did not leave messages for friends and family indicating they knew their lives were over,” and they did not have copies of Mohamed Atta’s final prayer note (see [September 28, 2001](#)). Personal items found suggest the men thought they were taking part in a conventional hijacking and were preparing for the possibility of prison. ([Rose 10/14/2001](#)) This is later contradicted by video filmed in Afghanistan in March 2001 showing several of the 11 non-lead hijackers proclaiming their willingness to die on an upcoming suicide mission (see [March 2001](#)).

October 11, 2001: Ashcroft Takes Over All Terrorist Prosecutions

It is reported that Attorney General John Ashcroft and his Justice Department is assuming control of all terrorism-related prosecutions from the US Attorney’s office in New York, which has had a highly successful record of accomplishment in prosecuting cases connected to bin Laden. 15 of the 22 suspects listed on a most wanted terrorism list a month after 9/11 had already been indicted by the New York office in recent years. A former federal prosecutor says of the New York office, “For eight years, they have developed an expertise in these prosecutions and the complex facts that surround these groups. If ever there was a case where you’d want to play to your strength, this is it.” ([Weiser and Rashbaum 10/11/2001](#)) A grand jury in the New York district began investigating the 9/11 attacks one week after 9/11. But media accounts of this grand jury’s activity stop by late October 2001 and there appears to be no other grand jury taking its place (see [September 18, 2001](#)).

October 11, 2001: Early Account of Able Danger Remains Classified

Dr. Eileen Preisser testifies before a congressional briefing. Dr. Preisser was one of four analysts in the US Army’s Land Information Warfare Activity (LIWA) supporting Able Danger in late 1999 and 2000 (see [Fall 1999](#)). While her testimony remains classified, the next day, Representative Christopher Shays (R) gives a brief summary: “In a briefing we had yesterday, we had Eileen [Preisser], who argues that we don’t have the data we need because we don’t take all the public data that is available and mix it with the security

data. And just taking public data, using, you know, computer systems that are high-speed and able to digest, you know, literally floors' worth of material, she can take relationships that are seven times removed, seven units removed, and when she does that, she ends up with relationships to the bin Laden group where she sees the purchase of chemicals, the sending of students to universities. You wouldn't see it if you isolated it there, but if that unit is connected to that unit, which is connected to that unit, which is connected to that unit, you then see the relationship. So we don't know ultimately the authenticity of how she does it, but when she does it, she comes up with the kind of answer that you have just asked, which is a little unsettling." ([US Congress. House. Committee on Government Reform. Subcommittee on National Security, Veterans Affairs and International Relations 10/12/2001](#) Sources: [Christopher Shays](#)) Note that according to some media accounts, the CIA monitored Mohamed Atta purchasing large quantities of chemicals in Germany in the spring of 2000 (see [January-May 2000](#)). Atta also sends a series of e-mails to the US in the spring of 2000, inquiring about flight school opportunities for himself and a "small group" of his associates (see [January-March 2000](#)). Dr. Preisser is apparently willing to testify about her role in how Able Danger uncovered Atta's name, but in September 2005 she is prohibited from publicly testifying before Congress (see [September 21, 2005](#)).

October 11-29, 2001: General Terror Alerts Issued, Terrorists Said Poised to Attack US 'in the Next Week'

On October 11, 2001, President Bush uses his first prime-time news conference to give an update on the early stages of the war on terrorism. He confirms that the Justice Department just issued a blanket alert "in recognition of a general threat." ([CNN News 10/11/2001](#)) This general threat never materializes. On October 29, the Administration warns again of plans to strike the United States "in the next week." In a quickly called news conference, US Attorney General John Ashcroft says intelligence sources have found "credible" information the nation could be the focus for some sort of terrorist attack within the week. No specific information is provided to the public now or later to explain what information may have caused this alert. ([CNN News 10/29/2001](#))

October 12, 2001: US Declares Al-Qadi Terrorist Financier



Yassin al-Qadi. [Source: *Arab News*] Yassin al-Qadi is included in a new US list of 39 individuals and organizations designated by the US as connected to terrorism (see [October 12, 2001](#)). The US officially declares him a “Specially Designated Global Terrorist” and his US assets are frozen. ([Salopek 10/14/2001](#); [Jackson, Cohen, and Manor 10/29/2001](#)) Al-Qadi says he is “horrificed and shocked” by the allegations. ([Cohen and Neikirk 10/16/2001](#)) There have been several accusations that al-Qadi laundered money to fund Hamas and al-Qaeda. He headed the Muwafaq (Blessed Relief) Foundation, a Saudi-based charity. Treasury officials allege it has funneled millions of dollars to al-Qaeda (see [1995-1998](#)). ([Cohen and Neikirk 10/16/2001](#); [Jackson, Cohen, and Manor 10/29/2001](#)) An investigation into his al-Qaeda connections was canceled by higher-ups in the FBI in October 1998 (see [October 1998](#)). In late 2002, Saudi Arabia will freeze al-Qadi’s accounts, an action the Saudis have taken against only three people. However, he has yet to be charged or arrested by the Saudis or the US. ([Mintz 12/7/2002](#))

October 12, 2001: Additional Suspected Terrorist Supporters’ Assets Frozen

The US and Britain freeze the assets of 39 additional individuals and organizations designated by the US as connected to terrorism. \$24 million is seized. The British also freeze the assets of 27 other entities named by the US in late September 2001 (see [September 24, 2001](#)). The new list includes 33 individuals and six organizations. Twenty-two of the individuals appeared on the FBI’s latest “most wanted terrorists” list. Saudi multimillionaire businessman Yassin al-Qadi is named (see [October 12, 2001](#)). So is Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, who will later be identified as the mastermind of 9/11. Five of the names were al-Qaeda leaders on a United Nations list published in March 8, 2001, with a recommendation that all nations freeze their assets. Other countries froze the assets of those on that list before 9/11, but the US did not (see [March 8, 2001](#)). ([Theimer 10/12/2001](#); [Gillan 10/13/2001](#); [Levin and Meyer 10/15/2001](#))

October 12, 2001: Two Suspected Charities Apparently Protected by Saudi Government Ties



Muslim World League logo. [Source: *Muslim World League*]The International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO) and the Muslim World League (MWL) are Saudi charities directly financed by the Saudi government. In 1996, the CIA gave the State Department a report detailing evidence that the IIRO supported terrorism. It claimed the IIRO has funded Hamas and six militant training camps in Afghanistan, and one funder of the Bojinka plot to blow up airplanes over the Pacific was the head of the IIRO office in the Philippines (see [January 1996](#)). US intelligence officials also believe that MWL employees were involved in the 1998 US embassy bombings (see [August 7, 1998](#)). Harper's magazine claims that it has long been known that both groups helped fund al-Qaeda. However, in October 2001, it is reported that the Bush administration has left the two organizations off an October 12, 2001 list of designated terrorist groups to spare the Saudi government from embarrassment (see [October 12, 2001](#)). In March 2002, the Virginia offices of the IIRO and MWL will be raided by US Customs agents (see [March 20, 2002](#)). ([Armstrong 3/2004](#)) In September 2003, it will be reported that US officials recently gave Saudi officials a detailed documenting the IIRO's terrorism links and asked the Saudis to close all of the organization's overseas offices. ([O'Brien 9/26/2003](#)) However, as of January 2006, it will be reported that it appears the overseas offices of the IIRO and MWL are still open and the US has not officially declared either group to be terrorist sponsors. The US will still be complaining to the Saudis about these two organizations and others, and the Saudis will still not do anything about them (see [January 15, 2006](#)).

October 12, 2001: Rumsfeld Allegedly Says that Missile Hit Pentagon

In an interview for *Parade* magazine Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld apparently says the Pentagon was hit by a missile. In the printed interview and a Defense Department website re-posting he is quoted as saying: "Here we're talking about plastic knives and using an American Airlines flight filled with our citizens, and the missile to damage this building and similar (inaudible) that damaged the World Trade Center." ([Rumsfeld 10/12/2001](#)) This will be taken by some who think the Pentagon was not hit by American Airlines Flight 77 (see [Early March 2002](#)) as an accidental admission of a missile strike. However, in 2004 *Parade* will say that a "transcription error led to the confusion, but conspiracy theorists latched onto Rumsfeld's supposed admission and spread it over the Internet." Although the transcription error is not specified, if the word "and" is replaced by the word "as" the statement becomes "[...] using an American Airlines flight filled with our citizens as the missile to damage this building." ([Winik 9/4/2004](#))

Shortly After October 12, 2001: Software Company Whistleblowers Ignored

Yassin al-Qadi, a Saudi multimillionaire businessman, was officially declared a terrorist financier in October 2001 (see [October 12, 2001](#)). ([Alkhereiji 9/26/2002](#)) That same month, a number of employees at Ptech, a Boston-based computer company that al-Qadi and other individuals suspected of financing officially designated terrorist groups invested in (see [1994](#)), tell the Boston FBI about the connections between Ptech and al-Qadi. However, FBI agents do little more than take their statements. A high-level government source later will claim the FBI does not convey the Ptech-al-Qadi link to Operation Greenquest, a Customs Department investigation into al-Qadi and other suspected financiers, and none of the government agencies using Ptech software are warned about the possible security threat Ptech represents. ([Ranalli 12/7/2002](#); [WBZ 4 \(Boston\) 12/9/2002](#)) According to a private counterterrorism expert involved in investigating Ptech at the time, “Frighteningly, when an employee told [Ptech president Oussama Ziade] he felt he had to contact the FBI regarding al-Qadi’s involvement in the company, the president allegedly told him not to worry because Yaqub Mirza, who was on the board of directors of the company and was himself a target of a [Greenquest] terrorist financing raid in March 2002 (see [March 20, 2002](#)), had contacts high within the FBI.” ([Katz and Devon 5/27/2003](#)) A Ptech investigation will finally begin in 2002 after more whistleblowers come forward (see [May-December 5, 2002](#)).

October 14, 2001: Bin Laden Reportedly Has Supporters at All Levels of Saudi Arabia

The Boston Herald reports: “Three banks allegedly used by Osama bin Laden to distribute money to his global terrorism network have well-established ties to a prince in Saudi Arabia’s royal family, several billionaire Saudi bankers, and the governments of Kuwait and Dubai. One of the banks, Al-Shamal Islamic Bank in the Sudan, was controlled directly by bin Laden, according to a 1996 US State Department report.” A regional expert states, “I think we underestimate bin Laden. He comes from the highest levels of Saudi society and he has supporters at all levels of Saudi Arabia.” ([Wells, Meyers, and Mulvihill 10/14/2001](#)) The US has yet to take any official steps against the Al-Shamal bank, and some suggest this is because of its ties to influential Saudi figures (see [September 24, 2001 and After](#)).

October 15, 2001: Russian Newspaper Calls Afghanistan War US Political Power Move

According to the Moscow Times, the Russian government sees the upcoming US conquest of Afghanistan as an attempt by the US to replace Russia as the dominant political force in Central Asia, with the control of oil as a prominent motive: “While the bombardment of Afghanistan outwardly appears to hinge on issues of fundamentalism

and American retribution, below the surface, lurks the prize of the energy-rich Caspian basin into which oil majors have invested billions of dollars. Ultimately, this war will set the boundaries of US and Russian influence in Central Asia—and determine the future of oil and gas resources of the Caspian Sea.” ([Rutland 10/15/2001](#)) The US later appears to gain military influence over Kazakhstan, the Central Asian country with the most resource wealth, and closest to the Russian heartland (see [March 30, 2002](#)).

(Mid-October-mid November 2001): Gold and Silver Recovered from WTC Basement Area; Evidence Suggests Attempted Theft



The Bank of Nova Scotia gold vault, located under WTC Building 4, is examined in late October 2001. [Source: *Leslie E. Robertson and Associates*] Workers at Ground Zero discover large amounts of gold and other precious metals stored below the ruins of the WTC. As debris is removed they are able to access parts of the 16-acre WTC basement, which drops 70 feet below ground level. Precious metals are stored in numerous vaults within this area. The London Times says the quantity of these “has been a carefully guarded secret,” but estimates \$750 million of gold and silver in vaults belonging to the Comex metals trading division of the New York Mercantile Exchange. There appears to have been an attempt, since 9/11, to break into a Comex vault containing \$200 million of precious metals belonging to the Bank of Nova Scotia. A government official involved in the recovery work says, “It looked like they used a blowtorch, a crowbar,” but a bank spokeswoman denies there has been any attempted break-in. The banks later states that “All of the silver, gold, platinum, and palladium stored in its vaults at 4 World Trade Center” has been relocated to a depository in Brooklyn. Other gold is discovered in a service tunnel below WTC 5. According to the London Times, this was being transported through the tunnel on the morning of 9/11 (see ([Before 9:59 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([Gittrich, Zambito, and Standora 10/31/2001](#); [Wapshott 11/1/2001](#); [Dwyer 11/1/2001](#); [Reuters 11/17/2001](#))

October 15, 2001-February 22, 2004: Waiter Who Served Atta Lunch Is Imprisoned for Five Months, Government Attempts to Keep Court Case Secret

Mohamed Kamel Bellahouel is arrested and held for five months after investigators discover he worked at a restaurant where Mohamed Atta and Marwan Alshehhi sometimes ate lunch in South Florida. In a sworn statement, Michael Rolince, head of the FBI's International Terrorism Operations Section, says, "It is likely that Bellahouel would have waited on both Atta and Alshehhi since Bellahouel had worked at the restaurant for 10 months, and both Atta and Alshehhi were frequent patrons during shifts that Bellahouel worked." Rolince also alleges Bellahouel may have waited on a third hijacker, Saeed Alghamdi, and says that a cinema employee claims Bellahouel saw a film with a fourth hijacker, Ahmed Alnami. However, Bellahouel, who denies going to the cinema with Alnami, has trouble gaining access to the evidence used against him. His attorney comments, "They won't call it secret evidence and they won't call it classified, but they won't give it to you, either." He is held in prison without bond and without charge from October 15, 2001 to March 1, 2002. After he is released, US authorities attempt to deport him, as he entered the US as a student, but then dropped out of college and started work, marrying a US citizen in June 2001. His attorney says the problem is that he is a Muslim. "If he were a Catholic coming from Venezuela or Colombia, they would have let him adjust his immigration status." Bellahouel sues the government over his incarceration, but the case is shrouded in secrecy and the press only learns the case is ongoing due to a court error. ([Christensen 3/14/2003](#)) For example, a journalist, who does not even know Bellahouel's name, attempts to attend a hearing in March 2003. But the court is closed. After some effort, the reporter finally finds the name in the electronic docket. When he tells a court official Bellahouel's name is on the docket, the official replies, "Is it? We'll have to fix that, too," and the name disappears. ([Christensen 12/2004](#)) In February 2004 the Supreme Court declines an appeal from Bellahouel to have an open hearing, and media organizations are prevented from accessing sealed court proceedings. ([Greenhouse 1/5/2004](#); [Mears 2/23/2004](#))

Mid-October 2001: Bin Laden's Oldest Son Confirms He Still Works with Family Company

Abdullah bin Laden, Osama bin Laden's oldest son, confirms in an interview that he works with the family business, the Saudi Binladin Group, in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. He declares his allegiance to the Saudi government, but also defends his father and refuses to disown him. Two knowledgeable sources from within Saudi Arabia claim that Abdullah is being prevented from leaving Saudi Arabia, with the implication that the government could bring harm to him if Osama attacks Saudi Arabia. ([Gasparino and Zuckerman 10/2/2001](#); [Mayer and Szechenyi 11/5/2001](#)) Abdullah also says that he lived with Osama in Sudan until 1996, but then moved back to Saudi Arabia when his father moved to Afghanistan, as he did not want to experience the hardships there. ([Coll 12/5/2005](#)) In 2005 it will be reported that Bakr bin Laden, the family patriarch and chairman of the Saudi Binladin Group, is said to frequently dine in public restaurants in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, with Abdullah. ([Mascolo and Follath 6/6/2005](#))

October 16, 2001: Bin Laden Cleared of Insider Trading in Britain

“The Financial Services Authority—Britain’s main financial regulator—has cleared bin Laden and his henchmen of insider trading. There has been a widespread suspicion that members of the al-Qaeda organization had cashed in on the US attacks, dumping airline, aerospace and insurance company shares before September 11th. The Authority says that after a thorough investigation, it has found no hard evidence of any such deals in London.” ([American Public Media 10/17/2001](#)) On September 24, Belgium’s Financial Minister had claimed there were strong suspicions that British markets may have been used for 9/11-related insider trading in early September. ([Bogdanowicz and Jackson 9/24/2001](#))

October 16, 2001: Several Arrested for Curious Sears Tower Surveillance

Two men, Moshe Elmakias and Ron Katar, are arrested in rural Pennsylvania after being found with a detailed video of the Sears Tower in Chicago. In addition, a woman named Ayelet Reisler is found with them, carrying conflicting identification information. They are arrested for illegal dumping, using a van with the name Moving Systems Incorporated. The video contains extensive zoom in shots of the Sears Tower; it is not known when the video was filmed. ([Mercury \(Philadelphia\) 10/17/2001](#))

October 16, 2001: Some Flight Control Transcripts Released, but Sections Are Missing

The government releases flight control transcripts of three of the four hijacked planes ([New York Times 10/16/2001](#); [New York Times 10/16/2001](#); [New York Times 10/16/2001](#)) . Strangely, Flight 93 is left out. Yet even the three released transcripts are incomplete (for instance, Flight 77’s ends at least 20 minutes before it crashes), and certain events that are part of the official story do not show up on these transcripts.

October 17, 2001: Military Head Says He Hadn’t Thought of 9/11-Type Scenario

Gen. Richard Myers, acting Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman on 9/11, says of 9/11, “You hate to admit it, but we hadn’t thought about this.” He was promoted from Vice-Chairman to Chairman three days after 9/11. ([Rhem 10/23/2001](#))

October 17, 2001: Top Bush Administration Officials Look to Blame Anthrax Attacks on Al-Qaeda, Iraq, or Russia

Vice President Cheney chairs a National Security Council meeting because President Bush is overseas. According to journalist Bob Woodward, who later interviews many participants in the meeting, the topic of the recent anthrax attacks is discussed (see [October 2001](#)). CIA Director George Tenet suggests that al-Qaeda is behind the attacks. He also adds, "I think there's a state sponsor involved. It's too well thought out, the powder's too well refined. It might be Iraq, it might be Russia, it might be a renegade scientist," perhaps from Iraq or Russia. Vice President Cheney's chief of staff I. Lewis Libby also suggests the anthrax attacks were state sponsored. "We've got to be careful on what we say. If we say it's al-Qaeda, a state sponsor may feel safe and then hit us thinking they will have a bye because we'll blame it on al-Qaeda." Tenet replies, "I'm not going to talk about a state sponsor." Vice President Cheney comments, "It's good that we don't, because we're not ready to do anything about it." ([Woodward 2002, pp. 244](#)) No strong evidence will emerge tying the attacks to al-Qaeda or any state sponsor. The anthrax attacks still remain completely unsolved.

October 18, 2001: Paul Wolfowitz Issues Memo Urging Secrecy Among Defense Department Staff

Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz issues a memorandum to senior officials throughout the Defense Department stating that, following President Bush's declaration of a national emergency on September 14, Defense Department employees should exercise great caution whenever discussing information relating to their department's work. The memo instructs: "Do not conduct any work-related conversations in common areas, public places, while commuting, or over unsecured electronic circuits. Classified information may be discussed only in authorized spaces and with persons having a specific need to know and the proper security clearance. Unclassified information may likewise require protection because it can often be compiled to reveal sensitive conclusions. Much of the information we use to conduct [the department]'s operations must be withheld from public release because of its sensitivity. If in doubt, do not release or discuss official information except with other DoD personnel." According to the memo, "the security of information critical to the national security will remain at risk for an indefinite period." ([US Department of Defense 10/18/2001](#); [Scarborough 10/23/2001](#))

Late October 2001: UAE Confused over Hijacker Bank Accounts

Governor of the United Emirates Central Bank Sultan Nasser al-Suwaidi first says that hijacker pilots Mohamed Atta and Marwan Alshehhi had accounts in the United Arab Emirates, but then later contradicts this saying that Atta did not have one. Initially, he

admits that Atta had an account at a Citibank branch in Dubai, but says it was closed a year before the attacks. “Mohamed Atta was like any adult expatriate in the UAE,” he says. The account was apparently busier than normal, with frequent transfers of \$10,000 to \$15,000. ([Miller and McDonnell 10/20/2001](#); [CNN 10/22/2001](#)) Although the existence of Alshehhi’s account is confirmed (see [July 1999-November 2000](#)), al-Suwaidi denies Atta had an account a few days later. He says that his bank had confused Atta with an Afghan who had a similar name, but different photo, age, and occupation. “They are different people, different nationalities,” he insists. The Afghan had an account with Citibank from 1997 to December 2000, but there were apparently no suspicious transfers to Afghanistan. ([UAE Interact 10/25/2001](#); [Carvalho 10/25/2001](#))

October 19, 2001: Al-Marabh Roommate Arrested, Appears to Have Significant Al-Qaeda Ties



Hassan Almrei. [*Source: Public domain via CBC*] Hassan Almrei, a Syrian national and an associate of Nabil al-Marabh, is arrested in Canada. He was al-Marabh’s Toronto apartment roommate in early 2001. Canadian authorities say Almrei’s honey and perfume business in the Middle East helped finance al-Qaeda. Police say they confiscate computers and disks that hold information about bin Laden, numerous images of bin Laden and other al-Qaeda members, a hijacking planner, diagrams of plane cockpits and military weapons, and copies of passports and official IDs. Within a week of his arrest, the Canadian government declares Almrei a “threat to national security” and announces its intention to deport him to Syria. The Federal Court of Canada will later agree with investigators that Almrei is a “a member of an international network of extremist individuals who support the Islamic extremist ideals espoused by Osama bin Laden” and was “involved in a forgery ring with international connections that produces false documents.” The court will approve his deportation. ([Canadian Broadcasting Corporation 10/27/2001](#); [Godfrey 1/14/2002](#); [ABC News 1/31/2002](#)) Almrei will admit to attending training camps in Afghanistan and lying about his past to get into Canada as a refugee claimant in 1999, but will deny any link to al-Qaeda. As of late 2005, he will still be in a Canadian prison, appealing his deportation. He will say he fears death or torture if he is returned to Syria. ([Toronto Sun 10/20/2005](#))

October 19, 2001: US Special Forces Arrive in Afghanistan

US Special Forces ground forces arrive in Afghanistan. ([MSNBC 11/2001](#)) However, during the Afghanistan war, special forces soldiers are mainly employed in small numbers as observers, liaisons, and spotters for air power to assist the Northern Alliance—not as direct combatants. ([Smucker 3/4/2002](#)) The first significant special forces operation on October 20 will be a near disaster, leaving military commanders increasingly reluctant to use US troops directly in battle (see [October 20, 2001](#)). ([Smucker 3/4/2002](#)) Counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke will suggest in 2004 that the Bush administration did not commit more ground forces to Afghanistan because it wanted to have enough troops available to stage a large offensive against Iraq. “I can’t prove this, but I believe they didn’t want to put in a lot of regular infantry because they wanted to hold it in reserve,” Richard Clarke explains. “And the issue is the infantry. A rational military planner who was told to stabilize Afghanistan after the Taliban was gone, and who was not told that we might soon be doing Iraq, would probably have put in three times the number of infantry, plus all the logistics support ‘tail.’ He would have put in more civil-affairs units, too. Based on everything I heard at the time, I believe I can make a good guess that the plan for Afghanistan was affected by a predisposition to go into Iraq. The result of that is that they didn’t have enough people to go in and stabilize the country, nor enough people to make sure these guys didn’t get out.” The first regular US combat troops will be deployed in late November and play a more limited role. ([Fallows 10/2004](#))

October 20, 2001: US Special Forces Little Used in Afghanistan for Fear of Casualties

US special forces conduct their first two significant raids in the Afghanistan war on this day. In the first, more than a hundred Army Rangers parachute into a supposedly Taliban-controlled airbase near Kandahar. But in fact, the airbase had already been cleared by other forces, and the raid apparently is staged for propaganda purposes. Footage of the raid is shown that evening on US television. In the other raid, a combination of Rangers and Delta Force attack a house outside Kandahar occasionally used by Taliban leader Mullah Omar. This raid is publicly pronounced a success, but privately the military deems it a near-disaster. Twelve US soldiers are wounded in an ambush as they leave the compound, and neither Mullah Omar nor any significant intelligence is found at the house. Prior to these raids, top military leaders were already reluctant to use special forces for fear of casualties, but after the raids, the military is said to be even more reluctant. ([Hersh 11/5/2001](#)) Author James Risen will later note that Gen. Tommy Franks was “under intense pressure from [Defense Secretary] Rumsfeld to limit the number of US troops being deployed to the country.” ([Risen 2006, pp. 185](#)) Only around three-dozen US special forces will take part in the pivotal battle for Tora Bora (see [December 5-17, 2001](#)). Counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke will later blame the failure to capture bin Laden during the war to “the abject fear of American casualties. It’s something that cuts across both [the Clinton and Bush] administrations.” ([Scheuer 6/20/2006](#))

October 20, 2001: Bin Laden Allegedly Confesses to 9/11 Involvement in Unreleased Video

A video is allegedly shot on this day of Osama bin Laden saying that al-Qaeda “instigated” the 9/11 attacks, and that 9/11 “was revenge for our people killed in Palestine and Iraq.” ([Lardner and Slevin 11/14/2001](#)) He also supposedly claims responsibility for an unspecified terrorist attack in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The existence of this video is first revealed by the Daily Telegraph on November 11, in an article which will say the video was not made for public release via the Al Jazeera television network, but has been circulating for 14 days among bin Laden’s supporters. The Telegraph will claim it obtained access to the footage in the Middle East. ([Bamber 11/11/2001](#)) On November 14, Tony Blair will refer to the video in a speech before the House of Commons and claim, “The intelligence material now leaves no doubt whatever of the guilt of bin Laden and his associates.” ([CNN 11/14/2001](#); [UK Prime Minister 11/14/2001](#)) Yet the British government will say it does not have a copy of the video, only information about it from intelligence sources. ([Lardner and Slevin 11/14/2001](#)) This video is different to a tape released in December by the US, in which bin Laden again seems to confirm his role in 9/11 (see [December 13, 2001](#)). ([Washington Post 12/9/2001](#)) The Daily Telegraph will note that in four previous post-9/11 videos, bin Laden has always denied responsibility for the attacks. ([Bamber 11/11/2001](#))

October 20, 2001: Report Finds None Arrested in Terrorism Investigation Connected to 9/11



Mohammed Azmath, left, and Syed Gul Mohammad Shah/ Ayub Ali Khan, right. [*Source: Associated Press*] The New York Times reports that, although 830 people have been arrested in the 9/11 terrorism investigation (a number that eventually exceeds between 1,200 and 2,000 (see [November 5, 2001](#)), there is no evidence that anyone now in custody was a conspirator in the 9/11 attacks. Furthermore, “none of the nearly 100 people still being sought by the [FBI] is seen as a major suspect.” Of all the people arrested, only four, Zacarias Moussaoui, Ayub Ali Khan, Mohammed Azmath, and Nabil al-Marabh, are likely connected to al-Qaeda. ([van Natta 10/21/2001](#)) Three of those are later cleared of ties to al-Qaeda. After being kept in solitary confinement for more than eight months without seeing a judge or being assigned a lawyer, al-Marabh pleads guilty to the minor charge of entering the United States illegally (see [September 3, 2002](#)) and is deported to Syria (see [January 2004](#)). There is

considerable evidence al-Marabh did have ties to al-Qaeda and even the 9/11 plot (see [September 2000](#); [January 2001-Summer 2001](#); [January 2001-Summer 2001](#); [Spring 2001](#); [Early September 2001](#)). (Fainaru 6/12/2002; Canadian Broadcasting Corporation 8/27/2002) On September 12, 2002, after a year in solitary confinement and four months before he was able to contact a lawyer, Mohammed Azmath pleads guilty to one count of credit card fraud, and is released with time served. Ayub Ali Khan, whose real name is apparently Syed Gul Mohammad Shah, is given a longer sentence for credit card fraud, but is released and deported by the end of 2002. (Lee 9/25/2002; New York Times 12/31/2002) By December 2002, only 6 are known to still be in custody, and none have been charged with any terrorist acts (see [December 11, 2002](#)). On September 24, 2001, Newsweek reported that “the FBI has privately estimated that more than 1,000 individuals—most of them foreign nationals—with suspected terrorist ties are currently living in the United States.” (Thomas 10/1/2001)

October 21, 2001: Four Embassy Bombers Sentenced to Life in Prison

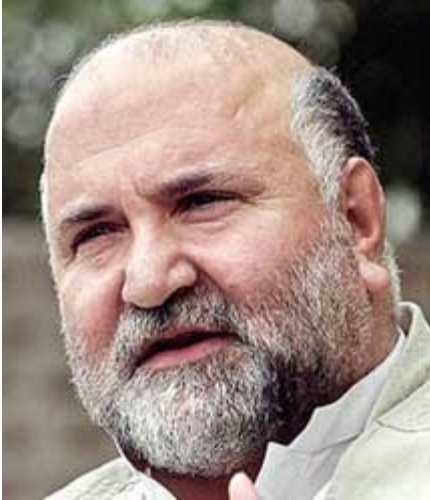


Khalfan Khamis Mohamed. [Source: FBI] Four men are sentenced to life in prison for their roles in the African embassy bombings (see [August 7, 1998](#)). The four are:

- Wadih El-Hage.
- Khalfan Khamis Mohamed.
- Mohamed al-Owhali.
- Mohammed Saddiq Odeh. ([Hirschorn 10/21/2001](#))

Another man in custody for the embassy bombings, Mamdouh Mahmud Salim, attempted to stab a prison guard and was removed from the trial and eventually given 32 years in prison for the stabbing instead. ([Hirschorn 5/4/2004](#)) Double agent Ali Mohamed is also in custody and pleads guilty for a role in the bombings, but he is never sentenced and his fate remains murky (see [July 2001-December 2001](#)). A New York jury considered the death penalty for some of them, but deadlocked on that and opted for life in prison without parole instead. Over a dozen people remain wanted for their alleged roles in the embassy bombings, including all of the suspected masterminds. ([Hirschorn 10/21/2001](#))

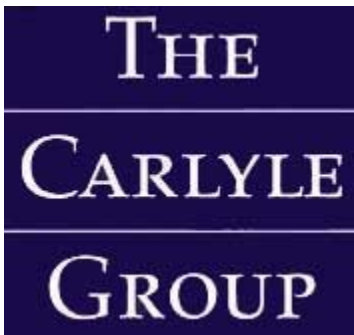
October 25, 2001: Afghan Resistance Leader Killed



Abdul Haq. [Source: *Abdul Haq Foundation*] Abdul

Haq, a leader of the Afghan resistance to the Taliban, is killed. According to some reports, he “seemed the ideal candidate to lead an opposition alliance into Afghanistan to oust the ruling Taliban.” ([Burke 10/28/2001](#)) Four days earlier, he had secretly entered Afghanistan with a small force to try to raise rebellion, but was spotted by Taliban forces and surrounded. He calls former National Security Adviser Robert McFarlane (who had supported him in the past) who then calls the CIA and asks for immediate assistance to rescue Haq. A battle lasting up to twelve hours ensues. (The CIA had previously rejected Haq’s requests for weapons to fight the Taliban, and so his force is grossly underarmed.) ([Gordon and Weiner 10/29/2001](#)) The CIA refuses to send in a helicopter to rescue him, alleging that the terrain is too rough, even though Haq’s group is next to a hilltop once used as a helicopter landing point. ([Burke 10/28/2001](#); [Marshall 10/28/2001](#)) An unmanned surveillance aircraft eventually attacks some of the Taliban forces fighting Haq, but not until five hours after Haq has been captured. The Taliban executes him. ([McFarlane 11/2/2001](#)) Vincent Cannistraro, former head of the CIA’s Counter Terrorism Center, and others suggest that Haq’s position was betrayed to the Taliban by the ISI. Haq was already an enemy of the ISI, which may have killed his family. ([Fard 10/26/2001](#); [Slavin and Weisman 10/31/2001](#); [Zielenziger and Tamayo 11/3/2001](#); [Diebel 11/5/2001](#))

October 26, 2001: Washington Investment Firm Ends Relationship with Bin Laden Family



Carlyle Group logo. [Source: *Carlyle Group*] The Carlyle Group, based in Washington, DC, is one of the world’s largest private-equity investment

firms. One of its brochures described it as investing “in niche opportunities created in industries heavily affected by changes in governmental policies.” ([Warner 3/18/2002](#)) It is also the 11th-largest defense contractor in the US. ([Red Herring 12/11/2001](#)) Since being established in 1987, it has signed up many former politicians and used their contacts and influence to promote itself. ([Burkeman and Borger 10/31/2001](#)) Those on its payroll include former Secretary of State James Baker, former White House budget director Dick Darman, former British Prime Minister John Major, and former US President George H. W. Bush. Its chairman is former CIA Director Frank Carlucci. ([Warner 3/18/2002](#)) Following 9/11, news reports revealed that Carlyle had a business relationship with Osama bin Laden’s family. According to a Carlyle executive, in 1995 the bin Ladens invested \$2 million in the Carlyle Partners II fund, which includes various defense holdings. This was a fairly small amount considering the entire fund is worth \$1.3 billion. However, a foreign financier with ties to the bin Ladens claimed their overall investment with Carlyle was much larger. ([Golden, Bandler, and Walker 9/27/2001](#); [Briody 5/8/2003](#)) Shafiq bin Laden, one of Osama’s brothers, had actually been in Washington, DC, on the morning of 9/11, attending the Carlyle Group’s annual investor conference there (see [\(9:00 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). Former President George H. W. Bush, who is senior adviser to Carlyle Group’s Asian Partners fund, has twice met with the bin Laden family on behalf of the company (see [November 1998](#); [January 2000](#)). On this day though, the Carlyle Group ends its relationship with the bin Ladens, and gives them back their investment. ([Red Herring 12/11/2001](#); [Warner 3/18/2002](#)) But the family is very well-connected, and their investment in Carlyle is hardly unusual for them. The New Yorker will note, “Much of the family’s private banking is handled by Citigroup, which is chaired by former Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin. The family has equity investments with Merrill Lynch and Goldman, Sachs. Among the family’s business partners is General Electric. A spokesman for Jack Welch, the chairman of G.E., says that the family threw a party for him in the nineteen-nineties in Saudi Arabia, and that Welch ‘considers them good business partners.’ One American diplomat says, ‘You talk about your global investors, it’s them. They own part of Microsoft, Boeing, and who knows what else.’” ([Mayer and Szechenyi 11/5/2001](#))

October 26, 2001: Patriot Act Becomes Law



President Bush signs the Patriot Act into law. Surrounding Bush from left are Rep. Mike Oxley (R), Sen. Orrin Hatch (R), Sen Pat Leahy (D), Sen. Harry Reid (D) and Rep. James Sensenbrenner, (R). [*Source: White House*] Bush signs the Patriot Act into law. Here are some of its provisions:

- 1) Non-citizens can be detained and deported if they provide “assistance” for lawful activities of any group the government chooses to call a terrorist organization. Under this provision the secretary of state can designate any group that has ever engaged in violent activity as a terrorist organization. Representative Patsy Mink notes that in theory supporters of Greenpeace could now be convicted for supporting terrorism. ([Sorensen 11/12/2001](#))
- 2) Immigrants can be detained indefinitely, even if they are found not to have any links to terrorism. They can be detained indefinitely for immigration violations or if the attorney general decides their activities pose a danger to national security. They need never be given a trial or even a hearing on their status. ([Rosenfeld 9/8/2002](#))
- 3) Internet service providers can be ordered to reveal the web sites and e-mail addresses that a suspect has communicated to or visited. The FBI need only inform a judge that the information is relevant to an investigation. ([Hentoff 11/26/2001](#); [Rosenfeld 9/8/2002](#))
- 4) It “lays the foundation for a domestic intelligence-gathering system of unprecedented scale and technological prowess.” ([McGee 11/4/2001](#)) It allows the government to access confidential credit reports, school records, and other records, without consent or notification. ([Rosenfeld 9/8/2002](#)) All of this information can now be given to the CIA, in violation of the CIA’s mandate prohibiting it from spying within the US. ([Hentoff 11/26/2001](#))
- 5) Financial institutions are encouraged to disclose possible violations of law or “suspicious activities” by any client. The institution is prohibited from notifying the person involved that it made such a report. The term “suspicious” is not defined, so it is up to the financial institutions to determine when to send such a report.
- 6) Federal agents can easily obtain warrants to review a library patron’s reading and computer habits (see [January 2002](#)). ([Hentoff 2/22/2002](#))
- 7) The government can refuse to reveal how evidence is collected against a suspected terrorist defendant. ([Ruth 4/6/2003](#))
- The law passes without public debate. ([Hentoff 11/9/2001](#); [Hentoff 11/26/2001](#)) Even though it ultimately took six weeks to pass the law, there was no hearing or congressional debate. ([Grieve 3/24/2003](#)) Congressman Barney Frank (D) says, “This was the least democratic process for debating questions fundamental to democracy I have ever seen. A bill drafted by a handful of people in secret, subject to no committee process, comes before us immune from amendment.” ([Hentoff 11/9/2001](#)) Only 66 congresspeople, and one senator, Russell Feingold (D), vote against it. Few in Congress are able to read summaries, let alone the fine print, before voting on it. ([Scheer 10/30/2001](#)) Feingold says, “The new law goes into a lot of areas that have nothing to do with terrorism and have a lot to do with the government and the FBI having a wish list of things they want to do.” ([Hentoff 11/9/2001](#)) Supporters point out that some provisions will expire in four years, but in fact most provisions will not expire. ([Ivins 11/1/2001](#)) One year later, criticism of the law grows. ([Rosenfeld 9/8/2002](#)) Dozens of cities later pass resolutions criticizing the Patriot Act (see [January 12, 2003](#)).

October 27, 2001: Pakistan Rewarded With Large Aid Package

It is reported that the US has put together a multi-billion dollar aid package for Pakistan that includes “sweeping debt rescheduling, grants stretching over many years and trade benefits as a reward for its support against terrorism.” Critics such as Representative Jim McDermott (D) complain the aid is a “blank check” that could go towards supporting the Pakistani military and Islamic militants fighting in India. ([Kahn 10/27/2001](#))

October 27, 2001: Officials Furious over NSA Lack of Cooperation

Furious government intelligence officials accuse the NSA of destroying data pertinent to the 9/11 investigation. They claim that possible leads are not being followed because of the NSA's lack of cooperation. ([Donnelly 10/27/2001](#))

October 27-November 2001: Zammar Arrested in Morocco

Suspected al-Qaeda operative Mohammed Haydar Zammar travels from Germany to Morocco. Not long after, perhaps in November, he is arrested by Moroccan police with US assistance. Although he is a German citizen and under investigation by Germany, German intelligence remain unaware of his arrest, and only learn about it from the newspapers in June 2002. He is sent to Syria, where there are formal charges against him (see [December 2001](#)). Zammar reportedly now claims he recruited Mohamed Atta and others into the al-Qaeda Hamburg cell. ([Finn 6/19/2002](#)) It is widely suspected that the US arranged for Zammar to be sent to Syria so that he could be more thoroughly interrogated using torture. The Germans are angry that the US has been submitting questions for Zammar and learning answers from Syria, but have not informed Germany of what they have learned ([Rennie and Helm 6/20/2002](#); [Bowers and Smucker 7/26/2002](#))

October 29, 2001: Necon Scholar: ‘This Is Total War’

Michael Ledeen, speaking at an event sponsored by the American Enterprise Institute, states: “No stages. This is total war. We are fighting a variety of enemies. There are lots of them out there. All this talk about first we are going to do Afghanistan, then we will do Iraq... this is entirely the wrong way to go about it. If we just let our vision of the world go forth, and we embrace it entirely and we don't try to piece together clever diplomacy, but just wage a total war... our children will sing great songs about us years from now.” ([Institute 10/29/2001](#))

October 29, 2001: Rumsfeld Establishes Office of Force Transformation



Arthur Cebrowski. [Source: Publicity photo] Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld announces the establishment of a new unit within the Office of the Secretary of Defense, called the Office of Force Transformation (OFT). Rumsfeld had called for the establishment of this office “as part of President Bush’s broad mandate to transform the Department of Defense. This transformation process challenges the organizational status quo with a new architecture for American defense in order to ensure an overwhelming and continuing competitive advantage for America’s military for decades to come.” He appoints retired Navy Vice Admiral Arthur Cebrowski—the former president of the Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island—as its director. ([US Department of Defense 11/26/2001](#)) Also recruited for this new department, as assistant for strategic futures, is Thomas Barnett, a senior strategic researcher at the Naval War College. As the “vision guy,” Barnett’s job is “to generate and deliver a compelling brief that would mobilize the Defense Department toward generating the future fighting force demanded by the post-9/11 strategic environment.” Barnett claims that, over time, senior military officials will come to cite his brief as “a Rosetta stone for the Bush Administration’s new national security strategy.” ([Barnett 2004, pp. 5-6](#)) Prior to 9/11, Barnett was the director of a research partnership between the Naval War College and the Wall Street bond firm Cantor Fitzgerald, called the New Rule Sets Project (see [May 1, 2000-June 4, 2001](#)). Considering that the OFT is a personal initiative of the defense secretary, it is interesting that Rumsfeld was in the late 1990s one of the founders of the neoconservative think tank, Project for the New American Century (PNAC) (see [June 3, 1997](#)). ([BBC 8/25/2005](#); [Kamen 6/12/2006](#); [Rogin 9/4/2006](#)) In September 2000, PNAC published a strategy document called “Rebuilding America’s Defenses” (see [September 2000](#)). Among other things, this laid out the need to establish “four core missions” for US military forces, one of these being to “transform US forces to exploit the ‘revolution in military affairs.’” The OFT appears to be fulfilling this mission. However, the PNAC document had continued, “the process of transformation, even if it brings revolutionary change, is likely to be a long one, absent some catastrophic and catalyzing event—like a new Pearl Harbor.” ([Project for the New American Century 9/2000, pp. iv and 51](#))

Late October 2001: Intense Political Pressure to Release Suspected Israeli Spies Arrested on 9/11

Around this time intense political pressure is put on US officials holding five Israeli men arrested for suspicious behavior at the time of the 9/11 attacks (see [3:56 p.m. September 11, 2001](#)). According to the Israeli newspaper Ha’aretz, Deputy Secretary of State

Richard Armitage and two unidentified “prominent New York congressmen” lobby heavily for their release. According to a source at ABC News, well-known criminal lawyer Alan Dershowitz also becomes involved as a negotiator to help get the men released. (Dershowitz will later refuse to comment on the matter.) ([Ketcham 2/7/2007](#)) ABC News will later report that was “high-level negotiations between Israeli and U.S. government officials” over the five men, resulting in a settlement. ([ABC News 6/21/2002](#)) Apparently the political pressure will succeed because the men will be released a few weeks later (see [November 20, 2001](#))).

(Late October 2001): FBI Hires Translator with Ties to Group under Federal Investigation

Melek Can Dickerson begins working for the FBI as a Turkish translator with top security clearance. She joins Sibel Edmonds and Kevin Taskasen (see [September 20, 2001](#) and [Early October 2001](#), respectively) as the FBI’s only Turkish translators. The FBI hired Dickerson without verifying that the information she provided on her application was correct. Had the bureau done this they would have learned that she spent two years working as an intern for the American-Turkish Council (ATC), a group that is being investigated by the FBI’s own counterintelligence unit and whose phone calls she will be listening in on as an FBI translator. ([Edmonds 7/1/2004](#)) On her application, Dickerson failed to disclose that she had worked for the organization. She also hid her tie to the group when she was interviewed as part of her background security check. ([Rose 9/2005](#)) According to Sibel Edmonds, it’s not clear that Dickerson’s background check was ever completed. ([Edmonds 7/1/2004](#))

Late October-Early December 2001: Gen. Franks Ignores CIA Request to Deploy Unused US Troops to Get Bin Laden



Gary Bernstein. [*Source: CNN*] Veteran CIA agent Gary Bernstein leads a CIA undercover team, codenamed Jawbreaker, to capture or kill bin Laden in Afghanistan. In a 2005 book, also called *Jawbreaker*, Bernstein will describe how his team monitored multiple intelligence reports tracking bin Laden on a path through Jalalabad to Tora Bora (see [November 13, 2001](#)). He will claim that at the start of December 2001,

one of his Arabic-speaking CIA agents finds a radio on a dead al-Qaeda fighter during a battle in the Tora Bora region. This agent hears bin Laden repeatedly attempt to rally his troops. On the same radio, that agent and another CIA agent who speaks Arabic hear bin Laden apologizing to his troops for getting them trapped and killed by US aerial bombing. Based on this information, Bernstein makes a formal request for 800 US troops to be deployed along the Pakistani border to prevent bin Laden's escape. The request is not granted. Bernstein's lawyer later claims, "Gary coordinated most of the boots on the ground. We knew where bin Laden was within a very circumscribed area. It was full of caves and tunnels but we could have bombed them or searched them one by one. The Pentagon failed to deploy sufficient troops to seal them off." Although the area is heavily bombed, bin Laden is able to escape (see [Mid-December 2001](#)). ([Berntsen and Pezzullo 2005, pp. 43-64](#); [Baxter 8/14/2005](#); [MSNBC 12/29/2005](#); [Spiegel 1/3/2006](#)) A Knight Ridder investigative report will later conclude, "While more than 1,200 US Marines [sit] at an abandoned air base in the desert 80 miles away, Franks and other commanders [rely] on three Afghan warlords and a small number of American, British, and Australian special forces to stop al-Qaeda and Taliban fighters from escaping across the mountains into Pakistan." Military and intelligence officials warn Franks that the two main Afghan commanders cannot be trusted. This turns out to be correct, as the warlords accept bribes from al-Qaeda leaders to let them escape. ([Knight Ridder 10/30/2004](#)) In 2005, Bernstein will call himself a supporter of Bush and will say he approves of how CIA Director Porter Goss is running the CIA, but he will nonetheless sue the CIA for what he claims is excessive censorship of his book. ([Baxter 8/14/2005](#); [MSNBC 12/29/2005](#))

Late October-Early November 2001: Al-Qaeda Fighters, Bin Laden Said to Move into Jalalabad without Hindrance

In late October, US intelligence reports began noting that al-Qaeda fighters and leaders were moving into and around the Afghan city of Jalalabad. By early November, bin Laden is said to be there. ([Brown 10/20/2002](#)) Counterterrorism "tsar" Richard Clarke will later recall, "We knew from day one the likely places that bin Laden would flee to. There had been lots of work done before 9/11 on where did he hang out, statistical analysis even. We knew Tora Bora was the place where he would be likely to go. People in CIA knew that; people in the counterterrorism community knew about it. We knew that what you should have done was to insert special forces—Rangers, that sort of thing—up into that area as soon as possible." ([Clarke 6/20/2006](#)) Knight Ridder Newspapers later reports that "American intelligence analysts concluded that bin Laden and his retreating fighters were preparing to flee across the border. However, the US Central Command, which was running the war, made no move to block their escape. 'It was obvious from at least early November that this area was to be the base for an exodus into Pakistan,' said one intelligence official, who spoke only on condition of anonymity. 'All of this was known, and frankly we were amazed that nothing was done to prepare for it.'" ([Brown 10/20/2002](#)) The vast majority of al-Qaeda's leaders and fighters will eventually escape into Pakistan.

October 31, 2001: New Regulation Allows Eavesdropping on Attorney-Client Conversations

The Justice Department issues a regulation that allows eavesdropping on attorney-client conversations in federal prisons wherever there is “reasonable suspicion... to believe that a particular inmate may use communications with attorneys to further or facilitate acts of terrorism.” The regulation requires written notice to the inmate and attorney, “except in the case of prior court authorization.” Officials no longer have to show probable cause or get a court order. The Los Angeles Times says the new policy is “sharply criticized by a broad array of lawyers and lawmakers.” ([Savage and Jackson 11/10/2001](#); [Sorensen 11/12/2001](#))

November 2001: Pakistan Promises to Seal Off Tora Bora Region in Exchange for US Aid

According to author Ron Suskind, some time in November the US makes a deal with Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf. Pakistan will seal off the passages to Pakistan from the Tora Bora region in Afghanistan where Taliban and al-Qaeda forces are expected to gather. In return, the US will give Pakistan nearly a billion dollars in new economic aid. Pakistan will fail to effectively seal the border in the next month (see [December 10, 2001](#)) and almost the entire force in Tora Bora will escape into Pakistan. ([Suskind 2006, pp. 58](#))

Between November 2001 and January 14, 2002: FBI Special Agent Suspicious about FBI Translator Who Has Lost Info on Several Wiretaps

Dennis Saccher, the FBI’s special agent in charge of Turkish counter-intelligence, develops suspicions about Melek Can Dickerson, a translator in his department who has lost information on several wiretaps and who he believes has forged signatures on certain documents. He reports his concerns to the FBI headquarters and his boss, Supervisory Special Agent Tom Frieids. ([Edmonds 8/22/2005](#))

November 2001 or December 2001: FBI Translator to Have Exclusive Access to Wiretaps of Surveillance Targets with Whom She Has Links

FBI translator Melek Can Dickerson recommends in a proposal to supervisor Mike Feghali that the Bureau’s Turkish language department adopt a new system for assigning translation tasks. Instead of the current system that randomly distributes assignments to translators, she suggests that each translator be permanently responsible for certain

targets. Included with her proposal is a list of recommended assignments for each of the department's translators. Under the proposed arrangement, she would be assigned to the phone lines of the American-Turkish Council (ATC) along with three other "high-value" diplomatic targets. Dickerson formerly worked for the ATC as an intern and is currently a personal friend of at least one of those high-value targets. She discusses her proposal alone with Feghali in his office for most of the afternoon. The following day, Feghali sends an email announcing that he has decided to adopt the new system proposed by Dickerson. ([Rose 9/2005](#)) As a result of the new arrangement, Dickerson, a mere "monitor," has exclusive access to her targets' wiretapped communications. (An FBI translator is either a "linguist" or a "monitor" for any given language. Linguists are more qualified and consequently have broader roles. For example, while linguists can do verbatim translations, monitors may only produce summaries. ([Edmonds 7/1/2004](#))) From this point on, none of the recorded conversations for these targets will be reviewed by an official department linguist, or any other translator for that matter. ([Rose 9/2005](#))

November 2001: FBI Interviews Al-Qaeda Operatives in Sudan; Hussein-Bin Laden Link Is Dismissed

FBI agent Jack Cloonan arrives in Sudan with several other FBI agents and is given permission by the Sudanese government to interview some al-Qaeda operatives living there. The interviews were conducted at safe houses arranged by Sudanese intelligence. Cloonan interviews Mubarak al Duri, an Iraqi. He lived in Tuscon, Arizona, in the late 1980s and early 1990s and was al-Qaeda's chief agent attempting to purchase weapons of mass destruction (see [1994](#)). Cloonan will later claim that al Duri and a second Iraqi al-Qaeda operative laughed when asked about possible bin Laden ties to Saddam Hussein's government. "They said bin Laden hated Saddam." Bin Laden considered Hussein "a Scotch-drinking, woman-chasing apostate." Cloonan also interviews Mohammed Loay Bayazid, an American citizen and founding member of al-Qaeda (see [August 11-20, 1988](#)), who ran an al-Qaeda charity front in the US (see [December 16, 1994](#)). ([Silverstein 4/29/2005](#)) The CIA will interview them in 2002, but they apparently remain free in Sudan (see [Mid-2002](#)).

(November 2001): FBI Translator Fails to Translate Wiretaps of Individuals with Whom She Has Connections

Recently hired FBI translator Melek Can Dickerson (see [Late October 2001](#)) begins marking as "not pertinent" wiretapped conversations that concern certain high-value surveillance targets working at the American-Turkish Council (ATC). As it later emerges, Dickerson previously worked as an intern for the ATC and maintains ongoing relationships with at least two individuals under investigation. ([Grimaldi 6/19/2002](#); [Sheehy 1/22/2004](#); [Rose 9/2005](#)) She also manages to obtain, and prevent from being translated, assignments designated for co-worker Sibel Edmonds. These wiretaps, which

she marks as being completed by Edmonds, concern the same targeted persons. ([Sheehy 1/22/2004](#))

(November 2001): Monitored Al-Qaeda Operative Connects KSM to 9/11 Hijackers

When investigators search the home of Amer el-Azizi, a known al-Qaeda operative, they find an e-mail address that connects him to 9/11 mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM). El-Azizi helped arrange a meeting between lead hijacker Mohamed Atta and an associate, Ramzi bin al-Shibh, in the run-up to 9/11 (see [July 8-19, 2001](#)), although he was monitored by Spanish authorities at the time (see [Before July 8, 2001](#)) and arrested in Turkey in 2000 (see [October 10, 2000](#)). His arrest shortly after 9/11 will be frustrated by Spanish intelligence (see [October 2001](#) and [Shortly After November 21, 2001](#)) and he will go on to be involved in the 2004 Madrid bombings (see [Before March 11, 2004](#) and [March 11, 2004](#)). An indictment released in 2004 will say, "A fundamental document... connects Amer el-Azizi directly with those responsible for the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, and concretely with Khalid Shaikh Mohammed via the e-mail address identified as Safar86@usa.net." The e-mail address "was being used by an individual who facilitated trips for al-Qaeda members in direct connection with [KSM], organizer of the attacks." A detainee will also later say that el-Azizi was in contact with the 9/11 plotters via e-mail. ([Rotella 4/29/2004](#)) After 9/11, however, when the Spanish want to indict el-Azizi, the US will be reluctant to turn the information over to them, and it will take six months to get it. Despite this, problems persist in information sharing between the US and Spain and this has an impact on prosecutions (see [Mid-2002-June 1, 2006](#)). ([Johnson and Crawford 5/4/2004](#))

November 2001-February 5, 2002: Saeed Sheikh Indicted for Role in 1994 Kidnapping

A US grand jury secretly indicts Saeed Sheikh for his role in the 1994 kidnapping of an American. The indictment is revealed in late February 2002. The US later claims it begins asking Pakistan for help in arresting and extraditing Saeed in late November. ([Arnold 2/26/2002](#); [Klaidman 3/13/2002](#)) However, it is not until January 9, 2002, that Wendy Chamberlin, the US ambassador to Pakistan, officially asks the Pakistani government for assistance. ([Yost 2/24/2002](#); [Callaway and Garrett 2/24/2002](#); [Mohan and Meyer 2/25/2002](#)) Saeed is seen partying with Pakistani government officials well into January 2002. The Los Angeles Times later reports that Saeed "move[s] about Pakistan without apparent impediments from authorities" up until February 5, when he is identified as a suspect in the Daniel Pearl kidnapping. ([Mohan and Gettleman 2/13/2002](#)) The London Times reports: "It is inconceivable that the Pakistani authorities did not know where he was" before then. ([Fielding 4/21/2002](#))

November 2001-January 2002: Western Leaders Promise Aid to Afghanistan

In a series of multinational conferences held to discuss the future of Afghanistan, Western leaders make great pledges and promises to Afghanistan. For instance British Prime Minister Tony Blair says, “We will not walk away from Afghanistan, as the outside world has done so many times before.” ([Osborne 5/25/2003](#)) President Bush says, “The Afghan people will know the generosity of America and its allies.” ([Pilger 9/20/2003](#)) US Secretary of State Colin Powell says, “[We] have an enormous obligation—not only the United States, but the whole international community—an enormous obligation to not leave the Afghan people in the lurch, to not walk away as has been done in the past.... We cannot wait; we must act as fast as we can. We must act as soon as possible.” ([Stout 11/20/2001](#)) In a January 2002 donor conference, countries around the world pledge \$4.5 billion to aid Afghanistan. ([Prusher 11/19/2002](#)) However, new Afghan leader Hamid Karzai says, “We believe Afghanistan needs \$15-20bn to reach the stage we were in 1979.” Most outside observers will agree that the amount pledged is insufficient. ([Osborne 5/25/2003](#)) Yet even that amount will fall far short of the aid actually given to Afghanistan in subsequent years (see [Spring 2003](#)).

Early November 2001: Al-Qaeda Convoy Flees Kabul

Many locals in Afghanistan reportedly witness a remarkable escape of al-Qaeda forces from Kabul around this time. One local businessman says, “We don’t understand how they weren’t all killed the night before because they came in a convoy of at least 1,000 cars and trucks. It was a very dark night, but it must have been easy for the American pilots to see the headlights. The main road was jammed from eight in the evening until three in the morning.” This convoy was thought to have contained al-Qaeda’s top officials ([Bhatia 7/22/2002](#))

Early November 2001: USA Today: Decision to Invade Iraq Made at This Time

According to a September 2002 USA Today article, the decision to invade Iraq is made at this time. Significantly, the decision is made independent of normal policy-making procedures—a National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) on Iraq was not requested, members of Congress were not consulted, and the concerns of senior military officers and intelligence analysts were ignored. Explaining why the White House did not request a NIE on Iraq, an unnamed US intelligence official explains it didn’t want to detail the uncertainties regarding the threat Iraq allegedly poses to the US. A senior administration official says the White House did not believe an NIE would be helpful. However in September 2002, an NIE will finally be requested as a result of pressure from Congress. The classified version of the document will include many qualified and nuanced statements, but the shorter, unclassified version, which is given to Congress, will not include these uncertainties (see [October 1, 2002](#)). ([Diamond et al. 9/10/2002](#) *Sources:*

officials at the White House, State Department, Pentagon, intelligence agencies, Congress and elsewhere)

November 2, 2001: Giuliani Reduces Number of Firefighters at Ground Zero, Following Recovery of Gold

New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani angers firefighters when he decides to severely reduce the number of them that can search for remains at Ground Zero. Until now, up to 300 firefighters at a time have been involved in the search and recovery effort. Giuliani's decision will mean no more than 25 at a time can do so in future. The International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) later alleges that, also at this time, Giuliani makes "a conscious decision to institute a 'scoop-and-dump' operation to expedite the clean-up of Ground Zero in lieu of the more time-consuming, but respectful, process of removing debris piece by piece in hope of uncovering more remains." So far, the bodies or remains of 101 firefighters have been recovered, out of the 343 who died at the World Trade Center on 9/11. According to the IAFF, the mayor refuses to even meet with local union presidents about the decision. Due to the ensuing public outcry, Giuliani will modify his policy and allow firefighters back on the pile at Ground Zero. The remains of another 113 firefighters will subsequently be found. The IAFF later alleges that "the mayor's switch to a scoop-and-dump coincided with the final removal of tens of millions of dollars of gold, silver and other assets of the Bank of Nova Scotia that were buried beneath what was once the towers" (see [\(Mid-October-mid November 2001\)](#)). "Once the money was out, Giuliani sided with the developers that opposed a lengthy recovery effort, and ordered the scoop-and-dump operation so they could proceed with redevelopment." ([Firefighting News \(.com\) 3/8/2007](#); [Chipman 3/9/2007](#); [Associated Press 3/10/2007](#)) IAFF President Harold Schaitberger later says, "in my opinion, it was more important for him [to] find the gold than it was to continue to find and recover remains." ([MSNBC 7/12/2007](#))

November 3, 2001: US Is Said to Be Relying on ISI for Intelligence in Afghan War

The US, lacking local agents and intelligence in Afghanistan, is said to be heavily reliant on the ISI for information about the Taliban. The US is said to be confident in the ISI, even though the ISI was the main supporter of the Taliban up until 9/11. Knight Ridder Newspapers comments, "Anti-Taliban Afghans, foreign diplomats, and Pakistani government security officials say that pro-Taliban officers remain deeply embedded within ISI and might still be helping America's enemies inside Afghanistan." A leader of the resistance to the Taliban says, "There are lots of (ISI) officers who are fully committed to the way of the Taliban and Osama bin Laden." Former ISI Director Hamid Gul says, "It is a foolish commander who depends on someone else's intelligence, especially when that someone doesn't like him and was once friendly with the enemy." ([Zielenziger and Tamayo 11/3/2001](#)) Later in the month another article notes that the CIA

continues to rely on the ISI for covert actions against the Taliban. One CIA agent says, “The same Pakistani case officers who built up the Taliban are doing the translating for the CIA. Our biggest mistake is allowing the ISI to be our eyes and ears.” ([Diebel 11/5/2001](#))

November 3, 2001: Mohamed Atta Alleged to Be Iraqi Agent

The Italian newspaper La Repubblica reports that Saddam Hussein’s interpreter, known only by the alias A.S., claims Mohamed Atta was an agent of el-Mukhabarat, the Iraqi secret services. A.S. is sponsored by the Iraqi exile group the Iraqi National Congress (INC). He claims that it was Atta who planned the 9/11 attacks, not with bin Laden or the other 18 hijackers but with two officials of the Iraqi secret services: Farouk Hijazi, a former Iraqi ambassador to Turkey, and Ahmed Khalil Ibrahim Samir al-Ani, a member of the Iraqi diplomatic corps in Prague, Czech Republic. ([Bonini and D'Avanzo 11/3/2001](#))

(November 4-5, 2001): Despite Terrorism Concerns, Cheney Goes on Hunting Trip

In the months following 9/11, Vice President Dick Cheney is frequently moved away to undisclosed locations, supposedly for security reasons (see [September 12, 2001-2002](#)). He will tell CBS News, “[W]e feel it’s important, especially when the threat level goes up, to keep the president or myself separated.” He suggests there is a risk that terrorists could “take out the entire leadership of our government.” ([Cheney 11/14/2001](#)) Yet, in spite of this supposed threat, Cheney goes ahead with a pheasant-hunting trip at the Paul Nelson Farm in South Dakota. He goes to this private retreat each year with friends, and on this occasion is joined by his daughter Mary. The trip had been planned before January this year, and the party has the entire facility to itself. ([Associated Press 11/5/2001](#); [Kamen 11/19/2001](#); [Hayes 2007, pp. 363](#)) CBS News’s Gloria Borger later questions Cheney about this trip, saying, “The American people are on a terror alert. You’re at an undisclosed location. Then the other week we learned that you went on a hunting trip. So did the Secret Service give you the all clear and say it’s fine to do that?” Cheney replies, “Well, the key thing here was I was away from the president. I wasn’t in the same location he was. We could not have both been eliminated at the same time by a terrorist attack.” ([Cheney 11/14/2001](#))

November 5, 2001: Has Bin Laden Family Really Disowned Osama?



The Binladin Group logo. [Source:

Bin Ladin Group]The New Yorker points to evidence that the bin Laden family has generally not ostracized itself from bin Laden as is popularly believed, but retains close ties in some cases. The large bin Laden family owns and runs a \$5 billion a year global corporation that includes the largest construction firm in the Islamic world. One counterterrorism expert says, “There’s obviously a lot of spin by the Saudi Binladin Group [the family corporation] to distinguish itself from Osama. I’ve been following the bin Ladens for years, and it’s easy to say, ‘We disown him.’ Many in the family have. But blood is usually thicker than water.” The article notes that neither the bin Laden family nor the Saudi royal family have publicly denounced bin Laden since 9/11. ([Mayer and Szechenyi 11/5/2001](#))

November 5, 2001: More Than 1,000 People Reportedly in Secret Custody

The Justice Department announces that it has put 1,182 people into secret custody since 9/11. Most all of them are from the Middle East or South Asia. ([Lewis 8/3/2002](#)) After this it stops releasing new numbers, but human rights groups believe the total number could be as high as 2,000. ([Gumbel 2/26/2002](#)) Apparently this is roughly the peak for secret arrests, and eventually most of the prisoners are released, and none are charged with any terrorist acts (see [July 3, 2002](#); [December 11, 2002](#)). Their names will still not have been revealed (see [August 2, 2002](#)).

November 7, 2001: Al Taqwa Bank Shut Down



Italian police raid Youssef Nada’s

villa in Lugano, Italy. [Source: *Keystone*]The US and other countries announce the closure of the Al Taqwa Bank and the Al Barakaat financial network. President Bush says, “Al Taqwa and Al Barakaat raise funds for al-Qaeda. They manage, invest and distribute those funds.” US officials claim that both entities skimmed a part of the fees charged on each financial transaction it conducted and paid it to al-Qaeda. This would provide al-Qaeda with tens of millions of dollars annually. Additionally, Al Taqwa would provide investment advice and transfer cash for al-Qaeda. Al Taqwa is based in Switzerland while Al Barakaat is based in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Over 100

nations are said to be cooperating with efforts to block the funds of these two groups. ([Sanger and Eichenwald 11/8/2001](#)) Swiss authorities raid Al Taqwa-related businesses and the homes of bank leaders Youssef Nada, Ali Himmat, and Ahmad Huber, but no arrests are made. In January 2002, Nada will announce that the Al Taqwa Bank is shutting down, due to bad publicity after the raids. He will maintain that he and his organization are completely innocent. ([Hosenball 11/7/2001](#); [Reuters 1/10/2002](#)) Days after 9/11, Huber called the 9/11 attacks “counterterror against American-Israeli terror,” the World Trade Center a “the Twin Towers of the godless,” and the Pentagon “a symbol of Satan,” yet he will claim to have no ties to the attackers. ([Reynolds 2/1/2002](#); [Hosenball 3/18/2002](#)) In searching Nada’s house, Swiss authorities discover a document entitled “The Project,” which is a strategic plan for the Muslim Brotherhood to infiltrate and defeat Western countries (see [December 1982](#)). By late 2002, both the US and UN will declare Al Taqwa Bank, Nada, and Ahmed Idris Nasreddin, another founder and director of the bank, supporters of terrorism. All of their accounts will be declared frozen worldwide. ([US Department of the Treasury 8/29/2002](#)) However, while Al Taqwa itself will be shut down, later reports will indicate that other financial entities operated by the directors will continue to operate freely (see [June-October 2005](#)).

November 7, 2001: Bin Laden Claims to Have Weapons of Mass Destruction



A video still of bin Laden filmed during his interview with Hamid Mir in November 2001. [*Source: National Geographic*] Pakistani reporter Hamid Mir is taken blindfolded to a location somewhere in the mountains of Afghanistan to interview bin Laden. The sound of antiaircraft fire can be heard in the distance. Bin Laden looks paler and his beard is greyer. While he doesn’t claim responsibility for the 9/11 attacks, he says that Muslims were behind it and that Muslims have the moral right to commit such attacks because they are done in self-defense. He says, “I wish to declare that if America used chemical or nuclear weapons against us, then we may retort with chemical and nuclear weapons. We have the weapons as deterrent.” He also says, “This place may be bombed. And we will be killed. We love death. The US loves life. That is the big difference between us.” ([Laden 11/10/2001](#); [Thomas 11/26/2001](#))

November 9, 2001: Taliban Loses Control of Northern Afghanistan

The Taliban abandon the strategic northern Afghan city of Mazar-i-Sharif, allowing the Northern Alliance to take control. ([Kugler 8/19/2002](#)) The Taliban abandons the rest of Northern Afghanistan in the next few days, except the city of Kunduz, where most of the Taliban flee. Kunduz falls on November 25, but not before most of the thousands of fighters there are airlifted out (see [November 14-25, 2001](#)). ([Hersh 1/21/2002](#))

November 10, 2001: Reporter Investigating ISI-Taliban Ties Is Expelled from Pakistan

Daily Telegraph reporter Christina Lamb is arrested and expelled from Pakistan by the ISI. She had been investigating the connections between the ISI and the Taliban. ([Lamb 11/11/2001](#))

November 10, 2001: Bush Dismisses 9/11 Conspiracy Theories

In a speech to the United Nations General Assembly, President Bush states, “We must speak the truth about terror. Let us never tolerate outrageous conspiracy theories concerning the attacks of September the 11th; malicious lies that attempt to shift the blame away from the terrorists, themselves, away from the guilty.” ([US President 11/19/2001](#))

November 11, 2001: Al-Qaeda Leader Al-Libi Captured While Fleeing Afghanistan

Pakistani forces capture Ibn al-Shaykh al-Libi, a Libyan national, apparently as he is trying to flee Afghanistan. Al-Libi is considered an al-Qaeda leader and head of the Khaldan training camp in Afghanistan for many years. ([Priest 6/27/2004](#)) He is the first al-Qaeda figure captured after 9/11 of any importance. He will be transferred to US custody one month later (see [December 19, 2001](#)).

(November 11, 2001): Ziad Jarrah’s ‘Farewell Letter’ Intercepted



Aysel Senguen. *[Source: CBC]* Authorities in the US discover a letter apparently written by Flight 93 hijacker Ziad Jarrah. It is believed the four-page letter, dated September 10, was written just hours before the 9/11 attacks. It is part of a package Jarrah mailed from the US to his Turkish girlfriend Aysel Senguen, a medical student living in the western German city of Bochum. The letter says, "I have done what I had to do.... You should be very proud, because it is an honor and in the end you will see that everyone will be happy." It adds, "Hold on to what you have until we see each other again." The package arrived in Germany shortly after September 11. However, due to Jarrah having made an error in writing the address, it was returned to the US and ended up in the hands of the FBI. Oddly, considering the letter is supposedly Jarrah's farewell to Senguen, the rest of his package reportedly includes papers about his flight training and scuba-diving instructions. It is believed to also contain some small presents. Ziad's uncle Jamal Jarrah says he thinks the letter is fabricated, and that it is suspicious that the address on it contained a mistake, as Ziad had known his girlfriend for five years and would not have made such an error. ([Associated Press 11/17/2001](#); [Williams 11/18/2001](#); [Connolly 11/18/2001](#); [Helm 11/18/2001](#); [BBC 11/19/2001](#))

November 11, 2001-December 2001: US Allows Warlords to Establish Control Over Most of Afghanistan



Gul Agha with US General D. K. McNeill. *[Source: Rob Curtis/ Agence France-Presse]* On November 11, 2001, top Taliban leader Mullah Omar concedes defeat and orders thousands of Taliban to retreat to Pakistan. Within a week, large sections of Afghanistan are abandoned by the Taliban. The Northern Alliance, however, does not have the means or the support to occupy those areas, and warlords take effective control of most of the country. On November 19, the New York Times reports, "The galaxy of warlords who tore Afghanistan apart in the early 1990s and

who were vanquished by the Taliban because of their corruption and perfidy are back on their thrones, poised to exercise power in the ways they always have.” The warlords all claim some form of loyalty to the Northern Alliance, but some of the same warlords had previously been allied with the Taliban and bin Laden. For instance, the new ruler of Jalalabad let bin Laden move from Sudan to Jalalabad in 1996. ([Burns 11/15/2001](#); [Harding 11/15/2001](#); [Perlez 11/19/2001](#)) For the next few weeks, there is widespread “chaos, rape, murder, and pillaging” in most of Afghanistan as old scores are settled. The Western media does little reporting on the brutality of the situation. ([Harris 12/2/2001](#)) The central Afghanistan government will later officially confirm the warlords’ positions with governor and minister titles (see [June 20, 2002](#)). In late 2005, it will be reported that warlords generally still retain their positions and power, even after regional elections. ([Huggler 10/8/2005](#)) The US made a conscious decision shortly after 9/11 not to allow peacekeepers outside of the capital city of Kabul, creating a power vacuum that was filled by the warlords (see [Late 2001](#)). Further, in some cases the US military facilitates the return of former warlords. For instance, Gul Agha Sherzai ruled the Kandahar area in the early 1990s; his rule was notorious for bribery, extortion, drug dealing, and widespread theft. Yet the US arms his militia and US Special Forces personally escort him back to Kandahar, and he will become governor of Kandahar province. ([Maass 1/6/2002](#); [GlobalSecurity \(.org\) 4/27/2005](#)) In 2003, Jane’s Terrorism and Security Monitor will look back at the US decisions in late 2001 and opine, “Perhaps the most serious tactical error was the restoration of warlords in Afghanistan. The common people were disaffected by the proteges and stooges of foreign occupiers who had carved Afghanistan into fiefdoms. Most or all of them were driven out by the Taliban and Pakistan and the remainder were on the verge of collapse or on the run.... US forces brought the warlords back, arming, financing and guiding them back to their lost thrones.” ([Gizabi 2/24/2003](#)) Journalist Kathy Gannon will later write, “At the heart of these misguided machinations was Zalmay Khalilzad, the US president’s hand-picked envoy to Afghanistan, who choreographed the early US decisions” in the country. ([Gannon 2005, pp. 113](#))

November 13, 2001: Kabul Falls to Northern Alliance; Rest of Country Soon Follows



Northern Alliance forces entering Kabul. One holds a poster of recently assassinated Northern Alliance leader Ahmed Shah Massoud. [Source: Getty Images] (click image to enlarge) Kabul, Afghanistan's capital, falls to the Northern Alliance. The Taliban will abandon the rest of the country over the next few weeks. ([BBC 11/13/2001](#)) The US and Pakistan did not want the Northern Alliance to conquer Kabul for ethnic and strategic reasons. But after a change in US bombing tactics, the Taliban front line unexpectedly and suddenly collapsed, making this conquest all but inevitable (see [October-Early November 2001](#)). It is later reported that the US paid about \$70 million in bribes to get dozens of Taliban leaders to surrender or change sides. This is credited with assisting the sudden collapse of Taliban forces. ([Bushell 2/7/2002](#); [Woodward 11/18/2002](#))

November 13, 2001: Al-Qaeda Convoy Flees to Tora Bora; US Fails to Attack

Bin Laden gave a speech in front of about 1,000 supporters on November 10, 2001 in the town of Jalalabad, Afghanistan. ([Smucker 3/4/2002](#)) On the night of November 13, a convoy of 1,000 or more al-Qaeda and Taliban fighters escapes from Jalalabad and reaches the fortress of Tora Bora after hours of driving and then walking. Bin Laden is believed to be with them, riding in one of "several hundred cars" in the convoy. The US bombs the nearby Jalalabad airport, but apparently does not attack the convoy. ([Smucker 3/4/2002](#); [Brown 10/20/2002](#)) The Northern Alliance captures Jalalabad the next day. ([Sydney Morning Herald 11/14/2001](#))

November 14-25, 2001: US Secretly Authorizes Airlift of Pakistani and Taliban Fighters

At the request of the Pakistani government, the US secretly allows rescue flights into the besieged Taliban stronghold of Kunduz, in Northern Afghanistan, to save Pakistanis fighting for the Taliban (and against US forces) and bring them back to Pakistan. Pakistan's President "Musharraf won American support for the airlift by warning that the humiliation of losing hundreds—and perhaps thousands—of Pakistani Army men and

intelligence operatives would jeopardize his political survival.” ([Hersh 1/21/2002](#)) Dozens of senior Pakistani military officers, including two generals, are flown out. ([Hersh 2/21/2003](#)) In addition, it is reported that the Pakistani government assists 50 trucks filled with foreign fighters to escape the town. ([Filkins and Gall 11/24/2001](#)) Many news articles at the time suggest an airlift is occurring. ([Hugger 11/16/2001](#); [Filkins and Gall 11/24/2001](#); [George 11/26/2001](#); [Tanner 11/26/2001](#); [Campbell 11/27/2001](#); [Moran 11/29/2001](#)) Significant media coverage fails to develop, however. The US and Pakistani governments deny the existence of the airlift. ([US Department of State 11/16/2001](#); [Hersh 1/21/2002](#)) On December 2, when asked to assure that the US did not allow such an airlift, Rumsfeld says, “Oh, you can be certain of that. We have not seen a single—to my knowledge, we have not seen a single airplane or helicopter go into Afghanistan in recent days or weeks and extract people and take them out of Afghanistan to any country, let alone Pakistan.” ([MSNBC 4/13/2003](#)) Reporter Seymour Hersh believes that Rumsfeld must have given approval for the airlift. ([Hersh 2/21/2003](#)) However, The New Yorker magazine reports, “What was supposed to be a limited evacuation apparently slipped out of control and, as an unintended consequence, an unknown number of Taliban and al-Qaeda fighters managed to join in the exodus.” A CIA analyst says, “Many of the people they spirited away were in the Taliban leadership” who Pakistan wanted for future political negotiations. US intelligence was “supposed to have access to them, but it didn’t happen,” he says. According to Indian intelligence, airlifts grow particularly intense in the last three days before the city falls on November 25. Of the 8,000 remaining al-Qaeda, Pakistani, and Taliban, about 5,000 are airlifted out and 3,000 surrender. ([Hersh 1/21/2002](#)) Hersh later claims that “maybe even some of bin Laden’s immediate family were flown out on those evacuations.” ([Hersh 2/21/2003](#))

November 15, 2001: Al-Qaeda Leader Reported Killed in Bombing Raid



Mohammed Atef. [Source: FBI] Al-Qaeda leader Mohammed Atef (a.k.a. Abu Hafs) is believed to have been killed in Gardez, near Kabul, Afghanistan. Atef is considered al-Qaeda’s military commander, and one of its top leaders. Initial reports claim he was killed by a US bombing raid, but later reports will reveal he was hit by Hellfire missile fired from a Predator drone. ([US Department of State 11/16/2001](#); [James 11/17/2001](#); [Thomas and Hosenball 11/11/2002](#)) Documents and videotapes are

discovered by US forces in the rubble after the raid. Details on two upcoming al-Qaeda attacks are discovered. Investigators examining the videotapes find images of about 50 al-Qaeda operatives (see [November 15-Late December 2001](#)). ([Suskind 2006, pp. 57](#))

Mid-November 2001: Afghan Politician Says US Policy Prevented Bin Laden Capture



Ismail Khan. [*Source: US Navy*]Independent warlord Ismail Khan's troops and other Northern Alliance fighters are reportedly ready to take back Pashtun areas from Taliban control at this time. Khan, former and future governor of Herat province and one of Afghanistan's most successful militia leaders, later maintains that "we could have captured all the Taliban and the al-Qaeda groups. We could have arrested Osama bin Laden with all of his supporters." ([Komarow 1/2/2002](#)) However, according to Khan, his forces hold back at the request of the US, who allegedly do not want the non-Pashtun Northern Alliance to conquer Pashtun areas. British newspapers at the time report bin Laden is surrounded in a 30-mile area, but the conquest of Kandahar takes weeks without the Northern Alliance (see [November 25, 2001](#)). However, more reliable reports place bin Laden near Tora Bora by mid-November (see [November 13, 2001](#)). ([CNN 11/18/2001](#))

November 15, 2001: Newspaper Questions Whether Flight 93 Was Shot Down

For the first time, a major newspaper publishes an article strongly suggesting Flight 93 was shot down. The Philadelphia Daily News quotes numerous eyewitnesses who believe the plane was shot down. The FBI has reported a half-ton piece of an engine was found "a considerable distance" from the main crash site. "That information is intriguing to shootdown theory proponents, since the heat-seeking, air-to-air Sidewinder missiles aboard an F-16 would likely target one of the Boeing 757's two large engines." The article concludes, "No one has fully explained why the plane went down, or what exactly happened during an eight-minute gap from the time all cell phone calls from the plane stopped and the time it crashed." ([Bunch 11/15/2001](#))

November 15-Late December 2001: US Finds Key Al-Qaeda Tape, Fails to Pass It On for Over a Month



A still from the casing video shows a US warship docked in Singapore. [Source: CBC] After killing al-Qaeda military commander Mohammed Atef and other operatives with a Predator drone (see [November 15, 2001](#)), US forces search the building where he was killed and find lots of evidence about al-Qaeda members and various plots. One of the pieces of evidence found is a casing video for an attack on US personnel in Singapore, which al-Qaeda and Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) have been plotting for some time (see [June 2001](#)). ([Suskind 2006, pp. 56-57](#)) Shortly before dying, Atef instructed JI leader Hambali to conduct the operation fast, because of the US invasion of Afghanistan. ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 3/8/2006](#); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 3/8/2006](#)) In addition, JI is also plotting a wave of embassy attacks. A senior Western diplomat will later comment: “There was an imminent danger. Their plans could have been operational in a week.” However, many militants are arrested in Southeast Asia in mid-December and the attacks never happen. US officials initially claim that the passage of the video to Singapore helps with the arrests. But Singapore authorities later point out that they did not receive the tape until the end of December and they had already arrested everybody by then based on information they had acquired on their own. They had also found a copy of the video in a suspect’s house in Singapore. ([Chandrasekaran 2/3/2002](#); [Graham 2/3/2002](#); [Jones 3/16/2002](#))

Mid-November 2001: Bin Laden ‘Confession’ Video Made, According to US



Khaled al-Harbi (right) talking to Osama bin Laden or one of his doubles. [Source: *US Department of Defense*] A conversation between Osama bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri, al-Qaeda spokesman Suliman abu Ghaith, and Khaled al-Harbi, a veteran of al-Qaeda's jihad in Bosnia, is videotaped. A portion of the taped conversation is later said to be found by the US and will be used as evidence of bin Laden's involvement in 9/11. ([Jeffery 12/13/2001](#); [Kohlmann 2004, pp. 28-9](#)) According to a translation released by the Pentagon, the man said to be bin Laden says: "... we calculated in advance the number of casualties from the enemy, who would be killed based on the position of the tower. We calculated that the floors that would be hit would be three or four floors. I was the most optimistic of them all... (inaudible)... due to my experience in this field, I was thinking that the fire from the gas in the plane would melt the iron structure of the building and collapse the area where the plane hit and all the floors above it only. This is what we had hoped for." He continues: "We had notification since the previous Thursday that the event would take place that day. We had finished our work that day and had the radio on. It was 5:30 p.m. our time... Immediately, we heard the news that a plane had hit the World Trade Center. We turned the radio station to the news from Washington... At the end of the newscast, they reported that a plane just hit the World Trade Center... After a little while, they announced that another plane had hit the World Trade Center. The brothers who heard the news were overjoyed by it." ([US Department of Defense 12/13/2001](#)) The release of the tape, which will be said to be found by US intelligence officers in Jalalabad, will be a major news story, and the tape will be taken by the media as proof of bin Laden's guilt. President Bush comments, "For those who see this tape, they'll realize that not only is he guilty of incredible murder, he has no conscience and no soul, that he represents the worst of civilization." British foreign secretary Jack Straw adds, "By boasting about his involvement in the evil attacks, Bin Laden confirms his guilt." ([BBC 12/14/2001](#); [Fox News 12/14/2001](#); [Koppel 12/16/2001](#)) However, the tape will later be disputed from three points of view:

- The accuracy of the translation will be questioned (see [December 20, 2001](#)). For example, the man thought to be bin Laden does not say "we calculated in advance the number of casualties," but "we calculated the number of casualties;"
- An analyst will conclude that the tape was actually made earlier as a part of a US-run sting operation (see [September 26, 2001](#));
- Some commentators will question whether the person in the video is actually bin Laden (see [December 13, 2001](#)).

Mid-November 2001: Alleged British Al-Qaeda Informer Arrested and Released

Atif Ahmed, an alleged co-conspirator of Zacarias Moussaoui, is arrested in London, but is released soon after. Ahmed was named as an associate by Moussaoui in August (see [August 17, 2001](#)) and the arrest follows a search of his flat, which produces enough evidence for an arrest warrant. The FBI works closely on the case with the New York Police Department and London police, and evidence about Ahmed comes from various parts of the FBI's 9/11 investigation. Investigators also find a phone call that suggests Ahmed and Moussaoui were working together. ([Miller and Thomas 11/14/2001](#)) However, Ahmed is released a few days later and British security sources will later describe Ahmed as a minor figure in the London Islamist underground. ([Adetunji and Burns 9/19/2002](#)) Moussaoui will later claim that Ahmed is a British agent and had foreknowledge of 9/11 (see [July 25, 2002](#)).

Mid-November 2001-Mid-December 2001: US-Allied Afghan Warlords Help Bin Laden Escape Tora Bora



Hazrat Ali. [*Source: Robert Nickelsberg / Getty Images*] Hazrat Ali and Haji Zaman Ghamsharik, warlords in the Tora Bora region of Afghanistan, both later claim that they are first approached in the middle of November by US officers and asked to take part in an attack on Tora Bora. They agree. ([Smucker 3/4/2002](#)) By late November, the US-allied warlords assemble a motley force of about 2,500 Afghans supported by a fleet of old Russian tanks at the foot of the Tora Bora mountains. They are poorly equipped and trained and have low morale. The better-equipped Taliban and al-Qaeda are 5,000 feet up in snow-covered valleys, forests, and caves. ([Weaver 9/11/2005](#)) On December 3, a reporter for the Christian Science Monitor overhears Ali in a Jalalabad, Afghanistan, hotel making a deal to give three al-Qaeda operatives safe passage out of the country. ([Smucker 3/4/2002](#)) The US chooses to rely mainly on Hazrat Ali's forces for the ground offensive against Tora Bora. Ali supposedly pays one of his aides \$5,000 to block the main escape routes to Pakistan. But in fact this aide helps Taliban and al-Qaeda escape along these routes. Afghan villagers in the area later even claim that they took part in firefights with fighters working for Ali's aide who were providing cover to help al-Qaeda and Taliban escape. ([Smucker 3/4/2002](#)) Author James Risen later claims, "CIA

officials are now convinced that Hazrat Ali's forces allowed Osama bin Laden and his key lieutenants to flee Tora Bora into Pakistan. Said a CIA source, 'We realized those guys just opened the door. It wasn't a big secret.'" While the US will never publicly blame Ali for assisting in the escape, the CIA will internally debate having Ali arrested by the new Afghan government. But this idea will be abandoned and Ali will become the new strongman in the Jalalabad region. ([Risen 2006, pp. 168-169](#)) CIA official Michael Scheuer later will comment, "Everyone who was cognizant of how Afghan operations worked would have told Mr. Tenet that [his plan to rely on Afghan warlords] was nuts. And as it turned out, he was.... The people we bought, the people Mr. Tenet said we would own, let Osama bin Laden escape from Tora Bora in eastern Afghanistan into Pakistan." ([Scheuer 6/20/2006](#))

November 16, 2001: Some Al-Qaeda and Taliban Leaders Reportedly Escape Afghanistan

According to Newsweek, approximately 600 al-Qaeda and Taliban fighters, including many senior leaders, escape Afghanistan on this day. This is the first day of heavy bombing of the Tora Bora region (see [November 16, 2001](#)). There are two main routes out of the Tora Bora cave complex to Pakistan. The US bombs only one route, so the 600 are able to escape without being attacked using the other route. Hundreds will continue to use the escape route for weeks, generally unbothered by US bombing or Pakistani border guards. US officials later privately admit they lost an excellent opportunity to close a trap. ([Nordland, Yousafzai, and Dehghanpisheh 8/11/2002](#)) On the same day, the media reports that the US is studying routes bin Laden might use to escape Tora Bora ([Drogin and Miller 11/16/2001](#)), but the one escape route is not closed, and by some accounts bin Laden and others escape into Pakistan will use this same route several weeks later (see [November 28-30, 2001](#)). High-ranking British officers will later privately complain, "American commanders had vetoed a proposal to guard the high-altitude trails, arguing that the risks of a firefight, in deep snow, gusting winds, and low-slung clouds, were too high." ([Burns 9/30/2002](#))

November 16, 2001: Tora Bora Battle Begins



A US airstrike in the Tora Bora region.

[Source: Gary Bernstein] Heavy US bombing of Tora Bora, the Taliban and al-Qaeda mountainous stronghold near the Pakistani border, begins. A large convoy containing bin Laden and other al-Qaeda leaders arrived in Tora Bora about three days earlier. The son of a tribal elder later recalls, "At first, we thought that the US military was trying to frighten the Arabs out, since they were only bombing from one side." Rather than send in US ground forces in large numbers, the US chooses to supply two local warlords and have their fighters do most of the fighting while heavy bombing continues. Within days, a small number of US special forces are brought in to assist the local warlords. One of the warlords chosen, Haji Zaman Ghamsharik, was actually living in exile in France and has to be flown to Afghanistan. He is "known to many as a ruthless player in the regional smuggling business." Between 1,500 to 2,000 of bin Laden's fighters are in Tora Bora when the battle begins. ([Smucker 3/4/2002](#); [Brown 10/20/2002](#)) There are two main mountain passes out of Tora Bora and into Pakistan. From the beginning on this day, eyewitnesses report that the US bombs only one pass. ([Nordland, Yousafzai, and Dehghanpisheh 8/11/2002](#)) The fighting and bombing will continue through early December (see [December 5-17, 2001](#)) while bin Laden and most of his forces escape via the other pass (see [November 28-30, 2001](#)).

November 20, 2001: Israelis Who Videotaped WTC Attack Are Released, Deported

The five Israelis arrested on 9/11 for videotaping the WTC attack and then cheering about it (see [3:56 p.m. September 11, 2001](#)) are released and deported to Israel. Some of the men's names had appeared in a US national intelligence database, and the FBI has concluded that at least two of the men were working for the Mossad, according to ABC News. However, the FBI says that none of the Israelis had any advanced knowledge of the 9/11 attacks, and they were released as part of a deal between the US and the Israeli government. After their release, they claim to have been tortured. ([Perelman 3/15/2002](#); [ABC News 6/21/2002](#))

November 21, 2001: Bush Says Afghanistan Is Just the Beginning

President Bush states that “Afghanistan is just the beginning on the war against terror. There are other terrorists who threaten America and our friends, and there are other nations willing to sponsor them. We will not be secure as a nation until all of these threats are defeated. Across the world and across the years, we will fight these evil ones, and we will win.” ([US President 11/26/2001](#)) A short time later, it is reported that “the US has honed a hit list of countries to target for military action in rogue regions across the globe where it believes terror cells flourish,” including Iraq. ([Engel 12/10/2001](#))

November 21, 2001: Opium Boom in Afghanistan

The Independent runs a story with the title: “Opium Farmers Rejoice at the Defeat of the Taliban.” Massive opium planting is underway all across Afghanistan. ([Parry 11/21/2001](#)) Four days later, the Observer runs a story headlined, “Victorious Warlords Set to Open the Opium Floodgates.” It states that farmers are being encouraged by warlords allied with the US to plant “as much opium as possible.” ([Harris 11/25/2001](#))

November 21, 2001: Flight 77 Remains Identified, Hijackers’ Identities Not Confirmed

The remains of all but one of the people on board Flight 77, including the hijackers, are identified. However, the identities of the hijackers have still not been confirmed through their remains ([Vogel 11/21/2001](#); [Kelly 1/11/2002](#)), and the FBI never provides DNA profiles of the hijackers to medical examiners for identification. Strangely, the official position is that there was a giant fireball on impact that not only destroyed the airplane, but actually vaporized the metal. A rescue worker states: “The only way you could tell that an aircraft was inside was that we saw pieces of the nose gear. The devastation was horrific.” ([Murphy 11/1/2001](#)) As of mid-2004, there still have been no reports that the hijackers’ remains have been identified by their DNA, except possibly for two unnamed hijackers.

November 21, 2001: Bush Wants Iraq Invasion Plan

George W. Bush and Donald Rumsfeld speak in private. Bush asks the Defense Secretary what kind of plan the Pentagon has for invading Iraq. “What have you got in terms of plans for Iraq? What is the status of the war plan? I want you to get on it. I want you to keep it secret,” Bush says. When Rumsfeld says its current plan is outdated, Bush instructs him to devise a new one. “Let’s get started on this,” Bush says. “And get Tommy Franks looking at what it would take to protect America by removing Saddam Hussein if we have to.” Bush requests that discussion about Iraq remain low-key. “I knew what would happen if people thought we were developing a potential war plan for Iraq,”

Bush later explains to journalist Bob Woodward. Bush does not share the details of his conversation with Condoleezza Rice, only telling her that Rumsfeld will be working on Iraq. ([Woodward and McDonough 4/16/2004](#); [Jehl 4/17/2004](#); [Hamilton 4/17/2004](#); [CBS News 4/18/2004](#) Sources: George Bush and other top officials interviewed by Washington Post editor Bob Woodward) When General Tommy Franks—who already has his hands full with the operation in Afghanistan—learns that the administration is considering plans to invade Iraq, he utters “a string of obscenities.” ([Woodward and McDonough 4/16/2004](#) Sources: Top officials interviewed by Washington Post editor Bob Woodward) General Franks will meet with Bush and brief him on the plan’s progress on December 28 (see [December 28, 2001](#)).

Shortly After November 21, 2001: Spanish Intelligence Frustrates Arrest of Al-Qaeda Leader

The Spanish intelligence agency CESID frustrates the arrest of a senior member of al-Qaeda in Europe, Amer el-Azizi, by Spanish police. Most members of the cell of which el-Azizi was a member were arrested shortly before, but el-Azizi had avoided the round-up by fleeing abroad (see [October 2001](#)). After returning to Spain, he again falls under police surveillance, but, according to Spanish police union head Jose Manuel Sanchez Fornet, his arrest is prevented by “interference” from CESID. Fornet will later say that a police recording made at this time shows two CESID agents going to el-Azizi’s house. This alerts el-Azizi that he is under surveillance and he flees his home. ([El Mundo \(Madrid\) 4/29/2004](#)) El-Azizi then remains in Spain for some weeks, selling his car to an associate. When his apartment is searched, police find more than a dozen bags with radical Islamic books and videos. They also find videos of bin Laden on his computer and pamphlets from groups like Hamas. ([Johnson et al. 3/19/2004](#); [Johnson and Crawford 4/7/2004](#); [Rotella 4/29/2004](#)) El-Azizi was arrested and released twice before (see [October 10, 2000](#)). He helped plan a meeting for Mohamed Atta just before 9/11 (see [Before July 8, 2001](#) and [July 8-19, 2001](#)), and will go on to be involved in the Madrid train bombings (see [Before March 11, 2004](#) and [March 11, 2004](#)).

November 23, 2001: More Israelis Arrested in Wake of 9/11

The Washington Post reports that “[a]t least 60 young Israeli Jews have been arrested and detained around the country on immigration charges since the September 11 attacks, many of them held on US government officials’ invocation of national security.” An INS official who requested anonymity says the use of the term “special interest” for Israelis being held in Cleveland, St. Louis, and other places means the case in question is “related to the investigation of September 11th.” ([Mintz 11/23/2001](#)) Most of them are deported. However, Intelligence Online claims that “For the overwhelming majority of the ring’s members expelled, there was no problem at all with visas, and in the lists we only found a few minor cases of expired visas.”” ([Agence France-Presse 3/6/2002](#))

November 23, 2001: Report Suggests Hijackers Snuck into Cockpits

The Boston Globe reports information strongly suggesting that at least one hijacker was inside each of the cockpits when the hijackings began. An airplane captain theorizes how they took control: “The most likely scenarios are something that was swift, where the pilots couldn’t have changed their transponder code and called the controllers. You think four times in one morning one of those crews would have done that. That means they had to be upon them before they could react.” On practice flights before 9/11, the hijackers repeatedly obtained access to cockpits by various methods. Perhaps the most important method was jumpseating, which allows certified airline pilots to use a spare seat in the cockpit when none is available in the passenger cabin. Airlines reciprocate to help pilots get home or to the city of their originating flight. Officials say they do not believe any of the hijackers were jumpseating on 9/11 despite media reports to the contrary. However, since 9/11 the FAA has banned the practice unless a pilot works for the airline in whose cockpit that person wants to ride. ([Johnson 11/23/2001](#)) The 9/11 Commission later concludes that the hijackers didn’t use jumpseating because they couldn’t find any paperwork relating to jumpseat requests.

November 25, 2001: US Troops Arrive in Kandahar Amid Talk of a Secret Deal

US troops are set to land near the Taliban stronghold of Kandahar, Afghanistan (see [November 26, 2001](#)). ([Kugler 8/19/2002](#)) Apparently, as the noose tightens around Kandahar, Hamid Karzai, the new leader of Afghanistan, makes a deal with the Taliban. He gives them a general amnesty in return for surrender of the city. Taliban’s leader Mullah Omar is allowed to escape “with dignity” as part of the deal. However, the US says it will not abide by the deal and Karzai then says he will not let Omar go free after all. Taliban forces begin surrendering on December 7. ([Baker 12/8/2001](#)) Omar escapes.

November 25, 2001: Bin Laden Reportedly Gives Last Public Speech to Followers

It is believed bin Laden makes a speech before a crowd of about 1,000 followers in the village of Milawa, Afghanistan. This village is on the route from Tora Bora to the Pakistani border, about eight to ten hours by walking. In his last known public appearance, bin Laden encourages his followers to leave Afghanistan, so they could regroup and fight again. ([Smucker 3/4/2002](#); [Brown 10/20/2002](#)) It is believed he crosses the border into Pakistan a few days later (see [November 28-30, 2001](#); [November 28, 2001](#)).

November 26, 2001: US Marines Land in Kandahar instead of Tora Bora



US Marines landing near Kandahar on December 10, 2001. [Source: *Earnie Grafton / Agence France-Presse*] A force of about 1,200 US marines settles in the countryside around Kandahar, Afghanistan. This will make up nearly the entire US force actually on the ground in the country during the war to remove the Taliban from power. Over the previous week, CIA Deputy Counter Terrorism Center Director Hank Crumpton had been in contact with Gen. Tommy Franks and other military leaders at CENTCOM, arguing that “the back door was open” in Tora Bora and the troops should go there instead. But Franks responded that the momentum of the CIA’s effort to corner bin Laden could be lost waiting for the troops to arrive. ([Suskind 2006, pp. 58](#)) The marines will end up being largely unused in the Kandahar region while bin Laden will escape from Tora Bora.

November 27, 2001: Rumsfeld Tells Franks ‘Look at Options for Iraq’

At the request of President Bush (see [November 21, 2001](#)), Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld telephones Gen. Tommy Franks with instructions to work on war plans for Iraq. “General Franks, the president wants us to look at options for Iraq,” the general will later recall being told. In his memoirs, Franks will write: “‘Son of a bitch,’ I thought. ‘No rest for the weary.’” Franks will brief Bush on the progress of his work a month later (see [December 28, 2001](#)). ([Franks 2004](#); [Cole 5/19/2005](#) Sources: [Thomas Franks](#)) Over the next few months, Bush will ask for and receive increasingly detailed briefings from Franks about the forces that would be needed if the US were to move against Iraq. The need to prepare for an invasion of Iraq, according to insiders interviewed by the Atlantic Monthly, hinders the US effort against bin Laden and the Taliban. ([Fallows 10/2004](#))

November 28, 2001: Bin Laden Family Business Valued at \$36 Billion; Osama’s Share Is Uncertain



Osama bin Laden's father, Mohammed bin Laden, with Faisal al-Saud, the Saudi king in the middle of the 20th century. [Source: CNN] The Financial Times estimates that the bin Laden family's business, the Saudi Binladin Group, is worth about \$36 billion. Osama bin Laden inherited about \$300 million at the age of ten on the death of his father, but he may be worth much more today. While he spends large amounts each month supporting terror, he reportedly gets large amounts from rich Saudis every month to make up for the losses. ([Huband 11/28/2001](#)) The 9/11 Commission later disputes these figures and claims that bin Laden only gets about \$1 million a year for about two decades until around 1994 (see [August 21, 2004](#)). ([9/11 Commission 6/16/2004](#))

November 28, 2001: Bin Laden Reportedly Escapes Tora Bora by Helicopter

A US Special Forces soldier stationed in Fayetteville, North Carolina, later (anonymously) claims that the US has bin Laden pinned in a certain Tora Bora cave on this day, but fails to act. Special Forces soldiers allegedly sit by waiting for orders and watch two helicopters fly into the area where bin Laden is believed to be, load up passengers, and fly toward Pakistan. No other soldiers have come forward to corroborate the story, but bin Laden is widely believed to have been in the Tora Bora area at the time. ([Newton 8/2/2002](#)) Newsweek separately reports that many locals "claim that mysterious black helicopters swept in, flying low over the mountains at night, and scooped up al-Qaeda's top leaders." ([Nordland, Yousafzai, and Dehghanpisheh 8/11/2002](#)) Perhaps coincidentally, on the same day this story is reported, months after the fact, the media also will report a recent spate of strange deaths at the same military base in Fayetteville. Five soldiers and their wives died since June 2002 in apparent murder-suicides. At least three were Special Forces soldiers recently returned from Afghanistan. ([Buncombe 8/2/2002](#)) Other reports indicate that bin Laden crosses the border into Pakistan by foot instead (see [November 28-30, 2001](#)).

November 28-30, 2001: Bin Laden Reportedly Crosses Border to Pakistan

Bin Laden made his last known public appearance on November 25, 2001, giving a speech in the village of Milawa, Afghanistan, near the Pakistan border (see [November 25, 2001](#)). According to later interviews with many locals in the area, it is believed he and four loyalists cross the Pakistan border between November 28 and 30. ([Smucker 2/23/2002](#); [Smucker 3/4/2002](#)) According to another account, bin Laden crosses the border at this time by helicopter instead (see [November 28, 2001](#)). His voice continues to be heard until December 10 on short wave radio transmissions in the Tora Bora enclave he had purportedly left. According to later interviews with loyalists, he calls from Pakistan to Tora Bora to urge his followers to keep fighting. But according to some eyewitness accounts, bin Laden is still in Tora Bora to make the radio transmissions, then leaves with about 30 followers by horseback. ([Smucker 3/4/2002](#); [Nordland, Yousafzai, and Dehghanpisheh 8/11/2002](#))

November 29, 2001: US and Pakistan Return Convicted Drug Warlord to Afghanistan

Ayub Afridi, a well-known Afghan warlord and drug baron, is released from prison in Pakistan and sent to Afghanistan with the apparent approval of both the US and Pakistani governments. Afridi had just begun serving a seven year sentence after being convicted of attempting to smuggle over six tons of hashish into Belgium. The Pakistani government gave no explanation for his release nor pointed to any law allowing the release. The Asia Times claims, "Afridi was a key player in the Afghan war of resistance against the Soviet Union's occupying troops in the decade up to 1989." The CIA lacked the billions of dollars need to fund the Afghan resistance. "As a result, they decided to generate funds through the poppy-rich Afghan soil and heroin production and smuggling to finance the Afghan war. Afridi was the kingpin of this plan. All of the major Afghan warlords, except for the Northern Alliance's Ahmed Shah Massoud, who had his own opium fiefdom in northern Afghanistan, were a part of Afridi's coalition of drug traders in the CIA-sponsored holy war against the Soviets." The Asia Times speculates that Afridi, an ethnic Pashtun, was released to help unify Pashtun warlord support for the new US supported Afghan government. Afridi also served three years in a US prison for drug smuggling in the mid-1990s. ([Shahzad 12/4/2001](#))

Late November 2001: Satellite Phone Ruse Aids Bin Laden's Escape



Abdullah Tabarak. *[Source: Public domain]* As US forces close in on Tora Bora, bin Laden's escape is helped by a simple ruse. A loyal bodyguard named Abdallah Tabarak takes bin Laden's satellite phone and goes in one direction while bin Laden goes in the other. It is correctly assumed that the US can remotely track the location of the phone. Tabarak is eventually captured with the phone while bin Laden apparently escapes. Tabarak is later put in the US-run Guantanamo Bay prison in Cuba. Interrogation of him and others in Tora Bora confirm the account. ([Finn 1/21/2003](#)) This story indicates bin Laden was still at least occasionally using satellite phones long after media reports that the use of such phones could reveal his location (see [February 9-21, 2001](#)). The US will consider Tabarak such a high-value prisoner that at one point he will be the only Guantanamo prisoner that the Red Cross will be denied access to. However, in mid-2004 he will be released and returned to his home country of Morocco, then released by the Moroccan government by the end of the year. Neither the US nor the Moroccan government will offer any explanation for his release. The Washington Post will call the release of the well-known and long-time al-Qaeda operative an unexplained "mystery." ([Whitlock 1/30/2006](#))

Late November, 2001: US Soldiers Permit Massacre of Taliban



A mass grave dug up near Mazar-i-Sharif, Afghanistan. *[Source: Physicians for Human Rights]* Ironically, it appears that even as the US is allowing some Taliban and al-Qaeda to secretly fly out of Kunduz, Afghanistan (see [November 14-25, 2001](#)), it allows a brutal massacre of those who had to stay behind. The Sunday Herald later says, "It seems established, almost beyond doubt, that US soldiers

oversaw and took part in horrific crimes against humanity,” which resulted in the death of thousands of Taliban supporters who surrendered after Kunduz fell to the Northern Alliance. The documentary, *Afghan Massacre: Convoy of Death*, exposes this news widely in Europe, but the massacre remains virtually unreported in the US. ([Mackay 6/16/2002](#))

Late November 2001: CIA Advises Bush and Cheney That Allies Won't Help Trap Bin Laden, but No Action Is Taken



Hank Crumpton. [Source: State Department] According to author Ron Suskind, CIA Deputy Counter Terrorism Center Director Hank Crumpton briefs President Bush and Vice President Cheney about the looming battle in the Tora Bora region of Afghanistan, where about 1,000 al-Qaeda and Taliban are settling in. He points out the region is very mountainous, with many tunnels and escape routes. Bush asks about the passages to Pakistan that the Pakistani government has agreed to block (see [November 2001](#)). Using a map, Crumpton shows “the area on the Pakistani side of the line [is] a lawless, tribal region that [Pakistan has] little control over. In any event, satellite images showed that [Pakistan’s] promised troops hadn’t arrived, and seemed unlikely to appear soon.” Crumpton adds that the Afghan forces in the region allied to the US are “tired and cold and, many of them are far from home.” They were battered from fighting in the south against Taliban forces, and “they’re just not invested in getting bin Laden.” He tells Bush that “we’re going to lose our prey if we’re not careful” and strongly recommends the US marines being sent to Kandahar (see [November 26, 2001](#)) get immediately redirected to Tora Bora instead. Cheney says nothing. Bush presses Crumpton for more information. “How bad off are these Afghani forces, really? Are they up to the job?” Crumpton replies, “Definitely not, Mr. President. Definitely not.” However, the Pentagon is not voicing the same concerns to Bush. The marines are not redirected to seal off the passes. ([Suskind 2006, pp. 58-59](#))

Late November 2001 or December 2001: CIA Devises Covert Plan ‘Anabasis’ to Provide Pretext for Full-Scale War with Iraq

At the request of CIA director George Tenet, veteran CIA agents Luis (his full name has not been disclosed) and John Maguire devise a covert plan to overthrow the government of Saddam Hussein. Under the plan, code-named Anabasis, the CIA would send a team of paramilitary CIA officers to recruit disloyal Iraqi officers by offering them large chunks of cash. The CIA would conduct a disinformation campaign aimed at making Hussein believe that there was growing internal dissent. Hussein would become increasingly paranoid and eventually implement a repressive internal security policy, mostly likely involving the executions of suspected disloyal officers. In addition, the plan calls for “direct action operations” (understood to be a euphemism for the assassinations of key regime officials); disrupting the government’s finances and supply networks; and conducting sabotage operations, such as the blowing up of railroads and communications towers. Finally, the plan includes creating a *casus belli* for an open military confrontation between the US and Iraq. The US would transport a group of exiles to Iraq, where they would take over an Iraqi base close to the Saudi border. When Hussein flies his troops south to handle the insurrection, the US would shoot his aircraft down under the guise of enforcing the US-imposed “no-fly” zone. The confrontation would then be used as a pretext for full-scale war. “The idea was to create an incident in which Saddam lashes out,” Maguire later recalls. If the plan worked the US “would have a premise for war: we’ve been invited in.” Implementing the plan would cost an estimated \$400 million. ([Isikoff and Corn 2006, pp. 6-9, 154](#); [Borger 9/7/2006](#)) The plan will be canceled at the last minute by Gen. Tommy Franks (see [After January 2003](#)).

November 30, 2001: Al-Qaeda Leader Approves of 9/11 Attacks but Denies Al-Qaeda Involvement



Mahfouz Walad Al-Walid. [*Source: Globalsecurity.org*] Al-Qaeda leader Mahfouz Walad Al-Walid (a.k.a. Abu Hafs the Mauritanian) gives the only media interview by any al-Qaeda leader besides bin Laden in the months after the 9/11 attacks. Speaking to an Al Jazeera reporter in Kandahar, Afghanistan, he says, “We are not responsible for [the 9/11 attacks] and therefore we are not responsible for religious explanations for it. That’s on the one hand. However, many clerics have issued clear religious rulings [in this matter]... and have proved that if this act was carried out by mujaheddin Muslims, then it was an unblemished act of jihad.” He also adds, “In the US there are [agencies] legally responsible for safeguarding the security of America and the Americans. It is they who should be held accountable.... Where were these apparatuses when these things occurred? These apparatuses have satellites, ground stations, millions

of spies, and huge budgets. It is said that they know what is happening in the bedrooms, that they know the shoe sizes of the wanted [men]. How did a group of people manage to stay for years, to train inside the US, and to plan this operation?" ([Al Jazeera 11/30/2001](#))

Late 2001: NSA Domestic Wiretapping Ties Up FBI with Bad Leads

The National Security Agency begins sending data—consisting of telephone numbers, e-mail addresses, and names—to the FBI that was obtained through surveillance of international communications originating within the US (see [September 13, 2001](#) and October 2001). The NSA sends so much data, in fact, that hundreds of agents are needed to investigate the thousands of tips per month that the data is generating. However, virtually all of this information leads to dead ends and/or innocent people. FBI officials repeatedly complain that the unfiltered information is bogging down the bureau: according to over a dozen current and former law enforcement and counterterrorism officials, the flood of tips provide them and their colleagues with very few real leads against terrorism suspect. Instead, the NSA data diverts agents from more productive work. Some FBI officials view the NSA data as pointless and likely illegal intrusions on citizens' privacy. Initially, FBI director Robert Mueller asks senior administration officials "whether the program had a proper legal foundation," but eventually defers to Justice Department legal opinions. One former FBI agent will later recall, "We'd chase a number, find it's a schoolteacher with no indication they've ever been involved in international terrorism—case closed. After you get a thousand numbers and not one is turning up anything, you get some frustration." A former senior prosecutor will add, "It affected the FBI in the sense that they had to devote so many resources to tracking every single one of these leads, and, in my experience, they were all dry leads. A trained investigator never would have devoted the resources to take those leads to the next level, but after 9/11, you had to." Former NSA director Bobby Ray Inman says that the problem between the FBI and the NSA may stem in part from their very different approaches. Signals intelligence, the technical term for the NSA's communications intercepts, rarely produces "the complete information you're going to get from a document or a witness" in a traditional FBI investigation, he says. And many FBI officials are uncomfortable with the NSA's domestic operations, since by law the NSA is precluded from operating inside US borders except under very specific circumstances. ([Bergman et al. 1/17/2006](#))

Late 2001: KSM Sheltered by Royal Family Members in Qatar

The New York Times will later report that Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM) hides in Qatar for two weeks with the support of some members of the Qatari royal family. KSM stays there "with the help of prominent patrons" after fleeing from Kuwait. One of the Qatari royals sheltering KSM is possibly Abdul Karim al-Thani, who has repeatedly sheltered Islamist militant leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and given passports and more than \$1 million to al-Qaeda. It is also possible that KSM may have received help from

Abdallah bin Khalid al-Thani, who is Qatar's Interior Minister by this time and who allowed KSM live on his farm for several years until 1996 (see [January-May 1996](#)). CIA Director George Tenet is reportedly infuriated, but no action is taken. In fact, the US military will base its headquarters for the Iraq war in Qatar (see [March 28, 2003](#)). ([Tyler 2/6/2003](#))

Late 2001: Israeli Government Reportedly Privately Admits to Running Spy Operation in US Before 9/11

The Forward, a popular Jewish weekly in the US, will later report that at the end of 2001, the Israeli government admits to having conducted a large-scale spying operation in the US before 9/11, using art students and moving vans as cover stories. The Forward quotes an anonymous former US official said to have been regularly briefed about the US investigation into Israeli spying: "The assessment was that Urban Moving Systems was a front for the Mossad and operatives employed by it. The conclusion of the FBI was that they were spying on local Arabs but that they could [be deported] because they did not know anything about 9/11." He further claims that US officials confront the Israeli government at this time and Israel privately admits the operation while continuing to publicly deny it. Israel privately apologizes for violating a secret gentlemen's agreement between the two countries under which espionage on each other's soil is coordinated in advance. The Forward notes, "Most experts and former officials interviewed for this article said that such so-called unilateral or uncoordinated Israeli monitoring of radical Muslims in America would not be surprising." ([Perelman 3/15/2002](#)) In 2007, Mark Perelman, the author of the 2002 Forward story that made these claims, will say he still stands by his story and his sources in the Mossad don't deny it. CounterPunch also will claim to independently confirm Israel's admission through two former CIA officers. ([Ketcham 2/7/2007](#))

Late 2001: German Intelligence Reportedly Prevents Arrest of Alleged Al-Qaeda-CIA Double Agent with 9/11 Foreknowledge

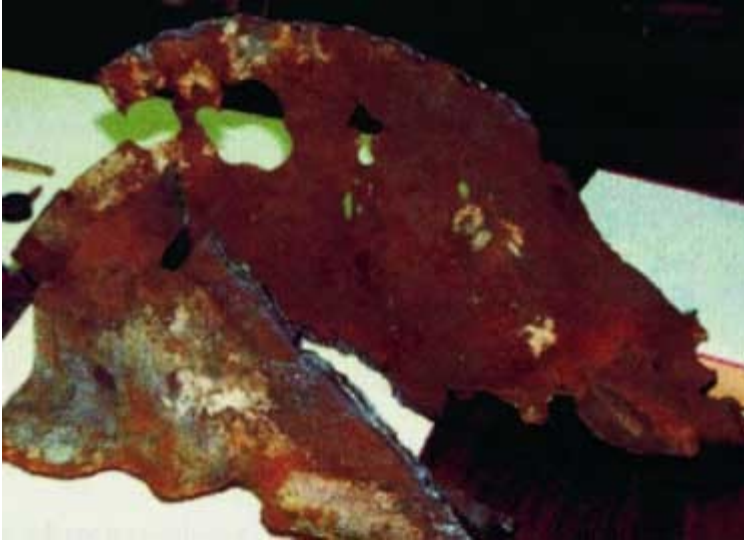
Al-Qaeda operative Luai Sakra apparently goes into hiding in the region of Stuttgart, Germany, after 9/11. He reportedly gave details of the 9/11 attacks to the Syrian government shortly before 9/11 (see [September 10, 2001](#)). The Syrians then passed this on to the CIA shortly after 9/11. According to Der Spiegel, while Sakra's name was not made public, "For the Mossad and the CIA he [soon] became one of the most wanted men in the world." ([Cziesche, Dahlkamp, and Stark 8/15/2005](#)) In late 2005, after Sakra's arrest in Turkey (see [July 30, 2005](#)), the German television news show Panorama will report that the German BKA (Federal Office of Criminal Investigation) suspects the German BND (Federal Intelligence Service) to have helped Sakra escape from Germany in late 2001. Supposedly, German police had learned where he was staying in Germany, but the BND enabled him to escape via France to Syria in order to prevent further investigations about him. Panorama will report that Sakra was secretly still working for

Syrian intelligence and was giving them information about al-Qaeda's leadership. Sakra will go on to mastermind a series of suicide bombings in Istanbul, Turkey, in 2003 (see [November 15-20, 2003](#)) before being arrested in 2005 (see [July 30, 2005](#)). ([Agence France-Presse 10/27/2005](#)) The Bundestag [lower chamber of the German parliament] Parliamentary Control Body will meet in November 2005 to discuss the allegations, but the session is held in secret and what is said exactly will not be not publicly revealed. ([BBC 11/9/2005](#)) The Bundestag will later issue a short statement clearing the BND of any wrongdoing in the case. ([Deutscher Bundestag 11/30/2005](#)) But in 2007, a book by former CIA Director George Tenet will indicate that not only did Sakra have some foreknowledge of the 9/11 attacks, but he was an informant for the CIA and Syrian intelligence before 9/11 as well (see [September 10, 2001](#)). Other evidence suggests Sakra was also an informant for Turkish intelligence before 9/11 (see [Early August 2001](#)). If he was an informant for any of these countries, it would explain why the BND might have wanted to protect him from arrest and investigation.

Late 2001-Mid-March 2002: CIA Looks to Brutal Torture Techniques of Egyptians, Saudis, and Soviets in Setting Up Its Interrogation Program

On September 17, 2001, President Bush gave the CIA broad powers to interrogate prisoners (see [September 17, 2001](#)), but the CIA does not have many officers trained in interrogation. As a result, in late 2001 and early 2002, while the CIA waits for high-ranking al-Qaeda leaders to be captured, senior CIA officials begin investigating which interrogation procedures to use. ([Johnston 9/10/2006](#)) The CIA "construct[s] its program in a few harried months by consulting Egyptian and Saudi intelligence officials and copying Soviet interrogation methods long used in training American servicemen to withstand capture." ([Shane, Johnston, and Risen 10/4/2007](#)) Both Egypt and Saudi Arabia are notorious for their brutal and widespread use of torture. The Soviet interrogation techniques mentioned were designed not to get valuable intelligence, but to generate propaganda by getting captured US soldiers to make statements denouncing the US. The CIA hires two psychologists willing to use the techniques, James Elmer Mitchell and Bruce Jessen, even though the two have never conducted any real world interrogations and there is no evidence at the time (or later) that the Soviet torture techniques are effective in obtaining valuable intelligence and not just false confessions (see [Mid-April 2002](#)). ([Johnston 9/10/2006](#); [Shane, Johnston, and Risen 10/4/2007](#)) In mid-March 2002, the CIA will draw up a list of ten permissible aggressive interrogation techniques based on the advice from these governments and psychologists (see [Mid-March 2002](#)).

December 2001: Scientific Journal Describes 'Eutectic Mixture' in WTC Steel



A sample of WTC steel eroded and corroded due to eutectic formations. [Source: FEMA] The Journal of the Minerals, Metals and Materials Society (JOM) reports that the examination of a beam from the remains of WTC Building 7—which collapsed late in the afternoon of 9/11 (see [\(5:20 p.m.\) September 11, 2001](#))—has revealed “unexpected erosion” of the steel. The article states: “The formation of the eutectic mixture of iron oxide and iron sulfide lowers the temperature at which liquid can form in this steel. This strongly suggests that the temperatures in this region of the steel beam approached around 1,000°C, forming the eutectic liquid by a process similar to making a ‘blacksmith’s weld’ in a hand forge.” ([Barnett, Biederman, and Sisson 12/2001](#)) The New York Times will call this “perhaps the deepest mystery uncovered in the investigation.” ([Glanz and Lipton 2/2/2002](#)) FEMA’s World Trade Center Building Performance Study, released in May 2002 (see [May 1, 2002](#)), will add that the same “unusual erosion patterns” have been observed in a sample of the remaining structural steel from one of the Twin Towers. It will state, “This sulfur-rich liquid penetrated preferentially down grain boundaries of the steel, severely weakening the beam and making it susceptible to erosion.” FEMA is unable to explain this phenomenon, saying, “The severe corrosion and subsequent erosion... are a very unusual event. No clear explanation for the source of the sulfur has been identified.... It is possible that this is the result of long-term heating in the ground following the collapse of the buildings. It is also possible that the phenomenon started prior to collapse and accelerated the weakening of the steel structure.” ([Federal Emergency Management Agency 5/1/2002, pp. C-1 - C-13](#)) Despite FEMA’s call for further research, the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) will make no mention of the eutectic formations in its final report into the WTC collapses, released in late 2005, following its three-year investigation. ([National Institute of Standards and Technology 9/2005, pp. 13](#))

December 2001: US Citizen Captured in Afghanistan, Declared to Be ‘Enemy Combatant’



Yaser Esam Hamdi in Afghanistan shortly after being captured there. [Source: *Virginian Pilot*] Yaser Esam Hamdi, who holds dual Saudi and US citizenship, is captured in Afghanistan by the Northern Alliance and handed over to US forces. According to the US government, at the time of his arrest, Hamdi carries a Kalashnikov assault rifle and is traveling with a Taliban military unit. The following month he will be transferred to Guantanamo. In April 2002, it will be discovered he is a US citizen. He will be officially be declared an “enemy combatant” and transferred to a Navy brig in Norfolk, Virginia (see [April 2002](#)). ([CNN 10/14/2004](#))

Late 2001-Early 2002: Rumsfeld Creates Ultra-Secret Program to Kill, Capture, and/or Interrogate ‘High Value’ Terrorists

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld authorizes the creation of a “special-access program,” or SAP, with “blanket advance approval to kill or capture and, if possible, interrogate ‘high value’ targets in the Bush administration’s war on terror.” The operation, known as “Copper Green,” is approved by Condoleezza Rice and known to President Bush. A SAP is an ultra secret project, the contents of which are known by very few officials. “We’re not going to read more people than necessary into our heart of darkness,” a former senior intelligence official tells investigative reporter Seymour Hersh. The SAP is brought up occasionally within the National Security Council (NSC), chaired by the president and members of which are Rumsfeld, Cheney, and Powell. The former intelligence official tells Hersh, “There was a periodic briefing to the National Security Council giving updates on results, but not on the methods.” He also says he believes NSC members know about the process by which these results are acquired. This official claims that fewer than two hundred operatives and officials, including Rumsfeld and Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Gen. Richard Myers were “completely read into the program.” Under-Secretary of Defense for Intelligence Stephen Cambone is generally in charge of running such operations. Motive for the SAP comes from an initial freeze in the results obtained by US agents from their hunt for al-Qaeda. Friendly foreign intelligence services on the other hand, from countries in the Middle East and South-East Asia, which employ more aggressive tactics on prisoners, are giving up much better information by the end of 2001. By authorizing the SAP, Rumsfeld, according to Hersh, desires to adopt these tactics and thus increase intelligence results. “Rumsfeld’s goal was to get a capability in place to take on a high-value target—a stand-up group to hit quickly,” the

former intelligence official tells Hersh. The program's operatives were recruited from among Delta Force, Navy Seals, and CIA's paramilitary experts. They are permitted to carry out "instant interrogations—using force if necessary—at secret CIA detention centers scattered around the world." Information obtained through the program is sent to the Pentagon in real-time. The former intelligence official tells Hersh: "The rules are 'Grab whom you must. Do what you want.'" The operation, according to Seymour Hersh, "encouraged physical coercion and sexual humiliation." ([Hersh 5/24/2004](#); [Hersh 9/13/2004](#)) Both the Defense Department and CIA deny the existence of Copper Green. One Pentagon spokesman says of Hersh's article about it, "This is the most hysterical piece of journalist malpractice I have ever observed." ([CNN 5/17/2004](#))

December 2001: Possible '20th Hijacker' Captured, Given to US

Saudi national Mohamed al-Khatani is captured at the Pakistani-Afghan border and transferred to US authorities. ([Washington File 6/23/2004](#)) His identity and nationality are at this time unknown. However, investigators will later come to believe he was an intended twentieth hijacker for the 9/11 plot (see [July 2002](#)).

December 2001: CIA Realizes Prague Visit Was Not Made by Hijacker Atta

The CIA realizes that a reported visit by Mohamed Atta to Prague, Czech Republic, was actually made by a Pakistani businessman with a similar name (see [May 31, 2000](#)), not by the 9/11 hijacker. Hijacker Atta's alleged Prague visit was used to bolster the theory that he met an Iraqi intelligence agent there in April 2001 (see [September 14, 2001](#)), and that Iraq was connected to 9/11. The Pakistani arrived on May 31, 2000 and was deported, as he did not have a Czech visa. Hijacker Atta arrived two days later on his way to the US on a Czech visa that came into effect on June 1. Shortly after 9/11, it was thought that Atta's business in Prague in May 2000 was so urgent that he had to fly into the airport and be deported one day before his visa came into effect (note: the theory was that he must have met someone at the airport while waiting for his deportation flight). However, investigation by the CIA, Czech and German authorities finds that the May 30 entry was made by a namesake, not the hijacker. ([Crewdson 8/29/2004](#))

December 2001: Zammar Taken to Syria for Torture and Interrogation

With help from the US, Mohammed Haydar Zammar, a German and Syrian citizen suspected of being a top al-Qaeda member, is taken in secret to Syria. He had been arrested while visiting Morocco (see [October 27-November 2001](#)). When the German government learns of the arrest and transfer, it strongly protests the move. After his arrival in Syria, according to a former fellow prisoner, Zammar is tortured in the Far'

Falastin, or “Palestine Branch,” detention center in Damascus. ([Rennie and Helm 6/20/2002](#); [Priest and Gellman 12/26/2002](#); [Human Rights Watch 6/2004](#)) The center is run by military intelligence and reportedly is a place “where many prisoners remain held incommunicado.” ([Finn 1/31/2003](#)) His Syrian interrogators are reportedly provided with questions from their US counterparts. ([Human Rights Watch 6/2004](#)) This is alleged by Murhaf Jouejati, Adjunct Professor at George Washington University, who tells the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States that, “Although US officials have not been able to interrogate Zammar, Americans have submitted questions to the Syrians.” ([911 Commission 7/9/2003](#)) In the “Palestine Branch” prison, Zammar is locked up in cell number thirteen. According to Amnesty International, the cell measures 185 cm long, 90 cm wide and less than two meters high. Zammar is said to be about six feet tall and now “skeletal” in appearance. ([Amnesty International 10/8/2004](#))

December 2001-Mid-2002: Al-Zarqawi Moves Operations to Northern Iraq but Has No Ties to Hussein’s Government

Jordanian Islamist militant Abu Musab al-Zarqawi flees Afghanistan (see [Early 2000-December 2001](#)) and heads to Iran where he continues to run his militant group, al-Tawhid. He uses telephones and a network of couriers to maintain contact with operatives in Europe. By April 2002, he still is based in Iran and has little to no ties to Iraq. But some time in mid-2002, he unites with Ansar al-Islam, an Islamist group based in a part of northern Iraq controlled by Kurdish rebels and opposed to Saddam Hussein (see [Mid-2002](#)). He reportedly moves his base of operations there and establishes an explosive training center camp there as well. ([Buncombe and Milmo 2/6/2003](#); [Isikoff 6/25/2003](#)) In an effort to justify military action against Iraq, the Bush administration will later claim that Saddam Hussein is aware of al-Zarqawi’s presence in Baghdad and therefore is guilty of knowingly harboring a terrorist (see [September 26, 2002](#)). The administration will also allege—falsely—that al-Zarqawi is a senior al-Qaeda agent and that his visit is evidence that Saddam’s regime has ties to Osama bin Laden. ([Borger 10/9/2002](#); [Buncombe and Milmo 2/6/2003](#); [Isikoff 6/25/2003](#) Sources: [Shadi Abdallah](#)) But the administration never offers any conclusive evidence to support this allegation. The claim is disputed by intelligence analysts in both Washington and London. ([Smith and Rennie 2/4/2003](#))

December 2001 and After: Drug Kingpin Let Go by US; Then Rebuilds Drug Network for Taliban and Al-Qaeda

Afghan drug kingpin Haji Juma Khan (see [July 2000](#)) is arrested and taken into US custody. Although his role in the illegal drug trade is known to US officials, he is let go. A European counterterrorism expert says, “At the time, the Americans were only interested in catching bin Laden and Mullah Omar.” Another major kingpin is arrested and released around this time as well (see [Late 2001](#)). After being released, Khan reestablishes a smuggling network that greatly benefits the Taliban and al-Qaeda. For instance, in May

2004, a tip off will reveal that Khan is employing a fleet of cargo ships to move Afghan heroin out of Pakistan to the Middle East. Some return trips bring back plastic explosives, antitank mines, and other weapons to be used against US troops in Afghanistan. In 2004, Assistant Secretary of State Bobby Charles says of Khan, “He’s obviously very tightly tied to the Taliban.... There are central linkages among Khan, Mullah Omar, and bin Laden.” ([McGirk 8/2/2004](#)) In 2006, a report by the research arm of Congress will label Khan as one of three prominent drug kingpins with ties to the Taliban and al-Qaeda, but he apparently has not yet been put on the official US list of wanted drug figures. ([Blanchard 1/25/2006](#))

Early December 2001: Bush Officials Again Look for Saudi Cooperation

Bush administration officials go to Saudi Arabia in a second attempt to obtain Saudi government cooperation in the 9/11 investigation. The Saudis have balked at freezing assets of organizations linked to bin Laden. Shortly thereafter, the Boston Herald runs a series of articles on the Saudis, citing an expert who says, “If there weren’t all these other arrangements—arms deals and oil deals and consultancies—I don’t think the US would stand for this lack of cooperation.” Another expert states that “it’s good old fashioned ‘I’ll scratch your back, you scratch mine.’ You have former US officials, former presidents, aides to the current president, a long line of people who are tight with the Saudis.... We are willing to basically ignore inconvenient truths that might otherwise cause our blood to boil.” These deals are worth an incredible amount of money; one Washington Post reporter claims that prior to 1993, US companies spent \$200 billion on Saudi Arabia’s defenses alone. ([PBS 2/16/1993](#); [Wells, Meyers, and Mulvihill 12/10/2001](#); [Mulvihill, Meyers, and Wells 12/11/2001](#))

Early December 2001: Al-Qaeda ‘Puppet Master’ Disappears in Britain



Abu Qatada. [*Source: Public domain*] Al-Qaeda religious leader Abu Qatada disappears, despite being under surveillance in Britain. He has been

“described by some justice officials as the spiritual leader and possible puppet master of al-Qaeda’s European networks.” ([Crumley 7/7/2002](#)) Qatada had already been sentenced to death in absentia in Jordan, and is wanted at the time by the US, Spain, France, and Algeria as well. ([Gillan et al. 2/14/2002](#)) In October 2001, the media had strongly suggested that Qatada would soon be arrested for his known roles in al-Qaeda plots, but no such arrest occurred. ([Leppard and Rufford 10/21/2001](#)) In November, while Qatada was still living openly in Britain, a Spanish judge expressed disbelief that Qatada hadn’t been arrested already, as he has previously been connected to a Spanish al-Qaeda cell that may have met with Mohamed Atta in July 2001. ([Harris 11/25/2001](#)) Time magazine will later claim that just before new anti-terrorism laws go into effect in Britain, Abu Qatada and his family are secretly moved to a safe house by the British government, where he is lodged, fed, and clothed by the government. “The deal is that Abu Qatada is deprived of contact with extremists in London and Europe but can’t be arrested or expelled because no one officially knows where he is,” says a source, whose claims were corroborated by French authorities. The British reportedly do this to avoid a “hot potato” trial. ([Crumley 7/7/2002](#)) A British official rejects these assertions: “We wouldn’t give an awful lot of credence [to the story].” ([Dodd 7/8/2002](#)) Some French officials tell the press that Qatada was allowed to disappear because he is actually a British intelligence agent. ([Burke 2/24/2002](#)) It appears that Qatada held secret meetings with British intelligence in 1996 and 1997, and the British were under the impression that he was informing on al-Qaeda (though there is disagreement if he was misleading them or not) (see [June 1996-February 1997](#)). Qatada is later arrested in London on October 23, 2002, but has yet to be put on trial or deported. ([McGrory, Ford, and Evans 10/25/2002](#))

Early December 2001: CIA Again Warns Bush ‘Back Door Is Open’ for Bin Laden to Escape Tora Bora

According to author Ron Suskind, the CIA continues to press President Bush to send US troops to surround the caves in Tora Bora where bin Laden is believed to be hiding. It is about a 15 square-mile area. The CIA issued similar warnings a few weeks earlier (see [Late November 2001](#)). Suskind relates: “A fierce debate was raging inside the upper reaches of the US government. The White House had received a guarantee from [Pakistani President Pervez] Musharraf in November that the Pakistani army would cover the southern pass from the caves (see [November 2001](#)). Bush, Cheney, and Rumsfeld felt the Pakistani leader’s assurance was sound. Classified CIA reports passed to Bush in his morning briefings of early December, however, warned that ‘the back door is open’ and that a bare few Pakistani army units were visible gathering near the Pakistani border.... Musharraf, when pressed by the White House, said troop movements were slow, but not to worry-they were on their way.” ([Suskind 2006, pp. 74](#)) But again, no US troops are sent, and Pakistani troops fail to arrive in time. Bin Laden eventually will escape into Pakistan (see [Mid-December 2001](#)).

Early December 2001: More Journalists than US Troops at Tora Bora



Groups of reporters watch US bombing in the Tora Bora region. [Source: CNN] Only about three dozen US soldiers take part in the Tora Bora ground offensive (see [December 5-17, 2001](#)). Author Peter Bergen will later comment, “If Fox and CNN could arrange for their crews to cover Tora Bora it is puzzling that the US military could not put more boots on the ground to find the man who was the intellectual author of the 9/11 attacks. Sadly, there were probably more American journalists at the battle of Tora Bora than there were US troops.” ([Bergen 10/28/2004](#))

Early December 2001: FBI Wiretaps Reveal that Turkish Groups Attempted to Bribe Congress Persons in Late 1990s

Chicago FBI special agent Joel Robertz contacts FBI contract linguist Sibel Edmonds and asks her to review more than 40 wiretaps, some of which are several years old. The wiretaps include what Sibel believes are references to large scale drug shipments and other crimes. The targets of these recordings are individuals at Chicago’s Turkish Consulate and the American-Turkish Consulate, as well as members of the American-Turkish Council and the Assembly of Turkish American Associations. She also finds evidence of attempts to bribe members of Congress, both Republican and Democrat, during the late 1990s (see [Late 1990s-Early 2001](#)). ([Deliso 8/15/2005](#); [Rose 9/2005](#))

December 2, 2001: Enron Files for Bankruptcy



Enron’s logo. [Source: Enron] Enron files for Chapter 11 bankruptcy—the biggest bankruptcy in history up to that date. ([Curwen 1/10/2002](#)) However, in 2002

Enron will reorganize as a pipeline company and will continue working on its controversial Dabhol power plant. ([Houston Business Journal 3/15/2002](#))

December 2, 2001: FBI Translator Sibel Edmonds Invited by Co-Worker to Become Member of Group that Is Under Federal Investigation

FBI translator Sibel Edmonds receives a call from co-worker Melek Can Dickerson, whom she barely knows. Dickerson says she and her husband Douglas Dickerson are in the area and would like to stop by for a visit. ([Rose 9/2005](#)) Douglas is a US Air Force major who procures weapons from the US for various Central Asian and Middle Eastern governments. ([Deliso 8/15/2005](#)) "I'm in the area with my husband and I'd love you to meet him. Is it OK if we come by?" Edmonds recalls Dickerson saying. When the couple arrives, Douglas Dickerson encourages Edmonds and her husband Matthew Edmonds to join the American-Turkish Council (ATC) and the Assembly of Turkish American Associations (ATAA). Joining the organizations would get them tied in with a network of high-level people, including officials at the Turkish Embassy. When Sibel's husband Michael suggests that there are probably strict eligibility requirements for becoming a member of this organization, Douglas says to Sibel, "All you have to do is tell them who you work for and what you do and you will get in very quickly." Sibel attempts to steer the conversation toward another topic. As part of her job at the FBI, some of the wiretapped conversations she translates involve the very same people the Dickersons are describing as "high-level friends." She is concerned that the ultimate goal of the Dickersons' offer is to get Sibel involved in espionage and to help shield those groups from FBI surveillance. ([Grimaldi 6/19/2002](#); [CBS News 10/25/2002](#); [Sheehy 1/22/2004](#); [Rose 9/2005](#)) "They wanted to sell me for the information I could provide," she later explains in an interview. They promised her she would receive enough to "live a very comfortable life wherever we wanted. We would never have to work again." ([Edmonds 7/1/2004](#))

December 3-14, 2001: Bush Administration Officials Tip Off Reporters About Raids on Suspect Charities

On December 3, 2001, New York Times reporter Judith Miller telephones officials with the Holy Land Foundation charity in Texas and asks them to comment about what she says is a government raid on the charity planned for the next day. Then in a December 4, 2001, New York Times article, Miller writes that President Bush is about to announce that the US is freezing the assets of Holy Land and two other financial groups, all for supporting Hamas. US officials will later argue that Miller's phone call and article "increased the likelihood that the foundation destroyed or hid records before a hastily organized raid by agents that day." Later in the month, a similar incident occurs. On December 13, New York Times reporter Philip Shenon telephones officials at the Global Relief Foundation in Illinois and asks them to comment about an imminent government crackdown on that charity. The FBI learns that some Global Relief employees may be

destroying documents. US attorney Patrick Fitzgerald had been investigating the charities. He had been wiretapping Global Relief and another charity in hopes of learning evidence of criminal activity, but after the leak he changes plans and carries out a hastily arranged raid on the charity the next day (see [December 14, 2001](#)). Fitzgerald later seeks records from the New York Times to find out who in the Bush administration leaked information about the upcoming raids to Miller and Shenon. However, in 2005 Fitzgerald will lose the case. It is still not known who leaked the information to the New York Times nor what their motives were. Ironically, Fitzgerald will succeed in forcing Miller to reveal information about her sources in another extremely similar legal case in 2005 involving the leaking of the name of CIA agent Valerie Plame. ([Miller 12/4/2001](#); [Shenon 12/15/2001](#); [Schmidt 9/10/2004](#); [Mintz 2/25/2005](#)) The 9/11 Commission will later conclude that in addition to the above cases, “press leaks plagued almost every [raid on Muslim charities] that took place in the United States” after 9/11. ([Schmidt 9/10/2004](#))

December 4, 2001: Holy Land Foundation Shut Down

The Holy Land Foundation is shut down and its assets are seized. Holy Land claimed to be the largest Muslim charity in the US. It claimed to raise millions for Palestinian refugees and denied any support for terrorism. In justifying the move, the US government presents evidence of ties between the Holy Land and Hamas. Much of this evidence dates back to 1993; the Associated Press titles a story on the closure, “Money Freeze A Long Time Coming.” ([Associated Press 12/5/2001](#)) Holy Land offices in San Diego, California; Paterson, New Jersey; and Bridgeview, Illinois, are also raided. ([CNN 12/4/2001](#)) The indictment says Holy Land has been “deeply involved with a network of Muslim Brotherhood organizations dedicated to furthering the Islamic fundamentalist agenda espoused by Hamas.” ([Mintz and Fatah 9/11/2004](#)) Holy Land is represented by the powerful law firm of Akin, Gump, Strauss, Hauer & Feld. Three partners at Akin, Gump are very close to President Bush: George Salem chaired Bush’s 2000 campaign outreach to Arab-Americans; Barnett “Sandy” Kress was appointed by Bush as an “unpaid consultant” on education reform and has an office in the White House; and James Langdon is one of Bush’s closest Texas friends. ([Mulvihill, Wells, and Meyers 12/11/2001](#); [Baker and Khan 12/17/2001](#)) The leaders of Holy Land will be charged with a variety of crimes in 2002 and 2004 (see [December 18, 2002-April 2005](#)).

December 4, 2001: FBI Translator Informs Supervisor that Co-Worker Is Shielding Targets of Investigation from Surveillance

FBI contract linguist Sibel Edmonds informs supervisor Mike Feghali—first orally and later in writing—about her recent encounter with the Dickersons on September 2 (see [December 2, 2001](#)) and describes their self-acknowledged links to the American-Turkish Council (ATC), the Assembly of Turkish American Associations (ATAA), and certain high-level Turkish Embassy officials, all of which are targets of FBI wiretaps. Edmonds also alleges, either on this day or some time afterwards, that Dickerson has also leaked

information to people under investigation and that she has even tried to stop Edmonds and another translator from listening to their wiretapped conversations. ([Petition for a writ of certiorari. Sibel Edmonds v. Department of Justice, et al. 8/4/2005, pp. 2](#); [Strohm 8/8/2005](#); [Rose 9/2005](#)) Feghali tells her not to worry and that he will immediately file a report with the security department. ([Edmonds 7/1/2004](#); [Rose 9/2005](#)) (The security department later tells Edmonds they received no such report ([Edmonds 7/1/2004](#); [Kornblut 7/5/2004](#)).) He then changes the subject. “Now, Sibel, I understand you’ve been taking on a lot of coursework at your university. Why not take advantage of our workplace opportunities?” he asks. When she asks what he means, he explains that she could come to the office on Saturday and Sunday to do her school work on the clock, adding another \$700 or so to her weekly earnings. On another occasion, one of her supervisors (possibly Feghali) offers to make her next trip to Turkey “TDY” (paid travel). All she would have to do is “stop off in some liaison office in Ankara a couple times, make my little appearance, and suddenly all my flights, hotels and expenses would be paid for by the FBI,” she recalls in a 2004 interview. “I couldn’t believe what I was hearing.” ([Edmonds 7/1/2004](#))

December 5, 2001: Head of US Marines Not Allowed to Send His Troops to Tora Bora



Brig. Gen. James N. Mattis. [*Source: US Navy*] About 4,000 US marines have arrived in Afghanistan by now. Brig. Gen. James N. Mattis, the commander of these troops, is convinced his forces can seal the Tora Bora area to trap bin Laden there. Around this date, Mattis argues strongly to his military superiors at Centcom that his troops should fight at Tora Bora, but he is turned down. The New York Times will later report that the Bush administration will eventually secretly conclude “that the refusal of Centcom to dispatch the marines—along with their failure to commit US ground forces to Afghanistan generally—was the gravest error of the war.” ([Weaver 9/11/2005](#))

December 5-17, 2001: Ground Battle for Tora Bora Rages but Is Later Called ‘Grand Charade’



US Special Forces unloading equipment in the Tora Bora region. [*Source: Banded Artists Productions*] (click image to enlarge) Around December 5, 2001, about three-dozen US special forces position themselves at strategic spots in the Tora Bora region to observe the fighting. Using hand-held laser target designators, they “paint” targets to bomb. Immediately the US bombing becomes more accurate. With this improved system in place, the ground battle for Tora Bora begins in earnest. However, as the Christian Science Monitor later notes, “The battle was joined, but anything approaching a ‘siege’ of Tora Bora never materialized.” No other US troops take part, and US-allied afghans fight unenthusiastically and sometimes even fight for the other side (see [Mid-November 2001-Mid-December 2001](#)). ([Smucker 3/4/2002](#)) The Tora Bora battle will end with a victory for the US-allied forces by December 17, 2001 (see [December 17, 2001](#)). However, the Daily Telegraph will later report, “In retrospect, and with the benefit of dozens of accounts from the participants, the battle for Tora Bora looks more like a grand charade.” Eyewitnesses express shock that the US pinned in Taliban and al-Qaeda forces, thought to contain many high leaders, on three sides only, leaving the route to Pakistan open. An intelligence chief in Afghanistan’s new government says, “The border with Pakistan was the key, but no one paid any attention to it. In addition, there were plenty of landing areas for helicopters had the Americans acted decisively. Al-Qaeda escaped right out from under their feet.” ([Smucker 2/23/2002](#))

[December 6, 2001: Ashcroft Prohibits FBI from Checking Gun Purchase Records of 9/11 Suspects](#)

It is reported that in the wake of 9/11, Attorney General John Ashcroft has prevented the FBI from investigating gun-purchase records to discover if any of the hundreds arrested or suspected since 9/11 had bought any guns. The White House supports him, saying they have no intention of changing the law to clarify the FBI’s ability to search gun-purchase records. ([CNN 12/6/2001](#); [Butterfield 12/6/2001](#)) A spokesman for The International Association of Chiefs of Police, the largest group of law enforcement executives in the

US, says, “This is absurd and unconscionable. The decision has no rational basis in public safety. It sounds to me like it was made for narrow political reasons based on a right-to-bear-arms mentality.” ([Butterfield 12/6/2001](#)) There were reports that the 9/11 hijackers on at least Flight 11 and Flight 93 used guns in the hijacking (see [\(8:20 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#) and [\(9:27 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)).

December 7, 2001: Indian Police Shoot Gangster Dead

Indian gangster Asif Raza Khan, an associate of Saeed Sheikh and Aftab Ansari, is shot dead by Indian police. Police claim he was trying to escape. ([Watson 1/23/2002](#)) A month or two before his death, Indian investigators recorded a confession of his involvement in a plot with Ansari and Saeed to send kidnapping profits to hijacker Mohamed Atta. This information becomes public just before Saeed is suspected in the kidnapping and murder of reporter Daniel Pearl. ([Popham 1/24/2002](#); [India Today 2/25/2002](#)) Many in Ansari’s Indian criminal network are arrested in October and November 2001, and they confirm Khan’s money connection to Atta. ([Mitra, Chakravarty, and Ghosh 2/14/2002](#))

December 8, 2001: US Oil Companies to Invest \$200 Billion in Kazakhstan

During a visit to Kazakhstan in Central Asia, Secretary of State Powell states that US oil companies are likely to invest \$200 billion in Kazakhstan alone in the next five to ten years. ([Banerjee and Tavernise 12/15/2001](#))

December 10, 2001: Pakistani Troops Start to Guard Tora Bora Border but Then Withdraw

In November 2001, Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf promised to seal off the Pakistani side of the border near the Tora Bora region of Afghanistan in return for considerable US economic aid (see [November 2001](#)). But Musharraf spends two weeks negotiating with tribal chieftains on the border before starting the deployment. Around December 10, two brigades begin to take up positions along the border. ([Smucker 3/4/2002](#); [Nordland, Yousafzai, and Dehghanpisheh 8/11/2002](#)) On December 11, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld says of this border region, “It’s a long border. It’s a very complicated area to try to seal, and there’s just simply no way you can put a perfect cork in the bottle.” ([Smucker 3/4/2002](#)) But armed gunmen storm the Indian Parliament on December 13, and a group based in Pakistan and allied with al-Qaeda is blamed (see [December 13, 2001](#)). Tensions suddenly rise between India and Pakistan, and Musharraf halts troop deployments to the Afghan border. The border near Tora Bora still is not adequately guarded by Pakistan when the Tora Bora battle ends on December 17. Less than 100 stragglers entering Pakistan around December 19 are captured by Pakistani forces, but a number of these subsequently escape. ([Nordland, Yousafzai, and Dehghanpisheh 8/11/2002](#))

December 11, 2001: Moussaoui Indicted, Could Face Death Penalty

Zacarias Moussaoui is criminally indicted for his role in the 9/11 attacks. If he is found guilty, he could be sentenced to death. ([MSNBC 12/11/2001](#); [Associated Press 12/12/2001](#)) Moussaoui has admitted to being a member of al-Qaeda, but while he has been involved in militant activity, many have expressed doubts that he was involved in the 9/11 plot.

December 12, 2001: Dubious Cease-Fire Gives Al-Qaeda Chance to Escape Tora Bora



Haji Zaman Ghamsharik speaking to reporters on December 16, 2001. [*Source: Chris Hondros / Getty Images*] US-allied warlord Haji Zaman Ghamsharik makes radio contact with some al-Qaeda commanders in Tora Bora and offers a cease-fire so bin Laden can negotiate a surrender. The other US-allied warlord, Hazrat Ali, is also in secret talks with al-Qaeda and acquiesces to the deal. The US military is reportedly furious, but the fighting stops for the night. US intelligence later concludes that about 800 al-Qaeda fighters escape Tora Bora that night during the cease fire. ([Weaver 9/11/2005](#)) Other rival Afghan commanders in the area later accuse Ghamsharik of accepting a large bribe from al-Qaeda so they can use the cease fire to escape. ([Burns 9/30/2002](#)) There are other accounts that the US-allied warlords helped instead of hindered al-Qaeda (see [Mid-November 2001-Mid-December 2001](#)).

December 12, 2001: Ridge Says Terrorist Attacks ‘Could Happen Within the Next Few Weeks’

Tom Ridge, Director of Homeland Security, warns that terrorist strikes “could happen within the next few weeks.” Ridge states that “the quantity and level of threats... have reached a threshold where we should once again place the public on general alert.” He describes the terrorists as “shadow soldiers... a shadow enemy.” ([MotherJones 12/3/2001](#)) Richard Reid does attempt to blow up an airplane with a shoe-bomb later in the month (see [December 22, 2001](#)).

December 12-15, 2001: News Reports Raises Israeli Spying Questions



Two stills from Carl

Cameron's Fox News report on potential Israeli spying in the US. [Source: Fox News] (click image to enlarge) Fox News reports, "Investigators within the DEA, INS, and FBI have all told Fox News that to pursue or even suggest Israeli spying... is considered career suicide." "A highly placed investigator says there are 'tie-ins' between the spy ring and 9/11. However, when asked for details, he flatly refuses to describe them, saying, 'evidence linking these Israelis to 9/11 is classified. I cannot tell you about evidence that has been gathered. It's classified information.'" The report also reveals that Amdocs, an Israeli company, is recording virtually every phone call in the US and could be passing information on to the Israeli government (similar claims were first raised in 2000 ([Waller and Rodriguez 5/29/2000](#))). Fox News suggests that the position of this company might impede the 9/11 investigation. ([Cameron 12/12/2001](#))

December 13, 2001: ISI-Connected Militants Attack Indian Parliament



A terrorist lies dead near the entrance to the Indian Parliament building. [Source: R. V. Moorthy] The Indian Parliament building in New Delhi is attacked by Islamic militants. Fourteen people, including the five attackers, are killed. India blames the Pakistani militant group Jaish-e-Mohammed for the attacks. Twelve days later, Maulana Masood Azhar, head of Jaish-e-Mohammed, is arrested by Pakistan and his group is banned. He is freed one year later. ([France-Presse 12/25/2001](#); [Baldauf 12/16/2002](#)) The Parliament attack leads to talk of war, even nuclear war, between Pakistan and India, until Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf cracks down on

militant groups in early January. ([Bedi 12/28/2001](#); [Pearl 1/3/2002](#); [McCarthy 5/25/2002](#)) As a result of the rising tensions, Pakistani troop deployments near the Tora Bora region of Afghanistan are halted, allowing many al-Qaeda and Taliban to escape into Pakistan (see [December 10, 2001](#)). It appears that Saeed Sheikh and Aftab Ansari, working with the ISI, were also involved in the attacks. ([Pittsburgh Tribune-Review 3/3/2002](#); [Anson 8/2002](#))

December 13, 2001: Authenticity of Bin Laden 'Confession' Video Is Disputed



The man in the picture on the left is supposed to be bin Laden in October 2001. The picture on the right is undisputedly bin Laden in December [*Source: Reuters*]. Following the release of a home video in which Osama bin Laden apparently confesses to involvement in 9/11 (see [Mid-November 2001](#)), some commentators question its authenticity, as a number of strange facts about the video soon emerge. For example, all previous videos had been made with the consent of bin Laden, and usually released to the Arabic television channel Al Jazeera. This video was supposedly recorded without his knowledge, found in a house in Afghanistan, and then passed to the CIA by an unknown person or group. Experts point out that it would be possible to fake such a video. So many people doubt the video's authenticity that President Bush soon makes a statement, saying it was "preposterous for anybody to think this tape was doctored. Those who contend it's a farce or a fake are hoping for the best about an evil man." ([Morris 12/15/2001](#)) Some commentators will suggest that the person thought to be bin Laden is not actually the al-Qaeda leader. For example, arabist Kevin Barrett will say that the person in the video is "at least 40 or 50 pounds heavier, and his facial features [are] obviously different." ([Barrett 2/14/2006](#)) The man said to be bin Laden also makes some questionable statements in the video:

■ "I was thinking that the fire from the gas in the plane would melt the iron structure of the building..." ([US Department of Defense 12/13/2001](#)) The jet fuel spilled from the planes burned up about 10 minutes after impact (see [8:57 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)), the

towers' structure did not melt (see [September 12, 2001-February 2002](#)), and the towers were not made of iron, but steel. ([National Institute of Standards and Technology 9/2005, pp. 6](#)) Bin Laden had studied civil engineering at university and had experience as a construction contractor. ([Burke 2004, pp. 47](#); [Laden 2005, pp. xii-xiii](#)) It is unclear why he would think the towers were made of iron.

■“We did not reveal the operation to [the brothers who conducted the operation] until they are there and just before they boarded the planes.” ([US Department of Defense 12/13/2001](#)) All the hijackers purchased tickets for the 9/11 flights about two weeks in advance (see [August 25-September 5, 2001](#)). The six plot leaders had flight training (see [July 6-December 19, 2000](#), [June 28-December 2000](#), [January-February 2001](#), and [May 5 and 10, 2000](#)), and some of the other 13 are thought to have assisted with target surveillance and casing flights (see [May 24-August 14, 2001](#), [August 1, 2001](#), [June 2001](#) and [August 2001](#)).

■“Those who were trained to fly didn't know the others. One group of people did not know the other group.” ([US Department of Defense 12/13/2001](#)) The opposite is true: the pilots intermingled with the muscle and the teams for the various planes mixed (see [April 23-June 29, 2001](#), [April 12-September 7, 2001](#), and [June 27-August 23, 2001](#)). There are reports that bin Laden had from four to ten look-alike doubles at the time. ([France-Presse 10/7/2001](#); [Beeston, Charter, and Hussain 11/19/2001](#))

December 14, 2001: Two US-Based Charities Are Shut Down for Links to Al-Qaeda and Other Militant Groups

US intelligence had been investigating the US-based Global Relief Foundation (GRF) long before 9/11 for links to al-Qaeda and other radical militant groups (see [1997-Late Spring 2001](#) and [March 2000](#)). The plan is to shut down a number of GRF's overseas offices while continuing to monitor the GRF's main office in Illinois and see how that office reacts to the overseas shutdowns. But on December 13, 2001, New York Times reporter Philip Shenon calls the Illinois office one day before the planned raids and asks them to comment about an imminent crack down on the charity (see [December 3-14, 2001](#)). The FBI quickly decides that the GRF is destroying documents after the tip-off, and they hastily arrange a raid on the Illinois office and the overseas offices the next day. Since the GRF and the Illinois-based Benevolence International Foundation (BIF) are considered to be closely linked, the BIF US office is raided and shut down at the same time, and the houses of GRF executive director Mohammad Chehade and BIF executive director Enaam Arnaout are searched. GRF fund-raiser Rabih Haddad is detained on the basis of overstaying a visa while Arnaout remains free in the US. ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 98-100](#)) October 18, 2002, the Treasury Department will officially designate GRF a terrorism financier. It will do the same to BIF on November 19, 2002. The UN also soon lists both groups as linked to al-Qaeda. ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 98-100](#)) Haddad will be imprisoned for 19 months and then deported for the immigration violation. ([Mullen 3/17/2004](#))

December 15, 2001: Bin Laden Said to Make Final Radio Broadcast from Tora Bora and Head North

According to author Ron Suskind, on this date bin Laden makes a broadcast on his shortwave radio from somewhere within Tora Bora, Afghanistan. He praises his “most loyal fighters” still fighting in Tora Bora and says “forgive me” for drawing them into a defeat. He says the battle will continue “on new fronts.” Then he leads a prayer and leaves Tora Bora. Suskind says, “With a small band, he escaped on horseback toward the north. The group, according to internal CIA reports, took a northerly route to the province of Nangarhar—past the Khyber Pass, and the city of Jalalabad—and into the province of Konar. That day and the next, much of the remaining al-Qaeda force of about 800 soldiers moved to the south toward Pakistan.” ([Suskind 2006, pp. 74-75](#) Sources: [Ron Suskind](#)) A radio had been captured by US allied forces some days earlier, allowing the US to listen in to bin Laden’s communications (see [Late October-Early December 2001](#)). In another account, a professional guide and former Taliban official later claims to have led bin Laden and a group of about 30 at this time on a four day trip into Pakistan and then back into a different part of Afghanistan. ([Nordland, Yousafzai, and Dehghanpisheh 8/11/2002](#)) Still other accounts have bin Laden heading south into Pakistan at this time instead (see [Mid-December 2001](#)). An article in the British Daily Telegraph entitled “Bin Laden’s voice heard on radio in Tora Bora” will appear the very next day, detailing some of these communications. ([Wastell 12/16/2001](#))

December 15, 2001: Possible Al-Qaeda Sleeper Operative Al-Marri Detained in US

Ali Saleh Kahlah al-Marri, from Qatar but a legal US resident, is detained for questioning in the county jail of Peoria, Illinois, on a material witness warrant issued by a grand jury. ([Lucian 12/19/2001](#)) The government will later charge him with making false statements to the FBI, and then will declare him an ‘enemy combatant’ (see [June 23, 2003](#)). ([Amnesty International 8/19/2003](#)) Al-Marri had arrived in the US one day before 9/11 (see [September 10, 2001](#)). He is believed to be a relative of Saudi national and future Guantanamo detainee Mohamed al-Khatani, who is said to be an intended 9/11 hijacker (see [July 2002](#)). ([Golden and van Natal 6/21/2004](#))

December 2001-Early January 2002: ISI Said to Help Bin Laden and Taliban Escape and Resettle in Pakistan

Yunus Qanooni, the interior minister of Afghanistan’s new government, accuses elements of Pakistan’s ISI of helping bin Laden and Mullah Omar escape from Afghanistan to Pakistan. He further asserts that the ISI are still “probably protecting” both bin Laden and Mullah Omar and “concealing their movements and sheltering leaders of Taliban and al-Qaeda.” ([BBC 12/30/2001](#); [Jehl 2/13/2002](#)) In addition, New Yorker magazine will report in early 2002, “Some CIA analysts believe that bin Laden eluded American capture inside

Afghanistan with help from elements of the [ISI].” ([Hersh 1/21/2002](#)) Another report suggests that Hamid Gul, former director of the ISI, is behind moves to help the Taliban establish a base in remote parts of Pakistan just across the Afghanistan border. Gul was head of the ISI from 1987 to 1989, but has remained close to Afghan groups in subsequent years and has been nicknamed the “godfather of the Taliban.” One report will later suggest that he was one of the masterminds of the 9/11 plot (see [July 22, 2004](#)). The US is said to be interested in interrogating Gul, but “because of his high profile and the ripples it would cause in the Pakistan army, this is unlikely to happen...” Yet, at the same time that the ISI is reportedly helping al-Qaeda and the Taliban escape, the Pakistan army is deployed to the Afghanistan border in large numbers to prevent them from escaping. ([Shahzad 12/13/2001](#)) In November 2001, it was reported that the US was continuing to rely on the ISI for intelligence about Afghanistan, a move none other than Gul publicly derided as “foolish.”(see [November 3, 2001](#)).

Mid-December 2001: Videotape Shows Bin Laden Heading into Pakistan

A videotape obtained by the CIA shows bin Laden at the end of the Tora Bora battle. He is walking on a trail either in Afghanistan and heading toward Pakistan, or already in Pakistan. Bin Laden is seen instructing his party how to dig holes in the ground to lie undetected at night. A US bomb explodes in the distance. Referring to where the bomb was dropped, he says, “We were there last night.” The existence of this videotape will not be reported until late 2006. ([Priest and Tyson 9/10/2006](#)) In September 2005, the New York Times will report that, “On or about Dec. 16, 2001, according to American intelligence estimates, bin Laden left Tora Bora for the last time, accompanied by bodyguards and aides.... Bin Laden and his men are believed to have journeyed on horseback directly south toward Pakistan.” ([Weaver 9/11/2005](#)) Other accounts have him heading north into other parts of Afghanistan around this time instead (see [December 15, 2001](#)).

December 16, 2001: Fox News Removes Controversial Story from Website, but Story Nonetheless Makes an Impact

Fox News removes its series on the “art student spy ring” from its website after only two days, in response to pressure from The Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs (JINSA), the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), the Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America (CAMERA) and others. CAMERA suggests the reporter “has something, personally, about Israel.... Maybe he’s very sympathetic to the Arab side.” ([Ketcham 5/7/2002](#)) The head of the ADL calls the report “sinister dangerous innuendo which fuels anti-Semitism.” ([Perelman 12/21/2001](#)) Yet there does not appear to be any substance to these personal attacks (and Forward later reverses its stance on the spy ring (see [March 15, 2002](#))). Fox News also never makes a formal repudiation or correction about the series. The contents of the series continues to be generally ignored by the

mainstream media, but it makes a big impact inside the US government: An internal DEA communiqué from December 18 mentions the Fox report by name, and warns of security breaches in telecommunications as described in the Fox report. ([Ketcham 5/7/2002](#))

December 17, 2001: US Declares Victory at Tora Bora; Afghan War Considered Over



Four prisoners captured at Tora Bora and shown to the media on December 17, 2001. [Source: *Getty Images*] US-allied forces declare that the battle of Tora Bora has been won. A ten-day ground offensive that began on December 5 has cleared out the remaining Taliban and al-Qaeda forces in Tora Bora. The Afghan war is now widely considered to be over. However, many will later consider the battle a failure because most of the enemy escapes (see [December 5-17, 2001](#)), and because the Taliban will later regroup. ([Smucker 3/4/2002](#)) The Christian Science Monitor later reports that up to 2,000 Taliban and al-Qaeda were in the area when the battle began. The vast majority successfully fled, and only 21 al-Qaeda fighters were finally captured. ([Smucker 3/4/2002](#)) Later accounts suggest between 1,000 and 4,000 escaped; between 50 to 80 of them were al-Qaeda leaders (see [October 2004](#)). Author Ron Suskind will suggest in 2006 that there were just over 1,000 al-Qaeda and Taliban in the area, and of those, 250 were killed or captured. ([Suskind 2006, pp. 75](#) Sources: [Ron Suskind](#)) Bin Laden left the area by December 15, if not earlier (see [December 15, 2001](#) and [Mid-December 2001](#)). It is believed that al-Qaeda's number two leader, Ayman al-Zawahiri, also escaped the area around the same time. ([Brown 10/20/2002](#))

December 17-18, 2001: Hamas Threatens to Attack US

On December 17, 2001, Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad release a joint manifesto declaring, "Americans are the enemies of the Palestinian people [and] a target for future attacks." The next day, Hamas leaders issues a statement declaring that "Americans [are] now considered legitimate targets as well as Israelis." So far, Hamas has not followed through with this threat. However, in February 2003, top Hamas leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin will called on Muslims to "threaten Western interests and strike them everywhere" in the event of a war in Iraq, which will begin one month later. ([Levitt 10/18/2003](#)) Despite these threats, known Hamas operatives will continue to live openly in the US. For instance, the US officially declared Mohammad Salah a terrorist in 1995 (see [June 2-](#)

[5, 2003](#)), the FBI knew he was living openly in Chicago since late 1997, and yet he will not be indicted for crimes committed in the early 1990s until 2004 (see [August 20, 2004](#)).

December 19, 2001: US Official Proclaims ‘We Will Not Leave Central Asia’ after Afghan War Ends

Speaking in Kazakhstan, US Deputy Secretary of State Elizabeth Jones states: “We will not leave Central Asia after resolving the conflict [in Afghanistan]. We want to support the Central Asian countries in their desire to reform their societies as they supported us in the war against terrorism. These are not only new but long term relations.” ([BBC 12/19/2001](#))

December 19, 2001: Sufaat Arrested, May Hold Key to 9/11-Crop Duster Mystery



Yazid Sufaat. [*Source: FBI*] Yazid Sufaat is arrested in Malaysia. Sufaat is a Malaysian who owns a condominium in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, where a January 2000 al-Qaeda summit was held (see January 5-8, 2000). He also graduated in 1987 from a California university with a degree in biological sciences. According to interrogations of Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, Hambali, and other captured prisoners, Sufaat was given the lead in developing chemical and biological weapons for al-Qaeda. But he apparently had been unable to buy the kind of anthrax he wanted for an attack. Zacarias Moussaoui, Mohamed Atta, and other al-Qaeda operatives appeared to have had an interest in crop dusters before 9/11. It has been suggested that this interest served to further Sufaat’s biological weapons plot. This would especially make sense in the case of Moussaoui, since he stayed with Sufaat in Sufaat’s Malaysia apartment for two months in late 2000. Sufaat remains in Malaysian custody. The US has only been able to directly interview him on one brief occasion, in November 2002. ([Eggen 3/28/2003](#); [Ressa 10/10/2003](#); [Simpson 12/7/2003](#))

December 19, 2001: Al-Libi Transferred into US Custody; Responsive to Non-Aggressive Interrogation Tactics

Ibn al-Shaykh al-Libi, captured by Pakistani forces six weeks earlier (see [November 11, 2001](#)), is handed over to US authorities at the Bagram air base in Afghanistan. Two FBI agents from New York are tasked with interrogating him. One of the agents, Russell Fincher, spends more than 80 hours with al-Libi discussing religion and prayer in an effort to establish a close bond. It works, and al-Libi opens up to Fincher, giving him information about Zacarias Moussaoui and the so-called shoe bomber, Richard Reid (see [December 22, 2001](#)). ([Isikoff and Corn 2006, pp. 120](#)) But despite this progress, he will soon be transferred to Egypt and tortured there into making some false confessions (see [January 2002 and after](#)).

December 20, 2001: Bush Says He Didn't Feel 'Sense of Urgency' to Deal With Bin Laden Before 9/11

In an interview with the Washington Post, President Bush says that before 9/11: "I knew [bin Laden] was a menace and I knew he was a problem. I was prepared to look at a plan that would be a thoughtful plan that would bring him to justice, and would have given the order to do that. I have no hesitancy about going after him. But I didn't feel that sense of urgency." ([Gellman 5/17/2002](#))

December 20, 2001: US Translation of Bin Laden 'Confession' Video Said to Be Misleading

Following the release of a home video in which Osama bin Laden apparently confesses to involvement in 9/11 (see [Mid-November 2001](#)), a German TV show checks the translation provided by the Pentagon and finds it is flawed. According to Professor Gernot Rotter, scholar of Islamic and Arabic Studies at the University of Hamburg, "This tape is of such poor quality that many passages are unintelligible. And those that are intelligible have often been taken out of context, so that you can't use that as evidence. The American translators who listened to the tape and transcribed it obviously added things that they wanted to hear in many places." For example, the sentence translated by Pentagon contractors as "We calculated in advance the number of casualties from the enemy," is said to be wrong, and the words "in advance" were apparently not said by bin Laden. The sentence "We had notification since the previous Thursday that the event would take place that day" is also said to be wrong and the word "previous" is not said by bin Laden. In addition, the sentence "We asked each of them to go to America" is said to be a mistranslation; it should have been "They were required to go to America." ([Restle and Sieker 12/20/2001](#))

December 21, 2001: FBI Won't Release Flight 93 Black Box Information

The FBI reveals that it knows what is on the Flight 93 black boxes, but refuses to release the transcript or audio recording. Families of the victims have requested to hear the cockpit voice recording, but the FBI says, “[W]e do not believe that the horror captured on the cockpit voice recording will console them in any way.” ([Candiotti 12/21/2001](#)) Accuracy in Media immediately submits a Freedom of Information Act request to have the transcript released, but the FBI turns it down because a release “could reasonably be expected to interfere with enforcement proceedings.” The Philadelphia Daily News asks, “What enforcement proceedings?” and suggests the FBI may be covering up a shootdown of the plane. ([Irvine 12/28/2001](#)) The recordings are later played, but only in private to victims’ relatives and the 9/11 Commission.

December 21, 2001: Senators Introduce Bills to Create Independent 9/11 Commission

Two bipartisan pairs of senators introduce legislation to create independent 9/11 commissions. Senators Joe Lieberman (D) and John McCain (R) propose to create a 14-member, bipartisan commission with subpoena power. At the same time, Robert Torricelli (D) and Charles Grassley (R) propose to create a 12-member board of inquiry with subpoena power. White House spokeswoman Anne Womack is noncommittal about the proposals, saying, “We look forward to reviewing them. Right now, the president is focused on fighting the war on terrorism.” ([Mitchell 12/21/2001](#))

December 22, 2001: Karzai Assumes Power in Afghanistan



Hamid Karzai. [*Source: United States Agency for International Development*] Afghan Prime Minister Hamid Karzai and his transitional government assume power in Afghanistan. It was reported a few weeks before that he had

been a paid consultant for Unocal at one time (Karzai and Unocal both deny this), as well as Deputy Foreign Minister for the Taliban. ([Monde 12/13/2001](#); [CNN 12/22/2001](#))

December 22, 2001: Shoe Bomber Plot Foiled, Bomber Claims Allegiance to Bin Laden



Richard Reid's shoe bomb. [*Source: NEFA Foundation*] British citizen Richard Reid is arrested for allegedly trying to blow up a Miami-bound jet using explosives hidden in his shoe. ([Kugler 8/19/2002](#)) He later pleads guilty to all charges, and declares himself a follower of bin Laden. ([CBS News 10/4/2002](#)) He may have ties to Pakistan. ([Reid and Richburg 3/31/2002](#)) It is later believed that Reid and others in the shoe bomb plot reported directly to 9/11 mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed. ([Ressa 1/30/2003](#)) It has been suggested that Mohammed has ties to the ISI, and that Reid is a follower of Ali Gilani, a religious leader believed to be working with the ISI (see [January 6, 2002](#)).

December 24, 2001: Taliban Leaders Free, Living Openly in Luxury in Pakistan

The Guardian reports that many in Afghanistan intelligence say former top Taliban officials are living openly in villas in Afghanistan and Pakistan. At least four top leaders who had been caught have been simply released. Yet another leader, wanted by the US for harboring al-Qaeda operatives at his compound, is able to escape a very loose house arrest in mid-December. Two soldiers were checking on him once a day. One intelligence source claims to know the exact location of many, and says they could be rounded up within hours. A former Taliban minister now working with the Northern Alliance also claims: "Some are living in luxury in fine houses, they are not hiding in holes. They could be in jail by tonight if the political will existed." The US claims it is working hard to find and catch these leaders. ([Chivers 12/20/2001](#); [Carroll 12/24/2001](#)) However, it will later be revealed that the US is aware of these Taliban living in Pakistan but will not seriously press Pakistan about them until 2006 (see [2002-2006](#)).

December 24, 2001-January 23, 2002: Reporter Daniel Pearl Investigates Sensitive Topics in Pakistan

Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl writes stories about the ISI that will lead to his kidnapping and murder (see [January 31, 2002](#)).

- On December 24, 2001, he reports about ties between the ISI and a Pakistani organization, Ummah Tameer-e-Nau, that was working on giving bin Laden nuclear secrets before 9/11. ([Pearl 12/24/2001](#))
- A few days later, he reports that the ISI-supported militant organization Jaish-e-Mohammed still has its office running and bank accounts working, even though President Pervez Musharraf claims to have banned the group. The Jaish-i-Mohammed is connected to the Al Rashid Trust, one of the first entities whose assets were frozen by the US after 9/11 and through which funding may have passed on its way to the hijackers in the US (see [Early August 2001](#) and [September 24, 2001](#)). “If [Pearl] hadn’t been on the ISI’s radarscope before, he was now.” ([Pearl 12/31/2001](#); [McCarthy 7/16/2002](#); [Anson 8/2002](#))
- He begins investigating links between shoe bomber Richard Reid and Pakistani militants, and comes across connections to the ISI and a mysterious religious group called Al-Fuqra. ([Anderson and Baker 2/23/2002](#))
- He also may be looking into the US training and backing of the ISI. ([Iqbal 3/25/2002](#))
- He is writing another story on Dawood Ibrahim, a powerful Islamic militant and gangster protected by the ISI, and other Pakistani organized crime figures. ([Fineman 2/4/2002](#); [Anson 8/2002](#))
- Former CIA agent Robert Baer later claims to be working with Pearl on an investigation of 9/11 mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed. ([Waterman 4/9/2004](#)) It is later suggested that Mohammed masterminds both Reid’s shoe bomb attempt and the Pearl kidnapping, and has connections to Pakistani gangsters and the ISI, so some of these explanations could fit together. ([Shahzad 10/30/2002](#); [Ressa 1/30/2003](#); [Waterman 4/9/2004](#)) Kidnapper Saeed will later say of Pearl, “Because of his hyperactivity he caught our interest.” ([News \(Islamabad\) 2/15/2002](#)) Pearl is kidnapped on January 23, 2002, and his murder is confirmed on February 22, 2002. ([Steiger 2/22/2002](#))

December 25, 2001: Experts: WTC Collapse Investigation Inadequate

The New York Times reports that “some of the nation’s leading structural engineers and fire-safety experts” believe the investigation into the collapse of the WTC is “inadequate” and “are calling for a new, independent and better-financed inquiry that could produce the kinds of conclusions vital for skyscrapers and future buildings nationwide.” Experts critical of the investigation include “some of those people who are actually conducting it.” They point out that the current team of 20 or so investigators has no subpoena power, inadequate financial support, and little staff support. Additionally, it has been prevented from interviewing witnesses and frequently prevented from examining the disaster site, and has even been unable to obtain basic information like detailed blueprints of the

buildings that collapsed. The decision to recycle the steel columns, beams, and trusses from the WTC rapidly in the days immediately after 9/11 means definitive answers may never be known. ([Glanz and Lipton 12/25/2001](#)) Incredibly, some of the steel is reforged into commemorative medallions selling for \$30 apiece. ([Associated Press 1/30/2002](#))

December 26, 2001: Suspected Bojinka and WTC Bomb Plotter Arrested But Only Charged for Minor Offenses

A Jordanian suspected of involvement in the 1993 WTC bombing (see [February 26, 1993](#)) and 1995 Bojinka plot (see [January 6, 1995](#)) is arrested but apparently only charged with minor offenses. Hadi Yousef Alghoul had been arrested in the Philippines in March 1995 and accused of involvement in the Bojinka plot there. (see April 1, 1995-Early 1996). He apparently is the cousin of bomber Ramzi Yousef. ([Ressa 2003, pp. 25](#)) On December 26, 2001, he is arrested in the Philippines again. He is found with nearly 300 sticks of dynamite and other bomb making materials. A police colonel says Alghoul had been under surveillance for years. ([CNN 12/28/2001](#); [Abuza 12/1/2002](#)) Police say he is one of the United States' 25 most wanted terrorists with a \$25 million reward for his arrest in connection with the 1993 WTC bombing. His "fingerprints perfectly matched those of a terrorist tagged in the World Trade Center bombing." He is also wanted for plotting the assassination of Americans. ([Roxas 1/6/2002](#)) Yet despite all these accusations, he is not extradited to the US as other Bojinka suspects were, and he is merely charged in 2002 with the illegal possession of explosive devices. There have been no further news accounts about him. ([Manila Sun-Star 11/16/2002](#))

December 26, 2001: Bin Laden Again Denies 9/11 Involvement, but Praises Hijackers



Osama bin Laden making his "Nineteen Students" speech.

[Source: *Al Jazeera*] Osama bin Laden makes a new video statement about 9/11, again denying the US has enough evidence against him to warrant an attack on Afghanistan (see [September 16, 2001](#) and [September 28, 2001](#)), which he calls "a vicious campaign based on mere suspicion." However, in what Professor Bruce Lawrence calls "his most extended and passionate celebration of the hijackers of 9/11," he praises the 19 who carried out "the blessed strikes against global unbelief and its leader America." He says

of the hijackers, “It was not nineteen Arab states that did this deed. It was not Arab armies or ministries who humbled the oppressor who harms us in Palestine and elsewhere. It was nineteen post-secondary school students—I beg Allah almighty to accept them—who shook America’s throne, struck its economy right in the heart, and dealt the biggest military power a mighty blow, by the grace of Allah Almighty.” He continues by saying that the hijackers “are the people who have given up everything for the sake of ‘There is no Allah but Allah.’” He also criticizes Israel’s occupation of Palestine, and suggests that Israel is trying to expand its borders to Medina, currently in Saudi Arabia. Bin Laden also attacks the sanctions against Iraq, which he notes have resulted in “the murder of over a million children.” ([Laden 2005, pp. 145-157](#)) Bin Laden’s left arm appears to be injured in the video, fueling speculation he was wounded in the battle for Afghanistan ([CNN 7/23/2002](#)) No new videotapes of Bin Laden speaking are released for nearly three years after this (see [October 29, 2004](#)). ([BBC 10/30/2004](#))

December 30, 2001: Afghan Minister Claims ISI Supports bin Laden

The new Afghan Interior Minister Younis Qanooni claims that the ISI helped bin Laden escape from Afghanistan: “Undoubtedly they (ISI) knew what was going on.” He claims that the ISI is still supporting bin Laden even if Pakistani President Musharraf isn’t. ([BBC 12/30/2001](#))

Late 2001: US Opposes Peacekeeping and Counter-narcotics in Afghanistan

James Dobbins, the Bush Administration’s special envoy for Afghanistan, later will say that three decisions in late 2001 “really shaped” the future of Afghanistan. “One was that US forces were not going to do peacekeeping of any sort, under any circumstances. They would remain available to hunt down Osama bin Laden and find renegade Taliban, but they were not going to have any role in providing security for the country at large. The second was that we would oppose anybody else playing this role outside Kabul. And this was at a time when there was a good deal of interest from other countries in doing so.” The main reason for this is because it is felt this would tie up more US resources as well, for instance US airlifts to drop supplies. The third decision is that US forces would not engage in any counter-narcotics activities. The Atlantic Monthly will later note, “One effect these policies had was to prolong the disorder in Afghanistan and increase the odds against a stable government. The absence of American or international peacekeepers guaranteed that the writ of the new [Hamid] Karzai government would extend, at best, to Kabul itself.” ([Fallows 10/2004](#))

Late 2001: Taliban’s Top Drug Kingpin Arrested by US Then Let Go

In the 1990s, Afghan drug kingpin Haji Bashir Noorzai developed close ties to Taliban top leader Mullah Omar, al-Qaeda, and the Pakistani ISI. He becomes the top drug kingpin in Taliban-controlled Afghanistan. He is also reputedly the richest person in Afghanistan and the Taliban's banker. For instance, according to US sources, as the Taliban began their military defeat after 9/11, they entrusted Noorzai with as much as \$20 million in Taliban money for safekeeping. But he then surrenders to the US military in Afghanistan. Noorzai later says of this time, "I spent my days and nights comfortably. There was special room for me. I was like a guest, not a prisoner." ([CBS News 2/7/2002](#); [Risen 2006, pp. 152-162](#)) He spends several days in custody at the Kandahar airport. He speaks to US military and intelligence officials, but is released before Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) agents arrive in the country to question him. ([Inskeep 4/26/2002](#)) The other top drug kingpin for the Taliban is also arrested then let go by the US at this time (see [December 2001 and After](#)). Noorzai then lives in Pakistan, where he has been given a Pakistani passport by the ISI. He operates drug-processing laboratories there and has little trouble traveling to other countries. ([Risen 2006, pp. 152-162](#)) In 2004 it will be reported, "According to House International Relations Committee testimony this year, Noorzai smuggles 4,400 pounds of heroin out of the Kandahar region to al-Qaeda operatives in Pakistan every eight weeks." ([Zoroya and Leinwand 10/26/2004](#))

2002: Iraq, Not Afghanistan, Dominates National Security Council Agenda


CIA official Gary Schoen will later say, "I can remember trying to take issues about Afghanistan to the National Security Council (NSC) during 2002 and early 2003 and being told: 'It's off the agenda for today. Iraq is taking the whole agenda.' Things that we desperately needed to do for Afghanistan were just simply pushed aside by concerns over in Iraq. There just wasn't the time." ([Schroen 6/20/2006](#)) A former senior NSC official will similarly recall that the Bush administration turned its attention to Iraq and "discussions about Afghanistan were constrained. Here's what you have now, you don't get anything more. No additional missions, no additional forces, no additional dollars." This official adds that "the meetings to discuss Afghanistan at the time were best described by a comment Doug Feith made in one meeting, when he said we won the war, other people need to be responsible for Afghanistan now. What he meant was that nation building or postconflict stability operations ought to be taken care of by other governments.... To raise Afghanistan was to talk about what we were leaving undone." ([Risen 2006, pp. 154](#))

2002: US Agencies Evade Law by Using Private Database on US Citizens

The FBI and Defense Department begin paying ChoicePoint, a private data-collection company, for access to its data-searching system. Neither agency is legally permitted to keep database records on US citizens, but they are effectively able to circumvent this law by contracting the task to ChoicePoint. Both agencies have steadily expanded their

relationship with the company. Exactly what kind of data is being accessed and the legality of doing so remain murky. ([Harris 11/11/2005](#))

2002: Al-Qaeda Leader Makes Second Attempt to Meet Hussein, but Is Turned Away Again

In 2006, a bipartisan Senate report will conclude that al-Qaeda leader Mahfouz Walad Al-Walid (a.k.a. Abu Hafs the Mauritanian) traveled to Iraq this year in an attempt to meet with Saddam Hussein. This is according to debriefings after the 2003 Iraq war. But Hussein refused to meet him and directed that he should leave Iraq because he could cause a problem for the country. Al-Walid made a similar attempt to meet with Hussein in 1998, and was similarly rebuffed (see [March-June 1998](#)). The Senate report will conclude that, despite many alleged meetings, these two attempted meetings by Al-Walid and an actual meeting between bin Laden and an Iraqi agent in 1995 (see [Early 1995](#)) were the only attempted contacts between the Iraqi government and al-Qaeda before the Iraq war. ([US Senate and Intelligence Committee 9/8/2006](#) )

2002: CIA Officials Ask Tenet to Warn White House Invasion of Iraq Will Undermine Counterterrorism Efforts

Senior CIA officials, including James Pavitt, the deputy director of operations of the CIA, ask CIA Director George Tenet to relay concerns to the White House that invading Iraq will undermine US counterterrorism efforts. They warn that it will divert attention and resources away from the ongoing fight against al-Qaeda, at a time when the United States' counterterrorism efforts seem to be having a decisive impact. One former aide to Tenet tells author James Risen, "A lot of people went to George to tell him that Iraq would hurt the war on terrorism, but I never heard him express an opinion about war in Iraq. He would just come back from the White House and say they are going to do it." ([Risen 2006, pp. 183-184](#))

2002-2004: World Trade Center Bombers Encourage Jihad from inside Maximum Security Facility

Three of the men convicted for the World Trade Center bombing (see [February 26, 1993](#))—Mohammed Salameh, Mahmud Abouhalima, and Nidal Ayyad—are allowed to write about 90 letters from inside the Supermax prison in Florence, Colorado, encouraging fellow extremists around the world. Some of the letters are sent to Morocco and some to a militant cell in Spain. In one, addressed to cell leader Mohamed Arcraf, who will be arrested for attempting to blow up the National Justice Building in Madrid, Salameh writes, "Oh, God, make us live with happiness. Make us die as martyrs. May we be united on the day of judgment." One of Salameh's letters, in which he calls Osama bin Laden "the hero of my generation," is published in a newspaper in July 2002, but this

does not result in any new security attempts to stop other letters. The letters urge readers to “terminate the infidels” because “Muslims don’t have any option other than jihad.” Former prosecutor Andrew McCarthy wonders, “He was exhorting acts of terrorism and helping recruit would-be terrorists for the jihad from inside an American prison.” Terrorism specialist Hedieth Mirahmadi says the letters would have been especially useful for recruitment because the convicted bombers have “a power that the average person or the average imam in a mosque doesn’t have.” Attorney General Alberto Gonzales will later comment, “I was surprised. Didn’t seem to make any sense to me and I’m sure the average American would have to wonder, ‘How could this happen?’” Staff at the prison noticed the letters were unmonitored and complained in 2003, but it apparently took management several months to impose a tighter regime. ([Myers 3/1/2005](#); [Myers 3/9/2005](#))

2002-2006: US Does Not Strongly Press Pakistan about Taliban Leaders Hiding There

Robert Grenier, head of the CIA station in Islamabad, Pakistan, later says that the issue of fugitive Taliban leaders living in Pakistan was repeatedly raised with senior Pakistani intelligence officials in 2002. “The results were just not there. And it was quite clear to me that it wasn’t just bad luck.” ([Rohde and Sanger 8/12/2007](#)) For instance, in December 2001 the Guardian reported that many Taliban leaders are living openly in large villas in Pakistan (see [December 24, 2001](#)). But Grenier decides that Pakistan will not act on the Taliban and urges them to focus on arresting al-Qaeda operatives instead. “From our perspective at the time, the Taliban was a spent force. We were very much focused on al-Qaeda and didn’t want to distract the Pakistanis from that.” Zalmay Khalilzad, US ambassador to Afghanistan, US military officials, and some Bush administration officials periodically argue that the Taliban are crossing from Pakistan into Afghanistan and killing US soldiers and aid workers (see [August 18, 2005](#) and [June 18, 2005](#)). But it is not until some time in 2006 that President Bush strenuously presses Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf about acting on the Taliban leaders living in Pakistan. Even then, Bush reportedly tells his aides that he worries the ties between the Pakistani ISI and the Taliban continue and no serious action will be taken despite Musharraf’s assurances. ([Rohde and Sanger 8/12/2007](#))

2002-2003: Afghan Official Believes Pakistani ISI Is Protecting Al-Qaeda and Taliban Leaders

Helaluddin Helal, Afghanistan’s deputy interior minister in 2002 and 2003, later claims that he becomes convinced at this time that Pakistani ISI officers are protecting bin Laden. He says that he passes intelligence reports on the location of Taliban and al-Qaeda leaders in Pakistan, but nothing is done in response. “We would tell them we had information that al-Qaeda and Taliban leaders were living in specific areas. The Pakistanis would say no, you’re wrong, but we will go and check. And then they would come back and say those leaders are not living there. [The Pakistanis] were going to these

places and moving the al-Qaeda or Taliban leaders.” ([Lasseter and Landay 9/9/2007](#)) Some al-Qaeda leaders are captured during this time, but there are also reports that Taliban leaders are living openly in Pakistan (see [December 24, 2001](#) and [2002-2006](#)).

2002-2006: Bush Administration Creates ‘Potemkin Village’ Facade to Hide Covert Operations with Few Limits or Rules

In late 2001 or early 2002, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld creates Operation Copper Green, which is a “special access program” with “blanket advance approval to kill or capture and, if possible, interrogate ‘high value’ targets.” especially al-Qaeda leaders (see [Late 2001-Early 2002](#)). According to a Pentagon counterterrorism consultant involved in the operation, the authorizations are “very calibrated” and vague in order to minimize political risk. “The CIA never got the exact language it wanted.” According to a high-level CIA official involved in the operation, the White House would hint to the CIA that the CIA should operate outside official guidelines to do what it wants to do. The CIA will later deny this, but CIA Director George Tenet will later acknowledge that there had been a struggle “to get clear guidance” in terms of how far to go during detainee interrogations. Slowly, official authorizations are expanded, and according to journalist Seymour Hersh, they turn “several nations in North Africa, the Middle East, and Asia into free-fire zones with regard to high-value targets.” But Copper Green has top-level secrecy and runs outside normal bureaucracies and rules. According to Hersh, “In special cases, the task forces could bypass the chain of command and deal directly with Rumsfeld’s office.” One CIA officer tells Hersh that the task-force teams “had full authority to whack—to go in and conduct ‘executive action,’” meaning political assassination. The officer adds, “It was surrealistic what these guys were doing. They were running around the world without clearing their operations with the ambassador or the chief of station.” ([Hersh 6/17/2007](#)) Another former intelligence official tells Hersh, “The rules are ‘Grab whom you must. Do what you want.’” ([Hersh 9/13/2004](#)) The above-mentioned high-level CIA official will claim, “The dirt and secrets are in the back channel. All this open business—sitting in staff meetings, etc..., etc...—is the Potemkin Village stuff.” Over time, people with reservations about the program get weeded out. The official claims that by 2006, “the good guys... are gone.” ([Hersh 6/17/2007](#))

2002-2003: Chertoff Advises CIA Can Use Waterboarding and ‘False Flag’ Trickery on Detainees

The New York Times will later report that in 2002 and 2003, Michael Chertoff repeatedly advises the CIA about legality of some aggressive interrogation procedures. Chertoff is head of the Justice Department’s criminal division at the time, and will later become the homeland security secretary. Chertoff advises that the CIA can use waterboarding. And the Times will claim he approves techniques “that did not involve the infliction of pain, like tricking a subject into believing he was being questioned by a member of a security service from another country.” ([Johnston, Lewis, and Jehl 1/29/2005](#)) It will later be

reported that the CIA tricked al-Qaeda leader Abu Zubaida into believing he was in the custody of the Saudis when in fact several US officials were merely pretending to be Saudis (see [Early April 2002](#)). Furthermore, Chertoff seems to have been advising on the legality of techniques used against Zubaida, strengthening allegations that ‘false flag’ trickery was used on him. “In interviews, former senior intelligence officials said CIA lawyers went to extraordinary lengths beginning in March 2002 to get a clear answer from the Justice Department about which interrogation techniques were permissible in questioning Abu Zubaida and other important detainees. ‘Nothing that was done was not explicitly authorized,’ a former senior intelligence said. ‘These guys were extraordinarily careful.’” Chertoff also opposed one technique that “appeared to violate a ban in the law against using a ‘threat of imminent death.’” ([Johnston, Lewis, and Jehl 1/29/2005](#)) This appears to match claims that the CIA proposed but did not implement a plan to place Zubaida into a coffin to convince him he was about to die (see [Between Mid-April and Mid-May 2002](#)).

Early 2002: Troops and Equipment Redirected from Afghanistan to Iraq



Members of the US Fifth Special Forces Group pose with future Afghan president Hamid Karzai, whom they are protecting. [Source: *US Military*] The Atlantic Monthly will later report, “By the beginning of 2002, US and Northern Alliance forces had beaten the Taliban but lost bin Laden. At that point the United States faced a consequential choice: to bear down even harder in Afghanistan, or to shift the emphasis in the global war on terror somewhere else.... Implicitly at the beginning of 2002, and as a matter of formal policy by the end, it placed all other considerations second to regime change in Iraq.” ([Fallows 10/2004](#)) In February, 2002, Gen. Tommy Franks allegedly tells Sen. Bob Graham (D), “Senator, we have stopped fighting the war on terror in Afghanistan. We are moving military and intelligence personnel and resources out of Afghanistan to get ready for a future war in Iraq” (see [February 19, 2002](#)). ([Graham 3/26/2004](#)) This shift from Afghanistan to Iraq involves a change of focus and attention (see [Early 2002](#)). Additionally, while the total number of US troops (less than 10,000) in Afghanistan does not go down, there is a considerable shift of specialized personnel and equipment many months before the war in Iraq will begin:

■ On February 15, 2002, President Bush directs the CIA to conduct operations in Iraq (see

[Early 2002](#)). In mid-March, the CIA tells the White House that it is cutting back operations in Afghanistan (see [Spring 2002](#)).

- Most of Task Force 5, a top-secret elite CIA and military special forces group, is called home from Afghanistan to prepare for operations in Iraq (see [Early 2002](#)).

- In March 2002, Fifth Group Special Forces, an elite group whose members speak Arabic, Pashtun, and Dari, that is apparently different from Task Force 5, is sent from Afghanistan to Iraq (see [March 2002](#)).

- The US Air Force's only two specially-equipped spy planes that had successfully intercepted the radio transmissions and cell phone calls of al-Qaeda's leaders are pulled from Afghanistan to conduct surveillance over Iraq. NSA satellites are "boreholed," (or redirected) from Afghanistan to Iraq as well (see [Spring 2002](#)).

- Almost all Predator drones are withdrawn from Afghanistan and apparently moved to the Persian Gulf region for missions over Iraq (see [Early 2002](#)).

More personnel will shift to Iraq in late 2002 and early 2003 (see [Late 2002-Early 2003](#)).

In 2007, retired US Gen. James L. Jones, a former NATO supreme commander, will say that Iraq caused the US to "take its eye off the ball" in Afghanistan. ([Rohde and Sanger 8/12/2007](#))

Early 2002: US Cannot Enter Pakistan Border Region to Search for Al-Qaeda

Al-Qaeda forces have been driven out of Afghanistan but regroup in the tribal border region of Pakistan called South Waziristan. However, the Pakistani government is strict about preventing US forces from crossing the border in pursuit of bin Laden or any other al-Qaeda figures. According to author James Risen, "Green Berets who served in southeastern Afghanistan say that there have been a series of tense confrontations—and even firefights—between American and Pakistani forces along the border. Both sides have largely covered up the incidents." ([Risen 2006, pp. 181](#)) This situation will persist until late 2003 (see [Late 2003](#)).

Early 2002: Most Predator Drones Withdrawn from Afghanistan, Not Replaced by New Ones

Most Predator drones are withdrawn from Afghanistan and apparently moved to the Persian Gulf region for missions over Iraq. Sen. Bob Graham (D) will later call the Predator "just about the perfect weapon in our hunt for Osama bin Laden." He will later comment that their removal is "a clear case of how the Bush administration's single-minded focus on Iraq undermined the war against al-Qaeda in Afghanistan" ([Graham and Nussbaum 2004, pp. 121](#); [Gellman and Linzer 10/22/2004](#)) Additionally, over the next years, all new Predators built are sent to Iraq and none to Afghanistan. A former Central Command official will say in 2007, "If we were not in Iraq, we would have double or triple the number of Predators across Afghanistan, looking for Taliban and peering into the tribal areas." ([Rohde and Sanger 8/12/2007](#))

Early 2002: Most of Task Force 5 Elite Force Is Redeployed from Afghanistan to Iraq

Most of Task Force 5's members are called home from Afghanistan to prepare for operations in Iraq. In early 2002, there were roughly 150 Task Force 5 commandos in Afghanistan. After the massive transfer, Task Force 5's numbers dip to as low as 30 men. Task Force 5 is a top-secret elite group that includes CIA paramilitary units and military "special mission units," or SMUs. One of the SMUs is the former Delta Force. The name of the other unit, which specializes in human and technical intelligence operations, is not known. The Washington Post will later note, "These elite forces, along with the battlefield intelligence technology of Predator and Global Hawk drone aircraft, were the scarcest tools of the hunt for jihadists along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border." According to Flynt Leverett, a career CIA analyst assigned to the State Department, "There is a direct consequence for us having taken these guys out prematurely. There were people on the staff level raising questions about what that meant for getting al-Qaeda, for creating an Afghan security and intelligence service [to help combat jihadists]. Those questions didn't get above staff level, because clearly there had been a strategic decision taken." ([Gellman and Linzer 10/22/2004](#)) In 2003, Task Force 5 will be disbanded and then merged into the new Task Force 121, which is to operate in both Iraq and Afghanistan. ([Shanker and Schmitt 11/7/2003](#))

Early 2002: Last Good Intelligence Leads on Bin Laden's Whereabouts



Bruce Riedel. [*Source: Brookings Institute*] Bruce Riedel, a South Asia expert at the CIA, will say in 2007 shortly after retiring, "There hasn't been a serious lead on Osama bin Laden since early 2002. What we're doing now is shooting in the dark in outer space. The chances of hitting anything are zero." Other intelligence officials interviewed by Newsweek will agree that since that time US intelligence has never had a better than 50 percent certainty about his location. ([Thomas 8/28/2007](#))

Early 2002: Bin Laden's Wife and Sons Get Sudanese Passports

When al-Qaeda operative Ramzi bin al-Shbih is captured in Karachi, Pakistan, in September 2002 (see [September 11, 2002](#)), a sign-in book is found with names and passport numbers. US investigators discover that one of Osama bin Laden's wives and two of his sons had signed in, and their passports had been issued in their real bin Laden names by Sudan in early 2002, through the Sudanese Embassy in Islamabad, Pakistan. President Bush is briefed on this, and US intelligence figures suspect that high-ranking Sudanese leaders must have approved the passports and are playing a double game of supporting bin Laden and the US at the same time. The Sudanese government suggests that the officials involved may have been paid off. In a show of good faith, they provide vigorous assistance on several other CIA initiatives. ([Suskind 2006, pp. 165-166](#))

Early 2002-January 2003: Syrian Government Helps US with Al-Qaeda Intelligence until US Cuts Off Relationship Because of Iraq War Priority

By early 2002, Syria emerges as one of the CIA's most effective intelligence sources on al-Qaeda. Syria is one of seven countries on a State Department list of sponsors of terrorism. It has been on that list since 1979, mostly because of its support for Hezbollah combating Israel. But Syria is also an opponent of the Muslim Brotherhood, and al-Qaeda has many connections to the Muslim Brotherhood, especially its Syrian branch. According to journalist Seymour Hersh in New Yorker magazine, "The Syrians had compiled hundreds of files on al-Qaeda, including dossiers on the men who participated—and others who wanted to participate—in the September 11th attacks. Syria also penetrated al-Qaeda cells throughout the Middle East and in Arab exile communities throughout Europe." It appears Syrian intelligence may even have penetrated the Hamburg cell tied to the 9/11 plot, as hijacker Mohamed Atta and other cell members, such as Mohammed Haydar Zammar, occasionally worked at a German firm called Tatem Trading, which was infiltrated by Syrian intelligence (see [September 10, 2002-June 2003](#)). For a time, the Syrians give much of what they know to the CIA and FBI. A former State Department official says, "Up through January of 2003, the cooperation was top-notch. Then we were going to do Iraq, and some people in the [Bush] administration got heavy-handed. They wanted Syria to get involved in operational stuff having nothing to do with al-Qaeda and everything to do with Iraq. It was something Washington wanted from the Syrians, and they didn't want to do it." Hersh reports, "The collapse of the liaison relationship has left many CIA operatives especially frustrated. 'The guys are unbelievably pissed that we're blowing this away,' a former high-level intelligence official told me. 'There was a great channel... The Syrians were a lot more willing to help us, but they'—[Defense Secretary] Rumsfeld and his colleagues—"want to go in [Syria after the Iraq war].'" ([Hersh 7/18/2003](#))

January 2002: Central Asian Countries See US Military Bases Expand

Reportedly, the US is improving bases in “13 locations in nine countries in the Central Asian region.” ([Grier 1/17/2002](#)) US military personnel strength in bases surrounding Afghanistan has increased to 60,000. ([Arkin 1/6/2002](#)) “Of the five ex-Soviet states of Central Asia, Turkmenistan alone is resisting pressure to allow the deployment of US or other Western forces on its soil...” ([Traynor 1/10/2002](#)) On January 9, the speaker of the Russian parliament states, “Russia would not approve of the appearance of permanent US bases in Central Asia,” but Russia seems helpless to stop what a Russian newspaper calls “the inexorable growth” of the US military presence in Central Asia. ([Traynor 1/10/2002](#)) Commenting on the bases, one columnist writes in the Guardian: “The task of the encircling US bases now shooting up on Afghanistan’s periphery is only partly to contain the threat of political regression or Taliban resurgence in Kabul. Their bigger, longer-term role is to project US power and US interests into countries previously beyond its reach.... The potential benefits for the US are enormous: growing military hegemony in one of the few parts of the world not already under Washington’s sway, expanded strategic influence at Russia and China’s expense, pivotal political clout and—grail of holy grails—access to the fabulous, non-OPEC oil and gas wealth of central Asia.” ([Tisdall 1/16/2002](#))

January 2002: 9/11 Flight Control Recording Completely Destroyed

Shortly before noon on 9/11, about sixteen people at the New York Air Route Traffic Control Center recorded their version of the response to the 9/11 attack. At least six are air traffic controllers who dealt with two of the hijacked airliners. But officials at the center never tell higher-ups about the tape. Around this time, a quality-assurance manager, whose name has not been released, crushes the cassette recording in his hand, shreds the tape, and drops the pieces into different trashcans. This manager later asserts that keeping the tape would have been a violation of union rules and accident procedures. When he destroyed the tape, he had already received an e-mail from the FAA instructing officials to safeguard all records that specifically stated, “If a question arises whether or not you should retain data, RETAIN IT.” Most, but not all, of the air traffic controllers involved make written statements about three weeks after 9/11, but it isn’t clear how these might differ with what was on the tape. The unidentified manager is later said to be disciplined for this incident, though it isn’t clear how. ([Goo 5/6/2004](#))

January 2002: FBI Aborts Investigation into Suspected Al-Qaeda Sleeper Cell in California

In late December 1999, Rita Katz, working with the Investigative Project on Terrorism, gave a presentation in the White House to members of the National Security Council (NSC) about a suspected al-Qaeda sleeper cell based in Anaheim, California (see

[December 25, 1999](#)). The NSC forwarded the information her team gleaned from public sources to the FBI. Katz later repeatedly asked a contact she had with the NSC named Peter what happened to the lead she gave them. Peter replied that he assumed the FBI was just sitting on the material. ([Katz 2003, pp. 180](#)) Around January 2002, Katz is contacted by an FBI agent in California who is looking for investigative leads on al-Qaeda in California. Katz forwards him all her information she gave in her White House presentation back in 1999. According to Katz, the agent looks over the material and says it is “very strong... I want to go all the way with this investigation.” Then the agent registers his investigation with the FBI so other agents with leads could contact him. A few days later, he calls Katz and says that he has been taken off the case because it falls into the jurisdiction of the FBI’s Anaheim office. Apparently that office does nothing with the lead. In 1999, Katz suggested the cell included Khalil Deek, arrested in late 1999 for involvement in a millennium bomb plot in Jordan (see [December 11, 1999](#)), his brother Tawfiq Deek, Hisham Diab, and Khalid Ashour. ([Katz 2003, pp. 186-187](#)) ABC News will later report that Diab continued to live in Anaheim until June 2001, when he apparently moved to Afghanistan to stay with top al-Qaeda leaders. ([Ross and Scott 12/23/2004](#)) Khalil Deek is mysteriously released in Jordan around the same time (see [May 2001](#)); it will later be alleged that he was a mole for the Jordanian government (see [Shortly After December 11, 1999](#)). By late 1999, Ashour had requested asylum in the US. Katz will later note that he “could have been easily located, investigated, and if necessary, denied asylum and deported.” But as of 2003, Katz claims Ashour still lives in the US. ([Katz 2003, pp. 187](#)) Tawfiq Deek apparently continues to live in Anaheim as well, where he works for the state’s Department of Toxic Substance Control as a chemical engineer. He denies all terrorism ties, though he confirms that he was an active member of the Islamic Association for Palestine (IAP), which the FBI has called a Hamas front group. ([Anderson 9/15/2005](#)) Another associate of the above group, Adam Gadahn, will emerge in Afghanistan in 2004 as a prominent al-Qaeda spokesman (see [Spring 2004](#)).

January-2002-December 2002: Prosecutors Not Allowed to Indict Al-Marabh

In November 2001, US police called Nabil al-Marabh one of their top five suspects in the 9/11 attacks. ([Godfrey 11/23/2001](#)) In mid-January 2002, Canadian police call him “the real thing.” ([Godfrey 11/23/2001](#)) In late January 2002, it is reported that in Chicago, “Federal agents say criminal charges spelling out his role [in 9/11 and other plots] are likely within a few weeks.” ([ABC News 1/31/2002](#)) Yet, shortly after this, there seems to be a dramatic change of opinion at Justice Department headquarters about al-Marabh. US Attorney Patrick Fitzgerald in Chicago drafts an indictment against Nabil al-Marabh, charging him with multiple counts of making false statements in his interviews with FBI agents. Fitzgerald already has several successful al-Qaeda prosecutions. However, the indictments are rejected by Justice Department headquarters in the name of protecting intelligence. In December 2002, Fitzgerald tracks down a Jordanian informant who had spent time with al-Marabh in a federal detention cell earlier in the year because of minor immigration problems. Fitzgerald has the man flown to Chicago and oversees his debriefing. The man reveals numerous criminal acts that al-Marabh confessed to him in

prison, and the information fits with what is already known of al-Marabh's history (see [December 2002](#)). However, Fitzgerald is still not allowed to indict al-Marabh. Another prosecutor in Detroit, trying some associates of al-Marabh in an ultimately unsuccessful case there, also expresses a desire at some point to indict al-Marabh, but is not allowed to do so. ([Solomon 6/3/2004](#)) Al-Marabh will ultimately be deported to Syria after serving a short sentence on minor charges (see [January 2004](#)).

2002-Early 2003: Wolfowitz Still Pushing Unlikely Theory Linking WTC Bombing to Iraqi Government

Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz proposes that President Bush should declare Ramzi Yousef an "enemy combatant." Yousef is already in the "Supermax" prison, the most secure prison in the US, after being sentenced to life in prison for the 1993 World Trade Center bombing years before. But Wolfowitz contends that as an enemy combatant, heavy interrogation could get Yousef to admit he bombed the WTC on behalf of the Iraqi government. However, Wolfowitz's proposal is strongly opposed by the FBI, which asserts that theories tying Yousef to the Iraqi government had been repeatedly investigated and debunked. Further, Yousef doesn't meet any of the criteria the White House had laid out for designating enemy combatants. "At one point, the high-level discussions apparently prompted a top Bureau of Prisons official to make an unauthorized entry to Yousef's [Supermax cell] to sound out his willingness to talk—a move that prompted strong protests to the Justice Department from the bomber's lawyer..." The issue is debated until the start of the Iraq war, at which point apparently Wolfowitz loses interest. One lawyer involved in the discussions will later recall, "We talked it to death." ([Isikoff and Hosenball 4/21/2004](#))

January-April 2002: FBI Gives Control of Al-Qaeda Prisoners to CIA; Bush Rejects Law Enforcement Approach

In the first months after 9/11, the FBI is generally in charge of captured al-Qaeda detainees and the assumption is that these detainees will be sent to the US for criminal prosecutions. However, beginning in January 2002, this policy begins to change. The highest ranking al-Qaeda detainee in US custody at the time, Ibn al-Shaykh al-Libi, is transferred from FBI to CIA custody and then flown to Egypt to be tortured by the Egyptian government (see [January 2002 and after](#)). Also in January, the CIA, not the FBI, begins secretly flying detainees to the US-controlled prison in Guantanamo, Cuba (see [January 14, 2002-2005](#)). Journalist James Risen will later comment, "By choosing the CIA over the FBI, [President] Bush was rejecting the law enforcement approach to fighting terrorism that had been favored during the Clinton era. Bush had decided that al-Qaeda was a national security threat, not a law enforcement problem, and he did not want al-Qaeda operatives brought back to face trial in the United States, where they would come under the strict rules of the American legal system." ([Risen 2006, pp. 28](#)) This change of policy culminates in the arrest of Abu Zubaida (see [March 28, 2002](#)). The

Washington Post will later report, “In March 2002, Abu Zubaida was captured, and the interrogation debate between the CIA and FBI began anew. This time, when FBI Director Robert S. Mueller III decided to withhold FBI involvement, it was a signal that the tug of war was over. ‘Once the CIA was given the green light... they had the lead role,’ said a senior FBI counterterrorism official.” ([Priest 6/27/2004](#)) The CIA decides that Guantanamo is too public and involves too many US agencies to hold important al-Qaeda detainees. By the time Zubaida is captured the CIA has already set up a secret prison in Thailand, and Zubaida is flown there just days after his capture (see [March 2002](#)). Risen will comment, “The CIA wanted secret locations where it could have complete control over the interrogations and debriefings, free from the prying eyes of the international media, free from monitoring by human rights groups, and most important, far from the jurisdiction of the American legal system.” ([Risen 2006, pp. 29-30](#))

January 2002 and after: CIA Given Control of Al-Libi, Renders Him to Egypt

At the request of CIA Director George Tenet, the White House orders the FBI to hand Ibn al-Shaykh al-Libi, a captured al-Qaeda operative being held in Afghanistan (see [December 19, 2001](#)), over to the CIA. One day before the transfer, a CIA officer enters al-Libi’s cell, interrupting an interrogation being conducted by FBI agent Russel Fincher, and tells al-Libi, “You’re going to Cairo, you know. Before you get there I’m going to find your mother and I’m going to f_ ck her.” Soon after, al-Libi is flown to Egypt. ([Hirsh, Barry, and Klaidman 6/21/2004](#); [Priest 6/27/2004](#); [Isikoff and Corn 2006, pp. 121](#)) Vincent Cannistraro, former head of the CIA’s Counter Terrorism Center, will later say, “He’s carried off to Egypt, who torture him. And we know that he’s going to be tortured. Anyone who’s worked on Egypt, has worked on other countries in the Middle East, knows that. Egyptians torture him, and he provides a lot of information.” ([Kirk 6/20/2006](#)) Al-Libi is said to provide his Egyptian interrogators with valuable intelligence about an alleged plot to blow up the US Embassy in Yemen with a truck bomb, and the location of Abu Zubaida, who will be captured in March 2002 (see [Mid-May 2002 and After](#)). However, in order to avoid harsh treatment he will also provide false information to the Egyptians, alleging that Iraq trained al-Qaeda members in bomb making and poisons and gases. ([Jehl 12/9/2005](#)) Both President Bush (see [October 7, 2002](#)) and Secretary of State Colin Powell (see [February 5, 2003](#)) will include these allegations in major speeches. The FBI has thus far taken the lead in interrogations of terrorist suspects, because its agents are the ones with most experience. The CIA’s apparent success with al-Libi contributes to the shift of interrogations from the bureau to the CIA. ([Priest 6/27/2004](#)) Such methods as making death threats, advocated by the CIA, are opposed by the FBI, which is used to limiting its questioning techniques so the results from interrogations can be used in court. ([Priest 6/27/2004](#)) “We don’t believe in coercion,” a senior FBI official says. ([Hersh 9/13/2004](#))

Early January 2002: Some Top Taliban Leaders Surrender Then Are Released



Mullah Obaidullah Akhund. *[Source: Public domain]* Seven former Taliban leaders surrender to the Northern Alliance near Kandahar, Afghanistan, but are released. Two are on a US list of twelve most wanted Taliban leaders: Defense Minister Mullah Obaidullah Akhund and Justice Minister Mullah Nooruddin Turabi. Akhund “is considered by American intelligence officials to have been one of the Taliban leaders closest to Mr. bin Laden.” The US military denies reports of their release, but officials of the new Afghan government confirm the account and are unrepentant about it. They claim they are following through on an announced policy to grant amnesty to any Taliban leaders who surrender. CNN reports, “Though US forces expressed interest in the men,... they accepted the Afghan decision to let them go, and have given no indication they are pursuing them...” This follows other accounts of Taliban leaders being released in December 2001 (see [December 24, 2001](#)). A senior Pakistani official will later note, “Unbelievably, not one [Taliban cabinet minister] was killed, arrested, or defected to opposition forces during the two-month-long, nonstop bombing.” It appears that the highest ranking Taliban leader to have been killed or captured is the deputy foreign minister, who was killed in a bombing raid. ([Baker and Khan 12/17/2001](#); [Glanz and Lipton 12/20/2001](#); [Graham and Sipress 1/10/2002](#); [CNN 1/10/2002](#)) Mullah Obaidullah Akhund will later become one of the most important leaders of the continued Taliban resistance. In 2004, it will be reported that Pakistan is allowing him and other Taliban leaders to freely come and go through Pakistan (see [August 18, 2005](#)). ([Burnett 7/11/2004](#))

January 1, 2002: Ex-Unocal Employee Becomes US Special Envoy to Afghanistan

Zalmay Khalilzad, already Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Gulf, Southwest Asia and Other Regional Issues, and a prominent neoconservative (see [May 23, 2001](#)), is appointed by Bush as a special envoy to Afghanistan. ([Fox 1/1/2002](#)) In his former role as Unocal adviser, Khalilzad participated in negotiations with the Taliban to build a pipeline through Afghanistan. He also wrote op-eds in the Washington Post in 1997 (see [October 7, 1996](#)) supporting the Taliban regime, back when Unocal was hoping to work with the Taliban. ([Sengupta and Gumbel 1/10/2002](#)) He will be appointed US ambassador to Afghanistan in 2003 (see [November 2003](#)).

January 4, 2002: Firefighter Magazine Scolds WTC Investigation

A firefighter trade magazine with ties to the New York Fire Department calls the investigation into the collapse of the WTC a “half-baked farce.” The article points out that the probe has not looked at all aspects of the disaster and has had limited access to documents and other evidence. “The destruction and removal of evidence must stop immediately.” The writer, Bill Manning, states, “I have combed through our national standard for fire investigation, NFPA 921, but nowhere in it does one find an exemption allowing the destruction of evidence for buildings over 10 stories tall.” He concludes that a growing number of fire protection engineers have theorized that “the structural damage from the planes and the explosive ignition of jet fuel in themselves were not enough to bring down the towers.” Yet, “[a]s things now stand and if they continue in such fashion, the investigation into the World Trade Center fire and collapse will amount to paper- and computer-generated hypotheticals.” ([Manning 1/2002](#); [Calderone 1/4/2002](#))

January 4, 2002: US Doctors Information About Al-Qaeda Militants



Defense Department pamphlet with a badly doctored photo of bin Laden. Note the blurry area around his neck. [*Source: US Defense Department*] It is reported that the State Department said Mohamed Atta “wanted to learn to fly, but didn’t need to take off and land” when this information clearly refers to Zacarias Moussaoui (although that story isn’t exactly true for him either (see [August 13-15, 2001](#))). It is also reported that the military dropped leaflets in Afghanistan which featured photos depicting bin Laden in Western clothing, with his hair cut short and beard shaved off. An expert says “Frankly, this is sloppy,” and the article calls these propaganda efforts “worthy of the tabloids.” ([Jelinek 1/4/2002](#))

January 5, 2002: FBI Interested in Captured Pakistani Militant Leader

The FBI has asked Pakistan for permission to question Maulana Masood Azhar, the leader of Jaish-e-Mohammed, according to reports. Pakistan arrested him on December 25, 2001, after US pressure to do so. One Pakistani official says, “The Americans are aware Azhar met bin Laden often, and are convinced he can give important information about bin Laden’s present whereabouts and even the September 11 attacks.” But the “primary reason” for US interest is the link between Azhar and Saeed Sheikh. They hope to learn about Saeed’s involvement in financing the 9/11 attacks. Whether Pakistan gives

permission to question Azhar is unclear. Four days later, the US officially asks Pakistan for help in finding and extraditing Saeed. ([Iqbal 1/5/2002](#))

January 6, 2002: Shoe Bomber Is Believed to Be Involved with Pakistani Jihadists



Ali Gilani. [Source: CNN]The Boston Globe reports that shoe bomber Richard Reid may have had ties with an obscure Pakistani group called Al-Fuqra. Reid apparently visited the Lahore, Pakistan, home of Ali Gilani, the leader of Al-Fuqra. ([Stockman 1/6/2002](#)) Reporter Daniel Pearl reads the article and decides to investigate. ([Anson 8/2002](#)) Pearl believes he is on his way to interview Gilani when he is kidnapped. ([Pittsburgh Tribune-Review 3/3/2002](#)) A 1995 State Department report said Al-Fuqra's main goal is "purifying Islam through violence." ([Anson 8/2002](#)) Intelligence experts now say Al-Fuqra is a splinter group of Jaish-e-Mohammed, with ties to al-Qaeda. ([Sale 1/29/2002](#)) Al-Fuqra claims close ties with the Muslims of the Americas, a US tax-exempt group claiming about 3,000 members living in rural compounds in 19 states, the Caribbean, and Europe. Members of Al-Fuqra are suspected of at least 13 fire bombings and 17 murders, as well as theft and credit-card fraud. Gilani, who had links to people involved in the 1993 WTC bombing, fled the US after the bombing. He admitted he works with the ISI, and now lives freely in Pakistan. ([Stockman 1/6/2002](#); [News \(Islamabad\) 2/15/2002](#); [Pittsburgh Tribune-Review 3/3/2002](#); [Anson 8/2002](#)) Saeed Sheikh "has long had close contacts" with the group, and praises Gilani for his "unexplained services to Pakistan and Islam." ([News \(Islamabad\) 2/18/2002](#); [Pittsburgh Tribune-Review 3/3/2002](#))

January 6, 2002: Mullah Omar Escapes Capture by US Military



Mullah Mohammed Omar. *[Source: CBC]* The US allegedly locates former Taliban leader Mullah Omar and 1,500 of his soldiers in the remote village of Baghran, Afghanistan. After a six-day siege, and surrounded by US helicopters and troops, Omar and four bodyguards supposedly escape the dragnet in a daring chase on motorcycles over dirt roads. His soldiers are set free in return for giving up their weapons, in a deal brokered by local leaders. Yet it remains unclear if Omar was ever in the village in the first place. ([Carroll 1/6/2002](#))

January 8, 2002: Intensive Search for Bin Laden and Mullah Omar in Afghanistan Comes to a Halt

Military spokesperson Navy Rear Adm. John Stufflebeem says, “We’re going to stop chasing... the shadows of where we thought [bin Laden and Mullah Omar were] and focus more on the entire picture of the country, where these pockets of resistance are, what do the anti-Taliban forces need, so that we can develop a better intelligence picture. The job is not complete and those leaders whom we wish to have from the al-Qaeda and Taliban chain of command, we are casting a wide net—a worldwide net, as well as regional, for where they are.” This announcement comes just two days after reports that Mullah Omar escaped an encirclement near Kandahar and fled into the nearby hills (see [January 6, 2002](#)). ([Reuters 1/8/2002](#))

January 9, 2002: Yoo Memo Says US Not Bound by International Laws in War on Terror

John Yoo, a neoconservative lawyer in the Justice Department’s Office of Legal Counsel serving as deputy assistant attorney general, writes a classified memo to senior Pentagon counsel William Haynes, titled “Application of Treaties and Law to al-Qaeda and Taliban Detainees.” ([Lewis 5/21/2004](#)) Yoo’s memo, written in conjunction with fellow Justice Department lawyer Robert Delahunty, echoes arguments by another Justice Department lawyer, Patrick Philbin, two months earlier (see [November 6, 2001](#)). Yoo states that, in his view, the laws of war, including the Geneva Conventions, do not apply to captured Taliban or al-Qaeda prisoners, nor do they apply to the military commissions set up to try such prisoners. Yoo’s memo goes even farther, arguing that no international laws apply to the US whatsoever, because they do not have any status under US federal law. “As a

result,” Yoo and Delahunty write, “any customary international law of armed conflict in no way binds, as a legal matter, the President or the US Armed Forces concerning the detention or trial of members of al-Qaeda and the Taliban.” In essence, Yoo and Delahunty argue that President Bush and the US military have *carte blanche* to conduct the global war on terrorism in any manner they see fit, without the restrictions of law or treaty. However, the memo says that while the US need not follow the rules of war, it can and should prosecute al-Qaeda and Taliban detainees for violating those same laws—a legal double standard that provokes sharp criticism when the memo comes to light in May 2004 (see [May 21, 2004](#)). Yoo and Delahunty write that this double standard may seem “at first glance, counter-intuitive,” such expansive legal powers are a product of the president’s constitutional authority “to prosecute the war effectively.” The memo continues, “Restricting the president’s plenary power over military operations (including the treatment of prisoners)” would be “constitutionally dubious.” ([Mother Jones 1/9/2002](#); [US Department of Justice 6/9/2002](#); [Isikoff 5/21/2004](#); [Lewis 5/21/2004](#)) The essence of Yoo’s argument is, says a Bush official, that the law “applies to them, but it doesn’t apply to us.” ([Isikoff 5/21/2004](#)) White House counsel and future Attorney General Alberto Gonzales agrees (see [January 25, 2002](#)), saying: “In my judgment, this new paradigm renders obsolete Geneva’s strict limitations on questioning of enemy prisoners and renders quaint some of its provisions.” ([Mother Jones 1/9/2002](#)) Many observers believe that Yoo’s memo is the spark for the torture and prisoner abuses later reported from Iraq’s Abu Ghraib prison (see [Evening November 7, 2003](#)), Guantanamo Bay (see [December 28, 2001](#)), and other clandestine prisoner detention centers (see March 2, 2007). The rationale is that since Afghanistan is what Yoo considers a “failed state,” with no recognizable sovereignty, its militias do not have any status under any international treaties. ([Isikoff 5/21/2004](#); [Barry, Hirsh, and Isikoff 5/24/2004](#)) Within days, the State Department will vehemently protest the memo, but to no practical effect (see [January 25, 2002](#)).

January 11, 2002: First Prisoners Transferred to Guantanamo Bay

Guantanamo receives its first twenty prisoners from the Afghan battlefield. ([Reuters 1/11/2002](#)) It is reported that the prisoners are hooded, shackled, and possibly drugged during their flight to Cuba. ([Goldenberg 1/11/2002](#)) Pictures of prisoners being transferred in conditions clearly in violation of international law are later leaked, prompting an outcry. But rather than investigating the inhumane transfer, the Pentagon begins investigating how the pictures were leaked. ([Associated Press 11/9/2002](#)) The prisoners are sent to this base—leased by Cuba to the US—because it is on foreign territory and therefore beyond the jurisdiction of US law (see [December 28, 2001](#)). ([Knox 9/5/2002](#)) Rumsfeld, acting on the advice of the Justice Department’s Office of Legal Counsel, publicly declares them “unlawful combatants” and thereby not entitled to the rights of the Geneva Conventions. “Unlawful combatants do not have any rights under the Geneva Convention,” Rumsfeld says. Though according to Rumsfeld, the government will “for the most part treat them in a manner that is reasonably consistent with the Geneva Conventions, to the extent they are appropriate.” ([Reuters 1/11/2002](#)) There is no

reason to feel sorry for these detainees, is Gen. Richard B. Myers' message, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the highest ranking military officer in the US. He assures: "These are people who would gnaw through hydraulic lines at the back of a C-17 to bring it down." ([Golden and van Natal 6/21/2004](#)) Senior British officials privately call the treatment of prisoners "scandalous," and one calls the refusal to follow the Geneva Convention "not benchmarks of a civilized society." ([Norton-Taylor 6/13/2002](#))

January 12, 2002: Pakistan Takes Half-Hearted Anti-Terrorism Measures

Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf makes "a forceful speech . . . condemning Islamic extremism." ([Hoagland 3/28/2002](#)) Around this time, he also arrests about 2,000 people he calls extremists. He is hailed in the Western media as redirecting the ISI to support the US agenda. Yet, by the end of the month, at least 800 of the arrested are set free ([Hoagland 3/28/2002](#)), including "most of their firebrand leaders." ([McGirk 5/6/2002](#)) Within one year, "almost all" of those arrested have been quietly released. Even the most prominent leaders, such as Maulana Masood Azhar, have been released. Their militant organizations are running again, most under new names. ([Lancaster and Khan 2/8/2003](#))

January 13, 2002: Former German Minister Believes CIA Is Responsible for 9/11



Andreas von Buelow. [*Source: Public domain*] Andreas von Bülöw, former German Minister for Research and Technology and a long-time member of German parliament, suggests in an interview that the CIA could have been behind the 9/11 attacks. He states: "Whoever wants to understand the CIA's methods, has to deal with its main task of covert operations: Below the level of war, and outside international law, foreign states are to be influenced by inciting insurrections or terrorist attacks, usually combined with drugs and weapons trade, and money laundering.... Since, however, it must not under any circumstances come out that there is an intelligence agency behind it, all traces are erased, with tremendous deployment of resources. I have the impression that this kind of intelligence agency spends 90 percent of its time this way: creating false leads. So that if anyone suspects the collaboration of the agencies, he is accused of paranoia. The truth often comes out only years later." ([Lebert and Thomma](#)

[1/13/2002](#)) In an example of covering tracks, Ephraim Halevy, head of Israel's Mossad from 1998 till 2002, claims, "Not one big success of the Mossad has ever been made public." ([CBS News 2/5/2003](#))

January 14, 2002: FBI Special Agent Concerned That Translator Is Protecting Surveillance Targets and Involved in Espionage

Dennis Saccher, the FBI's special agent in charge of Turkish counter-intelligence, invites FBI translator Sibel Edmonds into his office and shares with her his concern that Edmonds' co-worker, Melek Can Dickerson, is protecting surveillance targets at the American-Turkish Council (ATC). He shows her several translations of wiretapped conversations that Dickerson either marked as "not pertinent," or for which she provided only a brief summary indicating that the conversations were not important. When Edmonds tells Saccher that her department, at the request of Dickerson, no longer assigns translation tasks randomly and that certain targets, including the ATC, have been permanently attached to Dickerson, Saccher is shocked. "It sounds like espionage to me," he suggests. At Saccher's request, Edmonds and Kevin Taskasen, another translator, re-translate some of the conversations Dickerson had marked as "not pertinent." They agree to schedule a meeting with supervisor Mike Feghali on February 1 (see [February 1, 2002](#)). ([Grimaldi 6/19/2002](#); [Rose 9/2005](#))

Between January 14, 2002 and February 1, 2002: FBI Translator Re-Translates Wiretaps Assigned to Colleague; Discovers Colleague Buried Critical Information

FBI contract linguist Sibel Edmonds re-translates 17 of the "hundreds" of wiretapped conversations that had been originally translated or reviewed by co-worker Melek Can Dickerson. ([Deliso 8/15/2005](#)) She discovers that Dickerson marked as "not pertinent" every single file that included a reference to surveillance targets connected to the Turkish organizations with whom she had ties (see [November 2001](#)). One of those targets is a Turkish intelligence officer, who is a personal friend of Dickerson. Edmonds learns from the wiretaps that the officer had spies inside the US State Department and Pentagon seeking access to US military and intelligence secrets. ([CBS 10/27/2002](#)) The wiretaps also reveal that the group is involved in arms and drug smuggling and is tied into a complex network of governmental and private figures in several countries. ([United Press International 11/15/2005](#)) Additionally, Edmonds identifies hundreds of other instances where Dickerson's work obstructed investigations. For example, she learns from one conversation that a US State Department staffer agreed to accept \$7,000 in cash from certain individuals in the American-Turkish Council (ATC) in exchange for information. One wiretapped call discussed a payment to a Pentagon official, who seemed to be involved in weapons-procurement negotiations, while another suggested that Turkish

doctoral students had been placed at US research institutions in order to obtain information about black market nuclear weapons. Edmonds also hears discussions about the laundering of drug smuggling profits, the selling of classified military technologies, and a scheme to secretly give Republican Congressman Dennis Hastert tens of thousands of dollars in exchange for political favors and information. She becomes convinced that the American-Turkish Council (ATC) is being used as a front for criminal activity. ([Edmonds 7/1/2004](#); [Deliso 8/15/2005](#); [Rose 9/2005](#))

Before Mid-January 2002: Top CIA Official Reportedly Describes 9/11 as ‘Triumph’

According to former CIA officer Robert Baer, a high-ranking CIA official tells a reporter off-the-record that, “when the dust finally clears, Americans will see that September 11 was a triumph for the intelligence community, not a failure.” It is unclear why the CIA officer thinks this and the reporter who tells Baer this story is not named. However, Baer comments that if that is what the CIA thinks, “I’m scared to death of what lies ahead.” ([Baer 2002](#), pp. xxiii)

January 14, 2002-2005: Secret CIA Flights to Guantanamo Cross Airspace of European Countries



Prisoners being flown to Guantanamo. [*Source: Public domain*] Beginning in January 2002, when the US-controlled Guantanamo prison opens in Cuba, until at least 2005, over 700 suspects are secretly flown by the CIA to Guantanamo over the territories of European countries. Most prisoners come from Afghanistan or other places in the Middle East and

change planes at the Incirlik US military airbase in Turkey. Then they fly over Greek, Italian, and Portuguese airspace. About 170 other prisoners fly over or land in Spain. The first flight apparently takes place on January 14, and carries three British citizens known as the “Tipton Three” as well as others (see [January 13, 2002](#)). In 2007, the Council of Europe, Europe’s leading watchdog on human rights, will claim that European countries had breached the international convention against torture by giving the US secret permission to use its airspace. Moazzam Begg, a British prisoner at Guantanamo until 2005, will later recall his flight to Guantanamo. “Inside the plane there was a chain around our waist, and it connected to cuffs around my wrists, which were tied in the back, and to my ankles. We were seated but it was so painful not being able to speak, to hear, to breathe properly, to look, to turn left or right, to move your hands, stretch your legs, or anything.” ([Grey 11/25/2007](#)) All the member countries of NATO signed a secret agreement in late 2001 allowing blanket overflight clearances for any flight relating to terrorism (see [October 4 2001](#)).

January 17, 2002: Suicide Attack Alert Issued

Attorney General John Ashcroft warns that suicide attacks “might be expected because of confidential information” the US government has received. He further warns, in regards to the five most wanted terrorists, that “These men could be anywhere in the world” and “may be trained and prepared to commit future suicide terrorist acts.” ([NBC 1/17/2002](#))

January 20, 2002- March 20, 2002: Al-Qaeda Leader Who Worked with British Intelligence May Have Been Secretly Arrested

In January 2002, the Observer reports that Anas al-Liby, one of al-Qaeda’s top leaders, has been recently captured in Afghanistan. Al-Liby is considered one of bin Laden’s computer experts, and a long-time member of al-Qaeda’s ruling council. ([Burke et al. 1/20/2002](#)) In early March 2002, the London Times mentions al-Liby’s capture as an established fact. ([McGrory 3/11/2002](#)) Then, in late March 2002, the London Times and the Washington Post report that al-Liby has been recently captured in Sudan. Anonymous CIA sources and anonymous “senior administration officials” claim that al-Liby has been captured, but the Sudanese and US governments officially deny the arrest. The London Times says the arrest “has been kept a closely guarded secret.” Some senior officials who told the Post al-Liby had been arrested later change their account and say it was someone with a similar name. ([Leake and Grimston 3/17/2002](#); [Pincus and Mintz 3/19/2002](#); [Pincus 3/20/2002](#)) Al-Liby remains on the FBI’s most wanted list, with a \$25 million reward on his name. ([Lamb and Islamabad 5/8/2005](#)) Al-Liby appears to have collaborated with British intelligence to kill Libyan leader Colonel Mu’ ammar al-Qadhafi in 1996 and was allowed to openly live in Britain until 2000 (see [Late 1996-May 2000](#); [1996](#))

January 22, 2002: Saeed Sheikh and ISI Stage Attack in India

A crowd of mostly unarmed Indian police near the US Information Service building in Calcutta, India, is attacked by gunmen; four policemen are killed and 21 people injured. The gunmen escape. India claims that Aftab Ansari immediately calls to take credit, and India charges that the gunmen belong to Ansari's kidnapping ring are also connected to funding the 9/11 attacks in August 2001 (see [Early August 2001](#)). ([Bedi 1/24/2002](#); [Sharma 2/10/2002](#)) Saeed Sheikh and the ISI assist Ansari in the attack. ([Pittsburgh Tribune-Review 3/3/2002](#); [Anson 8/2002](#)) This is the fourth attack in which they have cooperated, including the 9/11 attacks, and attacks in October and December 2001.

January 22-25, 2002: India Tells FBI Director About Saeed Sheikh Connection to 9/11

FBI Director Mueller visits India, and is told by Indian investigators that Saeed Sheikh sent ransom money to hijacker Mohamed Atta in the US. In the next few days, Saeed is publicly blamed for his role with gangster Aftab Ansari in financing Atta and organizing the Calcutta attack (see [January 22, 2002](#)). ([Press Trust of India 1/22/2002](#); [Watson 1/23/2002](#); [Popham 1/24/2002](#); [France-Presse 1/27/2002](#); [Syal and Hastings 1/27/2002](#)) Meanwhile, on January 23, Saeed helps kidnap reporter Daniel Pearl and is later arrested. Also on January 23, Ansari is placed under surveillance after flying to Dubai, United Arab Emirates. On January 24, Mueller and US Ambassador to Pakistan Wendy Chamberlin discuss Saeed at a previously scheduled meeting with Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf. Apparently Saeed's role in Pearl's kidnapping is not yet known. ([Yost 2/24/2002](#)) On Mueller's way back to the US he flies to Dubai to pressure the government there to arrest Ansari and deport him to India. Ansari is arrested on February 5 and deported four days later. ([Sharma 2/10/2002](#); [Swami 2/16/2002](#); [India Today 2/25/2002](#))

January 23, 2002: Reporter Daniel Pearl Is Kidnapped While Investigating the ISI



Daniel Pearl. *[Source: Publicity photo]* Wall Street Journal report Daniel Pearl is kidnapped while investigating the ISI's connection to Islamic militant groups. ([O'Carroll 1/25/2002](#); [BBC 7/5/2002](#)) Saeed Sheikh is later convicted as the mastermind of the kidnap, and though it appears he lured Pearl into being kidnapped beginning January 11, the actual kidnapping is perpetrated by others who remain at large. ([Anson 8/2002](#); [Levine 1/23/2003](#)) The Guardian later suggests that Pearl must have been under ISI surveillance at the time of his kidnapping. "Any western journalist visiting Pakistan is routinely watched and followed. The notion that Daniel Pearl, setting up contacts with extremist groups, was not being carefully monitored by the Secret Services is unbelievable—and nobody in Pakistan believes it." ([Ali 4/5/2002](#)) Both al-Qaeda and the ISI appear to be behind the kidnapping. The overall mastermind behind the kidnapping seems to be Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, also mastermind of the 9/11 attacks. ([McGirk 1/26/2003](#); [Ressa 1/30/2003](#))

January 24, 2002: Cheney and Bush Pressure Senator to Avoid 9/11 Inquiry

Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle (D) later claims that on this day, Vice President Cheney calls him and urges that no 9/11 inquiry be made. President Bush repeats the request on January 28, and Daschle is repeatedly pressured thereafter. Newsweek summarizes one of these conversations: "Bush administration officials might say they're too busy running the war on terrorism to show up. Press the issue... and you risk being accused of interfering with the mission." ([Fineman 2/4/2002](#)) Cheney later disagrees: "Tom's wrong. He has, in this case, let's say a misinterpretation." ([Cornwell 5/27/2002](#))

January 25, 2002: Suspect Bosnian Charities Not Shut Down

It is reported that four charities operating in Bosnia are due to be shut down there within weeks. The four are Saudi High Relief Commission, Global Relief Foundation (GRF), Active Islamic Youth (AIO), and the Third World Relief Agency (TWRA). The Saudi High Commission is closely tied to the Saudi government and has given out hundreds of

millions of dollars in aid to Bosnia. At least three suspects recently arrested by the US worked for the Commission. In late 2001, GRF was shut down in the US and the UN shut its offices in nearby Kosovo (see [December 14, 2001](#)). In the early 1990s, TWRA funneled hundreds of millions of dollars worth of weapons to Bosnia in violation of a UN embargo (see [Mid-1991-1996](#)). A Bosnian police official says, “We have information that these groups are used to finance and support terrorism. There is also definitely money laundering here. And this laundering definitely shows evidence of sources in the narcotics and arms trades.” Bosnian Deputy Minister Rasim Kadic says, “A series of searches and other intelligence gathering proved activities and evidence that has no relationship to humanitarian work. Four groups have very suspicious financial dealings and other issues have made police very suspicious about these four groups.... We expect to make the hard decision to close some of these groups. We will say ‘Thank you for your help, but now you must go.’” Officials say have also discovered evidence of drug and weapons trafficking by the four charities. ([Prothero 1/25/2002](#)) But in fact, the four charities are not shut down in Bosnia, except for GRF, which will have its offices there shut near the end of 2002. ([BBC 11/28/2002](#)) In 2004, there will be reports that TWRA is operating in the Czech Republic. ([BBC 3/15/2004](#)) And in 2005, counterterrorism expert Rohan Gunaratna will tell an Austrian newspaper that TWRA is still tied to radical militants and still active there. ([BBC 6/14/2005](#))

January 25, 2002: Yoo Memo Draws Fire from State Department and Others

Two weeks after Justice Department lawyers John Yoo and Robert Delahunty write a memo saying that the US should not be bound by international laws covering warfare and torture (see [January 9, 2002](#)), White House counsel Alberto Gonzales concurs (see [January 25, 2002](#)), saying: “In my judgment, this new paradigm renders obsolete Geneva’s strict limitations on questioning of enemy prisoners and renders quaint some of its provisions.” ([Mother Jones 1/9/2002](#)) But others inside and outside the administration strongly disagree. Many will later point to Yoo and Delahunty’s memo as providing the “spark” for the torture and prisoner abuses reported from Iraq’s Abu Ghraib prison (see [Evening November 7, 2003](#)), Guantanamo Bay (see [December 28, 2001](#)), and other clandestine prisoner detention centers (see March 2, 2007). Human Rights Watch director Kenneth Roth will call the memo a “maliciously ideological or deceptive” document that ignores US obligations under multiple international agreements. “You can’t pick or choose what laws you’re going to follow,” Roth will observe. “These political lawyers set the nation on a course that permitted the abusive interrogation techniques” disclosed in later months. Scott Horton, president of the International League for Human Rights, agrees. When you read the memo, Horton says, “the first thing that comes to mind is that this is not a lofty statement of policy on behalf of the United States. You get the impression very quickly that it is some very clever criminal defense lawyers trying to figure out how to weave and bob around the law and avoid its applications.” Two days later, the State Department, whose lawyers are “horrificed” by the Yoo memo, vehemently disagrees with its position (see [January 11, 2002](#)). Three weeks later, State again criticizes the memo (see [February 2, 2002](#)). State senior counsel William Howard Taft IV

points out that the US depends itself on the even observations of international law, and that following Yoo's recommendations may undermine attempts to prosecute detainees under that same body of law. Secretary of State Colin Powell "hit[s] the roof" when he reads Gonzales's response to the Yoo memo, warning that adopting such a legal practice "will reverse over a century of US policy and practice" and have "a high cost in terms of negative international reaction" (see [January 26, 2002](#)). The Bush administration will give in a bit to Powell's position, announcing that it will allow Geneva to apply to the Afghan war—but not to Taliban and al-Qaeda prisoners. State Department lawyers call it a "hollow" victory for Powell, leaving the administration's position essentially unchanged. ([Isikoff 5/21/2004](#); [Barry, Hirsh, and Isikoff 5/24/2004](#))

January 27, 2002: Cheney Says Bin Laden 'Isn't That Big a Threat'

Vice President Cheney says, "And we want bin Laden, and I think we will get him, but I'm more concerned about disrupting all of these terrorist cells out there. Bin Laden by himself isn't that big a threat. Bin Laden connected to this worldwide organization of terror is a threat. We're going to go after him, but we're also after the network." ([Cheney 1/27/2002](#))

January 28, 2002: Daniel Pearl's Kidnappers Make Odd Demands for His Release

Reporter Daniel Pearl's kidnappers e-mail the media a picture of Pearl and a list of very strange demands. ([BBC 7/5/2002](#)) The kidnappers call themselves "The National Movement for the Restoration of Pakistani Sovereignty," a previously unheard of name. ([Anson 8/2002](#)) Their demands include the return of US-held Pakistani prisoners and the departure of US journalists from Pakistan. ([ABC News 2/7/2002](#)) Most unusually, they demand that the US sell F-16 fighters to Pakistan. No militant group had ever shown interest in the F-16's, but this demand and the others reflect the desires of Pakistan's military and the ISI to obtain the fighters. ([Fielding 4/21/2002](#); [McCarthy 7/16/2002](#)) On January 29, "a senior Pakistani official," presumably from the ISI, leaks the fact that Pearl is Jewish to the Pakistani press. This may have been an attempt to ensure the kidnappers would want to murder him, which they do shortly thereafter. ([Anson 8/2002](#)) On the same day, it is reported that US intelligence believes the kidnappers are connected to the ISI. ([Sale 1/29/2002](#))

January 29, 2002: Bush Labels Iraq, Iran, and North Korea an 'Axis of Evil,' Ending Cooperation with Iran

President Bush's State of the Union speech describes an "axis of evil" consisting of Iraq, Iran, and North Korea. Bin Laden is not mentioned in the speech. ([US President 2/4/2002](#)) Bush says, "States like these and their terrorist allies, constitute an axis of evil,

arming to threaten the peace of the world. By seeking weapons of mass destruction, these regimes pose a grave and growing danger. They could provide these arms to terrorists, giving them the means to match their hatred. They could attack our allies or attempt to blackmail the United States. In any of these cases, the price of indifference would be catastrophic.” Bush goes on to suggest for the first time that the US might be prepared to launch pre-emptive wars by saying, “The United States of America will not permit the world’s most dangerous regimes to threaten us with the world’s most destructive weapons.” ([Burrough et al. 5/2004](#)) When Bush advisor Richard Perle was asked one month before 9/11 about new challenges the US faced, he replied by naming these exact three countries (see [August 6, 2001](#)). Michael Gerson, head of the White House speechwriting team at the time, will later claim that, as Newsweek will later put it, “Bush was already making plans to topple Saddam Hussein, but he wasn’t ready to say so.” Iran and North Korea are inserted into the speech in order to avoid focusing solely on Iraq. The speech is followed by a new public focus on Iraq and a downplaying of bin Laden (see [September 15, 2001-April 6, 2002](#)). Prior to the speech, the Iranian government had been very helpful in the US fight against the Taliban, since the Taliban and Iran were enemies. ([Hirsh and Bahari 2/12/2007](#)) At the time, al-Qaeda operatives has been streaming into Iran from Afghanistan following the defeat of the Taliban. Iran has been turning over hundreds of suspects to US allies and provided US intelligence with the names, photographs, and fingerprints of those it is holding. ([Linzer 2/10/2007](#)) Newsweek will later say that it is “beyond doubt” the Iranian government was “critical... to stabilizing [Afghanistan] after the fall of Kabul.” But all this cooperation comes to an end after the speech. Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Mohammad Hossein Adeli will later say that, “Those [inside the Iranian government] who were in favor of a rapprochement with the United States were marginalized. The speech somehow exonerated those who had always doubted America’s intentions.” ([Hirsh and Bahari 2/12/2007](#))

January 31, 2002: Reporter Daniel Pearl Is Murdered by Pakistani Kidnappers



Reporter Daniel Pearl moments before he is killed.
[Source: Associated Press] Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl is murdered. He is

reported dead on February 21; his mutilated body is found months later. Police investigators say “there were at least eight to ten people present on the [murder] scene” and at least 15 who participated in his kidnapping and murder. “Despite issuing a series of political demands shortly after Pearl’s abduction four weeks ago, it now seems clear that the kidnappers planned to kill Pearl all along.” ([Anderson and Baker 2/23/2002](#)) Some captured participants later claim 9/11 mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed is the one who cuts Pearl’s throat. ([MSNBC 9/17/2002](#); [McGirk 1/26/2003](#)) The land on which Pearl was held and murdered reportedly belongs to either the Al Rashid Trust, or one of its supporters, Saud Memon. The Al Rashid Trust, an ostensibly charitable organization that US intelligence linked to the financing of al-Qaeda, is closely linked to the jihadi organization Jaish-i-Mohammed and was one of the very first organizations to have its assets frozen after 9/11. It may have been used to funnel money to the 9/11 hijackers in the US (see [Early August 2001](#) and [September 24, 2001](#)). ([McGirk 1/26/2003](#); [Ansari 5/9/2004](#); [Mir 4/2/2006](#))

(Early 2002): FBI Whistleblower Threatened with Investigation

At some point during Sibel Edmonds’ effort to report her concerns about potentially major security breaches in the FBI’s translation department (see, e.g., [December 2, 2001](#)), she is told by a superior in the counterintelligence squad: “I’ll bet you’ve never worked in government before. We do things differently. We don’t name names, and we usually sweep the dirt under the carpet.” ([Sheehy 1/22/2004](#)) On another occasion, an assistant special agent allegedly tells her: “Do you realize what you are saying here in your allegations? Are you telling me that our security people are not doing their jobs? Is that what you’re telling me? If you insist on this investigation, I’ll make sure in no time it will turn around and become an investigation about you.” ([CBS News 10/25/2002](#))

February 2002: US Military Determined to Avoid Counter-Narcotics Operations in Afghanistan

According to one former National Security Council official, Undersecretary of Defense Doug Feith argues in a White House meeting that since counter-narcotics is not part of the war on terrorism, the Pentagon doesn’t want to get involved in it. The former official complains, “We couldn’t get [the US military] to do counter-narcotics in Afghanistan.” Author James Risen comments, “American troops were there to fight terrorists, not suppress the poppy crop, and Pentagon officials didn’t see a connection between the two. The Pentagon feared that counter-narcotics operations would force the military to turn on the very same warlords who were aiding the United States against the Taliban, and that would lead to another round of violent attacks on American troops.” ([Risen 2006, pp. 154](#)) Immediately after 9/11, the US had decided not to bomb drug-related targets in Afghanistan and continued not to do so (see [Shortly After September 11, 2001](#)).

February 2002: US Criticism Results in Iran Expelling Al-Qaeda-Linked Warlord to Afghanistan



Flynt Leverett. *[Source: Publicity photo]* In the wake of the 9/11 attacks, Iran is supportive of US efforts to defeat the Taliban, since the Taliban and Iran have opposed each other. In 2006, Flynt Leverett, the senior director for Middle East affairs on the National Security Council in 2002 and 2003, will recall this cooperation between Iran and the US in a heavily censored New York Times editorial. Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, a notorious Afghan warlord with close ties to bin Laden (see [1984](#)), had been living in Iran since the Taliban came to power in the 1990s. Leverett claims that in December 2001 Iran agrees to prevent Hekmatyar from returning to Afghanistan to help lead resistance to US-allied forces there, as long as the Bush administration does not criticize Iran for harboring terrorists. “But, in his January 2002 State of the Union address, President Bush did just that in labeling Iran part of the ‘axis of evil’ (see [January 29, 2002](#)). Unsurprisingly, Mr. Hekmatyar managed to leave Iran in short order after the speech.” ([Leverett and Mann 12/22/2006](#)) Hekmatyar apparently returns to Afghanistan around February 2002. He will go on to become one of the main leaders of the armed resistance to the US-supported Afghan government. Iranian cooperation with the US over Afghanistan will continue in a more limited manner, with Iran deporting hundreds of suspected al-Qaeda and Taliban operatives who had fled Afghanistan, while apparently keeping others. But the US will end this cooperation in 2003. ([BBC 2/14/2002](#); [Slavin 5/21/2003](#); [Leverett and Mann 12/22/2006](#))

February 2002: DIA Suggests Prisoner Probably Lying about Al-Qaeda Ties to Iraq; But His Allegations Will Be Used in Bush Speech Later

The Defense Intelligence Agency issues a four-page Defense Intelligence Terrorism Summary (DITSUM No. 044-02) stating that it is probable that prisoner Ibn al-Shaykh al-Libi intentionally misled debriefers when he claimed Iraq was supporting al-Qaeda in working with illicit weapons. During interviews with al-Libi, the DIA noted the Libyan al-Qaeda operative could not name any Iraqis involved, any chemical or biological material used, or where the alleged training took place. “It is possible he does not know any further details; it is more likely this individual is intentionally misleading the debriefers,” the report says. “Ibn al-Shaykh has been undergoing debriefs for several

weeks and may be describing scenarios to the debriefers that he knows will retain their interest.” Information supplied by al-Libi will be the basis for a claim included in an October 2002 speech (see [October 7, 2002](#)) by Bush, in which the president states, “[W]e’ve learned that Iraq has trained al-Qaeda members in bomb making and poisons and gases.” Intelligence provided by al-Libi will also be included in Colin Powell’s February speech (see [February 5, 2003](#)) to the UN. In that speech, Powell will cite “the story of a senior terrorist operative telling how Iraq provided training in these weapons to al-Qaeda.” On the general subject of Iraq’s alleged ties to al-Qaeda, the DIA report notes: “Saddam’s regime is intensely secular and is wary of Islamic revolutionary movements. Moreover, Baghdad is unlikely to provide assistance to a group it cannot control.” The report also questions the reliability of information provided by high-value al-Qaeda detainees being held in secret CIA facilities or who have been “rendered” to foreign countries where they are believed to undergo harsh interrogation tactics. The DIA report is presumably circulated widely within the government, and is available to the CIA, the White House, the Pentagon, the National Security Council, and other agencies. ([Jehl 11/6/2005](#); [Pincus 11/6/2005](#); [Isikoff and Hosenball 11/10/2005](#))

February 2002: Remote Drone Targeting Bin Laden Kills Three Innocent Civilians Instead

US Central Command watches as a Predator drone captures images of a very tall man being greeted by a small group of people. It is quickly agreed the tall man could be Osama bin Laden, who is known to be tall. Within minutes, approval is given to launch a Hellfire missile from the Predator. By this time, the tall man has broken off from the group with two others. The missile hones in on him and kills him and his two companions. Journalists later report that the men were villagers who had been scavenging in the woods for scrap metal. ([Hersh 12/16/2002](#))

February 2002: Powell’s Proposal to Secure All of Afghanistan Is Rejected by Rumsfeld

Secretary of State Colin Powell argues in a White House meeting that US troops should join the small international peacekeeping force patrolling Kabul, Afghanistan, and help Hamid Karzai extend his influence beyond just the capital of Kabul. The State Department has held initial talks with European officials indicating that a force of 20,000 to 40,000 peacekeepers could be created, half from Europe and half from the US. But Defense Secretary Rumsfeld asserts that the Europeans would be unwilling to send more troops. He argues that sending more troops could provoke Afghan resistance and divert US forces from hunting terrorists. National Security Adviser Rice fails to take sides, causing Powell’s proposal to effectively die. In the end, the US only deploys 8,000 troops to Afghanistan in 2002, but all of them are there to hunt down Taliban and al-Qaeda, not to assist with peacekeeping or reconstruction. The 4,000 international peacekeepers do not venture beyond Kabul and the rest of the country remains under the de facto control of local warlords. ([Rohde and Sanger 8/12/2007](#))

February 1, 2002: FBI Supervisors Cancels Meeting with Whistleblowers Concerned about Security Violations in Translation Center

Before their scheduled meeting with FBI supervisor Mike Feghali, translators Sibel Edmonds and Kevin Taskasen meet with FBI field agent Dennis Saccher to discuss how they will present their findings to Feghali on efforts by translator Melek Can Dickerson to protect certain surveillance targets. After the short pre-meeting, they take an elevator and run into Feghali who—unaware that the two translators had just met with Saccher—tells them that Saccher can't make the meeting because "he's been sent out somewhere in the field." Saccher later tells Edmonds that he had been told the meeting was postponed. After the meeting, Saccher's superiors order him off the case and, in an unprecedented move, prohibit him from obtaining copies of Edmond's translations, even though he is the one in charge of Turkish counter-intelligence. He chooses not to resist, citing his concern that he might be assigned "to some fucked-up office in the land of tornadoes." ([Rose 9/2005](#)) In a 2005 interview, Edmonds will assert that the efforts to bury her allegations did not originate in the FBI, but rather "came directly from the Department of State." According to Edmonds, the State Department was concerned that her findings might jeopardize high-level criminal operations involving certain US allies. ([Deliso 8/15/2005](#))

Between February 1, 2002 and February 11, 2002: FBI Whistleblower Reassigned to Windowless Office; Given Permission to Write Description of Allegations at Home

FBI contract translator Sibel Edmonds is reassigned to the windowless office of translation-department supervisor Stephanie Bryan. Bryan instructs Edmonds to write a confidential memo explaining her allegations and gives her permission to write it at home. She turns in the memo on February 11. ([Bridis 1/14/2005](#); [Rose 9/2005](#))

February 5, 2002: Saeed Sheikh Secretly Turns Himself In to His ISI Bosses



Sheikh Sheikh photographed while in secret custody in February 2002. [Source: *CNN*] Pakistani police, with the help of the FBI, determine Saeed Sheikh is behind the kidnapping of Daniel Pearl, but are unable to find him. They round up about ten of his relatives and threaten to harm them unless he turns himself in. Saeed Sheikh does turn himself in, but to Ijaz Shah, his former ISI boss. ([Donnelly 2/7/2002](#); [Anson 8/2002](#)) The ISI holds Saeed for a week, but fails to tell Pakistani police or anyone else that they have him. This “missing week” is the cause of much speculation. The ISI never tells Pakistani police any details about this week. ([Moreau et al. 3/11/2002](#)) Saeed also later refuses to discuss the week or his connection to the ISI, only saying, “I will not discuss this subject. I do not want my family to be killed.” He adds, “I know people in the government and they know me and my work.” ([Klaidman 3/13/2002](#); [Anson 8/2002](#)) It is suggested Saeed is held for this week to make sure that Pearl would be killed. Saeed later says that during this week he got a coded message from the kidnappers that Pearl had been murdered. Also, the time might have been spent working out a deal with the ISI over what Saeed would tell police and the public. ([Moreau et al. 3/11/2002](#)) Several others with both extensive ISI and al-Qaeda ties wanted for the kidnapping are arrested around this time. ([Anderson and Baker 2/23/2002](#); [Hussain and Whitworth 2/25/2002](#)) One of these men, Khalid Khawaja, “has never hidden his links with Osama bin Laden. At one time he used to fly Osama’s personal plane.” ([Pakistan News Service \(Newark, CA\) 2/11/2002](#))

February 6, 2002: Tenet Is Proud of CIA’s Handling of 9/11

CIA Director Tenet tells a Senate hearing that there was no 9/11 intelligence failure. When asked about the CIA record on 9/11, he says, “We are proud of that record.” He also states that the 9/11 plot was “in the heads of three or four people” and thus nearly impossible to prevent. ([Nichols and Slavin 2/7/2002](#))

February 6, 2002: Western Media Largely Ignores Links Between Saeed Sheikh, ISI, and 9/11

Pakistani police publicly name Saeed Sheikh and a Islamic militant group he belongs to, Jaish-e-Mohammed, as those responsible for reporter Daniel Pearl's murder. ([Burke and McCarthy 2/24/2002](#)) In the next several months, at least 12 Western news articles mention Saeed's links to al-Qaeda ([ABC News 2/7/2002](#); [Donnelly 2/7/2002](#); [Yost 2/24/2002](#); [Miller 3/15/2002](#)) , including his financing of 9/11 ([Goldiner 2/7/2002](#); [Costello and Wedeman 2/8/2002](#); [Gannon 2/9/2002](#); [McCarthy 2/9/2002](#); [Popham 2/10/2002](#); [Kher 2/10/2002](#); [Miller 2/10/2002](#); [Dovkants 2/12/2002](#); [Mohan and Gettleman 2/13/2002](#); [Miller 2/22/2002](#); [Mackay 2/24/2002](#); [USA Today 3/8/2002](#)) , and at least 16 articles mention his links to the ISI. ([Cox News Service 2/21/2002](#); [Burke and McCarthy 2/24/2002](#); [Khan and West 2/24/2002](#); [Newsweek 2/25/2002](#); [Jehl 2/25/2002](#); [Smith 2/25/2002](#); [Cienski 2/26/2002](#); [Boston Globe 2/28/2002](#); [Moreau et al. 3/11/2002](#); [Klaidman 3/13/2002](#); [Ali 4/5/2002](#); [Allen 4/5/2002](#)) However, many other articles fail to mention either link. Only a few articles consider that Saeed could have been connected to both groups at the same time ([Hussain and Whitworth 2/25/2002](#); [Pittsburgh Tribune-Review 3/3/2002](#); [Fielding 4/21/2002](#)) , and apparently, only one of these mentions he could be involved in the ISI, al-Qaeda, and financing 9/11. ([Fielding 4/21/2002](#)) By the time Saeed is convicted of Pearl's murder in July 2002, Saeed's possible connections to al-Qaeda and/or the ISI are virtually unreported in US newspapers, while many British newspapers are still making one or the other connection.

February 6, 2002: US Officials Claim CIA Has Not Linked Hussein to Terrorism, WMDs, or Al-Qaeda for Many Years

Unnamed US intelligence officials tell the New York Times that the CIA has no evidence that Saddam Hussein's government has participated in any militant operations against the United States in nearly a decade. The agency also believes that Saddam Hussein has not provided chemical or biological weapons to al-Qaeda or other militant Islamic organizations. ([Risen 2/6/2002](#) Sources: Unnamed US Intelligence Officials)

February 7, 2002: White House Declares Geneva Convention Does Not Apply to Taliban or Al-Qaeda

The White House declares that the United States will apply the Geneva Conventions to the conflict in Afghanistan, but will not grant prisoner-of-war status to captured Taliban and al-Qaeda fighters. Though Afghanistan was party to the 1949 treaty, Taliban fighters are not protected by the Conventions, the directive says, because the Taliban is not recognized by the US as Afghanistan's legitimate government. Likewise, al-Qaeda fighters are not eligible to be protected under the treaty's provisions because they do not represent a state that is party to the Conventions either. The presidential directive is apparently based on Alberto Gonzales' January 25 memo (see [January 25, 2002](#)). The directive also concludes that President Bush, as commander-in-chief of the United States, has the authority to suspend the Geneva Conventions regarding the conflict in Afghanistan, should he feel necessary. Though not scheduled for declassification until

2012, the directive will be released by the White House in June 2004 to demonstrate that the president never authorized torture against detainees from the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. ([CNN 2/7/2002](#); [Barry, Hirsh, and Isikoff 5/24/2004](#); [Cohn 1/19/2005](#))

After February 7, 2002: Bush Authorizes Secret CIA Prison System



The Salt Pit, a secret CIA prison near Kabul, Afghanistan. [Source: *Space Imaging Middle East*] President George Bush signs a secret order authorizing the CIA to set up a network of secret detention and interrogation centers outside the United States where high value prisoners can be interrogated “with unprecedented harshness.” ([Barry, Hirsh, and Isikoff 5/24/2004](#)) This takes place shortly after February 7, 2002, when Bush declared that al-Qaeda and Taliban prisoners were not subject to the Geneva Convention (see [February 7, 2002](#)). The first secret CIA prison will begin operating in Thailand in March 2002 (see [March 2002](#)).

After February 7, 2002: US Makes Agreements with Other Countries to Set Up Secret CIA Prisons

The US negotiates “status of force” agreements with several foreign governments allowing the US to set up CIA-run interrogation facilities and granting immunity to US personnel and private contractors. The facilities were authorized by a recent secret presidential directive (see [After February 7, 2002](#)). ([Barry, Hirsh, and Isikoff 5/24/2004](#)) The CIA-run centers are kept completely under wraps. Prisoners are secretly held in custody and hidden from International Human rights organizations. In these facilities, there will be several incidents of abuse, torture, and murder. ([International Committee of the Red Cross 2/24/2004](#) [Ⓐ]; [Priest and Stephens 5/11/2004](#); [Risen, Johnston, and Lewis 5/13/2004](#)) These secret detentions centers will be operated in several locations around the world including:

Afghanistan - Asadabad, Kabul, Jalalabad, Gardez, Khost, Bagram, Kabul (known as “the Pit”). ([First 6/2004](#) [Ⓐ]; [Human Rights First 6/17/2004](#))

Pakistan - Kohat (near the border of Afghanistan), Alizai. ([First 6/2004](#) [Ⓐ]; [Human Rights](#)

[First 6/17/2004](#))

Britain - Diego Garcia (British Possession in the Indian Ocean). ([First 6/2004](#) [Ⓐ]; [Human Rights First 6/17/2004](#))

Jordan - Al Jafr Prison. ([First 6/2004](#) [Ⓐ]; [Human Rights First 6/17/2004](#))

United States naval ships at sea - USS Bataan, USS Peleliu. ([First 6/2004](#) [Ⓐ]; [Human Rights First 6/17/2004](#))

Thailand - Inside an unknown US military base, which is the first to become operational in March 2002 (see [March 2002](#)). ([Ross and Esposito 12/5/2005](#))

February 9, 2002: Pakistani and Afghan Leaders Revive Afghanistan Pipeline Idea

Pakistani President Musharraf and Afghan leader Hamid Karzai announce their agreement to “cooperate in all spheres of activity” including the proposed Central Asian pipeline, which they call “in the interest of both countries.” ([Irish Times 2/9/2002](#); [Hussain 9/2/2002](#))

February 9, 2002: Pakistani Gangster Admits Ties to ISI, Saeed Sheikh, and Terrorism



Aftab Ansari in Indian custody shortly after being arrested.

[Source: Rajeev Bhatt] Gangster Aftab Ansari is deported to India. He was arrested in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, on February 5. ([Popham 2/10/2002](#)) He admits funding attacks through kidnapping ransoms, and building a network of arms and drug smuggling. ([Deutsche Presse-Agentur \(Hamburg\) 2/11/2002](#)) He later also admits to close ties with the ISI and Saeed Sheikh, whom he befriended in prison. ([Press Trust of India 5/13/2002](#))

February 10, 2002: Driver's License Examiner Dies in Suspicious Circumstances

Katherine Smith is killed one day before her scheduled appearance in court on charges she helped five Islamic men get illegal drivers licenses. According to witnesses, she veered into a utility pole when a fire erupted in her car. She was burned beyond recognition. The FBI later determines that gasoline was poured on her clothing before she died in the fire and find that arson was the cause of death. ([Breed and Poovey 2/15/2002](#)) A suicide note was found, but prosecutors say they are looking for murder suspects. One of the five men, Sakhera Hammad, was found with a pass in his wallet giving access to the restricted areas of the WTC, dated September 5, 2001. Hammad claims he was a plumber and worked on the WTC's sprinkler system that day, but the company with exclusive rights to all WTC plumbing work has never heard of him. Smith was being investigated by the FBI; the five later plead guilty to charges of fraud. ([Bailey 2/12/2002](#); [Associated Press 2/13/2002](#); [Reuters 2/15/2002](#); [Buser 2/21/2002](#)) One of the five, Khaled Odtillah, drove from New York City to Memphis on 9/11. Tennessee is one of only four US states that doesn't require a Social Security card to get a driver's license. A prosecutor accuses each of the five men of attempting to acquire a "completely false and untraceable identity." ([Poovey 2/12/2002](#); [Breed and Poovey 2/15/2002](#)) One month later, the coroner who examines her body is targeted by a bomb, which is defused. Then in June the coroner is attacked, bound with barbed wire, and left with a bomb tied to his body, but he survives. ([Jones 3/14/2002](#))

February 12, 2002: ISI Deliver Saeed Sheikh to Pakistani Police

Saeed Sheikh, already in ISI custody for a week, is handed over to Pakistani police. Shortly afterwards, he publicly confesses to his involvement in reporter Daniel Pearl's murder. Later he will recant this confession. It appears that initially he thought he would get a light sentence. Newsweek describes him initially "confident, even cocky," saying he would only serve three to four years if convicted, and would never be extradited. ([Moreau et al. 3/11/2002](#)) He is sentenced in July 2002 to hang instead. Pakistani militants respond to his arrest with three suicide attacks that kill more than 30 people. ([McCarthy 7/16/2002](#))

February 12, 2002: Ashcroft Calls for 'Highest State of Alert'

Attorney General John Ashcroft says "I want to encourage...all Americans everywhere to be on the highest state of alert." The FBI warns of a threat from Yemeni or Saudi Arabian terrorists who may be planning an imminent attack. ([CNN 2/12/2002](#)) It is later revealed that the threat hadn't been corroborated by other US intelligence agencies. In addition, the threat actually indicated a more likely attack in Yemen. This announcement was made the same day that Enron CEO Kenneth Lay appeared before Congress. A week earlier, the White House had been ordered to refrain from destroying any documentation related to Enron. ([Dreyfuss 9/21/2006](#))

Afternoon February 12, 2002: FBI Translator Submits Formal Memo Alleging Security Breaches by Co-Worker in Department

FBI translator Sibel Edmonds submits a confidential memo (see [Between February 1, 2002 and February 11, 2002](#)) alleging that co-translator Melek Can Dickerson shielded Turkish officials from an FBI investigation by failing to translate important wiretapped conversations. Edmonds' supervisor, Stephanie Bryan, passes the memo onto supervisory special agent Tom Fields. But Fields says he will not look at the memo until after Dickerson and supervisor Mike Feghali have reviewed and commented on it. Shortly after submitting the memo, Edmonds is informed that she is being investigated by the bureau's security department because she wrote the memo on a home computer, even though she had received explicit permission to do so (see [Between February 1, 2002 and February 11, 2002](#)). Before leaving the office, Dickerson allegedly comes over to her and says, "Why are you doing this, Sibel? Why don't you just drop it? You know there could be serious consequences. Why put your family in Turkey in danger over this?" ([Sheehy 1/22/2004](#); [Rose 9/2005](#)) The following day, three FBI agents come to the home of Sibel and Matthew Edmonds and seize their computer. ([Bridis 1/14/2005](#); [Rose 9/2005](#))

February 13, 2002: Al-Qaeda Stops Using Monitored Communications Hub after Shootout



A safe house in Sana'a, Yemen, where Samir al-Hada was hiding. [*Source: CNN*] Samir al-Hada, an al-Qaeda operative who helped run a vital al-Qaeda communications hub in Sana'a, Yemen (see [Late 1998-Early 2002](#)), dies while being pursued by Yemeni police. The Yemeni police were tipped off by Samir's landlord that he was planning to flee the country when he failed to produce identity documents to renew his lease. The police stake out his hideout for a week but he escapes and, during the chase, a grenade explodes in his hand and kills him. He was the brother-in-law of 9/11 hijacker Khalid Almihdhar. ([BBC 2/13/2002](#); [Whitaker 2/14/2002](#); [CNN 2/14/2002](#); [Arrabyee 2/21/2002](#)) After the attack, the police search the house where al-Hada had been staying and seize weapons, documents, books, a mobile phone, and a piece of paper containing phone numbers. ([CBS News 2/13/2002](#); [BBC 2/15/2002](#)) The al-Hada hub was used in planning the embassy bombings in 1998 (see [August 5-25, 1998](#) and [October 4, 2001](#)), the attack on the USS *Cole* in 2000 (see [October 14-Late November, 2000](#)), and

9/11 (see [Early 2000-Summer 2001](#)). It had been monitored by the NSA since the late 1990s (see [Late August 1998](#) and [Early 1999](#)). Ahmed al-Hada is in Yemeni custody by 2006; it has not been stated when or how he was captured. ([Wright 2006, pp. 378](#)) It appears that the communications hub is no longer functional after al-Hada's death, as there are no more references to it operating, several of the al-Hada clan are rounded up, the hub is again discussed by the media (see [February 2001 and After](#)), and the clan's patriarch, Ahmed al-Hada, is again named in the media. ([Milwaukee Journal Sentinel 2/14/2002](#); [CNN 2/14/2002](#); [Arrabyee 2/21/2002](#))

(February 13, 2002): FBI Translations Supervisor Dismisses Allegations by Whistleblower in Memo to Superiors

Mike Feghali, the supervisor of the FBI's translations center, writes in a memo to his superiors that "there was no basis" for Sibel Edmonds's allegations (see [Afternoon February 12, 2002](#)) that FBI translator Melek Can Dickerson had shielded Turkish officials from FBI investigation by failing to provide field agents with accurate transcripts of wiretapped conversations. ([Rose 9/2005](#))

February 14, 2002: US Military Bases Line Afghan Pipeline Route

The Israeli newspaper Ma'ariv notes: "If one looks at the map of the big American bases created [in the Afghan war], one is struck by the fact that they are completely identical to the route of the projected oil pipeline to the Indian Ocean." Ma'ariv also states, "Osama bin Laden did not comprehend that his actions serve American interests... If I were a believer in conspiracy theory, I would think that bin Laden is an American agent. Not being one I can only wonder at the coincidence." ([Muwakkil 3/18/2002](#))

February 16, 2002: Bush Directs CIA to Conduct Operations in Iraq

Bush signs an intelligence finding directing the CIA to conduct some of the operations that have been proposed in the Anabasis plan devised by veteran CIA agents Luis (full-name not disclosed) and John Maguire (see [Late November 2001 or December 2001](#)). The plan called for conducting covert operations within Iraq as part of a larger effort to overthrow Hussein's government. ([Hamilton 4/17/2004](#); [Isikoff and Corn 2006, pp. 9](#) *Sources*: Top officials interviewed by Washington Post editor Bob Woodward)

February 18, 2002: Pakistan Applies Censorship on Link Between ISI and Saeed Sheikh

The Pakistani government unsuccessfully tries to stop Pakistani newspaper The News from publishing a story revealing Saeed Sheikh's connections to the ISI, based on leaks from Pakistani police interrogations. ([Hoodbhoy 3/10/2002](#); [Fielding 4/21/2002](#); [McCarthy 7/16/2002](#)) According to the article, Saeed admits his involvement in recent attacks on the Indian parliament in Delhi and in Kashmir, and says the ISI helped him finance, plan, and execute them. ([News \(Islamabad\) 2/18/2002](#)) On March 1, the ISI pressures The News to fire the four journalists who worked on the story. The ISI also demands an apology from the newspaper's editor, who flees the country instead. ([Hoodbhoy 3/10/2002](#); [Fielding 4/21/2002](#); [McCarthy 7/16/2002](#))

February 19, 2002: Gen. Franks: US Is Deploying Resources from Afghanistan to Iraq

General Tommy Franks allegedly tells Sen. Bob Graham (D), who is on a visit to US Central Command: "Senator, we have stopped fighting the war on terror in Afghanistan. We are moving military and intelligence personnel and resources out of Afghanistan to get ready for a future war in Iraq." ([Graham 3/26/2004](#) Sources: [Bob Graham](#)) (In his memoirs, Graham quotes Franks as saying that "military and intelligence personnel are being re-deployed to prepare for an action in Iraq." ([Graham and Nussbaum 2004, pp. 125](#); [Strobel 6/18/2005](#))) Franks denies making the comment. ([Strobel 6/18/2005](#)) The New Yorker magazine also reports on a redeployment of resources to Iraq at this time (see [Early March 2002](#)). ([Hersh 10/27/2003](#))

February 20, 2002: Pentagon Office Designed for Telling Lies Revealed; Declared Closed

The Pentagon announces the existence of the new Office of Strategic Influence (OSI), which "was quietly set up after September 11." The role of this office is to plant false stories in the foreign press, phony e-mails from disguised addresses, and other covert activities to manipulate public opinion. The new office proves so controversial that it is declared closed six days later. ([CNN 2/20/2002](#); [CNN 2/26/2002](#)) It is later reported that the "temporary" Office of Global Communications will be made permanent (it is unknown when this office began its work). This office seems to serve the same function as the earlier OSI, minus the covert manipulation. ([DeYoung 7/30/2002](#)) Defense Secretary Rumsfeld later states that after the OSI was closed, "I went down that next day and said fine, if you want to savage this thing fine I'll give you the corpse. There's the name. You can have the name, but I'm gonna keep doing every single thing that needs to be done and I have." ([US Department of Defense 11/18/2002](#))

February 22, 2002: Rogue Elements of ISI, Especially Those with CIA Ties, May Be Out of Control

In the wake of the kidnapping of Daniel Pearl and suspected ISI ties to the kidnapping plot, Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf is said to begin a “quiet and massive overhaul” of the ISI. However, one senior military source who once served in the ISI warns, “The biggest problem we have here are the rogue elements in the intelligence agencies, especially those who at some time became involved with the CIA.” The ISI is so used to operating independently that even honest agents may be difficult to control. Many may willfully disobey orders. “Among the more dangerous, sources say, are those who acted as Pakistan’s official liaison between the Pakistan Army and militant groups, such as the Kashmiri-oriented Harkat ul-Mujahedeen and Lashkar-e-Toiba, both of which are on the United States’ list of terrorist organizations. The ISI was also a crucial link between Pakistan and the Taliban in Afghanistan.” ([Staff 2/22/2002](#)) By early 2003, the Financial Times will note that Musharraf’s attempts at reforms have largely been abandoned. An expert on the region comments, “It is no longer a question of whether Pakistan is going backwards or forwards. It’s a question of how rapidly it’s going backwards.” ([Bokhari and Luce 2/8/2003](#))

February 22, 2002: FBI Supervisor Encourages Whistleblower to Drop Allegations

Sibel Edmonds takes her complaints and allegations to supervisory special agent Tom Frields, who encourages her to let the matter rest. When she indicates that she will do no such thing, Frields warns her that if she has disclosed any classified information to anyone she could be arrested. ([Rose 9/2005](#))

February 25, 2002: Taliban Defector Aware of ISI-Al-Qaeda Links Is Ignored by CIA



Mullah Mohammed Khaksar. [*Source: Agence France-Presse*] Time magazine reports the CIA is still not interested in talking to Mullah Mohammed Khaksar, easily the highest ranking Taliban defector. Khaksar was the Taliban’s deputy interior minister, which put him in charge of vital security matters. He was secretly giving the Northern Alliance intelligence on the Taliban since 1997, and he had sporadic and mostly unsuccessful efforts trying to give information to the US while

he still worked for the Taliban (see [April 1999](#) and [Between September 12 and Late November 2001](#)). In late November 2001, he defected to the Northern Alliance and was given an amnesty due to his secret collaboration with them. He continues to live in his house in Kabul after the defeat of the Taliban, but is unable to get in contact with US intelligence. In February 2002, Time magazine informs US officials that Khaksar wants to talk, but two weeks later the magazine will report that he still has not been properly interviewed. ([Time 2/25/2002](#)) The US may be reluctant to speak to him because much of what he has to say seems to be about al-Qaeda's links with the Pakistani ISI, and the US is now closely working with Pakistan. Time magazine reports, "The little that Khaksar has divulged to an American general and his intelligence aide—is tantalizing.... He says that the ISI agents are still mixed up with the Taliban and al-Qaeda," and that the three groups have formed a new political group to get the US out of Afghanistan. He also says that "the ISI recently assassinated an Afghan in the Paktika province who knew the full extent of ISI's collaboration with al-Qaeda." ([McGirk 2/19/2002](#)) He will similarly comment to journalist Kathy Gannon that bin Laden's foreign fighters in Afghanistan "were all protected by the Taliban leadership, but their money and instructions came direction from Pakistan's ISI." ([Gannon 2005, pp. 161](#)) Khaksar will continue to live in Afghanistan until early 2006, when he is apparently assassinated by the Taliban. ([Witte 1/15/2006](#))

Late February 2002: US Allegedly Helps Arms Dealer Victor Bout Escape Arrest

In February 2002, the Belgian government secretly indicts Victor Bout, the world's biggest illegal arms dealer, on charges of money laundering and illegal weapons trafficking. For the first time, he can be legally arrested and Interpol issues a secret arrest warrant for him anywhere in the world. Later that month, solid intelligence indicates Bout is going to be on a flight from Moldova to Greece. An encrypted message is sent by British intelligence field agents once the plane takes off, alerting their superiors in London that they are preparing to arrest Bout in Athens. But shortly after the message is sent, Bout's plane veers away from its flight plan and disappears off radar screens into mountainous terrain. It reappears on radar about ninety minutes later and lands in Athens. British special forces raid the plane, but find it empty except for the pilot and a few passengers. One European intelligence official familiar with the operation will later say, "There were only two intelligence services that could have decrypted the British transmission in so short a time. The Russians and the Americans. And we know for sure it was not the Russians." ([Farah and Braun 2007, pp. 202-203](#)) It has been alleged that the US began secretly working with Bout shortly after 9/11, despite his previous connections to the Taliban (see [Shortly After September 11, 2001](#)).

February 28, 2002: Majority of Muslims Believe Arabs Not Responsible for 9/11

A Gallup poll conducted in Muslim nations shows 18 percent believe that Arabs were responsible for 9/11 and 61 percent do not. In Pakistan, 86 percent say Arabs were not responsible. ([Whitaker 2/28/2002](#)) Even Pakistani President Musharraf has said bin Laden was not the mastermind, though he says that he probably supported it. ([Reuters 8/4/2002](#))

Spring 2002: Focus Shifts from Afghanistan and Al-Qaeda to Iraq

The Bush administration shifts its attention from Afghanistan and al-Qaeda to Iraq. White House counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke later recalls: “They took one thing that people on the outside find hard to believe or appreciate. Management time. We’re a huge government, and we have hundreds of thousands of people involved in national security. Therefore you would think we could walk and chew gum at the same time. I’ve never found that to be true.... It just is not credible that the principals and the deputies paid as much attention to Afghanistan or the war against al-Qaeda as they should have.” ([Fallows 10/2004](#)) Laurence Pope, an ambassador to Chad, will similarly recall that the change in focus that spring had a particularly damaging effect on operations in Afghanistan. “There was a moment of six months or so when we could have put much more pressure on the tribal areas [to get al-Qaeda], and on Pakistan, and done a better job of reconstruction in Afghanistan. In reality, the Beltway can only do one thing at a time, and because of the attention to Iraq, what should have happened in Afghanistan didn’t.” ([Fallows 10/2004](#)) US Intelligence agencies are also affected by the shift in priorities. The CIA’s limited supply of Arabic-speakers and Middle East specialists are redeployed to help meet the increasing demand for intelligence on Iraq. Michael Scheuer, a career CIA officer who was working on capturing bin Laden in Afghanistan at the time, says, “With a finite number of people who have any kind of pertinent experience there [was] unquestionably a sucking away of resources from Afghanistan and al-Qaeda to Iraq, just because it was a much bigger effort.” ([Fallows 10/2004](#)) Scheuer adds: “There really wasn’t any balance between the two threats, but clearly by 2002 in the springtime, it was almost taken for granted that we were going to go to war with Iraq... It was a nightmare. I know Tenet was briefed repeatedly by the head of the bin Laden department, that any invasion of Iraq would break the back of our counterterrorism program, and it was just ignored.” ([Scheuer 6/20/2006](#)) In addition to a shift in focus, there is a considerable shift of specialized equipment and personnel (see [Early 2002](#)).

Spring 2002: CIA Afghanistan Intelligence Gathering Plan Flounders for Lack of Funding

The CIA develops an innovative plan to gain intelligence about al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The CIA would spend \$80 million to create a new Afghan intelligence service in the new Afghan government. It would be staffed by Afghans but in reality would be “a wholly owned subsidiary of the CIA” with the orders being given by CIA officers. It would be much easier for Afghan operatives to slip into Pakistan and gain

information about al-Qaeda operations than it would be for Americans to do so. But the plan is disrupted by the Bush administration's focus on Iraq. Funding for the new service is repeatedly delayed and key personnel are redeployed to Iraq. ([Risen 2006, pp. 169-170](#))

Spring 2002: Equipment Intercepting Al-Qaeda Communications In Afghanistan Arena Is Sent to Iraq

The US Air Force's only two specially-equipped RC135 U spy planes—credited with having successfully intercepted the radio transmissions and cellphone calls of al-Qaeda's leaders—are pulled from Afghanistan to conduct surveillance over Iraq. ([James 3/26/2004](#)) NSA satellites are “boreholed,” (redirected) from Afghanistan to Iraq as well. ([Fallows 10/2004](#))

Spring 2002: CIA Reduces Operations and Personnel in Afghanistan

In mid-March 2002, Deputy CIA Director John E. McLaughlin informs senior members of the president's national security team that the CIA is cutting back operations in Afghanistan. Presumably the CIA there are to be used in Iraq instead. ([Gellman and Linzer 10/22/2004](#)) Newsweek will later report that around this time, “The most knowledgeable CIA case officers, the ones with tribal contacts, were rotated out.” The CIA station chief in Kabul, Afghanistan, a fluent Arabic speaker and intellectual, is replaced by a highly unpopular chief who admits to only having read one book on Afghanistan. ([Thomas 8/28/2007](#)) More CIA personnel will move from Afghanistan to Iraq in late 2002 and early 2003 (see [Late 2002-Early 2003](#)).

Spring 2002: US Green Berets Denied Chance to Get Al-Zawahiri in Afghanistan

Informants spot Ayman al-Zawahiri in a medical clinic in Gardez, Afghanistan. Green Berets are located just five minutes away, but they are ordered to stand down so SEAL Team Six, can raid the clinic and capture or kill al-Zawahiri. But the SEAL team is apparently located much farther away and too much time elapses while they are preparing for the raid, allowing al-Zawahiri to escape. In 2004, the Washington Post will mention this as one of a series of incidents in which Green Berets units were passed over and opportunities to get important wanted men were lost. ([Vistica 1/5/2004](#))

Spring 2002: Much of Al-Qaeda's Management Council Detained in Iran, Held as Bargaining Chips with US



Saad bin Laden. [Source: NBC] In the spring on 2002, as the Taliban is collapsing in Afghanistan, many al-Qaeda operatives flee into neighboring Iran. About 20 to 25 operatives composing much of al-Qaeda's management council are said to wind up in the custody of Iran's Revolutionary Guard. Prior to this point, the Iranian government has been turning over most al-Qaeda captives to other countries, but after President Bush's "Axis of Evil" speech criticizing Iran (see [January 29, 2002](#)), Iran decides to keep this group. ([Ignatius 7/9/2004](#)) Iran does not officially admit to holding them, and their status is unclear, but they all seem to be living in a village near the Caspian Sea. One senior US intelligence official says, "They are under virtual house arrest," and not able to do much. Those said to be in Iranian custody include:

- Saif al-Adel, one of al-Qaeda's top military commanders.
- Suliman abu Ghaith, al-Qaeda spokesman.
- Saad and Hamza bin Laden, two of Osama bin Laden's young sons.
- Abu Dahak, who served as al-Qaeda's liaison to the rebels in Chechnya.
- Mustafa Abu al-Yazid, a financial expert.
- Two unnamed top aides to Ayman al-Zawahiri.

At first, these operatives appear to be capable of communicating with operatives outside of Iran. Saad bin Laden is said to play a major role planning the attack of a synagogue in Tunisia in April 2002 (see [April 11, 2002](#)). But the Saudi government will suspect that some of the operatives in Iran are involved in a 2003 attack in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia (see [May 12, 2003](#)), and they will successfully press Iran to tighten the house arrest of the operatives in Iran. Iran will propose an exchange of these prisoners around the time of the Riyadh bombing, but the US will reject the offer (see [Mid-May 2003](#)). Since that time, these leaders apparently remain in a state of limbo. CIA Director Porter Goss will say in 2005, "I think [the] understanding that there is a group of leadership of al-Qaeda under some type of detention—I don't know exactly what type, necessarily—in Iran is probably accurate." ([Windrem 6/24/2005](#)) Michael Scheuer, former head of the CIA's bin Laden unit, will later ask, "The question is, what does house arrest mean in the Iranian context?" He suggests that Iran could release the group or loosen their restrictions depending on how relations evolve between the US and Iran. "They're a guarantee against bad behavior." ([Whitlock and Ladaa 9/9/2007](#)) In 2006, it will be reported that Saad bin Laden has been freed. ([Reuters 8/2/2006](#)) Also in 2006, al-Yazid will emerge as a leader of al-Qaeda forces in Afghanistan and may never have been in Iran. ([Whitlock 9/9/2007](#)) In 2007, the still teenaged Hamza bin Laden will reportedly appear in Afghanistan. ([Associated Press 9/11/2007](#))

Spring 2002: CIA Taking for Granted US Will Invade Iraq; Tenet Is Warned Invasion Will ‘Break the Back’ of Counterterrorism Efforts

CIA official Michael Scheuer will later say, “Clearly, by 2002 in the springtime, it was almost taken for granted that we were going to go to war with Iraq, in addition to having missed Osama bin Laden. It was a nightmare, and I know [CIA Director] Tenet was briefed repeatedly by the head of the bin Laden department that any invasion of Iraq would break the back of our counterterrorism program.” ([Kirk 6/20/2006](#)) Scheuer was head of the CIA’s bin Laden unit in the late 1990s and also leads a review of CIA intelligence on possible Iraq-al-Qaeda ties before the 2003 Iraq war (see [\(Before March 18, 2003\)](#)).

March 2002: Bush Official Says 9/11 Is Important Because It Lowers Public Resistance to US Military Adventures

An anonymous senior Bush administration official says, as The New Yorker paraphrases it, “Inside government, the reason September 11th appears to have been ‘a transformative moment,’ ... is not so much that it revealed the existence of a threat of which officials had previously been unaware as that it drastically reduced the American public’s usual resistance to American military involvement overseas, at least for a while.” ([Lemann 4/1/2002](#))

March 2002: Cheney Says The Decision Has Been Made to Invade Iraq

Vice President Dick Cheney drops by a Senate Republican policy lunch and instructs everyone that what he is about to say should not be repeated to anyone. He then explains that the question is no longer if the US will attack Iraq, but when. Time magazine reports this in May 2002. ([Eisenburg 5/5/2002](#))

March 2002: First Secret CIA Prison Built in Thailand

ABC News will later report that the first CIA secret prison is established in Thailand at this time to house Abu Zubaida, the first important al-Qaeda target who is captured at this time (see [March 28, 2002](#)). President Bush had recently authorized the creation of CIA prisons (see [After February 7, 2002](#)). After being captured in Pakistan and treated for gunshot wounds, Zubaida is flown to Thailand around the middle of April 2002 and housed in a small warehouse inside a US military base. He is waterboarded and interrogated ([Mid-May 2002 and After](#)). Later other secret prisons will open in other countries, such as Poland and Romania. ([Ross and Esposito 12/5/2005](#)) This prison in

Thailand apparently will close some time in 2003. ([Priest 11/2/2005](#)) Some reports place the secret prison at the Voice of America relay station near the north-eastern Thai city of Udon Thani close to the border of Laos, but this is unconfirmed. ([Sydney Morning Herald 11/5/2005](#))

March 2002: US Military Pulls Elite Special Operations Group From Afghanistan and Redeploys Them to Iraq

Fifth Group Special Forces—an elite group whose members speak Arabic, Pashtun, and Dari—is pulled from its mission in Afghanistan and sent to Iraq where the group is assigned the task of locating Saddam Hussein. Members of Fifth Group, who spent six months developing a network of local sources and alliances and who believe they were close to finding Osama bin Laden, are upset with the orders. “We were going nuts on the ground about that decision,” one of them will later recall. ([James 3/26/2004](#)) They are replaced by the Seventh Group Special Forces, who are Spanish speakers experienced mostly in Latin America. They have no local rapport or knowledge. ([James 3/26/2004](#); [Thomas 8/28/2007](#)) CIA official Gary Schroen will later comment, “Well, you could see changes being made in the US military staffing in Afghanistan, that the Green Beret units, the Fifth Special Forces group, for the most of it, were being pulled out to refit and get ready for Iraq. And it was clear that the kind of guys that I think a lot of us believed were essential US military personnel with special operations capabilities were being pulled away.” ([Kirk 6/20/2006](#))

March 2002: Treasure Trove of Al-Qaeda Documents Found in Bosnia Raid of US Charity

In March 2002, the Benevolence International Foundation (BIF) office in Sarajevo, Bosnia, is raided by US and Bosnian agents and a “treasure trove” of documents are found. One document found is the “Golden Chain,” a list of early al-Qaeda funders (see [1988-1989](#)). Enaam Arnaout is living in the US as head of BIF, but the Sarajevo investigators discover letters between him and bin Laden, including a handwritten note by bin Laden authorizing Arnaout to sign documents on his behalf. Arnaout prepares to flee the US, but is arrested. On November 19, 2002, the US declares BIF a terrorist financier and its Chicago office is closed down. In February 2003, Arnaout pleads guilty to working with al-Qaeda, but US prosecutors agree to drop the charges against him in return for information. ([Burr and Collins 2006, pp. 46-47](#))

March-May 2002: Empty Fuel Tanks in WTC 7 Wreckage Suggest Fuel May Have Contributed to Fire on 9/11

World Trade Center Building 7, which collapsed late in the afternoon of 9/11, had contained two independently supplied and operated fuel systems for emergency power.

The fuel had been in several storage tanks low down in the building. In March and April, two 11,700-gallon tanks that had been located under the building's first floor loading dock and operated by Silverstein Properties are removed from the collapse site. They show no evidence of fuel leakage. FEMA says that approximately 20,000 gallons of fuel are subsequently recovered from them, which is about 85 percent of their total capacity. In early May, two 6,000-gallon tanks that had been owned by Salomon Smith Barney and were also located below the loading dock are recovered. These were always kept full for emergencies and would have been full on 9/11. Yet now they are damaged and appear to be empty. According to the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), "Some fuel contamination was found in the gravel below the tanks and sand below the slab on which the tanks were mounted, but no contamination was found in the organic marine silt/clay layer underneath." Shyam Sunder, lead investigator of NIST's WTC investigation, will state that this "suggests that this fuel... could have been consumed in the building." This finding "allows for the possibility, though not conclusively, that the fuel may have contributed to a fire on Floor 5" of WTC 7. ([Federal Emergency Management Agency 5/1/2002, pp. 5-15](#); [Associated Press 6/6/2002](#); [Rayman 6/6/2002](#); [National Institute of Standards and Technology 4/5/2005](#); [New York City Council 9/8/2006](#).) Some people have speculated that the diesel fuel stored in WTC 7 may have played a role in its collapse (see [March 2, 2002](#)). However, FEMA says, "Although the total diesel fuel on the premises contained massive potential energy, the best hypothesis has only a low probability of occurrence." WTC 7 housed another 6,000-gallon tank between its second and third floors, which was meant to fuel generators that would supply backup power to the mayor's 23rd-floor emergency command center (see [June 8, 1999](#)). Currently, no data are available on the condition of this tank. ([Federal Emergency Management Agency 5/1/2002, pp. 5-16 and 5-31](#))

Early March 2002: French Author Claims Plane Crash into Pentagon Was Staged



Thierry Meyssan. [*Source: Public domain*]The book *l'Effroyable Imposture* (The Horrifying Fraud) is published in France. The book claims that Flight 77 did not crash into the Pentagon on 9/11. It is written by Thierry Meyssan, "president of the Voltaire Network, a respected independent think tank whose left-leaning

research projects have until now been considered models of reasonableness and objectivity.” ([Henley 4/1/2002](#)) The book is widely denounced by the media (See, for example, ([Agence France-Presse 3/21/2002](#); [Wavell 5/19/2002](#); [Vincent 8/31/2002](#); [Shane 9/12/2002](#))). One reporter heavily criticizes the book even while admitting never to have read it. ([Cooper 7/19/2002](#)) In France, however, the book sets a publishing record for first-month sales. ([Crumley 5/20/2002](#)) One of Meyssan’s theories is that people within the US government wanted to hit the Pentagon for its propaganda effect, but did not want to create a lot of damage or kill important people like Defense Secretary Rumsfeld. He notes that the plane hit the one section under construction, thus greatly reducing the loss of life. ([Agence France-Presse 3/21/2002](#); [Wavell 5/19/2002](#)) Furthermore, the wall at point of impact was the first and only one to be reinforced and have blast-resistant windows installed as part of an upgrade plan. ([Murphy 11/1/2001](#))

Early March 2002: Two FBI Agents Prevented from Discussing Unclassified Information with Reporter



FBI agents John Vincent (left), and Robert Wright (right) appear on ABC News. [*Source: ABC News*] In early March 2002, New York Times reporter Judith Miller hears that FBI agent Robert Wright is complaining about the FBI’s mishandling of the Vulgar Betrayal investigation. Miller submits a list of written questions to Wright about his allegations. She also submits a similar list to FBI agent John Vincent, who also worked on Vulgar Betrayal and shares many of Wright’s views. Wright and Vincent quickly reply, but the FBI does not allow Miller to read their answers. Meanwhile, Miller contacts some other FBI officials to hear their side of the issue. She is allowed to speak to them. Because Miller is unable to hear from Wright or Vincent, she decides not to write the story. In December 2002, the Justice Department will hear an appeal from Wright and rule that no classified information was contained in the answers to Miller’s questions. But as of the end of 2005, all of Wright and Vincent’s answers still have not been released by the FBI. ([Robert G. Wright, Jr., v. Federal Bureau of Investigation 5/16/2005](#))

Early March 2002: Bush Diverts Resources from War on Terror

According to a former White House official interviewed by Seymour Hersh during the fall of 2003, Bush makes the decision to invade Iraq at this time and begins diverting resources away from the “war on terrorism” to the planned invasion of Iraq. “The Bush administration took many intelligence operations that had been aimed at al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups around the world and redirected them to the Persian Gulf. Linguists and special operatives were abruptly reassigned, and several ongoing anti-terrorism intelligence programs were curtailed.” ([Hersh 10/27/2003](#) Sources: Unnamed Former White House official)

([Show related quotes](#))

March 1, 2002: ISI Maintains Huge Drug Economy

Vanity Fair suggests the ISI is still deeply involved in the drug trade in Central Asia. It estimates that Pakistan has a parallel drug economy worth \$15 billion a year. Pakistan’s official economy is worth about \$60 billion. The article notes that the US has not tied its billions of dollars in aid to Pakistan to assurances that Pakistan will stop its involvement in drugs. ([Orth 3/1/2002](#))

March 2, 2002: Diesel Tanks May Have Destroyed Building and Secret Files on 9/11

A New York Times article theorizes that diesel fuel tanks were responsible for the collapse of Building 7 of the WTC. It collapsed at 5:20 p.m. on 9/11, even though it was farther away from the Twin Towers than many other buildings that remained standing (see [\(5:20 p.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). It was the first time a steel-reinforced high-rise in the US had ever collapsed in a fire. One of the fuel tanks had been installed in 1999 (see [June 8, 1999](#)) as part of a new “Command Center” for Mayor Rudolph Giuliani. ([Glanz and Lipton 3/2/2002](#); [Debaise 9/10/2002](#)) However, in interviews, several Fire Department officers who were on the scene say they were not aware of any combustible liquid pool fires in WTC 7. ([Fire Engineering 9/2002](#)) And, according to the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), between 11:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. on 9/11, “No diesel smells [were] reported from the exterior, stairwells, or lobby areas” of WTC 7. ([National Institute of Standards and Technology 6/2004, pp. L-22](#)) Curiously, given all the Wall Street scandals later in the year, Building 7 housed the SEC files related to numerous Wall Street investigations, as well as other federal investigative files. All the files for approximately 3,000 to 4,000 SEC cases were destroyed. Some were backed up in other places, but many were not, especially those classified as confidential. ([Fisk 9/17/2001](#)) Lost files include documents that could show the relationship between Citigroup and the WorldCom bankruptcy. ([Goldstein 8/9/2002](#)) The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission estimates over 10,000 cases will be affected. ([Loomis 9/14/2001](#)) The Secret Service had its largest field office, with more than 200 employees, in WTC 7 and also lost investigative files. Says one agent: “All the evidence that we stored at 7 World Trade, in all our cases, went down with the building.” ([Tech TV 7/23/2002](#)) The IRS and Department of Defense were also tenants, along with the CIA,

which, it has been revealed, had a secret office in Building 7. ([Benson 11/4/2001](#); [Risen 11/4/2001](#); [Federal Emergency Management Agency 5/1/2002, pp. 5-2](#); [Jacobson 3/20/2006](#)) A few days later, the head of the WTC collapse investigation says he “would possibly consider examining” the collapse of Building 7, but by this time all the rubble has already been removed and destroyed. ([US Congress 3/6/2002](#))

March 2-13, 2002: Taliban and Al-Qaeda Forces Evade Encirclement Again



US troops investigate two dead bodies on March 17, 2002, as Operation Anaconda comes to a close. [*Source: Joe Raedle/Reuters*] The US launches Operation Anaconda, a major offensive in Shah-i-Kot valley, near the town of Gardez, Afghanistan. About 2,000 US and allied soldiers attack a Taliban and al-Qaeda stronghold in the valley. The goal is to surround and cut off the Taliban and al-Qaeda from being able to retreat into Pakistan. Officially, the operation is hailed as an easy victory. For instance, Gen. Tommy Franks calls the operation “an unqualified and absolute success.” ([Krushelnycky 3/20/2002](#)) A Pentagon spokesperson calls the operation “a great success,” and says that of the hundreds or even thousands of enemy fighters trapped in the valley, “less than 100 escaped.” ([Bearak 3/14/2002](#)) Up to 800 Taliban and al-Qaeda fighters are reported killed. ([Bearak 3/14/2002](#)) However, other accounts paint a different picture. The operation runs into unexpected resistance from the start, and eight US soldiers and a small number of allied Afghan fighters are killed in the first few days. The London Times later notes, “what was to have been a two-day operation stretched to 12.” Australian special forces troops who took part later say the operation was botched. “They blamed much of the problem on inadequate US air power, poor intelligence, and faulty technology.” ([Krushelnycky 3/20/2002](#); [Maynard 6/18/2002](#)) It appears that, as in Tora Bora, Afghan warlord armies supervised by a small number of US special forces, were given the key task of cutting off escape routes. At least one of the warlords involved had tricked the US military earlier in the war. “Although [Afghan] commanders insisted from the start of the campaign that the slopes were surrounded, [one Afghan commander] admitted that there had been at least one escape route” left open. The Guardian notes that “US troops spent weeks planning the attack on Shah-i-Kot, training and arming Afghan soldiers to prevent a repeat of the battle at Tora Bora,” but nonetheless, “nearly all the Taliban and al-Qaeda fighters appeared to have fled the area.” ([Baker and Vogel 3/4/2002](#); [McCarthy 3/15/2002](#)) The New York Times even reported

that “some participants lauded it for effectively encircling the foe, while others said the Taliban had more or less come and gone as they pleased, visiting villagers in nearby towns.” ([Bearak 3/14/2002](#)) One captured Taliban soldier who fought in the battle later claims that bin Laden made a brief personal appearance to rally his troops. ([Nordland, Yousafzai, and Dehghanpisheh 8/11/2002](#)) Only about 20 prisoners are captured and fewer than 20 bodies are found. ([Bearak 3/14/2002](#); [Burns 3/18/2002](#)) After retreating, the Taliban and al-Qaeda will change strategies and no longer attempt to congregate in Afghanistan in large numbers.

March 3, 2002: Powell Denies ISI Links to Daniel Pearl Murder

Secretary of State Powell rules out any links between “elements of the ISI” and the murderers of reporter Daniel Pearl. ([Dawn \(Karachi\) 3/3/2002](#)) The Guardian later calls Powell’s comment “shocking,” given the overwhelming evidence that the main suspect, Saeed Sheikh, worked for the ISI. ([Ali 4/5/2002](#)) Defense Secretary Rumsfeld called Saeed a possible “asset” for the ISI only a week earlier. ([Hussain and Whitworth 2/25/2002](#)) The Washington Post says, “The [ISI] is a house of horrors waiting to break open. Saeed has tales to tell.” ([Hoagland 3/28/2002](#)) The Guardian says Saeed “is widely believed in Pakistan to be an experienced ISI ‘asset.’” ([Ali 4/5/2002](#))

March 5, 2002: Israeli Spies Reportedly Tracked 9/11 Hijackers

It is reported that many spies in the uncovered Israeli spy ring seemed to have been trailing the 9/11 hijackers. At the very least, they were in close proximity. For instance, five Israeli spies are intercepted in the tiny town of Hollywood, Florida, and four 9/11 hijackers are known to have spent time in Hollywood, Florida. ([Cypel 3/5/2002](#); [Reuters 3/5/2002](#); [Jane's Intelligence Digest 3/15/2002](#)) In one case, some Israeli spies lived at 4220 Sheridan Street, only a few hundred feet from where Mohamed Atta was living at 3389 Sheridan Street. Israeli spies appear to have been close to at least ten of the 19 9/11 hijackers. ([Ketcham 5/7/2002](#))

March 6, 2002: US Officials Deny and Media Downplay Existence of Israeli Spy Ring

A Washington Post article, relying on US officials, denies the existence of any Israeli spy ring. A “wide array of US officials” supposedly deny it, and Justice Department spokeswoman Susan Dryden says: “This seems to be an urban myth that has been circulating for months. The department has no information at this time to substantiate these widespread reports about Israeli art students involved in espionage.” ([Mintz and Eggen 3/6/2002](#)) The New York Times fails to cover the story at all, even months later. ([Ketcham 5/7/2002](#)) By mid-March, Jane’s Intelligence Digest, the respected British

intelligence and military analysis service, notes: “It is rather strange that the US media seems to be ignoring what may well be the most explosive story since the 11 September attacks—the alleged breakup of a major Israeli espionage operation in the USA.” ([Jane's Intelligence Digest 3/15/2002](#))

March 6, 2002: House Committee on Science Holds Hearing on WTC Collapses Investigation

The House Committee on Science holds a hearing on the investigation into the collapse of the World Trade Center on 9/11. Witnesses from industry, academia, and government testify on the collapses and the subsequent efforts to find out how and why they occurred. The hearings charter points out several problems that have severely hampered investigations. It says, “Early confusion over who was in charge of the [WTC collapse] site and the lack of authority of investigators to impound pieces of steel for examination before they were recycled led to the loss of important pieces of evidence that were destroyed early during the search and rescue effort.... Some of the critical pieces of steel—including the suspension trusses from the top of the towers and the internal support columns—were gone before the first BPAT [Building Performance Assessment Team] team member ever reached the site”(see [September 12-October 2001](#)). Furthermore, “The building owners, designers and insurers, prevented independent researchers from gaining access—and delayed the BPAT team in gaining access—to pertinent building documents largely because of liability concerns.” Regarding the decision to rapidly recycle the WTC steel, Rep. Joseph Crowley (D) says, “I do believe that conspiracy theorists are going to have a field day with this,” and says this loss of important physical evidence “is not only unfortunate, it is borderline criminal.” In his statement before the committee, Glenn Corbett, a science professor at John Jay College, claims that the “lack of significant amounts of steel for examination will make it difficult, if not impossible, to make a definitive statement as to the cause and chronology of the collapse.” He also complains, “we are staffing the BPAT with part-time engineers and scientists on a shoestring budget.” ([US Congress 3/6/2002](#); [McCaffrey 3/7/2002](#))

March 7, 2002: Pakistan's President Wants Saeed Hanged

Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf says Saeed Sheikh, chief suspect in the killing of reporter Daniel Pearl, will not be extradited to the US, at least not until after he is tried by Pakistan. ([Gibson 3/15/2002](#)) The US ambassador later reports to Washington that Musharraf privately said, “I’d rather hang him myself” than extradite Saeed. ([Hoagland 3/28/2002](#)) Musharraf even brazenly states, “Perhaps Daniel Pearl was over-intrusive. A mediaperson should be aware of the dangers of getting into dangerous areas. Unfortunately, he got over-involved.” ([Reddy 3/8/2002](#)) He also says Pearl was caught up in “intelligence games.” ([Vick and Khan 5/3/2002](#)) In early April, Musharraf apparently says he wants to see Saeed sentenced to death. Defense lawyers are appalled, saying Musharraf is effectively telling the courts what to do. ([BBC 4/12/2002](#)) The Washington

Post reports in early March that Pakistani “police alternately fabricate and destroy evidence, depending on pressure from above” ([Hoodbhoy 3/10/2002](#)) , and in fact Saeed’s trial will be plagued with problems.

[March 7, 2002: Plane Crashing into Pentagon Is Shown in Photos](#)



The Pentagon “video.”¹ These are the first two of five stills of the Pentagon impact. The first one is labelled “plane,” which appears to be the black object above the post on the far right. The second one is labeled “impact.”² The three other stills depict a growing fireball. [Source: Public domain] (click image to enlarge) A series of photos surface purporting to show a plane crashing into the Pentagon on 9/11. It is not clear who released the photos, but the Pentagon asserts that they are authentic, and were taken by a Pentagon security camera. The release of these pictures comes within days of the publication of the book *Effroyable Imposture* that disputes the claim that Flight 77 hit the Pentagon (see [Early March 2002](#)). “Officials could not immediately explain why the date typed near the bottom of each photograph is September 12 and the time is written as 5:37 p.m.” ([Associated Press 3/8/2002](#); [News 3/8/2002](#)) The whole video, together with another also taken by a Pentagon security camera, will be released in 2006 (see [May 16, 2006](#)).

[March 7, 2002: FBI Whistleblower under FBI Surveillance](#)

Sibel Edmonds meets with James Caruso, the FBI’s deputy assistant director for counterterrorism and counter-intelligence, to discuss her allegations against co-worker Melek Can Dickerson (see [Afternoon February 12, 2002](#)). Caruso takes no notes and asks no questions as Edmonds tells him her story. After the meeting, she has lunch with her husband at the Capital Grille. As the Edmondses look over their menus, two men arrive in an FBI-issue SUV and sit down at an adjacent table. “They just sat and stared at Sibel,” Matthew Edmonds later recalls in an interview with *Vanity Fair* magazine. “They didn’t eat or drink—just sat, staring at Sibel, the whole time we were there.” ([Rose 9/2005](#))

[Afternoon March 7, 2002: After Being Rebuffed by Own Superiors, FBI Whistleblower Sends Letters to Senators and FBI Internal Investigation Departments](#)

FBI translator Sibel Edmonds writes letters to the Justice Department's internal affairs division, known as the Office of Professional Responsibility, and its Office of Inspector General, describing her allegations against co-worker Melek Can Dickerson (see [Afternoon February 12, 2002](#)). She also sends faxes alleging possible national-security breaches to the Senate Intelligence Committee and Senators Charles Grassley (R-Ia) and Patrick Leahy (D-Vt), both of whom sit on the Senate Judiciary Committee. ([Rose 9/2005](#))

March 10, 2002: Ridge Says FBI Can't Find Any Al-Qaeda Cells in US

Homeland Security Director Tom Ridge admits that the FBI has failed to find a single al-Qaeda cell operating in the US. He suspects there are active cells, but cannot explain why none have been caught. ([McGrory 3/11/2002](#)) Seemingly obvious al-Qaeda cells, such as Nabil al-Marabh's Boston cell (see [June 27, 2004](#)) and Ali Mohamed's Santa Clara, California, cell (see [Mid-1990s](#)), appear to have escaped detection or public mention. The FBI will issue a report in 2005 that again will claim that no sleeper cells can be found in the US (see [February 2005](#)). On September 12, 2001, the New York Times reported, "Authorities said they had also identified accomplices in several cities who had helped plan and execute Tuesday's attacks. Officials said they knew who these people were and important biographical details about many of them." ([Johnston and Risen 9/13/2001](#))

March 11, 2002: Suspected Israeli Students Reportedly Served in Military

A newspaper reports that the DEA study on Israeli "art students" determined the "students" all had "recently served in the Israeli military, the majority in intelligence, electronic signal intercept, or explosive ordnance units." ([Malone 3/11/2002](#))

March 11, 2002: Flight School Belatedly Receives Hijackers' Student Visa Approvals

Six months after 9/11, a Venice, Florida flight school attended by Mohamed Atta and Marwan Alshehhi belatedly receives visa approval forms for the alleged hijackers. The two had been required to apply for student visas before entering a professional flight training program. Their applications were sent from the school, Huffman Aviation, to the Immigration and Naturalization Service in August or September 2000 (see [August 29-September 15, 2000](#)). The forms show that the INS approved the visas in July and August 2001, clearing both men to stay in the US until October 1, 2001. Spokesman Russ Bergeron says the INS notified the two shortly afterwards. Despite Atta and Alshehhi's alleged involvement in the 9/11 attacks, an INS clerk issued their visas in October 2001. Rep. James Sensenbrenner (R-WI) comments, "This shows once again the complete

incompetence of the immigration service to enforce our laws and protect our borders.”
([McIntyre 3/13/2002](#); [Brassfield and Murphy 3/13/2002](#))

March 12, 2002: Ridge Announces Homeland Security Advisory System



The color coded Security Advisory System. [Source: *White House*]Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge announces the implementation of the Homeland Security Advisory System. He describes it as a method “to measure and evaluate terrorist threats and communicate them to the public in a timely manner.” He states that it “empowers government and citizens to take actions to address the threat. It is a system that is equal to the threat.” ([White House Office of the Press Secretary 3/12/2002](#))

March 14, 2002: US Indicts Saeed for Murder of Daniel Pearl

Attorney General Ashcroft announces a second US criminal indictment of Saeed Sheikh, this time for his role in the kidnapping and murder of Daniel Pearl. The amount of background information given about Saeed is very brief, with only scant reference to his involvement with Islamic militant groups after his release from prison in 1999. It only mentions is that he fought in Afghanistan with al-Qaeda in September and October 2001. The indictment and Ashcroft fail to mention Saeed’s financing of the 9/11 attacks, and no reporters ask Ashcroft about this either. ([Ressa 3/14/2002](#); [Miller 3/15/2002](#))

March 15, 2002: Jewish Magazine Says Israelis Spied in US on Radical Muslims

Forward, a US publication with a large Jewish audience, admits that there has been an Israeli spy ring in the US. ([Perelman 3/15/2002](#)) This is a reversal of their earlier stance. ([Perelman 12/21/2001](#)) But, “far from pointing to Israeli spying against US government and military facilities, as reported in Europe last week, the incidents in question appear to represent a case of Israelis in the United States spying on a common enemy, radical Islamic networks suspected of links to Middle East terrorism.” ([Perelman 3/15/2002](#))

March 15, 2002: FBI Claims Broad Investigation of Hamas Operatives in US

Days after FBI agent Robert Wright renewed efforts to make his disputes with the FBI public (see [Early March 2002](#)), the Associated Press releases a story that seems designed to counter Wright’s upcoming claims that the FBI has let large numbers of Hamas operatives live and fundraise openly in the US. The article says the FBI is conducting a “broad financial assault” against an “elaborate network of businesses and charities supporting Hamas” in the US. Further, “FBI terrorist tracking units monitoring, intercepting, and disrupting financial transactions from US supporters to Hamas overseas are moving closer to building criminal cases against some of the players.” The article notes that the FBI’s current efforts are based on Wright’s pre-9/11 work in Chicago. The article also says, “Information developed during and after [Wright’s] Chicago case has resulted in the execution of several national security warrants permitting electronic intercepts of key suspects here and overseas... In several instances, the FBI and other US agencies have decided to forgo arrests or indictments and instead have secretly disrupted Hamas activities so that agents could continue to monitor suspects and the flow of their money, officials said.” ([Associated Press 3/15/2002](#)) Presumably, if any of the Hamas operatives were not suspicious that they were under surveillance before reading this article, they would be after reading it.

Mid-March 2002: CIA Allows Ten Aggressive Interrogation Techniques of Dubious Legality, Including Waterboarding

In Mid-March 2002, the CIA comes up with a list of ten “Enhanced Interrogation Techniques” that it will allow to be used on captured high-ranking al-Qaeda detainees. In 2005, ABC News will reveal six of the techniques on the list and describe them as follows:

- The Attention Grab: The interrogator forcefully grabs the shirt front of the prisoner and shakes him.
- The Attention Slap: An open-handed slap aimed at causing pain and triggering fear.
- The Belly Slap: A hard open-handed slap to the stomach. The aim is to cause pain, but

not internal injury. Doctors consulted advised against using a punch, which could cause lasting internal damage.

- Long Time Standing: This technique is described as among the most effective. Prisoners are forced to stand, handcuffed and with their feet shackled to an eye bolt in the floor for more than 40 hours. Exhaustion and sleep deprivation are effective in yielding confessions.

- The Cold Cell: The prisoner is left to stand naked in a cell kept near 50 degrees. Throughout the time in the cell the prisoner is doused with cold water.

- Waterboarding: The prisoner is bound to an inclined board, feet raised and head slightly below the feet. Cellophane is wrapped over the prisoner's face and water is poured over him. Unavoidably, the gag reflex kicks in and a terrifying fear of drowning leads to almost instant pleas to bring the treatment to a halt. ([Ross and Esposito 11/18/2005](#)) The New York Times will reveal that there are actually four more techniques on the list, but will not detail what they are. ([Jehl 11/9/2005](#)) Waterboarding will be the most controversial technique used. In centuries past, it was considered by some to be the most extreme form of torture, more so than thumbscrews or use of the rack. ([Horton 12/15/2007](#)) The list is secretly drawn up by a team including senior CIA officials, and officials from the Justice Department and the National Security Council. The CIA got help in making the list from governments like Egypt and Saudi Arabia that are notorious for their widespread use of torture (see [Late 2001-Mid-March 2002](#)). ([Jehl 11/9/2005](#)) Apparently, "only a handful" of CIA interrogators are trained and authorized to use these techniques. Later the same month, al-Qaeda leader Abu Zubaida will be captured and the CIA will begin using all of these techniques on him (see [March 28, 2002](#)). However, the White House will not give the CIA clear legal authority to do so until months after the CIA starts using these techniques on Zubaida (see [March 28-August 1, 2002](#)). In 2004, CIA Inspector General John Helgerson will determine in a classified report that these techniques appear to constitute cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment under the Convention Against Torture, an international treaty signed by the US (see [Spring 2004](#)). ([Ross and Esposito 11/18/2005](#))

March 19, 2002: CIA Director Tenet Has 'No Doubt' There Are Links between Al-Qaeda and Iraqi Government

Testifying before the Senate Intelligence Committee, CIA Director George Tenet says: "There is no doubt that there have been (Iraqi) contacts and linkages to the al-Qaeda organization. As to where we are on September 11, the jury is still out. As I said carefully in my statement, it would be a mistake to dismiss the possibility of state sponsorship whether Iranian or Iraqi and we'll see where the evidence takes us.... There is nothing new in the last several months that changes our analysis in any way.... There's no doubt there have been contacts or linkages to the al-Qaeda organization.... I want you to think about al-Qaeda as a front company that mixes and matches its capabilities.... The distinction between Sunni and Shia that have traditionally divided terrorists groups are not distinctions we should make any more, because there are common interests against the United States and its allies in this region, and they will seek capabilities wherever

they can get it.... Their ties may be limited by divergent ideologies, but the two sides' mutual antipathies toward the United States and the Saudi royal family suggests that tactical cooperation between them is possible.” ([PBS 3/19/2002](#); [Agence France-Presse 3/20/2002](#))

March 20, 2002: SAAR Network Is Raided



US Customs Agents carry out boxes of evidence from SAAR network businesses on March 20, 2002. [*Source: Mike Theiler/ Getty Images*] Scores of federal agents raid 14 entities in a cluster of more than 100 homes, charities, think tanks, and businesses in Herndon, Virginia, a town just outside of Washington with a large Muslim population. No arrests are made and no organizations are shut down, but over 500 boxes of files and computer files are confiscated, filling seven trucks. This group of interlocking entities is widely known as the SAAR network (it is also sometimes called the Safa Group). SAAR stands for Sulaiman Abdul Aziz al-Rajhi, a Saudi banker and billionaire who largely funded the group beginning in the early 1980s (see [July 29, 1983](#)). He is said to be close to the Saudi ruling family and is on the Golden Chain, a list of early al-Qaeda supporters (see [1988-1989](#)). ([Miller 3/21/2002](#); [Farah 2004, pp. 152](#); [Simpson 6/21/2004](#)) The name and address of Salah al-Rajhi, Suleiman's brother, was discovered in 1998 in the telephone book of Wadih El-Hage (see [September 15, 1998](#)). El-Hage was bin Laden's personal secretary and was convicted of a role in the 1998 US embassy bombings. ([Miller 3/25/2002](#)) The raids are said to be primarily led by David Kane, a Customs agent working with a Customs investigation started just after 9/11 code-named Operation Greenquest. Many of the organizations are located at an office building at 555 Grove Street in Herndon. Kane writes in an affidavit for the raid that many organizations based there are "paper organizations" which "dissolve and are replaced by other organizations under the control of the same group of individuals." ([Miller 3/21/2002](#); [Simpson 6/21/2004](#)) Investigators appear to be primarily interested in the connections between the SAAR network and the Al Taqwa Bank, a Swiss bank closed after 9/11 on suspicions of funding al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups (see [November 7, 2001](#)). They are also interested in connections between both SAAR and Al Taqwa and the Muslim Brotherhood (see [December 1982](#)). According to author Douglas Farah, "US officials [later say] they had tracked about \$20 million from [SAAR] entities flowing through Nada's Bank al Taqwa, but said the total could be much higher. The ties between Nada and [SAAR] leaders were many and long-standing, as were their ties to other [Muslim] Brotherhood leaders.... For a time, Suleiman Abdel Aziz al-Rajhi, the SAAR Foundation founder, worked for Nada" at Al Taqwa's Liechtenstein branch. ([Miller 3/25/2002](#); [Farah 2004, pp. 154-155](#)) Organizations and individuals targeted by the raid include:

- Yaqub Mirza. He is the director of virtually all of the organizations targeted in the raid. The Wall Street Journal claims, “US officials privately say Mr. Mirza and his associates also have connections to al-Qaeda and to other entities officially listed by the US as sponsors of terrorism.” ([Simpson 4/18/2002](#); [Guidera and Simpson 12/6/2002](#))
- The SAAR Foundation or the Safa Trust, an umbrella group for the SAAR network. The SAAR Foundation had recently disbanded and reformed as the Safa Trust. ([Miller 3/21/2002](#); [Simpson 3/22/2002](#); [Farah and Mintz 10/7/2002](#))
- Hisham Al-Talib, who served as an officer of the SAAR Foundation and Safa Trust, had previously been an officer of firms run by Youssef Nada. Nada is one of the main owners of the Al Taqwa Bank. ([Simpson 3/22/2002](#))
- Mar-Jac Poultry Inc., an Islamic chicken processor with operations in rural Georgia. ([Simpson 6/21/2004](#))
- Jamal Barzinji. An officer of Mar-Jac and other organizations targeted in the raid, he had previously been involved with Nada’s companies. ([Simpson 3/22/2002](#))
- The International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO). ([Miller 3/21/2002](#))
- The Muslim World League. It is considered to be a parent organization for the IIRO. ([Miller 3/21/2002](#))
- International Institute for Islamic Thought (IIRT). The IIRT had been under investigation since at least 1998. ([Miller 3/21/2002](#))
- Tarik Hamdi, an employee at IIRT. His home is also raided. He carried a battery for a satellite phone to Afghanistan in early 1998, and the battery was used for Osama bin Laden’s phone (see [May 28, 1998](#)). ([Miller 3/21/2002](#))
- Abdurahman Alamoudi, a top Muslim lobbyist who formerly worked for one of the SAAR organizations. His nearby home is raided. The search yields a memo on large transactions involving Hamas, operations against the Israelis, and the notation “Met Mousa Abu Marzouk in Jordan.” Marzouk is a Hamas leader believed to be involved in fundraising for Hamas in the US for many years (see [July 5, 1995-May 1997](#)). Alamoudi is alleged to be a leader of the Muslim Brotherhood. ([Simpson 6/21/2004](#))
- Samir Salah, an Egyptian-born president of the Piedmont Trading Corporation, which is part of the SAAR network. He is also a former director and treasurer of the Al Taqwa Bank’s important Bahamas branch. Additionally, he was a founder of a Bosnian charity reportedly connected to a plot to blow up the US embassy in Bosnia. ([Miller 3/25/2002](#))
- Ibrahim Hassabella. He is a shareholder of the SAAR Foundation and also a former secretary of the Al Taqwa Bank. ([Miller 3/25/2002](#)) Investigators will later find that much of SAAR’s money seemed to disappear into offshore bank accounts. For instance, in 1998, SAAR claimed to have moved \$9 million to a charity based in the tax haven of the Isle of Man, but investigators will find no evidence the charity existed. One US official involved in the probe will say of SAAR, “Looking at their finances is like looking into a black hole.” ([Farah and Mintz 10/7/2002](#)) In 2003, it will be reported that US investigators are looking into reports that the director of the SAAR foundation for most of the 1990s stayed in the same hotel as three of the 9/11 hijackers the night before the 9/11 attacks (see [September 10, 2001](#)). Some US investigators had looked into the SAAR network in the mid-1990s, but the FBI blocked the investigation’s progress (see [1995-1998](#)).

March 20, 2002: Lawsuit Said to Spur Raid; Targets Allegedly Have Protection from High Republican Figures



Grover Norquist. *[Source: Publicity photo]* Counterterrorism expert John Loftus files a lawsuit against Sami al-Arian, a Florida professor with suspected ties to US-designated terrorist groups. Hours later, the SAAR network, a group of charities based in Herndon, Virginia, is raided (see [March 20, 2002](#)). Loftus claims that a January 2002 raid on the network was cancelled for political reasons, so he filed his lawsuit to force the raid. The SAAR network investigation grew out of an investigation of al-Arian and other people in Florida in the mid-1990s. In 2004, Loftus will claim that for years, people like al-Arian and Abdurahman Alamoudi, one of the targets of the SAAR raid, were able to operate with impunity “because [US agents had] been ordered not to investigate the cases, not to prosecute them, because they were being funded by the Saudis and a political decision was being made at the highest levels, don’t do anything that would embarrass the Saudi government.... But, who was it that fixed the cases? How could these guys operate for more than a decade immune from prosecution? And, the answer is coming out in a very strange place. What Alamoudi and al-Arian have in common is a guy named Grover Norquist. He’s the super lobbyist. Newt Gingrich’s guy, the one the NRA calls on, head of American taxpayers. He is the guy that was hired by Alamoudi to head up the Islamic Institute and he’s the registered agent for Alamoudi, personally, and for the Islamic Institute. Grover Norquist’s best friend is Karl Rove, the White House chief of staff, and apparently Norquist was able to fix things. He got extreme right wing Muslim people to be the gatekeepers in the White House. That’s why moderate Americans couldn’t speak out after 9/11. Moderate Muslims couldn’t get into the White House because Norquist’s friends were blocking their access.” ([Jacoby 3/21/2002](#); [MSNBC 10/23/2005](#))

After March 20, 2002-Early 2003: Customs and FBI Battle to Control Finance Investigations



Larry Thompson. [Source: White House] It appears that serious tensions develop between the FBI and Operation Greenquest investigators in the wake of the Greenquest raid on the SAAR network in March 2002 (see [After March 20, 2002](#)). The Customs Department launched Greenquest, an investigation into the financing of al-Qaeda and similar groups, weeks after 9/11. In June 2002, the Washington Post will headline an article, “Infighting Slows Hunt for Hidden Al-Qaeda Assets.” ([DeYoung and Farah 6/18/2002](#)) With the creation of the new Department of Homeland Security in November 2002, the FBI and its parent agency the Justice Department are given a chance to gain total control over Operation Greenquest. Newsweek reports, “Internally, FBI officials have derided Greenquest agents as a bunch of ‘cowboys’ whose actions have undermined more important, long-range FBI investigations into terrorist financing.” Meanwhile, “The FBI-Justice move, pushed by [Justice Department] Criminal Division chief Michael Chertoff and Deputy Attorney General Larry Thompson, has enraged Homeland Security officials... They accuse the [FBI] of sabotaging Greenquest investigations—by failing to turn over critical information to their agents—and trying to obscure a decade-long record of lethargy in which FBI offices failed to aggressively pursue terror-finance cases. ‘They [the FBI] won’t share anything with us,’ [says] a Homeland Security official. ‘Then they go to the White House and they accuse us of not sharing. If they can’t take it over, they want to kill it.’” This battle has a large effect on the investigation into Ptech, a Boston-based computer company with ties to suspected terrorist financiers. When Ptech whistleblowers [approach] the FBI, the FBI “apparently [do] little or nothing in response” (see [Shortly After October 12, 2001](#); [May-December 5, 2002](#)). Then Greenquest launched an investigation in Ptech, which culminates in a raid on the Ptech offices in December 2002 (see [December 5, 2002](#)). “After getting wind of the Greenquest probe, the FBI stepped in and unsuccessfully tried to take control of the case. The result, sources say, has been something of a train wreck.” ([Newsweek 4/9/2003](#)) Greenquest appears to have been heavily based on the pre-9/11 investigations of FBI agent Robert Wright. The New York Post will report in 2004, “After 9/11, Wright’s work was picked up by David Kane of the US Customs Service, who raided companies owned by [Yassin] al-Qadi, leading to al-Qadi’s designation as a ‘global terrorist’ and to money-laundering indictments of companies in Northern Virginia linked to al-Qadi and Soliman Biheiri (another Wright investigatee). The [Greenquest] indictments rely heavily on Wright’s work.” ([Schlassel 7/14/2004](#)) The FBI will eventually win the battle with Homeland Security and Customs, and Greenquest will cease to exist at the end of June 2003 (see [May 13-June 30, 2003](#)). ([Newsweek 4/9/2003](#))

March 21, 2002: FBI Translator Accused of National Security Breaches Polygraphed, but Questions Are Vague and Unspecific

FBI translator Melek Can Dickerson has been accused by co-worker Sibel Edmonds of shielding certain individuals from FBI surveillance. On this date Dickerson undergoes a polygraph test and passes. But the questions she is asked are reportedly vague and unspecific. “The polygraph unit chief admitted that questions directly on point could have been asked but were not,” one official is quoted in a report that is later released by the Justice Department’s Office of Inspector General. ([Rose 9/2005](#))

After March 20, 2002: CIA and FBI Said to Harass Greenquest Investigators

Counterterrorism expert Rita Katz is said to have given the Operation Greenquest investigators some of the information that led to the March 2002 SAAR network raid (see [March 20, 2002](#)). She will later write that in the months after that raid, “The CIA was investigating me and the SAAR investigators from Greenquest and Customs. The CIA and the FBI investigated everyone who had anything to do with the SAAR investigation. White vans and SUV’s with dark windows appeared near all the homes of the SAAR investigators. All agents, some of whom were very experienced with surveillance, knew they were being followed. So was I. I felt that I was being followed everywhere and watched at home, in the supermarket, on the way to work... and for what?... The Customs agents were questioned. So were their supervisors. So was the US attorney on the SAAR case.... Risking criticism for being unfoundedly paranoid, I must convey my theory about the investigation and CIA’s involvement in it, I don’t know for certain what’s the deal with the CIA investigating the SAAR investigators, but it sure feels as if someone up in that agency doesn’t like the idea that the Saudi Arabian boat is rocked. The [SAAR raid] had taken place already—the CIA couldn’t change that—but investigating and giving the people behind the raids a hard time is a most efficient way of making sure the SAAR investigation stops there.” ([Katz 2003, pp. 42](#)) The internal governmental battle against Greenquest will continue until Greenquest will be shut down in 2003 (see [After March 20, 2002-Early 2003](#)).

March 22, 2002: FBI Whistleblower Fired after Alleging Security Breaches in Translations Department

FBI translator Sibel Edmonds is called to the office of Stephanie Bryan, the supervisor of the Bureau’s translation department. While waiting she sees Mike Feghali, who, according to Edmonds, “tap[s] his watch and say[s], ‘In less than an hour you will be fired, you whore.’” A few minutes later, she meets with supervisory special agent Tom Fields who dismisses her on grounds that she violated security procedures. ([Rose 9/2005](#)) An agent then escorts her out of the building and tells her: “We will be watching

you and listening to you. If you dare to consult an attorney who is not approved by the FBI, or if you take this issue outside the FBI to the Senate, the next time I see you, it will be in jail.” ([Sheehy 1/22/2004](#))

March 24, 2002: Britain Accused of Fabricating WMD Threat to Justify Troop Deployment in Afghanistan



David Manning [*Source: Britainusa.com*] Britain is accused of falsely claiming the existence of an al-Qaeda biological and chemical weapons laboratory in Afghanistan in order to justify the deployment of Royal Marines to the country. A British government source says that documents found by American soldiers in a cave near the village of Shah-i-Kot indicates that Osama bin Laden had acquired chemical and biological weapons. The source also claimed that American forces had discovered the laboratory in a cave near the city of Gardez earlier this month. These claims are used to justify the deployment of 1,700 Royal Marines. But once these claims are made public, they are strongly denied by the Pentagon and State Department. A US Army official says, “I don’t know what they’re saying in London but we have received no specific intelligence on that kind of development or capability in the Shah-e-Kot valley region - I mean a chemical or biological weapons facility.” British intelligence, military, and Foreign Office sources also deny any knowledge of the claims. The only evidence related to any sort of laboratory was the discovery near Kandahar last December of an abandoned, incomplete building containing medical equipment, which had been previously reported. The source of the claims is eventually identified as an off-the-record briefing by Prime Minister Tony Blair’s senior foreign policy adviser, David Manning. The Prime Minister’s office says it sticks to “the thrust of the story.” It claims that although evidence points to al-Qaeda’s interest in acquiring such weapons, Manning had “not actually told” reporters a laboratory had been found. ([Beaumont and Vulliamy 3/24/2002](#))

March 27, 2002: Cockpit Recordings Raise Doubts about Flight 93 Events



Flight 93's damaged but successfully recovered cockpit voice recorder. [Source: FBI] New York Times reporter Jere Longman writes an article based on recent leaks to him about Flight 93's cockpit flight recording. (Later, relatives of the victims are given a single chance to listen to the recording). He claims that earlier reports of a 9-1-1 call from a bathroom reporting smoke and an explosion are incorrect. He names the passenger-caller as Edward Felt and notes that the dispatcher who took the call and Felt's wife both deny the smoke and explosion story. There were messages from both passengers and hijackers on the plane speaking of a bomb. ([Pittsburgh Post-Gazette 10/28/2001](#)) Longman also claims that one passenger, Tom Burnett, told his wife there were guns on the plane. ([Longman 3/27/2002](#)) Previously, it had been widely reported that Tom Burnett told his wife he did not see any guns. ([MSNBC 9/14/2001](#)) Note that the passengers appeared doubtful that the hijackers had either real guns or bombs, but there is a March 2002 report of a gun being used on Flight 11.

March 27, 2002: Easter Sunday Terror Alert for US Citizens in Italy

A terror alert is issued for American interests in four Italian cities. Richard Boucher, spokesman for the State Department, says that "There is not too much more detail I can give you other than saying that we have credible reports that extremists are planning additional terrorist attacks against US interests and that a possible threat exists to US citizens in the cities of Venice, Florence, Milan and Verona on Easter Sunday, March 31st." ([US Department of State 3/27/2002](#)) No attacks materialize and no further information is given on the nature of the threat. ([News Hounds 10/9/2004](#))

Before March 28, 2002: 'Vast Majority' of Al-Qaeda Leader's Contacts Are Already under Surveillance

When al-Qaeda logistics manager Abu Zubaida is arrested in late March 2002 (see [March 28, 2002](#)), his computer is searched. According to the Washington Post: "When agents found Zubaida's laptop computer, a senior law enforcement source said, they discovered that the vast majority of people he had been communicating with were being monitored under FISA warrants or international spying efforts. 'Finally, we got some comfort' that surveillance efforts were working, said a government official familiar with Zubaida's arrest." The fact some of his contacts are monitored under FISA warrants indicates that

they are in the US, as FISA warrants are only used for US targets (see [1978](#)). The monitoring of Abu Zubaida's communications began in the mid-1990s, at the latest (see [\(Mid-1996\)](#) and [October 1998 and After](#)), and continued after 9/11 (see [October 8, 2001](#)). ([Leonig 2/9/2006](#)) Some will later suggest that Zubaida may have had mental problems (see [Shortly After March 28, 2002](#)), but this apparently did not stop him from being a key al-Qaeda contact point. FBI agent Dan Coleman, an expert on al-Qaeda, will later say that the FBI "all knew he was crazy, and they knew he was always on the damn phone." ([Eggen and Pincus 12/18/2007](#))

March 28, 2002: Al-Qaeda Leader Zubaida Is Captured



The house in Faisalabad, Pakistan, where Zubaida was captured. [*Source: PBS*] FBI agents and Pakistani police commandos raid a house in the city of Faisalabad, Pakistan, and capture al-Qaeda leader Abu Zubaida. He's shot three times but survives. ([Burns 4/14/2002](#)) In late February 2002, some militants are arrested in Pakistan who admit they are on their way to Faisalabad to meet with Zubaida. His location is pinpointed over the next few weeks as US intelligence traces his phone calls. ([Burns 4/14/2002](#); [Suskind 2006, pp. 84-89](#)) He had surgically altered his appearance and was using an alias, so it takes a couple of days to completely confirm his identity. ([Johnston 9/10/2006](#)) Not long after his arrest, he is taken to Bagram base in Afghanistan. ([Burke 6/13/2004](#)) Shortly after the arrest, the New York Times reports that "Zubaida is believed by American intelligence to be the operations director for al-Qaeda and the highest-ranking figure of that group to be captured since the Sept. 11 attacks." ([Burns 4/14/2002](#)) However, it will later come out that while Zubaida was an al-Qaeda leader, his importance was probably overstated (see [Shortly After March 28, 2002](#)). Defense Secretary Rumsfeld publicly vows that Zubaida will not be tortured, but it will later come out that he was (see [Mid-May 2002 and After](#)). ([Burns 4/14/2002](#))

March 28-August 1, 2002: CIA Has No Clear Legal Guidelines for Interrogating Al-Qaeda Leader Zubaida and Other Detainees

After al-Qaeda leader Abu Zubaida is captured on March 28, 2002 (see [March 28, 2002](#)), the CIA takes control of his detention and interrogation, but there is no legal clarity over just how aggressive his interrogation can be for several months. CIA Director George

Tenet will write in a 2007 book, “Now that we had an undoubted resource in our hands—the highest-ranking al-Qaeda official captured to date—we opened discussions within the National Security Council as to how to handle him, since holding and interrogating large numbers of al-Qaeda operatives had never been part of our plan.... We wondered what we could legitimately do to get that information. Despite what Hollywood might have you believe, in situations like this you don’t call in the tough guys, you call in the lawyers. It took until August to get clear guidance on what Agency officers could legally do.” ([Tenet 2007, pp. 241](#)) This is a reference to an August 1, 2002 Justice Department memo legally justifying the use of some interrogations generally deemed to be torture (see [August 1, 2002](#)). But it appears Zubaida was subjected to the most extreme interrogation methods the US used, such as waterboarding, well before August 2002 (see [Mid-May 2002 and After](#)). However, during this period of uncertainty and into 2003, the CIA gets advice from Michael Chertoff, head of the Justice Department’s criminal division at the time, about which techniques are likely legal and which ones are not (see [2002-2003](#)).

March 28, 2002-Mid-2004: High-Ranking Al-Qaeda Detainees Subjected to Aggressive Interrogation Techniques

In 2007, NBC News will report that the CIA uses aggressive interrogation techniques on at least 13 high-ranking al-Qaeda detainees between 2002 and 2004. These techniques are first used on Abu Zubaida, captured in March 2002 (see [March 28, 2002](#)), and some of the techniques are discontinued in the wake of the Abu Ghraib scandal around the middle of 2004 (see [Evening April 28, 2004](#)), which is also around the time the CIA’s Inspector General issues a secret report suggesting many of these techniques could be a violation of an international treaty against torture (see [Spring 2004](#)). Euphemistically called “enhanced interrogation,” these techniques include:

- Sleep deprivation.
- Exposure to extreme heat and cold.
- Confined quarters.
- Psychological and physical abuse.
- The use of psychotropic drugs.
- Waterboarding. However, waterboarding is allegedly only used on about four of the detainees (see [May 2002-2003](#)).

All 13 of these detainees will later be transferred to Guantanamo prison to stand trial before a military tribunal there (see [September 2-3, 2006](#)). (Two others similarly transferred - Abu Faraj al-Libbi and Abu al-Hadi al-Iraqi - are captured after the Abu Ghraib scandal and thus are not subjected to as many interrogation techniques.) ([Windrem 9/13/2007](#)) However, there are other “ghost detainees” not officially acknowledged as captured by the US government (see [June 7, 2007](#)). Some, like Hassan Ghul, Abdul Rahim al-Sharqawi, and Mohammed Omar Abdul-Rahman, are held in the same secret prison as most of the “official” high-ranking detainees later transferred to Guantanamo, so it would seem likely that aggressive techniques have been used on many

of them as well. In 2007, President Bush will sign an executive order allowing the CIA to use most of these aggressive techniques again (see [July 2007](#)).

March 29, 2002: Bin Laden Family Denies Terrorist Connections



Abdullah bin Laden, bin Laden family spokesman (not the Abdullah connected to WAMY). [*Source: Agence France-Presse.*] Abdullah bin Laden, spokesman for the bin Laden family and one of Osama's many brothers, speaks directly to the press for the first time since 9/11. He says that the family cut all personal and financial ties to Osama in 1993 and that no family member has contact with him or provides any kind of support for him. "We went through a tough time. It was difficult. We felt we are a victim as well." ([ABC News 3/29/2002](#))

Shortly After March 28, 2002: US Intelligence Suspects Captured Al-Qaeda Leader Zubaida May Be Mentally Unstable and Overestimated

In the wake of al-Qaeda leader Abu Zubaida's arrest (see [March 28, 2002](#)), the FBI discovers much useful information (see [Shortly After March 28, 2002](#)). FBI agent Dan Coleman leads a team to sort through Zubaida's computer files and documents. However, at the same, 2002 time, it is discovered that Zubaida's prominence in al-Qaeda's hierarchy was overestimated and some conclude that he was used as little more than a travel agent for training camp attendees because he was mentally ill. Coleman will later comment, "This guy is insane, certifiable, split personality. That's why they let him fly all over the world doing meet and greet. That's why people used his name on all sorts of calls and e-mails. He was like a travel agent, the guy who booked your flights.... He knew very little about real operations, or strategy. He was expendable...." ([Suskind 2006, pp. 94-96, 100](#)) Other accounts back this up. For instance, Omar Nasiri, a former informant for European intelligence agencies who met Zubaida in the nineties, will later describe Zubaida's odd behavior. He "shuffled around his home in near-total darkness, carrying a gas lantern from room to room. He barely spoke and would often communicate

by pointing.” ([Khatchadourian 1/22/2007](#)) On the other hand, Zubaida does appear to be involved in numerous plots before 9/11 (see for instance [November 30, 1999](#) and [Early September 2001](#)). Al-Qaeda operative Ahmed Ressam cooperated with US investigators after being arrested. He worked with Zubaida and suggested Zubaida was of some importance, but not one of al-Qaeda’s highest leaders: “He is the person in charge of the [training] camps. He receives young men from all countries. He accepts you or rejects you. He takes care of the expenses of the camps. He makes arrangements for you when you travel coming in or leaving.” ([Gunaratna 2003, pp. 133](#)) In a 2007, former CIA Director George Tenet will claim that the reports Zubaida was mentally unstable are “Baloney.... Apparently, the source of the rumor that Abu Zubaida was unbalanced was his personal diary, in which he adopted various personas. From that shaky perch, some junior Freudians leapt to the conclusion that Zubaida had multiple personalities. In fact, Agency psychiatrists eventually determined that in his diary he was using a sophisticated literary device to express himself.” ([Tenet 2007, pp. 243](#)) Regardless, despite being briefed otherwise, President Bush and others in his administration will repeatedly tout the importance of capturing Zubaida and no hint of any doubts about his importance or sanity will be publicly expressed (see [April 9, 2002 and After](#)).

Shortly After March 28, 2002: US Investigators Fail to Trace Saudi-Al-Qaeda Financial Link; Saudis Lose Records



Abu Zubaida pictured shortly after he was captured in Pakistan. He appears to be bloodied and on some type of stretcher. [Source: *ABC News*] When al-Qaeda leader Abu Zubaida is captured in Pakistan (see [March 28, 2002](#)), he is found to be carrying two bank cards, similar to US ATM cards. One is from a Kuwaiti bank and the other is from a Saudi bank. A US source involved in Zubaida’s capture believes this is the only time an al-Qaeda leader was ever captured with direct evidence of using Western-styled bank accounts. Author James Risen

later notes that the “cards had the potential to help investigators understand the financial structure behind al-Qaeda, and perhaps even the 9/11 plot itself. The cards... could unlock some of al-Qaeda’s darkest secrets.” One US source later tells Risen that the cards “could give us entrée right into who was funding al-Qaeda... You could track money right from the financiers to a top al-Qaeda figure.” But Risen claims that two US sources familiar with the case believe no aggressive investigation into the cards is ever done and Zubaida is never even questioned about the cards. Risen says, “It is not clear whether an investigation of the cards simply fell through the cracks, or whether they were ignored because no one wanted to know the answers about connections between al-Qaeda and important figures in the Middle East—particularly in Saudi Arabia.” Nevertheless, some US investigators eventually pursue the trail of the cards on their own time. Over a year later, they will learn that around the time of Zubaida’s capture, Saudi intelligence officials seized all the financial records connected to the Saudi card and the records then disappeared. ([Risen 2006, pp. 173-177](#)) In 2007, former CIA officer Robert Baer will similarly comment, “When Abu Zubaida was arrested in Pakistan in 2002, two ATM cards were found on him. One was issued by a bank in Saudi Arabia (a bank close to the Saudi royal family) and the other to a bank in Kuwait. As I understand it, neither Kuwait nor Saudi Arabia has been able to tell us who fed the accounts.... There’s nothing in the 9/11 Commission report about any of this, and I have no idea whether the leads were run down, the evidence lost or destroyed.” ([Baer 12/7/2007](#)) Zubaida otherwise proves resistant to interrogation until he is transferred to a secret CIA prison in Jordan and tortured there in May 2002 (see [Mid-May 2002 and After](#)).

March 30, 2002: British Newspaper: US Special Forces Training at Secret Location in Kazakhstan

With US troops already in many Central Asian countries, US Special Forces are now reportedly training Kazakhstan troops in a secret location. ([Doran 3/30/2002](#)) An anonymous source in the Kazakh government previously stated, “It is clear that the continuing war in Afghanistan is no more than a veil for the US to establish political dominance in the region. The war on terrorism is only a pretext for extending influence over our energy resources.” ([Helmore 1/20/2002](#))

Late March 2002: President Bush Allegedly Takes Personal Interest in Interrogation of Zubaida

In a 2006 book, New York Times reporter James Risen will claim that shortly after al-Qaeda leader Abu Zubaida is captured in March 2002, “According to a well-placed source with a proven track record of providing extremely reliable information to the author, [CIA Director] George Tenet soon learned that [President] George Bush was taking a very personal interest in the Zubaida case.” Just days after Zubaida’s arrest, Tenet goes to the White House to give his usual daily Presidential Daily Briefing (PDB). Bush asks Tenet about what the CIA is learning from Zubaida’s interrogation. Tenet replies that nothing has been learned yet because Zubaida is heavily wounded and is too

groggy from painkillers to talk coherently. Bush then allegedly asks Tenet, “Who authorized putting him on pain medication?” Risen will comment, “It is possible that this was just one more piece of jocular banter between the two plain-speaking men, according to the source who recounted this incident. Bush’s phrasing was ambiguous. But it is also possible that the comment meant something more. Was [Bush] implicitly encouraging [Tenet] to order the harsh treatment of a prisoner?” Risen notes that some of Tenet’s associates claim they have never heard of the incident and doubt that it is true. ([Risen 2006, pp. 22-23](#)) Later, it appears Bush will be deliberately kept out of the loop regarding the treatment of Zubaida and other detainees in order to avoid culpability for the harsh interrogation methods used (see [April 2002 and After](#)).

[April, June, or August 2002: Al Jazeera Reporter Claims to Conduct Interview with 9/11 Masterminds](#)



Ramzi bin al-Shibh. [*Source: FBI*] It is originally reported that Al Jazeera reporter Yosri Fouda interviews 9/11 mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM) and 9/11 associate Ramzi Bin al-Shibh at a secret location in Karachi, Pakistan, in either June ([Fielding 9/8/2002](#)) or August. ([Tremlett 9/9/2002](#)) Details and audio footage of the interview come out between September 8 and 12, 2002. The video footage of the interview al-Qaeda promised to hand over is never given to Al Jazeera. ([Shahine 9/8/2002](#)) Both figures claim the 9/11 attacks were originally going to target nuclear reactors, but “decided against it for fear it would go out of control.” Interviewer Fouda is struck that KSM and bin al-Shibh remember only the hijackers’ code names, and have trouble remembering their real names. ([Fouda 9/9/2002](#)) KSM, who calls himself the head of al-Qaeda’s military committee and refers to bin al-Shibh as the coordinator of the “Holy Tuesday” operation, reportedly acknowledges “[a]nd, yes, we did it.” ([Fouda and Fielding 2003, pp. 38](#)) These interviews “are the first full admission by senior figures from bin Laden’s network that they carried out the September 11 attacks.” ([Fielding 9/8/2002](#)) Some, however, call Fouda’s claims into doubt. For example, the Financial Times states: “Analysts cited the crude editing of [Fouda’s interview] tapes and the timing of the broadcasts as reasons to be suspicious about their authenticity. Dia Rashwan, an expert on Islamist movements at the Al-Ahram Centre for Strategic Studies in Cairo, said: ‘I have very serious doubts [about the authenticity of this

tape]. It could have been a script written by the FBI.” ([Drummond 9/11/2002](#)) KSM is later variously reported to be arrested in June 2002, killed or arrested in September 2002, and then arrested in March 2003. After this last arrest report, for the first time Fouda claims this interview took place in April, placing it safely before the first reports of KSM’s capture. ([Guardian 3/4/2003](#); [CTV Television 3/6/2003](#)) Bin al-Shibh also gets captured several days after Fouda’s interview is broadcast, and some reports say he is captured because this interview allows his voice to be identified. ([Burke 9/15/2002](#); [CBS News 10/9/2002](#)) As a result, Fouda has been accused of betraying al-Qaeda, and now fears for his life. ([Gumbel 9/17/2002](#)) As the Washington Post states, “Now Al Jazeera is also subject to rumors of a conspiracy.” ([Williams 9/15/2002](#)) Yet after being so reviled by al-Qaeda supporters, Fouda is later given a cassette said to be a bin Laden speech. ([MSNBC 11/18/2002](#)) US officials believe the voice on that cassette is “almost certainly” bin Laden, but one of the world’s leading voice-recognition institutes said it is 95 percent certain the tape is a forgery. ([BBC 11/18/2002](#); [BBC 11/29/2002](#)) It will later be revealed that details of the interview were told to the CIA in mid-June 2002, which directly resulted in bin al-Shibh’s arrest a few months later (see [June 14, 2002 and Shortly After](#)).

April 2002: CIA Promotes False Hijacker ‘Superman’ Theory

CIA Deputy Director for Operations James Pavitt says of the hijackers: “The terror cells that we’re going up against are typically small and all terrorist personnel... were carefully screened. The number of personnel who know vital information, targets, timing, the exact methods to be used had to be smaller still.... Against that degree of control, that kind of compartmentalization, that depth of discipline and fanaticism, I personally doubt—and I draw again upon my thirty years of experience in this business—that anything short of one of the knowledgeable inner-circle personnel or hijackers turning himself in to us would have given us sufficient foreknowledge to have prevented [9/11].” An FBI official calls this “the superman scenario.” ([Hersh 5/27/2002](#)) The media repeats this notion. For instance, later in the year, the Chicago Tribune will comment, “The operational discipline surrounding Sept. 11 was so professional, and impenetrable, that intercepted telephone conversations, or even well-placed spies, might not have made a difference.” ([Crewdson and Simpson 9/5/2002](#)) But even in the same article that quotes Pavitt, a senior FBI official states that serious and potentially fatal errors were made by the hijackers. The article also notes that the hijackers did not maintain tight compartmentalization and discipline. ([Hersh 5/27/2002](#)) Eventually, more and more details will come out proving the “superman” notion false. The hijackers even told vital details of their plot to complete strangers (see [April-May 2000](#); [Late April-Mid-May 2000](#)).

April 2002: Al-Zarqawi Said to Head Militant Group Competing with Al-Qaeda



Shadi Abdallah. *[Source: Associated Press]* In April 2002, Shadi Abdallah, a militant connected to the al-Tawhid group led by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, is arrested by German police. Abdallah also briefly worked as one of bin Laden's bodyguards (see [Early 2001](#)). He begins cooperating with German authorities. He reveals that al-Zarqawi is not a part of al-Qaeda but is actually the founder of al-Tawhid, which he says works "in opposition" to al-Qaeda (see [1989-Late 1999](#)). The aim of the group is to kill Jews and install an Islamic regime in Jordan. The group is not really interested in the US, and this is the key ideological difference between it and al-Qaeda. Abdallah recounts one instance where al-Zarqawi vetoed a proposal to share charity funds collected in Germany with al-Qaeda. According to Abdallah, al-Zarqawi's organization had also "competed" with al-Qaeda for new recruits. He also reveals that al-Zarqawi's religious mentor is Abu Qatada, an imam openly living in Britain. ([Buncombe and Milmo 2/6/2003](#); [Isikoff 6/25/2003](#); [Bergen 2006, pp. 356-358](#)) A German intelligence report compiled in April 2002 based on Abdallah's confessions further states that "Al-Zarqawi mentioned to Abdallah that the possibility of a merger conflicted with the religious orientation of [Mahfouz Walad Al-Walid (a.k.a. Abu Hafis the Mauritanian)] who was responsible within al-Qaeda for religious or Islamic matters, which contradicted the teachings practices by al-Zarqawi." ([Bergen 2006, pp. 359-422](#)) Newsweek will later report that "several US officials" claim "they were aware all along of the German information about al-Zarqawi." ([Buncombe and Milmo 2/6/2003](#)) Nonetheless, Bush will claim in a televised speech on October 7, 2002 (see [October 7, 2002](#)) that a "very senior al-Qaeda leader... received medical treatment in Baghdad this year," a reference to al-Zarqawi. And Colin Powell will similarly state on February 5, 2003 (see [February 5, 2003](#)) that "Iraq is harboring the network of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, an associate and collaborator of Osama bin Laden and his al-Qaeda lieutenants." Both statements are made even though "US intelligence already had concluded that al-Zarqawi was not an al-Qaeda member..." ([BBC 2/5/2003](#); [Powell 2/5/2003](#); [Pincus 6/22/2003](#) *Sources: Unnamed US intelligence sources*)

April 2002: Zubaida Claims Al-Zarqawi Is Not Linked to Al-Qaeda

In April 2002, German intelligence compile a report about militant leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi; it suggests that al-Zarqawi is not a part of al-Qaeda (see [March 28, 2002](#)). At the end of March 2002, al-Qaeda leader Abu Zubaida was captured and interrogated by US forces (see [March 28, 2002](#)). While few details of what Zubaida is said to say are known, some details must have been quickly passed to the Germans because this German

intelligence report says, “Even in the interrogations of al-Qaeda leaders there are no indications of al-Zarqawi’s membership in al-Qaeda. Thus, Abu Zubaida (an al-Qaeda recruiter), in one of his interrogations, speaks instead about the ‘Group of al-Zarqawi.’” ([Bergen 2006, pp. 359, 422](#)) (Note that information gained from such interrogations are of unknown reliability, especially when torture is used. Zubaida appears to be tortured around this time (see [Mid-May 2002 and After](#))).

April 2002: CIA Officials Tell Case Officers that Bush Administration is Set on War with Iraq; Proposes Propaganda Campaign for Europe

CIA case officers stationed all over Europe attend a mandatory special conference in Rome. Officials from the CIA’s Iraq Operations Group inform the case officers that Iraq has been on the administration’s agenda from the very beginning. One officer who attends the conference later tells author James Risen: “They said this was on Bush’s agenda when he got elected, and that 9/11 only delayed it. They implied that 9/11 was a distraction from Iraq. And they said Bush was committed to a change of leadership in Iraq, and that it would start with kinetic energy—meaning bombs. Meaning war.” Officials in the Iraq Operations Group are openly supportive of the administration’s goal. At the conference, they give presentations about the evils of Iraq, most of which is based on information from the public record. One attendee likens it to a “pep rally” aimed at building support within the agency for an invasion of Iraq. “We were supposed to go out and tell our liaison contacts how bad Saddam was,” the officer later says. During the meeting, it is proposed that the CIA plant stories in the European media in support of a war with Iraq. ([Risen 2006, pp. 183-184](#))

April 2002 and After: President Bush Deliberately Shielded from Knowledge of Harsh Interrogation Techniques

After the capture of al-Qaeda leader Abu Zubaida, the US government is forced to review procedures on how Zubaida and future detainees should be treated. One CIA source will later say, “Abu Zubaida’s capture triggered everything.” The legal basis for harsh interrogations is murky at best, and the Justice Department will not give any legal guidelines to the CIA until August 2002, after Zubaida has already been tortured (see [March 28-August 1, 2002](#)). New York Times reporter James Risen will later claim in a 2006 book that after showing some initial interest in Zubaida’s treatment (see [Late March 2002](#)), President Bush is mysteriously absent from any internal debates about the treatment of detainees. The CIA’s Office of Inspector General later investigates evidence of the CIA’s involvement of detainee abuse, and concludes in a secret report that Bush is never officially briefed on the interrogation tactics used. CIA Director George Tenet gives briefings on the tactics to a small group of top officials, including Vice President Cheney, National Security Adviser Rice, Attorney General John Ashcroft and then later Attorney

General Alberto Gonzales, but not Bush. Risen will note that “Normally, such high-stakes—and very secret—CIA activities would be carefully vetted by the White House and legally authorized in writing by the president under what are known as presidential findings. Such directives are required by Congress when the CIA engages in covert action.” But through a legal slight-of-hand, the CIA determines the interrogations should be considered a normal part of “intelligence collection” and not a covert action, so no specific presidential approval is needed. Risen concludes, “Certainly, Cheney and senior White House officials knew that Bush was purposely not being briefed and that the CIA was not being given written presidential authorization for its tactics. It appears that there was a secret agreement among very senior administration officials to insulate Bush and to give him deniability, even as his vice president and senior lieutenants were meeting to discuss the harsh new interrogation methods. President Bush was following a ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ policy on the treatment of prisoners.” ([Risen 2006, pp. 23-27](#))

Early April 2002: FBI Whistleblower’s Sister in Turkey Sought by Police

Early in April, two Istanbul policemen knock on the door of Sibel Edmonds’ sister’s neighbor inquiring about the sister’s whereabouts. They say it concerns an “intelligence matter” and they leave a note, which reads, “For an important issue your deposition/interrogation is required. If you do not report to the station within 5 days, between 09:00 and 17:00, as is required by Turkish law CMK.132, you will be taken/arrested by force.” ([Rose 9/2005](#))

Early April 2002: Al-Qaeda Leader Zubaida Allegedly Incriminates Saudi Princes



Prince Ahmed bin Salman [*Source: Thoroughbred Corp.*] Author Gerald Posner, controversial for his books dismissing JFK assassination and other conspiracy theories, claims a remarkable interrogation of al-Qaeda prisoner Abu Zubaida begins at this time. Zubaida, arrested three days earlier (see [March 28, 2002](#)), is flown to a US Special Forces compound outside of Kandahar, Afghanistan.

There, he is tricked into thinking the US has handed him to the Saudis for a more brutal interrogation, but in fact “the Saudis” are still American agents. Zubaida expresses great relief at this and, under the influence of the “truth serum” sodium pentothal, tells his interrogators to call Prince Ahmed bin Salman, a nephew of the Saudi king. He provides telephone numbers from memory and says, “He will tell you what to do.” He proceeds to give more information and phone numbers, claiming ties with higher ups in both the Saudi and Pakistani governments. He also names:

- Pakistani air force chief Mushaf Ali Mir, said to be closely tied to the fundamentalists in the ISI.

- Saudi Intelligence Minister Prince Turki al-Faisal.

- Prince Sultan bin Faisal, another nephew of the Saudi King.

- Prince Fahd bin Turki, another member of the Saudi royalty. According to Posner, Zubaida claims that all of these people were intermediaries he dealt with in the frequent transfer of money to al-Qaeda. The phone numbers and other details are consistent with information already known by US intelligence. Zubaida then lays out many secrets about the 9/11 attacks. One unnamed investigator will later call them “the Rosetta Stone” of 9/11. According to Zubaida, he was present in a meeting in 1996 where the Pakistanis and the Saudis struck a deal with bin Laden (see [1996](#)), promising him protection, arms, and supplies in exchange for not being the targets of future terror attacks. He claimed both governments were told the US would be attacked on 9/11, but not given the details of how the attack would work. Within months, all of the people named by Zubaida die mysteriously except for Prince Turki, who is made an ambassador, giving him diplomatic immunity. ([Posner 2003, pp. 186-94](#)) Posner says he learned this story from two unnamed US government sources who gave similar, independent accounts. One is from the CIA and the other is a senior Bush administration official “inside the executive branch.”

([Follman 10/18/2003](#)) With the notable exception of a prominent Time magazine article ([Zabriskie 8/31/2003](#)), few news outlets cover the story ([Mitchell 9/5/2003](#); [Sirohi 9/17/2003](#); [Follman 10/18/2003](#)), and some that do cover it only in the form of book reviews. ([Leiby 9/10/2003](#); [Lichtblau 10/12/2003](#); [Mead 10/29/2003](#)) Some experts put forth the theory that the story could be made up by neoconservatives interested in starting a war with Saudi Arabia. It is also possible Zubaida mixed facts with lies, as he was found to lie to interrogators on many other occasions. ([Follman 10/18/2003](#)) There is also speculation that the gist of the story may be true, but that Zubaida’s Saudi and Pakistani contacts may have been pinned on dead men to protect the actual guilty parties. ([Raman 9/17/2003](#); [Follman 10/18/2003](#)) New York Times reporter James Risen will essentially repeat and confirm Posner’s account in his 2006 book *State of War*. He will add, “In addition to the incidents described by Posner, a senior former American government official said that the United States has obtained other evidence that suggests connections between al-Qaeda operatives and telephone numbers associated with Saudi officials.”

Risen further points out, “There is no evidence that a thorough examination of [Zubaida’s] claims of ties to powerful Saudis was ever conducted.” ([Risen 2006, pp. 187](#))

Also, in 2005, the New York Times will report that Michael Chertoff, then a Justice Department official advised the CIA about which interrogation techniques they could use on Abu Zubaida and others, and allowed the use of trickery to make the detainee believe “he was being questioned by a member of a security service from another country.” (see [2002-2003](#))

[April 1, 2002: Afghan Opium Crackdown Fails](#)



An Afghan farmer stands in his opium poppy fields.

[Source: Shaul Schwarz/ Corbis] “American officials have quietly abandoned their hopes to reduce Afghanistan’s opium production substantially this year and are now bracing for a harvest large enough to inundate the world’s heroin and opium markets with cheap drugs.” They want to see the new Afghan government make at least a token effort to destroy some opium, but it appears that the new government is not doing even that. Afghan leader Hamid Karzai had announced a total ban on opium cultivation, processing, and trafficking, but it appears to be a total sham. The new harvest is so large that it could be “enough opium to stockpile for two or two and a half more years.” ([Golden 4/1/2002](#)) Starting this month, Karzai’s government offers farmers \$500 for every acre of poppies they destroy, but farmers can earn as much as \$6,400 per acre for the crop. The program is eventually cancelled when it runs out of money to pay farmers. ([Shah 3/27/2003](#))

[Spring-Late 2002: CIA Videotapes Interrogations of High Value Detainees](#)

The CIA videotapes interrogations of high-value al-Qaeda detainees. The interrogations of at least two detainees are taped. One of the detainees is Abu Zubaida, who helped run a training camp in Afghanistan (see [March 28, 2002](#) and [Mid-May 2002 and After](#)). ([Central Intelligence Agency 12/6/2007](#)) Another is Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri, chief of al-Qaeda operations in the Arabian peninsula (see [November 8, 2002](#) and [Shortly After November 8, 2002](#)). ([Mazzetti 12/8/2007](#)) The tapes run to a “couple hundred hours,” and mostly show 24 hour a day coverage of Zubaida in his cell. However, some portions show aggressive interrogations, including waterboarding. According to one source, full transcripts are not made, although summaries are drafted and sent back to CIA headquarters. ([Fox News 12/13/2007](#); [Eggen and Pincus 12/18/2007](#)) Another source says the opposite, “A detailed written transcript of the tapes’ contents—apparently including references to interrogation techniques—was subsequently made by the CIA.” ([Isikoff and Hosenball 12/11/2007](#)) However, after tapes of Zubaida and al-Nashiri’s interrogations are destroyed in 2005 (see [November 2005](#)), some tapes are still in existence (see [September 19 and October 18, 2007](#)), suggesting that either not all tapes of their

interrogations are destroyed, or that one or more other detainees are videotaped. Another detainee whose interrogations may be taped is Ramzi bin al-Shibh, because he is the most important remaining al-Qaeda leader who is captured during this time period (see [June 13-September 25, 2000](#) and [September 11, 2002](#)). In addition, at least one audio recording is also made. ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 10/25/2007](#).) According to a statement by CIA Director Michael Hayden, the interrogations are recorded because “new” procedures are used during the interrogations and the tapes are “meant chiefly as an additional, internal check on the program in its early stages.” The videotaping apparently ends in 2002. ([Central Intelligence Agency 12/6/2007](#)) Another reason for the videotaping is said to be Abu Zubaida’s poor medical condition - he was shot several times during the operation to capture him. An intelligence official will later say, “There were concerns that there be a record of his medical treatment and condition in the event that he died.” ([Whitelaw 12/13/2007](#)) However, there are various allegations these detainees are tortured (see [Mid-May 2002 and After, June 16, 2004](#), [Shortly After September 6, 2006](#), and [March 10-April 15, 2007](#)). Some of the tapes are destroyed in 2005 (see [November 2005](#)) and there will be a media and political outcry when this is revealed in 2007 (see [December 6, 2007](#)).

Between April 2002 and November 2005:: CIA Interrogation Videos Held Overseas Despite Security Risk

CIA videotapes of detainee interrogations are held overseas and not sent back to CIA headquarters from the time they are made (see [Spring-Late 2002](#)) until the time they are destroyed (see [November 2005](#)). They are stored in a safe at the CIA station in the country or countries where the interrogations are performed. Given that there is concern about keeping such highly classified material overseas, it is unclear why the tapes are not sent to the US for security reasons. ([Mazzetti and Shane 12/19/2007](#)) However, portions of the tapes are transmitted to the US so they can be viewed by CIA managers (see [Between April 2002 and November 2005](#)).

April 4, 2002: Head of US Military States ‘The Goal Has Never Been to Get bin Laden’



Myers making his comments at a press conference. [Source: *Banded Artists Productions*] Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Richard Myers states, “The goal has never been to get bin Laden.” He adds, “Obviously, that’s desirable,” but then he hints it won’t be desirable to do so soon, saying, “I just read a piece by some analysts that said you may not want to go after the top people in these organizations. You may have more effect by going after the middlemen, because they’re harder to replace. I don’t know if that’s true, or not, and clearly we would like to eventually get bin Laden.” ([Myers 4/6/2002](#)) In early 2005, the recently retired Executive Director of the CIA will explicitly state that it is better to let bin Laden remain free (see [January 9, 2005](#)).

[April 4, 2002: Treasury Secretary Meeting Raises Political Influence Questions](#)



Talat Othman. [Source: *Hanania*] In the wake of the Operation Greenquest raid on the SAAR network (see [March 20, 2002](#)), disgruntled Muslim-American leaders meet with Treasury Secretary Paul O’Neill to complain about the raid. At the time, the Treasury Department had control over the Customs Department, which ran Greenquest. The meeting is arranged by prominent Republican activist Grover Norquist. About a dozen leaders are asked to attend the meeting. O’Neill pledges to look into concerns the leaders have about the raid. ([Simpson 4/18/2002](#); [Armstrong 3/2004](#))

Those who meet with O'Neill include:

■Khaled Saffuri. He is head of the Islamic Institute, a group he co-founded with Norquist to organize conservative Muslims (see [1998-September 2001](#)). The institute accepted \$20,000 in donations from the Safa Trust, which was targeted in the raid. The Safa Trust in turn has been funded by Youssef Nada, who had his assets frozen shortly after 9/11 on suspicion on funding al-Qaeda (see [November 7, 2001](#)). The institute also received donations from Abdurahman Alamoudi, another target of the raid who will later receive a long prison term (see [October 15, 2004](#)). ([Simpson 4/18/2002](#); [Armstrong 3/2004](#))

■Talat Othman. The Wall Street Journal calls him “a longtime associate and supporter of President Bush’s family who gave a benediction at the Republican National Convention in Philadelphia in August 2000.” He serves on the board of Amana Mutual Funds Trust, an investment firm founded by Yaqub Mirza, the director of most of the organizations targeted in the raid. Amana was not a target of the raid, but two other organization that were raided held large blocks of shares in Amana’s mutual funds. Othman claims to know Mirza only slightly. Othman is also on the board of Saffuri’s Islamic Institute. Further, Othman served on the board of Harken Energy in the late 1980s and early 1990s, at the same time that President Bush did. At the time, Othman represented Saudi businessman Abdullah Bakhsh on Harken Energy’s board, and the investments through Bakhsh were considered essential in saving Harken from bankruptcy. Bakhsh has indirect connections to the notorious criminal bank BCCI (see [July 5, 1991](#)), and in 1996 reputedly attended a secret meeting with al-Qaeda representatives, where the attendees agreed to pay al-Qaeda many millions of dollars of protection money (see [May 1996](#)). ([Petzinger, Truell, and Abramson 12/6/1991](#); [Simpson 4/18/2002](#)) Bakhsh will head a subsidiary of Halliburton, the oil services company formerly run by Vice President Cheney. Othman reportedly remains a friend of Bush. ([Armstrong 3/2004](#)) Harper’s magazine will note that “large sums of money from the suspect groups have moved through Amana, [yet] Greenquest agents chose not to raid the firm,” and will hint that political influence from Othman and others may have saved Amana from being raided. ([Armstrong 3/2004](#))

[April 4, 2002: Bush: ‘I Made Up My Mind that Saddam Needs to Go’](#)

President George Bush says in an interview on Britain’s ITV television network, “I made up my mind that Saddam [Hussein] needs to go. That’s about all I’m willing to share with you.” ([US President 4/15/2002, pp. 573](#))

[April 5, 2002: Saeed Shaikh Tried in Secret](#)



Saeed Sheikh surrounded by police. [Source: *unknown*] The Pakistani trial of Saeed Sheikh and three others begins. ([BBC 7/5/2002](#)) NBC reports that death sentences are expected for the four accused killers of Daniel Pearl, despite a lack of evidence. The case will be decided in top secret by handpicked judges in Pakistan's anti-terrorism courts. "Some in Pakistan's government also are very concerned about what [the defendant] Saeed might say in court. His organization and other militant groups here have ties to Pakistan's secret intelligence agency [the ISI]. There are concerns he could try to implicate that government agency in the Pearl case, or other questionable dealings that could be at the very least embarrassing, or worse." ([Allen 4/5/2002](#)) Later in the month the London Times says that the real truth about Saeed will not come out in the trial because, "Sheikh is no ordinary terrorist but a man who has connections that reach high into Pakistan's military and intelligence elite and into the innermost circles of Osama bin Laden and the al-Qaeda organization." ([Fielding 4/21/2002](#))

April 9, 2002 and After: Bush Administration Exaggerates the Value of Al-Qaeda Prisoner Zubaida for Political Gain

The capture of al-Qaeda leader Abu Zubaida (see [March 28, 2002](#)) is leaked to the press shortly after it occurs and on April 9, 2002, President Bush says in a speech, "The other day we hauled in a guy named Abu Zubaida. He's one of the top operatives planning death and destruction on the United States. He's not plotting and planning anymore." In the weeks and months that follow, President Bush and others in his administration will repeatedly tout the importance of capturing Zubaida. He is frequently described as "chief of operations" for all of al-Qaeda and the group's number three leader. Zubaida is the only significant al-Qaeda capture in the first year after 9/11, so there is pressure to hype his importance. However, at the time there is a raging debate among US intelligence analysts as to Zubaida's actual importance and even his mental sanity (see [Shortly After March 28, 2002](#)). According to journalist Ron Suskind, one day, when CIA Director George Tenet reminds Bush that Zubaida was not such a top leader after all, Bush reportedly says to him, "I said he was important. You're not going to let me lose face on this, are you?" Tenet replies, "No sir, Mr. President." Suskind will later comment, "In the wide, diffuse 'war on terror,' so much of it occurring in the shadows—with no transparency and only perfunctory oversight—the administration could say anything it wanted to say.... The administration could create whatever reality was convenient."

([Suskind 2006, pp. 99-100](#)) In 2006, Bush will make new claims about Zubaida's capture that are at odds with the known facts (see [September 6, 2006](#)).

April 11, 2002: KSM Connected to New Bombing in Tunisia

A truck bomb kills 19 people, mostly German tourists, at a synagogue in Djerba, Tunisia. It is later claimed that al-Qaeda is behind the attack, and that the suspected bomber speaks with Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM) by phone about three hours before the attack. ([Czuczka 8/24/2002](#))

April 11, 2002: Congresswoman Suspects Bush Knew of 9/11 in Advance



Cynthia McKinney. [*Source: House of Representatives*] Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney (D) calls for a thorough investigation into whether President Bush and other government officials may have been warned of the 9/11 attacks but did nothing to prevent them. She is the first national-level politician to do so. She states: "News reports from Der Spiegel to the London Observer, from the Los Angeles Times to MSNBC to CNN, indicate that many different warnings were received by the administration.... I am not aware of any evidence showing that President Bush or members of his administration have personally profited from the attacks of 9/11.... On the other hand, what is undeniable is that corporations close to the administration have directly benefited from the increased defense spending arising from the aftermath of September 11. The Carlyle Group, Dyn-Corp, and Halliburton certainly stand out as companies close to this administration." ([McKinney 4/12/2002](#)) McKinney's comments are criticized and ridiculed by other politicians and the media. For instance, Congressman Mark Foley (R) states, "She has said some outrageous things but this has gone too far.... Maybe there should be an investigation as she suggests—but one focused

on her.” Senator Zell Miller (D) says her comments were dangerous and irresponsible. ([Eilperin 4/12/2002](#)) An editorial in her home state calls her the “most prominent nut” promoting 9/11 “conspiracy theories.” ([Atlanta Journal-Constitution 4/15/2002](#)) One columnist says she is possibly “a delusional paranoid” or “a socialist rabble-rouser who despises her own country.” ([Parker 4/21/2002](#)) White House Press Secretary Ari Fleischer said McKinney “must be running for the hall of fame of the Grassy Knoll Society.” ([Eilperin 4/12/2002](#)) One month after McKinney’s comments, the Bush administration comes under fire after reports reveal it had been warned five weeks before 9/11 about possible al-Qaeda plane hijackings, and McKinney claims vindication. She will lose reelection later in the year, but win her seat back in 2004. ([Office of Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney 5/16/2002](#))

Between April and May 14, 2002: Zubaida Associate Threatened with Pictures of Zubaida Hurt by Torture



These two men were captured or killed during the raid to get Abu Zubaida. Their names are not known. [Source: *ABC News*] Omar Ghramesh had been captured in a house in Faisalabad, Pakistan, at the same time as al-Qaeda leader Abu Zubaida (see [March 28, 2002](#)). He is temporarily held in Pakistan and while there he is shown pictures of Zubaida looking battered and bruised. He is told, “If you don’t talk, this is what will happen to you.” It is not clear if he is in US or Pakistani custody at this time, as the arrest of Zubaida and his associates was a joint US-Pakistani operation. But Ghramesh does not talk, and on May 14, 2002, he and two others will be renditioned to a torture center in Syria called the Palestine Branch. There, Ghramesh will meet Abdullah Almalki, a dual Syrian and Canadian citizen who has also been renditioned to Syria to be tortured, and he will tell Almalki the account of being shown

the pictures of Zubaida. ([Grey 2007, pp. 4, 54, 284](#)) Almalki will later be found innocent of all terrorist ties and let go. ([Grey 2007, pp. 4, 54, 284](#)) Then, in 2006, he will tell the account of the Zubaida photos to journalist Stephen Grey. There is no sign Ghraesh has been freed. ([Grey 2007, pp. 4, 54, 284](#)) In late 2007, it will be reported that all videotapes of Zubaida's interrogation were destroyed (see [November 2005](#)), but Ghraesh's account suggests there may be surviving photos.

Between April 2002 and November 2005: Parts of CIA Interrogation Tapes Transmitted to US, Reviewed by Headquarters Officials

Portions of videotapes of CIA detainee interrogations are transmitted from the foreign countries where the detainees are being held back to CIA headquarters in the US, where they are reviewed by "a small number of officials." One of the reasons the tapes are made is so that headquarters can check on the methods being used by the interrogators (see [Spring-Late 2002](#) and [Mid-May 2002 and After](#)). These methods are said to include waterboarding and other questionable techniques (see [Mid-March 2002](#)). It is unclear what happens to these transmitted recordings when many of the videotapes of the interrogations are destroyed (see [November 2005](#)). However, in late 2007 an anonymous counterterrorism official will say there is "no reason" to believe the transmitted recordings still exist. ([Isikoff and Hosenball 12/11/2007](#)) A 2003 book by Gerald Posner will also indicate that a team of CIA officials watch the interrogation of al-Qaeda leader Abu Zubaida live on video from an adjacent room. Interrogators in the room wear earpieces so they can immediately act on suggestions from the team. ([Posner 2003, pp. 188-190](#))

Mid-April 2002: FBI Rapport Building Techniques Get Immediate Results with Zubaida, but CIA Stops Their Use

After being flown to a secret CIA prison in Thailand around mid-April 2002, Al-Qaeda leader Abu Zubaida is attended to by a mix of FBI and CIA agents. A CIA interrogation team is expected but has not yet arrived, so FBI agents who have been nursing his wounds are initially leading his questioning using its typical rapport-building techniques. ([Eban 7/17/2007](#)) To help get him to talk, the agents bring in a box of audiotapes and claim they contain recordings of his phone conversations. He begins to confess. Just how useful his information will later be sharply disputed. The New York Times will note that officials aligned with the FBI tend to think the FBI's techniques were effective while officials aligned with the CIA tend to think the CIA's techniques were more effective. ([Johnston 9/10/2006](#)) But in 2007, Vanity Fair will conclude a 10 month investigation comprising 70 interviews, and conclude that the FBI techniques were effective. After being shown a series of photographs of al-Qaeda leaders, he confirms that Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM) is known by the alias "Mukhtar," a vital fact US intelligence

discovered shortly before 9/11 (see [August 28, 2001](#)). He confesses that KSM planned the 9/11 plot, which US intelligence did not yet know. He also lays out the details of the plot. Vanity Fair will later comment, “America learned the truth of how 9/11 was organized because a detainee had come to trust his captors after they treated him humanely.” Zubaida also confesses to a plot against a US ally and reveals the name of Jose Padilla, an alleged al-Qaeda operative living in the US (see [Mid-April 2002](#)). CIA Director George Tenet reportedly blows up that the FBI and not the CIA obtained the information and he demands that the CIA team get there immediately. But once the CIA team arrives, they immediately put a stop to the rapport building techniques and instead begin implementing a controversial “psychic demolition” using legally questionable interrogation techniques. Zubaida immediately stops cooperating (see [Mid-April 2002](#)). ([Eban 7/17/2007](#)) FBI agents appeal to their superiors but are told that the CIA is now in charge. ([Johnston 9/10/2006](#)) In 2007, former CIA officer John Kiriakou will make the opposite claim, that FBI techniques were slow and ineffective and CIA techniques were immediately effective. However, Kiriakou led the team that captured Zubaida in Pakistan and does not appear to have traveled with him to Thailand (see [December 10, 2007](#)). ([Esposito and Ross 12/10/2007](#); [Kiriakou 12/10/2007](#).)

Mid-April 2002: Zubaida Identifies Jose Padilla, but Dismisses Him as an Incompetent with Far-Fetched Plans

Not long after being captured, al-Qaeda leader Abu Zubaida identifies Jose Padilla as an al-Qaeda operative to his FBI interrogators (see [Mid-April 2002](#)). Padilla is a US citizen, and US intelligence has been monitoring him and some of his associates in Florida for nearly a decade already (see [October 1993-November 2001](#)). However, the New York Times will allege in 2006, “But Mr. Zubaida dismissed Mr. Padilla as a maladroit extremist whose hope to construct a dirty bomb, using conventional explosives to disperse radioactive materials, was far-fetched. He told his questioners that Mr. Padilla was ignorant on the subject of nuclear physics and believed he could separate plutonium from nuclear material by rapidly swinging over his head a bucket filled with fissionable material.” ([Johnston 9/10/2006](#)) The US arrests Padilla a short time later, when he returns to the US from an overseas trip on May 8 (see [May 8, 2002](#)). One month later, Attorney General John Ashcroft will reveal Padilla’s arrest in a widely publicized announcement, and will further allege that Padilla was actively plotting to detonate a radioactive “dirty bomb” inside the US (see [June 10, 2002](#)). However, it appears Zubaida may have been correct that Padilla was wildly overhyped. The US will later drop charges that Padilla was making a “dirty bomb,” planning any attack in the US, and was a member of al-Qaeda. ([McCaffrey 11/23/2005](#)) Journalist Ron Suskind will comment in 2006, “Padilla turned out to not be nearly as valuable as advertised at the start, though, and I think that’s been shown in the ensuing years.” ([Suskind 9/7/2006](#))

Mid-April-May 2002: FBI Is Appalled by CIA Interrogation of Zubaida; Withdraws Its Personnel

Around mid-April 2002, the CIA begins using aggressive interrogation techniques on al-Qaeda leader Abu Zubaida. A new CIA team led by psychologist James Elmer Mitchell arrives and takes control of Zubaida's interrogation from the FBI (see [Mid-April 2002](#)). This team soon begins using techniques commonly described as torture, such as waterboarding. Journalist James Risen will write in a 2006 book, "The assertions that the CIA's tactics stopped short of torture were undercut by the fact that the FBI decided that the tactics were so severe that the bureau wanted no part of them, and FBI agents were ordered to stay away from the CIA-run interrogations. FBI agents did briefly see Abu Zubaida in custody, and at least one agent came away convinced that Zubaida was being tortured, according to an FBI source." ([Risen 2006, pp. 32](#)) Newsweek will similarly report in 2007 that Zubaida's interrogation "sparked an internal battle within the US intelligence community after FBI agents angrily protested the aggressive methods that were used. In addition to waterboarding, Zubaida was subjected to sleep deprivation and bombarded with blaring rock music by the Red Hot Chili Peppers. One agent was so offended he threatened to arrest the CIA interrogators, according to two former government officials directly familiar with the dispute." ([Isikoff, Hosenball, and Hirsh 12/12/2007](#)) The FBI completely withdraws its personnel, wanting to avoid legal entanglements with the dubious methods. The CIA then is able to use even more aggressive methods on Zubaida (see [Mid-May 2002 and After](#)). ([Johnston 9/10/2006](#))

Mid-April 2002: New CIA Team Arriving to Interrogate Zubaida Uses Completely Untried and Dubious Techniques



The law offices of Mitchell, Jessen and Associates are in this American Legion Building in Spokane, Washington. [Source: *Brian Plonka / Spokesman-Review*] The FBI has been interrogating captured Al-Qaeda leader Abu Zubaida at a secret CIA prison in Thailand and learning valuable intelligence information (see [Mid-April 2002](#)). However, the prison is controlled by the CIA and the FBI are only in control until a team of CIA interrogators arrives, which apparently happens around mid-April 2002. The FBI has been using humane rapport building techniques, but the new CIA team immediately abandons this approach. The team is lead by psychologist James Elmer Mitchell, who runs a consulting business in Washington state with psychologist Bruce Jessen. Both worked in SERE (Survival, Evasion,

Resistance, Escape), a classified US military training program which trains soldiers to endure being tortured by the enemy. Mitchell and Jessen reverse-engineered the techniques inflicted in the SERE training so they could be used on Zubaida and other detainees. ([Eban 7/17/2007](#)) SERE trainees are subjected to “waterboarding (simulated drowning), sleep deprivation, isolation, exposure to temperature extremes, enclosure in tiny spaces, bombardment with agonizing sounds, and religious and sexual humiliation.” One European official knowledgeable about the SERE program will say of Mitchell and Jessen, “They were very arrogant, and pro-torture... They sought to render the detainees vulnerable—to break down all of their senses.” The use of these psychologists also helps to put a veneer of scientific respectability over the torture techniques favored by top officials. One former US intelligence community adviser will later say, “Clearly, some senior people felt they needed a theory to justify what they were doing. You can’t just say, ‘We want to do what Egypt’s doing.’ When the lawyers asked what their basis was, they could say, ‘We have PhD’s who have these theories.’” ([Mayer 8/6/2007](#)) But Mitchell and Jessen have no experience in conducting interrogations and have no proof that their techniques are effective. In fact, the SERE techniques are based on Communist interrogation techniques from the Korean War designed not to get valuable intelligence but to generate propaganda by getting US prisoners to make statements denouncing the US. Air Force Reserve colonel Steve Kleinman, an expert in human-intelligence operations, will later say he finds it astonishing the CIA “chose two clinical psychologists who had no intelligence background whatsoever, who had never conducted an interrogation... to do something that had never been proven in the real world.” FBI official Michael Rolince calls their techniques “voodoo science.” In 2006, a report by the best-known interrogation experts in the US will conclude that there is no evidence that reverse-engineered SERE tactics are effective in obtaining useful intelligence. But nonetheless, from this time forward Zubaida’s interrogations will be based on these techniques. ([Eban 7/17/2007](#))

[April 17, 2002: Failure to Capture Bin Laden in Afghan War Is Called ‘Gravest Error’](#)

The Washington Post reports that, “The Bush administration has concluded that Osama bin Laden was present during the battle for Tora Bora late last year and that failure to commit US ground troops to hunt him was its gravest error in the war against al-Qaeda,” allowing bin Laden to escape. The newspaper claims that while the administration has failed to acknowledge the mistake publicly, “inside the government there is little controversy on the subject.” ([Gellman and Ricks 4/17/2002](#)) The next day, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld denies this, and states he did not know at the time of the assault, “nor do I know today of any evidence that he was in Tora Bora at the time or that he left Tora Bora at the time or even where he is today.” ([Moniz 4/18/2002](#)) Apparently, Rumsfeld soon forces the removal of Cofer Black from his position of head of the CIA’s counterterrorism division, because Rumsfeld thinks Black leaked information for this damning Washington Post article (see [May 17, 2002](#)).

April 17, 2002: Bush Falsely Promises ‘Marshall Plan’ for Afghanistan

President Bush explicitly likens US reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan to the successful Marshall Plan that helped rebuild Europe after World War II. At the Virginia Military Institute, where Gen. George Marshall trained a century ago, Bush calls the Marshall Plan “a beacon to light the path that we, too, must follow.” He says that Afghans have felt abandoned before, including by the US at the end of the Afghan war against the Soviets in the 1980s, and says, “We’re not going to repeat that mistake. We’re tough, we’re determined, we’re relentless. We will stay until the mission is done.” He vows to avoid the syndrome of “initial success, followed by long years of floundering and ultimate failure.” The New York Times will later note that that speech is little-noticed in the US but fuels expectations in Afghanistan and bolsters the stature of Hamid Karzai shortly before he is formally chosen to lead the Afghan government. But Bush’s promise will fail to materialize. In the months following the speech, the Bush administration fails to make any detailed reconstruction plan. For the next few years, Afghanistan will end up getting less assistance per capita than post-conflict Bosnia and Kosovo, or even poverty-stricken Haiti. ([Rohde and Sanger 8/12/2007](#))

Between Mid-April and Mid-May 2002: CIA Psychologist Opposed to Torture Techniques Planned for Zubaida Leaves in Disgust



R. Scott Shumate. [*Source: American Psychological Association*]/Held in a secret CIA prison in Thailand, al-Qaeda leader Abu Zubaida is interrogated by a new team of CIA interrogators led by James Elmer Mitchell and Dr. R. Scott Shumate. Mitchell is a psychologist contracted to the CIA, while Shumate is the chief operational psychologist for the CIA’s Counterterrorist Center. Mitchell wants to use torture techniques based on reverse-engineering SERE (Survival, Evasion, Resistance, Escape), a class he has taught that trains US soldiers to resist torture by the enemy. But the techniques have never been tried before and studies will later determine they are not effective in obtaining good intelligence (see [Mid-April 2002](#)). Zubaida is resistant to Mitchell’s new aggressive techniques and refuses to talk. Mitchell concludes

Zubaida will only talk when he was been rendered completely helpless and dependent, so the CIA begins building a coffin to bury Zubaida alive but not actually kill him. This creates an intense controversy over the legality of such a technique, and ultimately it appears it is never carried out. Both domestic and international law clearly prohibits death threats and simulated killings. However, a number of aggressive techniques have just been approved at the highest political level (see [Mid-March 2002](#)), so opponents to these techniques are mostly powerless. Shumate is so strongly opposed to these techniques that he leaves in disgust. He will later tell his associates that it was a mistake for the CIA to hire Mitchell. But with Shumate gone, Mitchell is now free to use more extreme methods, and the torture of Zubaida begins in earnest around the middle of May. ([Eban 7/17/2007](#)) Around this time, the FBI also washes their hands of the controversial techniques and withdraws their personnel from the secret prison (see [Mid-April-May 2002](#)).

April 18, 2002: Private Showing of Flight 93 Recordings Fails to Quell Confusions

The FBI allows relatives of passengers on Flight 93 to listen to the 31-minutes of tape from the plane's cockpit voice recorder and see a written transcript of the recording. About 70 relatives do so. They are allowed to take notes, but not to make recordings because the tape might be used in the trial of Zacarias Moussaoui. ([Hirschhorn and Mattingly 4/19/2002](#); [Burkeman 4/19/2002](#); [Levin 4/21/2002](#)) The San Francisco Chronicle responds: "Is there even a dollop of logic in that explanation? It's like saying we can't watch video of the planes crashing into the World Trade Center because that video might be used in a trial." ([Sorensen 6/3/2002](#)) Much of the tape is reportedly unintelligible. According to the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, "the voices were muddled and the ambient noise of the wind rushing by the speeding plane often made it impossible to distinguish individuals, even when they were yelling." ([Leith 4/20/2002](#); [Levin 4/21/2002](#)) New York Times reporter Jere Longman writes the book *Among The Heroes* based in part on interviews with relatives who hear the cockpit voice recording, along with several government officials and investigators. The recording reveals new details of the passengers' struggle on board Flight 93, but the government still has not officially stated if it believes they took over the plane or not. ([Snyder 4/19/2002](#); [MSNBC 7/30/2002](#); [Harnden 7/31/2002](#))

April 19, 2002: FBI Claims Hijacker Computer Use Offered No Evidence

FBI Director Mueller states: "In our investigation, we have not uncovered a single piece of paper either here in the United States or in the treasure trove of information that has turned up in Afghanistan and elsewhere that mentioned any aspect of the September 11 plot." He also claims that the attackers used "extraordinary secrecy" and "investigators have found no computers, laptops, hard drives or other storage media that may have been used by the hijackers, who hid their communications by using hundreds of pay phones and cell phones, coupled with hard-to-trace prepaid calling cards." ([Mueller 4/19/2002](#);

[Lichtblau and Meyer 4/22/2002](#)) However, before 9/11 CIA Director Tenet told the Senate that al-Qaeda is “embracing the opportunities offered by recent leaps in information technology” ([US Congress 3/21/2000](#)) ; the FBI broke the al-Qaeda computer encryption before February 2001 ([Sale 2/13/2001](#)) ; witnesses report seeing the hijackers use computers for e-mail at public libraries in Florida and Maine ([Holland, Peltz, and Benedick 9/16/2001](#); [Wedge and Farmer 10/5/2001](#)) ; in October 2001 there were many reports that hundreds of e-mails discussing the 9/11 plot had been found; Moussaoui’s laptop was found to contain important information, etc....

April 23, 2002: Spain Arrests Alleged Al-Qaeda Financier



Mohammed Zouaydi. [*Source: Agence France-Presse*] Spanish authorities arrest Syrian-born Spanish businessman Mohammed Galeb Kalaje Zouaydi, alleging that he is a key al-Qaeda financier. ([Simpson, Cohen, and Martinez 5/6/2002](#)) An accountant, Zouaydi is considered to be the “big financier” behind the al-Qaeda network in Europe, according to French investigator Jean-Charles Brisard. From 1996 to 2001, Zouaydi lived in Saudi Arabia and funneled money into a series of companies set up to accept donations. (The source of the donations is unknown.) Around \$1 million was then forwarded to al-Qaeda agents throughout Europe, especially to Germany. Mohamed Atta’s Hamburg apartment telephone number was saved in the cell phone memory of one of Zouaydi’s associates. ([France-Presse 9/20/2002](#)) Zouaydi also allegedly sent money to Mamoun Darkazanli, a Syrian-born businessman who has admitted knowing Atta and others in the Hamburg al-Qaeda cell. Before 9/11, Spanish intelligence monitored Darkazanli several times as he traveled to Spain and met with Zouaydi and others (see [August 1998-September 11, 2001](#)). ([Simpson, Cohen, and Martinez 5/6/2002](#)) One of Zouaydi’s employees in Spain visited the WTC in 1997. While there, he extensively videotaped the buildings. Perhaps only coincidentally, while in Saudi Arabia, Zouaydi “was an accountant for the al-Faisal branch of the Saudi royal family, including Prince Mohammed al-Faisal al-Saud and Prince Turki al-Faisal.” ([France-Presse 9/20/2002](#)) Al-Faisal al-Saud also has a large financial stake in a Sudanese bank allegedly co-founded by and closely linked to Osama bin Laden (see [September 24, 2001 and After](#)).

April 25, 2002: Saudi Prince Said to Meet Suspected Hijacker Associate While Visiting Bush



Prince Bandar and President Bush meet at Bush's ranch in August, 2002. [Source: *Associated Press*] Osama Basnan, an alleged associate of 9/11 hijackers Nawaf Alhazmi and Khalid Almihdhar, reports his passport stolen to Houston police. ([Isikoff and Thomas 11/24/2002](#)) This confirms that Basnan is in Houston on the same day that Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah, Prince Saud al-Faisal, and Saudi US Ambassador Prince Bandar meet with President Bush, Vice President Cheney, Secretary of State Powell, and National Security Adviser Rice at Bush's ranch in nearby Crawford, Texas. ([US-Saudi Arabian Business Council 4/25/2002](#)) Abdullah's entourage passes through Houston that week en route to Bush's ranch. While in Texas, it is believed that Basnan "met with a high Saudi prince who has responsibilities for intelligence matters and is known to bring suitcases full of cash into the United States." ([Isikoff and Thomas 11/24/2002](#); [Borger 11/25/2002](#)) The still-classified section of the 9/11 Congressional Inquiry is said to discuss the possibility of Basnan meeting this figure at this time. ([Lumpkin and Solomon 8/2/2003](#))

April 26, 2002: Alleged Al-Qaeda Supporter Regularly Meets with Top Far Right Wing Politicians



Ahmad Huber (left) with Jean Marie Le Pen (right), at Christian Cambuzat's spa in Switzerland. [Source: *Blick*] According to an article in a German newspaper, Ahmad Huber, one of the directors of the Al Taqwa Bank,

regularly meets with important far right wing figures. The Al Taqwa Bank was banned after 9/11 for allegedly financing al-Qaeda, Hamas, and other Islamic militant groups (see [November 7, 2001](#)). Jean Marie Le Pen, leader of a far right wing political party in France that has at times received around 10% of the popular vote, frequently attends a very exclusive spa in Switzerland to improve his health. This spa is run by Christian Cambuzat, a supporter of Le Pen and other far right figures. Huber confirms that he has met Le Pen at this spa, and a picture of Huber and Le Pen together accompany the article. Other politicians who meet at the spa include Franz Schanhuber, founder of an extreme right wing party in Germany and former SS member, and Gianfrano Fini, an Italian neo-fascist known for his admiration of Benito Mussolini. An unnamed extreme right wing politician from the US is also said to attend meetings at this spa. ([Sautter 4/26/2002](#))

[April 28-29, 2002: Guantanamo Bay Prisoners Transferred to New Facility](#)



Camp X-Ray prisoners. Their detention cages can be seen on the right. Pictures like this provoked an outrage about their treatment. [Source: *Shane T. McCoy/ Associated Press*] In Guantanamo, the 300 detainees (see [April 28, 2002](#)) being held in at Camp X-Ray are transferred to Camp Delta. Although cells at Camp Delta are even smaller than at Camp X-Ray (8 ft x 6 ft, 8 inches compared to 8 ft x 8 ft), ([Williams 1/14/2003](#)) the cells are now equipped with a flush toilet, a sink with running water and a metal bed frame. "There is indoor plumbing, exercise areas are better controlled, and detainees are out of the sun more," Brig. Gen. Rick Baccus, the commander of Military Police at Guantanamo says. ([Williams 1/14/2003](#)) The new facility also has the advantage of being more secure. "We've a much more secure facility to house them in Camp Delta. For instance, the guards don't have to escort them to the bathroom all the time and those types of things. That's a great improvement in terms of how the guards have to deal with them on a daily basis." ([Williams 1/14/2003](#)) Recreation time goes up from 5 minutes a day at Camp X-Ray to 15 minutes at Camp Delta. ([Prince and Jones 3/12/2004](#)) Use of Camp X-ray does not end. An undated Pentagon memo shows the camp is still used for isolation purposes between December 2002 and January 15, 2003. ([US Department of Defense 1/2003](#)) Still, according to a Pentagon adviser, around the middle of 2002, some high-security prisoners will enjoy their recreation time strapped into heavy, straitjacket-like clothing,

with their arms tied behind them, goggles over their eyes and their heads hooded. Describing what he was told by a Pentagon official, investigative reporter Seymour Hersh writes in the Guardian of London: “The restraints forced [these prisoners] to move, if he chose to move, on his knees, bent over at a 45-degree angle. Most prisoners just sat and suffered in the heat.” ([Hersh 9/13/2004](#)) The Camp Delta facility was built by Brown & Root, a Halliburton subsidiary, which was awarded the contract even though it was estimated military engineers could do the job for about half the price. ([Gerth and van Natta 7/13/2002](#))

April 30, 2002: US Military Plans Long-Term Presence in Central Asia

It is reported that the US military is drawing up a plan for a long term military “footprint” in Central Asia. The US says it plans no permanent bases, but the leaders of Central Asia speak of the US being there for decades, and the temporary structures that had been hastily constructed over the past several months are being replaced by permanent buildings. ([Hendren 4/4/2002](#); [Associated Press 4/30/2002](#); [Kaiser 8/27/2002](#)) All of the countries are encumbered by corrupt dictatorships, and many experts say their serious social and economic problems are growing worse. Some experts wonder if the US is increasing Muslim resentment and the risk of terrorism by closely associating with such regimes. ([Kaiser 8/27/2002](#))

Early 2002 or After: US Places Listening Devices in Remote Tribal Areas of Pakistan

At some unknown time after US-allied forces conquer Afghanistan in late 2001, a US special operations team known as Task Force Orange slips into the tribal areas of Pakistan to plant listening devices on mountain peaks. These devices are used because US spy satellites reportedly do not have antennas sensitive enough to pick up cell phone or hand-held radio transmissions. These devices have reportedly helped in some cases to locate al-Qaeda operatives. ([Thomas 8/28/2007](#))

May 2002: Silverstein Properties Awarded Insurance Payout for WTC 7

Industrial Risk Insurers agrees to make a full payment under its \$861 million policy for the loss of World Trade Center Building 7, a 47-story office building which completely collapsed late in the afternoon of 9/11. ([Insurance Journal 6/7/2002](#); [Grant 7/10/2002](#); [Hetter 10/21/2003](#)) WTC 7 was owned by Silverstein Properties, which also acquired the lease on the Twin Towers six weeks before 9/11. ([International Council of Shopping Centers 4/27/2001](#); [Port Authority of New York and New Jersey 7/24/2001](#)) Larry Silverstein, the president of Silverstein Properties, intends to use \$489 million of the insurance payment to cover an existing mortgage on WTC 7, and \$65 million of it for

other debts and costs. The remaining \$307 million will go toward the construction costs of the new WTC 7. ([Bloomberg 1/14/2003](#); [Gittrich 1/14/2003](#)) He is currently in a dispute with the carriers of his insurance on the Twin Towers, over whether the 9/11 attack constituted one or two separate events, and this will not be settled until mid-2007 (see [May 23, 2007](#)). ([Grant 9/11/2002](#); [Bagli 5/23/2007](#))

May 2002: CIA and FBI Are Increasingly Skeptical of Alleged Atta Meeting in Prague, but Do Not Share Skepticism with Public

In a 2007 book, CIA Director George Tenet will say of the alleged meeting between hijacker Mohamed Atta and an Iraqi agent in Prague, “We devoted an extraordinary effort to the issue but could never find any convincing evidence that the visit had happened.... By May of 2002, FBI and CIA analysts voiced increasing skepticism that these meetings had taken place. The case for the meetings continued to weaken from that time forward.” ([Tenet 2007](#)) But Tenet will not publicly say the CIA is “increasingly skeptical” about the meeting until July 2004, long after the start of the Iraq war and after the 9/11 Commission publicly confirmed that the meeting did not take place (see [April 28, 2002](#) and [June 16, 2004](#)).

May 2002: Latin American Specialist Appointed Head of CIA Counterterrorism



Jose Rodriguez. [*Source: CIA*] Jose Rodriguez, formerly chief of the CIA's Latin American division, is appointed head of its rapidly expanding Counterterrorist Center. The appointment surprises some, as Latin America is not at the heart of global counterterrorism efforts and Rodriguez, who cannot speak Arabic, has no experience in the Middle East. In addition, Rodriguez was removed from his position in 1997, after he tried to get the government of the Dominican Republic to drop charges against a person described as a “friend,” and was criticized by the CIA Office of Inspector General for showing a “remarkable lack of judgment” over the affair. ([Mazzetti 12/8/2007](#)) CIA officer Gary Berntsen, who served under Rodriguez as a station chief in an unnamed South American country, will be critical of him in a 2005 book. When Berntsen, an officer with a wealth of counterterrorism experience, took up his position in South America following the bombing of the USS *Cole* in October 2000, Rodriguez

greeted him “by saying that he had heard about my successful record of conducting counterterrorism operations, but that would not, *repeat not*, be my primary mission as a Chief of Station in South America. He stated categorically that he wanted me to conduct normal foreign intelligence collection against traditional targets and no, *repeat no*, counterterrorism. I was stunned. Had this man been living in a cave the last two years?” Berntsen was also surprised when, after 9/11, he received a message from CIA headquarters asking for volunteers to fight terrorism, and then a message from Rodriguez ordering all Latin American station chiefs not to volunteer. Berntsen will comment: “I didn’t understand... he was ordering me and other highly skilled officers in Latin America *not* to step forward? Had this guy taken leave of his senses? In a time of national tragedy was he still thinking of how to protect his Division?” ([Berntsen and Pezzullo 2005, pp. 69, 71](#)) Rodriguez’s identity is supposedly secret until the summer of 2007, shortly before he retires from the agency. ([Associated Press 8/8/2007](#)) Rodriguez will be put in charge of the Directorate of Operations in 2004, but will become involved in a scandal over the destruction of videotapes of detainee interrogations (see [November 2005](#) and [December 6, 2007](#)). ([Mazzetti 12/8/2007](#))

May-December 5, 2002: US Investigators Pressed to Look Into Ptech



Indira Singh. [*Source: Michael Kane*] In October 2001, Ptech insiders attempted to warn the FBI that suspected terrorist financier Yassin al-Qadi had funded Ptech (see [Shortly After October 12, 2001](#)). Then Indira Singh, an employee at JP Morgan Chase bank, develops her own suspicions about Ptech after her bank assigned her to investigate Ptech for a potential business deal. In May 2002, she speaks with the FBI about her concerns. Weeks later, she learns the FBI still has not told any other government agencies about the potential Ptech security threat. She later will recall, “the language, the kind of language law enforcement, counterterrorism, and the FBI agents themselves were using basically indicated to me that absolutely no investigation was going on, that it was totally at a standstill, at which point my hair stood on end.” She contacts a Boston CBS television station, WBZ-TV, and a reporter for the station named Joe Bergantino begins investigating Ptech. ([Ranalli 12/7/2002](#); [National Public Radio 12/8/2002](#); [WBZ 4 \(Boston\) 12/9/2002](#)) Around the same time, a former government official with contacts in the Bush administration tells officials at the National Security

Council about the Ptech allegations. By late August, Operation Greenquest then opens its own Ptech investigation. The FBI then tries “to muscle its way back into the probe once it [becomes] clear that [Greenquest is] taking the case seriously.” ([Hosenball 12/6/2002](#); [WBZ 4 \(Boston\) 12/9/2002](#)) Beginning in late November, US agents begin calling Ptech officials and asking them if they have ties to money laundering, thus tipping them off. Ptech will also be notified when a December raid will be occurring before it happens. ([Pope 1/3/2003](#)) WBZ-TV prepared a story on Ptech, but withheld it from the public for more than three months after receiving “calls from federal law enforcement agencies, some at the highest levels.” The station claims the government launched its Ptech probe in August 2002, after they “got wind of our investigation” and “asked us to hold the story so they could come out and do their raid and look like they’re ahead of the game.” ([Jurkowitz 12/7/2002](#); [WBZ 4 \(Boston\) 12/9/2002](#))

May 2002-2003: CIA Uses Controversial Waterboarding Technique on Several High-Ranking Al-Qaeda Detainees



This picture of US soldiers supervising the waterboarding of North Vietnamese prisoners was published in a US newspaper in 1968, resulting in an investigation and convictions. [*Source: Bettmann / Corbis*] In 2007, it will be reported that the CIA used the controversial interrogation technique of waterboarding on at least three detainees. The Associated Press will claim the detainees are:

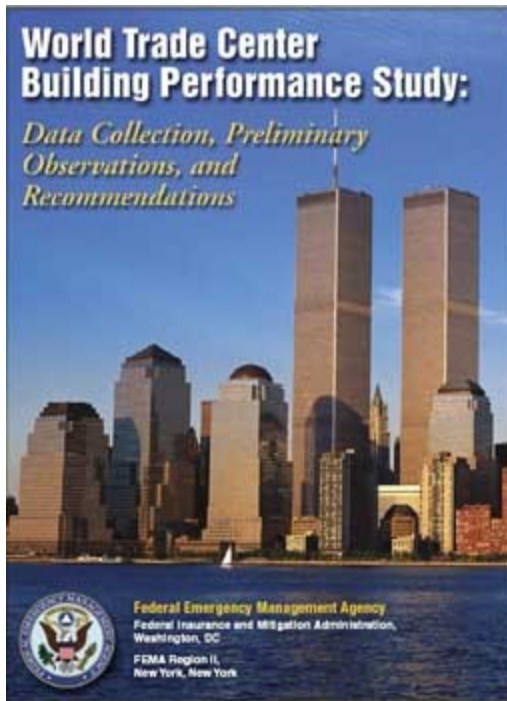
- Abu Zubaida, who is captured in March 2002 and tortured around May 2002 (see [March 28, 2002](#) and [Mid-May 2002 and After](#)).
- Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri, who is captured in November 2002 (see [November 8, 2002](#) and [Shortly After November 8, 2002](#)).
- Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM), who is allegedly captured in early 2003 (see [March 1, 2003](#) and [Shortly After March 1, 2003](#)). ([Hess 12/11/2007](#))
- NBC News will report a list of three that includes Hambali, who is captured in August 2003 (see [August 12, 2003](#) and [Shortly After August 12, 2003](#)). NBC’s list also mentions KSM and Zubaida, but does not mention al-Nashiri. ([Windrem 9/13/2007](#)) In a 2007 book, former CIA Director George Tenet will hint that slightly more than three may have been waterboarded, writing, “The most aggressive interrogation techniques conducted by

CIA personnel were applied to only a handful of the worst terrorists on the planet, including people who had planned the 9/11 attacks...” ([Tenet 2007, pp. 242](#)) ABC News will claim in September 2007, “It is believed that waterboarding was used on fewer than five ‘high-value’ terrorist subjects...” ([Ross, Esposito, and Raddatz 9/14/2007](#)) Prior to 2002, waterboarding was classified by the US government as a form of torture, and treated as a serious criminal offense. US soldiers were court-martialled for waterboarding captives as recently as the Vietnam War. The technique is said to simulate death by drowning. ([Mayer 8/6/2007](#)) In the 1600s, King James I of England wrote about the torture his government was using and stated that waterboarding was the most extreme form of torture used, worse than the rack and thumbscrews. ([Horton 12/15/2007](#)) In 2007, it will be revealed that at least some of the interrogations of Zubaida and al-Nashiri were videotaped, and it is suspected by some that their waterboarding may have been taped (see [Spring-Late 2002](#)). These tapes will later be destroyed under controversial circumstances (see [November 2005](#)). A government official will later claim that waterboarding is no longer used after 2003. The CIA and US military will prohibit the use of waterboarding in 2006. ([Hess 12/11/2007](#))

May 1, 2002: Head of Congressional Probe Resigns

L. Britt Snider, ex-CIA official and the head of the 9/11 Congressional Inquiry, resigns. Apparently there were many conflicts between Snider and his own staff, as well as with Congress. It is later revealed the final straw occurred when Snider tried to hire a CIA employee who had failed an agency polygraph test as an inquiry staffer. The hearings were expected to start in late May, but the resignation is one reason why the first public hearings are delayed until September. ([Miller 5/2/2002](#); [Miller 10/19/2002](#)) Snider is replaced by Eleanor Hill. She is widely credited for turning around an inquiry “hampered by infighting, politics, leaks and dueling agendas.” ([Davies 7/14/2002](#); [Priest 9/25/2002](#))

May 1, 2002: Investigation into Cause of Building Collapse on 9/11 Is Inconclusive



FEMA's World Trade Center Building Performance Study. [Source: FEMA]FEMA releases its report of the WTC collapses. It concludes, "[W]ith the information and time available, the sequence of events leading to the collapse of each tower could not be definitively determined." On Building 7: "The specifics of the fires in WTC 7 and how they caused the building to collapse remain unknown at this time." ([Federal Emergency Management Agency 5/1/2002](#))

May 1, 2002: Bush: 'I'm Going to Kick [Saddam's] Sorry Motherf_cking ass all over the Middle East'

During the White House daily press briefing, Ari Fleischer is peppered with questions about Bush's Iraq policy by Helen Thomas, a reporter for Hearst News Service. ([White House 5/1/2002](#); [Isikoff and Corn 2006, pp. 2-3](#)) After the briefing, Fleischer meets with the president and recounts his exchange with Thomas. According to Adam Levine, a White House communications assistant who is present, the president's mood immediately changes. "Did you tell her I don't like motherf_ckers who gas their own people?," Bush asks. "Did you tell her I don't like assholes who lie to the world? Did you tell her I'm going to kick his sorry motherf_cking ass all over the Middle East?" Fleischer responds, "I told her half of that." ([Isikoff and Corn 2006, pp. 2-3](#) Sources: [Adam Levine](#))

May 3, 2002: Report Fails to Explain 'Exit Hole' in Pentagon Wall

A report about shoring used in the Pentagon submitted to the University of Maryland makes reference to a hole created in a wall inside the Pentagon on 9/11, near the end of the path of damage caused by the aircraft that hit the building. However, the assessment

gives no specific explanation for what exactly caused the hole. The hole was on the ground level in a brick wall of the C Ring (the third of five concentric rings that form the Pentagon), on the A-E Drive, a service roadway that runs round the building between its C and B rings. The report says, “a nine foot diameter exit hole was created in the wall of C ring and the remainder of the debris from the impact ended up in the [...] A-E Drive.” ([Titus 5/3/2002, pp. 9](#)) Similarly, other reports do not offer any conclusive explanation for what caused the hole. The American Society of Civil Engineers’ Pentagon Building Performance Report, published in 2003 [January 23, 2003](#), will show the hole’s location in several diagrams, but explain only that “there was a hole in the east wall of Ring C, emerging into A-E Drive, between column lines 5 and 7 in Wedge 2. The wall failure was approximately 310 ft from where the fuselage of the aircraft entered the west wall of the building.” ([Mlakar et al. 1/2003, pp. 28](#)) The Arlington County After-Action Report, published in 2002, contains a photo of the exit hole with the note “the damage extended all the way through the inner wall of the C Ring, a distance of approximately 285 feet.” It offers no further explanation for what precisely caused the hole. ([US Department of Health & Human Services 7/2002, pp. A8](#)) Various explanations of how the hole came about are advanced after 9/11 (see [September 15, 2001 and After](#)).

May 5, 2002-July 22, 2004: US Government Fails to Investigate Wright’s Complaints

FBI agent Robert Wright, feeling that he had been gagged by FBI superiors (see [September 11, 2001-October 2001](#)), files a formal complaint in early 2002 with the Inspector General’s Office (IGO) of the Justice Department. The IGO probes agency wrongdoing and mistakes. However, the IGO turns him away. On May 5, 2002, the IGO writes that “Mr. Wright raises serious charges concerning the FBI’s handling of a criminal matter relating to suspected terrorists,” but the IGO does “not have the resources to conduct an investigation of [the] anticipated size and scope.” Instead, the IGO recommends Wright to refer his complaints to Congress. The IGO had previously conducted large-scale investigations, for instance looking into the FBI’s alleged mishandling of evidence in the trial of convicted Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh. David Schippers, one of Wright’s lawyers, scoffs at the IGO’s explanation: “The truth is, they don’t want to investigate FBI dereliction of duty.” The 9/11 Congressional Inquiry will interview Wright in late 2002. ([Crogan 8/9/2002](#)) However, neither his name, nor Yassin al-Qadi’s name, nor any details about the Vulgar Betrayal investigation will appear in the Inquiry’s heavily censored 2003 final report. He will not be interviewed by the 9/11 Commission, and neither his name, nor Yassin al-Qadi’s name, nor any details about the Vulgar Betrayal investigation will appear in the 9/11 Commission Final Report in 2004. Supposedly, the FBI “stalled Wright’s appearance before the 9/11 Commission until it was too late for him to appear before its public hearings.” ([US Congress 7/24/2003](#); [US Congress 7/24/2003](#); [Schlussel 7/14/2004](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004](#))

May 7, 2002: Explosives Detected on Illegal Israelis



A Fox News report on the Oak Harbor truck incident. [Source: Fox News] A moving truck is pulled over for speeding in the middle of the night in Oak Harbor, Washington, near the Whidbey Island Naval Air Station. The base is the home of the advanced electronic warfare Prowler jets. A bomb-sniffing dog detects explosives on one of the men and inside the truck. High-tech equipment is then used to confirm the presence of TNT on the gearshift and RDX plastic explosive on the steering wheel. Both men turn out to be Israeli (one with an altered passport) and in the country illegally. ([Cameron 5/13/2002](#)) However, the FBI later clears the two men, saying both the dog and the tests just detected false positives from "residue left by a cigarette lighter." ([Barber 5/14/2002](#); [Radler 5/14/2002](#)) The "art student spy ring" frequently uses moving vans as cover, and has been caught spying on the most top secret military bases. ([Ketcham 5/7/2002](#)) In a possibly related story, the Seattle FBI office that handled this case will be broken into a few weeks later, and even a room containing evidence will be penetrated. ([Seattle Post-Intelligencer 7/29/2002](#))

May 7, 2002: Sloppy Israeli Spy Ring Could Have Been Smoke Screen

Salon reports on the Israeli "art student spy ring." All the "students" claim to have come from either Bezalel Academy or the University of Jerusalem. A look in the Bezalel database shows that not a single "art student" appears to have attended school there. There is no such thing as the University of Jerusalem. In fact, the article points out that the sheer sloppiness and brazenness of the spy operation appears to be a great mystery, especially since the Mossad is renowned as one of the best spy agencies in the world. One government source suggests a theory to Salon that the "art students" were actually a smoke screen. They were meant to be caught and connected to DEA surveillance so that a smaller number of spies also posing as art students could complete other missions. One such mission could have been the monitoring of al-Qaeda operatives. ([Ketcham 5/7/2002](#)) Shortly afterwards, a major Israeli newspaper publishes a story about the spy ring, but does not come to any conclusions. ([Guttman 5/14/2002](#))

May 8, 2002: FBI Could Not Have Foreseen 9/11, Declares Director

FBI Director Mueller states, “[T]here was nothing the agency could have done to anticipate and prevent the [9/11] attacks.” ([US Congress 9/18/2002](#))

May 8, 2002: War in Afghanistan Called ‘All But Won’



Roger Lane. [*Source: British Ministry of Defence*] Brigadier Roger Lane, the commander of British forces in Afghanistan, says the war there against al-Qaeda and the Taliban is “all but won.” He claims that military operations will end in a matter of weeks rather than months. ([BBC 5/8/2002](#)) In March 2003, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld will announce that the Afghanistan war is over. (see [May 1, 2003](#)). But his pronouncement will be just as inaccurate as Lane’s. Al-Qaeda and Taliban forces will begin regrouping in Afghanistan in the autumn of 2002 (see [Autumn 2002](#)).

Before May 11, 2002: Al-Qaeda Operative Who Ran Communications Hub Reportedly Arrested in Yemen

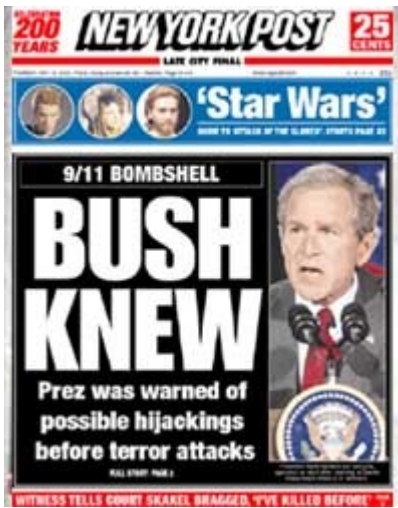
Ahmed al-Hada, an operative who ran an al-Qaeda communications hub in Yemen that was monitored by US intelligence, is said to be arrested by authorities in Yemen, though it is not known exactly when this happened. The hub was involved in the East African embassy bombings (see [August 5-25, 1998](#)), the attack on the USS *Cole* (see [Mid-August 1998-October 2000](#)) and 9/11 (see [Early 2000-Summer 2001](#)). His son, who helped run the hub, died while being pursued by security forces in February 2002 (see [February 13, 2002](#)). Details such as whether he is questioned by the US, whether he is charged, and the place he is being held are unknown. ([Agence France Presse 5/11/2002](#)) According to author Lawrence Wright, he will still be in custody in 2006. ([Wright 2006, pp. 378](#)) However, an undated MSNBC article apparently written around 2005 will list him as still being at large. ([Windrem 5/2005](#))

May 11, 2002: Wright Sues FBI for Blocking Book Criticizing FBI Failures

FBI agent Robert Wright claims he began writing a book in August 1999, immediately after being removed from the Vulgar Betrayal investigation. “It was single spaced, 500 pages, and it was titled ‘Fatal Betrayals of the Intelligence Mission.’ The manuscript outlines the FBI’s intentional, at times, failure, to pursue the terrorists and thereby prevent terrorist attacks. Ironically, I completed the text of the manuscript two days after

the September 11th attack. On September 10th, I had all but the last three pages completed.” He submitted the book for FBI approval on October 3, 2001, and the FBI is required to apply any censorship and approve publication within 3 days. By May 2002, he feels the FBI is stalling and he sues the FBI to force them to release the book. At one point, the FBI will approve 96 percent of the text and 94 percent of another document he wrote shortly after 9/11, but later the FBI will revoke this decision and prohibit the release of any portion of the book at all. Wright will claim that he based the book entirely on open source materials (with affidavits and other court documents from his investigations apparently making up much of the content). But as of the end of 2005, the book still has not been cleared for publication. Wright’s lawsuit is still ongoing. ([Miller 5/12/2002](#); [Federal News Service 5/30/2002](#); [Robert G. Wright, Jr., v. Federal Bureau of Investigation 5/16/2005](#))

May 15, 2002: Bush’s ‘Bin Laden Determined to Strike in US’ Warning Is Leaked to Public



The New York Post has a banner headline on May 16, 2002. [Source: *New York Post*] The Bush administration is embarrassed when the CBS Evening News reveals that President Bush had been warned about al-Qaeda domestic attacks in August 2001 (see [August 6, 2001](#)). Bush had repeatedly said that he had “no warning” of any kind. Press Secretary Ari Fleischer states unequivocally that while Bush had been warned of possible hijackings, “[t]he president did not—not—receive information about the use of airplanes as missiles by suicide bombers.” ([Sanger 5/15/2002](#); [Eggen and Miller 5/16/2002](#)) “Until the attack took place, I think it’s fair to say that no one envisioned that as a possibility.” ([Miklaszewski 9/18/2002](#)) Fleischer claims the August memo was titled “Bin Laden Determined to Strike the US,” but the real title is soon found to end with “... Strike in US” ([Woodward and Eggen 5/18/2002](#)) The Guardian will state a few days later, “the memo left little doubt that the hijacked airliners were intended for use as missiles and that intended targets were to be inside the US.” It further states that, “now, as the columnist Joe Conason points out in the current edition of the New York Observer, ‘conspiracy’ begins to take over from ‘incompetence’ as a likely explanation for the failure to heed—and then inform the public about—warnings that might have averted the worst disaster in the nation’s history.” ([Vulliamy 5/19/2002](#))

Mid-May 2002 and After: CIA Waterboards and Tortures Al-Qaeda Leader Abu Zubaida



Abu Zubaida. [Source: *New York Times*] The CIA begins interrogating captured al-Qaeda leader Abu Zubaida (see [March 28, 2002](#)), using some aggressive techniques that are commonly considered to be torture. Zubaida was initially interrogated by the FBI using traditional rapport building techniques, and many believe the FBI was obtaining valuable information (see [Mid-April 2002](#)). But he is being held at a secret CIA prison in Thailand (see [March 2002](#)), and soon a new CIA team comes in and takes over (see [Mid-April 2002](#)). This team, led by controversial psychologist James Elmer Mitchell, uses such extreme methods that the FBI completely withdraws its personnel (see [Mid-April-May 2002](#)), and even some CIA personnel leave in disgust (see [Between Mid-April and Mid-May 2002](#)). By mid-May, Mitchell's detractors are gone and the gunshot wounds Zubaida sustained during his capture have stabilized, so Mitchell begins applying even more aggressive interrogation techniques. ([Posner 2003, pp. 186, 191](#); [Suskind 2006, pp. 110-115](#)) According to one psychologist involved in Zubaida's interrogation, Mitchell argues that Zubaida needs to be reduced to a state of "learned helplessness." Reserve Air Force colonel Steve Kleinman, an experienced interrogator very familiar with Mitchell, will later say that "learned helplessness was his whole paradigm.... It starts with isolation. Then they eliminate the prisoners' ability to forecast the future—when their next meal is, when they can go to the bathroom. It creates dread and dependency. It was the KGB model. But the KGB used it to get people who had turned against the state to confess falsely. The KGB wasn't after intelligence." ([Mayer 8/6/2007](#)) Journalist Ron Suskind will later claim, "According to CIA sources, he was waterboarded, a technique in which a captive's face is covered with a towel as water is poured atop, creating the sensation of drowning. He was beaten, though not in a way to worsen his injuries. He was repeatedly threatened, and made certain of his impending death. His medication was withheld. He was bombarded with deafening, continuous noise and harsh lights." ([Suskind 2006, pp. 115](#)) The *New York Times* will later claim, "At times, Mr. Zubaida, still weak from his wounds, was stripped and placed in a cell without a bunk or blankets. He stood or lay on the bare floor, sometimes with air-conditioning adjusted so that, one official said, Mr. Zubaida seemed to turn blue. At other times, the interrogators piped in deafening blasts of music by groups like the Red Hot Chili Peppers." ([Johnston 9/10/2006](#)) Zubaida will reportedly later tell the Red Cross that he

was also kept for a prolonged period in a cage, known as a “dog box,” so small that he was unable to stand. ([Mayer 8/6/2007](#)) The CIA will claim that these aggressive methods are very effective, and soon they will begin using them on many other detainees. But others will later suggest that Zubaida gave up far less valuable information under torture than he did with the FBI’s rapport building techniques (see [June 2002](#)). The legal authority to conduct these types of interrogations are unclear. The CIA is being advised by Michael Chertoff at the Justice Department, but there will be no formal legal opinion permitting the techniques until August 2002. ([Johnston 9/10/2006](#))

Mid-May 2002 and After: CIA Headquarters Approves and Closely Monitors Zubaida’s Torture

In 2007, former CIA official John Kiriakou will claim to have details about the interrogation of al-Qaeda leader Abu Zubaida. Kiriakou was involved in the capture and early detention of Zubaida (see [March 28, 2002](#)), but claims he was transferred to another task before harsh interrogation techniques such as waterboarding were used on him (see [Mid-May 2002 and After](#)). ([Kiriakou 12/10/2007](#)) Kiriakou will claim that the activities of the interrogators were closely directed by superiors at CIA Headquarters back in the US. “It wasn’t up to individual interrogators to decide, ‘Well, I’m gonna slap him.’ Or, ‘I’m going to shake him.’ Or, ‘I’m gonna make him stay up for 48 hours.’ Each one of these steps, even though they’re minor steps, like the intention shake, or the open-handed belly slap, each one of these had to have the approval of the deputy director for operations.... The cable traffic back and forth was extremely specific. And the bottom line was these were very unusual authorities that the [CIA] got after 9/11. No one wanted to mess them up. No one wanted to get in trouble by going overboard. So it was extremely deliberate.” ([Esposito and Ross 12/10/2007](#)) Kiriakou also will say, “This isn’t something done willy-nilly. This isn’t something where an agency officer just wakes up in the morning and decides he’s going to carry out an enhanced technique on a prisoner. This was a policy made at the White House, with concurrence from the National Security Council and the Justice Department” (see [Mid-March 2002](#)). ([Reid 12/12/2007](#)) In 2005, ABC News reported, “When properly used, the [CIA interrogation] techniques appear to be closely monitored and are signed off on in writing on a case-by-case, technique-by-technique basis, according to highly placed current and former intelligence officers involved in the program.” ([Ross and Esposito 11/18/2005](#)) CIA Director George Tenet will similarly claim in a 2007 book that the interrogation of high-ranking prisoners like Zubaida “was conducted in a precisely monitored, measured way...” He will also say that “CIA officers came up with a series of interrogation techniques that would be carefully monitored at all times to ensure the safety of the prisoner. The [Bush] administration and the Department of Justice were fully briefed and approved the use of these tactics.” ([Tenet 2007, pp. 242](#)) Zubaida’s interrogations are videotaped at the time (see [Spring-Late 2002](#)), and CIA Director Michael Hayden will later claim this was done “meant chiefly as an additional, internal check on the [interrogation] program in its early stages.” ([Central Intelligence Agency 12/6/2007](#)) The videotapes will later be destroyed under controversial circumstances (see [November 2005](#)).

May 16, 2002: Nobody Predicted 9/11-Style Attacks, Says Rice



National Security Adviser Rice tries to explain what Bush knew and when in her May 16, 2002 press conference. [Source: CNN] National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice states, “I don’t think anybody could have predicted that these people would take an airplane and slam it into the World Trade Center, take another one and slam it into the Pentagon, that they would try to use an airplane as a missile,” adding that “even in retrospect” there was “nothing” to suggest that. ([White House 5/16/2002](#)) Contradicting Rice’s claims, former CIA Deputy Director John Gannon acknowledges that such a scenario has long been taken seriously by US intelligence: “If you ask anybody could terrorists convert a plane into a missile? [N]obody would have ruled that out.” Rice also states, “The overwhelming bulk of the evidence was that this was an attack that was likely to take place overseas.” ([MSNBC 5/17/2002](#)) Slate awards Rice the “Whopper of the Week” when the title of Bush’s August 6 briefing is revealed: “Bin Laden Determined to Strike in US.” ([Noah 5/23/2002](#)) Rice later will concede that “somebody did imagine it” but will say she did not know about such intelligence until well after this conference. ([Associated Press 9/21/2002](#))

May 16, 2002: Cheney Warns Democrats Against Criticizing Handling of Pre-9/11 Warnings

In the wake of new information on what President Bush knew, Vice President Cheney states, “[M]y Democratic friends in Congress... need to be very cautious not to seek political advantage by making incendiary suggestions, as were made by some today, that the White House had advance information that would have prevented the tragic attacks of 9/11.” He calls such criticism “thoroughly irresponsible... in time of war” and states that any serious probe of 9/11 foreknowledge would be tantamount to giving “aid and comfort” to the enemy. ([Eggen and Priest 5/17/2002](#))

May 16, 2002: Rice Incorrectly Claims Bush Warning Contains Only Historical Information

National Security Adviser Rice holds a press conference to respond to the public leak (see [May 15, 2002](#)) of the title of President Bush's August 6, 2001, Presidential Daily Briefing, "Bin Laden Determined to Strike in US" (see [August 6, 2001](#)). She asserts, "It was an analytic report that talked about [bin Laden]'s methods of operation, talked about what he had done historically, in 1997, in 1998.... I want to reiterate, it was not a warning. There was no specific time, place, or method mentioned." ([White House 5/16/2002](#)) In April 2004, Rice will testify under oath before the 9/11 Commission and repeatedly assert that it was "a historical memo... not threat reporting" (see [April 8, 2004](#)). However, when the full text of the memo is released later in April 2004, it will be discovered that it does contain threat reporting based on warnings from the summer of 2001.

May 16, 2002: CIA Operative Hurt While Posing as Terrorist Bomber in Philippines?

US citizen Michael Meiring is suspected of being a CIA operative after injuring himself in an explosion in his own hotel room. Meiring claimed a grenade was thrown into his room, but a Philippine government investigation determined the center of the blast came from an assembled bomb kept in a metal box owned by Meiring. Hotel employees said Meiring told them for weeks not to touch the box while cleaning the room. Additionally, an ID card with his picture on it found in his room lists him as an officer in the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), a Muslim rebel militant group. ([Greenblatt 12/2/2004](#)) One hour after the bombing in his room, a bomb explodes in a marketplace in the same region, injuring four people. ([Agence France-Presse 5/16/2002](#)) In the two months prior to this explosion in his room, there were several other other explosions in the same region, killing 37 people and injuring 170 more. ([Arguillas 5/30/2003](#)) In 2003, a group of Philippine soldiers will mutiny, in part because they believe these bombings were done with the secret approval of the Philippine government, and not done by rebel groups as the government claims (see [July 27-28, 2003](#)). A number of Philippine officials speculate Meiring may have been a CIA agent. Those who knew him said that he referred to himself as a CIA agent, but said it stood for "Christ In Action." He had frequently visited the Philippines for at least ten years. ([Arguillas 5/30/2003](#)) He claimed to be a treasure hunter, and had a company called Parousia International Trading (in Christian theology, Parousia is a term for the second coming of Christ). He also had ties to right wing extremists in the US (see [1992-1993](#)). He was said to be very well connected in the Philippines, being visited in his hotel room prior to the explosion by congressmen, a governor, and military officials. He was also connected to militants in the MNLF, Abu Sayyaf, and other groups. He was said to have met with top leaders of these militant groups starting in 1992 (see [1992-1993](#)). One source who knew him said that earlier in the year he had predicted a series of bombings and that his predictions "always came true." ([Arguillas 5/31/2003](#)) Meiring was already a major suspect in the production and distribution of counterfeit US Treasury bills. Over the last few years, billions of dollars worth of fake US Treasury bills were confiscated in the region. ([McGirk 2/26/2001](#); [de Leon and Francisco 5/27/2002](#)) Four days after the explosion, FBI agents take him out of the hospital where he was recovering from severe burns and amputations. According to

the Philippine Immigration Deputy Commissioner, agents of the US National Security Council then take him to the capital of Manila. The Financial Times will later report that he returns to the US and is handed over to the CIA. ([Zumel-Sicat and Andrade 5/30/2002](#); [Financial Times 7/12/2002](#); [Klein 8/15/2003](#)) The Guardian will later comment, “Local officials have demanded that Meiring return to face charges, to little effect. BusinessWorld, a leading Philippine newspaper, has published articles openly accusing Meiring of being a CIA agent involved in covert operations ‘to justify the [recent] stationing of American troops and bases in Mindanao.’ The Meiring affair has never been reported in the US press.” ([Klein 8/15/2003](#)) In 2004, a Houston TV station will trace Meiring back to the US, where he still lives, despite the Philippine government wanting him to be extradited to face a variety of charges related to the explosion (see [December 2, 2004](#)).

May 17, 2002: Bush Claims He Did Not Know ‘Enemy Was Going to Use Airplanes to Kill’

President Bush says in a speech, “Had I known that the enemy was going to use airplanes to kill on that fateful morning, I would have done everything in my power to protect the American people.” ([US President 5/20/2002](#))

May 17, 2002: Fear of Being Unpatriotic Affects Media Coverage After 9/11

CBS anchorman Dan Rather tells the BBC that he and other journalists haven’t been properly investigating since 9/11. He says, “There was a time in South Africa that people would put flaming tires around people’s necks if they dissented. And in some ways the fear is that you will be necklaced here, you will have a flaming tire of lack of patriotism put around your neck. Now it is that fear that keeps journalists from asking the toughest of the tough questions.” ([Engel 5/17/2002](#))

May 17, 2002: CIA Counterterrorism Head Fired for Criticizing Failure to Capture Bin Laden

It is announced that Cofer Black, head of the CIA’s counterterrorism division for the last three years, has been assigned to another position. However, in 2004, six anonymous US intelligence officials will claim that, in fact, Black is removed by Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld because Black publicly revealed details of the US military’s failure to capture or kill bin Laden in Tora Bora, Afghanistan, in late 2001. Sources will call Black “very aggressive, very knowledgeable,” in fighting al-Qaeda. According to these sources, after the Tora Bora battle ended, an intelligence analysis determined that bin Laden had been trapped in Tora Bora, and deemed his escape a “significant defeat” for the US. Rumsfeld, however, disagreed with the criticism, and said there was not enough “solid evidence” to come to that conclusion. Black then spoke on deep background to the

Washington Post, and on April 17, 2002, the Post called the failure to capture bin Laden “the gravest error in the war against al-Qaeda.”(see [April 17, 2002](#)) Rumsfeld learned about Black’s role and used his influence to get him removed. ([Sale 7/29/2004](#))

May 20-24, 2002: Flurry of Government Terrorist Warnings Given at Politically Suspicious Time

The Bush administration issues a remarkable series of terror warnings that many believe are politically motivated. Vice President Cheney warns it is “not a matter of if, but when” al-Qaeda will next attack the US. ([CNN 5/20/2002](#)) Homeland Security Director Tom Ridge says the same thing. Defense Secretary Rumsfeld says terrorists will “inevitably” obtain weapons of mass destruction. FBI Director Mueller says more suicide bombings are “inevitable.” ([Miller and Haughney 5/22/2002](#)) Authorities also issue separate warnings that al-Qaeda militants might target apartment buildings nationwide, banks, rail and transit systems, the Statue of Liberty, and the Brooklyn Bridge. USA Today titles an article, “Some Question Motives Behind Series of Alerts.” ([Locy 5/24/2002](#)) David Martin, CBS’s national security correspondent, says, “Right now they’re putting out all these warnings to change the subject from what was known prior to September 11 to what is known now.” It had been revealed the week before that Bush received a briefing in August 2001 entitled, “Bin Laden Determined to Strike in US” (see [August 6, 2001](#)). ([Kurtz 5/27/2002](#)) Remarkably, even Press Secretary Ari Fleischer says the alerts were issued “as a result of all the controversy that took place last week.” ([Curl 5/22/2002](#); [Gray 5/23/2002](#)) A retired CIA official reveals that the administration “made a political decision” to make any threat public, even those deemed to be hoaxes. In response to the alleged threat to New York, the former head of the FBI bureau there states that “there really isn’t any hard information.” ([Dreyfuss 9/21/2006](#)) Time notes, “Though uncorroborated and vague, the terror alerts were a political godsend for an administration trying to fend off a bruising bipartisan inquiry into its handling of the terrorist chatter last summer. After the wave of warnings, the Democratic clamor for an investigation into the government’s mistakes subsided.” ([Ratnesar and Weisskopf 5/27/2002](#))

May 21, 2002: FBI Whistleblower Reveals Slip-Ups in Moussaoui Arrest Before 9/11



Coleen Rowley. [Source: Publicity photo] Minnesota FBI Agent Coleen Rowley, upset with what she considers lying from FBI Director Mueller and others in the FBI about the handling of the Zacarias Moussaoui case, releases a long memo she wrote about the case two weeks before 9/11. ([Time 5/21/2002](#)) She also applies for whistleblower protection. Time magazine calls the memo a “colossal indictment of our chief law-enforcement agency’s neglect” and says it “raises serious doubts about whether the FBI is capable of protecting the public—and whether it still deserves the public’s trust.” ([Ratnesar and Weisskopf 5/27/2002](#)) Three days after 9/11, Mueller made statements such as “There were no warning signs that I’m aware of that would indicate this type of operation in the country.” Coleen Rowley and other Minnesota FBI agents “immediately sought to reach [Mueller’s] office through an assortment of higher-level FBI [headquarters] contacts, in order to quickly make [him] aware of the background of the Moussaoui investigation and forewarn [him] so that [his] public statements could be accordingly modified.” Yet Mueller continued to make similar comments, including in a Senate hearing on May 8, 2002. ([Time 5/21/2002](#); [Shenon 5/31/2002](#)) Finally, after Rowley’s memo becomes public, Mueller states, “I cannot say for sure that there wasn’t a possibility we could have come across some lead that would have led us to the hijackers.” He also admits: “I have made mistakes occasionally in my public comments based on information or a lack of information that I subsequently got.” ([Shenon 5/31/2002](#)) Time magazine later names Rowley one of three “Persons of the Year” for 2002, along with fellow whistleblowers Cynthia Cooper of WorldCom and Sherron Watkins of Enron. ([Ripley and Sieger 12/22/2002](#); [Ripley and Sieger 12/22/2002](#))

May 21, 2002: Fraudulent Consular Staff Admits to Providing Hijackers with Visas

Abdulla Noman, a former employee of the US consulate in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, where 15 of the 19 9/11 hijackers got their visas, says that he took money and gifts to provide fraudulent visas to foreigners. He pleads guilty and is convicted. About 50 to 100 visas were improperly issued by Noman from September 1996 until November 2001, when he was arrested. However, a former visa officer in Jeddah, Michael Springmann, has claimed

in the past that the Jeddah office was notorious for purposefully giving visas to terrorists to train in the US (see [September 1987-March 1989](#)). ([Associated Press 5/21/2002](#))

May 21-22, 2002: Prisoner Told FBI of Imminent al-Qaeda Attacks



Walid Arkeh. [*Source: Orlando Sentinel / Bureau of Prisons*] Walid Arkeh, a prisoner in Florida, is interviewed by a group of FBI agents in New York City. The agents seek information regarding the 1988 US embassy bombings and are there to interview him about information he learned from three al-Qaeda prisoners he had befriended. During the interview, Arkeh claims that, in August 2001, he told the FBI that al-Qaeda was likely to attack the WTC and other targets soon, but he was dismissed (see [August 21, 2001](#)). After 9/11, his warning still was not taken seriously by the local FBI. The New York FBI agents are stunned. One says to him: "Let me tell you something. If you know what happened in New York, we are all in deep sh_t. We are in deep trouble." Arkeh tells the agents that these prisoners hinted that the WTC would be attacked, and targets in Washington were mentioned as well. However, they did not tell him a date or that airplanes would be used. The New York FBI later will inform him that they find his information credible. ([Bloodsworth 10/30/2002](#)) Arkeh is later deported to Jordan despite a Responsible Cooperators Program promising visas to those who provided important information to US-designated terrorist groups. (It is unclear whether any one ever has been given a reward through this program.) ([Bloodsworth 11/10/2002](#); [Bloodsworth 1/11/2003](#); [Bloodsworth 3/12/2003](#))

May 22, 2002: Illegal Status of Terrorists Points to US Immigration Failure

A study indicates that at least half of the 48 Islamic radicals linked to terrorist plots in the US since 1993 manipulated or violated immigration laws to enter this country and then stay here. Even when the militants did little to hide violations of visa requirements or other laws, INS officials failed to enforce the laws or to deport the offenders. The militants used a variety of methods. At the time they committed their crimes, 12 of the 48 were illegal immigrants. At least five others had lived in the US illegally, and four others

had committed significant immigration violations. Others were here legally but should have been rejected for visas because they fit US immigration profiles of people who are likely to overstay their visas. ([Leinwand 5/22/2002](#)) Experts later strongly suggest that the visa applications for all 15 of the Saudi Arabian 9/11 hijackers should have been rejected due to numerous irregularities.

May 23, 2002: Bush Opposes Special Inquiry into Terrorism Warnings

President Bush says he is opposed to establishing a special, independent commission to probe how the government dealt with terrorism warnings before 9/11. ([CBS News 5/23/2002](#)) He later changes his stance in the face of overwhelming support for the idea (see [September 20, 2002](#)), and then sabotages an agreement that Congress had reached to establish the commission.

May 23, 2002: Rep. Curt Weldon Said to Show Able Danger Chart in Public Speech



A blurry image of the chart Rep. Curt Weldon presented to the Heritage Foundation in 2002. [*Source: Heritage Foundation*] During a speech before the Heritage Foundation, Rep. Curt Weldon (R) unfurls a chart, which, his comments suggest, was produced by Able Danger. He says it is “the unclassified chart that was done by the Special Forces Command briefing center one year before 9/11. It is the complete architecture of al-Qaeda and pan-Islamic extremism. It gives all the linkages.” However, he does not mention Mohamed Atta or any other 9/11 hijackers during the speech. Video footage of the speech shows the chart, but picture quality is too poor to determine whether Atta is on it. ([Limbacher 8/29/2005](#)) Weldon later claims to have given up his only copy of the chart showing Atta’s face in late 2001 (see [September 25, 2001](#)). ([Burger and Bennett 8/29/2005](#)) In September 2005, Weldon will refer to the chart shown in this 2002 speech and suggest it may not have been the same chart that contained Atta’s face. He also says he can’t find the chart used in the speech anymore. ([Office of Congressman Curt Weldon 9/17/2005](#))

May 27, 2002: FBI Still Has ‘No Breakthrough’ in Understanding 9/11 Plot

Journalist Seymour Hersh writes in the New Yorker, “In a recent conversation, a senior FBI official acknowledged that there had been ‘no breakthrough’ inside the government, in terms of establishing how the September 11th suicide teams were organized and how they operated.” The recent war in Afghanistan “has yet to produce significant information about the planning and execution of the attacks. US forces are known to have captured thousands of pages of documents and computer hard drives from al-Qaeda redoubts, but so far none of this material—which remains highly classified—has enabled the Justice Department to broaden its understanding of how the attack occurred, or even to bring an indictment of a conspirator.” ([Hersh 5/27/2002](#)) It has never been made clear if, how, and/or when the FBI subsequently made a breakthrough in understanding the 9/11 plot.

May 30, 2002: Afghan, Turkmen, and Pakistani Leaders Sign Pipeline Deal



Leaders sign the pipeline agreement. [*Source: Associated Press*] Afghanistan’s interim leader, Hamid Karzai, Turkmenistan’s President Niyazov, and Pakistani President Musharraf meet in Islamabad and sign a memorandum of understanding on the trans-Afghanistan gas pipeline project. ([Hashmi 5/31/2002](#); [Alexander's Gas & Oil Connections 6/8/2002](#)) Afghan leader Hamid Karzai (who formerly worked for Unocal) calls Unocal the “lead company” in building the pipeline. ([BBC 5/13/2002](#)) The Los Angeles Times comments, “To some here, it looked like the fix was in for Unocal when President Bush named a former Unocal consultant, Zalmay Khalilzad, as his special envoy to Afghanistan late last year .” ([Watson 5/30/2002](#)) Unocal claims that it has no interest in any Afghanistan pipeline after 9/11. However, Afghan officials say that Unocal will be the lead company in funding the pipeline. The Afghan deputy minister of mines comments on Unocal’s claim of disinterest: “Business has its secrets and mysteries. Maybe... they don’t want it to be disclosed in the media.” ([Landsberg 3/2/2003](#))

May 30, 2002: Wright Claims FBI Obstructed Efforts to Stop Terrorist Money Flows



Robert Wright tears up as he apologizes to 9/11 victims' relatives in his 2002 press conference. [Source: *Getty Images*] FBI agent Robert Wright holds a press conference. He makes a statement that has been preapproved by the FBI. As one account puts it, "Robert Wright's story is difficult to piece together because he is on government orders to remain silent.... [T]his is in distinct contrast to the free speech and whistle-blower protections offered to Colleen Rowley, general counsel in the FBI Minneapolis office, who got her story out before the agency could silence her. Wright, a 12-year bureau veteran, has followed proper channels" but has been frustrated by limitations on what he is allowed to say (see [September 11, 2001-October 2001](#)). "The best he could do [is a] press conference in Washington, D.C., where he [tells] curious reporters that he [has] a whopper of a tale to tell, if only he could." Wright says that FBI bureaucrats "intentionally and repeatedly thwarted [his] attempts to launch a more comprehensive investigation to identify and neutralize terrorists." He also claims, "FBI management failed to take seriously the threat of terrorism in the US." ([McCaleb 5/30/2002](#); [Federal News Service 5/30/2002](#); [Croghan 8/2/2002](#)) Larry Klayman, a lawyer representing Wright, says at the conference that he believes one reason Wright's investigations were blocked "is because these monies were going through some very powerful US banks with some very powerful interests in the United States. These banks knew or had reason to know that these monies were laundered by terrorists. And there are very significant potential conflicts of interests in both the Clinton and Bush Administrations—with the country primarily responsible for funding these charities, mainly Saudi Arabia. We have both Clinton and Bush, and in particular this Bush Administration, who is as tight with Saudi Arabia as you can get." He also says, "Corruption is knowing when something is not being done, knowing when the American people are being left unprotected and when you make a decision not to do something to protect the American people... And you effectively allow 9/11 to occur. That is the ultimate form of government corruption—dereliction of duty. That's subject in the military to prosecution, to court martial.... Frankly, if not treason." ([Federal News Service 5/30/2002](#))

May 30, 2002: Ground Zero Cleanup Operation Officially Ends

A brief ceremony marks the official ending of the cleanup and recovery effort at Ground Zero, eight months and 19 days after 9/11. As part of the ceremony, attended by thousands of people, a flatbed truck carries the last steel beam from the World Trade Center away from the site. The cleanup has been completed three months sooner than predicted and at a cost of \$750 million. More than 108,000 truckloads of debris, comprising 1.8 million tons of steel and concrete, have been removed from the site. The debris was taken to the Fresh Kills landfill on Staten Island. Controversially, much of the steel was melted down or shipped out of the US for recycling (see [September 12-October 2001](#)). A small number of workers will remain at the site for a few more weeks, due to a delay by Deutsche Bank in letting firefighters search its high-rise at 130 Liberty Street. The final truckload of debris will be removed on June 24 and control of the site will be turned over to the New York Port Authority, which owns the land. Forensic investigators will continue sifting through debris at Fresh Kills, in the hope of finding and identifying more victims, until mid-July. ([CBS News 5/16/2002](#); [CBS News 5/30/2002](#); [CNN 5/30/2002](#); [PBS 5/30/2002](#); [BBC 7/15/2002](#); [Glanz and Lipton 2004, pp. 316-318](#); [Stout, Vitchers, and Gray 2006, pp. 219 and 226-227](#))

Summer 2002: British Officials tell Claire Short Decision to Invade Iraq Occurred in Summer 2002

Claire Short, the British secretary for international development who later resigns in protest of the impending invasion of Iraq, will say in June 2003 that three senior British Intelligence officials told her before the war that Bush and Blair's decision to attack Iraq had been made sometime during the summer of 2002 and that it would likely begin in mid-February 2003. "Three extremely senior people in the Whitehall system said to me very clearly and specifically that the target date was mid-February." Furthermore, Short will learn, the decision by Blair's government to participate in the US invasion of Iraq bypassed proper government procedures and ignored opposition to the war from Britain's intelligence quarters. ([Wintour 6/18/2003](#) Sources: [Claire Short](#))

Summer 2002: Arms Dealer Victor Bout Helps Taliban and Al-Qaeda Ship Gold to Sudan

In September 2002, the Washington Post reports that European, US, and Pakistani investigators believe that al-Qaeda and the Taliban have secretly shipped large quantities of gold from Pakistan to Sudan in recent weeks and months. Disguised boxes of gold are taken by small boat from Karachi, Pakistan, to Dubai, United Arab Emirates, or Iran, and then flown to Khartoum, Sudan. European officials claim that some of the chartered planes used to fly the gold and other commodities are linked to Victor Bout, the world's largest illegal arms dealer. ([Farah 9/3/2002](#)) Bout worked extensively with the Taliban

before 9/11 (see [October 1996-early 2002](#)), but reportedly began working with the US after 9/11 (see [Shortly After September 11, 2001](#)). So if these various allegations against Bout are true, it means he would be working with the US and the Taliban and al-Qaeda at the same time. European and US intelligence sources say Sudan may have been chosen because Osama bin Laden used to live there and still retains business contacts there. The Taliban kept most of their money in gold when they ruled Afghanistan. Large amounts of gold were also apparently shipped out of Afghanistan shortly before the Taliban were driven from power there in late 2001. ([Farah 9/3/2002](#)) The US learned of bin Laden's extensive financial network in Sudan several years before 9/11, but apparently never shut it down, even after 9/11 (see [December 1996-January 1997](#) and [March 16, 2000](#)).

June 2002: Former FBI Translator Files Whistleblower Suit Against DOJ

Former FBI translator Sibel Edmonds files a lawsuit against the Department of Justice. She alleges that the government leaked confidential information about her to the media in violation of the Privacy Act, and that it also violated her free speech and due process rights when it fired her in retaliation for her having reported possible illegal activity by co-worker Melek Can Dickerson and other security and management problems in the FBI's language department. She is suing for monetary damages and reinstatement of her contract with the Bureau. ([Bohn 7/7/2004](#)) Dickerson and her husband Douglas Dickerson are subpoenaed in the case and the Justice Department is ordered by the court not to allow the couple to leave the country. ([Edmonds 7/1/2004](#))

June 2002: CIA Claims to Get Vital Intelligence from Torture of Zubaida, but Others Claim Zubaida's Leads Are Mostly Vague and Useless

In May 2002, the CIA began using new torture techniques on captured al-Qaeda leader Abu Zubaida (see [Mid-May 2002 and After](#)), and by June senior CIA officials prepare a preliminary report to determine whether Zubaida's confessions are accurate or not. According to author Gerald Posner, they "found nothing that could definitively prove Zubaida a liar. And they had uncovered some minor corroborating evidence about the times and places of the meetings he had mentioned, which meant he could be telling the truth." ([Posner 2003, pp. 192](#)) Vanity Fair will later comment that the "CIA would go on to claim credit for breaking Zubaida, and celebrate [James Elmer] Mitchell" - the psychologist who devised the torture techniques used on Zubaida by the CIA (see [Mid-April 2002](#)) - "as a psychological wizard who held the key to getting hardened terrorists to talk. Word soon spread that Mitchell and [his business partner Bruce] Jessen had been awarded a medal by the CIA for their advanced interrogation techniques. While the claim is impossible to confirm, what matters is that others believed it. The reputed success of the tactics was 'absolutely in the ether,' says one Pentagon civilian who worked on detainee policy." ([Eban 7/17/2007](#))

Much Intelligence Comes from His Possessions and FBI Interrogations - However, the

reliability of Zubaida's confessions remains controversial years later, and several factors complicate assessing their impact. For one, it appears that some of his most important confessions took place a month earlier when the FBI was interrogating him using rapport building instead of torture (see [Mid-April 2002](#)). What the New York Times calls his two most notable confessions - that Khalid Shaikh Mohammed was the 9/11 mastermind and giving up the name of Jose Padilla, a militant living in the US - appear to come from this earlier period, although some accounts conflict. ([Johnston and Risen 6/27/2004](#); [Suskind 2006, pp. 116-117](#); [Johnston 9/10/2006](#); [Eban 7/17/2007](#)) Furthermore, it is often not clear what was obtained from Zubaida's confessions and what was obtained from his possessions. Journalist Ron Suskind will later write, "The phone numbers, computers, CDs, and e-mail address seized at Zubaida's apartment now - a month after his capture - began to show a yield.... These higher-quality inputs were entered into big Cray supercomputers at NSA; many then formed the roots of a surveillance tree - trunk to branches to limbs and buds." ([Suskind 2006, pp. 116-117](#)) So while it is said that information from Zubaida helped lead to the capture of al-Qaeda figures such as Ramzi bin al-Shibh, Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri, Omar al-Faruq, and Muhammad al-Darbi, it is unclear where this information came from exactly. ([Priest 6/27/2004](#)) Additionally, it is not even clear if he provided such leads. For instance, it has been reported that the main break that led to bin al-Shibh's capture had nothing to do with Zubaida (see [June 14, 2002 and Shortly After](#)). ([Suskind 9/7/2006](#))

Zubaida Describes Vague and Unverifiable Plots - By most accounts, Zubaida's confessions under torture around this time are frustratingly vague. He describes many planned attacks, such as al-Qaeda attacks on US shopping malls, banks, supermarkets, water systems, nuclear plants, apartment buildings, the Brooklyn Bridge, the State of Liberty, and more. Red alerts are sounded and thousands of law enforcement personnel are activated each time, but the warnings are too vague to lead to any arrests. Suskind will later comment that Zubaida's information was "maybe nonsense, maybe not. There was almost no way to tell." ([Suskind 2006, pp. 115-116, 121](#)) But Suskind will later say more definitively, "[Zubaida] said, as people will, anything to make the pain stop. And we essentially followed every word and various uniformed public servants of the United States went running all over the country to various places that Zubaydah said were targets, and were not. Ultimately, we tortured an insane man and ran screaming at every word he uttered." ([Suskind 9/7/2006](#)) Posner claims that Zubaida provided "false information intended to misdirect his captors." For instance, "He caused the New York police to deploy massive manpower to guard the Brooklyn Bridge at the end of May [2002], after he told his interrogators that al-Qaeda had a plan to destroy 'the bridge in the Godzilla movie.'" ([Posner 2003, pp. 191](#))

Zubaida Appears to Be Feeding Interrogators' Expectations - Dan Coleman, the FBI's top al-Qaeda expert at the time who was able to analyze all the evidence from Zubaida, will later claim that the CIA "got nothing useful from the guy." ([Stein 12/14/2007](#)) Coleman will say, "The CIA wants everything in five minutes. It's not possible, and it's not productive. What you get in that circumstance are captives and captors playing to each other's expectations, playing roles, essentially, that gives you a lot of garbage information and nothing you can use." ([Suskind 2006, pp. 114](#)) Counterterrorism "tsar" Gen. Wayne Downing is apparently intimately involved in Zubaida's interrogation and will later recall, "[Zubaida] and some of the others are very clever guys. At times I felt we were in

a classic counter-interrogation class: They were telling us what they think we already knew. Then, what they thought we wanted to know. As they did that, they fabricated and weaved in threads that went nowhere. But, even with these ploys, we still get valuable information and they are off the street, unable to plot and coordinate future attacks.” ([Priest and Gellman 12/26/2002](#)) In legal papers to prepare for a military tribunal hearing in 2007, Zubaida himself will assert that he told his interrogators whatever they wanted to hear to make the torture stop. ([Eggen and Pincus 12/18/2007](#))

June 1, 2002: Bush Launches Doctrine of Preemptive Attack

In a speech, President Bush announces a “new” US policy of preemptive attacks: “If we wait for threats to fully materialize we will have waited too long. We must take the battle to the enemy, disrupt his plans and confront the worst threats before they emerge.” ([Bumiller 6/2/2002](#)) This preemptive strategy is included in a defensive strategic paper the next month (see [July 13, 2002](#)), and formally announced in September 2002. Despite the obvious parallels, the mainstream media generally fails to report that this “new” antiterrorism strategy was first proposed by Bush’s key administration officials in 1992 (see [March 8, 1992](#)) and has been continually advocated by the same people ever since. ([Sanger 9/20/2002](#); [Eggen and Priest 9/21/2002](#); [Burkeman and Walsh 9/21/2002](#)) Furthermore, State Department Director of Policy Planning Richard Haass originally drafted this new national security strategy. However, Condoleezza Rice had ordered that it be completely rewritten, reportedly wanting “something bolder.” The man responsible for this task was Philip Zelikow, who in 2003 will be appointed executive director of the 9/11 Commission. ([Mann 2004, pp. 316-317](#))

June 3, 2002: The Results of 9/11 Related Insider Trading Inquiries Are Still Unknown

A rare follow-up article about insider trading based on 9/11 foreknowledge confirms that numerous inquiries in the US and around the world are still ongoing. However, “all are treating these inquiries as if they were state secrets.” The author speculates: “The silence from the investigating camps could mean any of several things: Either terrorists are responsible for the puts on the airline stocks; others besides terrorists had foreknowledge; the puts were just lucky bets by credible investors; or, there is nothing whatsoever to support the insider-trading rumors.” ([O'Meara 6/3/2002](#)) Another article notes that Deutsche Bank Alex Brown, the American investment banking arm of German giant Deutsche Bank, purchased at least some of these options. Deutsche Bank Alex Brown was once headed by “Buzzy” Krongard, who quit that company in March 2001 and became Executive Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). “This fact may not be significant. And then again, it may. After all, there has traditionally been a close link between the CIA, big banks, and the brokerage business.” ([Ravindran 2/11/2002](#))

June 3, 2002: FBI Downplays Significance of Moussaoui's E-mails

Former FBI Deputy Director Weldon Kennedy states: “Even in the [Zacarias] Moussaoui case, there’s lots of uproar over the fact that the—there was a failure to obtain a warrant to search his computer. Well, the facts now are that warrant was ultimately obtained. The computer was searched and guess what? There was nothing significant on there pertaining to 9/11.” ([CNN 6/3/2002](#)) Three days later, the Washington Post reports: “Amid the latest revelations about FBI and CIA lapses prior to the September 11 attacks, congressional investigators say it is now clear that the evidence that lay unexamined in Zacarias Moussaoui’s possession was even more valuable than previously believed. A notebook and correspondence of Moussaoui’s not only appears to link him to the main hijacking cell in Hamburg, Germany, but also to an al-Qaeda associate in Malaysia whose activities were monitored by the CIA more than a year before the terror attacks on New York and Washington.” ([Washington Post 6/6/2002](#)) Slate magazine later gives Kennedy the “Whopper of the Week” award for his comment. ([Noah 6/7/2002](#))

June 4, 2002: Bush Acknowledges Agencies Made Mistakes, Continues to Insist That 9/11 Could Not Have Been Prevented

For the first time, Bush concedes that his intelligence agencies had problems: “In terms of whether or not the FBI and the CIA were communicating properly, I think it is clear that they weren’t.” ([Doran 6/5/2002](#)) However, in an address to the nation three days later, President Bush still maintains, “Based on everything I’ve seen, I do not believe anyone could have prevented the horror of September the 11th.” ([Alcorn 6/8/2002](#)) Days earlier, Newsweek reported that the FBI had prepared a detailed chart showing how agents could have uncovered the 9/11 plot if the CIA had told them what it knew about the hijackers Nawaf Alhazmi and Khalid Almihdhar sooner. (FBI Director Mueller denies the existence of such a chart. ([Pincus 6/3/2002](#))) One FBI official says, “There’s no question we could have tied all 19 hijackers together.” ([Isikoff and Klaidman 6/2/2002](#)) Attorney General Ashcroft also says it is unlikely better intelligence could have stopped the attacks. ([Pincus 6/3/2002](#))

June 4, 2002: 9/11 Mastermind KSM Publicly Identified



The photo of Mohammed on the right has been flipped to better compare it [Source: *FBI*] Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM) is publicly identified as the “mastermind” behind the 9/11 attacks. He is believed to have arranged the logistics while on the run in Germany, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. In 1996, he had been secretly indicted in the US for his role in Operation Bojinka (see [January 6, 1995](#)), and the US began offering a \$2 million reward for his capture in 1998, which increased to \$25 million in December 2001. ([Associated Press 6/4/2002](#); [Risen 6/5/2002](#)) There are conflicting accounts on how much US investigators knew about Mohammed before 9/11. Mohammed is Pakistani (though born in Kuwait ([CBS News 6/5/2002](#))) and a relative of Ramzi Yousef, the bomber of the WTC in 1993. ([Risen 6/5/2002](#))

June 4, 2002: Officer with Possible Unique 9/11 Knowledge Is Reprimanded for Criticizing Bush

Air Force Lieutenant Colonel Steve Butler is suspended from his post at the Defense Language Institute in Monterey, California, and is told he could face a court martial for writing a letter to a local newspaper calling President Bush a “joke” and accusing him of allowing the 9/11 attacks to happen. The military prohibits public criticism of superiors. ([BBC 6/5/2002](#); [Monterey County Herald 6/5/2002](#)) What is not reported is that he may have had unique knowledge about 9/11: A hijacker named Saeed Alghamdi trained at the Defense Language Institute and Butler was Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs there (note that this is not the same person as the Steven Butler who later testifies before the 9/11 Congressional Inquiry). ([Radelat 9/17/2001](#)) Later in the month the Air Force announces “the matter is resolved” and Butler will not face a court-martial, but it is unknown if he faced a lesser punishment. ([Howe 6/14/2002](#))

June 10, 2002: Arrest of Supposed Al-Qaeda Plotter Jose Padilla Announced



Jose Padilla. [Source: Florida Department of Motor Vehicles] Attorney General Ashcroft announces the arrest of Abdullah al-Mujahir, a.k.a. Jose Padilla. He claims that Padilla was part of an al-Qaeda plot to detonate a radioactive “dirty bomb” in a US city, and supposedly Padilla was scouting bomb targets when arrested. Padilla, a US citizen, is being held as an “enemy combatant,” allowing him to be held indefinitely. ([Borger 6/11/2002](#); [PBS 6/11/2002](#)) But almost immediately, doubts grow about this story. The London Times says that it is “beyond dispute” that the timing of the announcement of his arrest was “politically inspired.” Padilla was actually arrested a month earlier, on May 8. ([Maddox 6/13/2002](#)) It is widely believed that Ashcroft made the arrest announcement “only to divert attention from Intelligence Committee inquiries into the FBI and CIA handling of 9/11.” ([Ridgeway 6/12/2002](#); [Sengupta and Buncombe 6/12/2002](#); [van Wel 6/13/2002](#); [Pincus 6/13/2003](#)) Four days earlier, Coleen Rowley testified before Congress. The FBI whistleblower stated her belief that the attacks of Sept. 11 could have been prevented had the FBI flight-school warnings been made available to the agents investigating Zacharias Moussaoui. ([Dreyfuss 9/21/2006](#)) Bush soon privately chastises Ashcroft for overstating claims about Padilla. ([Burkeman 8/15/2002](#)) The government attorneys apparently could not get an indictment out of a New York grand jury and, rather than let him go, made Padilla an enemy combatant. ([Ridgeway 6/12/2002](#)) It later comes out that the FBI found no evidence that he was preparing a dirty bomb attack and little evidence to suggest he had any support from al-Qaeda, or any ties to al-Qaeda cells in the US. Yet the Justice Department maintains that its view of Padilla “remains unchanged,” and that he is a “serious and continuing threat.” ([Burkeman 8/15/2002](#)) Because Padilla is a US citizen, he cannot be tried in a military court. So apparently he will simply be held indefinitely. It is pointed out that any American could be declared an enemy combatant and never tried or have that status questioned. ([Epstein 6/11/2002](#); [Washington Post 6/11/2002](#)) The Washington Post says, “If that’s the case, nobody’s constitutional rights are safe.” ([Washington Post 6/11/2002](#)) Despite the evidence that Padilla’s case is grossly overstated, the government won’t allow him access to a lawyer (see [December 4, 2002](#); [March 11, 2003](#)).

June 13, 2002: In Arrest of Al-Qaeda Strongman, Sudan Is Helpful; Saudi Arabia Is Not

Sudan arrests an unnamed al-Qaeda leader who has confessed to firing a missile at a US plane taking off from Prince Sultan Air Base, Saudi Arabia, in May 2002. Saudi Arabia had failed to arrest him. This is just the latest in a series of events where “some countries

long deemed key US allies—such as Saudi Arabia—are considered less than helpful in the war against terror, while other states remaining on the US State Department’s blacklist of terrorist sponsors, such as Syria and Sudan, are apparently proving more cooperative than their pariah status would suggest.” The US hasn’t been given access to al-Qaeda members arrested by Saudi Arabia, and “concerns over the Saudi authorities’ ‘unhelpful’ stance are increasing.” ([Jane's Intelligence Review 7/5/2002](#))

June 14, 2002 and Shortly After: Al Jazeera Leak Leads US Intelligence to KSM and Bin Al-Shibh



Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani. [*Source: Qatar embassy*] Al Jazeera reporter Yosri Fouda recently interviewed 9/11 figures Ramzi bin al-Shibh and Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM), though there are conflicting accounts about whether the interview took place before or after KSM was publicly identified as the 9/11 mastermind (see [April, June, or August 2002](#)). Author Ron Suskind will later claim in the book *The One Percent Doctrine* that on June 14, 2002, Fouda went to his superiors at Al Jazeera’s headquarters in Qatar and told them about the interview. He speaks to Sheikh Hamad bin Thamer al-Thani, the chairman of Al Jazeera and the cousin of the emir of Qatar, and a few others. At this time, the US is intensely pressuring the Qatari government to get Al Jazeera to tone down what the US perceives as anti-American news coverage. In fact, it is widely believed in Qatar that the US deliberately bombed the Al Jazeera office in Kabul, Afghanistan, in November 2001 to send a message. Perhaps as a result of this pressure, a few days after Fouda reveals his interview, the emir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, tells the CIA all about it. Fouda described some of al-Qaeda’s operational plans and even had a good idea where the apartment was in Karachi, Pakistan, where the interview took place, and what floor he had been on. Suskind claims that “No one, not even Al Jazeera management, knew the emir was making the call” to the CIA. US intelligence begins an intense surveillance of Karachi in an attempt to find KSM and bin al-Shibh. Mostly because of this lead, bin al-Shibh will be arrested in Karachi in September 2002, around the time when Fouda’s interview is finally aired in public (see [September 11, 2002](#)). ([Suskind 2006, pp. 134-140](#)) Interestingly, in early September 2002, it will be reported that KSM was arrested in an apartment in Karachi on June 16, 2002, which would be right about when the CIA was given this information (see [June 16, 2002](#)).

June 16, 2002: 9/11 Mastermind KSM Reported Captured

In September 2002, articles appear in the Pakistani and Indian press suggesting that 9/11 mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM) is actually captured on this day in an apartment in Karachi. Supposedly he has been sent to the US, though the US and Pakistan deny the story and say Mohammed has not been captured at all. ([Daily Times \(Lahore\) 9/9/2002](#); [Rajghatta 9/9/2002](#); [Rajghatta 9/9/2002](#)) Interestingly, it will later be reported that in mid-June 2002 the CIA learned about an Al Jazeera interview with KSM and Ramzi bin al-Shibh (see [April, June, or August 2002](#)), and the information passed to the CIA included the apartment building and floor in Karachi where the Al Jazeera reporter believed the interview took place (see [June 14, 2002 and Shortly After](#)).

June 17, 2002: FBI Acknowledges Some Allegations by FBI Whistleblower Sibel Edmonds

In a lengthy unclassified hearing held by the Senate Judiciary Committee, FBI officials confirm translator Sibel Edmond's allegations that co-worker Melek Can Dickerson had either mistranslated or incorrectly marked "not pertinent" hundreds of wiretapped telephone conversations involving certain surveillance targets with whom she had become friends (see [November 2001](#)). They also acknowledge that she had attempted to take control over all translation assignments involving those targets (see [November 2001 or December 2001](#)). The targets worked at the American-Turkish Council (ATC), where Dickerson was an intern before taking her job at the FBI. The FBI confirms also that Dickerson had failed to disclose this information on her application (see also [Late October 2001](#)), but nonetheless attributes her failure to translate these wiretaps to lack of training. ([Leahy and Grassley 6/19/2002](#); [Grimaldi 6/19/2002](#); [Waterman 1/24/2005](#); [Rose 9/2005](#)) One of the participants of the hearing will later tell the New York Observer that the session was tense. "None of the FBI officials' answers washed, and they could tell we didn't believe them." He remembers that one of the Congressional investigators told the officials, "You basically admitted almost all that Sibel alleged, yet you say there's no problem here. What's wrong with this picture?" ([Sheehy 1/22/2004](#))

June 18, 2002: FBI Director Maintains 9/11 Attacks Could Not Have Been Prevented

FBI Director Mueller testifies before the Congressional 9/11 inquiry. His testimony will be made public in September 2002. ([Lumpkin 9/26/2002](#)) Mueller claims that with the possible exception of Zacarias Moussaoui, "[t]o this day we have found no one in the United States except the actual hijackers who knew of the plot and we have found nothing they did while in the United States that triggered a specific response about them." ([US Congress 9/26/2002](#)) The 9/11 Congressional Inquiry will later conclude near the end of 2002 that some hijackers had contact inside the US with individuals known to the FBI,

and the hijackers “were not as isolated during their time in the United States as has been previously suggested.” ([Miller 12/12/2002](#)) Mueller also claims, “There were no slip-ups. Discipline never broke down. They gave no hint to those around them what they were about.” ([US Congress 9/26/2002](#))

Summer 2002-Summer 2004: 9/11 Investigations Glance over Intercepts of Hijackers’ Calls

Both the 9/11 Congressional Inquiry and the 9/11 Commission examine the NSA’s intercepts of various calls made by the hijackers to an al-Qaeda communications hub in Sana’a, Yemen (see [Early 2000-Summer 2001](#)). The 9/11 Congressional Inquiry refers to several of the calls and gives an idea of the content of some of them. But it does not mention those made by Nawaf Alhazmi and possibly other hijackers from the US after the USS *Cole* bombing, which are only disclosed later in the media (see [Mid-October 2000-Summer 2001](#) and [2004 and After](#)). However, this section of the Inquiry report is heavily redacted so most details remain unknown. It states that, although the NSA intercepted the calls and disseminated dispatches about some of them, the NSA did not realize the hijackers were in the US at the time the calls were made. ([US Congress 7/24/2003, pp. xii, 11-12, 143-146, 155-157](#)) The 9/11 Commission Report contains a briefer section on the intercepts and deals with those which led to the surveillance of the al-Qaeda summit in Malaysia (see January 5-8, 2000). In addition, it mentions that Almihdhar called his wife from San Diego in the spring of 2000, but fails to mention that his wife lived at an al-Qaeda communications hub and that the calls were intercepted by the NSA (see [Spring-Summer 2000](#)). ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 181, 222](#)) The Los Angeles Times comments: “The [9/11 Congressional Inquiry] and the Sept. 11 commission that came after it referred indirectly to the calls from Yemen to San Diego. But neither report discloses what the NSA gleaned from the calls, or why they were never disclosed to the FBI.” ([Meyer 12/21/2005](#)) The publication of the 9/11 Commission report and revelations about domestic surveillance by the NSA will lead to increased media interest in and revelations about the intercepts starting from 2004 (see [2004 and After](#)).

June 20, 2002: Afghan Council Appears Manipulated in Selecting Warlords

The long-awaited loya jirga, or grand council, is concluded in Afghanistan. This council was supposed to be a traditional method for the Afghan people to select their leaders, but most experts conclude that the council is clearly rigged. ([O'Toole 8/1/2002](#)) Half of the delegates walk out in protest. ([CNN 6/18/2002](#)) One delegate states, “This is worse than our worst expectations. The warlords have been promoted and the professionals kicked out. Who calls this democracy?” Delegates complain, “This is interference by foreign countries,” obviously meaning the US. The New York Times publishes an article (“The Warlords Win in Kabul”) pointing out that the “very forces responsible for countless brutalities” in past governments are back in power. ([Zakhilwal and Niazi 6/21/2002](#))

June 22, 2002: 9/11 Inquiry Member Appears Biased in Defending FBI

Internal FBI documents show that Thomas Kelley, in charge of matters relating to the FBI in the 9/11 Congressional Inquiry, blocked an inquiry into the FBI's role in Waco. For instance, an internal FBI memo from December 2000 states that Kelley "continued to thwart and obstruct" the Waco investigation to the point that a special counsel was forced to send a team to search FBI headquarters for documents Kelley refused to turn over. ([Leiby and Priest 6/22/2002](#))

June 25, 2002: Suspensions of ISI-Al-Qaeda Links Continue

Although the Western media continues to report that the ISI has reformed itself, "few in Pakistan believe it." The Independent later reports rumors that on this day ISI officers hide three al-Qaeda members after a gun battle in which ten soldiers were killed. This follows several other betrayals—now the FBI and the other Pakistani law enforcement authorities no longer tell the ISI about their raids in advance. Other Pakistani investigators are forced to build files on militants from scratch, because the ISI will not share what it knows. ([Fisk 7/21/2002](#))

June 26, 2002-January 24, 2003: Owners of Florida Flight Schools Attended by Hijackers in Separate Air Crashes



The crash of Arne Kruithof's plane at Venice Municipal Airport. [*Source: Public domain*] Within the space of seven months, the owners of two Venice, Florida flight schools attended by several of the alleged 9/11 suicide pilots are separately in serious air accidents. On June 26, 2002, Arne Kruithof, whose Florida Flight Training Center was attended by Ziad Jarrah, survives a crash at the Venice Municipal Airport. He is a passenger in a twin-engine plane, which

suddenly pulls to the left when about 50 feet off the runway and the pilot is unable to regain control. All the passengers are uninjured, but the plane is damaged extensively. ([McIntyre 6/29/2002](#)) On January 24, 2003, Rudi Dekkers, whose Huffman Aviation was attended by Marwan Alshehhi and Mohamed Atta, crashes his helicopter. He is flying to work early in the morning for a meeting with a competitor, to sell his flight school to them. Ten minutes after takeoff, his engine cuts out and he crashes into a river. He is rescued from the ice-cold water by a friend and fellow helicopter pilot who pulls him to shore. He arrives in Venice later in the day, and is able to proceed with the sale of Huffman Aviation. Two days earlier, the Associated Press had announced that Dekkers was to be arrested on felony fraud charges (see [August 23, 2001-April 2004](#)). ([Associated Press 1/22/2003](#); [Associated Press 1/24/2003](#); [Mudge 1/25/2003](#); [Zoldan 1/25/2003](#); [Kimel 1/28/2003](#))

Mid-2002: Al-Qaeda Operatives with WMD Connections Interviewed but Remain Free in Sudan

In November 2001, the Sudanese allowed the FBI to interview two al-Qaeda operatives living in Sudan, Mohammed Loay Bayazid, and Mubarak al Duri (see [November 2001](#)). Even though both men had links to al-Qaeda dating back to the 1980s (Bayazid even was one of al-Qaeda's founding members), CIA Director George Tenet will later claim that the FBI agents "reported back that, although their suspicions were great, they were unable to develop sufficient grounds for a case against either man that would justify an extradition request." But the CIA continues to find more intelligence that appears to tie both of them to al-Qaeda efforts to get weapons of mass destruction. For instance, a trusted informant claims Bayazid helped in an effort to buy uranium for bin Laden (see [Late 1993](#)). Tenet claims that "Both men had developed business connections to Sudanese WMD-related entities, and both had established businesses that could have served as dual-use front companies for developing nuclear and biological weapons." In mid-2002, the CIA tries to get the two men to change sides. CIA officer Rolf Mowatt-Larssen goes to Sudan and is allowed to speak with them in a neutral location. But both men are unrepentant. After an appeal to help uncover al-Qaeda's WMD program to potentially save millions of lives, one of them replies, "No... I think it is legitimate to kill millions of you because of how many of us you killed." ([Tenet 2007, pp. 270-271](#)) There have been no reports since of the US capturing or killing either man or putting them on any public wanted lists.

July 2002: Militants Tied to Al-Qaeda and ISI Indicted by US, but Little Effort Is Made to Find Them

The US secretly indicts Rajaa Gulum Abbas and Abdul Malik for attempting to buy \$32 million in Stinger missiles and other military weaponry in an undercover arms-dealing investigation. However, a US official states that Abbas is an alleged member of the ISI, and is thought to have ties to Middle Eastern militant groups and arms-trafficking operations. He also appears to have foreknowledge of the 9/11 attacks. Abdul Malik is

said to be Abbas's money man. Abdul Malik is not related to Mohammed Malik, another Pakistani targeted by the undercover operation. The chief US informant in the case, Randy Glass, says that both men also have clear ties to al-Qaeda, and the arms were going to be funneled to al-Qaeda and used against American targets. ([Spencer-Wendel and Pacenti 3/20/2003](#); [Burstein 3/20/2003](#)) The indictment is not revealed until March 2003; both men still remain missing and are presumed to be in Pakistan. The US says it is still working on capturing and extraditing Abbas and Malik. ([NBC 3/18/2003](#)) NBC seems to have no trouble reaching Abbas in Pakistan by telephone. ([MSNBC 8/2/2002](#); [NBC 3/18/2003](#)) The indictment "makes no mention of Pakistan, any ties to Afghanistan's former Taliban regime or the ultimate destination of the weapons." ([Spencer-Wendel and Pacenti 3/20/2003](#))

July 2002: Alleged '20th Hijacker' Confesses in Guantanamo

The FBI takes over interrogations of Saudi Guantanamo detainee Mohamed al-Khatani. He had been captured and taken into US custody months before (see [December 2001](#)) but his real identity was only recently discovered. In the months before, military intelligence, using harsh tactics, was unsuccessful in gaining information from him, but the FBI allegedly uses subtle persuasion with an experienced interrogator and succeeds. Khatani discloses:

- He is an al-Qaeda member and received terrorist training at two al-Qaeda camps.
 - He attended an al-Qaeda summit in Malaysia attended by two 9/11 hijackers (see January 5-8, 2000).
 - He attempted unsuccessfully to be one of the hijackers himself, failing to enter the US in August 2001 (see [August 4, 2001](#)).
 - He had been sent to the US by 9/11 mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed.
 - He had met bin Laden on several occasions and had been in contact with many other senior al-Qaeda leaders.
 - He is related to Ali Saleh Kahlah al-Marri, an apparent al-Qaeda sleeper agent already arrested in the US (see [September 10, 2001](#)).
 - He informs on about thirty other prisoners being held at Guantanamo.
- But he is also believed to have little knowledge of other al-Qaeda plots. ([Golden and van Natal 6/21/2004](#); [Zagorin 3/3/2006](#)) He will later recant his confession (see [October 26, 2006](#)).

July 2002: US Special Forces Not Given Permission to Target Mullah Omar

A CIA case officer tells Adam Rice, a US Special Forces operations sergeant working out of a safe house near Kandahar, Afghanistan, that a figure believed to be top Taliban leader Mullah Omar has been tracked by a Predator drone to a location in Shah-i-Kot Valley, a short flight away. Omar and the group with him would be vulnerable to a helicopter assault. However, whenever Rice's team wants to move more than five kilometers from

their safe house, they are required to file a request in advance. If fighting is involved, the request has to pass through several layers of bureaucracy, and a three-star general has to give the final okay. The process can take days, and in this case it does. The target eventually moves on before permission is given. ([Thomas 8/28/2007](#))

Early July 2002: Moussaoui Expresses Willingness to Talk, Offer Is Rejected by Justice Department

Zacarias Moussaoui indicates that he is willing to disclose information to the US authorities, but his overtures are rejected by the FBI and the Justice Department. After learning of Moussaoui's offer, Minneapolis FBI counsel Coleen Rowley contacts assistants to FBI director Robert Mueller and to Justice Department manager Michael Chertoff. She says she is worried about Moussaoui's research into cropdusting and wind patterns, and that the information he could provide may prove useful averting a second strike by al-Qaeda. Rowley will later comment: "But by that time Moussaoui had been charged with the death penalty and I deduced that [attorney general John] Ashcroft would not allow any potential for bargaining leverage to be injected into the case." ([Rowley 5/2/2007](#))

Mid-2002-June 1, 2006: Lack of US Cooperation Hinders Al-Qaeda Prosecutions in Spain

Spanish investigators and prosecutors attempting to jail people they believe are important al-Qaeda operatives seek US assistance, but the US fails to provide them with full co-operation. Spanish authorities started to build a case against a Spain-based al-Qaeda cell headed by Barakat Yarkas in the 1990s and some of the suspects were under surveillance as they allegedly assisted the 9/11 plot (see [August 1998-September 11, 2001](#)). The US has some information about them, but does not release what the Spanish need because the US apparently does not want to fight terrorism through law enforcement, but through more direct methods. A Spanish official says, "From the US point of view, everything is an intelligence affair, not a judicial matter... That is what is undermining the whole process." In 2004, the Spanish official complains: "We could clearly prove the Spanish role in 9/11 if we had real cooperation. There are literally two or three elements missing to close the case, but as it is now, all of the suspects will go free." One key dispute centers on US unwillingness to share evidence linking Spain-based al-Qaeda operative Amer el-Azizi to the 9/11 plot and Spanish officials spend six months persuading the US before getting a copy of a "specific element that provides a concrete link" between el-Azizi and 9/11 mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (see [November 2001](#)). In addition, the US fails to provide information identifying Saudi Arabian investors in Spanish construction companies owned by a Syrian businessman, Mohammed Galeb Kalaje Zouaydi, another suspected militant who is thought to have channeled money to extremists through his group of companies, as well as suspicious Islamic charities. ([Johnson and Crawford 5/4/2004](#)) This lack of co-operation hinders the prosecutions of the operatives and means they receive only relatively light sentences. For example,

Yarkas is initially found guilty of both terrorism in Spain and assisting the 9/11 plot, but his 9/11 conviction is overturned on appeal (see [September 26, 2005](#)).

July 3, 2002: Few Detained on Immigration Charges Still in Custody

The Justice Department announces that only 74 of the 752 people detained on immigration charges after 9/11 are still in US custody. By December, only six of them will remain in custody (see [December 11, 2002](#)). Hundreds more were detained on other charges or as material witnesses, but no numbers pertaining to them have been released. 611 were subject to secret hearings. Senator Carl Levin (D), who had requested the figures, says, "It took the Justice Department more than three months to produce a partial response to my letter." But the answers raise "a number of additional questions, including why closed hearings were necessary for so many people." Though many were held for months, "the vast majority were never charged with anything other than overstaying a visa." ([Sachs 7/11/2002](#)) All the deportation hearings for these people have been held in secret as well. Some say the government is cloaking its activities out of embarrassment, because none of these people have turned out to have any ties to terrorism. ([Sachs 7/11/2002](#); [Audi 7/18/2002](#))

July 6, 2002: Afghan Vice President Assassinated

Afghan Vice President Hajji Abdul Qadir is assassinated by Afghan warlords. Some believe that Qadir was assassinated by opium warlords upset by Qadir's efforts to reduce the rampant opium farming and processing that has taken place since the US occupation. Qadir had been overseeing a Western-backed eradication program, and had recently complained that the money meant to be given to reward farmers for not planting opium was in fact not reaching the farmers. Additionally, Qadir "had long been suspected of enriching himself through involvement in the opium trade." ([Filkins 7/8/2002](#); [Sly 7/8/2002](#))

July 10, 2002: Defense Policy Board: 'Saudis Are Active at Every Level of the Terror Chain'

A briefing given to a top Pentagon advisory group states, "The Saudis are active at every level of the terror chain, from planners to financiers, from cadre to foot-soldier, from ideologist to cheerleader.... Saudi Arabia supports our enemies and attacks our allies." They are called "the kernel of evil, the prime mover, the most dangerous opponent." This position still runs counter to official US policy, but the Washington Post says it "represents a point of view that has growing currency within the Bush administration." The briefing suggests that the Saudis be given an ultimatum to stop backing terrorism or face seizure of its oil fields and its financial assets invested in the United States. The group, the Defense Policy Board, is headed by Richard Perle. ([Ricks 8/6/2002](#)) An international controversy follows the public reports of the briefing in August 2002 (for

instance, ([Scotsman 8/12/2002](#))). In an abrupt change, the media starts calling the Saudis enemies, not allies, of the US. Slate reports details of the briefing the Post failed to mention. The briefing states, “There is an ‘Arabia,’ but it needs not be ‘Saudi.’” The conclusion of the briefing: “Grand strategy for the Middle East: Iraq is the tactical pivot. Saudi Arabia the strategic pivot. Egypt the prize.” ([Shafer 8/7/2002](#)) Note that a similar meeting of the Defense Policy Board appears to have preceded and affected the United States’ decision to take a warlike stance against Iraq (see [September 19, 2001-September 20, 2001](#)).

July 13, 2002: US Military Plans for Global Dominance

The US military releases a new Defense Planning Guidance strategic vision. It “contains all the key elements” of a similar document written ten years earlier (see [March 8, 1992](#)) by largely the same people now in power. Like the original, the centerpiece of this vision is preventing any other powers from challenging US world dominance. Some new tactics are proposed, such as using nuclear weapons for a preemptive strike, but the basic plan remains the same. ([Hendren 7/13/2002](#); [Arkin 7/16/2002](#); [Armstrong 10/2002](#)) David Armstrong notes in Harper’s magazine: “[In 1992] the goal was global dominance, and it met with bad reviews. Now it is the answer to terrorism. The emphasis is on preemption, and the reviews are generally enthusiastic. Through all of this, the dominance motif remains, though largely undetected.” ([Armstrong 10/2002](#))

July 15, 2002: US Media Ignore ISI Link in Reports on Saeed’s Conviction

Saeed Sheikh and three co-defendants are judged guilty for the murder of reporter Daniel Pearl. Saeed, the supposed mastermind of the murder, is sentenced to death by hanging, and the others are given 25-year terms. Saeed threatens the judge with retribution. As if to confirm that his death covers up unpleasant truths, in the stories of his sentencing every major US media story fails to report Saeed’s connections to 9/11 and even to the ISI. ([Linzer 7/15/2002](#); [Gannon 7/15/2002](#); [News 7/15/2002](#); [CNN 7/15/2002](#); [Watson 7/15/2002](#); [Colt 7/15/2002](#); [Filkins 7/15/2002](#); [Reuters 7/15/2002](#); [Levine 7/15/2002](#); [Khan 7/15/2002](#); [O’Neill 7/16/2002](#)) In contrast, the British media connects Saeed to the ISI ([McCarthy 7/16/2002](#); [McCarthy 7/16/2002](#); [Williams 7/16/2002](#)) , al-Qaeda ([Fisk 7/16/2002](#)) , the 9/11 attacks ([Mcginty 7/16/2002](#)) , or some combination of the three ([Hussain and McGrory 7/16/2002](#); [Williams 7/16/2002](#); [O’Neill 7/16/2002](#)) (with one exception ([Abbas 7/16/2002](#); [BBC 7/16/2002](#))). The US and British governments both approve of the verdict. ([Levine 7/15/2002](#); [BBC 7/15/2002](#)) In the US, only the Washington Post questions the justice of the verdict. ([Khan 7/15/2002](#); [Khan 7/16/2002](#)) By contrast, all British newspapers question the verdict, and subsequently raise additional questions about it (see [July 16-21, 2002](#)). Saeed has appealed the decision, but a second trial has yet to begin. ([Nadeem 8/18/2002](#))

July 16, 2002: Blair Claims Attack on Afghanistan Only Possible After 9/11

British Prime Minister Tony Blair states, “We knew about al-Qaeda for a long time. They were committing terrorist acts, they were planning, they were organizing. Everybody knew, we all knew, that Afghanistan was a failed state living on drugs and terror. We did not act.... To be truthful about it, there was no way we could have got the public consent to have suddenly launched a campaign on Afghanistan but for what happened on September 11.” ([Webster 7/17/2002](#)) In a book released one month later, Clinton’s former National Security Adviser Sandy Berger will similarly state, “You show me one reporter, one commentator, one member of Congress who thought we should invade Afghanistan before September 11 and I’ll buy you dinner in the best restaurant in New York City.” ([Miller, Stone, and Mitchell 2002, pp. 219](#))

July 16-21, 2002: More Controversy Surrounding Saeed Trial

More questions emerge in British newspapers about the conviction of Saeed Sheikh for reporter Daniel Pearl’s murder in the days immediately after the verdict. Pakistani police have secretly arrested two men who many believe are the real masterminds of Pearl’s murder, and official confirmation of these crucial arrests could have ended Saeed’s trial. ([McCarthy 7/18/2002](#)) On May 16, Pearl’s body was found and identified, but the FBI does not officially release the DNA results because official confirmation of the body would also have meant a new trial. ([Fisk 7/16/2002](#)) Pakistani officials admit they waited to release the results until after the verdict. ([McCarthy 7/18/2002](#)) After the trial ends, Pakistani officials admit that the key testimony of a taxi driver is doubtful. The “taxi driver” turns out to be a head constable policeman. ([McCarthy 7/18/2002](#)) One of the co-defendants turns out to be working for the Special Branch. ([Fisk 7/21/2002](#)) According to Pakistani law, the trial needed to be completed in a week, but in fact it took three months. The trial judge and the venue were changed three times. ([Abbas 7/16/2002](#)) The trial was held in a bunker underneath a prison, and no reporters were allowed to attend. When all the appeals are done, it is doubtful that Saeed will be extradited to the US, “because Mr. Sheikh might tell the Americans about the links between al-Qaeda and Pakistan’s own intelligence organization.” ([Fisk 7/16/2002](#)) Meanwhile, at least seven more suspects remain at large. All have ties to the ISI, and as one investigator remarks, “It seems inconceivable that there isn’t someone in the ISI who knows where they’re hiding.” ([McGirk 5/6/2002](#))

July 19, 2002: Why Is US Not Interrogating Saeed, Indian Paper Wonders

An editorial in an Indian newspaper wonders why the US is still not interrogating Saeed Sheikh, recently convicted of murdering Daniel Pearl. Saeed was briefly interrogated by

the FBI in February, but they were unable to ask about his links to al-Qaeda, and no known US contact has taken place since. ([Fisk 7/16/2002](#); [Indian Express 7/19/2002](#)) The editorial suggests that if the US pressures its close ally Pakistan to allow Saeed to be interrogated in his Pakistani prison, they could learn more about his financing of the 9/11 attacks and the criminal underworld that Saeed was connected to. Also, US attempts to find al-Qaeda cells in Pakistan could be strongly boosted with new information. ([Indian Express 7/19/2002](#))

July 19, 2002: US Finally Ends Controversial Visa Program in Saudi Arabia

Faced with growing criticism of its Visa Express program, the State Department decides to change the program's name in early July 2002. When that fails to satisfy critics, the program is abandoned altogether on July 19. The Visa Express program allowed anyone in Saudi Arabia to apply for US visas through their travel agents instead of having to show up at a consulate in person. ([Schmidt and Kessler 7/11/2002](#)) Mary Ryan, the head of the State Department's consular service that was responsible for letting most of the hijackers into the US, is also forced to retire. It has been pointed out that Ryan deceived Congress by testifying that "there was nothing State could have done to prevent the terrorists from obtaining visas." However, after all this, Ryan and the other authors of the Visa Express program are given "outstanding performance" awards of \$15,000 each. The reporter who wrote most of the stories critical of Visa Express is briefly detained and pressured by the State Department. ([Carter 10/23/2002](#); [Malkin 12/30/2002](#))

July 20, 2002: Top CIA and MI6 Officials Meet; British Intel Chief Leaves with Impression That Decision to Invade Iraq Has Been Made

British Intelligence Chief Sir Richard Dearlove and other top MI6 officials attend an annual CIA-MI6 summit to have candid talks on the issues of counterterrorism and Iraq. CIA Director George Tenet had tried to cancel the summit, but the British, set on getting a better feel for the agency's intelligence on Iraq and Bush's Iraq policy, were insistent that the summit take place. Tenet reluctantly agreed to have the meeting, provided that it was held at CIA headquarters. The meeting is held on a Saturday and lasts almost the whole day. At one point during the meeting, Tenet and Dearlove leave to have a private discussion. While it has not been reported what Tenet tells Dearlove during the one-and-a-half-hour long chat, Dearlove's statements to other top British officials a few days later (see [July 23, 2002](#)) make it clear that after the summit he is convinced the US has little evidence to support the allegations they are making about Iraq and that the decision has already been made to invade. ([Risen 2006, pp. 183-184](#))

(Late July-Early August, 2002): Moussaoui E-mails May Have Vanished

Although US authorities are aware that Zacarias Moussaoui has one e-mail account and recover e-mails from it, he now says that he has another two, but the FBI is unable to find any trace of them (see [August 17-November 11, 2001 and After](#)). E-mails sent from the first address, pilotz123@hotmail.com, have been recovered and will be produced at his trial. However, the other two addresses, xdesertman@hotmail.com and olimahammed@hotmail.com, were not uncovered by the FBI's post-9/11 investigation and US authorities only learn of them from a statement made at this time by Moussaoui, who says the e-mails could provide him with an alibi and that he accessed the accounts from various computers, including his laptop, one at a Kinko's outlet, and one at the University of Oklahoma. However, Microsoft, which operates Hotmail, says it is unable to locate any records of the accounts and that they do not exist. As the accounts have been inactive for over a year and all data for a hotmail account is deleted after 90 days of inactivity, no e-mails can be retrieved. Had the FBI asked Microsoft about the addresses within the 90-day period, they may have found information about the e-mails, but they did not do so because they did not know about them—the FBI decided not to interview Moussaoui after 9/11 (see [September 11-12, 2001](#) and [Early July 2002](#)). The hard drives at the Kinko's outlet had been wiped by the time the FBI arrived in September 2001 and no record of Moussaoui's computer use there is found. Moussaoui had a receipt for the Kinko's outlet with him when he was arrested, so the FBI might have been able to examine the Kinko's computers before the hard drives were wiped if they had acted more promptly (see [August 17-November 11, 2001 and After](#)). ([Delio 8/30/2002](#); [Olavsrud 8/30/2002](#); [Hirschhorn 9/4/2002](#); [Hirschhorn 12/31/2002](#); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#))

July 22, 2002: Rumsfeld Authorizes Killing Terrorists

Defense Secretary Rumsfeld issues a secret directive to Special Operations forces allowing them to “capture terrorists for interrogation or, if necessary, to kill them” anywhere in the world. ([Hersh 12/16/2002](#)) Bush already issued a presidential finding authorizing the killing of terrorist leaders, but this increases such efforts. ([Risen and Johnston 12/15/2002](#)) However, Bush has not rescinded a presidential executive order dating from the 1970s that bans all assassinations, claiming that terrorists are military combatants. “Many past and present military and intelligence officials have expressed alarm” at the legality, wisdom, ethics, and effectiveness of the assassination program. Apparently much of the leadership of Special Operations is against it, worrying about the blowback effect. In February 2002, a Predator missile targeting someone intelligence agents thought was bin Laden hit its target, but killed three innocent Afghan farmers instead. ([Hersh 12/16/2002](#)) The first successful assassination takes place in November (see [November 3, 2002](#)).

July 22, 2002: New Rumsfeld Policy Prefers Interrogation or Killing of Terrorists Over Legally Arresting Them



Wreckage left behind where a missile struck Qaed Salim Sinan al-Harethi's truck in Yemen. [Source: *Associated Press*] Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld issue a secret directive ordering commander of Special Operations Air Force General Charles Holland "to develop a plan to find and deal with members of terrorist organizations." The directive says, "The objective is to capture terrorists for interrogation or, if necessary, to kill them, not simply to arrest them in a law-enforcement exercise." The manhunt would be global in its reach. Holland is to cut through the Pentagon bureaucracy and process deployment orders "in minutes and hours, not days and weeks." In internal Defense Department memos, Rumsfeld and the civilian officials close to him lay out the case for a new approach to the war on terrorism, one that would partly rely on the killing of individuals outside war zones. ([Hersh 12/16/2002](#)) The first public manifestation of this new policy will be the November 2002 assassination of al-Qaeda leader Qaed Salim Sinan al-Harethi in Yemen with a Predator missile strike (see [November 3, 2002](#)).

July 22, 2002-February 20, 2003: Saudi Princes and Pakistani General Later Implicated in 9/11 Plot Die Mysteriously



Mushaf Ali Mir. [Source: Publicity photo] Three prominent members of the Saudi royal family die in mysterious circumstances. Prince Ahmed bin Salman, a nephew of the Saudi king, prominent businessman, and owner of the winning 2002 Kentucky Derby horse, is said to die of a heart attack at the age of 43. The next day, Prince Sultan bin Faisal, another nephew of the king, dies driving to Prince Ahmed's funeral. A week later, Prince Fahd bin Turki supposedly "dies of thirst" in the Arabian desert. Seven months later, on February 20, 2003, Pakistan's air force chief, Mushaf Ali Mir, dies in a plane crash in clear weather, along with his wife and closest confidants. Controversial author Gerald Posner implies that all of these events are linked together and the deaths are not accidental, but have occurred because of the testimony of captured al-Qaeda leader Abu Zubaida in March 2002 (see [Early April 2002](#)). The deaths all occurred not long after the respective governments were told of Zubaida's confessions. Only one other key figure named by Zubaida remains alive: Saudi Intelligence Minister Prince Turki al-Faisal. Posner says, "He's the J. Edgar Hoover of Saudi Arabia," too powerful and aware of too many secrets to be killed off. Prince Turki lost his intelligence minister job ten days before 9/11, and is later made Saudi ambassador to Britain, giving him diplomatic immunity from any criminal prosecution. ([Posner 2003, pp. 190-94; Zabriskie 8/31/2003](#))

July 23, 2002: New York Declares Records of Firefighters' Actions Secret

The New York City government decides that the audio and written records of the Fire Department's actions on 9/11 should never be released to the general public. The New York Times has been trying to get copies of the materials, which include firsthand accounts given to Fire Department officials by scores of firefighters and chiefs. The city claims the firefighters were told their accounts would be kept confidential, but senior fire officials say they were never told that their remarks would be kept confidential. ([Steinhauer 7/23/2002](#))

July 23, 2002: British Intelligence Chief Says Bush Has Decided on War; ‘Facts... Being Fixed around the Policy’

Top British officials attend a meeting to discuss the UK's potential role in the Bush administration's confrontation with Iraq. According to the minutes of the meeting, transcribed by Matthew Rycroft, Sir Richard Dearlove, head of the British intelligence service, MI6, says that during his last visit (see [July 20, 2002](#)) to Washington he noticed a "perceptible shift in attitude. Bush wanted to remove Saddam, through military action, justified by the conjunction of terrorism and [weapons of mass destruction]. But the intelligence and the facts were being fixed around the policy." Furthermore, he states, Bush's National Security Council indicated it "had no patience with the UN route, and no enthusiasm for publishing material on the Iraqi regime's record." He also noted that there "was little discussion in Washington of the aftermath after military action." ([United Kingdom 7/23/2002](#); [Conason 5/6/2005](#); [Daniszewski 5/12/2005](#)) Foreign Minister Jack Straw appears to agree with Dearlove's assessment, saying that it seems clear that President Bush has already decided on using military force to depose Saddam Hussein. But Straw notes that the Bush administration's case against Saddam was "thin." The Iraqi leader "was not threatening his neighbors, and his WMD capability was less than that of Libya, North Korea, or Iran," the minutes say, summarizing his remarks. ([Norton-Taylor and Wintour 5/2/2005](#); [Daniszewski 5/12/2005](#)) There is no indication in the minutes that anyone present at the meeting disputed Dearlove's or Straw's observations. ([United Kingdom 7/23/2002](#)) Furthermore, the account provided by the intelligence official and Straw are corroborated by a former senior US official who is later interviewed by Knight Ridder. It is "an absolutely accurate description of what transpired," the official will say. ([Strobel and Walcott 5/2/2005](#)) Straw proposes that the next step would be to "work up an ultimatum to Saddam to allow back in the UN weapons inspectors," which "would also help with the legal justification for the use of force." ([Norton-Taylor and Wintour 5/2/2005](#); [Daniszewski 5/12/2005](#)) Britain's attorney general, Lord Peter Goldsmith, warns that "the desire for regime change [is] not a legal base for military action," the minutes say. But Blair says that "it would make a big difference politically and legally if Saddam refused to allow in the UN inspectors." ([Daniszewski 5/12/2005](#)) Finally, the officials agree that the British government "should continue to work on the assumption that the UK would take part in any military action" but "not ignore the legal issues." ([Norton-Taylor and Wintour 5/2/2005](#)) The minutes do not provide any indication that officials discussed how war might be avoided. ([Conason 6/10/2005](#)) The minutes of this meetings will be revealed by the British Sunday Times three years later (see [May 1, 2005](#)). Commonly referred to as the "Downing Street Memo," the minutes will re-spark the controversy over politicized intelligence.

July 25, 2002: Moussaoui Claims Accomplice Was British Agent

Zacarias Moussaoui claims that one of his associates, Atif Ahmed, was an informer for British intelligence and had foreknowledge of 9/11. In court Moussaoui says Ahmed “is a British agent who has taken a very important part of this,” adding, “My aim in pleading guilty was to expose the information I have.” Ahmed, the only associate named by Moussaoui during his initial questioning (see [August 17, 2001](#)), was arrested and released in November 2001 (see [Mid-November 2001](#)). Although Moussaoui was monitored by British authorities (see [1999](#), [Mid-2000-December 9, 2000](#), and [August 21, 2001-September 13, 2001](#)), the security services say that Ahmed was not one of their agents. Moussaoui attempts to get British lawyer Sadiq Khan to investigate Ahmed, but the results of his inquiries, if any, are not known. ([Levich 7/16/2002](#); [Rennie 7/26/2002](#); [Adetunji and Burns 9/19/2002](#); [Levich 9/25/2002](#)) Ahmed’s name will be mentioned at Moussaoui’s trial in 2006, but both the prosecutor and FBI agent Harry Samit will indicate he was not deeply involved in 9/11. ([United States of America v. Zacarias Moussaoui, a/k/a Shaqil, a/k/a Abu Khalid al Sahrawi, Defendant 3/6/2006](#); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 3/9/2006](#)) It is unclear why Moussaoui thinks Ahmed is an informer. Moussaoui does not say whether he suspected Ahmed was an informer before he gave his name to the FBI, or whether he surmised this because the British did little with the information, and then let him go soon after arresting him.

Late July 2002: Taliban General Reportedly Captured, but Released After Questioning

US Special Forces apprehend Mullah Akhter Mohammed Osmani, a top general and one of the six most-wanted Taliban, in Kandahar. He is flown to a detention center north of Kabul for interrogation, but is released a few weeks later and escapes to Pakistan. Contradicting the statements of many soldiers in Kandahar, the Defense Intelligence Agency says it “has no knowledge that Mullah Akhter Mohammed Osmani was ever in US custody in Afghanistan.” ([Scarborough 12/18/2002](#)) Osmani will be killed in an air strike at the end of 2006 (see [December 19, 2006](#)).

Late July 2002: 9/11 Congressional Inquiry Concludes Atta Did Not Have Prague Meeting

The 9/11 Congressional Inquiry investigating the 9/11 attacks concludes that there is no evidence that Mohammad Atta—under any of his known aliases—visited Prague in April 2001 (see [April 8, 2001](#)). ([Canellos and Bender 8/3/2003](#)) However, the Bush administration will delay the publication of the Inquiry’s final report for many months, so this conclusion will not be made public until after the US invasion of Iraq is done (see [January-July 2003](#)).

Late July -September 2002: As Much as \$700 Million Diverted from Afghanistan to Prepare for Invasion of Iraq

President Bush allegedly approves a request from the Pentagon for \$700 million to help fund military preparations underway in the Gulf for war against Iraq. The charge is made by Bob Woodward in his book, *Plan of Attack*, released in the spring of 2004. ([Woodward 2004](#); [CBS News 4/18/2004](#)) The White House and Pentagon will deny the charge claiming that Bush only approved the spending of \$178.4 million out of a requested total of \$750 million. According to the Pentagon, \$178.4 million is spent on 21 projects in Kuwait, Qatar, and Oman. At least 11 of them are in Kuwait, which becomes the major staging ground for operations in Iraq. In that country alone, \$24 million is spent constructing an ammunition storage and supply system for an Army brigade, and \$15 million worth of communications equipment is installed at the Arifjan Base Camp. The military also builds a \$3 million detention facility and a \$6.5 million inland petroleum-distribution system. In Qatar, \$36.4 million goes toward the construction of a forward headquarters facility for Central Command. ([Rogers 4/22/2004](#)) The money for these projects is taken from a supplemental appropriation for the Afghan War without congressional approval. ([CBS News 4/18/2004](#))

July 31, 2002: Sheriff Raids Business that Supplied 9/11 Hijackers with Fake ID



Passaic County Sheriff Jerry Speziale. [*Source:*

Triborochamber] A business owned by Mohamed el-Atriss, who supplied the 9/11 hijackers with fake IDs (see [\(July-August 2001\)](#)), is raided by the Passaic County Sheriff's Department. The raids are carried out in a blaze of publicity and are strongly opposed by the US attorney's office for New Jersey and the FBI, which has a relationship with el-Atriss (see [July 31, 2002 and After](#), [September 13, 2001-Mid 2002](#)). ([Allee 8/7/2002](#)) The sheriff is suspicious of el-Atriss and raids his business because, in addition to providing hijackers Abdulaziz Alomari and Khalid Almihdhar with at least two pieces of fake ID, el-Atriss:

- Talked repeatedly on the phone to another hijacker (see [\(July-August 2001\)](#));

- Is an associate of an unindicted co-conspirator in the 1993 ‘Landmarks’ bomb plot (see [Before September 11, 2001](#));
- Wired \$29,000 to the Arab National Bank in Mecca in 2002; ([Russakoff 1/3/2003](#))
- Made inquiries to a parts manufacturer about navigational systems for commercial jetliners to be shipped to Egypt in 1999; ([Schwanberg 10/20/2003](#))
- Downloaded a list of the 9/11 hijackers from the Internet after 9/11, underlined some names, and circled Khalid Almihdar’s. ([Schwanberg 10/20/2003](#))

El-Atriss is not present during the raid, having traveled to Egypt a short time before, but later returns to the US and is arrested at JFK airport in New York. ([CBS News 7/31/2002](#); [BBC 8/21/2002](#)) He will later say that he came back to the US to clear his name after learning of the raid while in Egypt. He will be charged with over two dozen counts of selling false documents. ([Schwanberg 10/20/2003](#)) Secret evidence will be used against him at the trial. He will plead guilty to one of charges, while the rest will be dropped. (see [November 2002-June 2003](#)).

July 31, 2002 and After: US Attorney Threatens to Arrest Local Sheriff in Row over Raid on Hijackers’ Associate, FBI Also Highly Critical



US attorney for New Jersey Christopher Christie opposed a raid on an associate of the 9/11 hijackers. [*Source: Public domain*] Both the FBI and the US attorney’s office for New Jersey are highly critical of a raid by the Passaic County sheriff’s office on the business of Mohamed el-Atriss, who supplied the 9/11 hijackers with false IDs (see [July-August 2001](#) and [July 31, 2002](#)). El-Atriss is later arrested and will plead guilty to selling fake IDs (see [November 2002-June 2003](#)). According to the sheriff, when US attorney for New Jersey Christopher Christie learns the sheriff intends to hold a news conference about the raid, he tells the sheriff that “he [will] be arrested and the US attorney [will] come down and shut down the Sheriff’s Department.” However, a spokesman for Christie will deny this. ([Schwanberg 10/20/2003](#)) The FBI also hammers the sheriff in the media after the arrest, calling the raid, in which officers were accompanied by several press representatives, a “shameful media grab” and saying that the sheriff killed an FBI investigation. The Bergen County Record will point out that this is unusual, as “the feds don’t make a habit of lambasting other law enforcement

officials publicly or of confirming the existence of secret investigations.” ([Allee 8/7/2002](#)) Federal officials then tell the sheriff’s department not to proceed with any investigations related to el-Atriss until they get clearance from the FBI. ([Schwanberg 10/20/2003](#)) El-Atriss cooperated with the FBI after 9/11 and promised to “keep his eyes and ears open” for other terrorists (see [September 13, 2001-Mid 2002](#)).

August or September 2002: Air Forces Investigation Concludes that Major, Accused of Espionage and Obstruction, Has Not Done Anything Wrong

The Air Force Office of Special Investigations completes its investigation into Major Douglas Dickerson’s relationship with the American-Turkish Council. The inquiry had been launched in response to allegations by FBI translator Sibel Edmonds that Dickerson’s wife was using her position as an FBI translator to shield certain targets working for the ATC from surveillance (see [December 2, 2001](#) and [Afternoon February 12, 2002](#)). On September 10, 2002, Colonel James N. Worth, the Air Force’s director of inquiries, writes in a letter to Edmonds’ attorneys: “We have determined the allegations contained in your letter of August 7, 2002, involving Major Douglas Dickerson do not show improprieties and therefore do not warrant a formal inquiry” by the Air Force’s Office of the Inspector General (OIG). After conducting “a complete and thorough review,” he continued, the Office of Special Investigations could find “no evidence of any deviation from the scope of his duties. Absent new and relevant information we have closed this matter.” ([Ridgeway 7/13/2004](#); [Waterman 1/24/2005](#)) Edmonds, who was never interviewed as part of the investigation, will continue to press for an investigation. In a September 19 letter to Joseph E. Schmitz, the Air Force’s Inspector General, Edmonds’ attorney will request that the OIG reopen the case and thoroughly investigate her charges. ([Colapinto 9/19/2004](#))

August 2002: Former FBI Translator Sues Bureau for Documents Relating to Allegations against Co-Worker Accused of Breaching Security

Former FBI translator Sibel Edmonds hires attorney David Colapinto of the Washington firm Kohn, Kohn and Calapinto, who sues the FBI under the Freedom of Information Act for full disclosure of all documents related to her allegations against Melek Can Dickerson (see [December 4, 2001](#) and [Afternoon February 12, 2002](#)) and her dismissal from the FBI (see [March 22, 2002](#)). ([Rose 9/2005](#))

August-September 2002: ‘Stunningly Explicit and Specific’ Warning Fails to Stop Bali Bombing



Mohammed Mansour Jabarah. *[Source: CBC]* A number of governments are given warnings suggesting an upcoming attack on nightclubs on the island of Bali, Indonesia, but this does not prevent the bombing of two nightclubs in Bali in October 2002 (see [October 12, 2002](#)). Mohammed Mansour Jabarah, an al-Qaeda operative with Canadian citizenship, attended a meeting held in southern Thailand led by Hambali, an al-Qaeda leader who also heads the al-Qaeda affiliate Jemaah Islamiyah (JI). Hambali announces a new plan to target nightclubs and restaurants in Southeast Asia. A second meeting held shortly thereafter also attended by Jabarah narrowed the target to nightclubs in Bali. Jabarah was arrested in Oman in April 2002 and deported to Canada. By August, he is in the US and interrogated by US agents, and he reveals this attack plan. As a result, US officials pass a warning to all Southeast Asian governments in August. ([Kingston 10/10/2003](#)) In September, a secret report compiled by the CIA, State Department, and other US agencies lists six likely bomb targets in Indonesia, including two Bali nightclubs that are just a short distance away from the two that will ultimately be attacked one month later. ([Caldwell 6/26/2003](#)) On September 26, 2002, the US embassy in Indonesia issues a public warning that states, "Americans and Westerners should avoid large gatherings, and locations known to cater primarily to a Western clientele such as certain bars, restaurants and tourist areas." However, the US State Department does not issue any travel warning for Indonesia, and other governments such as Australia do not issue any warnings. There also is no evidence that the owners of Bali nightclubs are given any warnings. The Sydney Morning Herald will conclude in 2003 that it is now "impossible for anyone to believe that Mohammed Mansour Jabarah's interrogation did not result in the US learning of JI's plan for a terrorist attack in Bali." Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage will later call Jabarah's warning "stunningly explicit and specific." ([Kingston 10/10/2003](#))

Early August 2002: Wolfowitz Pressures FBI to Confirm That Prague Meeting Took Place

Several Pentagon officials, including Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, meet with the FBI's assistant director for counterterrorism, Pat D'Amuro, to discuss the latest intelligence concerning the alleged April 2001 (see [April 8, 2001](#)) meeting between 9/11 plotter Mohamed Atta and Iraqi diplomat Ahmed Khalil Ibrahim Samir al-Ani. Wolfowitz pressures the FBI briefers to confirm that the Prague meeting had in fact happened. The FBI concedes that the occurrence of the meeting, though not proven, was at least possible. ([Ratnesar 9/2/2002](#))

August 1, 2002: Justice Department Approves Torture of Terrorism Suspects



Jay Bybee. [Source: Public domain]

The Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel (OLC) sends a non-classified memo to White House Counsel Alberto Gonzales, offering the opinion that a policy allowing suspected al-Qaeda members to be tortured abroad "may be justified." ([US Department of Justice 8/1/2002](#).) The 50-page "torture memo" is signed and authored by Jay S. Bybee, head of OLC, and co-authored by John Yoo, a deputy assistant attorney general. (It is later revealed that Yoo authored the memo himself, in close consultation with Vice President Cheney's chief adviser David Addington, and Bybee just signed off on it—see [December 2003-June 2004](#).) Gonzales had formally asked for the OLC's legal opinion in response to a request by the CIA for legal guidance. A former administration official, quoted by the Washington Post, says the CIA "was prepared to get more aggressive and re-learn old skills, but only with explicit assurances from the top that they were doing so with the full legal authority the president could confer on them." ([Allen and Priest 6/9/2004](#)) "We conclude that the statute, taken as a whole," Bybee and Yoo write, "makes plain that it prohibits only extreme acts." Addressing the question of what exactly constitute such acts of an extreme nature, the authors proceed to define torture as the infliction of "physical pain" that is "equivalent in intensity to the pain accompanying serious physical injury, such as organ failure, impairment of bodily function, or even death." Purely mental pain or suffering can also amount to "torture under Section 2340," but only if it results "in significant psychological harm of significant duration, e.g. lasting for months or even years." ([Allen and Priest 6/9/2004](#))

Torture Legal and Defensible - Bybee and Yoo appear to conclude that any act short of torture, even though it may be cruel, inhuman or degrading, would be permissible. They examine, for example, "international decisions regarding the use of sensory deprivation techniques." These cases, they notice, "make clear that while many of these techniques may amount to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, they do not produce pain or suffering of the necessary intensity to meet the definition of torture. From these decisions, we conclude that there is a wide range of such techniques that will not rise to the level of torture." More astounding is Bybee and Yoo's view that even torture can be defensible. "We conclude," they write, "that, under the current circumstances, necessity or self-

defense may justify interrogation methods that might violate Section 2340A.” Inflicting physical or mental pain might be justified, Bybee and Yoo argue, “in order to prevent further attacks on the United States by the al-Qaeda terrorist network.” In other words, necessity or self-defense may justify torture. Moreover, “necessity and self-defense could provide justifications that would eliminate any criminal liability.” ([Schmidt 6/8/2004](#)) International anti-torture rules, furthermore, “may be unconstitutional if applied to interrogations” of suspected terrorists. ([Cannon 6/21/2004](#)) Laws prohibiting torture would “not apply to the president’s detention and interrogation of enemy combatants” in the “war on terror,” because the president has constitutional authority to conduct a military campaign. ([Priest 6/27/2004](#)) “As commander in chief,” the memo argues, “the president has the constitutional authority to order interrogations of enemy combatants to gain intelligence information concerning the military plans of the enemy.” ([Allen and Priest 6/9/2004](#)) According to some critics, this judgment—which will be echoed in a March 2003 draft Pentagon report (see [March 6, 2003](#))—ignores important past rulings such as the 1952 Supreme Court decision in *Youngstown Steel and Tube Co v. Sawyer*, which determined that the president, even in wartime, is subject to US laws. ([Allen and Priest 6/9/2004](#)) The memo also says that US Congress “may no more regulate the president’s ability to detain and interrogate enemy combatants than it may regulate his ability to direct troop movements on the battlefield.” ([Priest 6/27/2004](#)) After the memo’s existence is revealed, Attorney General John Ashcroft denies senators’ requests to release it, and refuses to say if or how the president was involved in the discussion. “The president has a right to hear advice from his attorney general, in confidence,” he says. ([Lewis 6/8/2004](#); [Bloomberg 6/8/2004](#); [Allen and Priest 6/9/2004](#)) Privately, Ashcroft is so irritated by Yoo’s hand-in-glove work with the White House that he begins disparagingly referring to him as “Dr. Yes.” ([Shane, Johnston, and Risen 10/4/2007](#))

Only 'Analytical' - Responding to questions about the memo, White House press secretary Scott McClellan will claim that the memo “was not prepared to provide advice on specific methods or techniques,” but was “analytical.” But the 50-page memo seems to have been considered immensely important, given its length and the fact that it was signed by Bybee. “Given the topic and length of opinion, it had to get pretty high-level attention,” Beth Nolan, a former White House counsel from 1999-2001, will tell reporters. This view is confirmed by another former Office of Legal Counsel lawyer who says that unlike documents signed by deputies in the Office of Legal Counsel, memorandums signed by the Office’s head are considered legally binding. ([Allen and Priest 6/9/2004](#)) Almost two years later, the OLC’s new head, Jack Goldsmith, will withdraw the torture memos, fearing that they go far beyond anything countenanced by US law (see [December 2003-June 2004](#)).

Memo Addresses CIA Concerns - The administration, particularly the axis of neoconservatives centered around Cheney’s office, has enthusiastically advocated the use of violent, abusive, and sometimes tortuous interrogation techniques, though the US has never endorsed such tactics before, and many experts say such techniques are counterproductive. The CIA, responding to the desires from the White House, hastily put together a rough program after consulting with intelligence officials from Egypt and Saudi Arabia, where detainees are routinely tortured and killed in captivity, and after studying methods used by former Soviet Union interrogators. The legal questions were continuous. The former deputy legal counsel for the CIA’s Counterterrorism Center, Paul

Kelbaugh, recalls in 2007, “We were getting asked about combinations—‘Can we do this and this at the same time?... These approved techniques, say, withholding food, and 50-degree temperature—can they be combined?’ Or ‘Do I have to do the less extreme before the more extreme?’” The “torture memo” is designed to address these concerns. ([Shane, Johnston, and Risen 10/4/2007](#))

August 2, 2002: ISI Tried to Buy Nuclear Material for Bin Laden



This unnamed Pakistani intelligence agent was captured on undercover video in January 2001 as part of Operation Diamondback. [Source: *Dateline NBC*/MSNBC airs recordings informant Randy Glass made of arms dealers and Pakistani ISI agents attempting to buy nuclear material and other illegal weapons for bin Laden. ([MSNBC 8/2/2002](#)) Meanwhile, it is reported that federal investigators are re-examining the arms smuggling case involving Glass “to determine whether agents of the Pakistani government tried to buy missiles and nuclear weapons components in the United States last year for use by terrorists or Pakistan’s military.” ([Mintz 8/2/2002](#)) Two such ISI agents, Rajaa Gulum Abbas and Abdul Malik, are already secretly indicted by this time. But Glass still says, “The government knows about those involved in my case who were never charged, never deported, who actively took part in bringing terrorists into our country to meet with me and undercover agents.” ([Pacenti 8/2/2002](#)) One such person may be a former Egyptian judge named Shireen Shawky, who was interested in buying weapons for the Taliban and attended a meeting in July 1999 in which ISI agent Rajaa Gulum Abbas said the WTC would be destroyed. ([MSNBC 8/2/2002](#); [WPBF 25 \(West Palm Beach\) 8/5/2002](#)) Others not charged may include Mohamed el Amir and Dr. Magdy el Amir.

August 2, 2002: CIA Memo Says Evidence of Saudi Government Support for Hijackers Is ‘Incontrovertible’

According to Sen. Bob Graham (D), the 9/11 Congressional Inquiry he co-chairs later will uncover a CIA memo written on this date. The author of the memo writes about hijackers Khalid Almihdhar and Nawaf Alhazmi and concludes that there is “incontrovertible evidence that there is support for these terrorists within the Saudi government.” ([Graham and Nussbaum 2004, pp. 169](#)) Apparently, this memo will be

discussed in the completely censored section of the Inquiry's final report that deals with foreign government involvement in the 9/11 plot (see [August 1-3, 2003](#)). Osama Basnan, one of the key players in a suspected transfer of funds from the Saudi government to these two hijackers, is arrested in the US a few weeks after this memo is written, but he will be deported two months after that (see [August 22-November 2002](#)).

August 2, 2002: FBI Questions Members of Congressional Committees About 9/11 Leaks



Senator Richard Shelby. [Source: US Senate] The Washington Post reveals that FBI agents have questioned nearly all 37 members of the Senate and House Intelligence Committees about 9/11-related information leaks. In particular, in June 2002 the media reported that the day before 9/11 the NSA intercepted the messages "The match is about to begin" and "Tomorrow is zero hour." (see [September 10, 2001](#)) The FBI have asked the members to submit to lie detector tests but most have refused. Congresspeople express "grave concern" for this historically unprecedented move. A law professor states, "Now the FBI can open dossiers on every member and staffer and develop full information on them. It creates a great chilling effect on those who would be critical of the FBI." ([Priest 8/2/2002](#)) Senator John McCain (R) suggests that "the constitutional separation of powers is being violated in spirit if not in the letter. 'What you have here is an organization compiling dossiers on people who are investigating the same organization. The administration bitterly complains about some leaks out of a committee, but meanwhile leaks abound about secret war plans for fighting a war against Saddam Hussein. What's that about? There's a bit of a contradiction here, if not a double standard.'" ([Priest and Dewar 8/3/2002](#)) Later the search for the source of the leak intensifies to unprecedented levels as the FBI asks 17 senators to turn over phone records, appointment calendars and schedules that would reveal their possible contact with reporters. ([Priest 8/24/2002](#)) Most, if not all, turn over the records, even as some complain that the request breaches the separation of powers between the executive and legislative branches. One senator says the FBI is "trying to put a damper on our activities

and I think they will be successful.” ([Guggenheim 8/29/2002](#)) In January 2004, it is reported that the probe is now focusing on Sen. Richard Shelby (R). He is never charged with any crime relating to the leak. ([Priest and Lengel 1/22/2004](#)) In November 2005, the Senate Ethics Committee will announce they have dropped a probe of Shelby, citing insufficient evidence. ([Reuters 11/13/2005](#)) Inquiry co-chair Sen. Bob Graham (D) will write in a book in late 2004 that, at the time, he guessed “the leak was intended to sabotage [the inquiry’s] efforts. I am not by nature a conspiracy theorist, but the fact that we were hit with this disclosure at the moment we began to make things uncomfortable for the Bush administration has stuck with me. Over a year later, I asked [inquiry co-chair] Congressman [Porter] Goss (R) whether he thought we had been set up. Nodding, he replied, ‘I often wonder that myself.’” ([Graham and Nussbaum 2004, pp. 140](#))

August 2, 2002: Judge Calls for Disclosure of Identities of Those Secretly Arrested

A federal judge rules that the Bush administration must reveal the identities of the hundreds of people secretly arrested after the 9/11 attacks within 15 days. ([Fainaru and Eggen 8/3/2002](#)) The judge calls the secret arrests “odious to a democratic society.” The New York Times applauds the decision and notes that the government’s argument that terrorist groups could exploit the release of the names makes no sense, because the detainees were allowed a phone call to notify anyone that they were being held. ([New York Times 8/6/2002](#)) Two weeks later, the same judge agrees to postpone the release of the names until an appeals court can rule on the matter. ([Shenon 8/16/2002](#))

August 3, 2002: US Pilots Believe 9/11 Conspirators Used Utmost Professional Skill

A Portuguese newspaper reports on an independent inquiry into 9/11 by a group of military and civilian US pilots that challenges the official version of events. The group’s press statement says, “The so-called terrorist attack was in fact a superbly executed military operation carried out against the [US], requiring the utmost professional military skill in command, communications, and control. It was flawless in timing, in the choice of selected aircraft to be used as guided missiles and in the coordinated delivery of those missiles to their preselected targets.” A member of the inquiry team, a US Air Force officer who flew over 100 sorties during the Vietnam War, says: “Those birds (airliners) either had a crack fighter pilot in the left seat, or they were being maneuvered by remote control.” ([Missing 8/3/2002](#); [News \(Portugal\) 8/8/2002](#))

August 4, 2002: Firefighters Saw Only Limited Fire in South Tower



This picture of the hole created in the WTC by Flight 11 supports recordings indicating that fires weren't burning out of control. In the close-up insert at the top left, note the person standing at the edge of the hole. *[Source: unknown]* A "lost tape" of radio messages from firefighters inside the WTC on 9/11 is made public. Supposedly, "city fire officials simply delayed listening" to this tape until after the official report on the fire department's response to the attacks was published, and they still refuse to allow any officials to discuss the contents. The tape reveals that two firefighters were able to reach the crash site on the 78th floor of the South Tower. While there, "Chief Palmer could see only two pockets of fire, and called for a pair of engine companies to fight them." ([Dwyer and Fessenden 8/4/2002](#); [Batty and Borger 8/5/2002](#))

[August 11, 2002: Bush's Advisers Advocate Attacking Saudi Arabia, Iran, Egypt, and Other Countries](#)

A Newsweek article suggests that some of Bush's advisers advocate not only attacking Iraq, but also Saudi Arabia, Iran, North Korea, Syria, Egypt, and Burma, shocking many. One senior British official tells the magazine: "Everyone wants to go to Baghdad. Real men want to go to Tehran." ([Gutman and Barry 8/11/2002](#); [Nordland, Yousafzai, and Dehghanpisheh 8/11/2002](#)) In February 2003, US Undersecretary of State John Bolton says in meetings with Israeli officials that he has no doubt America will attack Iraq, and that it will be necessary to deal with threats from Syria, Iran, and North Korea afterward. This is not reported in the US media. ([Benn and Sadeh 2/17/2003](#))

August 11, 2002: Afghans Directly Producing and Exporting Heroin in Broad Daylight



An Afghan refines opium into heroin. *[Source: BBC]* In the past, Afghanistan had mostly exported raw opium, but now many new refineries are converting the opium into heroin. The British government has spent £20 million to eradicate opium, but the program is marred by corruption and largely seen as a failure. The new heroin factories are said to be “working in broad daylight.” There has been a rash of bombings and assassinations in Afghanistan as various factions fight over drug profits. Reporters for a British newspaper are able to determine the precise location of some of these factories, but the US-led forces in Afghanistan are doing nothing to stop them. ([Burke 8/11/2002](#))

August 12, 2002: FAA Releases No New Information About 9/11

A group of FAA flight controllers hold a press conference to talk about the 9/11 events for the first time. However, virtually no new information is disclosed. As the Boston Globe put it, “questions about detailed communications from the hijacked planes was avoided, with FAA officials saying that information remains under investigation.” ([Daniel 8/13/2002](#))

August 13, 2002: Electronic Warfare Methods May Have Brought Flight 93 Down

The Independent carries a story entitled, “Unanswered Questions: The Mystery of Flight 93,” a rare critique of the official version of events around that plane’s crash. Most of the information is a summation of what was reported before. However, there is one interesting new theory. Theorizing why witnesses did not see smoke from the faltering plane, the article points to the 1996 research of Harvard academic Elaine Scarry, “showing that the Air Force and the Pentagon have conducted extensive research on ‘electronic warfare applications’ with the possible capacity to intentionally disrupt the

mechanisms of an aeroplane in such a way as to provoke, for example, an uncontrollable dive. Scarry also reports that US Customs aircraft are already equipped with such weaponry; as are some C-130 Air Force transport planes. The FBI has stated that, apart from the enigmatic Falcon business jet, there was a C-130 military cargo plane within 25 miles of the passenger jet when it crashed (see [September 14, 2001](#)). According to the Scarry findings, in 1995 the Air Force installed 'electronic suites' in at least 28 of its C-130s—capable, among other things, of emitting lethal jamming signals.” ([Carlin 8/13/2002](#))

August 15, 2002: Son of Saudi Official Associated with Hijackers



Saud al-Rashid. [*Source: FBI*]The picture of a young Saudi man named Saud al-Rashid is discovered on a CD-ROM that also contains the pictures of four 9/11 hijackers in an al-Qaeda safe house in Pakistan. A senior US official says that investigators “were able to take this piece of information and it showed clear signals or lines that he was connected to 9/11.” ([Associated Press 8/21/2002](#)) Rashid was in Afghanistan in 2000 and 2001. ([Johnston and Jehl 7/29/2003](#)) Six days later, the US issues a worldwide dragnet to find him. ([Associated Press 8/21/2002](#)) But they are unable to catch him because a few days later, he flees from Egypt to Saudi Arabia and turns himself in to the Saudi authorities. The Saudis apparently will not try him for any crime or allow the FBI to interview him. ([CNN 8/26/2002](#); [CNN 8/31/2002](#)) Intriguingly, Al-Rashid’s father is Hamid al-Rashid, a Saudi government official who paid a salary to Omar al-Bayoumi, an associate of two hijackers who is later suspected of being a Saudi agent. ([Johnston and Jehl 7/29/2003](#))

August 15, 2002: US General Believes Troops Will Remain in Afghanistan for Long Time

General Tommy Franks, commander of US troops in Central Asia, says, “It does not surprise me that someone would say, ‘Oh gosh, the military is going to be in Afghanistan for a long, long time.’ Sure we will be.” He likens the situation to South Korea, where the US has stationed troops for over 50 years. A few days earlier, Joint Chiefs of Staff

Chairman Richard Myers said the war on terrorism “could last years and years.” ([CBS News 8/16/2002](#))

August 15, 2002: CNN General Manager Concedes Media Censored Itself

Rena Golden, the executive vice-president and general manager of CNN International, claims that the press has censored itself over 9/11 and the Afghanistan war. “Anyone who claims the US media didn’t censor itself is kidding you. It was not a matter of government pressure but a reluctance to criticize anything in a war that was obviously supported by the vast majority of the people. And this isn’t just a CNN issue—every journalist who was in any way involved in 9/11 is partly responsible.” ([Tomlin 8/15/2002](#)) These comments echo criticisms by Dan Rather in May 2002 (see [May 17, 2002](#)).

August 15, 2002: 9/11 Victims’ Relatives File Lawsuit Against Alleged Saudi Al-Qaeda Financiers



Deena Burnett, wife of Flight 93 passenger Tom Burnett, speaks on behalf of the victims’ relatives suing the Saudis. [*Source: Associated Press*] More than 600 relatives of victims of the 9/11 attacks file a 15-count, \$1 trillion lawsuit against various parties they accuse of financing al-Qaeda and Afghanistan’s former Taliban regime. The number of plaintiffs will quickly increase to 2,500 after the suit is widely publicized. Up to 10,000 were eligible to join this suit. The lawsuit does not allege that Saudi defendants directly participated in the 9/11 attacks, or approved them. Instead, it is alleged they helped fund and sustain al-Qaeda, which enabled the attacks to occur. ([Schmidt 8/16/2002](#); [Missing 9/13/2002](#)) Defendants named include:

- The Saudi Binladin Group, the conglomerate owned by the bin Laden family. ([CNN 8/15/2002](#))
- The National Commercial Bank, one of the largest banks in Saudi Arabia. ([Kellman 8/15/2002](#))
- The government of Sudan, for letting bin Laden live in that country until 1996. ([Schmidt](#)

[8/16/2002](#))

- The World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY). ([Schmidt 8/16/2002](#))
- The SAAR Foundation. ([Schmidt 8/16/2002](#))
- Al-Rajhi Banking & Investment Corp., which the plaintiffs contend is the primary bank for a number of charities that funnel money to terrorists. (This bank will later be dismissed from the suit (see [November 14, 2003-September 28, 2005](#)).) ([Schmidt 8/16/2002](#))
- The Benevolence International Foundation. ([Schmidt 8/16/2002](#))
- The International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO) and its parent organization, the Muslim World League (MWL). The suit claims that the IIRO gave more than \$60 million to the Taliban. ([Schmidt 8/16/2002](#))
- Khalid bin Mahfouz, one-time prominent investor in the Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI) who had to pay a \$225 million fine following the collapse of that bank. It is claimed he later operated a bank that funneled millions of dollars to charities controlled by al-Qaeda. (Mahfouz denies supporting terrorism and has filed a motion to dismiss the complaint.) ([Schmidt 8/16/2002](#))
- Mohammed al Faisal al Saud, a Saudi prince. (His name will later be dismissed from the suit because of diplomatic immunity (see [November 14, 2003-September 28, 2005](#)).) ([Schmidt 8/16/2002](#))
- Saudi Defense Minister Prince Sultan. (His name will later be dismissed from the suit because of diplomatic immunity (see [November 14, 2003-September 28, 2005](#)).) ([Schmidt 8/16/2002](#))
- Prince Turki al-Faisal, former chief of Saudi intelligence. (His name will later be dismissed from the suit because of diplomatic immunity (see [November 14, 2003-September 28, 2005](#)).) ([Schmidt 8/16/2002](#)) “The attorneys and investigators were able to obtain, through French intelligence, the translation of a secretly recorded meeting between representatives of bin Laden and three Saudi princes in which they sought to pay him hush money to keep him from attacking their enterprises in Saudi Arabia.” ([CNN 8/15/2002](#)) The plaintiffs also accuse the US government of failing to pursue such institutions thoroughly enough because of lucrative oil interests. ([News 8/15/2002](#)) Ron Motley, the lead lawyer in the suit, says the case is being aided by intelligence services from France and four other foreign governments, but no help has come from the Justice Department. ([Gordon 8/16/2002](#)) The plaintiffs acknowledge the chance of ever winning any money is slim, but hope the lawsuit will help bring to light the role of Saudi Arabia in the 9/11 attacks. ([News 8/15/2002](#)) A number of rich Saudis respond by threatening to withdraw hundreds of billions of dollars in US investments if the lawsuit goes forward (see [August 20, 2002](#)). More defendants will be added to the suit later in the year (see [November 22, 2002](#)). ([English 8/20/2002](#))

August 16, 2002: US Military Plans New Strategies, Including Conducting Secret Operations Aimed at ‘Stimulating Reactions’ Among Terrorists and States

The Defense Science Board authors a report titled “Special Operations and Joint Forces in Countering Terrorism” recommending an increase of more than \$7 billion in the

Pentagon's budget. It says the war on terrorism is a "real war" and describes the enemy as "committed, resourceful and globally dispersed... with strategic reach." The US will have to wage "a long, at times violent, and borderless war" that "requires new strategies, postures and organization," it adds. The report includes suggestions to develop the capability to tag key terrorist figures with special chemicals so they can be tracked by laser; a proposal to create a special SWAT team charged with secretly seeking and destroying chemical, biological and nuclear weapons anywhere in the world; and a plan to establish a "red team" known as the Proactive, Preemptive Operations Group, (P2OG), which would conduct secret operations aimed at "stimulating reactions" among terrorists and states suspected of possessing weapons of mass destruction. ([Board 8/16/2002](#); [Hess 9/26/2002](#); [Arkin 10/27/2002](#); [Isenberg 11/5/2002](#))

Proactive, Preemptive Operations Group, (P2OG) - The unit would provoke terrorist cells into action, perhaps by stealing their money or tricking them with fake communications, in order to expose them. The exposed cells would then be taken care of by "quick-response" teams. The US would use the revelation of such cells as an opportunity to hold "states/sub-state actors accountable" and "signal to harboring states that their sovereignty will be at risk." The P2OG would require at least \$100 million and about 100 people, including specialists in information operations, psychological operations, computer network attack, covert activities, signal intelligence, human intelligence, special operations forces and deception operations. According to the DSB, it should be headed by the Special Operations Executive in the White House's National Security Council. But according to sources interviewed by United Press International (UPI), people in the Defense Department want to see the group under the Pentagon's authority. ([Board 8/16/2002](#); [Hess 9/26/2002](#); [Arkin 10/27/2002](#); [Isenberg 11/5/2002](#))

Tagging terrorists - Intelligence operatives would penetrate terrorist cells and tag leaders' clothes with chemicals that would make them trackable by a laser. The agents would also collect DNA samples from objects and papers that are handled by the targets. Information about the terrorist's DNA would be kept in a database. The program would cost \$1.7 billion over a 5-year period beginning in 2004. ([Board 8/16/2002](#); [Hess 9/26/2002](#))

Special SWAT team - The SWAT Team would consist of special forces soldiers whose specialty would be searching and destroying nuclear, chemical or biological weapons sites anywhere in the world. They would also be trained to offer protection to US soldiers operating nearby and be responsible for "consequence management," like enacting quarantines. The program would cost about \$500 million a year and would be headed by US Special Operations Command. To effectively detect the presence of such weapons, the DSB advocates allocating about \$1 billion a year on the research and development of new sensor and "agent defeat" technologies. ([Board 8/16/2002](#); [Hess 9/26/2002](#))

Expanding US Special Forces - The panel recommends increasing the size of US Special Forces by about 2 percent a year. It also proposes that more special forces operations be conducted jointly with conventional forces. Its budget should be increased by "billions," the report also says. ([Board 8/16/2002](#); [Hess 9/26/2002](#))

Panel to speculate on possible terrorist attack scenarios - A panel of roughly 24 creative, highly respected analysts would be convened to speculate on the nature of future terrorists attacks against the US. The report recommends allocating \$20 million a year for the program. ([Board 8/16/2002](#); [Hess 9/26/2002](#))

Intelligence Reserve - A \$100 million-a-year reserve program would be established that

would put former intelligence retirees on call to assist with intelligence tasks and to participate in counterterrorism exercises when needed. ([Board 8/16/2002](#); [Hess 9/26/2002](#); [Isenberg 11/5/2002](#))

Addition of 500 people who would focus on identifying characteristics of potential adversaries - \$800 million would be spent on the addition of over 500 people to existing military and intelligence agencies who would “focus on understanding effects of globalization, radicalism, cultures, religions, economics, etc., to better characterize potential adversaries.” ([Board 8/16/2002](#); [Hess 9/26/2002](#))

Increase budget of Joint Warfare Analysis Center (JWAC) and Joint Forces Command's net assessment center - \$200 million more would be allocated to the Joint Warfare Analysis Center and Joint Forces Command's net assessment center. JWAC is a cell of about 500 planners and target analysts who work in Dahlgren, Va. ([Board 8/16/2002](#); [Hess 9/26/2002](#))

Increase surveillance and reconnaissance budgets - The panel envisions infusing \$1.6 billion per year into intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance budgets over the next six years. Spending would be focused on tying together unmanned aerial vehicles, manned platforms, space-based sensors and databases. A portion of the funds would also be used to develop “a rich set of new ground sensor capabilities” aimed at the surveillance of small terrorist cells. ([Board 8/16/2002](#); [Hess 9/26/2002](#))

Urban Training Center - A dedicated urban training range would be constructed on the West Coast emphasizing “small unit action, leadership initiative and flexibility.” Relatively low-level soldiers would also be trained on how to determine the logistics of the back-up fire they need while they are in battle. The program would need \$300 million a year for the next six years. ([Board 8/16/2002](#); [Hess 9/26/2002](#))

Database providing 3-d view of most of the cities of the world - The report recommends developing a detailed database of most of the cities in the world which would allow soldiers to view a three-dimensional display of the cities including “buildings [doors and windows included],... streets and alleys and underground passages, obstacles like power lines and key infrastructure like water and communications lines,” the UPI reports. ([Board 8/16/2002](#); [Hess 9/26/2002](#)) Critics warn that the changes proposed by the report would allow the military to engage in covert activities currently handled by the CIA. However unlike the CIA, the military would not be subject to Congressional oversight. But William Schneider Jr, the DSB chairman, downplays those concerns. “The CIA executes the plans but they use Department of Defense assets,” Schneider says, adding that his board's recommendations do not advocate any changes to US policies banning assassinations, or requiring presidents to approve US covert operations in advance. He also insists that such changes would not preclude congressional oversight. ([Isenberg 11/5/2002](#))

[August 20, 2002: Saudis Retract Billions from US in Response to 9/11 Lawsuit](#)

The Financial Times reports that “disgruntled Saudis have pulled tens of billions of dollars out of the US, signaling a deep alienation from America.” Estimates range from \$100 billion to over \$200 billion. Part of the anger is in response to reports that the US

might attack Saudi Arabia and freeze Saudi assets unless Saudi Arabia makes a serious effort al-Qaeda and other Islamic militant groups. It is also in response to a lawsuit against many Saudi Arabians that also may lead to a freeze of Saudi assets (see [August 15, 2002](#)). Estimates of total Saudi investments in the US range from \$400 billion to \$600 billion. ([Khalaf 8/20/2002](#))

August 21, 2002: Commencement of NIST Investigation Announced

The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST)—an agency of the US Commerce Department’s Technology Administration—announces details of its forthcoming investigation into the collapses of the World Trade Center Twin Towers and Building 7 on 9/11. The NIST investigation aims “to investigate the building construction, the materials used, and the technical conditions that contributed to the outcome of the World Trade Center (WTC) disaster.” It also aims to examine the activities of building occupants and emergency responders on 9/11, studying such issues as emergency communications within the WTC, the movement of people during the evacuations, and issues around persons with disabilities. Leading technical experts from industry, academia, and other laboratories, alongside NIST’s own expert staff, will participate in the investigation. Expert professionals from the private sector will also be involved. Glenn Corbett, a fire science professor at John Jay College, says, “This is going to be the most extensive building disaster investigation ever performed.” ([Associated Press 8/21/2002](#); [National Institute of Standards and Technology 8/21/2002](#); [National Institute of Standards and Technology 8/3/2005](#)) The investigation is formally authorized in October 2002, when the National Construction Safety Team Act is signed into law. The act, which gives NIST authorization to investigate major building failures in the US, is written largely as a result of the World Trade Center collapses. ([National Institute of Standards and Technology 10/2/2002](#); [Glanz 5/8/2003](#)) NIST’s investigation is originally proposed to last two years, with a budget of \$16 million. ([National Institute of Standards and Technology 8/21/2002](#)) However, it eventually will last three years, with its final report into the collapses of the Twin Towers being released in October 2005 (see [October 26, 2005](#)). A previous analysis of the WTC collapses conducted by FEMA and the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) was completed earlier in 2002 (see [May 1, 2002](#)), but this had a budget of just \$1.1 million. By the time NIST starts its investigation, much of the crucial steel debris from the WTC collapses has already been destroyed (see [September 12-October 2001](#)). They later refer to there being a “scarcity of physical evidence that is typically available in place for reconstruction of a disaster.” ([National Institute of Standards and Technology 9/2005, pp. xxxvi](#).)

August 22-November 2002: Possible Hijacker Associate Is Arrested, Then Deported

Osama Basnan, an alleged associate of 9/11 hijackers Nawaf Alhazmi and Khalid Almihdhar, and his wife are arrested for visa fraud. ([Isikoff 11/22/2002](#); [Serrano,](#)

[McManus, and Krikorian 11/24/2002](#)) One report says he is arrested for allegedly having links to Omar al-Bayoumi. ([Almotawa 11/26/2002](#)) On October 22, Basnan and his wife, Majeda Dweikat, admit they used false immigration documents to stay in the US. ([KGTV 10 \(San Diego\) 10/22/2002](#)) Possible financial connections between Basnan and al-Bayoumi, Alhazmi and Almihdhar, and the Saudi royal family are known to the 9/11 Congressional Inquiry (as well as the FBI and CIA) at this time. Remarkably, Basnan is deported to Saudi Arabia on November 17, 2002. His wife is deported to Jordan the same day. ([Schmidt and Allen 11/24/2002](#)) Less than a week after the deportations, new media reports make Basnan a widely known suspect. ([Isikoff 11/22/2002](#))

August 25, 2002: CIA Collects No Intelligence About Saudi Arabia

Appearing on NBC's Dateline, former CIA agent Robert Baer says the US collects virtually no intelligence about Saudi Arabia nor are they given any intelligence collected by the Saudis. He says this is because there are implicit orders from the White House that say: "Do not collect information on Saudi Arabia because we're going to risk annoying the royal family." On the same television program, despite being on a US list of suspected terrorist financiers since October 2001, Saudi millionaire Yassin al-Qadi says, "I'm living my life here in Saudi Arabia without any problem" because he is being protected by the Saudi government. Al-Qadi admits to giving bin Laden money for his "humanitarian" work, but says this is different from bin Laden's militant activities. Presented with this information, the US Treasury Department only says that the US "is pleased with and appreciates the actions taken by the Saudis" in the war on terror. The Saudi government still has not given US intelligence permission to talk to any family members of the hijackers, even though some US journalists have had limited contact with a few. ([MSNBC 8/25/2002](#))

August 27, 2002: Close Relationship Between Saudi Ambassador and Bush Raise Questions

Prince Bandar, Saudi ambassador to the US, meets privately for more than an hour with President Bush and National Security Adviser Rice in Crawford, Texas. ([Rennie 8/28/2002](#)) Press Secretary Ari Fleischer characterizes it as a warm meeting of old friends. Bandar, his wife (Princess Haifa), and seven of their eight children stay for lunch. ([Fox News 8/27/2002](#)) Prince Bandar, a long-time friend of the Bush family, donated \$1 million to the George W. Bush Presidential Library in College Station, Texas. ([Mulvihill, Meyers, and Wells 12/11/2001](#)) This relationship later becomes news when it is learned that Princess Haifa gave between \$51,000 and \$73,000 to two Saudi families in California who may have financed two of the 9/11 hijackers (see [December 4, 1999](#)). ([Johnston and Risen 11/23/2002](#); [MSNBC 11/27/2002](#))

August 27, 2002: US Establishes Military Presence in Uzbekistan

The Central Asian nation of Uzbekistan has recently signed a treaty committing the US to respond to “any external threat” to the country. Uzbekistan’s foreign minister explains: “The logic of the situation suggests that the United States has come here with a serious purpose, and for a long time.” According to a Washington Post report, the other Central Asian nations—Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan—have similar agreements with the US. The US claims it is supporting democracy in these nations, but experts say authoritarianism has been on the rise since 9/11. A new US military base in Uzbekistan currently holds about 1,000 US soldiers, but is being greatly enlarged. The article makes the general point that the US is replacing Russia as the dominant power in Central Asia. ([Kaiser 8/27/2002](#))

August 28, 2002: UN Calls Attempt to Thwart Al-Qaeda Money Flow a Failure

The Washington Post reports, “A global campaign to block al-Qaeda’s access to money has stalled, enabling the terrorist network to obtain a fresh infusion of tens of millions of dollars and putting it in a position to finance future attacks, according to a draft UN report.” In the months immediately following 9/11, more than \$112 million in assets was frozen. Since then, only \$10 million more has been frozen, and most of the original money has been unfrozen due to lack of evidence. Private donations to the group, estimated at \$16 million a year, are believed to “continue, largely unabated.” The US and other governments are not sharing information about suspected militants, and known militants are not being put on official lists of suspected terrorists. ([Lynch 8/29/2002](#)) One month later, a report by the Council on Foreign Relations, an influential US think tank, largely blames the US relationship with Saudi Arabia for the failure. The report says, “It is worth stating clearly and unambiguously what official US government spokespersons have not. For years, individuals and charities based in Saudi Arabia have been the most important source of funds for al-Qaeda, and for years the Saudi officials have turned a blind eye to this problem.” The report will also note that the Bush administration “appears to have made a policy decision not to use the full power of US influence and legal authorities to pressure or compel other governments to combat terrorist financing more effectively.” ([Farah 10/16/2002](#)) News reports from early 2006 will show little change to the situation (see [November 29, 2005](#); [January 15, 2006](#)).

August 29, 2002: Germany Charges Moroccan with Complicity in 9/11

German authorities charge Mounir El Motassadeq with complicity in the 9/11 attacks. He was arrested in Germany two months after 9/11. He is only the second person in the world to be charged with any crime related to the 9/11 attacks (after Zacarias Moussaoui).

He is charged with helping finance Mohamed Atta and others in the Hamburg terrorist cell. ([Agence France-Presse 8/29/2002](#); [Butler 8/29/2002](#))

Autumn 2002: Taliban and Al-Qaeda Regrouping in Afghanistan

With the US having diverted much of their best troops and equipment to Iraq, the Taliban and al-Qaeda begin regrouping inside Afghanistan. In August 2002, it is reported that former Taliban head Mullah Omar has secretly returned to Afghanistan and is living in remote hideouts near Kandahar. ([Harding 8/30/2002](#)) In September, US intelligence officials say “al-Qaeda operatives who found refuge in Pakistan are starting to regroup and move back into Afghanistan... The movement back into Afghanistan is still relatively small and involves al-Qaeda members traveling in small groups, the officials say.... American officials say the world’s largest concentrations of al-Qaeda operatives are now in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and the recent influx into Afghanistan is creating new dangers.” ([Risen and Filkins 9/10/2002](#)) In December, a United Nations report claims that al-Qaeda training camps have recently been reactivated in Afghanistan, and new volunteers are making their way to the camps. While the new camps are basic, they are said to be “increasing the long-term capabilities of the al-Qaeda network.” ([Associated Press 12/17/2002](#))

September 2002: Customs Intercepts Associated Press Package

The Customs Service intercepts a package sent via Federal Express from the Associated Press bureau in Manila to the AP office in Washington, and turns the contents over to the FBI. The FBI keeps the material, all unclassified and previously publicly disclosed, and fails to inform AP about this. It is claimed they do so to prevent the reporters from reporting their story, which is about government foreknowledge of the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing, and ties with Ramzi Yousef and other Islamic militants in the Philippines. ([Associated Press 3/12/2003](#))

September 2002: FBI Agent Sees ‘Grave Violations’ in FBI Handling of Terrorism Case in Florida



Mike German. [Source: *Publicity photo*] FBI agent Mike German is assigned to a counterterrorism case involving international militant groups. Apparently a domestic militia group in Tampa, Florida is considering allying with a major, unnamed militant Islamic organization. He becomes concerned that the investigation will fail due to “grave violations of FBI policy and possibly even grave violations of the law.” He complains to the Justice Department’s inspector general, claiming that FBI managers have falsified records, failed to properly handle evidence, falsely discredited witnesses, and failed to adhere to laws and regulations about electronic surveillance. German also sends his complaints directly to FBI Director Robert Mueller. But Mueller does not respond. Some time after German submits his complaints, he is removed from the case. “The phone just stopped ringing, and I became a persona non grata. Because I wouldn’t let this go away, I became the problem.... My entire career has been ruined, all because I thought I was doing the right thing here.” Frustrated with the bureau’s continuing mismanagement, he will retire from the FBI in 2004. ([Lichtblau 8/2/2004](#); [Strohm 1/26/2005](#)) German will later be exonerated in a 2005 Justice Department report investigating his charges (see [December 3, 2005](#)).

September 2002: CIA Completes ‘Iraqi Ties to Terrorism’ Report Based on Al-Libi Interrogation

The CIA completes a highly classified report on “Iraqi Ties to Terrorism,” summarizing claims that Iraq has provided “training in poisons and gases” to members of al-Qaeda. The report warns that evidence for the claim comes from “sources of varying reliability” and has not yet been substantiated. The main source behind this allegation, Ibn al-Shaykh al-Libi, who once operated bin Laden’s Khaldan training camp in Afghanistan and who is being held in custody by the CIA, will later recant the claim (see [February 14, 2004](#)). ([Jehl 7/31/2004](#); [Isikoff 7/5/2005](#))

September 2002: Most Members of House and Senate Intelligence Committees Not Briefed on CIA

Interrogations, Reportedly Because they Are Covert Activities

Although some members of both the House and Senate intelligence committees are briefed about a CIA detainee interrogation program around this time (see [September 2002](#)), the briefing is not received by all committee members. Senate Intelligence Committee chairman Bob Graham (D) will later say that the information is not shared with all committee members because the activities are regarded as covert. Within the intelligence committees, the information is restricted to the “gang of four”—the two top members from each committee. Graham will later complain about this: “Not only should I have been briefed [about the CIA interrogation program] but the entire committee [should have] been briefed. The only basis for what they called these covert gang of four briefings is where the president has indicated there’s an action that’s being undertaken for which the United States wants to have deniability. It’s not a blanket for every subject that the intelligence community might be involved with. In my judgment, this was not a covert operation and should have been briefed to the entire intelligence committee.” ([CNN 12/13/2007](#)) However, President Bush, who would usually be briefed on activities like the interrogation program, is not briefed on it, precisely because it is not regarded as a covert activity, but is classified as a normal part of “intelligence collection” (see [April 2002 and After](#)).

September 2002: Congressional Leaders Allegedly Briefed on CIA Interrogation Techniques, but Do Not Complain

Some congressional leaders are reportedly briefed on the CIA’s detainee interrogation program, but what is actually said will later be disputed. The briefing is described as “a virtual tour of the CIA’s overseas detention sites and the harsh techniques interrogators had devised to try to make their prisoners talk,” and apparently mentions waterboarding and information gleaned from detainees, according to two unnamed officials who are present and will later talk to the Washington Post. Due to the feeling of “panic” following 9/11, the legislators’ attitude is described as, “We don’t care what you do to those guys as long as you get the information you need to protect the American people,” and two even ask if the methods are “tough enough.” The briefing, apparently one of the first of a series of around 30 private briefings on the CIA’s interrogation program, is for the “gang of eight,” the four top congressional leaders and the senior member from each party on the House and Senate intelligence committees. However, the methods used are only described in some of the briefings, and some of the meetings are just for the “gang of four”—intelligence committee members only. The groups are said to be so small because they concern highly secret covert activities, although it will later be suggested that the administration’s motivation is “partly to hide from view an embarrassing practice that the CIA considered vital but outsiders would almost certainly condemn as abhorrent.” One of the committee members present is Nancy Pelosi (D), and other officials that receive such briefings are reported to include Jane Harman (D), Bob Graham (D), Jay Rockefeller (D),

Porter Goss (R) and Pat Roberts (R). Harman is said to be the only one to object at any point. The attendees' recollections of the meeting will later vary greatly. Goss will say, "Among those being briefed, there was a pretty full understanding of what the CIA was doing... And the reaction in the room was not just approval, but encouragement," although this may not be a reference to this specific meeting. Graham, who will leave the Senate Intelligence Committee in January 2003, will later say he has no memory of being told about waterboarding, "Personally, I was unaware of it, so I couldn't object." A "source familiar with Pelosi's position" will say that she participates in a discussion of enhanced interrogation techniques, but understands they are at the planning stage at this time and are not in use. ([Warrick and Eggen 12/9/2007](#)) Graham will later describe the limitations placed on legislators who receive such briefings: "In addition to the fact that the full members of the committee can't hear what's happening, those who are in the room are very restricted. You can't take any notes. You can't bring anyone with you and after the meeting, you cannot discuss what you've heard. So that if, for instance, there's an issue about, is this legal under the Geneva Convention, you can't go to someone who's an expert on that subject and get their opinion. It's a very limiting situation." ([CNN 12/13/2007](#)) The CIA has been conducting aggressive interrogations since at least May 2002 (see [Mid-May 2002 and After](#)), but it has no firm legal basis to perform them until the Justice Department gives approval in August 2002 (see [August 1, 2002](#)). CIA Director George Tenet will later comment in a 2007 book, "After we received the written Department of Justice guidance on the interrogation issue, we briefed the chairmen and ranking members of our oversight committees. While they were not asked to formally approve the program as it was done under the President's unilateral authorities, I can recall no objections being raised." ([Windrem 9/13/2007](#))

September 3, 2002: Al-Marabh Given Light Prison Sentence on Non-Terrorism Charges

The FBI decides not to charge Nabil al-Marabh on any terrorism related charge. Instead, on September 3, 2002, al-Marabh pleads guilty to illegally entering the US in June 2001 (see [June 27, 2001-July 11, 2001](#)), and is sentenced to only eight months in prison. ([Main 9/5/2002](#)) Federal prosecutors claim that "at this time" there is no evidence "of any involvement by [al-Marabh] in any terrorist organization," even though he has admitted to getting weapons training in Afghan training camps. ([Fainaru 9/4/2002](#)) Numerous reported ties between al-Marabh and the 9/11 hijackers are apparently not mentioned in the trial (see [September 2000](#); [January 2001-Summer 2001](#); [January 2001-Summer 2001](#); [Spring 2001](#); [Early September 2001](#)). The judge states he cannot say "in good conscience" that he approves of the plea bargain worked out between the prosecution and defense, but he seems unable to stop it. He says, "Something about this case makes me feel uncomfortable. I just don't have a lot of information." He has a number of unanswered questions, such as how al-Marabh had \$22,000 in cash and \$25,000 worth of amber jewels on his possession when he was arrested, despite holding only a sporadic series of low-paying jobs. "These are the things that kind of bother me. It's kind of unusual, isn't it?" says the judge. ([Owens 9/4/2002](#)) In 2003, the judge at al-Marabh's deportation hearing will rule that al-Marabh presents "a danger to national security" and

is “credibly linked to elements of terrorism” but this will not stop him from being deported.(see [January 2004](#)).

September 4, 2002: Iraq Sued for Conspiring with Al-Qaeda in 9/11 Attacks

Over 1,400 relatives of 9/11 attack victims sue Iraq for more than \$1 trillion, claiming there is evidence Iraq conspired with al-Qaeda on the 9/11 attacks. ([Simon 9/5/2002](#)) One of the key pieces of evidence cited is an article in a small town Iraqi newspaper written by Naeem Abd Muhallal on July 21, 2001. He describes bin Laden thinking “seriously, with the seriousness of the Bedouin of the desert, about the way he will try to bomb the Pentagon after he destroys the White House.” He adds that bin Laden is “insisting very convincingly that he will strike America on the arm that is already hurting,” which has been interpreted as a possible reference to the 1993 bombing of the WTC. Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein apparently praised this writer on September 1, 2001. The lawsuit is based largely on the idea that “Iraqi officials were aware of plans to attack American landmarks,” yet did not warn their archenemy, the US. ([Neumeister 9/4/2002](#)) Former CIA agent and terrorism consultant Robert Baer is hired by the prosecuting legal team to find evidence of a meeting between Mohamed Atta and Iraqi agents on April 8, 2001, but despite the help of the CIA, he is unable find any evidence of such a meeting. ([Simon 9/5/2002](#))

September 5, 2002: French Believe Moussaoui Was Prepared for Second Wave of Attacks

Based on the recent interrogations of al-Qaeda operative Zacarias Moussaoui’s al-Qaeda associates, including his alleged handler, French intelligence believes Moussaoui was not part of the 9/11 attacks, but was being readied for a second wave of attacks. Says one French official: “Moussaoui was going to be a foot soldier in a second wave of attacks that was supposed to culminate in early 2002 with simultaneous bombings against US embassies in Europe, the Middle East and Asia, as well as several hijackings in the United States.” However, the US has charged him with being the “20th hijacker” who planned to be on Flight 77 in the 9/11 attack. ([Ross and Scott 9/5/2002](#))

September 5, 2002: Senator Decries Lack of Government Cooperation in 9/11 Congressional Inquiry

Richard Shelby of Alabama, the ranking Republican on the Senate Intelligence Committee, expresses doubts that the committee’s 9/11 Congressional Inquiry will be able to accomplish anything, and he supports an independent investigation. “Time is not on our side,” he says, since the investigation has a built-in deadline at the end of 2002. “You know, we were told that there would be cooperation in this investigation, and I question that. I think that most of the information that our staff has been able to get that is

real meaningful has had to be extracted piece by piece.” He adds that there is explosive information that has not been publicly released. “I think there are some more bombs out there... I know that.” ([Mitchell 9/10/2002](#))

September 6, 2002: Al-Qaeda Figure with Ties to Rich Saudis Is Declared Terrorist Financier, but to Little Effect



Wael Hamza Julaidan. [*Source: Public domain, via Evan Kohlmann*]The US and United Nations designate Wael Hamza Julaidan a terrorist financier and freezes the funds of the Rabita Trust. Julaidan worked with bin Laden’s mentor Abdullah Azzam in the Muslim World League in Pakistan in the 1980s and was one of the founders of al-Qaeda in 1988 (see [August 11-20, 1988](#)). ([Kaplan, Ekman, and Latif 12/15/2003](#)) Julaidan’s name was on the “Golden Chain” list of early al-Qaeda funders (see [1988-1989](#)), serving as an intermediary between bin Laden and Saudi multimillionaires. Beginning in 2000, he became director general of the Rabita Trust, a Pakistani charity which the UN determined has been funding al-Qaeda. But Julaidan is considered highly connected in Saudi Arabia and even though the Saudi government officially goes along with the terrorist designations of Julaidan and the Rabita Trust, some top Saudi officials publicly defend him. For instance, Saudi Interior Minister Prince Nawaf bin Abdul Aziz publicly suggests that Julaidan is innocent. Julaidan is not arrested and the Saudi government offers no proof that they seized any of his or Rabita’s bank accounts. In December 2003, the Washington Post will report that US and UN officials believe Julaidan continues to work with charity fronts and handles large sums of money. The Rabita Trust meanwhile simply changed names and relocated to Pakistan. ([Farah 12/14/2003](#); [Burr and Collins 2006, pp. 100-101](#))

September 6, 2002: Cheney ‘Hell-bent for Action’ against Iraq

During a meeting at Camp David held with most principal cabinet members but without President Bush, Vice President Cheney argues against asking for a new UN resolution authorizing force against Iraq. Secretary of State Colin Powell argues in favor of getting a new UN resolution. Journalist Bob Woodward, who later has access to some of the

participants in the meeting, will comment, “Cheney was beyond hell-bent for action against Saddam. It was as if nothing else existed.” ([Woodward 2002, pp. 245-346](#))

September 8-11, 2002: Interview with Al-Qaeda Leaders Is Broadcast



Abdulaziz Alomari filmed speaking in Afghanistan in early 2001. He stands in front of a large map of the world. [*Source: Spiegel TV*] Details of an Al Jazeera interview with al-Qaeda leaders Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM) and Ramzi bin al-Shibh (see [April, June, or August 2002](#)) are widely publicized. ([Fielding 9/8/2002](#); [Fouda 9/9/2002](#); [Tremlett 9/9/2002](#)) But there are numerous doubts about this interview, since there is no video footage and only audio footage from bin al-Shibh. It has further been suggested that the broadcast of bin al-Shibh's voice in the interview helps in his capture a few days later (see [September 11, 2002](#)). ([Burke 9/15/2002](#); [CBS News 10/9/2002](#)) Al Jazeera also broadcasts footage of hijacker Abdulaziz Alomari speaking against the US filmed in Afghanistan in early 2001 and other footage of some other hijackers (see [September 9, 2002](#)). ([Drummond 9/11/2002](#))

September 9, 2002: FBI Translator and Air Force Major, Both the Targets of Federal Investigations, Leave Country with Government Approval

FBI translator Melek Can Dickerson and her husband Douglas Dickerson leave the country. Douglas, a US Air Force major who procures weapons from the US for various Central Asian and Middle Eastern countries, has been reassigned to Belgium to work on a NATO-related assignment. ([Edmonds 7/1/2004](#); [Rose 9/2005](#)) The Dickersons had been recently subpoenaed in Sibel Edmonds' lawsuit against the FBI (see [June 2002](#)) and are the subject of three separate investigations: one by the Air Force Office of Special Investigation, one by the Department of Justice, and the third by the Senate Judiciary Committee. ([Edmonds 8/22/2005](#)) The FBI, under court order not to allow the couple to leave the country, requires that Douglas Dickerson swear under oath that he will return if requested by the court. ([Edmonds 7/1/2004](#); [Rose 9/2005](#))

September 9, 2002: New Video Footage of 911 Hijackers Shown; New Audio of Bin Laden Praising Them




The top picture is of Waleed Alshehri. The bottom two pictures are said to be of hijackers planning the 9/11 attacks, but no faces are shown to help confirm this. [Source: *Spiegel TV*] Al Jazeera television broadcasts video footage in which bin Laden appears to take credit for the 9/11 attacks. Some of the video footage shows some 9/11 hijackers, including Ahmed Alnami, Hamza Alghamdi, Saeed Alghamdi, Waleed Alshehri, and Wail Alshehri, talking with each other and studying maps and flight manuals. At one point, hands are shown over maps of the US and the Pentagon, but no faces are shown. Al Jazeera says the video was filmed in Kandahar, Afghanistan, in early 2001. Additional footage has bin Laden hailing the hijackers as heroes, but there is no video footage of him saying this, only his voice over still photographs of the hijackers. The Financial Times will report, "But analysts cited the crude editing of the tapes and the timing of the broadcasts as reasons to be suspicious about their authenticity. The skepticism was deepened by Al Jazeera's silence yesterday about how it had obtained the videos." ([Drummond 9/11/2002](#)) Al Jazeera shows an interview of al-Qaeda leaders Ramzi bin al-Shibh and Khalid Shaikh Mohammed around the same time (see [September 8-11, 2002](#)).

September 10, 2002: Port Authority Sued by Relatives and Insurance Companies

Right before a one-year deadline, the Port Authority, the government body that owns the WTC complex, is sued by five insurance companies, one utility and 700 relatives of the WTC victims. The insurance companies and utility are suing because of safety violations connected to the installation of diesel fuel tanks in 1999 that many blame for the collapse of WTC Building 7. ([Debaise 9/10/2002](#)) The relatives' lawsuit is much more encompassing, and even blames the Port Authority for the Flight 93 hijacking (the Port Authority owns Newark airport, where the flight originated). The relatives' lawsuit is likely to lie dormant for at least six months as evidence is collected. Relatives are also considering suing the airlines, security companies, and other entities. ([Missing 9/13/2002](#))

September 10, 2002: Threat Level Raised to Orange for First 9/11 Anniversary

The government raises the National Alert Level to orange, the second highest level possible. This is the first time such an alert has been raised since 9/11. The government temporarily closes for public business about two dozen US diplomatic posts worldwide. Officials say there is no specific known threat against targets in the US. ([Washington Post 9/10/2002](#)) President Bush personally makes the announcement while Vice President Cheney flees to a "secure location." Attorney General John Ashcroft warns that the threat targets "transportation and energy sectors." More specific detail on the nature or targets of the threat is not supplied. The heightened terror alert coincides with the President's address to the nation from Ellis Island on the first anniversary of 9/11. ([Dreyfuss 9/21/2006](#) )

September 10, 2002-June 2003: Germans Begin, Then Cancel, Investigation into Company with Ties to Hamburg Cell and Syrian Intelligence



Tatex logo. [Source: *Tatex*] On September 10, 2002, German police raid the Tatex Trading company, a small textile business located just outside of Hamburg. According to Newsweek, German authorities has been "keeping a close watch on the company... for years." Germans begin preparing a case against the company and the US prepares to freeze the company's assets. But by June 2003, the investigation is closed and no action is taken by the US or Germany. Newsweek will claim that "Some US and German officials suggest that both countries decided not to proceed with legal action against Tatex to avoid antagonizing the government of Syria." ([Deutsche Presse-Agentur \(Hamburg\) 9/7/2003](#); [Hosenball 1/18/2004](#)) The New Yorker

will claim “Tatex was infiltrated by Syrian intelligence in the eighties; one of its shareholders was Mohammed Majed Said, who ran the Syrian intelligence directorate from 1987 to 1994.” ([Hersh 7/18/2003](#)) Some believe the Syrians infiltrated the company to spy on extremist Syrian exiles in Hamburg, while others believe Syrians were using the company as a front to illegally acquire high-tech equipment from the West. It is claimed that the investigation into Tatex is dropped because Syria has been cooperative with Germany and the US in other areas. ([Hosenball 1/18/2004](#)) Abdul-Matin Tatari, the Syrian in charge of Tatex, admits that his company had employed Mohammed Haydar Zammar and Mamoun Darkazanli, both of whom have been tied to the Hamburg al-Qaeda cell. Further, the Chicago Tribune claims, “Investigators also say Mohamed Atta himself worked for a time at Tatex, something Tatari vehemently denies. But Tatari admits that one of his sons signed Atta’s petition to establish an Islamic ‘study group’ at Hamburg’s Technical University that served as a rendezvous for the hijackers and their supporters.” Tatari’s son took trips with Mounir El Motassadeq, who also has been tied to the Hamburg cell. Tatari, Zammar, Darkazanli, and Atta all are believed to be members of the Syrian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, a secret society banned in Egypt. ([Crewdson and Cohen 11/1/2002](#))

September 11, 2002: 9/11 Planner Ramzi Bin Al-Shibh Captured in Pakistan; KSM Possibly Captured or Killed as Well



Ramzi bin al-Shibh arrested in Pakistan.

[Source: Associated Press] Would-be hijacker Ramzi bin al-Shibh is arrested after a huge gunfight in Karachi, Pakistan, involving thousands of police. ([Burke 9/15/2002](#)) He is considered “a high-ranking operative for al-Qaeda and one of the few people still alive who know the inside details of the 9/11 plot.” ([Risen 9/13/2002](#)) Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM) called bin al-Shibh “the coordinator of the Holy Tuesday [9/11]

operation” in an interview aired days before. Captured with him are approximately nine associates, as well as numerous computers, phones, and other evidence. ([Risen 9/13/2002](#); [Elliott 9/15/2002](#)) There are conflicting claims that either Mohammed is killed in the raid ([Shahzad 10/30/2002](#); [Daily Telegraph 3/4/2003](#); [Shahzad 3/6/2003](#)) ; shot while escaping ([Australian Broadcasting Corporation 3/2/2003](#)) ; someone who looks like him is killed, leading to initial misidentification ([McGirk 1/20/2003](#)) ; someone matching his general appearance is captured ([Associated Press 9/16/2002](#)) ; or that he narrowly escapes capture but his young children are captured. ([McDermott, Meyer, and McDonnell 12/22/2002](#))

September 11, 2002: One Year After 9/11, Details of Plot Are Still Very Mysterious

On the first anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, the New York Times writes, “One year later, the public knows less about the circumstances of 2,801 deaths at the foot of Manhattan in broad daylight than people in 1912 knew within weeks about the Titanic, which sank in the middle of an ocean in the dead of night.” John F. Timoney, the former police commissioner of Philadelphia, says: “You can hardly point to a cataclysmic event in our history, whether it was the sinking of the Titanic, the Pearl Harbor attack, [or] the Kennedy assassination, when a blue-ribbon panel did not set out to establish the facts and, where appropriate, suggest reforms. That has not happened here.” The Times specifically points to a failure by New York City Mayor Bloomberg to conduct a real investigation into the WTC attack response. Bloomberg stated in August 2002, “Every single major event is different from all others. The training of how you would respond to the last incident is not really important.” ([Dwyer 9/11/2002](#)) The Chicago Tribune made similar comments a week earlier, pointing out that despite the “largest investigation in history,” “Americans know little more today about the September 11 conspiracy, or the conspirators, than they did within a few weeks of the attacks.” ([Crewdson and Simpson 9/5/2002](#))

September 11, 2002: Story of Bush’s 9/11 Conduct Changes for 9/11 Anniversary

On the first anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, the story of what President Bush did on that day is significantly rewritten. In actual fact, when Chief of Staff Andrew Card told Bush about the second plane crash into the WTC, Bush continued to sit in a Florida elementary school classroom and hear a story about a pet goat for at least seven more minutes (see [\(9:06 a.m.-9:16 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#); [\(9:06 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), as video footage later broadcast in the 2004 movie Fahrenheit 9/11 shows. But one year later, Card claims that after he told Bush about the second WTC crash, “it was only a matter of seconds” before Bush “excused himself very politely to the teacher and to the students, and he left the Florida classroom.” ([Card 9/11/2002](#)) In a different account, Card says, “Not that many seconds later the president excused himself from the classroom.” ([Isikoff 9/9/2002](#)) An interview with the classroom teacher claims that Bush left the class even

before the second WTC crash: “The president bolted right out of here and told me: ‘Take over.’” When the second WTC crash occurred, she claims her students are watching television in a nearby media room. ([Balfour 9/12/2002](#))

September 12, 2002: Major Paper First to Give Room for 9/11 Skeptics

For the first time, a mainstream US newspaper looks at the people who believe there was government complicity or criminal incompetence in 9/11 and does not immediately dismiss them. The San Francisco Examiner quotes a number of 9/11 skeptics and lets them speak for themselves. “While different theorists focus on different aspects of the attacks, what they seem to have in common is they would like an independent investigation into 9/11.” ([Dineen 9/12/2002](#))

After September 11, 2002: KSM’s Children Said to Be Tortured

Khalid Shaikh Mohammed’s (KSM’s) children, who are captured in a September 2002 raid on a house he used (see [September 11, 2002](#)), are allegedly tortured following their capture. A statement that they are tortured is made in a submission to a Guantanamo Bay hearing to determine the status of a detainee called Majid Khan. The submission is made by Khan’s father, based on information from another of his sons. It reads: “The Pakistani guards told my son that the boys were kept in a separate area upstairs and were denied food and water by other guards. They were also mentally tortured by having ants or other creatures put on their legs to scare them and get them to say where their father was hiding.” ([US department of Defense 4/15/2007](#)) Human Rights Watch, based on eyewitness accounts, says that they are held in an adult detention center (see [June 7, 2007](#)), and KSM also says that his children are abused in US custody (see [March 10-April 15, 2007](#)). ([US Department of Defense 3/10/2007](#); [Parsons 6/7/2007](#)) According to author Ron Suskind, after KSM is captured and there is difficulty getting some information from him (see [March 1, 2003](#) and [June 16, 2004](#)), CIA headquarters authorizes his interrogators to “do whatever’s necessary.” KSM is then told that his two children will be hurt, unless he co-operates more. However, according to a CIA manager with knowledge of the incident, “He basically said, so, fine, they’ll join Allah in a better place.” ([Suskind 2006, pp. 230](#))

Shortly After September 11, 2002: Ramzi Bin Al-Shibh Not Waterboarded

In 2002 and 2003, many of the highest-ranking al-Qaeda detainees are subjected to waterboarding and other forms of interrogation generally considered to be torture (see [May 2002-2003](#)). However, Ramzi bin al-Shibh, captured in Pakistan in September 2002 and sent to a secret CIA prison (see [September 11, 2002](#)), is not waterboarded. NBC

News will later claim that he agreed to talk with just the threat of waterboarding. “Bin al-Shibh was viewed as a weakling and a narcissist and the agency played heavily on that. He quickly became the most cooperative of those detained...” However, by the time bin al-Shibh is charged before a military tribunal in 2007, he once again is refusing to talk (see [March 9-April 28, 2007](#)). ([Windrem 9/13/2007](#)) It is unknown what other interrogation techniques may have been used on him.

September 17, 2002: Tie Between 9/11 Arrest and Bin Laden Family Members

CBS reports that in the days after the arrest of Ramzi bin al-Shibh (see [September 11, 2002](#)) and four other al-Qaeda operatives in Pakistan on September 11, 2002, “a search of the home of the five al-Qaeda suspects turned up passports belonging to members of the family of Osama bin Laden.” No more details, such as which family members, or why bin al-Shibh’s group had these passports, is given. ([CBS News 9/17/2002](#))

September 18, 2002: First 9/11 Inquiry Hearing Amidst Protests About Lack of Government Cooperation



Eleanor Hill. [*Source: Reuters*]The 9/11 Congressional Inquiry holds its first public hearing. The inquiry was formed in February 2002, but suffered months of delays. The day’s testimony focuses on intelligence warnings that should have led the government to believe airplanes could be used as bombs. ([US Congress 9/18/2002](#)) However, the Washington Post reports, “lawmakers from both parties... [protest] the Bush administration’s lack of cooperation in the congressional inquiry into September 11 intelligence failures and [threaten] to renew efforts to establish an independent commission.” Eleanor Hill, the joint committee’s staff director, testifies that, “According to [CIA Director Tenet], the president’s knowledge of intelligence information relevant to this inquiry remains classified even when the substance of that intelligence information has been declassified.” She adds that “the American public has a compelling interest in this information and that public disclosure would not harm national security.” ([Milbank 9/19/2002](#)) Furthermore, the committee believes that “a particular al-Qaeda leader may have been instrumental in the attacks” and US intelligence has known

about this person since 1995. Tenet “has declined to declassify the information we developed [about this person] on the grounds that it could compromise intelligence sources and methods and that this consideration supersedes the American public’s interest in this particular area.” ([US Congress 9/18/2002](#)) A few days later, the New York Times reveals this leader to be Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, the mastermind of the 9/11 attacks. ([Risen 9/22/2002](#)) An FBI spokesman says the FBI had offered “full cooperation” to the committee. A CIA official denies that the report is damning: “The committee acknowledges the hard work done by intelligence community, the successes it achieved...” ([Miklaszewski 9/18/2002](#))

September 18, 2002: 9/11 Victims’ Relatives Raise Questions About Agencies’ Conduct



Kristen Breitweiser. [*Source: Hyungwon Kang/ Reuters*]/Two 9/11 victims’ relatives testify before the Congressional 9/11 inquiry. Kristen Breitweiser, whose husband Ronald died at the WTC, asks how the FBI was so quickly able to assemble information on the hijackers. She cites a New York Times article stating that agents descended on flight schools within hours of the attacks. “How did the FBI know where to go a few hours after the attacks?” she asks. “Were any of the hijackers already under surveillance?” ([Miklaszewski 9/18/2002](#)) She adds, “Our intelligence agencies suffered an utter collapse in their duties and responsibilities leading up to and on September 11th. But their negligence does not stand alone. Agencies like the Port Authority, the City of NY, the FAA, the INS, the Secret Service, NORAD, the Air Force, and the airlines also failed our nation that morning.” ([US Congress 9/18/2002](#)) Stephen Push states, “If the intelligence community had been doing its job, my wife, Lisa Raines, would be alive today.” He cites the government’s failure to place Khalid Almihdhar and Nawaf Alhazmi on a terrorist watch list until long after they were photographed meeting with alleged al-Qaeda operatives in Malaysia (see [January 6-9, 2000](#)). ([Miklaszewski 9/18/2002](#))

September 18, 2002-January 3, 2003: British Learn of Ricin Plot from Suspected Al-Qaeda Operative Tortured in Algeria



Mohammed Meguerba [*Source: BBC*] The first traces of the alleged ricin plot later uncovered in London in January 2003 (see [January 7, 2003](#)) are discovered in the wake of the arrest of an illegal Algerian immigrant. Mohammed Meguerba, later alleged to be the mastermind of the plot, is arrested in north London with various false IDs. An epileptic, Meguerba had entered Britain as an illegal immigrant. He had left his homeland in 1995 and traveled through Europe. He became a waiter in Ireland and married, divorced, remarried and, “by pure chance or cultural void,” said Algerian secret service, “allowed himself to be recruited by fundamentalists” at a Belfast mosque in 2000. Activists in London sent him to training camps in Afghanistan, where Osama bin Laden himself allegedly gave him a mission in Britain and supplied him with documentation and money. ([Riddell 4/17/2005](#)) After this training, Meguerba returned to London in March 2002. He went to the Finsbury Park mosque, where he began to work on crude poisons with fellow Algerian Kamal Bourgass. On September 18, 2002, Meguerba is arrested in London during an operation into suspected terrorist fundraising. But he is released on bail after suffering an epileptic fit, and then flees to Algeria. ([Hassaine and O’Neill 5/9/2005](#)) On December 16, 2002, Meguerba is arrested in Algeria by security forces after allegedly being smuggled in by Islamist radicals. On December 28, police begin his interrogation. Within two days, he tells them that he had been working with an al-Qaeda cell in north London and had been helping them produce poisons at a flat. Authorities in Britain receive this information from the Algerian security forces on January 2 or 3. The Algerian intelligence report spurs British authorities into action. As well as information on the poison plot, it contains information on many individuals in Britain who are allegedly engaged in hard-line, violent Islamic radicalism. The report also suggests the existence of a number of terrorist cells in Britain. ([Riddell 4/17/2005](#)) Meguerba names Bourgass as ringleader and other Algerians as co-conspirators. ([Carrell and Whitacker 4/17/2005](#)) Meguerba had been held in a secret detention center for 17 months by the Algerian security service. His relatives are unaware he had been held from December 2002 until he was moved to a prison in Algiers. When they are finally permitted to visit him, Meguerba weighs 77 lbs and claims he has been badly tortured. These claims are backed up another Algerian man, residing in Britain, who was detained in Algiers in January 2003 and placed by his interrogators in a room with Meguerba, whom the man describes as “bruised, cut, and swollen.” Upon his

appearance in an Algiers court, Meguerba appears frail and is missing teeth. The confession extracted from Meguerba during this time was the evidence that led to the Wood Green raid. However, during the later trial, the confession is not relied on by the prosecution as the allegations of torture could be raised by the defense. One source says “the Government has introduced the Human Rights Act but finds itself relying on regimes with appalling human rights records for information.” Algerian secret services deny the claims of torture. ([Hassaine and O'Neill 5/9/2005](#))

September 20, 2002: Bush Changes Course, Backs 9/11 Commission

In the wake of damaging Congressional 9/11 inquiry revelations, President Bush reverses course and backs efforts by many lawmakers to form an independent commission to conduct a broader investigation than the current Congressional inquiry. Newsweek reports that Bush had virtually no choice. “There was a freight train coming down the tracks,” says one White House official. ([Isikoff and Klaidman 9/22/2002](#)) But as one of the 9/11 victim’s relatives says, “It’s carefully crafted to make it look like a general endorsement but it actually says that the commission would look at everything except the intelligence failures.” ([CBS News 9/20/2002](#)) Rather than look into such failures, Bush wants the commission to focus on areas like border security, visa issues, and the “role of Congress” in overseeing intelligence agencies. The White House also refuses to turn over documents showing what Bush knew before 9/11. ([Isikoff and Klaidman 9/22/2002](#))

September 20, 2002: Saudi Charity in Bosnia Linked to Al-Qaeda

A Bosnian government probe connects the Saudi charity Talibah International Aid Association to the funding of Islamic militant groups and an al-Qaeda front group. Talibah has been under investigation since shortly after 9/11 due to a foiled attack in Bosnia that has been connected to Talibah and al-Qaeda. Abdullah Awad bin Laden, one of bin Laden’s nephews, is a Talibah officer in its Virginia office. An investigation into him was cancelled in September 1996 (see [February-September 11, 1996](#)). The US has been criticized for failing to list Talibah as a sponsor of terrorism and for not freezing its assets. ([Simpson 9/20/2002](#))

September 24, 2002: Discovered Business Card Helps Case Against Moussaoui

Federal prosecutors say a business card found in the wreckage of Flight 93 provides a link between alleged conspirator Zacarias Moussaoui and hijacker Ziad Jarrah. Supposedly a business card belonging to Jarrah has a phone number written on it, and Moussaoui had once called that number. It was not explained what the number is, whose phone number it was, when Moussaoui called it, when the card was found, or how

investigators know the card belonged to Jarrah. ([MSNBC 9/24/2002](#)) Interestingly, this find comes just as the case against Moussaoui is facing trouble. For instance, one month earlier, USA Today reported that investigators had found no link between Moussaoui and the other hijackers. ([Loey, Johnson, and Willing 8/29/2002](#)) Prosecutors have been trying to get permission to play the Flight 93 cockpit voice recordings to the jury, but on September 13, the judge said, “the recordings appear to have marginal evidentiary value while posing unfair prejudice to the defendant.” ([Jackman 9/25/2002](#))

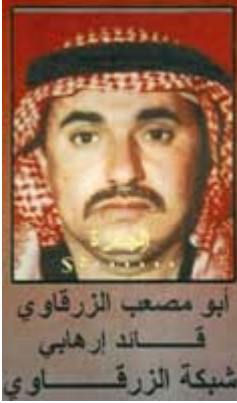
September 25, 2002: FBI Director Denies Moussaoui Leads Could Have Prevented 9/11

In an interview with CBS, FBI Director Mueller states, “I can tell you there are things I wish we had done differently. That there are things we should have followed up on. But the bottom line is I do not believe that we would have been able to prevent 9/11.” Speaking about the Zacarias Moussaoui case, he says, “That took us several months, to follow that lead, and it also required the full support of the German authorities, and it would have been very, I think impossible to have followed that particular lead in the days between the time in which Moussaoui was detained and September 11th.” ([CBS News 9/25/2002](#)) This negativism is in sharp contrast to a previous statement he made on May 21, 2002 (see [May 21, 2002](#)), as well as the opinion of many rank and file FBI officers, some of whom have made a chart showing how all the hijackers could have been caught if certain leads had been followed. ([Isikoff and Klaidman 6/2/2002](#)) Mueller’s opinion on the Moussaoui case is contradicted by many, including FBI agents working on that case. ([Time 5/21/2002](#)) The media also does not agree. For instance the Independent suggested information on Moussaoui’s computer “might have been enough to expose the Hamburg cell, which investigators believe was the key planning unit for 11 September.” ([Burrell, Gumbel, and Sengupta 12/11/2001](#))

September 25, 2002: Bush Says that Bin Laden and Hussein Are Indistinguishable

During a White House meeting with Colombian President Alvaro Uribe, George Bush makes the claim that Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden work together. “The danger is, is that they work in concert,” he says in response to a question from a Reuters reporter. “The danger is, is that al-Qaeda becomes an extension of Saddam’s madness and his hatred and his capacity to extend weapons of mass destruction around the world.” He continues: “I can’t distinguish between the two, because they’re both equally as bad, and equally as evil and equally as destructive.” ([Hutcheson and Ibarguen 9/25/2002](#); [Allen 9/26/2002](#); [US President 9/30/2002](#)) Later in the day, Bush’s comments are downplayed by White House Press Secretary Ari Fleischer, who says that Bush did not mean Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein are working together, but rather that there is the danger that they could work together. He explains, “Clearly, al-Qaeda is operating inside Iraq. In the shadowy world of terrorism, sometimes there is no precise way to have definitive information until it is too late.” ([Allen 9/26/2002](#); [White House 9/25/2003](#))

September 26, 2002: Rumsfeld Incorrectly Connects Al-Zarqawi to Iraqi Government



A wanted poster for Abu Musab al-Zarqawi posted by the US military in Iraq. [Source: *US Department of Defense*] Rumsfeld claims the US government has “bulletproof” confirmation of ties between the Iraqi government and al-Qaeda members, including “solid evidence” that al-Qaeda maintains a presence in Iraq. The allegation refers to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, a Jordanian-born Palestinian who is the founder of al-Tawhid, an organization whose aim is to kill Jews and install an Islamic regime in Jordan (see [December 2001-Mid-2002](#)). Rumsfeld’s statement is based on intercepted telephone calls in which al-Zarqawi was overheard calling friends or relatives. But Knight Ridder Newspapers reports that according to US intelligence officials, “The intercepts provide no evidence that the suspected terrorist was working with the Iraqi regime or that he was working on a terrorist operation while he was in Iraq.” ([Strobel, Landay, and Walcott 10/7/2002](#) Sources: Unnamed US Intelligence Officials)

September 27, 2002: French Court Ruling Backs Allegations of Widespread False Flag Attacks in Algeria



Habib Souaidia. [Source: *Public domain*] Algerian general Khaled Nezzar loses a libel suit in France against Habib Souaidia, a former lieutenant in the Algerian army. Souaidia claimed in a 2001 book that in the 1990s the Algerian army frequently massacred Algerian civilians and then blamed Islamic militants for the killings. The French court rules that the contents of Souaidia’s book are “legitimate.” The court declares that it could not judge Algeria’s history but Souaidia had acted in good

faith in making his allegations. ([Agence France-Presse 9/27/2002](#); [Godoy 9/30/2002](#)) Souaidia served in the Algerian army until 1996 and took part in operations against Islamic militants. Nezzar is considered the real power in Algeria, still ruling behind a facade of civilian rule ever since the early 1990s. Several former Algerian officers living in exile testified in court and corroborated Souaidia's statements. For instance:

■Souaidia told the French court, "In the beginning we spoke about restoring order in the country. But very soon the generals made of us an army of wild murderers.... We had permission to kill whoever we wanted to for nothing at all." He pointed to Nezzar in the courtroom and said that "at the same time they were counting the millions of dollars they had stolen from the people."

■Former colonel Mohammed Samraoui testified that "the Algerian army used all means to attack the Islamic rebellion: blackmail, corruption, threats, killings...we used terrorist methods to attack terrorism even before it had appeared."

■Former officer Ahmed Chouchene said that soldiers were told they could kill civilians as much as they liked as long as they could "produce a false explanation for the killings." They were taught that "their role was not to apply law, but to circumvent it." ([Godoy 9/30/2002](#))

Late September 2002: US Intelligence Plants Moles Inside 'Al-Qaeda's Bank'



Dennis Lormel. [Source: *Chris Nicodemo*] According to author Ron Suskind, after 9/11, US officials from various agencies decide that a man named Pacha Wazir from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is the main money-handler for al-Qaeda. Wazir runs a chain of hawalas from South Asia to Europe. An FBI team led by Dennis Lormel determines that Wazir handled \$67 million in assets for al-Qaeda over a two-year period. But since hawalas leave little to no financial trail, prosecution would be very difficult. ([Suskind 2006, pp. 142-146](#)) In late September 2002, the UAE government freezes millions of dollars of Wazir's assets and tells him that he is under investigation by the FBI. Wazir asks to meet with the FBI to convince them he is innocent. The FBI had already been preparing to apprehend him and now they put their plan in motion. Wazir is arrested by the CIA while on his way to meet with the FBI. His accounts are frozen and he is taken to a facility somewhere in the UAE for interrogation. But Wazir does not

reveal anything useful. His brother is then apprehended in a similar manner, but he does not talk either. Several days later, two of Wazir's employees operating a store in Karachi, Pakistan, are also apprehended on their way home from work. That night, they are interrogated but refuse to talk. The next morning, the store opens as usual, but the two men are replaced by CIA agents of Pakistani descent who have been specially trained for such an occasion. Pretending to be distant cousins of Wazir temporarily filling in for the other two, they continue to run the store. According to Suskind, "Over the coming months, dozens of key captures in Pakistan and elsewhere would be made because the CIA had taken up residence inside al-Qaeda's bank." Wazir and the other three men are rendered to a CIA black site and their fate since is unknown. ([Suskind 2006, pp. 159-161](#))

September 30, 2002: No Plea Bargain Sought in Case Against Moussaoui



Zacarias Moussaoui. [Source: *Sherburne County Sheriffs Office*] Seymour Hersh of *New Yorker* magazine reveals that, despite a weak case against Zacarias Moussaoui, no federal prosecutor has discussed a plea bargain with him since he was indicted in November 2001. Hersh reports that "Moussaoui's lawyers, and some FBI officials, remain bewildered at the government's failure to pursue a plea bargain." Says a federal public defender, "I've never been in a conspiracy case where the government wasn't interested in knowing if the defendant had any information—to see if there wasn't more to the conspiracy." Apparently a plea bargain isn't being considered because Attorney General Ashcroft wants nothing less than the death penalty for Moussaoui. One former CIA official claims, "They cast a wide net and [Moussaoui] happened to be a little fish who got caught up in it. They know it now. And nobody will back off." A legal expert says, "It appears that Moussaoui is not competent to represent himself, because he doesn't seem to understand the fundamentals of the charges against

him, but I am starting to feel that the rest of us are crazier... we may let this man talk himself to death to soothe our sense of vulnerability.” ([Hersh 9/30/2002](#))

October 2002: State Department Restarts Propaganda Activities

The State Department’s propaganda office, closed in 1996, is reopened. Called the Counter-Disinformation/Misinformation Team, this office supposedly only aims its propaganda overseas to counter propaganda from other countries. ([Associated Press 3/10/2003](#))

October 2002: Former CIA Official Says CIA Analysts Are Upset About Use of Cooked Intelligence

Vincent Cannistraro, former head of the CIA’s Counter Terrorism Center, says, “Basically, cooked information is working its way into high-level pronouncements and there’s a lot of unhappiness about it in intelligence, especially among analysts at the CIA.” ([Borger 10/10/2002](#))

October-November 2002: US Leaders Reassess Afghanistan War



A year after the US conquest of Afghanistan began, most of the [Source: ABC News] In May 2002, the commander of British forces in Afghanistan declared that the war in Afghanistan would be over within weeks (see [May 8, 2002](#)). The perception amongst many in the US is that the war is over. However, it appears that US leaders begin to believe the war is going to last longer and be more difficult than previously believed. On October 8, the US ambassador says, “The war is certainly not over. Military operations are continuing, especially in the eastern part of the country and they will continue until we win.” Most of the country is controlled by warlords who are now being supplied with weapons and money by the US government.

([Blair and Harnden 10/8/2002](#)) On November 8, 2002, Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Richard B. Myers says of Afghanistan, “I think in a sense we’ve lost a little momentum there, to be frank. They’ve made lots of adaptations to our tactics, and we’ve got to continue to think and try to out-think them and to be faster at it.” ([Ricks and Loeb 11/8/2002](#)) A few days after Myers’ remarks, Time magazine reports, “The fear of failure in Afghanistan has lately prompted some hard new thinking in both Washington and Kabul. General Myers’ candid remarks to the Brookings Institution suggests the Pentagon is trying to be more creative in its pursuit of stability in Afghanistan.” One strategy is to put more resources into reconstruction. ([McGirk and Ware 11/11/2002](#))

October 2002-October 2005: NIST Tries to Estimate Speed of Aircraft Impacting WTC

One of the key variables in the computer simulations used by the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) (see [October 2002-October 2005](#)) to explain the WTC collapses is the speed of the aircraft that hit the towers. However, there is no consensus on how fast the planes were traveling. The first estimate was contained in an initial research paper by engineers Zdenek Bazant and Yong Zhou, who stated that the planes were traveling at 342 miles per hour. ([Bazant and Zhou 1/2002](#)) However, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) report said that the plane that hit the North Tower was traveling at 470 miles per hour, whereas the plane that hit the South Tower was traveling at 590 miles per hour (see [May 1, 2002](#)). ([Federal Emergency Management Agency 5/1/2002, pp. 31](#)) NIST initially estimates speeds of 435 miles per hour for the plane that hit the North Tower and 497 miles per hour for the plane that hit the South Tower. These estimates closely match figures produced by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, which finds speeds of 429 miles per hour and 503 miles per hour for the two planes. However, NIST is dissatisfied with these results and does a second study, which finds speeds of 466 and 545 miles per hour. It then uses speeds of 472 and 570 miles per hour in its severe case model, on which its final report is based. In this model, the simulation of the planes traveling faster means greater damage to the towers’ structure, making them more unstable. ([Kausel 5/2002](#); [National Institute of Standards & Technology 9/2005, pp. 152-165](#); [National Institute of Standards and Technology 9/2005, pp. 109](#))

(October 2002-October 2005): NIST Adjusts Input Data so Computer Simulations of WTC Result in Collapses

During the course of its three-year investigation of the World Trade Center collapses, the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) performs computer simulations of the behavior of each WTC tower on 9/11. In its final report, released in October 2005 (see [October 26, 2005](#)), it will describe having determined which variables most affected the outcome of its various simulations. Then, “[f]or each of the most influential variables, a central or middle value and reasonable high and low values were identified.” However, “[u]pon a preliminary examination of the middle cases, it became clear that the towers

would likely remain standing. The less severe cases were discarded after the aircraft impact results were compared to observed events. The middle cases... were discarded after the structural response analysis of major subsystems were compared to observed events.” Therefore, the “more severe case... was used for the global analysis of each tower.” But, to “the extent that the simulations deviated from the photographic evidence or eyewitness reports, the investigators adjusted the input, but only within the range of physical reality.” ([National Institute of Standards and Technology 9/2005, pp. 143-144](#) ³¹)

October 4-10, 2002: French and British Deny Link Between Iraq and Al-Qaeda

French and British officials deny that there is any link between al-Qaeda and Iraq. The British specifically deny any meeting between Mohamed Atta and Iraqi agents in the Czech Republic. They state that Iraq has purposely distanced itself from al-Qaeda, not embraced it. ([Huband 10/4/2002](#); [Norton-Taylor 10/10/2002](#))

October 5, 2002: FBI Refuses to Allow FBI Informant to Testify Before 9/11 Inquiry

The New York Times reports that the FBI is refusing to allow Abdussattar Shaikh, the FBI informant who lived with hijackers Nawaf Alhazmi and Khalid Almihdhar in the second half of 2000, to testify before the 9/11 Congressional Inquiry. The FBI claims the informer would have nothing interesting to say. The Justice Department also wants to learn more about the informant. ([Risen 10/5/2002](#)) The FBI also tries to prevent Shaikh’s handler Steven Butler from testifying, but Butler does end up testifying before a secret session on October 9, 2002. Shaikh does not testify at all. ([Schmidt 10/11/2002](#)) Butler’s testimony uncovers many curious facts about Shaikh. ([Johnston and Risen 11/23/2002](#); [Borger, Pound, and Robinson 11/29/2002](#); [US Congress 7/24/2003](#); [Thornton 7/25/2003](#))

October 6, 2002: Christian Fundamentalists Believed to Influence Bush Foreign Policy

60 Minutes airs a program on the religious support for President Bush’s expansionist Middle Eastern policies. ([Simon 10/6/2002](#)) A Guardian editorial from around the same time suggests that “Christian millenarians” who are “driven by visions of messiahs and Armageddon” have formed an alliance with “secular, neoconservative Jewish intellectuals, such as Richard Perle and Paul Wolfowitz” and are strongly influencing Bush’s foreign policy. ([Buruma 9/17/2002](#)) A later Washington Post article also sees the support of evangelical Christians and right-wing Jewish groups as instrumental in defining US Middle East policy. ([Mintz 2/9/2003](#))

October 6, 2002: Al-Qaeda Attacks Oil Tanker



The Limburg after the attack. [Source: NAVSEA] Al-Qaeda conducts a suicide bombing against a French oil tanker, the *Limburg*. The attack takes place in the Gulf of Aden off the coast of Yemen. One crew member is killed and over 90,000 barrels of oil leak into the sea. The attack is similar to the one on the USS *Cole* almost two years before (see [October 12, 2000](#)) and is planned by one of the same people, Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri. ([BBC 10/16/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 153](#))

October 8, 2002: Former FBI Director Says FBI Could Not Have Stopped 9/11 Attacks

Testifying before the 9/11 Congressional Inquiry, former FBI Director Louis Freeh says, "I am aware of nothing that to me demonstrates that the FBI and the intelligence community had the type of information or tactical intelligence which could have prevented September 11th. In terms of the FBI's capability to identify, investigate and prevent the nineteen hijackers from carrying out their attacks, the facts so far on the public record do not support the conclusion that these tragic events could have been prevented by the FBI and intelligence community acting by themselves." ([US Congress 10/8/2002](#))

October 8-November 8, 2002: Suspected Bojinka Plotter Deported after Help from Sympathetic Philippine Officials

A suspect in the 1995 Bojinka plot is arrested in the Philippines but is soon deported. Mohammed Amin al-Ghafari is believed to have played a key role in financing the Bojinka plot (see [June 1994](#)). After the Bojinka plot was foiled, he stayed in the Philippines and effectively took over a charity that is believed to have helped fund the plot (see [1995 and After](#)). He is widely believed to be the successor to the local operations of Mohammed Jamal Khalifa, bin Laden's brother-in-law. The Philippine military arrested al-Ghafari after concluding he was a mastermind in an October 2, 2002 bombing that

killed one US soldier and three civilians in the southern city of Zamboanga. ([Manila Times 10/9/2002](#); [Manila Standard Today 10/19/2002](#)) One intelligence official says al-Ghafari had been “placed under surveillance after we established that he was in constant contact with members of Jemaah Islamiyah, mostly Indonesians, in the country, Abu Sayyaf bandits, and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).” ([Vanzi 10/9/2002](#)) He is also accused of heading another group that funded two new al-Qaeda training camps in the Philippines. ([Gulf News 10/11/2002](#)) Further, al-Ghafari’s brother belongs to the banned Palestinian militant group Hamas, and a foundation he controls was used as a gathering place for suspected Hamas sympathizers. The Manila Times will report that while some Philippine investigators had been interested in apprehending him for years, others in the government had protected him. For instance, Rex Piad, the Deputy Director-General of the national police, confirmed he helped al-Ghafari get two clearances that allowed him to stay in the country. Furthermore, Piad and retired generals Eduardo Cuadra and Percival Adiong “are directors of the Islamic Wisdom Worldwide Mission (IWWM), a foundation headed by al-Ghafari and a suspected conduit of funds for terrorist operations.” ([Manila Times 10/9/2002](#)) In 1999, it was reported that bin Laden was funding Muslim militants through the IWWM and other charities, but these charities stayed open (see [February 15, 1999](#)). It is reported that al-Ghafari had long been in contact with Philippine intelligence agents, who tried to recruit him as a spy, supposedly unsuccessfully. He was going to meet with agents the night he was arrested. ([Dacanay 10/11/2002](#)) On November 8, al-Ghafari is deported to Jordan. ([Manila Standard Today 11/9/2002](#)) The Zamboanga bombing will be blamed on Abu Sayyaf, a group that has often been accused of colluding with the Philippine government. ([Solmerin 4/26/2006](#))

October 9, 2002: FBI Agent Handled Hijackers’ Landlord

San Diego FBI agent Steven Butler reportedly gives “explosive” testimony to the 9/11 Congressional Inquiry. Butler, recently retired, has been unable to speak to the media, but he was the handler for Abdussattar Shaikh, an FBI asset who rented a room to hijackers Nawaf Alhazmi and Khalid Almihdhar. Butler claims he might have uncovered the 9/11 plot if the CIA had provided the FBI with more information earlier about Alhazmi and Almihdhar. ([Shenon 10/22/2002](#)) He says, “It would have made a huge difference.” He suggests they would have quickly found the two hijackers because they were “very, very close.” “We would have immediately opened... investigations. We would have given them the full court press. We would... have done everything—physical surveillance, technical surveillance, and other assets.” ([US Congress 7/24/2003](#) ³; [Thornton 7/25/2003](#)) Butler discloses that he had been monitoring a flow of Saudi Arabian money that wound up in the hands of two of the 9/11 hijackers, but his supervisors failed to take any action on the warnings. It is not known when Butler started investigating the money flow, or when he warned his supervisors. ([Borger, Pound, and Robinson 11/29/2002](#)) The FBI unsuccessfully tries to prevent Butler from testifying. ([Dewar 10/11/2002](#)) This testimony doesn’t stop the US government from deporting Basnan to Saudi Arabia several weeks later. ([Schmidt and Allen 11/24/2002](#))

October 9, 2002: Handling of 9/11 Hijackers' Visa Applications Denounced

Visa applications for the 15 Saudi Arabian hijackers are made public, and six separate experts agree: "All of them should have been denied entry [into the US]." Joel Mowbray, who first breaks the story for the conservative National Review, says he is shocked by what he saw: "I really was expecting al-Qaeda to have trained their operatives well, to beat the system. They didn't have to beat the system, the system was rigged in their favor from the get-go." A former US consular officer says the visas show a pattern of criminal negligence. Some examples: "Abdulaziz Alomari claimed to be a student but didn't name a school; claimed to be married but didn't name a spouse; under nationality and gender, he didn't list anything." "Khalid Almihdhar... simply listed 'Hotel' as his US destination —no name, no city, no state but no problem getting a visa." Only one actually gave a US destination, and one stated his destination as "no." Only Hani Hanjour had a slight delay in acquiring his visa. His first application was flagged because he wrote he wanted to visit for three years when the legal limit is two. When he returned two weeks later, he simply changed the form to read "one year" and was accepted. The experts agree that even allowing for chance, incompetence, and human error, the odds were that only a few should have been approved. ([Mowbray 10/9/2002](#); [Mowbray 10/9/2002](#); [Raddatz 10/23/2002](#)) In response to the revelation, the State Department says, "The fact is that with 20/20 hindsight, I'm sure one can always find a reason that you might have turned down a visa." ([Mowbray 10/10/2002](#); [State Department 10/10/2002](#))

October 10, 2002: Bush Backtracks on Support for Independent 9/11 Investigation

A tentative congressional deal to create an independent commission to investigate the 9/11 attacks falls apart hours after the White House objected to the plan (it appears Vice President Cheney called Republican leaders and told them to renege on the agreement ([Hulse 11/2/2002](#))). Bush had pledged to support such a commission a few weeks earlier (see [September 20, 2002](#)), but doubters who questioned his sincerity appear to have been proven correct. Hours after top Republican leaders announced at a press conference that an agreement had been reached, House Republican leaders said they wouldn't bring the legislation to the full House for a vote unless the commission proposal was changed. There are worries that if the White House can delay the legislation for a few more days until Congress adjourns, it could stop the creation of a commission for months, if not permanently. ([Johnston and van Natta 10/11/2002](#)) Another deal is made a few weeks later (see [November 15, 2002](#)) and the commission goes forward.

October 11, 2002: Pentagon and CIA at Odds Over Alleged Iraq-Al-Qaeda Ties

The Los Angeles Times reports that there is an escalating “war” between the Pentagon and the CIA over tying Iraq to al-Qaeda. ([Miller and Drogin 10/11/2002](#))

October 12, 2002: Bali Bombing Kills Over 200



An explosion lights up the sky on the island of Bali, Indonesia. [*Source: Agence France-Presse*] A car bomb detonates in front of a discotheque at Kuta Beach, on the Indonesian resort island of Bali, starting a fire that rages through a dozen buildings, killing 202 people. No group claims responsibility, but Jemaah Islamiyah, a radical Islamic organization in Indonesia, is suspected. ([Bonner 10/13/2002](#); [Mydans 10/14/2002](#); [BBC 2/19/2003](#)) Hambali, a leader in both al-Qaeda and Jemaah Islamiyah, is said to have been involved. ([Simpson 12/7/2003](#)) It will later turn out that the US was given a “stunningly explicit and specific” advanced warning that Hambali and Jemaah Islamiyah were planning to attack nightclubs in Bali (see [August-September 2002](#)).

Mid-October 2002: British Administrator Fires Bosnian Official Vigorously Investigating Terrorism and Corruption



Munir Alibabic. [*Source: Dani*] By 2002, the Muslim Bosnian government is controlled by the Social Democrats, now that Alija Izetbegovic has retired and his SDA party is out of power. To deal with the issues of corruption and terrorism, in July 2002 the new government brings Munir Alibabic out of retirement to run Bosnia's

intelligence agency. Alibabic had been fired in 1994 as head of the secret police in Sarajevo for opposing government corruption and the support of the mujaheddin, and he is widely respected for his integrity. He vows to stop the cover-up of Bosnian Muslim ties to terrorism, stating, “A crime is a crime, regardless which side commits it.” He works aggressively with other intelligence agencies to uncover the al-Qaeda network in Bosnia. He soon completes a report detailing ties between the SDA party and organized crime. The report names Elfatih Hassanein, Hasan Cengic, Irfan Ljevakovic, Bakir Alispahic, and Alija Delimustafic as key co-conspirators. The first three were central figures in the Third World Relief Agency (TWRA), a bin Laden-linked charity front active in the early 1990s (see [Mid-1991-1996](#)). But in October 2002 elections, the SDA returns to power. Paddy Ashdown, a British politician serving as the Office of the High Representative in Bosnia, publicly supported the SDA over secularists and reformers in the election and shortly after they win he fires Alibabic. Author John Schindler will later write that “By the end of 2002, it was evident that the post-9/11 drive to run al-Qaeda out of Bosnia and force its local supporters to heel had run out of steam.” ([Schindler 2007, pp. 289-291](#)) The Telegraph will later report that Ashdown fired Alibabic on the advice of the British intelligence agency MI6, but it isn’t clear why. ([de Quetteville and Griffiths 9/27/2004](#))

October 17, 2002: None Punished at Agencies for 9/11 Failures

The directors of the US’s three most famous intelligence agencies, the CIA, FBI and NSA, testify before a Congressional inquiry on 9/11. ([US Congress 10/17/2002](#); [US Congress 10/17/2002](#)) All three say no individual at their agencies has been punished or fired for any of missteps connected to 9/11. This does not satisfy several on the inquiry, including Senator Carl Levin (D), who says “People have to be held accountable.” ([Priest and Schmidt 10/18/2002](#))

October 17, 2002: NSA Denies Having Indications of 9/11 Planning



NSA Director Michael Hayden. [Source: NSA] NSA Director Michael Hayden testifies before the 9/11 Congressional Inquiry that the “NSA had no [indications] that al-Qaeda was specifically targeting New York and Washington... or

even that it was planning an attack on US soil.” Before 9/11, the “NSA had no knowledge... that any of the attackers were in the United States.” Supposedly, a post-9/11 NSA review found no intercepts of calls involving any of the 19 hijackers. ([Reuters 10/17/2002](#); [US Congress 10/17/2002](#); [Diamond 10/18/2002](#)) Yet, in the summer of 2001 (see [Summer 2001](#)), the NSA intercepted communications between Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, the mastermind of the 9/11 attacks, and hijacker Mohamed Atta, when he was in charge of operations in the US. ([Gumbel 6/6/2002](#); [Buncombe 9/15/2002](#)) What was said between the two has not been revealed. The NSA also intercepted multiple phone calls from al-Qaeda leader Abu Zubaida to the US in the days before 9/11 (see [Early September 2001](#)). But who was called or what was said has not been revealed. ([ABC News 2/18/2002](#)) In addition, Hayden testified three times in secret on June 18, June 19, and July 18, but little is known about what he said, as not much information is disclosed in the media and many sections of the Inquiry’s final report about the NSA are heavily redacted. The main revelations at the time of the summer hearings are that the NSA intercepted two messages apparently pertaining to the forthcoming attack one day before 9/11, and this sparks a controversial leak inquiry by the FBI (see [August 2, 2002](#)). ([Snow and Bash 6/18/2002](#); [Martin 6/19/2002](#); [Bash, Ensor, and Snow 6/20/2002](#); [US Congress 7/24/2003](#).)

October 17, 2002: Tenet Misinforms Congressional Inquiry about CIA Knowledge of Hijackers’ Entry into US

In sworn testimony to the 9/11 Congressional Inquiry, CIA Director George Tenet repeatedly claims that a March 2000 cable sent to CIA headquarters reporting that hijacker Nawaf Alhazmi had entered the US was not read by anybody. He says, “I know that nobody read that cable,” “Nobody read that cable in the March timeframe,” and “[N]obody read that information only cable.” ([New York Times 10/17/2002](#)) Former Counterterrorist Center Director Cofer Black will also claim that the cable was not read. ([US Congress 7/24/2003, pp. 51](#).) However, a later investigation by the CIA Office of Inspector General will find that numerous CIA officers had actually read the cable shortly after it was sent (see [March 6, 2000 and After](#)). Nevertheless, the 9/11 Commission will later assert that, “No-one outside the Counterterrorist Center was told any of this” (about Alhazmi’s arrival in the US) and neglect to mention that Tenet had previously misstated the CIA’s knowledge of the hijackers. Neither will the 9/11 Commission investigate the cause of the CIA’s apparent inaction. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 181](#))

October 18, 2002: Saudi Acquaintance of Bin Laden Given Immunity by Becoming Ambassador to Britain

Saudi Arabia announces that Turki al-Faisal will be its next ambassador to Britain. Turki is a controversial figure because of his long-standing relationship to bin Laden. He has also been named in a lawsuit (see [August 15, 2002](#)) by 9/11 victims’ relatives against Saudi Arabians for their support of al-Qaeda before 9/11. It is later noted that his

ambassador position could give him diplomatic immunity from the lawsuit. ([Gerson and Motley 12/30/2002](#)) Turki's predecessor as ambassador was recalled after it was revealed he had written poems praising suicide bombers. ([Harris and Bright 3/2/2003](#)) Articles reporting on his new posting suggest that Turki last met bin Laden in the early 1990s, before bin Laden became wanted by the US for his anti-American militancy. ([Beeston and Evans 10/18/2002](#); [Whitaker 10/19/2002](#)) However, these reports fail to mention other reported contacts with bin Laden, including a possible secret meeting in 1998 (see [July 1998](#)).

October 18, 2002: Ashcroft Invokes 'State-Secrets Privilege' to Prevent FBI Whistleblower's Suit from Being Heard in Court

At the request of FBI Director Robert Mueller, Attorney General John Ashcroft files a declaration invoking the rarely used "state-secrets privilege" to block FBI translator Sibel Edmonds' lawsuit against the government from being heard in court. ([Sheehy 1/22/2004](#)) The Justice Department insists that disclosing her evidence, even at a closed hearing in court, "could reasonably be expected to cause serious damage to the foreign policy and national security of the United States." The "state-secrets privilege," derived from English common law, has never been the subject of any congressional vote or statute. Normally, the privilege is used to block the discovery of a specific piece of evidence that could put the nation's security at risk. But Ashcroft's declaration asserts that the very subject of her lawsuit constitutes a state secret, thus barring her from even presenting her case in court. The text of Ashcroft's declaration is classified. ([Rose 9/2005](#))

October 21, 2002: 13 Hijackers Were Never Interviewed by US Consular Officials

The General Accounting Office, the nonpartisan investigative arm of Congress, releases a report asserting that at least 13 of the 19 9/11 hijackers were never interviewed by US consular officials before being granted visas to enter the US. This contradicts previous assurances from the State Department that 12 of the hijackers had been interviewed. It also found that, for 15 hijackers whose applications could be found, none had filled in the documents properly. Records for four other hijackers (the four non-Saudis, i.e., Ziad Jarrah, Mohamed Atta, Fayez Ahmed Banihammad, and Marwan Al Shehhi) could not be checked because they were accidentally destroyed. ([Mowbray 10/21/2002](#); [United States General Accounting Office 10/21/2002](#) ³⁸; [Eggen 10/22/2002](#)) The State Department maintains that visa procedures were properly followed. In December 2002, Senators Jon Kyl (R) and Pat Roberts (R) state in a chapter of the 9/11 Congressional Inquiry that "if State Department personnel had merely followed the law and not granted non-immigrant visas to 15 of the 19 hijackers in Saudi Arabia... 9/11 would not have happened." ([Associated Press 12/19/2002](#); [US Congress 7/24/2003](#), pp. 653-673 ³⁹)

October 23, 2002: Study Blames WTC Collapses on Failure of Support Columns



Matthys Levy. [Source: PBS] A report is made publicly available, which the Engineering News-Record calls the “most comprehensive study yet on the destruction of the World Trade Center.” The study was commissioned by WTC leaseholder Silverstein Properties Inc. to support a \$7 billion insurance claim, and conducted by a team of engineers from several leading firms, including Weidlinger Associates, LZA Technology/Thornton-Tomasetti, and ARUPFire. It is intended to build on a previous study sponsored by FEMA (see [May 1, 2002](#)). The report’s findings are based on an analysis of original structural drawings, thousands of photos, and dozens of videos. Investigators used fire evaluation techniques and powerful computer software to simulate the condition of each tower at critical times between the planes’ impacts and the towers’ collapses. The earlier FEMA investigators had no access to such computer modeling. Matthys Levy, the chairman of Weidlinger Associates and one of the engineers on the study team, says, “The buildings had tremendous reserve capacity and that was reflected in all of the elements we analyzed. In fact, because there were so much excess capacity, the columns even in the impact floors did not buckle immediately, but failed as the result of the fire.” The report states that failure of the WTC’s steel floor supports (“trusses”) did not contribute to the collapses. Instead, the collapses were caused by the failure of steel structural columns that were either destroyed when the planes hit or lost fireproofing, leaving them vulnerable to the weakening effects of the ensuing fires. It says that debris and dust distributed by the plane crashes inhibited the fires, such that the average air temperatures on the impact floors were between 400 and 700°C (750-1,300°F): significantly lower than those associated with typical “fully developed” office fires. However, says Matthys Levy, “By the time the temperature inside the buildings reached 400 degrees, the steel would have lost approximately 50% of its strength. Eventually, gravity took over and the towers began to fall.” Then, according to the analysis led by researchers from LZA Technology/Thornton-Tomasetti, “Once collapse initiated in each tower, essentially all of the interior structure of the tower fell straight down with floors pancaking on top of one another. The network of perimeter steel columns and spandrels acted like a chute to funnel the interior contents into the tower footprint.” According to the computer simulations, the damage to the South Tower’s steel core columns was so severe that the tower should have collapsed immediately after the plane hit. Civil engineer John Osteraas says this incorrect result casts doubt upon some of the study’s predictions. The report concludes that the collapse of the South Tower did not

cause or contribute to the subsequent collapse of the North Tower, thus supporting Silverstein Properties' claim that the terrorist attack represented two occurrences, entitling it to two \$3.5 billion insurance policy limits. A separate study commissioned by the insurers contradicts this (see [October 23, 2002](#)). The Silverstein report apparently does not examine the collapse of WTC Building 7, a 47-story skyscraper that also collapsed on 9/11 (see [\(5:20 p.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). It has been passed on to the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), which is undertaking its own investigation of the WTC collapses (see [August 21, 2002](#)). ([Glanz and Lipton 9/30/2002](#); [McLeod 10/23/2002](#); [Silverstein Properties, Inc. 10/23/2002](#); [Post 10/25/2002](#); [Glanz and Lipton 10/29/2002](#); [Post 11/4/2002](#); [Misonzhnik 4/30/2003](#))

October 23, 2002: Report Concludes that Destruction of One WTC Tower Would Have Left Other Unusable

An engineering report is released concluding that the destruction of one of the World Trade Center's Twin Towers would have rendered the other unusable. Swiss Re and other insurance companies involved in the WTC coverage commissioned the study, which was written by California-based Exponent Failure Analysis Associates. It is released the same day as a report on the collapses by WTC leaseholder Silverstein Properties Inc. (see [October 23, 2002](#)). Contradicting the Silverstein report, it concludes: "[T]he collapse of one tower in the World Trade Center complex would have severely compromised the future viability of the entire complex." This supports the insurance companies' contention that the WTC attacks constituted one loss event, not two, as claimed by Silverstein Properties, thereby entitling Silverstein to a policy limit of \$3.5 billion instead of \$7 billion. The report, along with the underlying data, computer models, and engineering analyses, have been passed on to the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), which is conducting an investigation into the collapses (see [August 21, 2002](#)). ([McLeod 10/23/2002](#); [Insurance Journal 10/23/2002](#); [Post 11/4/2002](#)) In late 2004, a jury will rule that the WTC attacks were two events, and Silverstein Properties will be tentatively awarded \$2.2 billion in insurance for the destruction of the Twin Towers. ([BBC 12/7/2004](#); [Insurance Journal 12/7/2004](#))

October 25, 2002: German-US Breakdown in Communications Hampers Anti-Terrorism Measures

PBS Newshour reports, "[German authorities] say they're not getting the cooperation they need from the authorities in the [US], and they're worried that a political dispute between Washington and Berlin is hampering their ability to protect the public... In Hamburg, the police say that breakdown in communications between the US and German governments has also led to a dramatic reduction in the amount of investigative help they're getting from the [US]" The Bush administration has not spoken to the German government since it won re-election four months earlier while openly opposing Bush's planned war on Iraq. Germans say existing prosecutions of 9/11 suspects are now threatened by the information breakdown. ([Online NewsHour 10/25/2002](#)) The Germans

helped capture suspected al-Qaeda operative Mohamed Heidar Zammar and turned him over to a third country, yet now they're learning very little from his interrogations, even though he has admitted to being involved in a plot to attack a consulate in Germany. A US State Department official denies there is any problem, aside from a few "bumps in the road." ([Butler 11/4/2002](#)) June 2004, German prosecutor Matthias Krauss, who investigated the Hamburg al-Qaeda cell, will be scheduled to testify before the 9/11 Commission about both pre-9/11 communication problems between German and US intelligence officials and the US government's cooperation with foreign governments prosecuting suspected terrorists in the post-9/11 period. However, he will unexpectedly cancel at the last minute. ([Yen 6/15/2004](#))

October 27, 2002: Author Gore Vidal Says Bush Used 9/11 as Pretext



Gore Vidal. [*Source: David Rentas*]The Observer reports:

"America's most controversial writer Gore Vidal has launched the most scathing attack to date on George W. Bush's Presidency, calling for an investigation into the events of 9/11 to discover whether the Bush administration deliberately chose not to act on warnings of al-Qaeda's plans. Vidal's highly controversial 7,000 word polemic titled 'The Enemy Within'... argues that what he calls a 'Bush junta' used the terrorist attacks as a pretext to enact a preexisting agenda to invade Afghanistan and crack down on civil liberties at home." Vidal also said, "Apparently, 'conspiracy stuff' is now shorthand for unspeakable truth." ([Vidal 10/27/2002](#))

October 28, 2002: US Diplomat Is Murdered in Jordan; Al-Zarqawi Is Allegedly to Blame



Laurence Foley. *[Source: Public domain]* US diplomat Laurence Foley, a senior administrator of the US Agency for International Development (USAID), is shot and killed in front of his house in Amman, Jordan. It will later be claimed that his two killers were working for Islamist militant Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. According to Jordanian court documents, in the summer of 2002 al-Zarqawi began training a small group of fighters in Syria to attack Western and Jewish targets in Jordan. Foley was their first target. The two killers met with al-Zarqawi in Syria and got money for the operation. ([Whitlock 6/8/2006](#)) Al-Zarqawi's alleged role in this murder will be widely reported in December 2002 and used as further justification for a US invasion of Iraq, since US officials are (incorrectly) arguing at the time that al-Zarqawi is linked to both al-Qaeda and the Iraqi government. For instance, one CNN story about the arrest of Foley's two killers is titled, "Arrests May Link Al-Qaeda, Iraq." ([CNN 12/14/2002](#); [Boettcher 12/14/2002](#))

November 2002: Saudi Interior Minister Blames Jews for 9/11 Attacks

Saudi Interior Minister Prince Nayef blames Zionists and Jews for the 9/11 attacks. He tells journalists, "Who has benefited from September 11 attacks? I think [the Jews] were the protagonists of such attacks." Nayef is in charge of the Saudi investigation into the attacks, and some US congresspeople respond to the comments by questioning how strongly Saudi Arabia is investigating the involvement of the 15 Saudi 9/11 hijackers. ([Shahine 12/5/2002](#))

November 2002-June 2003: Secret Evidence Used against Hijackers' Associate Attracts Criticism, Most Charges Are Dropped



Judge Marilyn Clark heard the case of Mohamed el-Atriss. [Source: [newjerseycourtsonline](#)] The case of Mohamed el-Atriss, who was arrested for selling false ID cards to two of the 9/11 hijackers (see [July-August 2001](#)) and was an associate of an unindicted co-conspirator in the 'Landmarks' bomb plot trial (see [Before September 11, 2001](#)), becomes controversial when secret evidence is used against him at a series of hearings. The evidence is presented without el-Atriss or his attorney being present and such secrecy is said to be unusual even after 9/11. Based on the secret evidence, el-Atriss' bond is set at \$500,000, which the Washington Post calls "an amount consistent with a charge of capital murder—even though most of the charges against him [are] misdemeanors." The secret evidence rule is invoked for national security reasons based on a request by the sheriff's office, while el-Atriss is being held in prison for six months. However, the FBI, which has a relationship with el-Atriss (see [September 13, 2001-Mid 2002](#)) and does not back the use of the secret evidence, insists that el-Atriss is not connected to terrorism. An appeals judge rules that the secret evidence cannot be used on the say-so of local officials. According to the judge, the secret information is inaccurate and could have been rebutted by el-Atriss if he had seen it. Transcripts of the secret hearings are later released to the media ([Russakoff 2/5/2003](#); [Russakoff 6/25/2003](#)). In January 2003 el-Atriss pleads guilty to a charge of selling false identification documents to two hijackers, Khalid Almihdhar and Abdulaziz Alomari, and is sentenced to five years' probation, with credit for the six months in jail he has already served, and a \$15,000 fine. Although he admits selling the cards not just to the two hijackers, but also to hundreds of illegal immigrants, the other 26 charges against him are dropped by prosecutors. ([Russakoff 2/5/2003](#); [Schwanberg 10/20/2003](#))

November 1, 2002: Caspian Oil Potential Was Wildly Overestimated

Steven Mann, Director of the State Department's Caspian Basin Energy Policy Office, points out that the Caspian Sea nations contain 50 billion barrels of proven oil reserves. ([Guggenheim 11/1/2002](#)) "Caspian oil represents four percent of the world reserves. It will never dominate the world markets, but it will have an important role to play," said Mann. He concludes that the Caspian Sea energy "will not be a second Persian Gulf." ([Guggenheim 11/1/2002](#)) In late 1995, the American Petroleum Institute asserted that the states bordering the Caspian Sea contained 659 billion barrels of oil (see [December 1995](#)).

November 1, 2002: 9/11 Victims' Relatives Protest Against Opposition to Sue Saudis

Some of the 9/11 victims' relatives hold a rally at the US Capitol to protest what they fear are plans by the Bush administration to delay or block their lawsuit against prominent Saudi individuals for an alleged role in financing al-Qaeda. ([Guggenheim 11/1/2002](#)) US officials say they have not decided whether to submit a motion seeking to block or restrict the lawsuit, but they are concerned about the "diplomatic sensitivities" of the suit. Saudis have withdrawn hundreds of billions of dollars from the US in response to the suit. The Guardian previously reported that "some plaintiffs in the case say the Bush administration is pressuring them to pull out of the lawsuit in order to avoid damaging US-Saudi relations, threatening them with the prospect of being denied any money from the government's own compensation scheme if they continue to pursue it. Bereaved relatives who apply to the federal compensation scheme must, in any case, sign away their rights to sue the government, air carriers in the US, and other domestic bodies—a condition that has prompted some of them to call the government compensation 'hush money.' The fund is expected, in the end, to pay out \$4 billion. They remain, however, free to sue those they accuse of being directly responsible for the attacks, such as bin Laden, and—so they thought—the alleged financiers of terrorism." ([Burkeman 9/20/2002](#))

November 3, 2002: CIA Assassinates Al-Qaeda Suspects with Remote Drone One Day Before US Elections



Qaed Senyan al-Harethi. [*Source: Yemen Observer*] A CIA-operated Predator drone fires a missile that destroys a truck of suspected al-Qaeda operatives in Yemen. The target of the attack is Qaed Salim Sinan al-Harethi, a top al-Qaeda operative, but five others are also killed, including American citizen Kamal Derwish. ([Pincus 11/4/2002](#); [Lumpkin 12/3/2002](#)) Al-Harethi is said to have been involved in the 2000 bombing of the USS *Cole*. Bush administration officials say Derwish was the ringleader of a sleeper cell in Lackawanna, New York, and connected to the so-called "Buffalo Six." ([Powell and Priest 11/9/2002](#); [Thomas and Hosenball 11/11/2002](#)) A former high-level intelligence officer complains that Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld wants "to take guys out for political effect." Al-Harethi was being tracked for weeks through his cell phone. ([Hersh 12/16/2002](#)) The attack happens one day before mid-term elections in the US. Newsweek will note that timing of the strike "was, at the very least, fortuitous" for the Bush administration. ([Thomas and Hosenball](#)

[11/11/2002](#)) New Yorker magazine will later report, “The Yemeni government had planned to delay an announcement of the attack until it could issue a joint statement with Washington. When American officials released the story unilaterally, in time for Election Day, the Yemenis were angry and dismayed.” ([Hersh 12/16/2002](#)) Initial reports suggest the truck was destroyed by a car bomb. But on November 5, Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz will brag about the strike on CNN, thus ruining the cover story and revealing that the truck was destroyed by a US missile (see [November 5, 2002](#)). ([Thomas and Hosenball 11/11/2002](#))

November 5, 2002: Defense Department Keeps Study on 9/11 Pentagon Damage Secret

The New York Times reports that the official Pentagon study assessing the structural effect of the 9/11 attack on the Pentagon was completed in July 2002 but has not been released, and may never be released. The study, conducted by the Army Corps of Engineers, “was specifically intended to consider Pentagon security in the light of new terrorist threats... Some, confused over what could be considered sensitive in the report, have expressed outrage that the lessons it may hold for other buildings could be squandered.” Engineers outside the investigation say the implications are considerable, since the design of the Pentagon is much more similar to other major buildings elsewhere than the design of the WTC. If the report were released, it is likely building codes would be changed and many lives saved in the long term. ([Glanz 11/5/2002](#))

November 5, 2002: British Whistleblower Convicted, Serves Short Sentence



David Shayler. [*Source: David Shayler*]David Shayler, a member of the British intelligence agency MI5, is convicted of divulging British intelligence secrets. Shayler claims that British intelligence paid an al-Qaeda agent to assassinate Libyan leader Colonel Mu’ammarr al-Qadhafi in 1996 (see [1996](#)). Under strict secrecy laws, the British press is not allowed to report Shayler’s claims. The press is not even allowed to report that the government won a gag order on the press. ([Daley 10/10/2002](#)) Shayler is not allowed to argue that he acted in the public interest by releasing the information, and the veracity of his claims is not challenged in court. ([Norton-Taylor and Wadham](#)

[11/6/2002](#)) Shayler is sentenced to six months in prison, but only serves seven weeks, then is released on parole. ([BBC 12/23/2002](#))

November 5, 2002: Wolfowitz Confirms US Carried Out Missile Strike in Yemen



Qaed Salim Sinan Al-Harethi (right) with Osama bin Laden on May 26, 1998, in Khost, Afghanistan. [*Source: CNN via Getty Images*] Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz confirms that the assassination of Qaed Senyan al-Harethi in Yemen two days earlier (see [November 3, 2002](#)) was done with a US Predator drone that struck the truck carrying al-Harethi and five others. Initial reported suggested that the truck was destroyed by a car bomb, but this cover story is blown when Wolfowitz brags about the success of the operation on CNN, revealing US involvement. Newsweek reports that “The CIA, which ran the operation, was furious with the Defense Department for blowing its cover story.” US procedures required that the Yemeni government had to give approval of the strike in advance, and the revelation of such approval is highly embarrassing to the Yemeni government. ([Pincus 11/6/2002](#); [Thomas and Hosenball 11/11/2002](#)) There are widespread protests in Yemen and the US Embassy has to be closed for a period of time following Wolfowitz’s revelation. ([Davis 8/13/2004](#)) A knowledgeable source tells Newsweek that Yemen’s President Ali Abdullah Saleh is “highly pissed” about the leak. CIA officials worry the leak will discourage other countries from allowing Predator strikes within their borders. A former senior CIA official says, “The Pentagon view seems to be, this is good, it shows we can reach out and touch ‘em. The CIA view is, you dumb bastards, this means no other country will cooperate with us!” ([Thomas and Hosenball 11/11/2002](#)) Yayha Almutawakel, deputy secretary general of the ruling party in Yemen, says, “This is why it is so difficult to make deals with the United States. This is why we are reluctant to work closely with them. They don’t consider the internal consequences in Yemen. In security matters you don’t want to alert the enemy.” ([Davis 8/13/2004](#)) Wolfowitz’s leak also starts a debate about the morality and legality of the strike, especially since a US citizen was killed (see [November 5- December, 2002](#)).

November 5- December, 2002: Remote Strike in Yemen Raises Legal and Ethical Issues



Kamal Derwish. [Source: PBS] The revelation that the US killed Qaed Salim Sinan al-Harethi in Yemen with a Predator missile strike (see [November 3, 2002](#) and [November 5, 2002](#)) sparks a debate about the morality and legality of remote attacks outside of war zones. The Bush administration had previously criticized Israel's policy of "targeted killings" of Palestinian militants. Newsweek comments, "A State Department spokesman bobbed and weaved and tried to draw distinctions. But, privately, administration officials say the difference is really one of scale and frequency." ([Thomas and Hosenball 11/11/2002](#)) Many international lawyers and some foreign governments question the legality of the assassination. ([Whitaker and Burkeman 11/6/2002](#)) For decades, the US government has been prohibited from conducting assassinations. The Bush administration says it still adheres to that policy but makes an exception for "enemy combatants" such as al-Qaeda leaders. In December 2002, it will be revealed that President Bush approved a secret "high-value target list" of about two dozen terrorist leaders, giving the CIA basic executive and legal authority to either kill or capture those in the list. The CIA is also empowered to capture or kill terrorists not mentioned in the list (see [September 17, 2001](#)). ([Risen and Johnston 12/15/2002](#)) Additional controversy is generated when it is discovered that US citizen Kamal Derwish was one of those killed in the strike. Derwish is alleged to have been connected to an al-Qaeda cell in Buffalo, New York. US officials say the CIA has the legal authority to target and kill US citizens it believes are working for al-Qaeda (see [July 22, 2002](#)). ([Lumpkin 12/3/2002](#)) The New Yorker reveals that there were two planned Predator strikes in Yemen called off at the last minute that turned out to be aimed at innocent people instead of al-Harethi. One recently retired Special Forces operative who served on high-level planning staffs at the Pentagon warns that the civilians running the military are no longer trying to "avoid the gray area." Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld is reportedly behind the effort to use the CIA and special forces for more remote killings (see [July 22, 2002](#)). One former high-level intelligence officer complains, "They want to turn these guys into assassins. They want to go on rumors—not facts—and go for political effect, and that's what the Special Forces Command is really afraid of." ([Hersh 12/16/2002](#)) Noting that in its battle against al-Qaeda, the US has effectively deemed the entire planet a combat zone, Scott Silliman, director of Duke University's Center on Law, Ethics and National Security says, "Could you put a Hellfire missile into a car in Washington, DC?... The answer is yes, you could." But National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice says, "No constitutional questions are raised here." ([Witt 11/24/2002](#); [Lumpkin 12/3/2002](#))

November 6-December 13, 2002: US Adds Pakistan and Saudi Arabia to New Immigration Restriction List Only After Pressure

The US tightens immigration restrictions for 18 countries. All males over age 16 coming to the US from Afghanistan, Algeria, Bahrain, Eritrea, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, North Korea, Oman, Qatar, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, or Yemen must register with the US government and be photographed and fingerprinted at their local INS office. ([Sheridan 11/7/2002](#); [Frank 11/23/2002](#)) Two countries not included are: Pakistan (the home country of Khalid Shaikh Mohammed and many other al-Qaeda members) and Saudi Arabia (the home country of bin Laden and 15 of the 19 9/11 hijackers). After criticism that they were not included, these two countries are added to the list on December 13, 2002. ([Lichtblau and Miller 12/19/2002](#))

November 8, 2002: Al-Qaeda Leader Al-Nashiri Arrested in UAE

High-ranking al-Qaeda leader Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri is captured in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Al-Nashiri is believed to have played a role in the 1998 African embassy bombings (see [August 7, 1998](#)), attended a 9/11 planning summit in Malaysia in 2000 (see January 5-8, 2000), was one of the masterminds of the 2000 USS *Cole* bombing (see [October 12, 2000](#)), and planned the 2002 bombing of the French oil tanker Limburg (see [October 6, 2002](#)). Said to be chief of al-Qaeda's operations in the Persian Gulf region, he is taking flight lessons in the remote UAE region of Umm Al-Qaiwain when he is arrested by local authorities and then turned over to the CIA. An unknown number of other al-Qaeda suspects are arrested with him, but apparently they are considered less important and are not handed to the CIA as well. His arrest is kept secret for two weeks before it is leaked to Arab newspapers, during which time the CIA tries to round some of his associates. ([Tyler 12/23/2002](#)) Nashiri will remain in secret CIA prisons until 2006 and then will be transferred to the Guantanamo Bay prison (see [September 2-3, 2006](#)).

Shortly After November 8, 2002: Al-Qaeda Leader Al-Nashiri Is Waterboarded in Secret CIA Prison

Shortly after his arrest in the United Arab Emirates on November 8, 2002 (see [November 8, 2002](#)), al-Qaeda leader Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri is taken to an unknown location and tortured. According to the Associated Press, he is waterboarded, which is a technique simulating drowning that is widely regarded as torture. He is only one of about four high-ranking detainees waterboarded, according to media reports (see [May 2002-2003](#)). ([Hess 12/11/2007](#)) Much will later be written about the torture and interrogation of other top al-Qaeda leaders such as Abu Zubaida, but next to nothing is publicly known about what happens to al-Nashiri in the months after his arrest. However, in late 2007 it will be

reported that at least some of his interrogations were videotaped by the CIA (see [Spring-Late 2002](#)), and his waterboarding was videotaped. ([Eggen and Pincus 12/18/2007](#)) But these videotapes will later be destroyed in controversial circumstances (see [November 2005](#)). It is not known where this waterboarding took place, but ABC News has reported that while in CIA custody al-Nashiri spent most of his time in a secret CIA prison in Poland (see [November 2005](#)).

November 9, 2002: Poison Attack on London Subway Is False Alarm



Heightened security on the London Underground.

[Source: BBC] Three men are arrested in London and charged under the Terrorism Act 2000 for the possession of articles for the preparation, instigation, and commission of terrorism acts. The Sunday Times breaks the story and claims that MI5 and police have foiled a major plot to release cyanide gas on the London Underground (the Tube), which is used by three million commuters each day. The men, all of North African origin, are also alleged to have links with al-Qaeda. They are Rabah Chekat-Bais, 21, Rabah Kadris, in his mid-30s, and Karim Kadouri, 33, all unemployed and of no fixed address. Kadris is the librarian at Finsbury Park Mosque, which is perceived by many officials to be a hotbed of radicalism. ([BBC 11/17/2002](#)) Magnus Ranstorp, an expert in international terrorism at the University of Saint Andrews in Scotland says “cyanide has surfaced a number of times surrounding al-Qaeda’s chemical program.” Video obtained by CNN in August shows tests of a chemical agent, presumed to be cyanide, on dogs at a camp in Afghanistan. Documentation recovered in Afghanistan also reveals al-Qaeda’s interest in chemical weapons. The Ministry of Defense simulated biological attacks on the underground in the early 1960s, during the Cold War. Scientists mixed harmless spores of the anthrax analogue *Bacillus globigii* with talcum powder and released them on the Northern Line. They found that the spores dispersed to every one of the several dozen stations on that line. The Defense scientists projected disastrous consequences in the event of a genuine attack. A London Underground spokeswoman, addressing the alleged cyanide threat, refused to comment on the counter measures currently in place but says, “we are always speaking to police and reviewing what we can do,” adding, “all our staff are well trained to look out for the unusual.” Governments around the world warn their citizens of possible terrorist attacks, and Prime Minister Tony Blair urges the public to be vigilant. ([Knight 11/18/2002](#)) In fact, no such plot has been discovered. The government moves quickly to play down connections between the arrest of the three men and a threat to the Tube. It is disclosed to the press that the men had been in contact with British

residents in London and that the charges related to false passports and credit cards, but not explosives or chemicals. A police source says there was “no bomb-making paraphernalia” in their possession. Three other men arrested at the same time are released later in the week. ([Wilson and Norton-Taylor 11/18/2002](#)) Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott, commenting on the Times story, says the arrests had “excited the press.” He adds “as the Prime Minister reminds us, we get an awful lot of intelligence which we have to make judgments about. In this case it does not appear there is any evidence whatsoever there was going to be a gas attack or use of bombs regarding the three people who have been arrested.” A Home Office spokesman says, “The Prime Minister has made it clear that there are threat reports every day and these are assessed. If the government or police thought it was necessary to give the public a specific warning about any venue, including the Underground, it would do it without hesitation.” ([BBC 11/17/2002](#)) Security sources indicate that separate intelligence from abroad points to Islamist extremists planning such an attack. Sources say that there is “a clear intention” to attack the underground and other targets in Britain and Western Europe. Whitehall sources say the arrests of the three men reflect a determination among the security services to disrupt suspect terrorists and networks “at an early stage.” ([Wilson and Norton-Taylor 11/18/2002](#)) The three arrested men make a 15-minute appearance in court on November 18. The court hears that the three have never been questioned by police about the alleged plot. According to lawyers for the three men, the details of the alleged plot had not been disclosed to them and had only emerged in the press over the last few days. The three suspects are remanded in custody for four weeks by district judge Timothy Workman and appear again on December 16. Two of the suspects subsequently plead guilty, under ordinary criminal laws, to passport offenses. ([Allen 11/18/2002](#))

November 11, 2002: Box Cutters and Pepper Spray Were Banned by Airlines on 9/11



A can of pepper spray apparently possessed by one of the hijackers. This can was introduced as evidence in Zacarias Moussaoui's 2006 trial. [Source: *FBI*] It is revealed that while the government did not ban box cutters, the airlines' own rules did. It had been widely reported the hijackers used box cutters because they were legal. It now appears pepper spray was also banned and, like box cutters, should have been confiscated. There is evidence the hijackers used pepper spray as well. It has been reported that nine of the hijackers were given special security screenings on 9/11, and six of those had their bags checked for weapons. ([Salant 11/11/2002](#))

November 12, 2002: Bin Laden Possibly Says Attacks against the West are Based on Principles of Reciprocity, Promises More Attacks

Following six attacks by different radical Islamic groups in Tunisia (see [April 11, 2002](#)), Pakistan, Yemen (see [October 6, 2002](#)), Kuwait, Bali (see [October 12, 2002](#)), and Moscow, a new audio message is released by a man said by some to be Osama bin Laden, although the identity of the speaker will be disputed (see [November 29, 2002](#)). The voice on the tape outlines a principle he says he and his allies are using: reciprocity. He comments: "If it pains you to see your victims and your allies' victims in Tunisia, Karachi, Failaka, and Oman, then remember that our children are murdered daily in Palestine and Iraq... If it pains you to see your victims in Moscow, then remember ours in Chechnya. How long will fear, killing, destruction, displacement, orphaning, and widowing be our sole destiny, while security, stability, and happiness is yours? This is injustice. The time has come to settle accounts. Just as you kill, so you shall be killed; just as you bomb, so you shall be bombed. And there will be more to come." ([Laden 2005, pp. 173-5](#))

November 15, 2002: Congress Starts New 9/11 Investigation

Congress approves legislation creating an independent commission—the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States—to “examine and report on the facts and causes relating to the September 11th terrorist attacks” and “make a full and complete accounting of the circumstances surrounding the attacks.” President Bush signs it into law November 27, 2002. ([US Congress 11/27/2002](#)) Bush originally opposed an independent commission (see [May 23, 2002](#)), but he changes his mind over the summer (see [September 20, 2002](#)) after political pressure. The Democrats concede several important aspects of the commission (such as subpoena approval) after the White House threatens to create a commission by executive order, over which it would have more control. Bush will appoint the commission chairman and he sets a strict time frame (18 months) for the investigation. ([Bush 11/15/2002](#)) The commission will only have a \$3 million budget. Senator Jon Corzine (D) and others wonder how the commission can accomplish much with such a small budget. ([Arnold 1/20/2003](#)) The budget is later increased (see [March 26, 2003](#)).

November 17, 2002: Toronto Paper Says Bush Did Nothing to Stop 9/11

A Toronto Star editorial entitled “Pursue the Truth About September 11” strongly criticizes the government and media regarding 9/11: “Getting the truth about 9/11 has seemed impossible. The evasions, the obfuscations, the contradictions and, let’s not put too fine a point on it, the lies have been overwhelming.... The questions are endless. But most are not being asked—still—by most of the media most of the time.... There are many people, and more by the minute, persuaded that, if the Bushies didn’t cause 9/11, they did nothing to stop it.” ([Zerbisias 11/17/2002](#))

November 18, 2002: US Said to Be Ignoring Accurate Information on Bin Laden’s Whereabouts

Right wing journalist Arnaud De Borchgrave, writing for United Press International, claims that although the US has given millions of dollars to buy the loyalty of Pakistani tribal leaders in an attempt to learn more about al-Qaeda leaders, they are ignoring a cooperative tribal leader who has the best information on bin Laden’s whereabouts. De Borchgrave calls this leader a “good news source... his information [is] prescient and invariably accurate.” Since November 2001, De Borchgrave and others have given the name of this tribal leader to top US leaders, but the tribal leader still has not been contacted. De Borchgrave concludes from this lack of interest that perhaps neither Pakistan nor the US is actually interested in capturing bin Laden. He notes that some people are speculating that Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf fears the US will lose interest in Pakistan and greatly reduce economic aid commitments once bin Laden is

captured or killed. He also speculates that US leaders think getting bin Laden “might detract from the current ‘get [Saddam] Hussein’ priority objective” and trigger more terror attacks. ([de Borchgrave 11/18/2002](#))

November 18, 2002: Letter Shows that White House Leads Effort to Keep FBI Asset Quiet

The 9/11 Congressional Inquiry had been frustrated in its attempts to speak with Abdussattar Shaikh (see [October 5, 2002](#)), the FBI asset who was a landlord to two of the 9/11 hijackers (see [Mid-May-December 2000](#); [May 10-Mid-December 2000](#)). On this day, a senior FBI official sends a letter to Sen. Bob Graham (D) and Rep. Porter Goss (R), the co-chairs of the Inquiry. In explaining why the FBI has been uncooperative and not allowed the informant to testify, the letter says, “the Administration would not sanction a staff interview with the source, nor did the Administration agree to allow the FBI to serve a subpoena or a notice of deposition on the source.” Graham later will comment, “We were seeing in writing what we had suspected for some time: the White House was directing the cover-up.” ([Graham and Nussbaum 2004, pp. 166](#))

November 20, 2002: Theory: Moussaoui Served as Backup Only

The US claims that captured would-be hijacker Ramzi bin al-Shibh has said that Zacarias Moussaoui met 9/11 mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed in Afghanistan during the winter of 2000-01 and that Mohammed gave Moussaoui the names of US contacts. ([Schmidt 11/20/2002](#)) Bin al-Shibh and Mohammed agreed Moussaoui should be nothing more than a backup figure in the 9/11 plot because he could not keep a secret and was too volatile and untrustworthy. Supposedly, bin al-Shibh wired Moussaoui money intended for other terrorist activities, not 9/11. ([Locy and Johnson 11/20/2002](#)) There have been suggestions that the US may move Moussaoui’s case from a civilian court to a military tribunal, which would prevent bin al-Shibh from testifying, but the issue remains undecided. ([Locy and Johnson 11/20/2002](#))

November 22, 2002: Newsweek Reports Saudi Royals Sent Money to Hijackers’ Associates

Newsweek reports that hijackers Nawaf Alhazmi and Khalid Almihdhar may have received money from Saudi Arabia’s royal family through two Saudis, Omar al-Bayoumi and Osama Basnan. Newsweek bases its report on information leaked from the 9/11 Congressional Inquiry in October. ([Isikoff 11/22/2002](#); [Isikoff 11/22/2002](#); [Johnston and Risen 11/23/2002](#); [Farah 11/23/2003](#)) Al-Bayoumi is in Saudi Arabia by this time. Basnan was deported to Saudi Arabia just five days earlier. Saudi officials and Princess Haifa immediately deny any connections to Islamic militants. ([Serrano, McManus, and Krikorian 11/24/2002](#)) Newsweek reports that while the money trail “could be perfectly

innocent... it is nonetheless intriguing—and could ultimately expose the Saudi government to some of the blame for 9/11...” ([Isikoff 11/22/2002](#)) Some Saudi newspapers, which usually reflect government thinking, claim the leak is blackmail to pressure Saudi Arabia into supporting war with Iraq. ([MSNBC 11/27/2002](#)) Senior US government officials claim the FBI and CIA failed to aggressively pursue leads that might have linked the two hijackers to Saudi Arabia. This causes a bitter dispute between FBI and CIA officials and the intelligence panel investigating the 9/11 attacks. ([Johnston and Risen 11/23/2002](#)) A number of senators, including Richard Shelby (R), John McCain (R), Mitch O’Connell (R), Joe Lieberman (D), Bob Graham (D), Joseph Biden (D), and Charles Schumer (D), express concern about the Bush administration’s action (or non-action) regarding the Saudi royal family and its possible role in funding Islamic militants. ([Reuters 11/24/2002](#); [Johnston and Shenon 11/25/2002](#)) Lieberman says, “I think it’s time for the president to blow the whistle and remember what he said after September 11—you’re either with us or you’re with the al-Qaeda.” ([ABC News 11/25/2002](#)) FBI officials strongly deny any deliberate connection between these two men and the Saudi government or the hijackers ([Shannon, Zagorin, and Duffy 11/24/2002](#)), but later even more connections between them and both entities are revealed. ([US Congress 7/24/2003](#))

November 22, 2002: More Defendants Added to Saudi Lawsuit

9/11 victims’ relatives add nearly 50 defendants to their \$1 trillion lawsuit against mostly Saudi citizens and organizations (see [August 15, 2002](#)). The suit alleges the defendants knowingly provided money and other aid to terrorists, which enabled the 9/11 attacks and other attacks to occur. There are now a total of 186 defendants named in the suit.

([Geyelin 11/22/2002](#); [Weinstein 11/23/2002](#)) Newly-named defendants include:

- Saudi Interior Minister Prince Nayef. The suit claims he was engaged in payoffs to al-Qaeda. Additionally, as interior minister he controls the activities of numerous Islamic charities said to help finance al-Qaeda. (His name will later be dismissed from the suit because of diplomatic immunity (see [November 14, 2003-September 28, 2005](#)).) ([Geyelin 11/22/2002](#); [Weinstein 11/23/2002](#))

- Minister of Defense and Aviation Prince Sultan bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud. The suit claims he also was engaged in payoffs to al-Qaeda. (His name will later be dismissed from the suit because of diplomatic immunity (see [November 14, 2003-September 28, 2005](#)).) ([Geyelin 11/22/2002](#))

- The Saudi American Bank, that nation’s second largest financial institution. The suit alleges that this bank, partly owned and managed by Citibank, financed development projects in Sudan benefiting bin Laden in the early 1990s when he was living there. (This bank will later be dismissed from the suit (see [November 14, 2003-September 28, 2005](#)).) ([Geyelin 11/22/2002](#))

- Bank Al Taqwa, for raising, managing, investing, and distributing funds for al-Qaeda. ([Weinstein 11/23/2002](#))

- Mohamed Jamal Khalifa, bin Laden’s brother-in-law. ([Third Amended Complaint. Thomas E. Burnett, Sr., et al. v. Al Baraka Investment and Development Corporation, et](#)

[al. 11/22/2002](#).)

■Yassin al-Qadi. ([Third Amended Complaint. Thomas E. Burnett, Sr., et al. v. Al Baraka Investment and Development Corporation, et al. 11/22/2002](#).)

■Saleh Kamel and the Dallah al-Baraka Group. ([Third Amended Complaint. Thomas E. Burnett, Sr., et al. v. Al Baraka Investment and Development Corporation, et al. 11/22/2002](#).)

■Individual members of the bin Laden family, including Bakr bin Laden, Tarek bin Laden, Omar bin Laden, Abdullah Awad bin Laden, and Yeslam Binladin. The suit claims that in the early 1990s, Tarek bin Laden was the general supervisor of the International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO), a Saudi charity suspected of terrorist ties (see [October 12, 2001](#)). ([Third Amended Complaint. Thomas E. Burnett, Sr., et al. v. Al Baraka Investment and Development Corporation, et al. 11/22/2002](#).)

November 24, 2002: Terrorism Suspects Held Without Charge as ‘Material Witnesses’

The Washington Post reports that the US is using an obscure statute to detain and investigate terrorism suspects without having to charge them with a crime. At least 44 people, some of them US citizens, have been held as “material witnesses.” Some have been held for months, and some have been held in maximum-security conditions. Most in fact have never testified, even though that is supposedly why they were held. ([Fainaru and Williams 11/24/2002](#))

November 25, 2002: Bush Creates Department of Homeland Security



This Homeland Security department logo of an eye peeking through a keyhole was copyrighted but apparently not used. [Source: *Public domain*] President Bush signs legislation creating the Department of Homeland Security. Homeland Security Director Tom Ridge is promoted to Secretary of Homeland Security. The Department will consolidate nearly 170,000 workers from 22 agencies, including the Coast Guard, the Secret Service, the federal security guards in airports, and the Customs

Service. ([Stevenson 11/26/2002](#); [Kemper 11/26/2002](#)) However, the FBI and CIA, the two most prominent anti-terrorism agencies, will not be part of Homeland Security. ([Gall 11/20/2002](#)) The department wants to be active by March 1, 2003, but “it’s going to take years to integrate all these different entities into an efficient and effective organization.” ([Gall 11/20/2002](#); [Kemper 11/26/2002](#)) Some 9/11 victims’ relatives are angry over sections inserted into the legislation at the last minute. Airport screening companies will be protected from lawsuits filed by family members of 9/11 victims. Kristen Breitweiser, whose husband died in the WTC, says, “We were down there lobbying last week and trying to make the case that this will hurt us, but they did it anyway. It’s just a slap in the face to the victims.” ([Firestone 11/26/2002](#))

November 26, 2002: Secret List of Saudi Terror Financiers Is Revealed

In the wake of news that two Saudis living in San Diego, California, may have helped two of the 9/11 hijackers, reports surface that the US has a secret, short list of wealthy individuals who are the alleged key financiers of al-Qaeda and other Islamic militant groups. The Washington Post claims there are nine names on the list: seven Saudis, plus one Egyptian, and one Pakistani. ([Farah 11/26/2002](#)) ABC News claims the list consists of 12 names, all Saudis, and says they were financing al-Qaeda through accounts in Cyprus, Switzerland, and Malaysia, among other countries. ([ABC News 11/25/2002](#)) They also claim the Saudi government has a copy of the list. US officials privately say all the people listed have close personal and business ties with the Saudi royal family. ([ABC News 11/26/2002](#)) A secret report by French investigator Jean-Charles Brisard names seven prominent Saudi financiers of terror; the number matches the seven Saudis mentioned in the Washington Post article, though it’s not known if all the names are the same. The Saudis mentioned by Brisard include Yassin al-Qadi, Adel Batterjee, and Wael Hamza Julaidan (who has had his assets frozen by the US.) ([US Department of State 9/6/2002](#)) Brisard says al-Qaeda has received between \$300 million and \$500 million over the last ten years from wealthy businessmen and bankers. He claims that the combined fortunes of these men equal about 20 percent of Saudi Arabia’s GDP (gross domestic product). ([Brisard 12/19/2002](#); [Rottela 12/24/2002](#)) However, Brisard’s study has been mistakenly described as a United Nations report. While he submitted the study to the UN, the UN didn’t request it. ([Ruehsen 10/2003](#)) It is also reported that a National Security Council task force recommends that the US demand that Saudi Arabia crack down on al-Qaeda’s financiers within 90 days of receiving evidence of misdeeds and if they do not, the US should take unilateral action to bring the suspects to justice. However, the US government denies this report and calls Saudi Arabia a “good partner in the war on terrorism.” ([Farah 11/26/2002](#)) Press Secretary Ari Fleischer says: “I think the fact that many of the hijackers came from that nation [Saudi Arabia] cannot and should not be read as an indictment of the country.” ([Tully 11/27/2002](#))

November 27, 2002: Kissinger Named Chairman of New 9/11 Commission



Henry Kissinger. *[Source: Public domain]* President Bush names Henry Kissinger as Chairman of the 9/11 Commission. Congressional Democrats appoint George Mitchell, former Senate majority leader and peace envoy to Northern Ireland and the Middle East, as vice chairman. Their replacements and the other eight members of the commission are chosen by mid-December. Kissinger served as Secretary of State and National Security Adviser for Presidents Nixon and Ford. ([New York Times 11/29/2002](#)) Kissinger's ability to remain independent is met with skepticism. ([Kaplan 11/29/2002](#); [CNN 11/30/2002](#); [Missing 12/3/2002](#); [Goldstein 12/17/2002](#)) He has a very controversial past. For instance, "Documents recently released by the CIA, strengthen previously-held suspicions that Kissinger was actively involved in the establishment of Operation Condor, a covert plan involving six Latin American countries including Chile, to assassinate thousands of political opponents." He is also famous for an "obsession with secrecy." ([BBC 4/26/2002](#)) It is even difficult for Kissinger to travel outside the US. Investigative judges in Spain, France, Chile, and Argentina seek to question him in several legal actions related to his possible involvement in war crimes, particularly in Latin America, Vietnam, Cambodia (see [March 1969-1973](#)), Laos (see [1969-1973](#)), Bangladesh, Chile, and East Timor (see [December 7, 1976](#)). ([Ridgeway, Anderson, and Bisin 8/15/2001](#); [Botsford 4/18/2002](#); [Page 12/1/2002](#)) The New York Times suggests, "Indeed, it is tempting to wonder if the choice of Mr. Kissinger is not a clever maneuver by the White House to contain an investigation it long opposed." ([New York Times 11/29/2002](#)) The Chicago Tribune notes that "the president who appointed him originally opposed this whole undertaking." Kissinger is "known more for keeping secrets from the American people than for telling the truth" and asking him "to deliver a critique that may ruin friends and associates is asking a great deal." ([Chicago Tribune 12/5/2002](#))

November 28, 2002: Al-Qaeda Stages Attacks in Kenya



Destruction at the Paradise Hotel, Mombasa, Kenya. [Source: Karel Princloo/ Associated Press] Three suicide bombers detonate their explosives outside a resort hotel in Mombasa, Kenya. Militants also fire shoulder-launched missiles unsuccessfully at a passenger jet. ([Filkins 11/30/2002](#)) The death toll reaches 16. ([CNN 12/1/2002](#)) Al-Qaeda purportedly claims responsibility a few days later. ([CNN 12/2/2002](#))

November 29, 2002: New Bin Laden Recording Could Be a Forgery

The authenticity of a new audio tape purportedly made by bin Laden, in which he praises recent attacks in Bali, Kuwait, Yemen and Moscow (see [November 12, 2002](#)), is disputed by Swiss voice analysts. US officials believe the voice is “almost certainly” bin Laden, but the Dalle Molle Institute for Perceptual Artificial Intelligence in Switzerland, one of the world’s leading voice-recognition institutes, is 95 percent certain the tape is a forgery. ([Kemkaran 11/13/2002](#); [BBC 11/18/2002](#); [BBC 11/29/2002](#); [Contenta 12/16/2002](#)) Two weeks after it was broadcast, a British newspaper publishes the complete text of a “letter to the American people,” purportedly written by bin Laden. ([Observer 11/25/2002](#)) However, “diplomats [are] skeptical about the authenticity of the document.” ([MacAskill and Whitaker 10/15/2002](#)) The institute will not continue to analyse bin Laden’s speeches (see February 12, 2003).

Late 2002: FBI Agent Wright Not Allowed to Continue His Financial Investigations

Robert Wright, the FBI agent in charge of some groundbreaking investigations into charity fronts before 9/11, has been suspended and under investigation since at least early 2001 (see [August 2000](#) and [January-March 2001](#)). However, at this time, his suspension is cleared and he is allowed to work as an FBI agent again. But he is specifically prohibited from working on topics he was investigating before, such as BMI and Yassin al-Qadi. He is not even allowed access to his own files from before his suspension. Wright will later be fired and then reinstated, but it does not appear he is ever able to continue his charity front investigations (see [April 30, 2005-October 19, 2005](#)). ([Katz 2003, pp. 186](#))

Late 2002: CIA Recruits New High-Level Al-Qaeda Informant

In 2006, journalist Ron Suskind will report that by late 2002, the CIA had developed “a source from within Pakistan who was tied tightly into al-Qaeda management.” He gives him the alias “Ali.” He claims that many within al-Qaeda like Ali thought the 9/11 attacks were a mistake, and that as a result US intelligence began “working a few potential informants.” He claims that by early 2003, Ali’s reports over the previous six months “had been almost always correct, including information that led to several captures.” Ali also warned of a new chemical bomb al-Qaeda has developed and revealed the name of the top al-Qaeda operative in Saudi Arabia (see [February-Late March 2003](#)). But Suskind will give no further details about Ali or what becomes of him, and no details about the other “potential informants” that he hints at. However, he will comment, “It has been generally acknowledged that the United States does not have any significant human sources... instead al-Qaeda. That is not true.” ([Suskind 2006, pp. 216-218](#))

Late 2002-Early 2003: More Talented US Personnel Redeployed from Afghanistan to Iraq



Robert Grenier. [*Source: Kroll, Inc.*] Robert Grenier, head of the CIA station in Islamabad, Pakistan, and then promoted to head of the Iraq Issues Group, will later say that in late 2002 to early 2003, “the best experienced, most qualified people who we had been using in Afghanistan shifted over to Iraq.” The CIA’s most skilled counterterrorism specialists and Middle East and paramilitary operatives move to Iraq and are replaced in Afghanistan by younger agents. Grenier will say, “I think we could have done a lot more on the Afghan side if we had more experienced folks.” A former senior official of the Pentagon’s Central Command involved with both wars later says that as war with Iraq draws closer, more special operative units like Delta Force and Navy Seals Team Six shift to Iraq from Afghanistan. “If we were not in Iraq... we’d have the ‘black’ Special Forces you most need to conduct precision operations. We’d have more CIA. We’re simply in a world of limited resources, and those resources are in Iraq. Anyone who tells you differently is blowing smoke.” ([Rohde and Sanger 8/12/2007](#)) Other special forces and CIA were moved from Afghanistan to Iraq in early 2002 (see [Early 2002](#)).

December 2002: Informant Details Even More of Al-Marabh’s Al-Qaeda Ties

Nabil al-Marabh is serving an eight-month prison sentence for illegally entering the US. A Jordanian in prison with al-Marabh earlier in 2002 informs against him, claiming that al-Marabh tells him many details of his terrorism ties. The informant, who shows “a highly detailed knowledge of his former cell-mate’s associations and movements” ([Freeze 6/4/2004](#)), claims that al-Marabh:

- admitted he sent money to a former roommate, Raed Hijazi, who is later convicted of trying to blow up a hotel in Jordan (see [November 30, 1999](#)), and that he aided Hijazi's flight from authorities. ([Solomon 6/3/2004](#))
- planned to die a martyr by stealing a gasoline truck, driving it into either the Lincoln or Holland tunnels in New York City, turning it sideways, opening its fuel valves and having an al-Qaeda operative shoot a flare to ignite a massive explosion. The plan was cancelled when Hijazi was arrested in Jordan in October 2000. ([Godfrey 10/16/2001](#); [Solomon 6/3/2004](#))
- trained on rifles and rocket-propelled grenades at militant camps in Afghanistan. ([Solomon 6/3/2004](#))
- boasted about getting drunk with two 9/11 hijackers. ([Freeze 6/4/2004](#))
- asked his uncle to hide an important data CD from Canadian police. ([Freeze 6/4/2004](#))
- claimed he took instructions from a mysterious figure in Chicago known as "al Mosul" which means "boss" in Arabic. ([Solomon 6/3/2004](#))
- acknowledged he distributed as much as \$200,000 a month to training camps in Afghanistan in the early 1990s. ([Solomon 6/3/2004](#)) FBI agents are able to confirm portions of the informant's claims. US Attorney Patrick Fitzgerald, after being denied permission to indict al-Marabh, uses the informant's information to press again for an indictment. But the Justice Department continues to refuse to allow an indictment, and al-Marabh will eventually be deported to Syria (see [January-2002-December 2002](#)). ([Solomon 6/3/2004](#))

December 2002: Bush Expresses Confidence Victory in Iraq Will Solve Counterterrorism Problems

President Bush meets with his cabinet-level advisers to review progress with counterterrorism efforts. According to author James Risen, one participant in the meeting will later recall that "several senior officials, including [CIA Director] Tenet, [National Security Advisor] Rice, and [Deputy Defense Secretary] Wolfowitz, voiced concerns about the ability of al-Qaeda-style terrorists to recruit and gain support on a widespread basis in the Islamic world. Did the United States have a strategy to counter the growth potential of Islamic extremism? 'The president dismissed them, saying that victory in Iraq would take care of that. After he said that, people just kind of sat down,' the participant recalled." ([Risen 2006, pp. 169-170](#))

End of 2002: Rumsfeld's Secret Program Targeting 'High Value' Terrorists is Going Strong

The Special Access Program, or SAP, (see [Late 2001-Early 2002](#)) authorized by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld giving blanket advance approval to kill or capture and, if possible, interrogate high-value targets, has taken off and is apparently faring well. "It was an active program," an intelligence source later explains to Seymour Hersh. "As this monster begins to take life, there's joy in the world. The monster is doing well—real well." Those who run the program, according to him, see themselves as "masters of the

universe in terms of intelligence.” By the end of 2002, terrorist suspects are being interrogated in secret detention facilities in such places as Pakistan, Thailand, and Singapore. ([Hersh 9/13/2004](#))

December 2002-February 2003: Pakistan Reportedly Permitting Al-Qaeda and Taliban Training Camps

The Associated Press reports that suicide squads are being trained in Pakistan by al-Qaeda operatives to hit targets in Afghanistan. The bombers’ families are being promised \$50,000. The Pakistani government denies the presence of any such camps. “But privately, some officials in Pakistan’s intelligence community and Interior Ministry say they believe there is such bomb training and that it is protected by Pakistani militants and Taliban sympathizers in the Pakistan military.” ([Associated Press 12/12/2002](#)) In February 2003, the Wall Street Journal claims, “Western diplomats in Islamabad and Kabul, Afghan officials, and US army officers [in Afghanistan] now strongly believe that elements of Pakistan’s intelligence services and its religious parties are allowing the Taliban to regroup on the Pakistani side of the border. US officers say 90 percent of attacks they face are coming from groups based in Pakistan. Simply put, Pakistan’s strategy appears to be to continue hunting down non-Afghan members of al-Qaeda hiding in Pakistan, so a level of cooperation with the US continues, while at the same time allowing the Pashtun Taliban and others to maintain their presence in Pakistan. The US has not raised this issue publicly, fearing that it would destabilize [Pakistani President] Gen. Musharraf’s government.... [W]hile promising support to [Afghan leader Hamid Karzai], Pakistan is undermining him and the effort to erase terrorism from Afghanistan. American silence is only encouraging Pakistan’s Islamic parties, who now govern the North West Frontier Province, to extend an even greater helping hand to Afghan and Pakistani extremists. The Pakistani army has willingly played into their hands, rigging last October’s general elections so that the Islamic parties were unprecedentedly successful, releasing from jail leaders of banned terrorist groups, and encouraging them to mount pro-Iraq demonstrations. All this is part of a larger power play where Gen. Musharraf can claim to the Americans that he needs greater US support because he is threatened by fundamentalists. This is a game that every Pakistani regime since the 1980s has played with Washington, and it has always worked.” ([Rashid 2/11/2003](#))

December 3, 2002: Trial of El Motassadeq Reveals Connections with Saudi Embassy Official

During the German trial of Mounir El Motassadeq, accused of participation in the 9/11 attacks, a German police officer testifies that the business card of Muhammad J. Fakihi, the chief of Islamic affairs at the Saudi Embassy in Berlin, was found in a raid on El Motassadeq’s apartment. The raid also turned up a credit card belonging to Mohamed Atta and the password to Atta’s e-mail account. Saudi officials deny that Fakihi had ever met El Motassadeq. Fakihi is recalled to Saudi Arabia three months later, following

demands by Germany that he leave. ([Finn 12/4/2002](#); [Finn 12/5/2002](#); [Butler 12/8/2002](#); [Isikoff and Hosenball 12/9/2002](#); [Mascolo and Stark 3/26/2003](#))

December 4, 2002: Judge Says Padilla Has Right to See Lawyer; Government Challenges Ruling

TA federal judge in New York rules that Jose Padilla, a US citizen who has been accused of being an al-Qaeda “dirty bomber,” has the right to meet with a lawyer (see [June 10, 2002](#); [June 9, 2002](#)). The judge agrees with the government that Padilla can be held indefinitely as an “enemy combatant” even though he is a US citizen. But he says such enemy combatants can meet with a lawyer to contest their status. However, the ruling makes it very difficult to overturn such a status. The government only need show that “some evidence” supports its claims. ([Fainaru and Eggen 12/5/2002](#); [Washington Post 12/11/2002](#)) In Padilla’s case, many of the allegations against Padilla given to the judge, such as Padilla taking his orders from al-Qaeda leader Abu Zubaida, have been widely dismissed in the media. ([Washington Post 9/1/2002](#)) As one newspaper puts it, Padilla “appears to be little more than a disoriented thug with grandiose ideas.” ([Borger 10/10/2002](#)) However, the government continues to challenge this ruling, and Padilla still has not had access to a lawyer (see [March 11, 2003](#)).

December 5, 2002: Software Company with Access to Government Secrets Raided



FBI agents raid Ptech offices. [*Source: ABC News*]/Federal agents search the offices of Ptech, Inc., a Boston computer software company, looking for evidence of links to bin Laden. A senior Ptech official confirms that Yassin al-Qadi, one of 12 Saudi businessmen on a secret CIA list suspected of funneling millions of dollars to al-Qaeda, was an investor in the company, beginning in 1994. Ptech appears to have connections to other potential terrorist financiers (see [1994](#)). In particular, there seem to be many ties between Ptech and BMI Inc., a New Jersey-based company whose list of investors has been called a “who’s who of designated terrorists and Islamic extremists.”(see [1986-October 1999](#)) ([Hosenball 12/6/2002](#); [WBZ 4 \(Boston\) 12/9/2002](#)) A former FBI counterterrorism official states, “For someone like [al-Qadi] to

be involved in a capacity, in an organization, a company that has access to classified information, that has access to government open or classified computer systems, would be of grave concern.” ([WBZ 4 \(Boston\) 12/9/2002](#)) On the day after the raid, US authorities will claim that Ptech’s software has been scrutinized and poses no danger. But security expert John Pike comments, “When you look at all of the different military security agencies that they have as customers, it’s very difficult to imagine how they would not be encountering sensitive information, classified information.” ([National Public Radio 12/8/2002](#)) The search into Ptech is part of Operation Greenquest, which has served 114 search warrants in the past 14 months involving suspected terrorist financing. Fifty arrests have been made and \$27.4 million seized. ([Hesseldahl 12/6/2002](#)) However, the raid appears to have been largely for show. Ptech was notified by US officials in November that they were being investigated, and they were told in advance exactly when the raid would take place.(see [May-December 5, 2002](#)). Top officials in the US government appear to have made up their minds before the results of the raid can even be examined. White House Press Secretary Ari Fleischer comments on the Ptech raid only hours after it ended, “The one thing I can share with you is that the products that were supplied by this company to the government all fell in the nonclassified area. None of it involved any classified products used by the government. The material has been reviewed by the appropriate government agencies, and they have detected absolutely nothing in their reports to the White House that would lead to any concern about any of the products purchased from this company.” ([White House 12/6/2002](#)) The fact that the raid took place at all appears to have to been due to the persistence of Operation Greenquest investigators, who are engaged at the time in a bureaucratic battle with other investigators over who will control US government investigations into terrorist financing (see [After March 20, 2002-Early 2003](#)). Greenquest will lose that battle early in 2003 and get shut down (see [May 13-June 30, 2003](#)). No charges will be brought against Ptech, and the company will continue fulfilling sensitive government contracts under a new name (see [May 14, 2004](#)).

[December 9, 2002: Special Forces in Afghanistan Back Away from Risky Operations](#)

US commanders have rejected as too risky many special operations missions to attack Taliban and al-Qaeda fighters in Afghanistan. After Army Green Beret A-Teams received good intelligence on the whereabouts of former Taliban leader Mullah Omar, commanders turned down the missions as too dangerous. Soldiers traced the timidity to an incident in June 2002 called Operation Full Throttle, which resulted in the death of 34 civilians. ([Scarborough 12/9/2002](#))

[December 11, 2002: Mitchell Resigns from New 9/11 Commission](#)



George Mitchell. [Source: Public domain] George Mitchell resigns as vice chairman of the recently-created 9/11 investigative commission. Lee Hamilton, an Indiana congressman for more than 30 years and chairman of the committee which investigated the Iran-Contra affair, is named as his replacement. ([Barrett and Karl 12/11/2002](#)) Mitchell cites time constraints as his reason for stepping down, but he also does not want to sever ties with his lawyer-lobbying firm, Piper Rudnick, or reveal his list of clients. Recent clients include the governments of Yemen and the United Arab Emirates. ([Isikoff and Hosenball 12/15/2002](#))

December 11, 2002: 9/11 Congressional Inquiry Blames Bush and Tenet

The 9/11 Congressional Inquiry concludes its seven month investigation of the performance of government agencies before the 9/11 attacks. A report hundreds of pages long has been written, but only nine pages of findings and 15 pages of recommendations are released at this time, and those have blacked out sections. ([Miller 12/12/2002](#)) After months of wrangling over what has to be classified, the final report is released in July 2003 (see [July 24, 2003](#)). In the findings released at this time, the inquiry accuses the Bush administration of refusing to declassify information about possible Saudi Arabian financial links to US-based Islamic militants, criticizes the FBI for not adapting into a domestic intelligence bureau after the attacks and says the CIA lacked an effective system for holding its officials accountable for their actions. Asked if 9/11 could have been prevented, Senator Bob Graham (D), the committee chairman, gives “a conditional yes.” Graham says the Bush administration has given Americans an “incomplete and distorted picture” of the foreign assistance the hijackers may have received. ([ABC News 12/10/2002](#)) Graham further says, “There are many more findings to be disclosed” that Americans would find “more than interesting,” and he and others express frustration that information that should be released is being kept classified by the Bush administration. ([Jacoby 12/12/2002](#)) Many of these findings remain classified after the Inquiry’s final report is released. Senator Richard Shelby (R), the vice chairman, singles out six people as having “failed in significant ways to ensure that this country was as prepared as it could have been”: CIA Director Tenet; Tenet’s predecessor, John Deutch; former FBI Director Louis Freeh; NSA Director Michael Hayden; Hayden’s predecessor, Lieutenant

General Kenneth Minihan; and former Deputy Director Barbara McNamara. ([US Congress 12/11/2002](#); [Priest and Schmidt 12/12/2002](#)) Shelby says that Tenet should resign. “There have been more failures on his watch as far as massive intelligence failures than any CIA director in history. Yet he’s still there. It’s inexplicable to me.” ([Reuters 12/10/2002](#); [PBS 12/11/2002](#)) But the Los Angeles Times criticizes their plan of action: “A list of 19 recommendations consists largely of recycled proposals and tepid calls for further study of thorny issues members themselves could not resolve.” ([Miller 12/12/2002](#))

December 11, 2002: Senator Claims Foreign Governments Were Involved in 9/11

In discussing the report of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence on 9/11, Senator Bob Graham (D), the committee chairman, says he is “surprised at the evidence that there were foreign governments involved in facilitating the activities of at least some of the [9/11] terrorists in the United States.... To me that is an extremely significant issue and most of that information is classified, I think overly classified. I believe the American people should know the extent of the challenge that we face in terms of foreign government involvement. I think there is very compelling evidence that at least some of the terrorists were assisted not just in financing—although that was part of it—by a sovereign foreign government and that we have been derelict in our duty to track that down.... It will become public at some point when it’s turned over to the archives, but that’s 20 or 30 years from now.” ([PBS 12/11/2002](#)) In March 2003, Newsweek says its sources indicate Graham is speaking about Saudi Arabia, and that leads pointing in this direction have been pursued. Graham also says that the report contains far more miscues than have been publicly revealed. “There’s been a cover-up of this,” he says. ([Isikoff 3/1/2003](#))

December 11, 2002: Only Six Detained on Immigration Charges Still in Custody

The vast majority of the more than 900 people the federal government acknowledges detaining after the 9/11 attacks have been deported, released or convicted of minor crimes unrelated to terrorism. The Justice Department announces that of the 765 people detained on immigration charges after 9/11, only six are still in US custody (see [November 5, 2001](#); [July 3, 2002](#)). Almost 500 of them were released to their home countries; the remainder are still in the US. 134 others were arrested on criminal charges and 99 were convicted. Another group of more than 300 were taken into custody by state and local law enforcement and so statistics are unknown about them. Additionally, more were arrested on material witness warrants, but the government won’t say how many. The Washington Post has determined there are at least 44 in this category (see [November 24, 2002](#)). ([Eggen 12/12/2002](#); [Anderson 12/12/2002](#)) Newsweek reports that of the “more than 800 people” rounded up since 9/11, “only 10 have been linked in any way to the hijackings” and “probably will turn out to be innocent.” ([Newsweek 10/29/2001](#)) The names of all

those secretly arrested still have not been released (see [August 2, 2002](#)). None in any of the categories have been charged with any terrorist acts.

Before December 10, 2002: CIA Officer Involved in Almihdhar and Alhazmi Failures Tells Congressional Inquiry Everything that Could Go Wrong, Did Go Wrong

Tom Wilshire, a CIA officer involved in the failed search for hijackers Nawaf Alhazmi and Khalid Almihdhar before 9/11, is interviewed by the Congressional Inquiry and comments on some of the failures. When asked about the failure to watchlist Nawaf Alhazmi based on a cable telling CIA headquarters he had arrived in the US and was a terrorist (see [March 5, 2000](#) and [March 6, 2000 and After](#)), Wilshire says: "It's very difficult to understand what happened with [the] cable when it came in. I don't know exactly why it was missed. It would appear that it was missed." Commenting on a meeting in June 2001 where the CIA failed to tell the FBI what it knew about Almihdhar and Alhazmi despite showing them photographs of the two hijackers (see [June 11, 2001](#)), Wilshire says: "[E]very place that something could have gone wrong in this over a year and a half, it went wrong. All the processes that had been put in place, all the safeguards, everything else, they failed at every possible opportunity. Nothing went right." ([US Congress 7/24/2003, pp. 147, 151](#) ^a)

December 13, 2002: Kissinger Resigns from New 9/11 Commission

Henry Kissinger resigns as head of the new 9/11 Commission. ([Fournier 12/13/2002](#); [Fournier 12/13/2002](#)) Two days earlier, the Bush administration argued that Kissinger was not required to disclose his private business clients. ([Schmitt 12/12/2002](#)) However, the Congressional Research Service insists that he does, and Kissinger resigns rather than reveal his clients. ([MSNBC 12/13/2002](#); [Eggen 12/14/2002](#)) It is reported that Kissinger is (or has been) a consultant for Unocal, the oil corporation, and was involved in plans to build pipelines through Afghanistan (see [September-October 1995](#)). ([Ottaway and Morgan 10/5/1998](#); [Conason 12/3/2002](#)) Kissinger claims he did no current work for any oil companies or Mideast clients, but several corporations with heavy investments in Saudi Arabia, such as ABB Group, a Swiss-Swedish engineering firm, and Boeing Corp., pay him consulting fees of at least \$250,000 a year. A Boeing spokesman said its "long-standing" relationship with Kissinger involved advice on deals in East Asia, not Saudi Arabia. Boeing sold \$7.2 billion worth of aircraft to Saudi Arabia in 1995. ([Isikoff and Hosenball 12/15/2002](#)) In a surprising break from usual procedures regarding high-profile presidential appointments, White House lawyers never vetted Kissinger for conflicts of interest. ([Isikoff and Hosenball 12/15/2002](#)) The Washington Post says that after the resignations of Kissinger and Mitchell, the commission "has lost time" and "is in

disarray, which is no small trick given that it has yet to meet.” ([Washington Post 12/14/2002](#))

December 13, 2002: Bush Appears Unaware about Saudi Funding for Al-Qaeda, Takes No Action about It

The top two dozen US government officials meet for a year-end review of counterterrorism efforts. Counterterrorism “tsar” Gen. John Gordon chairs the meeting. At one point, President Bush turns to Deputy Treasury Secretary Kenneth Dam and asks him, “Ken, where are we on terror finances?” Dam replies, “Mr. President, the majority of the funders for al-Qaeda are Saudis.” Dam gave all the meeting participants a one-page memo listing the fifteen or so top al-Qaeda funders, and almost all of them are Saudis. According to journalist Ron Suskind’s account, “Bush looked at Dam, perplexed, as though he either hadn’t read the handout in front of him, or was somehow surprised—though this was all but common knowledge.” Bush then asks how this is known and is told it is based on CIA intelligence. Bush then ends the meeting a few minutes later without any further comments or plan for action about terrorism financing. Apparently, he takes no significant action on the issue in the following months, either. ([Suskind 2006, pp. 184-186](#))

December 14, 2002: Al-Qaeda Associate Freed by Pakistani Court



Maulana Masood Azhar. [*Source: Agence France-Presse/ Getty Images*] A Pakistani court frees Maulana Masood Azhar, a member of the militant group Jaish-e-Mohammed, from prison. ([Baldauf 12/16/2002](#)) Two weeks later, he is freed from house arrest. He was held for exactly one year without charge, the maximum allowed in Pakistan. ([Associated Press 12/29/2002](#)) He was arrested shortly after an attack on the Indian Parliament that was blamed on his organization. In December 1999, he and Saeed Sheikh were rescued by al-Qaeda from an Indian prison, and he has ties to al-Qaeda and possibly the 9/11 attacks. Pakistan frees several other high-level militant leaders in the same month. It is believed they are doing this so they can fight in a secret proxy war with India over Kashmir. US officials have remained silent about the release of Azhar and others Pakistani militant leaders. ([Baldauf 12/16/2002](#))

The US froze the funds of Jaish-e-Mohammed in October 2001, but the group simply changed its name to al-Furqan, and the US has not frozen the funds of the “new” group. ([Bokhari and Luce 2/8/2003](#); [Lancaster and Khan 2/8/2003](#))

December 16, 2002: Ex-Governor Kean Replaces Kissinger as Chairman of New 9/11 Commission



Thomas Kean. [*Source: Public domain*] President Bush names former New Jersey governor Thomas Kean as the Chairman of the 9/11 Commission after his original choice, Henry Kissinger, resigned (see [December 13, 2002](#)). ([Goldstein 12/17/2002](#)) In an appearance on NBC, Kean promises an aggressive investigation. “It’s really a remarkably broad mandate, so I don’t think we’ll have any problem looking under every rock. I’ve got no problems in going as far as we have to in finding out the facts.” ([Guggenheim 12/17/2002](#)) However, Kean plans to remain president of Drew University and devote only one day a week to the commission. He also claims he would have no conflicts of interest, stating: “I have no clients except the university.” ([Goldstein 12/17/2002](#)) However, he has a history of such conflicts of interest. Multinational Monitor has previously stated: “Perhaps no individual more clearly illustrates the dangers of university presidents maintaining corporate ties than Thomas Kean,” citing the fact that he is on the Board of Directors of Aramark (which received a large contract with his university after he became president), Bell Atlantic, United Health Care, Beneficial Corporation, Fiduciary Trust Company International, and others. ([Kniffin 11/1997](#))

December 16, 2002: Members of 9/11 Commission Have Potential Conflicts of Interest



Richard Ben-Veniste. [Source: C-SPAN] The ten members of the new 9/11 Commission are appointed by this date, and are: Republicans Thomas Kean (Chairman), Slade Gorton, James Thompson, Fred Fielding, and John Lehman, and Democrats Lee Hamilton (Vice Chairman), Max Cleland, Tim Roemer, Richard Ben-Veniste, and Jamie Gorelick. ([Kemper and Zuckman 12/12/2002](#); [Associated Press 12/16/2002](#); [Shenon 12/17/2002](#)) Senators Richard Shelby (R) and John McCain (R) had a say in the choice of one of the Republican positions. They and many 9/11 victims' relatives wanted former Senator Warren Rudman (R), who cowrote an acclaimed report about terrorism before 9/11. But Senate Republican leader Trent Lott blocks Rudman's appointment and chooses John Lehman instead. ([Jacoby 12/12/2002](#); [Fournier 12/13/2002](#); [Zabarenko 12/16/2002](#)) It slowly emerges over the next several months that at least six of the ten commissioners have ties to the airline industry. ([CBS News 3/5/2003](#)) Henry Kissinger (see [December 13, 2002](#)) and his replacement Thomas Kean (see [December 16, 2002](#)) both caused controversy when they were named. In addition, the other nine members of the commission are later shown to all have potential conflicts of interest. Republican commissioners:

- Fred Fielding also works for a law firm lobbying for Spirit Airlines and United Airlines. ([Associated Press 2/14/2003](#); [CBS News 3/5/2003](#))
- Slade Gorton has close ties to Boeing, which built all the planes destroyed on 9/11, and his law firm represents several major airlines, including Delta Airlines. ([Guggenheim 12/12/2002](#); [CBS News 3/5/2003](#))
- John Lehman, former secretary of the Navy, has large investments in Ball Corp., which has many US military contracts. ([Associated Press 3/27/2003](#))
- James Thompson, former Illinois governor, is the head of a law firm that lobbies for American Airlines, and he has previously represented United Airlines. ([Associated Press 1/31/2003](#); [CBS News 3/5/2003](#))

Democratic commissioners:

- Richard Ben-Veniste represents Boeing and United Airlines. ([CBS News 3/5/2003](#)) Ben-Veniste also has other curious connections, according to a 2001 book on CIA ties to drug running written by Daniel Hopsicker, which has an entire chapter called "Who is Richard Ben-Veniste?" Lawyer Ben-Veniste, Hopsicker says, "has made a career of defending political crooks, specializing in cases that involve drugs and politics." Ben-Veniste has been referred to in print as a "Mob lawyer," and was a long-time lawyer for Barry Seal, one of the most famous drug dealers in US history who also is alleged to have had CIA connections. ([Hopsicker 2001, pp. 325-30](#))

- Max Cleland, former US senator, has received \$300,000 from the airline industry. ([CBS News 3/5/2003](#))
- James Gorelick is a director of United Technologies, one of the Pentagon's biggest defense contractors and a supplier of engines to airline manufacturers. ([Associated Press 3/27/2003](#))
- Lee Hamilton sits on many advisory boards, including those to the CIA, the president's Homeland Security Advisory Council, and the US Army. ([Associated Press 3/27/2003](#))
- Tim Roemer represents Boeing and Lockheed Martin. ([CBS News 3/5/2003](#))

December 18, 2002: Rumsfeld Declares Taliban, Al-Qaeda 'Gone' from Afghanistan

When asked to comment on the current situation in Afghanistan, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld replies, "It is encouraging. They have elected a government through the Loya Jirga process. The Taliban are gone. The al-Qaeda are gone." ([Rumsfeld 12/18/2002](#)) In May 2003, Rumsfeld will prematurely declare that the conflict in Afghanistan is over (see [May 1, 2003](#)).

December 18, 2002-April 2005: Marzouk, InfoCom, and Holy Land Foundation Leaders Are Charged and Convicted



Ghassan Elashi holds a press conference and denies any connection to terrorist funding. [Source: *Associated Press*] Mousa Abu Marzouk, his wife, and five brothers (Ghassan Elashi, Bayan Elashi, Hazim Elashi, Basman Elashi, and Ihsan Elashi) are charged with conspiracy, money laundering, dealing in the property of a designated terrorist, illegal export, and making false statements. The brothers are arrested in Texas, but Marzouk and his wife are living in Syria and remain free. Marzouk is considered a top leader of Hamas. FBI agent Robert Wright had been investigating Marzouk and the brothers since the late 1990s. Wright is set to appear on ABC News on December 19, 2002, to complain that the FBI had failed to prosecute Marzouk for years.

As the New York Post notes, “That got results: A day before the show aired, Attorney General Ashcroft announced he would indict Marzouk.” ([BBC 12/18/2002](#); [Brown 12/18/2002](#); [Mintz 12/19/2002](#); [Schlussel 7/14/2004](#)) FBI agent John Vincent, who worked closely with Wright, comments, “From within the FBI, [Wright] and I tried to get the FBI to use existing criminal laws to attack the infrastructure of terrorist organizations within the United States, but to no avail. It took an appearance [on television] by [Wright] and I to propel them into making arrests that they could have made as early as 1993.” ([Federal News Service 6/2/2003](#)) ABC News similarly notes, “Marzouk was in US custody in 1997 and under criminal investigation then for much the same crimes cited today.” ([Ross 12/18/2002](#)) Ghassan Elashi was the vice president of InfoCom Corporation, which was raided on September 5, 2001 (see [September 5-8, 2001](#)). He was also chairman of Holy Land Foundation, which was shut down in December 2001. InfoCom and Holy Land were based in the same Texas office park and shared many of the same employees. ([Whitaker 9/10/2001](#); [CBS News 12/18/2002](#); [Associated Press 12/23/2002](#)) Holy Land raised \$13 million in 2000 and claimed to be the largest Muslim charity in the US. The government charges that Hamas members met with Ghassan Elashi and other Holy Land officials in 1993 to discuss raising money for the families of suicide bombers (see [October 1993](#)). Wright had begun an investigation into Holy Land that same year, but he faced obstacles from higher-ups and eventually his investigation was shut down. ([CBS News 12/18/2002](#); [Lichtblau 7/28/2004](#)) In 2004, the five Elashi brothers will be convicted of selling computer equipment overseas in violation of anti-terrorism laws. In 2005, three of the brothers, Ghassan, Basman, and Bayan Elashi, will be found guilty of supporting Hamas by giving money to Marzouk through 2001. ([BBC 7/8/2004](#); [Associated Press 4/13/2005](#)) In July 2004, Ghassan Elashi will be charged again, along with four other former Holy Land officials. Two other Holy Land officials will also be charged but not arrested, since they had recently left the country. Sen. Charles Schumer (D) will state, “I wonder why this prosecution has taken so long. I think until recently we have not put the resources needed into tracking groups that finance terrorism, and the fact that they didn’t get 24-hour surveillance on these two who escaped is galling and perplexing.” ([Lichtblau 7/28/2004](#)) In 2007, this court case will result in a mistrial, and be cast as a major setback for the Justice Department (see [October 19, 2007](#)).

Mid-December 2002-March 2003: 9/11 Commission Gets Off to Slow Start

After experiencing some problems at its inception due to the resignation of its chair and vice-chair (see [December 11, 2002](#) and [December 13, 2002](#)), the 9/11 Commission spends much of the next four months hiring staff, getting security clearances (see [March 27, 2003](#)), finding office space, and asking for a budget increase (see [March 26, 2003](#)). One of the first employees hired is executive director Philip Zelikow, but disputes within the Commission over who will be general council last until March, when Dan Marcus is hired. The Commission is unable to even have a telephone until February, when it finds an official security facility for its offices. However, then most of the Commission’s staff cannot enter their offices, because they do not have the relevant security clearances yet,

even though there are no secret documents actually in the offices at this point. ([Kean and Hamilton 2006, pp. 34-45](#))

December 27, 2002: Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Turkmenistan Agree on Building Pipeline

Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Turkmenistan reach an agreement in principle to build the Trans-Afghanistan Pipeline, a \$3.2 billion project that has been delayed for many years. Skeptics say the project would require an indefinite foreign military presence in Afghanistan. ([BBC 5/30/2002](#); [Associated Press 12/26/2002](#); [McWilliam 12/27/2002](#)) As of mid-2004, construction has yet to begin.

December 27, 2002-January 1, 2003: Infiltration Story Based on Fabricated Information



Mohammed Asghar [*Source: CBC*] A member of a document-forging and smuggling ring is arrested in Canada in late October 2002. The suspect, Michael Hamdani, tells authorities about a cell of 19 terrorists seeking false passports from a Pakistani smuggling ring in order to gain entry to the US, with five successfully infiltrating the country via Canada on Christmas Eve. ([ABC News 1/6/2003](#)) He tells the FBI that he had been offered a large sum of money to assist with the smuggling of the five men into the US. He admits that he was part of the smuggling and counterfeit document ring; officials also believe that Hamdani has links to terrorist groups. ([Mintz 1/3/2003](#)) As a result, on December 27, 2002, the FBI issues an all-points bulletin that launches a massive effort by law enforcement officials who fear terrorist attacks over the holiday period. The bulletin is approved by President Bush, who says publicly, "We need to know why they have been smuggled into the country and what they're doing in the country." The FBI posts pictures of five of the men on its website, warning that the provided names and ages could be fictitious. They also raid six locations in Brooklyn and Queens. These pictures lead to numerous calls and sightings of the men from around the country. ([ABC News 1/6/2003](#)) During the course of the investigation, an unsubstantiated report surfaces; the FBI learns from a Middle East source that terrorists are planning eight

diversionary explosions in New York harbor on New Year's Eve, to be followed by one large-scale genuine attack. The target is identified as the US Secret Service office in Manhattan. The New York Police Department alerts the US Coast Guard, which closes the harbor to pleasure craft and scrambles a 100-person Maritime Safety and Security Team. This team patrols the harbor with boats mounted with heavy machine guns and carrying tactical officers armed with automatic weapons. No other evidence ever emerges to support the FBI's source. ([Shannon 1/5/2003](#)) The man pictured as Mustafa Khan Owasi in one of the FBI photos is found a few days later in Pakistan. ([ABC News 1/6/2003](#)) He says he had once tried to get a false visa in order to travel to Britain, but had been caught in the United Arab Emirates and returned to his home in Lahore, Pakistan. His real name is Mohammed Asghar and he works as a jeweler. He says he suspects the forgers that he provided his information to in order to receive the false visa may have used his identity to create papers for someone else. Investigators begin to doubt the veracity of Hamdani's claims. ([CBC News 1/2/2003](#)) US experts also find that the polygraph exam of Hamdani administered by Canadian authorities was seriously flawed. The assumption that this polygraph exam was accurate was one of the main motives in issuing the alert. Officials also fail to find any link between Hamdani and al-Qaeda, or any other radical militant organization. No links are discovered between the identities in the passports and extremist groups. ([ABC News 1/6/2003](#)) The FBI realizes that the infiltration story had been fabricated by Hamdani and retracts the terror alert on New Year's Day. ([Shannon 1/5/2003](#)) The retraction of the terror alert leads to criticism of the FBI. Michael Greenberger, a former Justice Department official who heads the University of Maryland's Center for Health and Homeland Security, says, "There is going to be a sort of 'crying wolf' scenario... When they put these out, there should be a more thorough explanation to the American public about what they're doing." The FBI defends its handling of the situation, saying that it reacted appropriately to the possibility of a real threat and noting that some of Hamdani's information on the smuggling ring was accurate and led to ten (non-terrorism related) arrests. ([Marcus and Eggen 1/8/2003](#)) Hamdani was already facing fraud charges in Canada after the raid that led to his arrest discovered fake passports, Pakistani driving licenses, immigration documents, and counterfeit traveler's checks. He also had outstanding fraud warrants from the FBI in New York and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. The FBI believes that Hamdani fabricated the story to avoid extradition to Canada. ([ABC News 1/6/2003](#)) One investigator says, "You wouldn't trust him as far as you could throw him." ([Shannon 1/5/2003](#))

Late 2002: FBI Hinders Customs Investigation into Bin Laden Associate in Texas



Joe Webber. *[Source: US Customs]* Joe Webber, running the Houston office of the Department of Homeland Security's Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, starts investigating a man believed to be raising money for Islamic militants. The suspect is in direct contact with people who are known to be associated with Osama bin Laden. Webber has good cooperation with the local FBI office, federal prosecutors in Houston, and Justice Department officials in Washington. However, he claims that FBI headquarters officials tell him point blank that he will not be allowed to conduct his investigation. After many months of delays from the FBI, friends from within the bureau tell him that headquarters will not allow the investigation to proceed because it is being run by Customs and not by the FBI. Webber is so upset that he eventually becomes a whistleblower. Sen. Charles Grassley and other politicians support his case and say there are other instances where the FBI impedes investigations because of turf battles. Asked if the FBI would put a turf battle above national security, Webber says, "That's absolutely my impression. You would think, in a post-9/11 environment, that an event like that wouldn't occur. But it did." ([Corderi and Greenberg 6/3/2005](#))

2003: CIA Lawyers View Videos of Detainee Interrogations

Lawyers from the CIA's Office of General Counsel examine videos of detainee interrogations made by the CIA the year before (see [Spring-Late 2002](#)). Although the videos show practices that are said to amount to torture (see [Mid-May 2002 and After](#), [June 16, 2004](#), [Shortly After September 6, 2006](#), and [March 10-April 15, 2007](#)), the lawyers find that they show lawful methods of questioning. The tapes are also examined by the Agency's Inspector General around this time. ([Central Intelligence Agency 12/6/2007](#))

2003: Justice Department Advises CIA Not to Destroy Interrogation Videotapes



Scott Muller. *[Source: New York Times]* Sometime in 2003, CIA General Counsel Scott Muller raises the idea of destroying videotapes of the interrogations of al-Qaeda leaders Abu Zubaida and Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri during discussions in 2003 with Justice Department lawyers. But the Justice Department lawyers advise against destroying them. It is unknown what the basis for their advice is. Muller similarly approaches White House Deputy Chief of Staff Harriet Miers with the idea and she also advises him against it (see [Between 2003-Late 2005](#)). ([Mazzetti 12/8/2007](#))

2003-2004: US Allegedly Twice Denies French Special Forces Permission to Assassinate Bin Laden

French special forces soldiers later interviewed for a documentary film will claim that they had Osama bin Laden in their sights once in 2003 and once in 2004 but were never given the go-ahead to fire from their US superiors. One French soldier says, “In 2003 and 2004 we had bin Laden in our sights. The sniper said ‘I have bin Laden’.” It then reportedly takes two hours for the request to shoot to reach US officers who could authorize it, but the French soldier says, “There was a hesitation in command,” and the authorization never came. Four French soldiers are interviewed who back up this claim, but a French military spokesperson denies it. France has roughly 200 elite troops operating under US command near Afghanistan’s border with Pakistan at the time. ([Murphy 12/19/2006](#); [CBC News 12/22/2006](#))

(2003-2004): Three White House Officials Asked about Destruction of CIA Interrogation Tapes, Response Unclear



National Security Council lawyer John Bellinger. [Source: *New York*

Times]The CIA meets three White House officials to discuss what to do with videotapes it has made of detainee interrogations (see [Spring-Late 2002](#)). The CIA wants to destroy the tapes, so it briefs the officials on them and asks their advice. The officials are:

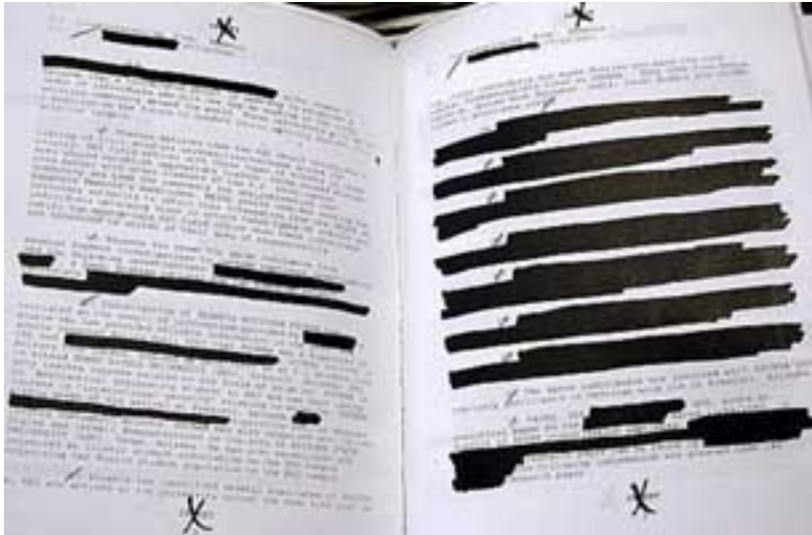
- Alberto Gonzales, White House counsel until early 2005, when he will become attorney general;
- David Addington, counsel to Vice President Dick Cheney;
- John Bellinger, senior lawyer at the National Security Council;

There are conflicting accounts of the advice the lawyers give the CIA. One source will say there was “vigorous sentiment” among some unnamed top White House officials to destroy the tapes. They apparently want to destroy the tapes in 2005 because they could be damaging in the light of the Abu Ghraib scandal (see [Evening April 28, 2004](#)). Other sources will say nobody at the White House advocates destroying the tapes. However, it seems none of the lawyers gives a direct order to preserve the tapes or says their destruction would be illegal. ([Mazzetti and Shane 12/19/2007](#)) A source familiar with Bellinger’s account will say, “The clear recommendation of Bellinger and the others was against destruction of the tapes... The recommendation in 2003 from the White House was that the tapes should not be destroyed.” ([Hess 12/20/2007](#)) When CIA Director Michael Hayden informs legislators of these discussions in late 2007, he will say that upon being informed high-ranking CIA officials are demanding the tapes be destroyed, the lawyers “consistently counseled caution.” The Washington Post will comment: “The ambiguity in the phrasing of Hayden’s account left unresolved key questions about the White House’s role. While his account suggests an ambivalent White House view toward the tapes, other intelligence officials recalled White House officials being more emphatic at the first meeting that the videos should not be destroyed. Also unexplained is why the issue was discussed at the White House without apparent resolution for more than a year.” ([Abramowitz and Warrick 12/20/2007](#)) Another White House official, Harriet Miers, is also consulted around this time and is said to advise against the tapes’ destruction (see [Between 2003-Late 2005](#)). ([Mazzetti and Shane 12/19/2007](#)) When it is revealed that these officials were consulted, Law professor Jonathan Turley will comment: “[T]his is a very significant development, because it shows that this was not just some rogue operator at the CIA that destroyed evidence being sought by Congress and the courts. It shows that this was a planned destruction, that there were meetings and those meetings extended all the way to the White House, and included Alberto Gonzalez, who would soon become attorney general and Harriet Miers, who would become White House counsel. That’s a hair’s breath away from the president himself.” ([CNN 12/19/2007](#))

Early 2003-September 5, 2003: US Slow to Freeze Assets in Southeast Asia

In early 2003, the Treasury Department draws up a list of 300 individuals, charities, and corporations in Southeast Asia believed to be funding al-Qaeda and its suspected Indonesian affiliate Jemaah Islamiya. "Due to inter-agency politics, the list [is] winnowed down to 18 individuals and 10 companies." ([Abuza 8/1/2003](#)) Later, the number of suspected financiers is narrowed down even further, and on September 5, 2003, only 10 individuals, all connected to Jemaah Islamiya, have their assets frozen. ([Joshi 9/5/2003](#)) The assets of Jemaah Islamiya itself were frozen shortly after the October 2002 Bali bombing was blamed on the group (see [October 12, 2002](#)), though ties between the group and al-Qaeda were first publicly reported in January 2002. ([Iqbal 1/18/2002](#); [Iqbal 1/25/2003](#)) Hambali, a notorious leader of both al-Qaeda's Southeast Asia operations and Jemaah Islamiya, only had his assets frozen in January 2003, even though he was publicly mentioned as a major figure as far back as January 2001. ([New Straits Times 1/25/2001](#); [Cerkez-Robinson 1/18/2002](#))

January-July 2003: Bush Administration Delays Release of 9/11 Congressional Inquiry Report Until After Start of Iraq War



The final version of the 9/11 Congressional Inquiry's report is heavily censored. [*Source: Agence France-Presse*] The 9/11 Congressional Inquiry is originally expected to release its complete and final report in January 2003, but the panel spends seven months negotiating with the Bush administration about what material can be made public, and the final report is not released until July 2003. In late March 2003, the US launches an attack on Iraq, beginning a long war. ([Schmidt 7/27/2003](#)) The administration originally wanted two thirds of the report to remain classified. ([Associated Press 5/31/2003](#)) The Inquiry concluded in July 2002 that Mohamed Atta never met with an Iraqi agent in Prague, as

some have claimed, but it is not able to make that conclusion public until now (see [Late July 2002](#)). Former Senator Max Cleland (D), member of the 9/11 Commission, later claims, “The administration sold the connection (between Iraq and al-Qaeda) to scare the pants off the American people and justify the war. There’s no connection, and that’s been confirmed by some of bin Laden’s terrorist followers... What you’ve seen here is the manipulation of intelligence for political ends. The reason this report was delayed for so long—deliberately opposed at first, then slow-walked after it was created—is that the administration wanted to get the war in Iraq in and over... before (it) came out. Had this report come out in January [2003] like it should have done, we would have known these things before the war in Iraq, which would not have suited the administration.” ([Waterman 7/25/2003](#))

Between 2003-Late 2005: White House Official Allegedly Tells CIA Not To Destroy CIA Interrogation Tapes



Harriet Miers. [*Source: Public domain via Wikipedia*] White House official Harriet Miers is informed by CIA General Counsel Scott Muller that the CIA has made video recordings of detainee interrogations and is told that the CIA is considering destroying the tapes. She advises not to destroy them. ([Karl 12/7/2007](#); [Mazzetti 12/8/2007](#)) The CIA is canvassing opinion on whether the tapes can be destroyed, and it repeatedly asks Miers about what it should do with the videotapes (see [November 2005](#)), which are said to show questionable interrogation methods. These discussions are reportedly documented in a series of e-mails between the CIA and the White House. One person involved is CIA Acting General Counsel John Rizzo. Miers’ opinion is asked because the CIA apparently thinks its interrogation and detention program was “imposed” on it by the White House, so the decision about what to do with the tapes should be made “at a political level.” Miers continues to advise the CIA that the tapes should not be destroyed, but the CIA destroys them anyway in late 2005 (see [November 2005](#)). ([Isikoff and Hosenball 12/11/2007](#)) It is unclear when this happens. One account says Miers is first consulted in 2003, another in 2005. Miers is deputy chief of staff to the President until early 2005, when she becomes White House Council. ([Mazzetti and Shane 12/19/2007](#)) The CIA also asks other White House officials for their opinions, but there are contradictory reports of their advice (see [\(2003-2004\)](#)).

Early January 2003: CIA Report Casts Further Doubt on Allegation that Iraq Trained Al-Qaeda Operatives in 'Poisons and Gases'

The CIA issues an updated version of its September 2002 classified internal report (see [September 2002](#)) which stated that according to “sources of varying reliability,” Iraq had provided “training in poisons and gases” to al-Qaeda operatives. The allegation in that report was based on information provided by a captured Libyan national by the name of Ibn al-Shaykh al-Libi. In this new updated version of the report, the CIA adds that “the detainee [al-Libi] was not in a position to know if any training had taken place.” It is not known whether this report is seen by White House officials. ([Isikoff and Hosenball 11/10/2005](#)) Intelligence provided by al-Libi about Iraq will also be included in Secretary of State Colin Powell’s speech to the UN one month later (see [February 5, 2003](#)).

Early January 2003: Bush Reportedly Tells Condoleezza Rice ‘We’re Going to Have To Go To War’

According to Bob Woodward’s book, Plan of Attack, National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice visits George Bush’s ranch in Crawford, Texas. Bush tells her: “We’re not winning. Time is not on our side here. Probably going to have to, we’re going to have to go to war.” ([Hamilton 4/17/2004](#)) When the contents of Woodward’s book are reported in mid-April 2004, many people interpret Bush’s statement as a decision to go to war. But Rice will deny that that was the case. “... I just want it to be understood: That was not a decision to go to war,” she will say. “The decision to go to war is in March. The president is saying in that conversation, I think the chances are that this is not going to work out any other way. We’re going to have to go to war.” ([Associated Press 4/19/2004](#))

(2003 and After): Corporate CEOs Balk at Providing Customer Information to Three US Intelligence Agencies

Chief executive officers of telecommunications companies and financial institutions express reluctance to provide data about their customers to three government agencies, the CIA, FBI, and Department of Homeland Security. The CEOs have been providing telephone, Internet and financial records to the CIA and, through it, the NSA to support “black” intelligence operations for some time (see [After July 1997](#)), but after 9/11 the FBI asks for the same information that the CIA is getting. Then, after it is established in late 2002, the Department of Homeland Security also wants the same information. The CEOs begin saying, “Look, we’ll do this once but not three times,” and prefer to give the information to the FBI, which has formal subpoenas. The dispute grows so serious that White House homeland security adviser Frances Fragos Townsend has to mediate and summons FBI Director Robert Mueller and acting CIA Director John McLaughlin to the

White House to hammer the issue out. After a series of meetings, they agree to each appoint a senior official to coordinate, ensuring companies are not bombarded with multiple requests. ([Woodward 2006, pp. 324-5](#))

January 3, 2003-January 6, 2003: Poll Shows Widespread Misperceptions About Iraq, 9/11 Among US Citizens

A poll conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates among 1,204 adults indicates widespread misperception regarding Iraq. The poll finds that almost 25 percent believe the Bush administration has “publicly released evidence tying Iraq to the planning and funding of the September 11 attacks, and more than 1 in 3 respondents didn’t know or refused to answer.” ([Merzer 1/12/2003](#)) 44 percent of those polled believe that “most” or “some” of the September 11 hijackers were Iraqi citizens and only 17 percent know that none of the hijackers were Iraqis. ([Editor & Publisher 3/26/2003](#)) The margin of error is estimated to be 3 percent. ([Merzer 1/12/2003](#))

January 5, 2003: Raid on Suspected ‘Poisons Laboratory’ in London



Kamal Bourgass’s flat in Wood Green, north London [*Source: BBC*] Metropolitan Police raid a flat in Wood Green, north London and discover a locked bag in a room occupied by an Islamist militant named Kamal Bourgass. An illegal immigrant from Algeria, Bourgass had arrived in Britain, hidden in a truck, in 2000. Using several false names, he remained in the country after failing to get asylum in December 2001, despite being fined for shoplifting in 2002. ([Carrell and Whitacker 4/17/2005](#)) In addition, police had discovered a false passport for Bourgass in a raid on a storage depot in Wembley, north London, on June 22, 2002. ([BBC 4/13/2005](#)) The bag contains an envelope with instructions in Arabic for manufacturing poisons and explosives, as well as lists of chemicals. These “poison recipes” are in Bourgass’s writing. The envelope has the address of the Finsbury Park mosque with the name of “Nadir,” a name which Bourgass also used. Other discoveries include a cup containing apple seeds, cherry stones, nail polish remover, and a bottle of acetone. The

search also uncovers 20 castor beans and £14,000 in cash. Police announce that they have discovered a “poisons laboratory” that contains recipes for ricin, toxic nicotine, and cyanide gas weapons. ([Riddell 4/17/2005](#)) Other flats are raided and seven North Africans are arrested. Six men are arrested on January 5 in north and east London and another man is arrested on January 8 in central London. ([Fox News 1/8/2003](#)) The arrests include a 17-year-old. Police uncover additional poison recipes, false papers, and computer discs with bomb-making instructions. Bourgass had been named as ringleader and other Algerians as co-conspirators in the alleged plot in an intelligence report passed to British officials from Algerian security forces. This report was the result of the interrogation of alleged al-Qaeda operative Mohammed Meguerba (see [September 18, 2002-January 3, 2003](#)). Bourgass had not been present during the Wood Green raid. However, on January 14, a raid on a flat in Crumpsall Lane, Manchester, seeking another terror suspect, uncovers Bourgass and alleged conspirator Khalid Alwerfeli. After a violent struggle, Bourgass stabs and murders policeman Stephen Oake and wounds several other police officers. ([Carrell and Whitacker 4/17/2005](#))

January 7, 2003: British Officials Announce Discovery of Alleged Ricin Plot, but No Ricin Is Actually Found



Alleged ricin ingredients. [Source:

BBC] Home Secretary David Blunkett and Health Secretary John Reid issue a joint statement claiming “traces of ricin” and castor beans capable of making “one lethal dose” were found in a raid on a flat in Wood Green, north London, which also resulted in several arrests (see [January 5, 2003](#)). The joint statement says “ricin is a toxic material which if ingested or inhaled can be fatal... our primary concern is the safety of the public.” Prime Minister Tony Blair says the discovery highlights the perils of weapons of mass destruction, adding: “The arrests which were made show this danger is present and real and with us now. Its potential is huge.” Dr. Pat Troop, the government’s deputy chief medical officer, issues a statement with police confirming that materials seized “tested positive for the presence of ricin poison.” A small number of easily obtainable castor beans are found. But the same day, chemical weapons experts at the Defense Science and Technology Laboratory at Porton Down in Wiltshire discover in more accurate tests that the initial positive result for ricin was false: there was no ricin in the flat. But this finding will not be released publicly for two years. ([Carrell and Whitacker 4/17/2005](#)) Dr. Martin Pearce, head of the Biological Weapons Identification Group, confirms that there was no

ricin in the flat. This report is also suppressed. ([Guardian 4/15/2004](#)) The Ministry of Defence later confirms that the results of the Porton Down test are not released to police and ministers until March 20, 2003, one day after war in Iraq begins. ([BBC 9/15/2005](#)) It appears that there was the intention to create ricin, based on evidence discovered in other raids, but not the technical know-how to actually do so (see [January 20, 2003](#) and [January 5, 2003](#)).

January 10, 2003: Government Employees Responsible for 9/11 Failures Are Promoted

FBI Director Mueller personally awards Marion (Spike) Bowman with a presidential citation and cash bonus of approximately 25 percent of his salary. ([Tapper 3/3/2003](#)) Bowman, head of the FBI's National Security Law Unit and the person who refused to seek a special warrant for a search of Zacarias Moussaoui's belongings before the 9/11 attacks, is among nine recipients of bureau awards for "exceptional performance." The award comes shortly after a 9/11 Congressional Inquiry report saying Bowman's unit gave Minneapolis FBI agents "inexcusably confused and inaccurate information" that was "patently false." ([Grow 12/22/2002](#)) Bowman's unit also blocked an urgent request by FBI agents to begin searching for Khalid Almihdhar after his name was put on a watch list. In early 2000, the FBI acknowledged serious blunders in surveillance Bowman's unit conducted during sensitive terrorism and espionage investigations, including agents who illegally videotaped suspects, intercepted e-mails without court permission, and recorded the wrong phone conversations. ([Bridis 1/10/2003](#)) As Senator Charles Grassley (R) and others have pointed out, not only has no one in government been fired or punished for 9/11, but several others have been promoted:

- Pasquale D'Amuro, the FBI's counterterrorism chief in New York City before 9/11, is promoted to the bureau's top counterterrorism post. ([Ratnesar and Burger 12/30/2002](#))
- FBI Supervisory special agent Michael Maltbie, who removed information from the Minnesota FBI's application to get the search warrant for Moussaoui, is promoted to field supervisor and goes on to head the Joint Terrorism Task Force at the FBI's Cleveland office. ([Tapper 3/3/2003](#); [Riley 3/21/2006](#))
- David Frasca, head of the FBI's Radical Fundamentalist Unit, is "still at headquarters," Grassley notes. ([Tapper 3/3/2003](#)) The Phoenix memo, which was addressed to Frasca, was received by his unit and warned that al-Qaeda terrorists could be using flight schools inside the US (see [July 10, 2001](#) and [July 27, 2001 and after](#)). Two weeks later Zacarias Moussaoui was arrested while training to fly a 747, but Frasca's unit was unhelpful when local FBI agents wanted to search his belongings—a step that could have prevented 9/11 (see August 16, 2001 and [August 20-September 11, 2001](#)). "The Phoenix memo was buried; the Moussaoui warrant request was denied." ([Ratnesar and Weisskopf 5/27/2002](#)) Even after 9/11, Frasca continued to "[throw] up roadblocks" in the Moussaoui case. ([Lewis 5/27/2002](#))
- President Bush later names Barbara Bodine the director of Central Iraq shortly after the US conquest of Iraq. Many in government are upset about the appointment because of her blocking of the USS *Cole* investigation, which some say could have uncovered the 9/11 plot. She failed to admit she was wrong or apologize. ([Sepe 4/10/2003](#)) However, she is

fired after about a month, apparently for doing a poor job.

■An FBI official who tolerates penetration of the translation department by Turkish spies and encourages slow translations just after 9/11 is promoted (see [March 22, 2002](#)). ([CBS News 10/25/2002](#)) The CIA has promoted two unnamed top leaders of its unit responsible for tracking al-Qaeda in 2000 even though the unit mistakenly failed to put the two suspected terrorists on the watch list (see August 23, 2001). “The leaders were promoted even though some people in the intelligence community and in Congress say the counterterrorism unit they ran bore some responsibility for waiting until August 2001 to put the suspect pair on the interagency watch list.” CIA Director Tenet has failed to fulfill a promise given to Congress in late 2002 that he would name the CIA officials responsible for 9/11 failures. ([Gerth 5/15/2003](#))

January 10, 2003: CIA Resists Pressure to Make Unsubstantiated Link between Al-Qaeda and Iraq



CIA manager Jami Miscik. [*Source: Black Collegian*] Jami Miscik, head of the CIA's Directorate of Intelligence, storms into CIA Director George Tenet's office, complaining about having to attend more meetings with Deputy National Security Adviser Stephen Hadley to rebut the Iraq-al-Qaeda connection yet again. She complains to Tenet, "I'm not going back there again, George. If I have to go back to hear their crap and rewrite this goddamn report... I'm resigning, right now." Tenet calls Hadley and shouts into the phone, "She is not coming over. We are not rewriting this fucking report one more time. It's fucking over. Do you hear me! And don't you ever fucking treat my people this way again. Ever!" This is according to Ron Suskind in his book, *The One Percent Doctrine*. Suskind will conclude, "And that's why, three weeks later, in making the case for war in his State of the Union address, George W. Bush was not able to say what he'd long hoped to say at such a moment: that there was a pre-9/11 connection between al-Qaeda and Saddam." ([Suskind 2006, pp. 190-191](#))

January 13, 2003: British Paper Criticizes US Media for Insufficiently Informing Public

The Guardian reports on the state of journalism in the US: “The worldwide turmoil caused by President Bush’s policies goes not exactly unreported, but entirely de-emphasized. Guardian writers are inundated by e-mails from Americans asking plaintively why their own papers never print what is in these columns... If there is a Watergate scandal lurking in [the Bush] administration, it is unlikely to be Washington Post journalist Bob Woodward or his colleagues who will tell us about it. If it emerges, it will probably come out on the web. That is a devastating indictment of the state of American newspapers.” ([Engel 1/13/2003](#))

January 13, 2003: Bush Reportedly Tells Powell ‘I’m Going to Have to’ Attack Iraq

US President George Bush and Secretary of State Colin Powell meet alone in the Oval Office for twelve minutes. According to Woodward’s book, *Plan of Attack*, Bush says, “The inspections are not getting us there.... I really think I’m going to have to do this,” meaning go to war with Iraq. He adds that he is firm in his decision. Powell responds, “You’re sure?... You understand the consequences.... You know that you’re going to be owning this place?” Bush indicates that he understands the implications and asks, “Are you with me on this?... I think I have to do this. I want you with me.” Powell responds: “I’ll do the best I can.... Yes, sir, I will support you. I’m with you, Mr. President.” Woodward will also say in his book that Bush had never—ever—asked his Secretary of State for his advice on the matter of Iraq. “In all the discussions, meetings, chats and back-and-forth, in Powell’s grueling duels with Rumsfeld and Defense, the president had never once asked Powell, Would you do this? What’s your overall advice? The bottom line?” Woodward will write. ([Jehl 4/17/2004](#); [Woodward 4/18/2004](#) Sources: Top officials interviewed by Washington Post editor Bob Woodward)

January 15, 2003: US Has Gone Mad, Says Novelist



John le Carré. [*Source: BBC*] Famous spy novelist John le Carré, in an essay entitled, “The United States of America Has Gone Mad,” says “The reaction to 9/11 is beyond anything Osama bin Laden could have hoped for in his nastiest dreams. As in McCarthy times, the freedoms that have made America the envy of the world are being systematically eroded.” He also comments, “How Bush and his junta succeeded in deflecting America’s anger from bin Laden to Saddam Hussein is one of the great public relations conjuring tricks of history.” ([Carre 1/15/2003](#))

January 18, 2003: Pakistan's President Warns of Imminent Western Attack

Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf warns of an “impending danger” that Pakistan will become a target of war for “Western forces” after the Iraq crisis. “We will have to work on our own to stave off the danger. Nobody will come to our rescue, not even the Islamic world. We will have to depend on our muscle.” ([Press Trust of India 1/19/2003](#); [Bokhari and Luce 2/8/2003](#)) Pointing to “a number of recent ‘background briefings’ and ‘leaks’” from the US government, “Pakistani officials fear the Bush administration is planning to change its tune dramatically once the war against Iraq is out of the way.” ([Bokhari and Luce 2/8/2003](#)) Despite evidence that the head of Pakistan’s intelligence agency, the ISI, ordered money given to the hijackers, so far only one partisan newspaper has suggested Pakistan was involved in 9/11. ([Sperry 1/3/2002](#))

January 20, 2003: Police Raid on Finsbury Park Mosque; Weapons and Chemical Weapons Suits Are Found



Raid on Finsbury Park Mosque. [*Source: BBC*] The Metropolitan Police raid the Finsbury Park Mosque in the early morning. Armored officers batter down the doors to begin three days of searches. In addition, they make seven arrests. After the trial and conviction of radical cleric Abu Hamza al-Masri for hate crimes in February 2006, police will reveal their discoveries from the raid. The police uncovered chemical weapons protection suits, pistols, CS spray, and a stun gun. Other military paraphernalia included a gas mask, handcuffs, hunting knives, and a walkie-talkie. The police also found more than 100 stolen or forged passports and identity documents, credit cards, laminating equipment and checkbooks hidden under rugs, as well as more than \$6000 in cash. Evidence found in a previous raid led to the police action against the mosque (see [January 5, 2003](#)). ([BBC 2/7/2006](#)) Kamal Bourgass, implicated in the alleged ricin plot, was in possession of an envelope with instructions in Arabic for manufacturing poisons and explosives, as well as lists of chemicals, discovered by police during the Wood Green raid days earlier. These “poison recipes” were in Bourgass’s writing, and the envelope had the address of the Finsbury Park Mosque with the name of “Nadir,” an alias used by Bourgass. ([Riddell 4/17/2005](#)) Like other illegal immigrants, Bourgass had used the mosque as a place to stay and as his postal address for correspondence with the immigration service. He had stayed there in

the weeks before his attempts to make ricin were discovered. A week after the arrest of Bourgass, the decision was taken to launch Operation Mermant - the raid on the mosque. ([BBC 2/7/2006](#))

January 22, 2003: CIA Chief Says Intelligence Was Insufficient to Prevent 9/11

CIA Deputy Director for Operations James Pavitt says he is convinced that all the intelligence the CIA had on September 11, 2001, could not have prevented the 9/11 attacks. "It was not as some have suggested, a simple matter of connecting the dots," he claims. ([Zakaria 1/23/2003](#))

January 22, 2003: Still No Clarity in Pearl Murder Case

One year after reporter Daniel Pearl's kidnapping and murder, the investigation is mired in controversy. "Mysteries still abound.... Suspects disappear or are found dead. Crucial dates are confused. Confessions are offered and then recanted.... Nobody who physically carried out the killing has been convicted. None of the four men sentenced is even believed to have ever been at the shed where Pearl was held" and killed. The government arrested three suspects in May 2002, but hasn't charged them and still will not admit to holding them, because acknowledging their testimony would ruin the case against Saeed Sheikh. ([Nadeem 8/18/2002](#); [Haven 1/22/2003](#)) Two of the three claim that 9/11 mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed cut Pearl's throat with a knife. ([MSNBC 9/17/2002](#); [McGirk 1/26/2003](#))

January 22, 2003: House of 9/11 Suspect Finally Searched by FBI

The FBI conducts a very public search of a Miami, Florida, house belonging to Mohammed Almasri and his Saudi family. Having lived in Miami since July 2000, on September 9, 2001, they said they were returning to Saudi Arabia, hurriedly put their luggage in a van, and sped away, according to neighbors. A son named Turki Almasri was enrolled at Huffman Aviation in Venice, Florida, where hijackers Atta and Marwan Alshehhi also studied. ([Roig-Franzia and Eggen 1/23/2003](#); [Barton, Kleinberg, and Lantigua 1/23/2003](#)) Neighbors repeatedly called the FBI after 9/11 to report their suspicions, but the FBI only began to search the house in October 2002. The house had remained abandoned, but not sold, since they left just before 9/11. ([McCabe and Kleinberg 1/22/2003](#); [South Florida Sun-Sentinel 1/22/2003](#); [Roig-Franzia and Eggen 1/23/2003](#); [Barton, Kleinberg, and Lantigua 1/23/2003](#)) The FBI returned for more thorough searches in January 2003, with some agents dressed in white biohazard suits. ([Roig-Franzia and Eggen 1/23/2003](#)) US Representative Robert Wexler (D), later says, "This scenario is screaming out one question: Where was the FBI for 15 months?" The FBI determines there is no terrorism connection, and apologizes to the family. ([United Press International 1/24/2003](#)) An editorial notes the "ineptitude" of the FBI in not

reaching family members over the telephone, as reporters were easily able to do. ([Palm Beach Post 2/1/2003](#))

January 23, 2003: Engineers Release Report on Pentagon Crash

Sixteen months after the attack occurred, the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) releases its Pentagon Building Performance Report on the Pentagon's architectural response to the impact, blast, and subsequent fires caused by the Flight 77 crash on 9/11. ([American Society of Civil Engineers 1/17/2003](#)) The report, which was finished several months earlier (see [September 14, 2001-April 2002](#)), admits "the volume of information concerning the aircraft crash... is rather limited," but the team is able to give some details of the impact. The report reproduces the five frames of security camera footage made public in 2002 that showed the strike on the Pentagon (see [March 7, 2002](#)), seeing in them the approaching aircraft with its top about 20 feet above ground before exploding against and into the building. ([Mlakar et al. 1/2003, pp. 14](#)) The report notes the plane struck a construction generator and vent structure on the lawn and speculates "portions of the wings might have been separated from the fuselage before the aircraft struck the building." ([Mlakar et al. 1/2003, pp. 35-36](#)) The ASCE finds that the plane hit the northern edge of Wedge One of the building—its southwest corner—which had been recently renovated, and that the plane made a 90 foot hole in the outer wall, destroying most ground floor support columns there and the limestone and brick façade between and in front of them. Aircraft debris is then reported to have passed through the building's three outer rings E, D, and C, following the plane's trajectory, entering the unrenovated Wedge Two towards the end of the path of destruction. ([Mlakar et al. 1/2003, pp. 39](#)) The report does not say what caused the much-debated hole in the wall of Ring C, which led on to an internal driveway in the middle of the building. However, in a section on the damage caused by the debris it notes, "There was a hole in the east wall of Ring C, emerging into AE drive," and a photo of the C Ring hole is included in the report. ([Mlakar et al. 1/2003, pp. 28](#))

January 27, 2003: 9/11 Commission Starts Off with Little Funding

The 9/11 Commission, officially titled the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, holds its first meeting in Washington. The commission has \$3 million and only a year and a half to explore the causes of the attacks. By comparison, a 1996 federal commission to study legalized gambling was given two years and \$5 million. ([Associated Press 1/27/2003](#)) Two months later the Bush administration grudgingly increases the funding to \$12 million total (see [March 26, 2003](#)). Philip Zelikow, the director of the Miller Center of Public Affairs at the University of Virginia and formerly in the National Security Council during George H. W. Bush's administration, is also appointed executive director of the commission. ([Associated Press 1/27/2003](#)) Zelikow cowrote a book with National Security Adviser Rice and was also, in

2002, responsible for completely rewriting President Bush's national security strategy. ([9/11 Commission 3/2003](#); [Mann 2004, pp. 316-317](#)) A few days later, Vice Chairman Lee Hamilton says, "The focus of the commission will be on the future. We want to make recommendations that will make the American people more secure.... We're not interested in trying to assess blame, we do not consider that part of the commission's responsibility." ([Waterman 2/6/2003](#))

January 30, 2003: Government Reveals Moussaoui Fifth-Jet Theory

The government reveals in a closed-door court hearing that recent interrogations of top al-Qaeda prisoners indicate that Zacarias Moussaoui may have been part of a plot to hijack a fifth plane on the day of 9/11, perhaps with the White House as its target. This is in contrast to the government's original accusation that Moussaoui was to be the "20th hijacker" on Flight 93. Because Moussaoui does not have a security clearance, he cannot see the classified evidence against him, but he later learns of this "fifth-jet theory" while reading a transcript of the hearing that was not thoroughly redacted. ([Bohn and Bernardini 8/8/2003](#); [Novak 10/19/2003](#)) At Moussaoui's 2006 trial (see [March 6-May 4, 2006](#)), the prosecution will support the fifth jet theory—which Moussaoui both admits (see [March 27, 2006](#)) and denies (see [April 22, 2005](#))—arguing that he engaged in parallel conduct with the hijackers (see [February 23-August 16, 2001](#)) and was supported by the same people (see [July 29, 2001-August 3, 2001](#) and [June 13-September 25, 2000](#)). The theory is also supported by the hearsay of what one of the hijackers reportedly told a relative. In February 2001, Khalid Almihdhar told a cousin that Osama bin Laden was planning to launch five attacks against the US (see [Late October 2000-July 4, 2001](#)). But during interrogations, some captured al-Qaeda leaders will reportedly insist that Moussaoui was only a back-up (see [November 20, 2002](#)), while others will claim that he was part of a follow-up operation (see [March 27, 2003](#)).

January 31, 2003: Bush Tells Blairs US Going to War Regardless of Inspection Results; US Considering Luring Saddam into Shooting at US Aircraft Painted in UN Colors

US President George Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair meet at the White House to discuss Iraq. Blair presses Bush to seek a second UN resolution that would provide specific legal backing for the use of force against Iraq. According to the minutes of the meeting, Bush says that "the diplomatic strategy [has] to be arranged around the military planning" and that the "US would put its full weight behind efforts to get another resolution and would 'twist arms' and 'even threaten.'" But if such efforts fail, Bush is recorded saying, "military action would follow anyway." Bush also tells Blair that he hopes to commence military action on March 10. Blair does not demur and offers Britain's total support for the war, saying that he was "solidly with the president and

ready to do whatever it took to disarm Saddam.” Notwithstanding, he insists that “a second Security Council resolution would provide an insurance policy against the unexpected, and international cover, including with the Arabs.” According to Bush, the question that needs to be addressed is what should they cite as evidence that Iraq is in breach of his obligations under UN Resolution 1441 (see [November 8, 2002](#)). The minutes indicate that there is concern that inspections have failed to provide sufficient evidence of a material breach. “The US was thinking of flying U2 reconnaissance aircraft with fighter cover over Iraq, painted in UN colors,” the minutes report. “If Saddam fired on them, he would be in breach.” ([Sands 2005](#); [Gibbon 2/2/2006](#); [MSNBC 2/2/2006](#); [Norton-Taylor 2/3/2006](#); [van Natta 3/27/2006](#)) The Times of London later notes that this proposal “would have made sense only if the spy plane was ordered to fly at an altitude within range of Iraqi missiles.” In this case, the plane would be far below the 90,000 foot altitude it is capable of operating at. ([Bennett and Evans 2/2/2006](#); [Gibbon 2/2/2006](#)) In addition to the U2 idea, Bush also says it is “also possible that a defector could be brought out who would give a public presentation about Saddam’s WMD, and there was also a small possibility that Saddam would be assassinated.” At one point during the two-hour meeting, Bush also says he thinks “it unlikely that there would be internecine warfare between the different religious and ethnic groups.” ([Sands 2005](#); [van Natta 3/27/2006](#)) Also present at the meeting are Blair’s foreign policy advisor, Sir David Manning, his aid Matthew Rycoft, and his chief of staff, Jonathan Powell; National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice and her deputy, Dan Fried; and Bush’s chief of staff, Andrew Card. ([Sands 2005](#); [McSmith 2/2/2006](#); [Gibbon 2/2/2006](#); [van Natta 3/27/2006](#))

(4:12 pm - 4:25 pm) January 31, 2003: Bush and Blair Acknowledge No Direct Link Between Saddam and 9/11

During a joint press conference with President George Bush and British Prime Minister Blair at the White House, the two leaders are asked by a reporter, “One question for you both. Do you believe that there is a link between Saddam Hussein, a direct link, and the men who attacked on September the 11th?” Bush answers succinctly, “I can’t make that claim.” ([US President 2/3/2003](#))

Early 2003: Khalid Shaikh Mohammed Arrested in Karachi?

In a book published in 2006, 9/11 Commission Chairman Tom Kean and Vice-Chairman Lee Hamilton will say that 9/11 mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM) is captured “in an early 2003 raid on a Karachi apartment orchestrated by the CIA, the FBI, and Pakistani security services.” ([Kean and Hamilton 2006, pp. 115](#)) Pakistan and the US will announce the arrest at the beginning of March (see [March 1, 2003](#)). In contrast to the version put forward later by Kean and Hamilton, the Pakistani government initially states he is captured in a house in Rawalpindi, solely by Pakistani security forces. The US agrees on the date and place, but says it was a joint operation. ([CNN 3/2/2003](#); [Iqbal 3/2/2003](#)) However, the initial account is called into question due to various problems

(see [March 10, 2003](#)). It is unclear whether Kean and Hamilton realize that the passing reference in their book is at variance with the initial account.

February 2003: CIA Tells Small Group of Congresspeople It Has Detainee Interrogation Tapes; Two Warn CIA Not to Destroy Them



Jane Harman. [Source: *US House of Representatives*] CIA General Counsel Scott Muller briefs a small group of legislators on the CIA's detainee interrogation program, and indicates that it has made videotapes of the interrogations. Muller says that the CIA is now thinking about destroying the tapes, because they put the officers shown on them at risk. Although four to eight legislators have already been briefed about the program (see [September 2002](#)), this is apparently the first mention that videotapes of interrogations have been made. ([Mazzetti 12/8/2007](#)) According to House Intelligence Committee member Jane Harman (D-CA), the briefing raises "a number of serious concerns." ([The Gavel 12/9/2007](#)) Both Harman and another of those present, Porter Goss (R-FL), advise the CIA that they think destroying the tapes is a bad idea (see [November 2005](#)). Harman is apparently supported by fellow Democrat Nancy Pelosi, who is said to "concur" with Harman's objections to the tapes' destruction. ([Mazzetti 12/8/2007](#)) Harman writes a follow-up letter to Muller asking about legal opinions on interrogation techniques and urging the CIA to reconsider its decision to destroy the tapes (see [February 28, 2003](#)).

February-March 20, 2003: Stories About PNAC Global Domination Agenda Gets Some Media Coverage

With war against Iraq imminent, numerous media outlets finally begin reporting on PNAC's role in influencing Iraq policy specifically, and US foreign policy generally. PNAC's plans for global domination had been noted before 9/11 ([Ricks 8/21/2001](#)) , and PNAC's 2000 report (see [September 2000](#)) recommending the conquest of Iraq even if Saddam Hussein is not in power was first reported in September 2002 ([Mackay 9/7/2002](#)) , but there are few follow-up mentions until February 2003. (Exceptions: ([Bookman 9/29/2002](#); [Bangor Daily News 10/18/2002](#); [Pilger 12/16/2002](#); [Johnson 1/12/2003](#))) Many of these articles use PNAC to suggest that global and regional domination is the real reason for the Iraq war. Coverage increases as war gets nearer, but many media

outlets still fail to do any reporting on this, and some of the reporting that is done is not prominently placed (a New York Times article on the topic is buried in the Arts section! ([Carr 3/11/2003](#))). One Newsweek editorial notes that “not until the last few days” before war have many reasons against the war been brought up. It calls this “too little, too late” to make an impact. ([Agovino 3/18/2003](#)) (Articles that discuss PNAC before war begins: ([Bunch 1/27/2003](#); [Purdum 2/1/2003](#); [PBS 2/20/2003](#); [Vulliamy 2/23/2003](#); [Floyd 2/23/2003](#); [Freedland 2/26/2003](#); [Dreyfuss 3/2003](#); [Reynolds 3/2/2003](#); [Jones 3/2/2003](#); [Boelsche 3/4/2003](#); [Ross and Scott 3/5/2003](#); [Scheer 3/5/2003](#); [Cornwell 3/8/2003](#); [Sallah and Mahr 3/9/2003](#); [ABC News 3/10/2003](#); [Australian Broadcasting Corporation 3/10/2003](#); [CNN 3/10/2003](#); [Monbiot 3/11/2003](#); [Carr 3/11/2003](#); [Dreyfuss 3/12/2003](#); [Page 3/12/2003](#); [Salutin 3/14/2003](#); [Japan Times 3/14/2003](#); [Carlton 3/15/2003](#); [Page 3/15/2003](#); [Black 3/16/2003](#); [Jones 3/16/2003](#); [Mackay 3/16/2003](#); [McQuaig 3/16/2003](#); [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation 3/17/2003](#); [Simpson 3/19/2003](#); [Escobar 3/20/2003](#); [Davidson 3/20/2003](#)))

Early February 2003: FBI Reportedly Baffled by White House Push to Link Iraq and Al-Qaeda

An unnamed Justice Department official tells the New York Times that the FBI has been baffled by the administration’s claims of links between Iraq and al-Qaeda. “We’ve been looking at this hard for more than a year and you know what, we just don’t think it’s there,” the official says. ([Risen and Johnston 2/3/2003](#) Sources: Unnamed government official)

February 4, 2003: Hussein Denies Any Relationship to Al-Qaeda

Saddam Hussein gives a rare interview, with former Labour MP Tony Benn for Channel 4 News and flatly denies supporting al-Qaeda. He says, “If we had a relationship with al-Qaeda and we believed in that relationship, we wouldn’t be ashamed to admit it.” ([BBC 2/4/2003](#))

February 7-13, 2003: Orange Alert Causes Duct Tape and Plastic Sheeting Buying Panic

The government raises the threat level to orange. The announcement is made by Attorney General John Ashcroft, Homeland Security Secretary Ridge, and FBI Director Mueller. CIA Director George Tenet calls the threat “the most specific we have seen” since 9/11 and says al-Qaeda may use a “radiological dispersal device, as well as poisons and chemicals.” Ashcroft states that “this decision for an increased threat condition designation is based on specific intelligence received and analyzed by the full intelligence community. This information has been corroborated by multiple intelligence sources.” ([CNN 2/7/2003](#)) Ashcroft further claims that they have “evidence that terrorists would

attack American hotels and apartment buildings.” ([Ross and Rackmill 2/13/2007](#)) A detailed plan is described to authorities by a captured terror suspect. This source cited a plot involving a Virginia- or Detroit-based al-Qaeda cell that had developed a method of carrying dirty bombs encased in shoes, suitcases, or laptops through airport scanners. The informant specifies government buildings and Christian or clerical centers as possible targets. ([Ross and Rackmill 2/13/2007](#)) Three days later, Fire Administrator David Paulison advises Americans to stock up on plastic sheeting and duct tape to protect themselves against radiological or biological attack. This causes a brief buying panic. ([MSNBC 6/4/2007](#)) Batteries of Stinger anti-aircraft missiles are set up around Washington and the capital’s skies are patrolled by F-16 fighter jets and helicopters. ([BBC 2/14/2003](#)) The threat is debunked on February 13, when the main source is finally given an FBI polygraph and fails it. Two senior law enforcement officials in Washington and New York state that a key piece of information leading to the terror alerts was fabricated. The claim made by a captured al-Qaeda member regarding a “dirty bomb” threat to Washington, New York, or Florida had proven to be a product of his imagination. Vincent Cannistraro, former head of the CIA’s Counterterrorism Center, says the intelligence turned out “to be fabricated and therefore the reason for a lot of the alarm, particularly in Washington this week, has been dissipated after they found out that this information was not true.” But threat levels remain stuck on orange for two more weeks. ([Ross and Rackmill 2/13/2007](#)) Bush administration officials do admit that the captured terror suspect lied, but add that this suspect was not the only source taken into consideration. Ridge says that there is “no need to start sealing the doors and windows.” Bush says that the warning, although based on evidence fabricated by an alleged terrorist, is a “stark reminder of the era that we’re in, that we’re at war and the war goes on.” ([BBC 2/14/2003](#)) The alert followed less than forty-eight hours after Colin Powell’s famous speech to the United Nations in which he falsely accused Saddam Hussein of harboring al-Qaeda and training terrorists in the use of chemical weapons (see [February 5, 2003](#)). ([Dreyfuss 9/21/2006](#)) Anti-war demonstrations also continue to take place world-wide. ([MSNBC 6/4/2007](#))

February 9, 2003: Prisoner Interviews Debunk Allegations of Al-Qaeda-Iraqi Government Ties

Journalist Jason Burke writes in the Observer about recent interviews he has conducted with prisoners held by Kurdish rebels in northern Iraq. One prisoner, Mohammed Mansour Shahab, claims to have been an Iraqi government agent who repeatedly met with Osama bin Laden over a several year period. The New Yorker published an article in March 2002 largely based on Shahab’s allegations and concluded, “the Kurds may have evidence of [Saddam Hussein’s] ties to Osama bin Laden’s terrorist network.” But Burke is able to find a number of inconsistencies and falsehoods in Shahab’s account, and after he points them out, Shahab does not deny that he was lying. Burke suggests that Shahab, like other prisoners being held by the Kurds, was lying in hopes of getting his prison sentence reduced since his Kurdish captors are looking to promote propaganda against their enemy, the Hussein government. Burke also interviews a number of prisoners belonging to the Ansar al-Islam militant group that is allegedly linked to Abu Musab al-

Zarqawi. He does not see evidence of any link between that group and Hussein's government and concludes, "Saddam may well have infiltrated the Ansar al-Islam with a view to monitoring the developments of the group (indeed it would be odd if he had not) but that appears to be about as far as his involvement with the group, and incidentally with al-Qaeda, goes." ([Burke 2/9/2003](#))

February 11 or 12, 2003: Powell Obtains Advance Copy of New Speech Allegedly by Bin Laden, Misrepresents Contents to Senate

Secretary of State Colin Powell obtains an advance transcript of a new audio tape thought to be from Osama bin Laden before it is broadcast on Al Jazeera, but misrepresents the contents to a US Senate panel, implying it shows a partnership between al-Qaeda and Iraq. ([CNN 2/12/2003](#)) Following Powell's initial claim the tape exists, Al Jazeera says that it has no such tape and dismisses Powell's statement as a rumor. ([Associated Press 2/12/2003](#)) However, later in the day Al Jazeera says that it does have the tape. ([Reuters 2/12/2003](#)) It is unclear how Powell obtains the advance copy, and *Counterpunch* even jokes, "Maybe the CIA gave Powell the tape before they delivered it to Al Jazeera?" ([Nimmo 2/13/2003](#)) In his testimony to the Senate Budget Committee Powell says, "[Bin Laden] speaks to the people of Iraq and talks about their struggle and how he is in partnership with Iraq." ([CNN 2/12/2003](#)) Powell's spokesperson, Richard Boucher, says that the recording proves "that bin Laden and Saddam Hussein seem to find common ground." ([Nakhoul 2/11/2003](#); [Johnston 2/12/2003](#); [Eggen and Schmidt 11/12/2003](#)) However, although bin Laden tells his supporters in Iraq they may fight alongside the Saddam Hussein, if the country is invaded by the US (see [November 12, 2002](#)), he does not express any direct support for the current regime in Iraq, which he describes as "pagan." ([CNN 2/12/2003](#)) A senior editor for Al Jazeera says the tape offers no evidence of ties between al-Qaeda and Saddam Hussein. "When you hear it, it doesn't prove any relation between bin Laden or al-Qaeda group and the Iraqi regime," he argues. ([ABC News 2/12/2003](#)) Several news reports also challenge Powell and Boucher's interpretation. For example, CNN reveals that the voice had criticized Saddam's regime, declaring that "the socialists and the rulers [had] lost their legitimacy a long time ago, and the socialists are infidels regardless of where they are, whether in Baghdad or in Aden." ([CNN 2/11/2003](#); [MacFarquhar 11/12/2003](#)) Similarly, a report published by Reuters notes that the voice "did not express support for Iraqi President Saddam Hussein—it said Muslims should support the Iraqi people rather than the country's government." ([Nakhoul 2/11/2003](#))

February 12, 2003: Swiss Analysts Decline to Analyze New Bin Laden Tape, Quality of Recording Is Disputed

Swiss voice analysts at the Dalle Molle Institute for Perceptual Artificial Intelligence decline to examine a new recording issued by a man thought to be Osama bin Laden (see [February 11 or 12, 2003](#) and [February 12, 2003](#)). The institute previously analyzed a

speech made by a man thought to be bin Laden and concluded that the speaker was not actually him (see [November 29, 2002](#)). The institute says that the previous analysis was done at the request of a French TV channel and was “mainly motivated by pure scientific curiosity.” It also says that the poor quality of that recording coupled with the limited number of voice examples meant that it was unlikely the recording could ever be properly authenticated. ([Swissinfo \(.org\) 2/12/2003](#)) However, US officials tell CNN that “this tape was of much better quality than the previous one presumed to be from bin Laden, which Al Jazeera broadcast in November.” ([CNN 2/12/2003](#)) The institute does not analyze any later tapes thought to be released by bin Laden.

February 12, 2003: New Alleged Bin Laden Speech Is Aired Discussing Iraq, Speaker Says Saddam Is Finished

A new speech thought to be from Osama bin Laden is aired on Al Jazeera. On the 16-minute audiotape the speaker predicts the US will invade Iraq to “loot Muslim riches” and “install a stooge government to follow its masters in Washington and Tel Aviv... to pave the way for the establishment of a greater Israel.” He also advises Iraqis on defensive tactics al-Qaeda has tested in Afghanistan, recommending trenches against aerial bombardment and saying “what the enemy fears most is urban and street warfare, in which heavy and costly human losses can be expected.” He also stresses the capacity of “martyrdom operations” to inflict “unprecedented harm” on the enemy. He predicts the US will use an “enormous propaganda machine” and “intense air strikes” to “hide its most conspicuous weak points: fear, cowardice, and lack of fighting spirit among its troops,” who are fighting for “the criminal gang in the White House.” Bin Laden also attacks Arab leaders allied with the US, calling them hypocrites and apostates, but highlights only six Arab countries as being in need of liberation: Jordan, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Nigeria, and Yemen. It is unclear why he omits Egypt and the Gulf sheikdoms, for example. He tells his supporters in Iraq that they may fight with Saddam Hussein’s “pagan” Ba’ath forces, as they are finished anyway. ([Laden 2005, pp. 179-185](#))

February 13, 2003: Blind Sheikh’s Son Captured in Pakistan



The Blind Sheikh's sons Mohammad Omar Abdul-Rahman and Ahmad Abdul-Rahman in 1998. It is not clear which is which. [Source: CNN] Pakistani authorities raid an apartment in Quetta, Pakistan, and apparently arrest Mohammad Omar Abdul-Rahman, a son of the Blind Sheikh, Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman. Supposedly, communications found at the apartment lead to the later arrest of Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (see [March 1, 2003](#)). ([Johnston 3/4/2003](#)) Government officials say he is a senior al-Qaeda operative who ran a training camp in Afghanistan before 9/11 attacks and also had a role in operational planning. Another son of the blind sheik, Ahmad Abdul-Rahman, was captured in Afghanistan in late 2001, but Ahmad was not considered to be high ranking. ([Associated Press 3/4/2003](#)) But even though Mohammad Omar's arrest is reported in the New York Times and elsewhere, there is no official announcement. In December 2005, his name will be on a list published by ABC News of high-detainees being held in a secret CIA prison (see [November 2005](#)). ([ABC News 12/5/2005](#)) In 2006, the US will announce that it is emptying the CIA prisons and transferring all high-level prisoners to Guantanamo, but he will not be one of those transferred and it is unclear what happened to him (see [September 2-3, 2006](#)).

February 14, 2003-June 4, 2004: Rumsfeld Recounts Sultan Calling 9/11 a 'Blessing in Disguise'



Sultan Qaboos bin Said Al Said. [Source: *Government of Oman*] In numerous public appearances, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld recounts a conversation with the Sultan of Oman (Qaboos Bin Said) a month or two after 9/11. The sultan said to him words to the effect of that September 11 was a "blessing in disguise,"

because it would “wake up the world, before terrorists get their hands on massive destruction, before they get biological weapons and kill not 3,000 but 30 or 300,000.” ([Rumsfeld 2/14/2003](#); [US Department of Defense 2/25/2003](#); [US Department of Defense 9/10/2003](#); [US Department of Defense 11/18/2003](#); [US Department of Defense 6/4/2004](#)) When he is asked in an interview, “Do you feel that [9/11] was a wake- up call?” Rumsfeld responds, “I think so absolutely, yeah.” ([PBS 9/10/2003](#)) Rumsfeld makes a similar claim in his prepared testimony for the 9/11 Commission in March 2004: “Think about what has been done since the September 11th attacks: two state sponsors of terrorism have been removed from power, a 90-nation coalition has been formed which is cooperating on a number of levels... All of these actions are putting pressure on terrorist networks. Taken together, they represent a collective effort that is unprecedented—which has undoubtedly saved lives, and made us safer than before September 11th.” ([9/11 Commission 3/23/2004](#))

February 17, 2003: CIA Kidnaps Own Informer in Broad Daylight in Italy, Damaging Italian Al-Qaeda Investigation



A surveillance photograph of Hassan Mustafa Osama Nasr. [Source: *Central Intelligence Agency*] The CIA kidnaps an Islamic extremist who previously informed for them in Milan, Italy. The man, Hassan Mustafa Osama Nasr (a.k.a. Abu Omar), who was a member of the Egyptian terror group Al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya and was close to al-Qaeda, provided information to the CIA in Albania (see [August 27, 1995 and Shortly After](#)) and operated in Italy (see [1997-February 17, 2003](#)). The US will say that Nasr is a dangerous terrorist and that he once plotted to assassinate the Egyptian foreign minister. However, Italian officials, who were monitoring him, will deny this and say that his abduction damaged an intelligence operation against al-Qaeda. A senior prosecutor will say, “When Nasr disappeared in February [2003], our investigation came to a standstill.” Italian authorities are mystified by the kidnap, as they are sharing the results of their surveillance with the CIA. Nor can they understand why Egypt wants him back. When he reaches Cairo, he is taken to the Egyptian interior minister and told that if he agrees to inform again, he will be set free. However, he

refuses and spends most of the next 14 months in prison, facing “terrible tortures.” The Chicago Tribune will ask, “Why would the US government go to elaborate lengths to seize a 39-year-old Egyptian who, according to former Albanian intelligence officials, was once the CIA’s most productive source of information within the tightly knit group of Islamic fundamentalists living in exile in Albania?” One possible answer is that he is kidnapped in an attempt to turn him back into the informer he once was. The kidnapping generates a substantial amount of publicity, leading to an investigation of the CIA’s practice of extraordinary rendition, and an Italian official will comment, “Instead of having an investigation against terrorists, we are investigating this CIA kidnapping.” ([Crewdson and Hundley 7/2/2005](#)) Arrest warrants will later be issued for some US intelligence officers involved in the kidnapping (see [June 23, 2005 and After](#)).

February 18, 2003: Alleged Al-Qaeda Member Convicted in Germany

Mounir El Motassadeq, an alleged member of Mohamed Atta’s Hamburg al-Qaeda cell, is convicted in Germany of accessory to murder in the 9/11 attacks. His is given the maximum sentence of 15 years. ([Associated Press 2/19/2003](#)) Motassadeq admitted varying degrees of contact with Atta, Marwan Alshehhi, Ramzi bin al-Shibh, Said Bahaji, Ziad Jarrah, and Zakariya Essabar; admitted he had been given power of attorney over Alshehhi’s bank account; and admitted attending an al-Qaeda training camp in Afghanistan from May to August 2000; but he claimed he had nothing to do with 9/11. ([Butler 10/24/2002](#)) The conviction is the first one related to 9/11, but as the Independent puts it, “there are doubts whether there will ever be a second.” This is because intelligence agencies have been reluctant to turn over evidence, or give access to requested witnesses. In Motassadeq’s case, his lawyers tried several times unsuccessfully to obtain testimony by two of his friends, bin al-Shibh and Mohammed Haydar Zammar—a lack of evidence that will later become grounds for overturning his conviction. ([Gumbel 2/20/2003](#))

February 19, 2003: Expert with Access to Classified Evidence Claims There Is No Al-Qaeda-Iraqi Government Link

Shortly after 9/11, counterterrorism expert Rohan Gunaratna, a research fellow at the Center for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland, begins researching for his book, *Inside al-Qaeda: Global Network of Terror*. He examines several tens of thousands of documents acquired from al-Qaeda and Taliban sources. During the course of his investigation, he finds no evidence of an Iraqi-al-Qaeda link. In an op-ed piece printed in the International Herald Tribune on February 19, 2003, he writes: “In addition to listening to 240 tapes taken from al-Qaeda’s central registry, I debriefed several al-Qaeda and Taliban detainees. I could find no evidence of links between Iraq and al-Qaeda. The documentation and interviews indicated that al-Qaeda

regarded Saddam, a secular leader, as an infidel.” ([Gunaratna 2/19/2003](#) Sources: [Rohan Gunaratna](#))

February 25, 2003: More 9/11 Terrorist Plotters Believed to Be in Germany

The Chicago Tribune reveals that there appear to be many more members of Mohamed Atta’s Hamburg cell than previously reported. While many members of the cell died in the attacks or fled Germany just prior to 9/11, up to a dozen suspected of belonging to the Hamburg cell stayed behind, apparently hoping to avoid government scrutiny. Many of their names have not yet been revealed. In some cases, investigators still do not know the names. For instance, phone records show that someone using the alias Karl Herweg was in close communication with the Hamburg cell and Zacarias Moussaoui, but Herweg’s real identity is not known. ([Crewdson, Swanson, and Simpson 2/25/2003](#))

February 26, 2003: Whistleblower Believes FBI Not Prepared for New Terrorist Threats

Coleen Rowley, the FBI whistleblower who was proclaimed Time magazine’s Person of the Year in 2002, sends another public letter to FBI Director Mueller. She believes the FBI is not prepared for new terrorist attacks likely to result from the upcoming Iraq war. She also says counterterrorism cases are being mishandled. She claims the FBI and the Justice Department have not questioned captured al-Qaeda suspects Zacarias Moussaoui and Richard Reid about their al-Qaeda contacts, choosing instead to focus entirely on prosecution. She writes, “Lack of follow-through with regard to Moussaoui and Reid gives a hollow ring to our ‘top priority’ —i.e., preventing another terrorist attack. Moussaoui almost certainly would know of other al-Qaeda contacts, possibly in the US, and would also be able to alert us to the motive behind his and Mohamed Atta’s interest in crop-dusting.” Moussaoui’s lawyer also says the government has not attempted to talk to Moussaoui since 9/11. ([Lichtblau and Glaberson 3/5/2003](#); [Shenon 3/6/2003](#))

Late February 2003: DNA Identifies Passenger Remains, but Hijacker DNA Is Not Tested

Medical examiners match human remains to the DNA of two of the hijackers that flew on Flights 11 and/or 175 into the WTC. The names of the two hijackers are not released. The FBI gave the examiners DNA profiles of all ten hijackers on those flights a few weeks earlier. Genetic profiles of five hijackers from Flight 77 and the four from Flight 93 that did not match any of the passengers’ profiles have been given to the FBI, but the FBI has not given any DNA profiles with which to match them. ([Wald 2/27/2003](#))

February 28, 2003: CIA Refuses to Say Whether Bush Has Approved Enhanced Interrogation Techniques

CIA general counsel Scott Muller writes to Jane Harman (D-CA), a member of the House Intelligence Committee, but fails to respond fully to questions about the CIA's use of enhanced interrogation techniques. ([Central Intelligence Agency 2/28/2003](#)) Following a briefing earlier in the month about the legality of the techniques (see [February 2003](#)), Harman had written to Muller and CIA Director George Tenet asking whether using the techniques was good policy for the US: "I would like to know whether the most senior levels of the White House have determined that these practices are consistent with the principles and policies of the United States. Have the enhanced techniques been authorized and approved by the President?" She also urges the CIA not to destroy videotapes of detainee interrogations because they are "the best proof that the written record is accurate," and their destruction "would reflect badly on the Agency." ([US Congress 2/10/2003](#)) In his reply, Muller completely fails to mention the tapes or say whether Bush has been consulted. He also says it would be inappropriate for him to comment on policy issues, merely that "it would be fair to assume that policy as well as legal matters have been addressed within the Executive Branch." ([Central Intelligence Agency 2/28/2003](#))

Spring 2003: Aid to Afghanistan Falls Short of Promises

At the beginning of 2002, the US, Britain, and other countries around the world made large pledges of aid to Afghanistan (see [November 2001-January 2002](#)). But with a new war in Iraq taking considerable focus in the West, those pledges appear to be largely unfulfilled. In February 2003, Sen. Joseph Biden (D) says, "I think [the Bush administration has] already given up the ghost in Afghanistan. They've basically turned it over to the warlords." In December 2002, President Bush signed a law authorizing close to \$1 billion a year in aid to Afghanistan for the next four years. But one month later, when Bush submitted his actual budget to Congress, it authorized no money for Afghanistan aid whatsoever. Congress soon authorizes \$300 million, but Sen. Chuck Hagel (R) notes that this amount "does not come near" the promise made a short time before. Ahmed Wali Karzai, brother of Afghanistan's president Hamid Karzai, complains to the press, "What was promised to Afghans with the collapse of the Taliban was a new life of hope and change. But what was delivered? Nothing... There have been no significant changes for people.... [I don't] know what to say to people anymore." ([Tapper 4/10/2003](#)) As of early 2003, there are only about 3,000 Afghan soldiers who have been trained for the country's new army, and many of those have quit because they had not been paid in more than six months. By contrast, there are roughly 200,000 fighters controlled by warlords. ([Tapper 4/10/2003](#); [Osborne 5/25/2003](#)) A study of post-conflict zones done by Care International estimates that Bosnia is receiving international aid of \$326 per person, and Kosovo \$288 per person, but Afghanistan is receiving only \$42 per person. There is one peacekeeper per 113 people in Bosnia, one per 48 people in Kosovo, but one per 5,380 in Afghanistan (and those are not allowed outside the capital of Kabul). ([Osborne 5/25/2003](#)) Only 3 percent of all international aid spent in Afghanistan has been

for reconstruction, 13 percent is for emergency aid, and the rest is spent on security. One Afghan minister complains, “We don’t even have enough money to pay [government] wages, let alone plan reconstruction.” ([Pilger 9/20/2003](#)) The Independent reports, “Afghans have also listened with astonishment as Americans portray their country’s experience since the overthrow of the Taliban as a ‘success’. Another Western observer summed up his views more acidly. ‘If the Americans think this is success, then outright failure must be pretty horrible to behold.’” ([Reeves 2/24/2003](#))

Spring 2003: US Green Berets Repeatedly Denied Permission to Go After Mullah Omar

There are several credible sightings by CIA and military informants of top Taliban leader Mullah Omar entering a mosque in Kandahar, Afghanistan. A Green Beret team located at a base just minutes away are ready to deploy to go after Omar, but each time US military commanders follow strict protocol and call in the Delta Force commando team instead. But this team is based hundreds of miles away near Kabul and it takes them several hours to arrive in Kandahar. By that time, Omar has disappeared. Apparently this is part of a pattern only allowing certain Special Forces units to go after important targets. The Washington Post will report in 2004 that any mission that takes Special Forces farther than two miles from a “firebase” requires as long as 72 hours to be approved. And on the rare occasions that such forces are authorized to act, they are required to travel in armed convoys, a practice that alerts the enemy. ([Vistica 1/5/2004](#))

March 2003 and later: Transport Vehicles for US Army in Iraq Not Prepared for Combat Zones

The US military sends 12,000 soft-skinned Humvees, some with canvas-skinned doors, to Iraq along with hundreds of transport vehicles which are equally unprepared for deployment in combat zones. ([Moran 4/15/2003](#); [Lieb 12/26/2003](#); [Heinatz 9/26/2004](#))

March 1, 2003: KSM Reportedly Arrested in Pakistan, But Doubts Persist



A photo taken during KSM's alleged arrest in Pakistan. [Source: *Associated Press*]Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM) is reportedly arrested in Rawalpindi, Pakistan. ([Gannon 3/1/2003](#)) Officials claim that he is arrested in a late-night joint Pakistani and FBI raid, in which they also arrest Mustafa Ahmed al-Hawsawi, the purported main financier of the 9/11 attacks. ([Williams, Mitchell, and Windrem 3/3/2003](#)) However, some journalists immediately cast serious doubts about this arrest. For instance, MSNBC reports, "Some analysts questioned whether Mohammed was actually arrested Saturday, speculating that he may have been held for some time and that the news was made public when it was in the interests of the United States and Pakistan." ([Williams, Mitchell, and Windrem 3/3/2003](#)) There are numerous problems surrounding the US-alleged arrest of KSM:

- Witnesses say KSM is not present when the raid occurs. ([Haven and Bangash 3/2/2003](#); [Ahmad 3/2/2003](#); [Australian Broadcasting Corporation 3/2/2003](#); [McCarthy 3/3/2003](#); [Eckholm and Johnston 3/3/2003](#))
- There are differing accounts about which house he is arrested in. ([Gannon 3/1/2003](#); [Meyer 3/2/2003](#); [Rashid 3/3/2003](#))
- There are differing accounts about where he was before the arrest and how authorities found him. ([Saporito and McGirk 3/1/2003](#); [Khan and Schmidt 3/2/2003](#); [Khan and Schmidt 3/2/2003](#); [Eckholm and Johnston 3/3/2003](#); [Johnston 3/4/2003](#))
- Some accounts have him sleeping when the arrest occurs and some don't. ([Meyer 3/2/2003](#); [Ikram and Brunnstrom 3/2/2003](#); [Eckholm and Johnston 3/3/2003](#); [Daily Telegraph 3/4/2003](#))
- Accounts differ on who arrests him—Pakistanis, Americans, or both. ([CNN 3/2/2003](#); [Meyer 3/2/2003](#); [Eckholm 3/2/2003](#); [Rashid 3/3/2003](#); [Reid and Hussein 3/3/2003](#); [Lumpkin 3/3/2003](#))
- There are previously published accounts that KSM may have been killed in September 2002 (see [September 11, 2002](#)).
- There are accounts that he was captured in June 2002 (see [June 16, 2002](#)).

These are just some of the difficulties with the arrest story. There are so many problems with it that one Guardian reporter says, "The story appears to be almost entirely fictional." ([Hilton 3/6/2003](#)) In addition, 9/11 Commission Chairman Tom Kean and Vice-chairman Lee Hamilton will write in a 2006 book that the arrest is made in an apartment in Karachi and carried out by a joint CIA, FBI and Pakistani team (see [Early 2003](#)).

Between March 2003 and June 25, 2003: Top Al-Qaeda Prisoners Deny Al-Qaeda-Iraq Link

US officials admit that imprisoned al-Qaeda leaders Khalid Shaikh Mohammed and Abu Zubaida have said in interrogations that bin Laden vetoed a long term relationship with Saddam because he did not want to be in Hussein's debt. ([Isikoff 6/25/2003](#))

Shortly After March 1, 2003: KSM Is Extensively Waterboarded and Tortured in Secret CIA Prisons

Shortly after he is arrested in Pakistan (see [March 1, 2003](#)), al-Qaeda leader Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM) is taken to a secret CIA prison and tortured. He is initially taken to a secret prison somewhere in Afghanistan. He is reportedly placed in a cell naked for several days and repeatedly questioned by females as a humiliation. He is attached to a dog leash and repeatedly yanked into the walls of his cell. He is suspended from the ceiling, chained naked in a painful crouch for long periods, doused with cold water, and kept in suffocating heat. ([Mayer 8/6/2007](#)) But he is resistant to these methods, so it is decided he will be transferred to a secret CIA prison in Poland and waterboarded, which is a technique simulating drowning that is widely regarded as torture. He is only one of about four high-ranking detainees waterboarded, according to media reports (see [May 2002-2003](#)). ([Mayer 8/6/2007](#); [Windrem 9/13/2007](#)) Accounts are contradictory about the use of waterboarding on KSM:

- NBC News will later claim that, according to multiple unnamed officials, KSM underwent at least two sessions of waterboarding and other extreme measures before talking. One former senior intelligence official will say, "KSM required, shall we say, re-dipping." ([Windrem 9/13/2007](#))
- A former CIA official familiar with KSM's case will later tell ABC News, "KSM lasted the longest under waterboarding, about a minute and a half, but once he broke, it never had to be used again." A senior CIA official claims that KSM later admitted he only confessed because of the waterboarding. ([Ross, Esposito, and Raddatz 9/14/2007](#))
- The New York Times will later claim that "KSM was subjected to intense and repeated torture techniques that, at the time, were specifically designated as illegal under US law." Some claim that KSM gives useful information. "However, many of the officials interviewed say KSM provided a raft of false and exaggerated statements that did not bear close scrutiny—the usual result, experts say, of torture." CIA officials stopped the "extreme interrogation" sessions after about two weeks, worrying that they might have exceeded their legal bounds. Apparently pressure to stop comes from Jack Goldsmith, head of the Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel, who is troubled about updates from KSM's interrogations and raises legal questions. He is angrily opposed by the White House, particularly David Addington, a top aide to Vice President Cheney. ([Shane, Johnston, and Risen 10/4/2007](#))
- The New Yorker reports that officials who have seen a classified Red Cross report say that KSM claims he was waterboarded five times. Further, he says he was waterboarded even after he started cooperating. But two former CIA officers insist that he was

waterboarded only once. One of them says that KSM “didn’t resist. He sang right away. He cracked real quick. A lot of them want to talk. Their egos are unimaginable. KSM was just a little doughboy.”

■A different ABC News account claims that KSM was al-Qaeda’s toughest prisoner. CIA officers who subject themselves to waterboarding last only about 14 seconds, but KSM was able to last over two minutes. ([Ross and Esposito 11/18/2005](#))

Regardless, footnotes to the 9/11 Commission final report indicate that KSM begins providing substantial information by April 17, 2003. ([Mayer 8/6/2007](#)) It will later be reported that up to 90 percent of KSM’s confessions may be unreliable. Furthermore, he has recanted many of his statements (see [August 6, 2007](#)).

March 3, 2003: Bush’s Efforts in Fighting Terrorism Since 9/11 Are Called an ‘Abysmal Failure’

An article in the New Republic claims that “President Bush has repeatedly stifled efforts to strengthen domestic safeguards against further terrorist attacks. As a consequence, homeland security remains perilously deficient.” The article cites numerous examples to support this contention, and comments: “Bush’s record on homeland security ought to be considered a scandal. Yet, not only is it not a scandal, it’s not even a story, having largely failed to register with the public, the media, or even the political elite.” It points out numerous examples where the administration has opposed the spending of more money to protect against an attack and argues: “The White House appears to grasp that Bush’s standing on national security issues, especially after September 11, is so unassailable that he does not need to shore it up. Instead, the administration seems to view his wartime popularity as a massive bank of political capital from which they can withdraw and spend on other, unrelated causes. In the short run, this strategy is a political boon for Bush and his party. But, in the long run, it divides and weakens the nation against its external threats.” ([Chait 3/3/2003](#)) Here are some of the examples of evidence supporting this article’s arguments pointed out in this and subsequent articles:

■Airports are said to be unacceptably vulnerable to terrorism. ([Miller 6/8/2004](#))

■Terrorist watch lists remain unconsolidated. ([Waterman 4/30/2003](#))

■Basic background checks on air security personnel remain undone. ([Donnelly 7/8/2003](#))

■The Treasury Department has assigned five times as many agents to investigate Cuban embargo violations as it has to track al-Qaeda’s finances. ([Solomon 4/30/2004](#))

■The White House has spurned a request for 80 more investigators to track and disrupt the global financial networks of US-designated terrorist groups. ([New York Times 4/4/2004](#))

■Cases involving “international terrorism” have been fizzling out in US courts. ([Schmitt 12/9/2003](#))

■Experts have concluded that the Iraq War has diverted resources from the war on terrorism and made the US less secure. ([Myers and Roston 7/29/2003](#); [Boehlert 7/31/2003](#))

■Investigations have shown that most chemical plants across the US remain dangerously vulnerable to a guerilla-style attack. Some plants have virtually no security at all, often not even locked gates. Explosions at some of these plants could kill more than a million people. Yet the Bush administration has so far successfully opposed strengthening

security regulations, apparently at the behest of chemical industry lobbyists. ([Chait 3/3/2003](#); [Lane 1/28/2005](#))

- There has been a huge increase in government spending to train and respond to terrorist attacks, but Time magazine reports that the geographical spread of “funding appears to be almost inversely proportional to risk.” ([Ripley 3/21/2004](#))

- Several high-profile studies have concluded that despite its frequent “bear any burden” rhetoric, the Bush administration has grossly underfunded domestic security. ([Chait 3/3/2003](#); [Lichtblau 7/25/2003](#))

- Community-based “first responders” lack basic equipment, including protective clothing and radios. ([Chait 3/3/2003](#); [Lichtblau 7/25/2003](#))

- Spending on computer upgrades, airport security, more customs agents, port security, border controls, chemical plant security, bioweapon vaccinations, and much more, is far below needed levels and often below Promised levels. ([Chait 3/3/2003](#))

February-Late March 2003: US Intelligence Learns Al-Qaeda Called Off Chemical Bomb Attack in US, but Effectiveness of Bomb is Disputed

In February 2003, some radical militants are arrested in Bahrain. A joint US-Saudi raid of an apartment in Saudi Arabia owned by one of them reveals the designs for a bomb called a mubtakkar. This bomb is made of two widely available chemicals, sodium cyanide and hydrogen, which combine to create hydrogen cyanide. When turned to gas, it is lethal, and counterterrorism experts are highly alarmed at this technical breakthrough. CIA Director Tenet briefs President Bush about the mubtakkar bomb in early March. ([Suskind 2006, pp. 193-197](#); [Suskind 6/17/2006](#)) Journalist Ron Suskind calls it a “nightmare delivery system—portable, easy to construct, deadly.” The CIA has a highly placed al-Qaeda informant codenamed Ali, and in late March they contact him to learn more about the bomb. He tells his CIA handlers that Yusef al-Ayeri, a Saudi in charge of al-Qaeda operations in the Arabian peninsula, visited al-Qaeda number two leader Ayman al-Zawahiri in January 2003. He told al-Zawahiri of an already advanced plot in the US. Operatives loosely linked to al-Qaeda had traveled to the US in the fall of 2002 and thoroughly cased locations in New York City. They would place the mubtakkar bomb in subway cars and remotely activate them. The group was ready to implement an attack in about 45 days. According to Suskind, several thousand people could be killed. But Ali learned that al-Zawahiri called off the attacks, though Ali does not know the reason why. The group did cancel the attack, and US intelligence never learns who exactly they were. President Bush and others puzzle why the attack was canceled and speculate that al-Qaeda put it aside in favor of an even bigger attack. ([Suskind 2006, pp. 216-220](#); [Suskind 6/17/2006](#)) Suskind’s account will cause alarm when revealed in 2006. Sen. Charles Schumer (D-NY) will say that authorities took the plot seriously but were never able to confirm its existence. Other officials will debate the effectiveness of the bomb and how many deaths it could have caused. ([CNN 6/18/2006](#)) University of Maryland professor Milton Leitenberg later says of the bomb, “What you would get, in all probability, is a big bang, a big splash, but very little gas.” He also says that concentrations of key chemicals present in household materials are so low “you would get next to nothing” by using them,

and one would have to get them from a chemical supplier or steal them from a laboratory. One counterterrorism official points out, “If this is such an amazing weapon, and the design for it is out there, why has no one ever used it?” ([Waterman 6/27/2006](#)) An article by the private intelligence service Stratfor is also skeptical and suggests that al-Zawahiri called off the attack because it wouldn’t have been as deadly as if conventional bombs were used instead. ([Burton 6/21/2006](#)) CIA Deputy Counter Terrorism Center Director Hank Crumpton will also later suggest that a team was recruited to stage the attack but apparently never was sent to the US. ([Thomas 8/28/2007](#))

March 7, 2003-May 18, 2007: Al-Qaeda Financier Tied to Pearl’s Death Disappears for Four Years, Then Dies



An ill Saud Memon shortly before his death.

[Source: *Daily Times*]/Saud Memon, a Pakistani businessman who owns the land where Wall Street Journal report Daniel Pearl is killed in late January 2002 (see [January 31, 2002](#)), apparently flees Pakistan for fear of being arrested for Pearl’s death. According to later newspaper accounts in Pakistan and India, Memon is arrested by the FBI in South Africa on March 7, 2003. He is kept at Guantanamo prison for more than two years and then handed over to Pakistani authorities. On April 28, 2007, some unknown men drop Memon in front of his house in Pakistan. He is deathly ill and unable to speak or recognize people. He dies less than one month later on May 18, 2007. Memon has been the top name on the list of Pakistan’s most wanted. In addition to having a suspected role in Pearl’s death, he helped fund the Al Rashid Trust, which has been banned for being an al-Qaeda front. While some suspect a US and/or Pakistan government role in Memon’s disappearance, it is not known for sure what happened to him for those four years. ([Khan 5/18/2007](#); [Naqvi and Syed 5/19/2007](#); [Indo-Asian News Service 5/19/2007](#))

March 10, 2003: Dubious Arrest Video Raises Question of KSM-ISI Connection

One week after the purported arrest of Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM) in Pakistan (see [March 1, 2003](#)), the ISI show what they claim is a video of the capture. It is openly mocked as a bad forgery by the few reporters allowed to see it. ([Peters 3/11/2003](#); [Denyer 3/11/2003](#); [Pakistan News Service \(Newark, CA\) 3/11/2003](#); [Daily Times \(Lahore\) 3/13/2003](#)) For instance, a Fox News reporter says, “Foreign journalists looking at it laughed and said this is baloney, this is a reconstruction.” ([Fox News 3/10/2003](#)) Other information about the arrest also raises questions about his relationship with the ISI (see

[Spring 1993](#)). At the time of KSM's alleged arrest, he was staying in a neighborhood filled with ISI officials, just a short distance from ISI headquarters, leading to suspicions that he'd been doing so with ISI approval. ([Ali 3/3/2003](#)) One expert notes that after his arrest, "Those who think they have ISI protection will stop feeling that comfort level." ([Australian Broadcasting Corporation 3/2/2003](#)) Journalist Robert Fisk reports, "Mohammed was an ISI asset; indeed, anyone who is 'handed over' by the ISI these days is almost certainly a former (or present) employee of the Pakistani agency whose control of Taliban operatives amazed even the Pakistani government during the years before 2001." ([Fisk 3/3/2003](#))

Shortly Before March 14, 2003: CIA Allegedly Prevents Bush from Mentioning Atta in Prague Claim in Speech

In 2007, Newsweek will claim that still-classified portions of a CIA cable reveal that some White House officials wanted to mention an alleged meeting between hijacker Mohamed Atta and an Iraqi agent in Prague in a speech President Bush was scheduled to give on March 14, 2003. But after learning of the proposed speech, the CIA station in Prague sent back a cable explaining why the CIA believed the meeting never took place. Accounts differ, but one source familiar with the cable will claim that the cable was "strident" and expressed dismay the White House would try to fit the dubious claim into Bush's speech only days before the US begins a planned invasion of Iraq. There is no proof that Bush ever saw the cable and he ultimately does not mention the claim in his speech. A senior intelligence official at the time will later claim that the White House proposed on multiple occasions to mention the claim in speeches by Bush and Vice President Cheney. While Bush never mentioned it, Cheney did on several occasions before the Iraq war began. For instance, in December 2001, Cheney claimed, "It's been pretty well confirmed, that [Atta] did go to Prague and he did meet with a senior official of the Iraqi intelligence service..." (see [December 9, 2001](#)). ([Hosenball 9/13/2006](#))

March 14, 2003: Afghanistan Becomes Number One Heroin Producer

The Afghan government warns that unless the international community hands over the aid it promised, Afghanistan will slip back into its role as the world's premier heroin producer. The country's foreign minister warns Afghanistan could become a "narco-mafia state." ([BBC 3/17/2003](#)) A United Nations study later in the month notes that Afghanistan is once again the world's number one heroin producer, producing 3,750 tons in 2002. Farmers are growing more opium poppies than ever throughout the country, including areas previously free of the crop. ([Shah 3/27/2003](#))

March 17-18, 2003: FBI Alleges Al-Qaeda Likely to Attack to Help Saddam Hussein

On March 17, 2003, the National Alert Level is raised to orange. The FBI warns of terror strikes directed by Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein or “allied or sympathetic terrorist organizations, most notably the al-Qaeda network.” This warning clearly attempts to establish a connection between Saddam Hussein and the terrorist activities of al-Qaeda. Interestingly, this third orange alert comes three days before President Bush invades Iraq, opening what he calls the “central front of the War on Terror.” The attack claim is debunked by future CIA director Porter Goss, then the chair of the House intelligence committee. He states that there is no intelligence which suggests a new attack. ([Dreyfuss 9/21/2006](#)) The next day, the Arizona National Guard is alerted and sent to an Arizona nuclear plant because “an attack by al-Qaeda agents [is] imminent.” No attack materializes. ([News Hounds 10/9/2004](#))

(Before March 18, 2003): CIA Conducts Major Review of Iraq Intelligence; Finds No Evidence of a Link between Iraq and Al-Qaeda

After the US Department of Defense publishes several reports linking al-Qaeda to Iraq, CIA Director George Tenet orders CIA researchers and analysts—who have maintained that there are no such links—to go through all the agency’s records on Iraq and al-Qaeda and search for evidence of the alleged relationship. CIA researcher Michael Scheuer leads the effort, which combs through about 19,000 documents going back nine or 10 years. Scheuer will later say, “there was no connection between [al-Qaeda] and Saddam. There were indications that al-Qaeda people had transited Iraq, probably with the Iraqis turning a blind eye to it. There were some hints that there was a contact between the head of the intelligence service of the Iraqis with bin Laden when he was in the Sudan, but nothing you could put together and say, ‘Here is a relationship that is similar to the relationship between Iran and Lebanese Hezbollah,’ which was what Doug Feith’s organization was claiming. There was simply nothing to support that.” ([Scheuer 11/24/2004](#); [Scheuer 6/20/2006](#); [Kirk 6/20/2006](#) Sources: [Michael Scheuer](#))

March 18, 2003: Bush Sends Letter to Congress Justifying Decision to Invade Iraq

Bush sends a letter to Congress justifying the invasion of Iraq. First, he has determined that further diplomacy will not protect the US. Second, he is “continuing to take the necessary actions against international terrorists and terrorist organizations, including those nations, organizations, or persons who planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001.” ([US President 3/24/2003](#)) This mimics language from a bill passed by Congress in October 2002 (see [October 11, 2002](#)), which granted Bush the power to declare war against Iraq if a link with the 9/11 attacks is shown and several other conditions are met. ([US Congress 10/2/2002](#)) But there is no evidence linking Iraq to the 9/11 attacks, a simple fact that even Bush has acknowledged (see [\(4:12 pm - 4:25 pm\) January 31, 2003](#)).

March 19, 2003: US and Partners Invade Iraq



A building in Baghdad is bombed during the US invasion of Iraq. [Source: Reuters] The US begins its official invasion of Iraq. The attack begins with an attempted “decapitation attack” aimed at killing Saddam Hussein and other top Iraqi officials that fails. ([Chilcote, King, and Starr 3/20/2003](#); [Long 3/20/2003](#)) Other countries, known collectively as the “coalition of the willing,” lend various degrees of support to the invasion. The group includes Britain, Australia, Poland, and several second- and third- world countries that had been pressured by the US to support the invasion. ([Schifferes 3/18/2003](#))

March 26, 2003: Bush Turns Down Increased Budget for 9/11 Commission

Time reports that the 9/11 Commission has requested an additional \$11 million to add to the \$3 million for the commission, and the Bush administration has turned down the request. The request will not be added to a supplemental spending bill. A Republican member of the commission says the decision will make it “look like they have something to hide.” Another commissioner notes that the recent commission on the Columbia shuttle crash will have a \$50 million budget. Stephen Push, a leader of the 9/11 victims’ families, says the decision “suggests to me that they see this as a convenient way for allowing the commission to fail. they’ve never wanted the commission and I feel the White House has always been looking for a way to kill it without having their finger on the murder weapon.” The administration has suggested it may grant the money later, but any delay will further slow down the commission’s work. Already, commission members are complaining that scant progress has been made in the four months since the commission started, and they are operating under a deadline. ([Burger 3/26/2003](#)) Three days later, it is reported that the Bush administration has agreed to extra funding, but only \$9 million, not \$11 million. The commission agrees to the reduced amount. ([Eggen 3/29/2003](#)) The New York Times criticizes such penny-pinching, saying, “Reasonable people might wonder if the White House, having failed in its initial attempt to have Henry Kissinger steer the investigation, may be resorting to budgetary starvation as a tactic to hobble any politically fearless inquiry.” ([listed 3/31/2003](#))

March 27, 2003: KSM Says Moussaoui Not Involved in 9/11

The Washington Post reports that information obtained from interrogations of 9/11 mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM) further undermines the government's case against Zacarias Moussaoui for his alleged involvement in the 9/11 attacks. Apparently, KSM told his interrogators that Moussaoui was not part of the 9/11 hijacker group, but was in the US for a second wave of attacks that were planned for early 2002. Details of any such plan have not been revealed. Legal experts agree that at the very least, "on the death penalty, [this information] is quite helpful to Moussaoui." In spite of KSM's revelations, the government still feels that it can convict Moussaoui of being involved in a conspiracy with al-Qaeda. ([Eggen 3/28/2003](#))

March 27, 2003: Security Clearance of 9/11 Commission Members Stalled

It is reported that "most members" of the 9/11 Commission still have not received security clearances. ([Eggen 3/27/2003](#)) For instance, Slade Gorton, picked in December 2002, is a former senator with a long background in intelligence issues. Fellow commissioner Lee Hamilton says, "It's kind of astounding that someone like Senator Gorton can't get immediate clearance. It's a matter we are concerned about." The commission is said to be at a "standstill" because of the security clearance issue, and cannot even read the classified findings of the previous 9/11 Congressional Inquiry. ([Fryer 3/12/2003](#))

March 28, 2003: Independence of 9/11 Commission Called Into Question

An article highlights conflicts of interest amongst the commissioners on the 9/11 Commission. It had been previously reported that many of the commissioners had ties to the airline industry (see [December 16, 2002](#)), but a number have other ties. "At least three of the ten commissioners serve as directors of international financial or consulting firms, five work for law firms that represent airlines and three have ties to the US military or defense contractors, according to personal financial disclosures they were required to submit." Bryan Doyle, project manager for the watchdog group Aviation Integrity Project says, "It is simply a failure on the part of the people making the selections to consider the talented pool of non-conflicted individuals." Commission chairman Thomas Kean says that members are expected to steer clear of discussions that might present even the appearance of a conflict. ([Arnold 3/28/2003](#))

March 28, 2003: Al-Qaeda Supporter Now In Charge of Security of Nation Closely Allied with US

The Los Angeles Times reports that, ironically, the man in charge of security for the nation where the US bases its headquarters for the Iraq war is a supporter of al-Qaeda. Sheik Abdullah bin Khalid al-Thani is the Interior Minister of Qatar. US Central Command and thousands of US troops are stationed in that country. In 1996, al-Thani was Religious Minister and he apparently let 9/11 mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM) live on his farm (see [January-May 1996](#)). Mohammed was tipped off that the US was after him. Some US officials believe al-Thani was the one who helped KSM escape, just as he had assisted other al-Qaeda leaders on other occasions. ([Meyer and Goetz 3/28/2003](#)) Another royal family member has sheltered al-Qaeda leaders and given over \$1 million to al-Qaeda. KSM was even sheltered by Qatari royalty for two weeks after 9/11 (see [Late 2001](#)). ([Tyler 2/6/2003](#)) Ahmad Hikmat Shakir, who has ties to the 1993 World Trade Center bombing (see [February 26, 1993](#)), the Bojinka plot (see [January 6, 1995](#)), and also attended the January 2000 al-Qaeda summit in Malaysia (see January 5-8, 2000), was sheltered by al-Thani's religious ministry in 2000. ([Isikoff and Klaidman 9/30/2002](#)) Former counterterrorism "tsar" Richard Clarke says al-Thani "had great sympathy for Osama bin Laden, great sympathy for terrorist groups, was using his personal money and ministry money to transfer to al-Qaeda front groups that were allegedly charities." However, the US has not attempted to apprehend al-Thani or take any other action against him. ([Meyer and Goetz 3/28/2003](#))

Late March 2003 and After: FBI Offers \$5 Million Reward for Information on Atta Associate

The FBI issues a reward of \$5 million for information on Adnan Shukrijumah, starting a world-wide manhunt that will last for years. Shukrijumah lived in the same area as most of the 9/11 hijackers and was reportedly seen with Mohamed Atta in the spring of 2001 (see [May 2, 2001](#)), when he was being investigated by the FBI over two terrorist plots (see [April-May 2001](#) and [Spring 2001](#)). Information gleaned from detainees suggests that Shukrijumah is a top al-Qaeda operative who was trained in Afghanistan and is associated with 9/11 architect Khalid Shaikh Mohammed and Jose Padilla (see [June 10, 2002](#)). In May 2004 Attorney General John Ashcroft will even single out Shukrijumah as the most dangerous al-Qaeda operative planning to attack the US. However, despite reported sightings in Central America, he is still on the run in 2006 and believed to be hiding in the tribal areas of Pakistan. ([Ragavan 4/7/2003](#); [Willing 6/15/2003](#); [Kaufman and Rabinowitz 10/27/2003](#); [9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 40-41](#); [Meyer 9/3/2006](#)) US authorities claim he is a pilot and has been receiving flight training outside the US for several years, though they do not release any evidence to substantiate this. His family insists that he is neither a qualified pilot nor an al-Qaeda operative. ([Willing 6/15/2003](#); [CNN 9/5/2003](#))

March 31, 2003: US Government Draws Harsh Criticism at First 9/11 Commission Hearing



Mindy Kleinberg. [Source: Public domain]

The 9/11 Commission has its first public hearing. The Miami Herald reports, “Several survivors of the attack and victims’ relatives testified that a number of agencies, from federal to local, are ducking responsibility for a series of breakdowns before and during September 11.” ([Davies 3/31/2003](#)) The New York Times suggests that the 9/11 Commission would never have been formed if it were not for the pressure of the 9/11 victims’ relatives. ([Chen 4/1/2003](#)) Some of the relatives strongly disagreed with statements from some commissioners that they would not place blame. For instance, Stephen Push states, “I think this commission should point fingers.... Some of those people [who failed us] are still in responsible positions in government. Perhaps they shouldn’t be.” ([Waterman 3/31/2003](#)) The most critical testimony comes from 9/11 relative Mindy Kleinberg, but her testimony is only briefly reported on by a few newspapers. ([Waterman 3/31/2003](#); [Hetter 4/1/2003](#); [Chen 4/1/2003](#); [Gould and Edozien 4/1/2003](#); [Coscarelli 4/1/2003](#)) In her testimony, Kleinberg says, “It has been said that the intelligence agencies have to be right 100 percent of the time and the terrorists only have to get lucky once. This explanation for the devastating attacks of September 11th, simple on its face, is wrong in its value. Because the 9/11 terrorists were not just lucky once: They were lucky over and over again.” She points out the insider trading based on 9/11 foreknowledge, the failure of fighters to catch the hijacked planes in time, hijackers getting visas in violation of standard procedures, and other events, and asks how the hijackers could have been lucky so many times. ([9/11 Commission 3/31/2003](#))

March 31-July 9, 2003 and After: 9/11 Commission Initially Conducts Little Noticed Background Policy Hearings

The 9/11 Commission holds its first three hearings in the spring and summer of 2003 on topics such as the experience of the attack, congressional oversight, and whether Iraq was behind 9/11 (see [March 31, 2003](#)). ([9/11 Commission 4/1/2003](#); [9/11 Commission 5/23/2003](#); [9/11 Commission 7/9/2003](#).) These hearings do not receive much publicity and Commission Chairman Tom Kean and Vice-chairman Lee Hamilton will later call them “background policy hearings in front of a C-SPAN audience.” The victims’ families are frustrated by this, by the lack of tough questioning, and by the fact that witnesses are not placed under oath. Kean and Hamilton later say that at this point the Commission “was not ready to present findings and answers” since the various staff teams are

nowhere near completing their tasks. For example, the team investigating the air defense failure on the day of 9/11 does not even issue a subpoena for the documents it needs until autumn (see [Late October 2003](#) and [October-November 2003](#)). ([Kean and Hamilton 2006](#), pp. 127-8)

April 3, 2003: Ex-CIA Director Foresees Many More Wars in Middle East



James Woolsey. [*Source: Public domain*] Former CIA Director James Woolsey says the US is engaged in a world war, and that it could continue for years: “As we move toward a new Middle East, over the years and, I think, over the decades to come... we will make a lot of people very nervous.” He calls it World War IV (World War III being the Cold War according to neoconservatives like himself), and says it will be fought against the religious rulers of Iran, the “fascists” of Iraq and Syria, and Islamic extremists like al-Qaeda. He singles out the leaders of Egypt and Saudi Arabia, saying, “We want you nervous.” This echoes the rhetoric of the PNAC, of which Woolsey is a supporter, and the singling out of Egypt and Saudi Arabia echoes the rhetoric of the Defense Policy Board, of which he is a member. In July 2002 (see [July 10, 2002](#)), a presentation to that board concluded, “Grand strategy for the Middle East: Iraq is the tactical pivot. Saudi Arabia the strategic pivot. Egypt the prize.” ([Feldman and Wilson 4/3/2003](#); [CNN 4/3/2003](#))

April 24, 2003: 9/11 Commission Member Barred from Viewing Intelligence Material



Tim Roemer. [Source: *US Congress*] 9/11 Commissioner Tim Roemer tries to review the transcripts of the 9/11 Congressional Inquiry. However, he learns that he has no permission to see them, even though he served on the Inquiry and had read the material before. ([Associated Press 4/26/2003](#)) Roemer says the arrangement is outrageous: “No entity, individual, or organization should sift through or filter our access to material.” ([Arnold 4/30/2003](#))

April 29, 2003: Two Key 9/11 Figures Captured in Pakistan

Twenty-five al-Qaeda operatives are captured in Karachi, Pakistan, including two key 9/11 figures. The captured include Tawfiq bin Attash, better known by his nickname Khallad. He is considered one of the masterminds of the USS *Cole* bombing (see [October 12, 2000](#)) and attended a Malaysia summit where the 9/11 plot was discussed (see January 5-8, 2000). Also captured is Ali Abdul Aziz Ali, one of 9/11 mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed’s nephews. He made travel arrangements for and wired money to many of the 9/11 hijackers. One investigator will later say, “He was turning up everywhere we looked—like a chameleon.” ([Risen 5/1/2003](#); [Serrano 5/21/2006](#)) Both Aziz Ali and bin Attash will be sent to secret CIA prisons and remain there until 2006, when they will be transferred to the Guantanamo Bay prison (see [September 2-3, 2006](#)). The identities and fates of the others captured with them are not known.

April 30-August 26, 2003: US Withdraws Most of Its Troops from Saudi Arabia, Fulfilling Key Bin Laden Demand



US troops in Saudi Arabia at some point before 9/11. [Source: PBS] On April 30, 2003, the US announces that it is withdrawing most of its troops from Saudi Arabia. About 10,000 US soldiers have been stationed there since the first Gulf War (see [March 1991](#)). The withdrawal is completed by the end of August 2003. About several hundred US military personnel remain in the country to train Saudi forces and tend to military sales. The US moves the rest of its troops to new bases in Qatar and other Persian Gulf countries, as well as building new bases in Iraq, conquered just a month before the announcement. ([Mannion 8/26/2003](#)) The withdrawal of US troops from Saudi Arabia has been bin Laden's most persistent demand since the troops entered the country in 1990. For instance, in his 1996 fatwa (see [August 1996](#)), he said, "The latest and greatest of these aggressions incurred by Muslims since the death of the Prophet... is the occupation of the land of the two Holy Places... by the armies of the American Crusaders and their allies." ([O'Neill 4/30/2003](#)) One senior US military official says the decision to leave was made partly to help relieve internal political pressure on the royal family: "The Saudis will be happy when we leave. But they're concerned that it not look as if it's precipitous, because it will look like bin Laden won." ([Loeb 4/30/2003](#)) One unnamed senior Saudi prince who participated in high-level debates about the withdrawal says, "We are fighting for our lives, and we are going to do what is necessary to save our behinds." ([Tyler 4/30/2003](#))

May-August 2003: 9/11 Commission Has Difficulty Gaining Access to Recording of Air Threat Conference

Members of the 9/11 Commission are informed that the air threat conference call, initiated by the military in response to the attacks on September 11, was recorded. This call reportedly began at around 9:37 a.m. on 9/11. Throughout the day, numerous key officials had participated in it, including the president, the vice president, the secretary of defense, plus senior officials from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD). Despite more than 18 months having passed since the attacks, Pentagon officials say they have not yet transcribed the tapes of the conference call. After the 9/11 Commission makes repeated requests, the Pentagon finally creates a classified transcript. On August 6, this is forwarded to the White House for an "executive-privilege review," which is supposedly required because of Vice President Cheney's participation in the call. The commission is then promised

access to the 200-page transcript. However, the fact that it is not time coded may hinder the commission's ability to outline an exact sequence of events, and commissioners say they may need to obtain the actual tapes recordings. Whether they are eventually allowed full or partial access to the tapes is unclear: The 9/11 Commission Report, released in 2004, will make numerous references to the "DOD transcript, Air Threat Conference Call." It will only make one reference to "the tape... of the air threat conference call," which it says was used to help reconstruct events in the Presidential Emergency Operations Center (PEOC). The report will state that all the times it gives for the air threat conference call are estimates, believed to be accurate within a three-minute margin of error. This would suggest it did not have full access to the tape recordings. ([Ragavan and Mazzetti 8/31/2003](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 37 and 463-465](#)) The recording of the air threat conference call is of particular significance, because the National Military Command Center (NMCC), which initiated the call, is—according to military instructions—the "focal point within Department of Defense for providing assistance" in response to hijackings in US airspace. ([US Department of Defense 6/1/2001](#))

May 1, 2003: Rumsfeld Prematurely Declares an End to War in Afghanistan

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld announces that the 8,000 US soldiers in Afghanistan have ended major combat operations there and will now shift their focus to rebuilding the country. The US talks about reducing the number of troops in 2004 and replacing them with newly trained Afghan soldiers. Rumsfeld's announcement comes on the same day that President Bush declares that combat operations have ended in Iraq (see [May 1, 2003](#)). Rumsfeld says that small-scale combat operations will continue to mop up pockets of Taliban and al-Qaeda resistance. ([Loeb 5/2/2003](#)) Over two years later, in June 2005, the New York Times will report that despite periodic predictions of the Taliban's collapse, recent intense fighting "reveals the Taliban to be still a vibrant fighting force supplied with money, men and weapons." While the Taliban may not be able to hold ground in the "almost forgotten war," they have enough personnel and weapons to "continue their insurgency indefinitely" and render parts of the country ungovernable. ([Gall 6/4/2005](#))

May 4, 2003: US Immediately Rejects Comprehensive Peace Proposal by Iran's Top Leadership



Sadegh Kharrazi. *[Source: University of Cambridge]* In the wake of the US-led conquest of Iraq, the government of Iran worries that they will be targeted for US invasion next. Sadegh Kharrazi, Iran's ambassador to France and the nephew of Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi, drafts a bold proposal to negotiate with the US on all the outstanding conflicts between them. ([Porter 5/21/2006](#)) Diplomats refer to the proposal as "the grand bargain." The US sends neoconservative Zalmay Khalilzad, a senior National Security Council official, to talk with Iran's UN ambassador, Javad Zarif. ([Unger 3/2007](#)) The proposal was reviewed and approved by Iran's top leaders Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, President Mohammad Khatami, and Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi. Tim Guldemann, the Swiss ambassador to Iran, is used as an intermediary since the US and Iran do not have formal diplomatic relations. ([Kessler 2/14/2007](#))

- According to the language of the proposal, it offers "decisive action against any terrorists (above all, al-Qaeda) in Iranian territory" and "full cooperation and exchange of all relevant information." In return, Iran wants "pursuit of anti-Iranian terrorists, above all [the Mujahedeen-e Khalq (MEK)]," a dissident Iranian group which the US officially lists as a terrorist organization.

- Iran also offers to accept much tighter controls by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in exchange for "full access to peaceful nuclear technology." It proposes "full transparency for security [assurance] that there are no Iranian endeavors to develop or possess WMD" and "full cooperation with IAEA based on Iranian adoption of all relevant instruments (93+2 and all further IAEA protocols)." That is a reference to IAEA protocols that would guarantee the IAEA access to any declared or undeclared facility on short notice.

- The proposal also offers a dramatic change in Iranian policy towards Israel. Iran would accept an Arab league declaration approving a land-for-peace principle and a comprehensive peace with Israel in return for Israel's withdrawal to 1967 lines, a softening of Iran's usual policy.

- The proposal further offers to stop any Iranian support of Palestinian opposition groups such as Hamas and proposes to convert Hezbollah into "a mere political organization within Lebanon." It further offers "coordination of Iranian influence for activity supporting political stabilization and the establishment of democratic institutions and a nonreligious government" in Iraq.

- In return, Iran wants a democratic government in Iran, which would mean its Shiite allies would come to power since the Shiites make up a majority of the Iraqi population.

The proposal wants the US to remove Iran from its “axis of evil” and list of terrorism sponsors. ([Porter 5/21/2006](#)) The US flatly rejects the idea. “We’re not interested in any grand bargain,” says Undersecretary of State for Arms Control and International Security John Bolton. ([Unger 3/2007](#)) The American Prospect will later comment that “Iran’s historic proposal for a broad diplomatic agreement should have prompted high-level discussions over the details of an American response.” State Department counterterrorism expert Flynt Leverett will later call it a “respectable effort” to start negotiations with the US. But within days, the US rejects the proposal without even holding an interagency meeting to discuss its possible merits. Guldemann, the Swiss intermediary, is reprimanded for having passed the proposal to the US. ([Porter 5/21/2006](#)) Larry Wilkerson, Secretary of State Colin Powell’s chief of staff, will later say that it was a significant proposal for beginning “meaningful talks” between the US and Iran but that it “was a non-starter so long as [Dick] Cheney was Vice President and the principal influence on Bush.” ([Hirsh 2/8/2007](#)) He will also say that the State Department supported the offer, “[b]ut as soon as it got to the Vice President’s office, the old mantra of ‘We don’t talk to evil’ ... reasserted itself” and Cheney’s office turned the offer down. ([BBC 1/18/2007](#)) Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage will later claim that, “We couldn’t determine what was the Iranians’ and what was the Swiss ambassador’s,” and says that he thought the Iranians “were trying to put too much on the table.” National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice will say of the proposal, “Perhaps somebody saw something of the like” but “I just don’t remember ever seeing any such thing.” ([Hirsh 2/8/2007](#)) Colin Powell will later say that President Bush simply didn’t want to negotiate with an Iranian government that he believed should not be in power. “My position... was that we ought to find ways to restart talks with Iran... But there was a reluctance on the part of the president to do that.” He also says, “You can’t negotiate when you tell the other side, ‘Give us what a negotiation would produce before the negotiations start.’” ([Hirsh and Bahari 2/12/2007](#)) Days later, Iran will propose a more limited exchange of al-Qaeda prisoners for MEK prisoners, but the US will reject that too (see [Mid-May 2003](#)). In 2007, the BBC will note, “Observers say the Iranian offer as outlined nearly four years ago corresponds pretty closely to what Washington is demanding from Tehran now.” ([BBC 1/18/2007](#))

May 7, 2003: NIST Investigators Issue Progress Report; Say Tests Were Not Conducted Regarding How WTC Would Cope With Major Fire



Insulated trusses in the World Trade Center. [*Source: Gilsanz Murray Steficek*] At a press briefing in New York City, the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) releases a 122-page progress report on its investigation into the WTC collapses. NIST began its study in August 2002 (see [August 21, 2002](#)). Investigators say they believe that the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, who built the Twin Towers, failed to carry out vital tests to establish how the buildings would cope with a major fire. They have been unable to find evidence that tests were conducted on the fireproofing material used in the buildings. Their report also states that in 1969, builders directed contractors to coat the WTC floor supports with half an inch of spray-on fireproofing. In 1999, the Port Authority issued guidelines to triple the thickness of the fireproofing, and by 9/11, about 30 floors in the upper areas of the two towers had been upgraded. Almost all the floors in the impact zone of the North Tower had their fireproofing upgraded, while in the South Tower just the 78th floor—the lowest in its impact zone—had been upgraded. As the New York Times states, though, “investigators took great care... to say they were nowhere close to definitively determining how and why the towers collapsed after they were struck by hijacked airliners.” ([National Institute of Standards and Technology 5/2003, pp. 81](#); [National Institute of Standards and Technology 5/7/2003](#); [Guardian 5/8/2003](#); [Glanz 5/8/2003](#))

May 7-9, 2003: CIA Wrongly Informs Court about Detainee Recordings in Moussaoui Case

On May 7, 2003, Leonie Brinkema, the judge in the Zacarias Moussaoui trial, asks the CIA if it has recordings of interrogations of detainees related to Moussaoui’s case. Two days later, the CIA replies that it does not, although it is actually in possession of some recordings. In 2002, the CIA secretly videotaped interrogations of high-ranking detainees Abu Zubaida and Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri (see [Spring-Late 2002](#)) but it does not reveal this to anyone involved in the Moussaoui trial. In 2005, some of these videotapes will be destroyed (see [November 2005](#)), around the time the Brinkema makes a repeat request for the tapes (see [November 3-14, 2005](#)). However, other recordings—two videotapes and one audio tape—will survive and will finally be viewed by Moussaoui’s prosecutors in

2007, long after Moussaoui has been convicted (see [September 19 and October 18, 2007](#)). ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 10/25/2007](#); [Vicini 11/13/2007](#)) Although the identity of the detainees in the recordings requested is not known, one of the prosecutors will later say, “Obviously the important witnesses included [Abu] Zubaidah, [Ramzi] bin al-Shibh, and KSM [Khalid Shaikh Mohammed]... those are the guys at the head of the witness list.” However, he will not specifically recall which tapes are requested. ([Hess 12/7/2007](#))

May 9, 2003: Mzoudi Is Charged for Role in 9/11 Attacks



Abdelghani Mzoudi. [*Source: Public domain*] Abdelghani

Mzoudi is charged in Germany for an alleged role in the 9/11 plot. The 30-year-old electrical engineering student from Morocco is accused of accessory to murder and membership of a terrorist organization. He is alleged to have trained in Afghanistan, transferred money, and provided other logistical support to his fellow cell members involved in the 9/11 attacks. Mzoudi had known lead hijacker Mohamed Atta since 1996 and had roomed with Mounir el Motassadeq, another Moroccan who was convicted of the same charges. Mzoudi denies any involvement in the hijacking plans. ([Associated Press 5/9/2003](#); [Washington Post 5/10/2003](#); [Finn 8/15/2003](#)) In Mzoudi's trial, which begins in August 2003, his lawyers say they may explore theories during the trial about how the 9/11 attacks suspiciously served the foreign policy goals of US conservatives. One defense attorney says, “As I take a close look at the results of the investigations through my glasses, I find anomalies that are immediately apparent. They begin with passenger lists that include the Arabic names of people who are still very much alive today.” (see [September 16-23, 2001](#)) ([Finn 8/15/2003](#); [Der Spiegel \(Hamburg\) 9/8/2003](#))

May 12, 2003: Saudi Arabia Bombing Hardens Saudi Government's Stance Toward Al-Qaeda



Reconstruction begins after the Riyadh bombings. [Source: *US Rewards for Justice*] (click image to enlarge) Saudi Arabia is attacked by three suicide bombings in the capital of Riyadh. At least 34 people are killed. The Saudi government had taken very little action against al-Qaeda prior to this. However, it appears to more aggressively combat al-Qaeda afterward. ([Meyer 7/16/2004](#)) In early 2006, it will be reported that the Saudis aggressively combat al-Qaeda within Saudi Arabia, but do next to nothing to stop al-Qaeda or its financing outside of the country. (see [January 15, 2006](#)).

May 13-June 30, 2003: FBI Wins Battle to Control Finance Investigations

The FBI and Customs Department had been waging a bureaucratic war over control of Operation Greenquest, a controversial but largely fruitful Customs terrorist finance investigation (see [After March 20, 2002-Early 2003](#)). On May 13, 2003, Attorney General John Ashcroft and Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge signed a memorandum of agreement giving the FBI near total control over all terrorist finance investigations. According to the memorandum, if the FBI feels the case is related to terrorist financing and should belong to them, “the investigation and operation of the matter shall be led by the FBI.” The agreement also effectively ends Greenquest. The memo states, “The Secretary [of Homeland Security] agrees that no later than June 30, 2003, Operation Greenquest will no longer exist as a program name.” ([Katz and Devon 5/27/2003](#))

May 14, 2003: Judge Rules That Moussaoui Should Have Same Access to Top al-Qaeda Prisoners as Prosecution

In January 2003, Judge Leonie Brinkema ruled that Zacarias Moussaoui must be allowed to conduct a videotaped deposition of bin al-Shibh. However, the government still refuses to allow Moussaoui access to bin al-Shibh, stating that even its own lawyers do not have access to question al-Qaeda captives. But on May 12, the government revealed that lawyers have been submitting questions to al-Qaeda detainees about Moussaoui’s role in the 9/11 plot. Two days later, Judge Brinkema demands to know, “If circumstances have changed such that submission of written questions is now possible, when did the circumstances change and why was neither this court nor the district court so informed at

the time?” She also suggests that since the prosecution can submit questions to al-Qaeda operatives in custody, Moussaoui should also be allowed to do the same. ([Shenon 5/15/2004](#))

Mid-May 2003: US Rejects Al-Qaeda-MEK Prisoner Exchange with Iran



Saif al-Adel. [*Source: FBI*] Around May 4, 2003, Iran attempted to start negotiations in an attempt to resolve all outstanding issues between Iran and the US. The US completely rejected the offer within days. Iran immediately comes back with a more limited proposal, offering to hand over a group of al-Qaeda leaders being held in Iran in return for the US to hand over leaders of the Mujahedeen of Iran (MEK). The US had already officially listed MEK as a terrorist group. ([Porter 5/21/2006](#)) Iran is believed to be holding a number of top al-Qaeda leaders, including military commander Saif al-Adel and Osama bin Laden's son Saad bin Laden (see [Spring 2002](#)). The US had captured about 4,000 members of MEK in Iraq the month before, in bases where they had been staging attacks against Iran. Iran pledges to grant amnesty to most of the MEK prisoners, try only 65 leaders, forgo the death penalty on them, and allow the Red Cross to supervise the transfer. ([Ignatius 7/9/2004](#)) Iran proposes to start with an exchange of information, offering to share the list of names of al-Qaeda operatives they are detaining in return for the US to share the list of names of MEK operatives US forces has captured in Iraq. This exchange of names is discussed at a White House meeting. Hardliners in favor of regime change in Iran argue that MEK is different than al-Qaeda. President Bush is said to respond, "But we say there is no such thing as a good terrorist." ([Porter 5/21/2006](#)) And he initially seems in favor of a prisoner exchange, saying about the MEK, "Why not? They're terrorists." ([Ignatius 7/9/2004](#)) But Bush does not immediately approve the exchange of names, although he does approve the disarming of MEK who have surrendered to US troops and he allows the State Department to continue secret negotiations on the issue of exchanging names and prisoners in Switzerland. But on May 12, 2003, a bombing in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia kills a number of US citizens (see [May 12, 2003](#)). Defense Secretary Rumsfeld, Vice President Cheney, and other neoconservatives argue that the bombing was planned by al-Qaeda leaders being held in Iran. ([Porter 5/21/2006](#)) The Washington Post will report in 2007 that, "US intelligence officials said there are suspicions, but no proof, that one of [the al-Qaeda leaders in Iran] may have been involved from afar in planning" the Riyadh bombing. Some of Bush's top advisers argue in favor of trading the prisoners, suggesting that directly interrogating the al-Qaeda

leaders could result in important new intelligence leads. But Cheney and Rumsfeld argue that any deal would legitimize Iran's government. Bush ultimately offers to accept information about the al-Qaeda leaders without offering anything in return. Not surprisingly, Iran refuses. ([Linzer 2/10/2007](#)) A planned meeting between US and Iranian officials on May 21 is canceled and negotiations come to a halt. The American Prospect will later comment, "In a masterstroke, Rumsfeld and Cheney had shut down the only diplomatic avenue available for communicating with Iran and convinced Bush that Iran was on the same side as al-Qaeda." ([Porter 5/21/2006](#)) Flynt Leverett, a State Department official dealing with Middle East policy, will later say, "Why we didn't cut this deal is beyond me." ([Ignatius 7/9/2004](#)) One anonymous senior US official will later say, "One reason nothing came of it was because we knew that there were parts of the US government who didn't want to give them the MEK because they had other plans for them... like overthrowing the Iranian government." ([Windrem 6/24/2005](#))

May 16, 2003: Suicide Bombers Attack Casablanca, Morocco



A Jewish community center was one of the bombed buildings in Casablanca. [*Source: Agence France-Presse*] Twelve suicide bombers attack five targets in Casablanca, Morocco, including a Jewish cultural center. Forty-five people are killed, including most of the bombers. Moroccan authorities link the bombers to the Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group, which is allegedly linked to al-Qaeda. After the attacks, Moroccan officials sentence two surviving bombers to death and round up thousands of people suspected of having ties to terrorism. ([Johnson 1/25/2005](#)) The suspected mastermind, Saad al-Houssaini, has extensive al-Qaeda ties and lived in Afghanistan for four years before 9/11. He will be captured in 2007. ([Whitlock 7/7/2007](#))

May 20, 2003: Dubious Orange Alert Announced for Memorial Day

For a second Memorial Day in a row (see [May 20-24, 2002](#)), the National Alert Level is raised to orange following warnings that "al-Qaeda has entered an operational period worldwide." Authorities say that recent attacks abroad have raised concerns about an impending attack on the US. The Department of Homeland Security issued this fourth orange alert due to what it calls "the heightened vulnerability associated with the

Memorial Day holiday.” However, Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge says there is no “credible, specific information” about targets or method of attack.” He does state that “weapons of mass destruction, including those containing chemical, biological or radiological agents or materials, cannot be discounted.” ([CNN 5/20/2003](#)) But federal law enforcement sources say the credibility of the threat is doubtful. They also say those transmissions are not the reason why the government has raised the threat level to orange. ([News 8 Austin 5/20/2003](#)) Meanwhile, two weeks after President Bush declared “Mission Accomplished” in Iraq (see [May 1, 2003](#)), the administration’s plan to implement Iraqi self-rule is postponed “indefinitely” due to looting and lawlessness (see [May 20, 2003](#)). ([Dreyfuss 9/21/2006](#))

May 31, 2003: Key Al-Qaeda Operative Killed in Saudi Arabia, Saudis Fail to Help US about Him

Yusef al-Ayeri, believed to be in charge of al-Qaeda operations in the Arabian peninsula, is shot and killed while attempting to flee a security checkpoint in Saudi Arabia. His body was strapped with explosives and a 6-month-old letter from Osama bin Laden was reportedly in his pocket. Al-Ayeri was publicly named earlier in the month and his photograph was distributed nationwide. ([Montgomery 6/4/2003](#)) US intelligence had known of al-Ayeri by his alias “Swift Sword” for a year and had eventually learned his real name. They had told Saudi intelligence that he may be behind an aborted al-Qaeda plot to attack the US with a chemical bomb (see [February-Late March 2003](#)) and said they were highly interested in questioning him. However, not only is he killed, but the Saudis apparently never collect his personal effects, such as his cell phone, his address book, or his car registry, and never trace such clues back to any residence that can be searched. One CIA operative involved in the search to find him will later recall, “We wondered, was it an accident that they killed him, or not? The Saudis just shrugged.... The bottom line: the missing link [that could reveal who took part in the planned US attack] was dead and his personal effects, which can be pretty important, were gone. Like so much else when you’re dealing with these countries, you’re never sure—was it an issue of will or capability?” ([Suskind 2006, pp. 146, 237-239](#)) The Internet communications run by al-Ayeri will be taken over by a previously unknown figure named Lewis Atiyallah. In 2005, it will be reported that some counterterrorism experts believe Atiyallah “is a pseudonym for Yusef al-Ayeri... Al-Ayeri was reported killed in 2003, however there are lingering doubts about whether he is in fact dead.” ([AKI 6/8/2005](#))

Summer 2003: Nearly Half of Remaining US Spies and Commandos in Afghanistan Sent to Iraq

Nearly half the US intelligence agents and commandos in Afghanistan and Pakistan are reassigned to Iraq as the resistance begins intensifying there. Some politicians in Washington apparently privately complain that President Bush is easing the pressure on bin Laden. Many transferred to Iraq end up in an elite task force created in October 2003

to track down Saddam Hussein and other resistance figures. But there is no anticipated shift of personnel back to Afghanistan after Hussein is captured in December 2003. Vincent Cannistraro, former head of the CIA's Counter Terrorism Center, will say shortly after Hussein's capture, "Clearly, the resources devoted to bin Laden were diluted, but I don't expect a switch back to Afghanistan just because of the capture of [Hussein]." ([Tamayo 12/14/2003](#))

Summer 2003-January 2004: 9/11 Commission Does Not Receive Videotapes of Detainee Interrogations



Kean (left) and Hamilton (right) of the 9/11 Commission. [*Source: Doug Mills / New York Times*] The 9/11 Commission does not receive video or audio recordings of interrogations of detainees thought to know something about the 9/11 plot (see [Spring-Late 2002](#)), even though it is unhappy with the amount and quality of information it is getting from detainees (see [Summer 2003](#)) and has a series of meetings with CIA officials to improve access (see [November 5, 2003-January 2004](#)). The CIA will indicate that the Commission never asks for the tapes, saying it "went to great lengths to meet the requests of the 9/11 Commission," and that one of the reasons that the tapes are not destroyed until after the Commission releases its final report in 2004 is so that it could have the tapes, if it so desires. ([Mazzetti 12/8/2007](#)) However, when the tapes' destruction is revealed in late 2007 (see [November 2005](#) and [December 6, 2007](#)), former 9/11 Commission Chairman Tom Kean and Vice Chairman Lee Hamilton will dispute this, saying that in hours of negotiations and discussions with the CIA and written requests they make it clear they want all material connected to the interrogations of the relevant detainees. ([Lichtblau 12/8/2007](#)) Kean will say, "They knew what they had and they didn't give it to us." ([Karl 12/7/2007](#)) Hamilton will say, "The CIA certainly knew of our interest in getting all the information we could on the detainees, and they never indicated to us there were any videotapes... Did they obstruct our inquiry? The answer is clearly yes. Whether that amounts to a crime, others will have to judge." ([Lichtblau 12/8/2007](#))

June 2003-August 2004: Detroit 'Sleeper Cell' Members Found Guilty, Then Convictions Overturned After Discovery of Widespread Prosecutorial Misconduct



Clockwise from top left: Karim Koubriti, Ahmed Hannan, Youssef Hmimssa, and Farouk Ali-Haimoud. [Source: *US Department of Corrections*, via *Reuters*] Verdicts are announced in a trial of four men who lived in a Detroit apartment on 9/11 that had previously been rented by al-Qaeda operative Nabil al-Marabh (see [September 17, 2001](#)). Abdel-Ilah Elmardoudi and Karim Koubriti are convicted of conspiring to provide material support to terrorists and also document fraud. Ahmed Hannan is convicted of document fraud. Farouk Ali-Haimoud is cleared of all charges. Justice Department officials, including Attorney General John Ashcroft, assert the men were in an al-Qaeda sleeper cell and had plans to attack targets in the US and Turkey. The verdicts are hailed as the first successful post-9/11 terrorism prosecution. ([Pierre 12/31/2003](#)) However, the case soon begins to fall apart. The judge learns the prosecution had withheld evidence in the case, and in December 2003, orders an internal Justice Department inquiry. In August 2004, the inquiry asks the judge to throw out the convictions because of prosecutorial misconduct, which he does. For instance, it is revealed that the only witness in the trial, Youssef Hmimssa, told a fellow prisoner that he had made up all his evidence against the defendants. But the prosecution kept this information, and much more that was potentially damaging to their case, from the jury. The Washington Post later reports that the inquiry concludes “the prosecution stuck doggedly to its theory in defiance of plausible explanations and advice from other US government officials. Records suggest prosecutors withheld evidence that cast doubt on their conclusions, even when ordered by superiors to deliver documents to the defense.” By late 2005, it will be reported that a federal grand jury is investigating whether the lead prosecutor, Richard Convertino, or anyone else should be indicted. Convertino meanwhile will sue Ashcroft and other Justice Department superiors, accusing them of mismanaging the case and retaliating against him for testifying critically about the Justice Department before Congress. ([Pierre 12/31/2003](#); [Associated Press 8/30/2004](#); [Slevin 11/20/2005](#))

Summer 2003: 9/11 Commission Unhappy with Information Coming from Detainees

The 9/11 Commission becomes unhappy with the quality of information being provided by the CIA, FBI, and Pentagon about detainees in US custody who are being interrogated, because “the government’s investigators [are] not asking the detainees the kinds of questions [it wants] answered” - they are asking about future threats rather than the history of the 9/11 plot. The Commission is receiving detainee evidence “third-hand - passed from the detainee, to the interrogator, to the person who writes up the interrogation report, and finally to [its] staff in the form of reports, not even transcripts.” It can take up to six weeks for a report on an interrogation to be produced. Due to the absence of any interaction between Commission staff and detainees, they also have “no way of evaluating the credibility of detainee information.” ([Kean and Hamilton 2006, pp. 119-123](#)) In at least one case, it seem possible that the 9/11 Commission was not given all the information from CIA interrogations that it needed. Counterterrorism expert Rohan Gunaratna will later independently view some interrogation transcripts, and from them he will claim that Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM) confessed to attending a pivotal al-Qaeda summit in Malaysia where the 9/11 plot was discussed (see January 5-8, 2000). The CIA was in charge of monitoring this meeting, so their failure to notice the presence of KSM, a photographed and well-known terrorist mastermind with a \$2 million bounty on his head at the time, would have been nearly inexplicable (see [July 9, 2003](#)). The Commission subsequently requests direct access to the detainees, but this request is not granted (see [November 5, 2003-January 2004](#)).

June 2, 2003: Wright Alleges FBI Let Hamas Operate Freely in US to Help Derail Israel Peace Accords

FBI agent Robert Wright holds a second press conference, accusing the FBI of obstructing the Vulgar Betrayal investigation before 9/11, and then engaging in a cover up after 9/11. He criticizes what he calls the FBI’s “pathetic anti-terrorism efforts.” He says, “the FBI does not want Congress and others to know how the FBI’s international terrorism unit was instrumental in the collapse of the Middle East peace process. The documents detail how the FBI allowed known terrorists, their co-conspirators and financiers to operate and roam freely throughout the United States while simultaneously turning a blind eye to the criminal activities of terrorists and obstructing those of us who are truly trying to identify them and neutralize them.” He also states, “I blame the FBI’s international terrorism unit for being instrumental in the collapse in the Middle East peace process in the 1990s.” ([Federal News Service 6/2/2003](#); [Novak 6/19/2003](#)) The FBI responds by launching a dubious disciplinary investigation into Wright (see [After June 2, 2003-December 2003](#)). The same day Wright makes these allegations, news reports will indicate suspected Hamas operatives are still living openly in the US (see [June 2-5, 2003](#)).

June 2, 2003: CIA Is Concerned about Interrogation Techniques US Military Is Using on High-Ranking Detainees

In a secret memo, Gen. George Casey, Jr., director of the US military's Joint Staff, warns Gen. Michael DeLong at Central Command (Centcom) that the "CIA has advised that the techniques the military forces are using to interrogate high value detainees (HVDs)... are more aggressive than the techniques used by CIA who is [sic] interviewing the same HVDs." DeLong replies to Casey that the techniques being used are "doctrinally appropriate techniques" in line with Army regulations and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's direction. ([Hersh 6/17/2007](#)) It will later come out that the CIA was using techniques on these detainees widely considered to be torture, such as waterboarding. But little is known about military treatment of these detainees or the techniques they used.

June 2-5, 2003: Suspected Hamas Operatives Living Openly in US



Abdelhaleem Ashqar. [*Source: Paul J. Richards / Agence France-Presse / Getty Images*]/NBS News and ABC News report that Mohammad Salah is living openly in Chicago. The US government had declared Salah a "designated global terrorist," in 1995 and his name has remained on the list ever since (see [February 1995](#)). Salah was convicted in Israel for being a member of Hamas and served five years in prison. Suspected Hamas fundraiser Jamil Sarsour is running a grocery store in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. US officials say Sarsour helped finance a string of suicide bus bombings in Israel, including one that killed two Americans. He also spent several years in an Israeli prison in the 1990s. Furthermore, suspected Hamas fundraiser Abdelhaleem Ashqar is working as a professor at Howard University in Washington. NBC additionally reports there are "about two dozen [other] alleged Hamas operatives in the United States now under investigation by the FBI." FBI agent Robert Wright began investigating these men and others in the early 1990s. For instance, Ashqar organized a secret Hamas fundraising meeting in Philadelphia in the early 1990s that was wiretapped by the FBI (see [October 1993](#)). Wright believes Sarsour has been a pivotal figure in sending funds from the US to Hamas overseas since the early 1990s (see [1989-January 1993](#)). Wright claims that the FBI could have moved against Hamas in the US years before 9/11. He says, "The Hamas criminal enterprise has been flourishing since then. These guys are still operating strong today because we're doing absolutely nothing about it. The FBI has turned a blind eye to what they are doing." Salah, who had been employed as a college professor in Chicago since February 2002, is fired from his job as a result of these stories. ([Myers 6/2/2003](#); [Ross 6/5/2003](#); [Walter, Ross, and Sauer 6/12/2003](#)) But the men are not

arrested in the wake of the media reports. Salah and Ashqar will finally be indicted in August 2004 (see [August 20, 2004](#)).

After June 2, 2003-December 2003: FBI Superiors Vow to Fire Wright



Robert Jordan. [Source: KGW] Beginning in 1999, the FBI had conducted five disciplinary investigations of FBI agent Robert Wright and failed to find any wrongdoing. But within days of Wright's second press conference (see [June 2, 2003](#)), they launch yet another investigation about him, claiming his media appearances show he was insubordinate. ([Lighty 4/22/2005](#)) Senators Charles Grassley (R) and Patrick Leahy (D) quickly hear of this new investigation and co-author a letter to FBI Director Robert Mueller on July 12. The letter states, "We are troubled by the FBI's apparent haste to launch [a disciplinary] investigation every time an agent speaks publicly about problems within the FBI... The FBI should worry more about catching terrorists than gagging its own agents." The senators demand a briefing on what is happening. ([Novak 6/19/2003](#); [Lighty 7/13/2004](#)) In July 2003, FBI agent Royden Rice speaks to a reporter from the LA Weekly. Wright will later sue the FBI, alleging that Rice disclosed classified information to the reporter in an attempt to smear him. Rice denies the charges and the case is still pending. ([Anderson 7/22/2005](#)) In December 2003, John Roberts, the third highest ranking official in the FBI's disciplinary office, writes a memo about FBI Assistant Director Robert Jordan and Deputy Assistant Director Jody Weis. The memo claims that Jordan and Weis were overheard saying that Wright's second press conference (see [June 2, 2003](#)) would give them an opportunity to "take him out." Roberts also refers to an e-mail from a higher up in the Chicago FBI office asking for permission to do a media smear job on Wright (it is not known if this agent is Rice or someone else). Roberts claims that Jordan and Weis are misusing the FBI's disciplinary process to silence and punish whistleblowers like Wright. He also claims that the allegations against Wright were not serious enough for a disciplinary investigation and at most Wright should have faced a written reprimand, since no classified information was disclosed. Roberts says, "I was left with the clear understanding that I was to... deceive, misrepresent, and hide... the facts of this matter." ([Lighty 7/13/2004](#); [Schlussel 7/14/2004](#)) Even though details of Roberts' memo will be revealed to the press in 2004, the investigation into Wright will continue and result in him being fired in 2005. Senators Grassley and Leahy will write at least three more letters to Mueller demanding explanations, but still will receive no answer. Later in 2005, Wright's dismissal will be overruled by the Justice Department and he will be reinstated (see [April 30, 2005-October 19, 2005](#)). There appears to have been no investigation into the behavior of Jordan and Weis. ([Anderson 7/22/2005](#))

June 15, 2003: BMI Leader Arrested and Imprisoned



Yaqub Mirza. [Source: Publicity photo, via *Byrd Business Review*] Soliman Biheiri, the former head of BMI Inc., a New Jersey-based investment firm with ties to many suspected terrorism financiers (see [1986-October 1999](#)), had left the US immediately after a raid of the SAAR network in March 2002 (see [March 20, 2002](#)). On this day, he returns to the US and is immediately arrested and interviewed by Customs agent David Kane. Biheiri tells Kane that he has longstanding ties to leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood, a radical Muslim group banned in Egypt. Agents are able to search his laptop computer, and discover ties with Hamas leader Mousa Abu Marzouk. He is also connected to two principals of the banned Al Taqwa Bank (see [November 7, 2001](#)), Youssef Nada and Ghaleb Himmat, when their addresses are discovered on his computer as well. Agents say there are “other indications” of connections between Al Taqwa and Biheiri’s company BMI, including financial transactions. ([Perelman 10/17/2003](#); [Simpson 6/21/2004](#); [Barakat 10/12/2004](#)) An e-mail is also discovered showing Biheiri was involved in Saudi multimillionaire Yassin al-Qadi’s financial dealings with Yaqub Mirza, the director of the raided SAAR network. The US froze al-Qadi’s assets in late 2001 (see [October 12, 2001](#)). ([Simpson 9/15/2003](#)) Biheiri will be convicted of immigration fraud in October 2003. He will be convicted again in 2004 for lying to Kane about his ties to Marzouk during his interview. ([Simpson 6/21/2004](#); [Barakat 10/12/2004](#))

June 23, 2003: President Bush Designates Third Enemy Combatant



Ali Saleh Kahlah al-Marri. *[Source: Slate]* President Bush designates Ali Saleh Kahlah al-Marri as an “enemy combatant.” Al-Marri arrived in the US one day before 9/11 (see [September 10, 2001](#)) and has been in US custody since December 2001 (see [December 15, 2001](#)). He is the third declared an enemy combatant, after Yaser Esam Hamdi and Jose Padilla. They both are US citizens while he is a legal US resident. The presidential order says he “engaged in conduct that constituted hostile and war-like acts, including conduct in preparation for acts of international terrorism.” The order adds that Al-Marri “represents a continuing, present, and grave danger to the national security of the United States.” His detention is necessary, the order claims, to prevent him from participating in terrorist activities against the US. Al-Marri is subsequently detained in solitary confinement at the Naval Brig in Charleston. The immediate result of the presidential order is that the Pentagon becomes Al-Marri’s new custodian and that Al-Marri will not be entitled to legal representation or access to a US court. The order in effect precludes a pretrial hearing scheduled for July 2 and the start of a formal trial on July 22. His lawyer Mark Berman filed a motion to suppress evidence seized at Al-Marri’s apartment during an FBI search, which he says was conducted without a warrant. In addition, he claims his client was not properly advised of his rights before his initial interrogation. Officially, Al-Marri was indicted on seven counts, including making false statements to the FBI and identity and credit card fraud. He supposedly lied about contacts between September and November 2001 with an al-Qaeda paymaster in the United Arab Emirates, Mustafa Ahmed al-Hawsawi. The Justice Department also alleges that Al-Marri is an al-Qaeda sleeper operative tasked with assisting other members in carrying out future terrorist attacks. These officials say this information was provided by another detainee, believed to be a member of al-Qaeda, who also claims Al-Marri is trained in the use of poisons. Other detainees have told interrogators that Al-Marri met with Osama bin Laden at the Al-Farouq training camp in Afghanistan, where he offered to become a martyr. An additional reason for Al-Marri’s designation of enemy combatant appears to be the possibility of drawing more information from him. Attorney General Ashcroft states: “An individual with that kind of situation is an individual who might know a lot about what could happen, might know the names of individuals, information being so key to intelligence and prevention.” ([CNN 6/24/2003](#))

July 2003: Fired ISI Director Resurfaces as Businessman

Lt. Gen. Mahmood Ahmed, who lost his position as ISI Director one month after 9/11 (see [October 7, 2001](#)), resurfaces in Pakistan as the head of a subsidiary of a prominent business consortium. The New Yorker notes that it is “a position that require[s] government backing.” Ahmed was considered close to the Taliban, and according to some media accounts, ordered money to hijacker Mohamed Atta. He still apparently has not given any media interviews or been interviewed by US intelligence since his firing. ([Mayer 7/28/2003](#))

July 2003: Former German Government Minister Releases Book Alleging US Government Complicity in 9/11

Andreas von Bulow, a former German government minister, releases a book called “Die CIA und der 11. September” (The CIA and September 11), in which he alleges US government complicity in 9/11. Von Bulow was Federal Minister of Research and Technology under Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, and before that was high up in Germany’s Ministry of Defense. ([Der Spiegel \(Hamburg\) 9/8/2003](#)) He argues that 9/11 was a covert operation in which the CIA and the Israeli Mossad played a role. He suggests remote control could have been used to direct the hijacked planes into their targets; that the WTC towers collapsed due to explosives; that no planes crashed into the Pentagon or in Pennsylvania; and that the CIA had faked mobile phone calls from Flight 93 passengers. ([Gavin 9/9/2003](#); [Bernstein 10/1/2003](#); [Connolly 11/20/2003](#)) Von Bulow tells the Daily Telegraph, “If what I say is right, the whole US government should end up behind bars.” The book is a bestseller in Germany, selling over 100,000 copies. ([Connolly 11/20/2003](#)) He previewed some of his theories in a January 2002 interview (see [January 13, 2002](#)). ([Connolly 11/20/2003](#))

July 2003: Bin Laden Hunt Frustrated Because Equipment Is in Iraq

Lt. Gen. John R. Vines, commander of US troops in Afghanistan at this time, will later complain that an opportunity to kill bin Laden is lost due to a lack of the right equipment. Unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) like the Predator are in short supply due to the war in Iraq. Vines receives intelligence that bin Laden is on the move and can take one of three routes. However, there is only one UAV to send. Vines will later recall, “A UAV was positioned on the route that was most likely, but he didn’t go that way. We believed that we were within a half-hour of possibly getting him, but nothing materialized.” ([Priest and Tyson 9/10/2006](#))

July 2003: Saudi Embassy in US Found to Be Passing Money to Suspect Charities through US Bank that Has CIA Ties



Riggs Bank in Washington, DC.

[Source: *Washington Post*] In late 2002, US federal banking investigators began looking into transactions at Riggs Bank because of news reports that some money may have passed from the Saudi Arabian embassy in Washington through Riggs Bank to the associates of two 9/11 hijackers in San Diego (see [December 4, 1999](#)). But in July 2003, the probe expands as investigators discover irregularities involving tens of millions of dollars also connected to the Saudi embassy. The Wall Street Journal will later report, “Riggs repeatedly failed in 2001 and 2002 to file suspicious-activity reports related to cash transactions in the low tens of millions of dollars in Saudi accounts, said people familiar with the matter.” Riggs Bank “handles the bulk of [Washington’s] diplomatic accounts, a niche market that revolves around relationships and discretion.” ([Simpson 1/14/2004](#)) Newsweek will later report that “investigators say the embassy accounts show a large commingling of funds with Islamic charities that have been the prime target of US probes.” In one instance, on July 10, 2001 the Saudi embassy sent \$70,000 to two Saudis in Massachusetts. One of the Saudis wrote a \$20,000 check that same day to a third Saudi who had listed the same address as Aafia Siddiqui, a microbiologist who is believed to have been a US-based operative for 9/11 mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (see [Late September 2001-March 2003](#)). ([Isikoff 4/12/2004](#)) The Wall Street Journal will later discover that Riggs Bank “has had a longstanding relationship with the Central Intelligence Agency, according to people familiar with Riggs operations and US government officials” (see [December 31, 2004](#)). The relationship included top Riggs executives receiving US government security clearances. Riggs also overlooked tens of millions of dollars in suspicious transactions by right wing dictators from Africa and South America such as former Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet. ([Simpson 12/31/2004](#)) A connection between the CIA and Riggs Bank goes back to at least the early 1960s. And in 1977, journalist Bob Woodward tied Riggs Bank to payments in a CIA operation in Iran. ([Shafer 1/10/2005](#)) The CIA tie leads to suspicions that the bank’s failure to disclose financial activity by Saudi diplomats and other foreign officials may have been implicitly authorized by parts of the US government. Some of the suspicious Saudi accounts belong to Saudi diplomats, including Prince Bandar bin Sultan, the Saudi ambassador to the US. Shortly after these irregularities are discovered, Prince Bandar meets with Treasury Secretary John Snow and details his work for the CIA. For instance, during the 1980s, Prince Bandar helped fund the anticommunist Nicaraguan Contra rebels at the request of the White House and CIA as part of what became known as the Iran-Contra affair, and he

also helped the CIA support Afghan rebels fighting the Soviet Union. It is not known what was discussed but US intelligence officials suggest Prince Bandar disclosed his CIA connections “as an explanation for the prince’s large unexplained cash transactions at Riggs.” ([Simpson 12/31/2004](#)) It will later come to light that for many years \$30 million a month were being secretly deposited into a Riggs Bank account controlled by Prince Bandar. It has been alleged that major British arms contractor BAE Systems funneled up to \$2 billion in bribes through this account over the years as part of an \$80 billion weapons deal between Britain and Saudi Arabia. Riggs Bank never knew the source of the funds. After the probe uncovers these suspicious transactions, the bank cuts off all business with the Saudis. ([Isikoff and Hosenball 6/11/2007](#)) The US Treasury will later impose unusually strict controls on Riggs Bank and fine the bank \$25 million. ([Simpson 1/14/2004](#)) The bank will also plead guilty to one felony count of failing to file suspicious activity reports and pay an additional fine of \$16 million. ([O'Hara 1/28/2005](#))

July 2003: CIA Claims There Was ‘Steady and Heavy’ Pressure to Find Al-Qaeda-Iraq Link before 2003 Iraq War

In a classified report, the CIA states: “Requests for reporting and analysis of [Iraq’s link to al-Qaeda] were steady and heavy in the period leading up to the war, creating significant pressure on the Intelligence Community to find evidence that supported a connection.” This comment will not be publicly mentioned until September 2006, in a media leak of still classified material. ([Hosenball 9/13/2006](#))

July 8, 2003: 9/11 Commission Denounces Lack of Cooperation

A status report released by the 9/11 Commission shows that various government agencies are not cooperating fully with the investigation. Neither the CIA nor the Justice Department have provided all requested documents. Lack of cooperation on the part of the Department of Defense “[is] becoming particularly serious,” and the commission has received no responses whatsoever to requests related to national air defenses. The FBI, State Department, and Transportation Department receive generally positive reviews. ([Arnold 7/9/2003](#)) Commissioner Tim Roemer complains, “We’re not getting the kind of cooperation that we should be. We need a steady stream of information coming to us... Instead, We’re getting a trickle.” ([Borger 7/10/2003](#)) Chairman Thomas Kean is also troubled by the Bush administration’s insistence on having a Justice Department official present during interviews with federal officials. ([Arnold 7/9/2003](#)) The 9/11 Commission is eventually forced to subpoena documents from the Defense Department and FAA (see [October-November 2003](#)).

July 9, 2003: Expert Claims KSM Told Al-Qaeda Malaysia Summit about Planes as Weapons Plot Targeting US



Rohan Gunaratna. [Source: George Washington

University] Counterterrorism expert Rohan Gunaratna claims to know what was discussed at the al-Qaeda summit held in Malaysia in January 2000 (see January 5-8, 2000).

Gunaratna has been described as an “ad hoc adviser to US intelligence officials,” and it is believed he has seen top secret transcripts of 9/11 mastermind Khalid Shaikh

Mohammed’s (KSM) recent interrogations in CIA prisons. It has not been explained how he saw such transcripts, but the CIA has not disputed the assertion that he saw them.

([Kelly 7/10/2003](#)) In public testimony before the 9/11 Commission, Gunaratna says that “Khalid Shaikh Mohammed chaired that meeting [in Malaysia]. The first two hijackers to enter the United States, they were present at that meeting. So the 9/11 operation is an extension of old Plan Bojinka (see [January 6, 1995](#)). So the players of old plan Bojinka, they were not all arrested.... If you read the interrogation of [KSM], who is now in US custody, he has very clearly stated how 9/11 was planned, that it originated from [Bojinka].” However, the 9/11 Commissioners do not ask him any follow-up questions about this. ([9/11 Commission 7/9/2003](#).)

In the 9/11 Commission’s final report, there will be no mention of any suggestions KSM was at the Malaysia meeting or any clear accounting as to who all the attendees were. Their report will also downplay any connections between the 1995 Bojinka plot and the 9/11 plot, which they will claim began in 1999. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 153-154](#))

However, later on the same day as his testimony, Gunaratna will give more details of what he claims to have learned from KSM’s interrogations in an interview with a reporter. He says that at the summit KSM said al-Qaeda operatives would need to learn to fly commercial airliners in the US as part of a “suicide operation.” However, although KSM had already agreed on the targets with bin Laden, the World Trade Center and the Pentagon were not mentioned at the summit. KSM “was careful not to discuss all the specific plans at that meeting.” The reporter who interviewed Gunaratna notes that “some US intelligence officials” have “pooh-poohed the significance of the Malaysian meeting as a link to Sept. 11,” and if KSM was at the meeting, that “further underscores how the CIA missed an opportunity” to stop the 9/11 attacks. ([Kelly 7/10/2003](#))

The CIA had Malaysian intelligence photograph and film the attendees of the summit as they were coming and going, but apparently there was no attempt to monitor what was said in the summit meetings (see [January 6-9, 2000](#)). If Gunaratna is correct, it suggests that the CIA and 9/11 Commission

may have withheld some details of KSM's interrogations to the public that are embarrassing to US intelligence agencies. Note also that doubts have been expressed about the reliability of KSM's testimony, which was at least partly obtained through the use of torture (see [June 16, 2004](#)).

July 23, 2003: Survey Finds Fifth of Germans Believe US Government Behind 9/11

The German weekly newspaper Die Zeit publishes a survey by the respected organization Forsa which finds that 19 percent of Germans believe the US government, or elements within it, were behind the 9/11 attacks. 31 percent of those under 30 are found to believe this. ([Reuters 7/23/2003](#); [Gavin 9/9/2003](#); [Connolly 11/20/2003](#)) Several popular books are on the market in Germany, questioning who was behind 9/11. ([Johnson 9/29/2003](#); [Bernstein 10/1/2003](#)) In response, the newsmagazine Der Spiegel runs a major cover story rebutting some of the theories proposed in these books. ([Der Spiegel \(Hamburg\) 9/8/2003](#)) A senior German government official dismisses the poll result, saying: "There's a group of people in every country who will believe any nonsense." ([Bernstein 10/1/2003](#)) In June 2005, a popular German crime show on German state television (ARD) will air an episode involving the premise that the Bush administration ordered the 9/11 attacks. ([Goeller 6/9/2005](#))

July 24, 2003: 9/11 Congressional Inquiry Says Almost Every Government Agency Failed



Senator Bob Graham and Representative Porter Goss co-chair the Congressional Inquiry. [*Source: Ken Lambert/ Associated Press*]/The 9/11 Congressional Inquiry's final report comes out. ([US Congress 7/24/2003](#) ¹; [US Congress 7/24/2003](#)) Officially, the report was written by the 37 members of the House and Senate Intelligence Committees, but in practice, co-chairmen Bob Graham (D) and Porter Goss (R) exercised "near total control over the panel, forbidding the inquiry's staff to speak to other lawmakers." ([Jacoby, Adair, and Fritz 9/29/2002](#)) Both Republican and Democrats in the panel complained how the two co-chairmen withheld information and controlled the process. ([Lipman 9/21/2002](#)) The report was finished in December 2002 and some findings were released then, but the next seven months were spent in negotiation with the Bush administration over what material had to remain censored. The Inquiry had a very limited mandate, focusing just on the

handling of intelligence before 9/11. It also completely ignores or censors out all mentions of intelligence from foreign governments. Thomas Kean, the chairman of 9/11 Commission says the Inquiry's mandate covered only "one-seventh or one-eighth" of what his newer investigation will hopefully cover. ([Schmidt 7/27/2003](#)) The report blames virtually every government agency for failures:

- Newsweek's main conclusion is: "The investigation turned up no damning single piece of evidence that would have led agents directly to the impending attacks. Still, the report makes it chillingly clear that law-enforcement and intelligence agencies might very well have uncovered the plot had it not been for blown signals, sheer bungling—and a general failure to understand the nature of the threat." ([Isikoff and Klaidman 7/28/2003](#))
- According to the New York Times, the report also concludes, "the FBI and CIA had known for years that al-Qaeda sought to strike inside the United States, but focused their attention on the possibility of attacks overseas." ([Johnston 7/26/2003](#))
- CIA Director Tenet was "either unwilling or unable to marshal the full range of Intelligence Community resources necessary to combat the growing threat." ([Schmidt and Drehle 7/25/2003](#))
- US military leaders were "reluctant to use... assets to conduct offensive counterterrorism efforts in Afghanistan" or to "support or participate in CIA operations directed against al-Qaeda." ([Schmidt and Drehle 7/25/2003](#))
- "There was no coordinated... strategy to track terrorist funding and close down their financial support networks" and the Treasury Department even showed "reluctance" to do so. ([Schmidt and Drehle 7/25/2003](#))
- According to the Washington Post, the NSA took "an overly cautious approach to collecting intelligence in the United States and offered 'insufficient collaboration' with the FBI's efforts." ([Schmidt and Drehle 7/25/2003](#)) Many sections remain censored, especially an entire chapter detailing possible Saudi support for 9/11. The Bush administration insisted on censoring even information that was already in the public domain. ([Isikoff 5/25/2003](#)) The Inquiry attempted to determine "to what extent the president received threat-specific warnings" but received very little information. There was a focus on learning what was in Bush's briefing on August 6, 2001 (see [August 6, 2001](#)), but the White House refused to release this information, citing "executive privilege." ([Priest 7/25/2003](#); [Cocco 8/7/2003](#))

July 24, 2003: 9/11 Congressional Inquiry Suggests Hijackers Received Considerable Assistance Inside US

The 9/11 Congressional Inquiry's final report concludes that at least six hijackers received "substantial assistance" from associates in the US, though it's "not known to what extent any of these contacts in the United States were aware of the plot." These hijackers came into contact with at least 14 people who were investigated by the FBI before 9/11, and four of those investigations were active while the hijackers were present. But in June 2002, FBI Director Mueller testified: "While here, the hijackers effectively operated without suspicion, triggering nothing that would have alerted law enforcement and doing nothing that exposed them to domestic coverage. As far as we know, they contacted no known terrorist sympathizers in the United States." CIA Director Tenet

made similar comments at the same time, and another FBI official stated, “[T]here were no contacts with anybody we were looking at inside the United States.” These comments are untrue, because one FBI document from November 2001 uncovered by the Inquiry concludes that the six lead hijackers “maintained a web of contacts both in the United States and abroad. These associates, ranging in degrees of closeness, include friends and associates from universities and flight schools, former roommates, people they knew through mosques and religious activities, and employment contacts. Other contacts provided legal, logistical, or financial assistance, facilitated US entry and flight school enrollment, or were known from [al-Qaeda]-related activities or training.” ([US Congress 7/24/2003](#) ³) The declassified sections of the 9/11 Congressional Inquiry’s final report show the hijackers have contact with:

- Mamoun Darkazanli, investigated several times starting in 1993 (see [1993](#); [Late 1998](#)); the CIA makes repeated efforts to turn him into an informer (see [December 1999](#)).
- Mohammed Haydar Zammar, investigated by Germany since at least 1997 (see [1996](#)), the Germans periodically inform the CIA what they learn.
- Osama Basnan, US intelligence is informed of his connections to Islamic militants several times in early 1990s but fails to investigate (see [April 1998](#)).
- Omar al-Bayoumi, investigated in San Diego from 1998-1999 (see [September 1998-July 1999](#)).
- Anwar Al Aulaqi, investigated in San Diego from 1999-2000 (see [June 1999-March 2000](#)).
- Osama “Sam” Mustafa, owner of a San Diego gas station, and investigated beginning in 1991 (see [Autumn 2000](#)).
- Ed Salamah, manager of the same gas station, and an uncooperative witness in 2000 (see [Autumn 2000](#)).
- An unnamed friend of Hani Hanjour, whom the FBI tries to investigate in 2001.
- An unnamed associate of Marwan Alshehhi, investigated beginning in 1999.
- Hijackers Nawaf Alhazmi and Khalid Almihdhar, who had contact with Basnan, al-Bayoumi, Aulaqi, Mustafa, and Salamah, “maintained a number of other contacts in the local Islamic community during their time in San Diego, some of whom were also known to the FBI through counterterrorist inquiries and investigations,” but details of these individuals and possible others are still classified. ([US Congress 7/24/2003](#) ³) None of the above people have been arrested or even publicly charged with any crime associated with terrorism, although Zammar is in prison in Syria.

July 27, 2003: Still Many 9/11 Mysteries after 9/11 Congressional Inquiry’s Report

Shortly after the public release of the 9/11 Congressional Inquiry’s final report (see [July 24, 2003](#)), the Los Angeles Times claims that “for all that it answers about the attacks, the nearly 900-page report is stocked with reminders of the many questions that remain—about other puzzling aspects of the [9/11] plot, the possible role of foreign governments, and even such politically charged matters as what Presidents Clinton and Bush had been told about al-Qaeda.... [E]ven lawmakers privy to the fuller, classified version of the report... acknowledge that the picture is incomplete.” Representative Porter Goss (R), co-

chairman of the Congressional Inquiry, says, "I can tell you right now that I don't know exactly how the plot was hatched. I don't know the where, the when and the why and the who in every instance. That's after two years of trying. And we will someday have the documents to exploit, we will have the people to interrogate, we will have ways to get more information to put the rest of the pieces of this puzzle on the table. But right now, we don't have it." Congressman Tim Roemer (D), also part of the Congressional Inquiry, says, "I still don't think we know about the 19 hijackers—where they were, why they did certain things." ([Miller 7/27/2003](#))

July 27-28, 2003: Philippine Soldiers Hold Brief Mutiny, Fearing Their Government Is Staging Terrorist Attacks

A group of Philippine soldiers mutiny, claiming they are trying to prevent the Philippine government from staging terrorist attacks on its own people. About 300 soldiers, many of them officers, rig a large Manila shopping mall and luxury hotel with explosives, evacuate them, and then threaten to blow up the buildings unless President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo and other top Philippine leaders resign. After a twenty hour siege, the soldiers surrender and no one is hurt. Their leaders are jailed for mutiny. While Arroyo remains in power, other top leaders resign, including the country's defense minister, police chief, and military intelligence chief. ([Aglionby 7/28/2003](#); [Klein 8/15/2003](#)) The mutineers had a number of grievances. They complain:

- Senior military officials, in collusion with President Arroyo, are secretly behind recent bombings that have been blamed on Muslim militant groups. They specifically claim that a series of bombings in March and April 2002 in the southern city of Davao that killed 38 people were actually false flag operations. (Their allegations could be related to a May 2002 incident in which a US citizen staying in the area was injured when a bomb he was making exploded in his hotel room; see [May 16, 2002](#). The Philippines media suggested that he was a CIA operative taking part in false flag operations.)

- The government is selling weapons and ammunition to rebel groups such as Abu Sayyaf even as these groups fight the government. The Guardian will later note that local newspaper reports describe the military's selling of weapons to rebels as 'an open secret' and "common knowledge." ([Klein 8/15/2003](#)) Gracia Burnham, an American missionary who was kidnapped in 2001 and held hostage by Abu Sayyaf rebels for more than a year, claims that her captors told her their weapons came from the Philippine government. ([Neumann 7/29/2003](#))

- Islamic militants are being allowed to escape from jail. Just two weeks before the mutiny, Fathur Rohman al-Ghozi, a bomb maker with the al-Qaeda allied Jemaah Islamiah group, was inexplicably able to escape from a heavily guarded prison in Manila. Police admit he could not have escaped without inside help.

- The government is on the verge of staging a new string of bombings to justify declaring martial law so Arroyo can remain in office past the end of her term in 2004. The Guardian will later note, "Though the soldiers' tactics were widely condemned in the Philippines, there was widespread recognition in the press, and even inside the military, that their claims 'were valid and legitimate' Days before the mutiny, a coalition of church groups, lawyers, and NGOs launched a 'fact-finding mission' to investigate

persistent rumors that the state was involved in the Davao explosions. It is also investigating the possible involvement of US intelligence agencies.” ([Klein 8/15/2003](#)) CNN comments, “While the government issued a statement calling the accusation ‘a lie,’ and saying the soldiers themselves could be victims of propaganda, the soldiers’ accusation plays on the fears of many Filipinos after the infamous 21-year term of President Ferdinand Marcos, during which he did the same thing. Marcos instigated a series of bombings and civil unrest in the late 1960s and early 1970s, using that as an excuse to declare martial law in 1972. It took the People Power Revolt of 1986 to end Marcos’ dictatorship.” ([Ressa 7/26/2003](#))

July 28, 2003: Bush Opposes Release of Full 9/11 Congressional Inquiry Report



Saudi Foreign Minister Saud al-Faisal after meeting Bush over the 9/11 Congressional Inquiry’s report. [*Source: Associated Press*] In the wake of the release of the 9/11 Congressional Inquiry’s final report, pressure builds to release most of the still-censored sections of the report, but on this day President Bush says he is against the idea. ([Associated Press 7/29/2003](#); [New York Times 7/29/2003](#)) Through an obscure rule, the Senate could force the release of the material with a majority vote ([Kiely and Diamond 5/29/2003](#)), but apparently the number of votes in favor of this idea falls just short. MSNBC reports that “the decision to keep the passage secret... created widespread suspicion among lawmakers that the administration was trying to shield itself and its Saudi allies from embarrassment.... Three of the four leaders of the joint congressional investigation into the attacks have said they believed that much of the material on foreign financing was safe to publish but that the administration insisted on keeping it secret.” ([MSNBC 7/28/2003](#)) Senator Richard Shelby (R), one of the main authors of the report, states that “90, 95 percent of it would not compromise, in my judgment, anything in national security.” Bush ignores a reporter’s question on Shelby’s assessment. ([Associated Press 7/29/2003](#)) Even the Saudi government claims to be in favor of releasing the censored material so it can better respond to criticism. ([MSNBC 7/28/2003](#)) All the censored material remains censored; however, some details of the most controversial censored sections are leaked to the media.

July 31, 2003: FBI Claims 9/11 Money Came from Pakistan



John Pistole. [Source: Marshall Center] John S. Pistole, deputy assistant director of the FBI's Counterterrorism Division, testifies before a Congressional committee. He states the 9/11 investigation "has traced the origin of the funding of 9/11 back to financial accounts in Pakistan, where high-ranking and well-known al-Qaeda operatives played a major role in moving the money forward, eventually into the hands of the hijackers located in the US." ([US Congress 7/31/2003](#)) Pistole does not reveal any further details, but in India it is noted that this is consistent with previous reports that Saeed Sheikh and ISI Director Lt. Gen. Mahmood Ahmed were behind the funding of 9/11. ([Joshi 8/1/2003](#); [John 8/7/2003](#)) However, the FBI will tell the 9/11 Commission that when Pistole used the word "accounts", he did not mean actual accounts with a bank, merely that 9/11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, who was based in Pakistan, handled the money. ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 144](#).)

August 2003: FBI and CIA Reopen Investigation Into Saudi Link to 9/11

In the wake of the 9/11 Congressional Inquiry report, and "under intense pressure from Congress," as the Boston Globe puts it, the FBI and CIA reopen an investigation into whether Saudi Arabian officials aided the 9/11 plot. ([Bender 8/3/2003](#)) In early August, Saudi Arabia allows the FBI to interview Omar al-Bayoumi. However, the interview takes place in Saudi Arabia, and apparently on his terms, with Saudi government handlers present. ([New York Times 8/5/2003](#); [Associated Press 8/6/2003](#)) Says one anonymous government terrorism consultant, "They are revisiting everybody. The [FBI] did not do a very good job of unraveling the conspiracy behind the hijackers." ([Bender 8/3/2003](#)) But by September, the Washington Post reports that the FBI has concluded that the idea al-Bayoumi was a Saudi government agent is "without merit and has largely abandoned further investigation... The bureau's September 11 investigative team, which is still tracking down details of the plot, has reached similar conclusions about other associates named or referred to in the congressional inquiry report." ([Eggen 9/10/2003](#)) Yet another article claims that by late August, some key people who interacted with al-Bayoumi have yet to be interviewed by the FBI. "Countless intelligence leads that might help solve" the mystery of a Saudi connection to the hijackers "appear to have been underinvestigated or completely overlooked by the FBI, particularly in San Diego." ([Reno 9/2003](#)) Not only were they never interviewed when the investigation was supposedly reopened, they were not interviewed in the months after 9/11 either, when the FBI supposedly opened an

“intense investigation” of al-Bayoumi, visiting “every place he was known to have gone, and [compiling] 4,000 pages of documents detailing his activities.” ([Isikoff and Klaidman 7/28/2003](#))

August 2003: NATO Takes Control in Kabul, Afghanistan

NATO takes control of security in Kabul, Afghanistan. This is NATO’s first-ever operational commitment outside Europe. ([BBC 5/15/2007](#)) NATO will eventually take control of military operations for all of Afghanistan in 2006 (see [July-October 2006](#)).

August 2003: Anti-US Asian Alliance Holds First Military Exercises Together

Five of the six members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) conduct their first ever military exercises together. Experts say the joint-maneuvers demonstrate how important the SCO is to China in its effort to counter the growing US military presence in Central Asia. Alex Vatanka, of the London based Jane’s Intelligence, suggests the point of the exercises is to show the Central Asian states what China can offer as a partner that the US cannot. ([Carlson 8/5/2003](#))

August 1-3, 2003: Leaks Hint at Saudi Involvement in 9/11

In the wake of the release of the 9/11 Congressional Inquiry’s full report, anonymous officials leak some details from a controversial, completely censored 28-page section that focuses on possible Saudi support for 9/11. According to leaks given to the New York Times, the section says that Omar al-Bayoumi and/or Osama Basnan “had at least indirect links with two hijackers [who] were probably Saudi intelligence agents and may have reported to Saudi government officials.” It also says that Anwar Al Aulaqi “was a central figure in a support network that aided the same two hijackers.” Most connections drawn in the report between the men, Saudi intelligence, and 9/11 is said to be circumstantial. ([Risen and Johnston 8/2/2003](#)) One key section is said to read, “On the one hand, it is possible that these kinds of connections could suggest, as indicated in a CIA memorandum, ‘incontrovertible evidence that there is support for these terrorists... On the other hand, it is also possible that further investigation of these allegations could reveal legitimate, and innocent, explanations for these associations.’”(see [August 2, 2002](#)) Some of the most sensitive information involves what US agencies are doing currently to investigate Saudi business figures and organizations. ([Lumpkin and Solomon 8/2/2003](#)) According to the New Republic, the section outlines “connections between the hijacking plot and the very top levels of the Saudi royal family.” An anonymous official is quoted as saying, “There’s a lot more in the 28 pages than money. Everyone’s chasing the charities. They should be chasing direct links to high levels of the Saudi government.

We're not talking about rogue elements. We're talking about a coordinated network that reaches right from the hijackers to multiple places in the Saudi government.... If the people in the administration trying to link Iraq to al-Qaeda had one-one-thousandth of the stuff that the 28 pages has linking a foreign government to al-Qaeda, they would have been in good shape.... If the 28 pages were to be made public, I have no question that the entire relationship with Saudi Arabia would change overnight." ([Ackerman 8/1/2003](#)) The section also is critical that the issue of foreign government support remains unresolved. One section reads, "In their testimony, neither CIA or FBI officials were able to address definitely the extent of such support for the hijackers, globally or within the United States, or the extent to which such support, if it exists, is knowing or inadvertent in nature. This gap in intelligence community coverage is unacceptable." ([Bender 8/3/2003](#))

August 6, 2003: Two Investigative Journalists Say Almihdhar and Alhazmi Worked for Saudi Intelligence and Were Protected by CIA

After 9/11, an unnamed former CIA officer who worked in Saudi Arabia will tell investigative journalist Joe Trento that hijackers Nawaf Alhazmi and Khalid Almihdhar were allowed to operate in the US unchecked (see, e.g., [Early February-Summer 2000](#) and [Mid-May-December 2000](#)) because they were agents of Saudi Arabia's intelligence agency. "We had been unable to penetrate al-Qaeda. The Saudis claimed that they had done it successfully. Both Alhazmi and Almihdhar were Saudi agents. We thought they had been screened. It turned out the man responsible for recruiting them had been loyal to Osama bin Laden. The truth is bin Laden himself was a Saudi agent at one time. He successfully penetrated Saudi intelligence and created his own operation inside. The CIA relied on the Saudis vetting their own agents. It was a huge mistake. The reason the FBI was not given any information about either man is because they were Saudi assets operating with CIA knowledge in the United States." ([Trento 8/6/2003](#)) In a 2006 book the Trentos will add: "Saudi intelligence had sent agents Khalid Almihdhar and Nawaf Alhazmi to spy on a meeting of top associates of al-Qaeda in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, January 5-8, 2000. 'The CIA/Saudi hope was that the Saudis would learn details of bin Laden's future plans. Instead plans were finalized and the Saudis learned nothing,' says a terrorism expert who asks that his identity be withheld... Under normal circumstances, the names of Almihdhar and Alhazmi should have been placed on the State Department, Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), and US Customs watch lists. The two men would have been automatically denied entry into the US. Because they were perceived as working for a friendly intelligence service, however, the CIA did not pass along the names." ([Trento and Trento 2006, pp. 8](#))

August 7, 2003-August 11, 2003: Seventy Percent of Americans Misled by Bush Administration Insinuations of Iraq-9/11 Links

According to a Washington Post survey, 7 in 10 Americans believe that it is “likely or very likely Saddam Hussein was involved in September 11.” Sixty-two percent of Democrats, 80 percent of Republicans and 67 percent of independents polled suspect there is a link between Saddam Hussein and 9/11. Additionally, eight in 10 Americans believe that it was likely that Saddam had provided assistance to al-Qaeda, and a similar percentage say they believe he developed weapons of mass destruction. ([Milbank and Deane 9/6/2003](#))

August 12, 2003: Hambali and Aides Arrested in Thailand; Handed to US

Hambali (a.k.a. Riduan Isamuddin) is arrested in Thailand in a joint US-Thai operation. He has been considered the operational leader of al-Qaeda in Southeast Asia. He was involved in the Bojinka plot in 1995, attended the January 2000 al-Qaeda summit in Malaysia (see January 5-8, 2000), and was said to be involved in the 2002 bombing of a nightclub in Bali, Indonesia, (see [October 12, 2002](#)), the 2003 bombing of a Marriott Hotel in Jakarta, Indonesia, and other similar acts. He is taken into US custody and is said to quickly and fully cooperate with his captors. ([Simpson 12/7/2003](#)) According to the Washington Post, at some point he will be transferred to the US naval base at the British island colony of Diego Garcia where the CIA is believed to have a secret interrogation center. ([Priest and Higham 12/17/2004](#); [Priest 1/2/2005, pp. A01](#)) Two of Hambali's associates - Mohamad Farik Amin (a.k.a. Zubair), and Mohammed Nazir Bin Lep (a.k.a. Lillie) - are arrested with him. Both are Malaysians and are said to be al-Qaeda operatives. Supposedly they were members of a four person suicide squad working for Hambali and Khalid Shaikh Mohammed to hijack an airplane. ([Elegant and Perrin 10/6/2003](#)) The US will later classify both of them, and Hambali, as about a dozen of the top al-Qaeda operatives in US custody (see [September 2-3, 2006](#)).

Shortly After August 12, 2003: Hambali Is Waterboarded in Secret CIA Prison

Shortly after he is arrested in Thailand (see [August 12, 2003](#)), al-Qaeda leader Hambali is taken to an unknown location and tortured. According to NBC News, he is waterboarded, which is a technique simulating drowning that is widely regarded as torture. He is only one of about four high-ranking detainees waterboarded, according to media reports (see [May 2002-2003](#)). He is reportedly chosen for waterboarding because he is resistant to other interrogation methods. NBC News claims that, according to multiple unnamed officials, “Hambali... quickly told all he knew.” One official claims Hambali “cried like a baby” after his first waterboarding session. ([Windrem 9/13/2007](#))

August 17, 2003: Arms Dealer Victor Bout Hints He Has Numerous Government Connections

The New York Times Magazine publishes an article based on an interview with Victor Bout, the world's biggest illegal arms dealer. Bout worked extensively with the Taliban in the years before 9/11, and because of this, he claims, "I woke up after Sept. 11 and found I was second only to Osama," in terms of being a wanted criminal. But he hints that he has powerful connections. "My clients, the governments... I keep my mouth shut." He also points to the middle of his forehead and adds, "If I told you everything I'd get the red hole right here." When asked about his possible ties to Russian intelligence, he says, "Until now you've been digging in a big lake with small spoons. There are huge forces..." He breaks his sentence, and explains to the reporter that he cannot explain too much about what the report calls "the triangulated relationship between him, governments, and his rogue clients." An unnamed British arms investigator claims, "Bout is encouraged by Western intelligence agencies when it's politically expedient." Bout, a Russian, is interviewed in Moscow, where "he lives in plain sight... under the apparent protection of a post-Communist system that has profited from his activities as much as he has." ([Landesman 8/17/2003](#)) It will later be alleged that Bout began working with US intelligence shortly after 9/11, if not before, despite being the main arms dealer to the Taliban (see [Shortly After September 11, 2001](#)).

August 27, 2003: NIST Investigators Rule Out Weak Steel as a Factor in Collapses

At the end of a two-day meeting to discuss the progress of their investigation of the WTC collapses on 9/11, National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) investigators say that early tests on steel beams recovered from the World Trade Center showed they met or were stronger than design requirements. NIST has collected 236 pieces of steel from the wreckage of the towers. Tests have found that the steel beams exceeded requirements to bear 36,000 pounds per square inch, and were often capable of bearing around 42,000 pounds per square inch. Lead investigator Shyam Sunder says that if further testing corroborates these findings, this will rule out weak steel as a factor in the collapses. ([National Institute of Standards and Technology 8/26/2003](#); [Associated Press 8/28/2003](#)) The final report of the NIST investigation, released in 2005, will corroborate this finding: "Overall, approximately 87 percent of all perimeter and core column steel tested exceeded the required minimum yield strengths specified in design documents. Test data for the remaining samples were below specifications, but were within the expected variability and did not affect the safety of the towers on September 11, 2001." It also will point out: "Of the more than 170 areas examined on 16 perimeter column panels, only three columns had evidence that the steel reached temperatures above 250°C.... Only two core column specimens had sufficient paint remaining to make such an analysis, and their temperatures did not reach 250°C.... Using metallographic analysis, NIST determined that there was no evidence that any of the samples had reached temperatures above 600 °C." ([National Institute of Standards and Technology 9/2005, pp. 89-90](#) ²¹)

September 2003: US Not Sharing Evidence about Darkazanli with Germans

German prosecutors claim that an inquiry is still under way against Mamoun Darkazanli, the Syrian businessman with ties to the Hamburg al-Qaeda cell. However, while the US had promised to share evidence against him, it is reported that the promised information has yet to be delivered. ([Deutsche Presse-Agentur \(Hamburg\) 9/7/2003](#))

September 5, 2003: Homeland Security Warns Al-Qaeda Planning New US Attacks

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) issues an advisory warning that al-Qaeda is working on plans to hijack airliners flying between international points that pass near or over the continental US. The DHS spokesman states that most of the flights fitting this description would originate in Canada. Reasons for this advisory include concerns regarding the second anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, a recent increase in intelligence information, and threats to aviation that continued through the summer. However, the advisory states that the information is not specific enough to raise the National Alert Level from yellow to orange. The advisory contains non-specific warnings about multiple attacks against “soft” targets in both the US and abroad. ([Meserve and Arena 9/5/2003](#)) No such attacks occur.

September 6, 2003: British Cabinet Minister Hints US Government Knew of 9/11 in Advance



Michael Meacher. [*Source: Global Free Press*] British government minister Michael Meacher publishes an essay entitled, “The War on Terrorism is Bogus.” Meacher is a long time British Member of Parliament, and served as Environmental Minister for six years until three months before releasing this essay. The Guardian, which publishes the essay, states that Meacher claims “the war on terrorism is a smoke screen and that the US knew in advance about the September 11 attack on New York but, for strategic reasons, chose not to act on the warnings. He says the US goal is ‘world hegemony, built around securing by force command over the oil supplies’ and that

this Pax Americana ‘provides a much better explanation of what actually happened before, during and after 9/11 than the global war on terrorism thesis.’ Mr. Meacher adds that the US has made ‘no serious attempt’ to catch the al-Qaeda leader, Osama bin Laden.” ([Meacher 9/6/2003](#)) Meacher provides no personal anecdotes based on his years in Tony Blair’s cabinet, but he cites numerous mainstream media accounts to support his thesis. He emphasizes the Project for the New American Century 2000 report (see [September 2000](#)) as a “blueprint” for a mythical “global war on terrorism,” “propagated to pave the way for a wholly different agenda—the US goal of world hegemony, built around securing by force command over the oil supplies” in Afghanistan and Iraq. ([MacAskill 9/6/2003](#)) Meacher’s stand causes a controversial debate in Britain, but the story is almost completely ignored by the mainstream US media.

September 10, 2003: SEC, Others Still Keep Mum About Insider Trading Investigations

Slate reports that two years after the 9/11 attacks, neither the Chicago Board Options Exchange nor the Securities and Exchange Commission will make any comment about their investigations into insider trading before 9/11. “Neither has announced any conclusion. The SEC has not filed any complaint alleging illegal activity, nor has the Justice Department announced any investigation or prosecution.... So, unless the SEC decides to file a complaint—unlikely at this late stage—we may never know what they learned about terror trading.” ([Plotz 9/10/2003](#))

September 12, 2003: Bush Administration Is Sued for Supposedly Having Foreknowledge of 9/11 Attacks



Ellen Mariani. [*Source: Ellen Mariani*] 9/11 victim’s relative Ellen Mariani sues the US government, claiming that certain officials had foreknowledge of the 9/11 attacks. “I’m 100 percent sure that they knew,” she says. In doing so, she is ineligible for government compensation from what she calls the “shut-up and go-away fund.” She believes she would have received around \$500,000. According to a statement by her lawyer, her lawsuit against President Bush, Vice President Cheney,

the CIA, Defense Department, and other administration members “is based upon prior knowledge of 9/11; knowingly failing to act, prevent or warn of 9/11; and the ongoing obstruction of justice by covering up the truth of 9/11; all in violation of the laws of the United States.” As the Toronto Star points out, this interesting story has been “buried” by the mainstream media, at least initially. Coverage has been limited mostly to Philadelphia where the case was filed and New Hampshire where Mariani lives. ([Slobodzian 9/23/2003](#); [Zerbisias 11/30/2003](#); [Lin 12/3/2003](#); [Ridgeway 12/3/2003](#); [Smallman 12/9/2003](#); [Associated Press 12/24/2003](#))

September 14, 2003-September 17, 2003: Cheney Links Iraq to 9/11; Bush, Rumsfeld, and Rice All Disavow Cheney’s Claim

Vice President Cheney says on NBC’s Meet the Press, “I think it’s not surprising that people make [the] connection” between Iraq and 9/11. He adds, “If we’re successful in Iraq... then we will have struck a major blow right at the heart of The Base, if you will, the geographic base of the terrorists who had us under assault now for many years, but most especially on 9/11.” However, two days later, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld states that he hasn’t “seen any indication that would lead” him to believe there was an Iraq-9/11 link. ([Associated Press 9/16/2003](#)) National Security Adviser Rice says the administration has never accused Hussein of directing the 9/11 attacks. ([Mikkelsen 9/16/2003](#)) The next day, Bush also disavows the Cheney statement, stating, “We’ve had no evidence that Saddam Hussein was involved with September the 11th... [but] there’s no question that Saddam Hussein has al-Qaeda ties.” ([CBS News 9/17/2003](#); [Milbank 9/18/2003](#))

September 17, 2003: Spain Charges Darkazanli, 34 Others with Involvement in 9/11 Plot



The 2007 PBS documentary “America at a Crossroads: The Brotherhood” will claim that Spanish investigators discovered this picture of Darkazanli holding a Kalishnikov rifle in Afghanistan. [Source: PBS] A Spanish judge issues an

indictment against Mamoun Darkazanli and 34 others, alleging that they belonged to or supported the al-Qaeda cell in Madrid, which assisted the 9/11 hijackers in planning the attack. Darkazanli's name appears 177 times in the 690-page indictment. He is accused of acting as bin Laden's "financier in Europe." "The list of those with whom Darkazanli has done business or otherwise exchanged money reads like a Who's Who of al-Qaeda: Wadih El-Hage, bin Laden's one-time personal secretary; [Tayyib al-Madani], the husband of bin Laden's niece and, before 9/11, al-Qaeda's chief financial officer; and Mustafa Setmariam Nasr, the head of a training camp for al-Qaeda in Afghanistan who journeyed to Hamburg to visit Darkazanli in 1996." ([Crewdson 10/5/2003](#)) The CIA had been monitoring Darkazanli sometime before December 1999 and had tried to convince Germany to "turn" him into an al-Qaeda informant. However, the CIA refused Germany's request to share information regarding Darkazanli's terrorist ties in the spring of 2000 (see [Spring 2000](#)). ([Crewdson 11/17/2002](#))

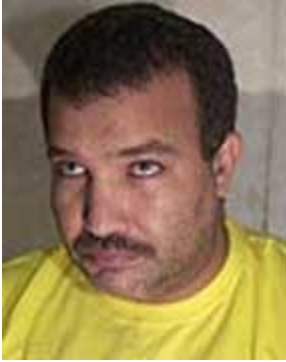
September 18, 2003: Questions of ISI Leader's Ties to 9/11 Resurface

A Wall Street Journal review of Bernard-Henri Levy's book "Who Killed Daniel Pearl?" notes, "It is a fact that Gen. Mahmood Ahmed, then head of the ISI, wired \$100,000 to Mohamed Atta before 9/11 through an intermediary. (This was reported in the Journal on Oct. 10, 2001.) So what have we done about it?" The article notes that few are willing to look into this issue or take action against Pakistan since Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf is considered a close ally and cooperative in the fight against terrorism. ([Varadarajan 9/18/2003](#)) Other reviews of the book raise similar points, and even the conservative columnist George Will notes in the Washington Post, "It is not fantasy that there have been many reports that the then-head of Pakistani intelligence was responsible for \$100,000 being wired to Mohamed Atta, the lead 9/11 hijacker." ([Will 10/5/2003](#))

September 19, 2003: FBI Finds No Insider Trading

Spokesperson Paul Bresson announces that the FBI has concluded that there was no insider trading in US securities markets by people with advance knowledge of the 9/11 attacks. According to Bresson, the "vast majority" of a pre-attack surge of trading in options that bet on a drop in the stock of AMR Corp., which owns American Airlines, and UAL Corp., which owns United Airlines, was conducted by investment hedge funds implementing bearish investment strategies or hedging a long position of common stock and was not linked to terrorists. ([St. Petersburg Times 9/19/2003](#); [Washington Post 9/19/2003](#)) Independent research will indicate otherwise a few months later.

September 25, 2003: 'Envoy' of Bin Laden's Brother-in-Law Arrested in Philippines Then Deported



Mahmoud Afif Abdeljalil. [Source: Joel Nito / Agence France-Presse] An “envoy” of bin Laden’s brother-in-law is accused of running al-Qaeda front companies in the Philippines and is deported. Mahmoud Afif Abdeljalil, a Jordanian, was arrested in the Philippines in early 1995 and accused of supporting the Bojinka plot, but then was let go (see [January 6, 1995](#) and April 1, 1995-Early 1996). He is arrested in the Philippines again on this day while attempting to sell some properties owned by Mohammed Jamal Khalifa, bin Laden’s brother-in-law. ([Abuza 12/1/2002](#); [Elegant 10/27/2003](#)) Philippine officials call him a suspected al-Qaeda operative who had been in close contact with militants from the Abu Sayyaf and other groups. He is called an “envoy” or “point man” for Khalifa, and reputedly took over some of Khalifa’s business front companies after Khalifa left the country in 1994 (see [December 1, 1994](#)). His house was used as a safe-house and meeting place for al-Qaeda operatives. ([Gutierrez 10/23/2003](#); [Associated Press 10/23/2003](#)) However, despite all these serious allegations, Abdeljalil is deported back to Jordan in early 2004. ([Associated Press 3/1/2004](#))

October 2003: Members of 9/11 Commission Meet with ISI

9/11 Commission staff director Philip Zelikow and several members of his staff embark on a fact-finding mission to Pakistan, Afghanistan, and other countries. While in Pakistan, they interview at least two senior members of the ISI. Whether they are investigating a possible ISI role in the 9/11 plot remains unclear. ([Waterman 11/5/2003](#))

October 2003: CIA Only Provides 9/11 Commission with ‘Non-Specific’ Information about Detainee Interrogations, Fails to Mention Videotapes

After becoming unhappy with the quality of information it is receiving from the CIA about detainee interrogations (see [Summer 2003](#)), the 9/11 Commission not only gives the CIA more questions for detainees, but also asks it how the interrogations are carried out. The Commission thinks the second set of questions is the most important, but the CIA only responds to them in a vague manner. They concern the translation process in the interrogations, the interrogators’ background, the way the interrogators handle inconsistencies in the detainees’ stories, the particular questions that were asked to elicit reported information, the way interrogators followed up on certain lines of questioning,

the context of the interrogations so the Commission can assess the credibility and demeanor of the detainees when they made the reported statements, and the interrogators' views or assessments. According to a later account by Commission chairman Tom Kean and vice-chairman Lee Hamilton, CIA general counsel Scott Muller writes back with "non-specific replies." Muller also fails to inform the Commission that the CIA has videotapes of some of the interrogations (see [Summer 2003-January 2004](#)). Because the Commission is "not satisfied" with Muller's response, it pushes for direct access to detainees, but this attempt fails (see [November 5, 2003-January 2004](#) and [After January 2004](#)). ([Kean and Hamilton 1/2/2008](#))

October-November 2003: 9/11 Commission Subpoenas FAA and Pentagon for Missing Documents

The 9/11 Commission unanimously agrees to subpoena the FAA after it refuses to produce records relating to FAA notification to US air defenses concerning the hijacked planes on 9/11. The panel states, "This disturbing development at one agency has led the commission to reexamine its general policy of relying on document requests rather than subpoenas." ([Arnold 10/15/2003](#)) The commission also votes to subpoena the Pentagon for documents related to NORAD's fighter response on 9/11. The commission says it is "especially dismayed" by incomplete document production on the part of NORAD. The commission explains, "In several cases we were assured that all requested records had been produced, but we then discovered, through investigation, that these assurances were mistaken." ([Arnold 11/7/2003](#))

October 19, 2003: New Alleged Bin Laden Audiotape Appears, Says US Is Bugged Down in Iraq

A new audiotape thought to contain a message from Osama bin Laden is broadcast by Al Jazeera. On the 31-minute tape the speaker says that the US occupation of Iraq, a "new Crusader campaign against the Islamic world," is bogged down in the "quagmires of the Tigris and Euphrates" and suffering mounting casualties from guerrillas. He also compares supporters in Iraq to great Muslim warriors of the past and forbids them from working with the Ba'ath party. After describing democracy as "the religion of ignorance," he addresses the question of Palestine, and attacks the "road map" for peace between Israel and Palestine as well as Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas, saying he is similar to Afghani President Hamid Karzai. He highlights US financial losses and budget deficits after 9/11, and would also apparently like to fight in Iraq: "God knows, if I could find a way to get to your battlefields, I would not hesitate." ([Deeb 10/19/2003](#); [Laden 2005, pp. 207-211](#))

Late October 2003: 9/11 Commission's Tour of NEADS Facility Suspended Over Discrepancies

Several months into its investigation, the 9/11 Commission is already dissatisfied with the Department of Defense (see [July 8, 2003](#)). When its staff take a tour of a Northeast Air Defense Sector facility in Rome, New York, which helped coordinate the air defense on the day of 9/11, the staff enter the operations room, which has “more than twenty banks of operators: some weapons controllers and some flight controllers.” The staff find that the operators’ conversations are always tape-recorded, but the tapes for 9/11 have not yet been sent to the commission and, according to Commission Chairman Tom Kean and Vice-Chairman Lee Hamilton, “there were also discrepancies between things NORAD was telling [the commission] about their performance on the morning of September—things that the agency had stated publicly after 9/11—and the story told by the limited tapes and documents the commission had received.” Upon learning of the existence of the tapes, team leader John Farmer immediately suspends the tour and the interviews and flies to meet Kean in New Jersey. The commission subsequently subpoenas NORAD for the tapes (see [October-November 2003](#)), but, according to Kean and Hamilton, this means that “the staff had lost so much time that our hearing on the 9/11 story in the skies was postponed for months. Indeed, the delays from NORAD and the FAA made it highly unlikely that the team could complete its work as scheduled.” ([Kean and Hamilton 2006, pp. 85-88](#)) Chapter 1 of the commission’s final report will draw heavily on the tapes. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 1-46](#)) However, the commission does not make the same effort with all day of 9/11 recordings. For example, it does not even find out which person(s) from the Department of Defense participated in a White House video conference chaired by counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke during the attacks. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 36](#))

October 21, 2003: 9/11 Commission Staff Meet Member of Able Danger Unit

Philip Zelikow, the executive director of the 9/11 Commission, along with two members of the commission’s staff and an unnamed “representative of the executive branch,” meets at Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan with three individuals doing intelligence work for the US Defense Department. ([CNN 8/17/2005](#); [Rosen 11/24/2005](#)) Among these is Lt. Col. Anthony Shaffer, an Army intelligence officer who worked closely with a military intelligence unit called Able Danger, which between fall 1999 and spring 2001 was tasked with assembling information about al-Qaeda networks around the world (see [Fall 1999](#) and [January-March 2001](#)). According to Shaffer’s own later account, he gives the commission staff a detailed account of what Able Danger was, and tells them, “We found two of the three cells which conducted 9/11, to include [Mohamed] Atta.” At the end of the meeting, Philip Zelikow approaches him and says, “This is important. We need to continue this dialogue when we get back to the states.” ([Goodwin 9/2005](#)) Following the meeting, Zelikow calls back to the 9/11 Commission’s headquarters in Washington to request that staff draft a document request, seeking information on Able Danger from the Department of Defense. ([Thomas H. Kean and Lee H. Hamilton 8/12/2005](#)) According to Anthony Shaffer, “My understanding from talking to another member of the press is that [Zelikow’s] call came into America at four o clock in the morning. He got people out of bed over this.” ([Goodwin 9/2005](#)) Shaffer subsequently tries contacting Philip Zelikow

in January 2004 (see [Early January 2004](#)). After it is revealed in the press that the commission, which includes no mention of Able Danger in its final report, had been briefed on the unit, spokesmen for commission members will insist that while they were informed of Able Danger at this time, they were not informed that it had identified Mohamed Atta or any other hijackers as threats. ([Shenon and Jehl 8/10/2005](#)) Head commissioners Thomas H. Kean and Lee H. Hamilton will later say in an official statement that a memorandum prepared by the commission staff after the meeting “does not record any mention of Mohamed Atta or any of the other future hijackers, or any suggestion that their identities were known to anyone at DOD before 9/11. Nor do any of the three Commission staffers who participated in the interview, or the executive branch lawyer, recall hearing any such allegation.” ([Thomas H. Kean and Lee H. Hamilton 8/12/2005](#) ^{ال})

October 21, 2003: Patrick Fitzgerald Blames ‘Wall’ for Intelligence Problems

Prosecutor Patrick Fitzgerald testifies before the Senate Committee on the Judiciary about post-9/11 legislative changes, and says that the removal of the “wall” was a significant step forward for US counterintelligence. The wall was a set of procedures which regulated the passage of intelligence information within the FBI and from the FBI to prosecutors (see [July 19, 1995](#)). Fitzgerald says the removal of the wall represented “the single greatest change that could be made to protect our country.” He cites four cases that he says are examples of how the wall and other such obstacles have hampered counterterrorism efforts:

- The arrest of Ali Mohamed. Fitzgerald claims it would have been “far less difficult” to arrest al-Qaeda operative Ali Mohamed for his involvement in the attacks on US embassies in East Africa (see [September 10, 1998](#)) had it not been for the wall. ([US Congress 10/21/2003](#)) However, author Peter Lance will point out, “But Fitzgerald neglected to tell the senators that... prosecutors and FBI agents had been monitoring the bombing cell members for two years or that they’d had multiple face-to-face meetings with Mohamed himself.” Mohamed, who was called a “key figure” in the Day of Terror plot in the US press in early 1995 (see [February 3, 1995](#)), had actually met Fitzgerald a year before the arrest and told him that he had trained bin Laden’s bodyguards, lived in bin Laden’s house, loved and believed in bin Laden, and that he didn’t need a fatwa to attack the US, as it was obvious the US was the enemy (see [After October 1997](#)). ([Lance 2006, pp. 274-6, 299-300](#))
- The Day of Terror conspiracy. After the partial success of the World Trade Center bombing (see [February 26, 1993](#)), the conspirators planned to attack other targets in New York, but were arrested by the FBI, which had penetrated their cell. All of the arrested plotters were successfully convicted. However, Fitzgerald tells the committee, “Prosecutors were in the dark about the details of the plot until very late in the day.” ([US Congress 10/21/2003](#); [Lance 2006, pp. 118-9](#))
- The Millennium Alert. Fitzgerald says that in 1999, investigations into suspected millennium plots were hampered because “criminal prosecutors received information only in part and with lag time so as not to breach the wall.” All attacks planned for the

millennium failed, including one plot to bomb the Los Angeles airport (see [December 31, 1999-January 1, 2000](#)).

■Sharing Wadih El-Hage's grand jury interview. In 1997, Al-Qaeda operative El-Hage provided information about bin Laden and his associates to a grand jury. Fitzgerald wanted to pass some of this information along to intelligence investigators (see [September 24, 1997](#)) but was unable to because grand jury information cannot be shared with intelligence investigators. To get around this restriction, an FBI agent had to get El-Hage to repeat the information outside the grand jury room. (Note: this example is not directly related to the "wall" under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, but rather to a similar obstacle governing the passage of information in the opposite direction—from criminal agents to intelligence agents). ([US Congress 10/21/2003](#))

November 2003: US Military Frustrated They Cannot Fight Drugs in Afghanistan

Mark Schneider, senior vice president of the nonprofit International Crisis Group, later says that during a trip to Afghanistan in November 2003, he is told by US military commanders and State Department officials that they are frustrated by rules preventing them from fighting Afghanistan's booming illegal drug trade. Author James Risen notes the US military's rules of engagement in Afghanistan states that if US soldiers discover illegal drugs they "could" destroy them, which is "very different from issuing firm rules stating that US forces must destroy any drugs discovered." An ex-Green Beret later claims that he was specifically ordered to ignore heroin and opium when his unit discovered them on patrol. Assistant Secretary of State Bobby Charles, who fights in vain for tougher rules of engagement (see [November 2004](#)), will later complain, "In some cases [US troops] were destroying drugs, but in others they weren't. [Defense Secretary] Rumsfeld didn't want drugs to become a core mission." ([Risen 2006, pp. 152-162](#))

November 2003: Appointment of Powerful 'Neocon' Ambassador Reflects New US Emphasis on Afghanistan

Zalmay Khalilzad, a prominent neoconservative connected to top Bush administration officials, is appointed US Ambassador to Afghanistan. Ethnically Afghani, he had already been appointed special envoy to Afghanistan at the start of 2002 (see [January 1, 2002](#)). But it is increasingly obvious that the US effort in Afghanistan is not going well and Khalilzad's appointment as ambassador reflects a new Bush administration resolve to devote more attention to Afghanistan. He had worked for the likes of Defense Secretary Rumsfeld and Vice President Cheney in years past and is easily able to reach President Bush on the phone. Khalilzad agrees to take the job if the US expands resources in Afghanistan, and as he takes over the US gives \$2 billion in aid to the country, double the amount of the year before. ([Rohde and Sanger 8/12/2007](#)) Khalilzad becomes so powerful that in 2005 the BBC will note that he is sometimes dubbed "the viceroy, or the real president of Afghanistan." He is accused of "frequently overshadowing President Hamid Karzai.... No major decisions by the Afghan government [are] made without his

involvement.” ([North 4/6/2005](#)) Similarly, a London Times article on him will be titled: “US Envoy Accused of Being the Power Pulling Karzai’s Strings.” ([Philp 10/5/2004](#)) A New York Times article on him will be titled: “In Afghanistan, US Envoy Sits in Seat of Power.” ([Waldman 4/17/2004](#)) He will keep this position until April 2005, when it is announced that Khalilzad will become US Ambassador to Iraq, as the Bush administration grows more concerned about the war there. ([Rohde and Sanger 8/12/2007](#))

October 2003 or After: Detainee Allegedly Sees Cameras in Cells and Interrogation Rooms



Muhammad Bashmilah. [*Source: Public domain via Raw Story*]/Muhammad Bashmilah, a Yemeni detained in Jordan and then moved to a CIA prison in Afghanistan, will later say that he sees cameras in the prison. He will describe to his lawyer cameras both in his cells and in interrogation rooms, some on tripods and some on the wall. ([Mazzetti and Shane 12/11/2007](#)) This claim contrasts with a later statement by the CIA saying that it stopped recording detainee interrogations in late 2002 (see [Spring-Late 2002](#)).

November 5, 2003-January 2004: 9/11 Commission’s Attempt to Get Access to Detainees Fails

After the 9/11 Commission becomes unhappy with the information it is getting from detainees in US custody who may know something about the 9/11 plot (see [Summer 2003](#)), the Commission asks CIA Director George Tenet to let them either talk to the detainees themselves, or at least view interrogations through a one-way mirror. However, Tenet denies the request because he does not want the Commission to know where the detainees are, and he claims questioning by a Commission staffer could apparently damage the “relationship” between interrogator and detainee and “upset the flow of questioning.” In addition, Tenet is worried that if the Commission has access to the detainees, Zacarias Moussaoui might also be able to compel them to testify in court, so he rejects compromise proposals. The Commission decides “to push the issue” and drafts a letter outlining why they should have direct access. Although the draft is seen by Tenet and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, it is never officially sent. At a White House meeting attended by Rumsfeld and Commissioners Lee Hamilton and Fred Fielding, Tenet and Attorney General Alberto Gonzales repeat the arguments Tenet made

previously, but Tenet says the Commission can submit written questions, and a CIA “project manager” will try to get them answered. After the administration “plead[s]” with the Commission not to use public pressure to get access to detainees, the Commission decides to drop the matter. Hamilton and Commission Chairman Thomas Kean will later partially blame the victims’ relatives and media for this failure: “Interestingly, there was no pressure from some of the usual sources for us to push for access. For instance, the 9/11 families never pressed us to seek access to detainees, and the media was never engaged on this issue.” Kean and Hamilton will later say that the “project manager” arrangement works “to a degree.” However, a disclaimer is inserted into the report in the first of two chapters that draw heavily on detainees’ alleged statements and says that the Commission could not fully judge the credibility of detainee information, so, according to Kean and Hamilton, “it [is] left to the reader to consider the credibility of the source - we had no opportunity to do so.” ([Kean and Hamilton 2006, pp. 119-126](#)) Commission staffer Ernest May will later criticize the Commission’s “reluctance ever to challenge the CIA’s walling off al-Qaeda detainees.” May will also say, “We never had full confidence in the interrogation reports as historical sources. Often we found more reliable the testimony that had been given in open court by those prosecuted for the East African embassy bombings and other crimes.” ([May 5/23/2005](#)) CIA videotapes and transcripts of interrogations are not provided to the Commission (see [Summer 2003-January 2004](#)).

November 8, 2003: Suicide Bombing Kills 17 in Saudi Arabia



Abdulaziz al-Muqrin. [*Source: Agence France-Presse*] A suicide bombing at a housing compound in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, kills 17. Most of the victims are Muslims working in Saudi Arabia. US and Saudi officials believe the bombing was masterminded by Abdulaziz al-Muqrin, believed to be al-Qaeda’s top figure in Saudi Arabia. ([BBC 12/6/2004](#))

November 12, 2003: 9/11 Commission and White House Agree to Terms of Access

Senators of both parties have been accusing the White House of stonewalling the 9/11 Commission by blocking its demands for documents despite threats of a subpoena. ([Associated Press 10/27/2003](#)) On this day, the White House and the 9/11 Commission

strike a deal. The main issue is access to the presidential daily briefings given to President Bush. Under the deal, only some of the ten commissioners will be allowed to examine classified intelligence documents, and their notes will be subject to White House review. Some 9/11 victims' relatives complain that the agreement gives the White House too much power. The Family Steering Committee complains, "All ten commissioners should have full, unfettered, and unrestricted access to all evidence." It urges the public release of "the full, official, and final written agreement." ([Arnold 11/13/2003](#)) Commissioner Max Cleland is unsatisfied with the deal and resigns a short time later (see [December 9, 2003](#)).

November 14, 2003-September 28, 2005: Some Defendants Are Dismissed in Saudi 9/11 Lawsuit



Saudi Defense and Aviation Minister Prince Sultan bin Abdul Aziz. [Source: Public domain] In a series of rulings, a number of defendants are removed from a 9/11 lawsuit filed in August 2002 (see [August 15, 2002](#)). The lawsuit, filed on behalf of 9/11 victims' relatives, accuses a number of individuals and organizations of funding and supporting al-Qaeda and thus helping the 9/11 attacks to occur. A number of Saudi princes are dropped because they work for the Saudi government. One judge writes in a ruling, "Whatever their actions, they were performed in their official (government) capacities." According to the court ruling, only the US president, not the courts, has the authority to label a foreign nation as a terrorist supporter. Judges rule that the plaintiffs failed to provide sufficient facts to overcome the kingdom of Saudi Arabia's immunity. Saudi defense minister Prince Sultan bin Abdul Aziz, Saudi ambassador to Britain Prince Turki al-Faisal, and Prince Mohammed Al-Faisal Al-Saud, among others, are dismissed from the lawsuit, but the lawsuit is allowed to proceed against many more defendants, including the Saudi Binladin Group, the multibillion dollar bin Laden family company. ([Associated Press 11/16/2003](#); [Bartelme 11/18/2003](#); [Associated Press 1/19/2005](#); [Hamblett 9/28/2005](#)) A judge writes in a ruling that "the Saudi Binladin Group maintained close relationships with Osama bin Laden at certain times" and that it remains "unclear" whether these ties continued since bin Laden became involved in terrorism. ([Follath and Mascolo 6/6/2005](#)) The International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO) is allowed to remain as a defendant, even though this charity has considerable ties to the Saudi government. ([Hamblett 9/28/2005](#)) Some of the Saudi princes, such as Prince

Sultan and Prince Salman, are represented in the case by the prestigious Dallas-based law firm of Baker Botts. James Baker, former Secretary of State and close associate of the Bush family, is one of the senior partners of the law firm. ([Isikoff and Hosenball 4/16/2003](#); [Hamblett 9/28/2005](#))

November 15-20, 2003: Al-Qaeda Hits Jewish and British Targets in Istanbul, Turkey



The bombed Neve Shalom synagogue in Istanbul, Turkey. [*Source: Murad Sezer / Associated Press*] On November 15, 2003, two Jewish synagogues are struck by suicide truck bombs in Istanbul, Turkey. Five days later, the British HSBC Bank and British Consulate in Istanbul are hit by more truck bombs. Fifty-eight people are killed in the attacks, including the British consul general, and over 750 are wounded. Turkish investigators believe the attacks were orchestrated by local al-Qaeda operatives after getting approval from Osama bin Laden. ([BBC 11/20/2003](#); [BBC 2/16/2007](#)) In 2007, seven people will be sentenced to life in a Turkish prison for their role in the attacks. One of them is Luai Sakra, who confessed to being one of the two masterminds of the attacks (see [March 21, 2006-February 16, 2007](#)). Forty-one people receive shorter sentences, and 26 people are acquitted. ([BBC 2/16/2007](#)) Evidence will later emerge suggesting that Sakra was an informant for the CIA, Turkey, and Syria at least in 2000 and 2001 (see [2000](#) and [September 10, 2001](#)).

November 20, 2003: US Government Issues Security Bulletin for Americans Abroad

The US government sends a security bulletin to law enforcement and government officials warning that a surge in terrorist violence abroad and the conclusion of Ramadan, the Muslim holy month, has increased the possibility of attacks on US citizens and interests abroad. According to a senior law enforcement official, the bulletin states that the spate of bombings in Istanbul and elsewhere signals al-Qaeda's continued intent to attack US interests abroad. However, the information is not specific enough to warrant an increase of the National Alert Level from yellow to orange. ([CBS News 11/21/2003](#))

Late 2003: Al-Qaeda Mostly Stops Leaving Electronic Footprints

According to journalist Ron Suskind, at the end of 2003, “The carefully constructed global network of [al-Qaeda’s] sigint and what can be called finint, or financial intelligence, started to go quiet. In short, al-Qaeda, and its affiliates and imitators, stopped leaving electronic footprints. It started slowly, but then became clear, a definable trend.” Al-Qaeda resorts more to low-tech methods, such as human couriers. One senior US intelligence official will later say, “We were surprised it took them so long” to figure out the dangers of electronic communication. ([Suskind 2006, pp. 277-279](#))

December 2003: US Intelligence Discovers Al-Qaeda May Not Be Interested in New Attack Inside US

In December 2003, Norwegian intelligence discovers an al-Qaeda treatise on the Internet called “Jihadi Iraq, Hopes and Dangers.” Completed in September 2003, it is dedicated to Yusef al-Ayeri, head of al-Qaeda operations in the Arabian peninsula until he was killed in May 2003 (see [May 31, 2003](#)), and parts of it may have been written by al-Ayeri. The treatise has a series of recommendations on how to undercut US efforts in Iraq. One major idea is to separate the US from its allies in the Iraq war such as Britain, Spain, and Poland by bombing them. It suggests the political utility of an attack in Spain before 2004 elections there, which is what later occurs (see [March 11, 2004](#)). But interestingly, the treatise focuses on new attacks in Saudi Arabia and Europe, but not in the US. This dovetails with a growing consensus within the US intelligence community that al-Qaeda may not have been trying to attack the US since 9/11. One senior CIA official will later say, “Clearly, they had the capability to attack us in about a hundred different ways. They didn’t. The question was, why?” Journalist Ron Suskind will later comment that the idea “al-Qaeda might not, at this point, actually want to attack America” was “a conclusion that was the last thing anyone in the White House wanted publicized...” Suskind will later note that President Bush’s “central assertion that he should be reelected [in 2004] because he had kept [the US] from being attacked again” would have been severely undercut if the US public was aware of this US intelligence consensus. ([Suskind 2006, pp. 302-204](#))

December 1-7, 2003: Presidential Candidate Howard Dean Raises Possibility of Bush Having Foreknowledge of 9/11 Plot



Howard Dean [*Source: UC Berkeley*] In a December 1, 2003, interview, Howard Dean discusses the possibility that President Bush is hiding information that he was warned in advance about the 9/11 attacks. Presidential candidate Dean states that “The most interesting theory that I have heard so far... is that he was warned ahead of time by the Saudis.” Six days later, Dean clarifies, “I don’t believe that... But we don’t know, and it’d be a nice thing to know.” He concludes, “Because the president won’t give information to the Kean Commission, we really don’t know what the explanation is.” ([Haire 12/23/2003](#)) When asked about these comments, President Bush says “Look, there’s time for politics. And, you know... there’s a time for politics. And... it’s an absurd insinuation.” Dean spokesman Jay Carson responds, “Gov. Dean has been very clear he doesn’t subscribe to or believe this theory. But the White House needs to be more forthcoming with the 9-11 commission and put all these types of theories to rest.” ([Dallas Morning News 12/15/2003](#))

December 9, 2003: Bob Kerrey Replaces Max Cleland on 9/11 Commission



Bob Kerrey. [*Source: US Congress*] Bob Kerrey, the former Nebraska senator who also served as the ranking Democrat on the Senate Intelligence Committee, is appointed to the 9/11 Commission, replacing Max Cleland, who leaves the commission to accept a position on the board of the Export-Import Bank. ([Eggen 12/10/2003](#)) Just before resigning, Cleland called the Bush administration’s attempts to stonewall and “slow walk” the commission a “national scandal.” He criticized the commission for cutting a deal with the White House that compromised their access to information, and said, “I’m not going to be part of looking at information only partially. I’m not going to be part of just coming to quick conclusions. I’m not going to be part of

political pressure to do this or not do that. I'm not going to be part of that. This is serious." ([Boehlert 11/21/2003](#))

December 11, 2003: Secret Testimony Leads to Release of Mzoudi

Abdelghani Mzoudi, charged by the German government in assisting the 9/11 plot, is released from custody, pending completion of his trial. Mzoudi is released on bail following evidence submitted by Germany's federal criminal office of secret testimony from an unnamed informant who says that Mzoudi was not involved with the planning for the attacks. The presiding judge in the case identifies captured al-Qaeda operative Ramzi bin al-Shibh as the likely source of the testimony ([Harding 12/12/2003](#); [BBC 1/21/2004](#); [Schwartz 1/22/2004](#); [Crewdson and Simpson 1/22/2004](#)). Presumably, this information comes from the US government. However, US authorities have repeatedly rejected German attempts to have bin al-Shibh appear in court for his testimony to be examined. ([Moulson 10/23/2003](#); [Agence France-Presse 1/22/2004](#)) Mzoudi will be acquitted in February 2004 and his acquittal will be upheld in 2005 as the US continues to refuse access to bin al-Shibh (see [February 5, 2004-June 8, 2005](#)).

December 14, 2003: Bush Has Difficulty Answering Question About 9/11 Foreknowledge

During a press conference, Washington Times reporter Bill Sammon asks President Bush, "I know you said there will be a time for politics, but you've also said you wanted a change in tone in Washington. Howard Dean recently seemed to muse aloud whether you had advanced knowledge of 9/11. Do you agree or disagree with the RNC that this kind of rhetoric borders on political hate speech?" Bush stammers and pauses with his reply: "Look, there's time for politics.... And, you know... there's a time for politics.... And... it's an absurd insinuation." ([CNN 12/14/2003](#); [Dallas Morning News 12/15/2003](#))

December 14, 2003: Dubious Document Links Atta to Saddam Hussein's Government

The London Daily Telegraph reports that it has obtained a copy of a memo purportedly written to Saddam Hussein by Tahir Jalil Habbush al-Tikriti, the former head of the Iraqi Intelligence Service, describing a three-day "work program" Atta participated in at Abu Nidal's base in Baghdad. The memo, dated July 1, 2001, also includes a report about a shipment sent to Iraq by way of Libya and Syria. The Telegraph asserts that the shipment is "believed to be uranium." Future Iraqi interim Prime Minister Ayad Allawi backs the validity of the document. ([Coughlin 12/14/2003](#)) But Newsweek quickly reports that the document is probably a fabrication, citing both the FBI's detailed Atta timeline and a document expert who, amongst other things, distrusts an unrelated second "item" on the

same document, which supports a discredited claim that Iraq sought uranium from Niger. ([Isikoff 12/17/2003](#)) Very few media outlets pick up the Telegraph's story.

December 16, 2003: Al Taqwa Bank Still Supporting Al-Qaeda Using New Names

A United Nations report criticizes Switzerland for failing to prevent support from reaching al-Qaeda and the Taliban. UN observers claim there is weapons smuggling passing through Switzerland to Afghanistan. The report further claims that the leaders of the banned Al Taqwa Bank (see [November 7, 2001](#)) are continuing to do business with new and renamed financial entities. They continue to maintain commercial interests and properties in Italy and Switzerland, despite being on US and UN blacklists. Switzerland is also failing to enforce travel bans. For instance, Al Taqwa leader Youssef Nada was able to travel through Switzerland to Liechtenstein and back in January 2003. ([Swissinfo 12/16/2003](#)) Salon noted in 2002 that, for many years, Al Taqwa has benefited from political connections in Switzerland. Al Taqwa directors have ties to some European far right wing politicians such as French politician Jean-Marie Le Pen, and even neo-Nazi groups (see [1988](#)). ([Bushinsky 3/12/2002](#); [Komisar 3/15/2002](#)) Newsweek will later report that in 2004, the UN will not convince its members to plug loopholes in the sanctions against Al Taqwa related entities. Instead, the UN Security Council will abolish its own monitoring group. ([Isikoff and Hosenball 3/3/2004](#); [Isikoff and Hosenball 12/24/2004](#)) In late 2004, the Washington Post will report that although Al Taqwa "was supposedly shut down, US and European officials say they still find Nada moving funds under new corporate names." ([Mintz and Fatah 9/11/2004](#)) Additional reports of entities connected to Al Taqwa directors continuing to do business will appear in 2005 (see [June-October 2005](#)).

December 17-21, 2003: 9/11 Commission Chairman Says 9/11 Attacks Were Preventable

For the first time, 9/11 Commissioner Thomas Kean says that the 9/11 attacks could and should have been prevented. Kean, a Bush appointee and former Republican governor of New Jersey, states that "This was not something that had to happen... There are people that, if I was doing the job, would certainly not be in the position they were in at that time because they failed. They simply failed." In 2002, FBI Director Robert Mueller stated, "[T]here was nothing the agency could have done to anticipate and prevent the [9/11] attacks" (see [May 8, 2002](#)) and other Bush administration officials have also said the attacks were all but unstoppable. Kean promises major revelations from the FBI, CIA, Defense Department, NSA, and possibly former President Clinton and President Bush. ([CBS News 12/17/2003](#)) But within days, Kean amends his comments. He says that he wants to make it "clear" that he meant that officials at the operational level two years ago deserved to be singled out for blame and that no judgments had been reached about senior officials. This coincides with continued attempts from the White House to paint the

intelligence prior to the attacks as non-specific “chatter,” and the attacks themselves as “literally bolts from the blue.” ([Oliphant 12/21/2003](#))

December 18, 2003: Two Unsubstantiated Reports of Terrorist Activity

Two reports of alleged terrorist activity trigger fear in the US. White powder is discovered on Pennsylvania Avenue, just outside the White House. A section of central Washington DC is subsequently cordoned off by police and an all-points terror alert is issued. After this large-scale reaction, the powder is found to be harmless and a Homeland Security spokesman declares the powder to be “benign.” Later, ABC News cites an anonymous intelligence source who warned of an “imminent credible threat” in Manhattan from a “woman suicide bomber.” This news causes the stock exchange to dip, despite a rapid denial by police. ([London Times 12/18/2003](#))

December 21, 2003: Fifth Nationwide Orange Alert Is Based on False Information

Secretary of Homeland Security Tom Ridge raises the nationwide terror alert level to orange. He states that “These strategic indicators, including al Qaeda’s continued desire to carry out attacks against our homeland, are perhaps greater now than at any point since Sept. 11.” In his announcement, Ridge cites further reports that al-Qaeda is planning further operations, and that “extremists abroad” are anticipating attacks on the scale of those on September 11, 2001. He states that “credible sources suggest the possibility of attacks against the homeland around the holiday season and beyond.” Officials repeatedly warn about threats to the aviation sector. ([CBC News 12/21/2003](#)) The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) says it has reliable and corroborated information from several sources indicating that a plot, similar to 9/11, is in an advanced stage. US officials focus their investigation on the “informed belief” that six men on Air France Flight 68, which arrives in Los Angeles daily at 4:05 p.m., are planning to hijack the jet and crash it near Los Angeles or Las Vegas. Officials say some names on the passenger manifest match those of known Taliban and al-Qaeda terrorists, with one of them being a trained pilot with a commercial license. Six Air France flights between Paris and Los Angeles are canceled by French Prime Minister Jean Pierre Raffarin. ([Times 12/24/2003](#)) The terror alert turns out to be baseless. The names identified as terrorists turn out to be a five-year-old boy, whose name had been mistaken for an alleged Tunisian terrorist, an elderly Chinese lady who used to run a restaurant in Paris, a Welsh insurance salesman, and three French nationals. ([Dreyfuss 9/21/2006](#)) Further investigation of the Tunisian man reveals that he has no plans to leave the country, no criminal record, and no links to extremism. ([Red Orbit 12/25/2003](#)) Despite criticism of the investigation, French authorities praise the level of cooperation between intelligence agencies. A spokesman for the prime minister says “What is important is that the evaluation of threats continues, and they are undertaken between the Americans and the French in a framework of intense cooperation. Franco-American cooperation in this domain is exemplary.” ([Red Orbit](#)

[12/25/2003](#)) This alert comes in the wake of the comments of the chair of the 9/11 Commission, Tom Kean, suggesting that the 9/11 attacks could have been prevented. President Bush is criticized in the press for the continuing failure to find weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. ([Dreyfuss 9/21/2006](#) ^{AI})

December 21, 2003: FBI Compiles Massive Data on Las Vegas Tourists During Terror Alert

The US government issues a terror alert, based on intelligence that hints at a potential attack somewhere in Las Vegas for New Year's Eve. The FBI quickly assembles data on most of the 1 million "potential suspects," which includes all tourists staying in Vegas for the holidays, and examines records on every hotel guest, car and truck rentals, guest lists for casinos, storage leases, and airplane travel. Those records are combed for any possible connections to terrorist organizations. When the city's hospitality industry begins balking at the sweeping nature of the FBI's information requests, National Security Letters (NSLs) are used to force industry officials to produce the data. Everything swept up by the Vegas data search remains in FBI databases. The terror alert will end on January 10, 2004, with no information about any terrorist actions or possible suspects located. ([Gellman 11/6/2005](#))

December 22, 2003: Most 9/11 Victims' Families Accept Settlement, While Some Sue

The deadline arrives for 9/11 victims' relatives to apply for government compensation. ([Harper 12/23/2003](#)) By receiving an award from the fund, families give up their right to sue the airlines, airports, security companies, or other US organizations that may be faulted for negligence and inadequate security measures. ([CBS News 3/7/2002](#); [Kasindorf 7/13/2003](#); [Eggen 9/10/2003](#)) Relatives may still sue "knowing participants in the hijacking conspiracy" without losing compensation. ([Kasindorf 7/13/2003](#)) Ninety-seven per cent of the 2,973 eligible families apply to the fund; compensation averages about \$2.1 million per family. However, 70 families decide to forego the fund, and instead sue various government agencies and private companies for alleged negligence. ([Shenon 6/16/2004](#); [Wright 6/16/2004](#)) Widow Beverly Eckert explains her decision: "I am suing because unlike other investigative avenues... my lawsuit requires all testimony be given under oath and fully uses powers to compel evidence. The victims' fund was not created in a spirit of compassion.... Lawmakers capped the liability of the airlines at the behest of lobbyists who descended on Washington while the September 11 fires still smoldered." ([Eckert 12/19/2003](#))

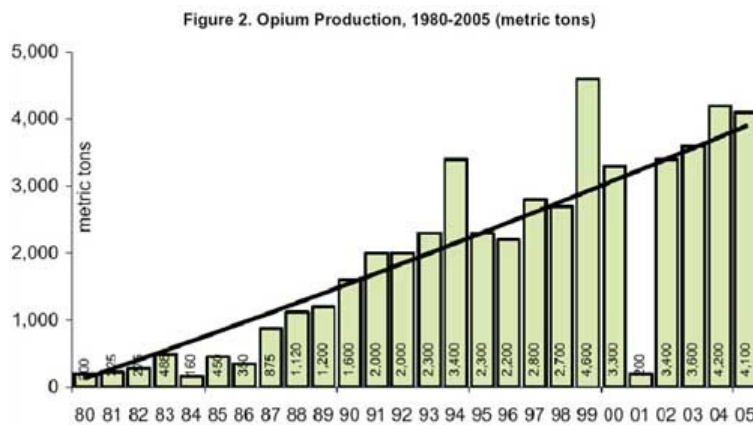
Late 2003: CIA Sets Up Secret Bases in Pakistan to Hunt for Bin Laden; Foiled by Pakistani Escorts

The US had been frustrated in their efforts to cross the Pakistan border to search for al-Qaeda figures (see [Early 2002](#)). However, the CIA is now permitted to establish a number of cover bases inside Pakistan to help in the hunt for bin Laden. But the ISI and Pakistani military place strict limits on the mobility of CIA officers in Pakistan. They have to travel in the tribal border regions where bin Laden is believed to reside with Pakistani security escorts, “making it virtually impossible for the Americans to conduct effective intelligence-gathering operations among the local tribes on Pakistan’s northwest frontier.” ([Risen 2006, pp. 181](#))

Late 2003: FBI Keeping Data on Innocent US Citizens

The Bush administration reverses a long-standing policy requiring FBI agents to destroy their files on innocent US citizens, residents, and companies after investigations are closed. Such information has since commonly been put in government data banks and shared with other agencies. ([Gellman 11/6/2005](#))

2004: Afghan Poppy Farmers Harvest Record Opium Crop



Opium production in Afghanistan, 1980-2005. Based on United Nations data. [Source: *UNODC/MCN*] (click image to enlarge) Roughly 4,600 tons of opium are harvested in Afghanistan during 2004, according to a December 2004 statement by Russian Federal Drug Control Service Oleg Kharichkin. By the end of the year, more than 206,000 hectares in Afghanistan are reportedly planted with the crop. The Russians believe that 2005 production will approach 5,000 tons. ([PakTribune \(Islamabad\) 12/22/2004](#))

2004: CIA Concludes Illegal Drug Profits Going to Islamic Militant Groups and Afghan Warlords

Assistant Secretary of State Bobby Charles asks the CIA to analyze where the drug profits in Afghanistan are going. The CIA concludes that it is probable some of the drugs are going to the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), an al-Qaeda-related group just

north of Afghanistan; the Taliban; the anti-US warlord Gulbuddin Hekmatyar; and possibly al-Qaeda. Charles says, "The linkages were there." Author James Risen later comments, "The connections between drug trafficking and terrorism that the Pentagon didn't want to acknowledge were real and growing, and were clearly helping to fuel a revival of guerrilla activity in Afghanistan." ([Risen 2006, pp. 152-162](#)) An article in the Independent this year will come to similar conclusions (see [August 14, 2004](#)). Based on this report and other evidence, Charles will push for a tough counter-narcotics policy but will end up losing his job instead (see [November 2004](#)).

2004: KLA Gun Runner Filmed Laughing with Top Democrats at Kerry Campaign Fundraiser



Richard Holbrooke (left), Florin Krasniqi (middle), and Wesley Clark (right). [Source: Channel 3] Richard Holbrooke, now Kerry's senior foreign policy advisor, and Wesley Clark are filmed laughing and conversing with KLA gun runner and fundraiser Florin Krasniqi at a fundraising event for the Kerry presidential campaign. Krasniqi is a registered campaign donor to the Kerry campaign. ([Nelson 10/24/2004](#)) Krasniqi is an Albanian who illegally emigrated to the US in 1989. He now runs a construction business in Brooklyn and raises money and supplies weapons to the KLA. ([Sullivan 5/26/1998](#); [CBS News 3/21/2005](#))

(2004 and After): London-based Website and Radio Station Glorify Jihad, British Authorities Take No Action

Al-Tajdeed Radio, a station run by London-based Saudi Islamist Mohammed al-Massari, broadcasts in Iraq and Saudi Arabia calls for attacks on British troops. The station carries songs calling for jihad against the coalition forces and addresses by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, head of an Iraqi group of militants reported to be affiliated with al-Qaeda. In addition, al-Massari also posts videos of attacks on British troops on his website. For example, in August 2006 the Council of Holy Warriors posts a declaration praising a bombing in Iraq that results in 55 people killed and wounded. MP Patrick Mercer calls the broadcasts "desperately demoralizing" for British troops in Iraq. Al-Massari says that

the broadcasts were not in Britain, but abroad, so they are legal. No action is taken against al-Massari over the radio station and website, even after Britain passes a new Terrorism Act in 2006 making glorifying or encouraging political violence a crime (see [March 30, 2006](#)). ([BBC 8/18/2005](#); [Mekhennet and Filkins 8/21/2006](#))

Early 2004: Weldon Fails to Convince 9/11 Commission to Look into Data Mining Programs



Rep. Curt Weldon. [*Source: House of Representatives*] Rep. Curt Weldon (R) is not yet familiar with Able Danger, though he will help bring information about the program to light in 2005. However, he is familiar with the closely related Land Information Warfare Activity (LIWA) program, having had dealings with it before 9/11. He says he is frustrated at the apparent lack of understanding about programs like LIWA based on the lines of questioning at public 9/11 Commission hearings in early 2004, so, “On at least four occasions, I personally tried to brief the 9/11 Commissioners on: NOAH [Weldon’s pre-9/11 suggestion to have a National Operations and Analysis Hub]; integrative data collaboration capabilities; my frustration with intelligence stovepipes; and al-Qaeda analysis. However, I was never able to achieve more than a five-minute telephone conversation with Commissioner Thomas Kean. On March 24, 2004, I also had my Chief of Staff personally hand deliver a document about LIWA, along [with] questions for George Tenet to the Commission, but neither was ever used.” ([US Congress. Senate. Committee on Judiciary 9/21/2005](#)) He says, “The next week, they sent a staffer over to pick up some additional materials about the NIWA, about the concept, and about information I had briefed them on. They never followed up and invited me to come in and meet with them. So they can’t say that I didn’t try.” ([Office of Congressman Curt Weldon 9/17/2005](#))

January 2004: Nabil al-Marabh Mysteriously Deported to Syria



Nabil al-Marabh. [Source: *Associated Press*] After Nabil al-Marabh's eight-month prison sentence was completed in 2003, he remained in a Chicago prison awaiting deportation. However, deportation proceedings were put on hold because federal prosecutors lodged a material witness warrant against him. When the warrant is dropped, al-Marabh is cleared to be deported to Syria. ([Associated Press 1/29/2003](#); [Solomon 6/3/2004](#)) In late 2002, the US government argued that there was no evidence al-Marabh had ever been involved in any terrorist activity or connected to any terrorist organization (see [September 3, 2002](#)). However, in al-Marabh's deportation hearing, the judge rules that he "does present a danger to national security," is "credibly linked to elements of terrorism," and has a "propensity to lie." A footnote in his 2003 deportation ruling states, "The FBI has been unable to rule out the possibility that al-Marabh has engaged in terrorist activity or will do so if he is not removed from the United States." He is deported nonetheless, and prosecutors from two US cities are not allowed to indict him. Both Democratic and Republican Senators will later express bafflement and complain about this deportation (see [June 30, 2004](#)). ([Solomon 6/3/2004](#))

January 2004: Critical Internal Report of US Military Efforts in Afghanistan Is Suppressed



Hy Rothstein. [Source: *Center on Terrorism and Irregular Warfare*] In late 2002, the Defense Department asks retired Army Colonel Hy Rothstein, a leading military expert in unconventional warfare, to examine the planning and execution of the war in Afghanistan. Rothstein travels to Afghanistan and interviews dozens of military personnel at all levels. The *New Yorker* calls his report, completed this month, "a devastating critique of the [Bush] administration's strategy." While Defense Secretary

Donald Rumsfeld has described the US military to be mostly reliant upon unconventional forces, Rothstein sees a reliance on heavy aerial bombing that results in large numbers of civilian casualties. He sees a poor effort at winning the hearts and minds of Afghans, and many mistakes such as allying with corrupt, drug-dealing warlords who oppress the population. One military expert calls the US strategy “snatching defeat from the jaws of victory.” When Rothstein presents his conclusions to Rumsfeld, he is told to dampen his criticisms before the report can be published. He refuses to do so, and so the report is left sitting in bureaucratic limbo. Many other officials privately agree with the report’s conclusions. One former senior intelligence officer says, “The reason they’re petrified is that it’s true, and they didn’t want to see it in writing.” ([Hersh 4/5/2004](#))

January 2004: Air Strike on Afghan Drug Lab Is Exception to the Rule

A British special forces team in Afghanistan calls in a US air strike on a drug lab. The damage leads to a 15 percent spike in heroin prices. It is unclear if US commanders knew that the proposed target was a drug lab. However, this seems to be nearly the only such strike on drug-related targets since 9/11. Shortly after 9/11, the US military decided to avoid such targets (see [Shortly After September 11, 2001](#)). The US continued to gain new intelligence on the location of drug facilities and continued not to act. Assistant Secretary of State Bobby Charles later will complain, “We had regular reports of where the labs were. There were not large numbers of them. We could have destroyed all the labs and warehouses in the three primary provinces involved in drug trafficking... in a week. I told flag officers, you have to see this is eating you alive, that if you don’t do anything by 2006 you are going to need a lot more troops in Afghanistan.” ([Risen 2006, pp. 152-162](#))

January-March 22, 2004: National Security Adviser Rice Privately Regrets Comments, Then Publicly Repeats Them

The New York Times later reports that in private discussions with the 9/11 Commission in January 2002, National Security Adviser “Rice [is] asked about statements she made in 2001 and 2002 [(see [May 16, 2002](#))] that ‘we could not have imagined’ that terrorists would use aircraft as weapons by piloting them into buildings. She [tells] the commission that she regret[s] those comments, because at the time she was not aware of intelligence, developed in the late 1990s, that some terrorists were thinking of using airplanes as guided missiles. She told the commission in the private session that she should have said, ‘I could not have imagined,’ according to one official familiar with the testimony, making it clear that some in the intelligence community knew about those threats but that she did not.” ([Shenon 4/6/2004](#)) However, in a March 22, 2004 op-ed for the Washington Post entitled “For the Record,” she essentially repeats her 2002 comments, claiming, “Despite what some have suggested, we received no intelligence that terrorists were preparing to attack the homeland using airplanes as missiles, though some analysts speculated that terrorists might hijack airplanes to try to free US-held terrorists.” ([Milbank 3/22/2004](#))

January-March 2004: Arrests Point to Al-Qaeda Involvement in Drug Network

In January 2004, a US naval vessel stops a small fishing boat in the Arabian Sea. According to a Western anti-narcotics official, a search turns up “several al-Qaeda guys sitting on a bale of drugs.” Later that month, a raid on a drug runner’s house in Kabul, Afghanistan, leads to the discovery of a number of satellite phones. The CIA determines the phones had been used to call numbers linked to suspected al-Qaeda-linked operatives in Turkey, the Balkans, and Western Europe. One official describes this as part of “an incredibly sophisticated network.” In March 2004, US troops raiding a suspected al-Qaeda hideout in remote Afghanistan discover opium with a street value of \$15 million. ([McGirk 8/2/2004](#))

Early January 2004: Able Danger Intelligence Officer Tries Contacting 9/11 Commission

Following an October 2003 meeting with three members of the 9/11 Commission’s staff (see [October 21, 2003](#)), Lt. Col. Anthony Shaffer tries contacting Philip Zelikow, the commission’s executive director, as requested by Zelikow himself. Shaffer is an Army intelligence officer who worked closely with a military intelligence unit called Able Danger, which identified Mohamed Atta and three other future 9/11 hijackers in early 2000 (see [January-February 2000](#)). He phones Zelikow’s number the first week of January 2004. The person who replies tells him, “I will talk to Dr. Zelikow and find out when he wants you to come in.” However, Shaffer receives no call back, so a week later he phones again. This time, the person who answers him says, “Dr. Zelikow tells me that he does not see the need for you to come in. We have all the information on Able Danger.” ([Goodwin 9/2005](#)) Yet the commission doesn’t even receive the Able Danger documentation they had previously requested from the Defense Department until the following month (see [February 2004](#)). ([Thomas H. Kean and Lee H. Hamilton 8/12/2005](#) ²¹)

January 7, 2004: CIA Misinforms German Intelligence about Terror Plot

German intelligence sources claim that the CIA misinformed them about an alleged terror plot due to take place at a Hamburg hospital on December 30, 2003, and allegedly fear that the information was planted. According to information provided to TV 2 Nettavisen, a German TV station, German intelligence has yet to find any evidence for the plot, which is alleged to be the work of the radical Kurdish group Ansar al-Islam. A German intelligence officer known only as Vahldiecker says, “We have not found any proof that the terror alarm was genuine, but we haven’t found any evidence that states it was not. It is of course possible that it was fake, but we do not know that for certain yet.... It is possible that [the CIA] gave us the wrong information, but it is not likely that they did it

on purpose.” However, German intelligence has indicated that it believes the information was planted on purpose and is surprised at the handling of the case and the leaks to the media; the story appeared on Der Spiegel Online within hours of the CIA tip. ([Selvik, Pettersson, and Kvamme 1/7/2004](#))

Mid-January 2004: Paul O’Neill Says He Never Saw Any Evidence that Iraq Had Weapons of Mass Destruction

In an interview with Time magazine, former US Secretary of Treasury Paul O’Neill says he never saw or heard of any real evidence that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction. “In the 23 months I was there, I never saw anything that I would characterize as evidence of weapons of mass destruction,” he explains. “There were allegations and assertions by people.... But I’ve been around a hell of a long time, and I know the difference between evidence and assertions and illusions or allusions and conclusions that one could draw from a set of assumptions. To me there is a difference between real evidence and everything else. And I never saw anything in the intelligence that I would characterize as real evidence.” ([Dickerson 1/11/2004](#))

January 19, 2004: White House Opposes 9/11 Commission Extension

The Washington Post reports, “A growing number of [9/11 Commission] members [have] concluded that the panel needs more time to prepare a thorough and credible accounting of missteps leading to the terrorist attacks.” As a result, the commission is asking Congress to vote on approving a several month extension to finish their report. “But the White House and leading Republicans have informed the panel that they oppose any delay, which raises the possibility that Sept. 11-related controversies could emerge during the heat of the presidential campaign.” ([Eggen 1/19/2004](#)) The White House will reverse its stance a month later (see [February 5, 2004](#)).

January 22, 2004: Iranian Spy Gives Evidence at Mzoudi Trial; Is Quickly Discounted

The prosecution in the trial of Abdelghani Mzoudi presents a witness who claims to be a defector from an Iranian intelligence agency. ([BBC 1/21/2004](#)) The witness, Hamid Reza Zakeri, does not appear in court himself, but instead Judge Klaus Rühle reads out his testimony. ([Schwartz 1/22/2004](#)) According to Zakeri, the Iranian intelligence service was really behind the 9/11 attacks and had employed al-Qaeda to carry them out. Zakeri’s claims are widely publicized. However, these claims are quickly discounted, and German intelligence notes that, “he presents himself as a witness on any theme which can bring him benefit.” ([Deutsche Presse-Agentur \(Hamburg\) 1/22/2004](#); [Crewdson and Simpson 1/22/2004](#); [Schwartz 1/22/2004](#); [Associated Press 1/30/2004](#))

January 23, 2004: Al-Qaeda Leader Captured in Iraq; He Becomes ‘Ghost Detainee’

Al-Qaeda leader Hassan Ghul is caught at the Iraq-Iran border. Details are sketchy, both about the arrest and Ghul himself, who has never been publicly mentioned before. Several days later, President Bush says, “[L]ast week we made further progress in making America more secure when a fellow named Hassan Ghul was captured in Iraq. [He] reported directly to [9/11 mastermind] Khalid Shaikh Mohammed... He was captured in Iraq, where he was helping al-Qaeda to put pressure on our troops.” ([Milbank 1/27/2004](#)) US officials point to his arrest as proof that al-Qaeda is heavily involved in the resistance in Iraq. One official says that Ghul was “definitely in Iraq to promote an al-Qaeda, Islamic extremist agenda.” ([Fox News 1/24/2004](#)) The 9/11 Commission will later claim, “Hassan Ghul was an important al-Qaeda travel facilitator who worked with [al-Qaeda leader] Abu Zubaida assisting Arab fighters traveling to Afghanistan. In 1999, Ghul and Zubaida opened a safe house under the cover of an import/export business in Islamabad [Pakistan]. In addition, at Zubaida’s request, Ghul also successfully raised money in Saudi Arabia...” ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 64](#)) But despite acknowledgment from Bush that Ghul is in US custody, he subsequently completely disappears, becoming a “ghost detainee.” In late 2005, ABC News will report that Ghul is being held in a secret CIA prison in Poland along with about a dozen of the highest ranking al-Qaeda detainees (see [November 2005](#)), but he has not been heard of since (see [June 7, 2007](#)).

January 28, 2004: CIA Director Privately Tells 9/11 Commission about Urgent Pre-9/11 Warning, but His Testimony Is Kept Secret

Former CIA Director George Tenet privately testifies before the 9/11 Commission. He provides a detailed account of an urgent al-Qaeda warning he gave to the White House on July 10, 2001 (see [July 10, 2001](#)). According to three former senior intelligence officials, Tenet displays the slides from the PowerPoint presentation he gave the White House and even offers to testify about it in public. According to the three former officials, the hearing is attended by commissioner Richard Ben-Veniste, the commission’s executive director Philip Zelikow, and some staff members. When Tenet testifies before the 9/11 Commission in public later in the year, he will not mention this meeting. The 9/11 Commission will neglect to include Tenet’s warning to the White House in its July 2004 final report. ([Landay, Strobel, and Walcott 10/2/2006](#)) Portions of a transcript of Tenet’s private testimony will be leaked to reporters in 2006. According to the transcript, Tenet’s testimony included a detailed summary of the briefing he had with CIA counterterrorism chief Cofer Black on July 10 (see [July 10, 2001](#)). The transcript also reveals that he told the commission that Black’s briefing had prompted him to request an urgent meeting with Rice about it. This closely matches the account in Woodward’s 2006 book that first widely publicized the July meeting (see [September 29, 2006](#)). ([Eggen and Wright 10/3/2006](#)) Shortly after Woodward’s book is published, the 9/11 Commission staff will deny knowing that the July meeting took place. Zelikow and Ben-Veniste, who attended

Tenet's testimony, will say they are unable to find any reference to it in their files. But after the transcript is leaked, Ben-Veniste will suddenly remember details of the testimony (see [September 30-October 3, 2006](#)) and will say that Tenet did not indicate that he left his meeting with Rice with the impression he had been ignored, as Tenet has alleged. ([Shenon 10/2/2006](#)) Woodward's book will describe why Black, who also privately testified before the 9/11 Commission, felt the commission did not mention the July meeting in their final report: "Though the investigators had access to all the paperwork about the meeting, Black felt there were things the commissions wanted to know about and things they didn't want to know about. It was what happened in investigations. There were questions they wanted to ask, and questions they didn't want to ask." ([Woodward 2006, pp. 78](#))

January 29, 2004: Extent of German Government Knowledge of Hijackers Is Reported Missing

A Hamburg, Germany, newspaper reports that a former senior official in the Hamburg state administration named Walter Wellinghausen has taken a "politically explosive" file from the government offices. "The file is said to contain an exact chronology of the knowledge of the [Hamburg] intelligence agency before September 11, 2001 about the people living in Hamburg who should later become the terrorists." He claims to have not been charged or even questioned about this matter and the file remains missing. ([Meyer-Wellmann 1/29/2004](#))

After January 2004: 9/11 Commission Decides to Add Disclaimer to Chapters Heavily Based on Detainee Interrogations

under the biographical information from a registration file, etc.

⁹³ Intelligence report, information on Abu Zubaydah, Aug. 24, 2000; Intelligence report, interrogation of a detainee, Feb. 25, 2002.

⁹⁴ Intelligence report, interrogation of Abu Zubaydah, June 7, 2002. Abu Zubaydah claims he applied for a U.S. student visa in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, sometime between 1987 and 1989, but claims he was denied. The State Department, however, was unable to locate a record of this. After one year in India, he claims he arranged to visit a computer programming school in Missouri with the help of a Palestinian friend in Saudi Arabia. As a Palestinian, he did not have a passport, but rather a refugee travel document so he said he borrowed the Kuwaiti passport of a friend to make the trip. Although he did not formally meet with anyone at the school and never enrolled, he said he walked around the campus and picked up some brochures.

⁹⁵ Intelligence report, information on Abu Zubaydah, Aug. 24, 2000.

⁹⁶ Intelligence report, interrogation of a detainee, Feb. 25, 2002.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Intelligence report, interrogation of Abu Zubaydah, July 10, 2002. In January 1999, Ahmed Ressaam reportedly stayed at the Khaklan safehouse, where Abu Zubaydah bought his plane ticket to Canada and doctored the visa in Ressaam's Canadian passport.

⁹⁹ Intelligence report, profile of Abu Zubaydah, June 14, 2000.

¹⁰⁰ Intelligence report, interrogation of Abu Zubaydah, May 23, 2002. Zubaydah claims that members of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, various Algerian groups and others came to him to learn his techniques.

¹⁰¹ Intelligence report, interrogation of Abu Zubaydah, May 23, 2002. Zubaydah also strictly limited the movement of travelers, almost never allowing them to leave the safehouse for any reason. Instead, individuals who blended into the local community were used to get clothes, food and whatever else was needed.

¹⁰² Intelligence reports, interrogations of Abu Zubaydah, May 23, 2002, Oct. 29, 2002, and Nov. 7, 2002.

¹⁰³ Intelligence reports, interrogation of Abu Zubaydah, Sept. 25 and Dec. 4, 2002.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Intelligence report, interrogation of a detainee, Apr. 24, 2003.

¹⁰⁶ Intelligence report, interrogation of Abu Zubaydah, Dec. 4, 2002; Intelligence report, interrogation of a detainee, Apr. 24, 2003.

¹⁰⁷ Intelligence report, interrogation of Abu Zubaydah, Dec. 4, 2002.

¹⁰⁸ Intelligence report, interrogation of Abu Zubaydah, Sept. 25, 2002.

¹⁰⁹ Intelligence reports, interrogation of Abu Zubaydah, Sept. 25, 2002, Dec. 4, 2002, Apr. 2, 2003, and Apr. 21, 2003. According to Abu Zubaydah, The African Facilitator procured construction and other necessary supplies in Pakistan and delivered them to Afghanistan, and although he operated openly in Afghanistan, he was more cautious in Pakistan.

¹¹⁰ Intelligence report, interrogation of Abu Zubaydah, June 9, 2003.

¹¹¹ Intelligence reports, interrogation of Abu Zubaydah, Sept. 25, 2002, Dec. 4, 2002, and Apr. 2, 2003.

"Ordinary" mujahid who needed help with their documents were required to report to The African Facilitator who would prioritize the work for the Kenyan forgers. Senior al Qaeda members could take a passport directly to the Kenyans.

¹¹² Intelligence report, interrogation of Abu Zubaydah, Dec. 4, 2002.

Other 9/11 Commission reports are heavily based on detainee interrogations. The red underlines are endnotes based on the interrogation of Abu Zubaida in the 9/11 Commission's Terrorist Travel Monograph. [Source: *Public domain via Wikipedia*] (click image to enlarge) Following unsuccessful attempts by the 9/11 Commission to get direct access to high-value detainees on which some sections of its report will be based (see [Summer 2003](#) and [November 5, 2003-January 2004](#)), the Commission decides to add a disclaimer to its report at the beginning of Chapter 5, the first of two that describe the development of the 9/11 plot. The disclaimer, entitled "Detainee Interrogation Reports," reads: "Chapters 5 and 7 rely heavily on information obtained from captured al-Qaeda members. A number of these 'detainees' have firsthand knowledge of the 9/11 plot. Assessing the truth of statements by these witnesses—sworn enemies of the United States—is challenging. Our access to them has been limited to the review of intelligence reports based on communications received from the locations where the actual

interrogations take place. We submitted questions for use in the interrogations, but had no control over whether, when, or how questions of particular interest would be asked. Nor were we allowed to talk to the interrogators so that we could better judge the credibility of the detainees and clarify ambiguities in the reporting. We were told that our requests might disrupt the sensitive interrogation process. We have nonetheless decided to include information from captured 9/11 conspirators and al-Qaeda members in our report. We have evaluated their statements carefully and have attempted to corroborate them with documents and statements of others. In this report, we indicate where such statements provide the foundation for our narrative. We have been authorized to identify by name only ten detainees whose custody has been confirmed officially by the US government.” ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 146](#)) Most of the endnotes to the report indicate the sources of information contained in the main body of the text. Of the 132 endnotes for Chapter 5, 83 of them cite detainee interrogations as a source of information contained in the report. Of the 192 endnotes for Chapter 7, 89 cite interrogations. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 488-499, 513-533](#)) The interrogation of 9/11 mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM) is mentioned as a source 211 times. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004](#)) He was repeatedly waterboarded and tortured (see [Shortly After March 1, 2003](#)) and it will later be reported that up to 90 percent of the information obtained from his interrogations may be unreliable (see [August 6, 2007](#)). Interestingly, the 9/11 Commission sometimes seems to prefer KSM’s testimony over other sources. For instance, in 2003 the 9/11 Congressional Inquiry reported that the CIA learned in 1996 that KSM and bin Laden traveled together to a foreign country in 1995, suggesting close ties between them (see [1996](#)). But the 9/11 Commission will ignore this and instead claim, based on KSM’s interrogation, that KSM and bin Laden had no contact between 1989 and late 1996. ([US Congress 7/24/2003](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 148-148, 489](#)) The interrogations of al-Qaeda leader Khallad bin Attash are used as a source 74 times, 9/11 hijacker associate Ramzi bin al-Shibh, 68 times, al-Qaeda leader Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri, 14 times, al-Qaeda leader Hambali, 13 times, and a generic “interrogation[s] of detainee” is used as a source 57 times. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004](#)) Most of these detainees are said to be tortured (see [May 2002-2003](#) and [Shortly After March 1, 2003](#)). Although the CIA videotaped some of the interrogations, it does not pass the videos to the 9/11 Commission (see [Summer 2003-January 2004](#)). Slate magazine will later say that these detainees’ accounts are “woven into the commission’s narrative, and nowhere does the 9/11 report delve into interrogation tactics or make any recommendations about the government’s continuing or future practices. That wasn’t the commission’s mandate. Still, one wonders where video evidence—or the knowledge that such evidence was being withheld—might have led it.” ([Bazelon and Lithwick 12/10/2007](#))

February 2004: Bush Administration Fails to Act on 9/11 Inquiry Recommendations

The 9/11 Congressional Inquiry, which ended in late 2002, made 19 urgent recommendations to make the nation safer against future terrorist attacks. However, more than one year later, the White House has only implemented two of the recommendations.

Furthermore, investigative leads have not been pursued. Senator Bob Graham (D) complains, “It is incomprehensible why this administration has refused to aggressively pursue the leads that our inquiry developed.” He is also upset that the White House classified large portions of the final report. ([Sheehy 2/11/2004](#))

February 2004: 9/11 Commission Receives Documentation Relating to Able Danger Program

The 9/11 Commission receives documents that it had requested from the Department of Defense, relating to a military intelligence unit called Able Danger, which had allegedly identified Mohamed Atta and three other 9/11 hijackers more than a year before the attacks. ([Jehl 8/9/2005](#); [Phucas 8/13/2005](#)) The commission requested the documents in November 2003, after a meeting in Afghanistan with Lt. Col. Anthony Shaffer, an Army intelligence officer who had worked closely with the unit (see [October 21, 2003](#)). Some documents are given directly to the commission, others are available for review in a Department of Defense reading room, where commission staff make notes summarizing them. Some of the documents include diagrams of Islamic militant networks. However, an official statement later claims, “None of the documents turned over to the Commission mention Mohamed Atta or any of the other future hijackers. Nor do any of the staff notes on documents reviewed in the DOD reading room indicate that Mohamed Atta or any of the other future hijackers were mentioned in any of those documents.” ([Thomas H. Kean and Lee H. Hamilton 8/12/2005](#); [Eggen 8/13/2005](#)) Shaffer responds, “I’m told confidently by the person who moved the material over, that the Sept. 11 commission received two briefcase-sized containers of documents. I can tell you for a fact that would not be one-twentieth of the information that Able Danger consisted of during the time we spent.” ([Fox News 8/17/2005](#))

February-April 2004: Bush Administration Withholds Clinton Documents from 9/11 Commission

The Bush administration withholds thousands of documents from the Clinton administration that had already been cleared by Clinton’s general counsel Bruce Lindsey for release to the 9/11 Commission. ([Shenon and Sanger 4/2/2004](#)) In April, after a public outcry, the Bush administration grants access to most of the documents. ([Shattuck and Malveaux 4/3/2004](#); [Fox News 4/4/2004](#)) However, they continue to withhold approximately 57 documents. According to the commission, the documents being withheld by the Bush White House include references to al-Qaeda, bin Laden, and other issues relevant to the panel’s work. ([Eggen 4/8/2004](#))

February 5, 2004: White House Reverses Position and Backs 9/11 Commission Extension

In January 2004, the White House announced that it opposed giving the 9/11 Commission more time to complete its work (see [January 19, 2004](#)). But on this day, CNN reports, “After resisting the idea for months, the White House announced... its support for a request from the commission investigating the September 11, 2001 attacks for more time to complete its work.” 9/11 victims’ relatives and some politicians had been pressuring the White House to support the deadline extension. ([Bash and Yuille 2/5/2004](#))

February 5, 2004-June 8, 2005: Mzoudi Twice Acquitted After US Refuses to Cooperate with German Courts



Mzoudi in an airport in Hanover, Germany, on June 21, 2005 as he returns to Morocco. [*Source: Associated Press*] Abdelghani Mzoudi is acquitted of involvement in the 9/11 attacks. Mzoudi is known to have been a friend and housemate of some of the 9/11 hijackers. A German judge tells Mzoudi, “You were acquitted not because the court is convinced of your innocence but because the evidence was not enough to convict you.” Mzoudi’s acquittal became likely after Germany received secret testimony from the US government that asserted Mzoudi was not part of the plot (see [December 11, 2003](#)). But the information apparently came from the interrogation of US prisoner Ramzi bin al-Shibh, and since the US would not allow Mzoudi’s defense to cross-examine bin al-Shibh, Mzoudi was released. ([Connolly 2/6/2004](#)) Later in the year, Mzoudi acquittal is appealed to a higher court. Kay Nelm, Germany’s top federal prosecutor, again appeals to the US State Department to release interrogation records of bin al-Shibh to the court. However, the US still refuses to release the evidence, and a list of questions the court gives to the US for bin al-Shibh to answer are never answered. ([Deutsche Presse-Agentur \(Hamburg\) 7/30/2004](#)) On June 8, 2005, Mzoudi’s acquittal is upheld. Nelm calls the US’s government’s behavior “incomprehensible.” ([Reuters 6/9/2005](#)) After the verdict, German authorities maintain that he is still a threat and give him two weeks to leave the country. He quickly moves back to his home country of Morocco, where he now lives. ([Deutsche Welle \(Bonn\) 6/26/2005](#))

February 9, 2004: Full 9/11 Commission Allowed To View Summaries of Presidential Briefings

The 9/11 Commission gets greater access to classified intelligence briefings under a new agreement with the White House. The 10-member panel had been barred from reviewing notes concerning the presidential daily briefings taken by three of its own commissioners and the commission's director in December 2003. The new agreement allows all commission members the opportunity to read White House-edited versions of the summaries. The White House had faced criticisms for allowing only some commissioners to see the notes. Still, only three commissioners are allowed to see the original, unclassified documents. ([Yen 2/10/2004](#))

February 9, 2004: Letter Tying Al-Zarqawi to Al-Qaeda Leaders Makes Front Page News; Later Revealed to Be US Propaganda



Dexter Filkins. [*Source: New York Times*]The New York Times publishes a front page story blaming Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the supposed leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq, for many troubles in the Iraq war. However, it will later be revealed that the contents in the article were a hoax or exaggeration by a US military propaganda operation. The article, written by Dexter Filkins, claims that in January 2004, US forces in Iraq intercepted a letter written by al-Zarqawi to senior leaders of al-Qaeda, asking for help to wage a "sectarian war" in Iraq in the next months. In the letter, al-Zarqawi boasts of his role in many suicide bombings in Iraq. The article also notes that this letter would "constitute the strongest evidence to date of contacts between extremists in Iraq and al-Qaeda." ([Filkins 2/9/2004](#)) Filkins will later say he was skeptical about the document's authenticity when he wrote the story and remains skeptical of it. ([Ricks 4/10/2006](#)) However, the article and follow up articles in the New York Times cast no doubt on the letter's authenticity, except for one sentence in the original article mentioning the possibility the letter could have been "written by some other insurgent." However, some scattered accounts elsewhere at the time are more critical. For instance, a few days later, Newsweek writes, "Given the Bush administration's record peddling bad intelligence and worse innuendo, you've got to wonder if this letter is a total fake. How do we know the text is genuine? How was it obtained? By whom? And when? And how do we know it's from al-Zarqawi? We don't." ([Mitchell 4/10/2006](#)) In the letter, al-Zarqawi says that if success does not come soon, "We can pack up and leave and look for another land, just like what has happened in so many lands of jihad. Our enemy is growing stronger day after day, and its intelligence information increases. By god, this is suffocation!"

Counterpunch notes this and skeptically comments, “If you were Karl Rove, you couldn’t design a better scenario to validate the administration’s slant on the war than this.” It is also noted that this article follows a dubious pattern of New York Times reporting on Iraq: “cultivate a ‘highly placed inside source,’ take whatever this person says and report it verbatim on the front page above the fold.” ([Weiher 2/26/2004](#)) Later in 2004, the Telegraph will report, “Senior diplomats in Baghdad claim that the letter was almost certainly a hoax” and that the US is systematically buying extremely dubious intelligence that exaggerates al-Zarqawi’s role in Iraq (see [October 4, 2004](#)). ([Blomfield 10/4/2004](#)) In 2006, a number of classified documents will be leaked to the Washington Post, showing the US military has a propaganda campaign to exaggerate the role of al-Zarqawi in Iraq (see [April 10, 2006](#)). One document mentions the “selective leak” of this letter to Filkins as part of this campaign. ([Ricks 4/10/2006](#)) Editor and Publisher will later examine the media coverage of this letter, and note that most publications reported on it unquestioningly, “So clearly, the leak to Filkins worked.” Ironically, Reuters at the time quotes an “amazed” US official who says, “We couldn’t make this up if we tried.” ([Mitchell 4/10/2006](#))

February 11, 2004: Hijackers Said to Use Short Knives, Not Box Cutters

It is reported the 9/11 Commission now believes that the hijackers used short knives instead of box cutters. The New York Observer comments, “Remember the airlines’ first reports, that the whole job was pulled off with box cutters? In fact, investigators for the commission found that box cutters were reported on only one plane [Flight 77]. In any case, box cutters were considered straight razors and were always illegal. Thus the airlines switched their story and produced a snap-open knife of less than four inches at the hearing. This weapon falls conveniently within the aviation-security guidelines pre-9/11.” ([Sheehy 2/11/2004](#)) It was publicly revealed in late 2002 that box cutters were illegal on 9/11. ([Salant 11/11/2002](#))

February 11, 2004: FBI Whistleblower Tells 9/11 Commission that Wiretapped Conversations Pertaining to the Attacks Were Not Translated

Sibel Edmonds testifies before the 9/11 Commission in a specially constructed “bug-proof” secure room for three and a half hours, describing in detail problems she witnessed while working as an FBI linguist (see, e.g., [September 20, 2001 and After](#), [After September 14, 2001-October 2001](#), [Early October 2001](#), [Late October 2001](#), [November 2001](#), and [December 2, 2001](#)). A month later, she tells the Independent: “I gave [the commission] details of specific investigation files, the specific dates, specific target information, specific managers in charge of the investigation. I gave them everything so that they could go back and follow up. This is not hearsay. These are things that are documented. These things can be established very easily.... There was general information about the time-frame, about methods to be used but not specifically about

how they would be used and about people being in place and who was ordering these sorts of terror attacks. There were other cities that were mentioned. Major cities with skyscrapers (see [April 2001](#)).” ([Buncombe 4/2/2004](#)) In its final report (see [July 22, 2004](#)), the 9/11 Commission will make no mention of the problems Edmonds witnessed with the FBI’s translation unit, save for a single footnote. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 222](#); [Edmonds 8/1/2004](#)) One month earlier, a reporter had asked one of the Democratic commissioners about the Edmonds case, and he replied, “It sounds like it’s too deep in the weeds for us to consider, we’re looking at broader issues.” ([Sheehy 1/22/2004](#))

February 14, 2004: CIA Tells White House that Prisoner Has Recanted Claim Iraq Gave Poison and Gas Training to Al-Qaeda

The CIA sends a memo to top Bush administration officials informing them that Ibn al-Shaykh al-Libi, an al-Qaeda operative being held in custody by the CIA, recanted his claim in January that Iraq provided training in poisons and gases to members of al-Qaeda (see [September 2002](#)). ([Jehl 7/31/2004](#); [Isikoff 7/5/2005](#); [Pincus 11/6/2005](#)) The claim had been used in speeches by both President George Bush (see [October 7, 2002](#)) and Secretary of State Colin Powell (see [February 5, 2003](#)).

Spring 2004: Conditions In Afghanistan Deteriorate

It is reported that conditions in Afghanistan have deteriorated significantly in nearly every respect. According to Lakhdar Brahima, UN special envoy to Afghanistan, the situation “is reminiscent to what was witnessed after the establishment of the mujaheddin government in 1992.” Abdul Rasul Sayyaf, a member of the Wahhabi sect of Islam who opposed the presence of US troops in Saudi Arabia, along with several other warlords accused of atrocities in the mid-1990s, have returned to power and are effectively ruling the country. Several hold key positions within the government. They “continue to maintain their own private armies and... are reaping vast amounts of money from Afghanistan’s illegal opium trade...” The US, while claiming to support Afghan President Karzai, is relying on these warlords to “help” hunt down Taliban and al-Qaeda factions, although the success rate is abysmal, and much of the intelligence provided by the warlords is faulty. The Taliban has begun to regroup, and now essentially controls much of the southern and eastern regions of the country. ([Gannon 5/2004](#))

Spring 2004: DIA Destroys Copies of Able Danger Documents

The Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) in Washington, DC apparently destroys duplicate copies of documentation relating to a military intelligence unit called Able Danger, for unknown reasons. The documents had been maintained by one of the DIA’s employees,

intelligence officer Anthony Shaffer. ([US Congress 9/21/2005](#)) The Able Danger unit was established in fall 1999, to assemble information about al-Qaeda networks worldwide (see [Fall 1999](#)). Lt. Col. Anthony Shaffer had served as a liaison officer between the unit and the DIA. ([Shenon 8/17/2005](#); [Borger 8/18/2005](#)) Able Danger allegedly identified Mohamed Atta and three other future 9/11 hijackers more than a year before the attacks (see [January-February 2000](#)). Other records relating to the unit were destroyed in May and June 2000, and March 2001 (see [May-June 2000](#)). ([US Congress 9/21/2005](#); [Fox News 9/24/2005](#))

Spring 2004: Mysterious US Al-Qaeda Figure Finally Makes US Watch List



Al-Qaeda has released a series of video messages featuring Adam Gadahn. This one is from September 2, 2006. [*Source: Public domain / Wikipedia*] The Washington Post will report in May 2004, “US officials have continued investigating [Khalil] Deek’s whereabouts, a fact that is made clear since [his name has recently] appeared on US terrorist lookout lists.” Deek is a naturalized US citizen whom authorities believe was a member of an al-Qaeda cell in Anaheim, California for most of the 1990s. He was arrested in Jordan for masterminding an al-Qaeda millennium bomb plot there (see [December 11, 1999](#)). Then he was let go, apparently with US approval (see [May 2001](#)). US intelligence has a record dating back to the late 1980s of investigating Deek for a variety of criminal activities but taking no action against him (see [Late 1980s](#), [March 1993-1996](#), [December 14-25, 1999](#), [November 30, 1999](#), [May 2000](#), [December 15-31, 1999](#)). It is not known why Deek is finally watchlisted at this time, though it is likely connected to wide publicity about Adam Gadahn. Gadahn, a Caucasian American also known as “Azzam the American,” was a member of Deek’s Anaheim cell in the mid-1990s. He moved to Afghanistan where he has since become well-known as a top al-Qaeda media spokesman. ([Khatchadourian 1/22/2007](#)) Counterterrorism expert Rita Katz, who investigated Deek for the US government in the late 1990s, says it’s “a mystery” law enforcement officials have not arrested or even charged Deek as a terrorist. ([Schou 6/17/2004](#)) A US newspaper reporter who closely followed Deek’s career will comment that Deek seemingly “couldn’t get arrested to save his life.” ([Schou 6/15/2006](#)) Deek has not been heard from since. There will be unconfirmed reports that he was killed somewhere in Pakistan in early 2005, but his body has not been found. ([Schou 6/15/2006](#))

Spring 2004: CIA Inspector General's Report Concludes CIA Interrogation Techniques Likely Violate Treaty Against Torture

The CIA Inspector General John Helgerson issues a classified report warning that some aggressive interrogation techniques approved for use by the CIA since early 2002 (see [Mid-March 2002](#)) might violate some provisions of the international Convention Against Torture. The convention was signed by the US with some reservations in 1994. Helgerson's report does not conclude that the techniques constitute torture, but it does find that they appear to constitute cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment under the convention. The report refers in particular to the treatment of 9/11 mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM), who was reportedly waterboarded more than once (see [Shortly After March 1, 2003](#)). Waterboarding is generally considered torture and was illegal in the US until early 2002 when the CIA started using it. The report also raises concern that the use of these techniques could eventually cause legal troubles for the CIA officers who used them. The report doubts the Bush administration position that the techniques do not violate the treaty because the interrogations take place overseas on non-US citizens. The report lists ten recommends for changes in the treatment of detainees, but it has not been reported what those are. Eight of the recommendations are apparently later adopted. Former CIA assistant general counsel John Radsan will later comment, "The ambiguity in the law must cause nightmares for intelligence officers who are engaged in aggressive interrogations of al-Qaeda suspects and other terrorism suspects." The report is completed around the time the Abu Ghraib scandal is made public (see [Evening April 28, 2004](#)), but it appears to have been in the works before then. ([Jehl 11/9/2005](#))

March 2004: Able Danger Intelligence Officer Has Security Clearance Suspended

Lt. Col. Anthony Shaffer, an Army intelligence officer who worked closely with a military intelligence unit called Able Danger, has his security clearance suspended for what his lawyer later describes as "petty and frivolous" reasons, including a dispute over mileage reimbursement and charges for personal calls on a work cell phone. ([Fox News 8/19/2005](#)) According to Shaffer, allegations are made against him over \$67 in phone charges, which he accumulated over 18 months. He says, "Even though when they told me about this issue, I offered to pay it back, they chose instead to spend in our estimation \$400,000 to investigate all these issues simply to drum up this information." No formal action is ever taken against Shaffer, and later in the year the Army promotes him to lieutenant colonel. ([Fox News 8/17/2005](#); [Goodwin 9/2005](#)) A few months previous, Shaffer had met with staff from the 9/11 Commission, and allegedly informed them that Able Danger had, more than a year before the attacks, identified two of the three cells which conducted 9/11, including Mohamed Atta (see [October 21, 2003](#)). According to Shaffer's lawyer, it is because of him having his security clearance suspended that he does not later have any documentation relating to Able Danger. ([Fox News 8/19/2005](#))

Rep. Curt Weldon (R) will later comment, “In January of 2004 when [Shaffer] was twice rebuffed by the 9/11 Commission for a personal follow-up meeting, he was assigned back to Afghanistan to lead a special classified program. When he returned in March, he was called in and verbally his security clearance was temporarily lifted. By lifting his security clearance, he could not go back into DIA quarters where all the materials he had about Able Danger were, in fact, stored. He could not get access to memos that, in fact, he will tell you discussed the briefings he provided both to the previous administration and this administration.” ([Fox News 8/19/2005](#)) These documents Shaffer are trying to reach are destroyed by the DIA roughly around this time (see [Spring 2004](#)). In September 2005, Shaffer has his security clearance revoked, just two days before he is scheduled to testify before the Senate Judiciary Committee about Able Danger’s activities (see [September 19, 2005](#)).

March 2004: Book Examines Atta’s Time in Florida; Portrays Him as Hooked on Drugs and Alcohol



Daniel Hopsicker. [*Source: Daniel Hopsicker*] A book examining the life of Mohamed Atta while he lived in Florida in 2000 is published. Welcome to Terrorland: Mohamed Atta and the 9-11 Cover-Up in Florida, is by Daniel Hopsicker, an author, documentary maker, and former business news producer. Hopsicker spent two years in Venice, Florida, where several of the 9/11 hijackers went to flight school, and spoke to hundreds of people who knew them. His account portrays Atta as a drinking, drug-taking, party animal, strongly contradicting the conventional view of Atta having been a devout Muslim. He interviewed Amanda Keller, a former stripper who claims to have briefly been Atta’s girlfriend in Florida. Keller describes trawls through local bars with Atta, and how he once cut up her pet kittens in a fit of anger. The book also alleges that the CIA organized an influx of Arab students into Florida flight schools in the period prior to 9/11, and that a major drug smuggling operation was centered around the Venice airfield while Atta was there. ([Phalnikar 4/30/2004](#); [Glenn 7/11/2005](#)) It also implicates retired businessman Wally Hilliard, the owner of Huffman Aviation, as the owner of a Lear jet that in July 2000 was seized by federal agents after they found 43 pounds of heroin onboard. ([Hicks 2/26/2004](#); [Peerenboom 3/22/2004](#)) The book is a top ten bestseller in Germany. ([Hopsicker 2004](#); [Phalnikar 4/30/2004](#))

March 2004: Homeland Security Official Keeps Job Despite Tie to Radical Militant



Faisal Gill. [Source: Salon] It is discovered that the Department of Homeland Security's intelligence division policy director has disturbing associations with known radical militants. Faisal Gill, a White House political appointee with close ties to powerful Republican lobbyist Grover Norquist and no background in intelligence, failed to disclose on security clearance documents that he had worked with Abdurahman Alamoudi, a lobbyist with suspected terrorist ties. This is a potential felony. Jailed at the time, Alamoudi will be sentenced to 23 years in prison later in the year for plotting with Libyan agents to kill the de facto ruler of Saudi Arabia (see [October 15, 2004](#)). Gill is briefly removed from his job when his incorrect disclosures are discovered, but it is ultimately decided that he can keep his job. Salon notes that "Gill has access to top-secret information on the vulnerability of America's seaports, aviation facilities, and nuclear power plants to terrorist attacks." Gill previously worked in an organization tied to both Alamoudi and Norquist. One anonymous official says, "There's an overall denial in the administration that the agenda being pushed by Norquist might be a problem. It's so absurd that a Grover Norquist person could even be close to something like this. That's really what's so insidious." Another official complains, "Who is Abdurahman Alamoudi? We really don't know. So how can we say there is not a problem with his former aide?" ([Jacoby 6/22/2004](#))

March 2004: CIA Finds 9/11 Hijackers Used 364 Aliases and Name Variants

After investigating the 9/11 hijackers, the CIA finds that the 19 operatives used a total of 364 aliases, including different spellings of their own names and noms de guerre. Although some examples are made public, the full list is not disclosed. ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 1, 5](#); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#)) In contrast to this, many reports emphasize that the hijackers usually used their own names. For example, the 9/11 Commission will say, "The hijackers opened accounts in their own names, using passports and other identification documents." ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 22](#)) In addition, a Commission staffer will tell UPI: "They did not need fake passports. The plotters all used their own passports to get into the country and once here, used US-issued ID documents whenever possible." ([Waterman 8/17/2005](#))

March 1, 2004: New Pearl Harbor Book Is Released



David Ray Griffin. [Source: Public domain] The book “The New Pearl Harbor: Disturbing Questions about the Bush administration and 9/11,” written by theology professor David Ray Griffin, is released. The Daily Mail calls it “explosive.” Well known historian Howard Zinn calls the book: “the most persuasive argument I have seen for further investigation of the Bush administration’s relationship to that historic and troubling event.” The book suggests there is evidence that the Bush administration may have arranged the 9/11 attacks or deliberately allowed them to happen. It questions why no military fighter jets were sent up to intercept the hijacked planes after the terrorists first struck. It also explores the question of whether the Pentagon was really hit by Flight 77, and suggests that explosives could have assisted the collapse of the World Trade Center. ([Democracy Now! 5/26/2004](#); [Reid 6/5/2004](#)) The book sells well, but is virtually ignored by the mainstream US news media. Those who do report on the book generally deride it. For example, Publishers Weekly states, “Even many Bush opponents will find these charges ridiculous, though conspiracy theorists may be haunted by the suspicion that we know less than we think we do about that fateful day.” ([Publishers Weekly 3/22/2004](#))

March 3, 2004: US Secrecy Leads to Overturning of Motassadeq Conviction

A German appeals court overturns the conviction of Mounir El Motassadeq after finding that German and US authorities withheld evidence. He had been sentenced to 15 years in prison for involvement in the 9/11 plot. According to the court, a key suspect in US custody, Ramzi bin al-Shibh, had not been allowed to testify. European commentators blame US secrecy, complaining that “the German justice system [is] suffering ‘from the weaknesses of the way America is dealing with 9/11,’ and ‘absolute secrecy leads absolutely certainly to flawed trials.’” ([Agence France-Presse 3/5/2004](#)) The court orders a new trial scheduled to begin later in the year. ([Mann 3/4/2004](#)) The release of Motassadeq (and the acquittal of Mzoudi earlier in the year) means that there is not a single person who has ever been successfully prosecuted for the events of 9/11.

Before March 11, 2004: Key Al-Qaeda Operative Possibly Returns to Spain before Bombings

Amer el-Azizi, a leading al-Qaeda operative, is thought to re-enter Spain to activate a cell that carries out train bombings in Madrid in 2004 (see [March 11, 2004](#)), as he is seen by witnesses in Madrid after the attacks. ([Rotella 4/29/2004](#)) A senior Spanish investigator

will say in 2004, “There are people who have seen el-Azizi here in Spain after the attacks. It looks like he came back and may have directed the others. If he was here, his background would make it likely that he was the top guy. We have reliable witness accounts that he was here in significant places connected to the plot. The idea of el-Azizi as a leader has become more solid.” ([Rotella 4/14/2004](#)) El-Azizi was arrested in Turkey with another of the 2004 Madrid bombers, Salaheddin Benyaich, and another extremist in 2000, but they were released for an unspecified reason (see [October 10, 2000](#)). Spanish intelligence also frustrated his arrest after 9/11 (see [Shortly After November 21, 2001](#)).

March 11, 2004: Al-Qaeda Bombings in Madrid



Multiple bombs destroyed this train in Madrid, Spain. [*Source: Rafa Roa/ Cover/ Corbis*] (click image to enlarge) A series of train bombings in Madrid, Spain, kills approximately 200 people. Basque separatists are initially blamed, but evidence later points to people loosely associated with al-Qaeda. Former counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke says later in the month, “If we catch [bin Laden] this summer, which I expect, it’s two years too late. Because during those two years when forces were diverted to Iraq... al-Qaeda has metamorphosed into a hydra-headed organization with cells that are operating autonomously like the cells that operated in Madrid recently.” ([Moniz and Komarow 3/28/2004](#))

2004 and After: Domestic Wiretapping Revelation Reignites 9/11 Hijacker Phone Call Debate

It was disclosed in 2003 that the NSA had intercepted several calls between hijackers Khalid Almihdhar, Nawaf Alhazmi, and Salem Alhazmi and an al-Qaeda communications hub in Sana’a, Yemen (see [Early 2000-Summer 2001](#) and [Summer 2002-Summer 2004](#)). But in 2004, after revelations that the NSA has been wiretapping inside the US, some media begin to re-examine the circumstances of the hijackers’ calls from the US, as the Bush administration uses the example of these calls as a justification for the NSA’s domestic wiretapping program. ([Risen and Lichtblau 12/16/2005](#); [Meyer 12/21/2005](#); [US President 12/26/2005](#).) The calls are thought to be a key aspect of the alleged intelligence failures before 9/11. In late 1998, the FBI had started plotting intercepts of al-Qaeda calls to and from the communications hub on a map (see [Late 1998-Early 2002](#)). According to author Lawrence Wright, “[h]ad a line been drawn from the [communications hub] in Yemen to Alhazmi and Almihdhar’s San Diego apartment, al-Qaeda’s presence in America would have been glaringly obvious.” ([Wright 2006, pp. 343-344](#)) In 2006, former NSA Director Michael Hayden will tell the Senate that if the NSA’s domestic wiretapping program had been active before 9/11, the NSA would have

raised the alarm over the presence of hijackers Khalid Almihdhar and Nawaf Alhazmi in San Diego. ([CNN 5/19/2006](#)) However, reports in the press suggest otherwise. For example, in one newspaper a senior intelligence official will say that it was not technically possible for the NSA, which had a budget of around \$3.6 billion in 2000, to trace the calls. “Neither the contents of the calls nor the physics of the intercepts allowed us to determine that one end of the calls was in the United States,” says the official. ([Bamford 2002, pp. 482](#); [Kaplan and Whitelaw 3/15/2004](#)) But another report flatly contradicts this. “NSA had the technical ability to pick up the actual phone number in the US that the switchboard was calling but didn’t deploy that equipment, fearing they would be accused of domestic spying.” ([Myers 7/21/2004](#)) It is unclear why concerns about domestic spying allegations would prevent the NSA from passing the information on to the FBI. Almihdhar and Alhazmi were not US citizens, but foreign nationals who had entered the US illegally claiming to be tourists. In addition, there was a wealth of evidence connecting them to al-Qaeda (see [Early 1999](#), January 5-8, 2000, and [Early 2000-Summer 2001](#)). In any event, the NSA did reportedly disseminate dispatches about some of these US calls (see [Spring-Summer 2000](#)). Some FBI officials will later profess not to know what went wrong and why they were not notified of the hijackers’ presence in the US by other agencies. A senior counterterrorism official will say: “I don’t know if they got half the conversation or none of it or hung up or whatever. All I can tell you is we didn’t get anything from it—we being the people at the FBI who could have done something about it. So were they sitting on it? I don’t know.” ([Meyer 12/21/2005](#)) The US intelligence community, through the CIA, also had access to the phone company’s records for the Yemeni communications hub, which would have shown what numbers were being called in the US (see [Late 1998-Early 2002](#)).

March 18-21, 2004: Terror Alert Follows Failure to Capture Al-Zawahiri

On March 18, Pakistani regular and paramilitary troops use artillery and helicopter gunships to launch an assault against suspected al-Qaeda and Taliban fighters in South Waziristan, a tribal region near Afghanistan. An American news channel reporting from Pakistan states that Pakistani President General Pervez Musharraf told them that the assault is targeting a “high-value target” being protected by al-Qaeda fighters. ([FOX News 3/18/2004](#)) Two Pakistani government sources reveal that intelligence indicates the surrounded figure is Ayman al-Zawahiri, al-Qaeda’s alleged second-in-command. Musharraf describes the 200 al-Qaeda fighters as well-trained and well-armed and says they are “in very strong dug-in positions. The houses there are almost forts, they are mud forts. And all of these forts are occupied.” ([CNN 3/18/2004](#)) On March 19, Pakistani officials say that al-Zawahiri has escaped the South Waziristan village during the fighting which left at least 15 soldiers and 24 fighters dead. Up to 100 al-Qaeda fighters continued to mount a strong resistance. ([Interactive Investor 3/19/2004](#)) Two days later, the State Department issues a terror alert, warning “that al-Qaeda continues to prepare to strike US interests abroad” and such attacks “could possibly involve non-conventional weapons such as chemical or biological agents as well as conventional weapons of terror.” More specific information is not provided. ([Command Post 3/21/2004](#)) Coinciding with the

terror alert, former counterterrorism “tsar” gives testimony before the 9/11 Commission that is harshly critical of the Bush administration’s counterterrorism efforts (see [March 24, 2004](#)). ([CBS News 3/21/2004](#))

March 21, 2004: Victims’ Relatives Demand That 9/11 Commission Executive Director Resign



Philip Zelikow. [*Source: Miller Center*]The 9-11 Family Steering Committee and 9-11 Citizens Watch demand the resignation of Philip Zelikow, executive director of the 9/11 Commission. The demand comes shortly after former counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke told the New York Times that Zelikow was present when he gave briefings on the threat posed by al-Qaeda to National Security Adviser Rice from December 2000 to January 2001. The Family Steering Committee, a group of 9/11 victims’ relatives, writes, “It is clear that [Zelikow] should never have been permitted to be a member of the commission, since it is the mandate of the commission to identify the source of failures. It is now apparent why there has been so little effort to assign individual culpability. We now can see that trail would lead directly to the staff director himself.” Zelikow has been interviewed by his own commission because of his role during the transition period. But a spokesman for the commission claims that having Zelikow reclude himself from certain topics is enough to avoid any conflicts of interest. ([Shenon 3/20/2004](#); [Waterman 3/23/2004](#)) 9/11 Commission Chairman Thomas Kean defends Zelikow, calling him “one of the best experts on terrorism in the whole area of intelligence in the entire country” and “the best possible person we could have found for the job.” ([NBC 4/4/2004](#)) However, Salon points out that the “long list” of Zelikow’s writings “includes only one article focused on terrorism,” and he appears to have written nothing about al-Qaeda. ([Conason 4/6/2004](#))

March 21, 2004: Counterterrorism ‘Tsar’ Clarke Goes Public with Complaints Against Bush Response to Terrorism

Richard Clarke, counterterrorism “tsar” from 1998 until October 2001, ignites a public debate by accusing Bush of doing a poor job fighting al-Qaeda before 9/11. In a prominent 60 Minutes interview, he says, “I find it outrageous that the president is running for re-election on the grounds that he’s done such great things about terrorism. He ignored it. He ignored terrorism for months, when maybe we could have done something to stop 9/11.... I think he’s done a terrible job on the war against terrorism.” He adds, “We had a terrorist organization that was going after us! Al-Qaeda. That should have been the first item on the agenda. And it was pushed back and back and back for months.” He complains that he was Bush’s chief adviser on terrorism, yet he never got to brief Bush on the subject until after 9/11. ([CBS News 3/21/2004](#); [CBS News 3/21/2004](#); [Clarke 3/23/2004](#); [Conason 3/24/2004](#)) The next day, his book *Against All Enemies* is released and becomes a best seller. ([Milbank 3/22/2004](#)) He testifies before the 9/11 Commission a few days later (see [March 24, 2004](#)).

March 22, 2004: Clarke Sees Halfhearted Effort in Afghanistan War

Counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke, who remained in that position up until days before the October 2001 invasion of Afghanistan began, states in an interview that the Bush administration’s real focus at the start of the Afghanistan war was Iraq. “The reason they had to do Afghanistan first was it was obvious that al-Qaeda had attacked us. And it was obvious that al-Qaeda was in Afghanistan. The American people wouldn’t have stood by if we had done nothing on Afghanistan. But what they did was slow and small. They put only 11,000 troops into Afghanistan.... To this day, Afghanistan is not stable. To this day, we’re hunting down Osama bin Laden. We should have put US special forces in immediately, not many weeks later. US special forces didn’t get into the area where bin Laden was for two months.... I think we could have had a good chance to get bin Laden, to get the leadership, and wipe the whole organization out if we had gone in immediately and gone after him.” ([Clarke 3/22/2004](#))

March 24, 2004: Counterterrorism ‘Tsar’ Clarke Gives High-Profile Testimony



Richard Clarke sworn in before the 9/11 Commission. [Source: CBC] Just a few days after releasing a new book, former counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke testifies before the 9/11 Commission. His opening statement consists of little more than an apology to the relatives of the 9/11 victims. He says, “Your government failed you, those entrusted with protecting you failed you, and I failed you. For that failure, I would ask... for your understanding and forgiveness.” Under questioning, he praises the Clinton administration, saying, “My impression was that fighting terrorism, in general, and fighting al-Qaeda, in particular, were an extraordinarily high priority in the Clinton administration—certainly no higher priority.” But he’s very critical of the Bush administration, stating, “By invading Iraq... the president of the United States has greatly undermined the war on terrorism.” He says that under Bush before 9/11, terrorism was “an important issue, but not an urgent issue.... [CIA Director] George Tenet and I tried very hard to create a sense of urgency by seeing to it that intelligence reports on the al-Qaeda threat were frequently given to the president and other high-level officials. But although I continue to say it was an urgent problem, I don’t think it was ever treated that way.” He points out that he made proposals to fight al-Qaeda in late January 2001. While the gist of them were implemented after 9/11, he complains, “I didn’t really understand why they couldn’t have been done in February [2001].” He says that with a more robust intelligence and covert action program, “we might have been able to nip [the plot] in the bud.” ([Branigin, Barbash, and Pincus 3/24/2004](#); [Bumiller and Miller 3/24/2004](#); [9/11 Commission 3/24/2004](#)) It soon emerges that President Bush’s top lawyer places a telephone call to at least one of the Republican members of the commission just before Clarke’s testimony. Critics call that an unethical interference in the hearings. ([Milbank and Eggen 4/1/2004](#)) Democratic commissioner Bob Kerrey complains, “To call commissioners and coach them on what they ought to say is a terrible mistake.” ([Meek 4/2/2004](#))

March 24, 2004-May 2004: FBI Says Saudi Associates of Hijackers Not Involved in Plot; This Conclusion Is Disputed

It is reported that the FBI has closed down their investigation into Saudis Omar al-Bayoumi and Osama Basnan. The Associated Press reports, “The FBI concluded at most the two Saudi men occasionally provided information to their kingdom or helped Saudi visitors settle into the United States, but did so in compliance with Muslim custom of being kind to strangers rather than out of some relationship with Saudi intelligence.” ([Solomon 3/24/2004](#)) Sen. Bob Graham (D) had cochaired the 9/11 Congressional Inquiry that found considerable evidence tying these two men to two 9/11 hijackers and also to the Saudi government. When he sees this news report, he contacts the FBI and is told the report is not correct and that the investigation into the two men is still ongoing. A month later, FBI Director Robert Mueller tells Graham that the report was correct, and the case has been closed. Graham asks Mueller to speak to the two FBI agents who reached this conclusion and find out why they reached it. He asks that he should be allowed the same access to them that the Associated Press had been given. Both Mueller and Attorney General John Ashcroft refuse to give clearance for the agents to speak to Graham. Graham then writes a letter with Sen. Arlen Specter (R), again asking for clarification and the right to meet with the agents. Their request is denied. Graham concludes that this is something it “seems that neither the FBI nor the Bush administration wants the American people to find out about.” ([Graham and Nussbaum 2004, pp. 224-227](#))

March 24-May 11, 2004: Al-Zarqawi Blamed for Beheading of US Citizen, but Video Raises Many Questions



A video still of Nick Berg being tormented by his captors in Iraq. [Source: Reuters] A video of US citizen Nick Berg being beheaded in Iraq is made public and causes widespread horror and outrage around the world. Berg had been working in Iraq with private companies installing communications towers. On March 24, 2004, he is taken into custody. Berg's family is sent e-mails confirming that he is in US custody (however, US officials will later claim they were erroneously notified and he was in Iraqi government custody instead). The official reasons for his arrest are “lack of documentation” and “suspicious activities.” Regardless of who is holding him, it is not disputed that he is visited three times by the FBI while being held. On April 5, the Berg

family launches an action against the US military for false imprisonment, and the next day Berg is released. Berg stays in a hotel in Baghdad for the next few days, and tells a hotel guest that he had been held in a jail with US soldiers as guards. His family last hears of him on April 9, when he tells them he is going to try to leave Iraq. Then, nearly a month later on May 8, his headless body is found dumped on a Baghdad roadside. Three days after that, on May 11, the video of his beheading is broadcast. ([Neville 5/29/2004](#); [National Public Radio 8/14/2004](#)) The video shows five masked men taunting and then beheading Berg, and one of them claims to be Islamist militant leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. Two days later, a CIA official says, "After the intelligence community conducted a technical analysis of the... video, the CIA assesses with high probability that the speaker on the tape is Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, and that person is shown decapitating American citizen Nicholas Berg." ([BBC 5/13/2004](#)) However, many doubts about the video and the identity of al-Zarqawi surface:

- Berg is seen wearing an orange jumpsuit typically worn by detainees in US custody. At the start of the video, he speaks directly to the camera in a relaxed way. The Sydney Morning Herald will later comment, "It is highly likely that this segment is edited from the interrogation of Berg during his 13 days of custody."
- Then the video cuts to scenes including the five masked men. But their Arabic is heavily accented in Russian, Jordanian, and Egyptian. One says "do it quickly" in Russian. A voice also seems to ask in English, "How will it be done?" Glimpses of their skin look white. ([Neville 5/29/2004](#))
- The masked man identified as al-Zarqawi does not speak with a Jordanian accent even though al-Zarqawi is Jordanian. CNN staff familiar with al-Zarqawi's voice claim the voice does not sound like his. ([CNN 5/12/2004](#); [Neville 5/29/2004](#))
- Berg is then decapitated, but there is very little blood. Dr John Simpson, executive director for surgical affairs at the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, says, "I would have thought that all the people in the vicinity would have been covered in blood, in a matter of seconds... if it [the video] was genuine." Forensic death expert Jon Nordby of the American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators suggests that the beheading was staged and Berg was already dead. He also suggests that Berg appears to be heavily drugged in earlier parts of the video. ([Goldstein 5/22/2004](#)) The Herald comments, "The scream is wildly out of sync, sounds female, and is obviously dubbed." ([Neville 5/29/2004](#))
- Al-Zarqawi is the one shown cutting Berg's throat with a knife, and uses his right hand to do so. But people who spent time in prison with al-Zarqawi and knew him well claim that he was left handed. ([Gettleman 7/13/2004](#))
- The timing of the video also raises suspicions, as it is broadcast just two weeks after the Abu Ghraib prison abuse scandal is exposed, and the shock of the beheadings cause some to claim a moral relativism to justify the US military's abusive behavior towards detainees. ([Neville 5/29/2004](#))
- Strangely, Al-Qaeda operative Zacarias Moussaoui somehow used Berg's e-mail account years before in Oklahoma (see [Autumn 1999](#)). US officials call this "a total coincidence."
- The London Times comments that "The CIA's insistence that al-Zarqawi was responsible appears based on the scantiest of evidence.... Sound experts have speculated that the voice might have been dubbed on." Further, "There are discrepancies in the times on the

video frames.” ([Allen-Mills and Fielding 5/23/2004](#))

■No autopsy is performed on Berg’s body, nor is there any determination of the time of his death. ([Neville 5/29/2004](#))

■No proper investigation of the circumstances surrounding his death is ever conducted. For instance, the US military will tell Berg’s family that they could find no evidence of Berg’s last days in a Baghdad hotel and that no Westerner stayed in that hotel for weeks. But the Washington Post was able to get a copy of the hotel register with Berg’s name on it, along with the date of his checkout, a list of the things he left in his room, and the exact words he said as he left the hotel. ([National Public Radio 8/14/2004](#))

It will later be reported that the US military was conducting a propaganda campaign to inflate the importance of al-Zarqawi (see [April 10, 2006](#)), but it is unknown if Berg’s death was somehow related to this campaign.

March 25, 2004: Pentagon Official: ‘9/11 Had Its Benefits’

An unnamed senior Pentagon official tells Washington Times reporter Rowan Scarborough, “I hate to say this and would never say this in public, but 9/11 had its benefits. We never would have gone into Afghanistan and started this war [on terror] without it. There just was not the national will.” ([Scarborough 2004, pp. iii](#)) Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld has repeatedly referred to the Sultan of Oman similarly telling him that 9/11 was a “blessing in disguise” (see [February 14, 2003-June 4, 2004](#)). As early as the evening of 9/11, President Bush had referred to the political situation due to the attacks as a “great opportunity” (see [\(Between 9:30 p.m. and 10:00 p.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)).

March 30, 2004: White House Makes Deal to Prevent Additional Public 9/11 Hearings for Bush Officials

The Bush administration bows to growing pressure in the wake of former counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke’s testimony before the 9/11 Commission (see [March 21, 2004](#)) and agrees to allow National Security Adviser Rice to testify before the commission in public and under oath. However, according to the New York Times, “In exchange for her appearance, the [9/11 Commission] agreed not to seek testimony from other White House aides at public hearings, although it can continue to question them in private.” ([Shenon and Bumiller 3/31/2004](#))

March 30-April 2, 2004: Terror Alert Warns of Al-Qaeda Attack on Trains and Buses in US

The FBI issues a bulletin to state and local law enforcement agencies which states that terrorists may use cultural, artistic or athletic visas to slip into the United States undetected. This is followed by another bulletin one day later from the FBI and

Department of Homeland Security warning of pending terrorist attacks on buses and trains in major cities during the summer. The uncorroborated intelligence cited by the warning indicates the possible use of a bomb made out of ammonium nitrate fertilizer and diesel fuel, similar to the one used in the Oklahoma City federal building attack. This intelligence, as well as the March 11, 2004, train bombings in Madrid (see [March 11, 2004](#)), reportedly increases the level of concern that terrorists are planning an attack in the US. It is reported that the intelligence community believes that al-Qaeda has the full intent and capability to execute coordinated and deadly attacks on public transportation systems. ([PBS 4/2/2004](#)) No such attacks occur. One day prior to the first alert, Charles Duelfer, the chief weapons inspector in Iraq, informed Congress that no WMD have been found to date. ([MSNBC 6/4/2007](#))

Late March 2004: Clarke Attacked by Republicans

Republicans attack Richard Clarke in the wake of his new book and 9/11 Commission testimony (see [March 24, 2004](#)), while Democrats defend him. ([Stout 3/25/2004](#)) Senator John McCain (R) calls the attacks “the most vigorous offensive I’ve ever seen from the administration on any issue.” ([Allen 3/28/2004](#)) Republicans on the 9/11 Commission criticize him while Democrats praise him. The White House violates a long-standing confidentiality policy by authorizing Fox News to air remarks favorable to Bush that Clarke had made anonymously at an administration briefing in 2002. National Security Adviser Rice says to the media, “There are two very different stories here. These stories can’t be reconciled.” However, in what the Washington Post calls a “masterful bit of showmanship,” Clarke replies that he emphasized the positives in 2002 because he was asked to, but did not lie. ([Fox News 3/24/2004](#); [Milbank 3/25/2004](#); [Allen 3/26/2004](#)) Republican Senate leader Bill Frist asks “If [Clarke] lied under oath to the United States Congress” in closed testimony in 2002. ([Babington and Pincus 3/27/2004](#)) However, a review of declassified citations from Clarke’s 2002 testimony provides no evidence of contradiction, and White House officials familiar with the testimony agree that any differences are matters of emphasis, not fact. ([Pincus and Milbank 4/4/2004](#)) Republican leaders threaten to release his 2002 testimony, and Clarke claims he welcomes the release. The testimony remains classified. ([Shrader 3/26/2004](#); [Associated Press 3/28/2004](#)) Clarke also calls on Rice to release all e-mail communications between the two of them before 9/11; this is not released either. ([Goldenberg and McGreal 3/29/2004](#)) Vice President Cheney calls Clarke “out of the loop” on terrorism. A Slate editorial calls Cheney’s comment “laughably absurd. Clarke wasn’t just in the loop, he was the loop.” ([Kaplan 3/23/2004](#)) Even Clarke’s later political opponent Rice says Clarke was very much involved. ([Bumiller 3/25/2004](#)) Clarke responds by pointing out that he voted Republican in 2000 and he pledges under oath not to seek a post if Senator John Kerry wins the 2004 Presidential election. ([Branigin, Barbash, and Pincus 3/24/2004](#)) According to Reuters, a number of political experts conclude, “The White House may have mishandled accusations leveled by their former counterterrorism adviser Richard Clarke by attacking his credibility, keeping the controversy firmly in the headlines into a second week.” ([Elsner 3/29/2004](#))

April 2, 2004: CIA Officer Involved in Failed Watchlisting Interviewed by 9/11 Commission, Misrepresents His Understanding Before Attacks

Tom Wilshire, a CIA officer involved in the failed watchlisting of hijackers Khalid Almihdhar and Nawaf Alhazmi (see [January 4-6, 2000](#) and [May 15, 2001](#)) and the failure to obtain a search warrant for Zacarias Moussaoui's belongings (see [August 24, 2001](#)), is interviewed by the 9/11 Commission. He tells them that nobody in the US intelligence community looked at the bigger picture and no analytic work foresaw the lightning that could connect the thundercloud [i.e. increased reporting that an al-Qaeda attack was imminent] to the ground [i.e. the cases that turned out to be connected to 9/11 such as the search for Almihdhar and Alhazmi, Zacarias Moussaoui, and the Phoenix memo]. The 9/11 Commission will agree with this and write in its final report: "Yet no one working on these late leads in the summer of 2001 connected the case in his or her in-box to the threat reports agitating senior officials and being briefed to the President. Thus, these individual cases did not become national priorities." ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 277](#)) However, Wilshire was receiving such threat reporting. For example, he received a report that al-Qaeda was planning an Hiroshima-like attack (see [Summer 2001](#)). ([Wright 2006, pp. 340](#)) Wilshire also repeatedly suggested that Khalid Almihdhar may well be involved in the next big attack by al-Qaeda (see [July 5, 2001](#), [July 13, 2001](#), and [July 23, 2001](#)). For example, on July 23, 2001 he wrote: "When the next big op is carried out by [bin Laden] hardcore cadre, [al-Qaeda commander] Khallad [bin Attash] will be at or near the top of the command food chain—and probably nowhere near either the attack site or Afghanistan. That makes people who are available and who have direct access to him of very high interest. Khalid Almihdhar should be very high interest anyway, given his connection to the [redacted]." ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#) ³)

April 8, 2004: Rice Testifies Before the 9/11 Commission



Condoleezza Rice sworn in

before the 9/11 Commission. [Source: *Larry Downing/ Reuters*] National Security Adviser Rice testifies before the 9/11 Commission under oath and with the threat of perjury. The Bush administration originally opposed her appearance, but relented after great public demand. ([Buncombe 4/3/2004](#)) In her statement she repeats her claim that “almost all of the reports [before 9/11] focused on al-Qaeda activities outside the United States.... The information that was specific enough to be actionable referred to terrorists operation overseas.” Moreover, she stresses that the “kind of analysis about the use of airplanes as weapons actually was never briefed to us.” But she concedes, “In fact there were some reports done in ‘98 and ‘99. I think I was—I was certainly not aware of them...” ([Washington Post 4/8/2004](#)) During heated questioning several subjects are discussed:

- Why didn’t counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke brief President Bush on al-Qaeda before September 11? Clarke says he had wished to do so, but Rice states, “Clarke never asked me to brief the president on counterterrorism.” ([Washington Post 4/8/2004](#))
- What was the content of the briefing President Bush received on August 6, 2001 (see [August 6, 2001](#))? While Rice repeatedly underlines that it was “a historical memo... not threat reporting,” Commissioners Richard Ben-Veniste and Tim Roemer ask her why then it cannot be declassified. ([Washington Post 4/8/2004](#)) Two days later the White House finally publishes it, and it is shown to contain more than just historical information.
- Did Rice tell Bush of the existence of al-Qaeda cells in the US before August 6, 2001? Rice says that she does not remember whether she “discussed it with the president.” ([Washington Post 4/8/2004](#))
- Were warnings properly passed on? Rice points out, “The FBI issued at least three nationwide warnings to federal, state, and law enforcement agencies, and specifically stated that although the vast majority of the information indicated overseas targets, attacks against the homeland could not be ruled out. The FBI tasked all 56 of its US field offices to increase surveillance of known suspected terrorists and to reach out to known informants who might have information on terrorist activities.” But Commissioner Jamie Gorelick remarks, “We have no record of that. The Washington field office international terrorism people say they never heard about the threat, they never heard about the

warnings.” ([Washington Post 4/8/2004](#)) Rice does not apologize to the families of the victims, as Clarke did weeks earlier. The Associated Press comments, “The blizzard of words in Condoleezza Rice’s testimony Thursday did not resolve central points about what the government knew, should have known, did and should have done before the September 11 terrorist attacks.” ([Woodward 4/8/2004](#)) The Washington Post calls “her testimony an ambitious feat of jujitsu: On one hand, she made a case that ‘for more than 20 years, the terrorist threat gathered, and America’s response across several administrations of both parties was insufficient.’ At the same time, she argued that there was nothing in particular the Bush administration itself could have done differently that would have prevented the attacks of September 11, 2001—that there was no absence of vigor in the White House’s response to al-Qaeda during its first 233 days in office. The first thesis is undeniably true; the second both contradictory and implausible.” ([unknown 4/9/2004](#))

[April 11, 2004: Bush Claims ‘Bin Laden Determined to Attack in US’ Memo ‘Said Nothing about an Attack on America’](#)

President Bush talks about the Presidential Daily Briefing (PDB) he was given on August 6, 2001, entitled “Bin Laden Determined to Strike in US.” He claims, “There was nothing in this report to me that said, ‘Oh, by the way, we’ve got intelligence that says something is about to happen in America.’... There was nothing in there that said, you know, ‘There is an imminent attack.’ That wasn’t what the report said. The report was kind of a history of Osama’s intentions.” ([Associated Press 4/12/2004](#)) He adds, “[T]he PDB was no indication of a terrorist threat. There was not a time and place of an attack. It said Osama bin Laden had designs on America. Well, I knew that. What I wanted to know was, is there anything specifically going to take place in America that we needed to react to.... I was satisfied that some of the matters were being looked into. But that PDB said nothing about an attack on America. It talked about intentions, about somebody who hated America—well, we knew that.... Had I known there was going to be an attack on America, I would have moved mountains to stop the attack.” ([US President 4/19/2004](#)) The complete text of the PDB was released the day before Bush’s comments and in fact the PDB does very clearly discuss an imminent attack on the US. For instance, it says that FBI information “indicates patterns of suspicious activity in this country consistent with preparations for hijackings or other types of attacks, including recent surveillance of federal buildings in New York.” And it discusses a call to a US “embassy in the UAE in May [2001] saying that a group of bin Laden supporters was in the US planning attacks with explosives” (see [August 6, 2001](#)).

[April 13, 2004: Bush Continues to Insist That 9/11 Could Not Have Been Prevented](#)

In a press conference, President Bush states, “We knew he [Osama bin Laden] had designs on us, we knew he hated us. But there was nobody in our government, and I don’t

think [in] the prior government, that could envision flying airplanes into buildings on such a massive scale.” ([Borger 4/15/2004](#)) He also says, “Had I any inkling whatsoever that the people were going to fly airplanes into buildings, we would have moved heaven and earth to save the country.” ([Lichtblau 4/18/2004](#); [US President 4/19/2004](#)) Bush made similar comments two days earlier (see [April 11, 2004](#)). In July 2004, he will claim even more generally, “Had we had any inkling whatsoever that terrorists were about to attack our country, we would have moved heaven and earth to protect America.” ([Cohen and Orr 7/22/2004](#))

[April 13, 2004: Bush Explains Genoa Threat Inspired Him to Ask For Famous August 2001 Briefing](#)

In a news conference, President Bush is asked about the August 6, 2001 Presidential Daily Briefing entitled “bin Laden Determined to Strike in US.” (see [August 6, 2001](#)) Bush explains: “I asked for the briefing. And the reason I did is because there had been a lot of threat intelligence from overseas. And part of it had to do with the Genoa G8 conference that I was going to attend. And I asked at that point in time, let’s make sure we are paying attention here at home as well. And that’s what triggered the report.” Apparently he made this request on July 5, 2001 (see [July 5, 2001](#)) (see [June 20, 2001](#)). ([US President 4/19/2004](#)) The main threat to the late July 2001 Genoa conference, as discussed in numerous articles even before the conference, was an al-Qaeda plot to fly an airplane into the conference building, killing Bush and other world leaders (see [Mid-July 2001](#)). But Bush’s tacit admission that a plot involving planes as weapons helped inspire the well-known August briefing passes without comment by the mainstream media. However, a professor writes a letter to the editor of Britain’s Financial Times noting Bush’s remark and commenting, “If President Bush had been sufficiently alarmed by the Italian defenses [against a suicide air attack] in Genoa to request a special report, he must have been able to recognize that, yes, it could happen in the US.” ([Willets 4/27/2004](#))

[April 13, 2004: Attorney General Blames ‘Wall’ for 9/11 Failures, but 9/11 Commission Believes He Is Exaggerating](#)



Attorney General John Ashcroft before the 9/11 Commission. [Source: Associated Press] Attorney General John Ashcroft publicly

testifies before the 9/11 Commission, claims there was no program to kill Osama bin Laden before 9/11, and blames the “wall” (see [July 19, 1995](#)) for the 9/11 attacks. Ashcroft says, “Let me be clear: my thorough review revealed no covert action program to kill bin Laden.” However, the 9/11 Commission has already found a Memorandum of Notification signed by President Clinton in 1998 after the embassy bombings that allowed CIA assets to kill bin Laden, and two commissioners, Fred Fielding and Richard Ben-Veniste, point this out to Ashcroft. ([9/11 Commission 4/13/2004](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 132, 485](#)) The attorney general comments, “The single greatest structural cause for September 11 was the ‘wall’ that segregated criminal investigators and intelligence agents. Government erected this ‘wall.’ Government buttressed this ‘wall.’ And before September 11, government was blinded by this ‘wall.’” The wall was a set of procedures that regulated the passage of information from FBI intelligence agents to FBI criminal agents and prosecutors to ensure that information obtained using warrants under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) would not be thrown out from criminal cases (see [July 19, 1995](#)). Ashcroft says that the wall impeded the investigation of Zacarias Moussaoui and that a “warrant was rejected because FBI officials feared breaching the ‘wall.’” (Note: two applications to search Moussaoui’s belongings were prepared. The first was not submitted because it was thought to be “shaky” (see [August 21, 2001](#)). The second warrant application was prepared as a part of an intelligence investigation under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, so it was not affected by the “wall” (see [August 28, 2001](#))). According to Ashcroft, the wall also impeded the search for hijackers Khalid Almihdhar and Nawaf Alhazmi because criminal investigators were not allowed to join in. However, the 9/11 Commission will find that they could legally have helped, but were prevented from doing so by FBI headquarters (see [August 29, 2001](#)). Ashcroft asserts that 9/11 Commissioner Jamie Gorelick was responsible for the wall. He cites a document he just declassified that had been written by Gorelick to deal with the two 1993 WTC bombing cases (see [March 4, 1995](#)). That document becomes known as the “wall memo.” However, this memo only governed the two WTC cases; all other cases were governed by a different, but similar memo written by Attorney General Janet Reno a few months later (see [July 19, 1995](#)). ([9/11 Commission 4/13/2004](#)) 9/11 Commission chairmen Thomas Kean and Lee Hamilton will say that the “attorney general’s claim was overstated,” and that the two 1995 memos only codified a set of procedures that already existed (see [Early 1980s](#)). During questioning, Republican 9/11 Commissioner Slade Gorton points out that Ashcroft’s deputy reaffirmed the procedures in an August 2001 memo that stated, “The 1995 procedures remain in effect today” (see [August 6, 2001](#)). ([Kean and Hamilton 2006, pp. 194-6](#))

April 13, 2004: CIA Manager Says, ‘When People Die, You Get More Money’

Former director of the CIA’s Counterterrorist Center Cofer Black tells the 9/11 Commission: “[U]nfortunately, when Americans get killed, it would translate into additional resources. It’s a constant track: either you run out, or people die, when people die you get more money.” He says this at the end of his prepared statement in a section

dealing with what he says is a lack of funds at the CIA for counterterrorism. ([9/11 Commission 4/13/2004](#))

April 13-April 29, 2004: Press and Politicians Mount Campaign Against Jamie Gorelick



9/11 Commissioner Jamie Gorelick was attacked for her role in extending the ‘wall’. [Source: *Associated Press* / *Charles Dharapak*] Attorney General John Ashcroft’s testimony before the 9/11 Commission (see [April 13, 2004](#)) sparks a wave of attacks against 9/11 Commissioner Jamie Gorelick, who was Deputy Attorney General during the Clinton administration. In 1995 Gorelick played a leading role in extending the “wall,” a set of procedures that regulated the passage of information from FBI intelligence agents to FBI criminal agents and prosecutors (see [March 4, 1995](#) and [July 19, 1995](#)). Ashcroft calls the wall “the single greatest structural cause for September 11.” The attacks include:

- On April 14 James Sensenbrenner, chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, calls on Gorelick to resign because of her “crippling conflict of interest.” He says “the public cannot help but ask legitimate questions about her motives” and argues that the commission will be “fatally damaged” if she continues. Other Republican congresspersons repeat this call;
- On April 16 House Majority Leader Tom Delay writes to Commission Chairman Tom Kean saying Gorelick has a conflict of interest and accusing the commission of “partisan mudslinging, circus-atmosphere pyrotechnics, and gotcha-style questioning,” as well as undermining the war effort and endangering the troops;
- Criticism of Gorelick also appears in several media publications, including the New York Times, New York Post, National Review, Washington Times, and Wall Street Journal. For example, an op-ed piece published in the New York Times by former terrorism commissioners Juliette Kayyem and Wayne Downing says the commissioners are talking too much and should “shut up.” ([McCarthy 4/13/2004](#); [McCarthy 4/19/2004](#); [Kean and Hamilton 2006, pp. 200-203](#))
- On April 22 Senator Christopher Boyd and ten other Republican senators write to the commission calling on Gorelick to testify in public;

- On April 26 Congressman Lamar Smith and 74 other Republicans write to Gorelick demanding answers to five questions about her time as deputy attorney general;
- On April 28 the Justice Department declassifies other memos signed by Gorelick;
- In addition to hate mail, Gorelick receives a bomb threat, requiring a bomb disposal squad to search her home.

Commission Chairmen Tom Kean and Lee Hamilton will call this an “onslaught” and say her critics used the wall “as a tool to bludgeon Jamie Gorelick, implicate the Clinton administration, and undermine the credibility of the commission before we had even issued our report.” Gorelick offers to resign, but the other commissioners support her and she writes a piece for the Washington Post defending herself. ([Gorelick 4/18/2004](#); [Kean and Hamilton 2006, pp. 200-205](#)) When the commission meets President Bush and Vice President Cheney at the end of the month (see [April 29, 2004](#)), Bush tells Kean and Hamilton he does not approve of memos being declassified and posted on the Justice Department’s website. At this point, the commissioners realize “the controversy over Jamie Gorelick’s service on the commission was largely behind us.” That afternoon, the White House publicly expresses the president’s disappointment over the memos and the effort to discredit Gorelick loses momentum. ([Kean and Hamilton 2006, pp. 208, 210](#))

April 15, 2004: Bin Laden Possibly Offers Truce to Europe, but Offer Is Rejected

A man thought to be Osama bin Laden offers European countries a truce, but the offer is rejected. Following bombings in Madrid, Spain, (see [March 11, 2004](#)) a new audiotape featuring a voice thought to be bin Laden’s is released and addresses Europeans. After mentioning the occupation of Palestine, the voice says: “[W]hat happened to you on September 11 and March 11 are your goods returned to you. It is well known that security is a vital necessity for every human being. We will not let you monopolize it for yourselves.” The speaker compares actions by militant Islamists to those of the West and its allies, in particular the killing of a wheelchair-bound Hamas leader, and asks: “In what creed are your dead considered innocent but ours worthless? By what logic does your blood count as real and ours as no more than water? Reciprocal treatment is part of justice, and he who commences hostilities is the unjust one.” The voice also says, “This war is making billions of dollars for the big corporations, whether it be those who manufacture weapons or reconstruction firms like Halliburton and its offshoots and sister companies.” The speaker finishes by saying that his actions have been in response to the West’s alleged interference in Muslim lands: “For we only killed Russians after they invaded Afghanistan and Chechnya, we only killed Europeans after they invaded Afghanistan and Iraq, and we only killed Americans in New York after they supported the Jews in Palestine and invaded the Arabian peninsula, and we only killed them in Somalia after they invaded it in Operation Restore Hope.” ([BBC 4/15/2004](#); [Laden 2005, pp. 233-6](#))

April 16, 2004-June 25, 2004: Apparent Boston Al-Qaeda Cell Member Arrested on Minor Charges

Mohamad Kamal Elzahabi is confronted by the FBI and agrees to a series of voluntary interviews. He admits to training at a militant training camp in Afghanistan in the late 1980s (see [Late 1980s](#)). He admits to having known al-Qaeda leaders Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, Abu Zubaida, and Abu Musab al-Zarqawi while living there. He worked in Afghanistan as a sniper in combat and as an instructor at the training camps until 1995. After getting a gunshot wound, he moved to Boston and drove a taxi. Al-Qaeda operatives Nabil al-Marabh, Bassam Kanj, and Raed Hijazi also moved to Boston and worked at the same taxi company (see [June 1995-Early 1999](#)). In 1999, he went to Chechnya and fought as a sniper, returning to the US one month before 9/11 (see [Mid-August 2001](#)). On June 25, 2004, Elzahabi is charged with lying to the FBI about the extent of his relationship with Hijazi while living in Boston. In addition, it is claimed that in 1995 he sent a large number of field radios to Afghanistan. Some of this equipment was recovered by US soldiers after 9/11. He is charged with lying about shipping these radios. ([Murphy 6/26/2004](#); [Herridge and Stolley 6/26/2004](#)) In December 2005, he will be indicted for possessing fraudulent immigration documents and faking a marriage to remain in the US. However, he still has not been tried on the earlier charges. ([Louwagie 12/8/2005](#))

April 22, 2004: Death Penalty Allowed by Appeals Court

In spite of multiple rulings beginning in 2002 that Zacarias Moussaoui must be allowed to question witnesses, including Ramzi bin al-Shibh, the government has continued to refuse any access to high-level al-Qaeda prisoners. Because of this, Judge Brinkema sanctions the government by ruling in October 2003 that the prosecution could not seek the death penalty. ([Novak 10/19/2003](#)) Prosecutors have appealed the decision and, on this day, a federal appeals panel restores the government's right to seek the death penalty. However, the same ruling hands a partial victory to Moussaoui, ordering prosecutors to work out a method that would permit Moussaoui to question three high-level prisoners. CBS News reports that the judge ruled, "Moussaoui could have access to information from three al-Qaeda prisoners [Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, Ramzi bin al-Shibh, and Mustafa Ahmed al-Hawsawi] who may be able to exonerate him." ([Cohen 4/23/2004](#)) As a result of the appeals decision, the government will file a motion in July 2004, seeking to conduct a psychiatric evaluation of Moussaoui. The motion explains that the evaluation would only be used to counter any defense strategy to spare Moussaoui the death penalty by citing his mental condition. The motion states, "Like most capital cases, the mental condition of the defendant is likely to play a significant rule during the penalty phase." ([Cohen 4/23/2004](#); [Associated Press 7/7/2004](#))

April 25, 2004: Academic Paper Determines 9/11 Insider Trading Not Due to Chance

Allen Poteshman, a professor of finance at the University of Illinois, publishes a paper demonstrating that the insider trading in options on United and American airline stocks

indicates someone profited from foreknowledge of 9/11. Poteshman concludes, “There is evidence of unusual option market activity in the days leading up to September 11.” ([Poteshman 3/10/2004](#); [Barnhart 4/25/2004](#))

Evening April 28, 2004: 60 Minutes Airs Abu Ghraib Prisoner Abuse Story



Lynndie England dragging a prisoner nicknamed Gus on October 24, 2003. [*Source: Public domain*] CBS “60 Minutes II” airs the Abu Ghraib prison photos (see [March 23, 2004](#)) having learned that the New Yorker is about to publish a piece on abuses at Abu Ghraib. Bush reportedly first learns about these photos from the television report. ([CBS News 5/6/2004](#); [Scheer 5/6/2004](#); [Bowman 5/6/2004](#); [Deggans 5/9/2004](#)) Most of the photos show prisoners being forced to engage in humiliating sexual acts. For example in one photo a hooded naked man is forced to masturbate as a grinning female MP, Lynndie England, looks on, giving a thumbs-up. Another photo shows two naked hooded men, one standing, while the other is kneeling in front of him, simulating oral sex. The Bush administration will portray these forced acts of humiliation as the immature pranks of low ranking soldiers. But others will argue that the acts were ordered from above with the intent to exploit Arab culture’s conservative views with regard to sex and homosexuality (see [\(2002-March 2003\)](#)). ([Hersh 5/10/2004](#); [Hersh 5/17/2004](#)) A different picture shows a hooded-man with his arms spread and wires dangling from his fingers, toes, and penis. He was apparently told that if he fell off the box he would be electricuted. The tactic is known as the “The Vietnam,” an “arcane torture method known only to veterans of the interrogation trade” that had been first used by Brazilians in the 1970s. ([Rejali 5/14/2004](#); [Barry, Hirsh, and Isikoff 5/24/2004](#) *Sources: Darius Rejali*) Another picture is of Manadel al-Jamadi who was killed after being “stressed” too much (see [\(7:00 a.m.\) November 4, 2003](#)). ([Hersh 5/10/2004](#); [Hersh 5/17/2004](#)) “A generation from now,” one observer notes, “historians may look back to April 28, 2004, as the day the United States lost the war in Iraq.” ([Carter 11/2004](#))

Shortly After April 28, 2004-February 2005: CIA Temporarily Suspends Use of Some Aggressive Interrogation Techniques, Including Waterboarding

CIA Director George Tenet orders a suspension of waterboarding and some other aggressive interrogation techniques. Intelligence officials will later claim that the Abu Ghraib scandal publicized in April 2004 (see [Evening April 28, 2004](#)), is a major factor in the decision. Additionally, the CIA's Inspector General finishes a secret report around the same time the Abu Ghraib scandal breaks, and it suggests that many aggressive techniques may violate an international treaty against torture that the US has signed (see [Spring 2004](#)). NBC News will later claim that the biggest reason is the worry: "Could CIA officials, including both the interrogators and their superiors, ultimately be prosecuted?" ([Windrem 9/13/2007](#)) The CIA approved a list of about 10 aggressive techniques, including waterboarding, in March 2002 (see [Mid-March 2002](#)), and used them on many high-ranking al-Qaeda detainees until this time (see [March 28, 2002-Mid-2004](#)). But the CIA suspends their use until the Justice Department can conduct a legal review. One former senior CIA official will say in June 2004, "Everything's on hold. The whole thing has been stopped until we sort out whether we are sure we're on legal ground." ([Priest 6/27/2004](#)) In December 2004, the Justice Department will publicly issue a new and public memo allowing the use of some aggressive techniques (see [December 30, 2004](#)). Then, in February 2005, it will secretly issue another memo that goes further, and will even allow the CIA to use waterboarding again. The New York Times will later call it "an expansive endorsement of the harshest interrogation techniques ever used by the Central Intelligence Agency" (see [February 2005](#)). The CIA presumably then resumes using most of these techniques but it does not resume waterboarding, as it had already stopped doing that in 2003 (see [May 2002-2003](#)).

April 29, 2004: Bush and Cheney Privately Meet with 9/11 Commission; Decline to Provide Testimony Under Oath



There were no pictures allowed of the Bush and Cheney joint testimony before the 9/11 Commission. Here are Commissioners Thomas Kean,

Fred Fielding, and Lee Hamilton preparing to begin the testimony. *[Source: New York Times]* President Bush and Vice President Cheney appear for three hours of private questioning before the 9/11 Commission. (Former President Clinton and former Vice President Al Gore met privately and separately with the commission earlier in the month. ([Eggen and Milbank 4/30/2004](#); [Shenon and Sanger 4/30/2004](#))) The commission permits Bush and Cheney to appear together, in private, and not under oath. The testimony is not recorded. Commissioners can take notes, but the notes are censored by the White House. ([Hutcheson 3/31/2004](#); [Clift 4/2/2004](#); [New York Times 4/3/2004](#)) The commission drew most of their questions from a list submitted to the White House before the interview, but few details about the questions or the answers given are available. ([Eggen and Pincus 4/29/2004](#)) Two commissioners, Lee Hamilton and Bob Kerrey, leave the session early for other engagements. They claim they had not expected the interview to last more than the previously agreed upon two-hour length. ([Schwartz and Maynard 5/1/2004](#))

May 2004: More Israelis Are Arrested in Suspicious Circumstances, Again Traveling in Moving Vans



The truck stopped in Kings Bay, Georgia. *[Source: Kings Bay Periscope]* On May 9, two Israelis are arrested after a high-speed chase in Tennessee. They are found with false documents. ([WCYB 5 \(Bristol, Va\) 5/9/2004](#)) On May 27, two others are arrested after trying to enter an Atlanta military base. Explosives are possibly discovered in their van. ([Smith 5/27/2004](#))

May 1, 2004: Gunmen Attack US Oil Company in Saudi Arabia

Gunmen attack the offices of the US oil company ABB Lummus Global Inc. in the port of Yanbu, Saudi Arabia. Six Westerners and a Saudi are killed. All four gunmen are killed in a subsequent shootout. Al-Qaeda is blamed for the attack. ([BBC 12/6/2004](#)) Three of the gunmen apparently worked at the company and used their entry passes to gain access for the attack. ([Asser 5/31/2004](#))

May 3, 2004: Future Saudi Arabian King Claims Israel Is behind Saudi Dissidents

Following an attack on an oil company's office in Yanbu, Saudi Arabia, in which six Westerners were killed (see [May 1, 2004](#)), Saudi officials say Israel played a role in the attacks. Crown Prince Abdullah, who will become king in 2005 (see [August 1, 2005](#)), says he is 95 percent sure "that Zionism is behind everything." Foreign Minister Prince Saud says it is "well known" that Saudi dissidents based in London "have contacts and are financed by parties that are linked to Israel." Although such allegations have been made before, this is the first time a figure as senior as Crown Prince Abdullah has repeated them. The suspected mastermind behind the attacks, Mustafa al-Ansari, was a member of the London-based Committee for the Defense of Legitimate Rights (CDLR) in the mid-1990s. However, prominent Saudi dissident Mohammed al-Massari, who founded the CDLR, dismisses the accusations of Israeli support. Newsweek notes that, "No evidence of such links has ever been made public," and another prominent dissident, Saad al-Fagih, comments, "This is like saying George Bush is sponsoring bin Laden." ([Associated Press 5/4/2004](#); [Isikoff and Hosenball 5/4/2004](#))

May 7, 2004: Oregon Lawyer Arrested in Connection with Madrid Train Bombings



Attorney Brandon Mayfield [*Source: MSNBC*] Attorney Brandon Mayfield of Portland, Oregon, is taken into custody by the FBI in connection with the March 11 bomb attacks in Madrid (see [March 11, 2004](#)). His detention is based on information from Spanish authorities that he had some involvement in the train bombings that killed 191 people and wounded more than 1,800. FBI sources say Mayfield's fingerprints were found on a plastic bag with bomb-related material that is being considered as evidence in the train bombing. Sources say he had been under constant surveillance. Mayfield is an Islamic convert. ([Arena 5/7/2004](#)) He is jailed for 14 days as a material witness to a terrorism investigation. The status of "material witness" means that he can be held without charge. The FBI affidavit that led to his arrest claims the fingerprint to be a "100 percent positive" match to the print on the bag. Officials say it is an "absolutely incontrovertible match." However, Spanish authorities express their doubts about US claims and announce in late May that they have matched the fingerprint to an Algerian, Ouhmane Daoud. Flaws in the US investigation rapidly become apparent. The FBI did not examine the original fingerprint evidence until after the Spanish announcement. Four FBI examiners "concurred that the latent fingerprint had multiple separations; that it was divided by many lines of demarcation possibly caused by creases in the underlying material, multiple touches by one or more fingers, or both," according

to court records. The examiners conclude that the digital copy the FBI was working from was “of no value for identification purposes.” The FBI comes under heavy media criticism for its material witness detainment policy and its use of scant and/or secret evidence. The competence of the investigators is called into question due to the lack of attention paid to the concerns of the Spanish investigators. ([Murphy 5/28/2004](#)) Mayfield is never charged, and the Justice Department later issues a formal apology for the intense and invasive investigation, as well as a \$2 million settlement. In an unprecedented element of the settlement, the FBI agrees to destroy communication intercepts from the investigation. Mayfield contends that he was a victim of profiling and strongly criticizes the investigation. He says “I, myself, have dark memories of stifling paranoia, of being monitored, followed, watched, tracked. I’ve been surveilled, followed, targeted primarily because I’ve been an outspoken critic of this administration and doing my job to defend others who can’t defend themselves, to give them their day in court, and mostly for being a Muslim.” ([Schuster and Frieden 11/30/2006](#)) The official apology mentions that, “The FBI has implemented a number of measures in an effort to ensure that what happened to Mr. Mayfield and the Mayfield family does not happen again.” ([Washington Post 11/29/2006](#))

May 11, 2004: White House Gives Top Prisoner Access to Some, Denies Custody to Others

In a secret agreement with the White House, the 9/11 Commission obtains the right to question at least two top al-Qaeda leaders in US custody. The two men are believed to be Khalid Shaikh Mohammed and Ramzi bin al-Shibh, two accused masterminds of the 2001 attacks. ([Sullivan 5/12/2004](#)) The results of the commission’s questioning of these suspects are published in a 9/11 Staff Statement released in June 2004. ([9/11 Commission 6/16/2004](#)) However, in an ironic twist, during a 9/11-related lawsuit hearing held in June, US authorities refuse to acknowledge whether or not they have Khalid Shaikh Mohammed in custody. ([Associated Press 4/23/2004](#); [Yen 6/15/2004](#)) Insurance companies representing 9/11 victims had requested that the US Justice Department serve a summons against Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, but a judge rules that the US government does not have to disclose whether it is holding alleged terrorists in custody. ([Associated Press 4/23/2004](#); [Yen 6/15/2004](#))

May 14, 2004: Ptech Continues Business with US Government Under New Name

A newspaper article reveals that Ptech, the Boston-based computer company with ties to Yassin al-Qadi and other suspected terrorist financiers (see [1994](#)), is still continuing its business under a different name. The article states, “Although no one associated with the company has been charged, the US attorney’s office has never issued a statement exonerating the company or ending the investigation.” Ptech is now called GoAgile. The company lost many customers in the wake of the widely-publicized raid on its offices in 2002 (see [December 5, 2002](#)). However, CEO Oussama Ziade states, “We still have

government agencies as customers, including the White House.” ([Adams 5/14/2004](#); [Ehrenfeld 6/17/2005](#))

May 17-18, 2004: Ashcroft Warns of ‘Immediate Attack’: Announcement Follows Bad News from Iraq

On May 17, 2004, security officials say that recent intelligence has led to increased concern about the possibility of a major terrorist attack in the US. It is believed that the attack could take place as early as the summer and before November, perhaps in an attempt to affect the outcome of the Presidential election. Potential targets include the dedication of the National World War II Memorial on the National Mall in Washington, the G8 economic summit on Sea Island, Georgia, Fourth of July celebrations, the Democratic convention in Boston, the Republican convention in New York, and the Olympics in Greece. However, no specific target, time or date is identified for the possible attack. Sources do state that the assessment is new and is the result of intelligence gathered over time. However, an official with the Department of Homeland Security, speaking on condition of anonymity, states that “We are not aware of any new highly credible intelligence indicating a planned attack in the US this summer. Nothing in the current intelligence is exceptionally specific.” ([Arena 5/25/2004](#)) The next day, Attorney General John Ashcroft and FBI Director Robert Mueller hold a news conference to warn of a “plane attack inside the United States.” They warn that terrorists are “poised for an immediate attack.” Ashcroft says “credible intelligence from multiple sources indicates that al-Qaeda plans to attempt an attack on the United States in the next few months. This disturbing intelligence indicates al-Qaeda’s specific intention to hit the United States hard.” ([CNN 5/26/2004](#)) The Justice Department asks for assistance in locating seven alleged terrorist operatives and states an increased concern about attacks over the summer. ([CBS News 6/14/2004](#)) It is later revealed the threat actually came from a group that falsely claimed responsibility for the terror attacks in Madrid. One expert says that the group is “not really taken seriously by Western intelligence.” These warnings come as the administration is under heavy criticism for failures in Iraq. The Abu Ghraib torture scandal dominates headlines. ([Dreyfuss 9/21/2006](#)) This warning also comes on the heels of other bad news for the Bush administration. During a May 16 interview on Meet the Press, Secretary of State Colin Powell is cut off by an aide while discussing misleading CIA information regarding WMD in Iraq. He admits that “it turned out that the sourcing was inaccurate and wrong and in some cases, deliberately misleading. And for that, I am disappointed and I regret it.” ([MSNBC 6/15/2004](#)) Three days later, Newsweek reports that White House counsel Alberto Gonzalez warned in a January 25, 2002 internal White House memo that US officials could be prosecuted for war crimes due to the unprecedented and unusual methods used by the Bush administration in the war on terrorism. ([Isikoff 5/19/2004](#))

May 19, 2004: Previously Public Information about FBI Whistleblower Is Now Classified

Attorney General John Ashcroft again invokes the “State Secrets Privilege,” forbidding former FBI translator Sibel Edmonds from testifying in a case brought by hundreds of families of September 11 victims (see [October 18, 2002](#)). ([Lichtblau 5/20/2004](#)) Four weeks earlier, on April 26, the Justice Department had obtained a temporary court order preventing her from testifying before the court. ([Buncombe 4/2/2004](#); [Strohm 4/30/2004](#)) The families, represented by the law firm Motley-Rice, alleges that a number of banks and two members of the Saudi royal family provided financial support to al-Qaeda. ([Lichtblau 5/20/2004](#)) Ashcroft’s order retroactively classifies information it provided senators Chuck Grassley and Patrick Leahy (see [June 17, 2002](#)) concerning former FBI translator Sibel Edmonds and her allegations. Among the documents to be “reclassified” are the follow-up letters sent by Grassley and Leahy to the FBI which they posted on their website. Their staff members are now prohibited from discussing the information, even though it is now public knowledge. The order bars Edmonds from answering even simple questions like: “When and where were you born?” “What languages do you speak?” and “Where did you go to school?” ([Lichtblau 5/20/2004](#); [Kornblut 7/5/2004](#); [Goldstein 8/6/2004](#); [Rose 9/2005](#)) In response to the announcement, Grassley says: “I think it’s ludicrous, because I understand that almost all of this information is in the public domain and has been very widely available. This classification is very serious, because it seems like the FBI would be attempting to put a gag order on Congress.” ([Risen 6/7/2004](#))

May 19, 2004: 9/11 Commission Reaches Self-Confessed ‘Low Point’ in Giuliani Questioning



Rudy Giuliani testifying before the 9/11 Commission. [*Source: Gotham Gazette*]The first day of the 9/11 Commission’s eleventh public hearing in New York produces an adverse reaction in the New York press, due to questioning of former city officials by Commissioner John Lehman. The second day is begun by former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani, whose opening statement draws considerable applause from the audience and who won Time magazine’s Person of the Year award for 2001. ([Pooley 12/22/2001](#); [Kean and Hamilton 2006, pp. 226-228](#)) According to Commission Chairman Thomas Kean and Co-chairman Lee Hamilton, “Each commissioner opens his or her questioning with lavish praise.” For instance, Richard Ben-Veniste: “Your leadership on that day and in the days following gave the rest of the nation, and indeed the world, an unvarnished view of the indomitable spirit and the humanity of this great city, and for that I salute you.” Jim Thompson thanks him for

“setting an example to us all.” John Lehman: “There was no question the captain was on the bridge.” Kean: “New York City on that terrible day in a sense was blessed because it had you as a leader.” This draws a mixed reaction from the audience, some of whom support Giuliani and some of whom want “real questions.” Kean and Hamilton will later say that: “The questioning of Mayor Giuliani was a low point in terms of the commission’s questioning of witnesses at our public hearings. We did not ask tough questions, nor did we get all of the information we needed to put on the public record. We were affected by the controversy over Lehman’s comments, and by the excellent quality of the mayor’s presentation.” ([Kean and Hamilton 2006, pp. 228-231](#))

May 26, 2004: Majority of Canadians Believe US Government Failed to Act on 9/11 Foreknowledge

The Toronto Star reports, “A majority of Canadians doubt the line out of Washington. A poll conducted for the non-profit inquiry (<http://www.911inquiry.org>) this month shows that 63 per cent of [Canadians] believe the US government had ‘prior knowledge of the plans for the events of September 11th, and failed to take appropriate action to stop them.’” ([Zerbisias 5/26/2004](#))

May 26, 2004: Study Finds Al-Qaeda Strong, Mainly Because of Iraq War

Time magazine reports that “the prestigious International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) released its annual survey that found, among other things, that far from dealing a blow to al-Qaeda and making the US and its allies safer, the Iraq invasion has in fact substantially strengthened bin Laden’s network and increased the danger of attacks in the West. And the London-based IISS is not some Bush-bashing antiwar think tank; it hosted the president’s keynote address during his embattled visit to the British late last year.” According to the IISS report, “Although half of al-Qaeda’s 30 senior leaders and perhaps 2,000 rank-and-file members have been killed or captured, a rump leadership is still intact and more than 18,000 potential terrorists are still at large, with recruitment accelerating on account of Iraq.” ([Karon 5/26/2004](#))

May 29-30, 2004: Gunmen Kill Western Hostages and Escape; Collusion with Saudi Security Is Suspected



The Oasis compound, where hostages were held. Bullet holes from the siege can be seen around some windows. *[Source: Wikipedia/ Public domain]* Gunmen attack oil company compounds in Khobar, Saudi Arabia, and then take hostages. The Khobar headquarters of APICORP (Arab Petroleum Investments Corporation) is attacked and six people are killed. About 30 minutes later, gunmen storm the Petroleum Center headquarters about two miles away and kill at least four people. Then the gunmen move less than a mile away to the Oasis compound, a residential building full of Westerners, and take hostages. After a 24-hour siege, all but one of attackers manage to escape even though the building is surrounded by a cordon of hundreds of police. At least 30 people are killed in total, including nine hostages. Al-Qaeda reportedly takes credit for the attacks. ([CNN 5/30/2004](#); [BBC 12/6/2004](#)) There is widespread speculation that the gunmen were allowed to walk free as part of a deal to ensure the safe release of other hostages. The BBC reports that counterterrorism experts say “they were surprised at the ease with which three of the four attackers were able to escape... despite the overwhelming numerical superiority of the security forces and the tactical and logistical advantages which they enjoyed. If true, the existence of collusion between attackers and the people meant to catch them would be most disturbing.” ([Asser 5/31/2004](#)) The Scotsman adds, “Eyewitnesses said they were highly skeptical of official accounts that there were only four kidnappers, insisting others were seen during the earlier attacks on two oil industry office buildings and entering the sprawling compound. It was also reported that they arrived in three vehicles.” Further, the fact that “the Khobar attackers wore military uniforms has raised fears of collusion between militants and the security forces.” ([Theodoulou 6/1/2004](#))

June-November 2004: Critical CIA Report on 9/11 Failures Is Finished, but Its Release Is Successfully Delayed until after Presidential Election

In November 2002, as the 9/11 Congressional Inquiry was finishing its investigation, it formally asked for a report by the CIA to determine “whether and to what extent personnel at all levels should be held accountable” for the failure to stop the 9/11 attacks. ([Jehl and Lichtblau 9/14/2004](#)) The CIA report by the agency’s inspector general is completed in June 2004. Newsweek calls the report “hard-hitting” and says it “identifies a host of current and former officials who could be candidates for possible disciplinary procedures imposed by a special CIA Accountability Board.” ([Isikoff 10/24/2004](#)) While the 9/11 Congressional Inquiry and 9/11 Commission Reports didn’t single out individuals for blame, this one does, and it is said to find “very senior-level officials responsible. Those who have read the classified report say that it faults about 20 intelligence officials, including former CIA Director George Tenet, his former Deputy Director of Operations James Pavitt, and the former head of the CIA’s Counter Terrorism Center Cofer Black. Tenet in particular is faulted for focusing too little attention on combating al-Qaeda as a whole in the years prior to 9/11.” ([Scheer 10/19/2004](#); [Miller 10/6/2005](#); [Linzer and Pincus 10/6/2005](#)) The report is submitted to John McLaughlin, interim acting CIA Director, but he returns it to the inspector general with a request “for more information.” ([Jehl and Lichtblau 9/14/2004](#)) It continues to remain completely classified, and even the 9/11 Commissioners (who all have high level security clearances) are not allowed to see it before they complete their own 9/11 investigation. ([Isikoff 10/24/2004](#)) In late September 2004, Peter Hoekstra (R) and Jane Harman (D), chairman and highest ranking Democrat of the House Intelligence Committee respectively, send a letter to the CIA. ([Jehl 10/27/2004](#)) They request that at least their committee, as the oversight committee that originally mandated the creation of the report, be allowed to see the report. But even this committee and the Senate Intelligence Committee are not allowed to see it. One anonymous official who has read the report tells the Los Angeles Times, “It is infuriating that a report which shows that high-level people were not doing their jobs in a satisfactory manner before 9/11 is being suppressed.... The report is potentially very embarrassing for the administration, because it makes it look like they weren’t interested in terrorism before 9/11, or in holding people in the government responsible afterward.” This official says the report has been deliberately stalled, first by John McLaughlin, then by Porter Goss, his replacement as CIA Director. (Ironically, Goss was the co-chairman of the 9/11 Congressional Inquiry that originally called for the report.) This official further notes that the only legal and legitimate reason the CIA can give for holding back such a report is national security, yet this reason has not been invoked. The official claims that Goss is “basically sitting on the report until after the [November 2004 Presidential] election. No previous director of CIA has ever tried to stop the inspector general from releasing a report to the Congress, in this case a report requested by Congress.” ([Scheer 10/19/2004](#); [Miller 10/20/2004](#)) One anonymous CIA official says, “Everybody feels it will be better off if this hits the fan after the election.” ([Isikoff 10/24/2004](#)) The previously mentioned official speaking to The Los Angeles Times comments that the successful delay of the report’s release until after the election has “led the management of the CIA to believe it can engage in a cover-up with impunity.” ([Scheer 10/19/2004](#)) More details of the report are revealed to the media in January 2005.(see [January 7, 2005](#)). In October 2005, CIA Director Porter Goss will announce that he is not going to release the report, and also will not convene an accountability board to hold anyone responsible.(see [October 10, 2005](#)).

June 1, 2004: US Raids Saudi Charity Formerly Headed by Bin Laden's Nephew



WAMY logo. [Source: WAMY] US agents raid the US branch of World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY), a large Saudi charity. The branch was founded in 1992 by Abdullah Awad bin Laden, a nephew of Osama, and he was still listed as president of the branch in a 2002 business listing. ([Schwartz 4/8/2002](#); [Markon 6/2/2004](#)) In 1996, an FBI investigation into WAMY, Abdullah Awad, and his brother Omar, was closed down, apparently for political reasons (see [February-September 11, 1996](#)). At least two of the 9/11 hijackers lived about three blocks from WAMY's office for much of 2001 (see [March 2001](#)). A new investigation of WAMY was launched one week after 9/11 (see [September 14-19, 2001](#)). All of WAMY's files and computer files are seized; one person is arrested on immigration charges. The raid appears to have taken place because WAMY came up in a terrorism investigation of the SAAR network (see [March 20, 2002](#)), located outside Washington and relatively close to the WAMY office. A federal affidavit alleges that WAMY has ties to Hamas. ([Markon 6/2/2004](#))

June 3, 2004: CIA Director George Tenet Resigns

Citing personal reasons, CIA Director Tenet announces he will be stepping down in the next month. President Bush praises Tenet's service, but there is widespread agreement that significant intelligence failures occurred during Tenet's tenure, most strikingly 9/11 itself. Sources also suggest that Tenet, originally a Clinton appointee, has been made a convenient scapegoat for Bush administration intelligence failures in Iraq and elsewhere. ([CNN 6/4/2004](#); [Cornwell 6/4/2004](#))

June 4, 2004: Rumsfeld Says US Lacked Intelligence to Stop 9/11

Defense Secretary Rumsfeld says the US would have stopped 9/11, but "We lacked the intelligence that might have prevented it." He blames the lack of "a source inside the group of people that had planned and executed those attacks.... Had we had a source inside there, we undoubtedly would have been able to stop it. We did not." ([Newsday 6/4/2004](#))

June 4, 2004: Victims' Families Listen to 9/11 Phone Recordings

When the recording of flight attendant Betty Ong is played in public before the 9/11 Commission in January 2004, family members demand that the FBI honor the family members' rights under the Victims Assistance Act to hear any and all phone calls made

from the hijacked airplanes. So, on this date, about 130 victims' relatives gather in Princeton, New Jersey, and hear previously unavailable calls. But the Justice Department only plays what it decided are "relevant" calls. However, attendees are ordered not to disclose what they hear lest it compromise the prosecution of Zacarias Moussaoui. ([Hirschhorn 5/28/2004](#); [Berland 6/5/2004](#); [Sheehy 6/17/2004](#)) Some family members nonetheless later discuss what they have heard. Witnesses describe one recording of two American Airlines managers who are told details of flight attendant Amy Sweeney's call from Flight 11 shortly after the first hijacking has begun. Rather than report news of a possible hijacking to other government agencies so they can learn what to do in case there is a crisis, the managers say things like, "don't spread this around. Keep it close," and "Keep it quiet" (see [\(Between 8:22 a.m. and 8:44 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)) ([Sheehy 6/17/2004](#))

June 12, 2004: Communications Intercepts Lead to Capture of One of KSM's Nephews

Al-Qaeda operative Musaad Aruchi is arrested in Karachi, Pakistan, by Pakistani paramilitary forces and the CIA. Aruchi is said to be a nephew of 9/11 mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed and a cousin of 1993 WTC bomber Ramzi Yousef. (Another of his nephews, Ali Abdul Aziz Ali, was captured in Karachi the year before (see [April 29, 2003](#)). CIA telephone and Internet intercepts led investigators to the apartment building where Aruchi lived. Aruchi is in frequent contact with Muhammad Naeem Noor Khan, who is in touch with al-Qaeda operatives all over the world. Aruchi is flown out of the country in an unmarked CIA plane; there have been no reports on his whereabouts since and he will not be transferred to Guantanamo Bay with other high-ranking prisoners in 2006. Noor Khan is followed and then arrested a month later (see [July 13, 2004](#)). ([Khan 8/3/2004](#); [Burke, Harris, and Bright 8/8/2004](#))

June 14, 2004: FBI 9/11 Investigation Still Continues at Reduced Level



By 2004, the FBI's 9/11 investigation is contained in this ten person office. [*Source: Washington Post*] The Washington Post reports that the FBI's 9/11 investigation still continues, though at a reduced level. Originally, the investigation, named PENTTBOM, was staffed by about 70 full time FBI

agents and analysts. The team now has only about ten members. Some observers complain the FBI has not done enough. Mary Galligan, who headed the investigation until early 2004, emphasizes how much is still unknown about the plot. She says, “There is still information coming in, and we still have so many unanswered questions.” ([Eggen 6/14/2004](#))

June 14, 2004: Cheney Repeats Claims of Ties Between Hussein and Al-Qaeda

During a speech before the James Madison Institute, a conservative think-tank based in Florida, Vice President Dick Cheney states that Saddam Hussein “had long-established ties with al-Qaeda.” ([Schneider 6/14/2004](#))

June 14-15, 2004: Somali Immigrant Charged with Ohio Mall Bomb Plot

The Justice Department announces to the press they have thwarted an imminent terror plot to bomb malls in Ohio. A Somali native residing in Ohio is charged with plotting to blow up a Columbus shopping mall. It is alleged that he was part of a group of al-Qaeda operatives. Attorney General John Ashcroft says, “The American heartland was targeted for death and destruction by an al-Qaeda cell which allegedly included a Somali immigrant who will now face justice.” The man, Nuradin Mahamoud Abdi is alleged to have obtained refugee documentation under false pretenses and to have attended terrorist training camps in Ethiopia. Although authorities would not state how many were involved in the plot, they do name admitted al-Qaeda member Iyman Faris as a co-conspirator. Faris, serving a 20-year sentence for providing material support to terrorism and conspiracy to provide material support, plead guilty in May 2003 to plotting to blow up the Brooklyn Bridge and to providing sleeping bags, mobile phones, and cash to al-Qaeda operatives. He later withdrew this plea, but was subsequently convicted. ([CBS News 6/14/2004](#)) Later it is revealed that Abdi had been arrested November 28, 2003, for his connections to terrorism, so there is nothing “imminent” in the case. Court papers filed by the government allege the existence of a plot from March 2000. His indictment isn’t announced until June 15, 2004, and it makes no mention of the shopping mall plot publicly announced the day before. ([Perry 6/15/2004](#)) The Justice Department announcement comes as Democratic Presidential candidate John Kerry leads President Bush by seven points in early Ohio polls. ([Dreyfuss 9/21/2006](#))

June 15, 2004: Cheney Claims Hussein Linked to Al-Qaeda

President Bush defends Vice President Dick Cheney’s claim this week that Saddam Hussein had longstanding ties with al-Qaeda. Speaking at a news conference with Afghan president Hamid Karzai, Bush asserts that Hussein “had ties to terrorist organizations.”

He does not mention al-Qaeda by name. The day before, Cheney claimed that Hussein was “a patron of terrorism” and said “he had long established ties with al-Qaeda” (see [June 14, 2004](#)). ([Boston Globe 6/16/2004](#))

June 16, 2004: 9/11 Commission Gives Account of Prisoner Interrogations

The 9/11 Commission releases a new report on how the 9/11 plot developed. Most of their information appears to come from interrogations of prisoners Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM), the 9/11 mastermind, and Ramzi bin al-Shibh, a key member of the al-Qaeda Hamburg cell. In this account, the idea for the attacks appears to have originated with KSM. In mid-1996, he met bin Laden and al-Qaeda leader Mohammed Atef in Afghanistan. He presented several ideas for attacking the US, including a version of the 9/11 plot using ten planes (presumably an update of Operation Bojinka’s second phase plot (see [February-Early May 1995](#))). Bin Laden does not commit himself. In 1999, bin Laden approves a scaled-back version of the idea, and provides four operatives to carry it out: Nawaf Alhazmi, Khalid Almihdhar, Khallad bin Attash, and Abu Bara al Taizi. Attash and al Taizi drop out when they fail to get US visas. Alhazmi and Almihdhar prove to be incompetent pilots, but the recruitment of Mohamed Atta and the others in the Hamburg al-Qaeda cell solves that problem. Bin Laden wants the attacks to take place between May and July 2001, but the attacks are ultimately delayed until September. ([9/11 Commission 6/16/2004](#)) However, information such as these accounts resulting from prisoner interrogations is seriously doubted by some experts, because it appears they only began cooperating after being coerced or tortured. For instance, it is said that KSM was “waterboarded,” a technique in which his head is pushed under water until he nearly drowns. Information gained under such duress often is unreliable. Additionally, there is a serious risk that the prisoners might try to intentionally deceive. ([Shenon and Marquis 6/17/2004](#)) For instance, one CIA report of his interrogations is called, “Khalid Shaikh Mohammed’s Threat Reporting—Precious Truths, Surrounded by a Bodyguard of Lies.” ([McDermott 6/23/2004](#)) The Commission itself expresses worry that KSM could be trying to exaggerate the role of bin Laden in the plot to boost bin Laden’s reputation in the Muslim world. ([9/11 Commission 6/16/2004](#)) Most of what these prisoners have said is uncorroborated from other sources. ([New York Times 6/17/2004](#)) In 2007, it will be alleged that as much as 90 percent of KSM’s interrogation could be inaccurate, and that he has recanted some of his confessions (see [August 6, 2007](#)).

June 17, 2004: Cheney Refuses to Abandon ‘Prague Connection’ Theory

During an interview with CNBC’s “Capitol Report,” Cheney says reporters who doubt the Prague Connection are “lazy.” He asserts that “[W]e don’t know” if Iraq was involved in 9/11 and adds that no one has “been able to confirm” or “knock... down” the claim that 9/11 plotter Mohamed Atta met with an Iraqi intelligence agent in Prague in April of 2001. When the interviewer notes that 9/11 Commission investigators have found no

evidence to support that allegation, Cheney asserts that he “probably” knows information the 9/11 Commission does not. ([CNN 6/18/2004](#)) A few days later, the commission says that after asking Cheney for any additional evidence he might have, they stand by their position. Cheney maintains his position as well. ([Wallsten and Meyer 7/2/2004](#))

June 18, 2004: NIST Presents ‘Working Hypothesis’ of WTC 7 Collapse

The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) issues a progress report on its investigation into the World Trade Center collapses. Since 2002, NIST has been investigating the collapses of the Twin Towers and WTC Building 7 (see [August 21, 2002](#)). The progress report includes its “working hypothesis” for the collapse of WTC 7. This was a 47-story building, located about 350 feet from the north side of WTC 1, which collapsed completely at around 5:20 in the afternoon of 9/11. The report claims that “fire appears to have played a key role” in the collapse, though it points out, “No fire was observed or reported in the afternoon on floors 1-5, 10, or above Floor 13.” It also says, “there may have been some physical damage on the south side of the building.” NIST summarizes its working hypothesis of the WTC 7 collapse as follows:

- “An initial local failure at the lower floors (below Floor 13) of the building due to fire and/or debris induced structural damage of a critical column (the initiating event), which supported a large span floor bay with an area of about 2,000 square feet.”
 - “Vertical progression of the initial local failure up to the east penthouse, as large floor bays were unable to redistribute the loads, bringing down the interior structure below the east penthouse.”
 - “Horizontal progression of the failure across the lower floors... triggered by damage due to the vertical failure, resulting in the disproportionate collapse of the entire structure.”
- NIST claims this hypothesis “is consistent with all evidence currently held by NIST, including photographs and videos, eyewitness accounts and emergency communication records,” but says it “will be revised and updated as results of ongoing, more comprehensive analyses become available.” ([National Institute of Standards and Technology 6/2004, pp. L1, L3, L17, L34, L38, L51-L52](#); [National Institute of Standards and Technology 6/18/2004](#)) NIST will release its final reports on the collapses of the Twin Towers in October 2005 (see [October 26, 2005](#)). As of mid-2007, it has yet to release a final report on the collapse of WTC 7. In early 2006, Dr. S. Shyam Sunder, who is the lead investigator for NIST’s WTC investigation, will admit, “truthfully, I don’t really know” what caused WTC 7 to collapse. He will add, “We’ve had trouble getting a handle on building no. 7” (see [March 20, 2006](#)). ([Jacobson 3/20/2006](#)) An earlier report on the WTC collapses, released by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in May 2002, had been inconclusive on what caused WTC 7 to collapse, and stated that “Further research, investigation, and analyses” were necessary (see [May 1, 2002](#)). ([Federal Emergency Management Agency 5/1/2002, pp. 5-31](#))

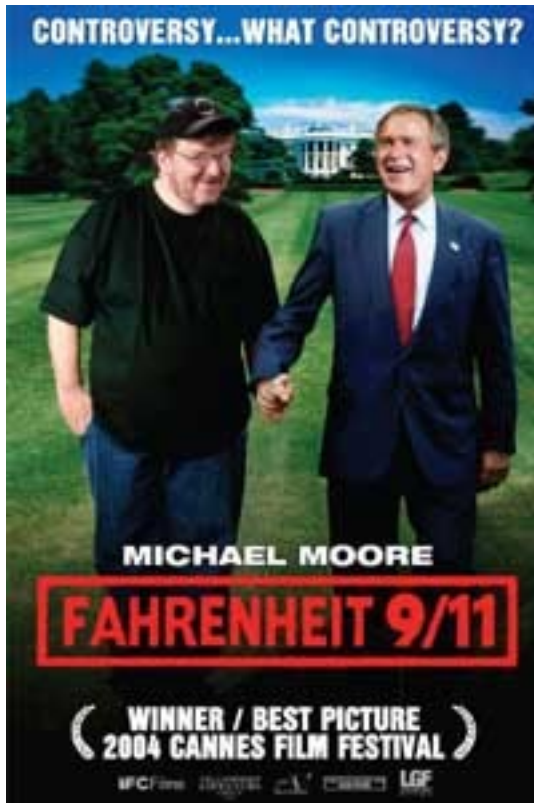
June 20, 2004: 9/11 Commission Figure Says Pakistan Was ‘Up to Their Eyeballs’ with Taliban and al-Qaeda

“An unnamed senior staff member” on the 9/11 Commission tells the Los Angeles Times that, before 9/11, Pakistani officials were “up to their eyeballs” in collaboration with the Taliban and al-Qaeda. As an example, this source says of bin Laden moving to Afghanistan in 1996, “He wouldn’t go back there without Pakistan’s approval and support, and had to comply with their rules and regulations.” From “day one,” the ISI helped al-Qaeda set up an infrastructure, and jointly operated training camps. The article further notes that what the commission will publicly say on this is just the “tip of the iceberg” of the material they’ve been given on the matter. ([Meyer 7/16/2004](#)) In fact, the commission’s final report released a month later will barely mention the ISI at all. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004](#))

June 21, 2004: Very Little Intelligence Gained from Prisoners Held at Guantanamo

Vice President Cheney has called the prisoners being held by the US at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, “the worst of a very bad lot” (see [January 27, 2002](#)) and other US officials have suggested that information from them has exposed terrorist cells and foiled attacks. But a lengthy New York Times investigation finds that US “government and military officials have repeatedly exaggerated both the danger the detainees posed and the intelligence they have provided.... In interviews, dozens of high-level military, intelligence and law-enforcement officials in the United States, Europe, and the Middle East said that contrary to the repeated assertions of senior administration officials, none of the detainees at the United States Naval Base at Guantanamo Bay ranked as leaders or senior operatives of al-Qaeda. They said only a relative handful—some put the number at about a dozen, others more than two dozen—were sworn al-Qaeda members or other militants able to elucidate the organization’s inner workings.” While some information from the prisoners has been useful to investigators, none of it has stopped any imminent attacks. Information from Guantanamo is considered “only a trickle” compared to what is being learned from prisoners held by the CIA in secret prisons elsewhere. Brig. Gen. Jay W. Hood, in charge of the task force running the prison, says, “The expectations, I think, may have been too high at the outset. There are those who expected a flow of intelligence that would help us break the most sophisticated terror organization in a matter of months. But that hasn’t happened.” Ironically, although few prisoners have been released, it appears about five have rejoined the Taliban and resumed attacks against US forces. Abdullah Laghmani, the chief of the National Security Directorate in Kandahar, Afghanistan, says, “There are lots of people who were innocent, and they are capturing them, just on anyone’s information. And then they are releasing guilty people.” ([Golden and van Natal 6/21/2004](#))

June 25, 2004: Michael Moore’s Fahrenheit 9/11 Movie Highlights 9/11 Issues



Fahrenheit 9/11 movie poster. [Source: Lions

Gate Films] Fahrenheit 9/11, a film by well-known filmmaker and author Michael Moore, is released in the US. Amongst other things, this film reveals connections between the Bush family and prominent Saudis including the bin Laden family. ([Wald 5/6/2004](#); [Wood 5/17/2004](#); [Zerbisias 6/13/2004](#)) It reviews evidence the White House helped members of Osama bin Laden's family and other Saudis fly out of the US in the days soon after 9/11. ([Wood 5/17/2004](#); [Zerbisias 6/13/2004](#); [Schmitt and Lichtblau 6/18/2004](#); [McDermott 6/23/2004](#); [Isikoff and Hosenball 6/30/2004](#)) It introduces to the mainstream damning footage of President Bush continuing with a photo-op for seven minutes (see [\(9:06 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)) after being told of the second plane hitting the WTC on 9/11. ([Schmitt and Lichtblau 6/18/2004](#); [Achenbach 6/19/2004](#); [Klaidman and Hirsh 6/20/2004](#); [McDermott 6/23/2004](#)) Disney refused to let its Miramax division distribute the movie in the United States, supposedly because the film was thought too partisan. ([Wald 5/6/2004](#); [Guardian 6/2/2004](#); [Finnegan 6/11/2004](#); [Agence France-Presse 6/23/2004](#)) The film won the top award at the prestigious Cannes film festival—the first documentary to do so in nearly 50 years. ([BBC 5/24/2004](#); [Barkham 5/24/2004](#); [Agence France-Presse 6/23/2004](#)) It is generally very well received, with most US newspapers rating it favorably. ([Agence France-Presse 6/23/2004](#); [Editor & Publisher 6/27/2004](#)) The film is an instant hit and is seen by tens of millions. ([Anderson 6/27/2004](#); [BBC 6/28/2004](#); [Associated Press 6/28/2004](#); [CBS News 6/28/2004](#)) There are some criticisms that it distorts certain facts, such as exaggerating the possible significance of Bush and bin Laden family connections, and gripes about a \$1.4 billion number representing the money flowing from Saudi companies to the Bush family. However, the New York Times claims that the public record corroborates the film's main assertions. ([Wood 5/17/2004](#); [Schmitt and Lichtblau 6/18/2004](#); [Isikoff and Hosenball 6/30/2004](#))

June 25, 2004: Swiss Investigating Tens of Millions of Dollars Given to Al-Qaeda Associates

It is reported that the Swiss government is investigate an unnamed Saudi businessman who is the former president of the Muwafaq Foundation, which is now defunct. Swiss investigators will say he is suspected of transferring tens of millions of dollars to “close al-Qaeda associates” from Swiss bank accounts. The Swiss will freeze \$20 million of his bank accounts. This businessman denies any connection with terrorism (see [September 19, 2005](#)). ([Fleck 6/25/2004](#)) There have been repeated allegations that Muwafaq funded radical militants in the Bosnian war (see [1991-1995](#)) and had ties to bin Laden (see [1995-1998](#)).

June 27, 2004: FBI Finally Admits Possibility of Al-Qaeda Sleeper Cell in Boston

It is reported that the FBI's Boston office is investigating if there may have been an al-Qaeda sleeper cell in Boston and whether it may have had connections to the 9/11 attacks. The Boston FBI had previously denied the existence of any Boston cell, even though they knew before 9/11 that four Boston taxi drivers—Nabil al-Marabh, Raed Hijazi, Mohamad Kamal Elzahabi, and Bassam Kanj—all knew each other well and were all connected to al-Qaeda (see [January 2001](#); [Mid-August 2001](#)). But the FBI shows new interest in the possibility after indicting Elzahabi in Minnesota a few days earlier (see [April 16, 2004-June 25, 2004](#)). The Boston Globe comments, “The possibility that unknown people in Boston were providing support to terrorists, including the 10 who hijacked the two planes out of Logan Airport, has been the subject of much conjecture among law enforcement officials.” ([Kurkjian and DeMarco 6/27/2004](#)) Unofficially, it seems that even before 9/11, some in the FBI thought that al-Qaeda had cells in Boston. On September 12, 2001, an anonymous long-time Boston FBI agent told the Boston Globe that there were “a lot of terrorist cells in [the Boston] area.... It's a facilitator for terrorist activity. There have been cells here of bin Laden's associates. They're entrenched here.” ([Cullen 9/12/2001](#)) Former counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke says, “We uncovered plots in December of 1999 that also involved Boston cab drivers around the millennium rollover. I think there is a high probability the Boston FBI missed a major cell there.” ([WCVB 5 \(Boston\) 6/28/2004](#))

June 28, 2004: Supreme Court Rules that US Citizens Declared ‘Enemy Combatants’ Can Challenge Their Detention



Yaser Esam Hamdi. [*Source: Associated Press*] In the case of *Yaser Esam Hamdi v. Donald Rumsfeld*, eight of nine Supreme Court justices decide, contrary to the government's position, that Yaser Hamdi, as a US citizen held inside the US, cannot be locked up indefinitely incommunicado, without an opportunity to challenge his detention. They rule he has the right to be given the opportunity to challenge the basis for his detention before an impartial court. Justice Sandra Day O'Connor writes for the majority that, "We have long since made clear that a state of war is not a blank check for the president when it comes to the rights of the Nation's citizens." She also writes: "It would turn our system of checks and balances on its head to suggest that a citizen could not make his way to court with a challenge to the factual basis for his detention by his government, simply because the Executive opposes making available such a challenge. Absent suspension of the writ by Congress, a citizen detained as an enemy combatant is entitled to this process." Hamdi, on the other hand, apart from military interrogations and "screening processes," has received no process. Due process, according to a majority of the court, "demands some system for a citizen detainee to refute his classification [as enemy combatant]." A "citizen-detainee... must receive notice of the factual basis for his classification, and a fair opportunity to rebut the Government's factual assertions before a neutral decisionmaker." However, O'Connor writes, "an interrogation by one's captor... hardly constitutes a constitutionally adequate factfinding before a neutral decisionmaker." Only Justice Clarence Thomas affirms the government's opinion, writing, "This detention falls squarely within the Federal Government's war powers, and we lack the expertise and capacity to second-guess that decision." ([Supreme Court opinion on writ of certiorari. Shafiq Rasul, et al. v. George W. Bush, et al. 6/28/2004](#)) Thomas adds, "The Founders intended that the president have primary responsibility—along with the necessary power—to protect the national security and to conduct the nation's foreign relations. They did so principally because the structural advantages of a unitary executive are essential in these domains." ([Dean 9/11/2007, pp. 105](#))

June 30, 2004: Several Senators Demand Ashcroft Explain Al-Marabh's Deportation Decision

The Associated Press reports that both Republicans and Democrats have expressed outrage that Nabil al-Marabh was deported in January 2004 (see [January 2004](#)). Several senators have written letters to Attorney General John Ashcroft, demanding an explanation. Sen. Charles Grassley (R) states that the circumstances of al-Marabh's

deportation—who was “at one time No. 27 on the [FBI] list of Most Wanted Terrorists”—are “of deep concern and appear to be a departure from an aggressive, proactive approach to the war on terrorism.” Sen. Patrick Leahy (D) wrote to Ashcroft, “The odd handling of this case raises questions that deserve answers from the Justice Department.... Why was a suspected terrorist returned to a country that sponsors terrorism? We need to know that the safety of the American people and our strategic goals in countering terrorism are paramount factors when decisions like this are made.” Sen. Charles Schumer (D) says, “It seems that pursuing a military tribunal, a classified criminal trial, or continued immigration proceedings would have made more sense than merely deporting a suspected terrorist.” Sen. Orrin Hatch (R) has also made inquiries into the case. Prosecutors in several US cities sought to bring criminal cases against al-Marabh and a US attorney in Chicago drafted an indictment against him, which he apparently was not allowed to pursue (see [January-2002-December 2002](#)). ([Solomon 6/30/2004](#)) Apparently, no explanation from Ashcroft is ever given. The 9/11 Commission Final Report, released a couple of months later, will fail to mention al-Marabh at all.

July 2004: Report on FBI’s 9/11 Failures Is Completed, But Remains Unreleased Until After Presidential Election

In November 2002, as the 9/11 Congressional Inquiry was finishing its investigation, it had formally asked for a report by the Justice Department (which oversees the FBI) to determine “whether and to what extent personnel at all levels should be held accountable” for the failure to stop the 9/11 attacks. An identical request was made to the CIA (see [June-November 2004](#)). ([Jehl and Lichtblau 9/14/2004](#)) The Justice Department report, titled “A Review of the FBI’s Handling of Intelligence Information Related to the September 11 Attacks,” is completed this month. ([Eggen 4/30/2005](#)) It centers on three FBI failures before 9/11: the failure to follow up on the arrest of Zacarias Moussaoui in August 2001 (see [August 16, 2001](#)), the failure to follow up on FBI agent Ken Williams’ memo (see [July 10, 2001](#)) warning about Islamic militants training in US flight schools, and the FBI’s failure to follow up on many leads to hijackers Nawaf Alhazmi and Khalid Almihdhar. The report provides some new details about miscommunications, inaction, and other problems. ([Jehl and Lichtblau 9/14/2004](#)) The report remains classified. Senior Senate Judiciary Committee members Patrick Leahy (D) and Charles Grassley (R) call for its release. The senators state, “While the needs of national security must be weighed seriously, we fear the designation of information as classified, in some cases, serves to protect the executive branch against embarrassing revelations and full accountability. We hope that is not the case here.” ([Seper 7/12/2004](#); [Jehl and Lichtblau 9/14/2004](#)) One problem complicating the issuing of even a declassified version is the possibility that the material would taint the criminal proceedings against Zacarias Moussaoui. In early 2005, the Justice Department inspector general’s office will ask the judge presiding over Moussaoui’s case for permission to release a declassified version of the report. But the judge will turn down the request in April 2005, even after Moussaoui pleads guilty (see [April 30, 2005](#)). The report will finally be released in June 2005 without the section on Moussaoui (see [June 9, 2005](#)). ([FBI 2/13/2005](#))

July 3, 2004: London-based Islamist Approves Killing of British Troops in Iraq, Assassination of Prime Minister, but Authorities Take No Action



Mohammed al-Massari. *[Source: David Burges]* When asked whether British troops can properly be targeted in Iraq under British law, London-based Islamist Mohammed al-Massari replies, “British soldiers are reasonable targets for Iraqis and those joining the camp of the Iraqis.” Al-Massari, who runs the Committee for Defense of Legitimate Rights, adds that Prime Minister Tony Blair is a legitimate target: “[The Prime Minister] is not a non-combatant. He is Tony Blair, the commander of the army.” Although it is an offence carrying a 10-year jail term to incite terrorism abroad, no action is apparently taken against al-Massari for these statements. ([BBC 7/3/2004](#)) Al-Massari helped set up a communications link for Osama bin Laden in the mid-1990s (see [1994](#)) and ran a radio station and website that glorified Islamic extremist violence (see [2004 and After](#)).

July 6, 2004: FBI Translator Whistleblower Lawsuit Dismissed



Sibel Edmonds. *[Source: Linda Spillers/ Getty]* US District Judge Reggie B. Walton, appointed by George W. Bush, dismisses Sibel Edmonds’ lawsuit (see [June 2002](#)) against the Justice Department, accepting the government’s

argument that allowing the case to proceed would jeopardize national security ([Bridis 7/6/2004](#); [Bohn 7/7/2004](#)) and infringe upon its October 2002 declaration (see [October 18, 2002](#)) that classified everything related to Edmonds' case. Walton refuses to explain his ruling, insisting that to do so would expose sensitive secrets. "The Court finds that the plaintiff is unable to establish her First Amendment, Fifth Amendment, and Privacy Act claims without the disclosure of privileged information, nor would the defendants be able to defend against these claims without the same disclosures... the plaintiff's case must be dismissed, albeit with great consternation, in the interests of national security," Walton says in his ruling. ([Bohn 7/7/2004](#)) Walton never heard evidence from Edmonds' lawyers. ([Bridis 7/6/2004](#); [Associated Press 7/7/2004](#))

July 8, 2004: Magazine Correctly Predicts 'July Surprise' Al-Qaeda Arrest

On July 8, 2004, the New Republic predicts a "July surprise" from the Bush-Cheney reelection campaign involving the arrest of a high-value target in Pakistan by the end of the month. The magazine reports that in the spring of 2004, the administration increased pressure on Pakistan to kill or capture Osama bin Laden, his deputy, Ayman al-Zawahiri, or Taliban leader Mullah Mohammed Omar, all believed to be hiding in Pakistan. Bush officials such as CIA Director George Tenet, Secretary of State Colin Powell and his assistant, Christina Rocca, State Department counterterrorism chief Cofer Black, and others all visited Pakistan in recent months to urge Pakistan to increase its efforts in the war on terrorism. The New Republic comments, "This public pressure would be appropriate, even laudable, had it not been accompanied by an unseemly private insistence that the Pakistanis deliver these high-value targets (HVTs) before Americans go to the polls in November." Bush spokespeople deny that the administration exerted any such pressure. But according to one source in the Pakistani ISI, "The Pakistani government is really desperate and wants to flush out bin Laden and his associates after the latest pressures from the US administration to deliver before the [upcoming] US elections." Another source in the Pakistani Interior Ministry says, "The Musharraf government has a history of rescuing the Bush administration. They now want Musharraf to bail them out when they are facing hard times in the coming elections." And another ISI source says that the Pakistanis "have been told at every level that apprehension or killing of HVTs before [the] election is [an] absolute must." The Pakistanis have even been given a target date, according to the second ISI source: "The last ten days of July deadline has been given repeatedly by visitors to Islamabad and during [ISI director Lieutenant General Ehsan ul-Haq's] meetings in Washington." The source says that a White House aide told ul-Haq last spring that "it would be best if the arrest or killing of [any] HVT were announced on twenty-six, twenty-seven, or twenty-eight July"—the first three days of the Democratic National Convention in Boston. One Pakistani general said recently, "If we don't find these guys by the election, they are going to stick this whole nuclear mess [relating to A. Q. Khan] up our asshole." The Bush administration apparently is using a carrot-and-stick approach to make sure such an arrest takes place on schedule. The New Republic observes, "Pushing Musharraf to go after al-Qaeda in the tribal areas may be a good idea despite the risks. But, if that is the case, it was a good

idea in 2002 and 2003. Why the switch now? Top Pakistanis think they know: This year, the president's reelection is at stake." ([Judis, Ackerman, and Ansari 7/29/2004](#)) Pakistan will announce the capture of al-Qaeda leader Ahmed Khalfan Ghailani on July 29, just hours before Democratic presidential John Kerry's acceptance speech at the Democratic National Convention. The authors of the New Republic article will claim vindication for their prediction (see [July 25-29, 2004](#)).

July 8, 2004: Warning that Terrorists May Plot to Disrupt US Presidential Elections



Deforest B. Soaries Jr. [*Source: MSNBC*] On July 6, John Kerry names John Edwards as his running mate. ([Dreyfuss 9/21/2006](#)) This produces a slight increase in the opinion polls and a media focus on the Kerry campaign. ([MSNBC 6/4/2007](#)) Two days later, Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge warns that "Al-Qaeda is moving forward with its plans to carry out a large-scale attack in the United States in an effort to disrupt our democratic process." ([Department of Homeland Security 7/8/2004](#)) Officials cite "alarming" intelligence about a possible al-Qaeda strike inside the United States this fall and admit they are reviewing a proposal that could allow for the postponement of the November presidential election in the event of an attack. Officials point to the recent Madrid train bombings as an attempt by al-Qaeda to influence the political process in a democratic nation (see [March 11, 2004](#)). Intercepted chatter leads one analyst to say "they want to interfere with the elections." It is reported that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) recently asked the Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel to analyze the necessary legal steps that would permit the postponement of the election were an attack to take place. ([Isikoff 7/19/2004](#)) The head of the US Election Assistance Commission, Deforest B. Soaries Jr., confirms he has written to Tom Ridge to discuss this prospect. ([MSNBC 6/4/2007](#)) Soaries notes that, while a primary election in New York on September 11, 2001, was suspended by the state Board of Elections after the attacks, "the federal government has no agency that has the statutory authority to cancel and reschedule a federal election." Soaries advises Ridge to seek emergency legislation from Congress that would grant such power to the DHS. DHS spokesman Brian Roehrka says, "We are reviewing the issue to determine what steps need to be taken to secure the election." ([Isikoff 7/19/2004](#)) A top European spy says of the threat: "I am aware of no intelligence, nothing that shows there will be an attack before the US presidential election." No attack materializes and no further information on the threat is presented to the public. ([Dreyfuss 9/21/2006](#))

(July 8, 2004): DOJ Inspector General Report Supports FBI Translator's Allegations

Glenn A. Fine, the Justice Department's inspector general, completes his report on Sibel Edmonds' allegations (see [Afternoon March 7, 2002](#)). The 100-page report determines that "many of Edmonds' core allegations relating to the co-worker [Melek Can Dickerson] were supported by either documentary evidence or witnesses" and concludes that "the FBI did not, and still has not adequately investigated these allegations." Additionally, Fine's report concludes that Edmonds was fired because she was having a "disruptive effect," which could be attributed to "Edmonds' aggressive pursuit of her allegations of misconduct, which the FBI did not believe were supported and which it did not adequately investigate." Fine adds, "[A]s we described throughout our report, many of her allegations had basis in fact. We believe... that the FBI did not take them seriously enough, and that her allegations were, in fact, the most significant factor in the FBI's decision to terminate her services." The report is immediately classified by the FBI. Not even Edmonds is allowed to see the contents. An unclassified 37-page summary of the report will be released in January 2005. ([Washington Post 7/9/2004](#); [Bridis 7/30/2004](#); [Bridis 1/14/2005](#); [Frieden 1/14/2005](#); [Lichtblau 1/15/2005](#); [Rose 9/2005](#))

July 11, 2004: Saudi-Terrorist Link Continues?

Senator Charles Schumer (D) claims that Saudi leaders and members of the Saudi royal family continue to fund Islamic militant schools and groups in the US. He calls on the Bush administration to cut US ties with Saudi Arabia, and says, "There's been much too close a relationship between Saudi royal family, the White House, and big oil. We have to be much tougher with the Saudis." ([Associated Press 7/11/2004](#))

July 12, 2004: 9/11 Commission Staff Meet with Navy Officer Involved with Able Danger Unit

Ten days before the 9/11 Commission releases its final report, a senior member of its staff, Dietrich Snell, accompanied by another commission staff member, meets at one of the commission's Washington, DC offices with a US Navy officer who worked with a US Army intelligence program called Able Danger, which had been tasked with assembling information about al-Qaeda networks around the world. This officer, Captain Scott Phillpott, tells them he saw an Able Danger document in 2000 that described Mohamed Atta as part of a Brooklyn al-Qaeda cell. He complains that this information about Atta, and information about other alleged members of the Brooklyn cell, was deleted from the document soon after he saw it, due to the concerns of Department of Defense lawyers. However, despite having this meeting with Phillpott, and having met previously with an Army intelligence officer who was also involved with Able Danger (see [October 21, 2003](#)), the 9/11 Commission makes no mention of the unit in their final report. The commissioners later claim that Phillpott's information "[does] not mesh with other conclusions" they are drawing from their investigation. Consequently, the commission

staff conclude “that the officer’s account [is] not sufficiently reliable to warrant revision of the report or further investigation.” Able Danger is not mentioned in their final report, they claim, because “the operation itself did not turn out to be historically significant.” ([Associated Press 8/11/2005](#); [Jehl 8/11/2005](#); [Thomas H. Kean and Lee H. Hamilton 8/12/2005](#); [Jehl 8/13/2005](#); [Eggen 8/13/2005](#); [Shenon 8/22/2005](#)) Lt. Col. Anthony Shaffer additionally claims, “Captain Phillpott actually told the 9/11 Commission about the fact that Able Danger discovered information regarding the Cole attack.... There was information that Able Danger found that related to al-Qaeda planning an attack. That information unfortunately didn’t get anywhere either. So that is another clue that was given to the 9/11 Commission to say, hey, this [Able Danger] capability did some stuff, and they chose not to even look at that.” ([Shaffer 9/20/2005](#))

July 12, 2004: 9/11 Commission Concludes There’s No Evidence Iraq Had 9/11 Role

The 9/11 Commission publicly concludes that there was “no credible evidence that Iraq and al-Qaeda cooperated on attacks against the United States” and that repeated contacts between Iraq and al-Qaeda “do not appear to have resulted in a collaborative relationship.” It also again confirms that it does not believe the alleged April 2001 Prague meeting between Mohamed Atta and Iraqi diplomat Ahmed Khalil Ibrahim Samir al-Ani (see [1999](#)) ever took place, a conclusion it had made in a public staff statement the month before (see [June 16, 2004](#)). ([Shenon 7/12/2004](#))

July 13, 2004: Al-Qaeda Computer Expert Arrested with Treasure Trove of Evidence

Muhammad Naeem Noor Khan, a young Pakistani, is arrested in Lahore after six weeks of surveillance by Pakistani authorities in conjunction with US intelligence agencies. The US and Pakistanis learned of Noor Khan after arresting another al-Qaeda suspect, Musaad Aruchi, a month before (see [June 12, 2004](#)), and they had been tracking him since then. Noor Khan is taken to a high-security prison by Pakistani authorities, who resisted pressure from the CIA to let them completely handle the operation. ([Burke, Harris, and Bright 8/8/2004](#)) American intelligence agents find what they later call a “treasure trove” of information in Noor Khan’s computers and documents. ([CNN 8/2/2004](#)) Khan is a communications hub of sorts for al-Qaeda. He is in frequent contact with dozens of other al-Qaeda terrorists around the world and passing messages back and forth from more senior al-Qaeda operatives. Former National Security Council official Gideon Rose will later say, “It is obviously a very serious victory. It is obvious that there is a real find here.” ([Burke, Harris, and Bright 8/8/2004](#)) Khan, who speaks fluent English, is not just a center for expediting clandestine communications between al-Qaeda leaders and their underlings, but also handles and collates documents, reports, maps, and other information, and sometimes performs his own intelligence-gathering, usually on trips to Britain. ([Moreau, Hussain, and Yousafzai 8/8/2004](#)) Khan’s computer contains detailed surveillance information about five US buildings—the Stock Exchange and

Citigroup's headquarters in New York City, the Prudential building in Newark, and the International Monetary Fund and World Bank headquarters in Washington—all possible targets for future al-Qaeda attacks, though the information is all from 2000 and 2001. Other sites in New York City and San Francisco are mentioned, and meticulous information about London's Heathrow Airport is also found. Pakistani intelligence officials believe that the information indicates a “present” threat, and so inform their US counterparts. Later in the month, the Pakistanis convince Khan to “turn,” or become a double agent. Khan will subsequently send e-mails to dozens of operatives all requesting that they contact him immediately (see [July 24-25, 2004](#)). ([Burke, Harris, and Bright 8/8/2004](#))

July 16, 2004: 9/11 Commission Chairman's Comments Lead to Flurry of Reporting on Iran, None on Pakistan

Shortly before the 9/11 Commission is due to release its final report (see [July 22, 2004](#)), Commission Chairman Thomas Kean says, “We believe. . . that there were a lot more active contacts, frankly, [between al-Qaeda and] Iran and with Pakistan than there were with Iraq.” ([Zagorin and Klein 7/16/2004](#)) The US media immediately runs prominent stories on the Commission's evidence regarding Iran and nearly completely ignores evidence regarding Pakistan. The Commission's final report mentions that around ten of the hijackers passed through Iran in late 2000 and early 2001. At least some Iranian officials turned a blind eye to the passage of al-Qaeda agents, but there was no evidence that the Iranian government had any foreknowledge or involvement in the 9/11 plot. ([Zagorin and Klein 7/16/2004](#); [Reuters 7/18/2004](#)) In the wake of these findings, President Bush states of Iran, “As to direct connections with September 11, we're digging into the facts to determine if there was one.” This puts Bush at odds with his own CIA, which has seen no Iran-9/11 ties. ([Chen and Miller 7/20/2004](#)) Bush has long considered Iran part of his “axis of evil,” and there has been talk of the US attacking or overthrowing the Iranian government. ([Reuters 7/18/2004](#)) Provocative articles appear, such as one in the Daily Telegraph titled, “Now America Accuses Iran of Complicity in World Trade Center Attack.” ([Coman 7/18/2004](#)) Yet, while this information on Iran makes front page news in most major newspapers, evidence of a much stronger connection between Pakistan and 9/11 is nearly completely ignored. For instance, only UPI reports on a document suggesting high-level Pakistani involvement in the 9/11 attacks that is revealed this same week. ([de Borchgrave 7/22/2004](#)) Furthermore, the 9/11 Commission's final report will contain almost nothing on Pakistan's ties to al-Qaeda, despite evidence given to the Commission that, according to one commissioner speaking to the Los Angeles Times, showed that Pakistan was “up to their eyeballs” in intrigue with al-Qaeda. ([Meyer 7/16/2004](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004](#))

July 17, 2004: Bush defends claims of relationship between Iraq and al-Qaeda

President Bush forcefully disputes statements by the 9/11 Commission (see [July 12, 2004](#)) that there was no evidence of collaboration between Iraq and al-Qaeda. “The reason I keep insisting that there was a relationship between Iraq and Saddam and al-Qaeda, because there was a relationship between Iraq and al-Qaeda,” Bush says. ([CNN 6/17/2004](#); [Milbank 6/18/2004](#))

Shortly before July 22, 2004: 9/11 Commission Debates Referring Military and Aviation Officials to Justice Department for Criminal Investigation

Towards the end of its tenure, the ten members of the 9/11 Commission secretly meet to discuss whether military and aviation officials deliberately misled them and the public. For over two years following 9/11, NORAD and the FAA had given information in testimony and media appearances later found to be incorrect. Authorities claimed that America’s air defenses reacted quickly on 9/11, with fighters launched in response to the last two hijackings and ready to shoot down Flight 93 if it threatened Washington, DC. Yet audiotapes from the FAA and NORAD obtained by the commission under subpoena showed that the military never had any of the hijacked airliners in its sights and only became aware of Flight 93 after it crashed. John Farmer, a senior counsel to the commission, says the military’s original story was “a whole different order of magnitude than spin. It simply wasn’t true.” The commissioners debate whether to refer the matter to the Justice Department for criminal investigation, but as a compromise they instead refer it to the inspectors general for the Pentagon and the Transportation Department (which includes the FAA). The Pentagon inspector general’s office will issue a secret report to Congress in May 2005, blaming the inaccuracies partly on “inadequate forensic capabilities,” including poor log keeping at the military air traffic control centers (see [May 27, 2005](#)). However, Farmer and other commission staff will later point out that the military had already reviewed the NORAD audiotapes before its officials gave their inaccurate testimonies. The 9/11 Commission’s concerns over whether it was deliberately misled will only come to light in news reports in August 2006. Thomas Kean, its former chairman, will say, “We to this day don’t know why NORAD told us what they told us. It was just so far from the truth.” ([Bronner 8/1/2006](#); [Eggen 8/2/2006](#); [Shenon and Dwyer 8/5/2006](#)) The Transportation Department’s inspector general’s office will issue its report in response to the commission’s referral in September 2006 (see [September 1, 2006](#)).

July 22, 2004: 9/11 Commission Finds No Insider Trading

In a footnote contained in its Final Report, the 9/11 Commission dismissed allegations of insider trading in the days preceding 9/11. According to the Final Report, the put options of the parent companies of United Airlines were placed by a “US-based institutional investor with no conceivable ties to al-Qaeda” “as part of a trading strategy that also included buying 115,000 shares of American on September 10.” With respect to the highly suspicious trading on the parent company of American Airlines, the Commission

stated that much of the trades were “traced to a specific US-based options trading newsletter, faxed to its subscribers on Sunday, September 9, which recommended these trades.” According to the Commission, “The SEC and the FBI, aided by other agencies and the securities industry, devoted enormous resources to investigating this issue, including securing the cooperation of many foreign governments. These investigators have found that the apparently suspicious consistently proved innocuous.” ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 499](#))

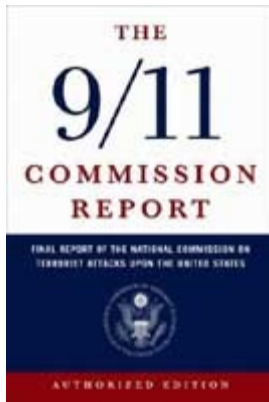
July 22, 2004: Evidence the ISI Was ‘Fully Involved’ in the 9/11 Plot Is Ignored

UPI reports that the 9/11 Commission has been given a document from a high-level, publicly anonymous source claiming that the Pakistani “ISI was fully involved in devising and helping the entire [9/11 plot].” The document blames Gen. Hamid Gul, a former ISI Director, as being a central participant in the plot. It notes that Gul is a self-avowed “admirer” of bin Laden. An anonymous, ranking CIA official says the CIA considers Gul to be “the most dangerous man” in Pakistan. A senior Pakistani political leader says, “I have reason to believe Hamid Gul was Osama bin Laden’s master planner.” The document further suggests that Pakistan’s appearance of fighting al-Qaeda is merely an elaborate charade, and top military and intelligence officials in Pakistan still closely sympathize with bin Laden’s ideology. ([de Borchgrave 7/22/2004](#)) However, the 9/11 Commission final report released a month later will fail to mention any of this. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004](#))

July 22, 2004: Prominent Figures See Ties Between the ISI, 9/11, and Even the CIA

Michael Meacher, a British member of Parliament, and a cabinet minister in Tony Blair’s government until 2003, writes in the Guardian, “Significantly, [Saeed] Sheikh is... the man who, on the instructions of General Mahmood Ahmed, the then head of Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), wired \$100,000 before the 9/11 attacks to Mohamed Atta, the lead hijacker. It is extraordinary that neither Ahmed nor Sheikh have been charged and brought to trial on this count. Why not?” Daniel Ellsberg, the “Pentagon Papers” whistleblower during the Nixon presidency, states in the same article, “It seems to me quite plausible that Pakistan was quite involved in [9/11]... To say Pakistan is, to me, to say CIA because... it’s hard to say that the ISI knew something that the CIA had no knowledge of.” ([Meacher 7/22/2004](#))

July 22, 2004: 9/11 Commission’s Final Report is Released; Conclusions are ‘Gentle’ on Bush Administration



The 9/11 Commission's final report. *[Source: 9/11 Commission]* The 9/11 Commission completes its work and releases its final report. They blame incompetence for the reason why the US government did not prevent the attack. The Washington Post summarizes the report, "The US government was utterly unprepared on Sept. 11, 2001, to protect the American people from al-Qaeda terrorists." ([Eggen 7/23/2004](#)) The report itself states, "We believe the 9/11 attacks revealed four kinds of failures: in imagination, policy, capabilities, and management." ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004](#)) The Washington Post reports, "Though openly dreaded for months by many Republicans and quietly feared by the White House, the report was much gentler on the Bush administration than they feared. Rather than focus criticism on the Bush administration, the commission spread the blame broadly and evenly across two administrations, the FBI, and Congress." ([Milbank and Allen 7/23/2004](#)) More to the point, as former counterterrorism "tsar" Richard Clarke notes in a New York Times editorial, "Honorable Commission, Toothless Report," because the commission wanted a unanimous report from a bipartisan group, "it softened the edges and left it to the public to draw many conclusions." ([Clarke 7/25/2004](#)) The Washington Post comments, "In many respects, the panel's work has been closer to the fact-finding, conspiracy-debunking Warren Commission of the mid-1960s, which investigated the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, than to the reform-oriented Church Commission, which exposed assassination plots and CIA abuses during the mid-1970s." ([Eggen and Coll 7/18/2004](#))

July 24, 2004: 9/11 Commission Report Fails to Mention Possible ISI Connections to 9/11

Despite previous leaks to the media showing the 9/11 Commission was given information showing Pakistani officials were "up to their eyeballs" in collaboration with the Taliban and al-Qaeda before 9/11 ([Turan 6/14/2004](#)), and even reports of a document given to the commission claiming the "ISI was fully involved in devising and helping the entire [9/11 plot]" ([de Borchgrave 7/22/2004](#)), the 9/11 Commission's Final Report released on this day rarely mentions the ISI at all. The only significant mention is a brief comment that the ISI was the Taliban's "primary patron." ISI Director Lt. Gen. Mahmood Ahmed is mentioned only twice, both in the context of post-9/11 diplomacy. Saeed Sheikh is not mentioned at all. The report notes that details of the 9/11 plot were widely known by the Taliban leadership, but fails to consider if the Taliban shared that knowledge or

involvement with their “primary patron.” ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004](#)) Indeed, far from criticizing Pakistan, the commission praises the country for its support in the war on terrorism, and suggests that the US should greatly increase its foreign aid there. ([Associated Press 7/22/2004](#))

July 24-25, 2004: Al-Qaeda Communications Node Is Turned, He Leads to Dozens of Operatives Around World

On July 13, 2004, a young Pakistani al-Qaeda operative named Muhammad Naeem Noor Khan was arrested in Pakistan (see [July 13, 2004](#)). US intelligence agents find what they later call a “treasure trove” of information in Noor Khan’s computers and documents. ([CNN 8/2/2004](#)) They realize that Khan has served as a communications hub of sorts for al-Qaeda. He is in frequent contact with dozens of other al-Qaeda terrorists around the world and passing messages back and forth from more senior al-Qaeda operatives. Intelligence agents quickly realize that, through Khan, they can penetrate deep into the core of al-Qaeda’s current operations. Around the weekend of July 24-25, the Pakistanis convince Khan to “turn,” or become a double agent. Khan sends e-mails to dozens of activists in Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, and other countries. He requests that they contact him immediately and reveal where they are. As the emails come back, intelligence agents all over the world go into action to monitor those who have replied to Khan. ([Burke, Harris, and Bright 8/8/2004](#)) Newsweek later reports that he sends e-mails to at least six contacts in the US, but the results of this are unknown. A senior US intelligence official confirms that Khan contacted people in the US, but believes number is less than six. ([Moreau, Hussain, and Yousafzai 8/8/2004](#)) Some of Khan’s contacts are quickly arrested, including Ahmed Khalfan Ghailani, a Tanzanian wanted since 1998 for his role in the bombing of the US embassy in his home country (see [July 25-29, 2004](#)). ([Suskind 2006](#)) Some communications take time to reach him. He is sometimes sent handwritten notes or computer discs from the mountains where bin Laden and other top leaders are hiding out. These are delivered by secretive relays of couriers who never see each other, using dead drops to avoid being traced. Other messages come from far-flung intermediaries who forward e-mail without knowing what it means, where it is going, or who is sending it. ([Moreau, Hussain, and Yousafzai 8/8/2004](#)) However, on August 1, Bush administration officials leak Noor Khan’s name to the press and the New York Times prints his name one day later. This only gives one week for the sting operation to work. Intelligence officials are crushed the operation has to end before it could expose many more al-Qaeda operatives (see [August 2, 2004](#)).

July 25-29, 2004: Al-Qaeda Suspect Arrested in Pakistan; Some Allege Announcement Is Timed for Political Effect



Ahmed Khalfan Ghailani. *[Source: FBI]* Ahmed Khalfan

Ghailani, a high-level al-Qaeda operative from Tanzania suspected of participating in the 1998 bombings of US embassies in East Africa, is captured in Gujrat, Pakistan, after a violent standoff with Pakistani police. ([CNN 8/3/2004](#)) Ghailani's arrest is publicly announced on July 29, four days later. The announcement by Pakistan's Interior Minister Faisal Hayat is made in an unusual late-night press conference that takes place just hours before John Kerry accepts the Democratic nomination for president. ([Haqqani 8/17/2004](#)) Pakistani authorities say the announcement of Ghailani's arrest was delayed four days because of the need to confirm his identity before making the proclamation. ([BBC 7/30/2004](#)) But former Pakistani official Husain Haqqani later claims the announcement was timed to upstage the Kerry speech. ([Haqqani 8/17/2004](#); [United States Conference on International Religious Freedom 6/30/2005](#)) An article in the New Republic published earlier in the month reported that the Bush administration was asking Pakistan to make high-profile arrests of al-Qaeda suspects during the Democratic National Convention in order to redirect US media attention from the nomination of John Kerry (see [July 8, 2004](#)). ([Judis, Ackerman, and Ansari 7/29/2004](#)) John Judis, who co-wrote the article predicting such an arrest, says the day after the arrest is announced, "Well, the latest development pretty much confirms what we wrote in the article, which is that there was pressure for Pakistan to produce a high-value target during the last 10 days of July and to announce that arrest." He also asks why is it "they announced [the arrest] at all? Because when you have somebody who's been in hiding since 1998, they have an enormous amount of information and contacts. By announcing this guy's arrest, what you do is you warn off everybody who's been associated with him from the last five or six years. You tell them that they better get their act together or they are going to be found. So, there's some, really a lot of questions of why they announced this thing when they did.... It may be in this case that we—that we, and the Pakistanis got somebody and prematurely announced this person's arrest in order to have an electoral impact." ([Democracy Now! 7/30/2004](#))

July 29, 2004: FBI Letter Vindicates Many of Whistleblower Sibel Edmonds' Allegations

A letter by FBI Director Robert Mueller regarding FBI whistleblower Sibel Edmonds is leaked to the media. Edmonds has made some very serious allegations about the FBI, including claims of important missed 9/11 warnings and the existence of a foreign spy ring inside US government agencies. Mueller's letter reveals that a highly classified Justice Department report on Edmonds has concluded that her allegations "were at least a contributing factor in why the FBI terminated her services." This report also criticizes the FBI's failure to adequately pursue her allegations of espionage. An anonymous official states that the report concludes that some of her allegations were shown to be true, others cannot be corroborated because of a lack of evidence, and none of her accusations were disproved. ([Lichtblau 7/29/2004](#))

July 30, 2004: Senator Mark Dayton Says NORAD and FAA Lied About 9/11 Failures



Senator Mark Dayton. [*Source: Publicity photo*]

Senator Mark Dayton (D) charges that NORAD and the FAA have covered up "catastrophic failures" that left the nation vulnerable during the 9/11 hijackings. He says, "For almost three years now, NORAD officials and FAA officials have been able to hide their critical failures that left this country defenseless during two of the worst hours in our history." He notes major discrepancies between various accounts and chronologies given by officials. He says NORAD officials "lied to the American people, they lied to Congress and they lied to your 9/11 Commission to create a false impression of competence, communication and protection of the American people." He calls the FAA's and NORAD's failures "the most gross incompetence and dereliction of responsibility and negligence that I've ever, under those extreme circumstances, witnessed in the public sector." He says that he grew upset about these failures after staying up late and reading the 9/11 Commission's final report. ([Gordon 7/30/2004](#))

Late July 2004: Reporters Test US Airport Security by Successfully Shipping Uranium Through It

ABC News tests US airport security by successfully shipping fifteen pounds of depleted uranium in a lead-lined steel pipe from the Jakarta, Indonesia, airport to Los Angeles. Indonesia is a hotbed of al-Qaeda and Islamist terrorist activity. It goes through successfully. The Department of Homeland Security, instead of re-examining its airport security protocols, will investigate ABC News and threaten criminal charges. ([Carter 2004, pp. 16](#))

August 2004: Criticism of the Homeland Security Terror Alert System

In early August 2004, Bush administration officials make multiple television appearances to defend increased alert levels in three cities during the previous week (see [August 1, 2004](#)). They also highlight the administration's focus on terror threats. National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice says "You have to go out and warn. You have a duty to warn." New York mayor Rudy Giuliani, appearing on the same program, says that he takes the warnings "very seriously," adding that they "helped to make us even more alert." However, retired General Wesley Clark, former NATO supreme commander and Democratic presidential nominee, says that the way in which the warnings are used "undercut the credibility of the system." Former counterterrorism "tsar" Richard Clarke says the Bush administration's warning system is "a laughingstock" among state, local and business officials he has talked to. He says that Secretary of Homeland Security Tom Ridge "is not a good spokesman for this issue. When he says things like 'Here's a warning,' then in the next breath says the president is doing a great job, that just raises suspicions." ([CNN 8/9/2004](#)) Criticism of the terror alert system is wide-ranging. Robert Butterworth, a trauma psychologist in Los Angeles, says the alert system creates "anticipatory anxiety," in which unnecessary fear is spread among the public. Others believe that the very nature of the system is counter-productive. Robert Pfaltzgraff, a security expert at Tufts University, says that the system could alert terrorists to the information discovered by US officials and could jeopardize sources. The alerts could also be used by terrorists to mislead US officials. "Everyone is looking at truck bombs, car bombs, and suicide bombers," says Randall Larsen, CEO and founder of Homeland Security Associates; "How about if they planned a different kind of attack?" An increase in the alert level could also be seen as a challenge by a dedicated terrorist cell. "There's going to be a core group of people who want to do it in any event, and might even view it is a dare to see if they can actually do it," says Juliette Kayyem, a homeland security specialist at Harvard University. "Basically it's been a failed system so far." ([Miller 8/4/2004](#))

August 1, 2004: FBI Whistleblower Sends Scathing Letter to Chairman of 9/11 Commission

Sibel Edmonds writes a blistering critique of the 9/11 Commission's final report in a letter to the commission's chairman Thomas Kean. She says the commission failed to investigate and report the information she provided in February (see [February 11, 2004](#))

regarding the problems she witnessed while working as a contract translator in the FBI's translation unit. She also explains why she thinks the attacks were not stopped and why the government will not prevent future attacks. "If Counterintelligence receives information that contains money laundering, illegal arms sale, and illegal drug activities, directly linked to terrorist activities; and if that information involves certain nations, certain semi-legit organizations, and ties to certain lucrative or political relations in this country, then, that information is not shared with Counterterrorism, regardless of the possible severe consequences. In certain cases, frustrated FBI agents cited 'direct pressure by the State Department,' and in other cases 'sensitive diplomatic relations' is cited.... Your hearings did not include questions regarding these unspoken and unwritten policies and practices. Despite your full awareness and understanding of certain criminal conduct that connects to certain terrorist related activities, committed by certain US officials and high-level government employees, you have not proposed criminal investigations into this conduct, although under the laws of this country you are required to do so. How can budget increases address and resolve these problems, when some of them are caused by unspoken practices and unwritten policies?" ([Edmonds 8/1/2004](#))

August 1, 2004: Terror Alert Issued Using Old Information; Alleged to be Politically Motivated

The Bush administration issues a terror alert in the wake of the Democratic presidential convention, which ended on July 29, 2004. New Code Orange alerts are put into effect for New York City, Newark, and Washington, DC. Homeland Security Director Tom Ridge says, "Now this afternoon, we do have new and unusually specific information about where al-Qaeda would like to attack.... Compared to previous threat reporting, these intelligence reports have provided a level of detail that is very specific. The quality of this intelligence, based on multiple reporting streams in multiple locations, is rarely seen and it is alarming in both the amount and specificity of the information.... As of now, this is what we know: reports indicate that al-Qaeda is targeting several specific buildings, including the International Monetary Fund and World Bank in the District of Columbia; Prudential Financial in Northern New Jersey; and Citigroup buildings and the New York Stock Exchange in New York." ([Department of Homeland Security 8/1/2004](#); [Eggen and Priest 8/3/2004](#)) But Ridge fails to mention that the so-called "casing disks" are from 2000 and 2001, nor does he discuss the fact that the decision on whether to issue the alerts had been hotly debated by officials over the weekend. Within 24 hours, the age of the intelligence is leaked, causing a controversy about the merit and urgency of the orange alert. ([Suskind 2006, pp. 325-326](#)) The next day it will be revealed that the warning was based on information from the computer of recently captured al-Qaeda operative Muhammad Naeem Noor Khan (see [August 2, 2004](#)). President Bush and his top advisors learned of the arrest and subsequent "turning" of Noor Khan just the day before. They decide to publicize an alert based on data captured with Noor Khan, even though doing so could jeopardize a sting operation launched just days earlier in which Noor Khan is contacting dozens of al-Qaeda operatives around the world (see [July 24-25, 2004](#)). ([Burke, Harris, and Bright 8/8/2004](#)) But even though Khan was arrested just weeks before, one senior law enforcement official who was briefed on the alert says,

“There is nothing right now that we’re hearing that is new. Why did we go to this level?... I still don’t know that.” Homeland Security officials admit that that there is no indication that any terrorist action was imminent. “What we’ve uncovered is a collection operation as opposed to the launching of an attack,” says one. However, administration officials insist that even three-year-old intelligence, when coupled with other information about al-Qaeda’s plans to attack the US, justifies the security response in the three cities. President Bush says of the alerts, “It’s serious business. I mean, we wouldn’t be, you know, contacting authorities at the local level unless something was real.” A senior counterterrorism official says, “Most of the information is very dated but you clearly have targets with enough specificity, and that pushed it over the edge. You’ve got the Republican convention coming up, the Olympics, the elections.... I think there was a feeling that we should err on the side of caution even if it’s not clear that anything is new.” ([Eggen and Priest 8/3/2004](#)) Former Democratic presidential candidate Howard Dean says he worries “every time something happens that’s not good for President Bush, he plays this trump card, which is terrorism. It’s just impossible to know how much of this is real and how much of this is politics, and I suspect there’s some of both.” But conservatives defend the alert and Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry swiftly moves to disassociate his campaign from Dean’s remarks. ([Conason 8/4/2007](#)) Author William Rivers Pitt points out that Laura Bush and daughters Barbara and Jenna make high-profile visits to the Citigroup Center in New York City on the first day of Ridge’s new orange alert. Noting this was one of the target buildings, Pitt asks, “George W. Bush sent his entire family to the very place that was supposedly about to be blown to smithereens?” Pitt concludes, “Bush and his administration officials are using terrorism—the fear of it, the fight against it—to manipulate domestic American politics. They are, as they have every day for almost three years now, using September 11 against their own people.” ([Pitt 8/4/2004](#))

August 2, 2004: Retiring Whistleblower Criticizes FBI

FBI agent Mike German quits the FBI and becomes a whistleblower against the bureau. He claims that FBI superiors committed illegal acts to hinder his investigation into terrorism in Florida (see [September 2002](#)). He complains, “What’s so frustrating to me is that what I hear the FBI saying every day on TV when I get home, about how it’s remaking itself to fight terrorism, is not the reality of what I saw every day in the field.” He also says, “Opportunities to initiate proactive investigations that might prevent terrorist acts before they occur, which is purported to be the FBI’s number one priority, continue to be lost, yet no one is held accountable.” He cites “a continuing failure in the FBI’s counterterrorism program” which is “not the result of a lack of intelligence, but a lack of action.” ([Lichtblau 8/2/2004](#))

August 2, 2004: Bush Officials Leak Name of Cooperating Al-Qaeda Operative, Ruining Investigations



Muhammad Naeem Noor Khan. [Source: BBC]

The New York Times reveals the identity of al-Qaeda operative Muhammad Naeem Noor Khan. Bush administration officials allegedly revealed his name to the Times in an attempt to defend a controversial US terror alert issued the day before (see [August 1, 2004](#)). ([Associated Press 8/10/2004](#); [Suskind 2006, pp. 325-326](#)) Officials from the Department of Homeland Security apparently gave out the name without revealing that Khan had already been turned and was helping to catch other al-Qaeda operatives. ([Hasan 8/8/2004](#)) A few days later, National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice confirms that US officials named Khan to the reporters “on background.” ([Savage and Bender 8/10/2004](#)) But some days after that, anonymous Pakistani government sources will claim that Khan’s name was initially leaked by Pakistani officials. ([Haqqani 8/17/2004](#)) Middle East expert Juan Cole suggests both accounts have merit. In the hours after the August 1 terror alert that was based on information secured from Khan’s computer, reporters scramble to determine the source of the alert. One reporter learns of the Khan arrest from a CIA analyst, though the analyst refuses to give out any names. Cole believes that New York Times reporter David Rohde then acquires Khan’s name from his Pakistani sources and confirms it through US sources at the Department of Homeland Security. ([Cole 8/19/2004](#)) Khan, an al-Qaeda computer expert, was arrested in Pakistan on July 13 and quickly began cooperating with investigators. He started sending e-mails to other operatives around the world and asked them to report back in. As they replied, investigators began tracing their locations. But Khan’s name is revealed before his computer contacts could be fully exploited. Many al-Qaeda members, including some suspected plotters planning strikes on US targets, escape arrest because of the outing. One Pakistani official says, “Let me say that this intelligence leak jeopardized our plan and some al-Qaeda suspects ran away.” ([Associated Press 8/10/2004](#); [Suskind 2006, pp. 325-326](#)) Intelligence reports also indicate that the exposure of Khan makes al-Qaeda members more cautious in their electronic communications. Many cells abruptly move their hideouts, causing the US losing track of them. ([Grieve 8/9/2004](#); [Ridgeway 8/2/2005](#)) Some are critical about the leak of Khan’s name:

- Tim Ripley, a security expert who writes for Jane’s Defense publications, says, “The whole thing smacks of either incompetence or worse. You have to ask: what are they doing compromising a deep mole within al-Qaeda, when it’s so difficult to get these guys in there in the first place? It goes against all the rules of counterespionage, counterterrorism, running agents, and so forth. It’s not exactly cloak and dagger undercover work if it’s on the front pages every time there’s a development, is it?”
- British Home Secretary David Blunkett is openly contemptuous of the White House’s management of the information. “In the United States there is often high-profile

commentary followed, as in the current case, by detailed scrutiny, with the potential risk of ridicule. Is it really the job of a senior cabinet minister in charge of counter-terrorism to feed the media? To increase concern? Of course not. This is arrant nonsense.” ([Grieve 8/9/2004](#))

■Other high-level British officials are “dismayed by the nakedly political use made of recent intelligence breakthroughs both in the US and in Pakistan.” They complain that they had to act precipitously in arresting low-level al-Qaeda figures connected to Khan instead of using those suspects to ferret out more senior al-Qaeda figures. These officials are “dismayed by the nakedly political use made of recent intelligence breakthroughs both in the US and in Pakistan.” ([Conason 8/11/2004](#))

■Senator Charles Schumer (D-NY) writes in a letter to Bush officials, “I respectfully request an explanation [about] who leaked this Mr. Khan’s name, for what reason it was leaked, and whether the British and Pakistani reports that this leak compromised future intelligence activity are accurate.” ([Savage and Bender 8/10/2004](#))

■Senator George Allen (R-VA) says, “In this situation, in my view, they should have kept their mouth shut and just said, ‘We have information, trust us’.”

■([Lobe 8/10/2004](#))

■Middle East expert Juan Cole notes that the leak of Khan’s name forced the British to arrest 12 members of an al-Qaeda cell prematurely, allowing others to escape. “[T]his slip is a major screw-up that casts the gravest doubts on the competency of the administration to fight a war on terror. Either the motive was political calculation, or it was sheer stupidity. They don’t deserve to be in power either way.” ([Hasan 8/8/2004](#))

■Salon’s Dale Davis says, “[S]adly, the damage [the Bush administration’s] machinations have caused to the goal of defeating al-Qaeda will be measured in the loss of the young American servicemen and women who carry the burden of their failed policies.” ([Davis 8/13/2004](#))

August 3, 2004: 7/7 London Bombers Stay Free Because of US Outing of Al-Qaeda Operative



Mohammad Sidique Khan. [*Source: London Times*] British agents are forced to arrest about a dozen of low-level suspected al-Qaeda operatives as a result of the August 1, 2004, outing of Muhammed Naeem Noor Khan by the US (see [August 2, 2004](#)). One important figure, Dhiren Barot, is among the arrested (see [August 3, 2004](#)). But the British are forced to move before they are ready, and many higher-level al-Qaeda operatives in Britain, including three of the 2005 London bombers (see [July 7, 2005](#))—

Mohammed Sidique Khan, Hasib Mir Hussain, and Magdy El Nashar—escape the hastily formed dragnet (see [August 3, 2004](#)). ([Ross 7/14/2005](#)) Sidique Khan will be able to later complete the planning and execution of the July 7, 2005, London bombings (see [July 7, 2005](#)). Sidique Khan is connected to at least one of the suspects arrested by British authorities, but because of the unexpected outing of Noor Khan, he and other al-Qaeda bombers slip through the British nets. ([Ross 7/14/2005](#); [Israel National News \(Arutz Shiva\) 7/19/2005](#)) Sidique Khan and other London bombing suspects had started working on a London bomb plot in 2003. Noor Khan's computer shows that there were plans for a coordinated series of attacks on the London subway system, as well as on financial buildings in both New York and Washington. Alexis Debat, a former official in the French Defense Ministry, will later say, "There's absolutely no doubt [Sidique Khan] was part of an al-Qaeda operation aimed at not only the United States but [Britain].... It is very likely this group was activated... after the other group was arrested." ([Ross 7/14/2005](#))

August 3, 2004: Al-Qaeda Suspect Arrested in Britain; Suspected of Planning Major Attacks



Dhiren Barot. [*Source: London Metropolitan Police*]/Dhiren

Barot, a Londoner of Indian descent who converted to Islam and fought in Afghanistan and Pakistan, is arrested along with about a dozen other al-Qaeda suspects by British authorities (see [August 3, 2004](#)). Barot, who uses a number of pseudonyms, including Abu Eissa al-Hindi, will be charged with several crimes surrounding his plans to launch attacks against British and US targets. Barot's plans were discovered in a computer owned by al-Qaeda operative Muhammad Naeem Noor Khan, who was arrested in July 2004 and was helping US intelligence until his outing by US and Pakistani officials on August 2, 2004 (see [August 2, 2004](#)). Though Barot is not believed to be a high-level al-Qaeda operative, he has connections to some of al-Qaeda's most notorious leaders, including bin Laden and 9/11 plotter Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM), who, according to the 9/11 Commission, dispatched him to "case" targets in New York City in 2001. Under the alias Issa al-Britani, he is known to have been sent to Malaysia in late 1999 or very early 2000 by KSM to meet with Hambali, the head of the al-Qaeda affiliate Jemaah Islamiyah. According to the commission report, Barot may have given Hambali the names of 9/11 hijackers Khalid Almihdhar and Nawaf Alhazmi. Barot may have traveled to Malaysia with Khallad bin Attash. Bin Attash is believed to be one of the planners behind the October 2000 bombing of the USS *Cole* (see [October 12, 2000](#)). Barot's trip to Malaysia came just days before the well-documented January 2000 al-Qaeda summit

where early plans for the 9/11 bombings were hatched (see January 5-8, 2000), though US officials do not believe that Barot was present at that meeting. British authorities believe that Barot was part of an al-Qaeda plan to launch a mass terror attack using chemical and/or radioactive weapons. Barot and other suspects arrested were, according to Western officials, in contact with al-Qaeda operatives in Pakistan, who themselves were communicating with bin Laden and other top al-Qaeda leaders as recently as July 2004. ([Isikoff and Hosenball 8/20/2004](#)) Barot's plans seem to have focused more actively on British targets, including London's subway system. In November 2006, Barot will be convicted of conspiracy to commit murder and other crimes, and eventually sentenced to thirty years in prison by a British court. ([BBC 11/7/2006](#); [BBC 5/16/2007](#))

August 4, 2004: Pakistan Continues to Support the Taliban

The New York Times reports that, "For months Afghan and American officials have complained that even while Pakistan cooperates in the fight against al-Qaeda, militant Islamic groups there are training fighters and sending them into Afghanistan to attack American and Afghan forces." One prisoner captured by the Afghan government says Pakistan is allowing militant groups to train and organize insurgents to fight in Afghanistan. Groups designated as terrorist organizations by the US and/or Pakistan have simply changed names and continue to operate freely. An anonymous Western diplomat says, "When you talk about Taliban, it's like fish in a barrel in Pakistan. They train, they rest there. They get support." The New York Times comments, "Western diplomats in Kabul and Pakistani political analysts have said that Pakistan has continued to allow the Taliban to operate to retain influence in Afghanistan." ([Gall 8/4/2004](#))

August 6, 2004: Clinton Questions Bush Prioritizing Iraq over Al-Qaeda

Former president Bill Clinton questions the priorities of the Bush administration's "war on terror," asking why the administration is issuing groundless terror alerts "[b]ased on four-year-old information" (see [August 1, 2004](#)). He asks rhetorically, "Now, who is the threat from? Iraq? Saddam Hussein? No. From bin Laden. And al-Qaeda. How do we know about the threat? Because the Pakistanis found this computer whiz [Muhammad Naeem Noor Khan and got his computer and gave it to us so it could be analyzed (see [August 2, 2004](#)). ... [W]e basically are dependent on [Pakistan] to find bin Laden...to break in and find the computer people and give it to us because we got all our resources somewhere else in Iraq." He continues to ask why Bush isn't focusing on bin Laden: "Why did we put our number one security threat in the hands of the Pakistanis with us playing a supporting role and put all of our military resources into Iraq, which was, I think, at best, our number five security threat[?] After the absence of a peace process in the Middle East, after the conflict between India and Pakistan and all the ties they had to Taliban, after North Korea and their nuclear program. In other words, how did we get to the point where we got 130,000 troops in Iraq and 15,000 in Afghanistan? It's like

saying... Okay, our big problem is bin Laden and al-Qaeda. We now know from the 9/11 Commission, again, that Saddam Hussein had nothing to do with it. Right? We now know that al-Qaeda is an ongoing continuing threat, even though when I was president we took down over 20 of their cells, they still had enough left to do 9/11, and since then, in the Bush years, they've taken down over 20 of their cells. But they're operating with impunity in that mountainous region going back and forth between Pakistan and Afghanistan and we have only 15,000 troops in that country....[W]e would have a better chance of catching them if we had 150,000 troops there rather than 15,000." Asked if the US could have captured bin Laden in the days and months after 9/11, he replies, "[W]e will never know if we could have gotten him because we didn't make it a priority...." ([Mansbridge 8/6/2004](#))

August 14, 2004: Evidence Mounts Afghan Drug Profits Help Fund Al-Qaeda, but US Troops Do Nothing

The Independent reports that "there is mounting evidence that [Afghanistan's] booming opium trade is funding terrorists linked to al-Qaeda." The governor of Kandahar, in a joint press conference with a US general, states, "One of the most important things prolonging terrorism is drugs. We are 100 percent sure that some of the top terrorists are involved in drug smuggling, and eradication of this industry would not only benefit Afghanistan but would be a step towards eradicating terrorism [worldwide]." The Independent comments, "Patrolling US troops routinely turn a blind eye to opium farming and trading, ignoring poppy fields, and have recruited warlords suspected of being drug dealers to fight al-Qaeda." Troops are explicitly told not to engage in drug eradication (see [November 2003](#)). It is believed that the US and allied military forces are overstretched in Afghanistan, and would face a violent backlash if they took more steps to confront drug trafficking. The Independent notes, "The drugs business is widely believed to have corrupted officials up to cabinet level, and many Afghans fear that they may have exchanged Taliban fundamentalism for rule by narco-mafias in the future." Defense Secretary Rumsfeld has raised the possibility of using the 17,000 US soldiers still stationed in Afghanistan to take a more active role against the drug trade. ([Meo 8/14/2004](#)) However, nine months later, no such change of policy will be evident. It will be reported that US and Afghan officials decided in late 2004 that a more aggressive anti-poppy effort is "too risky." ([Cloud and Gall 5/22/2005](#))

August 20, 2004: Salah Finally Arrested

Mohammad Salah, Mousa Abu Marzouk, and Abdelhaleem Ashqar are indicted on racketeering conspiracy charges. Salah and Ashqar are arrested. Marzouk, considered a high-ranking Hamas leader, is out of reach in Syria. Marzouk had been charged in 2002 on related matters (see [December 18, 2002-April 2005](#)). Ashqar was already under house arrest on related charges of contempt and obstruction of justice. The three are accused of using US bank accounts to launder millions of dollars to support Hamas. The indictment alleges the laundered money was used to pay for murders, kidnappings, assaults, and passport fraud. Many of the charges date to the early 1990s (see [1989-January 1993](#)) and

had been the subject of legal cases in 1998 and 2000 (see [June 9, 1998](#); [May 12, 2000-December 9, 2004](#)). ([Lichtblau 8/21/2004](#); [Associated Press 8/24/2004](#)) Salah and Ashqar had been living openly in the US for several years. The US had declared Salah a “designated global terrorist” in 1995 and he returned to Chicago in 1997 (see [February 1995](#)). The media reported on this in 2003 but they still were not arrested (see [June 2-5, 2003](#)). In 1993, Ashqar took part in a secret Hamas meeting in Philadelphia that was wiretapped by the FBI (see [October 1993](#)). ([Walter, Ross, and Sauer 6/12/2003](#); [Lichtblau 8/21/2004](#))

August 21, 2004: 9/11 Commission’s Terrorist Financing Conclusions at Odds with Media Accounts

The 9/11 Commission releases a report on terrorism financing. Its conclusions generally stand in complete contrast to a great body of material reported by the mainstream media, before and after this report. For instance, while the report does mention some terrorism-supporting organizations in great detail, such as the Global Relief Foundation or Al Barakaat, many seemingly important organizations are not mentioned a single time in either this report or the 9/11 Commission Final Report. The Commission fails to ever mention: BMI, Inc., Ptech, Al Taqwa Bank, Holy Land Foundation, InfoCom, International Islamic Relief Organization, Muslim World League, Muwafaq (Blessed Relief) Foundation, Quranic Literacy Institute, and the SAAR network or any entity within it. Additionally, important efforts to track terrorist financing such as Vulgar Betrayal and Operation Greenquest are not mentioned a single time. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 61](#); [9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 134-5](#)) Some select quotes from the report:

- “While the drug trade was an important source of income for the Taliban before 9/11, it did not serve the same purpose for al-Qaeda. Although there is some fragmentary reporting alleging that bin Laden may have been an investor, or even had an operational role, in drug trafficking before 9/11, this intelligence cannot be substantiated and the sourcing is probably suspect.” Additionally, there is “no evidence of [al-Qaeda] drug funding after 9/11.” ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 22-23](#))
- “[C]ontrary to some public reports, we have not seen substantial evidence that al-Qaeda shares a fund-raising infrastructure in the United States with Hamas, Hezbollah, or Palestinian Islamic Jihad.” ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 24](#))
- “The United States is not, and has not been, a substantial source of al-Qaeda funding, but some funds raised in the United States may have made their way to al-Qaeda and its affiliated groups. A murky US network of jihadist (holy war) supporters has plainly provided funds to foreign mujaheddin with al-Qaeda links. Still, there is little hard evidence of substantial funds from the United States actually going to al-Qaeda. A CIA expert on al-Qaeda financing believes that any money coming out of the United States for al-Qaeda is ‘minuscule.’” ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 24](#))
- The notion “that bin Laden was a financier with a fortune of several hundred million dollars” is an “urban legend.” “[S]ome within the government continued to cite the \$300 million figure well after 9/11, and the general public still [incorrectly] gives credence to the notion of a ‘multimillionaire bin Laden.’” ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 20, 34](#))

(A few months after this report, it will be reported that in 2000 over \$250 million passed through a bank account jointly controlled by bin Laden and another man (see [2000](#)).)

■“To date, the US government has not been able to determine the origin of the money used for the 9/11 attacks.... Ultimately the question of the origin of the funds is of little practical significance.” ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 144](#))

■“The US intelligence community has attacked the problem [of terrorist funding] with imagination and vigor” since 9/11. ([Shenon 8/22/2004](#))

■According to the New York Times, the report “largely exonerate[s] the Saudi government and its senior officials of long-standing accusations that they were involved in financing al-Qaeda terrorists.” ([Shenon 8/22/2004](#)) Author Douglas Farah comments on the Commission’s report, “The biggest hole is the complete lack of attention to the role the Muslim Brotherhood has played in the financing of al-Qaeda and other radical Islamist groups. While the ties are extensive on a personal level, they also pervade the financial structure of al-Qaeda.... According to sources who provided classified briefing to the Commission staff, most of the information that was provided was ignored.... [T]he Commission staff simply did not include any information that was at odds with the official line of different agencies.” ([Farah 8/27/2004](#))

August 21, 2004: 9/11 Commission Confused Over Hijackers’ ID Documents

The 9/11 Commission attempts to make a list of all identity documents obtained by the hijackers, but its account, contained mostly in its Terrorist Travel Monograph, may be incomplete:

■The Commission says several of the hijackers obtained USA ID cards in the summer of 2001 (see [July-August 2001](#)), although at least one, and possibly more of the cards is fake, and this is not mentioned by the Commission. According to it, Khalid Almihdhar, Nawaf Alhazmi, and Abdulaziz Alomari obtained their cards on July 10. However, the Commission gives conflicting dates for Salem Alhazmi, Majed Moqed, and Ahmed Alghamdi. For example, in one place it says Alghamdi got his card in July and in another it says he got it in August. At least one card, that of Khalid Almihdhar, is fake and ID forger Mohamed el-Atriss will be arrested after 9/11 and sentenced to jail for forging IDs for the hijackers (see [July-August 2001](#) and [November 2002-June 2003](#)). The Commission further says that the Alhazmi brothers’ cards were “found in the rubble at the Pentagon,” citing a US Secret Service report. Although an image of a damaged USA ID card belonging to Nawaf Alhazmi will be produced as evidence at the trial of Zacarias Moussaoui, according to the 9/11 Commission Salem Alhazmi was unable to produce any photo ID when checking in for his flight on 9/11 (see [7:25 a.m.-7:36 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), so it is unclear how his card came to be at the Pentagon. In addition, in the Commission’s Terrorist Travel Monograph, the mention of Salem Alhazmi’s card in the list of hijackers’ ID will be followed by a reference to an endnote. However, this endnote is missing; ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 27-29, 31-32, 34-44](#)); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#))

■FBI Director Robert Mueller will later say that the six hijackers who obtained USA ID cards plus Mohamed Atta obtained unspecified identification cards in Paterson, New

Jersey (see [July 2001](#)). However, it is unclear whether this statement refers to the USA ID cards, or a different set of ID cards not mentioned by the 9/11 Commission;

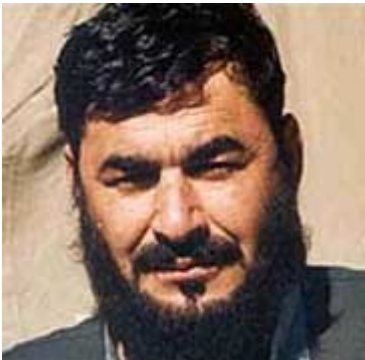
- The Commission will say that Satam al-Suqami did not obtain any ID document in the US, which is why he had to take his passport on his final flight. The passport was found shortly after the plane he was traveling on hit the WTC (see [September 12, 2001](#)). ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 27-29, 31-32, 34-44](#)) However, Florida media reported a man named Satam al Suqami obtained a Florida ID card on July 3, 2001, around the same time as several other hijackers obtained similar cards; ([Bousquet and Ulferts 9/16/2001](#))

- Ahmed Alhaznawi had a Florida's driver's license and two duplicates. Although the Commission mentions the original license and second duplicate, it does not mention the first one, issued on July 24, 2004. ([Ulferts 12/14/2001](#); [9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 28, 32, 33](#))

August 30, 2004: Half of New Yorkers Believe US Government Deliberately Failed to Act on 9/11 Foreknowledge

A recently conducted Zogby poll shows that “half (49.3 percent) of New York City residents and 41 percent of New York citizens overall say that some [US] leaders ‘knew in advance that attacks were planned on or around September 11, 2001, and that they consciously failed to act.’” Further, despite the recent completion of the 9/11 Commission investigation, 66 percent of New York City residents and 56 percent of New Yorkers want to see another full investigation of the “still unanswered questions” regarding 9/11. ([International 8/30/2004](#)) The poll is commissioned by the activist group 911Truth.org and is the first US poll to ask such a question. The Washington Post is the only major US newspaper to mention the poll results, and only mentions them as an aside in a longer article. No New York newspapers mention the results. ([Powell 9/1/2004](#))

Autumn 2004: US Misses Chance to Learn Secrets from Taliban's Top Drug Kingpin



Bashir Noorzai. [*Source: DEA*]Haji Bashir Noorzai, reputedly Afghanistan's biggest drug kingpin with ties to the Taliban and al-Qaeda, was arrested by US forces then inexplicably released in late 2001 (see [Late 2001](#)). He lives in Pakistan with the protection of the ISI, but in June 2004, the Bush administration adds his

name to a US government list of wanted drug figures. Concerned that he may eventually be arrested again, he agrees to hold secret talks with a FBI team to discuss a deal. According to author James Risen, “The message the Americans delivered to Noorzai was a simple one: you can keep on running, or you can come work with us. Cooperate, and tell us what you know about the Afghan drug business, al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and their financiers.” Arrangements are made for Noorzai to meet the FBI team in a hotel in the United Arab Emirates to finalize a deal. But the FBI team never arrives. According to Risen, “American sources add that the local CIA station in the UAE was so preoccupied with the war in Iraq that it was unable to devote any attention to the Noorzai case.” Noorzai eventually tires of waiting and returns to Pakistan. One US official familiar with the case says, “We let one of the big drug kingpins go, someone who was a key financier for al-Qaeda, someone who could help us identify al-Qaeda’s key financiers in the Gulf. It was a real missed opportunity. If the American people knew what was going on, they would go nuts.” ([Risen 2006, pp. 152-162](#); [Blanchard 1/25/2006](#))

September 2004: CIA Said to Have Less Operational Expertise on Al-Qaeda Now than on 9/11

Michael Scheuer, head of the CIA’s bin Laden unit from 1996 to 1999, complains, “In the CIA’s core, US-based bin Laden operational unit today there are fewer [operational] officers with substantive expertise on al-Qaeda than there were on 11 September 2001. There has been no systematic effort to groom al-Qaeda expertise among [operational] officers since 11 September... The excellent management team now running operations against al-Qaeda has made repeated, detailed, and on-paper pleas for more officers to work against the al-Qaeda—and have done so for years, not weeks or months—but have been ignored...” ([Atlantic Monthly 12/2004](#))

September 2, 2004: Bond Firm Sues Saudis For Allegedly Supporting 9/11 Attacks

Cantor Fitzgerald Securities, a bond-trading firm that lost 658 employees in the World Trade Center attacks, files a \$7 billion lawsuit against the government of Saudi Arabia for allegedly supporting al-Qaeda prior to 9/11. The lawsuit names dozens of other defendants, including many Saudi banks and Islamic charities. Many of the defendants had also been named in the still-pending \$300 billion Ron Motley lawsuit (see [August 15, 2002](#)). The Cantor Fitzgerald lawsuit claims the Saudi Arabian government “knew and intended that these Saudi-based charity and relief organization defendants would provide financial and material support and substantial assistance to al-Qaeda.... This uninterrupted financial and material support and substantial assistance enabled the al-Qaeda defendants to plan, orchestrate and carry out the Sept. 11 attacks.” ([Neumeister 9/3/2004](#))

September 3, 2004: Report: Israel Maintains 'Huge, Aggressive' Spy Operations Inside US

The Los Angeles Times reports that US officials claim, "Despite its fervent denials, Israel secretly maintains a large and active intelligence-gathering operation in the United States that has long attempted to recruit US officials as spies and to procure classified documents...." In turn, US agents have long monitored Israeli diplomats and agents in the US. An intelligence official who had recently left government says, "There is a huge, aggressive, ongoing set of Israeli activities directed against the United States.... Anybody who worked in counterintelligence in a professional capacity will tell you the Israelis are among the most aggressive and active countries targeting the United States.... The denials are laughable." The Times adds, "Current and former officials involved with Israel at the White House, CIA, State Department, and in Congress had similar appraisals, although not all were as harsh in their assessments." Officials note that Israel is considered a very close ally and is frequently given highly classified information. But it is also noted that US and Israeli intelligence agencies do not completely trust each other. ([Drogin and Miller 9/3/2004](#))

September 7, 2004: Senator Bob Graham Claims Cover Up of Saudi Connection to Two 9/11 Hijackers

Senator Bob Graham (D) alleges that the White House has covered up possible Saudi Arabian government connections to hijackers Nawaf Alhazmi and Khalid Almihdhar. In an interview to promote his new book entitled "Intelligence Matters," he contends that evidence relating to these two hijackers who lived in San Diego "present[s] a compelling case that there was Saudi assistance" to the 9/11 plot. He also concludes that President Bush directed the FBI "to restrain and obfuscate" investigations into these ties, possibly to protect US-Saudi relations. The San Diego Union-Tribune notes, "Graham co-chaired the exhaustive congressional inquiry into the Sept. 11 attacks and is privy to still-classified information about the probe." Graham claims that Omar al-Bayoumi and Osama Basnan are Saudi intelligence agents. He also claims that the FBI deliberately blocked his inquiry's attempts to interview Abdussattar Shaikh, the FBI asset who was a landlord to the above-mentioned hijackers (see [November 18, 2002](#)). The questions the inquiry wanted to ask Shaikh went unanswered because of FBI maneuvering. ([Graham and Nussbaum 2004](#); [Eckert 9/7/2004](#))

September 9, 2004: Car Bombing in Indonesia Said to Be Funded by Al-Qaeda



Damage to the Australian embassy.

[Source: Associated Press] A car bombing outside the Australian Embassy in Jakarta, Indonesia, kills ten people and injures about 200 more. Jemaah Islamiya, said to be the Southeast Asian arm of al-Qaeda, takes credit for the attack. A year later, a militant on trial for involvement in the attack claims that al-Qaeda funded the operation. ([Ressa 9/9/2004](#); [Reuters 8/2/2005](#))

September 10, 2004: Troubled Riggs Bank Added to Saudi 9/11 Lawsuit

Riggs Bank is added to the list of defendants in a 9/11 lawsuit filed on behalf of 9/11 victims' relatives (see [August 15, 2002](#)). The amended lawsuit alleges, "Riggs' constant failure to comply with banking oversight laws resulted in funds being forwarded from high risk Saudi Embassy accounts at Riggs Bank to at least two September 11 hijackers." ([Simpson 9/13/2004](#)) Riggs Bank is under investigation at the time and will later plead guilty to violating banking laws (see [March 29, 2005](#)). The bank also appears to have a long standing but murky relationship with the CIA (see [July 2003](#) and [December 31, 2004](#)).

September 11, 2004: Some US Officials Recommend Working with Muslim Brotherhood



Muslim Brotherhood logo. [Source: Muslim Brotherhood] The Washington Post reports that "Some federal agents worry that the Muslim Brotherhood has dangerous links to terrorism. But some US diplomats and intelligence officials believe its influence offers an opportunity for political engagement that could help isolate violent jihadists." The Post describes the Brotherhood as "a sprawling and secretive society with followers in more than 70 countries.... In some nations—Egypt, Algeria,

Syria, Sudan—the Brotherhood has fomented Islamic revolution. In the Palestinian territories, the Brotherhood created... Hamas, which has become known for its suicide bombings of Israelis. Yet it is also a sophisticated and diverse organization that appeals to many Muslims worldwide and sometimes advocates peaceful persuasion, not violent revolt. Some of its supporters went on to help found al-Qaeda, while others launched one of the largest college student groups in the United States.” A top FBI counterterrorism official says, “We see some sort of nexus, direct or indirect, to the Brotherhood, in ongoing [terrorism] cases.” A number of people connected to al-Qaeda, such as Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, Ayman al-Zawahiri, Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman, and Mohamed Atta, were members of the Brotherhood. Reportedly, “pockets” of US the government “have quietly advocated that the government reach out to the Brotherhood and its allies.” For instance, Reuel Marc Gerecht, a former CIA officer working with the neoconservative American Enterprise Institute, says, “Bin Laden-ism can only be gutted by fundamentalists.” But former CIA officer Graham Fuller says, “At high levels of the government, there’s no desire to go in the direction of dialogue. It’s still seen as fairly way out.” ([Mintz and Fatah 9/11/2004](#)) In 2005, it will be reported that some Muslim Brotherhood leaders created a plan in 1982 to infiltrate the West with the ultimate goal of subverting it and conquering it (see [December 1982](#)).

September 15, 2004: CIA Is Given Court Order to Preserve All Records about Treatment of Detainees



Alvin Hellerstein. [*Source: Associated Press*] In 2003, after reports began to surface that some detainees in US custody had been abused, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) filed a Freedom of Information Act request seeking records about the treatment of all detainees caught since 9/11 and held in US custody overseas. The ACLU eventually filed a lawsuit to get the records, and on September 15, 2004, judge Alvin Hellerstein orders the CIA and other government agencies to “produce or identify” all relevant documents by October 15, 2004. ([Dean 12/14/2007](#)) Hellerstein also rules that classified documents must be identified in a written log and the log must be submitted to him for review. In December 2004, the CIA and other agencies make public a huge amount of information but fail to inform the judge about the videotapes and other classified information (see [December 21, 2004](#)). Since that time, the case remains delayed with stays, extensions, and appeals. In December 2005, the CIA will destroy videotapes of the interrogations of at least two high-ranking al-Qaeda detainees (see [November 2005](#)). After the destruction of the videotapes is publicly revealed in

December 2007, the New York Times will comment on the ACLU case, “Some legal experts [say] that the CIA would have great difficulty defending what seemed to be a decision not to identify the tapes to the judge, and the subsequent decision to destroy the tapes.” ([Mazzetti 12/13/2007](#)) Legal analyst John Dean will later comment, “It is difficult to see why the CIA is, in fact, *not* in contempt, given the nature of the [ACLU] request and the judge’s order.” He will suggest that the case may represent the best chance to find out why and how the CIA destroyed the videotapes. ([Dean 12/14/2007](#))

September 16, 2004: Israelis Arrested on 9/11 Sue the US, Claiming Mistreatment and Torture

Four of the five Israelis arrested on 9/11 (see [3:56 p.m. September 11, 2001](#)), Paul and Sylvian Kurchel, Omer Marmari, and Vyron Shmuel, file a multimillion dollar lawsuit against the US Justice Department. They claim they were arrested illegally, then held without charge and interrogated and tortured for months. Their lawyer claims the case will serve as a venue to debunk theories that Israel was behind the 9/11 attacks. ([Yoaz 9/16/2004](#); [Jerusalem Post 9/16/2004](#)) Forward, a publication geared towards the Jewish population in the US, reported in 2002 that the FBI concluded at least two of the five were Mossad agents and that all were on a Mossad surveillance mission. ([Perelman 3/15/2002](#))

September 16, 2004: New Israeli Art Student Ring in Canada Has Unexplained Link to Islamic Fundamentalist Fundraising

In a curious echo of reports of an Israeli “art student spy ring” in the US before 9/11, it is reported that numerous young Israelis claiming to be from non-existent art schools in Israel are being arrested and deported for selling art in Canada. Unlike the earlier events in the US, there are no reports of government offices and workers being targeted. Rather, it appears to be a money making scam to sell cheap Asian art for vastly inflated prices in numerous Canadian cities. However, it is reported these Israelis “may be linked to a group fronting for Islamic fundamentalist fundraisers.” The nature and detail of the connection between the Israelis and Islamic fundamentalists is not explained in the newspaper accounts of this scam. ([Yoaz 9/16/2004](#); [Jerusalem Post 9/16/2004](#))

September 24, 2004: Porter Goss Sworn in as New CIA Director



Porter Goss. [Source: CIA] Porter Goss becomes the new CIA Director, replacing George Tenet (John McLaughlin served as interim director for a few months after Tenet's sudden resignation (see [June 3, 2004](#))). Goss was a CIA field agent, then a Republican Representative and co-chair of the 2002 9/11 Congressional Inquiry. ([Strobel and Landay 10/25/2004](#)) He took part in secret meetings with Pakistani ISI Director Mahmood Ahmed before 9/11 and on the morning of 9/11 itself (see [August 28-30, 2001](#)) (see [\(8:00 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). Despite some press reports that Mahmood directly ordered money to be sent to hijacker Mohamed Atta, there is virtually no mention of Mahmood or Pakistan in the Inquiry report that Goss co-chaired. Such issues appear to be forgotten by the US press, but the Times of India raises them when his nomination is announced. ([Rajghatta 8/10/2004](#)) During his confirmation hearings he pledged that he will be a nonpartisan CIA director, but he will purge the CIA of all but "true believers" in Bush's policies shortly after becoming director (see [November-December 2004](#)). ([Strobel and Landay 10/25/2004](#))

September 27, 2004: Bush Says 'Taliban No Longer Is in Existence'

President Bush, campaigning for reelection, says in a speech, "And as a result of the United States military, Taliban no longer is in existence. And the people of Afghanistan are now free." ([Bush 9/27/2004](#))

October 2004: Presidential Candidates Debate Tora Bora Battle; Evidence Supports Kerry's Position

In the 2004 presidential campaign, Democratic challenger Sen. John Kerry accuses the Bush administration of allowing bin Laden to escape Afghanistan in late 2001 by not sending enough US troops to contain him when he was trapped in the Tora Bora region. The New York Times publishes an op-ed by Gen. Tommy Franks, the former head of US Central Command. Franks writes, "On more than one occasion, Senator Kerry has referred to the fight at Tora Bora in Afghanistan during late 2001 as a missed opportunity for America. He claims that our forces had Osama bin Laden cornered and allowed him to escape. How did it happen? According to Mr. Kerry, we 'outsourced' the job to Afghan warlords. As commander of the allied forces in the Middle East, I was responsible for the operation at Tora Bora, and I can tell you that the senator's understanding of events

doesn't square with reality.... We don't know to this day whether Mr. bin Laden was at Tora Bora in December 2001. Some intelligence sources said he was; others indicated he was in Pakistan at the time; still others suggested he was in Kashmir. Tora Bora was teeming with Taliban and al-Qaeda operatives, many of whom were killed or captured, but Mr. bin Laden was never within our grasp." Franks is a vocal supporter of Bush's reelection. ([Franks 10/19/2004](#)) Shortly after Franks' comments, four Knight Ridder reporters who had been at Tora Bora during the battle revisit the issue. They discover that "Franks and other top officials ignored warnings from their own and allied military and intelligence officers that the combination of precision bombing, special operations forces, and Afghan forces that had driven the Taliban from northern Afghanistan might not work in the heartland of the country's dominant Pashtun tribe." ([Knight Ridder 10/30/2004](#)) Author Peter Bergen asserts, "There is plenty of evidence that bin Laden was at Tora Bora, and no evidence indicating that he was anywhere else at the time." Bergen cites after-action US intelligence reports and interviews with US counterterrorism officials that express confidence bin Laden was at Tora Bora. He notes that bin Laden discussed his presence at the Tora Bora battle in a audio message released in 2003. ([Bergen 10/28/2004](#)) In 2005, Gary Bernstein, who was in charge of an on-the-ground CIA team trying to find bin Laden, will claim that he gave Franks definitive evidence that bin Laden was trapped in Tora Bora (see [Late October-Early December 2001](#)). ([Spiegel 1/3/2006](#)) In 2006, former counterterrorism "tsar" Richard Clarke will comment, "Yes, we know [bin Laden] absolutely was there.... And yes, he did escape. And Gen. Franks and the president can deny it until the cows come home, but they made a mistake. They did let him go away." ([Clarke 6/20/2006](#)) In late 2006, it will be reported that the CIA possesses a video showing bin Laden walking out of Afghanistan at the end of the Tora Bora battle. It has not been reported if the CIA was aware of this video in 2004 or not (see [Mid-December 2001](#)).

October 2004: Harper's Magazine Cover Story Slams 9/11 Commission Report



The cover of Harper's Magazine, October 2004, depicting the whitewashing of the 9/11 Commission. [Source: *Harper's Magazine*] Bucking the trend of generally positive reviews of the 9/11 Commission's final report, Harper's Magazine publishes a cover story harshly criticizing the report. The story opines, "The plain, sad reality... is that The 9/11 Commission Report, despite the vast quantity of labor behind it, is a cheat and a fraud. It stands as a series of evasive maneuvers that infantilize the audience, transform candor into iniquity, and conceal realities that demand immediate inspection and confrontation.... In the course of blaming everybody a little, the

Commission blames nobody—blurs the reasons for the actions and hesitations of successive administrations, masks choices that, fearlessly defined, might actually have vitalized our public political discourse.” ([DeMott 10/2004](#))

Early October 2004: Veteran Military Intelligence Officer: Intelligence Value of Guantanamo Detainees ‘Wildly Exaggerated’

Lt. Col. Anthony Christino III, a 20-year military intelligence veteran who spent six months in 2003 working as “senior watch officer” with a Joint Intelligence Task Force, says that material he reviewed from Guantanamo indicated that the administration had “wildly exaggerated” the intelligence value of the Guantanamo detainees. The process of screening captives at Bagram for detention at Guantanamo was “hopelessly flawed from the get-go,” he says. The personnel that conducted the screening were “far too poorly trained to identify real terrorists from the ordinary Taliban militia.” Most of the Guantanamo detainees had no connection to al-Qaeda, Christino said, adding that Gen. Geoffrey D. Miller’s system would have only produced false confessions. ([Bright 10/3/2004](#)) He also says it is doubtful that Guantanamo prisoners possessed any important intelligence concerning al-Qaeda. Anyone claiming to have such information probably fabricated it in response to the awards and punishment policy instituted by General Miller. Christino’s account is supported by an FBI official whose job it is to track suspected terrorists. The official tells the Guardian, “I’m unaware of any important information in my field that’s come from Gitmo. It’s clearly not a significant source.” ([Rose 10/3/2004](#))

October 1, 2004: Former Detective Publishes Book Claiming 9/11 Was Perpetrated by US Government



Author Mike Ruppert. [*Source: From the Wilderness*] Mike Ruppert, a former detective with the Los Angeles Police Department, publishes *Crossing the Rubicon*, in which he argues that al-Qaeda launched the 9/11 attacks, but certain individuals within the Bush administration, the US Secret Service, and the CIA not only failed to stop the attacks but prevented others within government from stopping them. In contrast to other prominent skeptic literature (see, for example, [November 8, 2005](#) and

[March 20, 2006](#)), Ruppert focuses on non-physical evidence. He believes that those responsible for the attacks intended to use it as a pretext for war in the Middle East with the intention to gain control of a large amount of the planet's oil reserves, which he thinks will soon start to run out, forcing prices higher. He also discusses the various war games on 9/11 (see [\(9:00 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#) and [\(9:40 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), allegations of insider trading before the attacks (see [Early September 2001](#)), whether the CIA had a hand in thwarting the Moussaoui investigation (see [August 20-September 11, 2001](#)), and US relations with Pakistan and Saudi Arabia (see [October 7, 2001](#) and [January 2000](#)). ([Ruppert 2004](#))

October 4, 2004: Report: US Exaggerating Role of Al-Zarqawi to Create Al-Qaeda Connected Villain for Iraq War



A US PSYOP leaflet disseminated in Iraq showing a caricature of al-Zarqawi caught in a rat trap. The caption reads: "This is your future, Zarqawi." [Source: US Department of Defense] The Telegraph reports that US military intelligence agents in Iraq believe that the role of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the supposed leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq, has been greatly exaggerated. The Bush administration has used al-Zarqawi as a villain to blame post-invasion troubles in the Iraq war and to connect the Iraqi insurgency to al-Qaeda (see [February 9, 2004](#)). ([Blomfield 10/4/2004](#)) For instance, in April 2004, US military spokesman Maj. Gen. Rick Lynch said that more than 90 percent of the suicide attacks in Iraq were carried out by terrorists recruited and trained by al-Zarqawi. ([DeYoung and Pincus 6/10/2006](#)) The Telegraph reports: "US military intelligence agents in Iraq have revealed a series of botched and often tawdry dealings with unreliable sources who, in the words of one source, 'told us what we wanted to hear... We were basically paying up to \$10,000 a time to opportunists, criminals, and chancers who passed off fiction and supposition about al-Zarqawi as cast-iron fact, making him out as the linchpin of just about every attack in Iraq... Back home this stuff was gratefully received and formed the basis of policy decisions. We needed a villain, someone identifiable for the public to latch on to, and we got one.'" Military intelligence officials believe that the insurgency is dominated by Iraqis and that the number of foreign

fighters such as al-Zarqawi could be as low as 200. However, some of these officials complain that their reports to US leaders about this are largely being ignored. ([Blomfield 10/4/2004](#)) In 2006, leaked classified US military documents will show that the US military ran a propaganda campaign from at least early 2004 to exaggerate al-Zarqawi's importance in the US and Iraqi media (see [April 10, 2006](#)).

October 4, 2004: New CIA Report Doubts Any Link Existed between Al-Qaeda and Hussein's Government

Knight Ridder Newspapers reveals that a new CIA report released to top US officials the week before says there is no conclusive evidence linking Islamist militant Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and the former Iraqi government of Saddam Hussein. The CIA reviewed intelligence information at the request of Vice President Dick Cheney some months before. One official familiar with the report says it does not make clear judgments, and the evidence of a possible link is murky. For instance, the report claims that three of al-Zarqawi's associates were arrested by the Iraqi government before the Iraq war, and Hussein ordered one of them released but not the other two. The report doubts that al-Zarqawi received medical treatment at a Baghdad hospital in May 2002, and flatly denies reports that al-Zarqawi had a leg amputated there or anywhere else (see [January 26, 2003](#)). One US official says, "The evidence is that Saddam never gave al-Zarqawi anything." Several days after the report is given to top officials, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld backs away from previous claims he had made of a link between Hussein and al-Qaeda, saying, "To my knowledge, I have not seen any strong, hard evidence that links the two." It is widely acknowledged that al-Zarqawi spent time in Iraq before the start of the Iraq war, but he generally stayed in a border region outside of Hussein's control. ([Strobel, Landay, and Walcott 10/4/2004](#))

October 9, 2004: Karzai Wins Afghanistan's First-Ever Presidential Election

Hamid Karzai wins the first-ever presidential election with 55 percent of the total vote. Karzai has been the leader of Afghanistan since late 2001 (see [December 22, 2001](#)). There were 17 other candidates and the second place candidate finished far behind. Election officials say about eight million of the 10.5 million registered voters cast ballots. Forty-one percent of them were women. The election cost \$200 million to hold and was arranged by the United Nations. ([CNN 10/24/2004](#))

October 10, 2004: Former US Citizen 'Enemy Combatant' Released and Sent to Saudi Arabia

Yaser Esam Hamdi returns to Saudi Arabia aboard a US military jet. Earlier in 2004, the US Supreme Court ruled that the US government could not continue to hold Hamdi, a US citizen, as an enemy combatant without allowing him to challenge that status (see [June](#)

[28, 2004](#)). The US government was still free to bring charges against him but instead chose to negotiate with his attorneys about a release. In exchange for his release, Hamdi agrees to renounce his US citizenship and pledge never to travel to Afghanistan, Iraq, Israel, Pakistan, Syria, the Palestinian West Bank, or Gaza. He must also report any intent to travel outside Saudi Arabia. ([CNN 10/14/2004](#)) Andrew Cohen comments in the Los Angeles Times, “If Hamdi is such a minor threat today that he can go back to the Middle East without a trial or any other proceeding, it’s hard not to wonder whether the government has been crying wolf all these years.” He calls the release “a shocking admission from the government that there is not now, and probably never has been, a viable criminal case against Hamdi.” ([Cohen 8/16/2004](#))

October 14, 2004: Darkazanli Finally Arrested in Germany



Mamoun Darkazanli. [*Source: Associated Press*] Mamoun Darkazanli, under investigation for ties to al-Qaeda long before 9/11, is finally arrested in Germany. The Chicago Tribune calls him “one of the most elusive and mysterious figures associated with al-Qaeda and the Sept. 11 hijackers.” He has been living openly in Germany since the 9/11 attacks. The reason for the timing of the arrest is unclear, but there is speculation it may be to preempt an attempt by Darkazanli to apply for asylum in Syria, the nation of his birth. Because German anti-terrorism laws were so weak until after 9/11, he cannot even be convicted of financing terrorism. However, he is also wanted in Spain where prosecutors have been building a case against him and his associates. Germany says it intends to extradite him to Spain, but Darkazanli claims he’s innocent and is going to fight the extradition. ([Crewdson 10/15/2004](#))

October 15, 2004: Prominent Muslim Activist Given Long Prison Term



Abdurahman Alamoudi. *[Source: Wikipedia/ public domain]* Muslim activist Abdurahman Alamoudi is sentenced to 23 years in prison in the US for illegal dealings with Libya. Charges include that he was involved in a complex plot to kill Crown Prince Abdullah, the de facto ruler of Saudi Arabia. Prosecutors successfully argued that Alamoudi served as a go-between Saudi dissidents and Libyan officials involved in the plot. Alamoudi admitted that he illegally moved money from Libya, taking nearly \$1 million and using it to pay conspirators. The plot, thought to stem from a personality dispute between the leaders of Libya and Saudi Arabia, was ultimately foiled by the Saudi government. The Washington Post notes that Alamoudi was “one of America’s best-known Muslim activists—a former head of the American Muslim Council who met with senior Clinton and Bush administration officials in his efforts to bolster Muslim political prominence.” He was “once so prominent that his influence reached the highest levels of the US government.” Alamoudi is said to be cooperating with US investigators as part of the deal. It is believed that his testimony could be very useful to an ongoing probe of the SAAR network, since he was closely involved with that network (see [March 20, 2002](#)). ([Markon 10/16/2004](#))

October 17, 2004: Al-Zarqawi Pledges Loyalty to Bin Laden

Islamist militant leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and his group al-Tawhid pledges loyalty to bin Laden in a statement posted on the Internet. He states, [Let it be known that] al-Tawhid pledges both its leaders and its soldiers to the mujahid commander, Sheikh Osama bin Laden...” ([Bergen 2006, pp. 364](#)) Bin Laden and al-Zarqawi began discussing the possibility of an alliance in early 2004 (see [Early 2004](#)). There had been other occasional contacts and linkages between al-Zarqawi and his group in years past, but al-Zarqawi had generally maintained his independence from al-Qaeda. Just one month earlier, al-Zarqawi stated, “I have not sworn allegiance to [bin Laden] and I am not working within the framework of his organization.” ([Yousafzai and Moreau 4/4/2005](#)) The Atlantic Monthly will later report that at the same time al-Zarqawi made his loyalty oath, he also “proclaimed himself to be the ‘Emir of al-Qaeda’s Operations in the Land of Mesopotamia,’ a title that subordinated him to bin Laden but at the same time placed him firmly on the global stage. One explanation for this coming together of these two former antagonists was simple: al-Zarqawi profited from the al-Qaeda franchise, and bin Laden needed a presence in Iraq. Another explanation is more complex: bin Laden laid claim to al-Zarqawi in the hopes of forestalling his emergence as the single most important

terrorist figure in the world, and al-Zarqawi accepted bin Laden's endorsement to augment his credibility and to strengthen his grip on the Iraqi tribes. Both explanations are true. It was a pragmatic alliance, but tenuous from the start." ([Weaver 6/8/2006](#)) In December 2004, an audiotape said to be the voice of bin Laden acknowledges al-Zarqawi's comments. "It should be known that the mujahid brother Abu Musab al-Zarqawi is the emir of the al-Qaeda organization in [Iraq]. The brothers in the group there should heed his orders and obey him in all that which is good." ([Bergen 2006, pp. 364-365](#))

October 19, 2004: NIST Releases Latest Findings of WTC Investigation; Presents New Hypotheses as to Why the Twin Towers Collapsed



Shyam Sunder. [Source: NIST] The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) releases nearly 500 pages of documents, detailing the latest findings of its investigation of the WTC collapses on 9/11. These include its hypotheses for the collapse sequences of each of the Twin Towers; details of their analysis of interviews with nearly 1,200 building occupants, emergency responders, and victims' relatives; and information from their analysis of the emergency response and evacuation procedures. Their investigation into the collapses is based upon an analysis of thousands of photos and videos, examination of many of the elements used to construct the towers, and computer-enhanced modeling of the plane impacts and the spreading of the fires. Their hypothesis is that the towers collapsed ultimately due to the fires they suffered: As the fires burned, the buildings' steel core columns buckled and shortened. This shifted more load to the buildings' perimeter columns, which were already affected by the heat of the fires, and caused them to give way under the increased stress. Investigators have conducted a test with a reconstructed section of the WTC floor, and found that the original fireproofing was sufficient to meet the New York City building code. They say that had a typical office fire occurred in the towers, without the structural damage and the loss of some fireproofing caused by the plane impacts, it is likely the buildings would have remained standing. Lead investigator Dr. Shyam Sunder says, "The buildings performed as they should have in the airplane impact and extreme fires to which they were subjected. There is nothing there that stands out as abnormal." NIST's theories of why the WTC buildings collapsed conflict with an earlier investigation by FEMA, which claimed the collapse of the North Tower had begun in its core, rather than its perimeter columns (see [May 1, 2002](#)). ([National Institute of Standards and Technology 10/19/2004; Lipton 10/20/2004](#))

October 20, 2004: Millionaire Launches Campaign Questioning Official 9/11 Story



Jimmy Walter. *[Source: Publicity photo]* Jimmy Walter, a millionaire from California, spends more than \$5 million promoting the theory that there was a US government conspiracy behind the 9/11 attacks. Walter, the heir to an \$11 million fortune, runs full-page adverts in the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, the New Yorker, and Newsweek. He also runs television adverts: One of these questions why Building 7 of the World Trade Center collapsed on 9/11 despite not being hit by any plane, another suggests that Flight 77 never flew into the Pentagon. He offers a prize of \$1 million to anyone who can prove that the WTC buildings collapsed in the way the US government says, without the use of explosives. Walter tells the New York Times, “It just isn’t possible that 19 screw-ups with box cutters pulled this whole thing off.” He also helped to pay for a Zogby poll, which found two-thirds of New Yorkers wanted the 9/11 investigation reopened (see [August 30, 2004](#)). ([Urbina 11/8/2004](#); [CNN 11/10/2004](#); [CNN 11/11/2004](#); [Fine 12/16/2004](#); [Coulton 11/21/2005](#))

October 20, 2004-November 3, 2004: BBC Documentary Argues That Many Aspects of ‘War on Terrorism’ Are Exaggerated Myths



Leo Strauss. *[Source: Publicity photo]* The BBC airs a three-part documentary entitled *The Power of Nightmares: The Rise of the Politics of Fear*. It is directed by Adam Curtis, who the Guardian calls “perhaps the most acclaimed maker of serious television programs in Britain.” The documentary argues that much of what we have been told about the threat of international terrorism “is a fantasy that has been exaggerated and distorted by politicians. It is a dark illusion that has spread unquestioned

through governments around the world, the security services, and the international media.” The documentary begins by focusing on Sayyid Qutb in Egypt and Leo Strauss in the US. Both developed theories in the 1950’s and 1960’s that liberalism and individualism was weakening the moral certainties of their societies. Qutb has a strong influence on Islamic Jihad leader Ayman al-Zawahiri, and then through him, Osama bin Laden. Strauss meanwhile has a strong effect on neoconservatives such as Donald Rumsfeld, Dick Cheney, and Paul Wolfowitz, who all eventually gain prominent positions in George W. Bush’s administration. The documentary follows the rise of Islamic radicals and compares and contrasts this with the rise of the neoconservatives. Curtis argues that both groups have greatly benefited from 9/11, because both have been able to use fear of terrorism to gain widespread popular support. Curtis claims that al-Qaeda is not the highly centralized, widespread, and powerful organization that it is frequently depicted to be. Rather, it is more of a concept and loose alliance of groups with coinciding interests. He says, “Almost no one questions this myth about al-Qaeda because so many people have got an interest in keeping it alive.” The documentary gains favorable reviews in newspapers such as the Los Angeles Times, Christian Science Monitor, and the Guardian. ([Regan 10/18/2004](#); [BBC 2 10/20/2004](#); [BBC 2 10/27/2004](#); [BBC 2 11/3/2004](#); [BBC 2 11/3/2004](#); [Scheer 1/11/2005](#))

October 25, 2004: Former President Jimmy Carter Says Bush Exploited 9/11 Attacks

Former President Jimmy Carter (D) says in an interview, “President Bush has exploited the September 11, 2001, attacks for political gain.” He adds: “I think the basic reason is that our country suffered, in 9/11, a terrible and shocking attack... and George Bush has been adroit at exploiting that attack and he has elevated himself, in the consciousness of many Americans, to a heroic commander in chief, fighting a global threat against America. He’s repeatedly played that card, and to some degree quite successfully.” ([Reuters 10/25/2004](#))

October 26, 2004: CIA Official Still Believes 9/11 Attacks Could Not Have Been Stopped



James Pavitt. [*Source: Publicity photo*] James Pavitt, the CIA’s Deputy Director of Operations, states, “Given what we now know, in all the hindsight of the year 2004, I still do not believe we could have stopped the [9/11] attacks.” ([Jehl 10/27/2004](#))

Pavitt is said to be heavily criticized in a still-classified CIA report about that agency's failures to stop the 9/11 attacks (see [January 7, 2005](#)).

October 29, 2004: In Speech Released Just Prior to US Elections, Bin Laden Criticizes President Bush and Takes Credit for 9/11 Attacks for First Time



Bin Laden makes his Towers of Lebanon speech. [Source: *Al-Jazeera*] Four days before the presidential election in the US, Osama bin Laden releases a new video in which he addresses the US people and alludes to his role in 9/11. The tape was handed to an employee at Al Jazeera's bureau in Islamabad, Pakistan, on the day it was broadcast. ([MSNBC 10/30/2004](#)) In his strongest admission yet that he was involved in planning 9/11, he says, "Allah knows that the plan of striking the towers had not occurred to us, but the idea came to me when things went just too far with the American-Israeli alliance's oppression and atrocities against our people in Palestine and Lebanon." After likening the US and Israel to "a crocodile devouring a child," he continues, "As I looked at those destroyed towers in Lebanon, it occurred to me to punish the oppressor in kind by destroying towers in America, so that it would have a taste of its own medicine and would be prevented from killing our women and children." He attempts to isolate the US from other Western countries, pointing out that "security is one of the pillars of human life" and that al-Qaeda has not attacked Sweden, for example, because Sweden has not attacked the Middle East: "If the US leaves Muslims alone, they will leave it alone." He is critical of President Bush and his inaction on 9/11: "It did not occur to us that the Commander-in-Chief of the American armed forces would leave fifty thousand of his citizens in the two towers to face this great horror on their own, just when they needed him most. It seems that a little girl's story about a goat and its butting was more important than dealing with airplanes and their butting into skyscrapers." He comments that the Bush administration favors certain corporations and has mismanaged public funds: "To some analysts and diplomats, it seems as if we and the White House are on the same team shooting at the United States' own goal, despite our different intentions." He concludes, "I say unto you in truth that your security lies not in the hands of Kerry, Bush, or al-Qaeda. It lies in your own hands, and whichever state does not encroach on our security thereby ensures its own. Allah is our master; you have none. Peace be upon those who follow true guidance." ([Laden 2005, pp. 237-244](#)) Despite the

criticism of Bush in the speech, most commentators think it will actually help Bush get reelected. For example, Time magazine correspondent Karen Tumulty says, “I find it hard to find any way that this helps John Kerry. What we’ve seen over and over and over again is that when terrorism is the topic, and when people are reminded of 9-11, Bush’s numbers go up.” ([CNN 10/29/2004](#)) The CIA also concludes this is what bin Laden intended (see [October 29, 2004](#)).

October 29, 2004: National Security Council Principals Know Bush’s Ratings Go Up When Bin Laden Appears

Several members of the National Security Council conclude that Osama bin Laden’s presence on the international stage is helping George Bush’s presidential campaign. (The CIA has apparently concluded the same (see [October 29, 2004](#) and [October 29, 2004](#)).) Author Ron Suskind will write, “While the CIA glimpsed at the issue of bin Laden’s motivations and turned away, there were those who understood just how acutely this heated, global dialog—of ideas and message and the preservation of power, of us and them—was a two way street. On that score, any number of NSC principals could tell you something so dizzying that not even they will touch it: that Bush’s ratings track with bin Laden’s ratings in the Arab world. No one doubts that George Bush is earnest when he thinks of the victims of 9/11 and speaks of his longing to bring the culprits to justice. Yet he is an ambitious man, atop a nation of ambitious and complex desires, who knows that when the al-Qaeda leader displays his forceful presence, his own approval ratings rise, and vice versa.” ([Suskind 2006, pp. 336-7](#))

October 29, 2004: CIA and Other Analysts Conclude Bin Laden’s Speech Favors Bush’s Reelection Chances



CIA officer Rolf Mowatt-Larsen. [*Source: Department of Energy*]The CIA analyzes bin Laden’s new speech, which was released four days before the US presidential election (see [October 29, 2004](#)), and concludes that it improves George Bush’s reelection chances. According to author Ron Suskind, the CIA, which has “spent years... parsing each word of the al-Qaeda leader,” knows that “bin Laden speaks only for strategic reasons—and those reasons are debated with often startling depth inside the organization’s leadership.” The analysts conclude that “bin Laden’s message was clearly designed to assist the president’s reelection.” Deputy Director John McLaughlin

says in a meeting analyzing the speech, “Bin Laden certainly did a nice favor today for the president.” CIA deputy associate director Jami Miscik similarly comments, “Certainly, he would want Bush to keep doing what he’s doing for a few more years.” However, the CIA does not discuss why bin Laden wants Bush to stay. Suskind will write, “But an ocean of hard truths before them—such as what did it say about US policies that bin Laden would want Bush reelected—remained untouched.” CIA officer Rolf Mowatt-Larssen will later say: “It was sad. We just sat there. We were dispirited.” Several National Security Council members have already reached the conclusion that bin Laden’s presence on the international stage helps Bush (see [October 29, 2004](#)). Both presidential candidates condemn bin Laden. John Kerry says, “As Americans, we are absolutely united in our determination to hunt down and destroy Osama bin Laden.” George Bush says, “Americans will not be intimidated or influenced by an enemy of our country.” ([Suskind 2006, pp. 335-6](#)) Several commentators believe the intervention will help Bush, for example:

- Veteran journalist Walter Cronkite says, “I have a feeling that it could tilt the election a bit. In fact, I’m a little inclined to think that Karl Rove, the political manager at the White House, who is a very clever man, he probably set up bin Laden to this thing.” ([CNN 10/29/2004](#))

- Roger Simon of US News and World Report says, “I don’t have any trouble parsing out who this helps. I think this is an enormous boost for George Bush.” ([CNN 10/29/2004](#))

- MSNBC host Chris Matthews says, “The big thing in politics, of course, is picking the right topic... This creates a terrible situation for the challenger, because it seems to me that Karl Rove has his finger on this.” ([MSNBC 10/29/2004](#))

- MSNBC correspondent Andrea Mitchell says, “It makes it harder for Kerry, and it shifts the subject matter back to what George Bush is strongest on. So the Bush people may not say that they are happy about this, but I’m sure that they could not be more pleased that this is the subject of the closing days. How do you say October surprise? This is one that could benefit the president.” ([MSNBC 10/29/2004](#))

- CNBC co-host Lawrence Kudlow says, “It will play into Bush’s hands.... it falls into Bush’s lap. And unlike 2000, I think it’s the kind of thing that will cause the remaining undecided voters in the next 72 hours or so to break for Bush.” ([Luntz et al. 10/29/2004](#))

- Weekly Standard staff writer Stephen Hayes says, “I think that, as most people have indicated, that is likely to help President Bush.” ([Luntz et al. 10/29/2004](#))

Other commentators from across the political spectrum who suggest the speech will help Bush include Fox News correspondent Major Garrett, Boston Herald columnist Mike Barnicle, Time magazine correspondent Karen Tumulty, former plumber G. Gordon Liddy, former presidential candidate Pat Buchanan, MSNBC host Joe Scarborough, the Cook Political Report editor and publisher Charlie Cook, Washington Post journalist Jeffery Birnbaum, and Roll Call executive editor Morton Kondracke. ([Wilson et al. 10/29/2004](#); [Wilson et al. 10/29/2004](#); [CNN 10/29/2004](#); [Luntz et al. 10/29/2004](#); [Buchanan et al. 10/29/2004](#)) Some right wing commentators suggest that the tape will help Kerry, including Fox News political commentator Dick Morris, Weekly Standard executive editor Fred Barnes, Washington Times reporter Bill Gertz, Fox News host Sean Hannity, and author Peggy Noonan. ([Gibson 10/29/2004](#); [Wilson et al. 10/29/2004](#); [Fox News 10/29/2004](#); [Fox News 10/29/2004](#)) A Newsweek poll shows that Bush’s lead increases after the tape is released and, after the election, John Kerry, the losing

Democratic candidate, will attribute his failure to bin Laden's intervention: "We were rising in the polls until the last day the tape appeared. We flat-lined the day the tape appeared, and went down on Monday." ([Sherwell 11/1/2004](#); [MSNBC 1/30/2005](#)) George Bush will also agree that the tape helped, saying, "I thought it was going to help. I thought it would help remind people that if bin Laden doesn't want Bush to be the president, something must be right with Bush." ([Reuters 3/1/2006](#))

November 2004: FBI Officer Calls 9/11 Plot Unstoppable

Michael Rolince, head of counterintelligence at the FBI's Washington office, says of the 9/11 hijackers, "These guys were pros. For us to have done anything, these guys had to make a mistake. And they didn't. Could we have generated enough information-ever-to keep them off those planes? I doubt it." ([Zeman et al. 11/2004](#)) In 2002, an FBI agent called this kind of argument "the Superman scenario." The notion that the hijackers made no mistakes had been discredited well before Rolince's comments (see [April 2002](#)).

November 2004: Aggressive Afghan Counter-Narcotics Program Proposed and Ultimately Rejected



Bobby Charles. [*Source: State Department*] Assistant Secretary of State Bobby Charles, who runs the State Department's Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), has been growing increasingly concerned about the worsening drug crisis in Afghanistan. He starts warning his superiors that unless the problem is dealt with, it could "devour" the Afghan government. Charles pushes for a multi-faceted counter-narcotics program. One controversial aspect of his program would involve aggressive aerial spraying of Afghan poppy fields using a diluted solution of the pesticide known commercially as Roundup. To minimize Afghan opposition to the spraying, the program would be combined with an informational campaign asserting that the pesticide is safe and an aid package for alternative agricultural development. Further, the US military would begin counter-narcotics missions such as destroying drug labs. Secretary of State Colin Powell presents Charles' program to President Bush and other top officials shortly after Bush's reelection. Bush completely agrees with the program, even saying that he is determined not to "waste

another American life on a narco-state.” However, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld is firmly opposed to the program and, as author James Risen notes, “Time and again in the Bush administration, Rumsfeld simply ignored decisions made by the president in front of his war cabinet, according to several senior administration officials.” One month later, with Powell losing power as he leaves the Bush administration, Rumsfeld decreases support for the program, effectively killing it. Charles is told that he is now “highly inconvenient” and is pushed out of his job by the new Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice in early 2005. ([Risen 2006, pp. 152-162](#))

Early Winter 2004: US Patrol Allegedly Almost Accidentally Stumbles upon Bin Laden



Mustafa Abu al-Yazid. [*Source: Al Jazeera*] A US patrol allegedly nearly accidentally stumbles upon bin Laden. High-ranking al-Qaeda leader Mustafa Abu al-Yazid will tell the following story to Omar Farooqi, a Taliban officer who later tells it to a Newsweek reporter. Bin Laden and his entourage is holed up somewhere in the mountains along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. A sentry spots a patrol of US soldiers who seem headed straight for the hideout. The sentry radios an alert to bin Laden’s 40 or so bodyguards to remove him to a fallback position and supposedly there is even talk of killing bin Laden to prevent him from being taken alive. But the sentry watches the patrol move in a different direction without realizing how close they accidentally came to bin Laden. A former US intelligence officer later tells Newsweek that he is aware of official reporting on this incident. ([Thomas 8/28/2007](#))

November-December 2004: Political Purge of CIA Follows Presidential Election

A former CIA officer tells New Yorker reporter Seymour Hersh that, in mid-2004 the White House begins putting pressure on CIA analysts “to see more support for the Administration’s political position.” But after Porter Goss becomes the new CIA Director and the November 2004 election passes, a “political purge” of employees who have written papers that dissent with Bush policies begins. One former official notes that only “true believers” remain. ([Hersh 1/24/2005](#)) An anonymous former CIA official tells Newsday, “The agency is being purged on instructions from the White House. Goss was given instructions... to get rid of those soft leakers and liberal Democrats.” ([Royce](#)

[11/14/2004](#)) Days after the November 2004 Presidential election, Goss circulates an internal memorandum to all CIA employees, telling them their job is to “support the administration and its policies in our work.” ([Jehl 11/17/2004](#)) The memo also contains a caveat that they should “let the facts alone speak to the policymaker.” However, an op-ed in the Los Angeles Times calls this mere “lip service,” and says the memo leaves “the impression that in the second Bush administration, the White House will run the CIA.... Goss has confirmed the worst fears of critics who warned he was too partisan when Bush appointed him...” ([Wise 11/21/2004](#)) Such new policies inspire more employees to leave. By the time the purge is completed in early 2005, about 20 senior CIA officials will have resigned or retired. Only one member of the leadership team from George Tenet’s tenure will remain. ([Pincus 1/6/2005](#)) Newsweek says the “efforts at cleaning house may have only thrown the spy agency into deeper turmoil.” ([Isikoff and Klaidman 2/21/2005](#))

November 2, 2004: George W. Bush Reelected

President George W. Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney are re-elected to the US presidency for a second term. In the coming months, some important cabinet officials are replaced. Secretary of State Colin Powell resigns. Condoleezza Rice moves from National Security Adviser to Secretary of State. Her Deputy National Security Adviser Steven Hadley becomes the new National Security Adviser. Attorney General John Ashcroft resigns and is replaced by Alberto Gonzalez. Department of Homeland Security Director Tom Ridge resigns and is replaced by Michael Chertoff.

November 11, 2004: Laboratory Director Questions Cause of WTC Collapses



Kevin Ryan. [*Source: Public domain*] Kevin Ryan, the laboratory director at Environmental Health Laboratories Inc., which is a subsidiary of Underwriters Laboratories Inc., writes an e-mail to the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST)—the agency currently investigating the WTC collapses—in which he challenges the official theory regarding the WTC collapses. According to Ryan, Underwriters Laboratories Inc. was the company that certified the steel components used in the construction of the World Trade Center, and it had been agreed that the samples it certified met all requirements. His e-mail states, “This story just does not add up. If steel from [the Twin Towers] did soften or melt, I’m sure we can all agree that this was certainly not due to jet fuel fires of any kind, let alone the briefly burning fires in those

towers.” His e-mail is published on the Internet, and generates interest on many websites. Days later, Kevin Ryan is fired because, according to a company spokesman, he “expressed his own opinions as though they were institutional opinions and beliefs” of Underwriters Laboratories. According to Underwriters Laboratories, “there is no evidence” that any firm tested the materials used to build the towers. They also say that Ryan was not involved in any way with their fire protection division, which had conducted testing at NIST’s request. ([Dobberstein 11/22/2004](#))

December 2004: Further Criticism of the Terror Alert System

Retired Maj. Gen. Bruce Lawlor, formerly part of the Homeland Security Advisory Council, a panel made up of business representatives, academic leaders, and security experts appointed by President Bush, says that the Homeland Security warning system had outlived its usefulness. “I’m not suggesting that we do away with communications with the public. What I’m suggesting is that maybe you do away with the color-coded system.” ([Sifuentes 12/15/2004](#)) The Department of Homeland Security has also been accused on a number of occasions for manipulating the alert level for political reasons. ([Dreyfuss 9/21/2006](#)) Secretary of Homeland Security Tom Ridge acknowledges criticisms of the system, saying that the color-coded system has invited “questions and even occasional derision.” However, he also states that “the system is here to stay.” ([Associated Press 12/15/2004](#)) He agrees with a report released by the Heritage Foundation and the Center for Strategic and International Studies that recommends reform of the system. The report specifically suggests the removal of the color-coded system in favor of a system of regional alerts. The Homeland Security Advisory Council votes to collect information from the public and the media about the threat system. Other recommendations they adopt include plans to identify potential private-sector terror targets, suggestions on how to improve terrorism-related fields of study and how to bolster terror-related training. ([Sifuentes 12/15/2004](#))

December 2, 2004: Possible CIA Operative Posing as Muslim Militant and Wanted Overseas Is Discovered Living in US

A treasure hunter suspected of being a CIA operative is discovered living in the US. In May 2002, US citizen Michael Meiring accidentally blew himself up in a Philippines hotel room, and ended up losing both of his legs. He was mysteriously whisked back to the US amidst media reports suggesting he was a CIA operative posing as a Muslim militant bomber (see [May 16, 2002](#)). On June 19, 2002, the chief of the Philippines’ National Bureau of Investigation vowed that Meiring would be brought back to the Philippines to face charges since he appeared to have returned to the US, and the Philippines and the US have an existing extradition treaty. ([Arguillas 6/1/2003](#)) On December 2, 2004, a Houston TV station will discover that Meiring is living in Houston, Texas. They examined court documents about him and learned that earlier in 2004 he

changed his last name to Van De Meer. The Philippine government confirms that they issued an arrest warrant for Meiring and are still looking for him and an associate of his named Stephen Hughes, who is now said to be living in North Carolina. Counterterrorism expert Ron Hatchett asks, “How is he able to walk around freely within our society using the name that is on the arrest warrant for him?” Meiring is reached by phone in California. His only on the record comment to the reporter who discovered him is, “If this harms me in any way, you will find my power then, and you’ll find out who I am. But I will come for you. You harm me I will not let you off the hook.” ([Greenblatt 12/2/2004](#); [Filipino Reporter 12/30/2004](#)) In early 2005, it will be reported that Meiring may not get extradited back to the Philippines because the Philippine government cannot produce a picture of him. ([Mindanao Times 3/23/2005](#)) However, previous media reports claimed that a picture ID of Meiring was found in his hotel room after the explosion there. The ID lists him as an officer in the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), a Muslim rebel militant group. ([Greenblatt 12/2/2004](#)) He appears to have ties to leaders of that group and other Philippine Muslim militant groups since 1992 (see [1992-1993](#)). Since 2004, there have been no reports of Meiring being successfully extradited.

December 7, 2004: Militants Attack US Consulate in Saudi Arabia



Security forces at the gate where attackers entered the US Consulate compound. [*Source: Associated Press*] Armed militants attack the US Consulate in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Five workers at the consulate, none of them US citizens, are killed, and another thirteen are wounded. Four of the attackers die in a shootout as well after taking hostages. A group called Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula claims responsibility for the attack in an Internet posting ([Whitlock 12/7/2004](#); [CNN 12/7/2004](#))

December 14, 2004: Report: US Has Abandoned Its Hunt for Bin Laden

The Daily Telegraph reports that “the search for [bin Laden] the world’s most wanted man has all but come to a halt because of Pakistan’s refusal to permit cross-border raids from Afghanistan, according to CIA officials.” Even spy missions by unmanned Predator drones need Pakistani military approval involving a lengthy chain of command that frequently causes delays. Most accounts have bin Laden still alive and living in the near-lawless Pakistan and Afghanistan border region. US officials believe bin Laden and his deputies are being hidden by sympathetic local tribesmen, who are continuing to fund his operations from opium sales. ([Gedye 12/14/2004](#))

December 14, 2004: Bush Gives Tenet and Others the Medal of Freedom



President Bush awards Tenet the Medal of Freedom. [*Source: Associated Press*] President Bush gives the Presidential Medal of Freedom to former CIA Director George Tenet, former Iraq war leader General Tommy Franks, and former Iraq functionary Paul Bremer. The Medal of Freedom is the highest honor the president can bestow. Bush comments, “This honor goes to three men who have played pivotal roles in great events and whose efforts have made our country more secure and advanced the cause of human liberty.” ([Associated Press 12/14/2001](#)) However, the awards will come in for some criticism, as Tenet, CIA director on 9/11, wrongly believed Iraq had weapons of mass destruction (see [December 21, 2002](#)), Bremer disbanded the Iraqi army (see [May 23, 2003](#)), and Franks, responsible for the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, failed to assign enough troops to the hunt for Osama bin Laden, enabling him to escape (see [Late October-Early December 2001](#)). ([Cohen 12/14/2001](#)) Reporter Steve Coll will later comment, “I presume that for President Bush, it was a signal that he wasn’t making Tenet a scapegoat. It would be the natural thing to do, right? You’ve seen this episode of ‘I, Claudius.’ You know, you put the knife in one side and the medal on the other side, and that’s politics.” And author James Bamford will say, “Tenet [retired], and kept his mouth shut about all the things that went on, about what kind of influence [Vice President] Cheney might have had. They still have a CIA, but all the power is now with his team over at the Pentagon. They’re gathering more power every day in terms of intelligence. So largely, Cheney won.” ([Kirk 6/20/2006](#))

December 14, 2004-February 2005: Saudi Interrogation Possibly Turns Up Information about 7/7 London Bombings

An extremist arrested and interrogated in Saudi Arabia appears to disclose details of an operation that is strikingly similar to the 7/7 London bombings that will occur in mid-2005 (see [July 7, 2005](#)). However, the intelligence does not yield any results before the attacks, even though it is shared with the US and Britain. It will later be unclear whether the arrested man, known as Adel, provided a truthful account or was a fabricator who just happened to predict some details of the plot. Adel is arrested in Buraydah, Saudi Arabia, in late 2004 for using a fraudulent passport, and a memo on his interrogation dated December 14 of that year, which is sent to the CIA and British intelligence, seems to reveal details of a multifaceted operation. Some details match those of the actual attack: it is to be carried out by four people in London in the middle of 2005 and will include a location around “Edgewood Road” (one of the bombs will explode at Edgware Road tube station). However, Adel, who is said to know Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, also says the explosives will come from Bosnia and the plot will be coordinated by a Libyan businessman in London, who will help with safe houses and transport. In addition, one of the bombers is said to have tattoos on his fingers. The Saudis send Britain and the US a second report in February 2005, providing more details about the alleged bombers, who are supposed to be from different countries, although there are also apparently Caucasian British and Germans involved. The CIA checks a Syrian phone number mentioned in one of the memos, but finds nothing. ([Woodward 2006, pp. 400-2](#)) After the bombings, Saudi ambassador to London Prince Turki will say in a statement, “There was certainly close liaison between the Saudi Arabian intelligence authorities and the British intelligence authorities some months ago, when information was passed to Britain about a heightened terrorist threat to London,” although it is unclear whether this statement refers to this warning, another Saudi warning about a possible attack in Britain (see [April 2005 or Shortly Before](#)), or both. ([Bright 11/1/2007](#)) Interest in the detainee will be revived after the attack and even President Bush will become involved, but veteran reporter Bob Woodward, who examines the story in a 2006 book, will conclude that Adel is a fabricator. ([Woodward 2006, pp. 400-2](#))

December 16, 2004: Bin Laden Releases New Speech Attacking Saudi Rulers

A new address by Osama bin Laden attacks the rulers of Saudi Arabia in even more strident terms than before. Professor Bruce Lawrence calls this speech “a blistering indictment of the House of Saud and the calamity it has historically represented for the [Arabian] peninsula.” Bin Laden says that the ruling Saudi family “has neglected the necessary conditions to maintain security, life, social harmony, and cohesion... Millions of people suffer every day from poverty and deprivation, while millions of riyals [the Saudi currency] flow into the bank accounts of the royals who wield executive power.” He also says the Al Saud family is “beyond the pale of Islam,” and defines the fight as

“partly an internal regional struggle between global unbelief, with the apostates today under the leadership of America on one side, and the Islamic umma [community] and its brigades of mujaheddin, on the other.” He also complains of American influence over Saudi Arabia, and the depression in US interests of the price of oil, which apparently should be ”\$100 [a barrel] at the very least.” In addition, he attacks other regional rulers, such as those in Jordan, Egypt, Yemen, Iraq, and Libya, and urges their violent overthrow. ([Laden 2005, pp. 245-275](#))

December 21, 2004: London-based Militant Is Designated a Terrorist, but He Remains Free



Saad al-Fagih. [*Source: PBS*]The US and UN designate Saad al-Fagih a global terrorist, but Britain, where he lives, takes no effective action against him. Al-Fagih helped supply bin Laden with a satellite telephone used in the 1998 embassy bombings (see [November 1996-Late August 1998](#)). Britain seizes the assets of al-Fagih and his organization, the Movement for Islamic Reform in Arabia. ([US Department of the Treasury 12/21/2004](#); [BBC 12/24/2004](#)) However, Saudi ambassador to Britain Prince Turki al-Faisal will later complain that the total seized is only ”£20 or something” (note: equivalent of about \$39) and that the British government allows al-Fagih to continue to operate openly from London, despite being a specially designated global terrorist (see [August 10, 2005](#)). ([Beeston and Binyon 8/10/2005](#)) Britain has long been suspected of harboring Islamic militants in return for them promising not to attack the UK (see [August 22, 1998](#)).

December 21, 2004: US Finally Designates Top Al-Qaeda Financer

The US Treasury Department and UN designate Adel Batterjee a global terrorist. Batterjee is connected to the Benevolence International Foundation (BIF). The Treasury Department says that Batterjee “has ranked as one of the world’s foremost terrorist financiers” by helping to fund al-Qaeda. It is not explained why the US waited until this time to list him, but counterterrorism expert Rita Katz suggests that the Saudi government may have changed their stance due to increased al-Qaeda activity in Saudi Arabia. “I think they needed Saudi support, and now it seems to be in place.” However, there is no

report of Batterjee being arrested or having his funds frozen in Saudi Arabia. ([US Department of the Treasury 12/21/2004](#); [Chicago Tribune 12/22/2004](#))

December 24, 2004: Rumsfeld Comment that Flight 93 Was 'Shot Down' Raises Eyebrows

In a speech given on this day, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld describes terrorists as “the people who attacked the United States in New York, shot down the plane over Pennsylvania and attacked the Pentagon...” His comment that Flight 93 was “shot down” draws attention. A few days later, CNN reports, “A Pentagon spokesman insisted that Rumsfeld simply misspoke, but Internet conspiracy theorists seized on the reference to the plane having been shot down.” ([CNN 12/24/2004](#); [McIntyre 12/27/2004](#))

December 30, 2004: Justice Department Issues New Memo Meant to Deflect Criticism that US Tortures Detainees

The Justice Department issues a 17-page memo which officially replaces the August 2002 memo (see [August 1, 2002](#)), that asserted that the president’s wartime powers superseded international anti-torture treaties and defined torture very narrowly, describing it as a tactic that produces pain “equivalent in intensity to the pain accompanying serious physical injury, such as organ failure, impairment of bodily function, or even death.” The new memo, authored by acting chief of the Office of Legal Council (OLC) and Acting Assistant Attorney General Daniel Levin, is ostensibly meant to deflect criticisms that the Bush administration condones torture. In fact, the very first sentence reads, “Torture is abhorrent both to American law and values and to international norms.” But the White House insists that the new memo does not represent a change in policy because the administration has always respected international laws prohibiting the mistreatment of prisoners. The primary concern of the new memo is to broaden the narrow definition of torture that had been used in the August memo. Levin adopts the definition of torture used in congressional anti-torture laws which says that torture is the infliction of physical suffering “even if it does not involve severe physical pain.” But the pain must still be more than “mild and transitory,” the memo says. Like the original memo, Levin says that torture may include mental suffering. But to be considered so it would not have to last for months or years, as Bybee and Yoo had asserted two years earlier. The most contested conclusions of the August 2002 memo—concerning the president’s wartime powers and potential legal defense for US personnel charged with war crimes—are not addressed in the Levin memo. “Consideration of the bounds of any such authority would be inconsistent with the president’s unequivocal directive that United States personnel not engage in torture,” the memo says. ([US Department of Justice 12/30/2004](#), [Guggenheim 12/31/2004](#)) The memo also attempts to quell concerns that the administration believes national security may be used as justification for tactics that could be considered as torture. The memo states: “[A] defendant’s motive (to protect national security, for example) is not relevant to the question whether he has acted with the requisite specific

intent under the statute.” ([US Department of Justice 12/30/2004](#)) Many in the White House opposed the issuance of the memo, but were rebuffed when other administration officials said the memo was necessary to ease the confirmation of Alberto Gonzales as Attorney General. ([Shane, Johnston, and Risen 10/4/2007](#)) A secret memo is completed a short time later that allows such torture techniques as waterboarding to be used again (see [February 2005](#)).

Late 2004-Early 2005: Classified US Documents Suggest Pakistan Is Supporting Taliban

Classified US documents later found by reporters (see [April 10, 2006](#)) but dating from this time suggest that the Taliban is planning to attack US troops from bases inside Pakistan with the acquiescence or even support of elements within the Pakistani government. For instance, an August 2004 presentation accuses Pakistan of making “false and inaccurate reports of border incidents.” A document from early 2005 mentions that the US military is attempting to stop the flow of weapons to the Taliban from Pakistan and stop infiltration routes from Pakistan. Another document includes a US military commander commenting, “Pakistani border forces [should] cease assisting cross border insurgent activities.” ([Watson 4/10/2006](#)) Later in 2005, a report by Congress’ research arm will echo these concerns, stating, “Among the most serious sources of concern is the well-documented past involvement of some members of the Army’s Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) organization with al-Qaeda and the Taliban, and the possibility that some officers retain sympathies with both groups.” ([Watson 4/14/2006](#))

December 31, 2004: Newspaper Reveals Deep Ties between Scandal-Plagued Riggs Bank and CIA

The Wall Street Journal reports that a government investigation into activities at Riggs Bank may be hampered because of its “longstanding relationship with the Central Intelligence Agency” (see [July 2003](#)). ([Simpson 12/31/2004](#)) Yet this story attracts almost no mention or follow up in the US media. For instance, the Washington Post, which covers Riggs Bank more than other newspapers because the bank is based in Washington, mentions the CIA connection only in one paragraph near the end of article in the newspaper’s business section two months after the Wall Street Journal article: “Another potential cloud for any acquirer is the bank’s long-standing relationship with the CIA. Sources familiar with the bank’s operations and sources in the intelligence community say that since the 1960s Riggs at least held funds related to CIA operations or agents, and several officers of Riggs had high-level security clearances. However, law enforcement authorities say Riggs’s CIA connections had nothing to do with the bank’s violations of anti-money-laundering laws. And the subject did not arise in the bank’s negotiations with the US attorney for the District over Riggs’s guilty plea, the sources said.” ([Day 2/9/2005](#)) Only Slate appears interested, publishing two stories highlighting the Riggs-CIA connection. In one, it is noted that the connection “invites speculation that the Justice Department might abort the prosecutions lest courtroom brawls reveal more about Riggs

and the CIA than the government wants made public.” ([Shafer 1/10/2005](#)) The other Slate article will lament, “Where is the rest of the press on the Riggs-CIA connection? Spooks, sheiks, dictators, millions in laundered money, and a \$766 million merger in the balance! What does it take to entice an assignment editor these days, a tsunami or something?” ([Shafer 1/7/2005](#))

2005: Bush Surprised by Small Number of CIA Hunting Bin Laden, but Problem Not Fixed

In 2005, the CIA gives President Bush a secret slide show updating him on the hunt for bin Laden. Bush is taken aback by the small number of CIA case officers posted to Afghanistan and Pakistan. A former intelligence officer will later tell Newsweek that Bush asks, “Is that all there are?” In fact, the CIA had recently doubled the number of officers in the area, but many are inexperienced and raw recruits. Most veteran officers are involved in the Iraq war instead. ([Thomas 8/28/2007](#)) However, rather than increase the staff working on bin Laden in response to Bush’s complaint, later in the year the CIA will close Alec Station, the unit hunting bin Laden (see [Late 2005](#)).

2005 and After: US Officials Encourage and Advise Pakistani Sunni Militant Group



Abdul Malik Rigi. [*Source: ABC News*] According to US and Pakistani intelligence sources interviewed by ABC News, US officials begin encouraging and advising Jundullah, a Pakistani militant group that has been staging attacks against Iran. The group is made up of members of the Baluchi tribe and operates out of the Baluchistan province in Pakistan, just across the border from Iran. ([Ross and Isham 4/3/2007](#)) Iran says the group is linked to al-Qaeda. ([Reuters 5/13/2007](#)) Jundullah’s leader, Abdul Malik Rigi, formerly fought with the Taliban. Alexis Debat, a senior fellow on counterterrorism at the Nixon Center, tells ABC that Rigi “used to fight with the Taliban. He’s part drug smuggler, part Taliban, part Sunni activist.” Rigi commands “a force of several hundred guerrilla fighters that stage attacks across the border into Iran on Iranian military officers, Iranian intelligence officers, kidnapping them, executing them on camera,” Debat explains. According to ABC sources, the US government is not funding the group. ([Ross and Isham 4/3/2007](#)) Rather the group is receiving money and

weapons through the Afghan and Pakistani military and Pakistan's intelligence service, the ISI. ([Ross and Esposito 5/23/2007](#))

Early 2005: US Documents Implicate Afghan Leader's Brother and Other Top Officials in Drug Trade



Ahmed Wali Karzai. [*Source: ABC News*] According to classified files stolen from a US army base in Afghanistan and sold in a local market, some senior officials in the Afghan government are also believed to be drug lords. Described as “Tier One Warlords” in a document, they include Gen. Abdul Rashid Dostum, the Chief of Staff of the army, and Gen. Mohammad Daud, the Interior Minister for Counternarcotics (see [April 17, 2006](#)). Further, Ahmed Wali Karzai, brother of Afghan President Hamid Karzai, is listed in a classified document as a “problem maker” who “receives money from drug lords as bribe[s] to facilitate their work and movement.” ([Coghlan and Luddin 4/13/2006](#); [Ross and Peters 6/22/2006](#); [Shah 6/23/2006](#)) In early 2006, Newsweek will report that the president's brother is “alleged to be a major figure by nearly every source who described the Afghan network... including past and present government officials and several minor drug traffickers.” One Interior Ministry official says, “He is the unofficial regional governor of southern Afghanistan and leads the whole trafficking structure.” Newsweek adds that, “Diplomats and well-informed Afghans believe that up to a quarter of the new Parliament's 249 elected members are linked to narcotics production and trafficking.” ([Moreau and Yousafzai 1/2/2006](#))

January 2005: Documents Show US Knows Location of Al-Qaeda Camps and Leaders in Pakistan



A close up of one of the maps showing the location of al-Qaeda camps in Pakistan. AQ stands for al-Qaeda and TB stands for Taliban. [Source: *ABC News*/Classified files stolen from a US army base in Afghanistan and sold in a local market that date from this time include maps marking the location of al-Qaeda training camps and leaders in Pakistan. One map shows the location of four al-Qaeda training camps in the tribal areas of Pakistan near the Afghan border. This map also shows the location in Pakistan of al-Qaeda's number two leader, Ayman al-Zawahiri. Other maps and documents indicate 16 al-Qaeda and Taliban leaders in Pakistan. This includes Mullah Omar, the top Taliban leader. But bin Laden is not mentioned. ([Ross 6/22/2006](#)) One document dated October 2004 indicates two of the Taliban's main leaders, Mullah Akhter Osmani and Mullah Obaidullah, are in Pakistan, while top leader Mullah Omar and four others are in southern Afghanistan. ([Watson 4/10/2006](#))

January 7, 2005: Still-Classified Report Is Said to Blame CIA Leaders For 9/11 Failures, But There Are Pressures to Water It Down

Details of an internal CIA report (see [June-November 2004](#)) investigating the CIA's failure to stop the 9/11 attacks are leaked to the New York Times. The report by John Helgerson, the CIA's inspector general, was completed in June 2004 but remains classified (see [June-November 2004](#)). It sharply criticizes former CIA Director George Tenet, as well as former Deputy Director of Operations James Pavitt. It says these two and others failed to meet an acceptable standard of performance, and recommends that an internal review board review their conduct for possible disciplinary action. Cofer Black, head of the CIA's Counter Terrorism Center at the time of 9/11, is also criticized. However, the New York Times notes that, "It is not clear whether either the agency or the White House has the appetite to reprimand Mr. Tenet, Mr. Pavitt or others.... particularly since President Bush awarded a Medal of Freedom to Mr. Tenet last month." It is unclear if any reprimands will occur, or even if the final version of the report will point blame at specific individuals. ([Jehl 1/7/2005](#)) In late October 2004, the new CIA Director, Porter Goss, had asked Helgerson to modify the report to avoid drawing conclusions about whether individual CIA officers should be held accountable. ([Jehl 11/2/2004](#)) Helgerson "appears to have accepted [Goss's] recommendation" and will defer any final judgments to a CIA Accountability Review Board. The final version of the report is said to be completed within weeks. ([Jehl 1/7/2005](#)) However, months pass, and in October 2005,

CIA Director Porter Goss will announce that he is not going to release the report, and also will not convene an accountability board to hold anyone responsible.(see [October 10, 2005](#))

January 9, 2005: Newly Departing CIA Executive Director Says It's Better If Bin Laden Remains Free

A. B. “Buzzy” Krongard, the CIA’s recently departed Executive Director, says in an interview that the world may be better off if bin Laden remains at large. Krongard had been Executive Director, the CIA’s third most senior position, from 1998 until six weeks before this interview. He states, “You can make the argument that we’re better off with him [at large]. Because if something happens to bin Laden, you might find a lot of people vying for his position and demonstrating how macho they are by unleashing a stream of terror.” The London Times notes that, “Several US officials have privately admitted that it may be better to keep bin Laden pinned down on the border of Afghanistan and Pakistan rather than make him a martyr or put him on trial.” However, Krongard is the only senior official to say so publicly, and this position completely contradicts the rhetoric of the Bush administration, which has consistently claimed that catching bin Laden remains a top priority. ([Allen-Mills 1/9/2005](#))

January 18, 2005: Plans for a Trans-Afghanistan Pipeline Continue

The US ambassador to Turkmenistan states that US companies might join a long-delayed trans-Afghan natural gas pipeline project. The Turkmenistan government says a feasibility study for the \$3.5 billion pipeline is complete and construction will begin in 2006. The project’s main sponsor is the Asian Development Bank. The pipeline is to run from Turkmenistan through Herat and Kandahar in Afghanistan, through the Pakistani cities of Quetta and Multan, and on to India. ([Associated Press 1/18/2005](#)) However, in August 2005 it will be reported that security concerns are still causing delays in approval of the project. A NATO representative will say, “People here are able to see what the Iraqi insurgency can do despite the presence of 150,000 foreign troops. Why not do the same in Afghanistan?” ([McGeough 8/25/2005](#))

February 2005: Still No Sleeper Cells Found in US

A secret FBI report issued this month and later leaked to the press states, “Al-Qaeda leadership’s intention to attack the United States is not in question. However, their capability to do so is unclear, particularly in regard to ‘spectacular’ operations. We believe al-Qaeda’s capability to launch attacks within the United States is dependent on its ability to infiltrate and maintain operatives in the United States. To date, we have not identified any true ‘sleeper’ agents in the US.... Limited reporting since March indicates al-Qaeda has sought to recruit and train individuals to conduct attacks in the United States, but is inconclusive as to whether they have succeeded in placing operatives in this

country. US Government efforts to date also have not revealed evidence of concealed cells or networks acting in the homeland as sleepers” ABC News notes that this seemingly contradicts the sleeper cell depiction seven men arrested in Lackawanna, New York, in 2002. It also differs from warnings by FBI Director Robert Mueller and other US officials, who have warned that sleeper cells are probably in place. ([Scott 3/9/2005](#)) In 2002, it was also reported that no sleeper cells can be found in the US (see [March 10, 2002](#)).

February 2005: Secret Justice Department Ruling Authorizes Abuse, Torture of Detainees

The Justice Department issues a secret opinion that countermands and contradicts the administration’s official policy that torture is “abhorrent” and will not be practiced by US military or law enforcement officials (see [December 30, 2004](#)). The secret opinion is, the New York Times writes two years later while publicly revealing its existence, “an expansive endorsement of the harshest interrogation techniques ever used by the Central Intelligence Agency.” The opinion gives explicit authorization to abuse detainees with a combination of physical and psychological abuse, including head-slapping, stress positioning, simulated drowning (“waterboarding”), and prolonged exposure to intense cold. New attorney general Alberto Gonzales (see [November 10, 2004](#)) approves the memo over the objections of deputy attorney general James Comey, himself preparing to leave the Justice Department after a series of battles over the legality of torture and the domestic surveillance program (see [March 10-12, 2004](#)). Comey says at the time that everyone at the department will be “ashamed” of the new opinion once the world learns of it. ([Shane, Johnston, and Risen 10/4/2007](#))

February 10, 2005: Censored Version of Critical 9/11 Report Completed Before Presidential Elections Is Finally Released

A report by the 9/11 Commission on the FAA and 9/11 is publicly released. The fact that the report reveals nearly half of all FAA daily briefings between April and early September 2001 mentioned al-Qaeda, bin Laden, or both causes headlines (see [April 1, 2001-September 10, 2001](#)). However, the report was actually completed in August 2004 but was held up by the Bush administration. Some speculate that the publication of the report was delayed until after the November 2004 presidential election to help Bush get reelected. For instance, 9/11 victim’s relative Carol Ashley states, “I’m just appalled that this was withheld for five months. That contributes to the idea that the government knew something and didn’t act, it contributes to the conspiracy theories out there.” Representative Henry Waxman (D) asks for a hearing on whether the Bush administration played politics with the report’s release, but the Republican-controlled House of Representatives doesn’t allow such a hearing. ([Associated Press 2/11/2005](#)) Additionally, the released version of this report is heavily censored in some areas. The 9/11 Commission asserts that the whole report should be released, but the Bush administration

is blocking their efforts to release the censored portions. Politicians, 9/11 victims' relatives, open-government advocates, and others call for the release of the entire report, but to no avail. ([Lichtblau 2/11/2005](#))

February 17, 2005: Bush Picks John Negroponte to Oversee US Intelligence Agencies



John Negroponte. [*Source: Public domain*] President Bush nominates John Negroponte to be the first Director of National Intelligence, a new position created to oversee all the various US intelligence agencies. Negroponte had been serving as the US Ambassador to Iraq for the previous year. Prior to that he had been the US Ambassador to the United Nations and held a variety of other government positions. ([Jehl and Bumiller 2/17/2005](#)) The nomination is controversial because, as the Los Angeles Times reports, “While ambassador to Honduras from 1981-85, Negroponte directed the secret arming of Nicaragua’s Contra rebels and is accused by human rights groups of overlooking—if not overseeing—a CIA-backed Honduran death squad during his tenure.” Additionally, “He also helped orchestrate a secret deal later known as Iran-Contra to send arms through Honduras to help the Contras overthrow the Sandinista government.” ([Farley and Kempster 3/26/2001](#)) On April 21, 2005, the Senate confirms Negroponte by a vote of 98 to 2 in the Senate. His new office is said to be stronger than its predecessor position, the Director of Central Intelligence.

February 27, 2005: CIA Officers Reportedly Worried about Prosecution over Detainee Interrogation Methods

The New York Times reports that, according to current and former government officials, there is “widening unease within the Central Intelligence Agency over the possibility that career officers could be prosecuted or otherwise punished for their conduct during interrogations and detentions of terrorism suspects.” The conduct is questionable because it is said to amount to torture in some cases (see [Mid-May 2002 and After](#), [Shortly After September 6, 2006](#) and [March 10-April 15, 2007](#)). At this time, only one CIA contractor has been charged with a crime, after a prisoner died in Afghanistan. However, at least half a dozen other investigations by the Justice Department and the CIA’s Inspector General are ongoing, and involve actions in Afghanistan, Iraq, and possibly “black sites” in other countries. An official says, “There’s a lot more out there than has generally been

recognized, and people at the agency are worried.” ([Jehl and Johnston 2/27/2005](#)) Apparently due to these fears, some officers purchase legal insurance policies. ([Cochran 12/15/2007](#))

February 28, 2005: 9/11 Commission’s Executive Director Gets Job With Bush Administration

It is announced that Philip Zelikow, Executive Director for the 9/11 Commission, has been chosen to serve as a senior adviser for Condoleezza Rice in her new position as Secretary of State. ([Service 2/28/2005](#)) 9/11 victims’ relatives groups had demanded Zelikow’s resignation from the 9/11 Commission, claiming conflict of interest, including being too close to Rice (see [March 21, 2004](#)).

Spring 2005: Taliban’s Top Drug Kingpin Turns Himself In to US

Haji Bashir Noorzai, reputedly Afghanistan’s biggest drug kingpin with ties to the Taliban and al-Qaeda, had been arrested and then released by the US in late 2001 (see [Late 2001](#)), and then ignored when he wanted to make a deal with US in 2004 (see [Autumn 2004](#)). In spring 2005, the US again contacts him and offers a deal. Author James Risen explains, “The Americans asked Noorzai to come to the United States to negotiate a deal, and to the astonishment of nearly everyone involved in the case, he agreed. Noorzai flew on a regular commercial flight to New York, where he was met by federal agents. The Bush administration was so startled that he had actually agreed to come to the United States that it was not quite sure what to do with him.” Secret talks are held in New York City, resulting in Noorzai being indicted in April 2005. “By the summer of 2005, Noorzai was in jail and was talking, but questions remained about whether the Bush administration really wanted to hear what he had to say, particularly about the involvement of powerful Afghans and Pakistanis in the heroin trade.” ([Anderson 4/26/2005](#); [Risen 2006, pp. 152-162](#))

March 3, 2005: State Department Says Afghanistan Is on Verge of Becoming a Narcotics State

A State Department report on world drug production suggests that, as the Associated Press puts it, “Afghanistan has been unable to contain opium poppy production and is on the verge of becoming a narcotics state.” The area in Afghanistan devoted to poppy cultivation (the raw material for opium and heroin) in 2004 more than tripled the figure for 2003. The report suggests this situation “represents an enormous threat to world stability.” ([Gedda 3/4/2005](#)) Drug eradication efforts have been almost completely ineffectual. For instance, in May 2005 it will be reported that Afghanistan’s US-trained Central Poppy Eradication Force has destroyed less than 250 acres, well short of its original goal of 37,000 acres. ([Cloud and Gall 5/22/2005](#)) The drug economy now

accounts for between a third and half of the country's economic output. The World Bank estimates that opium cultivation can generate at least 12 times as much income as alternative crops. ([Bosco 5/18/2005](#))

March 8, 2005: 9/11 Commission Investigator Frustrates German Efforts to Convict Motassadeq

Dietrich Snell, the 9/11 Commission's lead investigator into the origins and role of the Hamburg cell in the 9/11 plot, testifies in the German retrial of Mounir El Motassadeq. Snell tells a panel of judges that the 9/11 Commission concluded the Hamburg al-Qaeda cell members such as Mohamed Atta did not develop the idea of the 9/11 plot on their own, but were recruited by bin Laden during a visit to Afghanistan in late 1999. He claims, "Ultimately, we did not arrive at the conclusion that there was solid evidence of any contact" between the Hamburg cell members and al-Qaeda leaders about the plot before the Hamburg group's trip to Afghanistan. These findings contradict the prosecutor's case against Motassadeq and also run counter to media accounts suggesting the Hamburg cell was involved in the plot before that time. According to German law, prosecutors must prove that important elements of the conspiracy took place in Germany in order to get a conviction. Snell largely fails to explain how the Commission came to that conclusion, saying the sources remain classified. ([Whitlock 3/9/2005](#))

March 22, 2005: Ruling Prohibits Moussaoui Access to Top Al-Qaeda Prisoners, but Issue Remains Unresolved

Zacarias Moussaoui wants captured al-Qaeda leaders Khalid Shaikh Mohammed and Ramzi bin al-Shibh to testify in his trial. However, an appeals court in April 2004 had only allowed indirect access to those prisoners, and further appeals court decisions in September and October 2004 had reaffirmed that ruling. On this date, the US Supreme Court, without comment, refuses to hear a further appeal. This was expected because the Supreme Court typically doesn't hear such appeals until after the case goes to trial. ([Markon 9/14/2004](#); [Markon 10/14/2004](#); [Markon 3/22/2005](#)) Moussaoui's guilty plea one month later (see [April 22, 2005](#)) may lead to a new round of appeals. Presiding judge Leonie Brinkema has indicated she believes witness access is "highly relevant to the sentencing phase," which will begin next, and could constitute "mitigating evidence" that could make the difference between Moussaoui receiving the death penalty or not. ([Markon 4/23/2005](#))

March 28, 2005: Mueller's Management of FBI Is Criticized by Insiders

US News and World Report publishes a cover story about FBI Director Robert Mueller's attempts to reform his agency. Insiders say that the senior leadership tends to withhold bad news from Mueller. Says one anonymous FBI official, "[Mueller] is so isolated and

shielded.” The article notes that there has been a “head-spinning exodus of top-tier executives - five officials have held the top counterterrorism job since 9/11; five others held the top computer job in 2002-2003 alone.” Mueller has reduced the autonomy of the field offices and centralized all major terrorism investigations at FBI headquarters. The 9/11 Commission in the 2004 final report had few recommendations on how to reform the FBI, largely leaving the issue to Mueller’s discretion. 9/11 Commissioner Timothy Roemer says that in retrospect, “[Mueller] knows how to play the system, how to play Congress, and he certainly worked the 9/11 Commission.” ([Ragavan 3/28/2005](#))

April 2005 or Shortly Before: Saudi Arabia Allegedly Warns Britain about 7/7 London Bombers

After the 7/7 London bombings (see [July 7, 2005](#)), an official at the Saudi Arabian embassy will tell a British journalist that before the attack Saudi Arabia provided intelligence to Britain that was sufficient to dismantle the plot, but British authorities failed to act on it. The information is quite detailed, containing names of senior al-Qaeda members said to be involved in the plot, including Kareem al-Majati, whose calls the Saudis have been intercepting and who may have been in contact with lead bomber Mohammad Sidique Khan. Al-Majati is said to have been involved in attacks in Morocco (see [May 16, 2003](#)) and Madrid (see [March 11, 2004](#)), before being killed in a shoot-out in Saudi Arabia in April 2005. After the bombings, Saudi ambassador to London Prince Turki issues a statement, “There was certainly close liaison between the Saudi Arabian intelligence authorities and the British intelligence authorities some months ago, when information was passed to Britain about a heightened terrorist threat to London,” although it is not clear if this statement refers to this warning, another Saudi warning about a possible attack in Britain (see [December 14, 2004-February 2005](#)), or both. The public response by British authorities when asked about this alleged warning changes over time; initially they deny having received it at all, but after the issue is reignited by King Abdullah in 2007 (see [October 29, 2007](#)), they will say that the warning was not specific enough to act on. ([Bright 11/1/2007](#))

April 2005: Federal Appeals Court Upholds Use of ‘State Secrets Privilege’ to Block Suit Against DOJ Brought by Former Translator

The DC federal appeals court rules in favor of the attorney general’s use of the state-secrets privilege (see [October 18, 2002](#) and [May 19, 2004](#)) to prevent the court from hearing Sibel Edmonds’ lawsuit (see [June 2002](#)). Lawyers for the Justice Department had addressed the judge behind sealed doors. ([Rose 9/2005](#))

April 2005-January 2006: 9/11 Conspiracy Documentary Released; Becomes 'Internet Blockbuster'



Korey Rowe, Jason Bermas, and Dylan Avery.

[Source: *Beyond the Ordinary*] A feature-length documentary film is released that suggests the 9/11 attacks were planned and implemented by people within the US government. The film, called *Loose Change*, is made by three men in their twenties from upstate New York: Dylan Avery, Korey Rowe, and Jason Bermas. The three are “Entirely self-taught, and without a single journalistic qualification between them beyond a couple of media courses Jason sat at college ” Avery, the film’s writer and director, had begun work on it when he was just 18. ([Sales 8/2006](#); [Pilkington 1/26/2007](#)) The original version of *Loose Change* is released in April 2005. In response to advice and criticism, an updated “2nd Edition” comes out in January 2006. ([Manjoo 6/27/2006](#)) The London Daily Mail describes the film as “a blitz of statistics, photographs pinched from the web, eyewitness accounts and expert testimony, all set to hip-hop music. And it is dramatically changing the way people think about 9/11.” ([Reid 2/9/2007](#)) Some of *Loose Change*’s key allegations are:

- The World Trade Center towers were in fact brought down as a result of a “carefully planned controlled demolition.”
- Flight 77 did not hit the Pentagon. Hani Hanjour, its alleged terrorist pilot, lacked the flying skills necessary to make the difficult maneuver supposedly made by this flight. Instead, the building looked more like a missile had hit it.
- Flight 93 did not crash in a field in Pennsylvania. The debris field showed nothing resembling a crashed airplane. Instead, it landed at Cleveland Hopkins Airport, after this had been evacuated.
- Cellphone calls made from the hijacked planes were in fact staged. The film refers to a study that claims phones wouldn’t get cellular signals at high altitudes.
- Video footage of Osama bin Laden claiming responsibility for 9/11 was faked. ([Manjoo 6/27/2006](#); [Pilkington 1/26/2007](#); [Monbiot 2/6/2007](#))

The documentary is hugely popular. By early 2007, an estimated 100,000 copies of it on DVD will have been sold and about 50,000 copies given away free. An unknown number of duplicates will have been given out, due to the makers’ encouragement of viewers to burn their own copies and pass them on. Up to 50 million people will see it when it is shown on television in 12 countries on the fifth anniversary of 9/11. Millions more watch

it for free over the Internet. Vanity Fair says Loose Change “just might be the first Internet blockbuster.” ([Sales 8/2006](#); [Pilkington 1/26/2007](#)) The film also receives some harsh criticism. Canadian journalist Gwynne Dyer calls it “pure paranoid fantasy.” ([Dyer 3/8/2007](#)) British left-wing journalist George Monbiot calls it “a virus sweeping the world” that “infects opponents of the Bush government... and turns them into gibbering idiots.” He claims, “Read some conflicting accounts, and Loose Change’s case crumbles faster than the Twin Towers.” ([Monbiot 2/6/2007](#)) Some skeptics of the official 9/11 account are also critical, and while agreeing that the US government was behind 9/11, disagree with many of Loose Change’s specific claims. According to Vanity Fair, though, “Undoubtedly what has put Loose Change ahead of the pack of 9/11 conspiracy fare is that it’s a pretty watchable movie—especially considering it cost \$2,000 and was made on Avery’s Compaq Presario laptop.” ([Manjoo 6/27/2006](#); [Sales 8/2006](#))

April 5, 2005: NIST Releases Latest Findings; Blames WTC Collapses on Loss of Fireproofing

The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), which is conducting an investigation into the WTC collapses on 9/11, releases three new reports. Investigators say that the Twin Towers would probably have remained standing if the fireproofing material that surrounded the buildings’ structural steel had not been stripped away when the planes hit. Their report states that “[t]he jet fuel, which ignited the fires, was mostly consumed within the first few minutes after impact. The fires that burned for almost the entire time that the buildings remained standing were due mainly to burning building contents and, to a lesser extent, aircraft contents, not jet fuel.” However, they claim, without the loss of fireproofing during the planes’ impacts, the heat from the fires would have been insufficient to cause the buildings to collapse. They say that although the architects had in 1964 tested the impact of a Boeing 707 airplane crashing into the 80th floor of one of the towers, they never envisioned the intense fires that ensued. NIST also reports that the time taken by survivors from the North Tower to descend a flight of stairs was about double the slowest evacuation speed estimated in a standard fire engineering text. They state: “approximately 87 percent of the WTC tower occupants, including more than 99 percent below the floors of impact, were able to evacuate successfully.” However, they say, if each tower had been full when they were hit, as many as 14,000 people could have died. ([National Institute of Standards and Technology 4/5/2005](#); [Matthews 4/5/2005](#); [Williams 4/5/2005](#); [Barrett 4/6/2005](#))

April 22, 2005: Moussaoui Pleads Guilty to All Charges Against Him, But Denies Role in 9/11 Plot



Zacarias Moussaoui. [Source: Sherburne County Sheriffs

Office] In an unexpected move, Zacarias Moussaoui pleads guilty to all six terrorism conspiracy charges against him. Moussaoui had been arrested weeks before 9/11, and was formally charged in December 2001 for his role in the 9/11 plot. He says it is “absolutely correct” that he is guilty of the charges: conspiracy to commit acts of terrorism transcending national boundaries; to commit aircraft piracy; to destroy aircraft; to use weapons of mass destruction; to murder US government employees; and to destroy US government property. However, he says, “I was not part of 9/11,” but rather claims he was part of a “broader conspiracy” aimed at post-9/11 attacks. He says he was personally directed by bin Laden to pilot a 747 and “strike the White House” with it, but as part of a “different conspiracy than 9/11.” His plea means there will be no trial to determine guilt, but there will still be a trial to determine his sentencing, which could be as severe as the death penalty. He promises to fight in the sentencing phase, stating he doesn’t deserve death because he was not directly connected to the 9/11 plot. ([Arena and Hirschhorn 4/23/2005](#); [Markon 4/23/2005](#)) A CNN legal analyst notes that Moussaoui’s guilty plea “makes little sense.” Moussaoui may have actually had a chance to be proven not guilty because of the many thorny legal issues his case raises (two suspected members of the al-Qaeda Hamburg cell have been found not guilty in German courts because they have not been allowed access to testimony from al-Qaeda prisoners who might exonerate them, and Moussaoui so far has been denied access to those same prisoners (see [March 22, 2005](#))). It is pointed out that Moussaoui gave a guilty plea without “any promise of leniency in exchange for his plea,” and that he is unlikely to gain any sympathetic advantage from it in the death penalty trial. CNN’s analyst notes that the statements in his plea “suggest that Moussaoui [mistakenly] thought he had tricked the prosecution.” Doubts still remain whether Moussaoui is fully mentally sound and capable of legally defending himself. ([Dorf 4/28/2005](#)) A counterterrorism expert for RAND Corporation says of Moussaoui’s rather confusing statements, “If we thought by the end of the day we would find the holy grail as to exactly what the genesis of 9/11 was and what Moussaoui’s role in it was, we have been sorely disappointed. This contradiction in his behavior raises more questions than it answers.” The Washington Post notes that, “It remains uncertain” whether the death penalty trial “will divulge much new information about the plot.” ([Eggen 4/23/2005](#))

April 30, 2005: Despite Moussaoui’s Guilty Plea, Judge Still Won’t Allow Release of Critical FBI Report



A courtroom sketch of Leonie Brinkema.

[Source: Art Lein / Agence France-Presse] Leonie Brinkema, the federal judge overseeing the prosecution of Zacarias Moussaoui, denies a request to make public an unclassified version of a report on the FBI's failure to stop the 9/11 attacks. The report, written by the Justice Department's Inspector General Glenn Fine, was completed in July 2004 (see [July 2004](#)) has been held up from publication because of the Moussaoui trial. One portion of the report deals with the FBI's handling of Moussaoui's arrest in August 2001 (see [August 16, 2001](#)). However, he pleaded guilty earlier in April (see [April 22, 2005](#)). Judge Brinkema doesn't give an explanation for continuing to keep the report classified or hint when it might finally be unclassified. Most of the report has no bearing on Moussaoui. ([Eggen 4/30/2005](#)) The report will be released two months later with the section on Moussaoui completely removed (see [June 9, 2005](#)).

[April 30, 2005-October 19, 2005: FBI Agent Wright Is Fired by FBI, Then Reinstated](#)

On April 30, 2005, FBI agent Robert Wright is notified that the FBI plans to fire him within 30 days. He is immediately ordered to cease work. ([Lighty 4/22/2005](#)) However, on October 19, 2005, it is announced that the Justice Department overruled the FBI and orders Wright reinstated as an FBI agent. However, he is placed on probation for one year and downgraded in pay. The Chicago Tribune comments, "Wright has been the subject of at least six disciplinary investigations in his career. His supporters have long suspected that the FBI retaliated against him for his public criticism of the bureau and its ability to safeguard the nation from future terrorist attacks." ([Lighty 10/19/2005](#)) He has two lawsuits still pending against the FBI. One alleges that the FBI improperly released confidential information from his personnel file (see [After June 2, 2003-December 2003](#)), and the other accuses the FBI of violating his rights of free expression by blocking the publication of a book he wrote before 9/11. ([Mintz 4/23/2005](#))

May 2005: Author Claims CIA Hid Explosive Zubaida Interrogation Transcripts from 9/11 Commission and FBI

Author Gerald Posner has claimed that shortly after al-Qaeda leader Abu Zubaida was captured in late March 2002 (see [March 28, 2002](#)), he was tricked into thinking he had been handed over to the Saudis and then confessed high-level cooperation between al-Qaeda and the Saudi and Pakistani governments. Posner's account has since been seconded by New York Times journalist James Risen (see [Early April 2002](#)). In a 2005 book, Posner will further allege, "From conversations with investigators familiar with the [9/11 Commission's] probe, the portions of Zubaida's interrogation in which he named [Saudi and Pakistani connections] were not provided to the Commission. The CIA has even withheld [them] from the FBI, which is supposed to have access to all terror suspects' questioning." ([Posner 2005, pp. 14](#)) There is some circumstantial evidence to support this. Aside from the alleged Saudi trickery, Zubaida reportedly confessed very vital intelligence in late March and into April, including the previously unknown fact that Khalid Shaikh Mohammed was the mastermind of the 9/11 attacks (see [Mid-April 2002](#)). But footnotes from various 9/11 Commission reports indicate that the earliest Zubaida interrogation used by the Commission is from May 23, 2002, after a new CIA team has taken over Zubaida's interrogation (see [Mid-May 2002 and After](#)). ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 65](#) ^۵) Hundreds of hours of Zubaida's interrogation sessions are videotaped by the CIA, but these videotapes will be destroyed by the CIA in 2005 under controversial circumstances (see [November 2005](#)).

May-September 2005: Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman Requests Over 100 Documents about CIA Interrogation Program, Receives No Reply



Jay Rockefeller. [*Source: US Senate*] Ranking member of the Senate Intelligence Committee Jay Rockefeller (D-WV) requests "over a hundred documents" from the CIA's Inspector General. The documents are referenced in or pertain to a report the Inspector General drafted in May 2004 about the CIA's detention and interrogation activities. Rockefeller also requests a report drafted by the CIA's Office of General Counsel (see [2003](#)) on the examination of videotapes of detainee interrogations stating

whether the techniques they show comply with an August 2002 Justice Department opinion on interrogation (see [August 1, 2002](#)). However, the CIA refuses to provide these documents, as well as others, even after a second request is sent to CIA Director Porter Goss in September 2005. ([US Congress 12/7/2007](#)) The videotapes Rockefeller is asking about will be destroyed by the CIA just two months after his second request (see [November 2005](#)).

May 2, 2005: Al-Qaeda's Alleged Number Three Leader Is Captured, but Some Suggest His Importance Is Overhyped

Al-Qaeda leader Abu Faraj al-Libbi is arrested in Mardan, Pakistan, near the town of Peshawar. He is captured by Pakistani forces with US assistance but is immediately turned over to the US and detained in a secret CIA prison (see [September 2-3, 2006](#)). ([Sengupta 5/5/2005](#)) In 2004, the Daily Telegraph claimed Faraj was Khalid Shaikh Mohammed's "right hand man" and helped him plan the 9/11 attacks. After Mohammed was arrested in early 2003 (see [March 1, 2003](#)), Faraj allegedly took his place and became the third in command of al-Qaeda and the group's operational leader. Furthermore, the Telegraph claims he was once Osama bin Laden's personal assistant, helped plan assassination attempts against Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf, and has been in contact with sleeper cells in the US and Britain. ([Ansari 9/19/2004](#)) President Bush hails Faraj's capture as a "critical victory in the war on terror." Bush also calls him a "top general" and "a major facilitator and chief planner for the al-Qaeda network." But Faraj is little known at the time of his arrest and some experts and insiders question if he really is as important as the US claims he is. The London Times will report several days after his arrest, "[T]he backslapping in Washington and Islamabad has astonished European terrorism experts, who point out that the Libyan was neither on the FBI's most wanted list, nor on that of the State Department 'Rewards for Justice' program." One former close associate of Osama bin Laden now living in London laughed at Faraj's supposed importance, saying, "What I remember of him is he used to make the coffee and do the photocopying." Even a senior FBI official admits that his "influence and position have been overstated." The Times comments, "Some believe [his] significance has been cynically hyped by two countries [the US and Pakistan] that want to distract attention from their lack of progress in capturing bin Laden, who has now been on the run for almost four years." ([Lamb and Islamabad 5/8/2005](#))

May 8, 2005: US Assassinate Al-Qaeda Figure with Remote Drone

The CIA launches a missile from a remotely piloted Predator drone and kills al-Qaeda leader Haitham al-Yemeni. He had been tracked since attending a meeting with other al-Qaeda leaders a few months earlier (see [Late 2005](#)). ([Mazzetti 7/8/2007](#)) US intelligence officials say they were hoping al-Yemeni would lead them to bin Laden, but after al-Qaeda leader Abu Faraj al-Libbi was captured in early May 2005, they worried al-Yemeni

would go into hiding and decided to kill him instead. Officials claim that al-Yemeni was going to replace al-Libbi as al-Qaeda's operations leader. However, little is known about him (including his real name since al-Yemeni means "from Yemen"), and he is not listed in either the FBI or Pakistani "Most Wanted" list. There are no prior media mentions of his name and no publicly released photographs of him either. ([Priest 5/15/2005](#)) One anonymous US intelligence source disputes claims that al-Yemeni was high-ranking. ([Ensor 5/14/2005](#))

May 10, 2005: Ridge Reveals Internal Dissension on Terror Alerts

Former Secretary of Homeland Security Tom Ridge admits to further problems with the terror alert system. In defense of his administration of the Department of Homeland Security, he says that Administration decisions to raise the threat level were sometimes unjustified by evidence and unsupported by his department. "More often than not we were the least inclined to raise it," says Ridge. "Sometimes we disagreed with the intelligence assessment. Sometimes we thought even if the intelligence was good, you don't necessarily put the country on [alert].... There were times when some people were really aggressive about raising it, and we said, for that?" Ridge had previously disagreed with Attorney General John Ashcroft on the communication of threat information to the public. These comments mark the first time that dissension among the Homeland Security Advisory Council, a panel made up of business representatives, academic leaders, and security experts appointed by President Bush, is discussed with the press. Reform of the terror alert system is under review by current Homeland Security secretary Michael Chertoff. Department spokesman Brian Roehrkasse says "improvements and adjustments" may be announced within the next few months. ([Hall 5/10/2005](#)) As of 2007, no such announcement have been made.

May 15, 2005: Al-Marabh Reported Jailed in Syria

The Globe and Mail reports that friends and family of Nabil al-Marabh fear he is being jailed in Syria. He apparently lived freely there for a few months but was then arrested by Syrian intelligence agents. The article notes that, "US deportation records show that Mr. al-Marabh had expressed fears about being conscripted or tortured in Syria, which is notorious for abusing its prisoners." ([Freeze 5/11/2005](#))

May 24, 2005: US to Have Long-Term Military Presence in Afghanistan

President Bush and Afghanistan's President Hamid Karzai sign a "strategic partnership" allowing the US to have a long-term military presence in Afghanistan. The US is allowed to have access to existing military bases and potentially new bases as well. ([Parameswaran 5/24/2005](#)) Both the US and Afghanistan government try to avoid talk of permanent US military bases in Afghanistan, because the idea is highly unpopular with

the Afghan population. There are about 18,000 foreign troops in the country, half of them American. There also is a NATO-led force of 8,500 peacekeepers in the capital of Kabul. ([Salahuddin 4/26/2005](#)) Asia Times reports that the US is constructing new military bases in the country, and in fact began work in February 2005. The bases “can be used in due time as a springboard to assert a presence far beyond Afghanistan.” The largest US air base in Afghanistan is located only about 50 miles from the border with Iran, “a location that makes it controversial.” ([Maitra 3/30/2005](#))

May 27, 2005: Defense Department Watchdog Blames Inaccurate Accounts of 9/11 on Poor Log Keeping

A report is secretly delivered to Congress by the Pentagon’s office of inspector general, regarding the inaccuracy of statements made by Defense Department officials on the military’s response to the September 11 hijackings. The 9/11 Commission had made a formal request in summer 2004 for the inspector general to investigate the matter, because military officials had given testimony that was later proved to have been false (see [Shortly before July 22, 2004](#)). For example, they had claimed that NORAD had been tracking Flight 93 on 9/11 and was ready to shoot it down if it threatened Washington. Yet audiotapes obtained under subpoena showed NORAD was unaware of this flight until after it crashed. In its report, the inspector general’s office states that it found “the inaccuracies, in part, resulted because of inadequate forensic capabilities.” It says that commanders found it difficult to create an accurate timeline of the events of 9/11 due to the lack of a well-coordinated system in logging information about air-defense operations. At the time, air-defense watch centers had used handwritten logs, and these could be unreliable. Following the attacks, the report claims, commanders failed to press hard enough for an accurate timeline to be produced for the benefit of investigations, like the 9/11 Commission. Yet, as some of the commission’s staff later point out, the military had already reviewed the NORAD audiotapes chronicling the events of 9/11 prior to its officials giving their incorrect testimonies. In response to a freedom-of-information request by the New York Times, the inspector general’s report will be publicly released in August 2006, but the equivalent of several pages will be blacked out on national security grounds. ([Bronner 8/1/2006](#); [Eggen 8/2/2006](#); [Shenon and Dwyer 8/5/2006](#); [Reuters 8/5/2006](#))

Summer 2005: Director of National Intelligence Tells CIA Not to Destroy Interrogation Tapes

Director of National Intelligence John Negroponte meets CIA Director Porter Goss to discuss what to do with tapes of CIA interrogations that apparently show controversial techniques (see [Spring-Late 2002](#)). Negroponte “strongly advise[s]” Goss that the tapes should not be destroyed and this opinion is documented in a memo drafted about the meeting. Despite this and warnings from other legislators and officials not to destroy the tapes (see [November 2005](#)), the CIA will destroy them a few months later (see [November](#)

2005). It is unclear whether the CIA manager that orders their destruction, Jose Rodriguez, is aware of this meeting and the memo. ([Isikoff and Hosenball 12/24/2007](#))

June-October 2005: Al Taqwa Bankers Continue to Run Businesses with Little Trouble



The headquarters of Nasco, the Nigerian company owned by Ahmed Idris Nasreddin, are actually located on Ahmed Nasreddin Road. [Source: *NBC News*] News reports indicate Al Taqwa bankers are able to conduct business globally with few restrictions, despite being on global terrorist financier lists (see [November 7, 2001](#)). For instance, Al Taqwa director Ahmed Idris Nasreddin is running a conglomerate in Nigeria that makes a range of goods such as breakfast cereal and beauty products. An MSNBC investigation shows a clear and easily discovered paper trail connecting Nasreddin to the Nigeria companies, and a Nigerian government spokesman says, “He is well known. He is actually the major shareholder” in the conglomerate. But Nigerian officials claim the US has never raised objections or asked Nigeria to take action. In 2003, news reports tied Nasreddin to a prominent hotel in Milan, Italy. Financial records indicate he still owns the hotel. ([Myers and Roston 6/30/2005](#)) Author Douglas Farah notes that the Geneva, Switzerland, branch of the International Islamic Charitable Organization (IICO) has two Al Taqwa figures as directors. Youssef al Qardawi was a major Al Taqwa investor, and Ghaleb Himmat was a director in the bank. Both are officially designated terrorist financiers. The IICO also operated as part of the SAAR network, which was raided in March 2002 (see [March 20, 2002](#)). The IICO’s vice president is Saleh Ibn Abdul Rahman Hussayen, who was a SAAR network official and also stayed in the same hotel as three of the 9/11 hijackers the night before the attacks (see [September 10, 2001](#)). Farah comments that these examples show “how ineffective and toothless the international sanctions regime has become. Those on the UN [terrorist financier] list continue to operate freely, presiding over businesses and charities that give them continued access to millions of dollars. The organizations that hire them are not penalized and, in the end, neither are the individuals.” ([Farah 11/7/2005](#))

June-July 2005: Judges Order Bush Administration Not to Destroy Evidence of Torture and Abuse of Detainees



Henry Kennedy. [Source: *District Court for the District of Columbia*] In June 2005, US District Judge Henry Kennedy orders the Bush administration to safeguard “all evidence and information regarding the torture, mistreatment, and abuse of detainees now at the United States Naval Base at Guantanamo Bay.” US District Judge Gladys Kessler issued a nearly identical order one month later. Later that year, the CIA will destroy videotapes of the interrogation and possible torture of high-ranking al-Qaeda detainees Abu Zubaida and Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri (see [November 2005](#)). In 2005, Zubaida and al-Nashiri are not being held at the Guantanamo prison, but at secret CIA prisons overseas. But while evidence of torture of Zubaida and al-Nashiri is not directly covered by the orders, it may well be indirectly covered. David Remes, a lawyer for some of the Guantanamo detainees, will later claim, “It is still unlawful for the government to destroy evidence, and it had every reason to believe that these interrogation records would be relevant to pending litigation concerning our client.” In January 2005, Assistant Attorney General Peter Keisler assured Kennedy that government officials were “well aware of their obligation not to destroy evidence that may be relevant in pending litigation.” ([Apuzzo 12/12/2007](#)) In some court proceedings, prosecutors have used evidence gained from the interrogation of Zubaida to justify the continued detention of some Guantanamo detainees. Scott Horton writing for Harper’s magazine will later comment that “in these trials, a defendant can seek to exclude evidence if it was secured through torture. But the defendant has an obligation to prove this contention. The [destroyed videotapes] would have provided such proof.” ([Horton 12/15/2007](#))

June 1, 2005: Swiss Investigation of Al Taqwa Bank Is Suspended



Youssef Nada's office in Lugano, Italy. [Source: *Keystone*] It is announced that Swiss prosecutors have suspended a three-year investigation into Al Taqwa Bank. The US and UN formally designated Al Taqwa and its founder Youssef Nada as terrorist financiers in November 2001 (see [November 7, 2001](#)). The suspension of the Swiss probe has no effect on those designations. Nada is self-acknowledged leader of the militant Muslim Brotherhood movement, but claims no ties to terrorism. ([Isikoff and Hosenball 6/22/2005](#)) Swiss investigators say that the Bahamas government failed to share information about the important Al Taqwa branch based in that country. They claim that was the decisive factor in not bringing a case. Additionally, Al Taqwa's Swiss financial records were all shipped to Saudi Arabia, and the Saudi government has not been cooperative in getting them back. ([Swissinfo 6/2/2005](#))

June 3, 2005: Father and Son Arrested in California for Alleged Terrorist Ties



Hamid (left) and Umer Hayat [Source: *ABC*] Hamid Hayat, 23, a United States citizen of Pakistani descent is arrested in Lodi, California and alleged to be part of a terrorist sleeper cell. His father, Umer Hayat, a naturalized American citizen born in Pakistan, is also arrested. The indictment contains Hamid's admission to attending an Islamist training camp in Balakot, Pakistan, in 2000 for a few days, and again in 2003-2004 for approximately three to six months. He further admits to training for jihad, that he came to the United States for jihad, and that he was prepared to wage jihad upon the receipt of orders. The indictment says that literature extolling violent Islamist activities was discovered at Hamid's home, including a magazine from Jaish-e-Mohammed, a Pakistani extremist group. Umer is arrested for making false statements to the FBI on unrelated charges. ([Department of Justice 4/25/2006](#)) On April 19, 2003, the two, on their way to Pakistan, were stopped outside of Dulles International Airport with \$28,093 in cash. They were allowed to continue with their journey. To make bail after their 2005 arrests, the Hayats put their two-house

compound up on bond and declare it to be appraised at \$390,000 with no outstanding debt. US District Judge Garland E. Burrell Jr. writes that Umer, an ice cream truck driver, “appears to have access to a significant amount of cash from an unexplained source.” Umer is charged with making false statements to the FBI when questioned about the cash he had at Dulles. Umer is later released and credited with time served. ([Hedlund and Bishop 8/25/2005](#)) On April 25, 2006, Hamid is convicted with one count of providing material support or resources to terrorists and three counts of making false statements to the FBI in matters related to international/domestic terrorism. The announcement of the conviction states that Hamid confessed in interviews to attending an Islamist training camp and receiving training in order to carry out attacks against the United States. The announcement further states that Hamid initially made false statements to the FBI in regards to this training, and was discovered to have been in possession of the Pakistani magazine, a “jihadi supplication,” and a “jihadi scrapbook.” The announcement indicates that the main was gathered between March 2003 and August 2003 and consists of several recorded conversations with a cooperating witness, in which Hamid “pledged his belief in violent jihad, pledged to go to a jihadi training camp and indicated that he, in fact, was going to jihadi training.” ([Department of Justice 4/25/2006](#)) Hamid will be sentenced to 24 years in prison on September 10, 2007. His defense lawyer, Wazhma Mojaddidi, says Hamid’s statements were the idle chatter of an uneducated, directionless man. She says the government has no proof her client had ever attended a terrorist training camp. Hamid says that he made the claims to end the interrogation. Umer says “We were expecting justice. We did not get justice. My son is innocent.” ([KCBS 9/10/2007](#)) The request for a new trial will be rejected by Judge Burrell on May 17, 2007. He says that there is evidence that jurors “thoroughly and thoughtfully deliberated regarding Hayat’s guilt or innocence.” He also rejects defense objections that the jury was misled by an FBI undercover witness who apparently incorrectly testified that he saw a top leader of al-Qaeda in public in Lodi. No further information is made available to the public on the source of the Hayat’s wealth. ([Associated Press 5/17/2007](#))

June 9, 2005: Report on FBI Failures Finally Released

The report by Justice Department’s Inspector General Glenn Fine, completed in July 2004, is finally released (see [July 2004](#)). It states that the inability to detect the 9/11 hijacking plot amounts to a “significant failure” by the FBI and was caused in large part by “widespread and longstanding deficiencies” in the way the agency handled terrorism and intelligence cases. In one particularly notable finding, the report concluded that the FBI missed at least five chances to detect the presence of two of the suicide hijackers—Nawaf Alhazmi and Khalid Almihdhar—after they first entered the United States in early 2000. The report states, “While we do not know what would have happened had the FBI learned sooner or pursued its investigation more aggressively, the FBI lost several important opportunities to find [Alh]azmi and [Alm]ihdhar before the September 11 attacks.” ([US Department of Justice 11/2004](#); [Eggen 6/10/2005](#))

June 14, 2005: Terror Watch List Incomplete and Inaccurate

An Justice Department review of the FBI's Terrorist Screening Center discovers that the terrorist watch list used to screen people entering the US is based on incomplete and inaccurate information. The report also criticizes the poor technical performance of the facility. In the report, Inspector General Glenn Fine writes, "While the [Terrorist Screening Database] is constantly evolving, we found that the management of its information technology, a critical part of the terrorist screening process, has been deficient." The Justice Department also warns that missing or duplicate information hinders the usefulness of the lists. Fine states that, "We found instances where the consolidated database did not contain names that should have been included on the watch list. In addition, we found inaccurate information related to persons included in the database." ([Sheriff 6/14/2005](#))

June 18, 2005: US Ambassador Criticizes Pakistan for Not Arresting Taliban Leaders



Mullah Akhtar Usmani's appearance on Pakistani television, June 15, 2005. [*Source: Agence France-Presse*] US ambassador to Afghanistan Zalmay Khalilzad criticizes Pakistan's failure to act against Taliban leaders living in Pakistan. Mullah Akhtar Mohammed Osmani, a senior Taliban commander, recently gave an interview on Pakistan television in which he said bin Laden is in good health and Mullah Omar remains in direct command of the Taliban. Khalilzad further points out that Taliban spokesman Abdul Latif Hakimi frequently gives interviews from the Pakistani city of Quetta, and asks, "If a TV station can get in touch with them, how can the intelligence service of a country, which has nuclear bombs and a lot of security and military forces, not find them?" ([Reuters 6/18/2005](#))

June 19, 2005: CIA Director Has 'Excellent Idea' Where Bin Laden is Hiding

Asked if he knows where bin Laden is, CIA Director Porter Goss responds, "I have an excellent idea where he is. What's the next question?" ([Associated Press 6/19/2005](#)) A

few days later, Vice President Cheney is asked about Goss's comments and replies, "We've got a pretty good idea of a general area that he's in, but I—I don't have the street address." ([Cheney 6/23/2005](#))

June 22, 2005-December 2005: Swiss Open and Close Investigation on Financier Al-Qadi

In the years since the US declared Saudi multimillionaire Yassin al-Qadi a terrorism financier (see [October 12, 2001](#)), no criminal charges have been brought against him anywhere in the world. But on June 22, 2005, it is announced that Swiss prosecutors are pursuing a formal criminal case against him. The case focuses on a series of transactions made between February and August 1998 that were sent from one of al-Qadi's companies to a firm owned by Saudi businessman Wael Hamza Julaidan. Julaidan reputedly associated with bin Laden in the 1980s. He was placed on US and UN terrorism financier lists in 2002. Over \$1 million of the money in these transactions was sent to a Yemeni charity, but allegedly wound up funding al-Qaeda instead. Al-Qadi denies knowing that the money would go to al-Qaeda. ([Isikoff and Hosenball 6/22/2005](#)) It is claimed that some of this money goes to support the 9/11 attacks. However, in December 2005, the Swiss apparently close the case. The Swiss court issues a statement, "Nothing in the file allows one to conclude with sufficient likelihood that Yassin al-Qadi knew or was able to know that the payments he made and for which he is implicated in the Swiss proceedings, could serve to specifically finance the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001." ([Mirza 12/25/2005](#))

June 23, 2005: NIST Releases 43 Draft Reports; Recommends Changes to Improve Safety of Tall Buildings

Based upon its three-year investigation of the WTC collapses, the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) calls for changes in the planning, construction, and operation of skyscrapers. NIST releases 43 draft reports, totaling about 10,000 pages, for public comments. These include 25 pages of recommendations, intended to learn from 9/11 and make building occupants and emergency responders safer in any future disasters. NIST's inquiry has been conducted by more than 200 technical experts and contractors, and had two main parts: to look at the causes of the collapses and to identify weaknesses in building codes. Their recommendations include specific improvements to building standards, codes and practices; changes to evacuation and emergency response procedures; and research to help prevent future building failures. NIST does not have the authority to change building codes, but hopes to influence the policies of local authorities. The cost of implementing their recommended changes would add an estimated extra 2 to 5 percent to the development costs of buildings. Some are critical of their recommendations. Structural engineer Jon Magnusson, whose firm is the descendant of the company that designed the Twin Towers, says, "They are leading the public down the wrong path. They are saying we are going to fix the codes in order to deal with Sept. 11th. The physics say that you can't do that." ([Dwyer and Lipton 6/22/2005](#); [National](#)

[Institute of Standards and Technology 6/23/2005](#); [Matthews 6/24/2005](#)) The New York Times points out that between 1989 and 1999, only five civilians had been killed in some 6,900 reported high-rise office building fires within the US. ([Lipton and Dwyer 6/24/2005](#)) NIST will release its final report on the Twin Towers collapses four months later (see [October 26, 2005](#)).

June 23, 2005: Italians Issue Arrest Warrants for CIA Officers over Milan Kidnapping

Italian authorities issue arrest warrants against 13 US intelligence officers who kidnapped an Islamic extremist in Milan, Italy (see [February 17, 2003](#)). The kidnapped person, Hassan Mustafa Osama Nasr (a.k.a. Abu Omar), had previously informed for the CIA (see [August 27, 1995 and Shortly After](#) and [1997-February 17, 2003](#)), but was held hostage at two US airbases, Aviano in Italy and Ramstein in Germany, and then reportedly tortured in Egypt. This is the first time a foreign government files criminal charges against the CIA for an overseas counterterrorism mission. The Washington Post will comment, "Coming from a longtime ally, Italy, which has worked closely with the US government to fight terrorism and has sent troops to Iraq, the charges reflect growing unease in Europe about some US tactics against suspected Islamic terrorists." The 13 are not in Italy to be arrested and many appear to have been using fake names. Court documents show they spent over \$100,000 staying in luxury hotels in Milan, Florence, and Venice before and after the kidnapping. Nasr is released temporarily after being held for about a year, and Italian authorities monitor a call in which he says he has been tortured with electric shocks in Egypt. The operation is so badly planned and executed that former CIA bin Laden unit chief Michael Scheuer has difficulty believing the CIA could have done it, saying, "The agency might be sloppy, but not that sloppy." ([Whitlock and Linzer 6/24/2005](#))

June 26, 2005: Rumsfeld Unsure If US Is Eliminating More Terrorists than Creating Them

Asked on NBC's Meet the Press if the US is "capturing, killing, or deterring and dissuading more terrorists every day" than are being created, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld replies, "Tough to know. I don't know the answer to the question." ([Russert 6/26/2005](#))

June 29, 2005: Asian Alliance Said to Be Focused on Curbing US Influence in Central Asia



A map of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization countries. Blue countries are members, green countries are observers. [Source: *Shanghai Cooperation Organization*] Vyacheslav Nikonov, a leading Russian political scientist and the president of the Moscow-based Polity Foundation, says during a news conference in Moscow that the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is resetting its priorities and that curbing US influence in Central Asia has become one of the organization's central objectives. "The SCO is now emerging as something of an interest club," he says. "The member countries are coming to share an interest in the possible restriction of American influence in Asia." ([Novosti Russian News and Information Agency 6/29/2005](#))

July 5, 2005: Asian Alliance Calls on US to Set Withdrawal Date from Afghanistan

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), meeting in Astana, Kazakhstan, calls on the US to set a withdrawal date for US military forces in Afghanistan. "As the active military phase in the anti-terror operation in Afghanistan is nearing completion, the SCO would like the coalition's members to decide on the deadline for the use of the temporary infrastructure and for their military contingents' presence in those countries," the organization says in its declaration. ([Associated Press 7/5/2005](#)) The declaration also advocates limited outside interference in a country's internal affairs, while at the same time the organization asserts its right to work with Afghanistan on security matters. "We have to make every effort to step up security cooperation or else all our talks about stability will be pointless," says Chinese President Hu Jintao after the conference. ([Blagov 7/6/2005](#))

July 7, 2005: Over 50 Killed in '7/7' Terrorist Bombings in London



The four London bombers captured on closed circuit television. From left to right, Hasib Hussain, Germaine Lindsay, Mohammad Sidique Khan, and Shehzad Tanweer, pictured in Luton train station at 07:21 a.m., Thursday, July 7, 2005. [Source: *Scotland Yard*] England suffers its worst terrorist attack when four bombs go off in London during the morning rush hour. At 8:50 a.m. bombs go off on three London Underground trains within 50 seconds of each other. A fourth bomb goes off at 9:47 a.m. on a double-decker bus, near Tavistock Square. Fifty-six people, including the four bombers, are killed. The bombings become popularly known as '7/7.' ([Daily Telegraph 7/7/2005](#); [Daily Mail 7/8/2005](#); [CNN 7/22/2005](#)) The alleged bombers, all British residents between the ages of 18 and 30, are Mohammad Sidique Khan, Hasib Mir Hussain, Shehzad Tanweer, and Germaine Lindsay. All were British nationals of Pakistani descent, except Lindsay, who was born in Jamaica, but moved to England when he was five. ([Sapsted and Gardham 7/16/2005](#); [BBC 7/21/2005](#)) In 2004, Khan had been the subject of a routine threat assessment by the British intelligence agency MI5, after his name came up during an investigation into an alleged plot to explode a truck bomb in London. However, MI5 did not consider him a threat and did not place him under surveillance. ([BBC 7/17/2005](#); [Leppard 7/17/2005](#)) According to the Independent, Tanweer had similarly been scrutinized by MI5 that year, but was also not considered a threat. ([Bennetto 12/17/2005](#)) Khan and Tanweer had flown to Pakistan together in November 2004, returning together in February 2005. However, what they did during their stay is unclear. ([BBC 7/18/2005](#); [CNN 7/20/2005](#)) Less than a month before the bombings, the British government lowered its formal threat assessment one level, from "severe general" to "substantial," prompted by a confidential report by the Joint Terrorist Analysis Centre (JTAC). JTAC, which is made up of 100 top intelligence and law enforcement officials, concluded, "At present there is not a group with both the current intent and the capability to attack [Britain]." ([Sciolino and van Natta 7/19/2005](#); [Freeman 7/19/2005](#)) The attacks also coincide with the G8 summit in Gleneagles, Scotland, attended by British Prime Minister Tony Blair and US President George W. Bush, amongst others. ([Jeffery and Procter 7/7/2005](#)) Consequently, 1,500 officers from London's Metropolitan Police, including many anti-terrorist specialists, are away in Scotland as part of the force of 12,000 created to police the event. ([Sheerin 7/7/2005](#); [London Times 7/10/2005](#)) In December 2005, despite the protests of victims' relatives, opposition MPs, and Muslim leaders, the British government rules out holding a public inquiry into the bombings. Tony Blair defends the decision, saying, "If we ended up having a full scale public inquiry... we would end up diverting a massive amount of

police and security service time.” Instead, a senior civil servant will compile a narrative describing the attacks, using existing evidence. ([BBC 12/14/2005](#); [Evans 12/14/2005](#))

July 13, 2005: Former Bush Administration Lawyer Suggests US Should Stage Fake Terror Attacks and Blame Them on Al-Qaeda

John Yoo, a law professor at UC Berkeley who worked in the Justice Department and provided legal justification for some of Bush’s policies after 9/11 (see [September 25, 2001](#)), suggests some provocative ideas in a Los Angeles Times editorial. He argues the US should go on the offensive against al-Qaeda, having “our intelligence agencies create a false terrorist organization. It could have its own websites, recruitment centers, training camps, and fundraising operations. It could launch fake terrorist operations and claim credit for real terrorist strikes, helping to sow confusion within al-Qaeda’s ranks, causing operatives to doubt others’ identities and to question the validity of communications.” ([Yoo 7/13/2005](#))

July 18, 2005: Darkazanli Released in Germany

Mamoun Darkazanli, a German-Syrian businessman who associated with 9/11 hijackers Mohamed Atta, Marwan Alshehhi, and Ziad Jarrah and is suspected of helping the 9/11 plot (see [October 9, 1999](#) and [Spring 2000](#)), is released in Germany. He had been arrested the previous year (see [October 14, 2004](#)) and Spanish authorities had requested he be deported to Spain, where he had been indicted in terrorism charges. However, Germany’s highest court rules that his arrest warrant is invalid because it violates a German law prohibiting the extradition of its own citizens. German Justice Minister Brigitte Zypries will call the ruling by the federal constitutional court “a blow for the government in its efforts and fight against terrorism.” Germany will amend its legislation and the Spanish will try again, but this second attempt to extradite Darkazanli will also be unsuccessful (see [Late April 2007](#)). ([BBC 7/18/2005](#))

July 19, 2005: Mohamed Atta’s Father Praises London Bombings

In an interview with CNN, hijacker Mohamed Atta’s father, Mohamed el-Amir, says he would like to see more attacks like the July 2005 London bombings (see July 7, 2005). CNN reports, “El-Amir said the attacks... were the beginning of what would be a 50-year religious war, in which there would be many more fighters like his son.” He even demands, without success, \$5,000 for an interview with another CNN crew and tells CNN that the money would be used to fund another attack on London. The security guard for the apartment building where el-Amir lives says el-Amir was under surveillance by Egyptian agents for several months after the September 11 attacks, but no one had been

watching him recently. ([CNN 7/20/2005](#)) Several days after the 9/11 attacks, he claimed to have been contacted by Atta the day after 9/11 (see September 19, 2001).

July 21, 2005: Repeat of '7/7' Attacks Fails



Muktar Ibrahim [*Source: CBC*] Four men attempt to carry out bomb attacks to disrupt part of London's public transport system two weeks after the July 7, 2005 London bombings (see [July 7, 2005](#)). The attempted explosions occur around midday at Shepherd's Bush, Warren Street, and Oval stations on London Underground, and on a bus in Shoreditch. A fifth bomber dumps his device without attempting to set it off. The target are three Tube trains and a bus, as on 7/7, but the devices fail to explode properly. The men are identified as Muktar Ibrahim, 29, Yassin Omar, 26, Ramzi Mohammed, 25, and Hussain Osman, 28. ([BBC 7/11/2007](#)) These events follow a period of high anxiety and alert for London's citizens and emergency services alike. The four men, all originating in east Africa and arriving in the UK in the 1990s, stocked up on large quantities of hydrogen peroxide from hairdressing suppliers and used Omar's flat in New Southgate as a bomb factory. The devices, designed to fit into rucksacks, were made of a hydrogen peroxide and chapatti flour mixture. The bombs all fail to explode properly and the four men subsequently escape. Police say that dozens of people could have been killed had the bombs detonated properly. The escape of the men sparks the UK's largest manhunt in history. Mohammed and Ibrahim are captured a week later in west London. Omar is arrested in Birmingham, having disguised himself as a woman in a burka, while Osman is arrested in Rome and extradited to Britain. ([BBC 7/10/2007](#)) Two days later, another bomb of similar construction is found and detonated by police in Little Wormwood Scrubs, a park. Police say that it appears that the bomb was dumped there, rather than hidden. This prompts the search for a fifth suspect. ([BBC 7/23/2005](#))

July 22, 2005: British Police Kill Innocent Brazilian



Jean Charles de Menezes [Source: *The*

Independent]/Brazilian Jean Charles de Menezes, 27, is shot seven times in the head and once in the shoulder at Stockwell Tube station, south London. Police had mistaken him for a suicide bomber. Stockwell passenger Mark Whitby describes the scene: “One of them was carrying a black handgun - it looked like an automatic - they pushed him to the floor, bundled on top of him and unloaded five shots into him.” ([BBC 7/22/2005](#)) Initial reports indicate that de Menezes was challenged and refused to obey an order to stop. Metropolitan Police Commissioner Sir Ian Blair says the shooting is “directly linked” to the ongoing London bombs inquiry and manhunt spurred by the previous day’s attempted terror attacks (see [July 21, 2005](#)). Other early reports say that de Menezes was wearing a heavy coat despite the fact that it was a very warm day, had vaulted the barrier, and attempted to run onto a Tube train. Later reports contradict all of these claims. In addition, police claim that there is an absence of CCTV footage of the pursuit and shooting. The Independent Police Complaints Commission investigation following the shooting is able to establish a probable timeline of events. A police surveillance team was assigned to monitor the Tulse Hill area where de Menezes lived, as evidence linked it to the July 21 attacks. Upon exiting the building on the day of the shooting, de Menezes was identified as a possible suicide bomber by the surveillance unit and followed to the Tube station. The police were under strict orders not to allow any potential bombers on to a train and so a quick decision was made to perform an armed “hard stop.” The unarmed surveillance officers subsequently had to call in an armed response team. By the time the armed unit arrived, de Menezes, wearing a light denim jacket, had paid for his Tube travel and was walking down towards the train. Eyewitnesses described men leaping the barriers and rushing down the stairs towards the same area. Other witnesses put other possible plainclothes officers on the train, searching for the suspect. Once de Menezes had been spotted, the officers, out of radio contact with their superiors on the surface, made their decision quickly. New training had advised officers that it was crucial not to allow a suspect any time to detonate a device and that shots to the chest could cause a bomb to explode. This training instructed officers to wear plain clothes, not identify themselves until the last possible moment, and to aim for the head. The officers in the Tube station chased de Menezes on to the train, pinned him down and shot him. ([Thompson and Phillips 8/14/2005](#)) Prime Minister Tony Blair says he is “desperately

sorry” about the shooting and expresses Britain’s “sorrow and deep sympathy” to the de Menezes family. He also says the police must be supported in doing their job. London Mayor Ken Livingstone says, “Consider the choice that faced police officers at Stockwell last Friday - and be glad you did not have to take it.” The de Menezes family retain legal counsel and consider suing Scotland Yard. ([BBC 7/25/2005](#)) On November 1, 2007, prosecutors accuse the Metropolitan Police Service of “shocking and catastrophic error” during a trial at London’s Old Bailey Central Criminal Court. They say that police had criminally endangered the public, first by allowing a man they believed was a bomber to board an underground train, then by shooting him at point blank range. A jury convicts the police of a single charge of breaching health and safety rules which require it to protect the public. Judge Richard Henriques says “No explanation has been forthcoming other than a breakdown in communication. It’s been clear from the evidence that the surveillance team never positively identified Mr. De Menezes as a suspect.” The force is fined £175,000 and ordered to pay legal costs of £385,000. No individual officers are punished over the shooting, the Crown Prosecution Service having decided last year there was insufficient evidence to charge any individual with crimes. Police Chief Sir Ian Blair faces calls to resign, including from the opposition Conservative and Liberal Democrat parties. He is however supported by Prime Minister Gordon Brown. Interior Minister Jacqui Smith says “The Commissioner and the Metropolitan Police remain in the forefront of the fight against crime and terrorism. They have my full confidence and our thanks and support in the difficult job that they do.” Blair says the conviction does not represent “systemic failures” in the police force and that he will not quit over events “of a single day in extraordinary circumstances.” The de Menezes family’s representatives say they are pleased at the conviction but call for an open inquest at which they could present evidence, and for manslaughter charges to be brought against individual officers. ([Hough 11/1/2007](#)) A week later, renewed calls for Blair’s resignation come from the Independent Police Complaints Commission, who find he was responsible for “avoidable difficulty” following the killing of de Menezes. The report reveals that prosecutors considered and rejected murder charges against the two officers who fired the fatal shots, as well as charges of gross negligence against Assistant Metropolitan Police Commissioner Cressida Dick, who was in charge of the operation. IPCC chairman Nick Hardwick says “Very serious mistakes were made that could and should have been avoided. But we have to take the utmost care before singling out any individual for blame.” The report highlights a series of failings, including poor communication between officers and Blair’s initial attempts to block inquiries into the shooting. ([Irish Times 11/8/2007](#))

July 23, 2005: Three Simultaneous Bombings at Egyptian Tourist Town



Damage from one of the Sharm el-Sheikh bombs. [Source: *National Geographic*] The Egyptian resort town of Sharm el-Sheikh is hit by three simultaneous suicide bombings. At least 88 are killed and over 150 are wounded. The town, located on the southern tip of the Sinai Peninsula, is popular with Westerners and many of the victims are from various European countries. The four star Ghazala Gardens hotel is directly hit, while the other two bombers are stopped at security checkpoints and forced to detonate themselves in areas without many tourists. ([BBC 7/23/2005](#); [Howie and Ross 7/26/2005](#)) A previously unknown Egyptian group called Tawhid and Jihad takes credit for the attacks, saying they were done on orders from al-Qaeda leaders Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahri. The Egyptian government received a warning about an imminent terror attack in the town several days in advance, but apparently mistakenly believed it would target casinos instead of hotels. ([Innes 7/27/2005](#))

July 28, 2005: ISI Suspected of Supplying Taliban with Sophisticated Weaponry

The Los Angeles Times reports that US and Afghan military officials suspect Pakistani complicity in the resurgence of Taliban attacks in Afghanistan. It is believed that the Pakistani ISI has made more sophisticated technology available to the Afghan insurgents, including the ability to construct and detonate bombs at long distance using cordless phones to transmit the detonation signals. Reportedly, there is no smoking gun of such assistance, and Pakistan denies any ties with the Taliban. But Lieutenant Sayed Anwar, the acting head of Afghanistan's counterterrorism department, says, "Pakistan is lying. We have very correct reports from their areas. We have our intelligence agents inside Pakistan's border as well. If Pakistan tells the truth, the problems will stop in Afghanistan. They say they are friends of Americans, and yet they order these people to kill Americans." At least some training camps in Pakistan that were closed have been recently reopened. A Times reporter visited one and observed militants training. ([Watson 7/28/2005](#))

July 30, 2005: Al-Qaeda Operative Alleged to Be CIA Informant Is Arrested in Turkey



Luai Sakra detained in Turkey. [Source: *Agence France-Presse*] Al-Qaeda operative Luai Sakra is arrested in Turkey. He is found with false travel documents and \$120,000 in cash. He had about one ton of explosives (hydrogen peroxide) stored in an apartment and fled when some of the explosives blew out the apartment's windows. Arrested at a nearby airport, a number of passports are found revealing his true identity despite the fact that he had extensive plastic surgery. He soon confesses to planning to load the explosives onto speed boats and crash them into Israeli cruise ships docking in Turkish ports. The attack would have taken place in just a few days, possibly on August 5, 2005. ([BBC 8/13/2005](#); [Cziesche, Dahlkamp, and Stark 8/15/2005](#); [Stark 8/24/2005](#); [Vick 2/20/2006](#)) Apparently, Turkish intelligence had learned something about the planned attacks and warned the Israeli government. The Israeli government then issued a public warning, which seems to have tipped off the plotters, and Sakra is one of the few who gets caught. A Turkish security official complains that the Israeli warning may have "spoiled all the operation and all the militants might escape." ([Journal of Turkish Weekly 8/15/2005](#)) Sakra, who has been alleged to be an informant for the CIA, Syria, and Turkey (see [2000](#)), will then reportedly make a remarkable series of confessions to Turkish interrogators (see [Early August 2005](#)).

(July 31, 2005): Air Force Office of Special Investigation Re-Opens Investigation into Former Whistleblower's Allegations



Douglas Dickerson. [Source: US Army] The Air Force's Office of Special Investigation sends word to Sibel Edmonds' attorney Mark Zaid that it is reopening the investigation into Edmonds' former co-worker Melek Can Dickerson and her husband, Douglas Dickerson. Edmonds had warned her superiors in early 2002 that the couple was involved in espionage (see [December 4, 2001](#)). Journalist David Rose, who recently authored a lengthy piece on the Sibel Edmonds case for Vanity Fair magazine, believes the investigation may have been re-opened in part because of that article and because he submitted about 150 different questions about the case to the Air Force and other parts of the Pentagon, the Justice Department, and the FBI. ([Democracy Now! 8/10/2005](#))

Early August 2005: Alleged CIA-Al-Qaeda Double Agent Confesses to Various Plots, Including Helping 9/11 Attacks



Luai Sakra shouting to passers-by while imprisoned in Turkey. [Source: Reuters] Al-Qaeda operative Luai Sakra, recently arrested in Turkey (see [July 30, 2005](#)), is interrogated for four days by police in Istanbul. He apparently freely confesses to involvement in a number of attacks and even shouts out confessions to reporters and passers-by from the window of his prison cell. ([BBC 8/13/2005](#))

■He says, "I was one of the people who knew the perpetrators of September 11, and knew the time and plan before the attacks. I also participated in the preparations for the attacks to WTC and Pentagon. I provided money and passports." He claims to know 9/11 hijacker Mohamed Atta. Sakra lived in Germany for about a year before the 9/11 attacks (see [September 2000-July 24, 2001](#)). ([Gun 8/14/2005](#); [Stark 8/24/2005](#)) He also makes the claim that he helped some of the 9/11 hijackers near Bursa, Turkey, and will provide

further details on this in 2007 (see [Late 1999-2000](#)). ([Vick 2/20/2006](#))

■Sakra claims to have co-masterminded a series of suicide bombings in Istanbul in 2003 that killed 58 people (see [November 15-20, 2003](#)). “I gave the orders, but as far as the targets, Habib Aktas made the decisions.” ([Journal of Turkish Weekly 8/13/2005](#))

■He claims to have fought for militant leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi in Fallujah, Iraq, in 2004. In 1999, Sakra worked with al-Zarqawi to start a new Afghan training camp for Syrians and Jordanians and the two of them became friends. Sakra boasts of participating in the execution of a kidnapped Turkish truck driver in August 2004. The driver was abducted from the laundry facility on a US base in Iraq and at one point Sakra worked in the laundry service there. ([Journal of Turkish Weekly 8/13/2005](#); [BBC 8/13/2005](#); [Stark 8/24/2005](#)) A US official says “We are taking very seriously reports that he was in Fallujah, and is linked with al-Zarqawi.” ([Waterman 8/17/2005](#)) A captured aide to al-Zarqawi later confirms that Sakra was a key aide to al-Zarqawi in Fallujah beginning in March 2004 and that Sakra “provided coordinates for mortar attacks on US bases in Mosul, Samarra, Baghdad, and Anbar province.” ([Vick 2/20/2006](#))

■Sakra’s lawyer also claims Sakra was a member of a gang that held Kenneth Bigley, a British contractor in Iraq, for three weeks and then murdered him in October 2004. ([Cobain 4/20/2006](#))

■He claims to have had foreknowledge of the 7/7 London bombings (see [July 7, 2005](#)). He says he sent details about the attacks and who exactly took part in it to bin Laden via messenger some weeks afterwards. He also claims that he frequently communicated with bin Laden in person and by messenger. ([Gun 8/15/2005](#))

■He claims to have sent many operatives to the US, Britain, Egypt, Syria, and Algeria to take part in various operations. ([Gun 8/15/2005](#))

■He claims that the CIA, Syrian intelligence, and Turkish intelligence all wanted to employ him as an informant. The Turkish newspaper Zaman will conclude that Sakra likely did work for all three governments. “Sakra eventually became a triple agent for the secret services. Turkish security officials, interrogating a senior al-Qaeda figure for the first time, were thoroughly confused about what they discovered about al-Qaeda.” ([Gun 8/14/2005](#)) A Turkish security official will comment, “If during his trial, Sakra tells half of the information we heard from him, al-Qaeda’s real face will emerge. But what he has said so far has more to do about a formation permeated by secret services rather than the terror organization of al-Qaeda.” ([Gun 8/15/2005](#))

■When offered a chance to pray, he surprisingly replies, “I don’t pray and I like alcohol. Especially whiskey and wine.” ([Stark 8/24/2005](#))


Der Spiegel reports, “Western investigators accept Sakra’s claims, by and large, since they coincide with known facts.” After talking to Sakra, Turkish officials suggest he may be one of the top five most important members of al-Qaeda. One security official says, “He had an intellect of a genius.” However, he also was found with medicine to treat manic-depression and exhibits manic-depressive behavior. ([Gun 8/14/2005](#); [Stark 8/24/2005](#)) Sakra will later be sentenced to life in prison (see [March 21, 2006-February 16, 2007](#)) for his self-confessed role in the 2003 Istanbul bombings (see [November 15-20, 2003](#)).

August 1, 2005: Abdullah Becomes King of Saudi Arabia



King Abdullah. [Source: White House] King Fahd of Saudi Arabia dies of old age. As expected, Fahd's half-brother Crown Prince Abdullah replaces him as king. Abdullah had been de facto ruler of the country since 1995, when King Fahd suffered a stroke (see [Late 1995](#)). Fahd had ruled the country since 1982. ([BBC 8/1/2005](#); [CNN 8/3/2005](#))

August 4, 2005: Former FBI Translator Takes Whistleblower Case to Supreme Court

Lawyers for Sibel Edmonds file a petition with the Supreme Court asking it "to provide guidance to the lower courts about the proper scope and application of the state secrets privilege, and to prevent further misuse of the privilege to dismiss lawsuits at the pleading stage." The petition also urges the court to affirm that the press and public may not be barred from court proceedings in civil cases without just cause. In May, the federal appeals court had closed the courtroom to the public and media. Edmonds' lawyers include the American Civil Liberties Union and Mark Zaid of Krieger and Zaid, PLLC. If the Supreme Court rules in favor of Edmonds, she will return to the lower courts and start her case again. ([Petition for a writ of certiorari. Sibel Edmonds v. Department of Justice, et al. 8/4/2005, pp. 2](#) ; [Strohm 8/8/2005](#))

August 9, 2005: New York Times Reveals Military Unit That Identified Four 9/11 Hijackers Before Attacks

A front page article in the New York Times reveals the existence of a highly classified military intelligence unit called Able Danger, which had identified Mohamed Atta and three other 9/11 hijackers as likely members of an al-Qaeda cell operating in the United States more than a year before the attacks. ([Jehl 8/9/2005](#)) Members of the unit had recommended that the FBI be called in to take out the cell, but Pentagon lawyers had blocked their request (see [September 2000](#)). The incident was first described in a June 2005 speech on the House floor by Rep. Curt Weldon (R), and in an interview with Weldon around the same time in the Norristown Times Herald, neither of which had garnered much attention. ([Phucas 6/19/2005](#); [US Congress. House 6/27/2005](#)) Weldon, who is vice chairman of both the House Armed Services Committee and the House

Homeland Security Committee, claims he only recognized the significance of the incident after contacting members of the Able Danger unit during research for a book about terrorism. ([Shenon and Jehl 8/10/2005](#))

August 10, 2005: Saudi Ambassador Criticizes Britain over Failure to Tackle Militants

The outgoing Saudi ambassador to Britain, Prince Turki al-Faisal, criticizes the Blair government over its lack of response to terrorism and says that MI5 is hampering efforts to clamp down. Prince Turki describes his experience: “When you call somebody, he says it is the other guy. If you talk to the security people, they say it is the politicians’ fault. If you talk to the politicians, they say it is the Crown Prosecution Service. If you call the Crown Prosecution service, they say, no, it is MI5. So we have been in this runaround...” Turki particularly criticizes the government’s failure to act against Saad al-Fagih of the movement for Islamic Reform in Arabia and Mohammed al-Massari. Al-Fagih is accused of being involved in the 1998 US embassy bombings (see [August 7, 1998](#)) and a plot to assassinate King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia. ([Beeston and Binyon 8/10/2005](#))

August 11, 2005: 9/11 Commission Admits Being Informed of Intelligence Unit That Identified Mohamed Atta in 2000

In response to new revelations about a military intelligence unit called Able Danger, which allegedly identified Mohamed Atta and three other 9/11 hijackers more than a year before the attacks, Al Felzenberg—formerly the chief spokesman for the 9/11 Commission—acknowledges that a uniformed officer briefed two of the commission’s staff members about the unit in early July 2004 (see [July 12, 2004](#)). He also admits that the officer said the program had identified Mohamed Atta as part of an al-Qaeda cell in Brooklyn. This information was not mentioned anywhere in the commission’s final report. ([Jehl 8/11/2005](#)) The existence of the Able Danger program was first revealed two days ago in an August 9 New York Times article (see [August 9, 2005](#)). In that article, the Times reported that Felzenberg had confirmed that an October 2003 briefing had taken place which did not include any references to Mohamed Atta or the Brooklyn al-Qaeda cell. But Felzenberg did not tell the newspaper about the July 2004 briefing, which apparently had provided the commission with far more details about the Able Danger program. ([Jehl 8/9/2005](#); [Jehl 8/11/2005](#)) It is not clear who exactly in the commission was aware of the program. Former 9/11 Commissioners Tim Roemer and John Lehman say they were never briefed about Able Danger before the 9/11 Commission’s Final Report was published. ([Goodwin 8/2005](#) Sources: [Curt Weldon](#))

August 12, 2005: New York Releases Records of 9/11 Emergency Responders

The City of New York releases a large volume of records from 9/11. These include over 12,000 pages of oral histories—testimonies from 503 firefighters, paramedics, and emergency medical technicians involved in the 9/11 emergency response—and about 15 hours of radio communications between dispatchers and firefighters. The oral histories were gathered in informal interviews by the New York City Fire Department, beginning in October 2001. This was on the order of then Fire Commissioner Thomas Von Essen, who said he wanted to preserve the accounts before individual memories faded. However, these histories were never subsequently used for any official purpose. ([Dwyer 8/12/2005](#); [BBC 8/13/2005](#); [Wilson 8/13/2005](#); [Murphy 8/13/2005](#)) The New York Times, under the freedom of information law, originally sought the records in February 2002. Mayor Bloomberg's administration refused the request, claiming their release would jeopardize the prosecution of Zacarias Moussaoui, and violate firefighters' privacy. The newspaper, joined by some 9/11 victims' relatives, consequently sued the city, and in March 2005 the state's highest court ruled that the city had to release the oral histories and recordings, but could edit out potentially painful and embarrassing portions. The city had also initially refused investigators from the 9/11 Commission and the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) access to the records, but relented following threats of legal action. ([Associated Press 8/12/2005](#); [Dwyer 8/12/2005](#); [Wilson 8/13/2005](#)) Analyzing the oral histories, the New York Times strongly criticizes the lack of information that firefighters received on 9/11: "[F]irefighters in the [north WTC tower] said they were 'clueless' and knew 'absolutely nothing' about the reality of the gathering crisis." It continues: "Of 58 firefighters who escaped the [North Tower] and gave oral histories, only four said they knew the South Tower had already fallen. Just three said they had heard radio warnings that the North Tower was also in danger of collapse. And some who had heard orders to evacuate debated whether they were meant for civilians or firefighters." ([Dwyer and O'Donnell 9/9/2005](#))

August 12, 2005: 9/11 Commission Heads Says Officer Who Briefed Commission on Able Danger Provided 'No Documentary Evidence'

Former leaders of the 9/11 Commission, Thomas Kean and Lee Hamilton, release a statement saying that panel staff members have found no documents or other witnesses that support allegations that hijacker Mohamed Atta was identified by a secret Pentagon program, known as Able Danger, before the 9/11 attacks. The existence of Able Danger first received wide public attention a few days before by the New York Times (see [August 11, 2005](#)). According to the commissioners, "The interviewee had no documentary evidence" to back up his claims and "the Commission staff concluded that the officer's account was not sufficiently reliable to warrant revision of the report or further investigation." ([Thomas H. Kean and Lee H. Hamilton 8/12/2005](#); [Eggen 8/13/2005](#))

August 15, 2005: Former FBI Translator Says Government Ties to Drugs- and Weapons- Smuggling Undermines US Counterterrorism Efforts

In an interview with Christopher Deliso of Antiwar.com, former FBI translator Sibel Edmonds says that the US government—the State Department in particular—consistently blocks counterterrorism investigations that come too close to certain top-level people. “We go for the Attas and Hamdis—but never touch the guys on the top.... [It] would upset ‘certain foreign relations.’ But it would also expose certain of our elected officials, who have significant connections with high-level drugs- and weapons- smuggling—and thus with the criminal underground, even with the terrorists themselves.... [A]ll of these high-level criminal operations involve working with foreign people, foreign countries, the outside world—and to a certain extent these relations do depend on the continuation of criminal activities.” Edmonds says that the government’s investigation into the financing of al-Qaeda is a case in point. “You know, they are coming down on these charities as the finance of al-Qaeda.... [But] a very small percentage comes from these charity foundations. The vast majority of their financing comes from narcotics. Look, we had 4 to 6 percent of the narcotics coming from the East, coming from Pakistan, coming from Afghanistan via the Balkans to the United States. Today, three or four years after Sept. 11, that has reached over 15 percent. How is it getting here? Who are getting the proceedings from those big narcotics?... But I can tell you there are a lot of people involved, a lot of ranking officials, and a lot of illegal activities that include multi-billion-dollar drug-smuggling operations, black-market nuclear sales to terrorists and unsavory regimes, you name it. And of course a lot of people from abroad are involved.” She says that her allegations against co-worker Melek Can Dickerson and her lawsuit against the FBI are just the tip of the iceberg. She expresses frustration that the media wants to only focus on the whistleblower aspect of her case instead of looking into the substance of her allegations. She says that it was completely by chance that she stumbled over an ongoing investigation into this international criminal network. “You can start from the AIPAC angle. You can start from the [Valerie] Plame case. You can start from my case. They all end up going to the same place, and they revolve around the same nucleus of people. There may be a lot of them, but it is one group. And they are very dangerous for all of us.” ([Deliso 8/15/2005](#))

August 16, 2005: US State Department Attacks British Book Examining Theories of US Government Complicity in 9/11

A book is released in Britain called 9/11 Revealed: Challenging the Facts Behind the War on Terror, written by radical British journalists Ian Henshall and Rowland Morgan. The Daily Mail calls it “a hugely provocative—many would say fantastical—yet, at times, genuinely disturbing new analysis of 9/11.” According to the London Times, the authors “have subjected the official version of what happened to intense scrutiny and found huge

gaps.” The book examines the various theories suggesting the Bush administration was complicit in carrying out the 9/11 attacks, so as to give Bush the excuse to go ahead with his long-held plan to invade Iraq. They examine theories that the Twin Towers and Building 7 of the WTC were brought down deliberately with explosives; that the Pentagon was hit by a military drone aircraft and a missile; that Flight 11 and Flight 175, which supposedly hit the Twin Towers, were in fact landed and replaced by remote-controlled substitutes; that cell phone calls from the hijacked planes were faked; and that the military’s response to the hijackings was hindered by an air defense exercise taking place at the same time as the attacks. The Daily Mail concludes, “In their inquiries Henshall and Morgan may have discovered no smoking guns - but they have certainly left a whiff of something sinister in the air.” ([Morgan and Henshall 2005](#); [Rennell 8/6/2005](#); [Fielding 9/4/2005](#)) Only five days after the release of the book, the US State Department takes the unprecedented move of posting a response to the book on its website. The State Department is highly critical, calling it “a collection of unfounded conspiracy theories that bear no relationship to the tragic realities of September 11.” As part of a series of “conspiracy theory” debunking web pages entitled “Identifying Misinformation,” the State Department attempts to rebut each of the main points of the book. ([US Department of State 9/16/2005](#))

[August 17, 2005: Intelligence Officer Comes Forward With Allegations About Secret Military Unit](#)

A US Army intelligence officer comes forward, saying he was involved with a secret military intelligence unit, which had identified Mohamed Atta and three other future 9/11 hijackers by mid-2000. He says the unit, called Able Danger, had tried to meet with agents at the FBI’s Washington field office that summer to share its information, but was prevented from doing so by military lawyers (see [September 2000](#)). Lt. Col. Anthony Shaffer, who served as a liaison officer between Able Danger and the Defense Intelligence Agency, is the first military officer associated with Able Danger to publicly acknowledge his involvement with the unit. Shaffer says that, had they been allowed to alert the FBI to Mohamed Atta being in the US, they might have been able to prevent 9/11. ([Shenon 8/17/2005](#); [Borger 8/18/2005](#); [Orin 8/18/2005](#)) A week prior to Shaffer’s coming forward, Able Danger was brought to the public’s attention in a New York Times front page article (see [August 9, 2005](#)). Shaffer says he met privately with staff from the 9/11 Commission in Afghanistan in October 2003, and explicitly mentioned Atta as a member of the “Brooklyn” al-Qaeda cell (see [October 21, 2003](#)).

[August 18, 2005: Taliban Rebound in Afghanistan with ISI Help](#)

Knight Ridder reports, “Nearly four years after a US-led military intervention toppled them from power, the Taliban has re-emerged as a potent threat to stability in Afghanistan. Though it’s a far cry from the mass movement that overran most of the country in the 1990s, today’s Taliban is fighting a guerrilla war with new weapons,

including portable anti-aircraft missiles, and equipment bought with cash sent through Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda network, according to Afghan and Western officials.... The Taliban is now a disparate assemblage of radical groups estimated to number several thousand, far fewer than when it was in power before November 2001. The fighters operate in small cells that occasionally come together for specific missions. They're unable to hold territory or defeat coalition troops.... The Taliban insurgents have adopted some of the terrorist tactics that their Iraqi counterparts have used to stoke popular anger at the Iraqi government and the US military. They've stalled reconstruction and fomented sectarian tensions in a country that remains mired in poverty and corruption, illegal drugs and ethnic and political hatred." Most of the original top leaders were never captured. Some who were briefly held and then released, such as former Defense Minister Mullah Obaidullah Akhund (see [Early January 2002](#)), are part of the resurgence. Forty-four US soldiers have been killed in the last six months. Afghan and Western officials claim that the Taliban continues to be supported by Pakistan's ISI. Pakistan "seeks a weak government in [Afghanistan] that it can influence." It is claimed that the Taliban are allowed to maintain training camps and arms depots just across the border from Pakistan. ([Landay 8/18/2005](#))

August 19, 2005: Motassadeq Convicted for Al-Qaeda Membership but Not for Role in 9/11 Plot

Mounir El Motassadeq is convicted in Germany of belonging to a terrorist organization and sentenced to seven years in prison. However, he is acquitted of involvement in the 9/11 plot. He had previously been convicted of such involvement (see [February 18, 2003](#)), only to have the ruling overturned later (see [March 3, 2004](#)). The verdict was overturned when a judge ruled he was unfairly denied testimony for al-Qaeda suspects in US custody such as Ramzi bin al-Shibh. For the retrial, the US provided summaries from the interrogation of bin al-Shibh and other suspects, but did not make full reports available to the court or allow the prisoners to appear in person for cross-examination. The judge presiding over the retrial criticized the US for failing to give more evidence, saying, "How are we supposed to do justice to our task when important documents are withheld from us?" ([Tiemann 8/19/2005](#)) A former roommate of testified that Atta and bin al-Shibh regularly visited Motassadeq, and he once overheard him say, "We are going to something big. He said: 'The Jews will burn; we will dance on their graves.'" ([Rising 6/5/2005](#)) However, a 9/11 Commission investigator gave testimony that was very damaging to the prosecution's argument that the Hamburg cell had a significant role in preparing the plot while in Germany (see [March 8, 2005](#)).

August 21, 2005: New Saudi Ambassador to US Has Controversial Past

Prince Bandar, Saudi ambassador to the US since 1983, steps down and is replaced by Prince Turki al-Faisal. It is said that Prince Bandar had been suffering health problems and is not close to the new Saudi King Abdullah (see [August 1, 2005](#)). Prince Turki was

Saudi intelligence minister from the late 1970s until about one week before 9/11 (see [August 31, 2001](#)). Then he served three years as Saudi ambassador to Britain. Prince Turki has had a controversial past. He was considered a mentor to bin Laden, and encouraged him to represent Saudi Arabia in the Afghanistan war against the Soviet Union. There are allegations that Prince Turki took part in a series of secret meetings between bin Laden and the Saudis over a period of many years (see [Summer 1991](#); [May 1996](#); [Spring 1998](#); [June 1998](#); [July 1998](#); [July 4-14, 2001](#)). There are also allegations that he went falcon hunting in Afghanistan with bin Laden during much of the 1990s (see [1995-2001](#)). In the wake of his appointment as ambassador, US officials try to downplay his past. One unnamed US official says, "Yes, he knew members of al-Qaeda. Yes, he talked to the Taliban. At times he delivered messages to us and from us regarding Osama bin Laden and others. Yes, he had links that in this day and age would be considered problematic, but at the time we used those links." The official adds that Prince Turki seems to have "gotten out of that business" since 2001 and "he understands that times have changed." He was sued in 2002 by a group of 9/11 victims' relatives for allegedly supporting al-Qaeda, but his name was dropped from the suit because of diplomatic immunity (see [August 15, 2002](#)). ([Weisman 7/21/2005](#))

August 22-September 1, 2005: More Individuals Come Forward to Confirm Able Danger Allegations

Several individuals come forward and corroborate claims made about a military intelligence unit called Able Danger that, by mid-2000, allegedly identified Mohamed Atta and three other future 9/11 hijackers. Days previously, a US Army intelligence officer called Anthony Shaffer made claims about the unit (see [August 17, 2005](#)). On August 22, Scott J. Phillpott, an active-duty Navy captain who managed the Able Danger program for the Pentagon's Special Operations Command, comes forward and corroborates Shaffer's claims. He says, "My story is consistent. Atta was identified by Able Danger in January-February of 2000." Phillpott states that he was the officer who met with staff from the 9/11 Commission in July 2004, and told them about the program (see [July 12, 2004](#)). ([Shenon 8/22/2005](#)) Claims about the program are further corroborated when a former employee of a defense contractor who says he worked on the technical side of the unit, also comes forward. James D. Smith, who worked for Orion Scientific Systems ([Phucas 9/22/2005](#)), states that in 2000 he helped create a chart for Able Danger. He says, "I am absolutely positive that he [Atta] was on our chart among other pictures and ties that we were doing mainly based upon [terror] cells in New York City." ([Fox News 8/28/2005](#)) Furthermore, the Pentagon admits that they have found three others, apart from Anthony Shaffer and Scott Phillpott, associated with Able Danger who assert that the program identified Mohamed Atta as an al-Qaeda suspect inside the US more than a year before 9/11. An official says that the five individuals associated with the program (including Shaffer and Phillpott) were all considered "credible people," and that four of them recalled a photo of Mohamed Atta accompanying the chart they produced. ([Dunham 9/1/2005](#)) Eleven people ran Able Danger. ([Kelly 8/14/2005](#)) The Pentagon interviewed a total of 80 people who had some kind of association with the Able Danger program. ([Shanker 9/1/2005](#))

August 31, 2005: Gas Station Robbers Arrested for Plotting Terror Attacks in US



Levar Washington. [Source: ABC]US Attorney Debra Yang holds a news conference in Los Angeles to report that four arrested gas station robbers have been indicted for plotting terror attacks. The group was led by Kevin James, a US national and founder of Jam'iyat Ul-Islam Is-Saheeh, a radical Islamic organization that identifies the US government and Jews as major targets. His co-conspirators are Levar Washington and Gregory Patterson, both US nationals, and Hammad Riaz Samana, a permanent US resident originally from Pakistan. ([US Department of Justice 8/31/2005](#)) Washington was recruited by James while incarcerated at New Folsom Prison. Upon his release, he recruited Samana and Patterson at his mosque, Jamat-E-Masjidul Islam in Los Angeles. ([New York Sun 9/6/2005](#)) Washington had pledged loyalty to James "until death by martyrdom" and sought to recruit men with bomb-making expertise. ([ABC News 9/13/2005](#)) Yang says that the four had purchased firearms and sought instructions for constructing bombs. She says that they were prepared to carry out attacks when two of them were arrested for robbing a gas station, allegedly to fund the operation. The indictment includes the eleven gas station robberies the men have allegedly carried out. ([Reuters 8/31/2005](#)) The indictment alleges that the men conducted surveillance of military facilities, the Israeli consulate in Los Angeles, El-Al airlines, and synagogues. They planned to strike on the dates of Jewish holidays to maximize casualties. Attorney General Alberto Gonzalez says that the men engaged in "identification of target locations, procurement of weapons, firearms and physical training, recruitment efforts, and financing operations through armed robberies." ([US Department of Justice 8/31/2005](#)) Police uncovered evidence of the plot when investigating the gas station robberies. ([Kaplan 2/22/2007](#)) Patterson dropped a mobile telephone during one robbery. Information from the phone triggered an FBI-led investigation that involved more than 25 agencies and 500 investigators. Police staked out Patterson and Washington, and arrested them after they robbed a Chevron station on July 5. A search of Washington's apartment turned up bulletproof vests, knives, jihad literature, and lists of potential targets. There was further evidence indicating that Patterson was in the process of acquiring an AR-15 assault rifle. ([New York Sun 9/6/2005](#)) Yang says that the "evidence in this case indicates that the conspirators were on the verge of launching their attack," adding that the arrest has exposed "a chilling plot based on one man's interpretation of Islam." ([Reuters 8/31/2005](#)) Many of the court documents are sealed, but it is known that the trial date was "continued" from October 24, 2006 to August 27, 2007. All four men plead not guilty.

The order moving the trial date indicates that the evidence includes 40,000 pages of documents, “numerous” audio and visual tapes, and 14 computer hard drives. ([MILNET 9/30/2006](#)) On December 14, 2007, James and Washington will plead guilty to domestic terrorism charges. There is no evidence presented during the trial that indicates the men had any contact with any extremist organizations, nor were they accused of this. The two will admit that they conspired “to levy war against (the US government) through terrorism.” James faces up to 20 years in federal prison and Washington could be sentenced to up to 25 years. Patterson is also expected to plead guilty to terrorism charges. Samana is found unfit to stand trial and is receiving psychiatric care at a federal prison. ([MSNBC 12/14/2007](#))

Autumn 2005 or Before: Fears Over CIA Evidence Cause FBI to Build Cases against Guantanamo Detainees

The FBI begins to build cases against high value detainees held by the US in Guantanamo Bay, due to Defense Department fears that evidence obtained from the detainees by the CIA will be inadmissible or too controversial to present at their upcoming war crimes tribunals. The investigation, which involves up to 300 agents in a “Guantanamo task force,” runs for at least two years and FBI agents travel widely to collect evidence. According to former officials and legal experts, “The [FBI] process is an embarrassment for the Bush administration, which for years held the men incommunicado overseas and allowed the CIA to use coercive means to extract information from them that would not be admissible in a US court of law—and might not be allowed in their military commissions....” In fact, the techniques used to extract the confessions even cause some CIA officials to question whether they are believable, much less sustainable in court, particularly as CIA officers are not trained to obtain evidence that can be used in such a setting. In addition, if the information is used, this may focus the trials on the actions of the CIA and not the accused. The detainees will be designated enemy combatants in 2007 in preparation for military commissions (see [March 9-April 28, 2007](#) and [August 9, 2007](#)), but this process will be questioned by a judge (see [June 4, 2007](#)). The Los Angeles Times will also comment, “The FBI’s efforts appear in part to be a hedge in case the commissions are ruled unconstitutional or never occur, or the US military detention center at Guantanamo Bay is closed. Under those scenarios, authorities would have to free the detainees, transfer them to military custody elsewhere, send them to another country, or have enough evidence gathered by law enforcement officials to charge them with terrorism in US federal courts.” ([Meyer 10/21/2007](#))

September-November 2005: Questions Raised over NIST’s Claims of Pre-Collapse Tilt of WTC Towers

Both towers of the World Trade Center tilted to one side before beginning to fall on 9/11 (see [9:59 a.m. September 11, 2001](#) and [10:28 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). The National Institute of Standards and Technology, which investigated the collapses (see [August 21,](#)

[2002](#)), states that the South Tower, which was hit on its south side, tilted about 7-8 degrees to the east and 3-4 degrees to the south, and the North Tower, which was hit on its north side, tilted about 8 degrees to the south, before starting to fall. ([National Institute of Standards and Technology 9/2005, pp. 300, 308](#)) However, these findings are criticized by Canadian scientist Frank Greening. After examining photo and video evidence, Greening says that the South Tower tilted by no more than two degrees and the North Tower by no more than three degrees before collapse initiation. Greening also says that the tilt angles NIST gives cannot correspond to the downward movement of the towers' walls NIST claims before they started to fall, and points out that the tilt angles NIST uses are inconsistent throughout its reports. Though Greening agrees with NIST that the towers were destroyed by the plane impacts and fire damage, he concludes that its computer model is "highly inaccurate and therefore of no value in explaining the demise of the Twin Towers." ([Greening 11/2005](#)) Greening is a leading figure in the post-9/11 dispute over why the WTC collapsed and publishes a series of papers dealing with various aspects of the Twin Towers' collapse. For example, a CBC documentary uses Greening for analysis of the WTC's fall. ([Canadian Broadcasting Corporation 8/25/2005](#))

September 13, 2005: Revised Version of 9/11's Commission's FAA Report Released; Some Material Still Blacked Out

A new version of a report by the 9/11 Commission on the FAA and 9/11, which was completed in August 2004, is publicly released. A heavily censored version of the same report came out in February 2005 (see [February 10, 2005](#)). Commission members complained that the deleted material included information crucial to understanding what went wrong on 9/11. The newly released version restores dozens of portions of the report, but numerous references to shortcomings in aviation security remain blacked out. Thomas Kean and Lee Hamilton, the former heads of the 9/11 Commission, state: "While we still believe that the entire document could be made available to the public without damaging national security, we welcome this step forward." Commission officials say they were perplexed by the White House's original attempts to black out material that they considered trivial or mundane. ([Miller 9/13/2005](#); [Lichtblau 9/14/2005](#))

September 14, 2005: Former 9/11 Commission Members Dismiss Able Danger Evidence

Former members of the 9/11 Commission dismiss recent allegations regarding a secret military intelligence unit called Able Danger, which had been set up in 1999 to bring together information about al-Qaeda. Several former members of the unit have come forward claiming the program identified Mohamed Atta and three other 9/11 hijackers more than a year before the attacks (see [August 17, 2005](#); [August 22-September 1, 2005](#)). The 9/11 Commission has been criticized for not mentioning Able Danger in its final report. In response, its former chairman, Thomas Kean, claims there is no evidence that

anyone in the government knew about Mohamed Atta before 9/11, and there are no documents that verify the claims made by former members of the unit. However, the Pentagon has recently confirmed that documents associated with Able Danger were destroyed in accordance with regulations about gathering intelligence on people inside the US. Another former commissioner, Slade Gorton, says, "Bluntly, it just didn't happen and that's the conclusion of all 10 of us." But a spokesman for Rep. Curt Weldon (R), who helped bring to light the existence of the program, says that none of the commissioners met with anyone from Able Danger, "yet they choose to speak with some form of certainty without firsthand knowledge." ([Barrett 9/15/2005](#); [Fox News 9/16/2005](#)) The commission's claim that no one in the US knew about Mohamed Atta before 9/11 is further contradicted by reports stating that the CIA had been tracking him while he was still in Germany, early in 2000 (see [January-May 2000](#)). And soon after 9/11, Newsweek reported US officials stating that Atta "had been known as [an associate] of Islamic terrorists" well before 9/11. ([Klaidman, Isikoff, and Hosenball 9/20/2001](#))

September 16, 2005: FBI's Anthrax Investigation Has Gone Cold

The Washington Post reports that four years after the 2001 anthrax attacks (see [October 2001](#)), the FBI investigation is growing cold. ([Lengel 9/16/2005](#)) A New York Times article from the same day also concludes the investigation has stalled. The FBI has found itself on the defensive amid claims that they publicly smeared Dr. Steven Hatfill when lacking other viable suspects. ([Shane 9/16/2005](#))

September 19, 2005: Able Danger Intelligence Officer Has Security Clearance Revoked

Mark Zaid. [*Source: C-SPAN*] Lt. Col. Anthony Shaffer, an Army intelligence officer who worked closely with a military intelligence unit called Able Danger, has his security clearance revoked. ([Stirland 9/21/2005](#); [Phucas 9/22/2005](#)) Shaffer alleges that Able Danger identified Mohamed Atta and three other future 9/11 hijackers more than a year before the attacks (see [August 17, 2005](#)). Shaffer's lawyer, Mark Zaid, states, "I specialize in security clearance cases.... Based on years of experience I can say categorically that the basis for the revocation was questionable at best." ([US Congress 9/21/2005](#)) Shaffer is due to testify two days later in front of a Senate Judiciary Committee investigating Able Danger, though he is subsequently prohibited from doing so by the Defense Department (see [September 21, 2005](#)). His security clearance had been suspended 18 months previously (see [March 2004](#)).

September 19, 2005: US Freezes Assets of Al-Qadi Associate

The US freezes the assets of Abdul Latif Saleh, who is a citizen of both Jordan and Albania. Bin Laden allegedly gave Saleh \$600,000 to create “extremist groups” in Albania, and Saleh is also said to be tied to the Islamic Jihad (which merged into al-Qaeda before 9/11). Saleh is also said to be associated with Saudi multimillionaire Yassin al-Qadi (see [October 12, 2001](#)). The Treasury Department claims, “Saleh and Qadi had entered into several business partnerships with one another, including a sugar importing business, a medical enterprise and a construction business. Saleh served as the general manager of all of Qadi’s businesses in Albania and reportedly holds 10 percent of the Qadi Group’s investments in Albania.” ([Associated Press 9/19/2005](#); [US Department of the Treasury 9/19/2005](#)) In the middle of 2004, the Swiss government also froze bank accounts worth \$20 million of an unnamed Saudi businessman who is the former president of the Muwafaq Foundation over alleged al-Qaeda ties (see [June 25, 2004](#)). Al-Qadi was the founder and main investor of Muwafaq (see [1995-1998](#)). ([Fleck 6/25/2004](#))

September 21, 2005: Senate Judiciary Committee Holds Public Hearing on Able Danger Unit; Key Officers Barred From Testifying



Sen. Arlen Specter. [*Source: C-SPAN*]/The Senate Judiciary Committee, led by Sen. Arlen Specter (R), holds a public hearing to investigate an intelligence program called Able Danger, to explore allegations that it identified Mohamed Atta and three other hijackers more than a year before 9/11, and to learn why the Pentagon disbanded it and destroyed the information it had gathered. ([Wait 9/21/2005](#); [Shenon 9/21/2005](#); [Waterman 9/21/2005](#)) The committee is seeking testimony from several former Able Danger members. Among these are Lt. Col. Anthony Shaffer, Navy Capt. Scott Phillpott, Dr. Eileen Preisser, and civilian analyst James D. Smith; all but Preisser have recently come forward with allegations about the unit (see [August 17, 2005](#); [August 22-September 1, 2005](#)). However, the day before the hearing, Defense Department lawyers ordered them and other former Able Danger members not to testify. ([Shaffer 9/20/2005](#); [Waterman 9/21/2005](#)) Shaffer says in an interview, “I was told by two [Defense Department] officials today directly that it is their understanding that [Defense Secretary Rumsfeld] directed that we not testify...” ([Shaffer 9/20/2005](#)) The Defense Department’s only reason for doing so, offered by a spokesman, is that they have “expressed [their] security concerns and believe it is simply not possible to discuss Able Danger in any great detail in an open public forum open testimony of these witnesses.” ([Shenon 9/21/2005](#)) Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Arlen Specter says, “That

looks to me like it may be obstruction of the committee's activities, something we will have to determine." He complains that the Pentagon only delivered hundreds of pages of documents related to Able Danger late on the eve of the hearing, leaving no time for committee staff to review the material. ([Morgan 9/21/2005](#)) Furthermore, the Pentagon's representative at the hearing, William Dugan, admits that he has very limited knowledge of Able Danger. Arlen Specter tells him, "You were sent over—perhaps with the calculation you wouldn't have the information." ([Associated Press 9/21/2005](#); [Wait 9/21/2005](#))

September 26, 2005: Spain Convicts Some for Al-Qaeda Ties, but 9/11 Link Does Not Hold

A Spanish court sentences a number of people to prison for connections to al-Qaeda. The main defendant, Imad Eddin Barakat Yarkas, is convicted of leading an al-Qaeda cell in Madrid and conspiring to commit the 9/11 attacks by hosting a meeting in Spain in July 2001 attended by Mohamed Atta, Ramzi bin al-Shibh, and others (see [July 8-19, 2001](#)). He is sentenced to 27 years in prison. ([McLean 9/27/2005](#)) However, in 2006, Spain's supreme court will overturn his 9/11 conspiracy conviction, after prosecutors reverse themselves and ask that the conviction be dismissed. One of the reasons for the dismissal is that the US, which possesses evidence supporting the convictions, is reluctant to provide it (see [Mid-2002-June 1, 2006](#)). This will leave Zacarias Moussaoui the only person in the world jailed for a role in the 9/11 attacks. Yarkas will still have to serve a 12-year sentence for leading an al-Qaeda cell. ([Naughton 6/1/2006](#)) Seventeen men besides Yarkas, mostly Syrians, are also found guilty and are given sentences of six to eleven years. One of these is Tayseer Allouni, a correspondent for the Al Jazeera satellite network. He is convicted of giving \$4,500 to a family of Syrian exiles in Afghanistan. The prosecutor alleged the family were al-Qaeda operatives, while Allouni argued he gave the money for humanitarian reasons. Two others, a Moroccan named Driss Chebli and a Syrian named Ghasoub al-Abrash Ghalyoun, were acquitted of being involved in the 9/11 plot, but Chebli was convicted of collaborating with a terrorist group. Ghalyoun was accused of videotaping the World Trade Center and other American landmarks in 1997 for the 9/11 plotters, but he claimed he was just a tourist (see [1998](#)). ([McLean 9/27/2005](#); [Green 9/27/2005](#); [Crawford 9/27/2005](#))

September 30, 2005: Incoming FDNY Chaplain Resigns After Expressing Doubts About 9/11

Imam Intikab Habib, who is due to be sworn in as New York City Fire Department's second ever Muslim chaplain, expresses doubts about the official US government story as to who is responsible for the 9/11 attacks. 30-year-old Habib, a native of Guyana who has lived in New York since 2000, tells New York's Newsday, "I as an individual don't know who did the attacks. There are so many conflicting reports about it. I don't believe it was 19... hijackers who did those attacks." He says, "I've heard professionals say that nowhere ever in history did a steel building come down with fire alone. It takes two or

three weeks to demolish a building like that. But it was pulled down in a couple of hours. Was it 19 hijackers who brought it down, or was it a conspiracy?" ([Eisenberg 9/30/2005](#)) After making the comments, and shortly before he is due to be sworn in as chaplain, Habib resigns. Fire Commissioner Nicholas Scoppetta tells reporters, "It became clear to him that he would have difficulty functioning as a Fire Department chaplain. And then I understand the head of the Islamic Society of the Fire Department... told him they were withdrawing their support." ([Associated Press 9/30/2005](#); [Eisenberg and Rayman 10/1/2005](#))

October 2005: CIA Report Concludes There Never Was Any Hussein-Al-Zarqawi Link

A CIA report completed this month concludes that Saddam Hussein's Iraq government "did not have a relationship, harbor, or even turn a blind eye toward [Islamist leader Abu Musab] al-Zarqawi and his associates." The report will be made public one year later as part of a bipartisan Senate investigation. That investigation will conclude that Hussein regarded al-Qaeda as a threat rather than as a potential ally, and that the Iraqi intelligence service "actively attempted to locate and capture al-Zarqawi without success." The New York Times will later report that "The disclosure undercuts continuing claims by the Bush administration that such ties existed, and that they provided evidence of links between Iraq and al-Qaeda." But despite this report, President Bush will continue to allege such a link existed. For instance, in August 2006, he will claim in a news conference that Hussein "had relations with Zarqawi." ([Mazzetti 9/8/2006](#))

October 3, 2005: FBI's Criminal Cases Down by Half Since 9/11 Due to Focus on Terrorism

The Justice Department's inspector general says that the number of criminal cases opened by the FBI has dropped by nearly half since 2000. Inspector General Glenn Fine says this is a reflection of the FBI's new focus on preventing terrorist attacks. Drug cases have declined by 70 percent, and organized crime, bank robberies, civil rights, health care fraud, corporate fraud, and public corruption have also dropped. State and local law enforcement have tried to fill the void, but they aren't always able to do so, especially in complex financial fraud cases. ([Associated Press 10/3/2005](#))

October 4, 2005: Book Describes Scientific Effort to Identify 9/11 Victims



Robert Shaler. [Source: Publicity photo] Robert Shaler, the scientist who led the forensic examination by the New York City medical examiner's office to identify 9/11 victims, releases a book about this investigation, called *Who They Were: Inside the World Trade Center DNA Story: The Unprecedented Effort to Identify the Missing*. According to Shaler the investigation eventually identified three of the 9/11 hijackers. However, he writes that they were not identified by name because the ten DNA profiles supplied by the FBI had no names attached. Shaler writes, "No names, just a K code, which is how the FBI designates 'knowns,' or specimens it knows the origins of. Of course, we had no direct knowledge of how the FBI obtained the terrorists' DNA." He also believes the three hijackers they identified were in the backs of the planes, stating, "I still doubt the pilots have anything remaining to collect or analyze." ([Publishers Weekly 8/22/2005](#); [Colford 10/12/2005](#)) The medical examiner's office concluded its efforts at identifying the remains of those killed at Ground Zero in February 2005, having been able to identify 1,588 of the 2,749 victims. ([Shaler 2005](#); [Lisberg and Shin 2/23/2005](#))

October 5, 2005: Defense Department Official Pleads Guilty for Passing Secrets to Israel

Defense Department analyst Larry Franklin pleads guilty to passing government secrets to two employees of a pro-Israel lobbying group and to an Israeli government official. He is later sentenced to 12 and a half years in prison. Franklin, an Iran specialist, gave details of US policy towards Iran to Steven Rosen and Keith Weissman, two members of AIPAC (American Israel Public Affairs Committee) which the *Washington Post* calls "one of Washington's most influential lobbying organizations." He also admits to giving classified information directly to Naor Gilon, chief of political affairs at the Israeli Embassy in Washington. Gilon returned to Israel, but Rosen and Weissman have been charged in what prosecutors claim was a conspiracy to obtain and illegally pass classified US information to foreign officials and news reporters. Franklin reportedly has been cooperating with investigators in return for a relatively lenient sentence. ([Markon 10/6/2005](#); [Markon 1/21/2006](#)) It appears that Franklin was caught by accident in 2003 as part of a larger FBI investigation into Israeli spying that began in 2001 (see [September 9, 2001](#)). Investigators had been monitoring Gilon and were reportedly "floored" to watch Franklin sit down and eat lunch with him. ([Sale 12/9/2004](#))

Shortly After October 5, 2005: Philippine Militant Leader Claims Some 9/11 Hijackers Trained in Philippines



Ahmed Santos. [Source: *Rolex de la Pena / EPA*] Ahmed Santos, the alleged leader of the Rajah Solaiman Movement (RSM) militant group is arrested and supposedly confesses that his group assisted some of the 9/11 hijackers in the Philippines. ([Zamboanga Sun Star 10/30/2005](#)) The “RSM was built upon Mohammed Jamal Khalifa’s NGO network, left unscathed by the Philippine authorities after 1995.” Like Khalifa, bin Laden’s brother-in-law, the RSM has ties to the Abu Sayyaf, Jemaah Islamiyah, and al-Qaeda. ([Abuza 9/1/2005](#)) Santos is interrogated immediately after his arrest and according to a Philippine investigator who was one of his interrogators, Santos says that his group helped train and give shelter to the hijackers (he does not specifically mention which ones or how many). This investigator says that Santos told him, “These Arabs, after their flight training in Angeles, Pampanga, went back to their shelter in the home-base of Santos’ RSM in Pangasinan.” Both Angeles City and RSM’s base are north of Manila near Clark Air Base, which was a major US airbase in the northern Philippines until 1991. ([Zamboanga Sun Star 10/30/2005](#)) Shortly after 9/11, many eyewitnesses were quoted in media reports claiming to recognize 9/11 pilots Mohamed Atta and Marwan Alshehhi taking flight training in the Angeles City area in the late 1990s (see [December 1999](#)). This fits with Santos’ alleged account.

October 6, 2005: NIST Refuses to Show Computer Visualizations of WTC Collapses

The British publication *New Civil Engineer* reports that, despite calls from leading structural and fire engineers, WTC collapse investigators with the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) are refusing to show computer visualizations of the Twin Towers’ collapses. Despite having shown detailed computer generated visualizations of the plane impacts and the development of fires in the WTC at a recent conference, it showed no visualizations of the actual collapse mechanisms of the towers. Colin Bailey, a professor of structural engineering at the University of Manchester, complains, “NIST should really show the visualisations; otherwise the opportunity to correlate them back to the video evidence and identify any errors in the modelling will be

lost.” A leading US structural engineer says that NIST’s “global structural model” is less sophisticated than its plane impact and fire models: “The software used has been pushed to new limits, and there have been a lot of simplifications, extrapolations and judgement calls.” ([Parker 10/6/2005](#))

October 6, 2005: New York Subway Terror Alert Is Reportedly Unnecessary

On October 6, 2005, the FBI warns of al-Qaeda subway bombings in New York City. It is alleged that a terror plot will be put into motion “on or about October 9, 2005.” A counterterrorism official states that the warning is unnecessary: “There was no there there.” ([Dreyfuss 9/21/2006](#)³) It is later confirmed that New York City authorities had been aware of the threat for at least three days and had responded accordingly. Local TV station WNBC had been asked by federal authorities to hold the story back. ([MSNBC 6/4/2007](#)) Meanwhile, Bush’s nomination of Harriet Miers to the Supreme Court is failing (see [October 3-27, 2005](#)). ([Dreyfuss 9/21/2006](#)³)

October 10, 2005: CIA Announces No Agency Officials to be Held Responsible For Pre-9/11 Failures

CIA Director Porter Goss announces that the agency will not pursue disciplinary action against any current or former CIA officials who have been severely criticized in an internal report produced by John Helgerson, the CIA’s inspector general. Those who have read the classified report say that it faults about 20 intelligence officials, including former CIA Director George Tenet, his former Deputy Director of Operations James Pavitt, and the former head of the CIA’s Counter Terrorism Center Cofer Black. Tenet in particular is faulted for focusing too little attention on combating al-Qaeda as a whole in the years prior to 9/11. However, he and others who are singled out strongly object to the report’s conclusions, and have prepared lengthy rebuttals. The 9/11 Congressional Inquiry, of which Goss was ironically the co-chairman, had formally requested the report in November 2002, as it was finishing its investigation. The 400-page document was completed in June 2004, but its release was delayed (see [June-November 2004](#)). John Helgerson finally delivered it to Congress in August 2005, and had urged Goss to convene “accountability boards” to assess the performance of officers it criticized. However, Goss says he has decided not to do this. He says the report in no way suggests “that any one person or group of people could have prevented 9/11,” and that “[o]f the officers named in [Helgerson’s] report, about half have retired from the Agency, and those who are still with us are amongst the finest we have.” Goss also claims the report “unveiled no mysteries,” and states that it will remain classified. ([Jehl 10/5/2005](#); [Miller 10/6/2005](#); [Linzer and Pincus 10/6/2005](#)) In response to Goss’s statement, Sen. Jay Rockefeller (D), the senior Democrat on the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, asks, “What failures in performance, if not these, warrant the convening of an accountability board at the CIA?” 9/11 victim’s relative Kristen Breitweiser comments, “No one has been held accountable for the failures on 9/11.” ([Reuters 10/5/2005](#))

October 26, 2005: NIST Releases Final Report on Twin Towers Collapses



The 43 NIST reports ran to over 10,000 pages. [Source: NIST] The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) issues the final report of its three-year, \$16 million study into the WTC collapses on 9/11. NIST has produced over 10,000 pages of findings, and its report includes 30 recommendations for improving building safety, such as having wider stairwells and structurally hardened elevators for use in emergencies. The recommendations are mostly the same as those outlined in an earlier draft of the report (see [June 23, 2005](#)). ([Ichniowski 10/27/2005](#); [Lipton 10/27/2005](#)) NIST has made some amendments and clarifications, though, based upon nearly 500 comments received during a six-week public review period. ([National Institute of Standards and Technology 10/26/2005](#)) NIST's theory about what caused the Twin Towers to collapse remains the same as that described in its previously released findings (see [October 19, 2004](#)). However, the NIST's account only examines events up to the initiation of each collapse; the investigation "does not actually include the structural behavior of the tower after the conditions for collapse initiation were reached and collapse became inevitable." ([National Institute of Standards and Technology 9/2005, pp. 82](#)) NIST makes no mention of molten metal found at the collapse site in the weeks and months after 9/11, which has been described in numerous reports (see [September 12, 2001-February 2002](#)). The "NIST found no corroborating evidence for alternative hypotheses suggesting that the WTC towers were brought down by controlled demolition using explosives planted prior to September 11, 2001." ([National Institute of Standards and Technology 9/2005, pp. 146](#)) Members of Congress are critical of NIST's recommendations, saying they are not detailed enough, or adequately documented, to be rapidly incorporated into standard building code publications. ([Lipton 10/27/2005](#)) According to Glenn Corbett, a technical adviser to NIST and fire science professor at John Jay College, NIST is not aggressive enough to carry out major forensic investigations. He says, "Instead of a gumshoe inquiry that left no stone unturned, I believe the investigations were treated more like research projects in which they waited

for information to flow to them.” ([Barrett 10/26/2005](#); [US Congress 10/26/2005](#)) NIST will release its final report on the collapse of Building 7 of the WTC separately, at a later date. ([National Institute of Standards and Technology 9/2005, pp. xiii](#))

October 26, 2005: NIST Describes WTC Fireproofing Tests

National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) releases a 12-page appendix to its final reports on the WTC collapses (see [October 26, 2005](#)) detailing tests it conducted on samples of the type of fireproofing used in the WTC. An earlier NIST report had concluded that loss of fireproofing was a major factor in the collapses (see [April 5, 2005](#)). The appendix was not included in earlier drafts of the report (see [June 23, 2005](#)) ([National Institute of Standards and Technology 6/23/2005](#); [National Institute of Standards & Technology 9/2005, pp. 263-274](#); [National Institute of Standards and Technology 9/2005, pp. 149](#)) NIST conducted a series of fifteen tests. In the tests projectiles were fired at fireproofing mounted on 12 inch x 12 inch plates, and steel bars with a one inch diameter. The fireproofing used in the tests was Blazeshield DC/F, one of the two grades of fireproofing used on the impact floors. In thirteen of the tests the projectiles were buckshot, which was fired at the steel samples from a modified shotgun at a distance of 29.5 ft. The other two tests used steel bolts and hexagon nuts, fired with less velocity and at closer range. According to NIST, “The test results support the assumption that, within the debris field created by the aircraft impact into WTC 1 and WTC 2, the SFRM [i.e., fireproofing] used for thermal insulation of structural members was damaged and dislodged.” ([National Institute of Standards & Technology 9/2005, pp. 83, 263-274](#))

October 26, 2005: Fire Expert Criticizes NIST’s WTC Investigation



James Quintiere. [*Source: University of Maryland*] During a House Science Committee hearing on the key findings and recommendations of the National Institute of Standard and Technology (NIST) investigation into World Trade Center collapse, a fire expert raises several concerns. James Quintiere is a professor of fire protection engineering at the University of Maryland, with over 35 years of experience in fire research. He’d worked in the fire program at NIST for 19 years, and is a former chair

of the International Association for Fire Safety Science, which is the principal world forum for fire research. In his statement presented at the hearing, Quintiere lists several specific concerns that he'd submitted to NIST, but which were never acknowledged or answered. These include:

- “Why were not alternative collapse hypotheses investigated and discussed as NIST had stated repeatedly that they would do?”
- “Spoliation of a fire scene is a basis for destroying a legal case in an investigation. Most of the steel [from the WTC] was discarded.... A careful reading of the NIST report shows that they have no evidence that the temperatures they predict as necessary for failure are corroborated by findings of the little steel debris they have.”
- “NIST used computer models that they said have never been used in such an application before and are the state of the art.... But the validation of these modeling results is in question.”
- “The critical collapse of WTC 7 is relegated to a secondary role.... Why has NIST dragged on this important investigation?”

Quintiere also complains, “In my opinion, the WTC investigation by NIST falls short of expectations by not definitively finding cause, by not sufficiently linking recommendations of specificity to cause, by not fully invoking all of their authority to seek facts in the investigation, and by the guidance of government lawyers to deter rather than develop fact finding.” ([US Congress. House. Committee on Science 10/26/2005](#))

October 31, 2005: Al-Qaeda's Strategic Thinker Captured in Pakistan

Around this date, al-Qaeda leader Mustafa Setmariam Nasar, a.k.a. Abu Musab al-Suri, is arrested in a raid in Quetta, Pakistan. The US posted a \$5 million reward for his capture in 2004. A red-haired, light-skinned Syrian citizen, he also is a citizen of Spain and long-time resident there. He is believed to have taught the use of poisons and chemicals at Afghanistan training camps and he is suspected of a role in the 2004 Madrid train bombings (see [March 11, 2004](#)) and the 7/7 London bombings (see [July 7, 2005](#)). But he is best known for his strategic writings. ([CNN 11/5/2005](#); [Associated Press 5/2/2006](#)) But he is best known for his strategic writings. The Washington Post calls him “one of the jihad movement's prime theorists.” He long advocated a decentralized militant movement, and was often critical of bin Laden's and al-Qaeda's mistakes. He says, “Al Qaeda is not an organization, it is not a group, nor do we want it to be. It is a call, a reference, a methodology.” He is soon flown out of Pakistan and into US custody. In 2006, US intelligence sources will claim that he is now in the secret custody of another unnamed country. ([Whitlock 5/23/2006](#); [Wright 9/4/2006](#))

Before November 2005: Mid-level CIA Lawyers Find No Bar to Destruction of Interrogation Videos



John Rizzo. [Source: C-SPAN] Guidance is issued by CIA lawyers Robert EATINGER and Steven HERMES to the CIA's National Clandestine Service (NCS) on the preservation of videotapes of detainee interrogations made by the CIA. ([Mazzetti and Shane 12/19/2007](#)) The guidance is apparently used as justification for the tapes' destruction (see [November 2005](#)), but its content is unclear. According to one account, "Lawyers within the clandestine branch of the Central Intelligence Agency gave written approval in advance to the destruction in 2005 of hundreds of hours of videotapes documenting interrogations of two lieutenants from al-Qaeda." ([Mazzetti and Shane 12/11/2007](#)) Another account supports this, saying the lawyers give "written guidance to [CIA manager Jose] Rodriguez that he had the authority to destroy the tapes and that the destruction would violate no laws." ([Mazzetti and Shane 12/19/2007](#)) However, according to another account: "[The guidance] advises that there is no explicit legal reason why the Clandestine Service had to preserve the tapes... The document does not, however, directly authorize the tapes' destruction or offer advice on the wisdom or folly of such a course of action." ([Isikoff and Hosenball 12/11/2007](#)) Some CIA videotapes have been requested for court proceedings, meaning such tapes should not be destroyed, but it is unclear if the tapes that are destroyed in November 2005 have been requested by courts or not (see [May 7-9, 2003](#) and [November 3-14, 2005](#)). The CIA's top lawyer, John Rizzo, is not asked for an opinion, although he has been involved in discussions about what to do with the tapes for years and several high-ranking officials and legislators are of the opinion that the tapes should not be destroyed (see [November 2005](#)). ([Mazzetti and Shane 12/11/2007](#)) EATINGER and HERMES apparently inform Rizzo they have issued the guidance and expect Rodriguez will consult him before destroying the tapes, but Rodriguez does not do so. ([Mazzetti and Shane 12/19/2007](#)) The New York Times will comment, "It is unclear what weight an opinion from a lawyer within the clandestine service would have if it were not formally approved by Mr. Rizzo. But [an anonymous former official] said Mr. Rodriguez and others in the clandestine branch believed the legal judgment gave them the blessing to destroy the tapes." The former official will also say they "didn't need to ask Rizzo's permission." ([Mazzetti and Shane 12/11/2007](#)) A lawyer acting for Rodriguez will later say, "He had a green light to destroy them." ([Mazzetti and Shane 12/19/2007](#)) However, other former CIA officers will express surprise that a lawyer junior to Rizzo would approve such a controversial decision without asking for his input. Former CIA lawyer John Radsan will say, "I'd be surprised that even the chief [NCS] lawyer made a decision of that magnitude without bringing the General Counsel's front office into the loop." He adds, "Although unlikely, it is conceivable that once a CIA officer got the answer he wanted from a [NCS] lawyer, he acted on that advice... But a streamlined process like that would have been risky for both the officer and the [NCS] lawyer." ([Mazzetti and Shane 12/11/2007](#))

November 2005: Top Captured Militants in Secret CIA Prisons Moved From Poland to Mauritania



A local newspaper claims this is the CIA prison in Mauritania. [Source: *Le Rénovateur Quotidien*] Most top al-Qaeda leaders being held by the US has been in a secret CIA prison in Poland. But after the nonprofit watchdog group Human Rights Watch discloses the existence of the prisons, the prisoners are moved to a new CIA prison located in the North African nation of Mauritania. The New Yorker will report that “After a new government friendly to the US took power, in a bloodless coup d’état in August, 2005... it was much easier for the intelligence community to mask secret flights there.” ([Hersh 6/17/2007](#)) A Mauritanian newspaper places the prison at Ichemmimène, a town deep in the Sahara desert. ([Le Rénovateur Quotidien 6/29/2007](#)) ABC News lists eleven prisoners making the move:

- Abu Zubaida (held in Thailand then Poland).
- Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri (held in Poland).
- Ramzi bin al-Shibh (held in Poland).
- Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (held in Poland).
- Khallad bin Attash (held in Poland).
- Ahmed Khalfan Ghailani (held in Poland).
- Hassan Ghul (held in Poland).
- Abdul Rahim al-Sharqawi (held in Poland).
- Mohammed Omar Abdul-Rahman (held in Poland).
- Ibn al-Shaykh al-Libi (held in Pakistan then Poland).

Further, Hambali is a high level prisoner in US custody but he is being held elsewhere. ([Ross and Esposito 12/5/2005](#); [ABC News 12/5/2005](#)) In 2007 Council of Europe, the European human rights monitoring agency, will reveal that the main CIA prison for high-level prisoners was in a Soviet-era military compound at Stare Kjekuty, in northeastern Poland. Lower-level prisoners from Afghanistan and Iraq were held in a military base near the Black Sea in Romania. The governments of Poland and Romania will continue to deny the existence of the prisons even after the US government admits to their existence. ([Grey and Carvajal 6/8/2007](#)) Eleven of the twelve prisoners mentioned above were subjected to the so-called “enhanced interrogation techniques” called torture by many. In 2006, Bush will announce that the CIA prisons are being emptied and high level prisoners will be transferred to the prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba (see [September 2-3, 2006](#)). But the list of prisoners being transferred will include some other names and will not include al-Shaykh al-Libi, Ghul, Rahim al-Sharqawi, or Abdul-Rahman. It is unclear what happened to them. ([Ross and Esposito 12/5/2005](#))

Between November 2005 and September 2006: Al-Qaeda Leader Al-Libi Secretly Transferred to Libya to Avoid Questions about Torture and False Confessions

Some time between when al-Qaeda leader Ibn al-Shaykh al-Libi is moved to a prison in Mauritania in November 2005 (see [November 2005](#)) and September 2006 when most imprisoned al-Qaeda leaders are transferred to Guantanamo (see [September 2-3, 2006](#)), al-Libi disappears from known US custody. Al-Libi was captured in late 2001 and confessed that the Iraqi government helped train al-Qaeda in chemical and biological weapons (see [January 2002 and after](#)). In 2004, he recanted his confession amid allegations that he was brutally tortured, and the CIA later determined his Iraq allegations were untrue (see [February 14, 2004](#)). In May 2007, a group of Democratic Congresspeople will write President Bush, asking if al-Libi was tortured and/or renditioned to Egypt to be tortured, and also asking, "Where is al-Libi today?" Human-rights groups and others suspect the Bush administration is hiding al-Libi and concealing key information about him because of the potential political and legal ramifications about his torture, as well as his false confession that helped lead to war with Iraq. While the White House has yet to respond to queries about al-Libi, Newsweek will later claim that al-Libi, a Libyan, has been quietly returned to Libya and is being secretly imprisoned there. He is reportedly extremely ill with tuberculosis and diabetes. It is said the Libyan government has kept silent about holding al-Libi as a favor to the Bush administration, to help avoid more public scrutiny about him. ([Isikoff 5/29/2007](#))

November 2005: CIA Destroys Videotapes of Detainees' Interrogations without Advance Notification

The Central Intelligence Agency destroys videotapes of the interrogations of two high-ranking detainees, Abu Zubaida and Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri, which were made in 2002 (see [Spring-Late 2002](#)). One anonymous senior intelligence official later claims that "Several hundred hours" of videotapes are destroyed. ([Eggen and Pincus 12/18/2007](#)) The decision to destroy the tapes is apparently made by Jose Rodriguez, chief of the CIA's Directorate of Operations, despite previous advice not to destroy the tapes (see [November 2005](#)). However, some accounts will suggest that Rodriguez received clearance to do so (see [December 7, 2007](#)). ([Mazzetti 12/8/2007](#)) The CIA's treatment of detainees has recently come under increased scrutiny. As the Wall Street Journal will later remark, "the Abu Ghraib prison pictures were still fresh, the existence of secret CIA prisons had just been revealed and politicians on Capitol Hill were talking about curtailing 'extreme techniques,' including the Central Intelligence Agency's own interrogation tactics." ([Gorman 12/10/2007](#)) Beginning on November 2, 2005, there are some pivotal articles revealing details about the CIA's handling of detainees, suggesting that some of them were illegally tortured (see [November 2-18, 2005](#)). According to a 2007 statement by future CIA Director Michael Hayden, the tapes are destroyed "in the absence of any legal or internal reason to keep them" and because they apparently pose "a serious security risk;" if they were leaked, they could be used for retaliation by al-

Qaeda and its sympathizers. ([Central Intelligence Agency 12/6/2007](#)) However, this rationale will be questioned when the destruction is revealed in late 2007 (see [December 6, 2007](#)). Senator Carl Levin (D-MI) will call this “a pathetic excuse... You’d have to burn every document at the CIA that has the identity of an agent on it under that theory.” CBS News will offer an alternative explanation, saying that the tapes were destroyed “to protect CIA officers from criminal prosecution.” ([CBS News 12/7/2007](#)) CIA Director Porter Goss and the CIA’s top lawyer, John Rizzo, are allegedly not notified of the destruction in advance, and Rizzo will reportedly be angry at this failure. ([Mazzetti 12/8/2007](#)) But Newsweek will later claim that Goss and Rizzo were involved in extensive discussions with the White House over what to do with the tapes. Goss supposedly thought there was an understanding the tapes would be saved and is upset to learn they have been destroyed (see [Between 2003-Late 2005](#) and [Before November 2005](#)). ([Isikoff and Hosenball 12/11/2007](#)) Congressional officials responsible for oversight are not informed for a year (see [March 14, 2007](#)). A White House spokeswoman will say that President Bush has “no recollection” of being made aware of the tapes’ destruction before 2007 (see [December 11, 2007](#)). It is also unclear whether the Justice Department is notified in advance or not. ([Mazzetti 12/8/2007](#)) The CIA still retains tapes of interrogations of at least one detainee (see [September 19 and October 18, 2007](#)).

November 2005: CIA Has Many Reasons Not to Destroy Videotapes of Detainee Interrogations

By November 2005, when the CIA destroys videotapes of the interrogations of al-Qaeda leaders Abu Zubaida and Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri (see [November 2005](#)), there are numerous reasons to not destroy them, some of them possibly legal requirements. ([Mazzetti 12/8/2007](#))

- In February 2003, Porter Goss, chairman of the House Intelligence Committee in 2003, Congressperson Jane Harman, the top Democrat on the committee, requested that the videotapes be preserved (see [February 2003](#)).
- Beginning in 2003 and continuing through 2005, White House officials, including White House deputy chief of staff Harriet Miers, requested that the videotapes be preserved (see [Between 2003-Late 2005](#)).
- In 2003, Justice Department lawyers also advised the CIA to preserve the videotapes (see [2003](#)).
- Beginning in 2003, lawyers in the Zacarias Moussaoui trial have requested access to evidence of interrogations of al-Qaeda leaders like Zubaida. The CIA twice misinformed the judge in the trial about the existence of the videotapes (see [May 7-9, 2003](#) and [November 3-14, 2005](#)). The trial will not be concluded until mid-2006 (see [May 3, 2006](#)).
- In September 2004, a judge rules the CIA has to preserve all records about the treatment of detainees overseas, as part of a lawsuit filed by the American Civil Liberties Union. The videotapes of Zubaida and al-Nashiri would clearly qualify, since both are held overseas (see [September 15, 2004](#)).
- Beginning in May 2005, Sen. Jay Rockefeller of the Senate Intelligence Committee

asked the CIA to preserve over 100 documents about the CIA interrogation program. One of the documents requested is a report about the videotapes of interrogations and their possible illegality (see [May-September 2005](#)).

■In June and July 2005, two judges ordered the CIA to preserve all evidence relevant to detainees being held in Guantanamo prison. The interrogation videotapes are indirectly relevant because the cases of some detainees hinge on their alleged ties to Zubaida (see [June-July 2005](#)).

■In the summer of 2005, Director of National Intelligence John Negroponte met with CIA Director Porter Goss and “strongly advised” him not to allow the videotapes to be destroyed (see [Summer 2005](#)).

■The videotapes are also needed for a trial of Jose Padilla, who is indicted in November 2005 (see [November 17, 2005](#)).

An unnamed official familiar with the case will comment, “Everybody from the top on down told them not to do it and still they went ahead and did it anyway.” ([Meyer 12/9/2007](#)) Despite this, many later reports will indicate that the National Clandestine Service (NCS), the CIA unit that takes the decision to destroy the tapes, believes the advice about their destruction is ambiguous. NCS head Jose Rodriguez will be said to feel he never gets a straight answer to the question of whether the tapes should be destroyed, despite extensive correspondence about the issue at the CIA. ([Isikoff and Hosenball 12/11/2007](#); [Isikoff and Hosenball 12/24/2007](#)) A former intelligence official will say, “They never told us, ‘Hell, no.’ If somebody had said, ‘You cannot destroy them,’ we would not have destroyed them.” ([Mazzetti and Shane 12/11/2007](#))

(November 2005): Man With Suspected Links to Mohamed Atta Tries to Set up a Flight School on Remote Island



Wolfgang Bohringer. [*Source: TVNZ*] A German citizen suspected by the FBI of having had links with alleged 9/11 ringleader Mohamed Atta arrives in the remote South Pacific archipelago of Kiribati, one of the world’s smallest nations. Wolfgang Bohringer wants to set up a tourist resort and flight school on the isolated outpost of Fanning Island, which is only 13 square miles in size, has no phones or a functioning airstrip, and is home to just 600 people. Its only advantage is that it is among the closest of the islands to Hawaii, which is 1,200 miles to the north. Bohringer meets Kiribati President Anote Tong to discuss his proposal. Bill Paupe, who runs an aviation business in Honolulu and is Kiribati’s consul in the US, comments that the flight

school plan makes no sense: “It would be very expensive. You would have to [transport] all the people there... and all your instructors and your staff would have to be housed and fed and everything.” However, he adds, “A rationale for setting up a private training school in such a remote location would be to get beyond the reach of regulatory agencies.” The FBI will later brief President Tong on its suspicions of Bohringer and warn him that small countries like Kiribati could be vulnerable to terrorists. In November 2006, when the whole incident comes to light, the FBI will confirm that Bohringer is considered a “person of interest,” and had close ties with a US flight school attended by Mohamed Atta. (This is presumably Huffman Aviation in Venice, Florida (see [July 6-December 19, 2000](#)).) But by this time, Bohringer will have fled Kiribati, with his whereabouts unknown. ([Associated Press 11/15/2006](#); [Australian Associated Press 11/15/2006](#); [Australian Broadcasting Corporation 11/15/2006](#); [Squires 11/16/2006](#))

November 2-18, 2005: Media Reveals Details of Secret CIA Prisons and Possible Use of Torture

Following a request that the CIA be exempted from a US ban on torture, claims about alleged CIA mistreatment of prisoners begin to appear in the media, apparently fueled by CIA employees unhappy with the practices the CIA is employing. On November 2, the Washington Post reveals information about the CIA’s network of secret prisons, including facilities in Europe, which is kept secret from “nearly all members of Congress charged with overseeing the CIA’s covert actions.” The rationale for the policy is that the CIA apparently needs to hold people without the restrictions imposed by the US legal system, in order to keep the country safe. Detainees are said to be tortured, and this is not only questionable under US law, but, in some cases, against the law of the host country. ([Priest 11/2/2005](#)) On November 9, the New York Times reveals that in 2004, the CIA’s Inspector General secretly concluded that the CIA’s aggressive interrogation techniques in use up until that time were likely in violation of a 1994 international treaty against torture signed by the US (see [Spring 2004](#)). ([Jehl 11/9/2005](#)) After the network is revealed, there is much interest in what actually goes on in it and more important details are uncovered by ABC News on November 18. Apparently, the CIA’s interrogation techniques have led to the death of one detainee and include sleep deprivation, physical violence, waterboarding, and leaving prisoners in cold cells (see [Mid-March 2002](#)). The intelligence generated by these techniques is said to be questionable, and one source says: “This is the problem with using the waterboard. They get so desperate that they begin telling you what they think you want to hear.” ([Ross and Esposito 11/18/2005](#)) Some videotapes of CIA interrogations of detainees are destroyed this same month, although what date this happens exactly is unclear (see [November 2005](#)). The CIA is also so alarmed by these revelations that it immediately closes its secret prisons in Eastern Europe and opens a new one in a remote section of the Sahara desert (see [November 2005](#)).

November 3, 2005: Wilkerson Says Cheney’s Office Directly Linked to Torture of US Detainees

Larry Wilkerson, the former chief of staff to former Secretary of State Colin Powell, says that he has seen documents that show a “visible audit trail” that links the practice of abuse and torture of prisoners by US soldiers directly back to the office of Vice President Dick Cheney. Wilkerson, while in Powell’s office, had access to a raft of documents concerning the allegations of prisoner abuse. He says that Cheney and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld led a quiet push to deny prisoners Geneva Convention protections. According to Wilkerson, Cheney’s then-chief counsel, David Addington (now Cheney’s chief of staff—see [October 28, 2005](#)), helped begin the process. Addington “was a staunch advocate of allowing the president in his capacity as commander in chief to deviate from the Geneva Conventions.” Cheney, Rumsfeld, Addington, and others “began to authorize procedures within the armed forces that led to, in my view, what we’ve seen,” Wilkerson says. The Pentagon’s contentions that such prisoner abuses, particularly at Abu Ghraib, were limited to a few soldiers of low rank are false, he says: “I’m privy to the paperwork, both classified and unclassified, that the secretary of State asked me to assemble on how this all got started, what the audit trail was, and when I began to assemble this paperwork, which I no longer have access to, it was clear to me that there was a visible audit trail from the vice president’s office through the secretary of Defense down to the commanders in the field that in carefully couched terms—I’ll give you that—that to a soldier in the field meant two things: We’re not getting enough good intelligence and you need to get that evidence, and, oh, by the way, here’s some ways you probably can get it. And even some of the ways that they detailed were not in accordance with the spirit of the Geneva Conventions and the law of war. You just—if you’re a military man, you know that you just don’t do these sorts of things because once you give just the slightest bit of leeway, there are those in the armed forces who will take advantage of that.” ([Milbank 11/4/2005](#))

[November 3-14, 2005: CIA Again Wrongly Informs Court about Detainee Recordings in Moussaoui Case](#)

On November 3, 2005, Leonie Brinkema, the judge in the Zacarias Moussaoui trial, asks the CIA about recordings of interrogations of detainees who are related to the Moussaoui case. Eleven days later, the CIA again incorrectly claims to prosecutors in that trial that it has no such recordings. The CIA made a similar claim in 2003 (see [May 7-9, 2003](#)), but in fact the CIA secretly videotaped detainee interrogations in 2002 (see [Spring-Late 2002](#)). Some of these videotapes are destroyed this month (see [November 2005](#)), however it is unknown if the destruction takes place before or after this date. In late 2007, the CIA will reveal that it did have some videotapes after all and prosecutors will finally be able to view some of them (see [September 19 and October 18, 2007](#)). But it will also be revealed that most of the videotapes were destroyed (see [December 6, 2007](#)). Prosecutors will later claim that neither the video nor the audio recordings contained material relevant to the Moussaoui trial, and some of the content of the interrogations was provided during discovery. ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 10/25/2007](#) ²⁸; [Vicini 11/13/2007](#))

November 8, 2005: Physics Professor Alleges WTC Brought Down With Explosives



Steven E. Jones. *[Source: Publicity photo]* Steven E. Jones, a 20-year physics professor at Brigham Young University in Utah, posts a 9,000-word academic paper on the Internet, in which he says it is likely there were explosives in the three WTC towers that collapsed on 9/11. In his paper, which has been accepted for peer-reviewed publication in 2006, he states, “It is quite plausible that explosives were pre-planted in all three buildings and set off after the two plane crashes—which were actually a diversion tactic.... Muslims are (probably) not to blame for bringing down the WTC buildings after all.” He says the official explanation for the collapses—that fires and structural damage caused them—cannot be backed up by either testing or history. The Pittsburgh Tribune-Review will comment, “Jones isn’t the first to make this shocking/unbelievable claim... But it’s hard to imagine anyone making it clearer.” Jones, who conducts research in fusion and solar energy, wants a new, independent investigation into what caused the collapses. ([Jarvik 11/10/2005](#); [KUTV 2 \(Salt Lake City\) 11/10/2005](#); [MSNBC 11/16/2005](#); [Pittsburgh Tribune-Review 11/20/2005](#))

November 9, 2005: Three Simultaneous Suicide Bombings in Jordan; Israeli Tourists Evacuated in Advance



Saijida Mubarak Atrous al-Rishawi confesses on Jordanian television to attempting to be one of the suicide bombers. Her bomb belt is also shown. [Source: *BBC / Jordanian Television*] Three hotels in Amman, Jordan are simultaneously bombed. Sixty people, including three bombers, are killed and 115 others are injured. The explosions take place at the Grand Hyatt Hotel, the Radisson SAS Hotel, and the Days Inn, which are hotels often frequented by Western military contractors and diplomats. The bomb at the Radisson explodes in a ballroom where a wedding reception is taking place. The Jordanian government soon announces that the group Al-Qaeda in Iraq, which is supposedly led by the Jordanian Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, took credit for the attack in an Internet statement. ([CNN 11/12/2005](#)) Within days, an Iraqi woman accused of being a failed fourth suicide bomber confesses to participating in the attack on Jordanian television. CNN notes that “Many people were expressing doubt [whether the woman] really was involved...” ([CNN 11/14/2005](#)) Two leading Palestinian security officials - West Bank military intelligence chief Maj Gen. Bashir Nafeh and his aide Col. Abel Allun - are among those killed. ([BBC 11/10/2005](#)) The Israeli newspaper Haaretz reports, “The Radisson is known to be popular with Israeli tourists,” yet no Israelis were killed in the bombings. “Hours before the bombings, many Israelis were evacuated from the Radisson... apparently due to a specific security alert.” (The Haaretz report about this is retracted and then later reinstated.) ([Stern and Blumenkrantz 10/11/2005](#)) The Los Angeles Times also notes that Haaretz report and adds that Amos N. Guiora, a former leader of the Israel Defense Forces, told the Times that “sources in Israel had also told him about the pre-attack evacuations. “It means there was excellent intelligence that this thing was going to happen.... The question that needs to be answered is why weren’t the Jordanians working at the hotel similarly removed?” ([Khalil, Kadri, and Meyer 11/10/2005](#)) The deaths of the Palestinian intelligence officials and warning to Israeli tourists cause some, especially in the Muslim world, to claim that the attacks were an Israeli false flag operation. ([Morley 11/15/2005](#))

November 11, 2005: Second Version of Able Danger Supposedly Also Identified Atta

Rep. Curt Weldon (R) claims in a press conference that Bob Johnson, an employee of the defense contractor Raytheon, claims to have independently identified Mohamed Atta prior to 9/11. The second version of Able Danger in late 2000 was associated with Raytheon while the first version was not, so presumably Johnson's identification of Atta would have taken place then. If true, that would mean that both versions of Able Danger identified Atta independently of each other in early 2000 and late 2000, respectively. Weldon claims that this is the sixth person to corroborate the claim that Atta was identified prior to the 9/11 attacks. ([Phucas 11/11/2005](#))

November 17, 2005: Former FBI Director Says Able Danger Could Have Stopped 9/11 Attacks

Louis Freeh, FBI Director for the duration of the Able Danger program, calls Able Danger “a missed opportunity that could have potentially prevented 9/11.” He also says, “The Able Danger intelligence, if confirmed, is undoubtedly the most relevant fact of the entire post-9/11 inquiry.... Yet the 9/11 Commission inexplicably concluded that it ‘was not historically significant.’ This astounding conclusion—in combination with the failure to investigate Able Danger and incorporate it into its findings—raises serious challenges to the commission’s credibility and, if the facts prove out, might just render the commission historically insignificant itself.” ([Freeh 11/17/2005](#))

November 17, 2005: Zubaida Interrogation Videotapes Are Legally Required for Jose Padilla Court Case



Jose Padilla being escorted by federal agents in January 2006. [Source: Alan Diaz / Associated Press] On November 17, 2005, “enemy combatant” Jose Padilla is indicted in a federal court. In 2002, captured al-Qaeda leader Abu Zubaida identified Padilla as an al-Qaeda operative (see [Mid-April 2002](#)) and the government cited Zubaida as a source of information about Padilla after Padilla’s arrest. Yet, sometime this same month, the CIA destroys the videotapes of Zubaida’s interrogations from the time period where he allegedly identified Padilla (see [November 2005](#)). The New Republic will later comment, “Given the [Bush] administration’s reliance on Zubaida’s statements as evidence of Padilla’s guilt, tapes of Zubaida’s

interrogation were clearly relevant to the Padilla trial... A federal criminal statute prevents the destruction of any record for a foreseeable proceeding, even if the evidence is not admissible.... [I]t seems almost certain that preservation of the tapes was legally required by the Jose Padilla prosecution. ” ([Huq 12/11/2007](#))

November 18, 2005: More Than Half of Congress Calls for Open Able Danger Hearings

Rep. Curt Weldon (R) sends Defense Secretary Rumsfeld a letter signed by 246 congresspeople demanding that Able Danger program officers and contractors be allowed to testify in open congressional hearings. There is a nearly even split between Democrat and Republican signatures. ([Rosen 11/24/2005](#))

November 28, 2005: Supreme Court Declines to Hear Case Brought by Former FBI Translator against FBI

The Supreme Court declines, without comment, to hear the case (see [August 4, 2005](#)) brought by former FBI translator Sibel Edmonds. ([Stout 11/28/2005](#); [Vicini 11/28/2005](#)) The decision puts an end to Edmonds’ legal efforts to hold the bureau accountable for its failure to address several security issues raised by Edmonds in late 2001 and early 2002 (see [December 2, 2001](#) and [Afternoon February 12, 2002](#), respectively). On August 4, Edmonds had filed a petition with the Supreme Court asking it “to provide guidance to the lower courts about the proper scope and application of the state secrets privilege, and to prevent further misuse of the privilege to dismiss lawsuits at the pleading stage.” The petition also urged the court to affirm that the press and public may not be barred from court proceedings in civil cases without just cause. (In May, the federal appeals court had closed the courtroom to the public and media.) If the Supreme Court had ruled in favor of Edmonds, she would have been able return to the lower courts and start her case again. ([Petition for a writ of certiorari. Sibel Edmonds v. Department of Justice, et all. 8/4/2005, pp. 2](#); [Strohm 8/8/2005](#))

November 28-30, 2005: Federal Prosecutors and Defense Lawyers Present Hundreds of Questions for Potential Jurors in Moussaoui Trial

The Justice Department files in US District Court in Alexandria a list of 89 questions for potential jurors in the forthcoming death penalty trial of al-Qaeda conspirator Zacarias Moussaoui. Months earlier Moussaoui pleaded guilty to all terrorism charges against him, but promised to fight the death penalty (See [April 22, 2005](#)). The Justice Department’s questions include requests for very specific biographical information, and queries about whether the individual socializes with people of Arab descent. They also cover such things as their religious beliefs and practices, and their views about Islam, the US government, and the death penalty. According to legal experts, the level of detail is

extraordinary and indicates the high stakes of the prosecution. ([Locy 11/28/2005](#); [Markon 11/29/2005](#)) Two days later, lawyers representing Moussaoui submit an even more extensive list to the trial judge, with 306 questions. These include asking potential jurors about their personal response to the 9/11 attacks, and their opinions of other high-profile FBI investigations such as Waco and Ruby Ridge. A sixth of the questions probe their attitudes to the death penalty. There are also questions about their work history over the previous 15 years, and whether they have ever worked for the government or a government contractor. ([Barakat 11/30/2005](#); [Hirschhorn 12/1/2005](#)) The jury selection process will involve 500 potential jurors being summoned to the Alexandria courthouse on February 6, 2006 to fill in questionnaires, then returning starting a week later to be questioned by the judge. The process is expected to take a month, which is far longer than most cases at the Alexandria courthouse. ([Associated Press 12/29/2005](#); [Markon 12/29/2005](#)) Moussaoui's trial will commence on March 6, 2006, and two months later he will be sentenced to life imprisonment for his role in the 9/11 attacks. ([Burkeman 3/7/2006](#); [BBC 5/4/2006](#))

November 29, 2005: US Effort to Fight Terrorist Financing Has Been 'Spotty,' Plagued by Infighting and Neglect

A new report by the Government Accountability Office (GAO), an impartial investigative arm of Congress, claims the US effort to help foreign nations cut off terrorism funding has been frustrated by infighting among US agencies, a lack of funding, and leadership problems. The report says "the US government lacks an integrated strategy" to train foreign countries and give them technical assistance. Officials at the State and Treasury Departments cannot even agree on who is supposed to be in charge of the effort. In at least one case, the State Department refused to even allow a Treasury official to enter a certain foreign country. "Investigators found clear tensions between officials at State, Treasury, Justice, and other US government departments." Remarkably, private contractors have sometimes been allowed to draft proposed laws for foreign countries to curb terrorist financing. The contractors' work at times resulted in proposals with "substantial deficiencies." Generally speaking, the New York Times notes that experts say that the Bush administration's efforts with terrorist financing has been "spotty, with few clear dents in al-Qaeda's ability to move money and finance terrorist attacks." ([Lichtblau 11/29/2005](#))

November 30, 2005: Congressman Calls Able Danger 'Bigger Cover-up than Watergate'

Rep. Curt Weldon (R) says of Able Danger, "I am convinced this is a bigger cover-up than Watergate.... More than 3,000 people were slaughtered and [the 9/11 Commission] deliberately kept the story from being part of its report because it would have embarrassed some of its members." ([Krowchenko 11/30/2005](#))

Late 2005: Rumsfeld Cancels Mission to Capture Al-Zawahiri in Pakistan

US intelligence learns through communications intercepts about a meeting of al-Qaeda leaders in North Waziristan, in the remote border regions of Pakistan near Afghanistan. Intelligence officials have an “80 percent confidence” that al-Qaeda’s second in command Ayman al-Zawahiri and/or other top al-Qaeda leaders are attending the meeting. One intelligence official involved in the operation says, “This was the best intelligence picture we had ever seen” about a high-value target. ([Mazzetti 7/8/2007](#); [Thomas 8/28/2007](#)) The original plan calls for cargo planes to carry 30 Navy SEALs near the target, then they will use motorized hang gliders to come closer and capture or kill al-Zawahiri. The plan is enthusiastically endorsed by CIA Director Porter Goss and Joint Special Operations Commander Lt. Gen. Stanley McChrystal. But Defense Secretary Rumsfeld and his assistant Stephen Cambone are uncertain. They increase the size of the force to 150 to take care of contingencies. ([Thomas 8/28/2007](#)) One senior intelligence official involved later says for effect, “The whole thing turned into the invasion of Pakistan.” Having decided to increase the force, Rumsfeld then decides he couldn’t carry out such a large mission without Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf’s permission. But with the cargo planes circling and the team waiting for a green light, Rumsfeld decides that Musharraf would not approve. He cancels the mission without actually asking Musharraf about it. It is unclear whether President Bush was informed about the mission. The New York Times will later report that “some top intelligence officials and members of the military’s secret Special Operations units” are frustrated at the decision to cancel the operation, saying the US “missed a significant opportunity to try to capture senior members of al-Qaeda.” ([Mazzetti 7/8/2007](#)) It is not clear why the US does not hit the meeting with a missile fired from a Predator drone instead, as they will do to kill an al-Qaeda leader inside Pakistan a couple of months later (see [May 8, 2005](#)).

Late 2005: Justice Department Issues Secret Ruling Declaring All CIA Interrogation Techniques Legal

As Congress debates legislation that will outlaw “cruel, inhuman, and degrading” treatment of terrorist suspects and detainees in US custody, the Justice Department issues a secret opinion, one that few lawmakers even know exists, ruling that none of the CIA’s interrogation methods violate that standard. The Justice Department has already issued one secret opinion countering the Bush administration’s stated position that torture is “abhorrent” (see [February 2005](#)). Both rulings are efforts by Attorney General Alberto Gonzales and White House officials to realign the Justice Department with the White House after an in-house revolt by many Justice officials threw administration policies on torture and domestic surveillance into doubt (see Late 2003-2005). Though the public debate on torture becomes ever more pervasive during President Bush’s second term, the two rulings will remain in effect through the end of 2007 and beyond, helping the White House give US officials the broadest possible legal latitude for abusing and torturing prisoners. As late as October 2007, the White House will insist that it has always

followed US and international law in its authorization of interrogation practices. Those assurances will be countered by an array of current and former officials involved in counterterrorism (see [October 3, 2007](#)). ([Shane, Johnston, and Risen 10/4/2007](#)) In 2007, Jameel Jaffer of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) will say in conjunction with a lawsuit filed against the Justice Department's interrogation practices, "These torture memos should never have been written, and it is utterly unacceptable that the administration continues to suppress them while at the same time declaring publicly that it abhors torture. It is now obvious that senior administration officials worked in concert over a period of several years to evade and violate the laws that prohibit cruelty and torture. Some degree of accountability is long overdue." The ACLU will also note that the administration had failed to disclose the existence of the two opinions in its court filings, a failure characterized by the administration as an accidental oversight. ([Horton 11/7/2007](#))

Between November 2005 and Summer 2006: Hayden Learns CIA Videotapes Have Been Destroyed; Does Not Inform Congressional Leaders

Deputy Director of National Intelligence Michael Hayden learns that the CIA has videotaped some detainee interrogations (see [Spring-Late 2002](#)). Hayden will later say he finds this out towards the end of his time as deputy director of national intelligence, a position he leaves in May 2006. Although the tapes were destroyed several months previously (see [November 2005](#)), Hayden will later say he is not aware of their destruction at this point: "I did not personally know before they were destroyed, not at all... I was aware of the existence of the tapes but really didn't become focused on it until the summer of '06." It appears that Hayden does not inform any congressional oversight committees of the destruction until 2007 (see [March 14, 2007](#) and [December 7, 2007](#)), even though he becomes CIA director in the summer of 2006 (see [May 5, 2006](#)). ([Associated Press 12/12/2007](#); [Fox News 12/13/2007](#))

After November 2005: CIA Officer Never Punished for Allegedly Destroying Vital Evidence Completely on His Own

In November 2005, CIA officer Jose Rodriguez will destroy videotapes of interrogations of at least two high-ranking al-Qaeda detainees (see [November 2005](#)), despite numerous court orders and commands from superiors and oversight agencies to keep them. The CIA will later claim that Rodriguez acted on his own without notifying CIA lawyers or his bosses, yet there is no evidence that he was ever punished in any way. The New York Times will later comment, "Some in Congress are curious to know why, if Mr. Rodriguez had really ignored White House advice not to destroy the tapes, he was apparently never reprimanded." ([Mazzetti 12/13/2007](#))

After November 2005: CIA Legal Office Reviews Videotapes' Destruction, Conclusion Unknown

Following the destruction of videotapes made by the CIA showing the interrogation of al-Qaeda detainees (see [Spring-Late 2002](#) and [November 2005](#)), the CIA's Office of General Counsel conducts a review of the circumstances of destruction, as well as any other investigations and preservation obligations at the time the tapes were destroyed. Although the review's conclusions are not known, the existence of the review is made public in a Justice Department letter obtained by the Associated Press after news of the tapes' destruction breaks in 2007 (see [December 6, 2007](#)). ([Associated Press 12/8/2007](#)) There is no indication that any action is taken against Jose Rodriguez, who will later be said to be the CIA officer responsible for the tapes' destruction (see [After November 2005](#)).

December 2, 2005: No Al-Qaeda Operational Capability Seen Inside US

Kevin Brock, the new deputy director of the National Counterterrorism Center, says that the US has not detected a significant al-Qaeda operational capability in the US since the 2003 arrest of a truck driver plotting to destroy the Brooklyn Bridge. But he says that al-Qaeda's capabilities remain unclear and the group is still dangerous. ([Shrader 12/2/2005](#))

December 3, 2005: FBI Whistleblower Exonerated by Justice Department Report

A report by the Justice Department's Office of the Inspector General is leaked to the New York Times. The report largely backs the allegations made by whistleblower ex-FBI agent Mike German (see [September 2002](#) and [August 2, 2004](#)). It finds that FBI officials mishandled a terrorism investigation German was involved in, falsified documents in an effort to cover up agency mistakes, and retaliated against German. In one instance, someone altered dates on three FBI forms using correction fluid to conceal a violation of federal wiretap law. After German tried to complain directly to FBI Director Robert Mueller, other FBI agents distanced themselves from him. For instance, the head of the FBI undercover unit, Jorge Martinez, froze German out of teaching assignments and told another agent that German would "never work another undercover case." ([Lichtblau 12/3/2005](#)) Notwithstanding, German is critical of the inspector general's report. He says the authors of the report distorted some facts and failed to fully investigate whether the investigation he was working on was a genuine terrorist conspiracy. ([Strohm 12/12/2005](#))

December 4-5, 2005: Former 9/11 Commission Chairman Says Public Safety Is 'Not a Priority for the Government Right Now'

As the former 9/11 Commissioners issue a harsh report card grading the government's counterterrorism efforts (see [December 5, 2005](#)), former commission chairman Thomas Kean adds some critical comments in several interviews. Kean says, "While the terrorists are learning and adapting, our government is still moving at a crawl... Four years after 9/11 we are not as safe as we could be and that's simply not acceptable." ([Miller 12/5/2005](#)) He also says that public safety is "not a priority for the government right now. You don't see the Congress or the president talking about the public safety is number one, as we think it should be, and a lot of the things we need to do really to prevent another 9/11 just simply aren't being done by the president or by the Congress." ([Meet the Press 12/4/2005](#))

December 5, 2005: 9/11 Commission Issues Critical Report Card on Public Security Reforms, Then Disbands

The ten ex-9/11 Commissioners issue a report card to monitor the progress on implementation of the commission's recommendations given in their July 2004 final report, and they generally give harsh grades. The report card assigns letter grades to the commission's 41 key recommendations. In nearly half the categories, the government receives a D, F, or incomplete grade. There is only one high grade, an A-minus for its "vigorous effort against terrorist financing." ([Eggen 12/6/2005](#)) Ironically, that one good grade runs counter to the opinion of many counterterrorism experts. For instance, author Zachary Abuza has said, "The glaring exception to the success in fighting terrorism has been on the financial front..." ([Abuza 8/1/2003](#)) The report card criticizes the government for:

- still not checking the identities of airplane passengers against a complete terrorism watch list.
- continuing to allocate domestic security funding without considering that certain parts of the country are at greater risk than others.
- excessive secrecy regarding intelligence spending.
- the handling of detainees.
- persistent problems in first responder communication systems. ([Miller 12/5/2005](#))
- the slow transformation of and continuing problems with the FBI. ([Eggen 12/6/2005](#))

The report does not give grades to President Bush or any other specific officials. The 9/11 Commission formally ceased operations after issuing its final report, but some members formed a privately funded foundation to monitor progress. The foundation disbands after releasing the report card. White House spokesman Scott McClellan defends the Bush administration's efforts, saying, "The best way to protect the American people is to take the fight to the enemy, to stay on the offensive." ([Miller 12/5/2005](#))

December 6, 2005: Florida Professor Found Not Guilty of Terrorism Support; Sentenced to Lesser Charges



Sami al-Arian being led from a courthouse in handcuffs.

[Source: Chris O'Meara/ Associated Press] Former Florida professor Sami al-Arian and three co-defendants are found not guilty of various counts of terrorist support, perjury, and immigration violations. The jury acquitted al-Arian of eight of the 17 federal charges against him and deadlocked on the rest. The New York Times calls the verdict “a major defeat for [US] law enforcement officials.” Al-Arian was indicted and imprisoned in 2003. He had been heavily investigated since 1995 and most of the charges related to events from 1995 or earlier (see [1995](#) and [1995-1998](#)). Law professor Peter Margulies says, “I think the government’s case was somewhat stale because a lot of these events dated back ten years and the case was so complex that it was all over the board.” ([Lichtblau 12/6/2005](#)) Six months later, a federal judge will sentence al-Arian to an additional 19 months in jail in addition to the 38 months he has already served before being deported. Al-Arian will plead guilty to a lesser charge of aiding members of Palestinian Islamic Jihad and agree to be deported and in return the US will not retry him on the more serious charges. As part of the plea deal, al-Arian admits he raised money for the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) and conspired to hide the identities of other members of the group. He denies committing any act of violence himself, but admits knowing “that the PIJ achieved its objectives by, among other means, acts of violence.” ([Silvestrini 4/18/2006](#)) The New York Times will note that the “outcome of the case against Mr. al-Arian did little to resolve the conflicting portraits of his life” as either a terrorism supporter or political scapegoat. ([Steinhauer 5/2/2006](#))

December 9, 2005: SAAR Investigation Making Slow Progress

According to an unnamed law enforcement official who works with the FBI and the National Counter Terrorism Center, the investigation into the SAAR network is still ongoing. However, only a small portion of the documents and computer files confiscated in a raid on the network in 2002 (see [March 20, 2002](#)) have been fully translated from Arabic into English. This official complains, “They don’t have the damn resources. They don’t have the language skills or computer forensic personnel to go through it all. And yet it’s a gold mine of information.” ([Sperry 12/9/2005](#))

December 17, 2005: Bush Justifies NSA Wiretapping Program with Reference to 9/11 Hijackers

After an NSA program to intercept telephone calls where one party is in the US and the other party is abroad is revealed (see [December 15, 2005](#)), President George Bush defends the program in a radio address. He justifies the program by implying that, if it had been in place before 9/11, it may have prevented the attacks: “As the 9/11 Commission pointed out, it was clear that terrorists inside the United States were communicating with terrorists abroad before the September the 11th attacks, and the commission criticized our nation’s inability to uncover links between terrorists here at home and terrorists abroad. Two of the terrorist hijackers who flew a jet into the Pentagon, Nawaf Alhazmi and Khalid Almihdhar, communicated while they were in the United States to other members of al-Qaeda who were overseas. But we didn’t know they were here until it was too late.” There are conflicting accounts of the circumstances of the hijackers’ calls and the NSA actually intercepted them, so it is unclear why they were not exploited to prevent the attacks (see [Early 2000-Summer 2001](#), [\(Spring 2000\)](#), [Summer 2002-Summer 2004](#), and [2004 and After](#)). ([US President 12/26/2005](#) ³) It is unclear which statements of the 9/11 Commission the president thinks he is referring to. The Commission’s final report touches on the NSA intercepts of the hijackers’ calls from the US in two places; in one it says: “[T]he NSA was supposed to let the FBI know of any indication of crime, espionage, or ‘terrorist enterprise’ so that the FBI could obtain the appropriate warrant. Later in this story, we will learn that while the NSA had the technical capability to report on communications with suspected terrorist facilities in the Middle East, the NSA did not seek FISA Court warrants to collect communications between individuals in the United States and foreign countries, because it believed that this was an FBI role,” (note: we do not actually learn this later in the 9/11 Commission report, this is the only mention). The second passage refers to Almihdhar’s time in San Diego and does not actually mention that the NSA intercepted the relevant calls, “Almihdhar’s mind seems to have been with his family in Yemen, as evidenced by calls he made from the apartment telephone.” ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004](#), pp. 87-8, 222)

December 19, 2005: FBI Monitoring Vegan, Environmentalist, Anti-Poverty and Other Activist Groups

Newly released documents indicate that several FBI investigations have targeted—albeit peripherally—activist groups working on issues such as animal cruelty, environment, and poverty relief. One document reveals an FBI plan to monitor a “Vegan Community Project.” Another document speaks of the Catholic Workers group’s “semi-communistic ideology.” Other groups monitored include PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) and Greenpeace. An American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) official says, “You look at these documents and you think, wow, we have really returned to the days of J. Edgar Hoover, when you see in FBI files that they’re talking about a group like the Catholic Workers league as having a communist ideology.” A Greenpeace official says,

“The fact that we’re even mentioned in the FBI files in connection with terrorism is really troubling.” ([Lichtblau 12/20/2005](#))

Late 2005: CIA Closes Unit Hunting Bin Laden

The CIA closes its unit that had been in charge of hunting bin Laden and other top al-Qaeda leaders. Analysts in the unit, known as Alec Station, are reassigned to other parts of the CIA Counterterrorism Center. CIA officials explain the change by saying the agency can better deal with high-level threats by focusing on regional trends rather than on specific organizations or individuals. Michael Scheuer, who headed the unit when it formed in 1996 (see [February 1996](#)), says the move reflects a view within the CIA that bin Laden is no longer the threat he once was, and complains, “This will clearly denigrate our operations against al-Qaeda.” Robert Grenier, head of the Counterterrorism Center in 2005, is said to have instigated the closure. ([Mazzetti 7/4/2006](#); [Goldenberg 7/4/2006](#)) The White House denies the search for bin Laden has slackened, calling the move merely a “reallocation of resources” within the CIA. ([Reuters 8/17/2006](#))

2006: Some FBI Agents Believe CIA and Saudi Intelligence Attempted to Recruit Hijackers Almihdhar and Alhazmi

After 9/11 there was much discussion about how hijackers Nawaf Alhazmi and Khalid Almihdhar were able to participate in an operation like 9/11, even though they were well known to US intelligence (see, for example, January 5-8, 2000, [Early 2000-Summer 2001](#) and [9:53 p.m. September 11, 2001](#)). Based on conversations with FBI agents, author Lawrence Wright speculates on why the CIA withheld information it should have given the FBI: “Some... members of the I-49 squad would later come to believe that the [CIA] was shielding Almihdhar and Alhazmi because it hoped to recruit them... [They] must have seemed like attractive opportunities; however, once they entered the United States they were the province of the FBI. The CIA has no legal authority to operate inside the country, although in fact, the bureau often caught the agency running backdoor operations in the United States... It is also possible, as some FBI investigators suspect, the CIA was running a joint venture with Saudi intelligence in order to get around that restriction. Of course, it is also illegal for foreign intelligence services to operate in the United States, but they do so routinely.” ([Wright 2006, pp. 312-313](#)) This theory offers a possible explanation, for example, of how Almihdhar and Alhazmi managed to move in and out of Saudi Arabia and obtain US visas there even though they were supposedly on the Saudi watch list (see [April 3-7, 1999](#) and [1997](#)), and why a Saudi agent in the US associated with them (see [January 15-Early February 2000](#)). Wright points out that “these are only theories” but still notes that “[h]alf the guys in the Bureau think CIA was trying to turn them to get inside al-Qaeda.” ([Wright 2006, pp. 313](#); [O'Connor 9/5/2006](#)) Wright is not the first to have made such a suggestion. Investigative journalist Joe Trento reported in 2003 that a former US intelligence agent had told him that Alhazmi and Almihdhar were

already Saudi Arabian intelligence agents when they entered the US (see [August 6, 2003](#)).

2006: Tenet Says New Evidence Completely Disproves Atta-Iraq Link

Former CIA Director George Tenet will write in 2007, “It is my understanding that in 2006, new intelligence was obtained that proved beyond any doubt that the man seen meeting with [a] member of the Iraqi intelligence service in Prague in 2001 was not Mohamed Atta.” ([Tenet 2007, pp. 355](#))

January 13, 2006: US Missile Strike Fails to Kill Al-Zawahiri in Pakistan

The US fires a missile from a Predator drone at a Pakistani village named Damadola, in the tribal region near the Afghanistan border. Apparently, al-Qaeda’s number two leader, Ayman al-Zawahiri, is targeted but not killed. Thirteen civilians, including women and children, are killed. Pakistani officials say four al-Qaeda operatives may have been killed as well, including bomb maker Midhat Mursi (a.k.a. Abu Khabab al-Masri), who has a \$5 million bounty on his head. After the attack, villagers insist no members of al-Qaeda were anywhere near the village when it was hit. ([Khan and Ross 1/18/2006](#); [Associated Press 1/22/2006](#)) US and Pakistani officials later say that no al-Qaeda leaders were killed in the strike, only local villagers. It appears that the intelligence tip that led to the strike was bad, and al-Zawahiri and the others were never there in the first place. ([Whitlock 9/9/2007](#)) The attack leads to a surge in support for al-Qaeda in Pakistan, including many marches of support near the targeted area. ([Khan and Ross 1/18/2006](#); [Associated Press 1/22/2006](#)) Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf condemns the attack as a violation of sovereignty and says it “was definitely not coordinated with [Pakistan].” ([Whitlock and Pincus 1/31/2006](#)) Al-Zawahiri appears in a video later in the month, taunting the US for failing to kill him in the raid. ([BBC 1/30/2006](#))

January 15, 2006: Saudis Not Helping to Stop Terrorist Financing

It had been widely reported that the Saudi government began to crack down seriously on al-Qaeda and other radical militants after a 2003 al-Qaeda attack in Saudi Arabia (see [May 12, 2003](#)). However, the Los Angeles Times reports that US officials now claim that is not true. While Saudis have been very aggressive and cooperative in cracking down on militants within Saudi Arabia since that attack, they have done little outside the country. Millions of dollars continue to flow from wealthy Saudis through charity fronts to al-Qaeda and other suspected groups, and the Saudi government is doing next to nothing about it. In 2004, the Saudis promised to set up a government commission to police such groups, but they have yet to do so. The Saudi government has also done little to rein in

influential radical religious leaders who openly encourage their followers to attack US interests in Iraq and elsewhere in the world. US officials claim that at least five organizations, including the Muslim World League (MWL), the International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO), and the World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WML), “are headquartered in Saudi Arabia but continue to engage in highly suspect activity overseas.” A senior US counterterrorism official says that some known terrorist financiers continue to “operate and live comfortably in Saudi Arabia” despite US objections. ([Meyer 1/15/2006](#))

January 19, 2006: New Alleged Bin Laden Audio Tape Is Released, Offers US Truce, but Offer Is Rejected

A new audio tape reported to be from Osama bin Laden surfaces. In the tape, the US is offered a truce by al-Qaeda. The voice on the tape criticizes President Bush, and discusses the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, which are said to be going badly for the US. The tape is also critical of the Pentagon’s efforts to manage the war news, and references an alleged US plan to attack the headquarters of Al Jazeera in Qatar. After comparing the US to Saddam Hussein and saying that US soldiers are raping women and taking them hostage, the voice says the US is torturing detainees, and that “Iraq has become a point of attraction and recruitment of qualified resources.” The voice also threatens further attacks in the US, “Operations are under preparation, and you will see them on your own ground once they are finished, God willing.” The US is offered a truce: “We do not object to a long-term truce with you on the basis of fair conditions that we respect... In this truce, both parties will enjoy security and stability and we will build Iraq and Afghanistan, which were destroyed by the war.” He also recommends the book *Rogue State* by William Blum. ([BBC 1/19/2006](#)) The US rejects the proposed truce, and Vice President Dick Cheney calls it a “ploy”. ([BBC 1/20/2006](#)) However, a bin Laden expert is skeptical about the tape (see [January 19, 2006](#)).

January 19, 2006: Bin Laden Expert Is Skeptical about Recently Released Tape



Professor Bruce Lawrence. [*Source: Duke University*]/Duke University professor Bruce Lawrence questions a tape reported to be from Osama bin Laden released on this day. In it, bin Laden comments on the progress of the wars in

Afghanistan and Iraq and offers the US a truce (see [January 19, 2006](#)). The CIA says the voice on the tape is bin Laden's, but Lawrence, who edited a collection of bin Laden's speeches, is skeptical, saying that "[i]t was like a voice from the grave" and that the message is missing several key elements: "There's nothing in this from the Koran. He's, by his own standards, a faithful Muslim. He [usually] quotes scripture in defense of his actions. There's no quotation from the Koran in the excerpts we got." Lawrence also points out that, at 10 minutes, it is the shortest message ever issued by bin Laden. Lawrence questions when the tape was recorded, arguing that the timing of its release could be to divert attention from a recent strike in Pakistan during which civilians were killed (see [January 13, 2006](#)) and that bin Laden may actually be dead. ([Rupinta 1/19/2006](#); [BBC 1/20/2006](#))

February 6, 2006: Moussaoui Unsuccessfully Seeks Last Minute Deal

Zacarias Moussaoui meets FBI special agent Jim Fitzgerald in jail. Moussaoui tries to persuade Fitzgerald he is worth more to US intelligence alive than dead and offers information in return for being spared the death penalty. However, Fitzgerald demands full and complete co-operation, not only on what he knows about the plot in which he was involved, but also on everything he knows about al-Qaeda. They fail to reach an agreement. ([Serrano 3/29/2006](#))

February 14, 2006: Atta's Name Reportedly Appears 13 Times in Pre-9/11 Government Databases

Rep. Curt Weldon (R) says that he is in contact with people who are still able to do data mining on pre-9/11 data, and, in "those data runs that are now being done today, in spite of what DOD (Department of Defense) said, I have 13 hits on Mohamed Atta." He also says that additional Able Danger material continues to be found in Pentagon files, and that in early February, a general was present as Able Danger was recovered from filing cabinets. This came from the early 2000 version of Able Danger that supposedly had all of its data destroyed by Erik Kleinsmith. Weldon also claims, "At least one additional witness has come forward who just retired from one of the intelligence agencies, who will also testify under oath that he was well-aware of and identified Mohamed Atta's both name and photo prior to 9/11 occurring." The Defense Department claims to have performed recent data mining on pre-9/11 and failed to find Mohamed Atta's name. A Defense Department official also says one day after Weldon's claims, "It is true that in the course of this more recent review, we have indeed unearthed additional documents related to Able Danger. These documents were found, I must say, with some considerable effort, only because they were filed and misfiled and in a place where they weren't easily gotten to, not because they were being hidden." ([Hefling 2/14/2006](#); [Gossett 2/15/2006](#); [US Congress 2/15/2006](#))

February 15, 2006: Second Congressional Hearing Held on Able Danger; Former Members Testify

A second open Congressional hearing on Able Danger is held. Deputy Secretary of Defense for Intelligence Stephen Cambone testifies that an extensive review of Able Danger under his direction failed to locate the chart with Mohamed Atta's picture and failed to find any other pre-9/11 references to Atta. Rep. Curt Weldon (R) repeatedly spars with Cambone, and says that since 9/11, "There's been no investigation! There's been no analysis [of Able Danger] by the 9/11 commission or anyone else." Three members of the Able Danger team, Eric Kleinsmith, Anthony Shaffer, and James D. Smith, testify in public. All three of them say that the 9/11 attacks might have been prevented if law-enforcement agencies had acted on the information about al-Qaeda they discovered. The three of them had been prevented from testifying in the first public hearings on Able Danger in September 2005 (see [September 21, 2005](#)). ([Rosen 2/15/2006](#)) Capt. Scott Phillpott, the former head of Able Danger, apparently joins other former team members in closed testimony. ([McClatchy News Service 2/15/2006](#)) The Congressional committee asked 9/11 Commission staff member Dietrich Snell to testify. But Snell's boss, New York Attorney General Eliot Spitzer, said that Snell would not be available. Rep. Curt Weldon has said he wants to ask Snell under oath why Snell did not inform any of the 9/11 Commissioners what he had learned about Able Danger. ([US Congress 2/15/2006](#))

February 15, 2006: US Terror Watch List Quadrupled in Size Since 2003

The US interagency National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) maintains a watch list of 325,000 names of international terrorism suspects, a number that has more than quadrupled since the the list was created in 2003 by merging other watch lists together. NCTC officials estimate that, due to aliases, some 200,000 individuals are represented on the list. The main US watch list at the time of 9/11 had 60,000 names on it (see [December 11, 1999](#)). An administration official says, "The vast majority are non-US persons and do not live in the US." However, officials refuse to state how many on the list are US citizens and how many names on the list were obtained through the controversial wiretapping program run by the National Security Agency (NSA). Civil liberties and privacy advocates claim that the scale of the list heightens their concerns that watch lists include the names of large numbers of innocent people. Attorney General Alberto Gonzales tells the Senate Judiciary Committee that he cannot discuss specifics but says, "Information is collected, information is retained, and information disseminated in a way to protect the privacy interests of all Americans." A September 2003 presidential directive instructs agencies to supply data for the list only about people who are "known or appropriately suspected to be... engaged in conduct constituting, in preparation for, in aid of, or related to terrorism." Marc Rotenberg, executive director of the Electronic Privacy Information Center, says the scope of the NCTC list highlights the "false positive" problem, in which innocent people have been stopped from flying because their names

are wrongly included or are similar to suspects' names. "If there are that many people on the list, a lot of them probably shouldn't be there. But how are they ever going to get off?" ([Pincus and Eggen 2/15/2006](#))

February 25, 2006: Afghanistan Said to Be More Dangerous for US Troops than Iraq in 2005

A think tank report suggests that Afghanistan was actually more dangerous for US troops than Iraq in 2005. One hundred US soldiers were killed in Afghanistan in 2005, a number far lower than in Iraq for the same period. However, there are only 20,000 troops in Afghanistan compared to about 140,000 in Iraq. Per capita, the rate of soldiers injured and killed in Afghanistan was 1.6 per 1,000 in Afghanistan compared to 0.9 per 1,000 in Iraq. ([Associated Press 2/25/2006](#))

Spring 2006: US Leadership Surprised about Strong Taliban Offensive, Despite Warnings



Ronald Neumann. [*Source: US State Department*]/The Taliban carry out their largest offensive in Afghanistan since 2001. Suicide bombings increase four-fold to 136 and roadside bombings double. 191 US and NATO soldiers die in 2006, making it nearly as statistically dangerous to fight in Afghanistan as in Iraq. But US assistance to Afghanistan drops 38 percent from \$4.3 billion in 2005 to \$3.1 billion in 2006. Ronald Neumann, US ambassador to Afghanistan, argued against the cut. He also warns in a February 2006 cable to his superiors that the Taliban is planning a strong spring offensive. Afghan president Hamid Karzai and some US military officials make similar warnings. But despite such warnings, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice will later say, "There was no doubt that people were surprised that the Taliban was able to regroup and come back in a large, well-organized force." The US will boost aid to \$9 billion in 2007 in response to the offensive. ([Rohde and Sanger 8/12/2007](#))

March 2006: Ali Mohamed Still Not Sentenced

Ali Mohamed, the double agent caught in 1998, still has not been sentenced. In 2000, he pled guilty to involvement in the 1998 African embassy bombings (see [October 20, 2000](#)) and his sentencing date had originally been set for July 2001 (see [July 2001-December](#)

[2001](#)). Linda Sanchez, Mohamed's wife, says in an interview at this time, "He's still not sentenced yet, and without him being sentenced I really can't say much. He can't talk to anybody. Nobody can get to him." The US government has "got Ali pretty secretive.... It's like he just kind of vanished [into] thin air." ([Lance 2006, pp. 23-24](#)) There is no evidence he has been sentenced since.

(March 2006): Former US Security Officer Alleges that US Abandoned Counterterrorism Investigation because of Potential Connection to ISI

Sam Karmilowicz, a former security officer at the US embassy in Manila, suggests in an interview with CounterPunch magazine, that US intelligence may have failed to properly follow leads in a counterterrorism case because of a potential link to Pakistani intelligence. In September 1994, Karmilowicz allegedly received information that a Pakistani businessman with possible ties to the ISI was part of a plot to assassinate President Clinton during his November 1994 visit to Manila (see [September 18-November 14, 1994](#)). An interagency US security team that was tasked with investigating the tip ended its investigation after only a few weeks. "My experience in the Philippines shows the US government has compartmentalized information... in order to cover-up its gross incompetence or its complicity in illegal and questionable activities conducted by, or against, foreign powers," Karmilowicz says. ([Cockburn 3/9/2006](#))

February-May 30, 2006: CIA Facilitates Travel for Hanjour Associate



Rayed Abdullah. [*Source: Scoop*] Rayed Abdullah, an associate of hijacker pilot Hani Hanjour (see [October 1996-December 1997](#) and [October 1996-Late April 1999](#)), enters New Zealand despite being on the watch list there and takes further pilot training. The New Zealand government claims it only ascertains his real identity after he has been in the country several months. Abdullah is then arrested and deported to Saudi Arabia, even though he was traveling on a Yemeni passport. ([Associated Press 6/9/2006](#); [Cumming 6/10/2006](#)) However, FBI agents and CIA officers later say that the US released Abdullah after 9/11 in an attempt to use him to spy on al-Qaeda for Saudi Arabia's intelligence agency. The CIA ensures he is allowed into New Zealand as a part of a joint operation. However, the New Zealanders get cold feet when Abdullah starts

flight training again. A CIA official will say: “[W]e know if Rayed was part of the [9/11] plot, someone in al-Qaeda will reach out for him, and we have a chance of making that connection.” An FBI official will comment: “The amazing thing is the CIA convinced itself that by getting [Abdullah] tossed out of New Zealand, he would then be trusted and acceptable to Saudi intelligence and useful in al-Qaeda operations. For this tiny chance of success they put passengers at risk to enter into a partnership with Saudi intelligence.” ([Trento and Trento 10/9/2006](#))

March 6, 2006: Moussaoui’s London Connection Played Down at Trial

During the trial of Zacarias Moussaoui (see [March 6-May 4, 2006](#) and [March 27, 2006](#)), there will be some mentions of his time in London, where he was radicalized and linked up with other militants. However, numerous questions about his actions and associates there remain unanswered. Journalists Sean O’Niell and Daniel McGrory will later comment, “US intelligence knew Moussaoui was a product of Finsbury Park mosque, but during his nearly four months in court nobody asked him about his relationship with [extremist cleric and British informer] Abu Hamza, or about those who were at the mosque at the same time as him, and what became of them. Those secrets Moussaoui takes to his eight-by-five-foot cell.” They add, “The publicity given to his spurious boast [that he wanted to hijack a fifth plane] meant that prosecutors paid little attention to other aspects of his testimony, particularly his measured account of how his time at Finsbury Park had shaped his beliefs and steered him and his ‘brothers’ towards al-Qaeda. Nobody asked who these ‘brothers’ were. Nor did they inquire who their leader in London was, and what role that person played in introducing them to al-Qaeda and its emerging network of training camps.” ([O’Neill and McGrory 2006, pp. 92, 223](#))

March 6-May 4, 2006: Zacarias Moussaoui Stands Trial



Zacarias Moussaoui. [Source: WNBC / Jonathan Deinst] Zacarias Moussaoui becomes the first and only person charged in direct connection with the 9/11 attacks to stand trial in the US. ([Sniffen and Barakat 3/17/2006](#)) He was preparing to hijack an aircraft and fly it into a target when he was arrested 26 days before 9/11 (see [August 16, 2001](#) and [April 22, 2005](#)). Although there has been disagreement whether Moussaoui was to take part in the actual attack of 9/11 or a follow-

up plot (see [January 30, 2003](#)), the prosecution alleges that Moussaoui had information related to the attacks (see August 16, 2001) and facilitated them by lying and not disclosing everything he knew to the FBI. He is charged with six counts, including conspiracy to commit acts of terrorism and conspiracy to commit aircraft piracy. ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 12/11/2001](#)) The trial receives much media coverage and the highlights include the playing of United 93's cockpit recorder (see [April 12, 2006](#)), a row over a government lawyer coaching witnesses (see [March 13, 2006](#)), and testimony by FBI agent Harry Samit (see [March 9 and 20, 2006](#)), former FBI assistant director Michael Rolince (see [March 21, 2006](#)), and Moussaoui himself (see [March 27, 2006](#)). Moussaoui is forced to wear a stun belt, controlled by one of the marshalls, under his jumpsuit. The belt is to be used if Moussaoui lunges at a trial participant. ([Lewis 4/17/2006](#)) He has already pleaded guilty (see [April 22, 2005](#)) and the trial is divided into two phases; in the first phase the jury decides that Moussaoui is eligible for the death penalty, but in the second phase it fails to achieve unanimity on whether Moussaoui should be executed (see [May 3, 2006](#)). ([Barakat 4/3/2006](#); [Lewis 4/17/2006](#))

March 9 and 20, 2006: FBI Agent Testifying at Moussaoui Trial Blames FBI 'Criminal Negligence' for Not Stopping 9/11 Plot



FBI agent Harry Samit testifying at the Moussaoui trial. [*Source: Agence France-Presse*] FBI agent Harry Samit testifies at the trial of Zacarias Moussaoui (see [March 6-May 4, 2006](#)). Samit was one of the main agents involved in Moussaoui's arrest and bombarded his superiors with messages about the danger Moussaoui posed (see [August 21, 2001](#) and [August 21, 2001](#)). Under direct examination he relates what happened in August 2001 (see [August 22, 2001](#)). The prosecutor asks Samit several times what he would have done if Moussaoui had told the truth, and Samit is usually allowed by the judge to say how it would have helped the investigation and made 9/11 less likely. ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 3/9/2006](#)) However, under cross examination Samit says he was not fooled by Moussaoui's lies and that he immediately suspected him of preparing

to hijack an airplane, but that the investigation was thwarted by FBI headquarters, and the Radical Fundamentalist Unit in particular. He admits that he told the Department of Justice Office of Inspector General that FBI headquarters was guilty of “obstructionism, criminal negligence and careerism” and that its opposition blocked “a serious opportunity to stop the 9/11 attacks.” ([Sniffen 3/20/2006](#)) Similar charges were made by one of Samit’s colleagues, Coleen Rowley, after 9/11 (see [May 21, 2002](#)). The Los Angeles Times will comment “His testimony appeared to undermine the prosecution’s case for the death penalty.” ([Serrano 3/20/2006](#))

March 13, 2006: Moussaoui Trial Halted over Witness Coaching



TSA lawyer Carla Martin [*Source: Thew European Pressphoto Agency*] Judge Leonie Brinkema halts the trial of Zacarias Moussaoui (see [March 6-May 4, 2006](#)) after it is discovered that Transportation Security Administration lawyer Carla Martin violated a court order prohibiting witnesses from following the trial. Martin e-mailed transcripts to seven witnesses and coached them on their testimony. Brinkema calls it “the most egregious violation of the court’s rules on witnesses [I have seen] in all the years I’ve been on the bench.” Even the prosecution says, “We frankly cannot fathom why she engaged in such conduct.” ([Markon and Dwyer 3/14/2006](#); [Sniffen and Barakat 3/17/2006](#)) Brinkema allows the prosecution to continue to seek the death penalty, but initially removes the aviation security portion of evidence from its case. However, after the prosecution complains this makes the proceedings pointless, she reinstates some of it, allowing the trial to continue. ([Sniffen 3/15/2006](#); [Hirschhorn 3/16/2006](#); [Sniffen and Barakat 3/17/2006](#)) As a result of her actions, Martin is placed on paid leave. Additionally, Pennsylvania’s lawyer disciplinary board begins an investigation and federal prosecutors explore charges. ([Markon 7/10/2006](#)) Martin’s e-mails also reveal that she has been communicating with attorneys for United and American Airlines. This prompts seven victims’ relatives, who are suing the airlines for being negligent on 9/11, to file a civil action against her alleging that she is trying to help the airline industry avoid civil liability. ([CBS News 4/7/2006](#); [Hirschhorn 4/26/2006](#))

March 20, 2006: Actor Charlie Sheen Reveals Doubts About Official 9/11 Story



Charlie Sheen [*Source: Publicity photo*] Well-known Hollywood actor Charlie Sheen reveals that he believes there is a massive US government coverup of what really occurred on 9/11. Appearing on the Alex Jones radio show, he says, “It seems to me like 19 amateurs with boxcutters taking over four commercial airliners and hitting 75 percent of their targets, that feels like a conspiracy theory. It raises a lot of questions.” ([Zwecker 3/23/2006](#)) He says, “I saw the South Tower hit live, that famous wide shot where it disappears behind the building and then we see the tremendous fireball,” and comments, “it didn’t look like any commercial jetliner I’ve flown on any time in my life.” He questions how a commercial plane could have performed the elaborate maneuvers necessary to hit the Pentagon, as Flight 77 reportedly did, and also says the collapses of the Twin Towers looked like a “controlled demolition.” ([CNN 3/22/2006](#)) In response, some newspaper columnists ridicule him, with the New York Post accusing him of joining the “9/11 gone-bonkers brigade,” and a columnist with the London Guardian calling him “insane.” ([Johnson 3/23/2006](#); [Hyde 3/25/2006](#)) However, CNN’s daily entertainment news show Showbiz Tonight gives him more sympathetic attention, and covers the story four shows in succession. Several celebrities defend Sheen’s right to express his views. Bestselling author Erica Jong says he has “done his homework, and he’s asking questions. He’s speaking truth to power, which is a brave thing to do.” ([CNN 3/22/2006](#); [CNN 3/23/2006](#); [CNN 3/24/2006](#); [CNN 3/27/2006](#))

March 20, 2006: Head of US Investigation on WTC Building 7 Does Not Know Why It Collapsed

Dr. S. Shyam Sunder, head of the National Institute of Standards and Technology government investigation into the collapse of the World Trade Center building, is asked about the collapse of WTC Building 7. Sunder says that he hopes to release something about that by the end of 2006. He adds, NIST did have some “preliminary hypotheses... We are studying the horizontal movement east to west, internal to the structure, on the fifth to seventh floors.... But truthfully, I don’t really know. We’ve had trouble getting a handle on building No. 7.” ([Jacobson 3/20/2006](#))

March 21, 2006: FBI Assistant Director Admits Greater Knowledge of Moussaoui Case

Michael Rolince, who headed the FBI's International Terrorism Operations Section when Zacarias Moussaoui was arrested, testifies at Moussaoui's trial (see [March 6-May 4, 2006](#)). He initially states that he was only informed of the Moussaoui case before 9/11 in two brief hallway conversations (see [Late August 2001](#)) and did not read a memo sent to him by the Minneapolis field office. However, under cross-examination he admits he also discussed a plan to deport Moussaoui to France, where his belongings could be searched (see [August 30-September 10, 2001](#)). ([Barakat 3/21/2006](#); [Sniffen 3/21/2006](#))

According to Newsday, Rolince appears "red-faced and flustered" at the end of the cross-examination and makes the court burst out laughing when he says he did not approve a briefing to FBI field offices about bin Laden threats in the US (see [Before April 13, 2001](#)), even though the briefing states he approved it. He says one of his subordinates may have approved it. ([Sniffen 3/21/2006](#); [Riley 3/22/2006](#)) Rolince is called by the prosecution, which wants him to give a list of steps the FBI would have taken if Moussaoui had confessed. However, Judge Brinkema states that, "Juries cannot decide cases on speculation... Nobody knows what would have happened." ([Sniffen 3/21/2006](#); [Barakat 3/22/2006](#))

March 21, 2006: Some FBI Agents Still Lack E-mail

The FBI has been slow in making use of computers and it is reported on this day that some New York FBI agents still lack e-mail accounts. The FBI's New York office has often been the lead office in dealing with al-Qaeda. An FBI official says, "As ridiculous as this might sound, we have real money issues right now, and the government is reluctant to give all agents and analysts dot-gov accounts." An FBI spokesperson says the accounts will be given before the end of 2006. ([CBS News 3/21/2006](#))

March 21, 2006-February 16, 2007: Tumultuous Trial in Turkey for Alleged CIA-Al-Qaeda Double Agent

There is a tumultuous trial of al-Qaeda operative Luai Sakra before he is finally convicted in early 2007. Sakra, considered a high-ranking leader, is on trial for co-masterminding a series of bombings in Istanbul, Turkey in 2003 (see [November 15-20, 2003](#)). There is also considerable evidence that he was an informant for the CIA, Turkey, and Syria (see [2000](#) and [September 10, 2001](#)). Having already confessed to assisting a number of attacks, including the 9/11 plot (see [Early August 2005](#)), Sakra makes additional claims during the trial. He says through his lawyer that shortly after being arrested in Turkey in 2005, he was visited in his Turkish prison cell by a group of English speaking foreigners. He claims that he was offered his freedom if he would falsely agree to testify that the Syrian government was involved in the assassination of Lebanese politician Rafiq Al-Hariri in 2005. He claims these people were aware that he had secretly met with the head of Syrian intelligence in the past, and that he turned down their offer. ([BBC 11/10/2005](#))

At the start of the trial, Sakra appears quite different than he had when he was seen in public after being arrested seven months before, heavier and with a full beard. He claims to be a completely different person. The *Washington Post* will comment, “More than 20 journalists failed to recognize Sakra as he entered the court building,” and even his own lawyer claims to doubt Sakra’s identity. ([Vick 3/21/2006](#); [BBC 3/21/2006](#)) Sakra’s trial leaves many questions about him unanswered. The *London Times* will later say that his “often outrageous behavior, conflicting statements of identity, and the suspicion that he has undergone extensive plastic surgery, have helped to build up a wall of mystery around him.” ([Erdem 2/17/2007](#)) Sakra’s lawyer will claim that if Sakra revealed all that he knew, “a few states would collapse.” ([Vick 3/21/2006](#)) At the conclusion of the trial, Sakra and six others receive life in prison for their role in the 2003 Istanbul bombings. Forty-one people receive shorter sentences, and 26 people are acquitted. ([BBC 2/16/2007](#))

March 22, 2006: Increased Airport Security May Have Thwarted 9/11 if Moussaoui Confessed

During the trial of Zacarias Moussaoui (see also [March 6-May 4, 2006](#)), the prosecution claims that if Zacarias Moussaoui had not lied when arrested and questioned (see [August 16, 2001](#)) and had provided information about the plot (see August 16, 2001), the FAA could have altered its security procedures to deal with the suicide hijacker threat. Prosecution witness Robert Cammarato, an aviation security officer, says that security measures in effect before 9/11 were designed to cope with different types of threats, such as “the homesick Cuban,” rather than suicide hijackings. He says that if the FAA had more information about Moussaoui, its three dozen air marshals could have been moved from international to domestic flights, security checkpoints could have been tightened to detect short knives like the ones Moussaoui had, and flight crews could have been instructed to resist rather than cooperate with hijackers. Most of these steps could have been implemented within a matter of hours. However, Cammarato admits that the FAA was aware before 9/11 that terrorists considered flying a plane into the Eiffel Tower and that al-Qaeda has performed suicide operations on land and sea. ([Sniffen 3/22/2006](#))

March 23-April 20, 2006 and July 31, 2006: Evidence from Moussaoui Trial Published on Internet



Ahmed Alnami's youth hosteling card found in the Flight 93 crash site. [Source: FBI] During the trial of Zacarias Moussaoui (see [March 6-May 4, 2006](#)), the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press publishes a significant portion of the exhibits used during the trial. ([Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press 12/4/2006](#)) Previously, only a few items of the evidence linking the attacks to al-Qaeda were made public. For example, the 9/11 Commission's Terrorist Travel Monograph contained 18 documents of the alleged hijackers and their associates. ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 171-195](#)) The published exhibits include:

- Items belonging to the alleged hijackers that were recovered from the crash sites and Logan airport;
 - Some details of the hijackers' movements in the US;
 - Graphic photos of dead victims and body parts in the Pentagon and WTC ruins;
 - Substitutions for testimony from some of the main plotters such as Khalid Shaikh Mohammed;
 - The missing chapter from the Justice Department's Office of Inspector General's review of the FBI's performance before 9/11 (see [June 9, 2005](#)); and
 - FBI and CIA documents. ([Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press 12/4/2006](#))
- At the end of July, the US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division, publishes more of the exhibits used in the trial. The additionally published exhibits include, for example:
- Documents of the hijackers found at the crash sites and Logan airport, such as Satam Al Suqami's passport (see [September 12, 2001](#)), Ahmed Alnami's youth hosteling card, and old correspondence between Mohamed Atta and the German authorities;
 - Recordings of calls made by the passengers from the flights and recordings of the hijacker pilots talking to the passengers;
 - Documents about the alleged hijackers prepared by the FBI such as a True Name Usage Chart for 2001 and chronologies for eleven of the hijackers from August 16-September 11, 2001;
 - Documents from the hijackers' flight schools;
 - A small sample of the hijackers' banking and phone records.

However, some of the exhibits are not disclosed. For example, the cockpit voice recording from United 93 is sealed and only a transcript is made available. ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia 7/31/2006](#))

March 27, 2006: Moussaoui Testifies Against Self, Claims He Was to Fly Fifth Plane

Against the will of his defense attorneys, Zacarias Moussaoui takes the stand at his trial (see [March 6-May 4, 2006](#)) and claims that he was supposed to fly a fifth plane on 9/11. He says the plane would have targeted the White House and one of the muscle hijackers would have been shoe-bomber Richard Reid (see [December 22, 2001](#)). However, he claims not to have known the details of the other hijackings, only that the WTC would be hit. He does not mention any other collaborators aside from Reid, who has already been sentenced to a long prison term. When the prosecution asks him whether he lied to FBI investigators so the plan could go forward he replies, "That's correct." An Associated Press expert calls this, "a stunning revelation that would help prosecutors rather than him." ([Sniffen 3/27/2006](#)) In what the New York Times calls a "bizarre moment," the defense team, aware of the damage this admission could do, subject Moussaoui to tough questioning and the chief prosecutor objects that one of the defense attorneys is badgering his own client. ([Lewis 4/17/2006](#)) There is some dispute over whether Moussaoui was indeed to have flown a fifth plane (see [January 30, 2003](#) and [March 27, 2003](#)). Following the testimony, the defense reads statements made by al-Qaeda leaders who are in custody, but are not permitted to testify at the trial (see [May 14, 2003](#) and [March 22, 2005](#)). The statements say that Moussaoui was not part of 9/11, but a follow-up operation. ([Associated Press 3/28/2006](#); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia 7/31/2006](#)) However, these statements were obtained using torture (see [June 16, 2004](#)). The government later concedes that there is no evidence linking Richard Reid to 9/11. ([Barakat 4/20/2006](#)) Moussaoui had denied being part of 9/11 before the trial (see [April 22, 2005](#)). By the end of the trial he will do so again, calling the confession he makes on this day "a complete fabrication." ([Sniffen 5/8/2006](#))

March 30, 2006: Britain Passes Tough Anti-Terrorism Laws, but Does Not Implement Them



Conservative Party leader David Cameron. [*Source: Public domain*] Following the London bombings (see [July 7, 2005](#)), Britain passes a new Terrorism Act containing tougher laws, but they have little practical effect and many Islamic radicals carry on as before. The act introduces new offenses such as criminalizing the encouragement of terrorism and dissemination of terrorist publications, but the most

controversial measure is an extension of the period for which suspects could be detained without trial. The government pushes for an extension from 14 days to 90 days, but parliament only allows 28 days. ([Guardian 11/9/2005](#); [London Times 11/9/2005](#); [BBC 11/9/2005](#); [UK Parliament. House of Commons. 3/30/2006](#)) In August 2006, Conservative Party leader David Cameron will criticize the government for failing to “follow-through when the headlines have moved on.” He asks, “Why have so few, if any, preachers of hate been prosecuted or expelled?” and “why has so little been done to use the existing law to deal with the radicalization that is rife within our shores?” He also criticizes the government for funding conferences addressed by radical imam Yousuf Abdullah Al-Qaradawi. ([Cameron 8/15/2006](#))

April 2006: National Intelligence Estimate Says Iraq War Worsens Terrorism

The newly released National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) on Iraq says that the US invasion and occupation of Iraq has helped spawn a new generation of Islamic radicalism and that the overall terrorist threat has grown since the 9/11 attacks. The NIE is compiled from information provided by the 16 American intelligence agencies, and written by the US government's National Intelligence Council. The NIE is released internally in April 2006, but portions are made public on September 24, 2006. It is the first formal appraisal of global terrorism by United States intelligence agencies since the Iraq war began. ([Mazzetti 9/24/2006](#)) Robert Hutchings, the council's former chairman, says, "The war in Iraq has exasperated the global war on terror." ([Toronto Daily News 9/24/2006](#)) The White House has issued its own reports touting its successes against Islamist terrorism and predicting that such activities will dwindle in the coming months. ([Mazzetti 9/24/2006](#)) The NIE report says, "[T]he Iraq war has become the 'cause celebre' for jihadists...and is shaping a new generation of terrorist leaders and operatives. ...[T]he Iraq conflict has greatly increased the spread of al-Qaeda ideological virus, as shown by a rising number of terrorist attacks in the past three years from London to Kabul, and from Madrid to the Red Sea. Our study shows that the Iraq war has generated a stunning increase in the yearly rate of fatal jihadist attacks, amounting to literally hundreds of additional terrorist attacks and civilian lives lost. Even when terrorism in Iraq and Afghanistan is excluded, fatal attacks in the rest of the world have increased by more than one third." Eliza Manningham-Buller, the head of the British secret service (MI5), agrees. She will say in early 2007, "Young teenagers are being groomed to be suicide bombers. The threat is serious, is growing and will, I believe, be with us for a generation." ([Independent 3/1/2007](#)) Senator Edward Kennedy (D-MA) says the report should "put the final nail in the coffin for President Bush's phony argument about the Iraq war." ([ABC News 9/25/2006](#))

April 10, 2006: Massive Security Breach at US Base in Afghanistan



Small flash computer drives for sale in a bazaar just outside the Bagram US military base. [Source: NBC] The Los Angeles Times reveals that stolen computer drives containing important classified information can be purchased cheaply at the local bazaar just outside the US military base in Bagram, Afghanistan. Shop owners at the bazaar say a variety of Afghan menial workers at the base continually sell them equipment stolen from inside the base. The drives had been sold cheaply as used equipment and only recently did a reporter discover some of them contained classified information. The drives purchased by reporters include:

- Deployment rosters that identify about 700 US soldiers and their social security numbers.
- Maps showing the locations of Taliban and al-Qaeda in Pakistan (see [January 2005](#)).
- Presentations that name suspected militants targeted or “kill or capture.”
- A list of officials in the Afghan government profiting from the illegal drug trade (see [Early 2005](#)).
- Documents and maps suggest the Taliban are staging attacks from across the Pakistan border with Pakistani support (see [Late 2004-Early 2005](#)).
- A classified briefing about capabilities of a special radar used to find where mortar rounds have been fired, including a map of where the radar was deployed in Iraq in March 2004.
- A January 2005 presentation identifying a dozen Afghan governors and police chiefs as “problem makers” involved in kidnappings, support for the Taliban, and/or attacks on US troops.
- Discussions of US efforts to “remove” or “marginalize” problematic Afghan officials. One governor on the list was removed from his post in December 2005 after he was caught with almost 20,000 pounds of opium in his office. But President Hamid Karzai then appointed him to Afghanistan’s upper parliament. ([Watson 4/10/2006](#))
- Some psychological operations are detailed, including attempts to manage the Afghan media. For instance, one list contains the item, “Prepare radio news stories for local stations highlighting Afghan National Police support.” ([Watson 4/12/2006](#))
- “Scores of military documents marked ‘secret,’ describing intelligence-gathering methods and information.”
- The names, photographs, and telephone numbers of Afghan spies informing on the Taliban and al-Qaeda. Some spies are described as having networks of informants working for them.
- Descriptions of meetings of Taliban commanders held in Pakistan.

■A file describing the layout of a US Special Forces base in Afghanistan complete with photographs of its perimeter and procedures for defending the base if attacked. ([Watson 4/14/2006](#)) The US immediately launches an investigation into the security breach. One US official says, “We’re obviously concerned that certain sources or assets have been compromised.” ([Watson 4/14/2006](#)) Several days after the first press reports, US soldiers buy up every computer drive from the bazaar that they can find, presumably to prevent them from falling into enemy hands. But within two weeks, there are plenty of drives for sale again, some containing classified information. One shopkeeper says he had been selling pilfered US military computer drives for four years. “I may have sold thousands of [them] since I have come and opened this shop.” ([Watson 4/25/2006](#)) A month after the security breach was first reported, shopkeepers at the bazaar say they still receive goods from inside the US base, but not at the rate they once did. ([Straziuso 5/8/2006](#))

[April 10, 2006: US Propaganda Campaign to Exaggerate Role of Al-Zarqawi to US and Iraq Audiences Is Exposed](#)



Enemy ¹COG Attack Example

- Offensive Strategic Communications: Fighting the Negative Insurgency → Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi
- Jan '04 – Capture of Hassan Ghul ²
- Feb '04 – The Zarqawi Letter
 - Selective leak to Dexter Filkins ³
 - \$10 million Reward...now \$25 million
 - The Matrix ⁴
- Mar '04 – Present: Villainize Zarqawi / leverage xenophobia response through:
 - Media Operations
 - PSYOP
 - Special Ops (626)

The Washington Post reports that leaked documents show the US military is conducting a propaganda campaign to exaggerate the role of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the alleged leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq. According to the Post, “The effort has raised his profile in a way that some military intelligence officials believe may have overstated his importance and helped the Bush administration tie the [Iraq] war to the organization responsible for the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks.” According to Col. Derek Harvey, who has been a top advisor on Iraq intelligence for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, although al-Zarqawi and other foreign insurgents in Iraq have conducted some deadly bombing attacks, they remain “a very small part of the actual numbers.... Our own focus on al-Zarqawi has enlarged his caricature, if you will—made him more important than he really is, in some ways.” Since at least 2004, the US military has manipulated the Iraq media’s coverage of Zarqawi in an effort to turn Iraqis against the insurgency. But leaked documents also explicitly list the “US Home

Audience” as one of the targets of a broader propaganda campaign. Additionally, sections of leaked military briefings show that the US media was directly used to influence view of al-Zarqawi. For instance, one document notes that a “selective leak” about al-Zarqawi was made to New York Times reporter Dexter Filkins, which resulted in a 2004 front page story about a letter supposedly written by al-Zarqawi and boasting of suicide attacks in Iraq (see [February 9, 2004](#)). ([Ricks 4/10/2006](#)) The Daily Telegraph reported in 2004 that “senior diplomats in Baghdad claim that the letter was almost certainly a hoax.” The Telegraph also reported the US was buying extremely dubious intelligence that exaggerated al-Zarqawi’s role and was treating it as fact, even in policy decisions (see [October 4, 2004](#)). ([Blomfield 10/4/2004](#)) One US military briefing from 2004 states, “Villainize Zarqawi/leverage xenophobia response” and lists three methods: “Media operations,” “Special Ops (626)” (a reference to Task Force 626, an elite US military unit) and “PSYOP,” meaning psychological operations and propaganda. One internal US military briefing concluded that the “al-Zarqawi PSYOP program is the most successful information campaign to date... primarily for the Iraqi audience but also with the international audience.” It is supposedly US military policy not to aim psychological operations at Americans, but there appears to be no punishment for the violation of this policy in the wake of this media report. ([Ricks 4/10/2006](#))

[April 12, 2006: United 93 Cockpit Recording Played in Court, Transcript Released](#)

The cockpit voice recorder tape from United 93, which crashed in Shanksville, Pennsylvania (see [\(10:06 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), is played at the trial of Zacarias Moussaoui (see [March 6-May 4, 2006](#)) just before the prosecution rests its case. Translations are displayed on a screen along with information taken from the plane’s flight data recorder, such as speed, altitude, and steering yoke position. ([Sniffen 4/12/2006](#); [Naughton and Knight 4/12/2006](#)) The recording is sealed by the judge and a transcript is made available to the public. ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#)) This is a big media event and it receives lots of coverage. CNN, for example, calls it “an absolutely spellbinding, unforgettable day in court.” Many of the passages are unintelligible, but the recording seems to indicate that the hijackers murdered a flight attendant. ([CNN 4/12/2006](#); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#)) Some of the victims’ relatives previously heard the recording at a private meeting (see [April 18, 2002](#)).

[April 12, 2006: Al-Qaeda Embassy Bomber Killed in Pakistan](#)



Mushin Musa Matwalli Atwah. *[Source: FBI]* Mohsin Musa

Matawalli Atwah, an Egyptian al-Qaeda operative, is killed in a remote village in the North Waziristan region of Pakistan. There was a \$5 million bounty for Atwah, who was wanted for involvement in the 1998 African embassy bombings (see [August 7, 1998](#)). Witnesses describe a missile strike followed by a Pakistani helicopter gunship attack. The attack is said to have killed nine people, including two young children. ([Associated Press 4/13/2006](#); [Schuster 10/24/2006](#))

April 17, 2006: Afghan's Anti-Drug Official Said to Be Drug Kingpin



Mohammad Daud. *[Source: Dieter Nagl / AFP / Getty*

Images] Interior Minister for Counternarcotics Gen. Mohammad Daud is the top counternarcotics official in the Afghan government, but it is reported on this day that there are allegations Daud is simultaneously a drug kingpin. One anonymous senior drug official from an unnamed country says, "He frustrates counternarcotics law enforcement when it suits him. He moves competent officials from their jobs, locks cases up and generally ensures that nobody he is associated with will get arrested for drug crimes." Daud denies the allegations. Additionally, there are allegations that some provincial governors, cabinet ministers, and even the president's own brother are involved in the drug trade. Although there are several dozen prominent major drug traffickers in the country, only two have been arrested and held since 9/11. ([Walsh 4/17/2006](#)) Daud's name also appears on a classified document from a US military base listing known Afghan drug kingpins (see [Early 2005](#)).

April 17, 2006: US Federal Agencies Not Improving the Sharing of Counterterrorism Information

The Government Accountability Office (GAO), Congress's non-partisan research arm, issues a report criticizing the government's sharing of counterterrorism information. Despite more than four years of legislation and executive orders, there has been little progress since 9/11 in sharing information among federal agencies and thousands of nonfederal partners. Deadlines set by both President Bush and Congress have repeatedly not been met. The responsibility for the task has also repeatedly shifted since 9/11—from the White House to the Office of Management and Budget, to the Department of Homeland Security, and to the Director of National Intelligence. In January 2006, the program manager in charge of improving information sharing between agencies resigned after complaining of inadequate budget and staffing. The GAO report notes that there is a lack of "government-wide policies and processes to help agencies integrate the myriad of ongoing efforts to improve the sharing of terrorism-related information..." For instance, there are at least 56 different secrecy classifications in use, with different agencies using different terms or sometimes the same terms with widely different meanings. State and local first responders claim they are often left in the dark or overwhelmed with identical information from multiple federal sources. ([DeYoung 4/19/2006](#))

April 28, 2006: US Still Doesn't List Taliban as Terrorist Group

The State Department's latest annual Country Reports on Terrorism does not list the Taliban as a terrorist group. In fact, according to the Council on Foreign Relations, the Taliban have never been designated as a terrorist group by the US, Britain, European Union, or any other major Western powers. Governments the US accuses of being sponsors of terrorism, such as Iran, are on the list, but the Taliban has never been listed despite its well-known connection to al-Qaeda. One Afghan analyst says that there is a political motive behind this double standard. The Afghan government has reached out to former members of the Taliban to broaden its support and, "You can't call them 'terrorists' and at the same time reconcile with them." ([Regan 5/2/2006](#))

Late April-Early May, 2006: New Film Suggests Daniel Pearl Was Murdered as Result of ISI Complicity with Al-Qaeda



Christiane Amanpour narrated *The Journalist and the Jihadi*.

[Source: CNN/HBO produces a documentary film entitled *The Journalist and the Jihadi* about *Wall Street Journal* reporter Daniel Pearl and one of the extremists involved in his kidnap and murder, Saeed Sheikh. The film, directed and produced by Ahmed Jamal and Ramesh Sharma, and narrated by CNN's Christiane Amanpour, portrays the two men as "a passionate journalist and a shrewd terrorist" representing the best and worst of their respective cultures. The film climaxes with Pearl's kidnap and murder, while he was investigating the 9/11 money trail in Pakistan. It suggests that, had it not been for complicity between al-Qaeda and certain factions inside Pakistan's ISI, Pearl may have survived. ([O'Hehir 4/28/2006](#); [Stanley 10/10/2006](#))

Between May and Late 2006: CIA Bans Use of Waterboarding



A simulation of waterboarding arranged by ABC News. [Source: ABC News] According to an ABC News report in September 2007, CIA Director Michael Hayden bans the use of waterboarding some time in 2006, with the approval of the White House. It is not known when exactly the technique is banned that year, but presumably it takes place after Hayden becomes CIA director (see

[May 5, 2006](#)) and in response to the Supreme Court decision mandating that terror suspects must be given treatment consistent with the Geneva Conventions (see [July 12, 2006](#)). Waterboarding is a harsh interrogation technique that simulates drowning and is usually referred to as torture. Allegedly, the CIA last used waterboarding in 2003 on Khalid Shaikh Mohammed and “It is believed that waterboarding was used on fewer than five ‘high-value’ terrorist subjects” (see [May 2002-2003](#)). John Sifton of Human Rights Watch later says the ban “a good thing, but the fact remains that the entire [CIA interrogation] program is illegal.” ([Ross, Esposito, and Raddatz 9/14/2007](#)) Over a year before Hayden’s decision, Justice Department official Daniel Levin had himself subjected to simulated waterboarding to help him determine if waterboarding was indeed torture (see [Late 2004-Early 2005](#)). Levin intended to issue a memo condemning the practice as beyond the bounds of the law, but was forced out of the Justice Department before he could make that ruling.

May 3, 2006: Moussaoui Sentenced to Life in Prison for Role in 9/11 Attacks; Escapes Death Penalty by One Vote



Zacarias Moussaoui on his way to the Supermax prison. [Source: *WNBC / Jonathan Deinst*] Zacarias Moussaoui is sentenced to life in prison for his role in the 9/11 attacks. A jury sentences him to six consecutive life terms without the possibility of parole. A single juror votes against the death penalty for one of the three counts for which Moussaoui is eligible to receive the death sentence (see [March 6-May 4, 2006](#)). For the other two counts, the vote is 10-2. According to the foreman of the jury, the lone dissenter did not identify his or herself to the other jurors during deliberations and consequently they could not discuss the person’s reasons for opposing the death penalty. “But there was no yelling. It was as if a heavy cloud of doom had fallen over the deliberation room, and many of us realized that all our beliefs and our conclusions were being vetoed by one person,” the foreman explains to the Washington Post. “We tried to discuss the pros and cons. But I would have to say that most of the arguments we heard around the deliberation table were [in favor of the death penalty]... Our sense was this was a done deal for that person and whoever that person is, they were

consistent from the first day and their point of view didn't change.” ([Dwyer 5/12/2006](#)) As a result of the vote, Moussaoui will not be executed and instead will serve six life sentences at the Supermax prison in Florence, Colorado. A day after the sentencing, on May 5, Moussaoui files a motion to withdraw his guilty plea. He says that his March 27 testimony that he was supposed to have hijacked a fifth plane on September 11 and fly it into the White House “was a complete fabrication.” At sentencing the judge told him, “You do not have a right to appeal your convictions, as was explained to you when you plead guilty. You waived that right.” ([Sniffen 5/8/2006](#))

May 5, 2006: CIA Director Goss Resigns Amid Scandal; Replaced by Michael Hayden

CIA Director Porter Goss abruptly resigns “amid allegations that he and a top aide may have attended Watergate poker parties where bribes and prostitutes were provided to a corrupt congressman.” A senior law enforcement official says, “It’s all about the Duke Cunningham scandal.” Congressman Cunningham (R-CA) was sentenced to eight years in prison after pleading guilty in late 2005 to taking millions of dollars in bribes. Goss is replaced by Gen. Michael Hayden, the director of the NSA during 9/11. ([Sisk and Meek 5/6/2006](#)) The Bush administration gives no explanation for the resignation and even Goss publicly describes his own resignation as “just one of those mysteries.” ([CNN 5/6/2006](#))

May 16, 2006: Pentagon Releases Two Videos of Pentagon Crash, But Quality is Poor



A frame from the poor-quality security video footage released by the US Department of Defense, showing the attack on the Pentagon. [*Source: US Department of Defense*] For the first time, the US Department of Defense officially releases video footage of the Pentagon attack. Security cameras outside the building recorded the footage the morning of 9/11. ([Burns 5/17/2006](#); [Markon 5/17/2006](#)) The Pentagon releases the two videos in response to a Freedom of Information Act request and related lawsuit by the public interest group Judicial Watch. It previously refused to do so because, it said, the tapes were “part of an ongoing investigation involving Zacarias Moussaoui.” ([Judicial Watch 5/16/2006](#)) Both tapes

were played as evidence during Moussaoui's recent death penalty trial. ([Markon 5/17/2006](#)) However, the footage is of poor quality and several still images from one of the tapes have in fact already been released unofficially (see [March 7, 2002](#)). ([Burns 5/17/2006](#)) Furthermore, Judicial Watch had sought all recordings of the Pentagon attack, including those taken by cameras at the nearby Sheraton Hotel and Citgo gas station, and Virginia Department of Transportation traffic cameras (see [\(After 9:37 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([Judicial Watch 5/16/2006](#)) According to CNN's Jamie McIntyre, "there are at least 80 other tapes that the government is holding onto. We're told that they don't really show much, but sources have told us that at least one of the tapes from a security camera at a nearby hotel may have captured the plane in the air." ([CNN 5/20/2006](#)) So far, none of these tapes have been made public, though the FBI will release the footage from the Citgo gas station and video taken from the Doubletree Hotel in Arlington later this year (see [September 13, 2006-Early December 2006](#)). Judicial Watch President Tom Fitton says he hopes the newly released Pentagon security camera footage "will put to rest the conspiracy theories involving American Airlines Flight 77." For example, some suggest a missile hit the Pentagon on 9/11. ([BBC 5/16/2006](#)) However, it appears to have the opposite effect, causing Internet traffic to 9/11 conspiracy sites to soar. James Fetzer, co-chair of the group Scholars for 9/11 Truth, says of the videos, "There is no new information here whatsoever... You can't tell what in the world is hitting the Pentagon." ([Alberts 5/18/2006](#))

May 17, 2006: Poll: 42 Percent of Americans Think There Has Been a Cover-up Over 9/11

A poll released by Zogby International shows widespread skepticism towards the official 9/11 story. The nationwide telephone survey of 1,200 adults finds that 42 percent of respondents agreed that "the US government and its 9/11 Commission concealed or refused to investigate critical evidence that contradicts their official explanation of the September 11th attacks," and that "there has been a cover-up." Ten percent of respondents said they were unsure, while less than half said the government and 9/11 Commission were not covering up. Forty-five percent of respondents felt the 9/11 attacks should be reinvestigated. Forty-four percent believed that President Bush exploited the attacks to justify the 2003 invasion of Iraq. The survey also found that 43 percent of respondents were unaware of the collapse of WTC 7 on 9/11. ([Zogby International 5/24/2006](#); [Feuer 6/5/2006](#); [Silverman 9/1/2006](#)) When Lee Hamilton, the former co-chair of the 9/11 Commission, is later questioned about this poll, he will say the figure of 42 percent of Americans believing there has been a cover up is "dispiriting, it's an unusually high number" (see [August 21, 2006](#)). ([Hamilton 8/21/2006](#)) A previous Zogby poll found 49 percent of New York City residents agreed that some leaders "knew in advance" of the 9/11 attacks and "consciously failed to act" (see [August 30, 2004](#)).

May 18, 2006: Hayden Says Warrantless Wiretapping Program Would Have Prevented 9/11

Former NSA director Michael Hayden says that a program in which the NSA listens in on calls between the US and other countries without obtaining warrants would have prevented 9/11, had it been in place then. Hayden tells a Senate hearing discussing his confirmation as CIA director, "Had this been in place prior to the attacks, the two hijackers who were in San Diego, Khalid Almihdhar and Nawaf Alhazmi, almost certainly would have been identified as who they were, what they were, and most importantly, where they were." Hayden also says, "I can demonstrate in closed session how the physics and the math would work." ([US Congress 5/18/2006](#)) However, the NSA actually intercepted the calls between Alhazmi and Almihdhar in the US and an al-Qaeda communications hub in Yemen (see [Early 2000-Summer 2001](#)), which it knew had been in contact with Osama bin Laden (see [November 1996-Late August 1998](#)) and was also involved in the East African embassy bombings (see [August 5-25, 1998](#)) and the attack on the USS *Cole* (see [Mid-August 1998-October 2000](#)). Before 9/11, the NSA was entitled to pass on information about the calls to the FBI, but did not do so, even though the FBI had specifically asked for information about calls between the communications hub in Yemen and the US (see [Late 1998](#) and [\(Spring 2000\)](#)). Various explanations for this failure are offered after 9/11 (see [Summer 2002-Summer 2004](#) and [2004 and After](#)).

May 23, 2006: Bin Laden Possibly Releases New Tape, Says Moussaoui and Gitmo Prisoners Have Nothing to Do with 9/11

A new 5-minute audiotape is released by a person said to be Osama bin Laden. The voice on the tape says that Zacarias Moussaoui and the vast majority of prisoners held in Guantanamo Bay had nothing to do with 9/11. The speaker says that Moussaoui "has no connection whatsoever with the events of September 11th" and "his confession that he was assigned to participate in those raids is a false confession which no intelligent person doubts is a result of the pressure put upon him for the past four and a half years." The voice also says that, as Moussaoui has not named a support team, he cannot have been slated to pilot a hijacked airliner, and that, as he was learning to fly, he cannot have been intended to be the 20th hijacker. Further, if Moussaoui had known the 9/11 group, he would have called lead hijacker Mohamed Atta and told him to flee the country (note: jail house calls can be recorded, so this may not have been wise (see [August 17, 2001](#))). There are various theories about Moussaoui's closeness to the 9/11 plot, but he was supported by some of the people who supported the hijackers (see [January 30, 2003](#)). The speaker also says that the detainees in Guantanamo Bay "have no connection whatsoever to the events of September 11th, and even stranger is that many of them have no connection with al-Qaeda in the first place, and even more amazing is that some of them oppose al-Qaeda's methodology of calling for war with America." The apparent reason so many detainees are being held: "(I)t is necessary to create justifications for the massive spending of hundreds of billions on the Defense Department and other agencies in their war against the Mujaheddin." ([MSNBC 5/23/2006](#)) One Guantanamo detainee, Mohamed al-Khatani, was allegedly supposed to meet lead hijacker Mohamed Atta in the US, but was refused entry to the country, indicating that he was scheduled to be involved in 9/11 (see [August 4, 2001](#) and [July 2002](#)).

May 28, 2006: Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Oil Pipeline Opens

The first oil pumped from Baku, by the Caspian Sea in Azerbaijan, arrives in Ceyhan, on Turkey's Mediterranean coast, and is loaded onto a ship. The 1,770 km pipeline, which passes through the Georgian capital of Tbilisi, bypasses Russia and Iran for geopolitical reasons. The main shareholder is British Petroleum, and other significant shareholders include the State Oil Company of Azerbaijan (SOCAR), Statoil of Norway, and the US company Unocal, which has an 8.9% interest and became interested in the project no later than 1998. Unocal begins losing interest in a pipeline across Afghanistan around the same time (see [December 5, 1998](#)). Substantial amounts to finance the \$3-4 billion Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline were arranged by the World Bank's International Finance Corporation and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. The consortium members put up the remaining 30%. ([US Congress 2/12/1998](#); [Alexander's Gas and Oil Connections 7/12/2002](#); [Paton 12/1/2003](#); [Tran 5/26/2005](#); [Socor 5/31/2005](#); [Turkish Weekly 5/29/2006](#)) Journalist Pepe Escobar comments: "In terms of no-holds-barred power politics and oil geopolitics, BTC is the real deal—a key component in the US's overall strategy of wrestling the Caucasus and Central Asia away from Russia—and bypassing Iranian oil and gas routes... BTC makes little sense in economic terms. Oil experts know that the most cost-effective routes from the Caspian would be south through Iran or north through Russia. But BTC is a designer masterpiece of power politics—from the point of view of Washington and its corporate allies. US Vice President Dick Cheney, already in his previous incarnation as Halliburton chief, has always been a huge cheerleader for the 'strategically significant' BTC." Escobar also mentions that the amount of Caspian oil was overestimated (see [November 1, 2002](#)), "the Caspian may hold only 32 billion barrels of oil—not much more than the reserves of Qatar, a small Gulf producer." ([Escobar 5/26/2005](#)) However, the Caspian area is still believed to hold considerable amounts of natural gas. The construction of this pipeline does not halt plans for the construction of a natural gas pipeline from Turkmenistan across Afghanistan to the Indian Ocean (see [January 18, 2005](#)).

May 29, 2006: Kabul Riots Suggest Discontent over Development and Governance



Protesters in Kabul

run from Afghan police gunshots. [Source: *Associated Press* / *Rodrigo Abd*] A US Army truck in a convoy careens out of control in Kabul, Afghanistan, killing at least three locals. Witnesses see the incident as symbolic of lack respect for the Afghan populace and rumors quickly swirl that it was intentional. Angry crowds form and begin pelting the rest of the convoy with rocks. US and/or Afghan soldiers open fire on the crowd and kill about six Afghans. This further enrages the populace, leading to rioting and looting all over Kabul for hours. Looters destroy businesses, Western non-profit offices, and even lay siege to the Interior Ministry for a time. NATO peacekeeping troops stay in their compounds and Afghan security forces are ineffectual. Officially, 17 are killed in the riots, but informed observers believe the death count is close to 100. Afghan member of parliament Dr. Ramazan Bashar Dost says that the people are angry at perceived price gouging by Western contractors and non-profits, and what is seen as poor results for all the billions of dollars spent. He says, “The problem is that the [non-profits] work within the system of corruption that plagues Afghanistan. They pay the bribes to the officials and even to Western contractors. So people see them as part of the same system as the corrupt government.” ([Prothero 6/14/2006](#); [Gall 8/23/2006](#)) Afghan President Hamid Karzai responds by appointing a new police chief and other top police officers known for their ties to organized crime. ([Gall 8/23/2006](#))

Summer 2006: President Karzai Losing Support in Afghanistan

The Washington Post and New York Times both publish articles suggesting that Afghan President Hamid Karzai is losing support among Afghans and some of his foreign backers. The Washington Post comments, “public confidence in his leadership has soured with reports of highway police robbing travelers, government jobs sold to the highest bidder, drug traffic booming, and aid money vanishing.” An anonymous Western diplomat says, “There is an awful feeling that everything is lurching downward. Nearly five years on, there is no rule of law, no accountability. The Afghans know it is all a charade, and they see us as not only complicit but actively involved.” ([Constable 6/26/2006](#)) The New York Times notes there “is widespread frustration with corruption,

the economy and a lack of justice and security.” Karzai is widely viewed as having failed to deal with many pressing problems. “For the first time since Mr. Karzai took office four and half years ago, Afghans and diplomats are speculating about who might replace him. Most agree that the answer for now is no one, leaving the fate of the American-led enterprise tied to his own success or failure.” ([Gall 8/23/2006](#))

June 3, 2006: London Police Raid Seeks Chemical Device; None Found and Charges Dropped



Abdul Koyar and Abdul Kahar. [*Source: Reuters*] Acting on intelligence indicating the construction of a chemical device, police carry out an armed raid which leads to a shooting and two arrests in Forest Gate, east London. The shot suspect, Abdul Kahar, is taken to hospital while his brother, Abdul Koyar, is held at a local police station. Sources reveal that intelligence indicated the presence of a “viable” chemical weapon in the house that was capable of producing hundreds of casualties. Deputy Assistance Commissioner Peter Clarke, head of the Metropolitan Police anti-terror unit, describes the intelligence as “specific.” An air exclusion zone is established at an altitude of 2,500 feet above the site and police in bio-chemical suits and gas masks conduct the search. This search of the home fails to turn up any threat, as do searches of where the men work. ([BBC 6/3/2006](#)) The raid, which cost more than \$4 million, fails to find the suspected chemical bomb. Scotland Yard justifies the raid as necessary to determine the validity of the intelligence. The raid causes heavy tension between law enforcement and the Bangladeshi Muslim community of Forest Gate. Overtime pay for the more than 200 officers used in the raid amounts to \$1.7 million and \$.7 million is spent on “non-pay costs” such as catering and the erection of road barriers. The men are subsequently released without charge. ([Steele 10/3/2006](#))

June 6, 2006: FBI Spokesman Says ‘No Hard Evidence’ Connects Bin Laden to 9/11

When asked why Osama bin Laden’s wanted poster only mentions his alleged involvement in the East African embassy bombings, but not 9/11, Rex Tomb of the FBI’s public affairs unit says, “The reason why 9/11 is not mentioned on Osama bin Laden’s Most Wanted page is because the FBI has no hard evidence connecting bin Laden to 9/11.” ([Milli Gazette 6/11/2006](#)) The *Washington Post* will later pick up this story and say

that bin Laden's alleged involvement in the 9/11 operation is not mentioned on the poster because he has not been indicted for it (see [August 28, 2006](#)).

June 8, 2006: Al-Zarqawi Reported Killed in Iraq; His Importance and Extent of Al-Qaeda Ties Remain in Dispute



The dead Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. [Source: US army] Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the supposed leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq, is apparently killed in a US airstrike north of Baghdad. There are contradictory details of what exactly happened in the airstrike, and three days later the Washington Post will report that “circumstances surrounding the killing [remain] cloudy.” ([Finer and Shammari 6/10/2006](#)) His killing is hailed by US and Iraqi officials as the most significant public triumph for US-allied forces since the 2003 capture of Saddam Hussein. For instance, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld calls him “the leading terrorist in Iraq and one of three senior al-Qaeda leaders worldwide.” The Washington Post calls al-Zarqawi the “mastermind behind hundreds of bombings, kidnappings and beheadings in Iraq.” ([Knickmeyer and Finer 6/8/2006](#); [DeYoung and Pincus 6/10/2006](#)) These pronouncements and media reports ignore a revelation made two months earlier by the Washington Post that the US military has been engaged in a propaganda campaign to exaggerate al-Zarqawi's importance. The newspaper had reported that Zarqawi wasn't behind nearly as many attacks as commonly reported (see [October 4, 2004](#) and [April 10, 2006](#)). Even a Washington Post article about the propaganda surrounding al-Zarqawi published two days after his death will fail to mention any of the details provided in the Post's original reporting on the campaign. ([DeYoung and Pincus 6/10/2006](#)) Later in the month, an audiotape surfaces in which bin Laden supposedly praises al-Zarqawi as a martyr (see [June 30, 2006](#)), calling him a “brave knight” and a “lion of jihad.” US officials say the tape is genuine, however it should be noted that a letter from 2004 said to tie al-Zarqawi to al-Qaeda leadership is believed by many experts to be a US-government promoted hoax (see [April 10, 2006](#)). ([DeYoung 6/30/2006](#)) Al-Zarqawi did pledge loyalty to bin Laden in 2004, but they don't appear to have been closely linked before then and there even are doubts about how close their relationship was after that time (see [October 17, 2004](#)).

June 23, 2006: “Miami Seven” Arrested in Connection with Sears Tower Plot, but Capability of Plotters Is Doubted



The Miami Seven. Group leader Narseal Batiste is on the bottom right. [Source: BBC] Police arrest seven people during a raid on a warehouse in the Miami area. The men are alleged to be a “home-grown” terrorist cell plotting to blow up the Sears Tower in Chicago and the FBI building in Miami, as well as possible other unspecified targets. They had allegedly conducted video surveillance of their targets. ([CNN 6/23/2006](#)) The men are identified in the federal indictment as Narseal Batiste, Patrick Abraham, Stanley Grant Phanor, Naudimar Herrera, Burson Augustin, Lyglenson Lemorin, and Rotschild Augustine. ([FindLaw 6/22/2006](#)) Two are Haitians, five are US citizens, and two are US immigrants. ([Democracy Now! 6/26/2006](#)) Vice President Dick Cheney describes them as a “a very real threat.” ([Thompson and Baxter 6/25/2006](#)) Bruce Hoffman, a counterterrorism expert who heads the Washington office of the Rand Corp., says that “amateur terrorists can kill as effectively as the professional kind.” ([Whoriskey and Eggen 6/24/2006](#)) However, officials concede that the group never had any contact with any other terrorist groups, including al-Qaeda. ([BBC 6/23/2006](#)) Officials also admit that the men had not acquired any explosives or weapons. Chicago Police Superintendent Philip Cline says “there was never any danger to the Sears Tower or Chicago.” Deputy FBI Director John Pistole says that the plot had not progressed beyond early planning stages and “was aspirational rather than operational.” Hoffman says that it is “not clear is whether they had any real capabilities to pull [the plot] off.” ([Whoriskey and Eggen 6/24/2006](#)) An FBI informant posing as an al-Qaeda operative had infiltrated the group for nearly six months and many conversations were recorded. ([Pincus 9/2/2006](#)) Batiste, the leader of the group, allegedly stated that he and his “soldiers” wanted to receive terrorist training in order to wage a “full ground war” against the US and to “kill all the devils we can.” ([BBC 6/23/2006](#)) He requested boots, uniforms, machine guns, radios, vehicles, and \$50,000 in cash from the informant. However, the men were only able to acquire military boots and a video camera. The indictment indicates that the men lacked any real resources; these organizational problems caused the plot to peter out by May. ([Whoriskey and Eggen 6/24/2006](#)) Critics accuse the FBI of running a border-line entrapment operation in which

a plot that was virtually a pipe-dream was kept alive by the involvement of the informant. Max Rameau of Miami CopWatch points out that the military gear and cameras had been supplied to the men by the government, via the informant. ([Democracy Now! 6/26/2006](#)) Court records would later show that not only did the government provide materiel to the group, but the informant also suggested the Miami FBI office as the first target. The records show that the informant, known as CW2, played a key role in the advancement of the plot, such as administering the “al-Qaeda oaths” taken by the men. At a detention hearing, judge Ted E. Bandstra says that the allegations are “disturbing,” but adds that “the plans appear to be beyond the present ability of these defendants.” ([Pincus 9/2/2006](#))

June 29-July 2006: Politicians Want Lecturer Fired for Controversial 9/11 Views



Kevin Barrett. [*Source: Public domain*] State lawmakers call for the dismissal of a University of Wisconsin-Madison instructor after he voices his opinion that the US government was behind the 9/11 attacks. Part-time lecturer Kevin Barrett appeared on a local radio show and claimed the alleged hijackers were “a bunch of losers who couldn’t even fly planes,” and that evidence indicated the WTC was destroyed by controlled demolition. Subsequently, State Representative Stephen Nass (R-Whitewater) issues a statement saying Barrett “needs to be fired” for using his position at the university to advance the idea “that September 11 was a creation of the government.” ([Twohey 6/29/2006](#); [Corcoran 6/30/2006](#)) Republican gubernatorial candidate Mark Green also demands that Barrett be fired, and Governor Jim Doyle (a Democrat) questions whether Barrett is competent to teach. ([Foley 7/6/2006](#); [Foley 7/10/2006](#)) Yet Barrett says that, for the Introduction to Islam course he is scheduled to teach, 14 of the 16 weeks will have nothing to do with politics. Only one week will cover different viewpoints on 9/11, including the theory that it was an “American operation.” Following a 10-day review, UW-Madison announces it will keep Barrett on and let him teach the controversial theory about 9/11. ([WKOW 7/10/2006](#); [Twohey 7/10/2006](#)) Sixty-one of the state legislature’s 133 members sign a letter to the university, urging it to fire Barrett. Stephen Nass states: “the leadership of the UW System operates at its own peril if it continues to ignore views of the taxpayers.” ([Associated Press 7/20/2006](#); [Huffstutter 7/25/2006](#)) Barrett tells the Associated Press he is pleased about the attention the controversy has brought to his cause. He says, “If these idiots had just kept their mouths shut, nobody would have ever heard of me. I’ve been trying to get publicity for years.” ([Foley 7/6/2006](#))

June 30, 2006: Bin Laden Possibly Releases New Audio Message Lionising Zarqawi



Al-Qaeda deputy leader Ayman al-Zawahiri also mentioned the death of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi in a video. *[Source: As Sahab]* A man said to be Osama bin Laden releases an audio message following the death of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who was said to be head of al-Qaeda's franchise in Iraq (see [June 8, 2006](#)). The voice says that al-Zarqawi, who died following a US air strike, is "one of our greatest knights and one of our best emirs... We were very happy to find in him a symbol and role model for our future generations." The voice, which the CIA says is bin Laden's, also asks that al-Zarqawi's body be returned to Jordan, where he was born. The speaker also says: "We will continue, God willing, to fight you and your allies everywhere, in Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia and Sudan, until we drain your money and kill your men and send you home defeated, God willing, as we defeated you before, thanks to God, in Somalia." The message lasts almost 20 minutes and is posted on a website associated with al-Qaeda. ([CNN 6/30/2006](#)) Al-Zarqawi pledged loyalty to bin Laden in 2004 (see [October 17, 2004](#)).

June 30, 2006: Supreme Court Rules Existing Guantanamo Military Commissions Are Illegal; Detainees There Have Legal Rights

In a 5-3 ruling, the Supreme Court strikes down the Bush administration's plans to try Guantanamo detainees before military commissions. Ruling in favor of detainee Salim Ahmed Hamdan, the Court rules that the commissions are unauthorized by federal statutes and violate international law. Writing for the majority, Justice John Paul Stevens says, "The executive is bound to comply with the rule of law that prevails in this jurisdiction." The opinion throws out each of the administration's arguments in favor of the commissions, including its assertion that Congress had stripped the Supreme Court of the jurisdiction to decide the case. One of the major flaws in the commissions, the Court rules, is that President Bush unilaterally established the commissions without the authorization of Congress. Civil libertarian and human rights organizations consider the ruling a shattering defeat for the administration, particularly in its assertions of expansive, unfettered presidential authority. Bush says in light of the decision, he will work with

Congress to “find a way forward” to implement the commissions. “The ruling destroys one of the key pillars of the Guantanamo system,” says Gerald Staberock, a director of the International Commission of Jurists. “Guantanamo was built on the idea that prisoners there have limited rights. There is no longer that legal black hole.” The ruling also says that prisoners held as “enemy combatants” must be afforded rights under the Geneva Conventions, specifically those requiring humane treatment for detainees and the right to free and open trials in the US legal system. While some form of military trials may be permissible, the ruling states that defendants must be given basic rights such as the ability to attend the trial and the right to see and challenge evidence submitted by the prosecution. Stevens writes that the historical origin of military commissions was in their use as a “tribunal of necessity” under wartime conditions. “Exigency lent the commission its legitimacy, but did not further justify the wholesale jettisoning of procedural protections.” Stevens is joined by Justices David Souter, Stephen Breyer, and Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Justice Anthony Kennedy issues a concurring opinion. Dissenting are Justices Samuel Alito, Antonin Scalia, and Clarence Thomas. Thomas, in a dissent signed by Scalia and Alito, calls the decision “untenable” and “dangerous.” Chief Justice John Roberts recused himself from the case because of his participation in a federal appeals court that ruled in favor of the administration (see [November 8, 2004](#)). Hamdan is a Guantanamo detainee from Yemen, captured in Afghanistan in November 2001 and taken to Guantanamo in June 2002. He is accused of being a member of al-Qaeda, in his function as driver and bodyguard for Osama bin Laden. He was not charged with a crime—conspiracy—until mid-2004. ([Greenhouse 6/30/2006](#))

July-October 2006: NATO Takes Control of US-Led Military Operations in Afghanistan



Map showing concentrations of US-allied troops after the NATO redeployment. [Source: BBC] (click image to enlarge) Beginning in July 2006, NATO troops begin taking control of the leadership of military operations against the Taliban in southern Afghanistan. By October 2006, NATO assumes responsibility for security across all of Afghanistan, taking command from a US-led coalition force. Previously, NATO only controlled security around the capital of Kabul (see [August 2003](#)). ([BBC 5/15/2007](#)) There are about 37,000 NATO troops from 37 countries. Most of the fighting is done by troops from the US (17,000), Britain

(7,000), Canada (2,500) and Netherlands (2,000). Troops deployed to safer areas include Germany (3,000), Italy (2,000), Turkey, Poland, and France (1,000 each). In addition, the US-led coalition under the banner of "Operation Enduring Freedom" continues a counterterrorism mission involving an additional 8,000 soldiers, mainly special forces. ([BBC 6/23/2007](#); [BBC 7/10/2007](#))

July 6-24, 2006: Survey Finds One Third of Americans Suspect Government Complicity in 9/11

A poll by Ohio University and Scripps Howard News Service finds that a significant minority of Americans believe there was US government complicity in the 9/11 attacks. Thirty-six percent of the 1,010 respondents say they believe that US government officials "either assisted in the 9/11 attacks or took no action to stop the attacks because they wanted the United States to go to war in the Middle East." Sixteen percent believe that secretly planted explosives brought down the Twin Towers, and 12 percent believe a military cruise missile, rather than a hijacked aircraft, hit the Pentagon. ([Scripps Howard News Service 8/4/2006](#); [Curiel 9/3/2006](#)) An earlier poll had found that half of New York City residents believed government officials knew in advance of the attacks and consciously failed to act (see [August 30, 2004](#)).

July 11, 2006: US Counterterrorism Spending Is Based on Wildly Inaccurate Target List

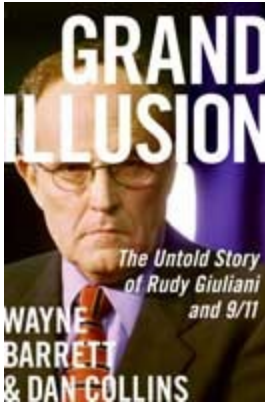
The Department of Homeland Security's inspector general releases a report criticizing terrorist targets listed in the federal antiterrorism database. This National Asset Database is used to determine how hundreds of millions of dollars in antiterrorism grants will be divvied up each year. The report says, "The presence of large numbers of out-of-place assets taints the credibility of the data." For instance, Indiana, with nearly 9,000 potential terrorist targets, has 50 percent more listed targets than New York and more than twice as many as California, making it the most target-rich state in the US. Obscure targets on the list include Old MacDonald's Petting Zoo, the Amish Country Popcorn factory, the Mule Day Parade, "Ice Cream Parlor," "Tackle Shop," "Donut Shop," and an unspecified "Beach at End of a Street." The list also apparently does not include many major business and finance operations or critical national telecommunications hubs. As a result, in May 2006 funding to New York City and Washington, DC, was cut by 40 percent while spending significantly increased to cities such as Louisville, Kentucky, and Omaha, Nebraska. The inspector general recommends that the Homeland Security department review the list and cut many "extremely insignificant" targets while providing better guidelines to prevent such future inclusions. ([Lipton 7/11/2006](#))

July 12, 2006: Bush Administration Agrees to Follow Geneva Conventions with All Al-Qaeda Suspects in US Custody



Daniel Dell'Orto. [Source: US Department of Defense] Shortly after the Supreme Court rules that the Geneva Conventions apply to detainees suspected of terrorist affiliations (see [June 30, 2006](#)), the Bush administration publicly agrees to apply the Conventions to all terrorism suspects in US custody, and the Pentagon announces that it is now requiring all military officials to adhere to the Conventions in dealing with al-Qaeda detainees. The administration says that from now on, all prisoners in US custody will be treated humanely in accordance with the Conventions, a stipulation that would preclude torture and "harsh interrogation methods." Until the ruling, the administration has held that prisoners suspected of terrorist affiliations did not have the right to be granted Geneva protections (see [February 7, 2002](#)). Lawyer David Remes, who represents 17 Guantanamo detainees, says, "At a symbolic level, it is a huge moral triumph that the administration has acknowledged that it must, under the Supreme Court ruling, adhere to the Geneva Conventions. The legal architecture of the war on terror was built on a foundation of unlimited and unaccountable presidential power, including the power to decide unilaterally whether, when and to whom to apply the Geneva Conventions." But in the wake of the ruling the administration is pressuring Congress to introduce legislation that would strip detainees of some of the rights afforded them under the Conventions, including the right to free and open trials, even in a military setting. "The court-martial procedures are wholly inappropriate for the current circumstances and would be infeasible for the trial of these alien enemy combatants," says Steven Bradbury, the acting chief of the Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel. Bradbury and Daniel Dell'Orto, the Defense Department's principal deputy attorney general, have repeatedly urged lawmakers to limit the rights of detainees captured in what the administration terms its war on terrorism. Dell'Orto says Congress should not require that enemy combatants be provided lawyers to challenge their imprisonment. Congressional Democrats have a different view. Senate Judiciary Chairman Patrick Leahy (D-VT) says, "I find it hard to fathom that this administration is so incompetent that it needs kangaroo-court procedures to convince a tribunal of United States military officers that the 'worst of the worst' imprisoned at Guantanamo Bay should be held accountable" for crimes. "We need to know why we're being asked to deviate from rules for courts-martial." ([Babington and Abramowitz 7/12/2006](#))

August 2006: Book Challenges Image of Giuliani as 9/11 Hero



Grand Illusion, by Wayne Barrett and Dan Collins. [Source: HarperCollins] A book is released that questions the conventional heroic image of then New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani on 9/11. *Grand Illusion: The Untold Story of Rudy Giuliani and 9/11* is by investigative reporters Wayne Barrett and Dan Collins. Barrett is a senior writer at the Village Voice, and Collins is a senior producer at CBSNews.com. ([Roane 8/22/2006](#)) For their book, they had exclusive access to never before seen 9/11 Commission interviews, and managed to get frank statements from some central figures, though Giuliani himself refused to be interviewed. ([Barrett and Collins 2006, pp. 363](#); [Henican 8/23/2006](#)) The New York Daily News calls the book an “exhaustively researched and unsentimental peek behind the mythology [that] strongly suggests that Giuliani and his top deputies committed many errors that did grave, even fatal, harm to citizens, emergency responders and recovery teams before, on and after that terrible day.” ([Louis 8/22/2006](#)) The book criticizes Giuliani’s claim that, after becoming mayor in 1994, he made preparing New York’s response to a future terrorist attack a priority. According to Barrett and Collins’ research, in the aftermath of the 1993 WTC bombing, he in fact failed to understand the importance of preparing the city for another attack. They write, “The facts—depressing but unavoidable—were that Giuliani had allowed the city to meet the disaster of September 11 unprepared in a myriad of ways.” ([Roane 8/22/2006](#); [Henican 8/23/2006](#)) The book criticizes Giuliani’s decision to locate New York’s emergency command center on the 23rd floor of World Trade Center Building 7—across the street from an obvious terrorist target—despite the objections of senior fire and police officials. ([Louis 8/22/2006](#); [Barrett 9/11/2006](#); [Mahler 11/12/2006](#)) The inadequacy of fire department radios on 9/11 is examined in detail. These same radios had failed when used at the 1993 WTC bombing. New radios were only provided in March 2001, but these failed in their first week of use and were withdrawn. Also, the fact that the police and fire departments were equipped with incompatible radios meant that many firefighters did not get the mayday call to evacuate the North Tower before it collapsed on 9/11. ([Roane 8/22/2006](#); [Barrett 9/11/2006](#); [Democracy Now! 1/3/2007](#)) The book also criticizes the fact that, after 9/11, construction workers and firefighters were permitted to work at Ground Zero without protective respiratory gear. Subsequently, thousands of them became afflicted with upper respiratory illnesses. ([Louis 8/22/2006](#)) *Grand Illusion* receives much praise, though the New York Times criticizes its “relentlessly hostile tone,” which, it claims, “undermines the authors’ case.” ([Mahler 11/12/2006](#))

August 1, 2006: Newly Released Military Tapes from 9/11 Reveal Contradictions in NORAD Accounts

Vanity Fair magazine publishes for the first time transcripts of audiotapes from the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD), which captured the activities at its Northeast Air Defense Sector (NEADS) during the course of the 9/11 attacks. NEADS had four multi-channel tape recorders in a corner of its operations floor, recording every radio channel along with time stamps. Nearly 30 hours of audio, covering six-and-a-half hours of real time, have been released by the Pentagon to journalist Michael Bronner, who'd been a producer on the recent movie *United 93*. Previously, the tapes had been provided under subpoena to the 9/11 Commission, but only a few short clips were played during its public hearings. Bronner, who describes the recordings in detail in his Vanity Fair article, calls them "the authentic military history of 9/11." They reveal "in stark detail" that parts of the testimony given by NORAD officials to the 9/11 Commission "were misleading, and others simply false." For example, they show that at 9:16 a.m. on 9/11, when NORAD originally claimed it had begun tracking Flight 93, "the plane had not yet been hijacked. In fact, NEADS wouldn't get word about United 93 for another 51 minutes." The New York Times says, "The tapes demonstrate that for most of the morning of Sept. 11, the airspace over New York and Washington was essentially undefended, and that jet fighters scrambled to intercept the hijacked planes were involved in a fruitless chase for planes that had already crashed." ([Bronner 8/1/2006](#); [Shenon 8/3/2006](#))

August 3, 2006: US Finally Designates Saudi Charity Behind Bojinka Plot a Terrorism Financier

The US and UN finally officially designate the Philippines and Indonesian branches of the International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO) as a financier of terrorism. Abdul Al-Hamid Sulaiman Al-Mujil, executive director of the IIRO's far east division, is similarly designated as well. The IIRO is a major charity connected to the Saudi government that has long been suspected of financing Islamic militant groups (see [January 1996](#)). It was reported shortly after 9/11 that the US left the IIRO off a list of designated terrorism financiers so as to not embarrass the Saudi government (see [October 12, 2001](#)). The Philippine IIRO branch in particular has been publicly accused of funding al-Qaeda since the mid-1990s, due to the activities of Mohammed Jamal Khalifa, bin Laden's brother-in-law who headed that branch when he funded the Bojinka plot in the early 1990s (see [1987-1991](#)). ([Associated Press 8/3/2006](#); [Canlas 12/12/2006](#)) A US Treasury Department press release says Al-Mujil has been nicknamed the "million dollar man" for his "long history of providing support to terrorist organizations." He is accused of funding the Abu Sayyaf group in the Philippines and Jemaah Islamiyah in Indonesia. He is said to have had relationships with bin Laden and Khalid Shaikh Mohammed. The press release also calls "a senior al-Qaeda member" and accuses the current director of the IIRO's Philippine branch, Abd al-Hadi Daguit, "a trusted associate of Khalifa." But curiously,

Khalifa himself is still not officially listed, nor is Daguit. He will die in mysterious circumstances several months later. ([Treasury Department 8/3/2006](#))

August 9, 2006: Cheney Calls Lamont Senate Victory a Positive for 'Al-Qaeda Types'

The beginning of the month sees the warrantless domestic surveillance program controversy peak. The day after the Connecticut Democratic Senatorial Primary, Vice President Dick Cheney says the victory of challenger Ned Lamont over incumbent Joe Lieberman is a victory for the “al-Qaeda types.” He says that these people are “clearly betting on the proposition that ultimately they break the will of the American people, in terms of our ability to stay in the fight.” ([MSNBC 6/4/2007](#)) Lamont will ultimately lose to Lieberman (who runs as an independent) in the general election.

August 10, 2006: Bojinka-Like Plot to Destroy Aircraft Is Foiled; Feasibility and Urgency of Plot Later Questioned



Rashid Rauf. [*Source: Warrick Page/ Getty Images*] British police arrest 24 people in connection with a plot to blow up aircraft flying from Britain to the United States. Metropolitan Police Deputy Commissioner Paul Stephenson says the plot was “intended to be mass murder on an unimaginable scale.” ([CNN 8/10/2006](#)) Secretary of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff describes the plot as “well-advanced and well-thought-out and... really resourced to succeed.” ([MSNBC 8/10/2006](#)) He also likens it to the foiled 1995 Bojinka plot, one portion of which involved blowing up up to a dozen airplanes over the ocean using liquid explosives smuggled onto the planes. ([CNN 8/11/2006](#)) The British threat warning level is raised to critical and London’s Heathrow airport is closed to most European flights. US officials say the plot involved hiding liquid explosives in carry-on luggage, and up to 12 flights would have been targeted. A senior US congressional source says the plotters planned to carry sports drinks on to the flights, which would then be mixed with a gel-like substance. The explosives would be triggered by the electrical charge from an iPod or mobile phone. Administration officials say the plot involved British Airways, Continental, United, and American Airlines. The plotters intended to detonate the devices over New York, Washington, San Francisco, Boston, and Los Angeles. Officials say the plot demonstrates “very strong links to al-Qaeda” and was

nearly operational. In the US, the Department of Homeland Security raises the terror threat to the highest level, red, meaning “severe,” for commercial flights originating in the UK and bound for the US. In addition, the threat level is raised to orange, or “high,” for all commercial flights operating in or coming to the US. ([CNN 8/10/2006](#)) British officials say the death toll could have exceeded the 2,700 of the September 11 attacks, with one source calling the plot “our 9/11.” According to a Pakistani government official, an arrest two weeks earlier on Pakistan’s border with Afghanistan spurred anti-terror forces into immediate action. A British government source says an intercepted message from Pakistan telling the bombers to “go now” had triggered the arrests. Security sources say the attacks were to take place within two days and had to act earlier than expected to prevent massive loss of lives. ([Laville, Norton-Taylor, and Dodd 8/11/2006](#)) Officials say some plotters already had tickets for flights and planned to stage test runs over the weekend. Despite the 24 arrests, US officials say the mastermind of the plot is in Pakistan and has yet to be captured, while five suspects in the Britain are still being urgently hunted. One official says, “They didn’t get them all.” But British officials claim the arrests in London and Birmingham snared all the alleged “main players.” ([MSNBC 8/10/2006](#)) The British Home Secretary, John Reid, says the operation is ongoing and more arrests may be made. US officials say the suspects are all British citizens between the ages of 17 and 35, with some being of Pakistani ethnicity. They add that some of the suspects had been monitored by British intelligence for several months. Deputy Assistant Commissioner Peter Clarke, Head of the Metropolitan Police Service Anti-Terrorist Branch, says the arrests followed an “unprecedented level of surveillance” over several months involving meetings, movements, travel, spending and the aspirations of a large group of people. ([CNN 8/10/2006](#)) Homeland Security bans all liquids and gels except baby formula and prescription medications in the name of the ticket holder in carry-on luggage on all flights. Passengers traveling from and through UK airports are temporarily permitted to only carry-on items on a restricted list. These items have to be carried in transparent plastic bags. No liquids can be carried on board, including liquid medications “unless verified as authentic.” All electronic items are also banned. ([Detroit Free Press 8/10/2006](#)) In the days following the security operation, the arrests meet with some skepticism. Stephen Glover of the Daily Mail points to previous baseless terror scares in the US and Britain, as well as questioning the political motivations of the Home Secretary. ([Glover 8/16/2006](#)) Douglas Fraser of the Herald in Edinburgh suggests the “political component” of the operation has caused skepticism. He says the intelligence services are taking credit for foiling a major plot by “ramping up the level of public concern about the threat.” He notes that the timing coincides with an attempt by the government of Prime Minister Tony Blair to return to an issue it was defeated on before: increasing to 90 days the amount of time that people can be detained without charge in the case of alleged terrorist offenses. ([Latham 8/18/2006](#)) Sean O’Neill and Stewart Tendler of The London Times urge the public and the media to wait for solid evidence before accepting the version of events presented by the government. They say previous bungled anti-terror operations have put pressure on the authorities to build a solid case in public. ([O’Neill and Tendler 8/12/2006](#)) Further controversy arises when it emerges that there was significant disagreement over when to conduct the arrests, with British officials planning to continue surveillance and US officials pressuring for immediate arrests. One US official says that missed opportunities leading up to 9/11 put US intelligence services

more on edge. There was also disagreement about the timing of the arrest of alleged ringleader Rashid Rauf in Pakistan. These charges meet with official denials; Frances Townsend, Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism, says, “we worked together to protect our citizens from harm while ensuring that we gathered as much info as possible to bring the plotters to justice. There was no disagreement between US and [British] officials.” ([Roston and Myers 8/14/2006](#)) In response to these criticisms, intelligence services are hesitant to release much information publicly, but confirm to the Guardian that surveillance and tips from informants pointed to a plot in the making. Police identified the explosives to be used in the plot as TATP (triacetone triperoxide) and HMTD (hexamethylene triperoxide diamine), both peroxide-based liquid explosives. ([Laville 8/19/2006](#)) Police also reveal that the raids uncovered jihadist materials, receipts of Western Union money transfers, seven martyrdom videos, and the last will and testament of one plotter. ([New York Times 8/28/2006](#)) However, the Guardian does indicate that some of the arrested suspects are likely to be released and that the security measures instituted following the arrests are almost certainly unnecessary. ([Laville 8/19/2006](#)) Contradicting earlier reports, a senior British official suggests an attack was not imminent, saying the suspects had not yet purchased any airline tickets. In fact, some did not even have passports. ([Roston and Myers 8/14/2006](#)) Over two and a half weeks after the arrests, a target date for the attacks and number of planes involved is still undetermined by investigators. The estimate of 10-12 planes is characterized by officials as speculative and exaggerated. Clarke acknowledges the police are still investigating “the number, destination and timing of the flights.” ([New York Times 8/28/2006](#)) Twelve suspects are charged with terrorism offenses near the end of August 2006. Trials are expected to start in January 2008 at the earliest. Prosecutor Colin Gibbs says he expects “a very long trial of [between] five and eight months.” ([IOL 9/4/2006](#))

August 14, 2006: Violence against Women ‘Widespread’ in Afghanistan

The plight of women in Afghanistan during Taliban rule was considered notoriously bad and it has been generally assumed to have gotten much better since the government headed by Hamid Karzai was established (see [December 22, 2001](#)). However, according to a report by the United Nations Development Fund for Women, “Violence against women in Afghanistan is widespread and mainly happens inside victims’ homes.... Acts of violence [against women] are happening with impunity.” ([Abrashi 8/14/2006](#))

August 15, 2006: Former Heads of 9/11 Commission Release Book; Claim Their Commission was ‘Set Up to Fail’ by Bush Administration

Thomas Kean and Lee Hamilton, the former chairman and vice chairman of the 9/11 Commission, release a book giving a behind-the-scenes look at their 20-month investigation of the September 11 attacks. ([Yen 8/4/2006](#)) They begin their book, titled *Without Precedent*, saying that, because their investigation started late, had a very short

time frame, and had inadequate funding, they both felt, from the beginning, that they “were set up to fail.” ([Hamilton 8/21/2006](#); [Lemieux 8/25/2006](#)) They explain the difficulties they faced in obtaining certain government documents and describe how the commission almost splintered over whether to investigate the Bush administration’s use of 9/11 as a reason for going to war. It says that if original member Max Cleland—a strong proponent of this line of inquiry—had not resigned (see [December 9, 2003](#)), the commission probably would not have reached unanimity. It also calls their gentle questioning of former New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani during his May 2004 testimony, “a low point” in the commission’s handling of witnesses at its public hearings (see [May 19, 2004](#)). ([Yen 8/4/2006](#); [Nichols 8/5/2006](#); [Williams 8/6/2006](#)) Despite the problems it faced, when discussing his book with the CBC, Hamilton says he thinks the commission has “been reasonably successful in telling the story” of 9/11. ([Hamilton 8/21/2006](#)) *Without Precedent*, however, contains little new information about the events of 9/11. Intelligence expert James Bamford says there is “an overabundance of self-censorship by the authors.” ([Bamford 8/20/2006](#))

August 21, 2006: Former 9/11 Co-Chairman Addresses Various ‘Conspiracy Theories’ About 9/11 Attacks



Former 9/11 Commission co-chair Lee Hamilton. [Source: CBC] Lee Hamilton, the former co-chair of the 9/11 Commission, gives a wide-ranging interview to the CBC about *Without Precedent*, a book he recently co-authored about his time on the 9/11 Commission (see [August 15, 2006](#)). In the interview he discusses the various “conspiracy theories” surrounding the events of 9/11. The interviewer, Evan Solomon, mentions to him a recent Zogby poll (see [May 17, 2006](#)) that found that 42% of Americans agreed that “the US government, and its 9/11 Commission, concealed or refused to investigate critical evidence that contradicts the official explanation of September 11th.” Hamilton calls this lack of trust in the Commission’s report “dispiriting,” but attacks the “conspiracy theory people,” saying, “when they make an assertion they do it often on very flimsy evidence.” He addresses some of the various “conspiracy theories” that have been put forward about 9/11:

- In order to contradict the allegation that the Twin Towers were brought down deliberately with pre-planted explosives, Hamilton says the WTC collapsed (see [8:57 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)) because “the super-heated jet fuel melted the steel super-structure of these buildings and caused their collapse.” He adds, “There’s a powerful lot of evidence to sustain that point of view, including the pictures of the airplanes flying into

the building.”

■With regard to the collapse of WTC Building 7 (see [\(5:20 p.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), which some people claim was also caused by explosives, he argues, “[W]e believe that it was the aftershocks of these two huge buildings in the very near vicinity collapsing. And in the Building 7 case, we think that it was a case of flames setting off a fuel container, which started the fire in Building 7, and that was our theory on Building 7.” However, the interviewer points out that the 9/11 Commission’s final report does not actually mention the collapse of Building 7, and Hamilton says he does not recall whether the Commission made a specific decision to leave it out.

■In reply to a question about why the debris of Building 7 were moved quickly from the scene without a thorough investigation, even though nobody died in Building 7 and there was no need for rescue operations there, Hamilton responds, “You can’t answer every question when you conduct an investigation.”

■When asked whether Saeed Sheikh sent Mohamed Atta \$100,000 for the 9/11 plot (see [Early August 2001](#) and [Summer 2001 and before](#)), Hamilton replies, “I don’t know anything about it.” When the interviewer presses him about whether the Commission investigated a possible Pakistani Secret Service (ISI) connection to the attacks, Hamilton replies, “They may have; I do not recall us writing anything about it in the report. We may have but I don’t recall it.”

■Asked about Secretary of Transportation Norman Mineta’s claim that Vice President Dick Cheney was in the presidential bunker beneath the White House at 9:20 a.m. on 9/11 (see [\(Between 9:20 a.m. and 9:27 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), almost 40 minutes earlier than the Commission claimed he had arrived there, Hamilton replies, “I do not recall.” When pressed, he expands, “Well, we think that Vice President Cheney entered the bunker shortly before 10 o’clock. And there is a gap of several minutes there, where we do not really know what the Vice President really did. There is the famous phone call between the President and the Vice President. We could find no documentary evidence of that phone call.”

■When the interviewer points out that Richard Clarke’s account conflicts with the Commission’s over what time authorization was received from Dick Cheney to shoot down Flight 93 (see [\(Between 9:45-9:55 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#) and [\(Between 10:00 a.m.-10:15 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), Hamilton retorts, “Look, you’ve obviously gone through the report with a fine-toothed comb, you’re raising a lot of questions—I can do the same thing.”

The interviewer also asks Hamilton whether he has any unanswered questions of his own about 9/11. Hamilton’s response is: “I could never figure out why these 19 fellas did what they did. We looked into their backgrounds. In one or two cases, they were apparently happy, well-adjusted, not particularly religious - in one case quite well-to-do, had a girlfriend. We just couldn’t figure out why he did it. I still don’t know.” ([Hamilton 8/21/2006](#))

[August 28, 2006: Bin Laden Still Not Indicted for 9/11](#)

The *Washington Post* notes that Osama bin Laden has still not been indicted for his alleged role in 9/11 and that his entry in the FBI’s Ten Most Wanted list only mentions his involvement in the 1998 African embassy bombings. The FBI says the reason bin Laden

is not officially wanted for 9/11 or the bombing of the USS *Cole* is that he has not yet been charged with involvement in the operations by the US. Bin Laden's entry on a separate list, of the 25 most wanted terrorists, also fails to mention his alleged involvement in 9/11. According to the *Post*, "The curious omission underscores the Justice Department's decision, so far, to not seek formal criminal charges against bin Laden" for 9/11. ([Eggen 8/28/2006](#))

[August 30, 2006: NIST Counters Allegations of Explosive Demolition of the WTC](#)



One of the 'puffs of smoke' observed during the Twin Towers collapses. [*Source: Richard Lethin*] The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) issues a seven-page fact sheet to counter alternative theories about the WTC collapses. NIST conducted a three-year study of the collapses, and concluded they were caused by the damage when the planes hit combined with the effects of the ensuing fires. However, many people—what the New York Times calls an "angry minority"—believe there was US government complicity in 9/11, and a recent poll (see [July 6-24, 2006](#)) found 16 percent of Americans believe the WTC towers were brought down with explosives. ([National Institute of Standards and Technology 8/31/2006](#); [Dwyer 9/2/2006](#); [Wolf 9/2/2006](#)) The fact sheet responds to 14 "Frequently Asked Questions." Some of its key points include the following:

- Regarding whether NIST considered a controlled demolition hypothesis: "NIST found no corroborating evidence for alternative hypotheses suggesting that the WTC towers were brought down... using explosives... Instead, photographs and videos from several angles clearly show that the collapse initiated at the fire and impact floors and that the collapse progressed from the initiating floors downward until the dust clouds obscured the view." However, it admits, "NIST did not test for the residue" of explosives in the remaining steel from the towers.

- Its explanation for puffs of smoke seen coming from each tower as it collapsed: "[T]he falling mass of the building compressed the air ahead of it—much like the action of a piston—forcing smoke and debris out the windows as the stories below failed sequentially."

- Its explanation for a stream of yellow molten metal that poured down the side of the South Tower shortly before it collapsed (see [\(9:50 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). NIST previously claimed it was aluminum, but this should not have been yellow in color: “Pure liquid aluminum would be expected to appear silvery. However, the molten metal was very likely mixed with large amounts of hot, partially burned, solid organic materials (e.g., furniture, carpets, partitions and computers) which can display an orange glow.”
- Regarding reports of molten steel in the wreckage at Ground Zero (see [September 12, 2001-February 2002](#)): “Any molten steel in the wreckage was more likely due to the high temperature resulting from long exposure to combustion within the pile than to short exposure to fires or explosions while the buildings were standing.”
- Regarding the collapse of WTC 7 (see [\(5:20 p.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)): “While NIST has found no evidence of a blast or controlled demolition event, NIST would like to determine the magnitude of hypothetical blast scenarios that could have led to the structural failure of one or more critical elements.” ([National Institute of Standards and Technology 8/30/2006](#)) In response to the fact sheet, Kevin Ryan, the coeditor of the online Journal of 9/11 Studies, says, “The list of answers NIST has provided is generating more questions, and more skepticism, than ever before.” He says, “NIST is a group of government scientists whose leaders are Bush appointees, and therefore their report is not likely to veer from the political story.” ([Dwyer 9/2/2006](#); [Wolf 9/2/2006](#))

September 2006: Moussaoui Agent Prevented from Speaking at Forum and Reassigned, then Moved Back

Michael Tabman, the Minneapolis FBI field office’s special agent in charge, prevents Harry Samit from speaking at a national security forum about the Moussaoui case and removes him from counterterrorism investigations. Samit was an important figure in the Zacarias Moussaoui investigation just before 9/11 (see [August 15-September 10, 2001](#), [August 16, 2001](#) and [August 20-September 11, 2001](#)). Unlike his former colleague Coleen Rowley (see [May 21, 2002](#) and [February 26, 2003](#)), Samit has never gone public with his criticism of the FBI’s handling of the case. Tabman has been working at the Minneapolis office only since 2005. After Samit files a complaint, FBI headquarters will reassign him to counterterrorism and send Tabman back to headquarters. ([Gordon and Chanen 9/23/2006](#); [Karnowski 1/10/2007](#))

September 2006: Senior Defense Officials Allegedly Request Al-Qaeda Detainee Convictions before 2008 US Election

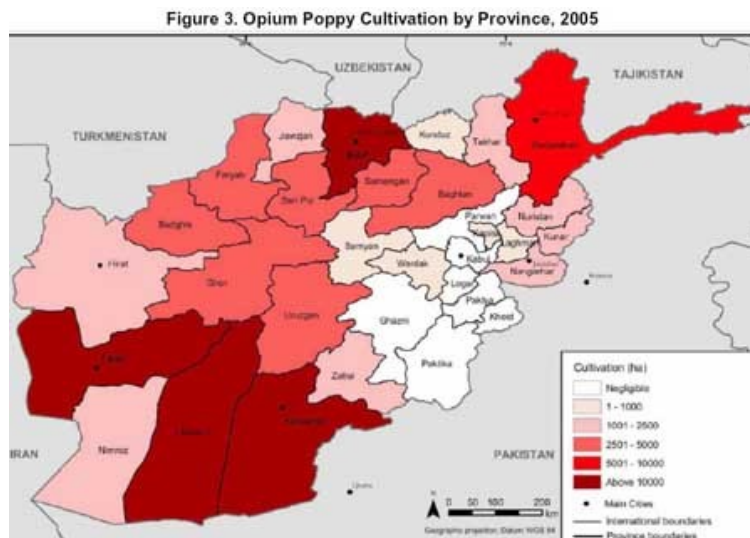


Air Force Colonel Morris Davis. [Source: US Department of Defense] Politically motivated officials at the Pentagon push for convictions of high-profile detainees ahead of the 2008 elections, according to Air Force Colonel Morris Davis, lead prosecutor for terrorism trials at Guantanamo Bay. Davis, whose later resignation is partially caused by this pressure (see [July 2007](#)), says the strategic political value of such trials is discussed at a meeting this month, and that officials prefer “sexy” cases, rather than those that are most solid or ready to go. Davis will later say, “There was a big concern that the election of 2008 is coming up... People wanted to get the cases going. There was a rush to get high-interest cases into court at the expense of openness.” ([White 10/20/2007](#))

September 1, 2006: FAA Cleared of Misleading the 9/11 Commission

The Transportation Department’s inspector general issues a report clearing FAA executives of deliberately misleading the 9/11 Commission. The commission had been frustrated over inaccurate statements made by the FAA and NORAD, and referred the matter to the relevant inspectors general (see [Shortly before July 22, 2004](#)). ([Miller 9/1/2006](#)) Military and civil aviation officials had initially portrayed their responses on 9/11 as fast and efficient. Yet according to evidence found by the commission, the military never had any of the hijacked aircraft in its sights. ([Eggen 9/2/2006](#)) Among other things, the FAA claimed that an Air Force liaison had joined its teleconference and established contact with NORAD immediately after the first WTC tower was hit. According to the inspector general’s report though, this liaison only joined the teleconference after the Pentagon was struck at 9:37 a.m. ([US Department of Transportation 8/31/2006](#) ¹, [Miller 9/1/2006](#)) The report says the inspector general’s office found no evidence that FAA executives deliberately made false statements or purposely omitted accurate information from any statements, regarding their notifications about the hijackings to the military on 9/11. It blames their incorrect statements on innocent mistakes, such as an erroneous entry in an early FAA timeline and a false assumption that others would correct the record. However, it recommends that the FAA “consider appropriate administrative action” against two unnamed executives for their failure to correct false information provided to the 9/11 Commission. ([US Department of Transportation 8/31/2006](#) ¹, [Shenon 9/2/2006](#); [Eggen 9/2/2006](#))

[September 2, 2006: Afghanistan's Opium Production Hits Record Levels Again](#)



Opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan by province, 2005. Based on satellite surveys and other analysis by the UN. Redder provinces produce more. [Source: *UNODC/MCN*] (click image to enlarge) The United Nations says Afghanistan's latest opium harvest is the biggest ever. The harvest was 6,100 metric tons (enough for 610 tons of heroin), an increase of nearly 50 percent from the year before. This is 92 percent of the world total and 30 percent more than global consumption. Antonio Maria Costa, head of the UN's drug office, says, "It is indeed very bad, you can say it is out of control." He says the Taliban have profited from the drug trade, and they promise protection to growers who expand their operations. 400,000 acres were planted with poppies in 2006; about ten percent of these poppy fields were destroyed by the Afghan government's eradication program. About five percent was destroyed in the previous year. ([Gall 9/2/2006](#); [Pennington 9/3/2006](#))

[September 2-3, 2006: US Temporarily Closes Secret CIA Prisons, Transfers Top Suspects to Guantanamo for Military Tribunals](#)



Ahmed Khalfan Ghailani (left) and Abu

Faraj al-Libbi. Other detainees mentioned here are depicted elsewhere, except for Zubair, Lillie, and Gouled Hassan Dourad. Apparently no public photos are available of them.

[Source: *FBI*]The US temporarily closes a network of secret CIA prisons around the world and transfers the most valuable prisoners to the US prison in Guantanamo, Cuba, for eventual military tribunals. The prison network will be reopened a short time later (see [Autumn 2006-Late April 2007](#)). There were reportedly fewer than 100 suspects in the CIA prisons; most of them are apparently sent back to their home countries while fourteen are sent to Guantanamo. All fourteen have some connection to al-Qaeda. Seven of them reportedly had some connection to the 9/11 attacks. Here are their names, nationalities, and the allegations against them.

- Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM) (Pakistani, raised in Kuwait). He is the suspected mastermind of 9/11 attacks and many other al-Qaeda attacks. A CIA biography of KSM calls him “one of history’s most infamous terrorists.”

- Mustafa Ahmed al-Hawsawi (Saudi). He allegedly helped finance the 9/11 attacks.

- Hambali (Indonesian). He attended a key planning meeting for the 9/11 attacks in Malaysia (see January 5-8, 2000) and is accused of involvement in many other plots, including the 2002 Bali bombing (see [October 12, 2002](#)).

- Khallad bin Attash (a.k.a. Tawfiq bin Attash) (Yemeni). He also attended a key planning meeting for the 9/11 attacks in Malaysia (see January 5-8, 2000) and had a role in other plots such as the 2000 USS *Cole* bombing (see [October 12, 2000](#)).

- Ali Abdul Aziz Ali (Pakistani, raised in Kuwait). He allegedly helped finance the 9/11 attacks and arranged transportation for some hijackers. His uncle is KSM.

- Ramzi bin al-Shibh (Yemeni). A member of the Hamburg al-Qaeda cell with Mohamed Atta and other 9/11 hijackers. The CIA calls him the “primary communications intermediary” between the hijackers and KSM. He also attended a key planning meeting for the 9/11 attacks in Malaysia (see January 5-8, 2000).

- Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri (Saudi). He is said to have been one of the masterminds of the USS *Cole* bombing (see [October 12, 2000](#)). He also attended a key planning meeting for the 9/11 attacks in Malaysia (see January 5-8, 2000).

The remaining seven suspects are alleged to have been involved in other al-Qaeda plots:

- Abu Zubaida (Palestinian, raised in Saudi Arabia). He is said to be a facilitator who helped make travel arrangements for al-Qaeda operatives. He is also alleged to have organized a series of planned millennium attacks.

- Ahmed Khalfan Ghailani (Tanzanian). He was indicted for a role in the 1998 African embassy bombings (see [August 7, 1998](#)). He is also said to be an expert document forger.

- Majid Khan (Pakistani). He lived in the US since 1996 and is said to have worked with

KSM on some US bomb plots.

- Abu Faraj al-Libbi (a.k.a. Mustafa al-'Uzayti) (Libyan). He allegedly became al-Qaeda's top operations officer after KSM was captured.

- Mohamad Farik Amin (a.k.a. Zubair) (Malaysian). He is a key Hambali associate and was allegedly tapped for a suicide mission targeting Los Angeles.

- Mohammed Nazir Bin Lep (a.k.a. Lillie) (Malaysian). He is a key Hambali associate. He is accused of providing funds for the 2003 bombing of the Marriott hotel in Jakarta, Indonesia. He was allegedly tapped for a suicide mission targeting Los Angeles.

- Gouled Hassan Dourad (Somali). He allegedly scouted a US military base in Djibouti for a planned terrorist attack.

The fourteen are expected to go on trial in 2007. ([Hutcheson and Talev 9/6/2006](#); [Central Intelligence Agency 9/6/2006](#); [Willing 9/7/2006](#))

September 6, 2006: In Speech, Bush Makes Inaccurate Statements Concerning Value of Some Prisoner Interrogations

In a speech defending the US treatment of high-level al-Qaeda prisoners, President Bush apparently makes some false claims about how valuable the intelligence from some prisoners was. He says that Abu Zubaida, who was captured in March 2002 (see [March 28, 2002](#)), revealed that 9/11 mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM) used the alias 'Mukhtar.' "This was a vital piece of intelligence that helped our intelligence community pursue KSM." However, the 9/11 Commission's final report published in 2004 revealed that the fact that KSM had that alias was known to US intelligence before 9/11 (see [August 28, 2001](#)). Bush also claims that Zubaida's interrogation identified Ramzi bin al-Shibh as an accomplice in the 9/11 attacks. ([Mazzetti 9/8/2006](#)) However, this was known months before Zubaida's capture, and reported in the US press as early as September 2001. A CBS News report from that time said bin al-Shibh was "believed to have provided logistics backup for the hijackers." ([CBS News 9/29/2001](#)) Bush also describes the interrogation techniques used on the prisoners as "safe, lawful and effective," and he claims torture was not used. However, the New York Times notes that "the Bush administration has yet to make public the legal papers prepared by government lawyers that served as the basis for its determination that those procedures did not violate American or international law." ([Mazzetti 9/8/2006](#)) Both the New York Times and Washington Post publish prominent stories pointing out the factual errors in Bush's statements, but this does not become a big political issue. ([Eggen and Linzer 9/7/2006](#); [Mazzetti 9/8/2006](#)) Bush repeatedly exaggerated the importance of Zubaida in the months after his capture as well (see [Shortly After March 28, 2002](#)).

September 6, 2006: Bush Admits Existence of Secret CIA Prisons, Announces Plans to Try Top Al-Qaeda Leaders in Military Tribunals



Bush acknowledging the secret CIA prison network.

[Source: Gerald Herbert / Associated Press] In a speech, President Bush acknowledges a network of secret CIA prisons and announces plans to try 14 top al-Qaeda terrorist suspects in military tribunals. The US government has never officially acknowledged the existence of the CIA prisons before, despite numerous media accounts about them. Bush's speech comes less than two months before midterm Congressional elections and also comes as the White House is preparing new legislation to legalize the CIA's detention program and shield US officials from prosecution for possible war crimes. Knight Ridder will comment that the speech "appeared to be intended to give him more leverage in his negotiations with Congress over how to try suspected terrorists.... In addition to the potential political benefits, Bush had other reasons to make the program public. A Supreme Court ruling in June struck down the administration's plan to bring terrorist suspects before military tribunals and called into question the legality of secret CIA detentions." ([Hutcheson and Talev 9/6/2006](#)) Other administration officials say the CIA prison network has been closed down, at least for the time being. (In fact, it will be reopened a short time later (see [Autumn 2006-Late April 2007](#)).) Reportedly, "fewer than 100" suspects had ever been in CIA custody. It is not known who they were or what happened to all of them, but most of them reportedly were returned to their home countries for prosecution. Fourteen "high-value" suspects, including accused 9/11 mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, were transferred from the secret CIA prisons to the prison in Guantanamo, Cuba in the days just prior to Bush's speech (see [September 2-3, 2006](#)). Bush says, "I want to be absolutely clear with our people and the world: The United States does not torture. It's against our laws, and it's against our values. I have not authorized it—and I will not authorize it." However, he says the Geneva Conventions' prohibition against "humiliating and degrading treatment" could potentially cause legal problems for CIA interrogators. Other administration officials say harsh interrogation techniques such as waterboarding were used in the CIA prisons. Such techniques are considered by many to be forms of torture. Bush claims that information gleaned from interrogations in the secret prisons helped thwart attacks on the US and provided valuable information about al-Qaeda operations around the world. ([Hutcheson and Talev 9/6/2006](#); [Smith and Fletcher 9/7/2006](#))

September 6, 2006: US Military Issues New Rules Explicitly Prohibiting Torture

The US military issues "a new manual on the treatment of prisoners that explicitly prohibits waterboarding, sexual humiliation, electric shocks, the threatening use of dogs,

and other degrading or painful tactics.” This comes the same day President Bush gives a speech acknowledging the existence of a network of secret CIA prisons (see [June 16, 2004](#)). Both moves are believed to have been made in an effort to protect US officials from prosecution for possible war crimes. ([Hutcheson and Talev 9/6/2006](#)) Lt. Gen. John Kimmons, the Army’s chief intelligence officer, says, “No good intelligence is going to come from abusive practices.” Newly approved questioning techniques involve mainly psychological approaches, such as making a prisoner fear he may never see his family. ([Diamond 9/6/2006](#))

September 7, 2006: Newly Released Footage Shows Bin Laden with Ramzi Bin Al-Shibh in 2001



Top: Ramzi bin al-Shibh (left) shaking hands with Mohammed Atef (right). Bottom: Bin al-Shibh (left) with bin Laden (right). [Source: *Al Jazeera*] Al Jazeera television broadcasts previously unseen footage of Osama bin Laden meeting with Ramzi bin al-Shibh, who was a roommate and close associate of some of the 9/11 hijackers. The footage is said to have been released by al-Qaeda’s production company, Al Sahab, in time for the fifth anniversary of the 9/11 attacks. Bin al-Shibh is seen sitting and talking with bin Laden and al-Qaeda military leader Mohammed Atef. Atef was killed in November 2001 (see [November 15, 2001](#)), so the footage has to be from before then, but it is unknown if it was filmed before or after 9/11. Bin Laden is also shown strolling through an Afghanistan training camp meeting followers. Al Jazeera says some of these followers include some of the 9/11 hijackers, but their faces are not seen so it is unclear if this is the case. But bin Laden addresses the camera at one point and says of his followers preparing for missions, “I ask you to pray for them and to ask God to make them successful, aim their shots well, set their feet strong, and strengthen their hearts.” The video also includes the last testament of two of the hijackers, Wail Alshehri and Hamza Alghamdi filmed in Kandahar, Afghanistan in March 2001 (see [March 2001](#)). Both assert that Muslims must stand up to fight back against the West. For instance, Alshehri says, “If jihad now is not an obligation (on Muslims), when will it be?” ([Associated Press 9/7/2006](#); [CNN 9/8/2006](#))

Shortly After September 6, 2006: Red Cross Interviews of Top Al-Qaeda Prisoners Indicate They Were Illegally Tortured by CIA

Shortly after 14 high-ranking al-Qaeda prisoners are transferred from secret CIA prisons to the US-controlled Guantanamo prison in Cuba (see [September 2-3, 2006](#)), the International Committee of the Red Cross is finally allowed to interview them. The prisoners include 9/11 mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, Ramzi bin al-Shibh, Hambali, and Abu Zubaida. The Red Cross has a policy of not publicizing or commenting its findings. However, some US officials are shown the report on the interviews with these prisoners and apparently some of these officials leak information to the New Yorker about one year later. The New Yorker will report, “Congressional and other Washington sources familiar with the report said that it harshly criticized the CIA’s practices. One of the sources said that the Red Cross described the agency’s detention and interrogation methods as tantamount to torture, and declared that American officials responsible for the abusive treatment could have committed serious crimes. The source said the report warned that these officials may have committed ‘grave breaches’ of the Geneva Conventions, and may have violated the US Torture Act, which Congress passed in 1994. The conclusions of the Red Cross, which is known for its credibility and caution, could have potentially devastating legal ramifications.” ([Mayer 8/6/2007](#))

September 10, 2006: Bin Laden Trail Said to Have Gone Cold



Lt. Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal. [Source: Defense Department / *Helene C. Stikkel*] The Washington Post reports in a front page story, “The clandestine US commandos whose job is to capture or kill Osama bin Laden have not received a credible lead in more than two years. Nothing from the vast US intelligence world—no tips from informants, no snippets from electronic intercepts, no points on any satellite image—has led them anywhere near the al-Qaeda leader, according to US and Pakistani officials.” It is widely believed by US intelligence that bin Laden is hiding in tribal areas of Pakistan near the Afghanistan border. Since May 2005, al-Qaeda has killed at least 23 tribal leaders in the region who are opposed to them, making intelligence collection increasingly difficult. There is no single person in charge of the US search for bin Laden

with authority to direct covert operations. One counterterrorism official complains, “There’s nobody in the United States government whose job it is to find Osama bin Laden! Nobody!” However, Lt. Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal has become the de facto leader of the search. In recent months, President Bush has requested that the CIA “flood the zone” to gain better intelligence and efforts have stepped up. But at the same time, “Pakistan has grown increasingly reluctant to help the US search.... Pakistani and US counterterrorism and military officials admit that Pakistan has now all but stopped looking for bin Laden. ‘The dirty little secret is, [the US has] nothing, no operations, without the Paks,’ one former counterterrorism officer said.” ([Priest and Tyson 9/10/2006](#))

September 12, 2006: US Still Has No National Intelligence Estimate on Al-Qaeda

It is reported that the US has not conducted a National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) about al-Qaeda and other Islamist groups since 9/11. An NIE is a formal, top-secret analysis about a particular threat combining intelligence from all relevant government agencies. Michael Scheuer, former head of the CIA’s bin Laden unit, says, “When I left the CIA in November 2004, they had not done an NIE on al-Qaeda. In fact, there has never been an NIE on the subject since the 1990s.” The last NIE on the subject in fact was released in 1997 (see [1997](#) and [Late 2000-September 10, 2001](#)). Rolling Stone magazine concludes, “Today, the [NIE] process remains bogged down in interagency disputes—largely because of resistance by the Pentagon to any conclusions that would weaken its primary role in counterterrorism. As a result, the Bush administration remains uncertain about the true nature of the terrorist foes that America faces—and unable to devise an effective strategy to combat those foes.” ([Dreyfuss 9/12/2006](#))

September 13, 2006-Early December 2006: Newly Released Footage from 9/11 Does Not Show Impact on the Pentagon



Security camera footage of the Pentagon attack, from the nearby Doubletree Hotel. [*Source: Public domain*] In mid-September 2006, the FBI releases never-before-seen footage from security cameras at a

Citgo gas station near the Pentagon, recorded on the morning of 9/11. Agents seized the video just minutes after the attack on the Pentagon (see [\(After 9:37 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). The FBI releases it in response to a Freedom of Information Act request and related lawsuit by the public interest group Judicial Watch. Many people believed the footage would show the strike on the Pentagon. However, the video, depicting views from the gas station's six security cameras, shows that these cameras apparently did not capture it. The footage has been partially obscured by the FBI, though, to protect the privacy of individuals who were in the Citgo convenience store at the time it was recorded. ([Federal Bureau of Investigation 9/13/2006](#); [Hall 9/15/2006](#); [Judicial Watch 9/15/2006](#)) Early in December, the FBI releases more security camera footage from the morning of 9/11, taken from atop the Doubletree Hotel in Arlington, Virginia, which it also seized after the attacks. This is also in response to the Freedom of Information Act lawsuit filed by Judicial Watch and others. The grainy video does not show American Airlines 77 in flight, but does show the explosion after the Pentagon was hit. According to Judicial Watch, this "seemingly contradicts a sworn FBI affidavit in a related case claiming that the Doubletree security recordings 'did not show the impact of Flight 77 into the Pentagon on September 11, 2001.'" ([CNN 12/2/2006](#); [KWTX 12/4/2006](#); [Judicial Watch 12/7/2006](#)) In the weeks after 9/11, it was reported that FBI investigators confiscated footage of the impact on the Pentagon from a hotel nearby (see [September 21, 2001](#)). Whether the hotel referred to was the Doubletree is unknown. Judicial Watch is trying to obtain 9/11 footage from cameras at the Sheraton National Hotel, which is also near the Pentagon. ([Emerson and Lindquist 9/12/2001](#); [Judicial Watch 5/16/2006](#); [CNN 5/17/2006](#))

Mid-September 2006: British Army Agrees to Secret, Limited Truce with Taliban



Sir Richard Dannatt. [*Source: Associated Press*] The London Times later reports that British forces in Afghanistan have cut a secret truce with the Taliban around this time, ceding authority in a portion of the Helmand province of southern Afghanistan to Taliban forces and agreeing to withdraw entirely from the region. The region centers around the town of Musa Qala, where British forces have sustained heavy losses attempting to defend a government outpost. Sir Richard Dannatt, the head of the British Army, has recently warned that British troops in Afghanistan were stretched to their capacity and can only "just" cope with the demands placed on them. According to the truce, both Taliban and British forces will withdraw from the region, but few believe

the Taliban will adhere to the agreement. A British officer concedes, “There is always a risk. But if it works, it will provide a good template for the rest of Helmand. The people of Sangin are already saying they want a similar deal.” One British officer sent a recent e-mail, published days earlier, saying in frustration, “We are not having an effect on the average Afghan. At the moment we are no better than the Taliban in their eyes, as all they can see is us moving into an area, blowing things up and leaving, which is very sad.” ([Smith 10/1/2006](#))

September 25, 2006: 9/11 Commissioner Reveals Secret Deal to Keep Bush and Clinton Testimony Secret until 2009

The 9/11 Commission interviewed presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush in 2004 (see [April 29, 2004](#)) but the details of what was revealed in these interviews were not included in the commission’s final report (with one exception, see [August 6, 2001](#)). On this day, former 9/11 Commission Richard Ben-Veniste says, “I had hoped that we had—we would have made both the Clinton interview and the Bush interview a part of our report, but that was not to be. I was outvoted on that question.... I didn’t have the votes.... I think the question was that there was a degree of confidentiality associated with that and that we would take from that the output that is reflected in the report, but go no further. And that until some five years’ time after our work, we would keep that confidential. I thought we would be better to make all of the information that we had available to the public and make our report as transparent as possible so that the American public could have that.” ([CNN 9/25/2006](#))

September 25, 2006: Pakistani President Musharraf Publishes Controversial Autobiography



President Musharraf appeared on the Daily Show with Jon Stewart to promote his new book. [Source: Adam Rountree / AP] President Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan publishes his autobiography, *In the Line of Fire*, generating a number of controversies:

- He speculates that Omar Saeed Sheikh, who was involved in the kidnapping and murder of Daniel Pearl (see [January 23, 2002](#)) and is said to have wired money to the 9/11

hijackers (see [Early August 2001](#)), may have been recruited by MI6 in the 1990s (see [Before April 1993](#)). The *Independent* will also comment, “he does not mention that British-born Omar Saeed Sheikh, who planned the Pearl abduction, had surrendered a week before his arrest was announced to a general with intelligence links who was Musharraf’s friend. What happened during that week?” ([Tripathi 11/21/2006](#))

■Musharraf writes, “Those who habitually accuse us of not doing enough in the war on terror should simply ask the CIA how much prize money it has paid to the Government of Pakistan.” ([Press Trust of India 9/28/2006](#)) However, US law forbids rewards being paid to a government. The US Justice Department says: “We didn’t know about this. It should not happen. These bounty payments are for private individuals who help to trace terrorists on the FBI’s most-wanted list, not foreign governments.” ([McGrory 9/26/2006](#))

Musharraf then backtracks and claims the Government of Pakistan has not received any money from the US for capturing people. ([Press Trust of India 9/28/2006](#))

■He also claims that State Department Official Richard Armitage threatened that if Pakistan did not co-operate with the “war on terror,” the US would bomb it “back into the stone age” (see [September 11-16, 2001](#)).

The book does not receive good reviews. For example, the *Independent* calls it “self-serving and self-indulgent” and concludes that “Readers who want to understand contemporary Pakistan deserve a more honest book.” ([Tripathi 11/21/2006](#)) In a review with the sub-heading “Most of Gen. Pervez Musharraf’s new book cannot be believed,” the *Wall Street Journal* writes, “The book is not so much an autobiography as a highly selective auto-hagiography, by turns self-congratulatory, narcissistic, and mendacious.” ([Varadarajan 10/19/2006](#))

September 29, 2006: New Book Causes Controversy Over Previously Unmentioned 9/11 Warning

Journalist Bob Woodward’s new book *State of Denial* is released. While the book focuses mainly on politics regarding the Iraq war, it also describes an urgent warning that then-CIA Director George Tenet gave to Condoleezza Rice, National Security Adviser at the time, and other White House officials on July 10, 2001 (see [July 10, 2001](#)). ([Sanger 9/29/2006](#); [Hutchinson 9/29/2006](#); [Woodward 10/1/2006](#)) This warning had been mentioned in passing in a 2002 Time magazine article, but it had escaped widespread attention until Woodward’s book. ([Elliot 8/4/2002](#)) The meeting is particularly controversial because neither the 9/11 Congressional Inquiry nor the 9/11 Commission mentioned it in their final reports. The 9/11 Commission had learned about it from Tenet in early 2004 (see [January 28, 2004](#)). Rice and a number of 9/11 Commissioners deny knowing about the July meeting for several days, until documentation surfaces in the media detailing the meeting and Tenet’s testimony to the commission (see [October 1-2, 2006](#) and [September 30-October 3, 2006](#)). Details about the July meeting and surrounding controversies are reported on by the mainstream media for about a week, but there are no articles on it in any prominent newspaper after October 3, 2006. On October 5, Sen. John Kerry (D) formally asks Sen. Richard Lugar (R), chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, for hearings about the revelations in Woodward’s book, including controversies surrounding the July meeting. Kerry says in a letter to Lugar, “It

is necessary to understand the mistakes of the past in order to ensure they are not repeated, and having testimony from the parties under oath will help to sharpen recollections and clarify the exact nature of this important meeting.” However, no hearings take place. ([Kerry 10/5/2006](#))

September 30, 2006: New Video of Bin Laden and Hijackers Emerges, but Questions Linger about Video’s Origins



The above still is from the bin Laden speech footage released in late 2006, and the below still is from the film *The Road to Guantanamo* released in early 2006. The date stamps are 1/8/2000 and 8/1/2000. In the film it is speculated the speech could have been from January or August 2000. [Source: *London Times* / *Sony Pictures*] A new videotape showing bin Laden, Mohamed Atta, and Ziad Jarrah in Afghanistan before 9/11 is leaked to the media. NBC reports that the US military obtained the tape at an al-Qaeda compound in Afghanistan in late 2001. NBC filed a freedom of information act request for the video earlier in 2006, but still had not gotten copies when the *London Times* somehow got a copy and released it. ([MSNBC 9/30/2006](#)) The *Times* will only say the video was passed to them “through a previously tested channel. On condition of anonymity, sources from both al-Qaeda and the United States have confirmed its authenticity.” There is no sound, and the *Times* claims that “lip-readers have failed to decipher it, according to a US source.” One part of the tape shows bin Laden addressing a crowd of about 100 followers on January 8, 2000. Another part of the tape shows Atta and Jarrah together at an Afghanistan training camp on January 18, 2000, apparently while they read their wills. ([Fouda 10/1/2006](#)) Ben Venzke, head of a group monitoring terrorism communications called the IntelCentre, says, “It is highly

unlikely that al-Qaeda wanted the material to be released in this manner and it is not consistent with any previous release.” He notes that bin Laden previously said he was saving Atta’s last will for a special occasion. This release could have spoiled those plans. Dia Rashwan, an Egyptian expert on militant groups, finds it strange the cameraman focuses on bin Laden’s audience instead of on bin Laden, clearly identifying many of the people in the crowd. “Was this a video by al-Qaeda or by a security agency? I have never seen such a video.” ([Associated Press 10/3/2006](#)) Further, it is noted on the Internet that footage of bin Laden’s speech is remarkably similar to footage of a bin Laden speech in *The Road to Guantanamo*, a docu-drama released in March 2006. While the film is mostly made up of reenactments, it is based on the real cases of several Guantanamo prisoners and shows one of them being asked to identify himself in the speech footage in 2003.

September 30-October 3, 2006: 9/11 Commissioners Claim to Be Furious They Were Not Told of July 2001 Warning, When In Fact They Were

In late September 2006, a new book by Bob Woodward reveals that CIA Director Tenet and CIA counterterrorism chief Cofer Black gave National Security Adviser Rice their most urgent warning about a likely upcoming al-Qaeda attack (see [July 10, 2001](#) and [September 29, 2006](#)). Tenet detailed this meeting to the 9/11 Commission in early 2004 (see [January 28, 2004](#)), but it was not mentioned in the 9/11 Commission’s final report later that year. According to the Washington Post, “Though the investigators had access to all the paperwork on the meeting, Black felt there were things the commissions wanted to know about and things they didn’t want to know about.” ([Woodward 10/1/2006](#)) The 9/11 Commissioners initially vigorously deny that they were not told about the meeting. For instance, 9/11 Commissioner Jamie Gorelick says she checked with commission staff who told her they were never told about a meeting on that date. She says, “We didn’t know about the meeting itself. I can assure you it would have been in our report if we had known to ask about it.” ([Baker 9/30/2006](#)) Commissioner Tim Roemer says, “None of this was shared with us in hours of private interviews, including interviews under oath, nor do we have any paper on this. I’m deeply disturbed by this. I’m furious.”

Commissioner Richard Ben-Veniste says the meeting “was never mentioned to us.” Philip Zelikow, the executive director of the 9/11 Commission, says the commissioners and their staff had heard nothing in their private interviews with Tenet and Black to suggest that they made such a dire presentation to Rice. “If we had heard something that drew our attention to this meeting, it would have been a huge thing.” ([Shenon 10/2/2006](#))

However, on October 3, 2006, a transcript of Tenet’s private testimony to the 9/11 Commission is leaked to reporters and clearly shows that Tenet did warn Rice of an imminent al-Qaeda threat on July 10, 2001. Ben-Veniste, who attended the meeting along with Zelikow and other staff members, now confirms the meeting did take place and claims to recall details of it, even though he, Zelikow, and other 9/11 Commissioners had denied the existence of the meeting as recently as the day before. In the transcript, Tenet says “the system was blinking red” at the time. This statement becomes a chapter title in the 9/11 Commission’s final report but the report, which normally has detailed footnotes,

does not make it clear when Tenet said it. ([Eggen and Wright 10/3/2006](#)) Zelikow had close ties to Rice before joining the 9/11 Commission, having co-written a book with her (see [March 21, 2004](#)), and became one of her key aides after the commission disbanded (see [February 28, 2005](#)). Zelikow does not respond to requests for comments after Tenet's transcript surfaces. ([Landay, Strobel, and Walcott 10/2/2006](#); [Eggen and Wright 10/3/2006](#))

Autumn 2006-Late April 2007: Al-Qaeda Leader Is Kept in Secret CIA Prison, Revealing that CIA Prison System Is Still Operating

In autumn 2006, Abd al-Hadi al-Iraqi, said to be an adviser to Osama bin Laden, is captured and detained in a secret CIA prison. President Bush announced on September 6, 2006 that the secret CIA prisons were emptied, at least temporarily (see [September 2-3, 2006](#) and [September 6, 2006](#)), and apparently al-Hadi is transferred to CIA custody after this announcement. The CIA keeps al-Hadi's detention secret from not only the public but also from the Red Cross until late April 2007, when it is publicly announced that al-Hadi has been transferred to the US military prison at Guantanamo. Only then is the Red Cross allowed to examine him. President Bush's September 2006 announcement was in response to a US Supreme Court decision that rules that all detainees, including those like al-Hadi held in secret CIA prisons, are protected by some provisions of the Geneva Conventions. Then in October 2006 Congress passed the Military Commissions Act, which forbids abuse of all detainees in US custody, including those in CIA custody. The CIA claims that it has no legal responsibility to alert the Red Cross about detainees such as al-Hadi, but without notifying watchdog organizations such as the Red Cross, there is no way to really know if detainees being held by the CIA are being illegally abused or not. Mary Ellen O'Connell, a professor of international law at Notre Dame Law School, says al-Hadi's case raises the possibility that President Bush has secretly given the CIA a new mandate to operate outside the constraints of the Military Commissions Act: "This suggests that the president has signed some sort of additional authority for the CIA." ([Benjamin 5/22/2007](#))

October 1-2, 2006: Rice Denies Attendance in Urgent Pre-9/11 Al-Qaeda Briefing, but State Department Confirms She Was There

Secretary of State Rice says that she does not recall the meeting on July 10, 2001, when CIA Director Tenet and other officials briefed her about the al-Qaeda threat (see [July 10, 2001](#)). "What I am quite certain of is that I would remember if I was told, as this account apparently says, that there was about to be an attack in the United States, and the idea that I would somehow have ignored that I find incomprehensible." ([Gearan 10/2/2006](#)) Rice says she has no recollection of what she variously calls "the supposed meeting" and "the emergency so-called meeting." ([Mitchell 10/1/2006](#); [Landay, Strobel, and Walcott](#)

[10/2/2006](#)) The Washington Post comments that “Rice added to the confusion... by strongly suggesting that the meeting may never have occurred at all—even though administration officials had conceded for several days that it had.” Hours after Rice’s latest denial, the State Department confirms that documents show Rice did attend such a meeting on that date. However, State Department spokesman Sean McCormack then says, “The briefing was a summary of the threat reporting from the previous weeks. There was nothing new.” The Washington Post notes that when it was pointed out to McCormack that Rice asked for the briefing to be shown to Defense Secretary Rumsfeld and Attorney General Ashcroft (see [July 11-17, 2001](#)), “McCormack was unable to explain why Rice felt the briefing should be repeated if it did not include new material.” ([Eggen and Wright 10/3/2006](#))

October 25, 2006: Cheney Says Exploitation of Yemen Hub Information Could Have Prevented 9/11



Vice President Cheney linked the NSA’s warrantless surveillance program to the case of 9/11 hijackers Khalid Almihdhar and Nawaf Alhazmi. [Source: *White House*] Vice President Dick Cheney justifies an NSA program for warrantless surveillance of conversations between the US and other countries by referring to communications between 9/11 hijackers Khalid Almihdhar and Nawaf Alhazmi in the US and an al-Qaeda communications hub in Yemen (see [Early 2000-Summer 2001](#)). The calls were intercepted by the NSA, but this did not help the US roll up the plot. Echoing remarks previously made by President Bush (see [December 17, 2005](#)), Cheney says: “If you’ll recall, the 9/11 Commission focused criticism on the nation’s inability to uncover links between terrorists at home and terrorists overseas [note: the 9/11 Commission’s final report does not actually say this (see [December 17, 2005](#))]. The term that was used is ‘connecting the dots’—and the fact is that one small piece of data might very well make it possible to save thousands of lives. If this program

had been in place before 9/11, we might have been able to prevent it because we had two terrorists living in San Diego, contacting terrorist-related numbers overseas.” ([Cheney 8/25/2006](#)) Before 9/11, the NSA was entitled to pass on information about the calls to the FBI, but did not do so, even though the FBI had specifically asked for information about calls between the communications hub in Yemen and the US (see [Late 1998](#) and [Spring 2000](#)). Various explanations for this failure are offered after 9/11 (see [Summer 2002-Summer 2004](#) and [2004 and After](#)).

October 26, 2006: Bush Administration Seeks to Prevent Detainee from Revealing ‘Alternative Interrogation Methods’



Majid Khan. *[Source: Public domain via Washington Post]* The Bush administration submits documents to US District Judge Reggie B. Walton arguing that Majid Khan, a Guantanamo detainee who was held in the secret CIA prison system for three years, cannot be allowed access to lawyers because he may reveal what interrogation techniques were used on him. CIA Information Review Officer Marilyn A. Dorn says in an affidavit that since “detained by CIA in this program, he may have come into possession of information, including locations of detention, conditions of detention, and alternative interrogation techniques that is classified at the TOP SECRET//SCI [sensitive compartmented information] level.” ([Leonnig and Rich 11/4/2006](#))

October 30, 2006: US Missile Strike Hits Religious School in Pakistan



The Chenagai madrassa after the Predator strike. [Source: BBC] The US launches a Predator missile strike on a madrassa (religious school) in the Bajour district of Pakistan's tribal region, then Pakistan sends in helicopters to attack the survivors. The aim is to kill al-Qaeda second-in-command Ayman al-Zawahiri, but he is not there. Pakistani officials initially claim that a number of al-Qaeda operatives are killed, including Abu Obaidah al-Masri, an operational leader. But the next day they only say that some Taliban members are killed. ([Debat 10/30/2006](#); [Debat 10/31/2006](#)) The attack is said to have killed 82, many of them students at the madrassa located in the village of Chenagai. ([Lamb 11/26/2006](#))

Early November 2006: Saeed Sheikh's Attorney Plans to Use Musharraf Book in Appeal

After learning that a new book published by Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf (see [September 25, 2006](#)) says that alleged 9/11 mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM) either killed American reporter Daniel Pearl or played a leading role in the murder (see [January 31, 2002](#)), the lawyer for Saeed Sheikh, one of the kidnappers, says he plans to use the book in an appeal. Sheikh was found guilty of the kidnapping (see [April 5, 2002](#)), but the lawyer, Rai Bashir, says, "I'm going to submit an application that [Musharraf's] book be used as a piece of evidence. The head of state has exonerated [Sheikh and his accomplices]." ([Montero 11/8/2006](#)) Bashir will also make similar comments after KSM says that he carried out the murder in early 2007 (see [March 10, 2007](#)): "In the next court hearing, I am going to submit the recent statement by Khalid Sheikh Mohammed in which he said he himself beheaded the US journalist... From day one, my contention was that the evidence presented in court was not strong enough to lead to the conviction of my client." ([Tran 3/19/2007](#)) Sheikh was convicted in July 2002 (see [July 15, 2002](#)). As of late July 2005, the appeal proceedings had been adjourned thirty-two times. ([Masood 7/29/2005](#)) As of 2007, his appeal process is still in limbo.

November 6-8, 2006: Defense Secretary Rumsfeld Resigns after Midterm Elections; Replaced by Robert Gates



Rumsfeld leaving the Defense

Department. [Source: *Boston Globe*] Donald Rumsfeld resigns as US Defense Secretary. On November 6, he writes a letter telling President Bush of his resignation. Bush reads the letter the next day, which is also the date for midterm elections in the US, in which the Democratic Party wins majorities in the Senate and House of Representatives. Bush publicly announces the resignation the next day. No explanation is given. ([Roberts 8/15/2007](#)) He is formally replaced by Robert Gates on December 18, 2006. According to a retired general who worked closely with the first Bush administration, the Gates nomination means that George H.W. Bush, his close political advisers—Brent Scowcroft, James Baker—and the current President Bush are saying that “winning the 2008 election is more important than any individual. The issue for them is how to preserve the Republican agenda. The Old Guard wants to isolate Cheney and give their girl, Condoleezza Rice, a chance to perform.” It takes Scowcroft, Baker, and the elder Bush working together to oppose Cheney, the general says. “One guy can’t do it.” Other sources close to the Bush family say that the choice of Gates to replace Rumsfeld is more complex than the general describes, and any “victory” by the “Old Guard” may be illusory. A former senior intelligence official asks rhetorically, “A week before the election, the Republicans were saying that a Democratic victory was the seed of American retreat, and now Bush and Cheney are going to change their national-security policies? Cheney knew this was coming. Dropping Rummy after the election looked like a conciliatory move—‘You’re right, Democrats. We got a new guy and we’re looking at all the options. Nothing is ruled out.’” In reality, the former official says, Gates is being brought in to give the White House the credibility it needs in continuing its policies towards Iran and Iraq. Gates also has more credibility with Congress than Rumsfeld, a valuable asset if Gates needs to tell Congress that Iran’s nuclear program poses an imminent threat. “He’s not the guy who told us there were weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, and he’ll be taken seriously by Congress.” Joseph Cirincione, a national security director for the Center for American Progress, warns, “Gates will be in favor of talking to Iran and listening to the advice of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, but the neoconservatives are still there [in the White House] and still believe that chaos would be a small price for getting rid of the threat. The danger is that Gates could be the new Colin Powell—the one who opposes the policy but ends up briefing the Congress and publicly supporting it.” ([Hersh 11/27/2006](#))

December 11, 2006: Prince Turki Al-Faisal Resigns as Saudi Ambassador to US

Saudi Arabia's ambassador to the US, Prince Turki al-Faisal, abruptly resigns and flies back to Saudi Arabia. His staff is reportedly shocked by his sudden departure. The explanation provided to the public is that he wants to spend more time with his family. ([Wright 12/10/2006](#)) But insiders say Turki left because he was angry about dealings taking place behind his back between the previous Saudi ambassador, Prince Bandar, and top White House officials (see [Late November 2006](#) and [Late 2006](#)). ([Harnden 1/10/2007](#); [Hersh 3/5/2007](#))

December 19, 2006: High-Ranking Taliban Leader Killed



Mullah Akhter Mohammed Osmani. [*Source: Reuters*] Mullah Akhter Mohammed Osmani, a high ranking Taliban leader, is reportedly killed in Afghanistan by a US air strike. Osmani is easily the highest-ranking Taliban leader to have killed or captured since 9/11. He was in charge of Taliban operations in six provinces in Afghanistan. A Taliban official confirms his death a few days later. According to news reports, British and US forces tracked him by his satellite phone signal and bombed his vehicle once he was in an unpopulated area. ([Smith 12/24/2006](#); [CBC News 12/27/2006](#)) Osmani was captured in 2002 but then apparently accidentally released a short time later (see [Late July 2002](#)).

December 20, 2006: Federal Government Asserts Right to Search Mail

President Bush signs the Postal Reform bill and includes a signing statement asserting that the federal government has a right to search the mail of any US citizen "for foreign intelligence collection." While White House spokesman Tony Snow insists that Bush is just clarifying current law, the New York Daily News reports that experts say Bush's signing statement "is contrary to existing law and contradicted the bill he had just signed." Nor do the lawmakers who drafted the law agree with Bush's interpretation. "Despite the president's statement that he may be able to circumvent a basic privacy

protection, the new postal law continues to prohibit the government from snooping into people's mail without a warrant," says Representative Henry Waxman (D-CA), who co-sponsored the bill. Under current law, federal agents must have a search warrant to open first-class mail. Commenting on Bush's signing statement, Ann Beeson, an attorney with the American Civil Liberties Union, remarks, "The signing statement raises serious questions whether he is authorizing opening of mail contrary to the Constitution and to laws enacted by Congress. What is the purpose of the signing statement if it isn't that?" ([New York Daily News 1/4/2007](#); [MSNBC 1/5/2007](#))

December 21, 2006: Civil Rights Group Files Lawsuit against Department of Homeland Security over Terror Risk Scores

The Electronic Frontier Foundation files a lawsuit against the Department of Homeland Security in an effort to obtain more information about a secret program called the Automated Targeting System (ATS) (see [2002 and After](#)). This program allows the government to assign terror risk numbers to American citizens who enter or leave the US. The suit demands an expedited response to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request it filed earlier in the month. Frontier Foundation Senior Counsel David Sobel says, "DHS needs to provide answers, and provide them quickly, to the millions of law-abiding citizens who are worried about this 'risk assessment' score that will follow them throughout their lives." ([Electronic Frontier Foundation 12/19/2006](#))

January 17, 2007: Mullah Omar Allegedly in Pakistan Under ISI Protection



Muhammad Hanif confessing on video. [*Source: BBC*] A captured Taliban spokesman claims that Taliban leader Mullah Omar is living in Pakistan under the protection of the ISI. Muhammad Hanif, a.k.a. Abdul Haq Haji Gulroz, one of two Taliban spokesmen, was recently captured by the Afghan government. He is seen on video saying to his captors, "[Omar] lives in Quetta [a Pakistan border town]. He is protected by the ISI." He further claims that the ISI funds and equips Taliban suicide bombings and former ISI Director Hamid Gul supports and funds the insurgency. The Pakistani government denies the allegations and claims Omar has not been seen in Pakistan. ([BBC 1/17/2007](#); [Coughlan 1/19/2007](#))

January 24-February 6, 2007: Egypt to Prosecute Leaders of Al Taqwa Bank and Muslim Brotherhood



Youssef Nada in 2007. *[Source: PBS]* Egypt freezes the assets of dozens of top Muslim Brotherhood figures and then announces that 40 of them will stand trial in Egypt's military court. The Associated Press notes this court is "known for its swift trials and no right of appeal." Figures targeted include most of the top leaders of the Al Taqwa Bank in Switzerland, the Muslim Brotherhood bank banned by the US for its alleged ties to al-Qaeda. About five of those to be tried in absentia are tied to the bank, including bank directors Youssef Nada and Ghaleb Himmat. ([Agence France-Presse 1/24/2007](#); [Associated Press 2/6/2007](#); [Ikhwanweb 2/8/2007](#)) The Muslim Brotherhood has been officially banned in Egypt for decades but it has generally been tolerated by the government. Muslim Brotherhood members became the largest opposition bloc in the Egyptian parliament after winning 88 of the 454 seats in the 2005 legislative elections by running as independents. ([Associated Press 2/6/2007](#))

January 30, 2007: Osama's Brother-in-Law Killed in Mysterious Circumstances

Mohammed Jamal Khalifa, brother-in-law and former best friend of Osama bin Laden, is killed in Madagascar. Khalifa's family claims that a large group of armed men broke into his house and killed him as he slept. His computer and laptop is stolen. Khalifa was living in Saudi Arabia but traded precious stones and was staying at a mine that he owns. His family says they do not believe he had been killed by locals. There is considerable evidence Khalifa was involved in funding al-Qaeda-connected plots in the Philippines and Yemen in the 1990s (see [December 16, 1994-February 1995](#), [December 16, 1994-May 1995](#), and [1996-1997 and After](#)). Since that time, Khalifa has steadfastly denied any involvement in terrorism and has criticized bin Laden. CNN reporter Nic Robertson asks, "Was he killed by bin Laden's associates for speaking out against the al-Qaeda leader or, equally feasibly, by an international intelligence agency settling an old score?" Just one week earlier, a Philippine newspaper published a posthumous 2006 interview with Khaddafy Janjalani, former leader of Abu Sayyaf, a Muslim militant group in the

southern Philippines. In the interview, Janjalani claimed Abu Sayyaf received \$122,000 from Khalifa and bomber Ramzi Yousef in the mid-1990s (see [Early 1991](#)). ([CNN 1/31/2007](#); [Ioniaina 2/1/2007](#))

February 1, 2007: Bush Administration Opposes Bill Tying Military Aid to Pakistan with Pakistan Stopping Support for Taliban

The Bush administration is opposed to a bill in Congress that would link military aid for Pakistan to tackling the Taliban. The bill, which has passed the House of Representatives, calls for an end to military assistance to Pakistan unless it stops the Taliban from operating out of Pakistan. Administration officials say the bill would undermine the fostering of a closer relationship with Pakistan. ([Reuters 2/1/2007](#))

February 26, 2007: Cheney Travels to Pakistan to Meet with Musharraf

Vice President Dick Cheney flies to Pakistan to meet with President Pervez Musharraf. The White House is tight-lipped about the trip and refuses to provide details about what the two leaders discuss. But media accounts, citing administration officials, suggest that Cheney warns Musharraf that US aid to Pakistan could be in jeopardy if his government does not improve in its efforts to combat al-Qaeda and the Taliban. ([Sanger 2/26/2007](#)) But Pakistani intelligence sources will later tell ABC news that the two leaders discussed a secret operation (see [2005 and After](#)) to support attacks against Iran by the Sunni militant group Jundullah. ([Ross and Isham 4/3/2007](#))

February 26-28, 2007: Taliban Leader Apparently Falsely Reported as Captured

In early March 2007, the Pakistani government announces that a top Taliban official has been captured. Mullah Obaidullah Akhund, the Taliban's former defense minister, was supposedly captured on February 26, 2007, the same day that Vice President Cheney visited Pakistan, which the Associated Press says "has been under growing international pressure to crack down on Taliban militants believed to seek sanctuary on its soil." If so, he would be the most senior Taliban leader ever captured since 9/11. However, the Swiss weekly SonntagsBlick claims that one of its reporters interviewed him in Quetta, Pakistan on February 28, just two days after his supposed capture. SonntagsBlick writes, "The world press reported: top-Taliban imprisoned. At the same time he was sitting with a SonntagsBlick reporter having coffee." ([Associated Press 3/2/2007](#); [Associated Press 3/11/2007](#)) He was also reportedly captured by the Northern Alliance in early 2002 and then released with US approval (see [Early January 2002](#)).

March 1, 2007: 'Iraq Effect' Worsening Terrorism Around World, Says Report

A report by the Center on Law and Security (CLS) finds that the “Iraq effect” is costing lives around the world. The report finds that the Iraq occupation is directly to blame for an upsurge in fundamentalist violence worldwide. It finds that the number killed in jihadist attacks around the world has risen dramatically since the Iraq war began in March 2003, comparing the period between 9/11 and the invasion of Iraq with the period since the invasion. The count—excluding the Arab-Israel conflict—shows the number of deaths due to terrorism rose from 729 to 5,420. Iraq has served as the catalyst for a ferocious fundamentalist backlash, according to the study, which says that the number of those killed by Islamists within Iraq rose from 7 to 3,122. A similar rise in attacks has occurred in Afghanistan, Chechnya, in the Kashmir region between India and Pakistan, and throughout Europe. Both President Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair insist that the opposite is true. Bush has said, “If we were not fighting and destroying the enemy in Iraq, they would not be idle. They would be plotting and killing Americans across the world and within our borders. By fighting these terrorists in Iraq, Americans in uniform are defeating a direct threat to the American people.” Blair insists that the Iraq war was not been responsible for Muslim fundamentalist attacks such as the 7/7 London bombings which killed 52 people (see [July 7, 2005](#)). “Iraq, the region and the wider world is a safer place without Saddam,” Blair said in July 2004. ([Independent 3/1/2007](#))

March 9, 2007: Government Claims Key Evidence Against Padilla Has Been Misplaced



Judge Marcia Cooke. [*Source: Daily Business Review*]/Federal prosecutors in the Jose Padilla case (see [May 8, 2002](#)) say that a video of Padilla’s final interrogation, on March 2, 2004, is inexplicably missing. The video was not part of a packet of DVDs containing classified material turned over to the court handling the Padilla case. Padilla’s lawyers believe that the missing videotape may show Padilla being subjected to “harsh” interrogation techniques that may qualify as torture, and wonder if other potentially exculpatory recordings and documentation of Padilla’s interrogations have also been lost. Padilla’s lawyers say something happened during that last interrogation session on March 2, 2004, at the Navy brig in Charleston, South Carolina, that led Padilla to believe that the lawyers are actually government agents. Padilla no longer trusts them, the lawyers say, and they want to know what happened. Prosecutors say that they cannot find the tape despite an intensive search. “I don’t know what

happened to it,” Pentagon attorney James Schmidli said during a recent court hearing. US District Court Judge Marcia Cooke finds the government’s claim hard to believe. “Do you understand how it might be difficult for me to understand that a tape related to this particular individual just got mislaid?” Cooke told prosecutors at a hearing last month. Padilla, a US citizen, is scheduled to stand trial in April. Padilla’s lawyers want the brig tapes, medical records, and other documentation to prove their claims that Padilla suffers intense post-traumatic stress syndrome from his long isolation and repeated interrogations, though Cooke has ruled that Padilla is competent to stand trial. They believe that he was mistreated and possibly tortured in the Naval brig before being transferred to civilian custody. This missing DVD may not be the only one because brig logs indicate that there were approximately 72 hours of interrogations that either were not recorded, or whose recordings were never disclosed. Prosecutors claim some interrogations were not recorded, but defense lawyers question that, pointing out that there are even videos of Padilla taking showers. ([Isikoff and Hosenball 2/28/2007](#); [Anderson 3/9/2007](#)) Statements by then-Deputy Attorney General James Comey in June 2004 indirectly support the defense’s claim that Padilla was subjected to harsh interrogation tactics (see [June 2004](#)). Other videotapes that may pertain to the Padilla case have been destroyed by the CIA (see [November 17, 2005](#)). Former civil rights litigator Glenn Greenwald writes, “[I]f the administration’s patently unbelievable claim were true—namely, that it did ‘lose’ the video of its interrogation of this Extremely Dangerous International Terrorist—that would, by itself, evidence a reckless ineptitude with American national security so grave that it ought to be a scandal by itself. But the likelihood that the key interrogation video with regard to Padilla’s torture claims was simply ‘lost’ is virtually non-existent. Destruction of relevant evidence in any litigation is grounds for dismissal of the case (or defense) of the party engaged in that behavior. But where, as here, the issues extend far beyond the singular proceeding itself—we are talking about claims by a US citizen that he was tortured by his own government—destruction of evidence of this sort would be obstruction of justice of the most serious magnitude.” ([Greenwald 3/10/2007](#))

March 9-April 28, 2007: Combat Status of High Value Detainees Is Reviewed in Guantanamo Prison



High value detainees. Top row, from left: KSM, Mustafa Ahmad al-Hawsawi, Hambali, Khallad bin Attash. Middle row, from left: Ali Abdul Aziz Ali, Ramzi bin al-Shibh, Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri, Abu Zubaida. Bottom row, from left: Majid Khan, Ahmed Khalfan Ghailani, Abu Faraj al-Libbi. There are no known public photographs for the three others. [Source: FBI (except for AFP for Hambali, New York Times for Abu Zubaida, and Reuters for Majid Khan)] (click image to enlarge) Combat Status Review Tribunal hearings are held for fourteen high-value detainees who have been moved to Guantanamo Bay and are being held there by the US military (see [September 2-3, 2006](#)). The purpose of the hearings is to check that the detainees are properly designated as “enemy combatants.” Transcripts of the unclassified part of the hearings are released to the media, but no journalists are allowed to attend the hearings, and no photographs of the prisoners are released. However, Senator Carl Levin (D) and former Senator Bob Graham (D) view Khalid’s Shaikh Mohammed’s confession on closed circuit television in Guantanamo Bay (see [March 10, 2007](#)).

- Alleged 9/11 mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM) admits to being involved in dozens of terror plots and attempts to morally justify his actions (see [March 10, 2007](#)), causing a good deal of interest in the media (see [March 15-23, 2007 and Shortly After](#)).
- Mustafa Ahmad al-Hawsawi says he is not an al-Qaeda member. However, he admits receiving military training from al-Qaeda, and helping some of the 9/11 hijackers, as well as knowing Osama bin Laden, Ayman Al-Zawahiri, Ramzi bin al-Shibh, and KSM (see [March 21, 2007](#)).
- Hambali is accused of being a leader of al-Qaeda affiliate Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) and being involved in several bomb plots in Southeast Asia. He submits a wide-ranging written statement and denies all involvement in terrorist acts, saying he resigned from JI in 2000. ([US department of Defense 4/4/2007](#).)
- Khallad bin Attash is accused of being involved in the attacks on US embassies in East

Africa and the USS *Cole*. He says that the details of his participation in the attacks, as presented in the evidence, are incorrect, but admits being involved in the attacks. ([US department of Defense 3/12/2007](#).)

- Ali Abdul Aziz Ali (a.k.a. Ammar al-Baluchi) admits sending hijacker Marwan Alshehhi some money, but says he knew nothing of the plot, denies being an “enemy combatant,” and says he has provided “vital information” to the US (see [March 30, 2007](#)).

- Ramzi bin al-Shibh refuses to attend the hearing, or talk to his personal representative and translator, so only the summary of unclassified evidence is read out at the hearing. He is accused of knowing three of the hijacker pilots and facilitating the plot, as well as helping Zacarias Moussaoui and being captured at an al-Qaeda safehouse. ([US department of Defense 3/9/2007](#).)

- Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri is accused of involvement in the African embassy and USS *Cole* bombings, but claims that he was tortured into confessing details of plots he invented (see [March 10-April 15, 2007](#)). However, he admits knowing Osama bin Laden and several other militants, as well as receiving up to \$500,000 from bin Laden and distributing it to associates, some of whom used the money to get married and some of whom used it “to do other stuff.” He admits knowing the people involved in the USS *Cole* attack, such as al-Qaeda commander Khallad bin Attash, who he describes as a “regular guy who was jihadist,” and he admits buying the boat used in the attack and some explosives in Yemen using money provided by bin Laden. ([US department of Defense 3/14/2007](#).)

- Abu Zubaida is accused of heading the Khaldan and Darunta training camps in Afghanistan, and admits heading Khaldan, but denies actually being a member of al-Qaeda (see [March 27, 2007](#)) and complains of torture (see [March 10-April 15, 2007](#)).

- Ahmed Khalfan Ghailani is accused of being involved in the 1998 embassy bombings (see [August 7, 1998](#)), for which he was indicted in the US. He admits being present when one of the bomb trucks was purchased and traveling in a scouting vehicle, but not to the embassy; and he admits buying the explosives, but argues another team member “could have gotten it himself, but he sent me to get it and bring it to him.” He also says he was told the explosives were for “mining diamonds.” He admits working with al-Qaeda, but denies actually being a member. He concludes by saying he “would like to apologize to the United States Government for what I did before... it was without my knowledge what they were doing but I helped them.” ([US Department of Defense 3/17/2007](#).)

- Majid Khan, who is alleged to have facilitated travel for extremists and to have planned an attack inside the US, attends the hearing, but says he “would rather have a fair trial... than a tribunal process.” He also denies the charges, complains of being tortured in US custody (see [March 10-April 15, 2007](#)), and submits favorable testimony from witnesses. For example, one witness claims he was forced to make a false statement saying that Khan wanted to participate in a suicide operation against Pakistani President Musharraf by the FBI, which threatened to transfer him to Guantanamo Bay. Khan also points out that he helped the FBI catch an illegal immigrant and says he will take a lie detector test. ([US department of Defense 4/15/2007](#).)

- Abu Faraj al-Libbi, who was accused of running an al-Qaeda guest house in Afghanistan, running a communications hub, and facilitating travel for militant trainees, elects not to participate in his hearing, as, according to his personal representative, “his freedom is far too important to be decided by an administrative process and [he] is

waiting for legal proceedings.” ([US department of Defense 3/9/2007](#).)

■Mohamed Farik Amin is accused of being involved with the al-Qaeda affiliate Jemaah Islamiyah and of helping finance attacks by it. He attends the hearing, but does not say anything. ([US department of Defense 3/13/2007](#).)

■Mohammed Nazir Bin Lep (a.k.a. Lillie) does not to attend the hearing and is represented by his personal representative. He is accused of facilitating the transfer of funds for attacks in Southeast Asia, being an associate of Hambali, and having suspicious materials in the apartment where he was arrested. He says he has “nothing to do with JI” and that “it is true I facilitated the movement of money for Hambali, but I did not know what it was going to be used for.” He also points out, “it is not against the law in Thailand to have an M-16 in your apartment.” ([US Department of Defense 3/20/2007](#).)

■Gouled Hassan Dourad is accused of heading an al-Qaeda cell in Djibouti and of participating in operations by Al-Ittihad al-Islami in Somalia, but decides not to attend the hearing. He denies the specific allegations, but acknowledges fighting Ethiopians, which he says is his “right.” ([US Department of Defense 4/28/2007](#))

March 10, 2007: KSM Admits to Long List of Plots, Defends Actions at Military Hearing



A photo of Khalid Shaikh Mohammed allegedly taken during his capture in 2003 (there are controversies about the capture). [Source: *FBI*]/Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM) attends his combat status review tribunal at Guantanamo Bay (see [March 9-April 28, 2007](#)), where he admits participating in the 9/11 attacks and numerous other plots, and offers a defense of his actions. He claims responsibility or co-responsibility for a list of 31 plots, including:

- The 1993 World Trade Center bombing (see [February 26, 1993](#));
- The 9/11 operation: “I was responsible for the 9/11 operation from A to Z;”
- The murder of Daniel Pearl (see [January 31, 2002](#)): “I decapitated with my blessed right hand the head of the American Jew, Daniel Pearl;”
- The shoe bombing operation (see [December 22, 2001](#));
- The Bali nightclub bombing (see [October 12, 2002](#));
- A series of ship-bombing operations (see [Mid-1996-September 11, 2001](#) and [June 2001](#));
- Failed plots to assassinate several former US presidents;
- Planned attacks on bridges in New York;

- Various other failed attacks in the US, UK, Israel, Indonesia, Australia, Japan, Azerbaijan, the Philippines, India, South Korea, and Turkey;
- The planned destruction of an El-Al flight in Bangkok;
- The Bojinka plot (see [January 6, 1995](#)), and assassination plans for President Clinton (see [September 18-November 14, 1994](#)) and the Pope (see [September 1998-January 1999](#)); and
- Planned attacks on the Library Tower in California, the Sears Tower in Chicago, the Empire State Building in New York, and the “Plaza Bank” in Washington State. ([US Department of Defense 3/10/2007](#) ^a) However, the Plaza Bank was not founded until 2006, three years after KSM was captured. The bank’s president comments: “We’re confused as to how we got on that list. We’ve had a little bit of fun with it over here.” ([Pulkkinen 3/15/2007](#))

On the other hand, KSM denies receiving funds from Kuwait or ever heading al-Qaeda’s military committee; he says this was a reporting error by Yosri Fouda, who interviewed him in 2002 (see [April, June, or August 2002](#)). In addition, he claims he was tortured, his children were abused in detention, and that he lied to his interrogators (see [June 16, 2004](#)). He also complains that the tribunal system is unfair and that many people who are not “enemy combatants” are being held in Guantanamo Bay. For example, a team sent by a Sunni government to assassinate bin Laden was captured by the Taliban, then by the US, and is being held in Guantanamo Bay. He says that his membership of al-Qaeda is related to the Bojinka operation, but that even after he became involved with al-Qaeda he continued to work with another organization, which he calls the “Mujaheddin,” was based in Pakistan, and for which he says he killed Daniel Pearl. ([US Department of Defense 3/10/2007](#) ^a) (Note: KSM’s cousin Ramzi Yousef was involved with the militant Pakistani organization Sipah-e-Sahaba). ([Reeve 1999, pp. 50, 54, 67](#)) He goes on to compare radical Islamists fighting to free the Middle East from US influence to George Washington, hero of the American War of Independence, and says the US is oppressing Muslims in the same way the British are alleged by some to have oppressed Americans. Regarding the fatalities on 9/11, he says, “I’m not happy that three thousand been killed in America. I feel sorry even. I don’t like to kill children and the kids.” Although Islam prohibits killing, KSM argues that there is an exception because “you are killing people in Iraq... Same language you use, I use... The language of war is victims.” ([US Department of Defense 3/10/2007](#) ^a) The hearing is watched from an adjoining room on closed circuit television by Senator Carl Levin (D) and former Senator Bob Graham (D). ([US Congress 3/10/2007](#)) KSM’s confession arouses a great deal of interest in the media, which is skeptical of it (see [March 15-23, 2007 and Shortly After](#)).

March 10-April 15, 2007: High Value Detainees Complain of Torture at Guantanamo Bay Hearings



Majid Khan. [Source: Associated Press] At hearings in

Guantanamo Bay in spring 2007 to determine whether they are “enemy combatants” (see [March 9-April 28, 2007](#)), several alleged top al-Qaeda leaders complain of being tortured in US custody:

■ Alleged al-Qaeda logistics manager Abu Zubaida says he is ill in Guantanamo Bay and has had around 40 seizures that temporarily affect his ability to speak and write properly, as well as his memory; apparently they are originally the result of a 1992 injury from which he still has shrapnel in his head. He says that the seizures are brought on by broken promises to return his diary, which he describes as “another form of torture,” as he is emotionally attached to it. He also says he was tortured after being captured (see [Mid-May 2002 and After](#)), when he was “half die”, due to a gunshot wound received when he was taken, and that he lied under torture. However, the passage in which he describes his treatment at this time is redacted. He has many other injuries, has lost a testicle, and also complains the Guantanamo authorities refuse to give him socks for his cold feet. He has to use his prayer hat to keep his feet warm and does so during the hearing. ([US Department of Defense 3/27/2007](#) ³⁵)

■ 9/11 mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed remarks that, “I know American people are torturing us from seventies.” However, the next section of the transcript is redacted. He also says his children were abused in US custody. ([US Department of Defense 3/10/2007](#) ³⁶)

■ Alleged travel facilitator Majid Khan submits a 12-page “written statement of torture.” Khan’s father also gives an account of the torture he says his son was subjected to: he was tied tightly to a chair in stress positions; hooded, which caused him difficulty breathing; beaten repeatedly; deprived of sleep; and kept in a mosquito-infested cell too small for him to lie down in. His father also says Khalid Shaikh Mohammed’s children, aged about 6 and 8, were held in the same building and were tortured by having insects placed on their legs to make them disclose their father’s location. ([US department of Defense 4/15/2007](#) ³⁷)

■ Alleged al-Qaeda manager Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri says he was tortured into confessing the details of plots he invented. He claims that “he was tortured into confession and once he made a confession his captors were happy and they stopped torturing him... [and] he made up stories during the torture in order to get it to stop.” Many of the details of the torture are redacted, but he says in one unredacted comment, “One time they tortured me one way and another time they tortured me in a different way.” ([US department of](#)

[Defense 3/14/2007](#) ^(A))

Eugene Fidell, president of the National Institute of Military Justice, says that the claims of torture could undermine the legitimacy of future military commissions: “Someone has got to get to the bottom of these allegations... If there is something there, they are going to need to address it.” The Pentagon promises to investigate the allegations, but Amnesty International comments, “Given the Bush administration record so far on these matters, it strains credulity that any such investigation would be anything other than substandard, or [that] those responsible would be held accountable.” ([Meyer 3/31/2007](#))

March 14, 2007: House Intelligence Committee Informed of Destruction of CIA Interrogation Tapes in ‘Offhand Comment’



Silvestre Reyes. [*Source: US House of Representatives*] In response to a question asked at a briefing, CIA Director Michael Hayden makes an “offhand comment” to the House Intelligence Committee indicating that tapes the CIA has made of detainee interrogations have been destroyed (see [Spring-Late 2002](#)). Although some committee members have been aware of the tapes’ existence since 2003 (see [February 2003](#)), this is apparently the first time they learn of their destruction, which occurred over year ago (see [November 2005](#)). The destruction is again “briefly mentioned” in a letter to a member of the committee in mid-April. Leading committee members Silvestre Reyes and Peter Hoekstra will later write to Hayden, “We do not consider this to be sufficient notification. Moreover, these brief mentions were certainly not contemporaneous with the decision to destroy the videotapes.” ([US Congress 12/7/2007](#)) The Senate Intelligence Committee is apparently not informed until later (see [December 7, 2007](#)).

March 15-May 2007: Rosie O’Donnell Criticized After Questioning Official 9/11 Story



Rosie O'Donnell. [Source: ABC/TV personality

Rosie O'Donnell is heavily criticized after she raises questions about the 9/11 attacks and who was responsible for them. On ABC's popular morning show *The View*, which she co-hosts, O'Donnell suggests that a recent confession by alleged 9/11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, where he'd admitted responsibility for 9/11 and other terrorist attacks, was false and had been elicited by using torture. ([WorldNetDaily 3/15/2007](#); [Gibson 3/16/2007](#)) In a March 15 posting on her Internet blog, she raises questions about World Trade Center Building 7, which collapsed late in the afternoon of 9/11, such as, "The fires in WTC 7 were not evenly distributed, so a perfect collapse was impossible," and, "Molten steel and partially evaporated steel members were found in the debris." She lists various official records that were supposedly destroyed when WTC 7 collapsed, including records of investigations of Enron and other companies. ([WorldNetDaily 3/19/2007](#)) Two weeks later, she says on *The View*, "I do believe... it is impossible for a building to fall the way it fell without explosives being involved, World Trade Center 7." Asked who she thinks was responsible, she replies, "I have no idea." ([Adubato 4/5/2007](#)) O'Donnell is subsequently fiercely attacked by some commentators. Fox News host Bill O'Reilly accuses her of "spitting out the worst propaganda that is fed to [her] by far-left American haters on the net." ([Fox News 3/30/2007](#)) MSNBC's conservative host Joe Scarborough calls for her to be fired. Jonah Goldberg writes in the Los Angeles Times that O'Donnell "seems to think that [*The View*] is the perfect venue to audition as grand marshal for the next tinfoil hat parade." ([Goldberg 4/3/2007](#); [Elfman 4/10/2007](#)) At the end of April, O'Donnell announces she is leaving *The View*, reportedly because she has been unable to come up with a contractual agreement with ABC. ([Nista 4/25/2007](#)) She plans to address the collapse of WTC 7 in a special segment of the show before departing. ([Nizza 5/16/2007](#)) She also reportedly books the producers of the popular 9/11 conspiracy documentary *Loose Change* (see April 2005-January 2006) to appear on *The View*. ([Johnson, Froelich, and Hoffman 5/27/2007](#)) But neither of these plans transpires, and she last appears on the show late in May. ([Bauder 5/25/2007](#)) Brian Frons, the president of ABC's daytime television group, says in a statement, "We had hoped that Rosie would be with us until the end of her contract three weeks from now, but Rosie has informed us that she would like an early leave." ([Fox News 5/25/2007](#); [Steinberg 5/26/2007](#)) In her defense, the Toronto Star writes that O'Donnell "had to go," because she "messed up the pretty picture that the corporate media present." ([Zerbisias 5/1/2007](#))

March 15-23, 2007 and Shortly After: Media and Terrorism Analysts Respond to KSM Confession with Scepticism



A cartoonist's view of Khalid Shaikh Mohammed's confession. [Source: Rob Rodgers / Pittsburgh Post-Gazette] Khalid Shaikh Mohammed's (KSM) confession at a Guantanamo Bay hearing (see [March 10, 2007](#)), becomes, as *Time* puts it, "a focus of cable TV and other media coverage, a reminder of America's ongoing battle against international terrorism." ([Zagorin 3/15/2007](#)) However, terrorism analysts are skeptical of some aspects of it. In an article entitled *Why KSM's Confession Rings False*, former CIA agent Robert Baer says that KSM is "boasting" and "It's also clear he is making things up." Specifically, Baer doubts that KSM murdered *Wall Street Journal* reporter Daniel Pearl (see [January 31, 2002](#)). Baer notes that this "raises the question of just what else he has exaggerated, or outright fabricated." Baer also points out he does not address the question of state support for al-Qaeda and that "al-Qaeda also received aid from supporters in Pakistan, quite possibly from sympathizers in the Pakistani intelligence service." ([Baer 3/15/2007](#)) Pearl's father also takes the confession of his son's murder "with a spice of doubt." ([Chaudhuri 3/23/2007](#)) Journalist Yosri Fouda, who interviewed KSM in 2002 (see [April, June, or August 2002](#)), comments, "he seems to be taking responsibility for some outrages he might not have perpetrated, while keeping quiet about ones that suggest his hand." Specifically, he thinks KSM may have been involved in an attack in Tunisia that killed about 20 people (see [April 11, 2002](#)). ([Fouda 3/18/2007](#)) KSM is also believed to have been involved in the embassy and USS *Cole* bombings (see [Mid-1996-September 11, 2001](#)), but these are also not mentioned. Terrorism analyst Bruce Riedel also does not take the confession at face value, saying, "He wants to promote his own importance. It's been a problem since he was captured." ([Zagorin 3/15/2007](#)) The *Los Angeles Times* notes that, according to intelligence officials, "the confession should be taken with a heavy dose of skepticism." A former FBI manager says: "Clearly he is responsible for some of the attacks. But I believe he is taking credit for things he did not have direct involvement in." ([Meyer 3/16/2007](#)) The *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* points out that the Plaza Bank, one of the targets KSM says he planned to attack, was actually established in

2006, three years after he was captured. ([Pulkkinen 3/15/2007](#)) Michael Scheuer, formerly head of the CIA's bin Laden unit, notes KSM only says he is "involved" in the plots and that 31 plots in 11 years "can hardly be called excessive." ([Chaudhuri 3/23/2007](#)) Some media are even more skeptical. For example, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* comments that KSM, "claimed credit for everything but being John Wilkes Booth's handler." ([Philadelphia Inquirer 3/30/2007](#))

March 21, 2007: 9/11 Facilitator Denies Providing Substantial Funding for Plot

At his combat status review tribunal in Guantanamo Bay, 9/11 facilitator Mustafa Ahmed al-Hawsawi denies providing a large amount of funds for the plot, although he does admit knowing some of the hijackers and helping them travel to the US. According to the Los Angeles Times, his denial that he provided substantial amounts to the hijackers is surprising because, "US authorities, as well as the Sept. 11 commission that investigated the attacks, have long alleged that al-Hawsawi was a top lieutenant of plot mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed... [and he]... arranged funding and travel for several of the 19 hijackers." Meyer also points out that, "the unclassified summary of evidence read at the hearing did not mention any instances in which he allegedly sent money to them. When specifically asked during the hearing if he had done so, al-Hawsawi said he had not." ([Meyer 3/30/2007](#)) The unclassified facts supporting his designation as an enemy combatant mostly relate to his receiving money transfers from some of the hijackers just before 9/11 (see [September 5-10, 2001](#)), a laptop computer hard-drive containing information about al-Qaeda that is said to be "associated with the detainee," and a nineteen-page address book. He admits returning to Pakistan just before 9/11 on the advice of 9/11 managers Ramzi bin al-Shibh and Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, meeting Osama bin Laden and Ayman Al-Zawahiri, receiving military training in an al-Qaeda camp, meeting four of the muscle hijackers (see [Early-Late June, 2001](#)), and talking to Mohamed Atta on the phone. However, he says that the information on the hard-drive was copied from other computers and was not put there by him, the address book is not his, he never swore *bayat* to Bin Laden, and is therefore not an al-Qaeda member. ([US department of Defense 3/21/2007](#)) Several other high-value detainees have combat status review tribunals hearings at this time (see [March 9-April 28, 2007](#)).

March 27, 2007: Abu Zubaida Denies Some Charges Against Him, Complains of Torture

At a Guantanamo Bay tribunal to decide his combat status (see [March 9-April 28, 2007](#)), militant Islamist logistics manager Abu Zubaida is accused of heading Khaldan and Darunta training camps in Afghanistan and of co-ordinating their operation with Osama bin Laden, as well as moving money for al-Qaeda, desiring fraudulently-obtained Canadian passports for a terrorist plot, and making diary entries about planned attacks in the US. Zubaida, who complains of being tortured in US custody (see [Mid-May 2002 and After](#) and [March 10-April 15, 2007](#)), denies that he is an "enemy combatant," saying that

the Khaldan training camp, which he admits being logistics manager of, was around since the Soviet-Afghan War and was also used to train Muslims who wanted to fight invaders in Muslim lands, such as Chechnya, Kashmir, the Philippines, and Bosnia, where “America helped us.” After he was captured the US administration exaggerated his importance, and some media accounts have suggested his role was greatly exaggerated (see [Shortly After March 28, 2002](#)). He denies being an official member of al-Qaeda and says he disagrees with attacks on civilians. However, he admits some of his trainees subsequently decided to join al-Qaeda and that he did not prevent them from doing this. He also denies moving the money and submits a volume of his diary that apparently shows he was in Pakistan when the charges state he went to Saudi Arabia to collect the money. He requests the production of other volumes of his diaries, on which some of the charges are based, but they are not made available to the tribunal. In addition, he denies corresponding with bin Laden before 2000 and details a dispute that arose between them after that time. He says his diary entries about military targets are “strictly hypothetical,” and the passports are for non-terrorist travel. Following the US invasion of Afghanistan, he admits he helped non-aligned fighters escape from South Asia. He states that he is an enemy of the US because of its alliance with Israel, which he claims is oppressing his fellow Palestinians, “A partner of a killer is also a killer.” ([US Department of Defense 3/27/2007](#) ³¹)

March 30, 2007: 9/11 Facilitator Denies He Is A Terrorist, Says He Has Given US ‘Vital Information’

At his Combat Status Review Tribunal hearing in Guantanamo Bay (see [March 9-April 28, 2007](#)), 9/11 facilitator Ali Abdul Aziz Ali (a.k.a. Ammar al-Baluchi) denies being an enemy combatant and says he has provided “vital information” to the US. Regarding the allegations against him:

- He admits sending money to hijacker Marwan Alshehhi in the US, but says it was Alshehhi’s money and he regularly moved money for others—he did not know Alshehhi intended to hijack airliners;
- He admits knowing and working for Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM), his uncle, but says he had no idea KSM was connected to al-Qaeda;
- He admits leaving Dubai just before 9/11, but says this was due to residence permit problems (see [September 9-11, 2001](#));
- He also denies various other allegations made against him and says he has never been a member of al-Qaeda, trained in the camps, or met Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri.

Statements by KSM and Ramzi bin al-Shibh saying he was not involved in the operation are also submitted in his defense. In his final statement to the tribunal he says: “Ever since I was turned in to the United States government, about four years ago, the government uses my services by getting information from me about al-Qaeda activities and personnel that I obtained through independent research. The United States has benefited from the vital and important information I supplied by foiling al-Qaeda plans and obtaining information on al-Qaeda personnel... So, is it fair or reasonable that after all the important and vital information I have supplied to the United States government

that I be considered an enemy combatant?” ([US Department of Defense 4/12/2007](#)) The CIA refuses to comment on Ali’s claim he is cooperating. ([Meyer 4/13/2007](#))

April 11, 2007: Bombs Kill 23 in Algeria



Damage after one of the Algiers bombings. [Source: *Agence France-Presse*] Two bombs hit Algiers, the capital of Algeria. At least 23 people are killed and 160 are injured. One of the bombs hits the prime minister’s office but the prime minister is not injured; the other bomb hits a police station. The group Al-Qaeda in the Maghreb reportedly takes credit for the bombings. The group, known as the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) until recently, is considered the main Islamist rebel group in Algeria. ([BBC 4/11/2007](#))

Late April 2007: Darkazanli Extradition Bid Fails Again

Germany rejects a fresh bid from Spain to extradite Mamoun Darkazanli, a German-Syrian businessman who associated with 9/11 hijackers Mohamed Atta, Marwan Alshehhi, and Ziad Jarrah and is suspected of helping the 9/11 plot (see [October 9, 1999](#) and [Spring 2000](#)). Germany had rejected a previous extradition request (see [July 18, 2005](#)), but German law had been amended and the Spanish, who had indicted Darkazanli on terrorism charges, tried again. The justice ministry in Hamburg was apparently in favor of extradition, but the move was blocked by the federal justice ministry, which said Germany had already investigated Darkazanli and found no grounds to prosecute him. Apparently, they could not find evidence that he supported the 9/11 plot and being a member of al-Qaeda only became illegal in Germany in 2002, so he cannot be extradited. It appears no action can now be taken against Darkazanli, and a spokesman for the justice department in the city-state of Hamburg says, “We now assume that the Darkazanli case is closed for us.” ([EUbusiness\(.com\) 4/30/2007](#); [Agence France-Presse 4/30/2007](#))

May 5, 2007: Bosnian Politicians Connected to Bosnian War Arms Pipeline Under Investigation



Haris Silajdzic [Source: Public domain] Press reports indicate that the Muslim leader of Bosnia's tripartite presidency, Haris Silajdzic, is under investigation for international arms smuggling. Police are also said to be investigating former Bosnian Deputy Defense Minister Hasan Cengic, Elfatih Hassanein, and Turkish businessman Nedim Suljak. Hassanein was the head of the Third World Relief Agency (TWRA) and Cengic was closely tied to TWRA. During the Bosnian war in the early 1990s, TWRA was a radical militant charity front providing cover for a massive illegal arms pipeline into Bosnia (see [Mid-1991-1996](#)). Silajdzic was Bosnian foreign minister during the war. Bosnian state prosecutors confirm that a weapons smuggling investigation into international illegal weapons smuggling had opened but refuse to say who is being targeted. ([Agence France-Presse 5/5/2007](#)) TWRA has remained active and there are reports that it is still connected to radical militants (see [January 25, 2002](#)). In late 2006, it was announced that Hassanein was opening a new charity in Bosnia. ([BBC 12/29/2006](#))

[May 7, 2007: Six Charged in Plot to Attack Fort Dix](#)



Fort Dix plot suspects. [Source: NBC] Six Muslim men are arrested in Cherry Hill, New Jersey, and accused of plotting to attack the Army's Fort Dix in New Jersey and massacre scores of US soldiers. FBI agent J. P. Weiss says "Today we dodged a bullet. In fact, when you look at the type of weapons that this group was trying to purchase, we may have dodged a lot of bullets." The FBI says the men had formed a "platoon" and had performed documented reconnaissance of their target. Although no evidence is uncovered linking the men to international terrorist organizations, including al-Qaeda, several of the men were willing to kill and die "in the name of Allah" according to court records. ([Parry 5/8/2007](#)) Officials characterize the plot as "homegrown" and still in the planning stages. They state that no attack was imminent. ([CBS News 5/8/2007](#)) The plotters are characterized as self-directed terrorist sympathizers. US Attorney Christopher J. Christie says, "Unlike other cases we've done,

there was no clear ringleader. They all seemed to feed off each other. They were clearly guys turning to this element for inspiration. They wanted to be jihadists.” ([Russakoff and Eggen 5/9/2007](#)) The men are identified as ethnic Albanian Yugoslavian illegal immigrants Dritan Duka, his brothers Eljvir Duka and Shain Duka, legal Turkish immigrant Serdar Tartar, and US citizens Mohamad Ibrahim Shnewer and Agron Abdullah. ([Hurriyet 5/8/2007](#)) The FBI was first made aware of the alleged plot in January 2006. An unidentified Circuit City store clerk alerted police to a video that showed the men firing assault weapons, calling for jihad and yelling “God is great” in Arabic, according to officials. The video had been taken into the store in order to be transferred to DVD. The video came from firearms training in the Poconos, according to the indictment. ([Russakoff and Eggen 5/9/2007](#)) The FBI managed to implant an informant in the group of friends. This informant discovered 50 loaded 9mm magazines in Tartar’s car. ([Hurriyet 5/8/2007](#)) Another informant infiltrated the group and was told of the plans to attack military installations. Shnewer was recorded as saying, “My intent is to hit a heavy concentration of soldiers... This is exactly what we are looking for. You hit four, five or six Humvees and light the whole place [up] and retreat completely without any losses.” ([US Department of Justice 5/8/2007](#)) The men allegedly possessed jihadist videos and documents, including copies of the last will and testament of two of the 9/11 hijackers. ([US Department of Justice 5/8/2007](#)) The target was allegedly decided by information gathered by one of the men, Tartar, who had access to Fort Dix from a job delivering pizzas there. ([Hurriyet 5/8/2007](#)) The men are arrested when they attempt to buy AK-47s, M-16s, and other weapons from yet another FBI informant. ([Parry 5/8/2007](#)) Most face possible life sentences. ([Russakoff and Eggen 5/9/2007](#))

May 9, 2007: Bush Signs Presidential Directive Giving Him Power to Lead All Three Branches in Event of ‘Catastrophic Emergency’

President George Bush issues National Security Presidential Directive/NSPD 51 establishing a new “National Continuity Policy” post-disaster plan, replacing the existing “continuity in government” policy that was put in place by the Clinton administration. The non-classified portion of the directive is posted quietly on the White House website, with no explanation. Security specialists and administration officials interviewed by the Boston Globe say the new plan centralizes control of post-disaster planning in the White House. According to the directive, in the event of a “catastrophic emergency,” the president would lead the entire federal government, not just the executive branch, and would be responsible “for ensuring constitutional government.” Such an emergency is defined by the document as “any incident, regardless of location, that results in extraordinary levels of mass casualties, damage, or disruption severely affecting the US population, infrastructure, environment, economy, or government function.” Incidents falling into this category would not be limited to hostile attacks, the document makes clear, but would also include “localized acts of nature” and “accidents.” While the directive says that there would be “a cooperative effort among the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of the Federal Government,” this effort would be “coordinated by the President, as a matter of comity with respect to the legislative and judicial branches

and with proper respect for the constitutional separation of powers.” ([US President 5/14/2007](#); [Rothschild 5/18/2007](#); [Savage 6/2/2007](#))
[Conservatives Warn of 'Dictatorial Powers'](#) - Conservative commentator Jerome Corsi says the directive appears to give the president a legal mechanism to seize “dictatorial powers” since it would not require consultation with Congress about when to invoke emergency powers, or when to relinquish them. It is also noted that the new plan does not explicitly acknowledge the National Emergencies Act, which gives Congress the authority to override the president’s determination that a national emergency still exists. James Carafano, a homeland security specialist at the Heritage Foundation, says that the lack of an explanation for the unexpected directive is “appalling.” ([Savage 6/2/2007](#))

May 13, 2007: Iran Border Guards Capture 10 Individuals Crossing into Iran with \$500K, Maps, and Modern Spying Cameras

Iran television reports that the country’s border patrol detained 10 people who illegally entered the country from Pakistan carrying \$500,000 in cash, maps of “sensitive areas,” and “modern spying cameras.” ([Reuters 5/13/2007](#)) A senior Pakistani official will tell ABC News the 10 men were members of Jundullah. ([Ross and Esposito 5/23/2007](#)) (Jundallah is reportedly being supported by the Pakistanis and advised by US government officials (see [2005 and After](#)).)

May 13, 2007: Taliban’s Top Military Commander Killed



Mullah Dadullah Akhund. [*Source: Reuters*]/Mullah Dadullah Akhund, the Taliban’s top military commander, is killed in Afghanistan. The Telegraph claims that, “Since the Taliban’s ousting in late 2001, Dadullah emerged as probably the militant group’s most prominent and feared commander.” He often appeared in videos and media interviews. ([Daily Telegraph 5/14/2007](#)) He is only the second high-ranking Taliban leader captured or killed since 9/11 (see [December 19, 2006](#)). ABC News claims that thirty-six hours before he was killed, Dadullah said in a videotaped interview that he was training US and British citizens to carry out suicide missions in their home countries. US officials claim to have tracked him from this interview in Quetta, Pakistan,

back to a Taliban hiding base in Afghanistan, then carried out a helicopter assault against his base. ([Ross and Isham 5/14/2007](#)) The Taliban immediately announce that his younger brother, Mullah Bakht, will be his replacement as the chief military strategist. ([CBC News 5/14/2007](#))

May 22, 2007: Only 40 Percent of Muslim-Americans Believe Arabs Were behind 9/11 Attacks

According to a poll by the Pew Research Center, only 40 percent of Muslims in the US believe that the 9/11 attacks were carried out by Arabs. ([Demirjian 5/22/2007](#))

May 23, 2007: \$2 Billion Settlement Ends Long Dispute Over WTC Insurance

Insurance companies reach a \$2 billion settlement with real estate development and investment firm Silverstein Properties for the destruction of the World Trade Center on 9/11. The agreement, which involves seven of the two-dozen insurers for the WTC, ends more than five years of legal wrangling. The other insurance companies involved have already paid out about \$2.55 billion, meaning the total payout will be \$4.55 billion. In September 2006, Silverstein Properties and the New York Port Authority had agreed to split the reconstruction of the WTC site between them, and to divide up the remaining insurance proceeds accordingly. Consequently, the Port Authority is to receive about \$870 million from the latest settlement, while the remaining \$1.13 billion will go to Silverstein Properties. ([New York State 5/23/2007](#); [Bagli 5/23/2007](#); [Schuster 5/23/2007](#); [Gralla and Wilchins 5/23/2007](#)) Silverstein Properties acquired the lease on several of the World Trade Center buildings, including the Twin Towers, in July 2001 (see [July 24, 2001](#)). ([Port Authority of New York and New Jersey 7/24/2001](#)) As the New York Times summarizes, “At that time, two dozen insurers had signed binders pledging to provide \$3.5 billion in insurance coverage, but had not finished the documentation.” Therefore, after 9/11, an “ugly dispute developed over which insurance policy was in effect at the time of the attack. Mr. [Larry] Silverstein [the president of Silverstein Properties] argued that since two jetliners slammed into the two towers, he was entitled to a double payment on the \$3.5 billion policy. But many of the insurers countered that they had agreed to a different policy that did not permit double claims.” ([Bagli 5/23/2007](#)) In 2004, federal juries had decided that Silverstein Properties could collect a maximum of \$4.68 billion for the loss of the WTC. The current settlement therefore means the insurers are obliged to pay 97.2 percent of that maximum. ([Levitt 5/23/2007](#); [New York State 5/23/2007](#); [Schuster 5/23/2007](#); [Gralla and Wilchins 5/23/2007](#)) Silverstein Properties had separately been awarded \$861 million of insurance money in 2002 for the loss of World Trade Center Building 7, which also collapsed on 9/11 (see [May 2002](#)).

May 2007 - November 26, 2007: Unfounded Warning of Terrorist and Drug Cartel Attack on Arizona Army Base



Fort Huachuca [Source: Army] An FBI advisory is distributed in May 2007 to the Defense Intelligence Agency, the CIA, Customs and Border Protection, and the Justice Department, as well as numerous law enforcement agencies throughout the nation warning that up to 60 Afghan and Iraqi terrorists are to be smuggled into the US through underground tunnels with high-powered weapons to attack an Arizona Army base. The alleged target, Fort Huachuca, is the nation's largest intelligence-training center. It lies about 20 miles from the Mexican border and has members of all four service branches training in intelligence and secret operations. Security measures are swiftly changed at the base in response to the threat, according to multiple confidential law enforcement documents obtained by The Washington Times. The advisory warns that "a portion of the operatives were in the United States, with the remainder not yet in the United States [and]...the Afghanis and Iraqis shaved their beards so as not to appear to be Middle Easterners." The FBI report on which the advisory is based points to the involvement of Mexican drug cartels, stating that each operative paid drug lords \$20,000 "or the equivalent in weapons" for assistance in smuggling them and their weapons, including anti-tank missiles and surface-to-air missiles, through tunnels along the border into the US. The advisory further warns that a number of the operatives are already in a safe house in Texas and some weapons have already been successfully smuggled into the US. The FBI report is based on Drug Enforcement Administration sources, including Mexican nationals with access to a "sub-source" in the drug cartels. This "sub-source" is allegedly "a member of the Zetas," the military arm of one of Mexico's most dangerous drug-trafficking organizations, the Gulf Cartel, who identified the Sinaloa cartel as the organization involved in the plot. However, the advisory states that "this information is of unknown reliability," while the DEA warns that the Gulf Cartel may be attempting to manipulate the US into acting against their rivals. FBI spokesman Paul Bresson says that the report is based on "raw, uncorroborated information that has not been completely vetted." A Department of Homeland Security document on the possible attack states "based upon the information provided by the DEA handling agent, the DEA has classified the source as credible [and]...the identity of the sub-source has been established; however, none of the information provided by the sub-source in the past has been corroborated." ([Carter 11/26/2007](#)) The threat later proves to be unfounded. The attack never occurs and FBI spokesman Manuel Johnson, based in Phoenix, admits in November that the warning was

the result of bad information. He says “a thorough investigation was conducted and there is no evidence showing that the threat was credible.” ([Mackey 11/26/2007](#))

May 27, 2007: Group: Terrorism Not Focus of Homeland Security

The Transactional Records Action Clearinghouse (TRAC), a data research organization affiliated with Syracuse University, has discovered that terrorism claims formed less than 0.01 percent of immigration court charges filed by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). The immigration court records were obtained under the Freedom of Information Act. Of 814,073 cases brought to the immigration courts by the DHS, 12, or 0.0015 percent, were for charges of terrorism. In addition, 114 cases, or 0.014 percent, concerned individuals charged with national security violations. TRAC spokesman David Burnham says, “The DHS claims it is focused on terrorism. Well that’s just not true. Either there’s no terrorism, or they’re terrible at catching them. Either way it’s bad for all of us.” TRAC further claims that there exists an “apparent gap between DHS rhetoric about its role in fighting terrorism and what it actually has been doing.” DHS spokesman Russ Knoke calls the TRAC report “ill-conceived” and said the group “lack[s] a grasp of the DHS mission.” The DHS claims that any clampdown on immigration decreases the likelihood of terrorists entering the US. ([Bronstein 5/27/2007](#))

June 2, 2007: Plot to Destroy New York Airport Considered Overhyped



Roslynn Mauskopf. [*Source: US Department of Justice*] US Attorney Roslynn Mauskopf describes a recently foiled alleged terror plot to blow up John F. Kennedy Airport in New York City as “one of the most chilling plots imaginable.” She claims it “could have resulted in unfathomable damage, deaths, and destruction.” But one unnamed law enforcement official with Mauskopf at her press conference will later say he cringed at the description. *Newsday* will later relate, “The plot, he knew, was never operational. The public had never been at risk. And the notion of blowing up the airport, let alone the borough of Queens, by exploding a fuel tank was in all likelihood a technical impossibility.” Michael Greenberger, director of the Center for Health and Homeland Security at the University of Maryland, says, “It was a totally overstated characterization that doesn’t comport with the facts....there’s a pattern here of Justice Department

attorneys overstating what they have.” ([Eisenberg 6/6/2007](#)) Safety experts have criticize the government’s description of the plot’s danger. John Goglia, a former member of the US National Transportation Safety Board, describes the plot as a “fantasy,” saying “You could definitely reach the tank, definitely start a fire, but to get the kind of explosion they were thinking they were going to get... this is virtually impossible to do.” Jake Magish, an engineer with Supersafe Tank Systems, says “The fantasy I’ve heard about people saying, ‘They will blow the tank and destroy the airport’, is nonsense.” The Department of Homeland Security and the Transportation Security Administration comes under fire from aviation expert Michael Boyd, who states that these organizations are “not run by security professionals...[they are] run by political appointees.” ([MSNBC 6/4/2007](#)) In addition, the plotters lacked the explosives and financial resources to carry out the attack. Four alleged Islamic radicals have been charged with conspiracy to cause an explosion at the airport and three of them have been arrested. ([The Australian 6/6/2007](#)) Newsday calls the plot’s alleged mastermind Russell Defreitas “hapless and episodically homeless.” ([Eisenberg 6/6/2007](#))

June 3, 2007: Republican Official Says ‘All We Need Is Some Attacks on American Soil’ Like 9/11 to Justify Bush’s Policies



Dennis Milligan. [*Source: Raw Story*]Dennis Milligan, chairman of the Republican Party of Arkansas, says in an interview, “I believe fully the president is doing the right thing, and I think all we need is some attacks on American soil like we had on [Sept. 11, 2001], and the naysayers will come around very quickly to appreciate not only the commitment for President Bush, but the sacrifice that has been made by men and women to protect this country.” ([Wickline 6/3/2007](#))

June 4, 2007: ‘Chaos’ in Guantanamo Tribunals as Judge Says ‘Enemy Combatant’ Designation Is Meaningless

A judge says that the designation “enemy combatant,” used to label detainees held by the US in Guantanamo Bay, is meaningless, throwing proceedings for hundreds of the men into what the Guardian describes as “chaos.” Tribunals had been held in Guantanamo Bay to determine whether detainees held there were “enemy combatants,” and it was thought

that such designation was a necessary preliminary step to putting them on trial. However, the judge, Colonel Peter Brownback, says that it is not enough to designate a detainee as an “enemy combatant,” and that a tribunal must be preceded by a designation that a detainee is an “unlawful enemy combatant,” as this is the wording used in the Military Commissions Act, which established the tribunals. Colonel Brownback throws out cases against detainees Omar Khadr and Salim Ahmed Hamdan, alleged to have been Osama bin Laden’s chauffeur, saying that a person “has a right to be tried only by a court that has jurisdiction over him,” and the court does not have that right. The ruling means that none of the other hundreds of detainees can be brought before the tribunals, because the incorrect designation was applied to all of them. However, the ruling is without prejudice, and the US can still try to re-designate detainees “unlawful enemy combatants” and bring them before tribunals. Defense attorney Kristine Huskey calls the situation a “shambles,” and says, “It’s another example of how everything has been so ad hoc. The Military Commissions Act was just not done thoughtfully.” Another defense attorney, Colonel Dwight Sullivan, comments, “The system right now should just stop... The commission is an experiment that failed and we don’t need any more evidence that it is a failure.” ([Goldenberg 6/5/2007](#))

June 7, 2007: Human Rights Groups Allege Dozens of Prisoners Have Disappeared into Secret US Prisons



Ali Abd al-Rahman al-Faqasi al-Ghamdi. [Source: *Public domain*] Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and four other organizations file a US federal lawsuit under the Freedom of Information Act seeking information about 39 people they believe have “disappeared” while held in US custody. The groups mentions 39 people who were reportedly captured overseas and then held in secret CIA prisons. The US acknowledges detaining three of the 39 but the groups say there is strong evidence, including witness testimony, of secret detention in 18 more cases and some evidence of secret detention in the remaining 18 cases. In September 2006, President Bush acknowledged the CIA had interrogated dozens of suspects at secret CIA prisons and said 14 of those were later sent to Guantanamo Bay (see [September 6, 2006](#)). At that time it was announced that there were no prisoners remaining in custody in US secret facilities (see [September 2-3, 2006](#)). However, the groups claim that in April 2007 a prisoner named Abd al-Hadi al-Iraqi was transferred from CIA custody to Guantanamo, demonstrating the system is still operating (see [Autumn 2006-Late April 2007](#)). The groups also claim that in September 2002 the US held the two children of Khalid Shaikh

Mohammed, then aged seven and nine, in an adult detention center. Mohammed was later captured and is now held at Guantanamo; it is unknown what happened to his children. ([Parsons 6/7/2007](#)) Some of the more important suspects named include:

- Hassan Ghul, said to be an important al-Qaeda courier. In December 2005, ABC News reported he was being held in a secret CIA prison (see [November 2005](#)).
- Ibn al-Shaykh al-Libi, a high-ranking al-Qaeda leader. The same ABC News report also mentions him.
- Mohammed Omar Abdul-Rahman, a son of the Blind Sheikh, Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman. The same ABC News report also mentions him.
- Ali Abd al-Rahman al-Faqasi al-Ghamdi, a.k.a. Abu Bakr al Azdi. He is said to be a candidate 9/11 hijacker who was held back for another operation. In 2004, the 9/11 Commission reported he is in US custody.
- Suleiman Abdalla Salim Hemed. Wanted for involvement in the 1998 African embassy bombings, he was reportedly captured in Somalia in March 2003. Witnesses claim to have seen him in two secret US prisons in 2004.
- Yassir al-Jazeeri. Said to be a high-ranking al-Qaeda leader, he was reportedly captured in Pakistan in March 2003. Witnesses later saw him in a secret CIA prison.
- Musaad Aruchi, a nephew of Khalid Shaikh Mohammed. He was reported captured in Pakistan in June 2004 and then taken into CIA custody (see [June 12, 2004](#)).
- Sheikh Ahmed Salim Swedan. Wanted for a role in the African embassy bombings, there were various reports he was captured in Pakistan in 2002 and taken into US custody.
- Anas al-Liby, also wanted for a role in the African embassy bombings. He was reportedly captured in 2002 (see [January 20, 2002- March 20, 2002](#)) and it is suspected the US has handed him over to Egypt. ([Human Rights Watch 6/7/2007](#)) The report seems to have missed Pacha Wazir, said to be al-Qaeda's main money handler. He was reportedly captured in the United Arab Emirates in 2002 and sent to a secret CIA prison (see [Late September 2002](#)).

June 13, 2007: FBI Watch List Bloated with Over Half a Million Names

The FBI terrorist watch list now includes over half a million names, which civil liberties advocates say limits its usefulness. Although the actual content of the list is classified, the FBI's 2008 budget request refers to "the entire watch list of 509,000 names," which is utilized by its Foreign Terrorist Tracking Task Force. It is common for many names on the list to be associated with one individual. The FBI foreign and domestic terror watch list, combined with the interagency National Counterterrorism Center's (NCTC) list of suspected international terrorists, comprise the watch list used by federal security screening personnel on the lookout for terrorists. The NCTC refuses to reveal how many US citizens are on the list (see [February 15, 2006](#)). ACLU senior legislative counsel Tim Sparapani says the FBI watch list "grows seemingly without control or limitation. If we have 509,000 names on that list, the watch list is virtually useless." Internal reviews of the list by the US Terrorist Screening Center have previously found the list to be incomplete and inaccurate (see [June 14, 2005](#)). Reviews of versions of the list reveal the names of US lawmakers, former Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein, imprisoned at the time of

review; al-Qaeda member Zacarias Moussaoui, also imprisoned; and 14 of the 19 9/11 hijackers, all deceased. ([Rood 6/13/2007](#))

June 15, 2007: FBI Increases ‘Black Bag’ Search Ops

It is reported that an unclassified FBI budget document states that since the 9/11 attacks the Bureau has dramatically increased so-called ‘black bag’ jobs. In a black bag job a team of specialists secretly enter a premise, search the contents, and leave no indication they were ever there. Whereas most of the FBI’s secret search operations previously related to criminal investigations, by 2006 close to 90 percent of such operations are for national security matters. The FBI is asking for more money and personnel to conduct more such operations. ([Rood 6/15/2007](#))

June 22, 2007: Arrested Militant Says Saeed Sheikh Funded 9/11 Hijackers

According to reports in the Indian press, a recently arrested militant leader says he believes Saeed Sheikh wired money to lead hijacker Mohamed Atta before 9/11 (see [Early August 2001](#) and [Summer 2001 and before](#)). The militant, who is known as Babu Bhai and is a leader of the militant organization Harkat ul-Jihad al-Islam, says that the money came from a ransom paid for the release of a kidnapped shoe company executive and that he was involved in the kidnap operation as a deputy to the local commander, Asif Raza Khan. Other people involved in the money transfer are arrested based on the information disclosed by Babu Bhai. This confession supports previous reports about the transfer (see [September 30-October 7, 2001](#), [January 22-25, 2002](#) and [July 31, 2003](#)). ([Siddiqui 6/25/2007](#); [News Post India 6/25/2007](#); [Rautela 6/29/2007](#))

June 23, 2007: Afghan President Criticizes Civilian Deaths Caused by US-Led Bombing



Dan McNeill. [Source: US Department of Defense] Afghan President Hamid Karzai criticizes the rising number of civilians killed by NATO and US-led troops. “Innocent people are becoming victims of reckless operations,” he says. He says his Western allies are using “extreme” force without coordinating with his government first. He says, “You don’t fight a terrorist by firing a field gun [24 miles] away into a target.

That's definitely, surely bound to cause civilian casualties." It is believed more civilians have been killed in Afghanistan in 2007 so far by Western allies than have been killed by the resurgent Taliban. ([BBC 6/23/2007](#)) The Observer reports that senior British soldiers have expressed concern that Gen. Dan McNeill, the new head of NATO troops in Afghanistan, is "'a fan' of the massive use of air power to defeat insurgents and that his favoured tactics could be counter-productive." He has been dubbed "Bomber McNeill" by his critics. One British officer who recently returned from Afghanistan says, "Every civilian dead means five new Taliban. It's a tough call when the enemy are hiding in villages, but you have to be very, very careful." ([Burke 7/1/2007](#))

June 25, 2007: Poll: More Than 4 in 10 Americans Still Believe Iraq Involved with 9/11

A Newsweek poll reveals that 41% of Americans believe that Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein was involved with the planning, financing, or commissioning of the 9/11 attacks. This is a slight increase from a September 2004 poll which showed that 36% believed in the Bush administration's claims of Iraq's involvement. These claims formed a cornerstone of the administration's push to garner public support for the war, which began in the immediate wake of the events of 9/11 (see [September 15, 2001-April 6, 2002](#)). Additionally, 20% of respondents believe that the majority of the 9/11 hijackers were Iraqi (when in fact none of them were). The same percent believe that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction at the time of the invasion. ([Editor & Publisher 6/25/2007](#))

July 2007: Legal Advisor for Guantanamo Tribunals Gets Involved in Prosecutions Instead of Remaining Neutral, Prosecutor Resigns



General Thomas Hartmann allegedly interfered with Guantanamo Bay prosecutions. [*Source: US Air Force*] A new legal adviser to military commission hearings for detainees in Guantanamo Bay, General Thomas Hartmann, interferes with prosecutions, causing lead prosecutor Colonel Morris Davis to resign (see [September 2006](#)). Davis says that Hartmann's position as adviser to the convening authority for the trials means he should stay neutral, but instead Hartmann requests detailed information on pending cases, defines the sequence in which they will be brought, and gets involved

in “nano-management.” A Pentagon review partially supports Davis, advising Hartmann that he should “diligently avoid aligning himself with the prosecutorial function so that he can objectively and independently provide cogent legal advice” to the official in charge of supervising the commissions. Hartmann also supports using classified evidence in closed court sessions, which Davis wants to avoid, because it might taint the trials in the eyes of international observers and make it seem that the trials are stacked against defendants. Davis also objects to all elements of the military commissions being put under the Defense Department’s general counsel, as he thinks this could lead to a conflict of interest. ([White 10/20/2007](#))

July 2007: President Bush Again Authorizes the CIA to Use Some Aggressive Interrogation Methods

In October 2007, the New York Times will report that in July, “after a month-long debate inside the administration, President Bush signed a new executive order authorizing the use of what the administration calls ‘enhanced’ interrogation techniques—the details remain secret—and officials say the CIA again is holding prisoners in ‘black sites’ overseas.” The executive order is said to have been reviewed and approved by Steven Bradbury, head of the Office of Legal Counsel. ([Shane, Johnston, and Risen 10/4/2007](#)) In late 2005 the Justice Department issued a secret memo declaring all aggressive interrogation techniques used by the CIA legal (see [Late 2005](#)), so apparently this mostly reconfirms the gist of that earlier ruling. It has been clear since April 2007 that the secret CIA prisons are still operating (see [Autumn 2006-Late April 2007](#)). Hours after the new executive order is issued, CIA Director Michael Hayden issues a secret memo to his CIA employees: “The President’s action - along with the Military Commissions Act of 2006 - gives us the legal clarity we have sought. It gives our officers the assurance that they may conduct their essential work in keeping with the laws of the United States.” One senior Bush administration official will later hint that the order does allow sleep deprivation to be used but does not allow exposure to extremes of hot and cold. ([Windrem 9/13/2007](#)) Intelligence officials also later say that the order not to allow the use of waterboarding. ([Mazetti 12/7/2007](#))

July 8, 2007: US Reluctant to Move Against Al-Qaeda Leaders Based in Pakistan

The New York Times reports that the US still rarely conducts missions inside Pakistan, where most of the top al-Qaeda leadership is assumed to be, out of consideration for the government of Pakistan. Such attacks could politically hurt Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf. A former Bush administration official says, “The Special Operations guys are tearing their hair out at the highest levels.” While there has not been good intelligence on the locations of the highest al-Qaeda leaders recently, there sometimes has been useful information on other figures. “There is a degree of frustration that is off the charts, because they are looking at targets on a daily basis and can’t move against them.” ([Mazzetti 7/8/2007](#))

July 9, 2007: London Bombers Found Guilty

Four men are found guilty of plotting to bomb London's transport network on 21 July, 2005, two weeks after the 7/7 bombings (see [July 21, 2005](#)). After a six-month trial, the jury unanimously convicts Muktar Ibrahim, Yassin Omar, Ramzi Mohammed, 25, and Hussain Osman, 28, of conspiracy to murder at Woolwich Crown Court. Evidence included thousands of hours of CCTV film, as well as a suicide note left by Mohammed for his girlfriend and two children asking them to "rejoice in happiness". The men had also been photographed by police on a camping trip in the Lake District in 2004. No verdict is reached for two other men accused of being members of the conspiracy. The men, Adel Yahya, 24 and Manfo Kwaku Asiedu, 34, face a retrial. ([BBC 7/10/2007](#)) Mr. Asiedu says he went along with the plot because he feared being killed by the others. Mr. Yahya, who argues that he was not part of the conspiracy to murder, was arrested at Gatwick in December 2005, after returning from Ethiopia. ([BBC 7/11/2007](#)) The defendants claim that the bombs were fakes and that the plot was a protest against the war in Iraq. Nigel Sweeney QC, the prosecutor, tells the jury that the plot "had been in existence long before the events of July 7" and was not a "hastily-arranged copycat" operation. Responding to the defense, Mr. Sweeney says: "The failure of those bombs to explode owed nothing to the intention of these defendants, rather it was simply the good fortune of the travelling public that day that they were spared." ([BBC 7/10/2007](#)) Mr. Justice Fulford also dismisses the suggestion that the men did not intend to cause carnage. He says "This was a viable and a very nearly successful attempt at mass murder." The four are sentenced to life imprisonment, with a minimum sentence of 40 years. ([BBC 7/11/2007](#))

July 13, 2007: Bush Equates Iraq Insurgency with 9/11 Attackers

George W. Bush, defying calls to begin withdrawing troops from Iraq, says, "The same folks that are bombing innocent people in Iraq were the ones who attacked us in America on September the 11th, and that's why what happens in Iraq matters to the security here at home." Critics say Bush is grossly oversimplifying the nature of the Iraq insurgency and its putative, unproven links with al-Qaeda, and is attempting to exploit the same kinds of post-9/11 emotions that helped him win support for the invasion in the months preceding the Iraqi offensive. The al-Qaeda affiliate group in Iraq called al-Qaeda in Iraq (or al-Qaeda in Mesopotamia) did not exist at all before the March 2003 invasion, and since then, it has thrived as a magnet for recruiting and for violence largely because of the invasion. While US military and intelligence agencies contend that al-Qaeda in Iraq is responsible for a disproportionately large share of the suicide car bomb attacks that have stoked sectarian violence, the organization is uniquely Iraqi in origin and makeup, with few operational ties to the overall terrorist group. Bruce Riedel, a Middle East expert and former CIA official, says, "The president wants to play on al-Qaeda because he thinks Americans understand the threat al-Qaeda poses. But what I don't think he demonstrates is that fighting al-Qaeda in Iraq precludes al-Qaeda from attacking America here tomorrow. Al-Qaeda, both in Iraq and globally, thrives on the American occupation."

Counterterrorism expert Bruce Hoffman says that if US forces were to withdraw from Iraq, the indigenous al-Qaeda fighters would focus much more on battling Shi'ite militias in the struggle for dominance in Iraq than on trying to follow US troops home. Al-Qaeda in Iraq "may have more grandiose expectations, but that does not mean [it] could turn al-Qaeda of Iraq into a transnational terrorist entity," he says. ([Gordon and Rutenberg 7/13/2007](#))

Mid-July 2007: Al-Qaeda Computer Expert Released in Pakistan



Muhammad Naeem Noor Khan. [*Source: Agence France-Presse / Getty Images*] Muhammad Naeem Noor Khan, an al-Qaeda computer expert, is released in Pakistan. He had been arrested in July 2004 (see [July 13, 2004](#)) and was quickly turned, sending out e-mails to help out dozens of al-Qaeda operatives around the world before his name was leaked to the press (see [July 24-25, 2004](#) and [August 2, 2004](#)). He was held for three years by Pakistan's intelligence agencies. He was never charged with any crime and apparently there are no plans to charge him in the future. He is said to be living with his parents in Karachi, Pakistan. He is being closely monitored and the media is not allowed to speak with him. US and British officials and analysts express dismay at Noor Khan's quick release. Seth Jones of the Rand Corporation says, "I find it strange and baffling.... He presents a major threat to the West." ([Walsh and Norton-Taylor 8/23/2007](#)) Former counterterrorism "tsar" Richard Clarke says, "Khan may have bargained for an early release because he cooperated." ([Khan and Sauer 8/21/2007](#)) But his release also comes at a time when Pakistan's judiciary is releasing dozens of suspected Islamic militants and government critics who have been held without trial. This is seen as a sign of President Pervez Musharraf's eroding influence after public protests forced him to reinstate Pakistan's chief justice. ([Hussain 8/23/2007](#)) One former intelligence official says that Khan's case is a "murky tale" in which there are "no clear answers." ([Walsh and Norton-Taylor 8/23/2007](#))

July 20, 2007: TSA Issues 'Dry Run' Terror Alerts Based on Bogus Information

The Transportation Security Agency (TSA) issues a national security bulletin based on four recent incidents in San Diego, Milwaukee, Houston, and Baltimore. The bulletin

creates the impression of imminent terrorist plots targeting the aviation sector. The TSA warns that terrorists are testing the possibility of smuggling bomb components on to an airplane. TSA spokeswoman Ellen Howe says the agency has noticed an increase in unusual items in checked and carry-on luggage, including “wires, switches, cell phone components, and dense clay-like substances” - including a block of cheese. ([International Herald Tribune 7/25/2007](#)) The incidents all turn out to have innocent explanations. On July 27, Brian Todd of CNN reports “That bulletin for law enforcement eyes only told of suspicious items recently found in passenger’s bags at airport checkpoints, warned that they may signify dry runs for terrorist attacks... it turns out none of that is true.” One such case was that of Sara Weiss, who was detained in San Diego after two ice packs covered in tape and containing clay were allegedly found in her baggage. Weiss, who works for a faith-based organization, was also carrying a survey about Muslim Americans. Weiss says she was held for three hours and questioned by San Diego Harbor Police and two other men who did not identify themselves. She says she was asked if she knew Osama bin Laden, which she described as “a ridiculous question.” Todd reports “The FBI now says there were valid explanations for all four incidents in that bulletin, and a US government official says no charges will be brought in any of these cases.” The FBI maintains “they were right” in putting the bogus reports on the TSA bulletin, which is distributed to law enforcement agencies nationwide. The TSA says that security officers must be trained in identifying suspicious packages, even when those packages turn out to be innocuous. ([Edwards and Juliano 7/27/2007](#)) Defense for the TSA bulletin comes from a number of sources. “This is what TSA should be doing whether it turns out to be a whole bunch of harmless coincidences or part of a plot,” says James Carafano, a security expert at the conservative Heritage Foundation who in the past called for TSA’s abolition. House Homeland Security Committee Chairman Rep. Bennie Thompson, also a critic of the TSA, agrees the agency is handling this appropriately: “To stay ahead of potential threats to our aviation system it must use all of the intelligence available as part of its daily operations.” However, the bulletin is questioned by San Diego Harbor Police Chief Kirk Sanfilippo who says officers found two ice packs wrapped in clear tape, not duct tape, and there was no clay inside. “It was not a threat. It was not a test run,” Sanfilippo says. “The whole thing was very explainable and understandable.” ([International Herald Tribune 7/25/2007](#)) He characterizes the bulletin as “a little bit off.” Local TSA Security Director and chief of the airport police Michael J. Aguilar says it was quickly determined the ice packs contained the usual blue gel. Aguilar says he doesn’t know why the TSA memo, issued in Washington, reported the substance as clay. ([Schmidt and Kucher 7/25/2007](#))

August 2007: US Military Allegedly Knows Bin Laden’s Location but Fails to Attack Him

In October 2007, Fox News military commentator Col. David Hunt claims that in August 2007, the US military had a chance to kill Osama bin Laden, but did not. “We know, with a 70 percent level of certainty—which is huge in the world of intelligence” that bin Laden was in a convoy heading south from Tora Bora. He claims that bin Laden was seen on satellite imagery and heard through communications intercepts. “We had the world’s

best hunters/killers—Seal Team 6—nearby. We had the world class Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) coordinating with the CIA and other agencies. We had unmanned drones overhead with missiles on their wings; we had the best Air Force on the planet, begging to drop one on the terrorist.” But, “[u]nbelievably, and in my opinion, criminally, we did not kill Osama bin Laden.” He blames risk-aversion and incompetence for the failure to act. His account has not been corroborated by other sources. ([Hunt 10/23/2007](#))

August 2, 2007: Analyst Says Al-Qaeda and US Logos Added to Al-Zawahiri Video at Same Time, then Retracts Claim

Researcher and computer security consultant Neal Krawetz first claims that the logos of As-Sahab, al-Qaeda’s media arm, and the US-based IntelCenter organization, which monitors terrorist activity, were added to a video released by al-Qaeda deputy leader Ayman al-Zawahiri at the same time, then retracts the claim when IntelCenter protests. Krawetz initially makes the claim during a presentation at a security conference about how analysis shows al-Qaeda videos are manipulated and backgrounds are added later. Krawetz says that the As-Sahab and IntelCenter logos have the same error level, so they must have been added at the same time. However, IntelCenter says that it did not add the As-Sahab logo and that just because two items in an image have the same error level, that does not mean they were added at the same time. Krawetz then tells a journalist that he retracts his initial claim and says that the IntelCenter logo has a different error level and was added later. The journalist comments: “However, in a taped interview I conducted with him after his presentation, he said the logos were the same error levels and that this indicated they were added at the same time. Additionally, after I’d written the first blog entry about his presentation, I asked him to read it to make sure everything was correct. He did so while sitting next to me and said it was all correct. He apologizes now for the error and the confusion it caused.” ([Zetter 8/2/2007](#)) Krawetz’s method of analysis will attract some criticism. For example, Cambridge University expert Marcus Kuhn will say that Krawetz’s tools were designed for still images, not video, and could lead a user to believe that a video had been manipulated when in fact it had not. ([Richards 8/6/2007](#))

August 6, 2007: KSM’s Interrogations Could Be 90 Percent Unreliable

An article in the New Yorker magazine reveals that the CIA interrogations of 9/11 mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM) were not as reliable as they are typically made out to be. KSM was interrogated with methods such as waterboarding that are regarded as torture by many. CIA official John Brennan, former chief of staff for CIA Director George Tenet, acknowledges, “All these methods produced useful information, but there was also a lot that was bogus.” One former top CIA official estimates that “ninety per cent of the information was unreliable.” Cables of KSM’s interrogation transcripts sent to higher-ups reportedly were prefaced with the warning that “the

detainee has been known to withhold information or deliberately mislead.” ([Mayer 8/6/2007](#)) For instance, one CIA report of his interrogations was called, “Khalid Shaikh Mohammed’s Threat Reporting—Precious Truths, Surrounded by a Bodyguard of Lies” (see [June 16, 2004](#)). ([McDermott 6/23/2004](#)) Former CIA analyst Bruce Riedel asks, “What are you going to do with KSM in the long run? It’s a very good question. I don’t think anyone has an answer. If you took him to any real American court, I think any judge would say there is no admissible evidence. It would be thrown out.” Senator Carl Levin (D) says, “A guy as dangerous as KSM is, and half the world wonders if they can believe him—is that what we want? Statements that can’t be believed, because people think they rely on torture?” ([Mayer 8/6/2007](#)) Journalist James Risen will also say in a 2006 book, “According to a well-placed CIA source, [KSM] has now recanted some of what he previously told the CIA during his interrogations. That is an enormous setback for the CIA, since [his debriefings] had been considered among the agency’s most important sources of intelligence on al-Qaeda. It is unclear precisely which of his earlier statements [he] has now disavowed, but any recantation by the most important prisoner in the global war on terror must call into question much of what the United States has obtained from other prisoners around the world...” ([Risen 2006, pp. 33](#))

August 9, 2007: High Value Detainees Ruled Enemy Combatants, Significance Uncertain

Fourteen “high value” detainees held by the US in Guantanamo Bay (see [March 9-April 28, 2007](#)) are ruled to be “enemy combatants.” The detainees include 9/11 mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, 9/11 coordinator Ramzi bin al-Shibh, Jemaah Islamiyah leader Hambali, and al-Qaeda leaders Khallad bin Attash and Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri. However, a judge had previously ruled that designating a detainee an “enemy combatant” was meaningless and that a person designated an enemy combatant could not be tried under the Military Commissions Act (see [June 4, 2007](#)). The Washington Post comments, “It is unclear if these men can be tried at military commissions without a change in the law or a newly designed review.” ([White 8/10/2007](#))

August 27, 2007: Esteemed Scientist Disputes Official 9/11 Account



Lynn Margulis. [Source: Javier Pedreira]Lynn Margulis, a distinguished professor in the department of geosciences at the University of Massachusetts, describes the US government's account of 9/11 as a "fraud," and calls for a new investigation of the attacks. In a statement published on the website PatriotsQuestion911.com, she writes, "Certainly, 19 young Arab men and a man in a cave 7,000 miles away, no matter the level of their anger, could not have masterminded and carried out 9/11: the most effective television commercial in the history of Western civilization." She calls 9/11 a "false-flag operation" that has been used to justify the recent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, along with "unprecedented assaults on research, education and civil liberties." She compares it to the sinking of the USS *Maine* in 1898—which led to the Spanish American War—and the German Reichstag fire of 1933, which facilitated the rise of the Nazi party. Some have alleged that these earlier events were orchestrated by governmental powers. Margulis has previously written extensively on a wide range of scientific topics, making original contributions to cell biology and microbial evolution, and is best known for her theory of symbiogenesis. In 1999, she received the National Medal of Science, which is America's highest honor for scientific achievement. Margulis says she came to her conclusions about 9/11 based on her own research and from reading two books about the attacks by retired theology professor David Ray Griffin (see [March 1, 2004](#)). She concludes her statement, "I suggest that those of us aware and concerned demand that the glaringly erroneous official account of 9/11 be dismissed as a fraud and a new, thorough, and impartial investigation be undertaken." ([University of Massachusetts 11/4/2003](#); [Palpin 9/11/2007](#); [Neale 9/20/2007](#))

September 7 and 11, 2007: US Analysts Obtain New Bin Laden Tapes Before Al-Qaeda Releases Them

US analysts obtain two new videos of a man thought to be Osama bin Laden (see [September 7, 2007](#) and [September 11, 2007](#)) before al-Qaeda makes them available on the internet. A video released on September 7 is obtained by the US-based SITE Institute, which provides it "to government agencies and news organizations at a time when many well-known jihadist Web sites had been shut down in a powerful cyberattack by unknown hackers." The next tape is obtained by a web designer known as "Laura Mansfield," who manages "to scoop al-Qaeda by publicly unveiling its new video, a feat she has accomplished numerous times since 2002." Although SITE's founder Rita Katz declines to comment on how it obtained the video, the Washington Post says that SITE, Mansfield,

and others like them obtained the videos, whose release was publicly announced in advance, “using a combination of computer tricks, personal connections and ingenuity to find and download password-protected content.” ([Warrick 9/12/2007](#)) The fact that the SITE Institute obtained the tape in advance was apparently leaked to the press by the White House, and SITE will complain about this, as it damages an intelligence operation aimed at al-Qaeda (see [September 7, 2007](#)).

September 7, 2007: White House Leak Damages Private Intelligence Operation Against Bin Laden

The US administration leaks the news that it has obtained an advance copy of a new video from a man thought to be Osama bin Laden, damaging an intelligence operation by the SITE Institute. SITE, a private organization involved in the fight against international terrorism, obtains an advance copy of the video through an intelligence operation that had been ongoing for years (see [September 7 and 11, 2007](#)) and provides the copy to the White House. SITE founder Rita Katz sends White House representatives Fred Fielding and Joel Bagnal an e-mail saying that there is a need for secrecy and the video should not be distributed, but within twenty minutes of this government defense and intelligence agencies begin downloading the video from SITE. The video leaks from the administration to the news media within a few hours, tipping al-Qaeda off to the security breach. SITE’s activities are described as “tremendously helpful” by some intelligence officials, but Katz says that due to the leak, “Techniques that took years to develop are now ineffective and worthless.” However, officials say that US agencies do not rely solely on outside contractors for such information, and Ross Feinstein, spokesman for the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, comments, “We have individuals in the right places dealing with all these issues, across all 16 intelligence agencies.” ([Warrick 10/9/2007](#)) The Office of the Director of National Intelligence announces an inquiry into the leak, but Feinstein says, “we don’t think there was a leak from the Office of the Director of National Intelligence or the National Counterterrorism Center,” which also received a copy of the video from SITE. ([Warrick 10/10/2007](#))

September 7, 2007: Bin Laden Possibly Releases First Video for Three Years

A man thought to be Osama bin Laden releases a new video message, his first for three years (see [October 29, 2004](#)). In the message, which is addressed to the US, the speaker says that actions by radical Islamists have influenced US policy and that American prestige in the world has fallen, even though the interests of radical Islamists “overlap with the interests of the major corporations and also with those of the neoconservatives.” He also criticizes the US media and, due to its treatment of Sunni Muslims, the Iraqi government. The speaker says, “The holocaust of the Jews was carried out by your brethren in the middle of Europe, but had it been closer to our countries, most of the Jews would have been saved by taking refugee with us,” and also references common discrimination against Jews and Muslims in Medieval Spain, pointing out that Jews in

Morocco “are alive with us and we have not incinerated them.” In addition, he criticizes the US-led wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, saying that the Democratic party was elected to stop the war, but continues “to agree to the spending of tens of billions to continue the killing and war there,” because “the democratic system permits major corporations to back candidates,” who are then, it is implied, controlled by these corporations. The voice mentions the assassination of former US President John Kennedy and says that “the major corporations who were benefiting” from the Vietnam War “were the primary beneficiary from his killing.” He also references left-leaning writer Noam Chomsky, former CIA bin Laden unit chief Michael Scheuer, global warming, and the Kyoto accord, saying that the democratic system has caused a “massive failure to protect humans and their interests from the greed and avarice of the major corporations and their representatives,” and is “harsher and fiercer than your systems in the Middle Ages.” Finally, the speaker compares US President Bush to former Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev, who failed to acknowledge the Soviet Union was losing the Afghan War, and calls on the US to get out of Iraq and embrace Islam, which recognizes Mary and Jesus, a “prophet of Allah,” but does not recognize taxation. ([Laden 9/7/2007](#)) Bin Laden’s beard is different to his beard in previous videos and this leads to some discussion. According to the Washington Post, “The tape’s most striking feature [is] bin Laden’s physical appearance: The straggly, gray-streaked whiskers of his previous images [have] been replaced with a neatly trimmed beard of black or dark brown. While some analysts speculated that the beard [is] fake, others said it [is] likely that bin Laden had dyed his beard, as is customary for older men in some Muslim cultures.” ([Warrick 9/8/2007](#)) There are some problems with the video; for example, the picture is frozen for most of the time and the video is spliced (see [September 12, 2007](#)).

September 11, 2007: New Bin Laden Audio Recording Possibly Released Together with 9/11 Hijacker Will



Waleed Alshehri in his video will.

[Source: *As Sahab*] A new video is released featuring an audio statement by a man thought to be Osama bin Laden and a video will by one of the 9/11 hijackers, Waleed Alshehri. The man thought to be bin Laden urges sympathizers to join the “caravan of martyrs” and praises Alshehri, saying, “It is true that this young man was little in years, but the faith in his heart was big.” The audio message is accompanied by a still image of

the man thought to be bin Laden, apparently taken from a video released a few days earlier (see [September 7, 2007](#)). It is unclear whether the audio message is new or was taped some time before release, although the speaker mentions the death of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi in 2006 (see [June 8, 2006](#)). In the will, Alshehri warns the US, “We shall come at you from your front and back, your right and left.” He also criticizes the state of the Islamic world, “The condition of Islam at the present time makes one cry... in view of the weakness, humiliation, scorn and enslavement it is suffering because it neglected the obligations of Allah and His orders, and permitted His forbidden things and abandoned jihad in Allah’s path.” Homeland security adviser Frances Townsend says that the video is not important and that bin Laden is “virtually impotent.” However, MSNBC will comment, “Bin Laden’s new appearances underline the failure to find the terror leader that President Bush vowed in the wake of the Sept. 11 attacks to take ‘dead or alive.’” ([MSNBC 9/11/2007](#))

[September 12, 2007: Some Problems with Possible New Bin Laden Video Noted by Analyst](#)



Osama bin Laden in 2004 (left) and 2007 (right). [Source: *As-Sahab*] Problems with a recently released video featuring a man thought to be Osama bin Laden surface. In particular, the 26-minute recording only contains two short sections where the man said to be bin Laden is seen talking. The first covers the initial two minutes of the tape, the second begins after around twelve and a half minutes and lasts for about 90 seconds. The remaining 23 minutes of the tape show only a still image of the speaker. There are also many audio and video splices in the tape and the two live sections appear to be from different recordings, as the desk in front of bin Laden is closer to the camera in the second section. Analyst Neal Krawetz says, “the new audio has no accompanying ‘live’ video and consists of multiple audio recordings... And there are so many splices that I cannot help but wonder if someone spliced words and phrases together. I also cannot rule out a vocal imitator during the frozen-frame audio. The only way to prove that the audio is really bin Laden is to see him talking in the video.” Krawetz will also note the similarities with bin Laden’s previous video, released just before the 2004 US presidential election (see [October 29, 2004](#)): “[T]his is the same clothing [a white hat, white shirt and yellow sweater] he wore in the 2004-10-29 video. In 2004 he had it unzipped, but in 2007 he zipped up the bottom half. Besides the clothing, it appears to be the same background, same lighting, and same desk. Even the camera angle is almost identical.” Krawetz also comments, “if you overlay the 2007 video with the 2004 video, his face has not changed in three years—only his beard is darker and the

contrast on the picture has been adjusted.” ([Vamosi 9/12/2007](#)) However, most of the Western news coverage about the video fails to point out that most of the video is a still image. ([CNN 8/8/2007](#); [National Public Radio 9/7/2007](#); [Gardner 9/8/2007](#))

September 18, 2007: Director of National Intelligence Denies US Detected Hijackers’ US Calls, Says 9/11 ‘Should Have and Could Have Been Prevented’

In testimony before the House Judiciary Committee, Director of National Intelligence Mike McConnell admits, “9/11 should have and could have been prevented; it was an issue of connecting information that was available.” ([Ryan and Cook 9/18/2007](#)) The reason he gives for this is: “There was a terrorist. He was a foreigner. He was in the United States [note: presumably he is referring to Khalid Almihdhar]. He was planning to carry out the 9/11 attacks. What the 9/11 Commission and the Joint Inquiry found is that person communicated back to al-Qaeda overseas and we failed to detect it.” ([US Congress 9/18/2007](#)) However, it is unclear which portions of the 9/11 Commission and Congressional Inquiry reports he thinks he is referring to. The 9/11 Commission report contains two brief mentions of these calls to and from the US, but does not say whether they were detected or not, although it does say that other calls made outside the US by the 9/11 hijackers were detected. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 87-8, 181, 222](#)) The Congressional Inquiry report says that the calls between Almihdhar in the US and the al-Qaeda communications hub in Yemen were intercepted and analyzed by the NSA, which distributed reports to other intelligence agencies about some of them. ([US Congress 7/24/2003, pp. 157](#)) The FBI had requested the NSA inform it of calls between the number Almihdhar talked to, an al-Qaeda communications hub in Yemen, and the US (see [Late 1998](#)), but the NSA did not do so (see [Spring 2000](#)). A variety of explanations are offered for this after 9/11 (see [Summer 2002-Summer 2004](#) and [2004 and After](#)).

September 19, 2007: Terrorism Analyst Says It Is Better to Let Al-Qaeda Issue Videos

Following the release of a new video and a new audio message from a man thought to be Osama bin Laden (see [September 7, 2007](#) and [September 11, 2007](#)), terrorism analyst Peter Bergen says it may be a good idea to allow As-Sahab, a clandestine institute that makes videos for al-Qaeda, to continue to operate. Bergen says it would be difficult to shut the operation down, “You’d have to capture or kill everyone involved, and if you knew who they were, you might want to follow them instead,” says Bergen, adding, “Understanding the inner workings of As-Sahab is probably as good a way as any I can think of to get close to bin Laden and [al-Qaeda deputy leader Ayman al-]Zawahiri.” However, former director of the National Counter-Terrorism Center John Brennan says of a possible attempt at penetrating As-Sahab, “Don’t presume that’s not happening.” CIA Director General Michael Hayden says of As-Sahab’s ability to continue putting out videos, “It might be disappointing, but it shouldn’t be surprising.” ([Waterman 9/19/2007](#))

September 19 and October 18, 2007: Moussaoui Prosecutors View Some Surviving CIA Detainee Interrogation Videos

In mid-September 2007, the CIA informs the prosecution team from the 2006 Zacarias Moussaoui trial that it has one video recordings of a high-ranking detainee interrogation. The CIA had previously claimed it had no video recordings of any interrogations when in fact it did (see [May 7-9, 2003](#) and [November 3-14, 2005](#)). The CIA then initiates a review and unearths another video and an audio recording several days later. The prosecutors will subsequently inform the judge, but say that the error did not influence the outcome of the trial, as Moussaoui pleaded guilty, but the death penalty was not imposed. ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 10/25/2007](#) ³; [Vicini 11/13/2007](#)) Lawyers who prosecuted Zacarias Moussaoui view these two videotapes and listen to the one audiotape. The names of the one to three detainees who were recorded are not known. ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 10/25/2007](#) ³) However, they were enemy combatants that could not testify at the trial, and substitutions for testimony were submitted in the trial on behalf of five enemy combatants: Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, Mustafa Ahmed al-Hawsawi, Khallad bin Attash, Hambali, and Mohamed al-Khatani. ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 10/25/2007](#) ³; [Vicini 11/13/2007](#)) Shortly after this, the CIA discloses that it had destroyed some similar videotapes in 2005 (see [November 2005](#) and [December 6, 2007](#)). Apparently this indicates some videotapes have survived the destruction.

September 20, 2007: Bin Laden Possibly Calls on Pakistanis to Overthrow President Musharraf

A man thought to be Osama bin Laden releases a new audio tape calling on the people of Pakistan to overthrow President Pervez Musharraf. The immediate reason is a Pakistani government attack on a mosque, which is compared to the destruction of a mosque in India by Hindu nationalists, “Pervez’s invasion of Lal Masjid [the Red Mosque] in the City of Islam, Islamabad, is a sad event, like the crime of the Hindus in their invasion and destruction of the Babari Masjid.” The voice on the tape accuses Musharraf of providing “loyalty, submissiveness and aid to America,” and says, “armed rebellion against him and removing him [are] obligatory.” Musharraf is also criticized for showing images of a cleric attempting to escape the mosque in women’s clothing, for Pakistani military intelligence allegedly pressurizing clerics to issue fatwas favorable to the government, for his inaction over Kashmir, and for using the Pakistani army in tribal areas. ([Laden 9/2007](#); [BBC 9/20/2007](#))

October 19, 2007: Mistrial in Holy Land Foundation Prosecution

In a setback for the Justice Department, a mistrial is declared in the government's attempted prosecution of the Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development (see [1989](#)), a now-defunct Muslim charity that the government accused of sponsoring terrorism back in 2001. The mistrial was not the first verdict sent down; the judge originally announced a near-complete acquittal of Holy Land's top officials on terrorist financing charges. However, three jurors stated in court that the verdict was incorrect, the judge sent the jury back into chambers for further deliberations. A mistrial of four Holy Land officials is declared after the jury declares itself locked, and a fifth official is declared innocent of all but one charge, where the jury again finds itself unable to render a verdict. The mistrials and acquittals are a blow to the Justice Department and the White House, both of which have billed the prosecution of Holy Land as the best efforts in years to secure a clear victory against terrorism. "It's a major loss for the government," says law professor Jonathan Turley, who has himself represented alleged terrorist financiers against the Justice Department. The case was never as solid as it was presented by government officials. In 2001, after Holy Land was declared a terrorist sponsor by the Bush administration and its funds were frozen (see [February 19, 2000](#) and [December 4, 2001](#)), civil libertarians called the government's definition of sponsorship of terrorism overly broad, and Holy Land fought back in court. In 2004, the government indicted Holy Land and its top leaders, leveling accusations that the charity and its officials had funnelled \$12 million to the terrorist group Hamas through secondary charities (see [October 1994-2001](#), [May 12, 2000-December 9, 2004](#) and [December 18, 2002-April 2005](#)). A summary of wiretapped conversations between charity officials contained inflammatory anti-Semitic statements, which bolstered the government's case in the public eye, but when the actual transcripts were examined, no such anti-Semitic statements could be found. And the government's strategy of adding a long list of "unindicted co-conspirators" to its allegations against Holy Land, a list which includes many prominent Muslim organizations still legally operating inside the US, has caused many to accuse the government of conducting a smear campaign (see [December 3-14, 2001](#) and [August 21, 2004](#)). While the Justice Department may well retry the case, the verdict, which seems to favor the defendants, "doesn't bode well for the government's prosecution" of this and other similar cases, says export controls lawyer Judith Lee. ([Schwartz 10/22/2007](#))

October 29, 2007: Saudi King Says Saudis Passed British Information that Could Have Prevented 7/7 London Bombings

On the eve of a visit to London, King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia says that his intelligence service warned Britain of an impending plot before the 7/7 London bombings (see [July 7, 2005](#)), but that British authorities failed to act on the warning. King Abdullah says, "We sent information to [Britain] before the terrorist attacks in Britain but unfortunately no

action was taken. And it may have been able to maybe avert the tragedy.” He also says that Britain did not take terrorism seriously for a while. However, British authorities deny all this. ([BBC 10/29/2007](#)) Details of the warning are not specified. However, this may be a reference to one or two discussions between Saudi Arabia and Britain in early 2005 about information indicating there was to be an attack in London (see [December 14, 2004-February 2005](#) and [April 2005 or Shortly Before](#)).

November 2, 2007: Prince Bandar Says Saudi Arabia Was ‘Actively Following’ Most 9/11 Hijackers Before 9/11

Saudi Arabia’s national security adviser Prince Bandar bin Sultan says that before 9/11 the Saudi government was “actively following” most of the 19 hijackers “with precision.” Further details, such as exactly how many hijackers, which of them, and how the surveillance was conducted, are not provided. Prince Bandar, formerly Saudi ambassador to the US, also says that the information Saudi Arabia had may have been sufficient to prevent 9/11, “If US security authorities had engaged their Saudi counterparts in a serious and credible manner, in my opinion, we would have avoided what happened.” A US official says that the statement made by Bandar should be taken with a grain of salt. ([CNN 11/2/2007](#)) Saudi officials had previously said that they watchlisted two of the Saudi hijackers, Nawaf Alhazmi and Khalid Almihdhar, in the late 1990s (see [1997](#) and [Late 1999](#)) and their interest in Nawaf Alhazmi may have led them to his brother, Salem. All three of these hijackers were also tracked by the US before 9/11 (see [Early 1999](#), January 5-8, 2000, [Early 2000-Summer 2001](#) and [9:53 p.m. September 11, 2001](#)).

November 8, 2007: FBI Warns Al-Qaeda May Strike Shopping Malls in LA and Chicago; Credibility of Threat Is Doubted

The FBI warns that al-Qaeda operatives are planning several holiday attacks on US shopping malls in Los Angeles and Chicago over the holiday period. ([Esposito and Walter 11/8/2007](#)) In an intelligence report distributed to law enforcement authorities, the FBI says that the attacks have been planned for two years with the goal of disrupting the US economy. ([Federal Bureau of Investigation 11/7/2007](#) ٥) The FBI received the information in late September and declassified it for the intelligence information reports. These reports routinely contain raw, unvetted or uncorroborated chatter about possible threats. It is estimated that the FBI released 8,000 such reports over the last year. The FBI and Department of Homeland Security Department have released about 200 threat bulletins possible plot trends that are based on actual events worldwide. ([Watkins 11/8/2007](#)) Questions are immediately raised about the alert. ([Esposito and Walter 11/8/2007](#)) As with previous threats, some in the media question the timing and necessity of such a warning. The FBI anticipates this and clarifies its intentions in releasing the memo. The report states that “this information was obtained through a lengthy chain of

acquisition, and was provided to the source by a sub-source who spoke in confidence. The veracity of the information is uncertain but the threat is being reported due to the nature of the information.” ([Esposito and Walter 11/8/2007](#)) Other intelligence officers raise the possibility that it could be “disinformation.” It is believed that the source only has “indirect access” to al-Qaeda. It is common for jihadist web sites and chat rooms to have comments discussing attacks on “soft targets,” such as shopping malls. Special Agent Richard Kolko says “out of abundance of caution, and for any number of other reasons, raw intelligence is regularly shared within the intelligence and law enforcement communities - even when the value of the information is unknown... Al-Qaeda messaging has clearly stated they intend to attack the US or its interests; however, there is no information to state this is a credible threat. As always, we remind people to remain vigilant and report suspicious activity to authorities.” A Homeland Security official says “we have no credible, specific information suggesting an imminent attack.” ([Esposito and Walter 11/8/2007](#)) LA mayor Antonio Villaraigosa urges residents to go about their daily routines, but says that they should be “mindful of anything out of the ordinary.” ([Watkins 11/8/2007](#))

November 8, 2007: Michael Mukasey Becomes Attorney General after Close Senate Vote and Waterboarding Controversy



Michael Mukasey. [Source: US Department of Justice] After two months of controversy, and a round of sporadically contentious Senate confirmation hearings, former judge Michael Mukasey narrowly wins the Senate’s approval to become the next attorney general, by an almost-party line 53-40 vote. Musakey replaces Alberto Gonzales, who resigned under fire in September 2007. Many Democrats vote against Mukasey because of his refusal to categorize the interrogation technique of waterboarding as torture, and his refusal to say that he would oppose President Bush’s insistence on eavesdropping on US citizens. Some Democrats took comfort in Mukasey’s characterization of waterboarding as “repugnant,” but others were not pleased by his refusal to say that the practice constitutes torture. Two key Democrats on the Senate Judiciary Committee, Charles Schumer (D-NY) and Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) refused to block Mukasey from going to the Senate for a confirmation vote. Both indicated that they reluctantly supported Mukasey’s nomination because the Justice Department needs an immediate infusion of leadership—Schumer called the department “adrift and rudderless” and in need of “a strong and independent leader”—and they feared if Mukasey was not

confirmed, President Bush would put someone worse in the position as an interim appointment. ([CNN 11/8/2007](#)) Schumer says he eventually decided to vote for Mukasey after the judge said “if Congress passed further legislation in this area, the president would have no legal authority to ignore it and Judge Mukasey would enforce it.” But Schumer’s colleague, Ted Kennedy (D-MA), is unimpressed. “Enforcing the law is the job of the attorney general,” Kennedy says. “It’s a prerequisite—not a virtue that enhances a nominee’s qualifications.” Ben Cardin (D-MD) wonders just how far, and how specifically, Congress will have to go to outlaw torture. He asks, “Are we going to have to outlaw the rack because there’s a question whether the rack is torture in this country?” ([National Public Radio 11/7/2007](#)) Arlen Specter (D-PA), the committee’s ranking Republican, calls Mukasey “ethical, honest [and] not an intimate of the president.” ([CNN 11/8/2007](#)) Mukasey is quietly sworn in only hours after winning the Senate vote. ([National Public Radio 11/9/2007](#)) All four Democratic senators running for president—Hillary Clinton (D-NY), Barack Obama (D-IL), Joseph Biden (D-DE), and Christopher Dodd (D-CT)—have said they oppose Mukasey’s nomination. Obama calls Mukasey’s refusal to label waterboarding as torture “appalling,” and notes that Mukasey’s belief that the president “enjoys an unwritten right to secretly ignore any law or abridge our constitutional freedoms simply by invoking national security” disqualify him for the position. The other candidates make similar statements. ([Fox News 10/30/2007](#)) However, none of them actually show up to cast their vote for or against Mukasey. John McCain (R-AZ), another senator running for president, also does not vote. ([Kellman 11/8/2007](#)) Three days after Mukasey’s confirmation, the New York Times writes a blistering editorial excoriating both the Bush administration and the compliant Senate Democrats for allowing Mukasey to become attorney general (see [November 11, 2007](#)).

November 13, 2007: CIA Claims It Accidentally Lied to Moussaoui Court and Lawyers about Interrogation Videotapes

The CIA “erroneously” misled the court and the lawyers involved in the ongoing prosecution of 9/11 suspect Zacarias Moussaoui (see [April 22, 2005](#)), it admits in a letter released today. In court declarations on May 9, 2003 and on November 14, 2005, the CIA stated it had no recordings of interrogations of “enemy combatants.” Now it admits it had two video tapes and one audio tape. Moussaoui’s lawyers want the tapes as part of his defense. The federal prosecutors say they just recently learned of the tapes, but they have been assured by the CIA that the tapes have no bearing on Moussaoui’s case, and no one on the tapes mentions either Moussaoui or the 9/11 plot. The prosecutors assert that, while the CIA errors are “unfortunate,” no harm was done to Moussaoui, who pled guilty and is serving a life sentence for his complicity in the attacks (see [May 3, 2006](#)). The letter, which has been heavily censored for public consumption, reads in part, “We bring the errors to the court’s attention... as part of our obligation of candor to the court.... The government will promptly apprise the court of any further developments.” ([Vicini 11/13/2007](#))

November 25, 2007: Al-Qaeda Leader Claims Alhazmi Was Pilot of Flight 77

On November 25, 2007, the London Times publishes an article about Luai Sakra, an al-Qaeda leader imprisoned in Turkey who allegedly was also a CIA informant before 9/11 (see [September 10, 2001](#)). The Times reports, “According to Sakra, [9/11 hijacker] Nawaf Alhazmi was a veteran operative who went on to pilot the plane that hit the Pentagon [Flight 77]. Although this is at odds with the official account, which says the plane was flown by another hijacker, it is plausible and might answer one of the mysteries of 9/11,” namely, why the FBI claims Hani Hanjour was the pilot of that plane, when many reports suggest Hanjour was a bad pilot. ([Gourlay and Calvert 11/25/2007](#)) Although none of the official accounts such as the 9/11 Commission report claim that Alhazmi was a pilot, there is considerable evidence to suggest that he was:

- In December 1999, Alhazmi was taught how to use a computer flight simulator program while in an al-Qaeda training camp in Afghanistan (see [Early December 1999](#)).
- On April 4, 2000, Alhazmi took one day’s worth of flying lessons, and his instructor later claims he did quite well and was already almost capable of taking off and landing on his own (see [April 4, 2000](#)).
- One month later, he took a second one day flying lesson, however his instructor will later call him “dumb” and unskilled (see [May 5 and 10, 2000](#)).
- Near the end of 2000, he told two unconnected associates that he was in Arizona and learning to fly with Hanjour (see [December 2000-January 2001](#)).
- On March 19, 2001, he bought flight deck videos for Boeing 747s and a Boeing 777 (see [November 5, 2000-June 20, 2001](#)).
- On March 23, 2001, he bought an aeronautical chart covering the northeastern US (see [March 23, 2001](#)).
- In July 2001, he and Hanjour appear to have rented an aircraft together in New Jersey. Alhazmi’s credit card was used to pay for the aircraft rental, as well as fuel in Maryland (a072001haninawafflight).
- Neighbors will later claim that just days before the 9/11 attacks, Alhazmi was practicing flying on a computer flight simulator program. ([KGTU 10 \(San Diego\) 9/14/2001](#))
- In 2002, al-Qaeda associate Ramzi bin al-Shibh will claim in an interview several months before his arrest that Alhazmi was one of the 9/11 pilots.

December 6, 2007: CIA Pre-empts New York Times Article and Admits Destroying Videos of Detainee Interrogations; Political Outcry Follows

In a statement released by CIA Director Michael Hayden, the CIA admits that it has destroyed videotapes of interrogations of two detainees, Abu Zubaida and Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri (see [Spring-Late 2002](#) and [November 2005](#)). ([Central Intelligence Agency 12/6/2007](#)) The statement is apparently released to preempt a New York Times article on the verge of publication that would have revealed the destruction. ([Eggen and Warrick 12/7/2007](#)) The fact that the CIA had videoed detainee interrogations was made public a

few weeks previously (see [November 13, 2007](#)). ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 10/25/2007](#).) According to several former intelligence officials, there is concern that the tapes could have set off controversies about the legality of the interrogations and generated a backlash in the Middle East. ([Mazzetti 12/8/2007](#)) Numerous political figures condemn the destruction in strong terms. For example, Senator Edward Kennedy (D-MA) says, “We haven’t seen anything like this since the 18½-minute gap in the tapes of President Richard Nixon,” and, “What would cause the CIA to take this action? The answer is obvious—coverup.” Senator Richard Durbin (D-IL) says, “What is at stake here goes to the heart of the rule of law and justice in America.” Human rights activists are also angry, and an Amnesty International spokesman says, “It falls into a pattern of measures that have been taken that obstruct accountability for human rights violations.” ([CBS News 12/7/2007](#); [Karl 12/7/2007](#)) Both the Justice Department and the CIA’s Inspector General initiate preliminary inquiries. The House and Senate intelligence committees also start investigations. ([Meyer 12/9/2007](#))

December 7, 2007: Some Commentators Are Skeptical CIA Tape Destruction Is Being Blamed on Single Scapegoat

Although it is reported that the head of the CIA’s clandestine service, Jose Rodriguez, is the man most responsible for the destruction of videotapes showing detainee interrogations (see [November 2005](#) and [December 6, 2007](#)), some commentators are skeptical of this. A former intelligence official says, “This looks like he was tossed under a giant bus... How likely is it that he took this decision on his own, especially when he’s not in the videotapes and wouldn’t be affected directly? Not very likely.” ([Silverstein 12/8/2007](#)) A former intelligence official says he is concerned Rodriguez is being unfairly singled out for blame over the matter. ([Mazzetti and Shane 12/11/2007](#)) According to attorney Scott Horton, by midday on December 7, shortly after news breaks that the CIA destroyed videotapes of detainee interrogations, “White House off-the-record explainers were extremely busy pointing fingers at one man, the designated scapegoat... So the sacrificial beast now has a name: it is Jose A. Rodriguez Jr., the head of the CIA’s Directorate of Operations.” Horton also sees a shift between the line initially taken by officials, and a later alteration: “Yesterday we are told, in highly implausible statements coming from General Hayden, that the CIA had acted completely appropriately... The issue had been considered, reviewed and cleared. Twenty-four hours later, there is a radical shift of course. Now we learn that the White House didn’t know about the decision and certainly wouldn’t have approved it.” Horton ascribes the shift to worries about the legality of destroying the tapes, especially as they may have been requested by a judge in the Zacarias Moussaoui trial (see [May 7-9, 2003](#) and [November 3-14, 2005](#)), problems in prosecutions where evidence has been destroyed, and a general lack of plausibility. Former CIA officer Larry Johnson will also be skeptical: “Jose Rodriguez will not be the only one walking the public plank on this issue. In fact, he did not undertake this mission without the permission or direction from higher ups. And when you are the Deputy Director of Operations, there are not a lot of people above you.” ([Horton 12/8/2007](#))

December 7, 2007: Legislators with CIA Oversight Say They Did Not Know About Tapes' Destruction, Contradicting Hayden

Chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee Jay Rockefeller (D-WV) says that he did not know about the destruction of CIA videos of detainee interrogations (see [November 2005](#) and [December 6, 2007](#)). ([US Congress 12/7/2007](#)) This contradicts a statement by CIA Director Michael Hayden saying that, "Our oversight committees also have been told that the videos were, in fact, destroyed." ([Central Intelligence Agency 12/6/2007](#)) The CIA says that the committee was informed of the destruction in November 2006, but, "A review of the November 2006 hearing transcript finds no mention of tapes being destroyed." ([US Congress 12/7/2007](#)) The House Intelligence Committee was apparently informed in March 2007. ([CBS News 12/7/2007](#)) However, the committee will say to Hayden that, "The notification came in the form of an offhand comment you made in response to a question," and, "We do not consider this to be sufficient notification." ([US Congress 12/7/2007](#)) There is also a dispute over what happened when the committees were first informed of the videos' existence. Hayden says, "The leaders of our oversight committees in Congress were informed of the videos years ago and of the Agency's intention to dispose of the material." ([Central Intelligence Agency 12/6/2007](#)) Some political leaders were informed of the tapes in 2003, but urged that they not be destroyed (see [November 2005](#)).

December 7, 2007: Ex-CIA Officer Suggests Destruction of CIA Videotapes May Not Only Be Related to Torture Allegations

Following the revelation that the CIA has destroyed videotapes of detainee interrogations (see [November 2005](#) and [December 6, 2007](#)), most of the media assume that the reason for the destruction is that the tapes must show CIA officers torturing detainees and "the CIA did not want the tapes seen in public because they are too graphic and could lead to indictments." However, author and former CIA officer Robert Baer will suggest there may be other reasons: "I would find it very difficult to believe the CIA would deliberately destroy evidence material to the 9/11 investigation, evidence that would cover up a core truth, such as who really was behind 9/11. On the other hand I have to wonder what space-time continuum the CIA exists in, if they weren't able to grasp what a field day the 9/11 conspiracy theorists are going to have with this... Still, the people who think 9/11 was an inside job might easily be able to believe that Abu Zubaida [one of the detainees who was videotaped] named his American accomplices in the tape that has now been destroyed by the CIA. It isn't going to help that the Abu Zubaida investigation has a lot of problems even without destroyed evidence. When Abu Zubaida was arrested in Pakistan in 2002, two ATM cards were found on him. One was issued by a bank in Saudi Arabia (a bank close to the Saudi royal family) and the other to a bank in Kuwait. As I understand it, neither Kuwait nor Saudi Arabia has been able to tell us who fed the accounts (see

[Shortly After March 28, 2002](#)). Also, apparently, when Abu Zubaida was captured, telephone records, including calls to the United States, were found in the house he was living in. The calls stopped on September 10, and resumed on September 16 (see [Early September 2001](#) and [September 16, 2001 and After](#)). There's nothing in the 9/11 Commission report about any of this, and I have no idea whether the leads were run down, the evidence lost or destroyed.” ([Baer 12/7/2007](#))

December 7, 2007 and Shortly After: Many Inquiries Launched into Destruction of CIA Videos

Several inquiries are launched into the destruction by the CIA of videotapes showing detainee interrogations.

- The Justice Department begins a preliminary inquiry. It writes to the CIA's top lawyer, John Rizzo, noting he has undertaken to ensure all currently existing records are preserved. ([Associated Press 12/8/2007](#))
- The CIA's Inspector General begins an inquiry. One of the questions it will address is whether the destruction was obstruction of justice. ([Jordan 12/11/2007](#)) However, some Democratic lawmakers raise questions about the propriety of inquiries run by the Justice Department, as its lawyers offered advice about the tapes, and the CIA Inspector General, who reviewed the tapes before they were destroyed. ([Eggen and Warrick 12/15/2007](#))
- The House Intelligence Committee starts an inquiry. Committee chairman Silvestre Reyes says it is planning a “broad review” of the CIA's detention and interrogation program, but adds, “I'm not looking for scapegoats.” ([Mazzetti 12/8/2007](#)) The committee requests all cables, memos and e-mails related to the videotapes, as well as legal advice given to CIA officials before the tapes were destroyed. ([Johnston and Mazzetti 12/15/2007](#))
- The Senate Intelligence Committee also begins an inquiry. ([Dean 12/14/2007](#))
- The House Judiciary Committee sends letters to CIA Director Michael Hayden and Attorney General Michael Mukasey asking whether the Justice Department provided the CIA with legal advice. ([Hess 12/7/2007](#))
- The House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform investigates whether the Federal Records Act has been violated. ([Dean 12/14/2007](#))
- There is a debate in a court case involving 11 Guantanamo detainees about whether the tapes were subject to a preservation order issued by the judge in that case (see [December 14, 2007](#)).

December 10, 2007: Former CIA Official Admits CIA Used Waterboarding; He Calls It Torture but Sometimes Necessary



John Kiriakou. [Source: ABC News] John Kiriakou, a CIA officer who led the CIA team that captured al-Qaeda leader Abu Zubaida (see [March 28, 2002](#)), claims that Zubaida was waterboarded. This is the first official on-the-record acknowledgment by any CIA official that the controversial technique that simulates drowning was used. He claims that waterboarding was extremely effective, so much so that after Zubaida was subjected to it one time, he began to fully cooperate. "From that day on, he answered every question. The threat information he provided disrupted a number of attacks, maybe dozens of attacks." ([Esposito and Ross 12/10/2007](#)) However, Kiriakou actually left the region before Zubaida was aggressively interrogated, so it is not known how much he really knows about what happened. ([Kiriakou 12/10/2007](#)) He claims waterboarding was used because of a sense of urgency. "Those tricks of the trade require a great deal of time—much of the time—and we didn't have that luxury. We were afraid that there was another major attack coming." He also claims that waterboarding is torture and it should remain banned now, but that the circumstances of the time warranted its use. He believes that waterboarding both compromised American principles and saved lives. ([Esposito and Ross 12/10/2007](#)) Kiriakou's comments come just days after it was publicly revealed that the CIA destroyed videotapes of Zubaida's interrogation (see [November 2005](#) and [December 6, 2007](#)). The New York Times reports that "Kiriakou sought and received approval from the CIA for his media blitz..." ([Nizza 12/11/2007](#)) However, Kiriakou denies this. The next day, it is reported that he apparently will not be the subject of a Justice Department investigation, even though he clearly revealed classified information about the use of waterboarding. Instead, CIA Director Gen. Michael Hayden sends out a classified memo warning all employees "of the importance of protecting classified information." ([Ross and Esposito 12/11/2007](#))

December 11, 2007: Bush Says He Was Unaware of CIA Interrogation Videotapes and Their Destruction

President George Bush says he was unaware that the CIA had videotaped detainee interrogations. The CIA had videotaped some interrogations in 2002 (see [Spring-Late 2002](#)), but the tapes were destroyed in late 2005 (see [November 2005](#)), and this was disclosed five days previously (see [December 6, 2007](#)). Bush says, "My first recollection of whether the tapes existed or whether they were destroyed was when [CIA Director] Michael Hayden briefed me." ([Raddatz 12/11/2007](#)) Bush took an interest in information coming from one of the detainees who was videotaped, Abu Zubaida (see [Late March 2002](#)), and normally a president would be informed about activities like the detainee

interrogations. However, there appears to have been a long-standing deliberate policy of keeping Bush out of the loop regarding aggressive interrogation methods to protect him from any adverse consequences that might arise (see [April 2002 and After](#)).

December 11-14, 2007: Some Politicians Support Special Counsel Investigation over CIA Videotape Destruction

Some US lawmakers indicate they may support the appointment of a special counsel to look into the CIA's destruction of videotapes (see [December 6, 2007](#)), in addition to various other inquiries that are launched at this time (see [December 7, 2007 and Shortly After](#)).

■Initially, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) indicates he will support a special counsel if the Bush administration impedes a congressional probe and an investigation initiated by the Justice Department: "The CIA, the Justice Department, the Bush White House and every American should know that if these investigations encounter resistance or are unable to find the truth, I will not hesitate to add my voice to those calling for a special counsel." ([Marre 12/11/2007](#))

■Senator Joseph Biden (D-DE), who is running for the Democratic presidential nomination, backs the call. ([Marre 12/11/2007](#))

■After some lawmakers begin to question whether the Justice Department will properly investigate the scandal (see [December 14, 2007](#)), Senator Edward Kennedy (D-MA) expresses some support for a special counsel: "I am concerned whether we are going to get to the real facts... [Because the inquiry is] being very closely held, the question is whether the American people will have a sense that this investigation is on the level. Unless you bring the FBI in, and unless you bring in the possibility of a special prosecutor as they had in Watergate, I am not sure we'll get to that point." ([Rowley 12/14/2007](#))

However, a special prosecutor is opposed by some, such as Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman Jay Rockefeller (D-WV). ([Marre 12/11/2007](#)) Attorney General Michael Mukasey calls such appointment "the most hypothetical of hypotheticals." ([Jordan 12/11/2007](#))

December 11-12, 2007: Hayden Backtracks over CIA Tape Destruction Following Appearances Before House and Senate Committees

Following appearances before the Senate and then House Intelligence Committees, CIA Director Michael Hayden takes a different line than the previous week over the CIA's destruction of videotapes showing detainee interrogations. When the scandal first broke, he had said: "The leaders of our oversight committees in Congress were informed of the videos years ago and of the Agency's intention to dispose of the material. Our oversight committees also have been told that the videos were, in fact, destroyed." ([Central](#)

[Intelligence Agency 12/6/2007](#)) However, the committees protested (see [December 7, 2007](#)) and, after his closed-door meeting with the House committee on December 12, he says, “particularly at the time of the destruction we could have done an awful lot better at keeping the committee alerted and informed.” ([Fox News 12/13/2007](#)) His private explanation to the Senate committee leaves many questions unanswered, but chairman Jay Rockefeller calls it “a useful and not yet complete hearing.” ([Hess 12/11/2007](#)) House committee chairman Silvestre Reyes, who expresses the committee’s “frustration” at not being kept informed about the tapes, calls the meeting “the first step in what we feel is going to be a long-term investigation,” and says some parts of Hayden’s briefing are “stunning.” ([Fox News 12/13/2007](#)) Hayden points out to both committees that he arrived at the CIA after the tapes had been destroyed, so “Other people in the agency know about this far better than I.” ([Hess 12/11/2007](#))

December 14, 2007: Justice Department and CIA Inspector General Hamper Congressional Probes of CIA Tape Destruction



Kenneth Wainstein. [*Source: White House*]The Justice Department attempts to delay probes by the House and Senate Intelligence Committees into the destruction of CIA tapes showing detainee interrogations, saying the administration cannot provide the witnesses or documents the committees want, as this may jeopardize its own investigations. Kenneth Wainstein, assistant attorney general for national security, and CIA Inspector General John Helgerson write to congressional intelligence committee leaders saying, “We fully appreciate the committee’s oversight interest in this matter, but want to advise you of concerns that actions responsive to your request would represent significant risk to our preliminary inquiry.” However, Wainstein and Helgerson are unable to say when they will have results. Attorney General Michael Mukasey also rejects a request for details about the Justice Department-CIA inquiry (see [December 14, 2007](#)). ([Eggen and Warrick 12/15/2007](#); [Johnston and Mazzetti 12/15/2007](#)) House Intelligence Committee Chairman Silvestre Reyes (D) and Vice Chairman Peter Hoekstra (R) threaten to issue subpoenas and respond in a joint statement: “We are stunned that the Justice Department would move to block our investigation... Parallel investigations occur all of the time, and there is no basis upon which the Attorney General can stand in the way of our work.” ([Eggen and Warrick 12/15/2007](#)) They add: “It’s clear that there’s more to this story than we have been told, and it is unfortunate that we are being prevented from learning the facts. The executive branch can’t be trusted to oversee

itself.” ([Apuzzo 12/15/2007](#)) The New York Times comments, “The inquiry by the House committee had been shaping up as the most aggressive investigation into the destruction of the tapes.” The intelligence committee inquiries are similar to those of the Justice Department and CIA Inspector General, but also aim to determine whether anyone in the executive branch had sought to have the tapes destroyed to eliminate possible evidence that CIA officers had used banned interrogation techniques. ([Johnston and Mazzetti 12/15/2007](#)) A CIA spokesman says, “Director Hayden has said the Agency will cooperate fully with both the preliminary inquiry conducted by DOJ and CIA’s Office of Inspector General, and with the Congress. That has been, and certainly still is, the case.” ([Eggen and Warrick 12/15/2007](#)) However, the CIA fails to provide documents the House committee has requested. ([Johnston and Mazzetti 12/15/2007](#)) Commentator Scott Horton will call this “a conscious decision to shield criminal conduct from exposure before the watchdog appointed by the Constitution: Congress.” ([Horton 12/15/2007](#))

December 14, 2007: Justice Department Urges Judge Not to Look into Destruction of CIA Tapes

The Justice Department urges a federal judge not to begin an inquiry into the destruction of CIA videotapes in a case involving 11 Guantanamo Bay detainees. The judge in the case, Henry Kennedy, had previously issued a ruling that evidence related to the detainees should be preserved (see [June-July 2005](#)). After attorneys for the detainees file a motion saying the CIA’s destruction of the tapes “raises grave concerns about the government’s compliance with the preservation order entered by this court,” the administration argues it was not under an obligation to preserve the videotapes and tells US District Judge Kennedy that asking for information about the tapes’ destruction could “potentially complicate” a Justice Department inquiry into it. The Justice Department also says the judge lacks jurisdiction and is worried he will compel CIA officers to testify. In addition, the destroyed tapes were made outside Guantanamo, whereas the order previously issued by the judge only directly affected material in Guantanamo. However, evidence from “a senior al-Qaeda lieutenant” is being used against one of the detainees, and this lieutenant may have been shown on the destroyed tapes, making them relevant to the case. The Associated Press calls the Justice Department’s request “unusual,” and law professor Douglas Kmiec comments, “It’s hard to know on the surface whether this is obstruction or an advancement of a legitimate inquiry.” ([Mazzetti and Shane 12/11/2007](#); [Apuzzo 12/15/2007](#)) Another law professor, Jonathon Turley, comments: “The Justice Department insists it will essentially investigate itself and then tells the court that because it is investigating itself it won’t turn over evidence of its possible criminal misconduct. It’s so circular, it’s maddening.” ([Cochran 12/15/2007](#))

December 14, 2007: Justice Department Refuses to Answer Congressional Questions about CIA Tape Destruction

After it is revealed that the CIA has destroyed tapes showing detainee interrogations (see [November 2005](#)), congressional leaders Patrick Leahy (D-VT) and Arlen Specter (R-PA) ask Attorney General Michael Mukasey for “a complete account of the Justice Department’s own knowledge of and involvement with” the tape destruction. News reports indicate the Justice Department did advise the CIA not to destroy the tapes as far back as 2003 (see [2003](#)). The Justice Department is also asked whether it offered legal advice to the CIA or communicated with the White House about the issue. However, Mukasey refuses to answer any of the questions, replying that the Justice Department “has a long-standing policy of declining to provide non-public information about pending matters. This policy is based in part on our interest in avoiding any perception that our law enforcement decisions are subject to political influence.” ([Eggen and Warrick 12/15/2007](#)) According to the New York Times, Justice Department officials describe this and another rebuff to congress (see [December 14, 2007](#)) as “an effort to caution Congress against meddling in the tapes case and other politically explosive criminal cases.” ([Johnston and Mazzetti 12/15/2007](#))

December 16, 2007: Congresswoman Says CIA Tapes Scandal Is ‘Constitutional Crisis’

Speaking about the CIA videotapes scandal, Congresswoman Jane Harman says in a Fox News interview, “We have a system of checks and balances and it’s broken. We’re in Constitutional crisis because of the arrogant view of some in this administration that they can decide what the policy is, write the legal opinions to justify that policy and be accountable to no one.” And when asked about the Justice Department’s refusal to cooperate with any Congressional investigations into the scandal (see [December 14, 2007](#)), she says, “It smells like the cover-up of the cover-up.” Peter Hoekstra, the top Republican on the House Intelligence Committee, is interviewed with Harman and is extremely critical of the leaders of the US intelligence community, calling them political, arrogant, and incompetent. “They’ve clearly demonstrated through the tapes case that they don’t believe that they are accountable to Congress.” ([Sheehan and Edwards 12/16/2007](#))

December 18, 2007: Washington Post Disputes CIA Claim that Torture of Zubaida Was Effective

The CIA videotapes destruction scandal reopens a debate about the usefulness of torturing al-Qaeda leader Abu Zubaida. The FBI briefly used rapport-building techniques on Zubaida before the CIA took over and tortured him. On December 10, 2007, several days after the public disclosure that the videotapes of the CIA’s interrogation of Zubaida was destroyed, former CIA officer John Kiriakou admits that Zubaida was tortured by the use of waterboarding (see [December 10, 2007](#)). Kiriakou claims that waterboarding was so effective that Zubaida completely broke after just one session of waterboarding lasting 35 seconds. ([Esposito and Ross 12/10/2007](#)) This claim becomes a frequently used media talking point. However, on December 18, the Washington Post presents a contrary

account. “There is little dispute, according to officials from both agencies, that Abu Zubaida provided some valuable intelligence before CIA interrogators began to rough him up, including information that helped identify Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, the alleged mastermind of the Sept. 11 attacks, and al-Qaeda operative Jose Padilla” (see [Mid-April 2002](#)). The Post notes that Kiriakou helped capture Zubaida but was not present at any of Zubaida’s interrogations. Furthermore, “other former and current officials” disagree with Kiriakou’s claim “that Abu Zubaida’s cooperation came quickly under harsh interrogation or that it was the result of a single waterboarding session. Instead, these officials said, harsh tactics used on him at a secret detention facility in Thailand went on for weeks or, depending on the account, even months.” ([Eggen and Pincus 12/18/2007](#)) The most in-depth previous media accounts suggest that the FBI interrogation of Zubaida was getting good intelligence while the CIA torture of him resulted in very dubious intelligence (see [Mid-April-May 2002](#) and [June 2002](#)).

December 19, 2007: Law Professor Outlines Six Possible Criminal Offences in CIA Tapes Scandal

Speaking on CNN, George Washington University law professor John Turley outlines the criminal offenses that may have been committed in the scandal surrounding the destruction of CIA videotapes showing detainee interrogations: “There are at least six identifiable crimes from obstruction of justice to obstruction of congress, perjury, conspiracy and false statements. What is often forgotten, the crime of torturing suspects. Now, if that crime was committed, it was a crime that would conceivably be ordered by the president himself, only the president can order those types of special treatments or interrogation techniques.” ([CNN 12/19/2007](#))

January 2, 2008: Prosecutor Appointed to Investigate Destruction of CIA Tapes

After the Justice Department and CIA Inspector General conclude there should be a criminal probe into the destruction of videotapes showing interrogations of two detainees, Abu Zubaida and Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri (see [January 2, 2008](#)), Attorney General Michael Mukasey appoints John Durham, a federal prosecutor from Connecticut, to oversee the case. The investigation would usually be handled by the prosecutor’s office in the Eastern District of Virginia, but that office is recused to avoid the appearance of a conflict of interests. Durham will not act as an independent special prosecutor like Patrick Fitzgerald in the Valerie Plame case, but will report to the Deputy Attorney General. House Judiciary Committee Chairman John Conyers (D-MI) criticizes the appointment, saying, “it is disappointing that the Attorney General has stepped outside the Justice Department’s own regulations and declined to appoint a more independent special counsel in this matter... The Justice Department’s record over the past seven years of sweeping the administration’s misconduct under the rug has left the American public with little confidence in the administration’s ability to investigate itself. Nothing less than a

special counsel with a full investigative mandate will meet the tests of independence, transparency and completeness.” ([Greenwald 1/2/2008](#))

January 2, 2008: Kean and Hamilton Say CIA and White House Obstructed 9/11 Commission over Detainee Videos

In an op-ed published by the New York Times, former 9/11 Commission chairman Tom Kean and vice-chairman Lee Hamilton write that their 9/11 inquiry was “obstructed” by the CIA, which failed to provide them with videotapes of detainee interrogations. The White House also knew of the videotapes’ existence but failed to inform them. The Commission had repeatedly asked for all material related to detainee interrogations and was unhappy with what the CIA gave it (see [Summer 2003-January 2004](#), [Summer 2003, November 5, 2003-January 2004](#), and [After January 2004](#)). Kean and Hamilton write that the CIA “failed to respond to our lawful requests for information about the 9/11 plot. Those who knew about those videotapes—and did not tell us about them—obstructed our investigation. There could have been absolutely no doubt in the mind of anyone at the CIA—or the White House—of the commission’s interest in any and all information related to Qaeda detainees involved in the 9/11 plot. Yet no one in the administration ever told the commission of the existence of videotapes of detainee interrogations.” ([Kean and Hamilton 1/2/2008](#))

January 2, 2008: Justice Department and CIA Inspector General Say Criminal Investigation Needed over Destruction of CIA Tapes

The Justice Department’s National Security Division and the CIA’s inspector general conclude their preliminary inquiry into the destruction of CIA videotapes showing the interrogation of detainees Abu Zubaida and Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri (see [December 7, 2007 and Shortly After](#)). They report that there is enough evidence to start a criminal investigation, but do not say for certain that a crime has been committed. ([Greenwald 1/2/2008](#)) A prosecutor is appointed to head the investigation (see [January 2, 2008](#)).