

Complete 9/11 Timeline

1975-2002: Saudi Billions Lay Groundwork for Radical Militancy

In 1973, the price of oil skyrockets, bringing a huge amount of wealth to Saudi Arabia and other oil-rich Middle Eastern countries. The Center for Security Policy (CSP), a Washington think tank, will calculate in 2003 that between 1995 and 2002, the Saudi government spends over \$70 billion on international aid. More than two thirds of the money goes to Islamic related purposes such as building mosques and religious schools. This money usually supports Wahhabism, a fundamentalist version of Islam dominant in Saudi Arabia but far less popular in most other Islamic nations. CSP scholar Alex Alexiev calls this “the largest worldwide propaganda campaign ever mounted” in the history of the world. In addition, private Saudi citizens donate many billions more for Wahhabi projects overseas through private charities. Some of the biggest charities, such as the Muslim World League and its affiliate, the International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO), are headed by Saudi government officials and closely tied to the government. The IIRO takes credit for funding 575 new mosques in Indonesia alone. Most of this money is spent on benign purposes with charitable intentions. But US News and World Report will assert in 2003, “Accompanying the money, invariably, was a blizzard of Wahhabist literature.... Critics argue that Wahhabism’s more extreme preachings—mistrust of infidels, branding of rival sects as apostates, and emphasis on violent jihad—laid the groundwork for terrorist groups around the world.” ([Kaplan, Ekman, and Latif 12/15/2003](#))

1976: CIA and Other Intelligence Agencies Use BCCI to Control and Manipulate Criminals and Terrorists Worldwide

Investigative journalist Joseph Trento will later report that in 1976, the Safari Club, a newly formed secret cabal of intelligence agencies (see [September 1, 1976-Early 1980s](#)), decides it needs a network of banks to help finance its intelligence operations. Saudi Intelligence Minister Kamal Adham is given the task. “With the official blessing of George H. W. Bush as the head of the CIA, Adham transformed a small Pakistani merchant bank, the Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI), into a world-wide money-laundering machine, buying banks around the world to create the biggest clandestine money network in history.” BCCI was founded in 1972 by a Pakistani named Agha Hasan Abedi, who was an associate of Adham’s. Bush himself has an account at BCCI established while still director of the CIA. French customs will later raid the Paris BCCI branch and discover the account in Bush’s name. ([Trento 2005, pp. 104](#)) Bush, Adham, and other intelligence heads work with Abedi to contrive “a plan that seemed too good to be true. The bank would solicit the business of every major terrorist, rebel, and underground organization in the world. The intelligence thus gained would be shared

with ‘friends’ of BCCI.” CIA operative Raymond Close works closely with Adham on this. BCCI taps “into the CIA’s stockpile of misfits and malcontents to help man a 1,500-strong group of assassins and enforcers.” ([Trento 2005, pp. 104](#)) Soon, BCCI becomes the fastest growing bank in the world. Time magazine will later describe BCCI as not just a bank, but also “a global intelligence operation and a Mafia-like enforcement squad. Operating primarily out of the bank’s offices in Karachi, Pakistan, the 1,500-employee black network has used sophisticated spy equipment and techniques, along with bribery, extortion, kidnapping and even, by some accounts, murder. The black network—so named by its own members—stops at almost nothing to further the bank’s aims the world over.” ([Beaty and Gwynne 7/22/1991](#))

September 1, 1976-Early 1980s: Secret Intelligence Cabal Works with Rogue CIA Elements to Influence Middle East and Africa



Alexandre de Marenches. [*Source: Thierry Orban/ Corbis Sygma*]/Prince Turki al-Faisal, head of Saudi intelligence from 1979, will say in a 2002 speech in the US, “In 1976, after the Watergate matters took place here, your intelligence community was literally tied up by Congress. It could not do anything. It could not send spies, it could not write reports, and it could not pay money. In order to compensate for that, a group of countries got together in the hope of fighting Communism and established what was called the Safari Club. The Safari Club included France, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, and Iran.” ([Scott 2007, pp. 62](#)) An Egyptian reporter digging through Iranian government archives will later discover that the Safari Club was officially founded on September 1, 1976. Alexandre de Marenches, head of the French external intelligence service SDECE, was the chief instigator of the group. Millions are spent to create staff, offices, communications, and operational capability. Periodic secret conferences are held in Saudi Arabia, France, and Egypt. This group plays a secret role in political intrigues in many countries, mostly in Africa and the Middle East. For instance, a rebellion in Zaire is put down by Moroccan and Egyptian troops, using French air support. It also plays a role in the US-Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty of 1979. ([Cooley 2002, pp. 15-17](#)) Author Joe Trento will later allege that the Safari Club, and especially the Saudi intelligence agency led by Kamal Adham and then his nephew Prince Turki

from 1979 onwards, fund off-the-books covert operations for the CIA. But rather than working with the CIA as it is being reformed during the Carter administration, this group prefers to work with a private CIA made up of fired agents close to ex-CIA Director George Bush Sr. and Theodore Shackley, who Trento alleges is at the center of a “private, shadow spy organization within” the CIA until he is fired in 1979. The Safari Club and rogue CIA will play a major role in supporting the mujaheddin in Afghanistan. ([Scott 2007, pp. 63-64, 111](#)) It is not clear when the Safari Club disbands, but its existence was exposed not long after the shah was deposed in Iran in 1979, and it seems to have disappeared by the time de Marenches stepped down from being head of French intelligence in 1982. ([Cooley 2002, pp. 15-17](#))

1977-1981: The Nationalities Working Group Advocates Using Militant Islam Against Soviet Union

In 1977 Zbigniew Brzezinski, as President Carter’s National Security Adviser, forms the Nationalities Working Group (NWG) dedicated to the idea of weakening the Soviet Union by inflaming its ethnic tensions. The Islamic populations are regarded as prime targets. Richard Pipes, the father of Daniel Pipes, takes over the leadership of the NWG in 1981. Pipes predicts that with the right encouragement Soviet Muslims will “explode into genocidal fury” against Moscow. According to Richard Cottam, a former CIA official who advised the Carter administration at the time, after the fall of the Shah of Iran in 1978, Brzezinski favored a “de facto alliance with the forces of Islamic resurgence, and with the Republic of Iran.” ([Dreyfuss 2005, pp. 241, 251 - 256](#))

1978: CIA Begins Covert Action in Afghanistan

The CIA begins covert action against the Communist government in Afghanistan, which is closely tied to the Soviet Union. Some time this year, the CIA begins training militants in Pakistan and beaming radio propaganda into Afghanistan. By April 1979, US officials are meeting with opponents of the Afghan government to determine their needs. ([Blum 1995, pp. 344](#)) Robert Gates, who will become CIA Director in the early 1990s, will later recall that in a meeting on March 30, 1979, Under Secretary of Defense Walter Slocumbe wonders aloud whether there is “value in keeping the Afghan insurgency going, ‘sucking the Soviets into a Vietnamese quagmire.’” ([Gates 1996, pp. 145](#)) In March 1979, there is a major revolt in Herat province, and in June and August there are large scale army mutinies. ([Cooley 2002, pp. 5](#)) President Carter will formally approve covert aid to opponents of the government in July (see [July 3, 1979](#)), which will result in a Russian invasion in December (see [December 8, 1979](#)).

(1978-9): Bin Laden Visits US, Britain, or Both

Osama Bin Laden visits the US, Britain or both around this time. Author Peter Bergen will later say, “Undoubtedly, bin Laden took his son for medical treatment to a western country and it’s either the United States or the [Britain]. There’s some kind of controversy

about that.” Khaled Batarfi, a close childhood friend to bin Laden, will later recall more specifically, “In Washington airport, Dulles Airport, people were surprised at the way he dressed, his wife dressed. Some of them were even taking photos and he was kind of joking about it. We were like in a zoo.” ([Coll 12/5/2005](#); [CNN 8/23/2006](#)) According to author Lawrence Wright, bin Laden visits London to seek medical advice for his young son, Abdul Rahman. Abdul Rahman was born with hydrocephalus and bin Laden considers the condition so bad that he goes abroad to seek medical advice. However, he does not like what he hears in London and returns home with his son to Saudi Arabia without letting the doctors operate. Bin Laden then treats Abdul Rahman with folk remedy, but the child becomes mildly retarded and requires special attention. ([Wright 2006, pp. 81](#)) Bin Laden is also said to visit London later (see [Early 1990s-Late 1996](#)).

1978-1982: Criminal BCCI Secretly Buys CIA’s Main US Bank; Even as CIA Uses Bank for Covert Operations



Kamal Adham. [*Source: Adham Center*] Beginning in 1978, a group of foreign investors attempt to buy First American Bankshares, the biggest bank in the Washington, D.C., area. This group is fronted by Kamal Adham, the longtime Saudi intelligence minister until 1979. In 1981, the Federal Reserve asks the CIA for information about the investors, but the CIA holds back everything they know, including the obvious fact that Adham was intelligence minister. As a result, the sale goes through in 1982. It turns out that Adham and his group were secretly acting on behalf of the criminal Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI), and BCCI takes over the bank. ([McGee 7/30/1991](#); [US Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations 12/1992](#)) Time magazine will later report that “the CIA kept some accounts in First American Bank, BCCI’s Washington arm.” But additionally, “Government investigators now have proof that First American had long been the CIA’s principal banker. Some of the more than 50 agency accounts uncovered at the bank date back to the 1950s. BCCI owned the CIA’s bank for a decade.” ([Castro 3/9/1992](#)) The CIA soon learns that BCCI secretly controls the bank, if the CIA didn’t already know this from the very beginning. By 1985, the CIA will secretly inform the Treasury Department on the bank’s control by BCCI, which would be illegal. But no action is taken then or later, until BCCI is shut down. Sen. John Kerry’s BCCI investigation will later conclude, “even when the CIA knew that BCCI was as an institution a fundamentally corrupt criminal enterprise, it used both BCCI and First American, BCCI’s secretly held US subsidiary, for CIA operations.

In the latter case, some First American officials actually knew of this use.” ([US Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations 12/1992](#))

November 1978-February 1979: Some US Officials Want to Support Radical Muslims to Contain Soviet Union

In December 1978, President Carter’s National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski says, “An arc of crisis stretches along the shores of the Indian Ocean, with fragile social and political structures in a region of vital importance to us threatened with fragmentation. The resulting political chaos could well be filled by elements hostile to our values and sympathetic to our adversaries.” ([Time 1/8/1979](#)) There is widespread discontent and rioting in Iran at the time. State Department official Henry Precht will later recall that Brzezinski had the idea “that Islamic forces could be used against the Soviet Union. The theory was, there was an arc of crisis, and so an arc of Islam could be mobilized to contain the Soviets.” ([Scott 2007, pp. 67](#)) In November 1978, President Carter appointed George Ball head of a special White House Iran task force under Brzezinski. Ball recommends the US should drop support for the Shah of Iran and support the radical Islamist opposition of Ayatollah Khomeini. This idea is based on ideas from British Islamic expert Dr. Bernard Lewis, who advocates the balkanization of the entire Muslim Near East along tribal and religious lines. The chaos would spread in what he also calls an “arc of crisis” and ultimately destabilize the Muslim regions of the Soviet Union. The Shah will later comment in exile, “I did not know it then, perhaps I did not want to know? But it is clear to me now that the Americans wanted me out. Clearly this is what the human rights advocates in the State Department wanted. What was I to make of the Administration’s sudden decision to call former Under Secretary of State George Ball to the White House as an adviser on Iran? Ball was among those Americans who wanted to abandon me and ultimately my country.” ([Engdahl 1992](#)) While there is later debate about US policy towards Iran actually is at this time, it will be noted that the Carter administration had “no clear policy” due to internal divisions and confusion. ([Keddie 2003](#)) The Shah abdicates on January 16, 1979, and Ayatollah Khomeini returns from exile to Iran on February 1, 1979, taking over the government.

May 1979: CIA Begins Working with Hekmatyar and Other Mujaheddin Leaders Chosen by ISI

As the US mobilizes for covert war in Afghanistan (see [1978](#) and [July 3, 1979](#)), a CIA special envoy meets Afghan mujaheddin leaders at Peshawar, Pakistan, near the border to Afghanistan. All of them have been carefully selected by the Pakistani ISI and do not represent a broad spectrum of the resistance movement. One of them is Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, a drug dealer with little support in Afghanistan, but who is loyal to the ISI. The US will begin working with Hekmatyar and over the next 10 years over half of all US aid to the mujaheddin will go to his faction (see [1983](#)). Hekmatyar is already known as brutal, corrupt, and incompetent. ([McCoy 2003, pp. 475](#))

July 3, 1979: President Carter Approves Covert Aid to Anti-Soviet Forces in Afghanistan

President Carter authorizes covert aid for opponents of the Communist government in Afghanistan. Zbigniew Brzezinski, Carter's National Security Adviser, will state in 1998, "According to the official version of history, CIA aid to the mujaheddin began... after the Soviet army invaded Afghanistan... But the reality, secretly guarded until now, is completely otherwise: Indeed, it was July 3, 1979 that President Carter signed the first directive for secret aid to the opponents of the pro-Soviet regime in Kabul. And that very day, I wrote a note to the president in which I explained to him that in my opinion this aid was going to induce a Soviet military intervention.... We didn't push the Russians to intervene, but we knowingly increased the probability that they would." ([Brzezinski 1/15/1998](#)) After Brzezinski's confession, other US officials who denied US involvement prior to the Soviet invasion will change their story as well. For instance, Charles Cogan, who is head of the CIA covert aid program to Afghanistan at this time, will call Carter's approval on this day a "very modest beginning to US involvement." ([Cooley 2002, pp. 10](#)) In fact, even this is not correct because the CIA had been aiding the rebels since at least the year before (see [1978](#) and [1973-1979](#)). The Soviets invade Afghanistan by the end of 1979 (see [December 8, 1979](#)).

November 1979: Bin Laden Brother Tied to Terror Act

In the 1960s Osama bin Laden's brother Mahrous bin Laden joined a rebel group opposed to the Saudi government. With his assistance, in 1979 the rebels smuggle weapons into Mecca, Saudi Arabia, using trucks belonging to the bin Laden family company. Five hundred rebels then seize the Grand Mosque in Medina, Islam's holiest mosque in its holiest city. They try, but fail, to overthrow the Saudi royal family. All the men who took part are later beheaded except Mahrous. Eventually he is released from prison because of the close ties between the bin Ladens and the Saudi royal family. Mahrous apparently abandons the rebel cause and joins the family business. He is eventually made a head of the Medina branch and a member of the board. He will still hold these positions on 9/11. But a newspaper reports that "his past [is] not forgiven and most important decisions in the [bin Laden family business] are made without Mahrous' input." ([MacKay 10/7/2001](#); [Mayer and Szechenyi 11/5/2001](#); [Leibovich-Dar 12/18/2002](#))

December 8, 1979: Soviet Forces, Lured in by the CIA, Invade Afghanistan



Soviet tanks entering Afghanistan

in late 1979. [Source: *Banded Artists Productions*] The Soviet Union invades Afghanistan. The Russians were initially invited in by the Afghan government to deal with rising instability and army mutinies, and they start crossing the border on December 8. But on December 26, Russian troops storm the presidential palace, kill the country's leader, Haizullah Amin, and the invitation turns into an invasion. ([Blum 1995, pp. 342](#)) Later declassified high-level Russian documents will show that the Russian leadership believed that Amin, who took power in a violent coup from another pro-Soviet leader two months before, had secret contacts with the US embassy and was probably a US agent. Further, one document from this month claims that "the right wing Muslim opposition" has "practically established their control in many provinces... using foreign support." ([Cooley 2002, pp. 8](#)) It has been commonly believed that the invasion was unprovoked, but the Russians will later be proven largely correct. In a 1998 interview, Zbigniew Brzezinski, President Jimmy Carter's National Security Adviser, will reveal that earlier in the year Carter authorized the CIA to destabilize the government, provoking the Russians to invade (see [July 3, 1979](#)). ([Le Nouvel Observateur \(Paris\) 1/1998](#); [Pilger 1/29/2002](#)) Further, CIA covert action in the country actually began in 1978 (see [1978](#)), if not earlier (see [1973-1979](#)). The US and Saudi Arabia will give a huge amount of money (estimates range up to \$40 billion total for the war) to support the mujaheddin guerrilla fighters opposing the Russians, and a decade-long war will ensue. ([Hiro 2/15/1999](#))

Early 1980: Osama Bin Laden, with Saudi Backing, Supports Afghan Rebels



Bin Laden, dressed in combat fatigues, in Afghanistan during the 1980's. (Note the image has been digitally altered to brighten the shadow on his face.) [Source: CNN] Osama bin Laden begins providing financial, organizational, and engineering aid for the mujaheddin in Afghanistan, with the advice and support of the Saudi royal family. ([Mayer and Szechenyi 11/5/2001](#)) Some, including Richard Clarke, counterterrorism "tsar" during the Clinton and George W. Bush administrations, believe he was handpicked for the job by Prince Turki al-Faisal, head of Saudi intelligence. ([Mayer and Szechenyi 11/5/2001](#); [Fielding 8/25/2002](#)) The Pakistani ISI want a Saudi prince as a public demonstration of the commitment of the Saudi royal family and as a way to ensure royal funds for the anti-Soviet forces. The agency fails to get royalty, but bin Laden, with his family's influential ties, is good enough for the ISI. ([Rosenberg 9/24/2001](#)) (Clarke will argue later that the Saudis and other Muslim governments used the Afghan war in an attempt to get rid of their own misfits and troublemakers.) This multinational force later coalesces into al-Qaeda. ([Clarke 2004, pp. 52](#))


Early 1980: Pakistan Turns to Islamic Fundamentalism after Invasion of Afghanistan



Muhammad Zia ul-Haq. [Source: Associated Press] General Mohammad Zia ul-Haq seized power in Pakistan in a 1977 coup and declared himself president. The US stopped all economic and military aid to Pakistan as a result of the coup and Zia ruled cautiously in an attempt to win international approval. But immediately after the Russian invasion of Afghanistan (see [December 8, 1979](#)), the US allies with Zia and resumes aid. This allows Zia to use Islam to consolidate his power without worrying about the international reaction. He passes pro-Islamic legislation,

introduces Islamic banking systems, and creates Islamic courts. Most importantly, he creates a new religious tax which is used to create tens of thousands of madrassas, or religious boarding schools. These schools will indoctrinate a large portion of future Islamic militants for decades to come. ([Gannon 2005, pp. 138-142](#)) Zia also promotes military officers on the basis of religious devotion. The Koran and other religious material becomes compulsory reading material in army training courses. “Radical Islamist ideology began to permeate the military and the influence of the most extreme groups crept into the army,” journalist Kathy Gannon will write in her book *I is for Infidel*. ([Gannon 2005, pp. 138-142](#)) The BBC will later comment that Zia’s self-declared “Islamization” policies created a “culture of jihad” within Pakistan that continues until present day. ([Hardy 8/5/2002](#))

Early 1980s: FBI Encounters Problems Passing Intelligence Information to Criminal Prosecutors, ‘Wall’ Arises

Due to apparent problems with the use of intelligence information in criminal proceedings, a set of procedures that later becomes known as the “wall” begins to take shape. The FBI, which performs both criminal and counterintelligence functions, normally obtains two types of warrants: criminal warrants and warrants under the recently passed Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA). FISA warrants are thought to be easier to obtain, as the FBI only has to show that there is probable cause to believe the subject is a foreign power or an agent of one. Sometimes a case begins as an intelligence investigation, but results in a criminal prosecution. In court the defense can then argue that the government has abused FISA and obtained evidence by improperly using the lower standard, so any evidence obtained under FISA should not be allowed in court. Although the government can use information it happens to obtain under a FISA warrant for a criminal prosecution, if the purpose of obtaining information under a FISA warrant is for a criminal prosecution, this is in violation of the Fourth Amendment’s prohibition against warrantless searches. To combat this apparent problem, the special FISA Court decides that for a warrant under FISA to be granted, collecting intelligence information must be the primary purpose, although such information can be used in a criminal investigation provided the criminal investigation does not become the primary purpose of the surveillance or search. As a result of these procedures, when the FBI is conducting an intelligence investigation and uncovers evidence of criminal activity, it no longer consults local United States Attorneys’ Offices, but prosecutors within the Justice Department’s Criminal Division. The prosecutors then decide when the local attorney’s office should become involved. ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 21-24](#) ) The wall will be extended in the 1990s (see [July 19, 1995](#)) and will be much criticized before and after 9/11 (see [July 1999](#) and [April 13, 2004](#)).

January 23, 1980: Invasion of Afghanistan Leads to Build Up of US Forces in Persian Gulf

In the wake of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (see [December 8, 1979](#)), President Carter declares in his annual State of the Union address, “An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force.” This will become known as the Carter Doctrine. ([Scott 2007, pp. 69, 303](#)) The US immediately follows up with a massive build up of military forces in the region. New military arrangements are made with Kenya, Oman, Somalia, Egypt, and Pakistan. In March 1980, a Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force is created, which will be renamed US Central Command (or Centcom) several years later. ([Scott 2007, pp. 78-79, 308-309](#))

Mid-1980s: US Officials Allegedly Meet Directly with Bin Laden

Journalist Simon Reeve will claim in the 1999 book *The New Jackals* that US officials directly met with bin Laden in Afghanistan in the 1980s. He will write, “American emissaries are understood to have traveled to Pakistan for meetings with mujaheddin leaders... [A former CIA official] even suggests the US emissaries met directly with bin Laden, and that it was bin Laden, acting on advice from his friends in Saudi intelligence, who first suggested the mujaheddin should be given Stingers.” ([Reeve 1999, pp. 167, 176](#)) The CIA begins supplying Stinger missiles to the mujaheddin in 1986 (see [September 1986](#)). After 9/11, the CIA will state, “Numerous comments in the media recently have reiterated a widely circulated but incorrect notion that the CIA once had a relationship with Osama bin Laden. For the record, you should know that the CIA never employed, paid, or maintained any relationship whatsoever with bin Laden.” ([US State Department 1/14/2005](#))

October 1980: Osama’s Oldest Brother Allegedly Involved in ‘October Surprise’



Salem bin Laden in 1975. [*Source: Corbis*]/Salem bin Laden, Osama’s oldest brother, described by a French secret intelligence report as one of two closest friends of Saudi Arabia’s King Fahd who often performs important missions for Saudi Arabia, is involved in secret Paris meetings between US and Iranian emissaries this month, according to a French report. Frontline, which published the French report, notes

that such meetings have never been confirmed. Rumors of these meetings have been called the “October Surprise” and some have speculated that in these meetings, George H. W. Bush negotiated a delay to the release of the US hostages in Iran, thus helping Ronald Reagan and Bush win the 1980 Presidential election. All of this is highly speculative, but if the French report is correct, it points to a long-standing connection of highly improper behavior between the Bush and bin Laden families. ([PBS Frontline 2001](#))

1981-1992: Cheney and Rumsfeld Practice Secret Continuity of Government Plan, Later Activated on 9/11



Donald Rumsfeld and Dick Cheney, along with then-President Gerald Ford, April 28, 1975. [*Source: David Hume Kennerly / Gerald R. Ford Library*] (click image to enlarge) Throughout the 1980s, Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld are key players in one of the most highly classified programs of the Reagan administration. Presently, Cheney is working as a Republican congressman, while Rumsfeld is head of the pharmaceutical company G. D. Searle. At least once per year, they both leave their day jobs for periods of three or four days. They head to Andrews Air Force Base, near Washington, DC, and along with 40 to 60 federal officials and one member of the Reagan Cabinet are taken to a remote location within the US, such as an underground bunker. While they are gone, none of their work colleagues, or even their wives, knows where they are. They are participating in detailed planning exercises for keeping government running during and after a nuclear war with the Soviet Union. This highly secret “continuity of government” (COG) program is known as Project 908. The idea is that if the US were under a nuclear attack, three teams would be sent from Washington to separate locations around the US to prepare to take leadership of the country. If somehow one team was located and hit with a nuclear weapon, the second or third team could take its place. Each of the three teams includes representatives from the State Department, Defense Department, CIA, and various domestic-policy agencies. The program is run by a new government agency called the National Program Office. Based in the Washington area, it has a budget of hundreds of million dollars a year, which grows to \$1 billion per year by the end of Reagan’s first term in office. Within the National Security Council, the “action officer” involved in the COG program is Oliver North, who is a key figure in the mid-1980s Iran-Contra scandal. Reagan’s Vice President George H. W. Bush also supervises some of the program’s efforts. As well as Cheney and Rumsfeld, other known figures involved in the COG exercises include Kenneth Duberstein, who serves for a time as President Reagan’s chief of staff, and future CIA Director James Woolsey. The program, though, is extraconstitutional, as it establishes a process for designating a new US president that is nowhere authorized in the US

Constitution or federal law. After George H. W. Bush is elected president in 1988 and the effective end of the Soviet Union in 1989, the exercises continue. They will go on after Bill Clinton is elected president, but will then be based around the threat posed by terrorists, rather than the Soviet Union (see [1992-2000](#)). According to journalist James Mann, the participation of Rumsfeld and Cheney in these exercises demonstrates a broader truth about them: “Over three decades, from the Ford administration onward, even when they were out of the executive branch of government, they were never too far away; they stayed in touch with its defense, military, and intelligence officials and were regularly called upon by those officials. Cheney and Rumsfeld were, in a sense, a part of the permanent, though hidden, national security apparatus of the United States.” ([Mann 2004, pp. 138-145](#); [Mann 3/2004](#); [Cockburn 2007, pp. 85](#)) The plan they rehearse for in the COG exercises will be activated, supposedly for the first time, in the hours during and after the 9/11 attacks (see [\(Between 9:45-9:55 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([Gellman and Schmidt 3/1/2002](#)) Mann subsequently comments, “The program is of particular interest today because it helps to explain the thinking and behavior of the second Bush Administration in the hours, days, and months after the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001.” ([Mann 3/2004](#))

1981 and After: US Advocacy Group Trains Fighters in Afghanistan; Alleged to Be CIA Front

The Committee for a Free Afghanistan (CFA) is established to support the mujaheddin in Afghanistan in their struggle against the Soviet Union. Ostensibly, it is meant to support the Afghans by non-violent means, such as by providing medicine and seeds, as well as arranging publicity. ([Tempest 5/12/1986](#)) However, it will be alleged that the CFA is “widely known as cover for the CIA.” ([Tass 6/20/1986](#); [Business Line 4/27/2000](#)) The person responsible for coordinating the aid in Pakistan is CFA Field Director Theodore Mataxis, who makes seven trips lasting between one and three months each to Peshawar, a staging point on the Pakistani side of the border. Mataxis, who reached the rank of Brigadier General in the US army before retiring, is an expert in guerrilla warfare, having fought in World War II, Korea, and Vietnam. He also supported Iran-based Kurdish irregulars in Iraq in 1968-70. ([Grau and Gress 2002, pp. xi-xv](#)) Mataxis helps train the mujaheddin. He is also aware of US arms shipments to fighters, some of which are diverted by “the group that was to become the Taliban... for their own purposes.” ([Cox 11/23/2001](#))

February 1981 and After: US Allegedly Helps Turn Soviet Soldiers Fighting in Afghanistan into Drug Addicts

Alexandre de Marenches, head of French intelligence and leader of the Safari Club, a secret cabal of intelligence agencies, meets President Reagan at the White House shortly after Reagan’s inauguration. De Marenches proposes a joint French-American-ISI operation to counter the Soviets in Afghanistan, and dubs it Operation Mosquito. As de

Marenches will later explain in his memoirs, he suggests making fake Russian newspapers with articles designed to demoralize Soviet troops, and other propaganda. He also suggests the US take drugs seized by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and other agencies that would normally be destroyed and secretly supply them to Soviet soldiers fighting in Afghanistan instead. According to de Marenches, the idea is ultimately rejected because of fear of media leaks. But in fact, fake issues of the Soviet army newspaper later do appear in Kabul, Afghanistan. And large quantities of hashish, opium, and heroin are made available to Soviet soldiers, resulting in widespread addiction. Such addiction to local drugs would have taken place to some degree in any case, but intriguingly, some quantities of cocaine also appear in Afghanistan. At the time, cocaine is only grown in South America. A team of Russian military historians will later write a candid book on the Afghan war and one will say, “there certainly was circumstantial evidence for some kind of systematic program” to addict Soviet soldiers. (Cooley 2002, pp. 106-108) In 1982, a secret memo will exempt the CIA from reporting on drug smuggling conducted by CIA officers or assets (see February 11, 1982). Mathea Falco, head of the State Department’s International Narcotics Control program, will later allege that the CIA and ISI worked together to encourage the mujaheddin to addict Soviet troops. And a book cowritten by two Time magazine reporters will allege that “a few American intelligence operatives were deeply emeshed in the drug trade” during the war. (Scott 2007, pp. 124-125)

1982: Pakistani ISI Begins Recruiting Arab Fundamentalists to Fight in Afghanistan

Pakistan’s intelligence agency, the ISI, begins its program to recruit Arab fundamentalists fighters from across the Arab world to fight against the Soviets in Afghanistan. (Rashid 2001, pp. 129)

Between 1981 and 1989: Officials Airborne in ‘Doomsday’ Plane for Three Days during Exercise



An E-4B Airborne Command Post. [Source: US Air Force] (click image to enlarge) During the 1980s, top-secret exercises are regularly held, testing a program called continuity of government (COG) that would keep the federal government functioning during and after a nuclear war (see 1981-1992). The program includes a special plane called the National Emergency Airborne Command Post (NEACP). This is a modified Boeing 747, based at Andrews Air

Force Base, near Washington, DC that has its own conference room and special communications gear. Nicknamed the “Doomsday” plane, it could act as an airborne command post from where a president could run the country during a nuclear war. One of the COG exercises run by the Reagan administration involves a team of officials actually staying aloft in the NEACP for three days straight. The team cruises across the US, and up and down the coasts, periodically being refueled in mid-air. ([Schwartz 1998](#); [Mann 2004, pp. 144](#)) Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld participate in the COG exercises, though whether they are aboard the NEACP in this particular one is unknown. ([Mann 3/2004](#)) The plan that is being rehearsed for in the exercises will be activated in response to the 9/11 attacks (see [\(Between 9:45-9:55 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). Also on 9/11, three Doomsday planes (then known as “National Airborne Operations Center” planes) will be in the air, due to an exercise taking place that morning called Global Guardian (see [Before 9:00 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). ([Schwartz 1998](#); [Dejka 2/27/2002](#))

1982-1991: Afghan Opium Production Skyrockets

Afghan opium production rises from 250 tons in 1982 to 2,000 tons in 1991, coinciding with CIA support and funding of the mujaheddin. Alfred McCoy, a professor of Southeast Asian history at the University of Wisconsin, says US and Pakistani intelligence officials sanctioned the rebels’ drug trafficking because of their fierce opposition to the Soviets: “If their local allies were involved in narcotics trafficking, it didn’t trouble [the] CIA. They were willing to keep working with people who were heavily involved in narcotics.” For instance, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, a rebel leader who received about half of all the CIA’s covert weapons, was known to be a major heroin trafficker. Charles Cogan, who directs the CIA’s operation in Afghanistan, later claims he was unaware of the drug trade: “We found out about it later on.” ([Weaver 5/1996](#); [Rosen 9/30/2001](#))

1982-1989: US Turns Blind Eye to BCCI and Pakistani Government Involvement in Heroin Trade

CIA covert weapons shipments are sent by the Pakistani army and the ISI to rebel camps in the North West Frontier province near the Afghanistan border. The governor of the province is Lieutenant General Fazle Haq, who author Alfred McCoy calls Pakistani President Muhammad Zia ul-Haq’s “closest confidant and the de facto overlord of the mujaheddin guerrillas.” Haq allows hundreds of heroin refineries to set up in his province. Beginning around 1982, Pakistani army trucks carrying CIA weapons from Karachi often pick up heroin in Haq’s province and return loaded with heroin. They are protected from police search by ISI papers. ([McCoy 2003, pp. 477](#)) By 1982, Haq is listed with Interpol as an international drug trafficker. But Haq also becomes known as a CIA asset. Despite his worsening reputation, visiting US politicians such as CIA Director William Casey and Vice President George H. W. Bush continue to meet with him when they visit Pakistan. Haq then moves his heroin money through the criminal Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI). A highly placed US official will later say that Haq “was our man... everybody knew that Haq was also running the drug trade” and that “BCCI was completely involved.” ([Scott 2007, pp. 73-75](#)) Both European and

Pakistani police complain that investigations of heroin trafficking in the province are “aborted at the highest level.” ([McCoy 2003, pp. 477](#)) In 1989, shortly after Benazir Bhutto takes over as the new ruler of Pakistan, Pakistani police arrest Haq and charge him with murder. He is considered a multi-billionaire by this time. But Haq will be gunned down and killed in 1991, apparently before he is tried. ([McCoy 2003, pp. 483](#)) Even President Zia is implied in the drug trade. In 1985, a Norwegian government investigation will lead to the arrest of a Pakistani drug dealer who also is President Zia’s personal finance manager. When arrested, his briefcase contains Zia’s personal banking records. The manager will be sentenced to a long prison term. ([McCoy 2003, pp. 481-482](#))

February 11, 1982: CIA Is Given Green Light to Take Part in Illegal Drug Trade in Afghanistan

CIA Director William Casey gets a legal exemption sparing the CIA for a requirement that they report on drug smuggling by CIA officers, agents, or assets. Attorney General William French Smith grants the exemption in a secret memorandum. On March 2, Casey thanks Smith for the exemption, saying it will help protect intelligence sources and methods. ([Cooley 2002, pp. 110-111](#)) There are allegations that in 1981 President Reagan approved a covert program to weaken Soviet soldiers fighting in Afghanistan by addicting them to illegal drugs (see [February 1981 and After](#)). A book cowritten by two Time magazine reporters will even allege that “a few American intelligence operatives were deeply emeshed in the drug trade” during the war. ([Scott 2007, pp. 124-125](#)) President Clinton will rescind the exemption in 1995. ([Cooley 2002, pp. 111](#))

December 1982: Muslim Brotherhood Project to Infiltrate and Defeat the West



Youssef Nada. [*Source: Zuma Press/ NewsCom*] In November 2001, Swiss investigators will search the home of Youssef Nada, the leader of Al Taqwa Bank, a Swiss bank that had just been shut down by the US and the UN for alleged ties to al-Qaeda, Hamas, and other radical militant groups (see [November 7, 2001](#)). Nada and other Al Taqwa directors are prominent members of the Muslim Brotherhood. Newsweek will say, “The Brotherhood, founded in Egypt in 1928 as a religious and quasi-political counterweight to the corrupt and increasingly decadent royalist and colonial governments dominating the Islamic world, always has had two faces: one a peaceful public, proselytizing and social-welfare oriented wing; the other a clandestine, paramilitary

wing.... Intelligence and law-enforcement officials say that while some branches and elements of the Brotherhood, such as the offshoots now operating in Egypt and Syria, have pledged to work for their goal of a worldwide Islamic caliphate using peaceful means and electoral politics, the Brotherhood has also spun off many—if not most—of the more violent local and international groups devoted to the cause of Islamic holy war.” Such offshoots will include al-Qaeda and Hamas. ([Isikoff and Hosenball 12/24/2004](#)) Swiss investigators discover a 14-page document from December 1982 entitled “The Project.” Nada claims not to know who wrote the document or how he came to have it, and he says he disagrees with most of the contents. The document details a strategic plan whose ultimate goal is “the establishment of the reign of God over the entire world.” The document begins, “This report presents a global vision of an international strategy of Islamic policy.” It recommends to “study of the centers of power locally and worldwide, and the possibilities of placing them under influence,” to contact and support new holy war movements anywhere in the world, to support holy war in Palestine, and “nurtur[e] the sentiment of rancor with regard to Jews.” Swiss investigators who analyze the document will later write that the strategy aims to achieve “a growing influence over the Muslim world. It is pointed out that the [Muslim Brotherhood] doesn’t have to act in the name of the Brotherhood, but can infiltrate existing entities. They can thus avoid being located and neutralized.” The document also advocates creating a network of religious, educational, and charitable institutions in Europe and the US to increase influence there. ([Unknown 12/1982](#); [Besson 10/6/2005](#))

1983: Gulbuddin Hekmatyar Emerges as Most Powerful ISI Client



A young Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. [*Source: Public domain*] Afghan warlord Gulbuddin Hekmatyar emerges as the most powerful of ISI’s mujaheddin clients, just as Rep. Charlie Wilson (D) and CIA Director William Casey, along with Saudi Intelligence Minister Prince Turki al-Faisal, are pouring “hundreds of millions of dollars’ worth of new and more lethal supplies into ISI warehouses.” Hekmatyar is among the most ruthless and extreme of the Afghan Islamic warlords. ([Coll 2004, pp. 119](#)) He receives about half of all the CIA’s covert weapons directed at Afghanistan despite being a known major drug trafficker (see [1982-1991](#)). He develops close ties with bin Laden by 1984 while continuing to receive large amounts of assistance from the CIA and ISI (see [1984](#)).

April 18-October 23, 1983: Beirut Bombings Begin Era of Suicide Attacks



The October 1983 bombing of US Marine barracks in Beirut, Lebanon. [Source: *US Marine Corps*.] In June 1982, Israel invaded Lebanon, and US Marines were sent to Lebanon as a peacekeeping force in September 1982. On April 18, 1983, the US embassy in Beirut, Lebanon, is bombed by a suicide truck attack, killing 63 people. On October 23, 1983, a Marine barracks in Beirut is bombed by another suicide truck attack, killing 241 Marines. In February 1984, the US military will depart Lebanon. The radical militant group Islamic Jihad will take credit for both attacks. This group is led by Ayman al-Zawahiri, who will later become the number two leader in al-Qaeda. However, many believe Hezbollah is involved in the attacks. Prior to this year, attacks of this type were rare. But the perceived success of these attacks in getting the US to leave Lebanon will usher in a new era of suicide attacks around the world. The next two years in particular will see a wave of such attacks in the Middle East, many of them committed by the radical militant group Hezbollah. ([US Congress 7/24/2003](#); [US Congress 7/24/2003](#)) The Beirut bombings will also inspire bin Laden to believe that the US can be defeated by suicide attacks. For instance, he will say in a 1998 interview, “We have seen in the last decade the decline of the American government and the weakness of the American soldier who is ready to wage Cold Wars and unprepared to fight long wars. This was proven in Beirut when the Marines fled after two explosions.” ([Laden 5/28/1998](#)) In 1994, bin Laden will hold a meeting with a top Hezbollah leader (see [1994](#)), and arrange for some of his operatives to be trained in the truck bombing techniques that had been used in Beirut. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004](#), pp. 48)

July 29, 1983: SAAR Network Is Founded



555 Grove Street, Herndon, Virginia. This is the location of the SAAR Foundation/Safa Group and many related businesses.

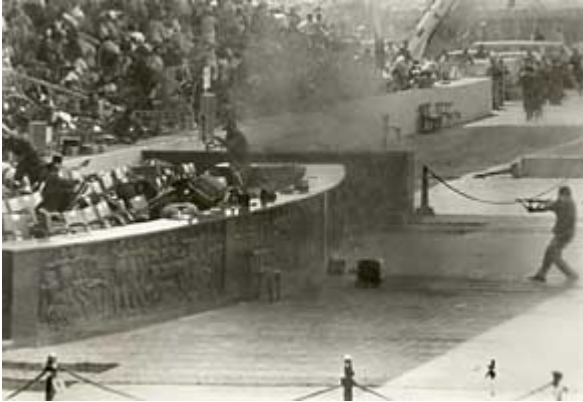
[Source: Paul Sperry] The SAAR Foundation is incorporated in Herndon, Virginia, just outside Washington. It will become an umbrella organization for a cluster of over 100 charities, think tanks, and businesses known as the SAAR network. In 2002, the US government will raid the SAAR network looking for ties to the Al Taqwa Bank and the Muslim Brotherhood (see [March 20, 2002](#)). ([Farah 2004, pp. 153](#))

1984: Bin Laden Develops Ties with Pakistani ISI and Afghan Warlord



Bin Laden first works for Maktab al-Khidamat from this building in Peshawar, a former British government guesthouse. [Source: PBS] Bin Laden moves to Peshawar, a Pakistani town bordering Afghanistan, and helps run a front organization for the mujaheddin known as Maktab al-Khidamat (MAK), which funnels money, arms, and fighters from the outside world into the Afghan war. ([Weaver 1/24/2000](#)) "MAK [is] nurtured by Pakistan's state security services, the Inter-Services Intelligence agency, or ISI, the CIA's primary conduit for conducting the covert war against Moscow's occupation." ([Moran 8/24/1998](#)) Bin Laden becomes closely tied to the warlord Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, and greatly strengthens Hekmatyar's opium smuggling operations. ([Maurus and Rock 9/14/2001](#)) Hekmatyar, who also has ties with bin Laden, the CIA, and drug running, has been called "an ISI stooge and creation." ([Erikson 11/15/2001](#)) MAK is also known as Al-Kifah and its branch in New York is called the Al-Kifah Refugee Center. This branch will play a pivotal role in the 1993 WTC bombing and also has CIA ties (see [January 24, 1994](#)).

1984: Ali Mohamed Works Briefly with CIA; Then Let Go Because of Connections to Islamic Fundamentalist Groups



Egyptian militants open fire on Egyptian President Anwar Sadat. [Source: Public domain] Ali Mohamed is a major in the Egyptian army. He is highly educated, speaking several languages and possessing two bachelor's degrees and a master's degree. In 1981 he was taking part in a special program for foreign officers at the US Army Special Forces school at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, while soldiers with radical Islamic beliefs from his Egyptian army unit assassinated Egyptian President Anwar Sadat. He is forced to quit in early 1984 on suspicions of becoming too religious. He approaches the CIA in Egypt and volunteers to be a spy. The CIA accepts, and he makes contact in Germany with a branch of Hezbollah, the Middle Eastern militant group. The CIA has claimed that Mohamed secretly tells Hezbollah members that he is working with the CIA, but the CIA quickly discovers this. The CIA supposedly suspects he wanted to help Hezbollah spy on the CIA and cuts off all further ties with him and tries to stop him from coming to the US. ([Weiser and Risen 12/1/1998](#); [Williams and McCormick 11/4/2001](#); [Waldman 11/26/2001](#)) But there will be claims that Mohamed then will come to the US through a secret CIA program. If true, this would cast doubt on the CIA's account of their interaction with Mohamed (see [September 1985](#)).

1984-1994: US Supports Militant Textbooks for Afghanistan

The US, through USAID and the University of Nebraska, spends millions of dollars developing and printing textbooks for Afghan schoolchildren. The textbooks are filled with violent images and militant Islamic teachings, part of covert attempts to spur resistance to the Soviet occupation. For instance, children are taught to count with illustrations showing tanks, missiles, and land mines. Lacking any alternative, millions of these textbooks are used long after 1994; the Taliban are still using them in 2001. In 2002, the US will start producing less violent versions of the same books, which President Bush says will have "respect for human dignity, instead of indoctrinating students with fanaticism and bigotry." (He will fail to mention who created those earlier books). ([Stephens and Ottaway 3/23/2002](#); [Off 5/6/2002](#))

1984-1986: CIA Director Repeatedly Meets with Head of Criminal BCCI Bank, Funding of Afghan War Is Discussed



Agha Hasan Abedi. *[Source: Associated Press]*/NBC

News later reports that CIA Director William Casey secretly meets with the head of the criminal Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI) from 1984 until 1986, shortly before Casey's death. The NBC report, quoting unnamed BCCI sources, will claim that Casey met with BCCI head Agha Hasan Abedi every few months in a luxury suite at the Madison Hotel in Washington. The two men allegedly discussed the Iran-Contra arms-for-hostages transactions and CIA weapons shipments to the mujaheddin in Afghanistan. The CIA denies all the allegations. ([Gordon 2/21/1992](#)) But books by Time magazine and Wall Street Journal reporters will corroborate that Casey repeatedly met with Abedi. ([Scott 2007, pp. 116](#))

1984-1986: CIA Reveals BCCI's Drug and Terrorist Links to Other US Agencies, but No Action Taken

The CIA sends a report on the Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI) and its drug-related activities to other US government departments. It follows up with a report about BCCI's links to notorious terrorists such as Abu Nidal, the most wanted man in the world at the time. Similar reports follow in 1986. However, the Justice Department, Treasury Department, and other departments keep silent about what they know and no action is taken against the bank. ([US Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations 12/1992](#); [Cooley 2002, pp. 93](#))

January 4, 1984: Alleged Terrorist Plot to Bomb WTC Uncovered



Peter Caram. *[Source: SRR Training]* The New York Port Authority, which owns the World Trade Center, is aware of terrorism occurring around the world and that the WTC is vulnerable to attack. It has therefore created the Terrorist Intelligence Unit within its police department, headed by Detective Sergeant Peter Caram, to gather information about terrorist groups and assess the vulnerability of its numerous facilities to attack. On this day, Caram writes a memo to the assistant superintendent of the Port Authority Police Department, reporting that the FBI has uncovered a terrorist threat: Two supporters of Ayatollah Khomeini are allegedly planning to bomb the WTC in the near future. Although the attack never occurs, this is the first of numerous occasions during the 1980s where the WTC is considered a potential target for a terrorist attack. ([Caram 2001, pp. 4-5](#); [New York County Supreme Court 1/20/2004](#))

January 17, 1984: Port Authority Terrorist Intelligence Unit Issues Report on WTC Security

Detective Sergeant Peter Caram, the head of the New York Port Authority's Terrorist Intelligence Unit, has been directed by the assistant superintendent of the Port Authority Police Department to compile a report on the vulnerability of the WTC to a terrorist attack. Having previously worked at the WTC Command, Caram has exclusive knowledge of some of the center's security weaknesses. On this day he issues his four-page report, titled "Terrorist Threat and Targeting Assessment: World Trade Center." It looks at the reasoning behind why the WTC might be singled out for attack, and identifies three areas of particular vulnerability: the perimeter of the WTC complex, the truck dock entrance, and the subgrade area (the lower floors below ground level). Caram specifically mentions that terrorists could use a car bomb in the subgrade area—a situation similar to what occurs in the 1993 bombing (see [February 26, 1993](#)). ([Caram 2001, pp. 5, 84-85](#); [New York County Supreme Court 1/20/2004](#)) This is the first of several reports during the 1980s, identifying the WTC as a potential terrorist target.

Early 1984: Port Authority Establishes Office of Special Planning



Peter Goldmark. [Source: *Environmental Defense Fund*] Peter Goldmark, the executive director of the New York Port Authority, is concerned that, in light of terrorist attacks occurring around the world (see [April 18-October 23, 1983](#)), Port Authority facilities, including the World Trade Center, could become terrorist targets. ([Maul 9/28/2005](#); [Hartocollis 10/27/2005](#)) He therefore creates a unit called the Office of Special Planning (OSP) to evaluate the vulnerabilities of all Port Authority facilities and present recommendations to minimize the risks of attack. The OSP is staffed by Port Authority police and civilian workers, and is headed by Edward O'Sullivan, who has experience in counterterrorism from earlier careers in the Navy and Marine Corps. In carrying out its work, the OSP will consult with such US agencies as the FBI, CIA, Secret Service, NSA, and Defense Department. It will also consult with security officials from other countries that have gained expertise in combating terrorism, such as England, France, Italy, and Israel. ([Glanz and Lipton 2004, pp. 226](#); [New York County Supreme Court 1/20/2004](#)) According to Peter Caram, head of the Port Authority's Terrorist Intelligence Unit, the OSP will develop "an expertise unmatched in the United States." ([Caram 2001, pp. 12](#)) In 1985 it will issue a report called "Counter-Terrorism Perspectives: The World Trade Center" (see [November 1985](#)). ([New York Court of Appeals 2/16/1999](#)) It will exist until 1987. ([Solnik 1/5/2000](#))

(Between Early 1984 and October 1985): Office of Special Planning Studies Vulnerability of WTC to Terrorist Attack

The Office of Special Planning (OSP), a unit set up by the New York Port Authority to assess the security of its facilities against terrorist attacks (see [Early 1984](#)), spends four to six months studying the World Trade Center. It examines the center's design through looking at photographs, blueprints, and plans. It brings in experts such as the builders of the center, plus experts in sabotage and explosives, and has them walk through the WTC to identify any areas of vulnerability. According to New York Times reporters James Glanz and Eric Lipton, when Edward O'Sullivan, head of the OSP, looks at WTC security, he finds "one vulnerability after another. Explosive charges could be placed at key locations in the power system. Chemical or biological agents could be dropped into

the coolant system. The Hudson River water intake could be blown up. Someone might even try to infiltrate the large and vulnerable subterranean realms of the World Trade Center site.” In particular, “There was no control at all over access to the underground, two-thousand-car parking garage.” However, O’Sullivan consults “one of the trade center’s original structural engineers, Les Robertson, on whether the towers would collapse because of a bomb or a collision with a slow-moving airplane.” He is told there is “little likelihood of a collapse no matter how the building was attacked.” ([Glanz and Lipton 2004, pp. 227](#); [New York County Supreme Court 1/20/2004](#)) The OSP will issue its report called “Counter-Terrorism Perspectives: The World Trade Center” late in 1985 (see [November 1985](#)).

October 1984: CIA Afghan Covert Operations Budget Increases



Charlie Wilson. [*Source: Sam Houston State University*] Primarily due to the pressure from Rep. Charlie Wilson (D), the CIA’s budget for the Afghan covert operations is tripled in a matter of a few weeks. The CIA initially resisted accepting the funds, but according to William Casey’s executive assistant Robert Gates, “Wilson just steamrolled [CIA Near East Division Chief Charles]—and the CIA for that matter.” ([Crile 2003, pp. 102](#)) Richard Clarke, a State Department analyst who later will become counterterrorism “tsar” for Presidents Clinton and Bush Jr., will claim, “Unclassified studies show that [covert aid] grew from \$35 million in 1982 to \$600 million in 1987. With few exceptions, the funds bought materiel that was given to Afghan fighters by [the ISI]. CIA personnel were not authorized to enter Afghanistan, except rarely.” ([Clarke 2004, pp. 50](#))

October 1984: CIA Director Secretly Visits Afghan Training Camps; He Urges Spread of Violence into Soviet Union



William Casey (center, with glasses) touring Afghan training camps in the 1980s. [Source: *Associated Press*] CIA Director William Casey makes a secret visit to Pakistan to plan a strategy to defeat Soviet forces in Afghanistan. Casey is flown to secret training camps near the Afghan border where he watches trainees fire weapons and make bombs. According to the Washington Post, “During the visit, Casey startled his Pakistani hosts by proposing that they take the Afghan war into enemy territory—into the Soviet Union itself. Casey wanted to ship subversive propaganda through Afghanistan to the Soviet Union’s predominantly Muslim southern republics.” The Pakistanis agree to the plan and soon the CIA begins sending subversive literature and thousands of Korans to Soviet republics such as Uzbekistan. Mohammad Yousaf, a Pakistani general who attended the meeting, will later say that Casey said, “We can do a lot of damage to the Soviet Union.” ([Coll 7/19/1992](#)) This will eventually evolve into CIA and ISI sponsored Afghan attacks inside the Soviet Union (see [March 1985](#) and [1986-1987](#)).

Late 1984: Bin Laden and His Mentor Azzam Set Up Precursor Organization to Al-Qaeda



Sheikh Abdullah Azzam and his son-in-law Abdullah Anas in Afghanistan during the 1980s. [Source: *History Channel*] Osama bin Laden, Sheikh Abdullah Azzam, bin Laden’s mentor, and Abdullah Anas, Azzam’s son-in-law, create an organization called Maktab al-Khidamat (MAK), known in English as the Services Office. It is also known as Al-Kifah. This organization will become a key node in the private funding network for the Afghan war. ([Bergen 2006, pp. 28-30](#)) The US

government will later call it the “precursor organization to al-Qaeda.” ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 89](#)) Initially, Azzam runs it while bin Laden funds it. They create a guesthouse in Peshawar, Pakistan, to help foreign volunteers connect with rebel forces in Afghanistan. Prior to this time, the number of such volunteers is very small, perhaps only several dozen. But the number begins to dramatically expand. ([Engelberg 1/14/2001; Bergen 2006, pp. 28-30](#)) Donors will include the Saudi intelligence agency, the Saudi Red Crescent, the Muslim World League, and private donors, including Saudi princes. ([Rashid 9/23/2001](#)) MAK/Al-Kifah begins fundraising in the US one year later (see [1985-1989](#)).

(1985): CIA Agent Proposes False Flag Attacks in Europe in Name of Hezbollah; Modified Proposal Is Implemented

CIA agent Robert Baer proposes a series of false flag attacks in Europe to drive a wedge between Syria and Iran, which he hopes will lead to the freeing of Western hostages held in Lebanon. Although his superiors ban the use of real explosives, the proposal is implemented in altered form. Baer is aware that the current secular Syrian government is nervous about the tendency of Iran, one of its allies, to support numerous Islamic movements, including ones generally opposed to Syria. He plans to make the Syrians think that Iran has turned against it by carrying out a series of car bombings against Syrian diplomats in Europe and then claiming them in a statement issued by the CIA pretending to be the Lebanon-based and Iran-backed terror group Hezbollah. Baer thinks that Syria would then break with Hezbollah and the hostages would be freed. Although the plan is for the bombs to misfire and the diplomats not to be killed, his superior says that the use of any bombs in Europe is beyond the pale for the CIA. Baer will later comment: “Eventually we did get an operation through the bureaucracy. The CIA has asked me not to describe it. I can say, though, that while it managed to irritate [Syrian president] Hafiz al-Asad—sort of like a twenty-four hour diaper rash—it wasn’t enough for him to shut down Hezbollah.” ([Baer 2002, pp. 140-2](#))

1985-1989: Precursor to Al-Qaeda Puts Down US Roots



Makhtab al-Khidamat offices in the US in the late 1980s. Some of the offices in fact were represented by single individuals. [*Source: National Geographic*] (click image to enlarge) Sheikh Abdullah Azzam, bin Laden’s mentor, makes repeated trips to the US and other countries, building

up his Pakistan-based organization, Maktab al-Khidamat (MAK), or “Services Office” in English. It is also known as Al-Kifah, which means “struggle.” Azzam founded the Al-Kifah/MAK in 1984 (see [Late 1984](#)). Branches open in over 30 US cities, as Muslim-Americans donate millions of dollars to support the Afghan war against the Soviet Union. The most important branch, called the Al-Kifah Refugee Center, opens in Brooklyn, New York (see [1986-1993](#)). Azzam is assassinated in a car bomb attack in late 1989 (see [November 24, 1989](#)). Bin Laden soon takes over the organization, which effectively morphs into al-Qaeda. His followers take over the US offices and they become financial conduits for al-Qaeda operations. ([Lance 2003, pp. 40-41](#))

1985-1986: CIA Becomes Unhappy with Afghan Fighters, Begins Supporting Islamist Volunteers from Other Countries

The Central Intelligence Agency, which has been supporting indigenous Afghan groups fighting occupying Soviet forces, becomes unhappy with them due to infighting, and searches for alternative anti-Soviet allies. MSNBC will later comment: “[T]he CIA, concerned about the factionalism of Afghanistan made famous by Rudyard Kipling, found that Arab zealots who flocked to aid the Afghans were easier to ‘read’ than the rivalry-ridden natives. While the Arab volunteers might well prove troublesome later, the agency reasoned, they at least were one-dimensionally anti-Soviet for now. So [Osama] bin Laden, along with a small group of Islamic militants from Egypt, Pakistan, Lebanon, Syria and Palestinian refugee camps all over the Middle East, became the ‘reliable’ partners of the CIA in its war against Moscow.” The CIA does not usually deal with the Afghan Arabs directly, but through an intermediary, Pakistan’s ISI, which helps the Arabs through the Maktab al-Khidamat (MAK) run by Abdullah Azzam. ([Moran 8/24/1998](#)) The agreement is sealed during a secret visit to Pakistan, where CIA Director William Casey commits the agency to support the ISI program of recruiting radical Muslims for the Afghan war from other Muslim countries around the world. In addition to the Gulf States, these include Turkey, the Philippines, and China. The ISI started their recruitment of radicals from other countries in 1982 (see [1982](#)). This CIA cooperation is part of a joint CIA-ISI plan begun the year before to expand the “Jihad” beyond Afghanistan (see [March 1985](#)). ([Rashid 2001, pp. 128-129](#)) Thousands of militant Arabs are trained under this program (see [1986-1992](#)).

1985-1990: White House Defies Congress and Allows Pakistan’s Nuclear Weapons Program to Progress

In 1985, US Congress passes legislation requiring US economic sanctions on Pakistan unless the White House can certify that Pakistan has not embarked on a nuclear weapons program. The White House certifies this every year until 1990. However, it was known all the time that Pakistan did had a continuing nuclear program. For instance, in 1983 a State Department memo said Pakistan clearly has a nuclear weapons program that relies on stolen European technology. Pakistan successfully builds a nuclear bomb in 1987 but

does not test it to keep it a secret (see [1987](#)). With the Soviet-Afghan war ending in 1989, the US no longer relies on Pakistan to contain the Soviet Union. So in 1990 the Pakistani nuclear program is finally recognized and sweeping sanctions are applied. ([Gannon 2005](#)) The government of Pakistan will keep their nuclear program a secret until they successfully test a nuclear weapon in 1998 (see [May 28, 1998](#)).

1985-1989: Bin Laden's Mentor Azzam Recruits Fighters All Over World with Apparent CIA Support



Sheikh Abdullah Azzam giving a speech in the US in February 1988. [Source: CNN] Bin Laden's mentor Abdullah Azzam frequently travels all over the world with the apparent support of the CIA. Slate will later write, "Azzam trotted the globe during the 1980s to promote the Afghan jihad against the Soviets. By the time of his death in 1989, he had recruited between 16,000 and 20,000 mujaheddin from 20 countries to Afghanistan, visited 50 American cities to advance his cause, and dispatched acolytes to spread the gospel in 26 US states, not to mention across the Middle East and Europe." Slate calls him "the Lenin of international jihad," noting that he "didn't invent his movement's ideas, but he furthered them and put them into practice around the world." ([Suellentrop 4/16/2002](#)) At the time, the US is supporting the Afghans fighting the Soviets and it will later be alleged that the CIA supported Azzam as part of this effort. Barnett Rubin, a Columbia University professor and senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, will claim in 1995 that sources told him Azzam was "enlisted" by the CIA to help unite the fractious Afghan rebel groups. Rubin claims Azzam was considered a prime asset because of his "close connections to the Muslim Brotherhood, Saudi intelligence, and the Muslim World League." But Azzam made no secret of his desire for a no compromise jihad to conquer the entire world. In 1988 in New Jersey, he says, "Blood and martyrdom are the only way to create a Muslim society" and he wants "to ignite the spark that may one day burn Western interests all over the world." He is frequently accompanied on his US lecture tours by El-Sayyid Nosair and Clement Rodney Hampton-El, both of whom will later be convicted of al-Qaeda-linked attacks in the US. ([Friedman 3/17/1995](#)) CAIR (Council on American-Islamic Relations) Executive Director Nihad Awad is a leader in the IAP (Islamic Association for Palestine) at this time. ISNA (Islamic Society of North America) affiliates, such as IAP and the MAYA (Muslim Arab Youth Association), host Azzam and arrange his visits to Islamic centers throughout the US. ([Braude 2/27/2007](#))

Mid-1980s: Pakistani ISI and CIA Gain from Drug Production



ISI headquarters in Islamabad, Pakistan. [Source: *Banded Artists Productions*] The Pakistani ISI starts a special cell of agents who use profits from heroin production for covert actions “at the insistence of the CIA.” “This cell promotes the cultivation of opium, the extraction of heroin in Pakistani and Afghan territories under mujaheddin control. The heroin is then smuggled into the Soviet controlled areas, in an attempt to turn the Soviet troops into heroin addicts. After the withdrawal of the Soviet troops, the ISI’s heroin cell started using its network of refineries and smugglers for smuggling heroin to the Western countries and using the money as a supplement to its legitimate economy. But for these heroin dollars, Pakistan’s legitimate economy must have collapsed many years ago.” ([Raman 8/10/2001](#)) The ISI grows so powerful on this money, that “even by the shadowy standards of spy agencies, the ISI is notorious. It is commonly branded ‘a state within the state,’ or Pakistan’s ‘invisible government.’” ([McGirk 5/6/2002](#))

Mid-1980s: ISI Head Regularly Meets with Bin Laden

According to controversial author Gerald Posner, ex-CIA officials claim that Gen. Akhtar Abdul Rahman, Pakistani ISI’s head from 1980 to 1987, regularly meets bin Laden in Peshawar, Pakistan. The ISI and bin Laden form a partnership that forces Afghan tribal warlords to pay a “tax” on the opium trade. By 1985, bin Laden and the ISI are splitting annual profits of up to \$100 million a year. ([Posner 2003, pp. 29](#))

Mid-1980s: Osama’s Brother Is Allegedly Involved in the Iran-Contra Affair

Quoting a French intelligence report posted by PBS Frontline, The New Yorker reports, “During the nineteen-eighties, when the Reagan administration secretly arranged for an estimated \$34 million to be funneled through Saudi Arabia to the Contras in Nicaragua, [Osama’s eldest brother] Salem bin Laden aided in this cause.” ([PBS Frontline 2001](#); [Mayer and Szechenyi 11/5/2001](#))

Mid 1980s: MI6 Agent Gets to Know Future Al-Qaeda Leaders

Alastair Crooke, an agent for the British intelligence service MI6, helps out with the anti-Soviet jihad and gets “to know some of the militants who would become leaders of al-Qaeda.” Crooke, whose role is to coordinate British assistance to the mujaheddin, will later be described by CIA officer Milton Bearden as “a natural on the frontier” and “a British agent straight out of the Great Game.” Details of exactly which future al-Qaeda leaders he gets to know are not available. In the 1990s, Crooke will move to Palestine, where he will come into contact with Hamas leaders. ([Grey 4/11/2005](#))

March 1985: US and Pakistan Begin Training Afghans to Attack Inside Soviet Union

Following a directive signed by President Reagan that sharply escalates US covert action in Afghanistan, the Pakistani ISI begins training Afghans to launch strikes directly into Soviet territory. Apparently the idea originated with CIA Director William Casey who first proposed harassing Soviet territory in 1984 (see [October 1984](#)). According to Graham Fuller, a senior US intelligence official, most top US officials consider such military raids “an incredible escalation” and fear a large-scale Soviet response if they are carried out. The Reagan administration decides not to give Pakistan detailed satellite photographs of military targets inside the Soviet Union. ([Coll 7/19/1992](#)) But Casey will approve of such attacks in 1986 and the first attack inside the Soviet Union will take place in early 1987 (see [1986-1987](#)).

March 1985: Reagan Sharply Increases Covert Support to Afghan Rebels

President Reagan issues a secret National Security Decision Directive to sharply escalate US covert action in Afghanistan. No longer content to simply help harass Soviet forces in Afghanistan, the directive leads to sharp increase in military and other aid to the mujaheddin to completely defeat the Soviets. The CIA begins supplying mujaheddin rebels with “extensive satellite reconnaissance data of Soviet targets on the Afghan battlefield, plans for military operations based on the satellite intelligence, intercepts of Soviet communications, secret communications networks for the rebels, delayed timing devices for tons of C-4 plastic explosives for urban sabotage and sophisticated guerrilla attacks, long-range sniper rifles, a targeting device for mortars that was linked to a US Navy satellite, wire-guided anti-tank missiles, and other equipment.” CIA Director William Casey also sees the directive as an opportunity to launch attacks inside the Soviet Union itself (see [March 1985](#) and [1986-1987](#)). ([Coll 7/19/1992](#))

July 1985: Report Outlines Terrorism Threat to WTC

While the Office of Special Planning is still working on its report about the vulnerability of the WTC to terrorist attack, the New York Port Authority has hired security consultant Charles Schnabolk to also review the center's security systems. This month his secret report, titled "Terrorism Threat Perspective and Proposed Response for the World Trade Center" is released. It sets out four levels of possible terrorism against the center, and gives examples of each: "(1) PREDICTABLE—Bomb threats; (2) PROBABLE—Bombing attempts, computer crime; (3) POSSIBLE—Hostage taking; (4) CATASTROPHIC—Aerial bombing, chemical agents in water supply or air conditioning (caused by agents of a foreign government or a programmed suicide)." Similar to other reports in the mid-1980s, it also warns that the WTC "is highly vulnerable through the parking lot." ([Reeves 10/12/2001](#); [New York County Supreme Court 1/20/2004](#))

September 1985: Ali Mohamed Moves to US; CIA Role Is Disputed



Ali Mohamed, pictured in a US army video. [*Source: US Army*] The CIA claims to have put Ali Mohamed on a terrorist watch list to prevent him from coming to the US (see [1984](#)). Somehow, Mohamed gets a US visa anyway. After learning that he has been given a visa, the CIA supposedly issues a warning to other Federal agencies that a suspicious character might be traveling to the US. Mohamed is able to move to the US nonetheless. ([Weiser and Risen 12/1/1998](#); [Williams and McCormick 11/4/2001](#)) The State Department will not explain how he is able to move to the US despite such warnings. ([Weiser and Risen 12/1/1998](#)) In 1995, after Mohamed's name publicly surfaces at the trial of Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman, the Boston Globe will report that Mohamed had been admitted to the US under a special visa program controlled by the CIA's clandestine service. This will contradict the CIA's later claims of disassociating themselves from Mohamed and attempting to stop him from entering the US. ([Quinn-Judge and Sennott 2/3/1995](#); [Weiser 10/30/1998](#)) Mohamed befriends an American woman he meets on the airplane flight to the US. They get married less than two months later, and he moves to her residence in Santa Clara, California. The marriage will help him to become a US citizen in 1989. ([Williams and McCormick 9/21/2001](#))

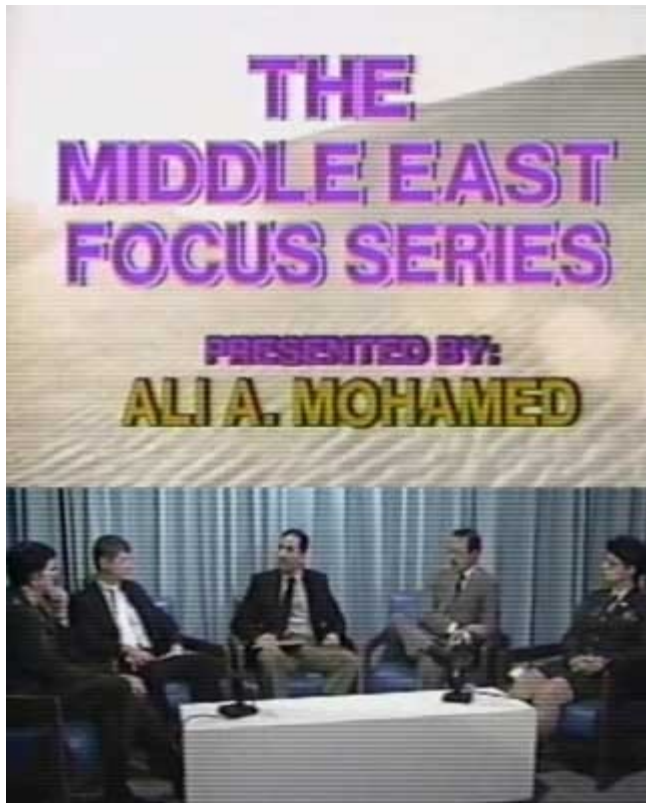
November 1985: Office of Special Planning Report Calls WTC a ‘Most Attractive Terrorist Target’

After assessing the security of New York Port Authority facilities, the Office of Special Planning (OSP), the Port Authority’s own antiterrorist task force, releases a report called “Counter-Terrorism Perspectives: The World Trade Center.” For security purposes, only seven copies are made, being hand-delivered and signed for by its various recipients, including the executive director of the Port Authority, the superintendent of the Port Authority Police, and the director of the World Trade Department. ([New York Court of Appeals 2/16/1999](#); [Solnik 1/5/2000](#)) Because of the WTC’s visibility, symbolic value, and it being immediately recognizable to people from around the world, the report concludes that the center is a “most attractive terrorist target.” ([New York County Supreme Court 1/20/2004](#)) The report, which is 120 pages long, lists various possible methods of attacking the center. ([New York Court of Appeals 2/16/1999](#); [Caram 2001, pp. 103](#); [Barrett and Collins 2006, pp. 87](#)) One of these is that a “time bomb-laden vehicle could be driven into the WTC and parked in the public parking area.... At a predetermined time, the bomb could be exploded in the basement.” ([Glanz and Lipton 2004, pp. 227](#)) As a Senate Committee Report will find in August 1993, “The specifics of the February 26, 1993 bombing at the World Trade Center garage were almost identical to those envisioned in the [OSP] report.” ([New York Court of Appeals 2/16/1999](#)) Due to the Port Authority’s failure to adequately implement the OSP’s recommendations, the report will be crucial evidence in a successful civil trial against it in October 2005, charging negligence in failing to prevent the 1993 bombing. ([Mumma 10/26/2005](#); [Hartocollis 10/27/2005](#); [Hoban 2/18/2006](#)) As of mid-2006, the other possible methods of attacking the WTC listed in the report remain undisclosed.

1986: Bin Laden Works with CIA, at Least Indirectly

The CIA, ISI, and bin Laden build the Khost tunnel complex in Afghanistan. This will be a major target of bombing and fighting when the US attacks the Taliban in 2001. ([Rashid 9/23/2001](#); [Islam 9/27/2001](#)) It will be reported in June 2001 that “bin Laden worked closely with Saudi, Pakistani, and US intelligence services to recruit mujaheddin from many Muslim countries,” but this information has not been reported much since 9/11. ([Waterman 4/9/2004](#)) A CIA spokesperson will later claim, “For the record, you should know that the CIA never employed, paid, or maintained any relationship whatsoever with bin Laden.” ([Ananova 10/31/2001](#))

1986: Ali Mohamed Joins US Armed Services and Teaches About Middle East; Supervisors Include Prominent Neoconservative Ideologue



Ali Mohamed, in one of the US military videos he helped create. In the lower picture, he is in the center, chairing a discussion on the Middle East with other US army officers. [Source: *US Army via CNN*] Ali Mohamed enlists in the US Army and is posted to Fort Bragg, North Carolina. (He had taken part in a special program for foreign officers at Fort Bragg when he was a major in the Egyptian army in 1981 (see [1984](#))). He works first as a supply sergeant for a Green Beret unit, and then as an instructor at the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare School. Fort Bragg is no ordinary military base—one newspaper calls it the “US military’s top warfare planning center.” Mohamed will steal numerous top secret documents and pass them to al-Qaeda (see [November 5, 1990](#)). ([Williams and McCormick 11/4/2001](#); [Sullivan and Neff 11/13/2001](#)) Mohamed trains and lectures soldiers being deployed to the Middle East on the region’s culture and politics. He also produces and appears in training videotapes about the Middle East. In one tape, he asserts that devout Muslims are widely misunderstood. “The term of fundamentalism scares people in the West. Everybody when he hears fundamentalist, he thinks about armed struggle. He thinks about radicals. He thinks about groups that are carrying weapons. The word fundamentalism does not mean extremism. It means just that ordinary Muslims accept everything—that this is my way.” One of his supervisors is Col. Norvell De Atkine, who later will say of Mohamed, “I don’t think he was anti-American. He was what I would call a Muslim fundamentalist, which isn’t a bomb thrower. I would not put him in that category.” ([Weiser 10/30/1998](#)) De Atkine is an expert on the Middle East and on the political aspects of military operations. In one of his articles he will praise the propaganda preparation for the Gulf War. ([De Atkine 1999](#)) De Atkine will also contribute articles to *Middle East Forum*, an aggressively neoconservative and pro-Israeli journal edited by Daniel Pipes. One of these, a denunciation of leftist and Arab influences in academia, will be written together with Pipes. ([De Atkine and Pipes 1995](#))

1986: 'Blind Sheikh' Secretly Meets with Al Taqwa Bank Leader and Others

Ahmed Ben Bella, a former president of Algeria, reportedly holds a secret meeting at his Switzerland home attended by “major figures in some of the world’s most violent groups.” People attending the meeting include the Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman (known as the “Blind Sheikh”); Youssef Nada, head of the Al Taqwa Bank and a major Muslim Brotherhood figure; and Sayyed Mohammad Hussein Fadlallah, a leading Lebanese Shi’ite Muslim scholar. US government sources believe Ben Bella, who is allegedly linked to violent Sudanese and Libyan groups, called the meeting to discuss ways to spread Muslim fundamentalism into the West. ([Buffalo News 7/6/1993](#)) Shortly after 9/11, a document called “The Project” written in 1982 will be found in Nada’s house. It outlines a secret Muslim Brotherhood plan to infiltrate and defeat Western countries (see [December 1982](#)).

1986-1992: CIA and British Recruit and Train Militants Worldwide to Help Fight Afghan War



William Casey [*Source: CIA*] Following an agreement between the CIA and Pakistan’s ISI to make more use of Arabs in the Soviet-Afghan War, recruitment of potential fighters increases significantly. The agreement was a result of CIA dissatisfaction at infighting between indigenous Afghan rebels (see [1985-1986](#)). According to Australian journalist John Pilger, in this year, “CIA Director William Casey [gives] his backing to a plan put forward by Pakistan’s intelligence agency, the ISI, to recruit people from around the world to join the Afghan jihad. More than 100,000 Islamic militants [are] trained in Pakistan between 1986 and 1992, in camps overseen by the CIA and [the British intelligence agency] MI6, with the [British special forces unit] SAS training future al-Qaeda and Taliban fighters in bomb-making and other black arts. Their leaders [are] trained at a CIA camp in Virginia.” ([Pilger 9/20/2003](#)) Eventually, around 35,000 Muslim radicals from 43 Islamic countries will fight with the Afghan mujaheddin. Tens of thousands more will study in the hundreds of new madrassas (Islamic schools) funded by the ISI and CIA in Pakistan. Their main logistical base is in the Pakistani city of Peshawar. ([Coll 7/19/1992](#); [Rashid 9/23/2001](#)) Ironically, although many are trained, it seems only a small percentage actually take part fight in serious fighting in Afghanistan, so their impact on the war is small. ([Wright 9/9/2002](#)) Richard Murphy, assistant

secretary of state for Near East and South Asian relations during the Reagan administration, will later say, “We did spawn a monster in Afghanistan. Once the Soviets were gone [the people trained and/or funded by the US] were looking around for other targets, and Osama bin Laden has settled on the United States as the source of all evil. Irony? Irony is all over the place.” ([Associated Press 8/23/1998](#)) In the late 1980s, Pakistani President Benazir Bhutto, feeling the mujaheddin network has grown too strong, tells President George H. W. Bush, “You are creating a Frankenstein.” However, the warning goes unheeded. ([Thomas 10/1/2001](#)) By 1993, President Bhutto tells Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak that Peshawar is under de facto control of the mujaheddin, and unsuccessfully asks for military help in reasserting Pakistani control over the city. Thousands of mujaheddin fighters return to their home countries after the war is over and engage in multiple acts of violence. One Western diplomat notes these thousands would never have been trained or united without US help, and says, “The consequences for all of us are astronomical.” ([Weaver 5/1996](#))

Between 1986-1989: Ali Mohamed Resumes Contact with CIA



Ali Mohamed's house in Santa Clara, California. [*Source: Peter Lance*] At some point during Ali Mohamed's US military service, possibly towards the end of his service, he expresses a great interest in being used as an intelligence operative, and asks his military superiors to be introduced to a CIA representative. The request is granted. The CIA representative who meets him appears to have no knowledge of the CIA's previous contact with him (see [1984](#); [September 1985](#)). The outcome of this meeting is unknown. However, after he leaves the military and moves to Santa Clara, California, his new friends and neighbors take it for granted that Mohamed is helping the CIA support the mujaheddin fighting the Soviets in Afghanistan. He doesn't tell them that he is working for the CIA, but does say that he worked for the CIA before, and hopes to work for them again. A neighbor who knew Mohamed and his wife well will say, “Everyone in the community knew he was working as a liaison between the CIA and the Afghan cause, and everyone was sympathetic.” ([Weiser and Risen 12/1/1998](#); [Waldman 11/26/2001](#))

1986-1987: US Helps Afghan Allies Launch Attacks Into Soviet Union

In 1986, the CIA, MI6 (Britain's intelligence agency), and the Pakistani ISI agree to launch guerrilla attacks from Afghanistan into then Soviet-controlled Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, attacking military installations, factories, and storage depots within Soviet territory. Some Afghans have been trained for this purpose since 1985 (see [March 1985](#)). The task is given to Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, an Afghan warlord closely linked to the ISI. In March 1987, small units cross from bases in northern Afghanistan into Tajikistan and launched their first rocket attacks against villages there. These secret attacks are strongly backed by CIA Director William Casey and apparently they come to an end when he dies later in 1987. ([Coll 7/19/1992](#); [Rashid 9/23/2001](#))

1986-1993: CIA and Bin Laden Both Closely Tied to Recruiting and Fund-raising Office for Afghanistan



Fawaz Damra. [*Source: Associated Press*] By the mid-1980s, Osama bin Laden and his mentor Abdullah Azzam jointly founded a charity front based in Pakistan which is called Maktab al-Khidamat (MAK) (which means “services office”) and is also known as Al-Kifah (which means “struggle”) (see [1984](#)). Branches start to open in the US; the first one apparently opens in Tucson, Arizona, where al-Qaeda has a sleeper cell. But around 1986, Khaled Abu el-Dahab, the right hand man of double agent Ali Mohamed, informally founds the branch in Brooklyn, New York, and it soon becomes the most important US branch. ([Weiser, Sachs, and Kocieniewski 10/22/1998](#); [Burr and Collins 2006, pp. 269-270](#)) On December 29, 1987, three men, Mustafa Shalabi, Fawaz Damra, and Ali Shinawy, formally file papers incorporating Al-Kifah, which is called the Al-Kifah Refugee Center. At first, it is located inside the Al Farouq mosque, which is led by Damra. But eventually it will get its own office space next to the mosque. Shalabi, a naturalized citizen from Egypt, runs the office with two assistants: Mahmud Abouhalima, who will later be convicted for a role in bombing the WTC in 1993 (see [February 26, 1993](#)), and El Sayyid Nosair, who will assassinate a Jewish leader in New York in 1990 (see [November 5, 1990](#)). ([Mitchell 4/11/1993](#); [Thomas 10/1/2001](#); [Sullivan, Garrett, and Rutchick 11/4/2001](#)) Jamal al-Fadl, a founding member of al-Qaeda and future FBI informant (see [June 1996-April 1997](#)), also works at the Al-Kifah Refugee Center in its early days. ([Miller, Stone, and Mitchell 2002, pp. 155](#)) The Brooklyn office recruits Arab immigrants and Arab-Americans to go fight in Afghanistan, even after the Soviets withdraw in early 1989. As many as 200 are sent there from the office. Before they go, the office arranges training in the use of rifles, assault weapons, and handguns, and then helps them with visas, plane tickets, and contacts. They are generally sent to the

MAK/Al-Kifah office in Peshawar, Pakistan, and then connected to either the radical Afghan faction led by Abdul Rasul Sayyaf or the equally radical one led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. ([Mitchell 4/11/1993](#)) The CIA has some murky connection to Al-Kifah that has yet to be fully explained. Newsweek will later say the Brooklyn office “doubled as a recruiting post for the CIA seeking to steer fresh troops to the mujaheddin” fighting in Afghanistan. At the same time, the Brooklyn office is where “veterans of [Afghan war arrived] in the United States—many with passports arranged by the CIA.” ([Thomas 10/1/2001](#)) The New Yorker will later comment that the Brooklyn office was a refuge for ex- and future mujaheddin, “But the highlight for the center’s regulars were the inspirational jihad lecture series, featuring CIA-sponsored speakers.... One week on Atlantic Avenue, it might be a CIA-trained Afghan rebel traveling on a CIA-issued visa; the next, it might be a clean-cut Arabic-speaking Green Beret, who would lecture about the importance of being part of the mujaheddin, or ‘warriors of the Lord.’ The more popular lectures were held upstairs in the roomier Al-Farouq Mosque; such was the case in 1990 when Sheikh [Omar] Abdul-Rahman, traveling on a CIA-supported visa, came to town.” One frequent instructor is double agent Ali Mohamed, who is in the US Special Forces at the time (see [1987-1989](#)). Bin Laden’s mentor Azzam frequently visits and lectures in the area. In 1988, he tells “a rapt crowd of several hundred in Jersey City, ‘Blood and martyrdom are the only way to create a Muslim society... However, humanity won’t allow us to achieve this objective, because all humanity is the enemy of every Muslim.’” ([Friedman 3/17/1995](#)) Ayman Al-Zawahiri, future Al-Qaeda second-in-command, makes a recruiting trip to the office in 1989 (see [Spring 1993](#)). ([Wright 9/9/2002](#)) The Brooklyn office also raises a considerable amount of money for MAK/Al-Kifah back in Pakistan. The Independent will later call the office “a place of pivotal importance to Operation Cyclone, the American effort to support the mujaheddin. The Al-Kifah [Refugee Center was] raising funds and, crucially, providing recruits for the struggle, with active American assistance.” ([Marshall 11/1/1998](#)) Abdul-Rahman, better known as the “Blind Sheikh,” is closely linked to bin Laden. In 1990, he moves to New York on another CIA-supported visa (see [July 1990](#)) and soon dominates the Al-Kifah Refugee Center. Shalabi has a falling out with him over how to spend the money they raise and he is killed in mysterious circumstances in early 1991, completing Abdul-Rahman’s take over. Now, both the Brooklyn and Pakistan ends of the Al-Kifah/MAK network are firmly controlled by bin Laden and his close associates. In 1998, the US government will say that al-Qaeda’s “connection to the United States evolved from the Al-Kifah Refugee Center.” Yet there is no sign that the CIA stops its relationship with the Brooklyn office before it closes down shortly after the 1993 WTC bombing. ([Weiser, Sachs, and Kocieniewski 10/22/1998](#))

(1985 or After): Islamic Jihad Receives CIA Money for Afghan Effort



Ayman al-Zawahiri (shorter) and Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan in the 1980s. [Source: *History Channel*] Islamic Jihad, headed by future al-Qaeda deputy leader Ayman al-Zawahiri from around 1987, receives some of the money the CIA spends on helping radical Islamist fighters against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. It is unclear whether the money is paid to the group directly or through an intermediary, or how much money the group receives from the CIA. ([Burke 1/17/1999](#))

1986-October 1999: New Jersey Firm Investors List Is ‘Who’s Who of Designated Terrorists’



Soliman Biheiri. [Source: *US Immigrations and Customs*] BMI Inc., a real estate investment firm based in Secaucus, New Jersey, is formed in 1986. Former counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke will state in 2003, “While BMI [has] held itself out publicly as a financial services provider for Muslims in the United States, its investor list suggests the possibility this facade was just a cover to conceal terrorist support. BMI’s investor list reads like a who’s who of designated terrorists and Islamic extremists.” Investors in BMI include: ([US Congress 10/22/2003](#))

■ Soliman Biheiri. He is the head of BMI for the duration of the company’s existence. US prosecutors will later call him the US banker for the Muslim Brotherhood, a banned Egyptian militant group. Biheiri’s computer will eventually be searched and found to have contact information for Ghaleb Himmat and Youssef Nada, leaders of the Al Taqwa Bank, which is founded two years after BMI (see [1988](#)). After 9/11, the US and UN will designate both Himmat and Nada and the Al Taqwa Bank as terrorist financiers, and the bank will be shut down (see [November 7, 2001](#)). US prosecutors say there are other ties

between BMI and Al Taqwa, including financial transactions. Biheiri also has close ties with Yousuf Abdullah Al-Qaradawi. Qaradawi is said to be a high-ranking member of the Muslim Brotherhood, a shareholder in Al Taqwa, and has made statements supporting suicide bombings against Israel. In 2003, US investigators will accuse Biheiri of ties to terrorist financing. He will be convicted of immigration violations and lying to a federal agent (see [June 15, 2003](#)). ([Simpson 9/15/2003](#); [Perelman 10/17/2003](#)) Biheiri will be convicted of immigration fraud in 2003 and then convicted of lying to federal investigators in 2004 (see [June 15, 2003](#)).

■Abdullah Awad bin Laden, a nephew of Osama bin Laden. He invests about a half-million dollars in BMI real estate ventures, earning a profit of \$70,000. For most of the 1990s he runs the US branch of a Saudi charity called World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY). He is investigated by the FBI in 1996 (see [February-September 11, 1996](#)), and WAMY will be raided by US agents in 2004 (see [June 1, 2004](#)). The raid is apparently part of a larger investigation into terrorism financing. In 2001, at least two of the 9/11 hijackers will live three blocks away from the WAMY office (see [March 2001](#)). ([Simpson 9/15/2003](#); [Sheridan 4/19/2004](#))

■Nur and Iman bin Laden, two female relatives of Osama bin Laden. Abdullah Awad bin Laden will invest some of their money in a BMI real estate project. While their bin Laden family ties are intriguing, neither have been accused of any knowing connections to terrorist financing. ([Sheridan 4/19/2004](#))

■Mousa Abu Marzouk. He has identified himself as a top leader of Hamas. The US declares him a terrorist in 1995 (see [July 5, 1995-May 1997](#)). BMI makes at least two transactions with Marzouk after he is declared a terrorist. ([Simpson 9/15/2003](#))

■Yassin al-Qadi, a Saudi multimillionaire. His lawyers will later claim he has no terrorism ties and had only a passing involvement with BMI and liquidated his investment in it in 1996. However, another company operating from the same office as BMI is called Kadi International Inc. and lists its president as al-Qadi. Al-Qadi is also a major investor in the suspect computer company Ptech (see [1994](#); [1999-After October 12, 2001](#)). Al-Qadi and BMI head Biheiri have financial dealings with Yaqub Mirza, a Pakistani who manages a group of Islamic charities in Virginia known as the SAAR network (see [July 29, 1983](#)). These charities will be raided in March 2002 on suspicions of terrorism ties (see [March 20, 2002](#)). Shortly after 9/11, the US will officially declare al-Qadi a terrorist financier (see [October 12, 2001](#)). ([Simpson 9/15/2003](#))

■Saleh Kamel. BMI allegedly receives a \$500,000 investment from the Dallah Al-Baraka banking conglomerate, which is headed by Kamel. For many years before 9/11, Omar al-Bayoumi, an associate of 9/11 hijackers Khalid Almihdhar and Nawaf Alhazmi, will receive a salary from Dallah, despite apparently doing no work. Some will accuse al-Bayoumi of involvement in funding the 9/11 plot, but that remains to be proven (see [August 1994-July 2001](#)). Kamel reportedly founded a Sudanese Islamic bank which housed accounts for senior al-Qaeda operatives. He is a multi-billionaire heavily involved in promoting Islam, and his name appears on the Golden Chain, a list of early al-Qaeda supporters (see [1988-1989](#)). He denies supporting terrorism. ([US Congress 10/22/2003](#); [Simpson 6/21/2004](#))

■The Kuwait Finance House. According to Clarke, this organization is alleged to be a BMI investor and the “financial arm of the Muslim Brotherhood in Kuwait. Several al-Qaeda operatives have allegedly been associated with the Kuwaiti Muslim Brotherhood,

including Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, Suliman abu Ghaith, Wadih El-Hage, and Ramzi Yousef.” In 2003, an apparent successor entity to the Kuwait Finance House will be designated as a terrorist entity by the US. A lawyer for the Kuwait Finance House will later say the bank has never let its accounts be used for terrorism. ([Simpson 9/15/2003](#); [US Congress 10/22/2003](#); [Simpson 4/20/2005](#))

■Tarek Swaidan. He is a Kuwaiti, an associate of al-Qadi, and a leading member of the Kuwaiti branch of the Muslim Brotherhood. It is unknown if he has made any denials about his alleged associations. ([Simpson 9/15/2003](#))

■Abdurahman Alamoudi. For many years he runs the American Muslim Council, a lobby group founded by a top Muslim Brotherhood figure. US prosecutors say he also is in the Brotherhood, and has alleged ties to Hamas. In 2004, the US will sentence him to 23 years in prison for illegal dealings with Libya (see [October 15, 2004](#)). ([Simpson 6/21/2004](#); [Markon 10/16/2004](#))

■The International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO) and the Muslim World League, closely connected Saudi charities suspected of financing terrorism. They give BMI \$3.7 million out of a \$10 million endowment from unknown Saudi donors. The Financial Times will later note, “While it is not clear whether that money came from the Saudi government, [a 2003] affidavit quotes a CIA report that says the Muslim World League ‘is largely financed by the government of Saudi Arabia.’” Both organizations consistently deny any support of terrorism financing, but in early 2006 it will be reported that US officials continue to suspect them of such support (see [January 15, 2006](#)). ([Alden and Brun-Rovet 8/21/2003](#)) In 1992, a branch of the IIRO gives \$2.1 million to BMI Inc. to invest in real estate. The money disappears from BMI’s books. In October 1999, BMI goes defunct after it is unable to repay this money to the IIRO branch. The IIRO branch gives BMI the rest of the \$3.7 million between 1992 and 1998. BMI will use the money to buy real estate (see [1992](#)). Eventually, some of this money will be given to Hamas operatives in the West Bank and spent on violent actions against Israel. This will eventually lead to legal action in the US and a seizure of some of the money. ([Simpson 11/26/2002](#); [Farah 8/20/2003](#); [Seper 3/26/2004](#); [Sheridan 4/19/2004](#)) By 1992, BMI has projected revenues in excess of \$25 million, based largely on their real estate investments in the US. ([US Congress 10/22/2003](#)) In early 1999, months before BMI goes defunct, the FBI hears evidence potentially tying BMI to the 1998 US embassy bombings (see [August 7, 1998](#)), but an investigation into this will not be pursued (see [Early 1999](#)). It should be noted that BMI had many investors, and presumably most BMI investors would have had no suspicions that their money might be used to fund terrorism or other types of violence.

1986-March 20, 2002: Bin Laden and Chechen Rebel Leader Have Ongoing Relationship



Chechen rebel leader Ibn Khattab [*Source: Associated Press*]/Osama bin Laden and Chechen rebel leader Ibn Khattab are, as a CIA officer puts it, “intricately tied together” in a number of ways. Their relationship apparently begins in the mid-1980s, when Ibn Khattab goes to fight in Chechnya, and ends in March 2002 with his death. ([BBC 4/26/2002](#); [De Waal 5/1/2002](#); [LaFraniere 4/26/2003](#); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#).²¹)

- They share fundraising and recruiting networks. For example, a Florida cell of radical Sunnis that is monitored by the FBI starting in 1993 is involved with both organizations (see [October 1993-November 2001](#)). Radical London imam Abu Qatada raises money for jihad in Chechnya (see [February 2001](#)) and is a key figure in al-Qaeda-related terrorism who is in communication with al-Qaeda logistics manager Abu Zubaida. ([BBC 3/23/2004](#); [Nasiri 2006, pp. 273](#)) The Finsbury Park mosque of fellow London imam Abu Hamza al-Masri is used as a conduit for funds for both jihad in Chechnya and bin Laden’s Darunta camp in Afghanistan (see [March 1999](#) and [March 2000-February 2001](#));

- Bin Laden sends hundreds of fighters to help the Chechen cause, and this is publicly revealed no later than August 2000 (see [May 2000](#));

- The two leaders debate strategy; ([Tumelty 2006](#)) and

- Ibn Khattab establishes camps for trainees sent to him by bin Laden, and the US is aware of this no later than October 1998 (see [October 16, 1998](#)).

Despite bin Laden’s contribution to the Chechen effort, he does not have control of operations there. ([Tumelty 2006](#))

(Mid-1986): Report Rates Vulnerability of Public Areas of WTC to Terrorist Attack as ‘Very High’

Following the release of the Office of Special Planning’s (OSP) report, which called the WTC a “most attractive terrorist target” (see [November 1985](#)), the New York Port Authority, which owns the center, seeks a second opinion on the OSP’s recommendations. At a cost of approximately \$100,000, it hires the Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC) to review the general security of the WTC. SAIC states in its report that the attractiveness of the WTC’s public areas to terrorists is “very high.” Like the OSP, SAIC pays particular attention to the underground levels of the center and describes a possible attack scenario much like what occurs in the 1993 bombing. ([Caram 2001, pp. 105-106](#); [New York County Supreme Court 1/20/2004](#))

September 1986: CIA Provides Afghan Rebels Stinger Missiles



Mujaheddin preparing to fire a stinger missile.

[Source: *National Geographic*] Worried that the Soviets are winning the war in Afghanistan, the US decides to train and arm the mujaheddin with Stinger missiles. The Soviets are forced to stop using the attack helicopters that were being used to devastating effect. Some claim the Stingers turn the tide of the war and lead directly to Soviet withdrawal. Now the mujaheddin are better trained and armed than ever before. ([Coll 2004, pp. 11, 149-51](#); [Clarke 2004, pp. 48-50](#))

December 15, 1986-1989: 'Blind Sheikh' Obtains First US Visas with Help from CIA

Radical Muslim leader Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman obtains his first US visa via the CIA. A State Department official will later discover this was the first of six US visas given to him between 1986 and 1990. All are approved by CIA agents acting as consular officers at US embassies in Sudan and Egypt. "The CIA officers claimed they didn't know the sheikh was one of the most notorious political figures in the Middle East and a militant on the State Department's list of undesirables." But one top New York investigator will later say, "Left with the choice between pleading stupidity or else admitting deceit, the CIA went with stupidity." ([Quinn-Judge and Sennott 2/3/1995](#); [Friedman 3/17/1995](#)) Abdul-Rahman uses the visas to attend conferences of Islamic students in the US. Then he visits Pakistan, where he preaches at Peshawar, visits the Saudi embassy in Islamabad, and is "lionized at receptions heavily attended by Americans." He plays a prominent role in recruiting mujaheddin fighters to fight against the Soviets in Afghanistan. ([Kepel 2002, pp. 300](#)) In 1989, Abdul-Rahman is arrested in Egypt and held under very closely guarded house arrest, but he manages to escape one year later, possibly by being smuggled out of his house in a washing machine. The CIA gives him another US visa and he moves to the US (see [July 1990](#)). ([Bernstein 1/8/1995](#))

1987: Office of Special Planning Closes Down

The New York Port Authority's Office of Special Planning (OSP) is closed down. It had been established in 1984 (see [Early 1984](#)) to evaluate and address the vulnerabilities of Port Authority facilities, including the World Trade Center, to terrorist attacks. ([Solnik 1/5/2000](#); [New York County Supreme Court 1/20/2004](#)) The reasons for the closure are unknown. However, Peter Goldmark, who'd created the OSP, had resigned as executive director of the Port Authority in 1985 to take a new job. ([Glanz and Lipton 2004, pp. 226-228](#)) So the absence of his support for the office may have been a factor.

1987: Hamas Forms with the Support of Israeli Intelligence

Sheikh Ahmed Yassin forms Hamas as the military arm of his Islamic Association, which had been licensed by Israel ten years earlier (see [1973-1978](#)). According to Charles Freeman, a former US ambassador to Saudi Arabia, "Israel started Hamas. It was a project of Shin Bet, which had a feeling that they could use it to hem in the PLO." ([Hanania 1/18/2003](#); [Dreyfuss 2005, pp. 191, 208](#)) Anthony Cordesman, a Middle East analyst for the Center for Strategic Studies, states that Israel "aided Hamas directly—the Israelis wanted to use it as a counterbalance to the PLO." A former senior CIA official speaking to UPI describes Israel's support for Hamas as "a direct attempt to divide and dilute support for a strong, secular PLO by using a competing religious alternative." Further, according to an unnamed US government official, "the thinking on the part of some of the right-wing Israeli establishment was that Hamas and the other groups, if they gained control, would refuse to have anything to do with the peace process and would torpedo any agreements put in place." Larry Johnson, a counterterrorism official at the State Department, states: "The Israelis are their own worst enemies when it comes to fighting terrorism. They are like a guy who sets fire to his hair and then tries to put it out by hitting it with a hammer. They do more to incite and sustain terrorism than curb it." ([Sale 2/24/2001](#) Sources: [Larry C. Johnson](#), Unnamed former CIA official)

Late 1980s: Bin Laden, CIA, and ISI Train Core of Future Philippines Militant Group

The core of the future Philippine militant group Abu Sayyaf fights with bin Laden in Afghanistan and its training there is paid for by the CIA and Pakistani ISI. In 1986, the CIA agreed to support an ISI program of recruiting radical Muslims from other countries, including the Philippines, to fight in the Afghan war (see [1985-1986](#)). By one estimate, initially between 300 and 500 radical Muslims from the southern Philippines go to Afghanistan to fight. ([Abuza 9/1/2005](#)) In 1987 or 1988, bin Laden dispatches his brother-in-law Mohammed Jamal Khalifa to the Philippines to find more recruits willing to go to Afghanistan. It is estimated he finds about 1,000 recruits. One of them is Abdurajak Janjalani, who emerges as the leader of these recruits in Afghanistan. When the Afghan war ends in 1989 most of them will return to the Philippines and form the Abu Sayyaf group, still led by Janjalani (see [Early 1991](#)). ([Abuza 12/1/2002](#); [Manila Times 2/1/2007](#)) Journalist John Cooley will write in a book first published in 1999 that

Abu Sayyaf will become “the most violent and radical Islamist group in the Far East, using its CIA and ISI training to harass, attack, and murder Christian priests, wealthy non-Muslim plantation-owners, and merchants and local government in the southern Philippine island of Mindanao.” (Cooley 2002, pp. 63) After having read Cooley’s book and gathering information from other sources, Senator Aquilino Pimentel, President of the Philippine Senate, will say in a 2000 speech that the “CIA has sired a monster” because it helped train this core of the Abu Sayyaf. (Pimentel 7/31/2000)

1987: Pakistan Secretly Builds Nuclear Weapon

Pakistan successfully builds a nuclear weapon around this year. The bomb is built largely thanks to the illegal network run by A. Q. Khan. Pakistan will not actually publicly announce this or test the bomb until 1998 (see [May 28, 1998](#)), partly because of a 1985 US law imposing sanctions on Pakistan if it were to develop nuclear weapons (see [1985-1990](#)). (Hersh 2004, pp. 291)

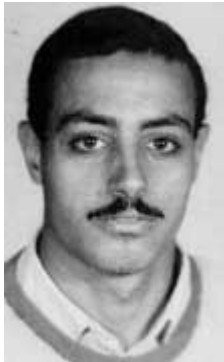
1987-1989: Ali Mohamed Meets with Islamic Militants Regularly While Instructor at US Base



The al-Kifah Refugee Center shared the same building as the Al-Farooq Mosque. [Source: *National Geographic*] (click image to enlarge) Ali Mohamed, while still an instructor at Fort Bragg, North Carolina (see [1986](#)), frequently spends his weekends traveling to meet with Islamic activists at the Al-Kifah Refugee Center in Brooklyn. (Miller, Stone, and Mitchell 2002, pp. 143-144) This center is the Brooklyn branch office of Maktab al-Khidamat (MAK)/Al-Kifah, which is a charity front in Pakistan closely tied to bin Laden and his mentor Abdullah Azzam. It also has ties to the CIA (see [1986-1993](#)). Mohamed teaches the Islamic activists survival techniques, map reading and how to recognize tanks and other Soviet weapons. He frequently stays at the home of El-Sayyid Nosair (see [November 5, 1990](#)). In July 1989, the FBI monitors him teaching Nosair and some of the future members of the 1993 World Trade Center bomb plot how to shoot weapons (see [July 1989](#)). Towards the end of this period he informs his superiors that he has renewed

his association with Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman. ([Weiser and Risen 12/1/1998](#); [Miller, Stone, and Mitchell 2002, pp. 143-144](#)) Mohamed will move to Brooklyn in May 1990 while also keeping a residence in Santa Clara, California. His connections to the Islamist network develop rapidly from this point on. ([Weiser and Risen 12/1/1998](#); [Miller, Stone, and Mitchell 2002, pp. 144](#))

1987-1998: California Al-Qaeda Cell Serves as Vital Communications Hub



Khaled Abu el-Dahab. [*Source: Egyptian government*] In the mid-1980's, Khaled Abu el-Dahab, an Egyptian medical student, joins the militant group Islamic Jihad, and also meets Ali Mohamed. Mohamed convinces el-Dahab to move to the US and become a sleeper cell agent. El-Dahab does so in 1987, moving to Santa Clara, California, where Mohamed has a residence. El-Dahab marries an American woman, becomes a US citizen, and gets a job at a computer company. In 1987, a female acquaintance of el-Dahab enters his apartment unannounced and finds several men there cleaning rifles. She decides it is something she does not want to know about, and breaks off contact with him. In 1990, Mohamed and el-Dahab travel together to Afghanistan. They are financially supported by a network of US sympathizers, including two Egyptian-American doctors. Beginning in 1990, El-Dahab's apartment becomes an important communications hub for al-Qaeda and Islamic Jihad cells all over the world. For much of the 1990's, the Egyptian government cut direct phone links to countries like Sudan, Yemen, Afghanistan or Pakistan in an effort to disrupt communications between radical militants. So Dahab acts as a telephone operator for the Islamic Jihad network, using a three-way calling feature to connect operatives in far-flung countries. He communicates with bin Laden's base in Sudan (where bin Laden lives until 1996). He receives phone calls from the likes of Islamic Jihad leader Ayman al-Zawahiri, who also visits California twice (see [Spring 1993](#); [Late 1994 or 1995](#)). He distributes forged documents and makes money transfers. He is trained to make booby-trapped letters, enrolls in a US flight school to learn how to fly gliders and helicopters, and recruits additional US sleeper agents (see [Mid-1990s](#)). He helps translate US army manuals and topographical maps into Arabic for al-Qaeda and Islamic Jihad training. El-Dahab will move to Egypt in 1998 and get arrested in October of that year. He will confess his role in all of this in an Egyptian trial in 1999. The Egyptian government will sentence him to 15 years in prison (see [1999](#)). ([Sachs and Kifner 10/23/2001](#); [London Times 11/11/2001](#); [Williams 11/21/2001](#); [Martin and Berens 12/11/2001](#))

1987-1991: Khalifa Sets Up Al-Qaeda Fronts in Philippines



Mohammed Jamal Khalifa. Apparently this photo was taken in the Philippines. [Source: *Asharq al-Awsat*] Mohammed Jamal Khalifa, bin Laden's brother-in-law, moves to the Philippines and sets up numerous financial fronts to benefit al-Qaeda. Khalifa is not only one of bin Laden's brothers-in-law, but he also says that during the 1980s, "Osama was my best friend. More than a brother...." ([Taylor 1/16/2003](#); [Robertson and Schuster 11/25/2004](#)) In the mid-1980s, Khalifa was already a very senior member of the Muslim Brotherhood in Lebanon and ran the Peshawar, Pakistan, office of the Muslim World League, where he was active in sending recruits to fight the Soviets in Afghanistan (see [Late 1980s](#)). Sent to the Philippines by bin Laden in 1987 or 1988, he soon marries two Filipino women. He sets up more than a dozen businesses and charities, all of which appear to be fronts to fund the Abu Sayyaf and Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) militant groups:

- The Islamic Wisdom Worldwide Mission (IWWM), which will later be blamed for funneling bin Laden money to militants (see [February 15, 1999](#) and [October 8-November 8, 2002](#)).
- The International Relations and Information Center (IRIC), which is later seen as the main funding vehicle for the Bojinka plot (see [Spring 1995](#) and [Spring 1995](#)).
- The Philippine branch of the International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO), founded in September 1991. The IIRO does some charity work, but a Philippine cabinet official will later note that it "built up the good will of the community through charity and then turned segments of the population into agents." The IIRO is a charity suspected of funding militant activities in numerous places around the world, but the US has been reluctant to prosecute it due to its direct links to the Saudi government (see [January 1996](#) and [October 12, 2001](#)). Khalifa is not only the first head of the IIRO's Philippine branch, but also the IIRO's regional director for all of Southeast Asia. The IIRO's offices are often staffed by members of the Abu Sayyaf and MILF. For instance, one IIRO branch office director is also the Abu Sayyaf's intelligence chief until he is killed in June 1994. ([Herrera 8/9/2000](#); [CNN 1/27/2002](#); [Abuza 8/1/2003](#); [Abuza 9/1/2005](#).)

It is estimated that as much as 70 percent of the money from these fronts are spent on militant groups. In one case, a charity that Khalifa claimed had built 30 orphanages had only built one. ([Vitug 10/22/2001](#)) The Philippines will investigate Khalifa and expel him from the country by late 1994 (see [December 15, 1994](#) and [December 1, 1994](#)). He apparently never returns. He will no longer be directly connected to these charities, but

they will all continue operating despite widely reported terrorist ties (see [1995 and After, February 15, 1999](#), [August 9, 2000](#)), and they will usually continue to be run by Khalifa's close associates (see [October 8-November 8, 2002](#) and [September 25, 2003](#)). The US will finally officially declare the Philippine branch of the IIRO a terrorism financier in 2006 (see [August 3, 2006](#)).

1987-1991: KSM Works in Afghanistan for Warlord Most Favored by CIA

Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM) fights and works in Afghanistan. KSM, a Pakistani who spent most of his childhood in Kuwait, went to college at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University in the US from 1983 to 1986. Then, in 1987, he goes to Afghanistan to take part in the struggle against the Russians. Two of his brothers die in the fighting there. Another brother, Zahid Shaikh Mohammed, works for a prominent Islamic charity there and introduces KSM to Abdul Rasul Sayyaf, an Afghan warlord. KSM serves as Sayyaf's secretary and helps recruit Arabs to fight in Afghanistan for Sayyaf's faction. ([Gunaratna 6/1/2005](#)) At the time, the CIA and Saudi Arabia are spending billions of dollars funding warlords such as Sayyaf. The Los Angeles Times will later call Sayyaf "the favored recipient of money from the Saudi and American governments." While in Afghanistan, KSM also gets to know bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri, and many other future al-Qaeda leaders. ([McDermott, Meyer, and McDonnell 12/22/2002](#))

April 1987: Hamid Gul Becomes Head of ISI

Gen. Hamid Gul is made head of Pakistan's ISI. ([Yousaf and Adkin 1992, pp. 91-92](#)) General Gul is a favorite of CIA Station Chief Milt Bearden and US ambassador to Pakistan Arnie Raphel, who view him as an ally and a potential national leader of Pakistan. ([Bearden and Risen 2003, pp. 301](#)) According to Bearden, however, he will later (sometime after 1990) turn against the US. ([Bearden and Risen 2003, pp. 358, 523-524](#)) Evidence will later appear that in the late 1990s Gul is somehow able to give the Taliban advanced warning of US attempts to assassinate bin Laden with missile strikes (see [July 1999](#)). In 2004, allegations will appear in the US media that Gul was a key participant in the 9/11 plot and "bin Laden's master planner" (see [July 22, 2004](#)).

September 1987-March 1989: Head US Consular Official Claims He's Told to Issue Visas to Unqualified Applicants



Michael Springmann. [Source: Michael

Springmann]/Michael Springmann, head US consular official in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, later claims that during this period he is “repeatedly ordered... to issue [more than 100] visas to unqualified applicants.” He turns them down, but is repeatedly overruled by superiors. ([BBC 11/6/2001](#); [Freedberg 11/25/2001](#)) In one case, two Pakistanis apply for visas to attend a trade show in the US, but they are unable to name the trade show or city in which it will be held. When Springmann denies them a visa, he gets “an almost immediate call from a CIA case officer, hidden in the commercial section [of the consulate], that I should reverse myself and grant these guys a visa.” Springmann refuses, but the decision is reversed by the chief of the consular section. Springmann realizes that even the ambassador, Walter Cutler, is aware of the situation, which becomes “more brazen and blatant” as time goes on. On one occasion Springmann is even told, “If you want a job in the State Department in future, you will change your mind.” ([CBC Radio One 7/3/2002](#); [Trento 2005, pp. 344-6](#)) Springmann loudly complains to numerous government offices, but no action is taken. He is fired and his files on these applicants are destroyed. He later learns that recruits from many countries fighting for bin Laden against Russia in Afghanistan were funneled through the Jeddah office to get visas to come to the US, where the recruits would travel to train for the Afghan war. According to Springmann, the Jeddah consulate was run by the CIA and staffed almost entirely by intelligence agents. This visa system may have continued at least through 9/11, and 11 of the 19 9/11 hijackers received their visas through Jeddah (see [November 2, 1997-June 20, 2001](#)), possibly as part of this program (see [October 9, 2002](#) and [October 21, 2002](#)). ([BBC 11/6/2001](#); [Freedberg 11/25/2001](#); [CBC Radio One 7/3/2002](#); [Gedda 7/17/2002](#); [Fox News 7/18/2002](#))

September 14, 1987-March 2005: Arrested Militant Not Asked by US about Various Crimes

Fawaz Younis, a Lebanese militant associated with the Amal militia, a Shiite organization that is influential in Lebanon at this time, is arrested in international waters near Cyprus on September 14, 1987 during a joint FBI-CIA operation. However, US authorities fail to ask him about activities in Lebanon, such as the murders of CIA officers, kidnappings of

US citizens who will later be part of an arms-for-hostages deal with Iran (see [May 29, 1986](#)), and an attack on the US marine barracks in Beirut, where over 200 people were killed (see [April 18-October 23, 1983](#)). Authors Joe and Susan Trento will say, “The key to all these unasked questions may be that those in charge did not want to know the answers.” For example, he is not asked about cooperation between the Amal group, which had a covert relationship with the CIA, and Hezbollah in the bombings. One possible reason for this is that Amal head Nabih Berri has “full knowledge of the arms-for-hostages deal,” an aspect of the Iran-Contra scandal. After Younis is released in 2005, the Trentos will interview him and he will say that Amal was co-responsible for the attacks: “Nothing happened in areas we controlled without Amal’s cooperation.” He will also say that Berri ordered some of the hijackings and that he cannot understand “why the United States allowed him to get away with it.” In addition, he will comment, “Privately, people in our government will say we cannot act [against Islamic militancy] in Lebanon because Nabih Berri is a valuable US intelligence asset,” and, “That lack of action is seen by the Hezbollah as evidence of America’s lack of seriousness and resolve in the War on Terror.” Regarding 9/11, he will say, “I have no doubt that our experience in breaking through airport security, developing sources and help among airport staff, was information that Hezbollah passed on to al-Qaeda.” ([Trento and Trento 2006, pp. 213, 215-7](#))

1988: Bin Ladens Bail Out George W. Bush?



Bush during his Harken days. [*Source: Lions Gate Films*] Prior to this year, President George W. Bush is a failed oilman. Three times, friends and investors have bailed him out to keep his business from going bankrupt. However, in 1988, the same year his father becomes president, some Saudis buy a portion of his small company, Harken, which has never performed work outside of Texas. Later in the year, Harken wins a contract in the Persian Gulf and starts doing well financially. These transactions seem so suspicious that the Wall Street Journal in 1991 states it “raises the question of... an effort to cozy up to a presidential son.” Two major investors in Bush’s company during this time are Salem bin Laden and Khalid bin Mahfouz. Salem bin Laden dies in a plane crash in Texas in 1988. ([Intelligence Newsletter 3/2/2000](#); [Cave 11/19/2001](#)) Salem bin Laden is Osama’s oldest brother; Khalid bin Mahfouz is a Saudi banker with a 20 percent stake in BCCI. The bank will be shut down a few years later and

bin Mahfouz will have to pay a \$225 million fine (while admitting no wrongdoing) (see [October 2001](#))). ([Vardi 3/18/2002](#))

1988: Ali Mohamed Fights in Afghanistan But Is Not Punished For It

Ali Mohamed, now an instructor at the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare School at Fort Bragg, North Carolina (see [1986](#)), travels to Afghanistan to train mujaheddin. He tells friends that he plans to join the mujaheddin in Afghanistan and “kill Russians.” He informs supervisor Lt. Col. Steve Neely of his plans, who passes the information up the chain of command. Lt. Col. Robert Anderson, Mohamed’s commanding officer, also reports Mohamed’s suspicious activities to Fort Bragg officials and army intelligence, but gets no response. Mohamed takes one month of leave and goes to Afghanistan. No action is taken to prevent him from doing this. ([Weiser and Risen 12/1/1998](#); [Sullivan and Neff 10/21/2001](#); [Miller, Stone, and Mitchell 2002, pp. 143](#)) When he returns, he boasts of his combat exploits to his colleagues. Lt. Col. Anderson writes up a second report and again gets no response. Freelance fighting would be a serious breach of military rules, and the New York Times will later note that, “The capture or death of an American serviceman in Afghanistan would have been a major international embarrassment to the United States.” However, no disciplinary action is taken against him. This leads Anderson to conclude that Mohamed’s activities are sponsored by a US intelligence agency. Anderson will state, “I think you or I would have a better chance of winning [the lottery], than an Egyptian major in the unit that assassinated [Egyptian President Anwar] Sadat would have getting a visa, getting to California... getting into the Army and getting assigned to a Special Forces unit. That just doesn’t happen.” He will add that it is equally unthinkable that an ordinary US soldier would go unpunished after fighting in a foreign war. ([Weiser and Risen 12/1/1998](#); [Williams and McCormick 11/4/2001](#)) Mohamed is also stealing classified documents from the base; some of them will be discovered by US investigators in 1990 (see [November 5, 1990](#)). According to a US army spokesperson, an officer working with Mohammed “did have some suspicions about what he did, but nothing came as a result of it. It really depended on who you believed.” ([Hays and Theimer 12/31/2001](#))

1988: Al Taqwa Bank Founded; Tied to Nazi Supporters



Francois Genoud (left) and Ahmad Huber, a.k.a. Albert Huber (right). [*Source: Seuil, AIJAC*] Leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood

found the Al Taqwa Bank. This bank will later be accused of being the largest financial supporter of al-Qaeda, Hamas, the GIA in Algeria, and other organizations officially designated by the US as groups that sponsor terrorism. For instance, the Treasury Department will later claim that \$60 million in funding for Hamas will pass through Al Taqwa in 1997. The bank is mostly based on both sides of the border between Switzerland and Italy, but important branches are established in Liechtenstein and the Bahamas as offshore tax havens. ([US Department of the Treasury 8/29/2002](#)) Newsweek will explain, "Al Taqwa, which means 'Fear of God,' was launched... by leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood, a secret society devoted to the creation of a worldwide Islamic government. The Brotherhood wanted to create a financial institution in which devout Muslims could invest their money. It would operate under strict Islamic law, which prohibits banks from charging interest. But investigators believe the convoluted structure of Al Taqwa made it easy to use as a money-laundering mechanism.... The [central] operation consisted of four men working at computers in a small apartment in Lugano, Switzerland. Lugano, which sits near the Italian border, is a kind of Alpine Tijuana, well known as a haven for tax evaders and money launderers." ([Hosenball 3/18/2002](#)) Reportedly, in 1995, Italian investigators will tell a Swiss prosecutor that Al Taqwa and related entities comprise "the most important financial structure of the Muslim Brotherhood and Islamic terrorist organizations." ([Komisar 3/15/2002](#)) Six members of the bin Laden family are among the original contributors to the Bahamas branch. ([Simpson and Pearl 12/17/2001](#)) A number of the bank's leaders have ties to Nazism or fascism. For instance, when board chairman Youssef Nada was a young man, he allegedly worked with both the armed branch of the Muslim Brotherhood and Nazi Germany military intelligence. Ahmad Huber, a Swiss convert to Islam previously known as Albert Huber, is both a director of the bank and an open neo-Nazi. He proudly displays portraits of Adolf Hitler and Osama bin Laden next to each other in his house. ([Finn 4/29/2002](#); [Erikson 11/8/2002](#)) According to a reporter who will interview him in 1995, Huber's office is adorned with portraits of Hitler, Nazi leader Heinrich Himmler, and Islamic militants. ([Wells 11/8/2001](#)) Huber will spend decades attempting to forge links between the neo-Nazi movement and the radical Muslim movement, speaking to and networking with both groups. He will be quoted around 2001 saying that the al-Qaeda leaders he met in January 2001 are "very discreet, well-educated, and very intelligent people." (see [Late January 2001](#)). ([Williamson and Jaklin 11/8/2001](#); [Reynolds 2/1/2002](#)) The founder of Al Taqwa appears to be Francois Genoud, who will die in 1996. Genoud is a Swiss lawyer who funded the Nazis and served as a Nazi agent during World War II. After the war, he funded the secret Odessa organization, which enabled many notorious Nazi fugitives to escape to safe havens in South America and elsewhere. Authorities believe that Genoud uses Al Taqwa to fund international militants like Carlos the Jackal and bin Laden. He also paid for the legal expenses of ex-Nazis such as Klaus Barbie and Adolf Eichmann. Many Muslim radicals and neo-Nazis share a strong hatred for Jews and the United States. ([Bushinsky 3/12/2002](#)) Al Taqwa will be shut down shortly after 9/11 for its support of al-Qaeda, Hamas, and other groups officially designated as terrorist organizations (see [November 7, 2001](#)).

1988: 'Al-Qaeda' Possibly the Name of a Computer Database

Robin Cook, British Foreign Secretary from 1997 to 2003, will later say that “al-Qaeda” was originally the name of a database. In a 2005 article, Cook will write that bin Laden was “a product of a monumental miscalculation by western security agencies. Throughout the ‘80s he was armed by the CIA and funded by the Saudis to wage jihad against the Russian occupation of Afghanistan. Al-Qaeda, literally ‘the database,’ was originally the computer file of the thousands of mujaheddin who were recruited and trained with help from the CIA to defeat the Russians.” Cook will give no explanation as to how he might know this. ([Cook 7/8/2005](#)) Al-Qaeda the organization will be founded in 1988 (see [August 11-20, 1988](#)).

Late 1980s: 'Blind Sheikh' Works with CIA and Warlords in Afghanistan

The Boston Globe will later say that, “Throughout the 1980s” the “Blind Sheikh,” Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman, “was a spiritual leader of the CIA-backed mujaheddin.” ([Sennott 6/21/1995](#)) The Atlantic Monthly will later report that in the late 1980s in Peshawar, Pakistan, Abdul-Rahman “became involved with the US and Pakistani intelligence officials who were orchestrating the [Afghan] war. The sixty or so CIA and Special Forces officers based there considered him a ‘valuable asset,’ according to one of them, and overlooked his anti-Western message and incitement to holy war because they wanted him to help unify the mujaheddin groups.” He is unable to unify the groups, but he helps coordinate some of their activities. He tends to favor the two most radically anti-Western factions led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and Abdul Rasul Sayyaf. He also has close links to Abdullah Azzam, bin Laden’s mentor. ([Weaver 5/1996](#)) According to Barnett Rubin, a Columbia University professor and senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, Azzam was also working with the CIA to help recruit for and unite the mujaheddin groups (see [1985-1989](#)), and when he is assassinated in 1989, the CIA relies even more heavily on Abdul-Rahman. Rubin claims the CIA pays to send him back to Peshawar “to preach to the Afghans about the necessity of unity to overthrow the Kabul regime.” As a reward for his help, the CIA gives him a visa to the US, even though he is on a terrorism watch list (see [July 1990](#)). ([Friedman 3/17/1995](#)) One source who worked with the CIA supply operation at this time will later say that Abdul-Rahman’s ties to Hekmatyar, the CIA’s most favored Afghan warlord, “put Sheikh Omar in the [CIA’s] good books. And believe me, later on when the Sheikh wanted to come to the States, he cashed in those chips.” ([Lance 2006, pp. 20](#))

1988-1989: Al-Qaeda Golden Chain Lists Financiers



The Golden Chain list. [Source: Public domain] In March 2002, authorities in Bosnia, Sarajevo, will raid the offices of the Benevolence International Foundation (BIF) due to suspected funding of al-Qaeda (see [March 2002](#)). The raid will uncover a handwritten list containing the name of twenty wealthy donors sympathetic to al-Qaeda. The list, referred to as “The Golden Chain,” contains both the names of the donors and the names of the recipients (but does not mention amounts given). Seven of the payments are made to Osama bin Laden. ([Prothero 2/11/2003](#)) Most accounts will be vague on what year the Golden Chain document was written; some say 1988. ([Simpson 3/18/2003](#)) But counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke will say it dates from 1989. ([US Congress 10/22/2003](#)) Al-Qaeda is formed in late 1988 (see [August 11-20, 1988](#)). The Wall Street Journal will later note, “The list doesn’t show any continuing support for al-Qaeda after the organization began targeting Americans, but a number of the Saudis on it have been under scrutiny by US officials as to whether they have supported terrorism in recent years.” ([Simpson 3/18/2003](#)) The donors named include:

- The “Bin Laden brothers.” Their first names are not mentioned. They give money to Osama bin Laden. UPI will later point out that “the discovery of this document in Sarajevo calls into question whether al-Qaeda has received support from one of Osama’s scores of wealthy brothers.”
- Adel Batterjee, a wealthy Saudi businessman who is also the founder of both BIF and its predecessor, Lajnat Al-Birr Al-Islamiah. He appears to be mentioned as a recipient three times. ([Prothero 2/11/2003](#)) The US will declare him as a terrorist financier in 2004 (see [December 21, 2004](#)).
- Wael Hamza Julaidan, a Saudi millionaire and one of the founders of al-Qaeda. He is listed as a recipient. The US will declare him a terrorist financier in 2002 (see [September 6, 2002](#)).
- Saleh Kamel, a Saudi billionaire, and the majority shareholder of the Saudi conglomerate Dallah Albaraka. In 2003, Forbes will call him one of the richest people in the world. The list has him giving money to Batterjee.
- Sulaiman Abdul Aziz al-Rajhi, another Saudi billionaire. The SAAR network, which is named after him, will be raided by the FBI in 2002 (see [March 20, 2002](#)). ([Emerson 2006, pp. 400](#))
- Khalid bin Mahfouz, another Saudi billionaire. A lawyer for bin Mahfouz will later say bin Mahfouz did contribute a small amount to fund the mujaheddin in the late 1980s, but only at the behest of the US and Saudi Arabia. ([Simpson 3/18/2003](#))

1988-Spring 1995: KSM's Brother Works for Charity Allegedly Connected to CIA

Zahid Shaikh Mohammed, brother of 9/11 mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM), works as the head of the Pakistani branch of the charity Mercy International. A book published in 1999 will allege that this charity, based in the US and Switzerland, was used by the CIA to funnel money to Muslim militants fighting against US enemies in places such as Bosnia and Afghanistan (see [1989 and After](#)). It is not known when Zahid got involved with the charity, but he was heading the Pakistani branch by 1988, when his nephew Ramzi Yousef first goes to Afghanistan (see [Late 1980s](#)). ([Reeve 1999, pp. 120](#)) In the spring of 1993, US investigators raided Zahid's house while searching for Yousef (see [Spring 1993](#)). Documents and pictures were found suggesting close links and even a friendship between Zahid and bin Laden. Photos and other evidence also showed close links between Zahid, KSM, and government officials close to Nawaf Sharif, who is Prime Minister of Pakistan twice in the 1990s. They also discover that Zahid was seen talking to Pakistani President Farooq Ahmad Khan Leghari during a Mercy International ceremony in February 1993. ([Reeve 1999, pp. 48-49, 120](#)) But despite the raid, Zahid apparently keeps his job until about February 1995, when Yousef is arrested in Pakistan (see [February 7, 1995](#)). Investigators learn Yousef had made a phone call to the Mercy office, and there is an entry in Yousef's seized telephone directory for a Zahid Shaikh Mohammed. Pakistani investigators raid the Mercy office, but Zahid has already fled. ([Iqbal 4/11/1995](#); [Pallister and Wilson 9/26/2001](#); [McDermott 2005, pp. 154, 162](#)) It is unclear what has happened to Zahid since. In 1999 it will be reported he is believed to be in Kuwait, but in 2002 the Kuwaiti government will announce he is a member of al-Qaeda, so presumably he is no longer welcome there. ([Reeve 1999, pp. 48](#); [McDermott 9/1/2002](#)) Mercy International's Kenya branch will later be implicated in the 1998 US embassy bombing in that country, and so will KSM, Zahid's brother (see [Late August 1998](#)).

1988-February 1992: US Support for Mujaheddin Declines; Funds from Saudi Donors Increase

US support for the mujaheddin slows down to "a trickle" because of concerns about dangers of promoting Islamic fundamentalism. The slack is picked up, however, by wealthy individual donors, many of whom are Saudis. These donors seem to favor the most extreme fundamentalist groups among the mujaheddin. ([Yousaf and Adkin 1992, pp. 91-92](#))

February 1988-December 1992: Justice Department Blocks Investigations into BCCI

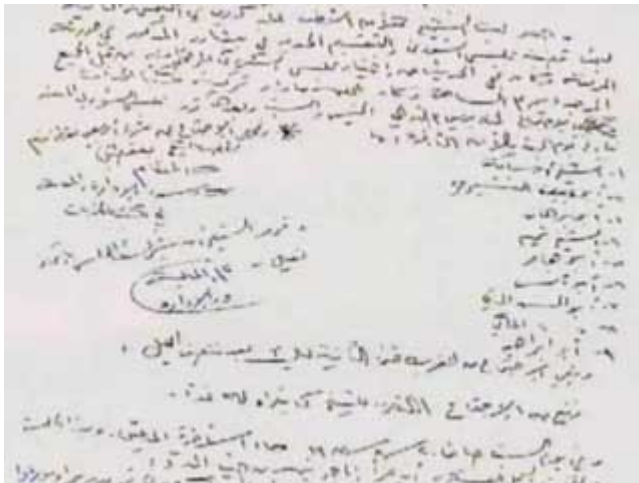


US Justice Department headquarters. [Source: *GlobeXplorer*] Sen. John Kerry (D) stumbles across the criminality of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI) while investigating international drug trafficking as part of a congressional oversight committee. He soon starts a vigorous congressional investigation of BCCI, and New York district attorney Robert Morgenthau launches a vigorous investigation as well. ([Tolchin 7/29/1991](#)) However, Kerry's and Morgenthau's investigations are consistently stifled. Kerry will later say that, "with the key exception of the Federal Reserve, there was almost [no]... information or cooperation provided by other government agencies." ([US Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations 12/1992](#)) Kerry will later conclude that the Justice Department in particular went to great lengths to block his and Morgenthau's investigations "through a variety of mechanisms, ranging from not making witnesses available, to not returning phone calls, to claiming that every aspect of the case was under investigation in a period when little, if anything was being done." After the Bank of England shuts down BCCI in July 1991 (see [July 5, 1991](#)), making big headlines, Under Assistant Attorney General Robert Mueller takes over Justice Department efforts on BCCI and assigns many new attorneys to the case. But Kerry will ultimately conclude that the indictments the Justice Department brings forth against BCCI after that time were narrower and less detailed than those of Morgenthau's, and often seemed to be in response to what Morgenthau was doing. ([US Congress 12/1992](#)) Kerry submits his report on BCCI in December 1992, and after that investigations into BCCI peter out. President Bush will appoint Mueller to be director of the FBI shortly before 9/11 (see [September 4, 2001](#)).

April 1988: Soviet Union Announces It Will Withdraw All Troops from Afghanistan

In an agreement signed in Geneva, Switzerland, the Soviet Union pledges to withdraw all of its troops from Afghanistan by February 15, 1989. They will end up withdrawing the last of their soldiers on that exact date (see [February 15, 1989](#)). At the time, the Soviets have slightly over 100,000 soldiers in Afghanistan. ([Keller 2/16/1989](#))

August 11-20, 1988: Bin Laden Forms Al-Qaeda



The notes from al-Qaeda's formation meeting. The short lines on the right side are the list of attendees. [Source: CNN/Bin Laden conducts two meetings to discuss "the establishment of a new military group," according to notes that are found later. Notes reveal the group is initially called al-Qaeda al-Askariya, which roughly translates to "the military base." But the name soon shortens to just al-Qaeda, meaning "the base" or "the foundation." (Solomon 2/19/2003; Wright 2006, pp. 131-134) With the Soviets in the process of withdrawing from Afghanistan, it is proposed to create the new group to keep military jihad, or holy war, alive after the Soviets are gone. The notes don't specify what the group will do exactly, but it concludes, "Initial estimate, within six months of al-Qaeda (founding), 314 brothers will be trained and ready." In fact, al-Qaeda will remain smaller than that for years to come. Fifteen people attend these two initial meetings. (Wright 2006, pp. 131-134) In addition to bin Laden, other attendees include:

- Ayman Al-Zawahiri, the head of the Egyptian militant group Islamic Jihad. (Wright 9/9/2002)
- Mohammed Atef, a.k.a. Abu Hafs.
- Mamdouh Mahmud Salim, a.k.a. Abu Hajer.
- Jamal al-Fadl.
- Wael Hamza Julaidan.
- Mohammed Loay Bayazid, a US citizen, who is notetaker for the meetings. (Wright 2006, pp. 131-134)

Al-Fadl will reveal details about the meetings to US investigators in 1996 (see June 1996-April 1997). Notes to the meeting will be found in Bosnia in early 2002. (Wright 9/9/2002) It will take US intelligence years even to realize a group named al-Qaeda exists; the first known incidence of US intelligence being told the name will come in 1993 (see May 1993).

October 1988: State Department Envoy Warns Against Continued Support of Militant Islamists



Milton Bearden. *[Source: Publicity photo]* State Department

Special Envoy Ed McWilliams, stationed in Islamabad, sends a widely distributed cable to Washington warning that continued support for the Islamist militants will have disastrous consequences. This leads to a long and bitter debate between those who agree with McWilliams, and those, including CIA Station Chief Milton Bearden, who believe that the manipulation of the Islamists has been a huge success that can and should be continued and replicated elsewhere. In response to the warning, the embassy investigates McWilliams, searching for weaknesses such as alcoholism and homosexuality. ([Coll 2004, pp. 184](#)) Additionally, the CIA “raises serious questions about his handling of classified materials.” ([Coll 2004, pp. 176-204](#))

Late 1980s: Afghan Training Camps Forge Future Boston Al-Qaeda Cell

Four men, Mohamad Kamal Elzahabi, Nabil al-Marabh, Raed Hijazi, and Bassam Kanj, meet each other in an Afghanistan training camp. All four of them take part in fighting against the Soviets. This is according to testimony by Elzahabi in 2004 (see [April 16, 2004-June 25, 2004](#)). Elzahabi will claim that while there, he met Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, later famous for allegedly attacking US soldiers in Iraq, and al-Qaeda leaders Abu Zubaida and Khalid Shaikh Mohammed. This appears to be the genesis of a Boston al-Qaeda sleeper cell that will play vital roles in 9/11 and other al-Qaeda plots. The four men go their separate ways in subsequent years, but by 1998 all of them will be working as taxi drivers in Boston (see [June 1995-Early 1999](#)). ([Kurkjian and DeMarco 6/27/2004](#))

1989: Holy Land Foundation Formed in US



Holy Land Foundation logo. *[Source: Holy Land Foundation]* The

Holy Land Foundation charity is established in the US, two years after Hamas was founded in the Middle East. From the very beginning, there are signs that Holy Land is supports illegal violent acts committed by Hamas. For instance, In 1990, Haitham Maghawri will apply for asylum in the US. He will tell the INS that he had been arrested

several times in Lebanon, once for placing a car bomb. He will be denied asylum, but will gain permanent residence by marrying a US citizen. He then will become executive director of Holy Land. Additionally, government documents, corporate records, and Arabic-language articles show clear connections between Hamas, Holy Land, and a closely related group, the Islamic Association for Palestine (IAP). For instance, in the late 1980s, Mousa Abu Marzouk, a known political leader of Hamas living in the US, is the chairman of IAP's advisory committee and donates hundreds of thousands of dollars to the IAP. The IAP publicly recommends Muslims should donate money to Holy Land to support Hamas in the Palestinian *intifada* (uprising) against Israel. According to international law, violent acts against Israeli military targets are not illegal, but such acts against civilian targets are, and Hamas freely acknowledges that it does both. As a result, financial support in the US for Hamas is controversial and often done in secret. Hamas will not be officially declared a terrorist group until 1995, and after this all US financing support for Hamas will be done in secret (see [January 1995](#)). ([Reaves and McGonigle 4/8/1996](#); [Associated Press 12/12/2001](#); [Cohen, Manor, and Franklin 12/16/2001](#); [McGonigle 12/20/2002](#))

Late 1980s: Ramzi Yousef Recruited by CIA?

Al-Qaeda bomber Ramzi Yousef is said to be recruited by the CIA, though details are not known. Author Richard Labeviere reported without elaboration in a 1999 book, "A classified FBI file indicates that [Yousef] was recruited by the local branch of the CIA." ([Labeviere 1999, pp. 220-221](#)) In 1995, Newsday will report, "FBI officials also are considering a probe of whether the CIA had any relationship with Yousef, who fought with the CIA-financed mujaheddin in Afghanistan in the 1980s." ([Kocieniewski 4/16/1995](#)) But there appears to be no further reporting on whether such a probe was conducted. Yousef is believed to have masterminded a series of bombings in the early 1990s, including the 1993 World Trade Center bombing and the planned Bojinka attack, before being captured in 1995 (see [February 7, 1995](#)). If Yousef was recruited by the CIA, it may have been in the late 1980s when the CIA recruited and trained thousands of people around the world to fight in Afghanistan (see [1986-1992](#)). In the late 1980s, Yousef was studying engineering at a Wales college, but he'd also joined the Muslim Brotherhood while there. During a break from school in 1988, he went to one of bin Laden's training camps in Afghanistan and spent several months honing his bomb-making skills. ([Miller, Stone, and Mitchell 2002, pp. 78](#))

Late 1980s: US Intelligence Already Investigating Abu Zubaida and California Al-Qaeda Operative



Khalil Deek. *[Source: Ali Jarekji / Reuters]* New Yorker magazine will later mention, “American intelligence officials had been investigating [Khalil] Deek and [Abu] Zubaida’s activities since at least the late eighties,” but it will not be explained why. Deek is a Palestinian and naturalized US citizen living in California for most of the 1990s who will later reportedly mastermind several al-Qaeda bomb plots. Zubaida, also Palestinian, will later be considered one of al-Qaeda top operational leaders.

([Khatchadourian 1/22/2007](#)) Zubaida joins the Palestinian uprising in 1987, when he is only sixteen years old. He then goes to Afghanistan, presumably joins with bin Laden, and fights there before the war ends in 1989. ([Suskind 2006, pp. 95](#)) Between 1988 and 1996, Deek is apparently involved with the Islamic Association for Palestine (IAP), a US-based charity which the US government will later call a “front group” for the Palestinian militant group Hamas. The IAP is closely tied to the Holy Land Foundation, established near Dallas, Texas, in 1989 (see [1989](#)), and it appears the foundation was investigated from very early on. Deek is living in Dallas that year. ([Schou 5/31/2001](#)) Palestinian militant activity through organizations like the IAP may explain why these two are investigated at this time, and/or the two may have engaged in other activities.

Counterterrorism expert Rita Katz will later claim that the Jordanian government “knew about Deek since the early 1990s. They had a lot of interest in him. They really considered him a major terrorist figure.” ([Schou 6/17/2004](#)) Deek and Zubaida will later work together on a number of operations, for instance using the honey trade to ship drugs and weapons (see [May 2000](#)), and masterminding a millennium bomb plot in Jordan. ([Khatchadourian 1/22/2007](#))

Late 1980s and After: CIA Blocks Investigations into Al-Qaeda’s ‘Operational Headquarters’ in US



Robert Morgenthau. [Source: Robert Maass / Corbis]

In the late 1980s, Osama bin Laden and his mentor Abdullah Azzam are running a charity front called Maktab al-Khidamat (MAK)/Al-Kifah in Peshawar, Pakistan, and it has an important branch in Brooklyn, New York, called the Al-Kifah Refugee Center that is sending money and recruits to fight in Afghanistan. The CIA apparently helps the Al-Kifah Brooklyn office send up to 200 people from the US to fight in Afghanistan (see [1986-1993](#)). Many of them are US citizens. Zalmay Khalilzad, a State Department Afghan specialist who will go on to become a prominent neoconservative, will later deny knowing of any Arab-Americans fighting with the mujaheddin. But one anonymous Congressional aide will recall occasional mentions of Al-Kifah Refugee Center or its head Mustafa Shalabi by some of the most radical mujaheddin. He says, "Among that cabal, the extreme militant fringes, Shalabi was known.... [T]hey were asking to talk to him so he could organize some particular assistance." The Neutrality Act prevents US citizens from fighting against countries not at war with the US, but the New York Times will later note, "Yet there is no sign that a criminal investigation ever took place even though Federal agents had come across broad hints about the center's activities when they investigated the [Meir] Kahane assassination [in 1990 (see [November 5, 1990](#)) and the slaying of Mr. Shalabi [in 1991]" (see [February 28, 1991](#)). Kahane's assassin, El Sayyid Nosair, was one of Shalabi's assistants. ([Mitchell 4/11/1993](#)) Apparently the CIA's ties to the Al-Kifah Refugee Center prevent other US agencies from investigating it, even after the 1993 WTC bombing when all of the bombers are found to have been tied to the center. While Al-Kifah closes itself down shortly after the WTC bombing, it immediately reopens in Boston under a different name and continues to publish the same newsletter and post from the same website (see [April 1993-Mid-2003](#)). The New Yorker will later comment, "[W]hen the fanatical fervor [the CIA] whipped up leads to unintended consequences - the assassination of a Jewish militant leader in Manhattan, the bombing of the World Trade Center, a terror conspiracy to blow up the Holland and Lincoln Tunnels and other Manhattan landmarks - [the CIA tried] to discourage local law enforcement agencies and the FBI from looking into the matter too deeply." After Nosair assassinates Kahane, the FBI tells District Attorney Robert Morgenthau that Nosair was a lone gunman, not part of a broader conspiracy. However, the FBI had truckloads of evidence connecting to Al-Kifah strongly suggesting otherwise that it does not closely investigate. The FBI also blocks him from tying Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman to the WTC bombing (see [After February 26, 1993](#)). Morgenthau will later speculate the CIA may have encouraged the FBI not to pursue any other leads. "The FBI lied to me. They're supposed to untangle terrorist connections, but they can't be trusted to do the job." ([Friedman 3/17/1995](#)) Counterterrorism expert Steven Emerson will later call Al-Kifah "al-Qaeda's

operational headquarters in the United States.” ([Emerson 2006, pp. 436](#)) In 1994, a secret internal CIA report will conclude that the agency is “partially culpable” for the WTC bombing because of its support for radicals connected to Al-Kifah. One CIA source will say, “By giving these people the funding that we did, a situation was created in which it could be safely argued that we bombed the World Trade Center” (see [January 24, 1994](#)). But even after 1994 there is little evidence that the links from Al-Kifah were carefully explored by any US government agency. For instance, the government will not freeze Al-Kifah’s funds until shortly after 9/11, long after it ceased to exist (see [September 24, 2001](#)).

1989-1994: Al-Marabh Has Curious FBI Contacts; Trains in Afghanistan



Nabil al-Marabh. [*Source: Associated Press*] Nabil al-Marabh moves to Boston in 1989 and apparently lives there as a taxi driver for several years. ([Golden and Miller 9/18/2001](#); [Farmer 9/19/2001](#)) In a 2003 interview, al-Marabh will claim that he had a conflict with a fellow Boston taxi driver who falsely accused him of planning to bomb a car. He will say he spoke with FBI agents who concluded the allegations were false. But from this time on, the FBI repeatedly tried to recruit him to become an informant. He will claim he refused the offer (see [Late August 2000](#)). ([Ashenfelter 5/23/2003](#)) In a 2002 statement, he will claim that he traveled to Pakistan in 1992 at the behest of a roommate who “both worked for the FBI and fought in Afghanistan.” (Interestingly, when al-Marabh will be briefly detained in Canada in the summer of 2001, fellow prisoners will claim that he repeatedly says he is in contact with the FBI because they find him “special”(see [June 27, 2001-July 11, 2001](#)).) Al-Marabh stays at the House of Martyrs, a guest house notoriously connected to bin Laden. He says he meets al-Qaeda operative Raed Hijazi there (though it seems likely they already met in Afghanistan in the late 1980s (see [Late 1980s](#)).) The two of them will later be roommates in Boston in the late 1990s (see [June 1995-Early 1999](#)). Curiously, one newspaper account will claim that Hijazi became an FBI informant around the time he was al-Marabh’s roommate (see [Early 1997-Late 1998](#)). ([Fainaru 9/4/2002](#)) Al-Marabh and Hijazi go to a training camp in Afghanistan and receive training in rifles, machine guns, and rocket-propelled grenades. ([Fainaru 9/4/2002](#); [Main 9/5/2002](#); [Solomon 6/3/2004](#))

Al-Marabh later claims that he spends the next year or two in Pakistan working for the Muslim World League, an Islamic charity some have suspected of funding radical militants. He also later acknowledges distributing as much as \$200,000 a month to various training camps in Afghanistan at this time, but claims it is for charitable causes. He says he decides to return to the US in the wake of a Pakistani crackdown on Arabs following the World Trade Center bombing in 1993. ([Fainaru 9/4/2002](#); [O'Brien and van Natta 7/31/2003](#); [Solomon 6/3/2004](#))

1989 and After: CIA Supposedly Supports Muslim Charity Tied to Bin Laden



Mercy International USA's logo. [Source: *Mercy International USA*] The 1999 book *Dollars for Terror* will allege that in 1989, Mercy International, a “subsidiary of the Muslim Brotherhood, was able to establish its headquarters in the United States, in the state of Michigan, with the assistance of the CIA. The Agency provided significant logistical and financial support to this ‘humanitarian’ organization, enabling it to act clandestinely in the various Balkan conflicts as well as within the Muslim communities of several Russian republics.” ([Labeviere 1999, pp. 364](#)) Mercy International will later be tied to al-Qaeda in a number of ways. For instance, in the mid-1990s its Pakistan branch will be headed by Zahid Shaikh Mohammed, brother of 9/11 mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (see [1988-Spring 1995](#)). ([McDermott 9/1/2002](#)) Its Kenya branch will be tied to the 1998 US embassy bombing there. Its Philippine branch is tied to Mohammed Jamal Khalifa, bin Laden's brother-in-law. ([Burr and Collins 2006, pp. 128, 188-189](#)) Branches of this charity in different countries have slightly different names such as Mercy International-USA and Mercy International Relief Agency, and it has been claimed that the US branch has no connection with the terrorism-related branches. However, a 2003 article will draw links between the US branch and other branches. ([Epstein and Schmidt 9/4/2003](#))

Early 1989: US Supplies Sniper Rifles to Bin Laden's Mentor

The US government sends 25 high-powered sniper rifles to a group of fighters in Afghanistan that includes bin Laden. The armor-piercing weapons have range-finding equipment and night-vision scopes. In an early 2001 US court trial, Essam al Ridi, a pilot for bin Laden in the early 1990s (see [1993](#)), will recall that he helped ship the weapons to Abdullah Azzam, bin Laden's mentor. Azzam and bin Laden are close to each other at

this time, and al Ridi will later testify he sometimes saw the two of them together. The president of the US company that made the rifles will later state that the rifles “were picked up by US government trucks, shipped to US government bases, and shipped to those Afghan freedom fighters.” The rifles are considered ideal for assassination. ([Hopper 10/16/2001](#)) The order, worth about \$150,000 at the time, is a significant one for the manufacturer, accounting for 15-25% of its annual turnover on the guns. Their export would usually require an end user certificate from the US Department of State, but the circumstances of the sale are unknown, as al Ridi is not asked how he manages to purchase such a large number of rifles. ([Dao 10/7/2001](#); [Moloney 10/15/2001](#)) The CIA will deny being involved in the transfer. ([Central Intelligence Agency 3/7/2002](#)) However, al Ridi will say that the CIA was aware that bin Laden ended up with some of the guns. ([Miller 6/3/2002](#)) This shipment is especially significant because there was a protracted debate within the Reagan administration about sending sniper rifles to Afghanistan due to worries that it could violate a US law against assassinations and put US officials in legal jeopardy. In the end, the US gave less than 100 of such rifles without night-vision scopes to the government of Pakistan to pass on to mujaheddin, but the ones sent to Azzam had night-vision scopes. The timing is also significant since the Soviet Union agreed to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan in 1988 and complete the pull out in February 1989, around when these rifles are sent. The rifles given to Pakistan appear to have arrived before 1987. ([Coll 7/20/1992](#))

1989-January 1993: Hamas Trains and Fundraises in US



Hamas logo. [*Source: Hamas*] Hamas is a Palestinian group known both for charitable works benefiting the Palestinian population and suicide attacks against Israeli targets. Hamas was formed in 1987, after a Palestinian uprising began the year before. Some claim that Israel indirectly supported and perhaps even directly funded Hamas in its early years in order to divide the Palestinians politically. For instance, a former senior CIA official will later claim that Israel’s support for Hamas “was a direct attempt to divide and dilute support for a strong, secular PLO [Palestinian Liberation Organization] by using a competing religious alternative.” Hamas begins attacks on Israeli military and civilian targets in 1989 and will begin suicide attacks on these targets in April 1994. The US will not officially declare Hamas a terrorist organization until 1995 (see [January 1995](#)). This means that funding Hamas is not a crime in the US before that year, but knowingly participating in or supporting a violent act overseas outside of the rules of war such as a suicide bombing could still potentially result in criminal charges in the US. ([Sale 6/18/2002](#); [Associated Press 3/22/2004](#)) Mohammad Salah, a Palestinian-

American living in Chicago as a used car salesman, was reputedly trained by Hamas in terrorist techniques, including the use of chemical weapons and poisons, in the late 1980s. Working on the orders of high-level Hamas leader Mousa Abu Marzouk, Salah leads a four day Hamas training camp in the Chicago area in June 1990. According to one trainee, the approximately twenty-five trainees study Hamas philosophy, receive weapons training, and learn how to plant a car bomb. Two of the trainees are ultimately selected to fly to Syria, where they undergo more advanced training in making car bombs and throwing grenades. Ultimately, they are sent into Israel to launch attacks. Similar training camps take place in Kansas City and Wisconsin from 1989 through early 1991. Then, Salah is told by Marzouk to change his focus from training to fundraising. In early 1992, Salah receives about \$800,000 from Saudi multimillionaire Yassin al-Qadi, and he temporarily invests it in a BMI real estate scheme (see [1991](#)). Between June 1991 and December 1992, Salah repeatedly travels to the Middle East and spends more than \$100,000 in direct support of Hamas military activities. He attempts to spend the \$800,000 that is still invested in BMI, but BMI is unable to quickly liquidate the investment. Marzouk sends Salah almost \$1 million to spend. Salah goes to the West Bank in January 1993 and begins dispersing that money, but he is arrested before the end of the month. With Salah arrested, Hamas needs a new point man to collect and transfer new money raised in the US. Jamil Sarsour, a grocery store owner in Milwaukee, is chosen. It will be reported in 2003 that Sarsour is still living openly in Milwaukee (see [June 2-5, 2003](#)) ([Jackson, Cohen, and Manor 10/29/2001](#); [Crogan 8/2/2002](#); [Federal News Service 6/2/2003](#))

1989-Late 1999: Al-Zarqawi Becomes Prominent Islamist Militant

Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, a Jordanian-born Palestinian, travels to Afghanistan in 1989 and fights against the pro-Soviet government there. He becomes a radical Islamist and reportedly trains at an al-Qaeda training camp there. He forms a militant group later known as al-Tawhid. In 1993, he returns to Jordan but is quickly arrested for possessing grenades and is sentenced to 15 years in prison. But he gathers many followers inside the prison and is connected to growing Jordanian radical militant networks outside the prison. In May 1999, Abdullah II becomes the new king of Jordan and al-Zarqawi is released from prison as part of a general amnesty. ([Weaver 6/8/2006](#)) In late 1999, al-Zarqawi is allegedly involved in an unsuccessful attempt to blow up the Radisson SAS Hotel in Amman, Jordan (see [November 30, 1999](#)). ([Borger 10/9/2002](#); [Buncombe and Milmo 2/6/2003](#); [Pincus 2/7/2003](#)) By the end of 1999, he returns to Afghanistan and meets bin Laden. However, bin Laden reportedly strongly dislikes him, because al-Zarqawi comes across as too ambitious, abrasive, and overbearing, and has differing ideological views. But another al-Qaeda leader, Saif al-Adel, sees potential and convinces bin Laden to give a token \$5,000 to set up his own training camp near the town of Herat, close to the border with Iran. He begins setting up the camp in early 2000 (see [Early 2000-December 2001](#)). ([Weaver 6/8/2006](#))

January 20, 1989: George H. W. Bush Is Inaugurated US President



President George Herbert Walker Bush. [Source: *White House*] George H. W. Bush replaces Ronald Reagan and remains president until January 1993. Many of the key members in his government will have important positions again when his son George W. Bush becomes president in 2001. For instance, Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Colin Powell later becomes Secretary of State, and Defense Secretary Dick Cheney later becomes vice president.

February 15, 1989: Soviet Forces Withdraw from Afghanistan



A convoy of Soviet tanks leaving Afghanistan. [Source: *National Geographic*] Soviet forces withdraw from Afghanistan, but Afghan communists retain control of Kabul, the capital, until April 1992. ([Coll 7/19/1992](#)) It is estimated that more than a million Afghans (eight per cent of the country's population) were killed in the war, and hundreds of thousands had been maimed by an unprecedented number of land mines. Almost half of the survivors of the war are refugees. ([Wright 9/9/2002](#)) Richard Clarke, a counterterrorism official during the Reagan and George H. W. Bush administrations and the counterterrorism "tsar" by 9/11, later claims that the huge amount of US aid provided to Afghanistan drops off

drastically as soon as the Soviets withdraw, abandoning the country to civil war and chaos. The new powers in Afghanistan are tribal chiefs, the Pakistani ISI, and the Arab war veterans coalescing into al-Qaeda. ([Clarke 2004, pp. 52-53](#))

February 16, 1989-December 1990: CIA Continues to Work with ‘Blind Sheikh’ and Supports Mujaheddin Despite Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan

Although the Soviets withdraw from Afghanistan in February 1989 (see [February 15, 1989](#)), the CIA continues to support the mujaheddin because the Soviet-allied Communist government stays in power in Kabul. Apparently, the CIA and the Saudi government continue to fund the mujaheddin at least until December 1990, although it could be longer because the Communist government remains in power in Kabul until 1992. The “Blind Sheikh,” Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman, reportedly has been working with the CIA in the 1980s to help unite the mujaheddin factions fighting each other (see [Late 1980s](#)). The Village Voice will later report that according to a “very high-ranking Egyptian official,” Abdul-Rahman continues to work with the CIA after moving to Brooklyn in July 1990 (see [July 1990](#)). He “work[s] closely with the CIA, helping to channel a steady flow of money, men, and guns to mujaheddin bases in Afghanistan and Pakistan.” But despite working with the CIA, Abdul-Rahman still considers the US the “Great Satan” and does not try to hide this. In one radio broadcast, he says that “Americans are descendants of apes and pigs who have been feeding from the dining tables of the Zionists, Communism, and colonialism.” Matti Steinberg, an expert on Islamic fundamentalism, says that Abdul-Rahman’s “long-term goal is to weaken US society and to show Arab rulers that the US is not an invulnerable superpower.” The Egyptian official will later complain, “We begged America not to coddle the sheikh.” ([Friedman 3/30/1993](#))

(April 25-May 1989): US Holds Secret Meetings with Egyptian Terror Group Headed by ‘Blind Sheikh’

Members of Egyptian terror group al-Gama’a al-Islamiyya, whose spiritual head is the ‘Blind Sheikh,’ Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman, hold a series of secret meetings with US officials at the American embassy in Cairo. The meetings are initiated by Al-Gama’a al-Islamiyya, which wants to co-operate with the US, because it thinks the US is co-operating with and supporting the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. At the meetings, representatives of the group tell the US:

- Al-Gama’a al-Islamiyya has between 150,000 and 200,000 members;
- One of the representatives at the meetings sat on Al-Gama’a al-Islamiyya’s shura, or leadership council, between 1981 and 1988. The 11 members of the group’s shura are named at the meetings, as is its operational commander;
- Al-Gama’a al-Islamiyya thinks highly of Saudi Arabian King Fahd, but believes he should take a stronger line against Iran. However, Abdul-Rahman met an Iranian delegation in Pakistan in autumn 1988;

- The group will not attack US diplomats;
- Abdul-Rahman travels to the US yearly, and also travels to Britain;
- The group is not as secret and violent as represented by the Egyptian government and has undergone a “change in thinking,” becoming concerned about its radical and violent image.

Embassy officials are skeptical about some of the claims, as the group’s representatives reveal more than the officials think is prudent. One year after the meetings, Abdul-Rahman will be issued a US visa by a CIA officer and move to the US (see [July 1990](#)). ([US Embassy in Cairo 4/25/1989](#) ³; [US Embassy in Cairo 5/3/1989](#) ³)

Summer 1989: Ali Mohamed Uses His US Military Expertise to Train Muslim Radicals

Ali Mohamed, a spy for bin Laden working in the US military, trains Islamic radicals in the New York area. Mohamed is on active duty at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, at the time, but he regularly comes to Brooklyn on the weekends to train radicals at the Al-Kifah Refugee Center, a charity connected to both bin Laden and the CIA. Lawyer Roger Savis will later say, “He came quite often and became a real presence in that [Al-Kifah] office, which later metastasized into al-Qaeda.... He would bring with him a satchel full of military manuals and documents. It was Ali Mohamed who taught the men how to engage in guerrilla war. He would give courses in how to make bombs, how to use guns, how to make Molotov cocktails.” Mohamed’s gun training exercises take place at five different shooting ranges. One series of shooting range sessions in July 1989 is monitored by the FBI (Mohamed apparently is not at those particular sessions in person) (see [July 1989](#)). Mohamed’s trainees include most of the future bombers of the World Trade Center in 1993. ([Lance 2006, pp. 47-49](#))

June 4, 1989: Ali Mohamed Shows US Military Training Videos to Muslim Radicals

Ali Mohamed, a spy for bin Laden working in the US military, trains Muslim radicals. On this date, he travels with El Sayyid Nosair to the Al-Kifah Refugee Center in Brooklyn, a charity connected to bin Laden and the CIA, and shows training videos from the Fort Bragg military base where US Special Forces train. A former FBI agent will later comment, “You have an al-Qaeda spy who’s now a US citizen, on active duty in the US Army, and he brings along a video paid for by the US government to train Green Beret officers and he’s using it to help train Islamic terrorists so they can turn their guns on us.... By now the Afghan war is over.” ([Lance 2006, pp. 48](#)) Nosair, who watches the videos, will assassinate a Jewish leader in New York one year later (see [November 5, 1990](#)).

July 1989: FBI Monitors Future Bombers Weapons Training Sessions; Fail to Follow Up



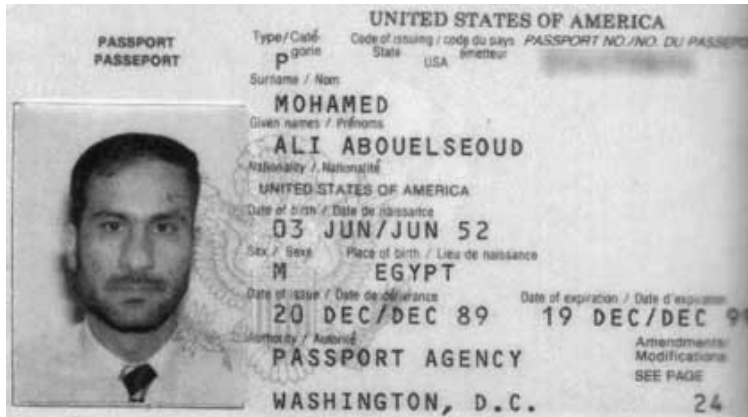
One of the Calverton surveillance photographs introduced as evidence in court (note that some faces have been blurred out). [Source: *National Geographic*] FBI agents photograph Islamic radicals shooting weapons at the Calverton Shooting Range, on Long Island, New York. The group is secretly monitored as they shoot AK-47 assault rifles, semiautomatic handguns, and revolvers for four successive weekends. The use of weapons such as AK-47's are illegal in the US, but this shooting range is known to be unusually permissive. Ali Mohamed is apparently not at the range but has been training the five men there: El Sayyid Nosair, Mahmud Abouhalima, Mohammed Salameh, Nidal Ayyad, and Clement Rodney Hampton-El. Nosair will assassinate Rabbi Meir Kahane one year later (see [November 5, 1990](#)), and the others except for Hampton-El will be convicted of the 1993 World Trade Center bombing (see [February 26, 1993](#)), while Hampton-El will be convicted for a role in the "Landmarks" bombing plot (see [June 24, 1993](#)). Some FBI agents have been assigned to watch some Middle Eastern men who are frequenting the Al-Kifah Refugee Center in Brooklyn. Each weekend, Mohamed's trainees drive from Al-Kifah to the shooting range, and a small FBI surveillance team follows them. The FBI has been given a tip that some Palestinians at Al-Kifah are planning violence targeting Atlantic City casinos. By August, the casino plot fails to materialize, and the surveillance, including that at the shooting range, comes to an end. Author Peter Lance will later say that why the FBI failed to follow up the shooting sessions is a "great unanswered question." ([Lance 2003, pp. 29-33](#); [New York Times 10/5/2003](#))

July 1989: Ramzi Yousef Already Visits Philippines, Setting Up New Base for Bin Laden

A Philippine government undercover operative later says that bomber Ramzi Yousef comes to the Philippines at this time to set up a new base for bin Laden. The operative, Edwin Angeles, is posing as a member of the militant group the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). Angeles will later claim that Yousef approaches him as the "personal envoy" of bin Laden and is looking to set up a new base of operations on the rebellious Muslim island of Mindanao. Bin Laden's brother-in-law Mohammed Jamal Khalifa is already in the Philippines setting up charity fronts. These early contacts will contribute to the creation of the Abu Sayyaf, an offshoot of the MILF that Angeles will join. ([Philippine Daily Inquirer 7/10/2001](#)) Yousef had been studying electrical engineering in

Wales until 1989. He first went to Afghanistan in 1988 to learn bomb making at a bin Laden camp (see [Late 1980s](#)). After graduating, he moved to Afghanistan, where his father, two of his brothers, and his uncle Khalid Shaikh Mohammed are already fighting with bin Laden. ([Bone and Road 10/18/1997](#)) Yousef will frequently return to the Philippines to train and plot attacks (see [December 1991-May 1992](#)).

November 1989: Ali Mohamed Honorably Discharged from US Army



Ali Mohamed's US passport, issued in 1989. [*Source: US Justice Department*] (click image to enlarge) Ali Mohamed is honorably discharged from the US Army with commendations in his file, including one for "patriotism, valor, fidelity, and professional excellence." He remains in the Army Reserves for the next five years. ([Weiser and Risen 12/1/1998](#); [Sullivan and Neff 10/21/2001](#)) A US citizen by this time, he will spend much of his time after his discharge in Santa Clara, California, where his wife still resides. He will try but fail to get a job as an FBI interpreter, will work as a security guard, and will run a computer consulting firm out of his home. ([Williams and McCormick 9/21/2001](#))

November 9, 1989: Cold War Ends; US Asserts World Dominance



Secretary of State Colin Powell. [Source: *US State*

Department]/The Berlin Wall begins to fall in East Germany, signifying the end of the Soviet Union as a superpower. Just six days later, Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Colin Powell presents a new strategy document to President George H. W. Bush, proposing that the US shift its strategic focus from countering Soviet attempts at world dominance to ensuring US world dominance. George H. W. Bush accepts this plan in a public speech, with slight modifications, on August 2, 1990, the same day Iraq invades Kuwait. In early 1992 (see [March 8, 1992](#)), Powell, counter to his usual public dove persona, tells congresspersons that the US requires “sufficient power” to “deter any challenger from ever dreaming of challenging us on the world stage.” He says, “I want to be the bully on the block.” Powell’s early ideas of global hegemony will be formalized by others in a 1992 policy document and finally realized as policy when George W. Bush becomes president in 2001. ([Armstrong 10/2002](#))

November 24, 1989: Bin Laden’s Mentor Assassinated



Sheikh Abdullah Azzam. [Source: *CNN*]/Bin Laden’s mentor Sheikh Abdullah Azzam is killed by a car bomb in Afghanistan. The killing is never solved. Azzam has no shortage of enemies. Suspects include the Mossad, CIA, Afghan warlord Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, the ISI, and bin Laden. The reason bin Laden is suspected is because he and Azzam were increasingly at odds over what approach to take since the Soviet Union had been driven from Afghanistan earlier in the year (see [February 15, 1989](#)). ([Suellentrop 4/16/2002](#); [Coll 2004, pp. 204](#)) In 1998, Mohammed Sadiq Odeh will be arrested and later convicted for a role in the 1998 African embassy

bombings. He reportedly will tell US interrogators that bin Laden “personally ordered the killing of Azzam because he suspected his former mentor had ties with the CIA.” However, it is not known if Odeh was just passing on a rumor. ([Gunaratna 2003, pp. 32](#)) Regardless, in the wake of Azzam’s death, bin Laden takes control of Azzam’s recruiting and support network, Maktab al-Khidamat (MAK)/Al-Kifah, and merges it with al-Qaeda, which was formed the year before (see [August 11-20, 1988](#)). ([Suellentrop 4/16/2002](#); [Coll 2004, pp. 204](#))

Late 1989-Late 1991: Bin Laden Slowly Shifts Operations to Sudan, Keeps Training Camps in Afghanistan



Osama bin Laden and Hassan al-Turabi in Sudan in the early 1990s. [Source: PBS] Hassan al-Turabi comes to power in Sudan in 1989, and his beliefs are ideologically compatible with bin Laden’s. With the Afghan war ending and the Afghans beginning to fight amongst themselves, al-Turabi sends a delegation and a letter to bin Laden, inviting him to collaborate and move to Sudan. Bin Laden agrees to the offer, but moves slowly. He sends advance teams to buy businesses and houses. He also visits Sudan himself to establish a relationship with al-Turabi. Gradually, about 1,000 bin Laden supporters move to Sudan. But bin Laden also keeps offices and guest houses in Pakistan, as well as training camps in Afghanistan, including the Darunta, Jihad Wal, Khaldan, Sadeek, al-Farouq, and Khalid ibn Walid camps. US-al-Qaeda double agent Ali Mohamed plays an important role in the move (see [Summer 1991](#)). ([Gunaratna 2003, pp. 39-41](#))

1990: Ali Mohamed Becomes Informant for FBI

Ali Mohamed, an al-Qaeda operative recently discharged from the US army (see [November 1989](#)), becomes an informant for the FBI. He applies to be a translator at FBI offices in Charlotte, North Carolina, and San Francisco, and is turned down. However, the San Francisco office hires him to be an informant to help expose a local document forging conspiracy that possibly involves members of Hamas. ([Miller, Stone, and Mitchell 2002, pp. 144](#)) Mohamed will continue to have connections with the FBI for much of the rest of the 1990s while also running an al-Qaeda cell in California.

1990: Mohamed Atta Joins Muslim Brotherhood Linked Group



A young Mohamed Atta with his father. [Source: Getty images] In 1990, after finishing his studies in architecture, Atta joins what is called an “engineering syndicate,” a professional or trade group. Like the school that trained many of its engineers, the syndicate serves as an unofficial base for the Muslim Brotherhood, where the organization recruits new operatives and spreads its ideology. Other members of the 9/11 plot will also have connections to the Muslim Brotherhood at various points in their lives. ([Finn 9/22/2001](#); [Hooper 9/23/2001](#); [Newsweek 12/31/2001](#))

1980s and 1990s: Most 9/11 Hijackers Have Middle-Class Backgrounds

After 9/11, some in Western countries will say that one of the root causes of the attacks is poverty and assume that the hijackers must have been poor. However, most of them are middle class and have relatively comfortable upbringings. The editor of *Al Watan*, a Saudi Arabian daily, will call them “middle-class adventurers” rather than Islamist fundamentalist ideologues. ([Sennott 3/3/2002](#))

- Mohamed Atta grows up in Cairo, Egypt. His father is an attorney, and both Atta and his two sisters attend university. ([McDermott 2005, pp. 10-11](#))
- Marwan Alshehhi is from Ras al-Khaimah Emirate in the United Arab Emirates. His family is not particularly wealthy, but his father is a muezzin and one of his half-brothers a policeman. He attends university in Germany on an UAE army scholarship (see [Spring 1996-December 23, 2000](#)). ([McDermott 2005, pp. 55](#))
- Ziad Jarrah is from Beirut, Lebanon. His father is a mid-level bureaucrat and his mother, from a well-off family, is a teacher. The family drives a Mercedes and Jarrah attends private Christian schools before going to study in Germany. ([McDermott 2005, pp. 49-50](#))
- Hani Hanjour is from Taif, near Mecca in Saudi Arabia. His family has a car exporting business and a farm, which he manages for five years in the mid-1990s. ([Goldstein, Sun, and Lardner 10/15/2001](#))
- Nawaf and Salem Alhazmi are from Mecca, Saudi Arabia. Their father owns a shop and the family is wealthy. ([Khashoggi 9/20/2001](#); [Wright 2006, pp. 378](#))
- Abdulaziz Alomari is from south-western Saudi Arabia. He is a university graduate (see

[Late 1990s](#)). He apparently marries and has a child, a daughter, before 9/11. ([Sunday Times \(London\) 1/27/2002](#); [Saudi Information Agency 9/11/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 232](#))

■Mohand Alshehri is from Tanooma in Asir Province, Saudi Arabia. He attends university (see [Late 1990s](#)). ([Saudi Information Agency 9/11/2002](#))

■Hamza Alghamdi is from Baha Province, Saudi Arabia. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 231](#)) He works as a stockboy in a housewares shop. ([Sennott 3/3/2002](#))

■Fayez Ahmed Banihammad is from the United Arab Emirates. He gives his home address as being in Khor Fakkan, a port and enclave of Sharjah Emirate on the country's east coast. ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#)) The 9/11 Commission will say he works as an immigration officer at one point. ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 20](#))

■Maqed Mojed is from Annakhil, near Medina in western Saudi Arabia. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 232](#)) He attends university (see [Late 1990s](#)).

■Ahmed Alhaznawi is from Hera, Baha Province. His father is an imam at the local mosque and he is reported to attend university (see [Late 1990s](#)).

■Ahmed Alnami is from Abha, Asir Province. His family is one of government officials and scientists and his father works for the Ministry of Islamic Affairs. He attends university (see [Late 1990s](#)). ([Lamb 9/15/2002](#))

■Wail Alshehi and Waleed Alshehri are from Khamis Mushayt in Asir Province, southwestern Saudi Arabia. Their father is a businessman and builds a mosque as a gift to the town. They both go to college (see [Late 1990s](#)). The Alshehris are a military family with three older brothers who hold high rank at the nearby airbase. Their uncle, Major General Faez Alshehri, is the logistical director of Saudi Arabia's armed forces. ([Sennott 3/3/2002](#)) Dr. Ali al-Mosa, a Saudi academic, will later comment: "Most of them were from very rich, top-class Saudi families. The father of the Alshehri boys is one of the richest people in the area and the other families are not far behind him." ([McGeough 10/5/2002](#))

The social situation of the families of Satam al Suqami, Ahmed Alghamdi, Saeed Alghamdi, and Khaled Almihdhar is not known. However, Almihdhar is from a distinguished family that traces its lineage back to the prophet Mohammed. ([Wright 2006, pp. 379](#))

1990: Islamist Militants Set Up Operations in Bosnia



Abdullah Anas. [*Source: History Channel*] According to author Richard Labeviere, in this year Talaat Fouad Qassem, a leader of the Egyptian militant group Al-

Gama'a al-Islamiyya, is designated by a leaders from different radical militant groups to head up the militant effort in Bosnia. Qassem is living in exile in Denmark and recruits the help of two Algerian militants also living in exile in Europe, Kamer Eddine Kherbane and Abdullah Anas. In future years, the three of them will coordinate all the requests for volunteers from European countries who want to fight in Bosnia. They will send about 2,000 volunteers to camps in Bosnia near the towns of Zenica and Tuzla. Kherbane will directly lead the Tuzla group. ([Labeviere 1999, pp. 73](#)) In 1991, Kherbane will set up a charity front in Croatia that is a branch of Maktab al-Khidamat/Al-Kifah, which is closely tied to al-Qaeda (see [1991](#) and [Early 1990s](#)). In 1995, Qassem will be abducted in Croatia by US forces and killed in Egypt (see [September 13, 1995](#)).

1990: FBI Seizes List of Al-Kifah Contacts

At some point in 1990, the FBI seizes a handwritten list of contacts from a top official of the Al-Kifah Refugee Center in Brooklyn. Al-Kifah is a charity front with links to both al-Qaeda and the CIA (see [1986-1993](#)). Little is known about the list, such as when exactly it was seized and why, what was done with it, or whose names are on it, except that a Texas imam named Moataz Al-Hallak is on the list (mention of the list comes from an article about Al-Hallak). The FBI also seizes a different computerized list of Al-Kifah contacts at some point. ([McGonigle 2/19/1999](#)) It will later be alleged that the CIA repeatedly blocked the FBI's investigations into Al-Kifah (see [Late 1980s and After](#)).

Early 1990s: US Intelligence Uses Hi-Tech to Track Bin Laden

The National Imagery Office, which coordinates all US satellite activity, begins satellite surveillance of bin Laden's bases and training camps in Sudan and Afghanistan. Also, bin Laden's voice print, a computerized record of his voice is made from tapes of his speeches that were distributed in Saudi Arabia around the time of the Gulf War. The NSA is able to use the voice print to scan satellite and cell phone calls for a match. As a result, "on numerous occasions the NSA and CIA" are able to monitor bin Laden's calls even if he is not using his usual satellite phone. ([Reeve 1999, pp. 206](#))

Early 1990s-Late 1996: Bin Laden Frequently Travels to London, According to Various Sources

The 1999 book *The New Jackals* by journalist Simon Reeve will report that in the early 1990s, bin Laden "was flitting between Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, London, and Sudan."

Reeve does not say who his sources are for this statement. ([Reeve 1999, pp. 156](#))

- Bin Laden allegedly visits the London mansion of Saudi billionaire Khalid bin Mahfouz around 1991 (see [\(1991\)](#)).

- Bin Laden allegedly travels to London and Manchester to meet GIA militants in 1994 (see [1994](#)).

- One report claims bin Laden briefly lived in London in 1994 (see [1994](#)).

- Similarly, the 1999 book *Dollars for Terror* by Richard Labeviere will claim, “According to several authorized sources, Osama bin Laden traveled many times to the British capital between 1995 and 1996, on his private jet.”
 - The book will also point out that in February 1996, bin Laden was interviewed for the Arabic weekly al-Watan al-Arabi and the interview was held in the London house of Khalid al-Fawwaz, bin Laden’s de facto press secretary at the time (see [Early 1994-September 27, 1998](#)). ([Labeviere 1999, pp. 101](#))
 - In a book first published in 1999, journalist John Cooley will say that bin Laden “seems to have avoided even clandestine trips [to London] from 1995.” ([Cooley 2002, pp. 63](#))
 - Labeviere, however, will claim bin Laden was in London as late as the second half of 1996, and, “according to several Arab diplomatic sources, this trip was clearly under the protection of the British authorities.” ([Labeviere 1999, pp. 108](#))
- After 9/11, some will report that bin Laden never traveled to any Western countries in his life. On the other hand, in 2005 a British cabinet official will state that in late 1995 bin Laden actually considered moving to London (see [Late 1995](#)).

1990-September 10, 2001: Around Three to Four Dozen Al-Qaeda Operations Thwarted before 9/11

Counterterrorism expert Rohan Gunaratna will claim in a 2002 book that “in addition to successfully completing many missions, a significant number of planned bombings and assassinations [by al-Qaeda] have been thwarted. At least three to four dozen operations were detected and disrupted by government security and intelligence agencies or called off by al-Qaeda.” For instance, he cites a 1992 al-Qaeda plot to blow up a plane, which is called off when an operative involved in the plot is arrested. He also cites attempts to bomb US embassies in Albania, Bosnia, and Uganda, and a 2000 plot to assassinate King Abdullah II of Jordan. ([Gunaratna 2003, pp. 133](#)) Gunaratna has had unusually good access to US intelligence information. One article calls him “something of an ad hoc adviser to US intelligence officials.” And he is the only private citizen believed to have access to some top secret transcripts of al-Qaeda prisoners interrogated after 9/11. ([Kelly 7/10/2003](#))

May 1990: Bin Laden Family Forms Binladin Group



King Fahd (left) with Bakh bin Laden (right), a brother of Osama bin Laden, in the mid-1990's. [Source: *Agence France-Presse*] (click image to enlarge) Beginning in the 1920's, Mohammed Awad bin

Laden rose from relative obscurity by creating a construction company favored by the Saudi royal family. He had 54 children before he was killed in a plane crash in 1968. His son Osama bin Laden was born in 1957. The bin Laden family's companies continued to grow until they became the second wealthiest family in Saudi Arabia, behind only the Saudi royal family. In May 1990, the bin Laden family registers a new parent company for their business activities called the Saudi Binladin Group. Bakr bin Laden, one of Mohammed's sons, is running the company by this time. By 9/11, the company will employ 36,000 people in 30 countries. The company has been branching out from construction to many other endeavors. However, it will keep a low profile internationally, as most of its business is still in Saudi Arabia. It has business ties with major international corporations such as General Electric, Unilever, Motorola, Schweppes, Citigroup, and Bank HSBC. ([Leibovich-Dar 12/18/2002](#))

Mid-1990s: Al-Qadi Claims Good Relationship with Cheney

Saudi multimillionaire Yassin al-Qadi will say in an interview shortly after 9/11, "I have also met with US Vice President and former Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney in Jeddah [Saudi Arabia] when he came for a lecture organized by the Dallah Group. I spoke to him for a long time and we still have cordial relations." The US had named al-Qadi a supporter of terrorism and frozen his assets two days before (see [October 12, 2001](#)). Oussama Ziade, CEO of Ptech, a US computer company that al-Qadi had invested in (see [1994](#)) and that will be raided for suspected terrorism ties (see [December 5, 2002](#)), later will claim that al-Qadi "talked very highly of his relationship" with Cheney. Ziade will claim he only knew al-Qadi for a few years starting around 1994, so presumably the contact between al-Qadi and Cheney happens during the mid-1990s. A newspaper will report later that when a Cheney spokeswoman is asked about his possible ties to al-Qadi, she replies that "she had no reason to believe the vice president had met with al-Qadi". Al-Qadi claims to be a respected businessman who met other important leaders such as ex-President Jimmy Carter. ([Samman 10/14/2001](#); [Pope 1/3/2003](#); [Verton 1/17/2003](#)) The US will declare al-Qadi a terrorism financier shortly after 9/11 (see [October 12, 2001](#)), and the Dallah Group will be accused of funding al-Qaeda (see [November 22, 2002](#)).

July 1990: 'Blind Sheikh' Enters US Despite Being on Terrorist Watch List, Takes Over Al-Kifah



Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman. [Source: FBI] Despite being on a US terrorist watch list for three years, radical Muslim leader Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman enters the US on a “much-disputed” tourist visa issued by an undercover CIA agent. ([Friedman 3/30/1993](#); [Weaver 5/1996](#); [Lance 2003, pp. 42](#)) Abdul-Rahman was heavily involved with the CIA and Pakistani ISI efforts to defeat the Soviets in Afghanistan, and became famous traveling all over the world for five years recruiting new fighters for the Afghan war. The CIA gave him visas to come to the US starting in 1986 (see [December 15, 1986-1989](#)). However, he never hid his prime goals to overthrow the governments of the US and Egypt. ([Weaver 5/1996](#)) FBI agent Tommy Corrigan will later say that prior to Abdul-Rahman’s arrival, “terrorism for all intents and purposes didn’t exist in the United States. But [his] arrival in 1990 really stoke the flames of terrorism in this country. This was a major-league ballplayer in what at the time was a minor-league ballpark. He was... looked up to worldwide. A mentor to bin Laden, he was involved with the MAK over in Pakistan.” The charity front Maktab al-Khidamat (MAK) is also known as Al-Kifah, and it has a branch in Brooklyn known as the Al-Kifah Refugee Center. The head of that branch, Mustafa Shalabi, picks up Abdul-Rahman at the airport when he first arrives and finds an apartment for him. Abdul-Rahman soon begins preaching at Al Farouq mosque, which is in the same building as the Al-Kifah office, plus two other locals mosques, Abu Bakr and Al Salaam. ([Lance 2006, pp. 53](#)) He quickly turns Al-Kifah into his “de facto headquarters.” ([Weaver 5/1996](#)) He is “infamous throughout the Arab world for his alleged role in the assassination of Egyptian president Anwar Sadat.” Abdul-Rahman immediately begins setting up a militant Islamic network in the US. ([Friedman 3/30/1993](#)) He is believed to have befriended bin Laden while in Afghanistan, and bin Laden secretly pays Abdul-Rahman’s US living expenses. ([Weaver 5/1996](#); [ABC News 8/16/2002](#)) For the next two years, Abdul-Rahman will continue to exit and reenter the US without being stopped or deported, even though he is still on the watch list (see [Late October 1990-October 1992](#)).

August 2, 1990-March 1991: Bin Laden and Saudi Government Clash Over First Gulf War

After Iraq invades Kuwait (see [November 8, 1990](#)), bin Laden, newly returned to Saudi Arabia, offers the Saudi government the use of his thousands of veteran fighters from the

Afghan war to defend the country in case Iraq attacks it. The Saudi government turns him down, allowing 300,000 US soldiers on Saudi soil instead. Bin Laden is incensed, and immediately goes from ally to enemy of the Saudis. ([Coll 2004, pp. 221-24, 270-71](#)) After a slow buildup, the US invades Iraq in March 1991 and reestablishes Kuwait. ([Posner 2003, pp. 40-41](#)) Bin Laden soon leaves Saudi Arabia and soon forms al-Qaeda ((see [Summer 1991](#))).

October 1990: Bin Laden Helps Install Pakistani Leader

In October 1990, Nawaz Sharif is running for election to replace Benazir Bhutto as the prime minister of Pakistan. According to a senior Pakistani intelligence source, bin Laden passes a considerable amount of money to Sharif and his party, since Sharif promises to introduce a hard-line Islamic government. Bin Laden has been supporting Sharif for several years. There is said to be a photograph of Sharif chatting with bin Laden. Sharif wins the election and while he does not introduce a hard-line Islamic government, his rule is more amenable to bin Laden's interests than Bhutto's had been. Sharif will stay in power until 1993, then will take over from Bhutto again in 1996 and rule for three more years. ([Reeve 1999, pp. 170-171](#)) Former ISI official Khalid Khawaja, a self-proclaimed close friend of bin Laden, will later claim that Sharif and bin Laden had a relationship going back to when they first met face to face in the late 1980s. ([Sauer 11/30/2007](#)) There are also accounts of additional links between Sharif and bin Laden (see [Late 1996](#) and [Between Late 1996 and Late 1998](#)).

October 1990: US Imposes Sanctions on Pakistan

Since 1985, US Congress has required that sanctions be imposed on Pakistan if there is evidence that Pakistan is developing a nuclear weapons program (see [1985-1990](#)). With the Soviet-Afghan war over, President Bush finally acknowledges widespread evidence of Pakistan's nuclear program and cuts off all US military and economic aid to Pakistan. However, it appears some military aid will still get through. For instance, in 1992, Senator John Glenn will write, "Shockingly, testimony by Secretary of State James Baker this year revealed that the administration has continued to allow Pakistan to purchase munitions through commercial transactions, despite the explicit, unambiguous intent of Congress that 'no military equipment or technology shall be sold or transferred to Pakistan.'" ([Glenn 6/26/1992](#)) These sanctions will be officially lifted a short time after 9/11.

Late October 1990-October 1992: 'Blind Sheikh' Able to Repeatedly Leave and Reenter US Despite Being on Watch List

In July 1990, the “Blind Sheikh,” Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman, was mysteriously able to enter the US and remain there despite being a well known public figure and being on a watch list for three years (see [July 1990](#)).

- In late October 1990, he travels to London, so he is out of the US when one of his followers assassinates the Zionist rabbi Meir Kahane on November 5, 1990 (see [November 5, 1990](#)). He returns to the US in mid-November under the name “Omar Ahmed Rahman” and again has no trouble getting back in despite still being on the watch list. ([Duke 7/13/1993](#))

- The State Department revokes his US visa on November 17 after the FBI informs it that he is in the US. ([McKinley 12/16/1990](#))

- In December 1990, Abdul-Rahman leaves the US again to attend an Islamic conference in Copenhagen, Denmark. He returns nine days later and again has no trouble reentering, despite not even having a US visa at this point. ([Duke 7/13/1993](#))

- On December 16, 1990, the New York Times publishes an article titled, “Islamic Leader on U.S. Terrorist List Is in Brooklyn,” which makes his presence in the US publicly known. The Immigration and Nationalization Service (INS) is said to be investigating why he has not been deported already. ([McKinley 12/16/1990](#))

- Yet in April 1991, the INS approves his application for permanent residence.

- He then leaves the US again in June 1991 to go on the religious hajj to Mecca, Saudi Arabia, and returns on July 31, 1991. INS officials identify him coming in, but let him in anyway. ([Mitchell 4/24/1993](#); [Duke 7/13/1993](#))

- In June 1992, his application for political asylum will be turned down and his permanent residence visa revoked. But INS hearings on his asylum bid are repeatedly delayed and still have not taken place when the WTC is bombed in February 1993 (see [February 26, 1993](#)). ([Lance 2003, pp. 105-106](#))

- Abdul-Rahman then goes to Canada around October 1992 and returns to the US yet again. The US and Canada claim to have no documentation on his travel there, but numerous witnesses in Canada see him pray and lecture there. Representative Charles Schumer (D) says, “Here they spent all this time trying to get him out. He goes to Canada and gives them the perfect reason to exclude him and they don’t.”

- After the WTC bombing, the US could detain him pending his deportation hearing but chooses not to, saying it would be too costly to pay for his medical bills. ([Mitchell 4/24/1993](#))

Abdul-Rahman will be involved in the follow up “Landmarks” plot (see [June 24, 1993](#)) before finally being arrested later in 1993. It will later be alleged that he was protected by the CIA. In 1995, the New York Times will comment that the link between Abdul-Rahman and the CIA “is a tie that remains muddy.” ([MacFarquhar 10/2/1995](#))

November 5, 1990: First Bin Laden-Related Terror Attack in US as Jewish Rabbi Is Assassinated



Meir Kahane. *[Source: Publicity photo]* Egyptian-American El Sayyid Nosair assassinates controversial right-wing Zionist leader Rabbi Meir Kahane. Kahane's organization, the Jewish Defense League, was linked to dozens of bombings and is ranked by the FBI as the most lethal domestic militant group in the US at the time. Nosair is captured after a police shoot-out. ([Friedman 3/30/1993](#)) Within hours, overwhelming evidence suggests that the assassination was a wide conspiracy but the US government will immediately declare that Nosair was a lone gunman and ignore the evidence suggesting otherwise (see [November 5, 1990 and After](#)). Nosair will later be acquitted of Kahane's murder (though he will be convicted of lesser charges) as investigators continue to ignore most of the evidence in his case which links to a wider conspiracy (see [December 7, 1991](#)). Nosair is connected to al-Qaeda through his job at the Al-Kifah Refugee Center, an al-Qaeda front (see [1986-1993](#)). A portion of Nosair's defense fund will be paid for by bin Laden, although this will not be discovered until some time later. ([Miller, Stone, and Mitchell 8/16/2002](#); [Lance 2003, pp. 34-37](#))

[November 5, 1990 and After: US Promotes Lone Gunman Theory in Kahane Assassination, Hiding Evidence of Al-Qaeda Links](#)



Investigators remove boxes of evidence from El Sayyid Nosair's residence hours after the assassination. *[Source: National*

Geographic/US government agencies cover up evidence of a conspiracy in the wake of El Sayyid Nosair's assassination of controversial right-wing Zionist leader Rabbi Meir Kahane (see [November 5, 1990](#)). Nosair is captured a few blocks from the murder site after a police shoot-out. An FBI informant says he saw Nosair meeting with Muslim leader Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman a few days before the attack, and evidence indicating a wider plot with additional targets is quickly found. ([Friedman 3/30/1993](#)) Later that night, police arrive at Nosair's house and find a pair of Middle Eastern men named Mahmud Abouhalima and Mohammed Salameh there. They are taken in for questioning. Additionally, police collect a total of 47 boxes of evidence from Nosair's house, including: ([Lance 2003, pp. 34-35](#))

- Thousands of rounds of ammunition.
- Maps and drawings of New York City landmarks, including the World Trade Center.
- Documents in Arabic containing bomb making formulas, details of an Islamic militant cell, and mentions of the term "al-Qaeda."
- Recorded sermons by Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman in which he encourages his followers to "destroy the edifices of capitalism" and destroy "the enemies of Allah" by "destroying their... high world buildings."
- Tape-recorded phone conversations of Nosair reporting to Abdul-Rahman about paramilitary training, and even discussing bomb-making manuals.
- Videotaped talks that Ali Mohamed delivered at the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.
- Top secret manuals also from Fort Bragg. There are even classified documents belonging to the US Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Commander in Chief of the Army's Central Command. These manuals and documents had clearly come from Mohamed, who completed military service at Fort Bragg the year before and frequently stayed in Nosair's house.
- A detailed and top secret plan for Operation Bright Star, a special operations training exercise simulating an attack on Baluchistan, a part of Pakistan between Afghanistan and the Arabian Sea. ([Sullivan and Neff 10/21/2001](#); [Sullivan and Neff 11/13/2001](#); [Waldman 11/26/2001](#); [Miller, Stone, and Mitchell 8/16/2002](#); [Lance 2003, pp. 34-35](#))
- Also within hours, two investigators will connect Nosair with surveillance photographs of Mohamed giving weapons training to Nosair, Abouhalima, Salameh, and others at a shooting range the year before (see [July 1989](#)). ([Lance 2003, pp. 34-35](#)) But, ignoring all of this evidence, still later that evening, Joseph Borelli, the New York police department's chief detective, will publicly declare the assassination the work of a "lone deranged gunman." He will further state, "I'm strongly convinced that he acted alone.... He didn't seem to be part of a conspiracy or any terrorist organization." The 9/11 Congressional Inquiry will later conclude, "The [New York Police Department] and the District Attorney's office... reportedly wanted the appearance of speedy justice and a quick resolution to a volatile situation. By arresting Nosair, they felt they had accomplished both." ([Friedman 3/30/1993](#); [Lance 2003, pp. 34-36](#)) Abouhalima and Salameh are released, only to be later convicted for participating in the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center. Investigators will later find in Nosair's possessions a formula for a bomb almost identical to one used in the WTC bombing. ([Friedman 3/17/1995](#)) As one FBI agent will later put it, "The fact is that in 1990, myself and my detectives, we had in our office in handcuffs, the people who blew up the World Trade Center in '93. We were told

to release them.” The 47 boxes of evidence collected at Nosair’s house that evening are stored away, inaccessible to prosecutors and investigators. The documents found will not be translated until after the World Trade Center bombing. Nosair will later be acquitted of Kahane’s murder (though he will be convicted of lesser charges), as investigators will continue to ignore all evidence that could suggest Nosair did not act alone (see [December 7, 1991](#)). ([Miller, Stone, and Mitchell 8/16/2002](#); [Lance 2003, pp. 34-37](#)) District Attorney Robert Morgenthau, who prosecuted the case, will later speculate the CIA may have encouraged the FBI not to pursue any other leads. Nosair worked at the Al-Kifah Refugee Center which was closely tied to covert CIA operations in Afghanistan (see [Late 1980s and After](#)). ([Friedman 3/17/1995](#))

November 8, 1990: Bush Announces Massive Troop Deployment in Persian Gulf

President Bush, reeling from the Republican defeat in the midterm elections two days before, announces the deployment of 200,000 more troops around the Persian Gulf to augment the 250,000 already in place. Bush announces the deployment without consulting or advising Congress, a brush-off that angers many legislators who feel that Bush kept this from Congress in order to make sure it did not become an election issue. Bush is also weighing the advice of Defense Secretary Dick Cheney, who argues that the president does not need the authorization of Congress to wage war (see [November 8, 1990](#)). ([Dean 9/11/2007, pp. 90](#))

Mid-November 1990: CIA Allegedly Blocks FBI Investigation of ‘Blind Sheikh’ in Kahane Assassination

The FBI is apparently under pressure to back off from investigating Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman. One week after the murder of Zionist rabbi Meir Kahane, a long-time FBI counterterrorism expert meets with one of his top undercover operatives. According to the FBI agent, the undercover operative asks, “Why aren’t we going after the Sheikh [Abdul-Rahman]?” The FBI agent replies, “It’s hands-off.” He further explains, “It was no accident that the Sheikh got a visa and that he’s still in the country. He’s here under the banner of national security, the State Department, the NSA, and the CIA.” The agent concludes that Abdul-Rahman is untouchable. Noting how the government is already firmly suggesting that El Sayyid Nosair was the only one involved in Kahane’s murder, he says, “I haven’t seen the lone-gunner theory advocated [so forcefully] since John F. Kennedy.” ([Friedman 3/30/1993](#)) The FBI will also fail to look at a wealth of evidence suggesting others were involved in the assassination (see [November 5, 1990 and After](#)).

November 28, 1990: US Intelligence Predicts Political Collapse and Civil War in Yugoslavia

The New York Times reports that US intelligence has created a new National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) predicting Yugoslavia will break apart, probably within 18 months, and that civil war within Yugoslavia is likely. The NIE is said to be unusually bold and runs counter to some analysis in the State Department and elsewhere. It blames Slobodan Milosevic, president of Serbia, as the principal instigator of trouble. The Times also notes that, "Late last month, the House and Senate passed an amendment to the Foreign Operations Appropriation law that bars any United States loans or credits for Yugoslavia unless the assistance is directed to a republic 'which has held free and fair elections and which is not engaged in systematic abuse of human rights.'" ([Binder 11/28/1990](#))

Late 1990: Fervent Muslim Wins Vote in Mostly Secular Bosnia



Alija Izetbegovic. [*Source: US Defense Department / Helene C. Stikkel*] Alija Izetbegovic is elected leader of Bosnia, which is still a republic within the nation of Yugoslavia. He wins the vote because Muslims have a plurality of about 40 percent in the republic. During World War II, Izetbegovic supported the Handzar divisions organized by the Nazi SS. After the war, he was sentenced to three years in prison for his wartime activities. He wrote a controversial Islamic manifesto in 1970 entitled "The Islamic Declaration." ([Binder 10/20/2003](#)) In it, he called for "political revolution" and wrote, "There can be no peace or harmony between the 'Islamic religion' and non-Islamic social and political institutions." He also wrote, "Our objective is the Islamization of Muslims" and "Our motto is to have faith and fight." ([Schindler 2007, pp. 45](#)) In 1983, the Communist government of Yugoslavia sentenced him to 14-years in prison on charges of conspiring to create a Muslim state, however he was released in 1988. The New York Times will later say that the "Muslims of Bosnia were overwhelmingly a secular people. [But] in his strong religious faith, Mr. Izetbegovic was the exception rather than the rule." He win remain the leader of the Bosnian Muslims through the rest of the 1990s. ([Binder 10/20/2003](#))

Late 1990s: CIA Director Tenet Has Direct, Private Channels to Saudi Leaders

George Tenet, appointed as CIA director in 1997, develops close personal relationships with top Saudi officials, especially Prince Bandar, the Saudi ambassador to the US. Tenet develops a habit of meeting with Bandar at his home near Washington about once a month. But CIA officers handling Saudi issues complain that Tenet doesn't tell them what he discusses with Bandar. Often they are only able to learn about Tenet's deals with the Saudis later and through Saudi contacts, not from their own boss. Tenet also makes one of his closest aides the chief of the CIA station in Saudi Arabia. This aide often communicates directly with Tenet, avoiding the usual chain of command. Apparently as a favor to the Saudis, CIA analysts are discouraged from writing reports raising questions about the Saudi relationship to Islamic extremists. ([Risen 2006, pp. 185](#))

Late 1990s-Early 2001: FBI Investigation Discovers Turkish Nationals Attempting to Bribe Members of Congress

An FBI investigation finds that Turkish nationals are involved in efforts to bribe members of Congress, both Republican and Democrat. Targets of the FBI's investigation include 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. Wiretaps obtained by investigators also contain what appears to be references to large scale drug shipments and other crimes. In 1999 some FBI investigators call for the appointment of a special prosecutor to continue the investigation. But after the Bush administration comes to office, higher-ups in the Department of State pressure the bureau to shift the attention of its investigation away from elected politicians and instead focus on appointed officials. ([Deliso 8/15/2005](#); [Rose 9/2005](#))

1991: White House Is Protected From Airplane Attack During Gulf War

Time magazine reports in 1994, "During the Gulf War, uniformed air-defense teams could be seen patrolling the top floor [of the White House] with automatic rifles or shoulder-mounted ground-to-air missiles." ([Duffy 9/26/1994](#)) While a battery of surface-to-air-missiles remains permanently on the roof of the White House, the rest of these defenses are apparently removed after the war is over. ([Wastell and Jacobson 9/16/2001](#)) Yet even though counterterrorism officials later call the alerts in the summer of 2001 "the most urgent in decades," similar defensive measures will apparently not be taken. ([US Congress 9/18/2002](#))

Between 1991 and 2001: NORAD Exercise Simulates Crash into Famous US Building

At some point between 1991 and 2001, a regional NORAD sector holds an exercise simulating a foreign hijacked airliner crashing into a prominent building in the United States, the identity of which is classified. According to military officials, the building is not the World Trade Center or the Pentagon. The exercise involves some flying of military aircraft, plus a “command post exercise” where communication procedures are rehearsed in an office environment. ([Starr 4/19/2004](#))

1991: Portion of Saudi Multimillionaire’s BMI Investment Pays for Hamas Attacks

In 1991, Saudi multimillionaire Yassin al-Qadi transfers \$820,000 from a Swiss bank account to the Quranic Literacy Institute, a Muslim charity based in Chicago. The charity uses the money to purchase land in Woodridge, a quiet town on the outskirts of Chicago. Al-Qadi claims the money is an interest-free loan for charitable purposes, but in a June 1998 affidavit, FBI agent Robert Wright will claim the investment is designed to produce money for Middle East terrorism. According to the affidavit, most of about \$110,000 in income generated from the Woodridge property goes to Mohammad Salah, an admitted operative of Hamas. Salah is said to give \$96,000 of this money to another Hamas operative to buy automatic rifles, pistols, and ammunition. In March 1992, al-Qadi will send an additional \$27,000 directly to Salah. The institute will sell the Woodridge property for more than they had paid for it, but they will never repay al-Qadi’s \$820,000. ([Simpson 11/26/2002](#)) In June 1998, the US will seize the Quranic Literacy Institute’s assets (see [June 9, 1998](#)). In 2004, a US court will rule that the money from al-Qadi’s original investment was used to fund a Hamas attack in 1996 that killed a US citizen (see [May 12, 2000-December 9, 2004](#)). ([Simpson 11/26/2002](#))

1991: Private Security Report Indicates WTC Is Terrorist Target

During the mid-1980s, a series of reports described the vulnerability of the World Trade Center to terrorist attack (see [July 1985](#))(see [November 1985](#))(see [Mid-1986](#)). Now, because of the increased risk of terrorism against the US due to the Gulf War, the New York Port Authority hires private security company Burns and Roe Securacom to prepare a further report, and tells them that the WTC is a terrorist target. Unlike previous investigators, Burns and Roe Securacom finds that the center’s shopping and pedestrian areas, rather than the underground parking garage, are the most likely targets. ([New York County Supreme Court 1/20/2004](#); [Hartocollis 10/27/2005](#)) After separating from Burns and Roe, Securacom (later called Stratesec) will become one of a number of firms involved in providing security at the WTC, right up to the day of 9/11 (see [October 1996](#)). ([Burns 3/1/2003](#))

1991: US Convinces Bosnian President to Renege on Agreement

Lawrence Eagleburger sends Warren Zimmerman to Sarajevo to encourage Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic to renege on an agreement brokered by Lord Carrington that would have prevented the breakup of Yugoslavia. Because of this and other similar incidents, Sir Alfred Sherman, a close colleague of Margaret Thatcher and a staunch US Cold War ally, later describes American intervention in the Balkans as a policy of “lying and cheating, fomenting war in which civilians are the main casualty, and in which ancient hatreds feed on themselves.” ([Sherman 3/2/1997](#))

Early 1990s and After: Mysterious Links Seen between Right Wing Westerners and Philippine Muslim Militants

In 2002, a Philippine newspaper article will claim that “Philippine police have long been aware of operational ties between local Islamic radicals and right-wing foreigners.” Apparently these ties become first noticeable in the early 1990s. The article is mainly about a 1996 recorded testimonial by Edwin Angeles, a Philippine undercover agent who had posed as a leader of the Philippine militant group Abu Sayyaf until 1995 (see [1991-Early February 1995](#)). In his testimony, he claimed to have attended meetings between Muslim militants and Oklahoma City bomber Terry Nichols, plus another right-wing American named John Lepney (see [Late 1992-Early 1993 and Late 1994](#)). The article notes that Philippine officials believe such ties were not limited to these cases. “Why the strange alliance exists remains a puzzle to police and military intelligence agents. A senior counterterrorism expert says commerce and short-term goals could account for the unusual ties. ‘Eventually, they’ll be killing each other. But for now, they seem to be working together.’” Lepney had been seen in the rebellious areas of the southern Philippines since 1990 and occasionally boasted of his rebel ties. ([Zumel-Sicat 4/26/2002](#)) Additionally, Michael Meiring, a US citizen who may have been a CIA operative with ties to Muslim militant leaders (see [May 16, 2002](#)) and [December 2, 2004](#)), periodically appeared in the same region beginning in 1992 (see [1992-1993](#)). He sometimes stayed in Davao City, the same city where Lepney was based. Meiring claims to be a treasure hunter, but military officials note that there are “terrorists and intelligence operatives of all stripes about among treasure hunters’ circles.” Meiring also had ties to at least one neo-Nazi figure in the US. ([Zumel-Sicat and Andrade 5/30/2002](#); [Zumel-Sicat 5/31/2002](#)) Philippine officials will later identify a number of other suspicious right-wing Westerners living in the rebellious southern region of the country in the early 1990s. For instance, there is US citizen Nina North, whom acquaintances claim has CIA connections. From 1990 to 1992, she was reportedly working on business deals with bin Laden and other Middle East figures involving the transfer of gold bullion. In 2002, Philippine officials will claim that ties between right-wing Westerners and Muslim militants continue to the present day but they do not provide new information because of ongoing investigations. ([Zumel-Sicat 5/31/2002](#))

1991: KSM Proves Worth to Al-Qaeda while Building Network in Philippines

Counterterrorism expert Rohan Gunaratna will later write that Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM) first “earned his spurs” in al-Qaeda by serving as one of Osama bin Laden’s first bodyguards. Then, in 1991, bin Laden sends KSM to the Philippines where he trains members of the militant groups Abu Sayyaf and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in bomb making and assassination. He works with bin Laden’s brother-in-law Mohammed Jamal Khalifa to establish an operational base there and also in Malaysia. Presumably he also works with his nephew Ramzi Yousef, who trains Abu Sayyaf militants the same year (see [December 1991-May 1992](#)). Gunaratna says that “After proving himself an outstanding organizer, [KSM] was given substantial operational authority and autonomy by bin Laden.” However, KSM’s work with the Abu Sayyaf and MILF is soon discovered and he “has been on the run since 1991.” KSM will return with Yousef to the Philippines in 1994 to exploit the network they built and develop the Bojinka plot (see [January 6, 1995](#)). ([Gunaratna 2003, pp. xxiv-xxix](#))

1991: Al-Qaeda Begins Infiltrating Balkans Region Through Charity Front

A 2006 analysis compiled jointly by US and Croatian intelligence will reveal that al-Qaeda began infiltrating the Balkans region even before the start of the Bosnian war in 1992. Kader Eddine Kherbane, a member of Algerian militant group GIA, moved to Zagreb, Croatia, in 1991 to set up a charity front at the direct request of Osama bin Laden. The organization, called Maktab al-Khidamat (MAK) or Al-Kifah, is closely tied to al-Qaeda. Its Brooklyn, New York, branch called the Al-Kifah Refugee Center is tied to both the 1993 WTC bombers and the CIA (see [1986-1993](#)). ([Kole 4/17/2006](#)) Apparently the Zagreb branch of MAK/Al-Kifah is also called the Al-Kifah Refugee Center like the Brooklyn branch and has very close ties with that branch (see [Early 1990s](#)). A Spanish police report will later claim that Kherbane is the head of the Zagreb branch. ([Goodman 12/8/2002](#)) The analysis will allege that Kherbane used Al-Kifah “to infiltrate GIA members into Bosnia,” and that Iran and unnamed Arab countries paid for the operation through money transfers. ([Kole 4/17/2006](#)) Kherbane appears to have begun working with other radical militants in Bosnia in 1990 (see [1990](#)).

1991: Algerian Army Helps Create Al-Qaeda Linked Militant Group



Mohammed Samraoui. *[Source: Rachad]* Mohammed Samraoui, the Algerian army's deputy chief counterintelligence specialist, will later desert in disgust and explain in a French trial that the Algerian army helped create the Groupe Islamique Armé (GIA), supposedly an Islamist militant group linked to al-Qaeda fighting the Algerian government. He will say that in the months before an Algerian army coup in January 1992 the Algerian army "created the GIA" in an attempt to weaken and destroy the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), an Islamist political party poised to take power in elections. He will say, "We established a list of the most dangerous people and demanded their arrest, but in vain: they were needed [to be free] to create terrorist groups. Instead, we arrested right, left, and center. We were trying to radicalize the movement." Army intelligence identified Algerians returning from the Soviet-Afghan war and many times recruited them. "They all took the flight home via Tunis because it was half-price. As soon as they landed in Algiers, we took them in hand." ([Randal 2005, pp. 169-170](#))

(1991): Bin Laden Allegedly Stays at London Estate of Saudi Billionaire



Khalid bin Mahfouz. *[Source: CBC]* Shortly after 9/11, the London Times will report that Osama bin Laden stayed at the London estate of Saudi billionaire Khalid bin Mahfouz. "Sources close to the bin Mahfouz family say that about 10 years ago, when bin Laden was widely regarded as a religious visionary and defender of the Muslim faith, he visited the property and spent 'two or three days' on the estate, relaxing in its open-air swimming pool, walking in the grounds and talking to bin Mahfouz. What the men discussed remains a mystery." Bin Mahfouz was a major investor in the criminal Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI), which is closed down around this time (see [July 5, 1991](#)). ([Leppard 9/23/2001](#)) Bin Laden was also heavily invested in BCCI at the time (see July 1991). There are other reports of bin

Laden visiting London around this time (see [Early 1990s-Late 1996](#)), and even briefly living there (see [1994](#)). The name “bin Mahfouz” appears on the “Golden Chain,” a list of early al-Qaeda financial supporters (see [1988-1989](#)). Bin Mahfouz denies any terrorist link to bin Laden.

1991-1997: Oil Investment in Central Asia Follows Soviet Collapse

The Soviet Union collapses in 1991, creating several new nations in Central Asia. Major US oil companies, including ExxonMobil, Texaco, Unocal, BP Amoco, Shell, and Enron, directly invest billions in these Central Asian nations, bribing heads of state to secure equity rights in the huge oil reserves in these regions. The oil companies commit to \$35 billion in future direct investments in Kazakhstan. It is believed at the time that these oil fields will have an estimated \$6 trillion potential value. US companies own approximately 75 percent of the rights. These companies, however, face the problem of having to pay exorbitant prices to Russia for use of the Russian pipelines to get the oil out. ([Hersh 7/9/2001](#); [Asia Times 1/26/2002](#))

1991-2000: Airport Later Used by Ten Hijackers Has Poor Security Record and Lacks Surveillance Cameras



Virginia Buckingham [*Source: Publicity photo*] Data compiled by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) shows that over this period Boston's Logan Airport has one of the worst records for security among major US airports. Flight 11 and Flight 175 depart from Logan on 9/11. While it is only America's eighteenth busiest airport, it has the fifth highest number of security violations. FAA agents testing its passenger screening are able to get 234 guns and inert hand grenades and bombs past its checkpoint guards or through its X-ray machines. Though it is possible that the high number of violations is because the FAA tests more frequently at Logan than elsewhere, an official later quoted by the Boston Globe says lax security is the only explanation, as all checkpoints at every major airport are meant to be tested monthly. In contrast, Newark Airport, from where Flight 93 departs on 9/11, has an above average security record. Washington's Dulles Airport, from where Flight 77 takes off, is below average, though not as bad as Logan. Officials familiar with security at Logan will, after 9/11, point to various flaws. For example, the State Police office has no video surveillance of the

airport's security checkpoints, boarding gates, ramp areas, or perimeter entrances. ([Brelis and Carroll 9/26/2001](#)) Security cameras had been put into use at most US airports in the mid-1980s. When Virginia Buckingham takes over as executive director of Massachusetts Port Authority in 1999, she is surprised at the lack of cameras at Logan, and orders them that year. Yet by 9/11, they still will not have been installed. ([Hanchett and Washington 9/29/2001](#); [Belkin 9/30/2001](#)) In spite of Logan's poor security record, after 9/11 the Boston Globe will report, "[A]viation specialists have said it is unlikely that more rigorous attention to existing rules would have thwarted the 10 hijackers who boarded two jets at Logan on Sept. 11." ([Carroll 10/17/2001](#))

1991-1992: Bush Administration is Split on Bosnia Policy

There is a growing conflict within the Bush administration between the "selective engagers" and an alliance of "hardliners" and "liberal humanitarianists" over whether or not to intervene militarily in Bosnia. The selective engagers believe that the US should militarily intervene only in cases where US strategic interests are directly threatened. Richard Perle and Albert Wohlstetter are prominently mentioned among the hardliners. ([Western 7/1999](#))

1991-1995: Rich Saudis Fund Bosnia Fighters through Alleged Bin Laden Charity Front



Mujaheddin battalions in formation during the Bosnia war. More details are unknown. [Source: *History Channel*] Saudi multimillionaire Yassin al-Qadi forms the Muwafaq Foundation (also known as Blessed Relief). The Muwafaq Foundation is a charitable trust registered in Jersey, an island off the coast of Britain with lenient charity regulations. ([Burr and Collins 2006, pp. 121-123](#)) Al-Qadi is said to be the chief investor, donating about \$15 to \$20 million for the charity from his fortune. He also persuades members of very rich and powerful Saudi families to help out. ([Jackson, Cohen, and Manor 10/29/2001](#)) The foundation's board of directors

will later be called “the creme de la creme of Saudi society.” ([Gerth and Miller 10/13/2001](#)) Saudi billionaire Khalid bin Mahfouz’s legal team will later state that bin Mahfouz “was the principal donor to the foundation at its inception in 1991 but was not involved in the running of the charity.” They also will state that the foundation was purely humanitarian and had no terrorist ties. ([Bin Mahfouz Info 11/22/2005](#)) The Muwafaq Foundation opens offices in several African countries, but it is soon suspected of providing funds for Islamic extremists. For instance, in 1992 it opens an office in Mogadishu, Somalia, at a time when al-Qaeda is assisting militants fighting US soldiers there (see [October 3-4, 1993](#)). Burr and Collins will claim “its purpose [there] consisted of transporting weapons and ammunition to Islamists in the city.” But most of the foundation’s work appears to center on Bosnia. It opens an office in neighboring Croatia in 1992, the same year the Bosnian war begins, and then in Sarajevo, Bosnia, a year later. By June 1993, group of mujaheddin fighting in the Zenica region of Bosnia form the Al Muwafaq Brigade. It consists of about 750 Afghan-Arabs and has Iranian advisors. According to Burr and Collins, it soon becomes well known in the region that the Muwafaq Foundation is funding the Al Muwafaq Brigade and at least one camp in Afghanistan training mujaheddin to fight in Bosnia. In July 1995, a US Foreign Broadcast Information Service report indicates that the Muwafaq Foundation’s office in Zagreb, Croatia, is a bin Laden front. In early 1996, bin Laden will mention in an interview that he supports the “Muwafaq Society” in Zagreb. However, al-Qadi denies any ties to fighting mujaheddin. The brigade apparently disbands after the war ends in 1995 and the Muwafaq Foundation will close its Bosnia office by 1998. ([Burr and Collins 2006, pp. 121-123, 137-138](#)) A secret 1996 CIA report will claim that Muwafaq has ties to the al-Gama’a al-Islamiyya militant group and helps fund mujaheddin fighting in Bosnia and at least one training camp in Afghanistan (see [January 1996](#)). The US will declare al-Qadi a terrorist financier shortly after 9/11 but has never taken any action against the Muwafaq Foundation (see [1995-1998](#)).

1991-1995: German Intelligence Illegally Arms Bosnian Muslims and Croats



Christoph von Bezold. [*Source: History Channel*] In 1997, it will be reported that the German parliament’s Control Commission, which oversees Germany’s intelligence services, is investigating media allegations that the BND German intelligence agency covertly and illegally armed the Bosnian Muslims and Croats during the Bosnian war. The BND allegedly infiltrated the European Union’s monitoring missions that were

supposed to help arrange ceasefires and assist with humanitarian aid. The Germans used that cover to smuggle weapons and money to Bosnian Muslims. In one instance, Christoph von Bezold, head of the German EU monitors in Zagreb, Croatia, was allegedly actually a BND agent and on March 27, 1994, he shipped munitions across enemy lines to the Bosnian Muslim controlled pocket of Bihac, Bosnia, in boxes supposedly containing powdered milk. Apparently this was just one of many such shipments using EU monitors as cover. In addition, Germany appears to be Croatia's largest arms supplier during the war, although this is in violation of German law prohibiting the shipments of arms to an active war zone and a violation of the UN arms embargo on Yugoslavia as well. Most of the Croatia military hardware comes from East German supplies rendered obsolete in Germany after East and West Germany merged. Germany even smuggled former East German MiG-21 fighters to Croatia. ([Judah 4/20/1997](#))

1991-1997: Group of Foreign Policy Analysts Recommends Interventionist Policy



Morton Abramowitz. [*Source: Bradley Olsen*] Morton Abramowitz, president of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, establishes a number of blue-ribbon commissions, headed by a select group of foreign policy elite, to create a new post-Cold War foreign policy framework for the US. Some of the group's members are Madeleine Albright, Henry Cisneros, John Deutch, Richard Holbrooke, Alice Rivlin, David Gergen, Admiral William Crowe, Leon Fuerth, as well as Richard Perle and James Schlesinger, the two token conservatives who quickly resign. The commission will issue a number of policy papers recommending the increased use of military force to intervene in the domestic conflicts of other countries. Some of the commission's members are appointed to brief Democratic presidential candidates on the commission's reports ahead of their release. ([Roberts 6/1999](#)) Abramowitz is also influential in the career of counterterrorism "tsar" Richard Clarke, who refers to Abramowitz as his "boss and mentor" at the State Department. ([Clarke 2004, pp. 48](#))

Early 1991: Islamist Group Abu Sayyaf Formed; Funded by Al-Qaeda Figures



Abdurajak Janjalani. [Source: Public domain] Abu

Sayyaf, a militant Islamic group, is formed in the Philippines, and is led mainly by returned mujaheddin fighters from Afghanistan. Abdurajak Janjalani, who had fought with bin Laden in Afghanistan, is considered the founder of the group. ([Struck et al. 9/23/2001](#); [May 10/15/2001](#); [Bengwayan 4/2005](#)) Janjalani had befriended bin Laden while fighting in Afghanistan in the late 1980s. He and many others from the Philippines had their training paid for by the CIA and Pakistani ISI (see [Late 1980s](#)). “Osama bin Laden wanted to expand his al-Qaeda network, established in 1988, so he turned to Janjalani to establish a cell in Southeast Asia.” Many militants break from the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), a much larger rebel group, to join Abu Sayyaf. It will later be reported that, “Philippine intelligence officials believe [Abu Sayyaf’s] primary goal at the time was to sabotage the ongoing peace process between the MNLF and the [Philippine government] and to discredit the MNLF’s leaders.” ([Abuza 9/1/2005](#)) This comment takes on added meaning in light of evidence that the group was penetrated from the very beginning by the Philippine government, as a deep undercover operative became the group’s second in command and operational leader (see [1991-Early February 1995](#)). The group begins a series of attacks by killing two American evangelists in April 1991. ([Struck et al. 9/23/2001](#)) The group engages primarily in kidnapping and extortion. It also receives early funding from Mohammed Jamal Khalifa, a brother-in-law of bin Laden, and Ramzi Yousef, the 1993 WTC bomber (see [December 1991-May 1992](#)). ([May 10/15/2001](#); [Elegant 8/30/2004](#))

1991-Early February 1995: Al-Qaeda Linked Philippine Militant Group Deeply Penetrated by Government Operative



Edwin Angeles. [Source: Robin Moyer] Edwin Angeles helps found the new Muslim militant group Abu Sayyaf in the Philippines and becomes the group's second in command and operations officer. But Angeles is actually a deep cover operative for the Philippine government and has already penetrated the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), a much larger rebel group that Abu Sayyaf splintered from. Angeles is the first to suggest that Abu Sayyaf take part in kidnappings, and plans the group's first kidnapping for ransom in 1992. He will be directly involved in numerous violent acts committed by Abu Sayyaf until his cover is blown in early 1995 (see [Late 1994-January 1995](#) and [Early February 1995](#)). ([Philippine Daily Inquirer 7/10/2001](#)) Colonel Rodolfo Mendoza, who will later lead the Philippine investigation in the Bojinka plot, is his main handler. Mendoza will later recall, "I received orders to handle him... I had the impression he was also being handled by somebody higher." ([Vitug and Gloria 2000](#)) In 2002, one of Angeles' wives will claim in a deathbed confession that Angeles told her he was a "deep-penetration agent" working for "some very powerful men in the DND (Department of National Defense)," the Philippine national defense-intelligence agency. ([Timmerman 6/22/2002](#)) During this time, Abu Sayyaf is very active. Philippine intelligence will later estimate that from 1991 to 1995 the group launches 67 kidnappings and violent attacks, killing around 136 people and injuring hundreds more. ([Abuza 9/1/2005](#) ²¹)

1991-Late 2003: Radical Islamists Train and Select Muslim Chaplains for US Military

In 1991, there is a surge in the number of US soldiers adhering to Islam, due to a conversion program sponsored by the Saudi government (see [March-September 1991](#)). Islamic activist Abdurahman Alamoudi approaches the US military and suggests they create a program for Muslim chaplains, similar to a longstanding program for Christian chaplains. His proposal is accepted and in 1991 he creates the American Muslim Armed Forces and Veterans Affairs Council (AMAFVAC) with the stated purpose to "certify Muslim chaplains hired by the military." In 1993, the Defense Department certifies it as one of two organizations to select and endorse Muslim chaplains. The other is the Graduate School of Islamic and Social Sciences (GSISS). ([US Congress, Senate, Committee on the Judiciary 10/14/2003](#); [Simpson 12/3/2003](#)) That group is run by prominent Islamic scholar Taha Jabir Al-Alwani. Most of the roughly one dozen Muslim chaplains in the US military are educated there. In 2002, the US government searches the school and Al-Alwani's home as part of a raid on the SAAR network (see [March 20,](#)

[2002](#)). He appears to also be named as an unindicted coconspirator in the Sami al-Arian trial. Counterterrorism expert Rita Katz says Al-Alwani is a “person who supports and funnels money to terrorist organizations,” but Al-Alwani denies all terrorism ties and has not been charged with any crime. ([Jacoby 3/27/2003](#)) Most Muslim chaplains trained at GSISS then receive an official endorsement from Alamoudi’s AMAFVAC organization. US intelligence will learn in early 1994 that Alamoudi has ties to bin Laden (see [Shortly After March 1994](#)). ([US Congress, Senate, Committee on the Judiciary 10/14/2003](#)) In 1996, counterterrorism expert Steven Emerson will warn in a Wall Street Journal editorial that Alamoudi openly supports Hamas, even after the US government officially designated it a terrorist organization (see [March 13, 1996](#)). ([Emerson 3/13/1996](#)) But Alamoudi will work for the Defense Department until 1998 on an unpaid basis to nominate and to vet Muslim chaplain candidates. After that, he will give the task to others in his AMAFVAC organization. ([US Congress, Senate, Committee on the Judiciary 10/14/2003](#)) Furthermore, Sen. Chuck Schumer (D) will later allege the US the military allowed Muslim chaplains to travel to the Middle East on funds provided by the Muslim World League, which has been linked to al-Qaeda (see [October 12, 2001](#)). Sen. Jon Kyl (R) will later comment, “It is remarkable that people who have known connections to terrorism are the only people to approve these chaplains.” ([Leo 10/27/2003](#)) In late 2003, Alamoudi will be arrested and later sentenced to 23 years in prison for terrorism-related crimes. The US military will announce around the same time that it is reviewing and overhauling its Muslim chaplain program. ([Leo 10/27/2003](#))

February 1991: Pakistan Supposedly Considers Funding Covert Operations through Drug Money

Pakistan’s army chief and the head of the ISI, its intelligence agency, propose to sell heroin to pay for the country’s covert operations, according to Nawaz Sharif, Pakistan’s prime minister at the time. Sharif claims that shortly after becoming prime minister, army chief of staff Gen. Aslam Beg and ISI director Gen. Asad Durrani present him with a plan to sell heroin through third parties to pay for covert operations that are no longer funded by the CIA, now that the Afghan war is over. Sharif claims he does not approve the plan. Sharif will make these accusations in 1994, one year after he lost an election and became leader of the opposition. Durrani and Beg will deny the allegations. Both will have retired from these jobs by the time the allegations are made. The Washington Post will comment in 1994, “It has been rumored for years that Pakistan’s military has been involved in the drug trade. Pakistan’s army, and particularly its intelligence agency... is immensely powerful and is known for pursuing its own agenda.” The Post will further note that in 1992, “A consultant hired by the CIA warned that drug corruption had permeated virtually all segments of Pakistani society and that drug kingpins were closely connected to the country’s key institutions of power, including the president and military intelligence agencies.” ([Anderson and Khan 9/12/1994](#))

February 1991: CIA Already Aware of ‘Al-Qaeda’

The CIA is aware of the term al-Qaeda at least by this time. Billy Waugh is a CIA contractor assigned to follow bin Laden and other suspected criminals in Sudan starting at this time (see [February 1991- July 1992](#)). He will later recall in a book that when he arrived in Sudan, the CIA station chief there said to him about bin Laden, “We don’t know what he’s up to, but we know he’s a wealthy financier and we think he’s harboring some of these outfits called al-Qaeda. See what you can find out.” Waugh will note, “I was familiar with bin Laden from [CIA] traffic, but this was the first time I had heard the term al-Qaeda.” ([Waugh and Keown 2004, pp. 121](#)) According to most other media accounts, US intelligence does not learn about the existence of al-Qaeda until several years later, not long before the State Department publicly uses the term in 1996 (see [August 14, 1996](#)). For instance, US News and World Report will even assert in 2003, “So limited was the CIA’s knowledge that it began using al-Qaeda’s real name only [in 1998] —10 years after bin Laden founded the organization.” ([Kaplan, Ekman, and Latif 12/15/2003](#))

February 1991- July 1992: CIA Already Spying on Bin Laden in Sudan



Billy Waugh. [*Source: Billy Waugh*]The CIA monitors bin Laden in Khartoum, Sudan, where he has just moved (see [Summer 1991](#)). Billy Waugh, an independent contractor working for the CIA, moves to Khartoum and is given the task of spying on him. Waugh is a legendary fighter already in his sixties who has performed special operations for the US Army and CIA for many years and will continue to do so until he is in his seventies. The Associated Press will later report that Waugh “played a typecast role as an aging American fitness enthusiast and would regularly jog past bin Laden’s home. He said he often came face-to-face with bin Laden, who undoubtedly knew the CIA was tailing him. Neither said anything, but Waugh recalled exchanging pleasantries with bin Laden’s Afghan guards.” ([Waugh and Keown 2004, pp. 121](#); [Kaczor 6/4/2005](#)) Waugh will later recall, “I was on a tracking team in Sudan keeping track of [bin Laden] in his early days as a possible terrorist network leader. Our CIA Chief of Station there told me upon arrival that [he] was one of our targets, that he was a wealthy Saudi financier and possible supporter of the terrorist outfit called al-Qaeda. He ran companies there and even owned an entire street block in the al-Riyadh section of the city.... At the time of our surveillance operations against him in 1991-92, [he] was not a particularly high priority, though evidence was gathering about him. At the time, it would have been very easy to take him out.” Waugh also claims that he saw bin Laden “in the

mountains of the Pakistan/Afghanistan border in the late 1980's when we were training the [mujaheddin] resistance.” ([Peterson 6/2005](#))

(February 28, 1991): Head of Al-Kifah Charity Front Murdered, Increasing Al-Qaeda's Strength in US

Around February 28, 1991, Mustafa Shalabi, head of the Al-Kifah Refugee Center's main US office in Brooklyn, is murdered. Al-Kifah is a charity front with ties to both the CIA and al-Qaeda (see [1986-1993](#)). Shalabi's body is found in his house on March 1. He had been shot and stabbed multiple times and \$100,000 was stolen. Shalabi is found with two red hairs in his hand, and the FBI soon suspects Mahmud Abouhalima, who is red-headed, for the murder. Abouhalima identified Shalabi's body for the police, falsely claiming to be Shalabi's brother. He will later be one of the 1993 WTC bombers. Shalabi had been having a growing public dispute with the “Blind Sheikh,” Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman, over where to send the roughly one million dollars Al-Kifah was raising annually. Abdul-Rahman wanted some of the money to be used to overthrow the Egyptian government while Shalabi wanted to send all of it to Afghanistan. Shalabi had given up the fight and had already booked a flight to leave the US when he was killed. The murder is never solved. ([Lance 2003, pp. 49-52](#); [Lance 2006, pp. 65-66](#)) Abdul Wali Zindani takes over as head of Al-Kifah and apparently will run the office until it closes shortly after the 1993 WTC bombing. He is nephew of Sheikh Abdul Majeed al-Zindani, a radical imam in Yemen with ties to bin Laden. Abdul-Rahman, also linked to bin Laden, increases his effective control over Al-Kifah and its money. ([Miller, Stone, and Mitchell 2002, pp. 82](#)) Al-Kifah's links to al-Qaeda were already strong before Shalabi's death. But author Peter Lance will later comment that after his death, “Osama bin Laden had an effective al-Qaeda cell right in the middle of Brooklyn, New York. A tough look at the Shalabi murder might have ripped the lid off al-Qaeda years before the FBI ever heard of the network.” ([Lance 2003, pp. 52](#))

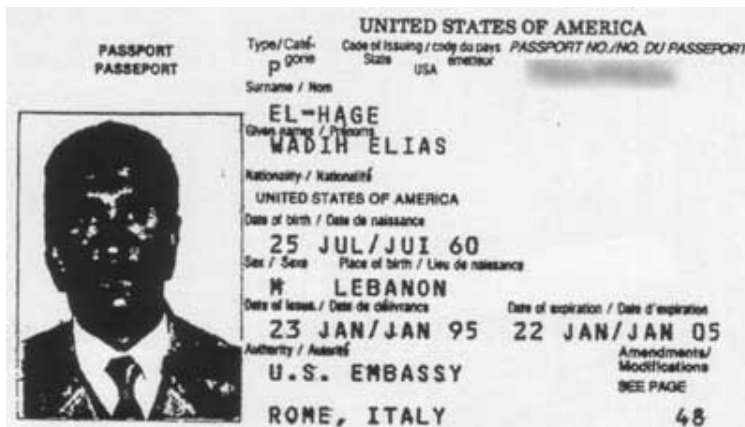
March 1991: US Military Remains in Saudi Arabia



US troops in Saudi Arabia in the 1990s.
[Source: PBS] As the Gulf War against Iraq ends, the US stations some 15,000-20,000 soldiers in Saudi Arabia permanently. ([Hiro 2/15/1999](#)) President George H. W. Bush falsely claims that all US troops have withdrawn. ([Prins 12/21/2001](#)) The US troop's

presence is not admitted until 1995, and there has never been an official explanation as to why they remained. The Nation postulates that they are stationed there to prevent a coup. Saudi Arabia has an incredible array of high-tech weaponry, but lacks the expertise to use it and it is feared that Saudi soldiers may have conflicting loyalties. In 1998, bin Laden will say in a fatwa: “For more than seven years the United States has been occupying the lands of Islam in the holiest of places, the Arabian peninsula, plundering its riches, dictating to its rulers, humiliating its people, terrorizing its neighbors, and turning its bases in the peninsula into a spearhead through which to fight the neighboring Muslim peoples” (see [February 22, 1998](#)). ([Hiro 2/15/1999](#)) US troops will finally leave in 2003, shortly after the start of the Iraq war and the construction of new military bases in other Persian Gulf countries (see [April 30-August 26, 2003](#)).

March 1991: FBI Begins Investigating Bin Laden’s Future Personal Secretary



Wadih El-Hage’s US passport.

His face is overly dark due to a poor photocopy. [Source: *US Justice Department*] (click image to enlarge) The FBI begins to investigate Wadih El-Hage, who will soon work as bin Laden’s personal secretary. The FBI is investigating the February 1991 murder of Mustafa Shalabi (see [February 28, 1991](#)), the head of the Al-Kifah Refugee Center, a charity with ties to both bin Laden and the CIA. El-Hage, a US citizen living in Texas, came to New York to briefly run Al-Kifah so Shalabi could take a trip overseas, and happened to arrive the same day that Shalabi was murdered. Investigators find a message from El-Hage on Shalabi’s answer machine. They learn El-Hage had been connected to the 1989 murder of an imam in Tucson, Arizona. ([Miller, Stone, and Mitchell 2002, pp. 148-149](#); [Lance 2006, pp. 67-68](#)) Further, he visited El Sayyid Nosair, who assassinated Meir Kahane the year before (see [November 5, 1990](#)), in prison, and left his name in the visitor’s log. ([Lance 2003, pp. 50-51](#)) However, the FBI decides there is not enough evidence to charge El-Hage with any crime. They lose track of him in early 1992, when he moves to Sudan and begins working there as bin Laden’s primary personal secretary. He will help bin Laden run many of his businesses, and will frequently take international trips on bin Laden’s behalf. ([Zill 4/1999](#); [Weiser 1/22/2000](#))

March-September 1991: Radical Imams and Saudi Government Convert Many US Soldiers to Islam; Some Later Fight in Bosnia



Bilal Philips. [Source: *Lightuponlight.com*] Shortly after the end of fighting in the US-led Persian Gulf war against Iraq, the US allows the Saudi government to conduct a massive program to convert US soldiers still stationed in Saudi Arabia (see [March 1991](#)) to Islam. Huge tents are erected near the barracks of US troops and Saudi imams lecture the soldiers about Islam and attempt to convert them. Within months, about 1,000 soldiers, and perhaps as many as 3,000, convert to Islam. Some US officials express concern about the aggressive conversion effort and the long term implications it may have, but the program is not stopped. Radical imam Bilal Philips helps lead the conversion effort. He will later explain that a special team of fluent English speakers, some trained in psychology, was amply paid by the Saudi government to convert the soldiers. Converts had their pilgrimages to Islamic holy cities paid for and Muslim imams were assigned to follow up with them when they returned to the US. Philips is openly hostile to the US, saying such things as, “Western culture led by the United States is an enemy of Islam.” He will later note that some of his converts went to fight in Bosnia and others were the subject of terrorism probes in the US. ([US Congress, Senate, Committee on the Judiciary 10/14/2003](#); [Mintz and Vistica 11/2/2003](#)) Philips will work with the Saudi government and one of the “Landmarks” bombers to send 14 Muslim ex-US soldiers to fight in Bosnia in 1992 (see [December 1992](#)). Listed as an unindicted coconspirator in the 1993 WTC bombing, he will be deported from the US in 2004. ([Australian Associated Press 4/4/2007](#))

March 1991-December 1992: CIA Hides Its Relationship to Criminal BCCI

In March 1991, Sen. John Kerry’s Senate investigation of the criminal Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI) investigation hears about a secret CIA report on BCCI that was given to the Customs Service. Kerry’s office asks the CIA for a copy, but is told the report does not exist. After months of wrangling, more and more information about the CIA’s ties to BCCI comes out, and the CIA eventually gives Kerry that report and many other reports relating to BCCI. But crucially, the CIA does not share documents on CIA operations using the bank. Kerry’s public report will conclude, “Key questions about the relationship between US intelligence and BCCI cannot be answered at this time, and

may never be.” ([Corn 10/26/1992](#); [US Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations 12/1992](#))

Summer 1991: Bin Laden Leaves Saudi Arabia



Prince Turki al-Faisal. [*Source: Publicity photo*] Bin Laden, recently returned to Saudi Arabia, has been placed under house arrest for his opposition to the continued presence of US soldiers on Saudi soil. ([PBS Frontline 2001](#)) Controversial author Gerald Posner claims that a classified US intelligence report describes a secret deal between bin Laden and Saudi Intelligence Minister Prince Turki al-Faisal at this time. Although bin Laden has become an enemy of the Saudi state, he is nonetheless too popular for his role with the mujaheddin in Afghanistan to be easily imprisoned or killed. According to Posner, bin Laden is allowed to leave Saudi Arabia with his money and supporters, but the Saudi government will publicly disown him. Privately, the Saudis will continue to fund his supporters with the understanding that they will never be used against Saudi Arabia. The wrath of the fundamentalist movement is thus directed away from the vulnerable Saudis. ([Posner 2003, pp. 40-42](#)) Posner alleges the Saudis “effectively had [bin Laden] on their payroll since the start of the decade.” ([Zabriskie 8/31/2003](#)) This deal is reaffirmed in 1996 and 1998. Bin Laden leaves Saudi Arabia in the summer of 1991, returning first to Afghanistan. ([Coll 2004, pp. 229-31, 601-02](#)) After staying there a few months, he moves again, settling into Sudan with hundreds of ex-mujaheddin supporters (see [1992-1996](#)). ([PBS Frontline 2001](#))

Summer 1991: Ali Mohamed Helps Bin Laden Move to Sudan

Bin Laden moves his base of operations from Afghanistan to Sudan (see [Summer 1991](#)), and asks US-al-Qaeda double agent Ali Mohamed to assist in the move. The New York Times will later report that US officials claim, “this was a complex operation, involving the transfer through several countries of Mr. bin Laden and at least two dozen of his associates.” Mohamed also stays busy frequenting mosques in the US, apparently recruiting operatives for al-Qaeda. ([Weiser and Risen 12/1/1998](#); [Aita 5/15/2001](#)) Ihab

Ali Nawawi, an al-Qaeda operative based in Florida, helps Mohamed with the move.
([Lance 2006, pp. 123](#))

June 1991: Bosnian Muslims Begin Forming and Arming Private Army



Hasan Cengic. [*Source: Dani*]The SDA, the ruling party of Bosnian Muslim President Alija Izetbegovic, decides in private meetings that war in Bosnia is inevitable. They begin forming their own paramilitary force called the Patriotic League, which answers to Izetbegovic and his party, not the Bosnian government as a whole. Hasan Cengic, a radical militant imam, is given control of the Patriotic League and begins arming it. The Bosnian Muslims have no armed force at all at this time while the Yugoslavian army they face is very large and well supplied. Cengic travels to many countries arranging secret arms deals to supply the new force, planned to be 30,000 soldiers strong. By the end of the year, he arranges deals with Slovenia, Lebanon, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and other countries. ([Schindler 2007, pp. 70](#)) Cengic's efforts will be the start of an illegal arms pipeline into Bosnia of massive proportions (see [Mid-1991-1996](#)).

June 25, 1991: Croatia and Slovenia Declare Independence; War Between Croatia and Serbia Begins

The provinces of Croatia and Slovenia declare their independence from Yugoslavia. Slovenia breaks off without violence (it has no border with Serbia). However, within two days the Yugoslav army, representing Serbia, attacks Croatia and a long war between the two countries begins. This is the start of nearly a decade of conflict in the region as Yugoslavia slowly breaks apart. ([US Department of State 12/6/1995](#); [Time 12/31/1995](#))

Mid-1991-1996: Bin Laden-Linked Charity Front Funnels Billions of Dollars to Bosnia for Weapons



Elfatih Hassanein (center). [Source: *Magyar*

Iszlam] In 1987, a Sudanese man named Elfatih Hassanein found the Third World Relief Agency (TWRA). By mid-1991, Bosnian President Izetbegovic contacts Hassanein, who he has known since the 1970s. The two men agree to turn TWRA from an obscure charity into what the Washington Post will later call “the chief broker of black-market weapons deals by Bosnia’s Muslim-led government and the agent of money and influence in Bosnia for Islamic movements and governments around the world.” A banker in Vienna will later call Hassanein the “bagman” for Izetbegovic. “If the Bosnian government said we need flour, he ran after flour. If they said we need weapons, he ran after weapons.” (Pomfret 9/22/1996; Schindler 2007, pp. 148) The TWRA is controlled by a committee composed of Hassanein and:

- Hasan Cengic. He is in charge of arming a Bosnian militia run by the SDA party (see [June 1991](#)).
- Irfan Ljevakovic.
- Husein Zivalj.
- Dervis Djurdjevic.

All of them are important members of Izetbegovic’s SDA party, and all but Ljevakovic were codefendants with Izetbegovic in a 1983 trial. Most payments require the approval of three of the five, except for amounts greater than \$500,000, in which case Izetbegovic has to give approval. The corruption from these higher-ups is said to be incredible, with up to half of all money passing through the TWRA going into their pockets. (Schindler 2007, pp. 148-152) The TWRA is based in Vienna, Austria, and Izetbegovic personally guarantees Hassanein’s credentials with banks there. Soon, machine guns, missiles and other weapons are being shipped into Bosnia in containers marked as humanitarian aid. Hassanein is a member of Sudan’s government party and a follower of top Sudanese leader Hassan al-Turabi. Just like al-Turabi, he works with bin Laden and the “Blind Sheikh,” Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman. He becomes the main agent in Europe for marketing and selling video and audio tapes of Abdul-Rahman’s sermons. In March 1992, the Sudanese government gives him a diplomatic passport and he uses it to illegally transport large amounts of cash from Austria into Bosnia without being searched. (Burr and Collins 2006, pp. 140-141) The Saudi Arabian government is the biggest contributor to TWRA, but many other governments give money to it too, such as Sudan, Iran, Pakistan, Brunei, Turkey, and Malaysia. Bin Laden is also a major contributor. (Pomfret 9/22/1996) Author John Schindler will later note, “Relations between bin Laden and TWRA were close, not least because during the Bosnian war the al-Qaeda leadership was based in Khartoum, Sudan, under the protection of the Sudanese Islamist regime that was the ultimate backer of Hassanein and his firm.” TWRA also works closely with the International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO) and most other charity fronts in Bosnia.

([Schindler 2007, pp. 151-152](#)) A later study by the Bosnian government with help from Western intelligence agencies will determine that at least \$2.5 billion passed through the TWRA to Bosnia between 1992 and 1995. The study will call the TWRA “a group of Bosnian Muslim wartime leaders who formed an illegal, isolated ruling oligarchy, comprising three to four hundred ‘reliable’ people in the military commands, the diplomatic service, and a number of religious dignitaries.... It was this organization, not the Government [of Bosnia], that controlled all aid that Islamic countries donated to the Bosnian Muslims throughout the war.” ([Schindler 2007, pp. 149-150](#))

July 5, 1991: Outlaw BCCI Bank Is Shut Down



The BCCI logo. [Source: BCCI] The Bank of England shuts down Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI), the largest Islamic bank in the world. Based in Pakistan, this bank financed numerous militant organizations and laundered money generated by illicit drug trafficking and other illegal activities, including arms trafficking. Bin Laden and many other militants had accounts there. ([Ehrenfeld 9/30/2001](#)) One money-laundering expert claims, “BCCI did dirty work for every major terrorist service in the world.” ([Pasternak and Braun 1/20/2002](#)) American and British governments were aware of its activities yet allowed the bank to operate for years. The Pakistani ISI had major connections to the bank. However, as later State Department reports indicate, Pakistan remains a major drug trafficking and money-laundering center despite the bank’s closing. ([Ehrenfeld 9/30/2001](#)) “The CIA used BCCI to funnel millions of dollars to the fighters battling the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan” according to the Washington Post. A French intelligence report in 2001 suggests the BCCI network has been largely rebuilt by bin Laden (see [October 2001](#)). ([Farah 2/17/2002](#)) The ruling family of Abu Dhabi, the dominant emirate in the United Arab Emirates, owned 77 percent of the bank. ([Pasternak and Braun 1/20/2002](#))

Shortly After Summer 1991: Ali Mohamed Sets Up New Al-Qaeda Camps in Sudan

Double agent Ali Mohamed, after helping bin Laden move to Sudan (see [Summer 1991](#)), sets up new al-Qaeda training camps there. Up to 2,000 Muslim militants move to Sudan with bin Laden. After helping them move as well, Mohamed trains them in newly created camps on kidnapping, bomb-making, cell structure, urban warfare, and more. ([Lance 2006, pp. 77-78](#))

September 26, 1991: US Imposes Arms Embargo on All Countries in Former Yugoslavia Region

The UN Security Council votes to impose an arms embargo on all countries occupying the region of Yugoslavia. Macedonia, Croatia, and Slovenia have split from Yugoslavia by this time and Bosnia will in early 1992, leaving Serbia to dominate what's left of Yugoslavia. The New York Times comments, "The resolution is in effect an effort to prevent Croatia and other successionist republics from buying arms from other countries. The Yugoslav armed forces have long had a highly developed arms industry of their own and do not need to import weapons at this time..." ([New York Times 9/26/1991](#))

October 3, 1991-February 1992: First Hijacker Enters US



A young Hani Hanjour. [Source: FBI] Future 9/11 hijacker Hani Hanjour first arrives in the US on October 3, 1991. ([US Congress 9/26/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 520](#)) Some media accounts have him entering the country in 1990. He apparently is the first hijacker to enter the US. ([Cloud 10/1/2001](#); [O'Meilie 10/15/2001](#); [Yardley and Thomas 6/19/2002](#)) He takes an English course in Tucson, Arizona until early 1992. There are some important al-Qaeda operatives currently living in Tucson. However, it is not known if Hanjour has contact with them at this time, or even when he first develops his radical militant beliefs. According to Hanjour's eldest brother Abulrahman, Hani stays in Arizona for three months then returns to Saudi Arabia, where he spends the next five years managing his family's lemon and date farm. ([Goldstein, Sun, and Lardner 10/15/2001](#)) FBI Director Robert Mueller also reports his stay as lasting three months. ([US Congress 9/26/2002](#)) However, the FBI tells one person that Hanjour may have stayed in the US for as long as 15 months. ([Fainaru and Ibrahim 9/10/2002](#))

November 4, 1991: Al-Qaeda Linked Assassination Attempt on Exiled King of Afghanistan



Zahir Shah. [Source: Associated Press] An assailant posing as a Portuguese journalist stabs Zahir Shah, the former king of Afghanistan, in his home in exile in Rome. Shah survives. The New York Times will later report that US investigators concluded the assailant had ties to al-Qaeda. ([United Press International 11/6/1991](#); [Risen and Engelberg 10/14/2001](#)) The assailant, a Portuguese convert to Islam named Paulo Jose de Almeida Santos, will later claim he was one of the first members of al-Qaeda. He claims that he discusses the plan to kill Zahir Shah in detail with bin Laden, as there is civil war in Afghanistan at the time and there is a possibility that Shah could return there and lead a secular government hostile to bin Laden's interests. But he will say he didn't get specific permission from bin Laden for the attack. "[T]here wasn't a well-defined hierarchy, we were rather disorganized; you could give a try to whatever entered into your head." He also says that bin Laden "was the guy who gave money to keep the organization going... but he didn't give many orders." Santos is immediately caught and serves eight years in an Italian prison for the attack. ([Bergen 2006, pp. 116-119](#))

December 1991-May 1992: Bin Laden Linked Bomber Trains Philippine Militants

Ramzi Yousef, the future bomber of the WTC in 1993, stays in the Philippines and trains militants there in bomb-making. According to Philippine intelligence documents, Yousef had developed expertise in bomb-making and worked at a training camp at Khost, Afghanistan, teaching bomb-making for militants connected to bin Laden. But bin Laden dispatches him to the Philippines, where he trains about 20 militants belonging to the Abu Sayyaf group. Abu Sayyaf is heavily penetrated by Philippine undercover operatives at this time, especially Edwin Angeles, an operative who is the second in command of the group. Angeles will later recall that Yousef is introduced to him at this time as an "emissary from bin Laden." ([Abuza 9/1/2005](#)) Angeles also claims Yousef decided to use the Philippines as a "launching pad" for terrorist acts around the world. ([Kocieniewski 9/6/1996](#)) One of Abu Sayyaf's top leaders will later recall that Yousef also brings a significant amount of money to help fund the group. ([Dinampo 1/22/2007](#); [CNN 1/31/2007](#)) A flow chart of Yousef's associates prepared in early 1995 by Angeles' Philippines handler Rodolfo Mendoza shows a box connected to Abu Sayyaf labeled "20

trainees/recruits.” So presumably the Philippine government is aware of this information by then, but it is not known when they warned the US about it (see [Spring 1995](#)). Yousef will also later admit to planning the 1993 WTC bombing at an Abu Sayyaf base, which most likely takes place at this time (see [Early 1992](#)). The ties between Yousef and Abu Sayyaf will grow stronger, culminating in the 1995 Bojinka plot (see [January 6, 1995](#)), an early version of the 9/11 plot.

December 1991-April 1993: Bin Laden’s Brother-in-Law Directly Assists Militant Attacks in Philippines

Mohammed Jamal Khalifa, bin Laden’s brother-in-law, apparently directly assists the Abu Sayyaf militant group with a number of attacks during this time. According to a 1996 Philippine intelligence report, in December 1991, Khalifa meets with Abu Sayyaf leaders and gives them \$1000 in local currency to bomb a church in the town of Jolo. In January 1992, Khalifa and future Bojinka bombers Wali Khan Amin Shah and Ramzi Yousef meet with Abdurajak Janjalani, the head of the Abu Sayyaf. This time, Khalifa gives \$6,000 for two ultimately successful operations—to assassinate an Italian missionary and to bomb a local public market to disrupt provincial elections. Khalifa continues to liaison with Abu Sayyaf leaders, providing food, medicines, ammunition, and sometimes targets to attack. The last known attack with such help from Khalifa takes place in April 1993. ([Ressa 2003, pp. 27, 227](#))

December 7, 1991: US Still Refuses to Investigate Possible Conspiracy in Murder of Jewish Rabbi



El Sayyid Nosair. [*Source: FBI*] El-Sayyid Nosair is acquitted of killing Meir Kahane (see [November 5, 1990](#)), leader of the Jewish Defense League, but convicted of firearms offenses connected with his shooting of two witnesses during his attempt to flee. The judge will declare that the acquittal verdict “defie[s] reason” and sentence Nosair to 22 years by applying maximum sentences to his convictions on the other charges. ([Friedman 3/30/1993](#); [Marshall 11/1/1998](#); [Lance 2003, pp. 65](#)) The prosecution of Nosair was hobbled by the US government’s absolute refusal to acknowledge the possibility that the murder was anything other than the work of a “lone deranged gunman” despite information gained during the course of the investigation provided by an FBI operative that he had “very close” ties to the radical imam Sheikh

Omar Abdul-Rahman. Many boxes of evidence that could have sealed Nosair's guilt on the murder charge and also shown evidence of a larger conspiracy were not allowed as evidence. ([Friedman 3/30/1993](#); [Miller, Stone, and Mitchell 2002, pp. 44-46](#)) A portion of Nosair's defense fund is paid for by bin Laden, but this will not be discovered until some time later. ([Miller, Stone, and Mitchell 8/16/2002](#)) District Attorney Robert Morgenthau, who prosecuted the case, will later speculate the CIA may have encouraged the FBI not to pursue any other leads. Nosair worked at the Al-Kifah Refugee Center which was closely tied to covert CIA operations in Afghanistan (see [Late 1980s and After](#)). ([Friedman 3/17/1995](#))

December 1991-October 27, 1994: Islamist Militants Stage Numerous Attacks in Algeria



GIA logo. [Source: Public domain]The Groupe Islamique Armé (GIA), established in 1991, allegedly is an Islamist militant group linked to al-Qaeda, but there are allegations it was manipulated by the Algerian government from its inception (see [1991](#)). Militants launch their first attack in December 1991, shortly before an Algerian army coup (see [January 11, 1992](#)), striking a military base, killing conscripts there and seizing weapons. The GIA competes with an existing militant group, the Armed Islamic Movement (MIA), which changes its name to the Islamic Salvation Army (AIS) in 1993 and becomes the armed wing of the banned FIS party. After the army coup, the GIA and AIS stage many attacks in Algeria. The GIA is more active, targeting many government employees, intellectuals, and foreigners for assassination, and attacking factories, railroads, bridges, banks, military garrisons, and much more. They generally try to minimize civilian casualties, but hope to create a state of fear that will lead to paralysis and the collapse of the government. The group goes through four leaders during this time. But in October 1994 a new leader will take over, dramatically changing the direction of the group (see [October 27, 1994-July 16, 1996](#)). ([Crotty 2005, pp. 291](#))

1992: BMI Said to Fund Terrorism Through DC Real Estate Investments



The Barnaby Knolls housing

development, another Washington, DC, suburb funded by BMI Inc. [Source: *Susan Biddle/ Washington Post*] BMI Inc., is a New Jersey-based Muslim investment firm. Some of the lead investors have been suspected of supporting terrorism and other types of violence in the Middle East (see [1986-October 1999](#)). In 1992, a branch of the International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO), a Saudi charity gives \$2.1 million to BMI to invest in real estate. The money disappears from BMI's books. By 1996, the CIA will secretly report that the IIRO supports terrorism financing in many locations around the world (see [January 1996](#)). In October 1999, BMI will go defunct after it is unable to repay this money to the IIRO branch. Additionally, the IIRO branch will give BMI over a million dollars between 1992 and 1998. BMI uses some money from the IIRO and other investors to build houses in Oxon Hill, a Washington, D.C., suburb. Many well to do Muslims invest in the housing development because BMI advertises itself as investing according to Islamic principles. Most of the small investors as well as the middle class Americans who buy the Oxon Hill houses do not realize that the profits from the property sales go to Mousa Abu Marzouk, a known leader of Hamas. Marzouk is said to make \$250,000 in profits from BMI real estate deals in the early 1990s. In 2004, an Immigration and Customs Enforcement court declaration will assert that significant amounts of cash obtained from BMI by Marzouk is eventually used "in furtherance of Hamas terrorist operations." ([Simpson 11/26/2002](#); [Farah 8/20/2003](#); [Seper 3/26/2004](#); [Sheridan 4/19/2004](#)) By the end of 1992, BMI will have projected revenues in excess of \$25 million based largely on their real estate investments in the US. ([US Congress 10/22/2003](#))

1992: Iran Opens Arms Smuggling Route to Bosnia

Iran opens a weapons smuggling route to Bosnia with the assistance of Turkey. ([Wiebes 2003, pp. 178, 196-197](#))

Early 1990s: US Intelligence Monitoring Bin Laden in Sudan



Bin Laden's house in Khartoum,

Sudan. [Source: PBS] It has not been revealed when US intelligence begins monitoring bin Laden exactly, though the CIA was tailing him in Sudan by the end of 1991 (see [February 1991- July 1992](#)). But in late 1995 the FBI is given forty thick files on bin Laden from the CIA and NSA, mostly communications intercepts (see [October 1995](#)). The sheer amount of material suggests the surveillance had been going on for several years. Dan Coleman, an FBI agent working with the CIA's bin Laden unit, will begin examining these files and finds that many of them are transcripts from wiretapped phones tied to bin Laden's businesses in Khartoum, Sudan, where bin Laden lives from 1991 to 1996. ([Miller, Stone, and Mitchell 2002, pp. 148-149](#); [Wright 2006, pp. 242-244](#)) CIA Director George Tenet will later comment, "The then-obscure name 'Osama bin Laden' kept cropping up in the intelligence traffic.... [The CIA] spotted bin Laden's tracts in the early 1990s in connection with funding other terrorist movements. They didn't know exactly what this Saudi exile living in Sudan was up to, but they knew it was not good." ([Tenet 2007, pp. 100](#)) The London Times will later report that in Sudan, "bin Laden used an \$80,000 satellite phone and al-Qaeda members used radios to avoid being bugged..." ([Callinan 10/7/2001](#)) Bin Laden is mistaken in his belief that satellite phones cannot be monitored; a satellite phone he buys in 1996 will be monitored as well (see [November 1996-Late August 1998](#)).

1992: Bin Laden Brought to Philippines by Government Hoping to Strengthen the Rebels It Is Fighting

In 2002, it will be reported that a former head of the CIA station in Manila, Philippines, alleges that Osama bin Laden comes to the Philippines personally this year at the invitation of the Philippine government. This CIA official claims, "Bin Laden presented himself as a wealthy Saudi who wanted to invest in Muslim areas and donate money to charity." He was flown to the southern island of Mindanao by Philippine President Fidel Ramos. Bin Laden is not known as a notorious terrorist at the time, but it appears he actually is invited to help strengthen Abu Sayyaf and other rebel groups based in Mindanao fighting the Philippine government. A 2002 article calls this "an alleged plot" by Ramos "to manipulate Abu Sayyaf as a means of enhancing his personal political power." ([Timmerman 6/22/2002](#)) There have been reports for years that the Philippine

government has propped up Abu Sayyaf to split the Muslim militants in the southern Philippines and for other Machiavellian reasons (see for instance [1991-Early February 1995](#), [1994](#), and [July 27-28, 2003](#)). It has also been reported that bin Laden visited the southern Philippines around 1988 to set up operations there. This was before Abu Sayyaf was formed (see [Early 1991](#)), but he apparently met with members of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), a larger rebel group in the same region. ([Schloss and Robles 10/11/2001](#); [CNN 1/27/2002](#))

1992: Ali Mohamed Informs for FBI Again, Never Polygraphed

Double agent Ali Mohamed, who became an informant for the FBI in 1990 (see [1990](#)), apparently works as an FBI informant again, obtaining intelligence on some suspects at a San Jose, California, mosque. But he is never polygraphed, even though this is standard procedure. Retired FBI agent Joseph O'Brien will later complain, "One of the most unbelievable aspects of the Ali Mohamed story is that the Bureau could be dealing with this guy and they didn't" polygraph him. "The first thing you do with any kind of asset or informant is you polygraph him and if the relationship continues, you make him submit to continued polygraphs down the line." FBI agent John Zent becomes Mohamed's handler. ([Lance 2006, pp. 95-96](#)) Apparently Mohamed will be given a polygraph test in 1993 and will fail it (see [May 1993](#)).

1992-2000: Secret Continuity of Government Exercises Prepare for Terrorist Threat

During the 1980s, Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld were regular participants in top-secret exercises, designed to test a program called continuity of government (COG) that would keep the federal government functioning during and after a nuclear war with the Soviet Union (see [1981-1992](#)). Despite the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union, the COG exercises continue into the 1990s, being budgeted still at over \$200 million per year. Now, terrorists replace the Soviet Union as the imagined threat. The terrorism envisaged is almost always state-sponsored, with the imagined terrorists acting on behalf of a government. According to journalist James Mann, the COG exercises are abandoned fairly early in the Clinton era, as the scenario is considered farfetched and outdated. However another journalist, Andrew Cockburn, suggests they continue for longer. He adds that, while the "shadow government" created in the exercises had previously been drawn from across the political spectrum, now the players are almost exclusively Republican hawks. A former Pentagon official with direct knowledge of the program will later say, "It was one way for these people to stay in touch. They'd meet, do the exercise, but also sit around and castigate the Clinton administration in the most extreme way. You could say this was a secret government-in-waiting. The Clinton administration was extraordinarily inattentive, [they had] no idea what was going on." ([Mann 3/2004](#); [Cockburn 2007, pp. 88](#)) The continuity of government plan will be activated, supposedly for the first time, in the hours during and

after the 9/11 attacks (see [\(Between 9:45-9:55 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([Gellman and Schmidt 3/1/2002](#))

1992: Bin Laden's Main Charity Front in US Turns Focus to Supporting Bosnian War

A Call For Jihad In

Bosnia

ICNA Reports:

- More than a hundred thousand killed
- 3 Million Homeless
- Thousands of Muslim girls and women have been kidnapped and kept in Yugoslav army camps for sex . Old men and children are kept in Nazi style concentration camps
- Tens of Thousands Missing and Wounded
- \$150 Billion in Property Damage

Ask yourself what you are doing for these Muslims.
Ask Muslim governments what they are doing for these Muslims and their freedom.

If you Desire to provide the Emerging Jihad Movement in Bosnia with more than Food and Shelter, Please send your Sadaka to:

Bosnia Fund
c/o Alkifah Refugee Center
1085 Commonwealth Avenue
Suite 124
Boston, MA 02215

Muslims helping Muslims
since we are one

“A Call for Jihad in Bosnia” flyer published by the Al-Kifah Refugee Center’s Boston branch. *[Source: Public domain]* The Al-Kifah Refugee Center in Brooklyn, New York, is al-Qaeda’s main foothold in the US and most of the 1993 WTC bombers are closely tied to it. It had been formed in the 1980s to send militants to fight in Afghanistan and also help veteran fighters settle in the US (see [1986-1993](#)). But the Afghanistan war against the Soviets ended in early 1989 and the winning factions soon began fighting amongst themselves (see [February 15, 1989](#)). But a new cause is on the horizon as Yugoslavia starts falling apart. By 1991, the center’s parent organization in Pakistan, Maktab al-Khidamat(MAK)/Al-Kifah begins setting up al-Qaeda charity fronts in the Bosnia region (see [1991](#)). The main regional MAK/Al-Kifah branch in Zagreb, Croatia, is also called the Al-Kifah Refugee Center like the Brooklyn branch and has very close ties with that branch (see [Early 1990s](#)). In 1992, war breaks out in Bosnia (see [April 6, 1992](#)) and the Al-Kifah Refugee Center in Brooklyn shifts its focus fully to the Bosnia cause. For instance, the Boston branch publishes “A Call for Jihad in Bosnia.” It claims that more than 100,000 Bosnians had been killed and that thousands of Muslim girls had been kidnapped and kept in Yugoslav army camps for sex. It urges readers who wish “to provide the emerging jihad movement in Bosnia with more than food and shelter” to send their donations to Al-Kifah. And just as Al-Kifah led the

effort to send US-based militants to fight in Afghanistan, it appears to do the same for Bosnia. Vanity Fair will later claim, “Dozens and perhaps hundreds of US residents are reported to have joined appeals to fight the Serbs in Bosnia.” ([Scroggins 3/2005](#)) The head of the Al-Kifah Refugee Center’s Zagreb branch, Kamer Eddine Kherbane, apparently is also one of the leaders of the mujaheddin fighters in Bosnia around this time (see [1990](#) and [1991](#)). The CIA had ties to Al-Kifah during the Afghan war (see [Late 1980s and After](#)) and there is some circumstantial evidence of US government ties to it during the Bosnia war. In 1992, Ali Mohamed, a double agent and ex-US Special Forces officer with close ties to Al-Kifah, leads a group of US militants who are all ex-US soldiers to train and fight in Bosnia (see [December 1992](#)). Abu Ubaidah Yahya, an ex-US marine and security chief at the Brooklyn branch, will lead a second group of US militants to fight in Bosnia (see [Spring 1993](#)).

Early 1990s: FBI Reportedly Aware of California Training Camps Run by Known Al-Qaeda Operative but Take No Action

Al-Qaeda operative Khalil Deek runs military training camps in Southern California in the early 1990s. Those trained in the camps include followers of the “Blind Sheikh,” Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman, and some of the people involved in the 1993 “Landmarks” plot (see [June 24, 1993](#)). Deek is a member of an al-Qaeda sleeper cell based in Orange County and has reportedly been under investigation by US intelligence since the late 1980s (see [Late 1980s](#)). Rita Katz, a private counterterrorism expert who sometimes works with US officials, will learn of these camps when speaking to an FBI agent in early 2002. According to Katz, she is told that the FBI had known about the camps for “years” but had not acted because of the “wall” between criminal and intelligence investigations. The FBI agent will tell Katz that the information about the camps was “Intel information. Unusable.” ([Katz 2003, pp. 186-187](#)) Deek also attracts attention for his suspected involvement with Al-Gama’a al-Islamiyya, the militant group led by Abdul-Rahman, because of the group’s plans “to bomb a Masonic temple in Los Angeles.” ([Anderson 9/15/2005](#)) Katz will conclude that “the FBI had learned that Deek was running military training camps for al-Qaeda in California and was planning to blow up various American targets. And the agency let these people go about their business undisturbed.” ([Katz 2003, pp. 186-187](#)) Around the same time, Deek also works in Bosnia for a charity suspected of funneling weapons and new recruits to the mujaheddin fighting there (see [Early 1990s](#)). In late 1999, Deek will be captured overseas for participation in a planned millennium bombing (see [December 11, 1999](#)). It will later be alleged that he was a mole for the Jordanian government (see [Shortly After December 11, 1999](#)).

Early 1990s: Al-Qaeda Operative Running Training Camps in California Also Helping Militants in Bosnia War

Khalil Deek, a US citizen and al-Qaeda operative mostly living in California, also works in Bosnia for the Islamic Relief Agency (ISRA), also known as the Islamic African Relief Agency (IARA), during the Bosnia war. ([Glain and Cloud 11/17/2000](#)) A secret 1996 CIA report will say, “The IARA office in Zagreb [Croatia] provides weapons to the Bosnian military, according to a clandestine source. The source claimed the office was controlled by officials of Sudan’s ruling party, the National Islamic Front.” ([Central Intelligence Agency 1/1996](#)) The Wall Street Journal will later claim that the “US suspects [the IARA] was involved in smuggling fighters into Bosnia from among the mujaheddin.” ([Glain and Cloud 11/17/2000](#)) Deek has a Bosnian passport. ([Schindler 2007, pp. 270](#)) Some reports identify him as a US Army veteran. ([Schou 6/15/2006](#)) Deek will later reportedly serve similar roles for al-Qaeda in Pakistan, helping to smuggle weapons (see [May 2000](#)) and direct recruits to militant training camps in Afghanistan (see [1998-December 11, 1999](#)). While in Bosnia, he will get to know other al-Qaeda operatives later connected to various bomb plots (see [January 2000](#)). Around the same time that he is working in Bosnia, he is also being monitored by the FBI running militant training camps in California, but the FBI takes no action against him or his camps (see [Early 1990s](#)).

1992: Al-Qaeda Allegedly Plans Bomb Attack Inside US

Counterterrorism expert Rohan Gunaratna will later claim in a book that al-Qaeda planned to bomb a target inside the US this year. Operatives plan to get explosives in Italy and ship them to the US via Cuba. However, the operation is aborted. Further details, such as what the target is or who is involved, are unknown. Gunaratna is known to have sources inside US intelligence and will claim the information came from the CIA, but it is unclear when the CIA may have first learned about this alleged plot. ([Gunaratna 2003, pp. 133](#))

1992-1996: Bin Laden Attacks US Interests Using Sudanese Base



Bin Laden (center) being feted by Sudanese leaders. [*Source: CBC*] (click image to enlarge) With a personal fortune of around \$250 million (estimates range from \$50 to \$800 million ([Rosenberg 9/24/2001](#))), Osama bin Laden begins plotting attacks against the US from his new base in Sudan. The first attack kills two tourists in Yemen at the end of 1992. ([Weaver 1/24/2000](#)) The CIA learns of his involvement in that attack in 1993, and learns that same year that he is

channeling money to Egyptian extremists. US intelligence also learns that by January 1994 he is financing at least three militant training camps in North Sudan. ([Gerth and Miller 8/14/1996](#); [PBS Frontline 2001](#); [US Congress 7/24/2003](#))

1992-1995: Pentagon Helps Bring Islamic Militants to Fight with Bosnians Against Serbs

The Pentagon helps bring thousands of mujaheddin and other Islamic militants from Central Asia into Europe to fight alongside the Bosnian Muslims against the Serbs. ([Wiebes 2003](#); [O'Neill 9/6/2003](#)) Bin Laden plays a key organizing role. ([Meyer and Rempe 10/7/2001](#)) As a result, the Balkans become a “safe haven” and “staging area” for Islamist terrorism. ([Priest 11/30/1995](#); [Meyer and Rempe 10/7/2001](#))

1992-1993: Suspected CIA Operative Has Ties to Philippine Militant Leaders

Michael Meiring, a suspected CIA operative connected to Philippine militant groups (see [May 16, 2002](#)), first comes to the Philippines and lives there for a year. According to a later report by the Manila Times, Meiring lives in the capital of Manila and is frequently seen with two agents of the Philippine National Bureau of Investigation (NBI). Yet at the same time he is believed to have ties with the top leaders of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), which, together with the Abu Sayyaf, are the main Muslim militant groups in the southern Philippines. “Meiring’s connections with rebel leaders made the military wary about him. He was under surveillance by more than one intelligence unit on more than one occasion.” One close US friend later claims that in 1992 Meiring said he had found and sold a box full of US Federal Reserve notes worth more than \$500 million. It is believed that he spends millions of dollars while in the Philippines. ([Zumel-Sicat 5/29/2002](#)) (There appear to have been frequent scams in the Philippines involving millions and even billions of dollars of fraudulent US Federal Reserve notes.) ([McGirk 2/26/2001](#)) Meiring, a former citizen of South Africa, fled to the US when he became the subject of an investigation toward the end of South Africa’s apartheid regime. He then became a US citizen. Meiring is connected to a group of treasure hunters led by James Rowe, an American. Rowe connects with a group of right-wing white supremacists linked to the US neo-Nazi party. In 1993, Meiring and Rowe travel to the Philippines together. ([Zumel-Sicat and Andrade 5/30/2002](#)) Meiring will come and go between the US and the Philippines for the next ten years, claiming to be a treasure hunter. In 2002 he will be severely injured by a bomb he is trying to make and will be whisked out of the Philippines by US officials (see [May 16, 2002](#)) and [December 2, 2004](#)). Philippine officials have observed other right-wing Americans with ties to Muslim militants starting in the early 1990s (see [Early 1990s and After](#)). ([Zumel-Sicat 5/29/2002](#))

1992-1995: KSM Fights and Fundraises in Bosnia

Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM) fights and fundraises in Bosnia. The 9/11 Commission will later state, “In 1992, KSM spent some time fighting alongside the mujaheddin in Bosnia and supporting that effort with financial donations.” ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 147](#)) He reportedly fights with the elite El Mujahid battalion, and gains Bosnian citizenship. ([Schindler 2007, pp. 281](#)) He also works for Egypitska Pomoc, an Egyptian aid group in Zenica, Bosnia, and in 1995 becomes one of its directors. ([Gunaratna 6/1/2005](#)) KSM mostly lives in Qatar for the next three years (see [1992-1996](#)), but in 1995 he is back fighting in Bosnia as the violence escalates that year. Abdallah bin Khalid al-Thani, Qatar’s Minister of Religious Affairs, underwrites the costs of the trip. ([McDermott, Meyer, and McDonnell 12/22/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 147, 488](#)) This second trip to Bosnia means that KSM fights there at the same time as 9/11 hijackers Khalid Almihdhar and Nawaf Alhazmi, though it is not known if they meet (see [1993-1999](#)). The FBI will later suspect that KSM helped build a bomb used to blow up a police station in neighboring Croatia while KSM was in the area (see [October 20, 1995](#)).

1992-1996: KSM Lives in Qatar with Government Protection

Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM) lives in Qatar during these years. He is invited there by Abdallah bin Khalid al-Thani, Qatar’s Minister of Religious Affairs at the time. He works on a farm owned by al-Thani and lives in the open, not even bothering to use an alias. He works as a project engineer for the government. One US official will later recall that al-Thani “has this farm and he always had a lot of people around, the house was always overstaffed, a lot of unemployed Afghan Arabs.... There were always these guys hanging around and maybe a couple of Kalashnikovs [machine guns] in the corner.” ([McDermott, Meyer, and McDonnell 12/22/2002](#)) KSM continues to plot and travel extensively, including a 1995 trip to fight in Bosnia with the trip’s expenses paid for by al-Thani. Apparently the CIA becomes aware that KSM is living there in 1995 and is also already aware of his role in the 1993 WTC bombing and the Bojinka plot (see [October 1995](#)). KSM will finally have to leave his Qatar base after his presence becomes too well known in early 1996 (see [January-May 1996](#)). ([McDermott, Meyer, and McDonnell 12/22/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 147, 488](#)) KSM will return to Qatar occasionally, even staying there with the knowledge of some Qatari royals for two weeks after 9/11 (see [Late 2001](#)).

1992-1993: Key Al-Qaeda Charity Front Relocates to US



A map of where BIF operates.

Taken from the BIF website, the date of the map is unknown. [Source: BIF] (click image to enlarge) In 1987, Saudi millionaire Adel Batterjee founds the Islamic Benevolence Committee, a charity front supporting the mujaheddin in Afghanistan. In 1998, bin Laden's brother-in-law Mohammed Jamal Khalifa founds the Benevolence International Corporation export-import company in the Philippines to support militant groups there. In 1992, the two groups merge and create a new Saudi charity called the Benevolence International Foundation (BIF). BIF funds charity projects, but its 1999 mission statement says its purpose is to make "Islam supreme on this earth," and it funds radical militants as well. In 1992, it moves its headquarters to Florida in the US. Then, in 1993, it moves its headquarters again to Chicago. Battargee is replaced as head of the organization by Enaam Arnaout, but Battargee maintains a behind the scenes role. Arnaout fought with bin Laden in Afghanistan in the 1980s and in fact in 1988 the Arab News published a picture of Arnaout and bin Laden together at a mujaheddin camp in Afghanistan. Mohammed Loay Bayazid, a US citizen and one of the founder members of al-Qaeda, is made president of BIF. BIF mostly funds regions where Islamist militants are fighting, especially Bosnia and Chechnya. (Burr and Collins 2006, pp. 45-46) In 1993, bin Laden will privately name BIF as one of al-Qaeda's three most important charity fronts (see 1993). The US will designate BIF a terrorism financier in 2002 (see March 2002) and will similarly designate Batterjee in 2004 (see December 21, 2004).

Early 1990s: Al-Kifah's Bosnia War Branch Is Connected to Terrorist Attacks and Brooklyn Office



Fateh Kamel. [Source: *Radio Canada*] The Al-Kifah Refugee Center in Brooklyn has an office in Zagreb, Croatia, also called the Al-Kifah Refugee Center, and the links between the two are very close. Both are connected to Maktab al-Khidamat/Al-Kifah in Pakistan, which is an al-Qaeda charity front. Hassan Hakim, deputy director of the Zagreb office, says his office is linked only to the Brooklyn office. This is important because the Zagreb office is closely involved in assisting mujaheddin in the Bosnian war and the Brooklyn office is closely linked to the CIA, suggesting the CIA could be assisting the Bosnia mujaheddin through the relationship between Brooklyn and Zagreb offices. ([Coll and LeVine 8/3/1993](#); [Kohlmann 2004, pp. 41](#)) The Zagreb office will remain open after the Brooklyn office is closed in the wake of the 1993 WTC bombing (see [February 26, 1993](#)), as all of the bombers were connected to that office. A Washington Post journalist who visits it in August 1993 describes it as being “housed in a modern, two-story building staffed by Arabs who identified themselves as Algerians.” ([Coll and LeVine 8/3/1993](#)) Like the Brooklyn office, the Zagreb office appears to be staffed with many militants involved in illegal activities:

- Fateh Kamel will reportedly be involved in many attacks and is considered a leader for Ahmed Ressam, who will attempt to bomb the Los Angeles airport (see [December 14, 1999](#)).
- Lionel Dumont is involved in numerous al-Qaeda plots, even as far afield as Japan.
- Hocine Senoussaoui is connected with Al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya and the GIA and will be arrested in France in 1996. ([Kohlmann 2004, pp. 164, 186, 189, 195](#))
- Kamar Eddine Kherbane, head of the Zagreb office, is a known al-Qaeda operative as well as a leader of an Algerian extremist group, and allegedly will be involved in the 9/11 attacks (see [September 18-20, 2001](#)).
- Hassan Hakim. A 1996 CIA report will say that he is a senior member of Algerian extremist groups and was arrested in France for weapons smuggling in July 1994.
- In 1996, a CIA report will say that an Algerian national connected to the Zagreb office is “preparing for an unspecified terrorist attack in Europe...” ([Central Intelligence Agency 1/1996](#))

Early 1992: Yousef Plans WTC Bombing at Militant Base in Philippines

Al-Qaeda bomber Ramzi Yousef plans the 1993 World Trade Center bombing (see [February 26, 1993](#)) at an Abu Sayyaf base in the Philippines. Yousef will admit this during his trial for the bombing after his 1995 arrest. He says he plotted there with “Afghans”—other veterans of the war in Afghanistan during the 1980s. ([Labeviere 1999,](#)

[pp. 220-221](#)) It isn't known when he did this exactly, but reports place him in the Philippines with the Abu Sayyaf for much of early 1992 (see [December 1991-May 1992](#)) before his trip to the US in September 1992 (see [September 1, 1992](#)), so it most likely took place then. It will later come to light that the Abu Sayyaf militant group is deeply penetrated by the Philippine government at this time, as even the second in command of the group is an undercover operative (see [1991-Early February 1995](#)). It is not known if the Philippine government gave the US any warning about Yousef's activities.

1992-January 1993: Future Democratic 9/11 Commission Co-Chair Leads Cover-up of Republican Plot

In 1992, a House of Representatives task force chaired by Democratic Congressman Lee Hamilton conducts a ten-month investigation into the "October Surprise" - an alleged Republican plot to delay the release of US hostages held in Iran in 1980 until after that year's US presidential election. The investigation concludes in 1993 that there is "no credible evidence" of any such plot. But Robert Parry, a journalist writing for the Associated Press and Newsweek, gains access to the stored records of Hamilton's task force. He finds clear evidence of a major cover up. For instance, William Casey, CIA Director in the early 1980s, was alleged to have been involved in the plot, and Hamilton's investigators discovered a CIA created index of Casey's papers made after Casey's death in 1987. When investigators searches Casey's possessions, they found all the papers mentioned in the index, except for all the ones relevant to the alleged October Surprise plot. But the disappearance of such evidence was not mentioned in Hamilton's findings. ([Scott 2007, pp. 101](#)) In addition, an official Russian intelligence report placing Casey in Europe in order to arrange a politically favorable outcome to the hostage crisis arrived in Washington shortly before Hamilton's task force issued their conclusions, but this Russian information was not mentioned by the task force. ([Scott 2007, pp. 106-107](#)) Hamilton will later be appointed co-chair of the 9/11 Commission (see [December 11, 2002](#)).

January 11, 1992: Islamic Party's Election in Algeria Upended by Army Coup; Years of Violence Enue



A large rally for the FIS on January 9, 1992, in Algiers, Algeria. [Source: Gyori Antoine / Corbis] Starting in 1989, the Algerian government allows political reform and elections. The country has been ruled by one party, the National Liberation Front (FLN), since independence. In June 1990, the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) won by large margins in local elections. Journalist Jonathan Randal will later comment that “the outcome was more a massive no-confidence vote against the corrupt, incompetent, and self-satisfied secular establishment than an endorsement of an Islamic republic.” In legislative elections in December 1991, the FIS wins again. They seem poised to win a runoff election one month later that would put them in power. But on January 11, 1992, the army stages a coup, overthrowing President Chadli Benjedid and canceling the runoff elections. Within months, the FIS is banned, its local officials elected in 1990 are removed from office, and tens of thousands of suspected sympathizers imprisoned and often tortured. Radical Islamists go underground and launch a number of violent militant groups. Over 150,000 will die over the next decade. ([Randal 2005, pp. 165-167](#))

January 21, 1992: US Ambassador Says US Is Trying to Break Up Yugoslavia



Warren Zimmerman. [Source: BBC] The official US policy at this time is that the US is working to keep Yugoslavia together. But in an interview with a Croatian newspaper, US ambassador to Yugoslavia Warren Zimmerman says, “We are aiming for a dissolution of Yugoslavia into independent states peacefully...” ([Danas 1/21/1992](#))

February 1992: Soviet Puppet Government Ousted in Afghanistan

Afghan President Mohammad Najibullah, a Soviet puppet in power since 1988, is finally ousted by Ahmed Shah Massoud in February 1992. US aid to the mujaheddin continues during this period, but at a lower level. There are disagreements about which leaders should be receiving support. The CIA favors Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, an extreme Islamist closely associated with bin Laden (see [1983](#)), while the State Department favors the much more Westernized and well educated Massoud. ([Coll 2004, pp. 205-207, 225](#))

February 1992-February 7, 1995: Ramzi Yousef's Stay at Pakistani Guesthouse Links Him to Bin Laden



Apparently the bin Laden guest house where Yousef lived. [*Source: National Geographic*] According to Pakistani investigators, Ramzi Yousef spends most of this time at the Beit Ashuhada guesthouse (translated as House of Martyrs) in Peshawar, Pakistan, which is funded by Osama bin Laden. Pakistani investigators reveal this bin Laden-Yousef connection to US intelligence in March 1995. The CIA will publicly reveal this in 1996. ([Central Intelligence Agency 1996](#); [Tenet 2007, pp. 100](#)) While living there, Yousef receives help and financing from two unnamed senior al-Qaeda representatives. ([Reeve 1999, pp. 47](#)) Yousef will be arrested at another nearby bin Laden safe house in February 1995 (see [February 7, 1995](#)) with bin Laden's address found in his pocket. ([Bone and Road 10/18/1997](#)) During these years, Yousef takes long trips to the US in preparation of the WTC bombing (see [February 26, 1993](#)) and the Philippines, where several plots are developed (see [January 6, 1995](#)). He also uses an al-Qaeda influenced mosque in Milan, Italy, as a logistical base (see [1993-1997](#)).

February 23-March 18, 1992: US Discourages Bosnian Muslim Leader from Signing Agreement to Avoid War

In a meeting held in Lisbon by the European Community, top Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic, top Bosnian Muslim leader Alija Izetbegovic, and top Bosnian Croat leader Stepan Klujic sign an agreement to partition Bosnia into three ethnically based divisions which would form a loosely joined independent confederation. But the New York Times will later report, "A few days later, influenced by what he saw as an

encouraging conversation with Warren Zimmermann, the United States ambassador, [Izetbegovic] changed his mind.” The Bosnian Muslims and Croats then quickly hold a referendum on the issue of Bosnian independence which passes by 99 percent on March 1, but the Bosnian Serbs boycott the vote. ([Binder 10/20/2003](#)) Then, on March 18, the same three leaders hold another meeting in Lisbon and again agree to the partition plan. But the New York Times will report a year later, “On returning to Sarajevo, Mr. Izetbegovic was encouraged by United States and European Community diplomats to choose instead a sovereign Bosnia and Herzegovina under his presidency, saying that was justified by the referendum on March 1 on independence.” ([Lewis 6/17/1993](#)) War will break out one month later (see [April 6, 1992](#)). The final agreement at the end of the war three years later will closely resemble the agreement almost signed before it began (see [December 14, 1995](#)).

March 1992: Bosnian Mafia Figure Negotiates Arms Deals between Turkey and Bosnia

Muhammed Cengic, who has close ties to Bosnian intelligence, negotiates a military cooperation agreement with Turkey. According to Prof. Cees Wiebes, the agreement ostensibly involves Turkish purchases of Bosnian arms, but “it is reasonable to assume that the Turkish-Bosnian arms traffic in reality went in the opposite direction.” The Cengic family is very powerful in Bosnia. Western intelligence sources describe them as “Mafia.” ([Wiebes 2003, pp. 178-179](#)) The clan also includes Hasan Cengic, who is one of the key figures in the Third World Relief Agency charity front and illegal weapons pipeline (see [Mid-1991-1996](#)).

March 8, 1992: Raw US World Dominance Plan Is Leaked to the Media

The Defense Planning Guidance, “a blueprint for the department’s spending priorities in the aftermath of the first Gulf War and the collapse of the Soviet Union,” is leaked to the New York Times. ([Tyler 3/8/1992](#); [Phelps, Fireman, and Royce 3/16/2003](#)) The document causes controversy, because it hadn’t yet been “scrubbed” to replace candid language with euphemisms. ([Tyler 3/10/1992](#); [Tyler 3/11/1992](#); [Cohen 4/7/2002](#)) The document argues that the US dominates the world as sole superpower, and to maintain that role, it “must maintain the mechanisms for deterring potential competitors from even aspiring to a larger regional or global role.” ([Tyler 3/8/1992](#); [New York Times 3/8/1992](#)) As the Observer summarizes it, “America’s friends are potential enemies. They must be in a state of dependence and seek solutions to their problems in Washington.” ([Cohen 4/7/2002](#)) The document is mainly written by Paul Wolfowitz and I. Lewis “Scooter” Libby, who hold relatively low posts at the time, but become deputy defense secretary and Vice President Cheney’s chief of staff, respectively, under George W. Bush. ([Phelps, Fireman, and Royce 3/16/2003](#)) The authors conspicuously avoid mention of collective security arrangements through the United Nations, instead suggesting the US “should expect future coalitions to be ad hoc assemblies, often not lasting beyond the crisis being

confronted.” ([Tyler 3/8/1992](#)) They call for “punishing” or “threatening punishment” against regional aggressors before they act. ([Armstrong 10/2002](#)) Interests to be defended preemptively include “access to vital raw materials, primarily Persian Gulf oil, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles, [and] threats to US citizens from terrorism.” The section describing US interests in the Middle East states that the “overall objective is to remain the predominant outside power in the region and preserve US and Western access to the region’s oil..., deter further aggression in the region, foster regional stability, protect US nationals and property, and safeguard... access to international air and seaways.” ([Tyler 3/8/1992](#)) Senator Lincoln Chafee (R) later says, “It is my opinion that [George W. Bush’s] plan for preemptive strikes was formed back at the end of the first Bush administration with that 1992 report.” ([Phelps, Fireman, and Royce 3/16/2003](#)) In response to the controversy, US releases an updated version of the document in May 1992, which stresses that the US will work with the United Nations and its allies. ([Gellman 5/24/1992](#); [Armstrong 10/2002](#))

March 15, 1992: UN Troops Arrive in Bosnia just before War

UN forces begin arriving in Bosnia, where they make their regional headquarters in the capital of Sarajevo. The UN troops are moving into the region in an attempt to keep the peace between Croatian and Serb forces fighting in neighboring Croatia. But within a month, war will break out in Bosnia and the UN troops will find themselves involved there as well (see [April 6, 1992](#)). ([Burns 3/15/1992](#)) US troops will soon be forced to withdraw from Bosnia, but are able to establish a truce in Croatia. ([Lewis 5/31/1992](#))

April 6, 1992: Bosnia Declares Independence; War between Bosnia and Serbia Begins



Territory controlled around the start of the war. White represents the Bosnian Serbs while gray represents Bosnian Muslims and Croats. [Source: *Time* / Cowan, Castello, Glanton] Bosnia declares independence from Yugoslavia (which is now mostly made up of Serbia). The Bosnian Serbs immediately declare their own separate state, but remain closely tied to Serbia. War between Bosnia

and Serbia begins immediately, adding to the existing war between Croatia and Serbia. Within days, the US recognizes the states of Croatia, Slovenia, and Bosnia. The European Union, which has already recognized Croatia and Slovenia, recognizes Bosnia as well. Serbia immediately gains the upper hand and within a month Serbian forces surround most of the area around the Bosnian capital of Sarajevo. ([US Department of State 12/6/1995](#); [Time 12/31/1995](#); [Binder 10/20/2003](#))

Shortly After April 6, 1992: Mujaheddin Begin Arriving in Bosnia to Fight against Serbs

Soon after Bosnian Muslims declare independence from Yugoslavia (see [April 6, 1992](#)), Muslim volunteers from all of the Muslim world come to help fight against the Bosnian Serbs. These volunteers are generally known as the mujaheddin, just as they were in the 1980s war in Afghanistan (and many fought there as well). A military analyst will later call them “pretty good fighters and certainly ruthless.” However, their numbers are small, never reaching more than 4,000 (see [1993-1995](#)). In an interview shortly after 9/11, Richard Holbrooke, Balkans peace negotiator for the US, will say, “I think the Muslims wouldn’t have survived without” help from the mujaheddin. But he will also call their help “a pact with the devil” from which Bosnia is still recovering. ([Meyer and Rempe 10/7/2001](#))

May 1992-Spring 1993: ISI Helps Ramzi Yousef Travel, Then Helps Him Avoid Capture



Ramzi Yousef’s passport photo. [*Source: National*

Geographic] Ramzi Yousef gets considerable help from the Pakistani ISI. When Yousef returns to Pakistan on May 15, 1992, he uses an Iraqi passport bearing a visa issued by the Pakistani embassy in Baghdad. However, the seal on the visa is not the official one and the signature of the visa officer is faked. A senior US intelligence official will later say, “Yousef was developing high-level contacts in Pakistani intelligence through his links with bin Laden, mainly in the ISI. It’s a dirty mess. They facilitated much of his travel. Getting airport officials to turn a blind eye to his travel would have been nothing. ([Reeve 1999, pp. 136-137](#)) Then, on August 31, 1992, Yousef and Ahmed Ajaj are able to fly from Pakistan to the US despite lacking the proper papers to leave Pakistan. US

intelligence officials will later claim senior ISI officials helped Yousef enter the US. ([Reeve 1999, pp. 139](#)) When Ramzi Yousef's Pakistani immigration records are checked after the WTC bombing, it is discovered his embarkation card and other documents had mysteriously disappeared. ISI agents had access to the room where the records were stored. The FBI later gives the Pakistani government the names of Pakistani officials they suspect were colluding with terrorists, but apparently it is never discovered for sure who helped Yousef. One US investigator will later say, "Bin Laden had friends in the ISI who had funded him during the war in Afghanistan. The same contacts were cultivated by Yousef and members of his family." ([Reeve 1999, pp. 48-49](#))

May 1992: CIA Analysis Ignored by US Officials Opposed to Intervening in Bosnia War

At the outset of the war in Bosnia, a small three- or four-man team from the CIA and National Security Agency determine from satellite images that the Serb's artillery guns are in vulnerable positions and can be easily "eliminated in one single day of air strikes-right at the start of the siege." When a diplomat who is working with the team sends word of this to Assistant Secretary for European Affairs Tom Niles, the intelligence is ignored by US officials who do not want the US to get militarily involved. Two months later, officials from the Pentagon and CIA will incorrectly tell the Senate foreign relations committee that striking Serbian artillery positions would be impossible because of the dense forests and mountainous terrain. The diplomat will later take his story to the Guardian, suggesting that claims the Bosnian War was unexpected by US intelligence were without merit and that the Senate Committee was deliberately misled. ([Vulliamy 5/20/1995](#))

May-December 1992: Alleged Hijackers' Associate Linked to Islamic Militant Organization

US authorities discover a connection between Osama Basnan, who is later alleged to associate with 9/11 hijackers Khalid Almhidhar and Nawaf Alhazmi (see [April 1998](#) and [December 4, 1999](#)), and Eritrean Islamic Jihad (EIJ). The US will connect EIJ to bin Laden in 1996 and the FBI will become aware that a high-level EIJ member sits on al-Qaeda's Shura council. The State Department gives the FBI a box of documents recovered from an abandoned car in May 1992. The documents are in Arabic and one of them is a newsletter addressed to EIJ supporters reporting news about the EIJ council. The newsletter is marked "confidential." In addition, the box contains letters addressed to Basnan discussing plans to import used cars into the US. The FBI opens a counterterrorism investigation, but finds little, closing it in December of the same year. ([US Congress 7/24/2003, pp. 176-7](#))

May 30, 1992: UN Imposes Economic Sanctions on Serbia

The US Security Council votes to impose tough sanctions on Yugoslavia, which effectively refers to Serbia since most other Yugoslav republics have declared independence. The embargo requires all the countries of the world to cease trading in any commodity, including oil, and to freeze all its foreign assets. All air traffic links are suspended as well. Sales of medicine and food are exempted. The sanctions are meant to pressure Serbia to agree to a cease fire in the war in Bosnia. ([Lewis 5/31/1992](#))

June 4, 1992: FBI Investigates Ties Between George W. Bush and Saudi Money



James Bath. [*Source: Time Life Images*]The FBI investigates connections between James Bath and George W. Bush, according to published reports. Bath is Salem bin Laden's official representative in the US. Bath's business partner contends that, "Documents indicate that the Saudis were using Bath and their huge financial resources to influence US policy," since George W. Bush's father is president. George W. Bush denies any connections to Saudi money. What becomes of this investigation is unclear, but no charges are ever filed. ([Urban 6/4/1992](#))

Early July 1992: FBI Fires Informant Who Has Penetrated WTC Bombing Group



Emad Salem. [*Source: National Geographic*]In mid-June 1992, FBI informant Emad Salem talks to El Sayyid Nosair, who is in prison for killing Zionist leader Rabbi Meir Kahane (see [November 5, 1990](#)). Nosair and an associate of his named Ali Shinawy reveal to Salem that their group (all of whom are close to Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman) is plotting to set off bombs at twelve "Jewish locations" in New York

City, including temples and banks. A few days later, Nossair's cousin Ibrahim El-Gabrowni introduces Salem to "Dr. Rashid," which is an alias for Clement Rodney Hampton-El, although Salem does not know that yet. "Dr. Rashid" says he is unable to get the remote bomb detonators the group wants, but he can get already assembled pipe bombs for about \$1,000 apiece, and guns. Salem and Shinawy agree to find a warehouse where they can build the bombs. Salem tells all of this to his FBI handlers Louis Napoli and John Anticev, but their boss, Carson Dunbar, insists that Salem has to wear a wire so they can record conversations in order to get the evidence to make a convincing court case against the plotters. But Salem, who is only being paid \$500 a week to inform for the FBI, refuses to wear a wire, saying it is too dangerous. The FBI had been able to corroborate most of Salem's information through their own surveillance such as the monitoring of Nossair's calls from prison. But even though Salem is easily the FBI's best source of information on Abdul-Rahman's group, the FBI fires Salem in early July 1991. ([Miller, Stone, and Mitchell 2002, pp. 70-75](#)) The FBI had a long tradition of having pure intelligence agents who did not wear wires. One FBI source will later note that the FBI could have easily gotten what they needed to make a criminal case without Salem wearing a wire. "It would just take a little more work. We'd have to take his leads and do surveillance. Follow these guys and contain the threat. This is what the FBI does." ([Lance 2003, pp. 92](#)) Author Peter Lance will later comment that without Salem, "Now, when it came to Nossair, the bombing plot, and Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman, the [FBI] was essentially flying blind." The FBI will be unaware as the "Jewish locations" plot morphs into a plot to bomb the World Trade Center over the next several months. ([Lance 2003, pp. 92](#))

(August 1992): Clinton Calls for Military Intervention in Bosnia

Presidential candidate Bill Clinton campaigns "vociferously in support of greater US engagement in Bosnia." A commission, created by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace to devise a post-Cold War foreign policy framework, has been "hand-feed[ing]" key Democrats its recommendations (see [February 1992](#)) in advance of the release of its reports. ([Roberts 6/1999](#); [Daalder 2000, pp. 6](#))

Autumn 1992: Ali Mohamed Trains Top Al-Qaeda Leadership in Afghanistan; Detained in Italy

Ali Mohamed returns to fight in Afghanistan, even though the Soviets have been defeated and the country is now involved in civil war. He trains rebel commanders in military tactics. This is just one of many such trips, as he later will confess spending several months out of each year training operatives overseas for most of the 1990's. ([Weiser and Risen 12/1/1998](#); [Williams and McCormick 9/21/2001](#); [Williams and McCormick 10/11/2001](#)) US prosecutor Patrick Fitzgerald will later say of Mohamed's visits to Afghanistan, "Mohamed did not [make a loyalty pledge] to al-Qaeda but he trained most of al-Qaeda's top leadership—including bin Laden and [Ayman] al-Zawahiri—and most

of al-Qaeda's top trainers. Mohamed taught surveillance, counter-surveillance, assassinations, kidnapping, codes, ciphers and other intelligence techniques." ([9/11 Commission 6/16/2004](#)) FBI agent Jack Cloonan will later say that in addition to bin Laden, others who attend Mohamed's course are Abu Ubaidah al-Banshiri, al-Qaeda's first military commander, and Mohammed Atef, its second military commander. ([Lance 2006, pp. 104-105](#)) During this 1992 trip he teaches intelligence tradecraft, later admitting, "I taught my trainees how to create cell structures that could be used for operations." Also around this time, he is detained by Italian authorities at the Rome airport when airport security discovers his luggage has false compartments. He is let go after convincing the Italians that he is fighting terrorists. ([Weiser and Risen 12/1/1998](#); [Williams and McCormick 9/21/2001](#); [Williams and McCormick 10/11/2001](#)) Mohamed will regularly return to Afghanistan in years to come, as part of at least 58 trips overseas leaving from the US. ([Martin and Berens 12/11/2001](#)) Nabil Sharef, a university professor and former Egyptian intelligence officer, will say, "For five years he was moving back and forth between the US and Afghanistan. It's impossible the CIA thought he was going there as a tourist. If the CIA hadn't caught on to him, it should be dissolved and its budget used for something worthwhile." ([Waldman 11/26/2001](#))

Autumn 1992: Al-Qaeda Builds Operations in Bosnia to Attack Europe and US



Abu Abdel Aziz Barbaros in Bosnia in September 1992. His beard is dyed with henna. [*Source: Pascal le Segretain / Corbis*] Jamal al-Fadl, an al-Qaeda financial agent, is sent from bin Laden's headquarters in Sudan to Zagreb, Croatia, to gather information about the Bosnian war and the prospects of buying businesses in Croatia for al-Qaeda. In Croatia, he meets with Enaam Arnaout (who will soon become the head of the Benevolence International Foundation (BIF) in the US), and al-Qaeda operatives Abu Abdel Aziz Barbaros (a.k.a. Abdel Rahman al Dosari), and Abu Zubair al Madani, one of bin Laden's cousins (he will later be killed fighting in Bosnia). Barbaros tells al-Fadl that al-Qaeda is seeking to create training camps in Bosnia, develop relationships with Bosnian charities, and establish businesses to help finance al-Qaeda activities. He says that BIF is providing money for al-Qaeda to buy weapons to use in Bosnia and that they have already obtained some weapons from Germany with the help of BIF and Mohammed Loay Bayazid (who also works for BIF in the US). According to a later Justice Department indictment, Barbaros also says that "al-Qaeda's goal in Bosnia [is] to establish a base for operations in Europe against al-Qaeda's true enemy, the United

States.” Around this time, BIF begins providing food, clothing, money and communications equipment to fighters in Bosnia, including the elite Black Swans unit. ([USA v. Enaam M. Arnaout 10/6/2003, pp. 24-25](#); [Kohlmann 2004, pp. 16-17](#)) In 1996, al-Fadl will defect from al-Qaeda and tell all he knows to US investigators (see [June 1996-April 1997](#)).

Autumn 1992: Al-Qaeda Develops Ties with Bosnian Charity Front

Jamal al-Fadl travels to Vienna and has meetings with the Third World Relief Agency (TWRA), which has its headquarters in Vienna. He opens up a Vienna bank account and al-Qaeda operative Wadih El-Hage also opens up a Vienna bank account around this time. Presumably these accounts are used by al-Qaeda to send money to TWRA for operations in Bosnia. Around the same time, al-Qaeda leader Mamdouh Mahmud Salim tells al-Fadl that al-Qaeda’s goal is to make Bosnia a base for European operations. ([United States of America v. Usama bin Laden, et al., Day 21 3/22/2001](#); [USA v. Enaam M. Arnaout 10/6/2003, pp. 24-25](#)) TWRA will funnel hundreds of millions of dollars into Bosnia for illegal weapons purchases over the next several years while the US watches but fails to act. In 1996, al-Fadl will defect from al-Qaeda and tell all he knows to US investigators (see [June 1996-April 1997](#)).

Autumn 1992-1999: Atta Attends University in Hamburg, Germany



Dittmar Machule, a professor who worked with Mohamed Atta at the Technical University of Hamburg-Harburg. [*Source: Corbis/Antoine Serra*] Mohamed Atta enrolls in the planning program of the Technical University of Hamburg-Harburg, where he studies for a master’s degree. Luckily for Atta, the department’s chairman, Dittmar Machule, is a specialist on the Middle East. Machule feels that Atta shares his passion and says that Atta is “tender, sensitive...he had deep, dark eyes. His eyes would speak. You could see the intelligence, the knowledge, the

alertness.” Those who know him at the university will say that he sits and listens, without making hasty comments, that he is careful about what he says, and that he is very respectful of well-prepared teachers. Fellow student Martin Ebert will say, “I don’t think it was possible to have a fight with him.” Another fellow student, Harmut Kaiser, will say that it is hard to draw Atta into political discussions in class, even if politics is relevant to the topic under discussion: “He wasn’t a guy who acted like he wanted to change the world—unlike a lot of other students in the group.” ([McDermott 2005, pp. 24-25](#))

September 1992: Charity Front Exposed as Illegal Weapons Pipeline, but No Action Taken Against It

A secret weapons pipeline into Bosnia in violation of a UN arms embargo is exposed. Large transport planes have been arriving once a week for four weeks from Sudan to Maribor, Slovenia. The cargo is marked as humanitarian aid but in fact the planes are carrying tons of weapons, mostly from surplus stocks of old Soviet weapons. The planes are run by a company belonging to Victor Bout, a notorious illegal arms dealer who will later work closely with the Taliban in Afghanistan (see [October 1996-early 2002](#)). ([Farah and Braun 2007, pp. 50-51, 268-269](#)) Such planes have been bringing weapons through Croatia bound for Muslim Bosnia, but due to deteriorating relations between Croatia and Muslim Bosnia, the Croatian government stops the flights and impounds 120 tons of weapons. At the same time, chartered Russian helicopters fly more weapons directly into Muslim Bosnia. Austrian government agents learn that the Third World Relief Agency (TWRA) is financing all of these shipments. They are working with Hasan Cengic, a radical imam who is also a Bosnian government official. The TWRA and Cengic switch to other routes. The next year, the German government will stumble across an illegal weapons deal being negotiated in Germany by Bosnian Muslims and Turkish arms dealers and arrest around 30. TWRA was the financial broker of the deal. But despite the exposure of TWRA as a charity front, no government takes any action against it and it will continue to be the main vehicle by which Muslim Bosnia gets illegal weapons. ([Pomfret 9/22/1996](#); [Farah and Braun 2007, pp. 50-51, 268-269](#)) Bout and Cengic will apparently continue working together. A 2004 Bosnian intelligence report will say that “Victor Bout in collaboration with Hasan Cengic is transporting weapons to Chechnya” via a Bout front company. ([Farah and Braun 2007, pp. 50-51, 268-269](#))

September 1992 and After: Al-Zawahiri Frequently Visits Bosnia, Works with Bosnian Muslim Politicians



Ayman al-Zawahiri in disguise. [Source: *Interpol*] Al-Qaeda second-in-command Ayman al-Zawahiri is said to visit Bosnia many times from around this date. A prominent Muslim Bosnian politician later claims that al-Zawahiri visited mujaheddin camps in central Bosnia as early as September 1992. The Egyptian government, which considers al-Zawahiri an important enemy, claims al-Zawahiri is running several mujaheddin operations in Bosnia through charity fronts. They also claim he meets regularly with Bosnian Muslim politicians in Sarajevo. He is further said to occasionally meet with Iranian government representatives to discuss the war in Bosnia, as Iran is supplying weapons to the Bosnian Muslims. ([Schindler 2007, pp. 123, 141](#)) Anwar Shaaban, a radical imam leading the Bosnian mujaheddin effort from Milan, Italy (see [Late 1993-1994](#)), remains in regular contact with al-Zawahiri, according to Italian intelligence. ([Schindler 2007, pp. 164](#)) In 1993, bin Laden reportedly puts al-Zawahiri in charge of the organization's operations in the Balkans. ([Taylor 12/15/2001](#)) By 1994, al-Zawahiri will settle in Bulgaria to manage operations in Bosnia and the rest of the Balkan region (see [September 1994-1996](#)).

September 1, 1992: US Misses Opportunity to Stop First WTC Bombing and Discover Al-Qaeda



Ahmed Ajaj. [Source: *FBI*] Al-Qaeda Operatives Ahmad Ajaj and Ramzi Yousef enter the US together. Ajaj is arrested at Kennedy Airport in New York City. Yousef is not arrested, and later, he masterminds the 1993 bombing of the WTC. "The US government was pretty sure Ajaj was a terrorist from the moment he stepped foot on US soil," because his "suitcases were stuffed with fake passports, fake IDs and a cheat sheet on how to lie to US immigration inspectors," plus "two handwritten notebooks filled with bomb recipes, six bomb-making manuals, four how-to videotapes concerning weaponry, and an advanced guide to surveillance training." However, Ajaj is

charged only with passport fraud, and serves a six-month sentence. From prison, Ajaj frequently calls Yousef and others in the 1993 WTC bombing plot, but no one translates the calls until long after the bombing. ([Braun et al. 10/14/2001](#)) Ajaj is released from prison three days after the WTC bombing, but is later rearrested and sentenced to more than 100 years in prison. ([Braun et al. 10/14/2001](#)) One of the manuals seized from Ajaj is horribly mistranslated for the trial. For instance, the title page is said to say “The Basic Rule,” published in Jordan in 1982, when in fact the title says “al-Qaeda” (which means “the base” in English), published in Afghanistan in 1989. Investigators later complain that a proper translation could have shown an early connection between al-Qaeda and the WTC bombing. ([Engelberg 1/14/2001](#)) An Israeli Newsweekly later reports that the Palestinian Ajaj may have been a mole for the Israeli Mossad. The Village Voice has suggested that Ajaj may have had “advance knowledge of the World Trade Center bombing, which he shared with Mossad, and that Mossad, for whatever reason, kept the secret to itself.” Ajaj was not just knowledgeable, but was involved in the planning of the bombing from his prison cell. ([Friedman 8/3/1993](#))

Mid-September 1992: Bosnia Muslims Stage Attack from Sarajevo Hospital to Discredit Serbians

Lord David Owen arrives in Sarajevo as the new European Union peace negotiator. Owen is initially seen as anti-Serb and had recently advocated Western air strikes against the Bosnian Serbs. He is outraged that his arrival coincides with a Serb bombardment of the Kosevo Hospital in Sarajevo, Bosnia. But within hours, he learns that the incident was actually provoked by the Bosnian Muslims. He will later say, “The UN monitors actually saw the Muslim troops enter the hospital and, from the hospital grounds, firing at Serb positions. Then the mortar was packed up and removed as the television crew showed up. A few minutes later a retaliatory fire of course landed in or near the hospital and all was filmed for television.” UN Gen. Philippe Morillon immediately writes a letter to Bosnian President Izetbegovic: “I now have concrete evidence from witnesses of this cowardly and disreputable act and I must point out the harm such blatant disregard for the Geneva Convention does to your cause.” But the letter and information about the incident is not made public and the Serbs are the only ones blamed for the incident. Owen will later say, “I asked Morillon why didn’t he make this public, and he shrugged his shoulders [and said], ‘We have to live here.’” ([Rothstein 1999, pp. 176, 188](#))

October, 1992: UN Investigator Says Bosnian Muslims Are ‘Threatened with Extermination’

The Bosnian Serbs have the upper hand in their war with the Bosnian Muslims and Croats. A UN human rights investigator warns that the Bosnian Muslims are “virtually threatened with extermination” unless they are helped by outside forces. But a UN weapons embargo is still in place. ([Risen and McManus 4/5/1996](#))

October 3, 1992: FBI Learns Al-Kifah Charity Front Is Forming an Elite Armed Militia

Garrett Wilson is a burly ex-US Army Ranger and military police officer at a naval base in Philadelphia who also runs his own security business. He is also a trusted FBI informant, helping to monitor militant black Muslims who come to him to for paramilitary training and to buy surplus military equipment. On October 3, 1992, Wilson gets a call from Abdul Wali Zindani, head of the Al-Kifah Refugee Center in Brooklyn. Al-Kifah is a charity front linked to both al-Qaeda and the CIA (see [1986-1993](#)). Zindani wants Wilson to help train and supply an elite group of about ten men. Wilson then speaks to Abu Ubaidah Yahya, security chief for Al-Kifah, and Yahya further explains that they are especially interested in hostage rescue training. Wilson contacts his FBI handlers John Liguori and Tommy Corrigan, who are intrigued. They are aware that friends of El Sayyid Nosair have been plotting to break Nosair from prison and worry the hostage rescue training could be related to that, since Nosair has been closely linked to Al-Kifah. They tell Wilson to remain in contact with the people at Al-Kifah and see what develops. ([Miller, Stone, and Mitchell 2002, pp. 81-83](#))

November 1992-February 11, 1993: Egyptian Intelligence Repeatedly Warns US about Cells Linked to ‘Blind Sheikh’ in New York

Beginning in November 1992, Egyptian intelligence repeatedly warns US intelligence that Sheikh Abdul-Rahman’s principal mosques in the US, the Al Salaam and Al Farouq mosques in Brooklyn, are “hotbeds of terrorist activity,” and that Abdul-Rahman is plotting a new round of terrorist attacks in Egypt. The Al-Kifah Refugee Center charity front is based inside the Al Farouq mosque (see [1986-1993](#)). One Egyptian official later says, “There were many, many contacts between Cairo and Washington.” On November 12, 1992, members of the Al-Gama’a al-Islamiyya militant group led by Abdul-Rahman machine-guns a bus-load of Western tourists in Egypt, injuring five Germans. ([Friedman 3/30/1993](#)) Between February 6 and 11, 1993, some FBI agents travel to Cairo, Egypt, to discuss Egyptian concerns with officials there. The Egyptians are said to warn about certain terrorist cells in the US connected to Abdul-Rahman but do not specifically warn about the WTC bombing. ([Jehl 4/6/1993](#)) Perhaps as a result of these concerns, on February 13, the FBI obtains a FISA warrant and begins tapping Abdul-Rahman’s phone calls. ([Lance 2003, pp. 103](#)) Shortly after the WTC bombing two weeks later (see [February 26, 1993](#)), Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak will say that the bombing could have been prevented if Egypt’s warnings had been heeded. ([Jehl 4/6/1993](#))

Mid-November-December 20, 1992: FBI Informant Learns of Plot to Train and Arm Group with Automatic Weapons and Bombs

In mid-November 1992, Garrett Wilson, an FBI informant who sells military equipment and conducts paramilitary training, is contacted by someone named “Dr. Rashid.” Wilson had previously been contacted by Abu Ubaidah Yahya, the security chief at the Al-Kifah Refugee Center in Brooklyn, a charity front tied to both al-Qaeda and the CIA (see [1986-1993](#)). Wilson’s FBI handlers are excited to learn about this because in June 1992, a “Dr. Rashid” had met with FBI informant Emad Salem and offered to supply bombs and guns (see [Early July 1992](#)). The FBI runs a background check and determines “Dr. Rashid” is really Clement Rodney Hampton-El, who works at a hospital in Long Island. The also learn from phone records that he has recently made calls to the “Blind Sheikh,” Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman. On December 20, 1992, Wilson meets with Yahya and Hampton-El. They tell him that they want him to train eight to ten men for an international jihad battalion separate from another small group Al-Kifah wants Wilson to help train (see [October 3, 1992](#)). Hampton-El says he will provide AK-47s for the training sessions, but is looking for detonator caps, which are needed to make bombs. He also says the group will be sent to fight in Bosnia, but they are asking to be instructed in sniper firing and frontal assaults on buildings. Wilson tells FBI agent Tommy Corrigan, “It sounds to me like they either want to kidnap or kill someone.” Corrigan and other FBI agents are alarmed. ([Miller, Stone, and Mitchell 2002, pp. 83-84](#))

November 17, 1992: US Fights to Keep Bosnian Arms Embargo in Place

The UN Security Council votes to impose a naval blockade around Serbia (which does not have much effect since Serbia is a landlocked country). While debating the resolution, a number of Islamic countries argue that Bosnia should be excluded from the arms embargo that was imposed on all former Yugoslavia republics in September 1991 (see [September 26, 1991](#)). But the US successfully leads an effort to shoot down the proposal. Former US Secretary of State Cyrus Vance tells the Security Council, “It taxes credulity to suggest that lifting the arms embargo for only one party is either feasible or desirable.” ([Prial 11/17/1992](#)) Ironically, around the same time, the US begins to secretly support Bosnian Muslim efforts to violate the embargo using a charity front controlled by radical militants (see [September 1992](#)).

Late 1992-1995: US and Saudis Allegedly Collaborate on Illegal Weapons Deliveries to Bosnian Muslims

In 1996, the Washington Post reports that the Saudi Arabian government spent hundreds of millions of dollars to channel weapons to the Muslim Bosnians, and that the US government knew about it and assisted it. An anonymous Saudi official who took part in the effort will say that the US role “was more than just turning a blind eye to what was going on.... It was consent combined with stealth cooperation.... American knowledge began under [President George] Bush and became much greater under [President] Clinton.” The Bosnian program was modeled on Saudi and US cooperation to fund the mujaheddin in Afghanistan in the 1980s. The major difference is that if Afghanistan the

Saudis and Americans split the costs, but in Bosnia the Saudis pay for everything. They spend \$300 million on illegal weapons deliveries plus around \$500 million in Saudi aid to the Bosnian government. The US helps because Saudi Arabia lacks the “technical sophistication” to mount the operation on their own. The Post will report, “The official refused to go into detail about the American role in the operation, other than to say that the Saudis had made use of the same ‘network’ of undercover operatives, arms salesmen, and ‘former this and former that’ set up during the Afghan operation.” The official does say, “We did not set up a formal structure, the way we did in Afghanistan. But logic tells you that without the consent of NATO, the United States, and Germany, there was no way it could have happened.” Most of the weapons go through Croatia since Bosnia lacks good access to the sea, and the Croatian government takes a cut of up to half of all the weapons. Some emergency deliveries are made through “secret nighttime flights to Tuzla and other airports under the control of the Bosnian authorities.” Other supplies come by sea, with NATO apparently turning a blind eye in their naval blockade of the coastline. The direct aid given to Bosnia is used to buy weapons on the black market at high prices, sometimes from Serb enemies. US government officials will later deny any such arrangement took place, but British, French, and other officials believe the US was secretly involved in efforts to arm the Bosnians. ([Dobbs 2/2/1996](#)) Much of the money must go through the Third World Relief Agency (TWRA), since most illegal weapons get to Bosnia through the TWRA. This charity front has ties to Osama bin Laden and other radical militants (see [Mid-1991-1996](#)).

Late 1992-Early 1993: Bosnian Charity Front Funds Training Camp and Militant Bombers in US

Clement Rodney Hampton-El will later admit that he had been smuggling money into the US for military training from the Third World Relief Agency (TWRA). ([USA v. Benevolence International Foundation and Enaam M. Arnaout 4/29/2002, pp. 6-7](#) ³) Hampton-El is linked to Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman and the Al-Kifah Refugee Center and will later be given a long prison term for involvement in the “Landmarks” plot (see [June 24, 1993](#)). He makes several trips to Europe in 1992-1993, raising over \$150,000 to fund a Pennsylvania training camp (see [Late 1992-Early 1993](#)). After one trip to Vienna, Austria (where TWRA has its headquarters), he returns to the US with \$20,000 hidden in his pants to avoid the scrutiny of US customs officers. ([United Press International 8/2/1995](#)) At the time, TWRA is funneling huge amounts of weapons into Bosnia in violation of a UN embargo but with the tacit approval of the US (see [Mid-1991-1996](#)). Hampton-El also travels to Bosnia around this time. ([Kohlmann 2004, pp. 73-74](#))

December 1992: US Army Allegedly Tries to Get Radical Militants in New York to Fight in Bosnia

The Independent will report in 1998, “In December 1992, a US army official met one of the Afghan veterans from Al-Kifah [Refugee Center] and offered help with a covert operation to support the Muslims in Bosnia, funded with Saudi money, according to one

of those jailed for assisting with the New York bombings. But that effort quickly disintegrated, leaving a great deal of bad feeling.” ([Marshall 11/1/1998](#)) More details about this are not known. However, the plan may not have necessarily failed because it will later be reported that that very same month, double agent Ali Mohamed, an-ex US Special Forces soldier, is part of a 14-man al-Qaeda team made up of retired US military personnel that enters Bosnia through Croatia to train and arm mujaheddin fighters there in 1992 (see [December 1992-June 1993](#)). Mohamed is also closely tied to the Al-Kifah Refugee Center, which is located in Brooklyn, New York (see [1987-1989](#)). Al-Kifah is closely tied to both al-Qaeda and the CIA (see [1986-1993](#)). Also that same month, a Bosnian charity front largely funded by Saudi money begins paying for a militant training camp in Pennsylvania that trains some of those later arrested for roles in the New York bombing (see [December 1992-Early February 1993](#)).

December 1992: Saudi Embassy Pays Radical Militants in US to Fight in Bosnia

Clement Rodney Hampton-El, one of the 1993 “Landmarks” bombers (see [June 24, 1993](#)), is summoned to the Saudi Embassy in Washington and told that wealthy Saudis are sponsoring fighters in Bosnia. Hampton-El has longstanding links to the International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO), which is closely tied to the Saudi government (see [October 12, 2001](#)). He is given \$150,000 to recruit and train people in the US to fight in Bosnia. ([Schindler 2007, pp. 121-122](#)) He starts a militant training camp in Pennsylvania that same month (see [December 1992-Early February 1993](#)) and gets \$150,000 overseas from a bin Laden linked charity front (it is not known if this is the same \$150,000 or additional money) (see [Late 1992-Early 1993](#)). The Saudi embassy also introduces him to a radical imam named Bilal Philips. Philips, a Canadian citizen and author on Islamic topics, has been employed by the Saudi government since early 1991 to proselytize among US soldiers stationed in Saudi Arabia (see [March-September 1991](#)). Philips gives Hampton-El a list of likely candidates who are ex-US soldiers that Philips recently helped convert to Islam. ([Schindler 2007, pp. 121-122](#)) That same month, 14 ex-US soldiers go to Bosnia to fight and train there (see [December 1992-June 1993](#)). They are led by double agent Ali Mohamed, who, like Hampton-El, is closely tied to the Al-Kifah Refugee Center in New York.

Late 1992-Early 1993 and Late 1994: Oklahoma City Bomber Said to Meet with Ramzi Yousef in Philippines



Terry Nichols. *[Source: Oklahoma City Police Department]* A Philippine undercover operative and one of his wives claims that Terry Nichols, later convicted for the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995, meets with al-Qaeda bomber Ramzi Yousef in the Philippines at these times. The operative, Edwin Angeles, was the second in command in the militant group Abu Sayyaf from 1991 to 1995 while secretly working for Philippine intelligence at the same time (see [1991-Early February 1995](#)). In 1995, after the Oklahoma City bombing, he will claim in a videotaped interrogation that in late 1992 and early 1993 there are meetings in the southern Philippines between Yousef, Nichols, and a second would-be American terrorist named John Lepney. There are additional meetings with the same people and others in late 1994. For about a week, Angeles, Yousef, Nichols, and Lepney, are joined by Abdurajak Janjalani, the leader of Abu Sayyaf, two members of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), Abdul Hakim Murad and Wali Khan Amin Shah (both of whom are working with Yousef on the Bojinka plot (see [January 6, 1995](#)), and a half-brother of Yousef known only by the alias Ahmad Hassim (this is a probable reference to Yousef's brother Abd al-Karim Yousef, who is living in the Philippines at the time). Elmina Abdul, Angeles' third wife, will add additional details about these 1994 meetings in a taped 2002 hospital confession to a Philippines reporter days before her death. She only remembers Nichols as "Terry" or "The Farmer" and doesn't remember the name of the other American. She says, "They talked about bombings. They mentioned bombing government buildings in San Francisco, St. Louis, and in Oklahoma. The Americans wanted instructions on how to make and to explode bombs. [Angeles] told me that Janjalani was very interested in paying them much money to explode the buildings. The money was coming from Yousef and the other Arab." ([Dacanay 4/3/2002](#); [Insight 4/19/2002](#); [Zumel-Sicat 4/26/2002](#); [Timmerman 6/22/2002](#)) ("The other Arab" may be a reference to the Arab Mohammed Jamal Khalifa, bin Laden's brother-in-law, because Janjalani's younger brother later claimed Abu Sayyaf was funded in its early years by Yousef and Khalifa). ([CNN 1/31/2007](#)) She claims Nichols and Lepney are sent to an unnamed place for more instructions on bomb-making to destroy a building in the US. She also says that Angeles and others in Abu Sayyaf believed Yousef worked for the Iraqi government. ([Timmerman 6/22/2002](#)) The Manila Times later reports that "Lepney did indeed reside and do business in Davao City [in the Southern Philippines] during 1990 to 1996." One bar owner recalls that when he got drunk he liked to brag about his adventures with local rebel groups. ([Zumel-Sicat 4/26/2002](#))

December 1992-June 1993: Ali Mohamed and Other Former US Soldiers Train Al-Qaeda Fighters in Bosnia

Double agent Ali Mohamed spends much of 1992 training al-Qaeda recruits in Afghanistan. But he also gives specialized training in Sudan, Bosnia, and other conflict zones. Using the alias Abu 'Abdallah, he is part of a 14-man al-Qaeda team made up of retired US military personnel that enters Bosnia through Croatia to train and arm mujaheddin fighters there. Apparently this will come to light in a 1998 trial in Egypt. ([Gunaratna 2003, pp. 41, 150, 337](#)) The training takes place at Meskovic, a village near the town of Tuzla. The 14-man team are smuggled into Bosnia one by one in December 1992. The team is said to be sponsored by a "mosque in Newark, New Jersey." ([Brumley 12/3/1995](#)) Mohamed regularly trained militants at the Al-Kifah Refugee Center, an al-Qaeda front in the US (see [1987-1989](#)), and there was a mosque associated to it in Newark. This effort takes place at a time when Al-Kifah is sending many US-based militants to fight in Bosnia (see [1992](#)). It will later be alleged that a US Army official met with people at Al-Kifah in December 1992 and offered to help with a covert operation to support Muslims in Bosnia (see [December 1992](#)). Twelve of the Americans leave within two months after training a group of 25 mujaheddin in insurgency warfare. But Mohamed and another American only known by the code name Abu Musa remain at Meskovic until June 1993, occasionally accompanying the mujaheddin on attacks behind Serb lines. ([Brumley 12/3/1995](#))

December 8, 1992: UN and Senior Western Military Officials Claim Bosnian Muslims Are Attacking Their Own People to Gain International Sympathy

The Independent reports, "United Nations officials and senior Western military officers believe some of the worst recent killings in Sarajevo, including the massacre of at least 16 people in a bread queue, were carried out by the city's mainly Muslim defenders - not Serb besiegers - as a propaganda ploy to win world sympathy and military intervention. The view has been expressed in confidential reports circulating at UN headquarters in New York, and in classified briefings to US policymakers in Washington. All suggest that Sarajevo's defenders, mainly Muslims but including Croats and a number of Serb residents, staged several attacks on their own people in the hope of dramatizing the city's plight in the face of insuperable Serbian odds. They emphasize, however, that these attacks, though bloody, were a tiny minority among regular city bombardments by Serbian forces." The reports claim the following events were likely committed by the Bosnian Muslims:

- The bombing of a bread line in Sarajevo on May 27, 1992.
- A mortar attack on July 17, 1992, hitting a bunker where British minister Douglas Hurd was meeting with Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic. Ten bystanders were killed or wounded.
- An August 4, 1992, explosion at a cemetery while two orphans were being buried.
- The August 13, 1992, death of ABC News producer David Kaplan near Sarajevo. One

UN military officer says it would have been impossible the bullet that killed him was fired by a sniper from distant Serbian positions. “That shot came in horizontal to the ground. Somebody was down at ground level.”

■A Ukrainian soldier killed in Sarajevo on December 3, 1992, was similarly shot by small arms fire which would imply the Bosnian Muslims.

The UN officials behind these reports claim that are not trying to exonerate the Serbs, who also have been killing many in sniper attacks, mortar rounds, and so forth. “But they expressed fears that the ‘self-inflicted’ attacks may not augur well for existing UN forces or for additional Western troops, including Britons, who have to serve there.” ([Doyle 8/22/1992](#))

December 1992-Early February 1993: Islamist Militants Learn to Fight at Pennsylvania Training Camp



Mohammed Abouhalima. [*Source: Corbis*] Siddig Siddig Ali, Abdo Mohammed Haggag, Abu Ubaidah Yahya, Mohammed Abouhalima, and others train at a militant training camp in New Bloomfield, Pennsylvania, with weapons and ammunition provided by Yahya and Clement Rodney Hampton-El (see [February 21, 1995](#)). Abouhalima will later be convicted for a role in the 1993 WTC bombing, as will his brother (see [February 26, 1993](#)) while the others mentioned will be convicted for roles in the related “Landmarks” plot (see [June 24, 1993](#)). ([USA v. Omar Ahmad Ali Abdel-Rahman et al 7/13/1995, pp. 9](#)) Yahya is the chief instructor, as he is an ex-US Marine who served two tours in Vietnam and teaches at a martial arts academy. Siddig Ali will later say of Yahya, “[H]e’s decorated and has a lot of medals... [and he was] a great trainer...” The training even includes mock nighttime assaults on a nearby electric power substation. ([Kohlmann 2004, pp. 73](#)) An FBI informant named Garrett Wilson helps lead the FBI to the camp, and the FBI monitors it for two days, January 16 and 17, but the monitoring team is mysteriously pulled away before the end of the second day (see [January 16-17, 1993](#)). In a wiretapped conversation with an FBI informant (most likely Wilson), Siddig Ali says regarding the camp, “Our goal is that these people get extensive and very, very, very good training, so that we can get started at anyplace where jihad (holy war) is needed... And after they receive their training, they go to Bosnia... And whoever survives, I mean, could come and [instruct] somewhere else, or Egypt, or any other place, etc...” ([Kohlmann 2004, pp. 73](#)) Hampton-El makes trips to Europe to pick

up money from the Third World Relief Agency (TWRA) charity front to fund the camp (see [Late 1992-Early 1993](#)). TWRA is funneling huge amounts of weapons into Bosnia in violation of a UN embargo but with the tacit approval of the US (see [Mid-1991-1996](#)).

December 19, 1992: FBI, Having Fired Key Informant, Misses Opportunity to Uncover WTC Bombing Plot

Mahmud Abouhalima, one of the 1993 WTC bombing plotters, calls Emad Salem. Salem had been an FBI informant on a group close to the “Blind Sheikh,” Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman, including Abouhalima, but he had been fired by the FBI some months before (see [Early July 1992](#)). Salem is mad at the FBI about being fired and doesn’t bother to tell them about the phone call, and doesn’t call Abouhalima back. It will later be discovered that on that same day other plotters begin calling chemical companies in search of bomb parts and the next day another FBI informant is contacted and asked to help get bomb parts (see [Mid-November-December 20, 1992](#)). Salem has bomb making expertise so it is likely Abouhalima was calling him to get help in making the bomb to blow up the WTC. The authors of the 2002 book *The Cell* will later note, “Had Salem still be working as an informant for [the FBI] at the time of the call, the World Trade center bombing plot might well have been cracked before Salem had hung up the phone.” ([Miller, Stone, and Mitchell 2002, pp. 84-85](#))

December 29, 1992: Islamic Militants Attack Hotels in Yemen, Killing Two



The Movenpick hotel in Aden, Yemen.

[Source: *Al Bab*] Bombs explode at two hotels, the Movenpick and the Gold Mohur, in Aden, Yemen, killing a tourist and a hotel worker. US soldiers involved in an operation in Somalia are sometimes billeted nearby, but none are killed or injured in the blasts. ([Bergen 2001, pp. 176](#); [Scheuer 2006, pp. 147](#)) US intelligence will conclude in April 1993 that “[Bin Laden] almost certainly played a role” in this attack. However, there is little chance of a successful prosecution due to lack of evidence. ([Bergen 2001, pp. 176](#); [US Congress 7/24/2003](#)) Other operatives involved in the bombing are reputedly “point man” Tariq Nasr al-Fadhli, a leading Afghan veteran and tribal leader who later lives on a Yemeni government stipend, and Jamal al-Nahdi, who is said to have lost a hand in the blast. ([Burns 11/26/2000](#)) The Yemen government sends an armored brigade to arrest al-

Fadhli and he eventually surrenders, but is soon set free. Author Peter Bergen will later comment: “[T]he Yemeni government seems to have developed amnesia: al-Fadhli became a member of the president’s personally selected consultative council and his sister is married to General Ali Muhsin al-Ahmar, a member of President Saleh’s family; al-Nahdi is a businessman in Sana’a and a member of the permanent committee of Yemen’s ruling party.” ([Bergen 2001, pp. 176](#)) The US announces it is withdrawing from Yemen shortly after the bombings (see [Shortly After December 29, 1992](#)).

Shortly After December 29, 1992: US Announces Withdrawal from Yemen following Bombings, Bin Laden Later Claims Victory

Following attacks on two hotels near where US troops stayed (see [December 29, 1992](#)), the US announces it will no longer use Yemen as a base to support operations in Somalia. ([Bergen 2001, pp. 176](#)) Although no US troops are killed, the attacks are regarded as a success by militant Islamists. In 1998, Osama bin Laden will say, “The United States wanted to set up a military base for US soldiers in Yemen, so that it could send fresh troops to Somalia... The Arab mujaheddin related to the Afghan jihad carried out two bomb explosions in Yemen to warn the United States, causing damage to some Americans staying in those hotels. The United States received our warning and gave up the idea of setting up its military bases in Yemen. This was the first al-Qaeda victory scored against the Crusaders.” ([Scheuer 2006, pp. 147](#))

1993: Bin Laden Buys Airplane From US Military to Kill US Soldiers

Bin Laden buys a jet from the US military in Arizona. The US military approves the transaction. The aircraft is later used to transport missiles from Pakistan that kill American Special Forces in Somalia. A man named Essam al Ridi will testify in a US trial before 9/11 that he buys a Saber-40 aircraft for \$210,000, then flies it from Texas to Khartoum, Sudan. Bin Laden wants the plane to transport Stinger missiles, and apparently it is used in to transport some kind of missile from Pakistan that kill US Special Forces in Somalia in 1993. Essam al Ridi had just taken flying lessons himself (at the Ed Boardman Aviation School in Fort Worth) in an apparently early attempt by bin Laden to get more pilots. ([Mackay 9/16/2001](#); [Fainaru 5/19/2002](#))

1993: Darkazanli Gives CIA First Hint of Hamburg Cell

According to CIA documents, US intelligence first becomes aware of Mamoun Darkazanli at this time, when a person arrested in Africa carrying false passports and counterfeit money is found with Darkazanli’s telephone number. Darkazanli is a Syrian businessman residing in Germany. The CIA carefully scrutinizes Darkazanli and his business dealings, but authorities are not able to make a case against him. ([US Congress](#)

[7/24/2003](#) ^٥) Many will later claim that Darkazanli is a member of the Hamburg al-Qaeda cell. He will associate with Mohamed Atta, Marwan Alshehhi, and others.

1993: Ali Mohamed Sets Up Nairobi Cell; Trains Somalis to Fight US Troops

Bin Laden asks Ali Mohamed to set up an al-Qaeda cell in Nairobi, Kenya, to support al-Qaeda operations against the US intervention in the neighboring country of Somalia that year. He does so, setting up a cell of a dozen operatives. He creates a car business, a fishing business, and sells scuba diving equipment, luxury automobiles, and diamonds to create income for the cell, and a charity organization to provide operatives with documents. The cell will later plan the 1998 embassy bombings in both Nairobi and nearby Dar es Salaam, Tanzania (see [August 7, 1998](#)). He also helps train Somali clansmen in the months leading up to a battle that will kill 18 US soldiers (see [October 3-4, 1993](#)). ([Los Angeles Times 10/21/2000](#); [Sullivan and Neff 10/21/2001](#); [Waldman 11/26/2001](#); [Martin and Berens 12/11/2001](#))

1993: Albanian Drug Smuggling Profits Fund Muslim Arms Buildup in Balkans

Albanian drug smugglers are found to be playing a prominent role in funding the Muslim arms buildup in Bosnia, Croatia, Kosovo, and Macedonia. In addition to small arms and machine guns, the criminal arms deals include surface-to-surface missiles and helicopters. ([Block and Doyle 12/10/1993](#); [Viviano 6/10/1994](#))

1993: Bosnian President Izetbegovic Grants Bin Laden Passport as Gesture of Appreciation

Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic grants Osama bin Laden a Bosnian passport “in recognition of his followers’ contributions to Mr. Izetbegovic’s quest to create a ‘fundamentalist Islamic republic’ in the Balkans,” according to an account in a Bosnian newspaper in 1999. ([Taylor 12/15/2001](#)) Renate Flottau, a reporter for Der Spiegel, will later claim that bin Laden told her he had been given a Bosnian passport when she happened to meet him in Bosnia in 1994 (see [1994](#)). ([Schindler 2007, pp. 123-125](#))

1993: US-Based Charity Helps Send Nine Elite Al-Qaeda Trainers to Bosnia



Al-Hajj Boudella. *[Source: Public domain via National Public Radio]* Enaam Arnaout, head of the Benevolence International Foundation (BIF) in the US and an al-Qaeda operative, personally arranges for nine elite instructors from the Al-Sadda training camp in Afghanistan to be sent to central Bosnia to train mujaheddin there. One of the trainers is Al-Hajj Boudella, who will become the long-time director of the BIF's office in Bosnia. He will be arrested shortly after 9/11 and renditioned to the Guantanamo Bay prison in 2002 (see [January 18, 2002](#)). ([Kohlmann 2004, pp. 19-20, 255](#))

1993: US Begins Construction on Airfield Used for Bosnia Arms Pipeline

The US government, in collaboration with Hasan Cengic and his father Halid Cengic, starts work on an airport in Visoko, Bosnia, northwest of Sarajevo. This will become a major destination of a secret US arms pipeline into Bosnia. ([Wiebes 2003, pp. 179](#)) US Special Forces are apparently secretly involved in the construction. ([Harris 12/3/1995](#)) The Cengics are radical Muslims and Hasan Cengic is heavily involved with an illegal weapons pipeline into Bosnia controlled by radical militants (see [Mid-1991-1996](#)). The airport will be completed in late 1994 (see [Late 1994-Late 1995](#)).

1993: Bin Laden Visits Bosnia, Supports Muslim President Izetbegovic

Bin Laden visits Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic in Sarajevo. He sponsors some fighters from Arabic countries to fight on the Muslims' side in Bosnia. ([Binder 10/20/2003](#)) Izetbegovic gives bin Laden a Bosnian passport the same year as a gesture of appreciation for his support (see [1993](#)). A CIA report in 1996 will conclude bin Laden did visit the Balkans region in 1993, though it will not definitively state he went to Bosnia. ([Gunaratna 2003, pp. 176, 340](#)) Bin Laden will also visit Izetbegovic in 1994 (see [November 1994](#) and [1994](#)).

1993: US Begins Regularly Conducting Renditions

The United States begins a practice known as "rendition," the official purpose of which is to bring suspected foreign criminals to justice. Suspects detained abroad are "rendered"

to courts in the United States or other countries. In some cases they are transferred to countries with poor human rights records and tortured. Some are convicted, even put to death, without a fair trial. ([Priest 1/2/2005, pp. A01](#)) The frequency of renditions will increase dramatically after the September 11 attacks (see [After September 11, 2001](#)). ([Chandrasekaran and Finn 3/11/2002, pp. A01](#); [van Natta 3/9/2003](#); [Priest and Stephens 5/11/2004, pp. A01](#))

1993: US Government Turns Blind Eye to Illegal Weapons Pipeline to Muslim Bosnia

According to a senior Western diplomat, in 1993 the Clinton administration learns about the Third World Relief Agency (TWRA) and its real purpose of secretly violating the UN embargo to get weapons to Bosnia (see [Mid-1991-1996](#)). But the US takes no action to stop its fund-raising or arms shipments. The diplomat will later say, “We were told [by Washington] to watch them but not interfere. Bosnia was trying to get weapons from anybody, and we weren’t helping much. The least we could do is back off. So we backed off.” TWRA has key offices in Austria and Germany, but authorities in both those countries refrain from shutting down TWRA as well. Austrian officials will later admit that “public pressure to support Bosnia’s Muslims allowed them to turn a blind eye to the agency’s activities.” ([Pomfret 9/22/1996](#)) However, it seems probable that the US found out about TWRA’s smuggling activities earlier, when they were exposed in late 1992 (see [September 1992](#)). Further, there are suggestions that the US may have tacitly agreed to the illegal smuggling and even helped with it from the very beginning (see [Late 1992-1995](#)). The TWRA is linked to bin Laden and other radical militants, and in 1993 it helps fund bomb plotters in the US, but the FBI does not act on that link (see [Late 1992-Early 1993](#) and [Early April 1993](#)).

1993: Bin Laden Lists Al-Qaeda’s Most Important Charity Fronts



Qatar Charitable Society logo. [*Source: Qatar Charitable Society*] Bin Laden privately identifies the three most important charity fronts used to finance al-Qaeda. He names:

- The Muslim World League (MWL), a Saudi charity closely tied to the Saudi government.
- Benevolence International Foundation (BIF), a charity based in Chicago, Illinois.
- The Qatar Charitable Society (QCS). Al-Qaeda apparently will stop using this organization after it is publicly linked to an assassination attempt on Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in 1995 (see [June 1995](#)).

Bin Laden tells this to Jamal al-Fadl, who is helping to run bin Laden's businesses in Sudan. A Justice Department brief will later explain, "[Al-Fadl] understood from conversations with bin Laden and others in al-Qaeda that the charities would receive funds that could be withdrawn in cash and a portion of the money used for legitimate relief purposes and another portion diverted for al-Qaeda operations. The money for al-Qaeda operations would nevertheless be listed in the charities' books as expenses for building mosques or schools or feeding the poor or the needy." ([USA v. Enaam M. Arnaout 10/6/2003](#).) In 1996, al-Fadl will quit al-Qaeda and tell US investigators all he knows about the organization and its finances (see [June 1996-April 1997](#)). Yet the US has yet to list the MWL or QCS as terrorism financiers, and will wait until 2002 before listing BIF. The US knew about the MWL's support for radical militants even before al-Fadl defected (see [January 1996](#)), but its ties to the Saudi government has repeatedly protected it (see [October 12, 2001](#)).

1993: Algerian GIA Joins Forces with Al-Qaeda

By 1993, the Algerian militant group Groupe Islamique Armé (GIA) is extremely active launching attacks in Algeria. For instance, in a two month period of 1994 alone, it will burn down over 500 schools. In 1993, bin Laden sends Qari Said al-Jazairi, an Algerian member of al-Qaeda's shura (ruling council), to meet with rebel leaders in the mountains. He gives them \$40,000 but warns them there is no room for compromise with the government and total war is the only solution. This marginalizes the moderates. According to later testimony by key al-Qaeda defector Jamal al-Fadl, the GIA is then treated as an affiliate of al-Qaeda. ([Day 2. United States of America v. Usama bin Laden, et al. 2/6/2001](#); [Wright 2006, pp. 189-190](#)) Bin Laden and other al-Qaeda leaders may not be aware of it, but the GIA is highly infiltrated by the Algerian intelligence agency by this time (see [1991](#)).

1993: Al-Zawahiri's Brother Help Manage Mujaheddin in Bosnia Using Charity Cover

Ayman al-Zawahiri, head of Islamic Jihad and Al-Qaeda's second-in-command, sends his brother Mohammed al-Zawahiri to the Balkans to help run the mujaheddin fighters in Bosnia. He is known as a logistics expert and is said to be the military commander of Islamic Jihad. Mohammed works in Bosnia, Croatia, and Albania under the cover of being an International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO) official. He is said to make an extended stay in central Bosnia, where most of the mujaheddin are based, in 1993. He sets up an Islamic Jihad cell in Albania with over a dozen members to support the mujaheddin in Bosnia. ([Wright 9/9/2002](#); [Schindler 2007, pp. 123](#)) Ayman also frequently visits Bosnia (see [September 1992 and After](#)) and by 1994 will move to Bulgaria to presumably work with Mohammed to manage operations in the Balkans region (see [September 1994-1996](#)).

1993: Charity Shut Down in Saudi Arabia for Ties to Al-Qaeda But Prospers in US

The Guardian reports in May 1993 that the Benevolence International Foundation (BIF) (then known as Lajnat al-Birr al-Islamiyya) has been closed in Saudi Arabia and “its head, Adel Batterjee, a known political activist, has been detained by the police.” The Guardian hints that the shut down is related to pressure from the Egyptian government. This is possibly the only instance of the Saudis shutting down a charity before 9/11. ([Evans 5/5/1993](#)) Al-Qaeda will determine later in the year that the shut down was because the Saudis had found a link between BIF and al-Qaeda, but an operative will report that the problem has been fixed. ([USA v. Enaam M. Arnaout 10/6/2003](#)₃) Batterjee is also mentioned in a 1992 New York Times article as the chairman of the World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY), flying wounded Saudis fighting in the Bosnian war and giving them free medical treatment. ([Hedges 12/5/1992](#)) BIF stops operating in Saudi Arabia but expands its operations in the US (see [1992-1993](#)). ([USA v. Enaam M. Arnaout 10/6/2003](#)₃) The FBI will not begin to seriously investigate it until 1998 (see [1998](#)). US agents will raid WAMY offices in 2004 for suspected ties to radical militants (see [June 1, 2004](#)).

1993: FBI Already Interested in Al-Qaeda Related Charity Based in US

The FBI interviews Adham Amin Hassoun, a Muslim community activist living in Florida. The year before, Hassoun had filed Florida incorporation papers for the first American chapter of the Islamic charity Benevolence International (BIF), listing wealthy Saudi businessman Adel Batterjee as the president. The FBI shows him photographs of suspects in the World Trade Center bombing and asks him if he could recognize the people. At this interview or a later one, he is also asked about Enaam Arnaout, who will take control of Benevolence International after it moved its headquarters to Chicago in 1994. After 9/11, Hassoun will be questioned again for alleged ties with so-called “dirty bomber” Jose Padilla. Hassoun and Padilla were acquaintances in Florida since the early 1990s. ([Weinberg and Shields 7/13/2002](#)) The FBI begins monitoring Hassoun and some of his associates, including Padilla, in October 1993 (see [October 1993-November 2001](#)). Benevolence International will later be connected to al-Qaeda and shut down, but only after 9/11.

1993: CIA Declares Bin Laden Significant Financial Backer of Islamic Militants

In 2007, former CIA Director George Tenet will write, “As early as 1993, [the CIA] had declared bin Laden to be a significant financier backer of Islamic terrorist movements. We knew he was funding paramilitary training of Arab religious militants in such far-

flung places as Bosnia, Egypt, Kashmir, Jordan, Tunisia, Algeria, and Yemen.” ([Tenet 2007, pp. 100](#))

1993-1994: Expert Panel Predicts Terrorists Will Use Planes as Weapons on Symbolic US Targets



Marvin Cetron. [*Source: Publicity photo*]An expert panel commissioned by the Pentagon in 1993 postulates that an airplane could be used as a missile to bomb national landmarks. Marvin Cetron, president of Forecasting International, a company which conducts studies for many companies and governments, writes the panel’s report. He will later recall telling the panel, “Coming down the Potomac, you could make a left turn at the Washington Monument and take out the White House, or you could make a right turn and take out the Pentagon.” ([Reeve 1999, pp. 259-260](#); [Warrick and Stephens 10/2/2001](#)) However, State Department officials edit out the planes as weapons references in the final version of the panel’s Terror 2000 Report. ([Hess 5/17/2002](#)) Cetron later says, “We were told by the Department of Defense not to put it in... and I said, ‘It’s unclassified, everything is available.’ In addition, they said, ‘We don’t want it released, because you can’t handle a crisis before it becomes a crisis. And no one is going to believe you.’” ([ABC News 2/20/2002](#)) Air Force Col. Doug Menarchik, who organized the study for the Pentagon, will later recall, “It was considered radical thinking, a little too scary for the times. After I left, it met a quiet death.” ([Warrick and Stephens 10/2/2001](#)) However, in 1994, Cetron will write in a Futurist magazine article about the report, “Targets such as the World Trade Center not only provide the requisite casualties but, because of their symbolic nature, provide more bang for the buck. In order to maximize their odds for success, terrorist groups will likely consider mounting multiple, simultaneous operations with the aim of overtaxing a government’s ability to respond, as well as demonstrating their professionalism and reach.” ([Warrick and Stephens 10/2/2001](#))

1993-1999: Hijackers Alhazmi and Almihdhar Fight for Al-Qaeda



Nawaf Alhazmi (left), and Khalid

Almihdhar (right). [Source: FBI] Of all the 9/11 hijackers, Nawaf Alhazmi and Khalid Almihdhar have the longest records of involvement with al-Qaeda. CIA Director Tenet calls them al-Qaeda veterans. According to the CIA, Alhazmi first travels to Afghanistan in 1993 as a teenager, then fights in Bosnia with Alhazmi (see [1995](#)). Almihdhar makes his first visit to Afghanistan training camps in 1996, and then fights in Chechnya in 1997. Both swear loyalty to bin Laden around 1998. Alhazmi fights in Afghanistan against the Northern Alliance with his brother, Salem Alhazmi. He fights in Chechnya, probably in 1998. ([Observer 9/23/2001](#); [ABC News 1/9/2002](#); [US Congress 6/18/2002](#); [McDermott 9/1/2002](#); [US Congress 7/24/2003, pp. 131](#).) He then returns to Saudi Arabia in early 1999 where he shares information about the 1998 US embassy bombings. However it is not clear what information he disclosed to whom or where he obtained this information. ([US Congress 7/24/2003, pp. 131](#).) It is possible that some or all of this information came from the NSA, which is intercepting some of Alhazmi's phone calls at this time (see [Early 1999](#)).

1993-1997: Swiss Block Investigation into Bank that Funds Suspicious Italian Mosque



Ahmed Idris Nasreddin. [Source: NBC News] Ahmed Idris

Nasreddin is a founder and director of the Al Taqwa Bank. In the early 1990s he helped created and finance a mosque called the Islamic Cultural Institute, in Milan, Italy. This is close to Al Taqwa's headquarters in Lugano, a town on the border between Switzerland and Italy. ([Hosenball 3/18/2002](#)) After the 1993 World Trade Center bombing (see [February 26, 1993](#)), US investigators uncover heavy phone traffic between the Milan mosque and the Jersey City mosque of Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman, the spiritual leader of the bombers who carried out the plot (see [July 1990](#)). Italian police also will claim that Ramzi Yousef, the mastermind of the bomb plot, used the Milan mosque as a logistical base (see [Late 1993-1994](#)). ([Hundley 10/22/2001](#)) European investigators increasingly

suspect that the Milan mosque is an important recruiting and supply center for al-Qaeda and other radical militant groups. ([Hosenball 3/18/2002](#)) In 1995, an Italian intelligence report alleges Al Taqwa is funding radical groups in Algeria, Tunisia, and Sudan, and is a major backer of Hamas. Reportedly, the Italians tell a Swiss prosecutor that Al Taqwa “comprises the most important financial structure of the Muslim Brotherhood and Islamic terrorist organizations.” Italian intelligence also finds links between Al Taqwa and the Milan mosque through Nasreddin. Additionally, two other top officials in the mosque are Al Taqwa shareholders. ([Komisar 3/15/2002](#); [Perelman 10/17/2003](#)) Italian officials get the impression that Swiss officials are loathe to look into Al Taqwa. In 1997, the Italians convince a Swiss prosecutor to start questioning Al Taqwa officials. But reportedly, an Al Taqwa lawyer is able to make phone calls to influential people and have the investigation stopped. ([Komisar 3/15/2002](#))

1993-1995: Al-Qaeda Operative Helps Militant Group Conduct Attacks in Philippines



Mohammed Saddiq Odeh. [*Source: ABC News*] An al-Qaeda operative helps the militant group Abu Sayyaf conduct attacks in the Philippines at least between the years 1993 to 1995, if not longer. Mohammed Saddiq Odeh, an ethnic Palestinian, went to college in the Philippines in the late 1980's. Then he went to training camps in Afghanistan, joined al-Qaeda there, and became an explosives expert. ([Weiser and Golden 9/30/2001](#)) Philippine intelligence agents photograph him in front of his house in the southern city of Davao at some point. ([Burgos 10/1/2001](#)) He is a suspect in a 1993 bombing of a cathedral in Davao that kills seven. The attack is blamed on Abu Sayyaf. In 1995, Philippine authorities arrest him for possession of explosive devices and then let him go. He will later be captured and convicted for participating in the 1998 US embassy bombings (see [August 7, 1998](#)). ([New York Times 12/27/1993](#); [Abuza 12/1/2002](#)) In late 1998, the Washington Post will report that he had recently confessed to taking part in “Operations in the Philippines that Odeh refused to describe in detail.” ([Khan and Constable 8/19/1998](#)) Presumably these are Abu Sayyaf operations since they are the only Muslim militant group conducting attacks in the early 1990s. From at least 1991 to 1995, Abu Sayyaf is deeply penetrated by a Philippine government operative (see [1991-Early February 1995](#)), but it unclear what the US government may have been told about Odeh and when. The US had been warned of Odeh through another source in 1993 (see [Summer 1993](#)). Odeh will also later admit to helping militias in Somalia kill US soldiers there in 1993 (see [October 3-4, 1993](#)).

1993-1995: Mujaheddin Reach a Peak of Up to 4,000 in Bosnia



The caption for this picture published in newspapers on December 11, 1995, reads, “One of the Bosnian Army Muslim brigades marches through Zenica in a demonstration of strength by 10,000 soldiers.” [Source: Reuters] (click image to enlarge) The number of Mujaheddin fighting in Bosnia plateaued at around several thousand. Estimates of mujaheddin numbers in Bosnia vary from as few as a couple of hundred to as many as 4,000. However, most put the number somewhere between 1,000 and 2,000. The difficulty in pinning down an exact figure stems from the fact that there are a variety of foreign mercenary groups in Bosnia and it is not entirely clear who is and who isn't mujaheddin. Furthermore, these groups are not all present in Bosnia at the same time. According to Cees Wiebes, a professor at Amsterdam University, mujaheddin forces in Bosnia are not controlled by Bosnian authorities, but rather by their countries of origin, Islamic militant organizations, and criminal organizations. (Wiebes 2003, pp. 207-208) While the mujaheddin's presence in Bosnia is said to be of only limited military value, they are considered a valuable “political tool” for obtaining the support from Arab countries. According to a UN report, Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic sees the fighters as “a conduit for funds from the Gulf and the Middle East.” (Wiebes 2003, pp. 208, 215)

1993-1995: Croatian General Agim Ceku Responsible for Anti-Serb Atrocities



Agim Ceku. [Source: *Viewimages.com*]Croatian General Agim Ceku's troops in Croatia are responsible for many atrocities against the Croatian Serbs, witnessed by Canadian peace-keeping forces. The Canadian testimony ultimately leads to a sealed indictment against Ceku being issued by the Hague Tribunal. ([Taylor 2002, pp. 164](#)) Ceku will be elected prime minister of Kosovo in 2006 despite the still pending war crimes charges (see [January 1999](#)).

January 1993: Cheney Releases New Global Domination Strategy

While still serving as Defense Secretary, Dick Cheney releases a document titled "Defense Strategy for the 1990s," in which he reasserts the plans for US global domination outlined in the Defense Policy Guide leaked to the press in March 1992 (see [March 8, 1992](#)). ([Armstrong 10/2002](#)) Clinton's inauguration as president later in the month precludes Cheney from actually implementing his plans.

January 1993: Confession Exposes Hamas Fundraising in US



Mohammad Salah. [Source: *WGN-TV*]In January 1993, Mohammad Salah, a Hamas operative living in the US (see [1989-January 1993](#)), is arrested in the West Bank by the Israeli government on suspicion of transferring money to Hamas for guns and ammunition. News reports in February indicate that he is from Chicago and "had been found with more than \$100,000 and plans from Hamas leaders in

the United States.” Apparently, this causes Chicago FBI agent Robert Wright to begin investigating his fundraising activities (see [After January 1993](#)). Salah reportedly quickly confesses to directing certain Hamas military operations, organizing military cells, and to handling more than \$1 million to purchase weapons. He names 23 organizations in the US that he says are helping to fund Hamas. He later will claim he was tortured into confessing. One of Salah’s associates is also arrested and reveals the existence of Hamas training camps in the US. Salah secretly will be tried by the Israeli government in 1994 and will plead guilty of the charges in 1995. He will be sentenced to five years in prison and released in 1997. ([Miller 2/17/1993](#); [Emerson 2002, pp. 82-83](#); [Federal News Service 6/2/2003](#))

January 1993: Pakistani Vessel Shipping Arms to Bosnia Intercepted

A Pakistani vessel carrying ten containers of arms, destined for the Bosnian army, is intercepted in the Adriatic Sea. ([Wiebes 2003, pp. 195](#)) During this same time frame (between March 1992 and May 1993), Pakistan also airlifts sophisticated anti-tank guided missiles to the Bosnian Muslims, according to the later testimony of Lt. Gen. Javed Nasir, who is head of Pakistan’s ISI during this period. ([South Asia Tribune \(Great Falls, VA\) 12/23/2002](#))

1993-September 11, 2001: US Slow to Implement Anti-Money-Laundering Law

In 1994, Congress passes an anti-money-laundering law that requires unregulated financial services, like currency exchanges, check cashers, and the money brokers known in the Arab world as *hawalas*, to register with the government and report large and suspicious transfers of cash. However, proposed rules to implement the program are not written until 1997, and the regulations do not take effect until 2002. ([Levin and Meyer 10/15/2001](#)) According to another account, the law is passed in 1993, but the rules are not published until 1999. Then the Bush administration orders a further delay, until June 2002. ([Weiner and Johnston 9/20/2001](#)) In late 1998, it will be determined that there is only one person in the US government with any expertise about hawalas, but he will be let go before 9/11 (see [Late 1998](#)).

After January 1993: Wright Begins Investigating Terrorism Financing Inside US

FBI agent Robert Wright is assigned to the FBI’s counterterrorism task force in Chicago. He had joined the FBI three years earlier. ([Schlussel 7/14/2004](#); [Seper 7/18/2004](#)) He immediately begins to uncover a wide network of suspected Hamas and al-Qaeda financiers inside the US. Apparently, he gets a key head start from the confession of Mohammad Salah in Israel in early 1993 (see [January 1993](#)). Salah names 23

organizations in the US who he says are secretly funding Hamas, and Israel shares this information with US officials. Some of his confession, including the mention of the Holy Land Foundation as a key Hamas funder, is even publicly revealed in a February 1993 New York Times article. ([Miller 2/17/1993](#); [Federal News Service 6/2/2003](#)) In the next few years, Wright will uncover evidence that leads him to suspect the following:

- Mousa Abu Marzouk, the political director of Hamas, has been laundering money and fundraising in the US for Hamas (see [July 5, 1995-May 1997](#)).
- The Holy Land Foundation charity is secretly financing Hamas suicide bombings (see [October 1993](#); [December 4, 2001](#)).
- Saudi multimillionaire Yassin Al-Qadi is funding Hamas (see [June 9, 1998](#)).
- Al-Qadi is funding al-Qaeda attacks (see [October 1998](#)).
- Several other US residents and entities are also financing Hamas. In 1996, Wright's investigations will turn into a larger investigation of terrorist financing, code named Vulgar Betrayal (see [1996](#)). It will continue to discover more leads to connect not only to Hamas, but also to al-Qaeda. ([Schlusser 7/14/2004](#))

January 1993 and After: Bosnian Muslims Sometimes Shell Sarajevo Airport that They Control

Lord David Owen, European Union peace negotiator for the Bosnian conflict, will later write in a book, "Around this time [January 1993] the UN had clear evidence that Muslim forces would from time to time shell the airport to stop the relief flights and refocus world attention on the siege of Sarajevo. As the Deputy Commander in Chief US European Command from 1992 to 1995 [Gen. Charles Boyd] describes it, "The press and some governments, including that of the United States, usually attribute all such fire to the Serbs, but no seasoned observer in Sarajevo doubts for a moment that Muslim forces have found it in their interest to shell friendly targets. In this case, the shelling usually closes the airport for a time, driving up the price of black-market goods that enter the city via routes controlled by Bosnian army commanders and government officials." ([Owen 1997, pp. 262](#)) In September 1994, it is reported the UN believe the Muslim Bosnians again shelled their own Sarajevo airport on August 18, 1994. UN spokesman Lieutenant-Colonel Pierre Duclos says, "The result of all our investigations show the shell clearly came from [Bosnian] government lines," he said. Another UN official says, "This was a direct and intentional targeting of the airport." ([Barber 9/6/1994](#))

January 7-13, 1993: FBI Cancels Monitored Meetings that Could Expose WTC Bomb Plot



Carson Dunbar. [Source: Brian Price/ Associated Press] Garrett Wilson, a paramilitary trainer and gun seller working as an FBI informant, meets with Clement Rodney Hampton-El and Abu Ubaidah Yahya at a Brooklyn restaurant on January 7, 1993. Yahya is the security chief of the Al-Kifah Refugee Center, a charity front tied to both al-Qaeda and the CIA (see [1986-1993](#)), and Hampton-El is also tied to Al-Kifah. They had already met Wilson and discussed hiring him to give weapons training to a small group (see [Mid-November-December 20, 1992](#)). They agree that, starting on January 13, Wilson will train the group for five days at a New Jersey shooting range and will get paid \$5,000 for doing so. (This is not to be confused with other training going on the same month taught by Yahya in Pennsylvania (see [December 1992-Early February 1993](#)).) The FBI plans to monitor the training and follow all of the participants. But FBI superior Carson Dunbar learns of the plan just before the training is to begin and expresses concern that the FBI could be training potential terrorists. He dramatically cuts down what Wilson is allowed to teach, so much so that his FBI handlers are worried Wilson will be immediately exposed as a US agent and killed. Then, as Wilson is getting in his car to drive to the training site, Carson cancels the operation altogether. Luckily for Wilson, he has a good alibi for not attending, so his cover is not blown. But other FBI agents are furious at Dunbar's behavior. It is not known who would have attended, but Hampton-El and Yahya are loosely connected to many of the 1993 WTC bombers. The authors of the 2002 book *The Cell* will later comment that the FBI "was just a whisper away from the World Trade Center plot." ([Miller, Stone, and Mitchell 2002, pp. 87-90](#))

January 15, 1993: FBI Informant Connects Plotters to 'Blind Sheikh'

Garrett Wilson, a paramilitary trainer and gun seller working as an FBI informant, had made an agreement to give weapons training to a group of radical militants, but the FBI canceled the plan at the last minute after FBI superior Carson Dunbar worried the FBI could be training future terrorists. Wilson had made the arrangement with Clement Rodney Hampton-El and Abu Ubaidah Yahya, both of whom are connected to the Al-Kifah Refugee Center, which is linked to al-Qaeda and the CIA (see [1986-1993](#)). But while the training has been canceled, Wilson's cover as an informant has not been blown yet and his FBI handlers realize that Wilson would still have to give Hampton-El some equipment he'd bought for him. His FBI handlers Tommy Corrigan and John Liguori proposes that Wilson meet Hampton-El so the FBI can monitor the meeting and see

where the trail leads. This time, they avoid Dunbar and get permission from a different supervisor, Neil Herman. Wilson goes to meet Hampton-El at a New Jersey hotel on January 15, 1993. Hampton-El isn't there, but Yahya is, along with two others that Wilson does not know. Wilson hands off the equipment (weapons and military manuals) and quickly leaves, and then the FBI tails the others as they leave. Yahya returns in one car to the Al-Kifah office, where he is the security chief. The others go in another car to the apartment where the Blind Sheikh, Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman, lives. The FBI quickly determines the other two men at the meeting are Abdo Mohammed Haggag, Abdul-Rahman's speechwriter, and Siddig Siddig Ali, Abdul-Rahman's Sudanese translator. Corrigan, Liguori, and other FBI agents are stunned by the connections to Abdul-Rahman, who is a well-known public figure. But they will only be allowed to follow up for several days before the surveillance operation is canceled. ([Miller, Stone, and Mitchell 2002, pp. 87-90](#))

January 16-17, 1993: FBI Discovers Islamic Militant Training Camp in Pennsylvania but Immediately Cuts Off Surveillance

On January 15, 1993, FBI informant Garrett Wilson had led the FBI to a meeting attended by Abu Ubaidah Yahya, Abdo Mohammed Haggag, and Siddig Siddig Ali (see [January 15, 1993](#)). Yahya is security chief for the Al-Kifah Refugee Center, a charity front tied to both al-Qaeda and the CIA (see [1986-1993](#)), and Haggag and Siddig Ali both work with the "Blind Sheikh," Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman, who is also closely linked to Al-Kifah. Suspecting a violent plot, FBI agents have a plan to continuously monitor Yahya, Haggag, and Ali from when they leave the meeting, and for the next couple of days that is what they do. On January 16, Yahya leads the FBI to Jersey City, New Jersey, where he is holding exercises for a group of Sudanese and Middle Eastern men. Then the FBI follows Yahya and this group he is leading to a militant training camp on a farm in New Bloomfield, Pennsylvania. A squad of investigators watch them practicing martial arts, sniper firing, and rappelling. The agents think that they recognize one of the trainees as Mahmud Abouhalima, who they already strongly suspect was involved in the 1990 assassination of a Jewish leader (see [November 5, 1990](#)). (In fact, the trainee is his brother Mohammed - both of them are tall and red-headed.) However, on January 17, FBI supervisor Carson Dunbar calls the squad away from the training camp, preventing them from following the suspects as they return to their homes that evening. The FBI squad is upset, as they are sure following the suspects to their homes would lead to many new identifications and leads. Dunbar claims the surveillance is costing too much money and effectively shuts down further surveillance of everyone but Yahya and Clement Rodney Hampton-El, who has been working with Yahya, and only when they're in close range of the FBI New York office. ([Miller, Stone, and Mitchell 2002, pp. 90-91](#)) Yahya will continue to train his group at the Pennsylvania camp through early February (see [December 1992-Early February 1993](#)), but apparently without further FBI surveillance of them.

January 20, 1993: Bill Clinton Inaugurated



President Bill Clinton. [Source: *Library of Congress*] Bill Clinton replaces George H. W. Bush as US president. He remains president until January 2001.

January 25, 1993: Militant Kills Two at CIA Headquarters



Mir Aimal Kasi. [Source: *FBI*] A Pakistani militant named Mir Aimal Kasi walks up to the main headquarters of CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia, and opens fire with an AK-47. He shoots five CIA personnel as they sit in their cars, killing two of them. Remarkably, Kasi simply walks off and then flies back to Pakistan. A massive international manhunt ensues, and a joint FBI-CIA team will capture him in a central Pakistan town in 1997. ([Tenet 2007, pp. 41-42](#)) He is then rendered to the US instead of going through the less controversial but lengthier extradition process. ([Associated Press 12/27/2005](#)) While Kasi apparently acted alone, he will be treated as a hero and sheltered by radical Islamists in Afghanistan until his capture. Kasi will be convicted of murder later in 1997. Four US oil workers will be killed in Pakistan one day later in apparent retaliation. ([Cooper and Khan 11/13/1997](#)) Kasi will later say that he was upset with US policy in the Middle East and was hoping to assassinate the CIA director. He will be convicted of murder and executed in 2002. ([Tenet 2007, pp. 41-42](#))

February 1993-May 1994: US Military Head and GAO Recommend Reducing Units Dedicated to Continental Air Defense

The continental air defense mission, carried out by the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD), was developed during the Cold War to protect against any Soviet bombers that might try to attack the US via the North Pole. In 1960 NORAD had about 1,200 fighters dedicated to this task, but now its US portion comprises 180 Air National Guard fighters, located in ten units and 14 alert sites around the US. In February 1993 Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Colin Powell issues a report in which he suggests that, due to the former Soviet Union no longer posing a significant threat, the mission could be transferred to existing general-purpose combat and training forces. In May 1994, the General Accounting Office (GAO) issues a report agreeing with Powell, saying that a “dedicated continental air defense force is no longer needed.” The report also says, “NORAD plans to reduce the number of alert sites in the continental United States to 14 and provide 28 aircraft for the day-to-day peacetime air sovereignty mission. Each alert site will have two fighters, and their crews will be on 24-hour duty and ready to scramble within 5 minutes.” ([US Department of Defense 2/12/1993](#); [General Accounting Office 5/3/1994](#)) NORAD will play a key role in responding to the hijackings on 9/11. By then, it will have just 14 fighters available around the US on “alert”—on the runway, fueled, and ready to take off within minutes of being ordered into the air. ([Code One Magazine 1/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 17](#)) The GAO report points out that launching fighters in response to suspicious aircraft (like what happens on 9/11) is a routine occurrence, saying, “Overall, during the past 4 years, NORAD’s alert fighters took off to intercept aircraft (referred to as scrambled) 1,518 times, or an average of 15 times per site per year. Of these incidents, the number of suspected drug smuggling aircraft averaged one per site, or less than 7 percent of all of the alert sites’ total activity. The remaining activity generally involved visually inspecting unidentified aircraft and assisting aircraft in distress.” ([General Accounting Office 5/3/1994](#))

February 11, 1993: Hijacking Raises Concern of Plane Being Crashed into New York Building

A 20-year-old Ethiopian man hijacks a Lufthansa Airbus bound from Frankfurt to Addis Ababa, via Cairo. Wielding a gun (which is subsequently found to be just a starter pistol), he forces the pilot to divert the plane to New York. The 11-hour ordeal ends after the plane lands at JFK International Airport and the hijacker surrenders to the FBI. ([CNN 3/14/1996](#); [Weale 2/8/2000](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 457](#)) Journalist Eric Margolis, who is on the plane, says he and the other passengers are “convinced the hijacker... intended to crash the plane into Manhattan.” ([Margolis 2/13/2000](#)) While giving television commentary on the morning of 9/11, Larry Johnson—currently the deputy director of the State Department’s Office of Counter Terrorism—will say it was feared when the plane was flown to New York “that it might be crashed into something.” ([NBC 9/11/2001](#)) This is the last hijacking to occur prior to 9/11 involving US air traffic

controllers, FAA management, and military coordination. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004](#), pp. 14; [Cooper 8/5/2004](#))

February 26, 1993: WTC Is Bombed but Does Not Collapse, as Bombers Had Hoped



Bomb damage in underground levels of the WTC in 1993. [Source: *Najlah Feanny/ Corbis*] An attempt to topple the World Trade Center fails, but six people are killed and over 1000 are injured in the misfired blast. An FBI explosives expert later states that, “If they had found the exact architectural Achilles’ heel or if the bomb had been a little bit bigger, not much more, 500 pounds more, I think it would have brought her down.” Ramzi Yousef, who has close ties to bin Laden, organizes the attempt. ([Friedman 3/30/1993](#); [US Congress 2/24/1998](#)) The New York Times later reports on Emad Salem, an undercover agent who will be the key government witness in the trial against Yousef. Salem testifies that the FBI knew about the attack beforehand and told him they would thwart it by substituting a harmless powder for the explosives. However, an FBI supervisor called off this plan, and the bombing was not stopped. ([Blumenthal 10/28/1993](#)) Other suspects were ineptly investigated before the bombing as early as 1990. Several of the bombers were trained by the CIA to fight in the Afghan war, and the CIA later concludes, in internal documents, that it was “partly culpable” for this bombing (see [January 24, 1994](#)). ([Marshall 11/1/1998](#)) 9/11 mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed is an uncle of Yousef and also has a role in the WTC bombing (see [March 20, 1993](#)). ([Gumbel 6/6/2002](#); [McDermott 9/1/2002](#)) One of the attackers even leaves a message which will later be found by investigators, stating, “Next time, it will be very precise.” ([Neumeister 9/30/2001](#))

After February 26, 1993: Threat Assessments Predict Possibility of Terrorists Crashing Plane into WTC



Brian Michael Jenkins. *[Source: Rand Corporation]* Following the 1993 World Trade Center bombing (see [February 26, 1993](#)), the New York Port Authority asks investigative and security consulting firm Kroll Associates to help design new security measures for the WTC. Kroll's Deputy Chairman Brian Michael Jenkins leads the analysis of future terrorist threats and how they might be addressed. Assessments conclude that a second terrorist attack against the WTC is probable. Although it is considered unlikely, the possibility of terrorists deliberately flying a plane into the WTC towers is included in the range of possible threats. ([Jenkins and Edwards-Winslow 9/2003, pp. 11](#))

[After February 26, 1993: Security Chief Predicts Terrorists Flying Plane into WTC](#)



Rick Rescorla. *[Source: Public domain]* Rick Rescorla, a Vietnam veteran who also previously worked for British intelligence, is vice president for security at Morgan Stanley Dean Witter and has an office in the south WTC tower. Following the 1993 bombing, he believes terrorists will attack the WTC again, this time by flying a cargo plane, maybe loaded with biological or chemical weapons, into it. Fred McBee, a close friend of his, will later say, "He assumed that it would be the terrorists' mission to bring the Trade Center down." Rescorla therefore wants his company to leave the WTC and relocate to New Jersey, but their lease doesn't expire until 2006. Previously, he had predicted an attack much like the 1993 bombing: Around 1990, along with friend and ex-special forces soldier Dan Hill, he had done a security survey of the WTC and concluded that the biggest threat to it was an underground truck bomb. He had met with New York Port Authority security officials about this, but, according to Hill, was told it was none of his business. Rescorla will be in his office on the 44th floor of the South Tower at the time of the first attack on 9/11, and immediately order and supervise a successful evacuation of almost all of Morgan Stanley's 2,700 workers from the building.

Unfortunately, he will himself die when the tower collapses. ([Grunwald 10/28/2001](#); [Stewart 2/11/2002](#); [Gertz 9/20/2002](#); [BBC 2/10/2003](#))

February 27, 1993: WTC Engineer Says Building Would Survive Jumbo Jet Hitting It

In the wake of the WTC bombing, the Seattle Times interviews John Skilling who was one of the two structural engineers responsible for designing the Trade Center. Skilling recounts his people having carried out an analysis which found the Twin Towers could withstand the impact of a Boeing 707. He says, “Our analysis indicated the biggest problem would be the fact that all the fuel (from the airplane) would dump into the building. There would be a horrendous fire. A lot of people would be killed.” But, he says, “The building structure would still be there.” ([Nalder 2/27/1993](#)) The analysis Skilling is referring to is likely one done in early 1964, during the design phase of the towers. A three-page white paper, dated February 3, 1964, described its findings: “The buildings have been investigated and found to be safe in an assumed collision with a large jet airliner (Boeing 707—DC 8) traveling at 600 miles per hour. Analysis indicates that such collision would result in only local damage which could not cause collapse or substantial damage to the building and would not endanger the lives and safety of occupants not in the immediate area of impact.” However, besides this paper, no documents are known detailing how this analysis was made. ([Glanz and Lipton 2004, pp. 131-132](#); [Lew, Bukowski, and Carino 10/2005, pp. 70-71](#)) The other structural engineer who designed the towers, Leslie Robertson, carried out a second study later in 1964, of how the towers would handle the impact of a 707 (see [Between September 3, 2001 and September 7, 2001](#)). However, the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), following its three-year investigation into the WTC collapses, will in 2005 state that it has been “unable to locate any evidence to indicate consideration of the extent of impact-induced structural damage or the size of a fire that could be created by thousands of gallons of jet fuel.” ([National Institute of Standards and Technology 9/2005, pp. 13](#))

Shortly After February 26, 1993-1994: FBI Fails to Close Branches of Al-Qaeda’s ‘Operational Headquarters’ in US



Neil Herman. *[Source: Paul Schneck Photography]* The Al-Kifah Refugee Center is bin Laden's largest fundraising group in the US and has offices in many cities (see [1986-1993](#) and [1985-1989](#)). Counterterrorism expert Steven Emerson will later call it "al-Qaeda's operational headquarters in the United States." ([Emerson 2006, pp. 436](#)) Nearly every figure involved in the 1993 WTC bombing has a connection to the Al-Kifah branch in Brooklyn, New York. ([Turque 3/29/1993](#)) Bob Blitzer, a former FBI terrorism chief who heads the FBI's first Islamic terrorism squad, is stunned to discover the number of militants connected to Al-Kifah who have left the US to fight for Muslim causes overseas. He will later remember thinking, "What the hell's going on?" Neil Herman, head of the FBI's WTC bombing investigation, will comment, "It was like a modern underground railroad." But no effort is made to keep track of who has gone overseas to fight, even though many of the WTC bombers had gone overseas to fight then came back to use their training to plan an attack in the US. Furthermore, the Al-Kifah office in Brooklyn shuts itself down, but all the other branch offices remain open. US News and World Report will later note that the offices "were left largely intact [and] helped form the nucleus of bin Laden's al-Qaeda network." Herman will say, "They certainly continued on, but were somewhat fragmented." Over time, the other branches generally go underground. Soon their functions are largely replaced by a network of Islamic charities. For instance, the functions of the Brooklyn branch, including its newsletter and website, are directly taken over by a new Boston-based charity called Care International (see [April 1993-Mid-2003](#)). Another charity is the Benevolence International Foundation (BIF), run by Enaam Arnaout, who is a veteran of the Al-Kifah Brooklyn office. ([Kaplan 6/2/2002](#)) The US will not freeze the assets of Al-Kifah until shortly after 9/11, long after all the US branches have dissolved (see [September 24, 2001](#)). There is evidence to suggest that the CIA had ties to Al-Kifah and blocked FBI investigations of it (see [Late 1980s and After](#)).

[Spring 1993: 'Blind Sheikh' Plot to Crash Airplane into US Embassy in Egypt](#)



Siddig Siddig Ali. [Source: Chester Higgins / *New York Times*] In March 1995, Emad Salem, an FBI informant and an ex-Egyptian army officer, publicly testifies in a 1995 trial of the 1993 World Trade Center bombing plotters. He mentions a plot taking place at this time by Islamic radicals tied to the “Blind Sheikh,” Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman (see [July 1990](#)). A Sudanese Air Force pilot would hijack an airplane, attack Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, then crash the plane into the US Embassy in Cairo, Egypt. Siddig Siddig Ali, who will be one of the defendants in the trial, asks Salem for help to find “gaps in the air defense in Egypt” so the pilot could “bomb the presidential house and then turn around, crash the plane into the American embassy after he ejects himself out of the plane.” Abdul-Rahman gives his approval to the plot, but apparently it never goes beyond the discussion stage. Although details of this plot are in public records of the World Trade Center bombing trial, both the 9/11 Congressional Inquiry and 9/11 Commission fail to mention it. ([Lance 2004, pp. 196](#); [Berger 4/8/2004](#)) Abdul-Rahman is closely tied to bin Laden and in fact in 1998 there will be an al-Qaeda hijacking plot designed to free him from prison (see [1998](#)). Individuals connected to Abdul-Rahman and al-Qaeda will also plot to crash an airplane into the White House in 1996 (see [January 1996](#)).

[Spring 1993: US Discovers that Ramzi Yousef and KSM Have Ties with ISI](#)

US agents uncover photographs showing Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM) has ties with the Pakistani ISI. Several weeks after the World Trade Center bombing (see [February 26, 1993](#)), US agents come to Pakistan to search for Ramzi Yousef for his part in that bombing. Searching the house of Zahid Shaikh Mohammed, Yousef’s uncle, they find photographs of Zahid and KSM, who is also one of Yousef’s uncles, with close associates of Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. ([Bokhari et al. 2/15/2003](#)) According to another account, the pictures actually show Zahid with Sharif, and also with Muhammad Zia ul-Haq, president of Pakistan until his death in 1988. ([Jacquard 2002, pp. 66](#)) Pictures of Osama bin Laden are also found. US agents are unable to catch Yousef because Pakistani agents tip him off prior to the US raids. Yousef is able to live a semi-public life (for instance, he attends weddings), despite worldwide publicity naming him as a major terrorist. The Financial Times will later note that Yousef, KSM, and their allies “must have felt confident that their ties to senior Pakistani Islamists, whose power had been cemented within the country’s intelligence service [the ISI], would prove invaluable.”

([Bokhari et al. 2/15/2003](#)) Several months later, Yousef and KSM unsuccessfully attempt to assassinate Benazir Bhutto, who is prime minister of Pakistan twice in the 1990s (see [July 1993](#)). She is an opponent of Sharif and the ISI. ([Bhutto 9/21/2001](#); [Gunaratna 3/3/2003](#)) The Los Angeles Times will later report that KSM “spent most of the 1990s in Pakistan. Pakistani leadership through the 1990s sympathized with Osama bin Laden’s fundamentalist rhetoric. This sympathy allowed [him] to operate as he pleased in Pakistan.” ([McDermott 6/24/2002](#))

Spring 1993: World Trade Center Bombing Investigation Uncovers Links to Ali Mohamed



One of the documents stolen by Ali Mohamed found in El-Sayyid Nosair’s residence. At the bottom are the words: “United States Army. John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center.” [*Source: National Geographic*] Not long after the World Trade Center bombing in February 1993 (see [February 26, 1993](#)), investigators discover a connection between some of the plotters and El-Sayyid Nosair (see [November 5, 1990](#)). The Wall Street Journal reports that investigators “went back to look at [Nosair’s] personal possessions. There, they finally saw the link to Mr. Mohamed.” Top secret US military documents obviously supplied by Mohamed are found among Nosair’s possessions. Still no action is taken against Mohamed. ([Waldman 11/26/2001](#); [Posner 2003, pp. 186-94](#))

Spring 1993: Ali Mohamed Detained in Vancouver; FBI Tells Canadian Authorities He Is an Informant



Essam Marzouk. [Source: FBI] US-al-Qaeda double agent Ali Mohamed is detained by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) in Vancouver, British Columbia, after attempting to pick up a man named Essam Marzouk, who is carrying two false passports. They identify Mohamed as a top al-Qaeda operative. Mohamed admits to them that he traveled to Vancouver to help Marzouk sneak into the US and admits working closely with bin Laden. ([Williams and McCormick 11/4/2001](#); [Oziewicz and Ha 11/22/2001](#); [Waldman 11/26/2001](#)) After many hours of questioning, Mohamed tells the Canadian officials to call John Zent, his handler at the FBI. Zent confirms that Mohamed works for the FBI and asks them to release him. They do. ([Lance 2006, pp. 124](#)) Mohamed is accompanied by fellow al-Qaeda operative Khaled Abu el-Dahab (see [1987-1998](#)), who brings \$3,000 sent by bin Laden to pay for Marzouk's bail. Marzouk had run one of bin Laden's training camps in Afghanistan and was an active member of the al-Qaeda allied group Islamic Jihad at the time. However, Canadian intelligence apparently isn't aware of his past. Marzouk will spend almost a year in detention. But then, again with the help of another visit to Canada by Mohamed, Marzouk will be released and allowed to live in Canada. He later will be suspected of helping to plan the 1998 African embassy bombings (see [August 7, 1998](#)). He will leave Canada in 1997 to fight in Kosovo, then will be arrested in Azerbaijan in 1998, deported to Egypt, convicted of radical militant activity by Egypt, and sentenced to 15 years in prison. ([Oziewicz and Ha 11/22/2001](#); [Bell 11/26/2005](#)) Jack Cloonan, an FBI agent who later investigates Mohamed, will later say, "I don't think you have to be an agent who has worked terrorism all your life to realize something is terribly amiss here. What was the follow up? It just sort of seems like [this incident] dies." ([Lance 2006, pp. 125](#))

[Spring 1993: Islamic Jihad Head Fundraises in US](#)

Ali Mohamed helps Ayman al-Zawahiri enter the US for a fundraising tour and acts as his head of security during his stay. At the time, al-Zawahiri is known to have been the head of the militant group Islamic Jihad since the late 1980's. He is also al-Qaeda's de facto number two leader, though this is not widely known. This is apparently his second visit to the US; having previously paid a recruiting visit to the Al-Kifah Refugee Center in Brooklyn in 1989 (see [1986-1993](#)). The exact timing of this second visit is disputed, but New Yorker magazine will report that "people at the FBI" assert "al-Zawahiri arrived in America shortly after the first bombing of the World Trade Center" in February 1993. Al-Zawahiri stays at Mohamed's residence in Santa Clara, California, posing as a representative of a charity organization. It is said that not much money is raised. ([Wright](#)

[9/9/2002](#)) Al-Zawahiri will make another apparently more successful fundraising trip to the US in either late 1994 or sometime in 1995 (see [Late 1994 or 1995](#)).

Spring 1993: US Intelligence Connects Ramzi Yousef and Bin Laden

US intelligence learns of ties between Ramzi Yousef and bin Laden. FBI official Neil Herman, head of the WTC bombing investigation, will later say, “The first connection with bin Laden came in connection with some phone records overseas, connecting either Yousef or possibly one of his family members.” But Herman adds that bin Laden was just “one of thousands of leads that we were trying to run out.” Bin Laden will later praise Yousef but say, “Unfortunately, I did not know him before the incident.” ([Reeve 1999, pp. 47-48](#))

Spring 1993: Second Group of US Militants Linked to Al-Kifah Charity Front Fight in Bosnia

In June 1993, Abu Ubaidah Yahya will tell the New York Times that early in the year he went to Bosnia with several other Muslims from the New York region to help embattled Bosnian Muslims “with technical advice and medical aid.” ([Clines 6/26/1993](#)) Yahya is an ex-US Marine connected to numerous figures in the 1993 WTC bombing and “Landmarks” bombing plots, and US intelligence had him under surveillance since January 1993 (see [January 7-13, 1993](#)), although how intensive the surveillance was is unknown. The FBI is aware that Yahya repeatedly travels in the spring of 1993 to Vienna, Austria, to pick up money from the Bosnian-linked Third World Relief Agency charity front (see [Early April 1993](#)), so presumably he goes to nearby Bosnia on some or all of those trips. It is likely he and his group actually go to Bosnia to fight, since one of his associates told an FBI informant that Yahya and a group of about ten men he trained were going to fight in Bosnia once their training session was over, and the training ended in February 1993 (see [December 1992-Early February 1993](#)). Saudis also gave Yahya’s close associate Clement Rodney Hampton-El a considerable amount of money to train militants in the US to fight in Bosnia (see [December 1992](#)). ([Miller, Stone, and Mitchell 2002, pp. 113](#)) Yahya is the security chief of the Al-Kifah Refugee Center, a charity front linked to both al-Qaeda and the CIA (see [1986-1993](#)). A group of US militants linked to Al-Kifah go fight in Bosnia starting in December 1992, but this must be a different group since Yahya is still training his group for another two months (see [December 1992-June 1993](#) and [December 1992-Early February 1993](#)).

March 1993: Muslim Brotherhood Said to Help Fund World Trade Center Bombing



Nidal Ayyad. [Source: *FBI*] An Egyptian official will later detail an alleged confession of Mahmud Abouhalima made at this time. Abouhalima was captured in Egypt in March 1993 and reportedly tortured into a confession there before being handed over to US officials. He will later be convicted for a role in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing (see [February 26, 1993](#)). Abouhalima supposedly confessed that the bomb plot originated in Afghanistan among Arab veterans of the Afghan war. He also tells his interrogators that it was approved by men describing themselves as Iranian intelligence agents and by the “Blind Shiekh,” Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman. Abouhalima further confessed that he was a member of the Al-Gama’a al-Islamiyya (the Islamic Group), a militant group headed by Abdul-Rahman, and that the group obtained its money from various sources including the German offices of the Muslim Brotherhood. It is unclear how much this account can be trusted, especially since the Egyptian government has conflicts with Iran and the Muslim Brotherhood at the time. ([Hedges 7/16/1993](#)) However, two March 1993 Los Angeles Times and New York Times reports appears to confirm at least part of Abouhalima’s confession. The Times articles reports that two of the bomb plotters, Mohammed Salameh and Nidal Ayyad, had bank accounts in the US where they received a total of \$10,000 sent from Germany prior to the bombing. ([Fritz and Jackson 3/12/1993](#); [Blumenthal 3/12/1993](#)) And in 1999, journalist Simon Reeve will report, “FBI and CIA investigations traced some of the money given to the WTC conspirators back to Germany and the Muslim Brotherhood.” ([Reeve 1999, pp. 245](#)) However, nothing more about this possible Muslim Brotherhood connection has been reported since.

March 1993: Bosnian Croats and Muslims, Losing to Serbs, Begin Fighting Each Other as Well

The Bosnian Croats and Muslims have been fighting Bosnian Serb forces and are slowly losing. The Serbs control about 70 percent of Bosnia. But despite this, the Croats and Muslims begin fighting each other as well. ([Time 12/31/1995](#))

After February 26, 1993: CIA Obstructs FBI Investigation of ‘Blind Sheikh’ in 1993 WTC Bombing

After the 1993 WTC bombing (see [February 26, 1993](#)), New York District Attorney Robert Morgenthau’s investigators search El Sayyid Nosair’s belongings (see [November](#)

[5, 1990 and After](#)) and find a bomb formula which was quite similar to the bomb used to attack the WTC. This discovery would link Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman's group to the bombing. The belongings also include a taped plea from Abdul-Rahman to destroy "the towers that constitute the pillars" of the civilization of "enemies of God." Some suspect this is a reference to the WTC. But the FBI refuses to acknowledge and follow up on the bomb formula or other leads from Nosair. Morgenthau later concludes that the CIA may have pressured the FBI to back off from evidence which led to Abdul-Rahman, as well as blocking other investigative leads (see [Late 1980s and After](#)). ([Goodman 11/21/1994](#); [Friedman 3/17/1995](#))

March 1993-1996: FBI Uninterested in Warnings of California Terrorist Cell



Saraah Olson. [*Source: ABC News*] In 1992 and early 1993, the "Blind Sheikh," Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman, visits a mosque in Anaheim, California, and is hosted by an al-Qaeda sleeper cell there. Cell leaders Hisham Diab and Khalil Deek live next door to each other and are avid followers of Abdul-Rahman. Apparently he stays with Deek on one trip and with Diab on another. Saraah Olson, Diab's wife, sees Abdul-Rahman on television in connection with the February 1993 World Trade Center bombing (see [February 26, 1993](#)) and fears that her husband is a terrorist. She will later claim, "I called the FBI. I said I have information about the blind sheikh. He's been to my house, and I need to speak to someone." But she will say they responded, "We don't know who you're talking about. Thank you for the information. And they hung up." ([ABC News 12/23/2004](#); [Ross and Scott 12/23/2004](#)) From 1990 until 1996, when she divorces Diab, she claims that "some of Osama bin Laden's top deputies would stay with her and her husband." She claims she repeatedly tried to warn the FBI about this but was never taken seriously. She also claims that even after Abdul-Rahman was arrested in mid-1993, he would regularly call Diab from prison each Sunday and deliver fiery sermons that were recorded and distributed to some of his other followers. US intelligence had been investigating Deek since at least the late 1980s but never took any action against him (see [Late 1980s](#)). ([Ross and Scott 12/23/2004](#); [Krikorian and Reza 10/8/2006](#)) Apparently also in the early 1990s, the FBI is apparently aware that Deek is running militant training camps in California for followers of Abdul-Rahman, but they take no action against him or the camps (see [Early 1990s](#)). Diab eventually becomes a US citizen and then will leave the US in June 2001. He is now believed to be hiding in Pakistan with

top al-Qaeda leaders. The FBI has been asked about Olson's allegations but has neither confirmed nor denied them. ([Ross and Scott 12/23/2004](#))

March 4-5,1993: Suspect Allowed to Leave US Despite Evidence Tying Him to WTC Bombing



Abdul Rahman Yasin. [*Source: CBS News*] A week after the WTC bombing, an Iraqi-American is questioned by the FBI and then allowed to leave the country, despite evidence tying him to the bombing. Abdul Rahman Yasin is a US citizen but spent most of his life in Iraq until 1992, when he returned to the US. Two of the major WTC bomb plotters, Ramzi Yousef and Mohammed Salameh, lived in the apartment directly above Yasin's. Several days after Salameh is arrested, the FBI searches Yasin's apartment. They find traces of bomb explosives on a scale, a tool box, and a shirt. In the trash, they find jeans with an acid hole burned in them, and torn pieces of a map showing the route to Yousef's other apartment. Yasin is taken to an FBI office and interrogated by Neil Herman, head of the FBI's WTC bombing investigation, and others. Yasin gives information about Salameh, Yousef, and other participants in the bomb plot. Agents observe a chemical burn on his right thigh, making them suspect that he was involved in mixing the chemicals used in the bombing. The next day, he drives FBI agents to the apartment where the bomb was made. Yet Yasin will later be interviewed and claims that the FBI never asked him if he was involved in the bomb plot. Later that evening, he flies to Iraq. Herman will later say, "There was not enough information to hold him and detain him. And the decision was made, and he was allowed to leave." ([Meyer and Lichtblau 10/12/2001](#)) In 2002, Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz will recall, "I have to tell you that we fear[ed] that sending Yasin back to Iraq... was a sting operation [for the US to] tell people later on, look, this man who participated in that event now is in Iraq, etc., and use it as they are doing now, using many false pretexts, you see, to hurt Iraq in their own way." ([60 Minutes 6/2/2002](#)) Yasin will be indicted in August 1993 for his role in the WTC bombing and the US later puts a \$2 million bounty on his head. In October 2001, that will be increased to \$25 million. In 2002, Yasin will be interviewed by CBS News in Iraq and will confess to involvement in the WTC bombing but says he was not an Iraqi government agent. Iraqi authorities will tell CBS that Yasin is still imprisoned without charge and has been in prison since 1994, but this has not been independently confirmed. Some continue to point to Yasin as evidence that Iraq was behind the WTC bombing. ([Meyer and Lichtblau 10/12/2001](#); [60 Minutes 6/2/2002](#))

March 20, 1993: FBI Connects KSM to WTC Bombing



Mohammed Salameh. *[Source: Sygma / Corbis]* An internal FBI report finds that Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM) played a role in the bombing of the World Trade Center. According to the report, KSM wired \$660 from Qatar to a bank account of Mohammed Salameh, one of the key bombers, on November 3, 1992. This is apparently the first time KSM has come to the attention of US law enforcement. Transaction records show the money was sent from “Khaled Shaykh” in Doha, Qatar, which is where KSM is living openly and without an alias at the time (see [1992-1995](#)). ([US Congress 7/24/2003](#)) KSM also frequently talked to his nephew Ramzi Yousef on the phone about the bombing and sent him a passport to escape the country, but apparently these details are not discovered until much later. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 147, 488](#))

Before April 1993: Saeed Sheikh Allegedly Recruited by British Intelligence

Saeed Sheikh may be recruited by the British intelligence service MI6, according to a claim made in a book published in 2006 by Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf. According to Musharraf, Saeed Sheikh, who will be involved in the kidnapping and murder of Daniel Pearl (see [January 23, 2002](#)) and will be said to wire money to the 9/11 hijackers (see [Early August 2001](#)), may be recruited by MI6 while studying in London, and when he goes to Bosnia to support the Muslim cause there, this may be at MI6’s behest (see [April 1993](#)). Musharraf will further speculate, “At some point, he probably became a rogue or double agent.” ([McGrory 9/26/2006](#)) The London Times will provide some support for this theory, suggesting that Saeed will later have dealings with British intelligence (see [1999](#)).

April 1993: Saeed Sheikh Travels to Bosnia and Joins Militant Islamic Group



Saeed Sheikh during his London School of Economics days.

[Source: CNN] Saeed Sheikh, a British citizen and student at the London School of Economics, goes to Bosnia on a trip sponsored by the “Convoy of Mercy” ([Jehl 2/25/2002](#)), a front for the newly formed militant Islamic fundamentalist group, Harkat ul-Ansar. ([Jane's International Security News 9/20/2001](#)) There he joins Harkat ul-Ansar. ([Jehl 2/25/2002](#)) Aukai Collins, who will meet Saeed Sheikh in a camp in Afghanistan near the border with Pakistan some months later (see [June 1993-October 1994](#)), will later confirm that Saeed is a member of Harkat ul-Ansar. ([Collins 2003, pp. 33](#)) Harkat ul-Ansar will change its name to Harkat ul-Mujahdeen in 1997 after Harkat ul-Ansar is named a terrorist organization by the US State Department. ([Raman 2/18/2002](#)) Collins will also claim Harkat ul-Ansar was funded by bin Laden. ([Raman 2/18/2002](#))

April-May 1993: UN Declares Safe Areas for Bosnian Muslims

The Bosnian Serbs have the upper hand in their war against Bosnian Muslims and there is international concern that large numbers of Muslim civilians could be killed. The UN Security Council declares six “safe areas” for Bosnian Muslims: Sarajevo, Tuzla, Bihac, Srebrenica, Zepa and Gorazde. However, despite UN promises, in 1995 the Serbs will begin shelling the Muslim safe areas and conquer Srebrenica and Zepa. ([Time 12/31/1995](#))

April 1993-Mid-2003: FBI Slow to Act as Main Branch of Al-Qaeda’s ‘Operational Headquarters’ in US Reforms in Boston

The Al-Kifah Refugee Center is bin Laden’s largest fundraising group in the US and has offices in many cities (see [1986-1993](#) and [1985-1989](#)). Counterterrorism expert Steven Emerson will later call it “al-Qaeda’s operational headquarters in the United States.” ([Emerson 2006, pp. 436](#)) In late March 1993, Newsweek will report that “virtually every principal figure implicated in the World Trade Center bombing” that took place the month before (see [February 26, 1993](#)) has a connection to the Al-Kifah branch in Brooklyn, New York. ([Turque 3/29/1993](#)) The Brooklyn branch quietly shuts itself down. But other branches stay open (see [Shortly After February 26, 1993-1994](#)) and the Boston branch

appears to take over for the Brooklyn branch. In April 1993, it reincorporates under the new name Care International (which is not connected with a large US charity based in Atlanta with the same name). Emerson will later comment, "The continuity between the two organizations was obvious to anyone who scratched the surface." For instance, Care takes over the publication of Al-Kifah's pro-jihad newsletter, *Al Hussam*. ([Emerson 2006, pp. 437](#)) It also shares the same website and street address as the Al-Kifah Boston branch it took over. ([Guidera and Simpson 11/21/2001](#)) By the time of the WTC bombing, Al-Kifah is doing most of its fund raising for the mujaheddin fighting in Bosnia. For instance, one month after the bombing, a member of Al-Kifah/Care in Boston named Aafia Siddiqui sends Muslims newsgroups an e-mail pledge form asking for support for Bosnian widows and orphans. Siddiqui, a university student in Boston for most of the 1990s, is well known to Boston's Muslim community as a dedicated Islamic activist. One imam will later recall, "She attended many conferences. Whenever there was an event, she would come." But it appears Siddiqui is also a prominent al-Qaeda operative, working as a "fixer" for Khalid Shaikh Mohammed. Despite considerable suspicious evidence against her discovered shortly after 9/11, she will disappear in Pakistan in 2003 (see [Late September 2001-March 2003](#)). ([Scroggins 3/2005](#)) Two long-time Care employees are also be long-time employees of Ptech, a Boston-based computer firm formed in 1994 that will be raided in 2002 by the FBI for suspected radical militant ties. One of them writes many articles advocating Islamic jihad (see [1994](#)). Emerson and his Investigative Project on Terrorism research team begins researching Care International in 1993, targeting it and several employees for suspected radical militant ties. The team discovers some checks made out to Care have notations on the back such as, "For jihad only." ([Keenan 9/11/2006](#)) Presumably Emerson's team shares what they learn with US intelligence, as his research on other matters lead to US government investigations around the same time (see for instance [October 1994-2001](#)). Al-Kifah branches in the US are connected to the charity Maktab al-Khidamat (MAK) overseas, which is also sometimes called Al-Kifah. In 1996, a secret CIA report will assert that the main MAK office in Pakistan funds at least nine militant training camps in Afghanistan and has ties to bin Laden and other militant groups and leaders. Furthermore, it connects this office to the Al-Kifah office in Brooklyn and the 1993 WTC bomber Ramzi Yousef (see [January 1996](#)). But the FBI takes no action against any of the remaining Al-Kifah branches in the US before 9/11. The US will officially declare Al-Kifah and/or Maktab al-Khidamat a terrorist financier shortly after 9/11, but by then all the US branches have closed or changed their names (see [September 24, 2001](#)). One day after the declaration, a Boston Globe article will make the connection between Care and Al-Kifah, pointing out that Care and the old Al-Kifah branch in Boston share the exact same address. ([Kranish and Kurkjian 9/26/2001](#)) But the FBI will wait until 2003 before raiding the Care offices and shutting it down. The FBI will later state that Care raised about \$1.7 million from 1993 to 2003. ([Keenan 9/11/2006](#)) Al-Kifah has had a murky connection with the CIA, at least in its early days. Shortly after 9/11, Newsweek will comment that Al-Kifah's Brooklyn office "doubled as a recruiting post for the CIA seeking to steer fresh troops to the mujahedin." ([Thomas 10/1/2001](#))

Early April 1993: FBI Links Bombers in US to Bosnian Charity Front; But Bosnian Link Is Not Explored



Clement Rodney Hampton-El. *[Source: Jolie Stahl]* FBI investigators begin monitoring Clement Rodney Hampton-El's house in New York as they close in on the militants involved in the "Landmarks" plot (see [June 24, 1993](#)). They listen in on a call from Hampton-El's right-hand man, Abu Ubaidah Yahya, as he is in Vienna, Austria, picking up money from the Third World Relief Agency (TWRA) for the militants in the US tied to the Landmarks plot. Over the next few months, Yahya is tracked as he makes several trips from the US to Vienna, picking up about \$100,000. ([Miller, Stone, and Mitchell 2002, pp. 113](#)) Hampton-El had also been in Vienna earlier in the year, picking up more money from TWRA for the plotters (see [Late 1992-Early 1993](#)). TWRA is funneling a huge amount of weapons to Muslim Bosnia in violation of a UN embargo but with the tacit approval of the US government (see [Mid-1991-1996](#)). It also has ties to radical militants like bin Laden and Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman. The Washington Post will later report that, "Intelligence agencies say they have tapes of telephone calls by Abdul-Rahman to [TWRA's] office." The "Landmarks" bombers are closely associated with Abdul-Rahman and will be convicted along with him. ([Pomfret 9/22/1996](#)) A secret 1996 CIA report will state that "according to a foreign government service" Elfatih Hassanein, the head of TWRA, "supports US Muslim extremists in Bosnia." ([Central Intelligence Agency 1/1996](#)) But apparently the US does not go after TWRA for its ties to the "Landmarks" plotters and the connection will not be publicized for years.

April 2, 1993: Yousef Placed on Most Wanted List, Massive Manhunt Ensues



Matchboxes with the photographs and reward information of suspects like Ramzi Yousef. [Source: Jeffrey Markowitz / Corbis] The FBI places Ramzi Yousef on its “Ten Most Wanted” list, after determining his prominent role in the 1993 WTC bombing (see [February 26, 1993](#)). An international manhunt ensues. The FBI works with a State Department program that publicly offers generous rewards and a new identity for informants giving information about wanted terrorists. A \$2 million reward is announced for information on Yousef, and a large publicity campaign about the reward is launched, with a focus on Pakistan, India, Malaysia, and the Philippines. Huge numbers of matchboxes are distributed with Yousef’s photograph and reward information on them. In early 1995, one of Yousef’s associates will learn of the program and turn him in for the reward money (see [February 3-7, 1995](#)). The matchbox program will be used for other wanted suspects, such as Abdul Rahman Yasin and Mir Kansil. However, Yousef’s uncle Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM) will never be placed on the most wanted list before 9/11, and while there eventually will be a \$2 million reward for him, no similar massive manhunt or large publicity campaign will take place for him, even after he is identified as a mastermind in the WTC bombing, Bojinka plot, African embassy bombings, and many other attacks. (Reeve 1999, pp. 42-43, 56-57)

April 23, 1993: FBI Discovers Follow-up Plot to WTC Bombing; Sudanese Diplomats Are Reportedly Involved

In the wake of the 1993 WTC bombing (see [February 26, 1993](#)), Emad Salem is rehired as an FBI informant. Because Salem has the confidence of the group around the “Blind Sheikh” Omar Abdul-Rahman connected to the bombing, the FBI is so desperate to hire him back that they pay him over \$1 million to return. It takes time for Salem to fully regain confidences, but on April 23, 1993, Siddig Siddig Ali approaches Salem and asks him to participate in a series of bombings that he is planning. Siddig Ali explains that he wants to simultaneously bomb four landmarks in New York City: the Lincoln and Holland tunnel, the United Nations headquarters, and the New York FBI office. This will later be known as the “Landmarks” plot. Siddig Ali later tells Salem that he has friends in the Sudanese Embassy who had approved the plan and are willing to help with diplomatic

license plates and credentials. Wearing a wire, over the next weeks Salem meets and records others participating in the plot. Many of them, including Siddig Ali, attended a training camp the FBI briefly monitored back in January 1993 (see [January 16-17, 1993](#)). ([Miller, Stone, and Mitchell 2002, pp. 113-114](#)) The FBI will expand its surveillance of the plotters and roll up the plot a couple of months later (see [June 24, 1993](#)). The US will later eject two Sudanese diplomats, Siraj Yousif and Ahmed Yousif Mohamed, for suspicions of involvement in the plot. Both are said to be intelligence agents posing as diplomats. Later in 1993, the US also places Sudan on a list of terrorist countries. ([Prial 8/18/1993](#); [Wren 4/11/1996](#))

May 1993: Ali Mohamed Gives FBI First Glimpse of Al-Qaeda

In the wake of his detention in Canada (see [Spring 1993](#)), double agent Ali Mohamed is interviewed by the FBI and volunteers the earliest publicly known insider description of al-Qaeda. Mohamed is working as an FBI informant on smugglers moving illegal immigrants from Mexico to the US. FBI agent John Zent, Mohamed's handler, interviews him in the FBI San Francisco office after having helped release him from Canadian custody. ([Risen 10/31/1998](#); [Lance 2006, pp. 125, 130](#)) Mohamed says that bin Laden is running a group called "al-Qaeda." Apparently, this is the first known instance of the FBI being told of that name, though it appears the CIA was aware of the name since at least 1991 (see [February 1991](#)). Mohamed claims to have met bin Laden and says bin Laden is "building an army" that could be used to overthrow the Saudi Arabian government. He admits that he has trained radical militants at bin Laden's training camps in Sudan and Afghanistan. He says he taught them intelligence and anti-hijacking techniques. Mohamed apparently is given a polygraph test for the first time, and fails it (see [1992](#)). However, he denies links to any criminal group or act. An FBI investigator later will say, "We always took him seriously. It's just he only gave us 25 percent of what was out there." In addition to his Canadian detention, the FBI is also interested in Mohamed because his name had surfaced in connection with the Al-Kifah Refugee Center as part of the 1993 World Trade Center bombing investigation. ([Weiser and Risen 12/1/1998](#); [Williams and McCormick 11/4/2001](#); [Waldman 11/26/2001](#); [Martin and Berens 12/11/2001](#)) By the time this interview takes place, investigators looking into the World Trade Center bombing earlier in the year have already determined that top secret US military training manuals found in the possession of assassin El-Sayyid Nosair (see [November 5, 1990](#)) must have been stolen by Mohamed from the US army base where he had been stationed (see [Spring 1993](#)). Yet Mohamed is not arrested, though he is monitored (see [Autumn 1993](#)). New Yorker magazine will later note, "inexplicably, [the contents of the FBI's] interview never found its way to the FBI investigators in New York." ([Wright 9/9/2002](#))

May 1993: Egyptian President Says 'Blind Sheikh' Worked with CIA

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak is quoted in an Egyptian newspaper saying Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman had worked with the CIA. Under pressure from the US State Department, the newspaper's editor retracts the story a few days later. ([Quinn-Judge and Sennott 2/3/1995](#); [Lance 2006, pp. 127](#))

Shortly After May 1993: Ali Mohamed Describes Al-Qaeda Training Camps, Possibly More, to US Military

Double agent Ali Mohamed is interviewed by the US military about al-Qaeda, but what exactly is said is uncertain because the interview files are supposedly lost. When Mohamed's FBI handler John Zent interviewed him in May 1993 (see [May 1993](#)), he mentioned al-Qaeda training camps. FBI agent Jack Cloonan, who will later investigate Mohamed, will recall, "John realizes that Ali is talking about all these training camps in Afghanistan. And starts talking about this guy named bin Laden. So John calls the local rep from army intelligence" and arranges for them to interview him. A special team of army investigators shows up from Fort Meade, Virginia, which is the home of the NSA. "They bring maps with them and they bring evidence.... And so they debrief Ali, and he lays out all these training camps." What else he may reveal is not known. Cloonan is not sure why Mohamed volunteered all this vital al-Qaeda information. Earlier in the year, FBI investigators discovered that Mohamed stole many top secret US military documents and gave them to Islamic militants (see [Spring 1993](#)). However, Mohamed faces no trouble from the Defense Department about that. FBI agent Joseph O'Brien will later ask, "Who in the government was running this show? Why didn't the Bureau bring the hammer down on this guy Mohamed then and there?" Whatever Mohamed says in this interview is not shared with US intelligence agencies, even though it would have obvious relevance for the worldwide manhunt for Ramzi Yousef going on at the time since Yousef trained in some of the camps Mohamed is describing. Several years later, Cloonan will attempt to find the report of Mohamed's interview with army intelligence but "we were never able to find it. We were told that the report was probably destroyed in a reorganization of intelligence components" in the Defense Department. ([Lance 2006, pp. 130-131](#))

Summer 1993: WTC Bomber Gives Up Names of Future Embassy Bombers, US Turns Down Deal for More Information



Mahmud Abouhalima. [Source: *Agence France-Presse*] Mahmud Abouhalima is arrested for his role in the February 1993 WTC bombing. He meets with US investigators without his lawyer and provides a detailed account of the Al-Kifah Refugee Center, bin Laden's main support base in the US in the early 1990s. He says that twice he turned to a Texas acquaintance named Wadih El-Hage to buy weapons for his associates. El-Hage, who turns out to be bin Laden's personal secretary (see [September 15, 1998](#)), will later be caught and convicted of bombing the US embassies in Africa in 1998 (see [August 7, 1998](#)). Abouhalima further recounts fighting in Afghanistan with the mujaheddin in the 1980s and tells of travelling to training camps with a Palestinian man named Mohammed Odeh. A Palestinian man with the name Mohammed Saddiq Odeh will later be convicted of a role in the 1998 embassy bombings as well. Abouhalima offers additional inside information about the bomb plot and his associates in exchange for a lighter sentence. But, as the New York Times will later note, prosecutors turn down the offer "for reasons that remain unclear." Abouhalima is later found guilty and sentenced to life in prison. ([Weiser, Sachs, and Kocieniewski 10/22/1998](#))

June 1993: Saudis Urge US to Lead in Military Assistance to Bosnian Muslims



Richard Holbrooke. [Source: *US State Department*] Saudi intelligence chief Prince Turki al Faisal urges President Bill Clinton to take the lead in military assistance to Bosnia. Richard Holbrooke, US ambassador to Germany at the time, draws up plans for covert assistance. ([Wiebes 2003, pp. 195](#))

June 1993-October 1994: 9/11 Funder Saeed Sheikh Links with Al-Qaeda

Saeed Sheikh, a brilliant British student at the London School of Economics, drops out of school and moves to his homeland of Pakistan. He had been radicalized by a trip to Bosnia earlier in the year (see [April 1993](#)). Two months later, he begins training in Afghanistan at camps run by al-Qaeda and the Pakistani ISI. By mid-1994, he has become an instructor. In June 1994, he begins kidnapping Western tourists in India. In October 1994, he is captured after kidnapping three Britons and an American, and is put in an Indian maximum-security prison, where he remain for five years. The ISI pays a lawyer to defend him. ([Watson 2/9/2002](#); [Williams 7/16/2002](#); [Anson 8/2002](#)) His supervisor is Ijaz Shah, an ISI officer. ([Varadarajan 3/12/2002](#); [McCarthy 7/16/2002](#))

June 24, 1993: New York ‘Landmarks’ Bombing Plot Is Foiled



Informant Emad Salem, pictured bent over in a green shirt, enables the FBI to take surveillance footage like this of the plotters making a bomb. [Source: *National Geographic*] Eight people are arrested, foiling a plot to bomb several New York City landmarks. The targets were the United Nations building, 26 Federal Plaza, and the Lincoln and Holland tunnels. This is known as the “Landmarks” or “Day of Terror” plot. The plotters are connected to Ramzi Yousef and the “Blind Sheikh,” Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman. If the bombing, planned for later in the year, had been successful, thousands would have died. An FBI informant named Emad Salem had infiltrated the group, gathering information that leads to arrests of the plotters (see [April 23, 1993](#)). ([US Congress 7/24/2003](#)) Abdul-Rahman will eventually be sentenced to life in prison for a role in the plot. Nine others will be given long prison terms, including Ibrahim El-Gabrowni and Clement Rodney Hampton-El. ([Fried 1/18/1996](#)) Siddig Siddig Ali, who was possibly the main force behind the plot (see [April 23, 1993](#)), will eventually be sentenced to only 11 years in prison because he agreed to provide evidence on the other suspects ([Weiser 10/16/1999](#))

July 1993: Ramzi Yousef and KSM Attempt to Assassinate Pakistani Prime Minister

Ramzi Yousef and his uncle Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM) unsuccessfully try to assassinate Behazir Bhutto, the leader of the opposition in Pakistan at the time. Yousef, with his friend Abdul Hakim Murad, plan to detonate a bomb near Bhutto's home as she is leaving it. However, they are stopped by a police patrol. Yousef had hidden the bomb when the police approached, and after they left the bomb is accidentally set off, severely injuring him. ([Ressa 2003, pp. 25](#)) KSM is in Pakistan at the time and will visit Yousef in the hospital, but his role in the bombing appears to be limited to funding it. ([Ressa 2003, pp. 25](#); [Gunaratna 3/3/2003](#)) Bhutto had been prime minister in Pakistan before and will return to power later in 1993 until 1996. She will later claim, "As a moderate, progressive, democratically elected woman prime minister of Pakistan, I was a threat to the fundamentalist zealots on multiple levels..." She claims they had "the support of sympathetic elements within Pakistan's security apparatus," a reference to the ISI intelligence agency. ([Bhutto 9/21/2001](#)) This same year, US agents uncover photographs showing KSM with close associates of previous Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, Bhutto's main political enemy at the time. Presumably, this failed assassination will later give KSM and Yousef some political connection and cover with the political factions opposed to Bhutto (see [Spring 1993](#)). Sharif will serve as prime minister again from 1997 to 1999. ([Bokhari et al. 2/15/2003](#))

July 3, 1993: 'Blind Sheikh' Arrested in Brooklyn

The "Blind Sheikh," Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman, is arrested in Brooklyn after a long stand off. The "Landmarks" plot was rolled up on June 24, 1993, and many of Abdul-Rahman's close associates were arrested on that day (see [June 24, 1993](#)). But Abdul-Rahman moved to the Abu Bakr mosque and stayed there. His presence in a mosque and the many supporters that gathered to surround it makes his arrest difficult. But after long negotiations, on July 3, 1993, he is arrested on immigration charges and taken to prison. ([Mitchell 7/3/1993](#)) He will later be charged with a role in the "Landmarks" plot and eventually sentenced to life in prison. ([Fried 1/18/1996](#))

August 1993: FBI Connects Bin Laden's Brother-in-Law Khalifa and 'Blind Shiekh'

After the "Blind Sheikh," Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman, is arrested for his involvement in several bomb plots (see [July 3, 1993](#)), his New Jersey residence is searched by the FBI. A business card from Mohammed Jamal Khalifa, bin Laden's brother-in-law, is found. Sixty-two thousand dollars in cash is also found in Abdul-Rahman's briefcase, suggesting he is being well funded. ([Lance 2006, pp. 139](#))

Autumn 1993: US Intelligence Begins Monitoring Ali Mohamed

At some point not long after Ali Mohamed is interviewed by the FBI in the autumn of 1993, the US government begins tracking his movements and monitoring his phone calls.

Eventually, this surveillance will lead US investigators to the al-Qaeda cell in Nairobi, Kenya (see [Late 1994](#)). It is not clear which governmental agency does this. Meanwhile, he continues to have periodic contact with the FBI. They are especially interested in what he knows about bin Laden, as bin Laden's importance becomes increasingly evident. ([Weiser and Risen 12/1/1998](#))

September 1993: Freeh Becomes FBI Director

President Clinton appoints Louis Freeh to be the new director of the FBI. Freeh was once an FBI field agent. He will forge alliances with Republicans in Congress. This will drive a wedge between the FBI and Clinton's White House and national security staff. Freeh will retire in the summer of 2001 (see [May 1, 2001](#)). The New York Times will later claim that he "left the FBI badly damaged. Lawmakers in both parties clamored for change at an agency they attacked as ineptly managed, resistant to change, and unwilling to admit mistakes." ([Bumiller 6/2/2002](#))

September 11, 1993: NSA Analyst Warns of Terrorist Attacks on US; Analyst Ordered to Undergo Psych Evaluation

A National Security Agency (NSA) linguist runs afoul of his superiors after he and other linguists submit a report concluding that Islamist terrorists are planning attacks on America. The analyst, who insists on remaining anonymous and is nicknamed "J" by press reports, is fluent in an unusual number of languages. His and his colleagues' study of Arabic language messages, and the flow of money to terrorist organizations from Saudi Arabia, lead them to believe that Saudi extremists are plotting an attack. J will recall in January 2006, "You could see, this was the pure rhetoric of Osama bin Laden and his group, the exact same group, and we had an early indication.... All of us in the group had this view of a burgeoning threat, and suddenly we were all trotted off to the office of security. Then came the call to report for a battery of psychological tests." J will issue further warnings of potential terrorist strikes, this time involving hijackers, passenger planes, and US buildings, in May 2001 (see [May 2001](#)). In 2006, other current and former NSA officials will claim that the NSA routinely uses unfavorable psychological evaluations to retaliate against whistleblowers and those employees who come into conflict with superiors (see [January 25-26, 2006](#)). ([Gossett 1/26/2006](#))

October 1993: FBI Records Hamas Leaders Plotting in US but Take No Action



Sheikh Muhammad Al-Hanooti. [Source: *Muslim World*

League Canada]The FBI secretly records top Hamas leaders meeting in a Philadelphia hotel. Five Hamas leaders meet with three leaders of the Texas-based Holy Land Foundation charity (see [1989](#)), including CEO Shukri Abu Baker and chairman Ghassan Elashi. A peace accord between Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) had just been made, and this group meets to decide how to best oppose that. It is decided that “most or almost all of the funds collected [by Holy Land] in the future should be directed to enhance [Hamas] and to weaken the self-rule government” of Palestinian and PLO leader Yasser Arafat. According to an FBI memo released in late 2001 that summarizes the surveillance, “In the United States, they could raise funds, propagate their political goals, affect public opinion and influence decision-making of the US government.” The FBI also learns from the meeting that Hamas leader Mousa Abu Marzouk gave Holy Land large sums of cash to get the charity started. Holy Land will eventually grow to become the largest Muslim charity in the US. In a January 1995 public conference also monitored by the FBI, Holy Land CEO Abu Baker will be introduced to the audience as a Hamas senior vice president. One Hamas military leader there will tell the crowd, “I’m going to speak the truth to you. It’s simple. Finish off the Israelis! Kill them all! Exterminate them! No peace ever!” ([Rohde 12/6/2001](#); [Emerson 2002, pp. 89-90](#); [CBS News 12/18/2002](#)) Investigators conclude at the time that some of Holy Land’s “key decision makers [are] Hamas members, the foundation [is] the primary US fundraising organ for Hamas, and most of its expenditures [go] to build support for Hamas and its goal of destroying Israel.” ([McGonigle 12/5/2001](#)) Sheikh Muhammad Al-Hanooti is one of the attendees for Hamas. In 1995, he will be listed as an unindicted coconspirator in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing (see [February 26, 1993](#)). In the early 1990s, he is the imam at a Jersey City, New Jersey, mosque where at least one of the WTC bombers regularly prays and where al-Qaeda leader Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman often delivers incendiary speeches. An FBI report claims Al-Hanooti raised more than \$6 million for Hamas in 1993 alone, funneling much of it through the Holy Land Foundation. As of the end of 2005, Al-Hanooti will still be an imam in the US and will continue to deny all charges against him. ([Lyons 6/30/2002](#)) Chicago FBI agents Robert Wright and John Vincent try and fail to get a criminal prosecution against the attendees of this meeting. Instead, the attendees will not be charged with criminal activity connected to this meeting until 2002 and 2004 (see [December 18, 2002-April 2005](#)). Vincent will comment in 2002 that the arrests made that year could have been made in 1993 instead. One of the Hamas attendees of the meeting, Abdelhaleem Ashqar, will be not arrested until 2004 (see [August 20, 2004](#)), and other attendees like Ismail Selim Elbarasse have never been arrested. Elbarasse, a college roommate of Hamas leader Mousa Abu Marzouk, will be detained in 2004 on the accusation of working with Marzouk to raise hundreds of thousands of dollars for Hamas, but not charged. ([Federal News Service](#)

[6/2/2003](#); [Fesperman and MacGillis 8/26/2004](#)) Oliver “Buck” Revell, head of the Dallas FBI office at the time, will say after 9/11 that the US government should have shut down Holy Land as soon as it determined it was sending money to Hamas (even though raising money for Hamas is not a criminal act in the US until 1995 (see [January 1995](#))). ([Associated Press 12/12/2001](#))

(October 1993-November 2001): Florida Cell Supports Global Jihad, Is Monitored by FBI

A Florida cell of Islamic radicals carries out fundraising, training, and recruitment to support the global jihad movement. The group is monitored by the FBI from the early 1990s, but no action is taken against it until after 9/11. The cell’s most prominent members are Adham Amin Hassoun, Mohammed Hesham Youssef, Kifah Wael Jayyousi, Kassem Daher, and Jose Padilla. Adnan Shukrijumah may also be involved (see [Spring 2001](#))).

■Both Hassoun and Jayyousi are associates of “Blind Sheikh” Omar Abdul-Rahman and the FBI monitors telephone conversations between them and Abdul-Rahman from January 1993 to 1995, at least. After Abdul-Rahman is taken into police custody in July 1993, according to an FBI agent, Jayyousi calls Abdul-Rahman in jail to “update the sheikh with jihad news, many times reading accounts and statements issued directly by terrorist organizations.” ([Adams 11/23/2003](#); [Lance 2006, pp. 126-8](#); [Anderson 4/8/2006](#); [Sontag 1/4/2007](#))

■Funds are provided through bank accounts of Al-Gama’a al-Islamiyya (the Islamic Group), the Canadian Islamic Association, and Benevolence International Foundation (BIF), for which Hassoun files incorporation papers in Florida. The cell pays out thousands of dollars in checks, some of which are marked “Chechnya”, “Kosovo,” or “for tourism”.

■They try to talk in code, but the code is unsophisticated; for example “tourism” apparently means “terrorism”. In addition, they are not very careful and in one conversation overheard by the FBI, which records tens of thousands of their conversations from the early 1990s, one plotter asks another if he has enough “soccer equipment” to “launch an attack on the enemy.” In another, the conspirators discuss a \$3,500 purchase of “zucchini” in Lebanon.

■Cell members are involved in jihad, through funding or direct participation, in Egypt, Somalia, Bosnia, Chechnya, Afghanistan, Lebanon, Libya, Kosovo, the former Soviet Republic of Georgia, and Azerbaijan.

■They are involved with both bin Laden and Chechen leader Ibn Khattab; for example, in one conversation Youssef tells Hassoun that he would be traveling “there at Osama’s and... Khattab’s company.” ([Indictment. United States v. Jose Padilla 11/17/2005](#) [a](#))

■They publish the Islam Report, a radical magazine about jihad. ([Anderson 4/8/2006](#)) It is unclear why the FBI monitors the cell for almost a decade before doing anything. However, some of their activities are focused on Bosnia, where the US is turning a blind eye, or even actively assisting Islamic militants fighting on the Bosnian side (see [1992-1995](#) and [April 27, 1994](#)). The cell is broken up in the months after 9/11, and Hassoun, Jayyousi, and Padilla are sent for trial, which begins in 2007. ([Sontag 1/4/2007](#))

October 3-4, 1993: Al-Qaeda and Pakistani Leader Support Somalia Attack on US Soldiers



A UN vehicle burning in Mogadishu, Somalia, on October 3, 1993. [Source: CNN] Eighteen US soldiers are attacked and killed in Mogadishu, Somalia, in a spontaneous gun battle following an unsuccessful attempt by US Army Rangers to snatch a local warlord. (This event later becomes the subject of the movie *Black Hawk Down*.) A 1998 US indictment will charge bin Laden and his followers with training the attackers. ([PBS Frontline 10/3/2002](#)) Al-Qaeda operatives involved in the attack include:

- Maulana Masood Azhar, who is a Pakistani militant leader connected with bin Laden. He appears to serve as a key link between bin Laden and the Somali killers of US soldiers. ([Watson and Barua 2/25/2002](#)) Azhar is also associated with Pakistan's ISI. He will be imprisoned briefly in Pakistan after 9/11 and then released (see [December 14, 2002](#)).

- Ali Mohamed, the notorious double agent, apparently helps train the Somalis involved in the attack (see [1993](#)).

- Mohammed Atef, al-Qaeda's military commander. An informant will later testify in an early 2001 US trial that he flew Atef and four others from bin Laden's base in Sudan to Nairobi, Kenya, to train Somalis. ([Miller 6/3/2002](#))

- Mohammed Saddiq Odeh, who will later be convicted for a role in the 1998 US embassy bombings, will boast that he provided the rocket launchers and rifles that brought down the helicopters. ([Vick 11/23/1998](#); [Lance 2006, pp. 143](#))

- Fazul Abdullah Mohammed (a.k.a. Haroun Fazul), who will also be convicted for the embassy bombings, trains militants in Somalia with Odeh. ([Vick 11/23/1998](#))

- Abdullah Ahmed Abdullah, who will also be connected to the embassy bombings and is still at large, is linked to the helicopter incident as well. ([Lance 2006, pp. 143](#))

- Muhsin Musa Matwalli Atwah, who will also be connected to the embassy bombings. He will be killed in Pakistan in 2006 (see [April 12, 2006](#)). ([Schuster 10/24/2006](#))

In a March 1997 interview, bin Laden will say of the Somalia attack, "With Allah's grace, Muslims over there cooperated with some Arab mujaheddin who were in Afghanistan... against the American occupation troops and killed large numbers of them." ([Hirschhorn 4/20/2001](#))

November 1993: Enron Power Plant Creates Demand for an Afghanistan Pipeline



The Dabhol power plant. [Source: Enron] The Indian government approves construction of Enron's Dabhol power plant, located near Bombay on the west coast of India. Enron has invested \$3 billion, the largest single foreign investment in India's history. Enron owns 65 percent of the Dabhol liquefied natural gas power plant, intended to provide one-fifth of India's energy needs by 1997. ([Nayar 2/27/2000](#); [Allison 1/18/2001](#)) It is the largest gas-fired power plant in the world. Earlier in the year, the World Bank concluded that the plant was "not economically viable" and refused to invest in it. ([Dugger 3/20/2001](#))

Late 1993: Al-Qaeda Allegedly Attempts to Buy Enriched Uranium

According to reliable al-Qaeda defector Jamal al-Fadl (see [June 1996-April 1997](#)), in late 1993 he meets with a former high-ranking Sudanese government official to discuss buying enriched uranium. Is taken to an anonymous address in Khartoum, Sudan, and shown a two- to three-foot long metal cylinder with South African markings. Intermediaries demand \$1.5 million to buy the cylinder which is supposed to contain uranium. Mohammed Loay Bayazid, a founding member of al-Qaeda and also president of the US-based Benevolence International Foundation (BIF) at the time, is brought in to examine the deal. Al-Fadl is then instructed to write a document for al-Qaeda leader Mamdouh Mahmud Salim detailing the offer. Salim reviews the document and approves the purchase. Al-Fadl never sees the purchase go through, but he is given \$10,000 for his role and is told the uranium will be shipped to Cyprus to be tested. He later learns from second-hand sources that the deal went through and the uranium was good. If so, there has been no sign of al-Qaeda attempting to use the uranium ever since. US intelligence does not know about the deal at the time, but learns of it when al-Fadl defects in 1996 (see [June 1996-April 1997](#)). The incident will be referred to in an indictment against Salim in 1998. ([Neuffer 9/16/2001](#); [Port and Smith 10/1/2001](#); [Lance 2006, pp. 262-263](#))

Late 1993-Late 1994: Ali Mohamed and Anas Al-Liby Scout Targets in Africa

In late 1993, bin Laden asks Ali Mohamed to scout out possible US, British, French, and Israeli targets in Nairobi, Kenya. Mohamed will later confess that in December 1993, “I took pictures, drew diagrams and wrote a report.” Then he travels to Sudan, where bin Laden and his top advisers review Mohamed’s work. In 1994, Mohamed claims that “bin Laden look[s] at a picture of the American Embassy and point[s] to where a truck could go as a suicide bomber.” A truck will follow bin Laden’s directions and crash into the embassy in 1998. Mohamed seems to spend considerable time in Nairobi working with the cell he set up there and conducting more surveillance. He also is sent to the East African nation of Djibouti to scout targets there, and is asked to scout targets in the West African nation of Senegal. ([Los Angeles Times 10/21/2000](#); [Martin and Berens 12/11/2001](#); [Crogan 5/24/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 6/16/2004](#)) Much of his work seems to be done together with Anas al-Liby, a top al-Qaeda leader with a mysterious link to Western intelligence agencies similar to Mohamed’s. In 1996, British intelligence will pay al-Liby to assassinate Libyan leader Colonel Mu’ammar al-Qadhafi (see [1996](#)), and then will let him live openly in Britain until 2000 (see [Late 1996-May 2000](#)). Al-Liby is said to be a “computer wizard” known for “working closely” with Mohamed. ([Feuer 2/13/2001](#); [Feuer and Weiser 4/5/2001](#)) L’Houssaine Kherchtou, an al-Qaeda member who later turns witness for a US trial (see [September 2000](#)), was trained in surveillance techniques in Pakistan by Mohamed in 1992. Kherchtou will claim he later comes across Mohamed in 1994 in Nairobi. Mohamed, Anas al-Liby, and a relative of al-Liby’s use Kherchtou’s apartment for surveillance work. Kherchtou sees al-Liby with a camera about 500 meters from the US embassy. ([Aita 2/22/2001](#)) Mohamed returns to the US near the end of 1994 after an FBI agent phones him in Nairobi and asks to speak to him about an upcoming trial. ([Aita 2/22/2001](#))

Late 1993-1994: US Investigators Discover Links Between WTC Bombing and Mujaheddin Fighting in Bosnian War



Anwar Shaaban. [Source: *Evan Kohlmann*] The Islamic Cultural Institute mosque in Milan, Italy is dominated by Al-Gama’a al-Islamiya, the Egyptian militant group led by Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman. The imam of the mosque, Anwar

Shaaban, is a leader of that group and also a leader of the mujaheddin efforts in Bosnia. The Islamic Cultural Institute serves as a transit and logistical base for mujaheddin coming or going to Bosnia (see [Late 1993-December 14, 1995](#)). After the 1993 WTC bombing, US investigators will discover heavy phone traffic between the Milan mosque and the Jersey City mosque run by Abdul-Rahman. Furthermore, they learn that bomber mastermind Ramzi Yousef used the Milan mosque as a logistical base as well. ([Hundley 10/22/2001](#)) Yousef also prayed at the Milan mosque prior to the WTC bombing. ([Gunaratna 2003, pp. 171](#)) Shaaban is a close friend of Talaat Fouad Qassem, another leader of Al-Gama'a al-Islamiya and one of the highest ranking leaders of the mujaheddin fighting in Bosnia. Qassem is directing the flow of volunteers to Bosnia while living in political asylum in Denmark (see [1990](#)). ([Kohlmann 2004, pp. 25](#)) In April 1994, seven Arab men living in Denmark, including Qassem, are arrested. US prosecutors will later claim that fingerprints on documents and videotapes seized from the men match fingerprints on bomb manuals that Ahmad Ajaj was carrying when he entered the US with Yousef (see [September 1, 1992](#)). A raid on one apartment in Denmark uncovers bomb formulas, bomb making chemical, sketches of attack targets, some videotapes of Abdul-Rahman's sermons, and a pamphlet claiming responsibility for the WTC bombing and promising more attacks. Also, phone records and documents found in Abdul-Rahman's Jersey City apartment show the men in Denmark were communicating regularly with Abdul-Rahman. ([McKinley 4/15/1995](#)) But no one in either Milan or Denmark will be charged with a role in the WTC bombing. Danish police will later say that none of the seized documents indicated that the Arab men personally took part in the bombing. The men all are released and ironically, two of them are granted political asylum in Denmark because they are members of Al-Gama'a al-Islamiya, which the Danish consider to be a persecuted group. ([Associated Press 6/28/1995](#)) The US government will later call the Islamic Cultural Institute al-Qaeda's main logistical base in Europe and some evidence will link figures connected to it to the 9/11 plot (see [Late 1998-September 11, 2001](#)).

Late 1993-December 14, 1995: Logistical Base for Militants Fighting in Bosnia Is Investigated and Shut Down

In late 1993, the FBI discovers that WTC bomber Ramzi Yousef used a mosque in Milan, Italy, known as the Islamic Cultural Institute, as a logistical base (see [Late 1993-1994](#)). The Italian government begins investigating the mosque and soon discovers that it is the main European headquarters for Al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya, a radical Egyptian militant group, and is also the logistical base for mujaheddin traveling to fight in Bosnia. The mosque is run by Anwar Shaaban, who has a close working relationship with Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman, and who also stays in regular contact with al-Qaeda second-in-command Ayman al-Zawahiri. Shaaban runs a training camp thirty miles outside of Milan where fighters heading to Bosnia can practice using weapons and explosives. The mosque also helps smuggle men, money, and weapons to Bosnia. ([Schindler 2007, pp. 163-164](#)) On June 25, 1995, Italian police raid the mosque and over 70 other locations in northern Italy. Seventeen people are indicted and eleven of them are arrested, but that is only a

fraction of the hundreds investigated. Inside the mosque, police find forgery tools, letters to wanted radicals around the world, and hundreds of false documents. Plots to bomb targets in other countries and a US target elsewhere in Italy are averted. Shaaban escapes arrest, as he had already left the country, but he is killed in Croatia a short time later (see [December 14, 1995](#)). ([Willan 6/26/1995](#); [Vidino 2006, pp. 216-218](#)) But the Islamic Cultural Institute will soon reopen and continue to be a focal point for radical militants in Europe. It will be linked the 9/11 attacks and other violent plots (see [Late 1998-September 11, 2001](#)).

1994: FBI Watches Suicide Bomber Train in Arizona, Fails to Take Action

By 1990, Arizona became one of the main centers in the US for radical Muslims, and it remains so through 9/11. For instance, a counterterrorism expert will later call the principal mosque in Tucson, Arizona, the focal point of “basically, the first cell of al-Qaeda in the United States; that is where it all started.” A number of future al-Qaeda leaders live in Arizona in the early 1990s, including Mubarak al Duri, al-Qaeda’s chief agent attempting to purchase weapons of mass destruction, and Wadih El-Hage, bin Laden’s personal secretary who will later be convicted for a role in the 1998 US embassy bombings (see [August 7, 1998](#)). The founder of the mosque, Wael Hamza Julaidan, is later considered one of the founders of al-Qaeda and its logistics chief. Around 1991, future 9/11 hijacker Hani Hanjour moved to Arizona for the first time (see [October 3, 1991-February 1992](#)) and he will spend much of the rest of the decade in the state. The FBI apparently remains largely oblivious of Hanjour, though one FBI informant claims that by 1998 they “knew everything about the guy.” ([Yardley and Thomas 6/19/2002](#); [Fainaru and Ibrahim 9/10/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 521](#)) In 1994, the Phoenix FBI office uncovers startling evidence connecting Arizona to radical Muslim militants. According to FBI agent James Hauswirth, they are told that a group of “heavy duty associates” of al-Qaeda leader Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman have arrived in the area, fleeing New York in the wake of the 1993 World Trade Center bombing. They are in the area to train a recruit as a suicide bomber. The recruit apparently is an FBI informant. FBI agent Ken Williams, who will later author the July 2001 “Phoenix memo,” orders surveillance of the training. The informant is driven to a remote stretch of desert and instructed in how to use explosives. A device is thrown at a car, but it fails to explode. The FBI secretly videotapes the entire incident. One of the two men is later positively linked to Abdul-Rahman. But apparently the investigation into the people involved fails to make progress. Hauswirth later blames this on a lack of support from higher-ups in the Phoenix office, recalling, “The drug war was the big thing back then, and terrorism was way on the back burner.” Additionally, also in 1994, a key FBI informant will begin monitoring local radical militants (see [October 1996](#)). However, terrorism will remain a low priority for the Phoenix, Arizona, FBI office (see [April 2000-June 2001](#)). ([Los Angeles Times 5/26/2002](#); [Yardley and Thomas 6/19/2002](#); [Lance 2003, pp. 209-210](#))

1994: French Suspect Moussaoui Involvement in Assassination; British Block Investigation



Zacarias Moussaoui obtained a master's degree in international business from South Bank University in London in the mid-1990s. [*Source: Agence France-Presse*] Three French consular officials in Algeria are assassinated. A French magistrate travels to London to investigate the case. The magistrate has information that a "Zacarias" living in London was a paymaster for the assassination. Zacarias Moussaoui, born in France and of North African ancestry, had moved to London in 1992 and become involved in radical Islam after being influenced by Abu Qatada (who has been called one of the leaders of al-Qaeda in Europe). The magistrate asks British authorities for permission to interview Moussaoui and search his apartment in Brixton. The British refuse to give permission, saying the French don't have enough evidence on Moussaoui. But the French continue to develop more information on Moussaoui from this time on. ([Burrell, Gumbel, and Sengupta 12/11/2001](#); [Boulden 12/11/2001](#); [Zucchino 12/13/2001](#))

1994: US Declines to Accept Documents Exposing Saudi Scandals and Ties to Islamic Militants

Mohammed al-Khilewi, the first secretary at the Saudi mission to the United Nations, defects and seeks political asylum in the US. He brings with him 14,000 internal government documents depicting the Saudi royal family's corruption, human-rights abuses, and financial support for Islamic militants. He meets with two FBI agents and an assistant US attorney. "We gave them a sampling of the documents and put them on the table," says his lawyer, "but the agents refused to accept them." ([Hersh 10/16/2001](#)) The documents include "details of the \$7 billion the Saudis gave to [Iraq leader] Saddam Hussein for his nuclear program—the first attempt to build an Islamic Bomb." However, FBI agents are "ordered not to accept evidence of Saudi criminal activity, even on US soil." ([Palast 2002, pp. 101](#))

1994: Ali Mohamed Trains Bin Laden's Bodyguards and Sets Up Hezbollah Meeting



Imad Mugnyiah. [Source: FBI] Ali Mohamed goes to Sudan and trains bin Laden's bodyguards. While there, Mohamed arranges security for a meeting between bin Laden and Imad Mugnyiah, the security chief for the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah who is said to have directed the 1983 bombing of the US Marine barracks in Beirut, Lebanon. Bin Laden and Mugnyiah are said to discuss upcoming operations. Mugnyiah is believed to be involved in the hijacking of an Air India jet in 1999 where passengers will be exchanged for three militants in Indian prisons, including Saeed Sheikh, who will be the paymaster for 9/11 (see [December 24-31, 1999](#)). Mohamed will later claim in court that Hezbollah subsequently provided explosives training for al-Qaeda and Islamic Jihad. ([Los Angeles Times 10/21/2000](#); [Sullivan and Neff 10/21/2001](#); [Martin and Berens 12/11/2001](#); [Crogan 5/24/2002](#)) US prosecutor Patrick Fitzgerald will later agree with this assessment, stating, "in the middle of the 1990's, al-Qaeda members received sophisticated explosives training from Hezbollah, despite the deep religious differences between the Sunni members of al-Qaeda and the Shiite members of Hezbollah." ([9/11 Commission 6/16/2004](#)) Dan Benjamin and Steve Simon, director and senior director of the National Security Council's counterterrorism team, will later write that "The meeting between the two preeminent terrorists of the era reportedly did take place, and there was an agreement to cooperate. But there the record ends; there is little evidence that a long-term bond between the Sunni and Shiite groups was ever formed." ([Benjamin and Simon 2002, pp. 128](#)) Mohamed returns to the US after an FBI agent phones him and asks to speak to him about an upcoming trial (see [December 9, 1994](#)).

1994: Al-Qaeda Leader Suspects Ali Mohamed Is Working with US Government

At some point in 1994, Mohamed Atef, one of al-Qaeda's top leaders, refuses to let Ali Mohamed know what name and passport he is traveling under. Al-Qaeda operative L'Houssaine Kherchtou, testifying in a US trial in February 2001, will say that Atef "doesn't want Abu Mohamed al Amriki [the American] to see his name, because he [is] afraid that maybe he is working with United States or other governments." ([Sullivan and Neff 10/21/2001](#))

1994: Ptech Founded with Support from Suspected Terrorism Financiers



Oussama Ziade. [Source: Beta Consulting] Ptech is founded in 1994

by Oussama Ziade, Hussein Ibrahim, and James Cerrato. Ziade came from Lebanon to study at Harvard University. As the Associated Press will describe it, Ptech's "idea was to help complicated organizations like the military and large companies create a picture of how their assets—people and technology—work together. Then the software could show how little changes, like combining two departments, might affect the whole." They raise \$20 million to start the company. A number of Ptech employees and investors will later be suspected of having ties to groups that have been designated by the US as terrorist organizations: ([CNN 12/6/2002](#); [Guidera and Simpson 12/6/2002](#); [Pope 1/3/2003](#))

■Yassin al-Qadi, a Saudi multimillionaire. He will invest \$5 million of Ptech's start-up money. The US will declare him an al-Qaeda financier shortly after 9/11 (see [October 12, 2001](#)). In 1998, al-Qadi will come under investigation by FBI agent Robert Wright (see [October 1998](#)) for potential ties to the 1998 US embassy bombings (see [August 7, 1998](#)). Al-Qadi is also a major investor in BMI Inc., an investment firm with connections to a remarkable number of suspected terrorist financiers (see [1986-October 1999](#)). Al-Qadi later will claim that he sold his investment in Ptech in 1999, but there will be evidence he may continue to hold a financial stake after that year, and even after the US will officially declare him a terrorism financier (see [1999-After October 12, 2001](#)). ([Guidera and Simpson 12/6/2002](#); [Mintz 12/7/2002](#); [Pope 1/3/2003](#))

■Gamel Ahmed, Ptech's comptroller in the mid-1990s. One al-Qadi loan Wright will investigate also involves Ahmed. ([Pope 1/3/2003](#))

■Hussein Ibrahim, Ptech vice president and chief scientist. He also serves as vice president and then president of BMI from 1989 until 1995. He has no known direct terrorism finance connections, but it has been reported that al-Qadi brought Ibrahim into Ptech as his representative. ([Guidera and Simpson 12/6/2002](#); [WBZ 4 \(Boston\) 12/9/2002](#); [Pope 1/3/2003](#))

■Soliman Biheiri. He is the head of BMI and a member of Ptech's board. US prosecutors will later call him the US banker for the Muslim Brotherhood, a banned Egyptian militant group. He will later be convicted for lying and immigration fraud (see [June 15, 2003](#)). ([Ehrenfeld 6/17/2005](#))

■Abdurahman Alamoudi. He is one of Ptech's founders, as well as an investor in BMI. In 2004, the US will sentence him to 23 years in prison for illegal dealings with Libya (see [October 15, 2004](#)). ([Markon 10/16/2004](#); [Ehrenfeld 6/17/2005](#))

- Muhammed Mubayyid and Suheil Laheir. Neither have any known direct ties to terrorism financing. However, both are longtime Ptech employees whom formerly worked for Care International, a Boston-based suspect Islamic charity (not to be confused with a large international charity having the same name). ([Guidera and Simpson 12/6/2002](#)) In 2005, Mubayyid will be charged with conspiring to defraud the US and making false statements to the FBI. Care International had previously been the Boston branch of the Al-Kifah Refugee Center (see [a0493kifahboston])) and a recruitment office for Mektab al Khidmat (MAK), the precursor organization to al-Qaeda (see [1985-1989](#)). Laheir, Ptech's chief architect, wrote many articles in support of Islamic holy war. He frequently quoted Abdullah Azzam, bin Laden's mentor. ([Emery 5/13/2005](#); [Ehrenfeld 6/17/2005](#))
- Yaqub Mirza. He is a Ptech investor and on a Ptech advisory board. He directs SAAR, a multi-million dollar network of companies and charities in Herndon, Virginia (see [July 29, 1983](#)). In March 2002, US investigators will raid the SAAR network for suspected terrorism ties (see [March 20, 2002](#)). In late 2002, the Wall Street Journal will report, "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." ([Guidera and Simpson 12/6/2002](#); [WBZ 4 \(Boston\) 12/9/2002](#); [Pope 1/3/2003](#))
- BMI itself directly invests in Ptech. It also gives Ptech a founding loan, and leases Ptech much of its office and computer equipment. ([Guidera and Simpson 12/6/2002](#); [Pope 1/3/2003](#)) Ptech president Ziade and other Ptech employees will claim that all of their ties to suspected terrorist financiers are coincidental. By 2002, Ptech will have annual revenues of up to \$10 million. ([Guidera and Simpson 12/6/2002](#)) Ptech's potential ties to suspected terrorist financiers will be of particular concern because of its potential access to classified government information (see [1996-1997](#)). ([Guidera and Simpson 12/6/2002](#); [Ranalli 12/7/2002](#)) Joe Bergantino, a CBS journalist who will be the first to report on Ptech, will say of Ptech in 2002, "The worst-case scenario is that this is a situation where this was planned for a very long time to establish a company in this country and in the computer software business that would target federal agencies and gain access to key government data to essentially help terrorists launch another attack." ([National Public Radio 12/8/2002](#))

1994: Militants Tied to Al-Qaeda Suspected of Collusion with Philippine Government

Some begin to suspect that the Philippine military is collaborating with Abu Sayyaf, a Muslim militant group operating in the southern Philippines which is said to have ties with al-Qaeda. In 1994, Philippine Catholic priest Father Loi Nacordo is kidnapped and held hostage by Abu Sayyaf for two months. He later comments, "There were many times when we passed close to military camps, and I would wonder: 'Why isn't the military going after us?' ... Many times, we would walk very near the military camps—about 50 or 100 meters away, and we were never bothered by the army, even though my captors and I could actually see them. It would have been impossible for the army not to spot us, as we were moving in a large group—there were about 20 of us." He will also say that he sometimes overheard Abu Sayyaf commanders talking about arms shipments from

government sources and that weapons and ammunition boxes used by the group were marked as coming from the Philippine military. Nacordo will go public with these accusations in 2002, when the Philippine congress launches an investigation into allegations of continued collusion between the government and Abu Sayyaf. That same year, the BBC will report, “many Filipinos suspect that some high ranking military officers are colluding with the Abu Sayyaf, and taking a cut of the profits of the lucrative kidnapping trade.” ([de Guzman 1/31/2002](#)) Also in 1994, a lieutenant colonel will voice similar doubts about Abu Sayyaf in the Philippine Army journal, asking, “How can a band of criminals with no military training to speak of withstand the full might of the armed forces, slip through the troop cordon and conduct kidnapping right under the very noses of government troops? Something is terribly wrong with our Armed Forces.” ([Vitug and Gloria 2000](#))

1994: Al-Qaeda Helps Form Militant Training Camps in Philippines



MILF forces on parade in Camp Abubakar, February 1999. [*Source: Romeo Gacad / AFP / Getty Images*] The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), a large Philippine militant group, sets up a major training camp with al-Qaeda help. According to Philippine investigators, a sprawling complex and set of camps known as Camp Abubakar is built this year in a remote part of the southern island of Mindanao. One camp within the complex called Camp Palestine trains Arabs exclusively. Another is Camp Hodeibia, and is used by Jemaah Islamiyah, the al-Qaeda-linked group based in Indonesia. ([Ressa 2003](#)) Al-Qaeda leader Abu Zubaida is said to send al-Qaeda operative Omar al-Faruq with one other al-Qaeda camp instructor to help recruit and train in these camps. Al-Faruq will remain the head of al-Qaeda's operations in Southeast Asia until his capture in 2002. ([Ratnesar 9/15/2002](#); [Ressa 10/28/2002](#)) Philippine officials will claim that over the next few years Camp Abubakar continues to grow and over twenty other MILF camps are used and supported by al-Qaeda operatives (see [February 1999](#)). The Philippine military will raze Camp Abubakar during a brief offensive against the MILF in 2000, but the camp will be quickly rebuilt and still be used to train foreign militants. ([Ressa 2003](#)) The Philippine government has had a series of negotiations, cease fires, and peace treaties with the MILF. The MILF has generally denied ties to al-Qaeda, but in 1999 the head of the MILF will say his group had received non-military aid from bin Laden (see [February 1999](#)). In

2003, President Bush will pledge \$30 million to MILF regions of the Philippines to promote a new peace treaty with the group. ([Garrido 10/30/2003](#))

1994: Surveillance of Bin Laden's Brother-in-Law Exposes Bojinka Plot

Mohammed Jamal Khalifa, bin Laden's brother-in-law, is monitored while living in the Philippines. The former head of Philippine military intelligence chief will later say that Khalifa was monitored starting in the late 1980s. ([Zamora 9/20/2001](#)) The surveillance intensifies when investigator Rodolfo Mendoza begins an investigation into foreign terrorist connections in the Philippines in 1994. He will later say that the report is based on "hundreds of wiretaps and countless man-hours of surveillance... In 1994 up to 1995, my unit [tracked] Khalifa [with] tight investigation and surveillance." Mendoza believes Khalifa is running a front to fund the training of fighters for the Abu Sayyaf and Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), and submits a secret report about this on December 15, 1994 (see [December 15, 1994](#)). ([CNN 11/24/2004](#)) Phone taps from Khalifa's offices will lead to Konsonjaya, a front company financing the Bojinka plot, which could kill thousands (see [June 1994](#)). By December, Tariq Javed Rana, another apparent Bojinka plotter, is also being monitored (see [December 1994-April 1995](#)), as are other Bojinka plotters such as Ramzi Yousef (see [Before January 6, 1995](#)). The Bojinka plot will be foiled days before it is to be implemented, apparently after police deliberately set a fire in Ramzi Yousef's apartment to provide an excuse to look around (see [January 6, 1995](#)).

1994: Intelligence Services in Bosnia Under Pressure to Produce Pro-Bosnian Reports

Intelligence services operating in the Balkans, especially US intelligence, become increasingly politicized and are under pressure to produce reports with a pro-Bosnian, anti-Serb slant. ([Wiebes 2003, pp. 86, 141](#)) For instance, one CIA report in 1995 blaming the Bosnian Serbs for the vast majority of the ethnic cleansing in Bosnia will later be accused of distorting the facts to fit an anti-Serb slant (see [March 9, 1995](#)).

1994: Bin Laden Front Establishes Secure Communications through Denver Using US Army Lines

The London-based Advice and Reformation Committee (ARC) establishes a secure system for communications between Saudi Arabia and London for Osama bin Laden. The system is set up by Denver resident Lujain al-Imam, wife of London-based Islamic activist Mohammad al-Massari, at his request. The calls are routed from Saudi Arabia to Britain through Denver, Colorado, using toll-free lines established for US servicemen during the Gulf War, in order to stop the Saudi government from intercepting the messages. After the system is set up, bin Laden calls al-Massari to thank him. It is not known how long the phone system is used. However, in late 2001 al-Imam will say that

some of the people involved in setting up the system are still in the Denver area, but she will not name them. ([Kilzer 11/12/2001](#)) The ARC is widely considered bin Laden's publicity office. ARC head Khalid al-Fawwaz will be indicted for his involvement in the US embassy bombings in 1998 (see [August 7, 1998](#) and [August 21, 2001](#)). Denver-based radical publisher Homaidan al-Turki begins to be investigated over suspicions he is involved in terrorism in 1995, although it is unclear whether this is related to the Saudi Arabia-Britain phone lines. ([Sarache 8/31/2006](#))

1994: Bin Laden Seen Repeatedly Meeting with Bosnian Muslim President Izetbegovic



Renate Flottau. [*Source: Public domain*] Renate Flottau, a reporter for Der Spiegel, later claims she meets Osama bin Laden in Bosnia some time in 1994. She is in a waiting room of Bosnian Muslim President Alija Izetbegovic's office in order to interview him when she runs into bin Laden. He gives her a business card but at the time she does not recognize the name. They speak for about ten minutes and he talks to her in excellent English. He asks no questions but reveals that he is in Bosnia to help bring Muslim fighters into the country and that he has a Bosnian passport. Izetbegovic's staffers seem displeased that bin Laden is speaking to a Western journalist. One tells her that bin Laden is "here every day and we don't know how to make him go away." She sees bin Laden at Izetbegovic's office again one week later. This time he is accompanied by several senior members of Izetbegovic's political party that she recognizes, including members from the secret police. She later calls the encounter "incredibly bizarre." ([Schindler 2007, pp. 123-125](#)) A journalist for the London Times will witness Flottau's first encounter with bin Laden and testify about it in a later court trial (see [November 1994](#)). Members of the SDA, Izetbegovic's political party, will later deny the existence of such visits. But one Muslim politician, Sejfidin Tokic, speaker of the upper house of the Bosnian parliament, will say that such visits were "not a fabrication," and that photos exist of bin Laden and Izetbegovic together. One such photo will later appear in a local magazine. Author John Schindler will say the photo is "fuzzy but appears to be genuine." ([Schindler 2007, pp. 124-125, 342](#)) According to one account, bin Laden continues to visit the Balkan region as late as 1996. ([Kurop 1/11/2001](#))

1994: US Intelligence Aware of Bin Laden's Terrorist Ties in Bosnia by This Time

In a 2004 book, former counterterrorism "tsar" Richard Clarke will mention that by 1994, bin Laden's name "popped up in intelligence in connection with terrorist activity" in Bosnia. "European and US intelligence services began to trace the funding and support of [mujaheddin fighters in Bosnia] to bin Laden in Sudan" and to support networks in Western Europe. However, he also says that "What we saw unfold in Bosnia was a guidebook to the bin Laden network, though we didn't recognize it as such at the time." He states that "The hard-pressed Bosnians clearly wished they could do without these uncontrollable savages, but Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic decided to take aid where he could." ([Clarke 2004, pp. 96, 137](#)) Author John Schindler, who was involved in the Bosnian war as an NSA intelligence officer, will later note Clarke's comments and say, "even professional counterterrorists, not usually a wishful thinking bunch, have shown an unwillingness to admit that [Bosnia] invited the mujaheddin, for political as much as military purposes, and that they were quite welcome guests of [Izetbegovic's ruling party]." ([Schindler 2007, pp. 191](#))

1994: Bin Laden Allegedly Briefly Lives in London

Shortly after 9/11, unnamed FBI agents will tell a British newspaper that bin Laden stayed in London for several months in 1994. He was already wanted by the US, but "confusion at British intelligence agencies allowed him to slip away." However, it may not simply have been confusion as British intelligence has a history of not acting on radical Muslim militants in Britain. One Israeli intelligence source will tell the same newspaper, "We know they come and go as they like in Britain. In the past our government has remonstrated with the Home Office but nothing has happened." ([Gardner 9/16/2001](#)) There are reports that bin Laden visits Britain at other times (see [Early 1990s-Late 1996](#)) and even considers applying for political asylum there in 1995 (see [Late 1995](#)). Ayman al-Zawahiri, al-Qaeda's second-in-command, is also "said to have lived in Britain for a time after fleeing Cairo, [Egypt, in the 1980s,] but [British ministers] refused Egypt's request to arrest and extradite him." ([McGoroy 9/24/2001](#))

1994: Bin Laden Travels to Britain to Meet GIA Militants

According to a book by French counterterrorism expert Roland Jacquard first published just prior to 9/11, "Bin Laden himself traveled to Manchester and the London suburb of Wembley in 1994 to meet associates of the GIA, notably those producing the Al-Ansar newsletter. Financed by a bin Laden intermediary, this newsletter called for a jihad against France in 1995, the opening salvo of which was the Saint-Michel metro attack." ([Jacquard 2002, pp. 67](#)) The GIA is an Algerian militant group heavily infiltrated by government moles around this time (see [October 27, 1994-July 16, 1996](#)), and the wave of attacks against France have been called false flag attacks designed to discredit Muslim

opponents to the government of Algeria (see [January 13, 1995](#) and [July-October 1995](#)). It is unknown if bin Laden is duped by the GIA, but in 1996 he will withdraw support from the group, claiming it has been infiltrated by spies (see [Mid-1996](#)). Bin Laden appears to make many trips to London in the early 1990s (see [Early 1990s-Late 1996](#)). If Jacquard is correct, it seems probable that bin Laden meets with Rachid Ramda at this time, because he is editor-in-chief of Al-Ansar and is also allegedly finances the GIA attacks in France. ([Jacquard 2002, pp. 64](#))

1994-1995: Wright Allegedly Thwarted by FBI Intelligence

FBI agent Robert Wright had begun to investigate terrorism financing in 1993, and apparently quickly discovered many leads (see [After January 1993](#)). However, he will later claim that by 1994, he encounters resistance to his investigations from the FBI's International Terrorism Unit. Wright will claim, "[T]here existed a concerted effort on the part of agents conducting counterterrorism intelligence investigations to insulate the subjects of their investigations from criminal investigation and prosecution." In 2002, Wright will claim that the agents were doing this because they were lazy, and he will sue these unnamed agents. ([Horrock 5/30/2002](#)) But in 2003, he will suggest that in addition to such incompetence, his investigations into Hamas operatives living in the US were deliberately blocked so Hamas would be able to foment enough violence in Israel to derail the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. He will allege that some people in the FBI had a political agenda regarding Israel contrary to President Clinton's (see [June 2, 2003](#)). ([Federal News Service 6/2/2003](#))

Early 1994-January 1995: KSM Receives Mysterious Financial Support in the Philippines



Khalid Shaikh Mohammed in a 1998 FBI wanted poster.

[Source: *FBI*] 9/11 mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM) lives in the Philippines for a year, planning Operation Bojinka until the plot is exposed in January 1995 and he has to flee (see [January 6, 1995](#)). Police later say he lives a very expensive and non-

religious lifestyle. He goes to karaoke bars and go-go clubs, dates go-go dancers, stays in four-star hotels, and takes scuba diving lessons. Once he rents a helicopter just to fly it past the window of a girlfriend's office in an attempt to impress her. This appears to be a pattern; for instance, he has a big drinking party in 1998. ([McDermott 6/24/2002](#)) Officials believe his obvious access to large sums of money indicate that some larger network is backing him by this time. ([Drogin and Meyer 6/6/2002](#)) One of the participants in Bojinka is a Pakistani businessman with alleged ties to the ISI and the drug trade. This Pakistani is said to use counterfeit US currency to help fund the Bojinka plot (see [September 18-November 14, 1994](#)). It has been suggested that KSM, a Pakistani, is able "to operate as he please[s] in Pakistan" during the 1990s ([McDermott 6/24/2002](#)), and he is linked to the Pakistani ISI by 1993 (see [Spring 1993](#)). His hedonistic time in the Philippines resembles reports of hijackers Mohamed Atta and Marwan Alshehhi in the Philippines in 1998-2000 (see [December 1999](#)). KSM returns to the Philippines occasionally, and he is even spotted there after 9/11 (see [September 1998-January 1999](#)).

Early 1994-September 27, 1998: Bin Laden's London Representative Helps Al-Qaeda Cells Despite Being Heavily Monitored



Dollis Hill, the London street where Khalid al-Fawwaz runs bin Laden's de facto press office. [*Source: Telegraph*] Khalid al-Fawwaz moves to London and becomes bin Laden's de facto press secretary there. Al-Fawwaz, a Saudi, had fought with bin Laden in Afghanistan and lived with him in Sudan. ([Reeve 1999, pp. 180, 192](#)) He headed the al-Qaeda cell in Kenya for about a year until early 1994 when he was arrested there. He went to London shortly after bribing his way out of Kenyan custody. ([O'Neill 9/19/2001](#); [Huband 11/29/2001](#)) He opens a London office of the Advice and Reformation Committee (ARC), a bin Laden front. He also allegedly opens an account at Barclays Bank. US officials believe he uses the account to channel funds to al-Qaeda operatives around the world. Al-Fawwaz will be heavily monitored by Western intelligence agencies for most of this time. ([Reeve 1999, pp. 180, 192](#)) For instance, the NSA will record bin Laden phoning him over 200 times from 1996 to 1998 (see [November 1996-Late August 1998](#)). Bin Laden also frequently calls al-Fawwaz's work phone, and Ibrahim Eidaous and Adel Abdel Bary, who work with al-Fawwaz at the London ARC office. ([Fielding and Gadhery 3/24/2002](#)) He works directly with some al-Qaeda cells during this time. For instance, a letter found on Wadih El-Hage's computer

in a late 1997 raid (see [August 21, 1997](#)) will repeatedly mention al-Fawwaz by his real first name. One part of the letter says that al-Fawwaz “asked me also to write periodically about the entire situation of the [al-Qaeda Nairobi] cell and the whole group here in east Africa.” ([Reeve 1999, pp. 180, 192](#)) Al-Fawwaz issues bin Laden’s fatwas in 1996 and 1998 and also arranges media interviews with him (see [August 1996](#) and [February 22, 1998](#)). ([O’Neill 9/19/2001](#)) But al-Fawwaz, along with Eidarous and Abdel Bary, will not be arrested until shortly after the 1998 African embassy bombings (see [August 7, 1998](#)). Nearly ten years after their arrests, the three of them still remain in a British prison without being tried while fighting extradition to the US. ([O’Neill 9/19/2001](#); [Huband 11/29/2001](#))

Between 1994 and July 1996: NSA Learns Top Saudi Prince Funding Charities Connected to Radical Militants



Prince Salman bin Abdul-Aziz. [*Source: Public domain*] By 1994, if not earlier, the NSA is collecting electronic intercepts of conversations between Saudi Arabian royal family members. Journalist Seymour Hersh will later write, “according to an official with knowledge of their contents, the intercepts show that the Saudi government, working through Prince Salman [bin Abdul Aziz], contributed millions to charities that, in turn, relayed the money to fundamentalists. ‘We knew that Salman was supporting all of the causes,’ the official told me.” By July 1996 or soon after, US intelligence “had more than enough raw intelligence to conclude... bin Laden [was] receiving money from prominent Saudis.” ([Hersh 2004, pp. 324, 329-330](#)) Prince Salman has long been the governor of Riyadh province. At the time, he is considered to be about fourth in line to be king of Saudi Arabia. His son Prince Ahmed bin Salman will later be accused of having connections with al-Qaeda leader Abu Zubaida (see [Early April 2002](#)). ([PBS 10/4/2004](#)) It appears this surveillance of Saudi royals will come to an end in early 2001 (see [February-March 2001](#)).

January 24, 1994: CIA Concludes It Is ‘Partly Culpable’ for WTC Bombing

The Boston Herald reports that an internal CIA report has concluded that the agency is “partially culpable” for the 1993 World Trade Center bombing (see [February 26, 1993](#)) because it helped train and support some of the bombers. One source with knowledge of the report says, “It was determined that a significant amount of blowback appeared to have occurred.” A US intelligence source claims the CIA gave at least \$1 billion to forces in Afghanistan connected to Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. More than a half-dozen of the WTC bombers belonged to this faction, and some of the CIA money paid for their training. The source says, “By giving these people the funding that we did, a situation was created in which it could be safely argued that we bombed the World Trade Center.” Those connected to the bombing who went to Afghanistan include Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman, Clement Rodney Hampton-el, Siddig Siddig Ali, Ahmed Ajaj, and Mahmud Abouhalima. ([Miner 1/24/1994](#)) Additionally, Ramzi Yousef trained in Afghanistan near the end of the Afghan war, and there are claims he was recruited by the CIA (see [Late 1980s](#)). “Intelligence sources say the CIA used the Al-Kifah Refugee Center in Brooklyn—founded to support the Afghani rebels fighting Soviet occupation—to funnel aid to Hekmatyar, setting the stage for terrorists here to acquire the money, guns and training needed to later attack the Trade Center. CIA support also made it easier for alleged terrorist leaders to enter the country.” ([Miner 1/24/1994](#)) It will later be alleged that the CIA repeatedly blocked investigations relating to Al-Kifah, which was al-Qaeda’s operational base in the US (see [Late 1980s and After](#)).

February 1994-Late 1995: US Spy Planes Help Croats and Muslims Fight Serbs in Bosnia

The US begins flying spy planes over Serbia and Bosnia. In March 1994, the CIA begins flying Gnat-750 drone aircraft from Glader, a remote Albanian air force base in north-central Albania. ([Jahn 5/7/1994](#)) In December 1994, the CIA begins flying more drone aircraft from the Croatian island of Brac. ([Beelman 2/3/1995](#)) In July 1995, the US begins using the Predator remote spy drone over Bosnia, from the Glader base. ([Dhimgjoka 7/21/1995](#)) Such surveillance information is allegedly shared with Croat and Muslim forces, allowing them to bypass Serb defensive positions in battle. The US officially denies the existence of all these flights since the US is supposed to be neutral in the war. ([Eagar 11/5/1995](#))

Spring-Autumn 1994: Taliban Arise in Afghanistan; Quickly Co-opted by ISI

By early 1994, many people in Afghanistan have become fed up with widespread corruption and violence between warlords fighting for power. The Taliban starts as a small militia force near the town of Kandahar. It is led by Mullah Omar, a former mujaheddin fighter who preaches and teaches in a small remote village. Feeding on discontent, the Taliban’s popularity rapidly grows. ([Coll 2004, pp. 285](#)) The Pakistani ISI takes an interest in their success. Journalist Steve Coll will later comment, “There was a meeting at ISI headquarters with some of the early leaders of the Taliban—not Mullah

Omar, but some of his aides—and the ISI chief in the late autumn of 1994.” ([Coll 10/3/2006](#)) The ISI floods them with weapons and new recruits taken from religious schools in Pakistan and soon effectively dominates the group (see [October 1994](#) and [Autumn 1994-Spring 1995](#)). ([Gannon 2005, pp. 37-39](#)) Before long, as Coll put it, the Taliban becomes “an asset of the ISI.” ([Coll 10/3/2006](#))

March 1994: FBI Begins to Focus on Radical Fundamentalism

The FBI creates the Radical Fundamentalist Unit to investigate international radical fundamentalism, including al-Qaeda. (An FBI unit focusing on bin Laden will not be created until 1999.) ([US Congress 7/24/2003](#).)

March 1994: US Withdraws from Somalia Following ‘Black Hawk Down’ Incident, Bin Laden Later Claims Victory



Super six four, one of the Black Hawk helicopters shot down in the Battle of Mogadishu. [*Source: Public domain*]/The US withdraws from Somalia six months after the Battle of Mogadishu, during which 18 US soldiers were killed and four Black Hawk helicopters were shot down by local clan fighters (see [October 3-4, 1993](#)). The casualties caused the battle to be regarded as a pyrrhic victory in the US, even though the US force had actually captured two lieutenants of a local clan leader and killed hundreds of Somalis. ([Bowden 1999, pp. 448-53](#)) Osama bin Laden, some of whose associates are said to have trained local fighters before the battle, will later claim victory: “The youth [local fighters] were surprised at the low morale of the American soldiers and realized more than before that the American soldier was a paper tiger and [would] after a few blows run in defeat. And America forgot all the hoopla and media propaganda... about being the world leader and the leader of the New World Order, and after a few blows they forgot about this title and left, dragging their corpses and their shameful defeat.” In August 1997 he will comment: “The Americans are cowards and cannot confront me. If they ever think of confronting me, I will teach them a

lesson similar to the lesson they were taught a few years ago in Somalia.” ([Scheuer 2006, pp. 149](#))

March 10, 1994: Al-Qaeda Affiliate Kills Two German Intelligence Agents

An al-Qaeda affiliate group, al-Muqatila, allegedly kills two German intelligence agents. The agents, Silvan Becker and his wife Vera, are in Libya when they are killed. In 1998, the Libyan government will issue an arrest warrant for Osama bin Laden and several others for their murders (see [April 15, 1998](#)). Counterterrorism expert Rohan Gunaratna will later write, “According to the German secret service, Becker was their Arabist and his untimely death gravely affected Germany’s ability to effectively the growing al-Qaeda infrastructure in Germany.” ([Gunaratna 2003, pp. 189-190](#))

March 13, 1994: Bosnian Croats and Muslims Stop Fight Each Other, Form Political Federation

Bosnian Muslims and Croats have been fighting each other, as well as Bosnian Serbs, for the past year (see [March 1993](#)). But at the urging of the US, a peace deal is agreed to and the Muslim federation of Croatia and Bosnia is formed. Croats and Muslims now concentrate on fighting the Serbs in Bosnia. ([Time 12/31/1995](#); [Wiebes 2003, pp. 165-166](#))

March 13, 1994: Report: Violence, Drugs, and Militant Training Camps Are Rife in Afghanistan

The New York Times reports that tens of thousands of Islamic radicals from around the world have come to train in Afghanistan since the end of the Soviet-Afghan war, in order to bring the militant jihad struggle back to their home countries. There are dozens of training camps all over the country, with around 20 under control of warlord Gulbuddin Hekmatyar alone. ([Weiner 3/13/1994](#)) Even though bin Laden is living in Sudan at this time and has moved some training camps there, he also keeps some camps and guesthouses open in Pakistan and Afghanistan until he moves back to Afghanistan take direct control of them in 1996. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 63](#)) A civil war that has raged non-stop since the Soviets left and the growing importance of the opium crop made Afghanistan into “essentially a lawless country. There is no civil law, no government, no economy—only guns and drugs and anger.” Abdul Haq, a politically moderate warlord, says, “For us, Afghanistan is destroyed. It is turning to poison, and not only for us but for all others in the world. If you are a terrorist, you can have shelter here, no matter who you are. Day by day, there is the increase of drugs. Maybe one day [the US] will have to send hundreds of thousands of troops to deal with that. And if they step in, they will be stuck. We have a British grave in Afghanistan. We have a Soviet grave. And then we will have an American grave.” ([Weiner 3/13/1994](#))

April 1994: Disgruntled Worker Tries to Fly Passenger Jet Into Memphis Building

A flight engineer at Federal Express who is facing a potentially career-ending disciplinary hearing boards a DC-10 as a passenger, storms the cockpit with a hammer, and hits each of the three members of the cockpit crew in the head. He severely injures all of them, but they nonetheless are able to wrestle him down and regain control of the plane. Company employees claim he was trying to hit a company building in Memphis, Tennessee. ([Wald 10/3/2001](#))

April 1994: CIA Suspects US Ambassador May Be Involved in Arms Smuggling

US ambassador Peter Galbraith speaks with Iman Sefko Omerbasic, the religious leader of the small Muslim community in Zagreb, Croatia. Sefko later informs the Iranian ambassador that American diplomats want him to purchase arms for the Bosnian army. The CIA keeps tabs on Galbraith, concerned that he might be engaged in a secret operation. ([Wiebes 2003, pp. 166](#)) The CIA fears that another Iran-Contra scandal is brewing. ([Beelman 1997](#))

Shortly After March 1994: US Learns Bin Laden Gave Prominent Muslim Activist Money for ‘Blind Sheikh’



Alamoudi, center, with Vice President Gore, left, and President Clinton, right. This picture is from a 1997 American Muslim Council newsletter and was presumably taken around that time. [*Source: CAIR*] Abdo Mohammed Haggag, speechwriter for the “Blind Sheikh,” Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman, makes a deal and agrees to testify against Abdul-Rahman in an upcoming US trial. ([McFadden 6/26/1994](#)) He soon reveals that bin Laden has been paying for Abdul-Rahman’s living expenses since Abdul-Rahman moved to the US in 1990 (see [July 1990](#)). This is one of the first things that causes US intelligence to become interested in bin Laden. ([Miller, Stone, and Mitchell 2002, pp. 147-148](#)) Further, Haggag reveals that the money was funneled through Abdurahman Alamoudi and his organization, the American Muslim Council. “Investigators tried to prove Alamoudi was a terror middleman but could not find ‘smoking gun’ evidence. That allowed Alamoudi to become a politically

connected Muslim activist and co-founder of the American Muslim Armed Forces and Veteran Affairs Council, which helps the US military select Muslim chaplains.” ([Weiss 10/1/2003](#)) This same year, Alamoudi will be one of the founders of Ptech, a US computer company with suspected terrorism ties (see [1994](#)). It will later be alleged that he was able to operate with impunity for years due to his close ties to Grover Norquist, a powerful Republican lobbyist (see [March 20, 2002](#)). In 2004, the US will sentence him to 23 years in prison for illegal dealings with Libya (see [October 15, 2004](#)).

April 9, 1994: Saudi Government Publicly Breaks with Bin Laden

The Saudi government revokes bin Laden’s citizenship and moves to freeze his assets in Saudi Arabia because of his support for Muslim fundamentalist movements. ([Ibrahim 4/10/1994](#); [PBS Frontline 2001](#)) However, allegedly, this is only a public front and they privately continue to support him as part of a secret deal allegedly made in 1991 (see [Summer 1991](#)). In fact, bin Laden will travel to Albania as part of an official Saudi delegation later in the month (see [Shortly After April 9, 1994](#)). The Saudis were said to have been pressured into this move after US officials privately met with Saudi officials and confronted them with satellite images of al-Qaeda training camps in northern Sudan. ([Follath and Mascolo 6/6/2005](#)) But Alain Chouet, head of the French intelligence subdivision tracking terrorist movements, will later claim that bin Laden’s “loss of Saudi nationality is nothing but a farce.” ([Dasquié 4/15/2007](#))

Shortly After April 9, 1994: Bin Laden Travels to Albania, Meets with Government Officials

Bin Laden visits Albania as a member of a Saudi government delegation. He is introduced as a friend of the Saudi government who could finance humanitarian projects. Yet, earlier the same month, the Saudi government supposedly cut all ties with bin Laden (see [April 9, 1994](#)). One former US intelligence officer will complain in 1999, “Why was he a member of that delegation? The Saudis are supposed to be our allies. They told us he was persona non grata, and yet here he was working the crowds on an official visit.” Bin Laden strengthens ties with the Albanian secret service, with an eye to assisting the fight against Serbia in the neighboring country of Bosnia. ([Reeve 1999, pp. 180-181](#); [Krale 9/18/2001](#); [Taylor 12/15/2001](#))

Shortly After April 9, 1994: Bin Laden Family Publicly Disowns Osama

Shortly after the Saudi government publicly disowns bin Laden (while privately continuing to support him) (see [April 9, 1994](#)), the bin Laden family follows suits and publicly disowns him as well. Bakr bin Laden, the chairman of the Saudi Binladin Group, the main bin Laden family company, signs a two-sentence statement. Osama bin Laden

has 25 brothers, 29 sisters, and more in-laws, aunts, uncles, and so forth. Der Spiegel will later report that in the years bin Laden lives in Sudan, Saudi intelligence minister “Prince Turki sent Osama’s mother, Hamida, and his brother Bakr to the Sudanese capital, Khartoum, several times to convince Osama to abandon his terrorist activities. The visits were so frequent that Israel’s intelligence agency, the Mossad, believed at the time that Osama was a Saudi spy.” Vincent Cannistraro, former head of the CIA’s Counter Terrorism Center, will say, “I tracked the bin Ladens for years. Many family members claimed that Osama was no longer one of them. It’s an easy thing to say, but blood is usually thicker than water.” Michael Scheuer, former head of the CIA unit specializing in hunting bin Laden, doubts that the entire bin Laden family has severed ties with Osama. In a 2005 interview he will say, “I haven’t seen anything in the last 10 years that’s convinced me that would be the case.” ([Follath and Mascolo 6/6/2005](#); [Mascolo and Follath 6/6/2005](#))

April 27, 1994: US Gives Bosnians Green Light To Smuggle Arms



Peter Galbraith. [*Source: CBC*] US President Bill Clinton and National Security Adviser Anthony Lake decide that they will give the Bosnians a “green light” for the arms supply pipeline from Iran to Croatia. The CIA is not consulted. Lake passes the word on to US ambassador to Croatia Peter Galbraith by “cleverly” telling him that they have “no instructions” for him with regard to the Iranian arms shipments. ([Wiebes 2003, pp. 167- 168](#)) Two days later, Galbraith passes the “no instructions” message on to Croatian President Franjo Tudjman, making it clear that the US government is giving him a green light for Croatia to conduct arms deals with Iran. ([Beelman 1997](#))

May 21-July 7, 1994: North Yemen, Backed by US and Bin Laden, Wins Yemen Civil War

The southern part of Yemen attempts to cede from the rest of the country, but loses the ensuing war and north Yemeni forces take the south’s capital, Aden, reuniting the country. Yemen first united in 1990, but tensions between the two former independent halves of the country resulted in the civil war. As the south is regarded as communist, the north is backed by both the US and Osama bin Laden. ([Whittaker 5/6/1994](#); [Leupp 5/20/2002](#);

[Higgins and Cullison 12/20/2002](#); [Katz 4/8/2004](#)) The New York Times will say that the north Yemeni president uses “large numbers of Arab Afghans formed into Islamic terrorist units as his shock troops.” ([Burns 11/26/2000](#)) CIA officer Michael Scheuer will comment, “In 1993 and 1994, bin Laden sent al-Qaeda fighters from Pakistan to Afghanistan—via Sudan—to fight the Yemeni Communists in the civil war that yielded a reunified Yemen.” ([Scheuer 2006, pp. 151](#)) According to Western intelligence, before the war Ali Mohsen al-Ahmar, a brother of north Yemen’s President Ali Abdallah Saleh, received US\$ 20 million from bin Laden to help settle Arab Afghan fighters in the country. When war breaks out, as military commander he deploys these fighters in the war’s final battle for the south’s capital of Aden. Despite its socialist tendencies, the south is backed by Saudi Arabia, as it thinks a divided Yemen is less of a threat to it. ([Leupp 5/20/2002](#); [Higgins and Cullison 12/20/2002](#); [Katz 4/8/2004](#)) Veteran Middle Eastern journalist Brian Whittaker will comment, “The Saudis invested hugely in the war on behalf of the South, and the outcome is a defeat for them as much as anyone.” ([Whittaker 7/22/1994](#)) After the war, the government will allow the radical fighters to settle in Yemen and use it as a base (see [After July 1994](#)).

June 1994: Front Company for Bojinka Plot Formed; Ties Plot to Al-Qaeda Figures

A young Indonesian nicknamed Hambali forms a front company that ties al-Qaeda figures to the Bojinka plot (see [January 6, 1995](#)), an early version of the 9/11 plot. Hambali had fought in Afghanistan in the late 1980’s, repeatedly met with bin Laden there, and allied himself to bin Laden’s cause. In 1994, Hambali, living in a village north of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, began frequently receiving visitors. According to his landlord, “Some looked Arab and others white.” There has been no explanation who these “white” visitors may have been. Hambali had been very poor prior to this time, but he is suddenly “flush with newfound cash” brought by the visitors. In June 1994, he founds a front company called Konsonjaya with Wali Khan Amin Shah, a key Bojinka plotter, and both their names are listed on the eight-person board of directors. Shah fought with bin Laden in Afghanistan, and bin Laden will even admit knowing him and praise him in an 1998 interview (see [May 28, 1998](#)). Philippine police phone taps show that frequent calls are made from the Konsonjaya offices in Malaysia to the Philippines offices of Mohammed Jamal Khalifa, bin Laden’s brother-in-law who is also believed to be part of the Bojinka plot. ([Elegant 4/1/2002](#)) A Malaysian official will later say that Hambali spends time in the Philippines with Shah and bomber Ramzi Yousef in 1994 as they plan the Bojinka plot. ([Chandrasekaran 2/3/2002](#)) Mohammed Amin al-Ghafari, another Konsonjaya director, makes frequent trips from Malaysia to the Philippines while planning for the Bojinka plot is under way, and he is later believed to play a key role in financing the plot. In early 1995, after the Bojinka plot is broken up, one of the arrested Bojinka plotters will confess to Hambali’s and Konsonjaya’s role in the plot (see [February-Early May 1995](#)) and a Philippine investigator’s flow chart of the Bojinka plotters and their connections will prominently include Konsonjaya (see [Spring 1995](#)). However, neither the Philippine nor US government appears interested in capturing Hambali, al-Ghafari, or the others involved in Konsonjaya before 9/11. ([McDermott](#)

[6/24/2002](#); [Abuza 12/1/2002](#)) Hambali will continue to live openly in Malaysia, even throwing a party every year for hundreds of people. He will go on to plan other al-Qaeda attacks and will attend a key planning meeting for the 9/11 plot in 2000 (see January 5-8, 2000). ([Elegant 4/1/2002](#)) Al-Ghafari will finally be deported in 2002 after years of police protection (see [October 8-November 8, 2002](#)).

June 20, 1994: Ramzi Yousef Bombs Iranian Shrine



Imam Reza shrine. [*Source: Public domain*] After failing to bomb the Israeli embassy in Bangkok, Thailand, Razmi Yousef moves back to Pakistan and plots a bombing inside Iran. Yousef, a Sunni Muslim, has a deep hatred of Shiite Muslims, and most Iranians are Shiites. On June 20, 1994, Yousef bombs a mosque in the Iranian town of Mashhad, killing 26 people and injuring over 200 more. The mosque is an important shrine and one of the holiest Shiite sites in Iran, and the attack also takes place on a Shiite holy day. The group Yousef works with this time includes his younger brother, Abdul Muneem, and his father, who is arrested and detained in Iran. While Yousef generally works in concert with or by orders from bin Laden, the Mashhad bombing runs counter to bin Laden's efforts to work with the Iranian-influenced Hezbollah militant group this same year (see [1994](#)). ([Reeve 1999, pp. 63-67](#))

June 24, 1994: Pentagon Report Predicts New Age of Religiously Inspired 'Superterrorism'



Peter Probst. [*Source: Publicity photo*] The Pentagon privately publishes a report called *Terror 2000*. It is designed to help US intelligence prepare for

new terrorism threats. Peter Probst in the Pentagon's Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict supervises the report. The panel consults with 40 experts, including a top Russian intelligence official and a senior Israeli intelligence official. The report concludes that the world is witnessing the dawn of a new age of "superterrorism." It predicts chemical and biological attacks and says that terrorists will soon try to conduct simultaneous bombings and attacks. ([Reeve 1999, pp. 259-260](#)) Also, in contrast to the state-sponsored terrorism familiar to most Americans at the time, the report says tomorrow's "most dangerous" terrorists would be "motivated not by political ideology but by fierce ethnic and religious hatreds.... Their goal will not be political control but utter destruction of their chosen enemies." ([Warrick and Stephens 10/2/2001](#)) The report further states: "We appear to be entering an era in which few, if any, restraints will remain.... Unlike politically motivated terrorists, [religiously motivated terrorists] do not shrink from mass murder.... Mass casualties are not to be shunned... but sought because they demonstrate to unbelievers the cataclysmic nature of divine retribution." ([Hess 5/17/2002](#)) It also postulates the use of planes as weapons, but this is not put in the report, partly for fear of giving potential terrorists ideas (see [1993-1994](#)). The study is presented to officials in Congress, FEMA, the CIA, FBI, NSA, DIA, Justice Department, State Department, and senior executives from the telecommunications, banking and computer industries. State Department officials consider publicly releasing the report but ultimately decide not to. "That was a mistake," Probst will later say. ([Warrick and Stephens 10/2/2001](#); [Hess 5/17/2002](#)) Marvin Cetron, an expert who wrote the report, will later say, "Some of the people thought it was right on—but most of them thought it was too far out." ([Reeve 1999, pp. 259-260](#))

Mid 1994-March 2, 1995: French Informer Provides Inside Information on GIA Militant Cell in Belgium, Purchases Ammunition

Omar Nasiri (a pseudonym), a member of a cell of the al-Qaeda-linked Groupe Islamique Armé (GIA) Algerian militant group in Brussels, Belgium, steals money from a more senior member of the cell. Not knowing what to do and being unhappy about the way the cell uses his mother's house, he contacts French intelligence, which gives him money to repay what he stole and makes him an informer. Nasiri, whose task for the cell is to purchase weapons and ammunition, also smuggles explosives into North Africa before a bombing there (see [January 30, 1995 and Before](#)). He provides information about the cell's members, associates passing through, weapons smuggling, and the GIA's main publication, Al Ansar, which is put together in his bedroom for a time. The cell and other parts of the network are raided in March 1995 by the Belgian authorities and some members are jailed. ([Nasiri 2006, pp. 3-100](#)) Nasiri subsequently penetrates al-Qaeda's camps in Afghanistan, meets some of its top commanders and reports on them to French and British intelligence (see [Mid 1995-Spring 1996](#) and [Summer 1996-August 1998](#)).

August 1994: Private Military Contractor MPRI Brought in by State Dept to Assist Bosnian Muslim Forces

Assistant Secretary of State for European and Canadian Affairs Richard Holbrooke persuades the State Department to license Military Professional Resources Inc. (MPRI), a private military contractor, to provide training to the Croatian army. ([Ripley 1999, pp. 81-82, 90](#); [Jennings 3/2/2001](#)) According to MPRI information officer Joseph Allred, the firm exists so that “the US can have influence as part of its national strategy on other nations without employing its own army.” ([Grigg 5/10/1999](#); [Serbian National Federation 8/1999](#))

August 1994-July 2001: Possible Terrorist Front Man with Saudi Backing Settles in San Diego



Dallah Avco logo. [*Source: Dallah Avco*] A Saudi named Omar al-Bayoumi arrives in San Diego, California. He will later become well known for his suspicious connections to both some 9/11 hijackers and the Saudi government, although the 9/11 Commission asserts that it received no evidence that he was involved in terrorism or the 9/11 attacks. ([9/11 Commission 6/16/2004](#)) Acquaintances in San Diego long suspect he is a Saudi government spy reporting on the activities of Saudi-born college students. ([Thornton 9/14/2002](#); [Isikoff 11/22/2002](#); [Reno 9/2003](#)) Says one witness, “He was always watching [young Saudi college students], always checking up on them, literally following them around and then apparently reporting their activities back to Saudi Arabia.” ([Isikoff and Thomas 11/24/2002](#)) Just prior to moving to the US, he worked for the Saudi Ministry of Defense and Aviation, headed by Prince Sultan. His salary in this job is approved by Hamid al-Rashid, a Saudi government official whose son, Saud al-Rashid, is strongly suspected of al-Qaeda ties (see [August 15, 2002](#)). ([US Congress 7/24/2003](#)) Once in San Diego, al-Bayoumi tells people that he’s a student or a pilot, and even claims to be receiving monthly payments from “family in India” (despite being Saudi). However, he is none of those things ([Bassey 10/21/2001](#); [Simpson 8/11/2003](#)) In fact, as he tells some people, he receives a monthly stipend from Dallah Avco, a Saudi aviation company that has extensive ties to the same Saudi Ministry of Defense and Aviation. ([McDermott 9/1/2002](#); [Isikoff and Thomas 11/24/2002](#)) From early 1995 until 2002, he is paid about \$3,000 a month for a project in Saudi Arabia even though he is living in the US. According to the New York Times, Congressional officials believe he is a “ghost employee” doing no actual work. The classified section of the 9/11

Congressional Inquiry report notes that his payments increase significantly just after he comes into contact with two hijackers in early 2000. ([Risen and Johnston 8/2/2003](#)) The FBI is investigating possible ties between Dallah Avco and al-Qaeda. ([Newsweek 10/29/2001](#)) The firm's owner, Saudi billionaire Saleh Abdullah Kamel, has denied the accusation. ([Isikoff and Klaidman 7/28/2003](#))

August-September 1994: Ramzi Yousef Trains Abu Sayyaf for Bojinka Plot

Bomber Ramzi Yousef trains with members of the Abu Sayyaf, a Philippine militant group. He sneaks into the Philippines by boat to a southern island where Abu Sayyaf influence is strong. He tries to teach Abu Sayyaf operatives about explosives, but is frustrated by their inability to learn. After a few weeks, he goes to Manila to make the bombs needed for the planned Bojinka plot (see [January 6, 1995](#)) himself. However, some Abu Sayyaf militants are involved in the Bojinka plot, though details of their exact roles are scarce (see [Late 1994-January 1995](#)). There will be additional training in December 1994, involving five Filipinos and more foreigners (see [January 3, 1995](#)). ([Ressa 2003, pp. 25-28](#))

Mid-1990s-Spring 1998: Al-Zawahiri Frequently Visits Yemen

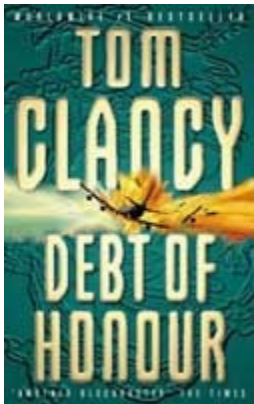
Al-Qaeda deputy head Ayman al-Zawahiri spends time in Yemen and holds meetings there. Yemen is favorably inclined towards militants, due to the help they provided to the winning side in the 1994 civil war (see [May 21-July 7, 1994](#) and [After July 1994](#)). Al-Zawahiri holds Islamic Jihad meetings at the Youth House, a government-run hall in the capital of Sana'a, according to confessions presented at a 1999 Cairo trial (see [1999](#)). A defector will later reveal where al-Zawahiri is staying in Yemen to the local authorities, but the authorities, who sympathize with radical Islam, tip off al-Zawahiri and he escapes to Afghanistan (see [Spring-Summer 1998](#)). ([Higgins and Cullison 12/20/2002](#)) Al-Zawahiri is also reported to be in Yemen in the summer of 2001 (see [Late July-August 2001](#)).

After July 1994: Militants Settle in Yemen with Official Approval

Following the Yemen Civil War, which Islamic militants help the north to win, the militants are allowed to settle in Yemen. Before the war, Osama bin Laden had provided several million dollars to Ali Mohsen al-Ahmar, a Yemeni general and a brother of Yemen's President Ali Abdallah Saleh, to help settle Arab Afghan fighters in the country (see [May 21-July 7, 1994](#)). Yemeni Prime Minister Abd al-Karim al-Iryani will later say: "Yes, these jihadis have helped us during the secessionist war, and yes, we decided that they must be absorbed into the government system afterwards and not let loose to cause

trouble.” This policy is devised by President Saleh, who becomes known for his “big tent” strategy of reaching out to Islamic militants. ([Burns 11/26/2000](#)) In 2000, Jane’s Intelligence Review will comment that “harboring terrorists has become something of a cottage industry in Yemen” and estimate the number of militants who fought in the Soviet-Afghan War present in the country may be as high as 2,000. Bin Laden, whose family is originally from Yemen, is also said to visit the country a number of times. The money he provides is used to set up small businesses, including safe houses and document forgery shops. Yemen becomes a base for al-Qaeda operations in Africa and counterterrorism expert Rohan Gunaratna will later write, “Only some 35 percent of Yemen is under the permanent influence and control of the government, so its state of lawlessness would have made it an ideal base for al-Qaeda.” ([Lackey 7/1/1999](#); [Gunaratna 2003, pp. 186-7](#))

[August 17, 1994: Tom Clancy Bestseller Includes Plane Deliberately Crashed Into US Capitol Building](#)



Debt of Honor, by Tom Clancy. [*Source: HarperCollins*] A novel by the military thriller writer Tom Clancy, one of America’s top-selling authors, includes a plotline of a suicide pilot deliberately crashing a commercial jet plane into the US Capitol building in Washington, DC. The story of *Debt of Honor* is based around a crisis between Japan and the United States. A short, armed conflict between the two nations arises and is won by the US. The book ends with a Japanese commercial airline pilot filling a Boeing 747 with explosives and deliberately crashing it into the US Capitol building during a joint session of Congress. The president is killed, along with most of the Senate, House, Supreme Court, and others. ([Buckley 10/2/1994](#); [Guinn 8/13/1996](#); [Osava 9/15/2001](#); [Pinkerton 5/20/2002](#)) Clancy later describes to the BBC how he’d gone about writing this book: “I didn’t write *Debt of Honor* without first discussing it with an Air Force officer. And so I ran this idea past him and all of a sudden this guy’s eyeballing me rather closely and I said come on general, I know you must have looked at this before, you’ve got to have a plan for it. And the guy goes, ‘Mr. Clancy, to the best of my knowledge, if we had a plan to deal with this, it would be secret, I wouldn’t be able to talk to you about it, but to the best of my knowledge we’ve never looked at this possibility before.’” ([BBC 3/24/2002](#)) *Debt of Honor* makes number one on the New York Times bestseller list. ([Mansfield 10/6/1994](#)) Following the 9/11 attacks, there will be considerable interest in it, particularly because the Capitol building is considered to have been a likely intended

target of Flight 93. ([Lane and Pan 9/12/2001](#); [Harnden 9/17/2001](#); [Berger 1/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 14](#))

Autumn 1994-Spring 1995: ISI Begins Massive Support of Taliban

It is frequently reported that the Pakistani ISI created the Taliban. For instance, in 1996 CNN will report, “The Taliban are widely alleged to be the creation of Pakistan’s military intelligence [the ISI], which, according to experts, explains the Taliban’s swift military successes.” ([Pratap 10/5/1996](#)) And counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke will later claim that not only did the ISI create the Taliban, but they also facilitated connections between the Taliban and al-Qaeda to help the Taliban achieve victory. ([Clarke 2004, pp. 53](#)) The Wall Street Journal will state in November 2001, “Despite their clean chins and pressed uniforms, the ISI men are as deeply fundamentalist as any bearded fanatic; the ISI created the Taliban as their own instrument and still support it.” ([Erikson 11/15/2001](#)) Technically, the Taliban appear to have actually started out on the own, but they were soon co-opted by the ISI and effectively became their proxy force (see [Spring-Autumn 1994](#)). Benazir Bhutto, prime minister of Pakistan at the time, will later recall how ISI support grew in late 1994 and into early 1995. “I became slowly, slowly sucked into it.... Once I gave the go-ahead that they should get money, I don’t know how much money they were ultimately given.... I know it was a lot. It was just carte blanche.” Bhutto was actually at odds with her own ISI agency and will later claim she eventually discovered the ISI was giving them much more assistance than she authorized, including Pakistani military officers to lead them in fighting. ([Coll 2004, pp. 293-294](#))

September 1994-1996: Al-Zawahiri Manages Bosnian Mujaheddin from Bulgarian Base



Ayman al-Zawahiri. [*Source: Interpol*] In 1996 it will be reported that the Egyptian government has been investigating Ayman al-Zawahiri and has determined he has been living in Sofia, Bulgaria, since September 1994 under an alias. Al-Zawahiri, head of Islamic Jihad and al-Qaeda’s second-in-command, is considered one of Egypt’s top enemies. The Egyptians pass on details of al-Zawahiri’s whereabouts to the Bulgarian government, but Bulgaria has no extradition treaty with Egypt and he is not believed to have broken any Bulgarian laws. Al-Zawahiri is living there mainly to help manage the

mujaheddin effort in nearby Bosnia. Prior to that, it is believed he mostly lived in Switzerland for about a year. ([BBC 2/29/1996](#); [Intelligence Newsletter 3/21/1996](#)) A Wall Street Journal article will later claim that al-Zawahiri was in charge of al-Qaeda's Balkans operations, running training camps, money-laundering, and drug running networks in the region. Supposedly there was an "elaborate command-and-control center" in Sofia, Bulgaria. ([Kurop 1/11/2001](#)) His brother Mohammed al-Zawahiri also helps manage operations in the region, mostly from a base in Albania (see [1993](#)). With the war in Bosnia over, Ayman al-Zawahiri will attempt to enter Chechnya in late 1996, only to be arrested and held by the Russians (see [December 1, 1996-June 1997](#)).

Early September 1994: US Military Begins Advising and Assisting Bosnian Muslim Army



Brigadier Gen. Michael Hayden (left, with glasses), US Marine Corps Gen. David Mize (front and center), and US Marine Corps Lt. Gen. Edward Hanlon Jr. (behind Mize) in Gornji Vakuf, Bosnia, on September 4, 1994. [*Source: Paul Harris*] (click image to enlarge) US ambassador Charles Thomas; Assistant Secretary of State for Europe Richard Holbrooke, his deputy Robert Frasure, head of intelligence for US European Command Brigadier Gen. Michael Hayden, US Air Force Gen. Charles Boyd, US Marine Corps Gen. David Mize, and US Marine Corps Lt. Gen. Edward Hanlon Jr., meet with the Muslim Bosnian army commander for Central Bosnia, Mehmet Alagic, in the town of Gornji Vakuf. The US group also visits Mostar, which is also controlled by the Bosnian Muslims. The Pentagon claims the US diplomats are there to familiarize themselves with the situation on the ground and the generals "just happened to be along," but in appears in fact these meetings are part of a US effort to help the Croats and Muslims work together in upcoming offensives. Following this visit, US "logistics advisers" move into key locations throughout Bosnia, including the UN-controlled Tuzla airport. US Special Forces help build a secret airstrip in Visoko, central Bosnia, to land heavy transport aircraft (see [Late 1994-Late 1995](#)), and mysterious flights begin arriving at the Tuzla airports a few months later (see [February-March 1995](#)). ([Vulliamy 11/20/1994](#); [Harris 12/3/1995](#)) Hayden will later become head of the NSA and then head of the CIA.

September 11, 1994: Suicidal Man Attempts to Crash Small Airplane into White House



Frank Corder piloted this Cessna, which crashed into the White House lawn and skidded up to the side of the building. *[Source: Getty Images]* A suicidal and apparently apolitical pilot named Frank Corder steals a single-engine plane from an airport north of Baltimore, Maryland, and attempts to crash it into the White House. He crashes into a wall two stories below the presidential bedroom (President Clinton is not there at the time). Corder is killed on impact. ([Duffy 9/26/1994](#); [Wald 10/3/2001](#)) A Time magazine story shortly after the incident notes, “The unlikely incident confirmed all too publicly what security officials have long feared in private: the White House is vulnerable to sneak attack from the air. ‘For years I have thought a terrorist suicide pilot could readily divert his flight from an approach to Washington to blow up the White House,’ said Richard Helms, CIA director from 1966 to 1972.” The article further notes that an attack of this type had been a concern since 1974, when a disgruntled US Army private staged an unauthorized helicopter landing on the South Lawn. Special communications lines were established between the Secret Service and Washington’s National Airport control tower to the Secret Service operations center, but the line is ineffective in this case because no flight controller pays attention to the flight in time. ([Duffy 9/26/1994](#))

September 18-November 14, 1994: Key Figure in Al-Qaeda Plot to Assassinate Clinton May Have Ties to ISI

Sam Karmilowicz, a security officer at the US embassy in Manila, Philippines, will later claim that on September 18, 1994 the embassy receives a call from an anonymous person speaking with a Middle Eastern accent that there is a plot to assassinate President Clinton, who is scheduled to visit Manila from November 12 through 14, 1994. The caller says that a Pakistani businessman named Tariq Javed Rana is one of the leaders of the plot. Further, Rana is using counterfeit US money to help pay for the plot. An interagency US security team is immediately notified and begins investigating the threat. A few weeks later, Karmilowicz is told by members of this team that the plot was a hoax. Clinton comes to the Philippines as scheduled and no attack takes place. ([Cockburn 3/9/2006](#)) However, bomber Ramzi Yousef moved to the Philippines in early 1994, along with his uncle Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM) and associate Wali Khan Amin Shah. ([McDermott 9/1/2002](#)) Yousef will later confess to FBI agents that he planned to assassinate Clinton by blowing up his motorcade with a missile or explosives, but gave up because the security was so tight. Shah will also confess to this plot and add that the

order to kill Clinton came from bin Laden. ([Younge 8/26/1998](#)) CNN will report in 1998, “The United States was aware of the planned attempt before the president left for the Philippines and as a result, security around the president was intensified.” ([CNN 8/25/1998](#)) Secret Service sources will later report that large sums of counterfeit US currency were entering the Philippines during the time of the plot. Karmilowicz will conclude that the warning about the assassination was accurate and that Tariq Rana was involved in the plot. CNN reporter Maria Ressa will later tell Karmilowicz that her sources in the Philippine intelligence and police believe that Rana is a close associate of Yousef and KSM. Additionally, her sources believe Rana is connected to the Pakistani ISI. ([Cockburn 3/9/2006](#)) Rana will be monitored by Philippines police and eventually arrested in April 1995 (see [December 1994-April 1995](#)).

September 22-27, 1994: Bin Laden’s Brother-in-Law Khalifa Works with Radical Militant Groups

Mohammed Jamal Khalifa, bin Laden’s brother-in-law, is in the Netherlands at this time. He meets with representatives of:

- The Muwafaq Foundation, a Saudi funded charity operating from the town of Breda, Netherlands.
 - The Egyptian militant group Al-Gama’a al-Islamiyya (the Islamic Group), led by Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman.
 - The Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), an outlawed Islamist political party in Algeria.
- What happens in Khalifa’s meetings is unknown, but the next month he opens a branch of the Muwafaq Foundation in the Philippines. ([Gunaratna 2003, pp. 168, 194, 342](#)) Saudi multimillionaire Yassin al-Qadi is believed to be the chief funder of Muwafaq; the US will pronounce him a terrorist financier shortly after 9/11 (see [October 12, 2001](#)). The US will later claim Muwafaq funded the Abu Sayyaf militant group in the Philippines (see [1995-1998](#)). A secret 1996 CIA report will claim that Muwafaq has ties to Al-Gama’a al-Islamiyya and helps fund mujaheddin fighting in Bosnia (see [1991-1995](#)) and at least one training camp in Afghanistan (see [January 1996](#)).

October 1994: US Gives Very Early Support to Taliban

Afghanistan has been mired in civil war ever since the withdrawal of Soviet troops in 1989. The Taliban arise organically in early 1994, but are soon co-opted by the Pakistani ISI (see [Spring-Autumn 1994](#)). By mid-October 1994, the Taliban takes over the town of Kandahar in southern Afghanistan. Before the end of the month, John Monjo, the US ambassador to Pakistan, makes a tour of areas controlled by the Taliban with Pakistan’s Interior Minister Nasrullah Babar, who is said to have been a force behind the Taliban’s creation. The State Department issues a press release calling the victory of the “students” a “positive development likely to bring stability back to the area.” ([Labeviere 1999, pp. 261-262](#))

October 1994: CIA and ISI Allegedly Give Help and Secret Cache of Weapons to Taliban

The CIA supposedly backs the Taliban around the same time the Pakistani ISI starts strongly backing them (see [Spring-Autumn 1994](#)). According to a senior Pakistani intelligence source interviewed by British journalist Simon Reeves, the CIA provides Pakistan satellite information giving the secret locations of scores of Soviet trucks that contain vast amounts of arms and ammunition. The trucks were hidden in caves at the end of the Afghan war. Pakistan then gives this information to the Taliban. “The astonishing speed with which the Taliban conquered Afghanistan is explained by the tens of thousands of weapons found in these trucks...” ([Reeve 1999, pp. 191](#)) Journalist Steve Coll will later similarly note that at this time, the Taliban gain access to “an enormous ISI-supplied weapons dump” in caves near the border town of Spin Boldak. It has enough weapons left over from the Soviet-Afghan war to supply tens of thousands of soldiers. ([Coll 2004, pp. 291](#)) Another account will point out that by early 1995, the Taliban was equipped with armored tanks, ten combat airplanes, and other heavy weapons. They are thus able to conquer about a third of the country by February 1995. “According to the files at one European intelligence agency, these military advances can be explained mainly by ‘strong military training, not only by the Pakistani services, but also by American military advisers working under humanitarian cover.’” Later in 1995, a Turkish newsweekly will claim to have learned from a classified report given to the Turkish government that the CIA, ISI, and Saudi Arabia were all collaborating to build up the Taliban so they could quickly unite Afghanistan. ([Labeviere 1999, pp. 262-263](#)) Selig Harrison, a long-time regional expert with extensive CIA ties, will later say that he complained at the time about how ISI support of the Taliban was backed by the CIA. “I warned them that we were creating a monster.” ([Times of India 3/7/2001](#))

October 1994-2001: Media Reports Point to Links Between Hamas and Texas Charities



Steve McGonigle. [*Source: University of Texas at Austin*]/In October 1994, CBS News shows a documentary made by counterterrorism expert Steven Emerson called *Jihad in America* that alleges the Islamic Association for Palestine (IAP) and Holy Land Foundation have given critical financial support to Hamas. The story is

largely based on confessions that Hamas operative Mohammad Salah and another man gave to Israeli officials in 1993 (see [January 1993](#)). It claims that these two Texas-based organizations are sending more than a million dollars to Hamas, much of it to buy ammunition. The US officially declares Hamas a terrorist organization in 1995 (see [January 1995](#)), and a new law passed in 1996 confirms a 1995 executive order that giving any support to groups like Hamas a crime (see [April 25, 1996](#)). ([Terry 10/5/1994](#); [Reaves and McGonigle 4/8/1996](#)) In March 1996, the Israeli government closes the Jerusalem office of the Holy Land Foundation because of alleged ties to Hamas. This prompts Steve McGonigle, a reporter at the Dallas Morning News, to begin investigating Holy Land, since their headquarters are near Dallas. Beginning in April 1996, McGonigle begins reporting on Holy Land and their ties to Hamas. He notices by looking at public records that Mousa Abu Marzouk, the political leader of Hamas being detained in New York (see [July 5, 1995-May 1997](#)), has provided hundreds of thousands of dollars in funding to Holy Land beginning in 1992, the same information that FBI agents like Robert Wright are already aware of. In 1997, the Associated Press will note that Marzouk gave Holy Land its single biggest contribution in the first five years of Holy Land's existence. Congresspeople such as Rep. Nita Lowey (D) ask the IRS to revoke the Holy Land Foundation's tax-exempt status because of its support for a US-designated terrorist group. McGonigle also publishes that Marzouk's wife invested \$250,000 in 1993 in InfoCom, the computer company located next to Holy Land that will also be accused of Hamas ties (see [September 16, 1998-September 5, 2001](#)). McGonigle will continue to write more stories about Holy Land and Hamas, causing Holy Land to sue his newspaper for defamation in April 2000 (the suit will be dropped after 9/11). ([Reaves and McGonigle 4/8/1996](#); [Cole 5/26/1997](#); [Lipton and Giuffo 1/2002](#)) Yet despite all of this media coverage, InfoCom will not be raided until one week before 9/11 (see [September 5-8, 2001](#)), and the Holy Land Foundation will not be raided until after 9/11.

October 25, 1994: Secretary of State Calls Iran 'Most Significant State Sponsor of Terrorism'

Secretary of State Warren Christopher calls Iran "the world's most significant state sponsor of terrorism." ([Hedges et al. 11/6/1994](#))

October 27, 1994-July 16, 1996: Government Mole Takes Over Algerian GIA, Causes Group to Splinter and Lose Popularity



Djamel Zitouni. [Source: *Fides Journal*] Djamel Zitouni takes over the Groupe Islamique Armé (GIA). There are allegations that the Algerian government manipulated the GIA from its creation in 1991 (see [1991](#)). After going through several leaders, it appears that the GIA's new leader Zitouni is in fact an agent of the Algerian intelligence agency. For instance, in 2005 the Guardian will report that Algerian intelligence "managed to place Djamel Zitouni, one of the Islamists it controlled, at the head of the GIA." ([Bouteldja 9/8/2005](#)) And journalist Jonathan Randal will write in a 2005 book that according to Abdelkhader Tigha, a former Algerian security officer, "army intelligence controlled overall GIA leader Djamel Zitouni and used his men to massacre civilians to turn Algerian and French public opinion against the jihadis." ([Randal 2005, pp. 170-171](#)) Indeed, prior to Zitouni taking over, the GIA tried to limit civilian casualties in their many attacks (see [December 1991-October 27, 1994](#)). But Zitouni launches many attacks on civilian targets. He also attacks other Islamist militant groups, such as the rival Islamic Salvation Army (AIS). He also launches a series of attacks inside France. ([Crotty 2005, pp. 291-292](#)) Zitouni also kills many of the genuine Islamists within the GIA. ([Campbell 2/14/2004](#)) These controversial tactics cause the GIA to slowly lose popular support and the group also splits into many dissident factions. Some international militant leaders such as Ayman al-Zawahiri and Abu Qatada continue to support the GIA. He will finally be killed by a rival faction on July 16, 1996. ([Crotty 2005, pp. 291-292](#))

November 1994: US Policy in Bosnia Leads to Crisis within NATO

Pressure from the Clinton administration for NATO air strikes in Bosnia leads to a crisis within the NATO alliance. Ivo H. Daalder, who is responsible for coordinating Bosnia policy on the National Security Council, later writes: "By Thanksgiving 1994, the differences within the NATO that had simmered for months below the surface had come to a full boil, creating the worst crisis within the Atlantic alliance since 1956... Faced with the possibility that NATO might be torn asunder by the rift over Bosnia policy, the administration decided to put NATO unity first and abandon any effort to convince the allies or the United Nations that air strikes remained necessary to turn the military tide in Bosnia." ([Daalder 2000, pp. 33](#))

November 1994: Bin Laden Seen Meeting with President of Muslim Bosnia



Eve-Ann Prentice. [*Source: BBC*] In 2006, London Times reporter Eve-Ann Prentice will testify under oath during Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic's international war crimes tribunal that she saw Osama bin Laden go into a meeting with Muslim Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic. Prentice was there with Der Spiegel reporter Renate Flottau waiting for an interview with Izetbegovic when bin Laden walked by (see [1994](#)). Prentice will later recall, "[T]here was a very important looking Arabic looking person is the best way I can describe it who came in and went ahead just before I was supposed to go in to interview, and I was curious because it obviously looked as if it was somebody very, very important, and they were shown straight through to Mr. Izetbegovic's office." Curious, Prentice asked around and found out from Flottau and another eyewitness that the person was bin Laden, then Prentice confirmed this for herself when she later saw pictures of bin Laden. Interestingly, the judge at Milosevic's trial will cut off questions about the incident and there will be no mentions of it by journalists covering the trial, though a transcript of the exchange will eventually appear on the United Nation's International Criminal Tribunal website. ([International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia 2/3/2006](#)) Prentice apparently will no longer be reporting by 2006, but in 2002 she mentioned in passing in a Times article, "Osama bin Laden visited the Balkans several times in the 1980s and 1990s and is widely believed by Serbs to have aided Muslims in the Bosnian war and the Kosovo conflict." ([Prentice 3/5/2002](#)) Bin Laden also visited Izetbegovic in 1993 (see [1993](#)).

November 1994-December 1999: 9/11 Funder Saeed Sheikh Is Captured; Makes Connections in Indian Prison



Saeed in an Indian hospital shortly after being arrested
[Source: *Indian Express*] Saeed Sheikh is imprisoned in India for kidnapping Westerners. While there, he meets Aftab Ansari, another prisoner, an Indian gangster who will be released from prison near the end of 1999. ([India Today 2/25/2002](#)) Saeed also meets another prisoner named Asif Raza Khan, who also is released in 1999. ([Singh 11/17/2001](#)) After Saeed is rescued from prison at the end of 1999, he works with Ansari and Khan to kidnap Indians and then uses some of the profits to fund the 9/11 attacks. ([Swami 2/2/2002](#); [Mitra, Chakravarty, and Ghosh 2/14/2002](#)) Saeed also becomes good friends with prisoner Maulana Masood Azhar, a militant with al-Qaeda connections. ([Fielding 4/21/2002](#)) Saeed will later conduct operations together with Azhar's group, Jaish-e-Mohammed. ([Buncombe 2/26/2002](#))

Late 1994: Tapped Phones Reveal Link between Ali Mohamed and Al-Qaeda Cell in Kenya

US intelligence began monitoring Ali Mohamed in the autumn of 1993 (see [Autumn 1993](#)). The San Francisco Chronicle will later report that from "1994 to 1998... FBI agents trace phone calls from Mohamed's California residences in Santa Clara and, later, Sacramento to bin Laden associates in [Nairobi, Kenya]." In late 1994, FBI agents discover that Mohamed is temporarily living in an al-Qaeda safe house in Nairobi. The FBI contacts him there and he returns to the US a short time later to be interviewed by the FBI (see [December 9, 1994](#)). ([Williams and McCormick 9/21/2001](#)) When Mohamed is making arrangements to be interviewed by the FBI, he uses the telephone of Wadih El-Hage, bin Laden's personal secretary who is part of the Kenya al-Qaeda cell. ([United State of America v. Usama Bin Laden, et al., Day 39 5/3/2001](#)) By 1996, US intelligence is continually monitoring five telephone lines in Nairobi used by the cell members, including those belonging to El-Hage (see [April 1996](#)).

Late 1994 or 1995: Islamic Jihad Head Fundraises in US Again



A young Ayman al-Zawahiri dressed as a Westerner.

[Source: Public domain via BBC] Ali Mohamed helps Ayman al-Zawahiri enter the US for another fundraising tour and acts as his head of security during his stay. At the time, al-Zawahiri is known to have been the head of the militant group Islamic Jihad since the late 1980's. He is also al-Qaeda's de facto number two leader, though this is not widely known. This is apparently his third visit to the US after recruiting and fundraising trips in 1989 and 1993 (see [Spring 1993](#)). ([Wright 9/9/2002](#)) Al-Zawahiri travels on a passport forged by Mohamed and uses a false name. He pretends to be a doctor for a charity raising money for refugees in Afghanistan, but in fact raises money for his Islamic Jihad group. Some donors know his true purpose, and others do not. According to one security expert, he is also in the US "to see whom he could recruit here, what could be done here—preparing the establishment of a base." Mohamed and Khaled Abu el-Dahab (see [1987-1998](#)), the two known members of a Santa Clara, California, based al-Qaeda sleeper cell, host al-Zawahiri in Santa Clara and escort him to nearby mosques in Santa Clara, Stockton, and Sacramento. ([Williams and McCormick 10/11/2001](#); [Martin and Berens 12/11/2001](#)) He spends weeks in the US, traveling to other states such as Texas and New York to raise money from mosques there as well. He raises as much as \$500,000. El-Dahab is later told some of the money collected is used later in the year to fund bombing of Egyptian Embassy in Islamabad, Pakistan, killing 17 diplomats (see [November 19, 1995](#)). ([Williams and McCormick 10/11/2001](#)) Accounts on the timing of the trip are vague, and differ as to whether it took place in late 1994 or some time in 1995. Perhaps coincidentally, Mohammed Jamal Khalifa, bin Laden's brother-in-law, is arrested in mid-December 1994 in Morgan Hill, California, approximately 30 miles from Santa Clara. The FBI finds and quickly translates literature in Khalifa's luggage advocating training in assassination, explosives, and weapons, bombing churches, and murdering Catholic priests, but seemingly inexplicably, they deport him a few months later (see [December 16, 1994-May 1995](#)). Two directors of President Clinton's National Security Council's counterterrorism team later will claim that they did not learn of al-Zawahiri's trips until 1999, and even then they only learned about it by accident and were unable to get the FBI to reveal any more about the trips (see [1999](#)).

Late 1994-Late 1995: US Secretly Supplies Bosnian Muslims Through Remote Airport Controlled by Corrupt and Radical Militant Clan



Bernard Janvier. [Source: *Dani*] Roughly around this time, a new airport is completed in the Muslim Bosnian town of Visoko, northwest of Sarajevo. UN soldiers frequently report seeing C-130 transport planes landing there, and they say the runway is constantly being improved to handle more aircraft. One UN soldier later says to the British newspaper the Observer, “Why don’t you write about Visoko airport? Planes land there all the time and we think they’re American.” ([Eagar 11/5/1995](#); [Schindler 2007, pp. 184-185](#)) Visoko is said to be the logistics center of the Bosnian army and the airport and area is run by Halid Cengic. Author and former NSA officer John Schindler will later call him head of the “fanatical and thievish Cengic clan.” He is said to make great profits on the materiel coming through the airport. He is also the father of Hasan Cengic, who is one of the key figures smuggling huge amounts of weapons into Bosnia through the Third World Relief Agency, a charity front tied to Osama bin Laden and other radical militants (see [Mid-1991-1996](#)). ([Eagar 11/5/1995](#); [Schindler 2007, pp. 195](#)) By March 1995, General Bernard Janvier, commander of UN forces in Bosnia, reports to UN Secretary General Kofi Annan that the Visoko airport is in operation and illegal supply flights are landing there. The report notes that the airport was built by Hasan Cengic with help from Iran. Canadian peacekeepers allege that unmarked flights coming into Visoko are American. However, this UN report is not made public. ([Schindler 2007, pp. 184-185](#)) According to the Observer in November 1995, some Bosnian politicians say that the US is the “number one donor of all weapons into Bosnia” and British political sources say the Visoko airport was built with US help. Furthermore, UN officials complain that they frequently report flights into Visoko, but these flights are never cited as violations of the no-fly zone over all of Bosnia. One UN source says, “The Awacs (air warning and control systems planes) have sighted only two flights into Visoko in the last five months. There have been dozen of flights reported from the ground.” These UN officials believe that these flights in Visoko take place on days when Awacs flights are manned by all US crews instead of NATO crews. Another UN source says, “Only the US has the theater control to put certain aircraft in the air at certain times.” ([Eagar 11/5/1995](#))

December 1994-April 1995: US and Philippines Fumbles Monitoring of Key Bojinka Plotter



Avelino "Sonny" Razon. [*Source: Canadian Broadcasting Corp.*] In December 1994, Philippine police reportedly begin monitoring a Pakistani businessman by the name of Tariq Javed Rana. According to Avelino Razon, a Philippine security official, the decision to put Rana under surveillance is prompted by a report that "Middle Eastern personalities" are planning to assassinate Pope John Paul II during his upcoming January 1995 visit to Manila. "[We] had one man in particular under surveillance—Tariq Javed Rana, a Pakistani suspected of supporting international terrorists with drug money. He was a close associate of Ramzi Yousef," Razon later recalls. But it is possible that police began monitoring Rana before this date. In September, the Philippine press reported that he was a suspect in an illegal drug manufacturing ring, and the US embassy in Manila received a tip that Rana was linked to the ISI and was part of a plot to assassinate President Clinton during his November 1994 visit to Manila (see [September 18-November 14, 1994](#)). ([Cockburn 3/9/2006](#)) While under surveillance in December, Rana's house burns down. Authorities determine that the fire was caused by nitroglycerin which can be used to improvise bombs. One month later, a fire caused by the same chemical is started in Ramzi Yousef's Manila apartment (see [January 6, 1995](#)), leading to the exposure of the Bojinka plot to assassinate the Pope and crash a dozen airplanes. ([Abuza 12/1/2002](#); [Cockburn 3/9/2006](#)) Rana is arrested by Philippine police in early April 1995. It is announced in the press that he is connected to Yousef and that he will be charged with investment fraud. He is said to have supported the militant group Abu Sayyaf and to have helped Yousef escape the Philippines after the fire in Yousef's apartment. A search of the Lexis Nexus database shows there have been no media reports about Rana since his arrest. Around the same time as his arrest, six other suspected Bojinka plotters are arrested, but then eventually let go (see April 1, 1995-Early 1996). ([Reid 4/2/1995](#))

December 1994-January 1995: US Prosecutor Possibly Tells Ali Mohamed to Ignore Subpoena



Andrew McCarthy. *[Source: Front Page Magazine]* In December 1994, defense attorney Roger Stavis is preparing to defend his client El Sayyid Nosair in the upcoming landmarks trial. He discovers the top secret US military training manuals found in Nosair's house and begins investigating Ali Mohamed, the US soldier (and double agent) who stole the manuals and gave them to Nosair. Stavis wants to defend Nosair on the basis that since Nosair was trained by Mohamed, who worked for the CIA and US military, the US government should share culpability for Nosair's crimes. He writes up a subpoena for Mohamed. Stravis later recalls, "I wanted him. And I tried everything to find him." But Mohamed has disappeared and not even his wife in California knows where he is. However, US intelligence is secretly monitoring him (see [Autumn 1993](#)) and they know he is in Kenya. An FBI agent calls him there and tells him to come back to be interviewed. Mohamed immediately returns to the US and on December 9 he is interviewed by FBI agent Harlan Bell and Assistant US Attorney Andrew McCarthy, one of the prosecutors for the upcoming trial (see [December 9, 1994](#)). Mohamed stays in touch after the interview, for instance talking to McCarthy on the phone on December 22. But when the trial starts on January 30, 1995, Stavis is told that Mohamed cannot be found and never responded to the subpoena. In 1999, Ibrahim El-Gabrowni, Nosair's cousin, will find himself in a jail cell next to Mohamed. El-Gabrowni will later allege that he asked why Mohamed never showed up in court to support Nosair. Mohamed supposedly responds that he did get the subpoena, but that McCarthy advised him to ignore it and not testify and that McCarthy would cover up for him. Had Mohamed testified, McCarthy would have had a more difficult time getting a conviction, and the revelations of Mohamed's ties to the CIA, FBI, and US military would have been highly embarrassing. Author Peter Lance will later note also that had Mohamed testified in the high profile trial, he would have become too well known to continue working as an informant and double agent. ([Lance 2006, pp. 171-178](#))

December 1, 1994: CIA Helps Bin Laden's Brother-in-Law Come to US after Being Forced Out of Philippines

A suspected terrorism financier enters the US with apparent CIA help. Philippines investigators had begun monitoring and investigating Mohammed Jamal Khalifa, bin Laden's brother-in-law, earlier in 1994 (see [1994](#)). ([Ressa 2003](#)) According to a 1999 book by Richard Labeviere, near the conclusion of this investigation, the Philippine government expedites an order expelling Khalifa from the country. Khalifa gets a visa to the US through the US consulate in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, with the help of the CIA. The

CIA had a history of using that consulate to give US visas to radical Muslim militants dating back to the 1980s (see [September 1987-March 1989](#)). ([Labeviere 1999, pp. 365; Elegant 10/27/2003](#)) Another account claims his visa “was issued, despite his notoriety, because of a computer error.” When he applied for the visa in August 1994, the address he gave was that of the bin Laden family company. ([Lief 5/15/1995](#)) He enters the US on December 1. The report detailing his terrorist connections is released on December 15 (see [December 15, 1994](#)). The next day, Khalifa is arrested in the US (see [December 16, 1994-May 1995](#)). ([Lief 5/15/1995](#))

December 9, 1994: Ali Mohamed Interviewed by FBI Again, Admits Bin Laden Ties

Prosecutors in the “Landmarks” bombing trial want to speak with Ali Mohamed. FBI agents, working through an intermediary, track him to an al-Qaeda safe house in Nairobi. Mohamed will later testify in US court, “In late 1994, I received a call from an FBI agent who wanted to speak to me about the upcoming trial of United States vs. Abdul Rahman. I flew back to the United States, spoke to the FBI, but didn’t disclose everything that I knew.” ([Aita 5/15/2001](#); [Waldman 11/26/2001](#); [9/11 Commission 6/16/2004](#)) FBI agent Harlan Bell conducts the interview in the presence of Assistant US Attorney Andrew McCarthy, a prosecutor for the upcoming trial. Mohamed tells them that he is working in Kenya in the scuba diving business (when in fact he is helping the al-Qaeda cell there). He also says that he went to Pakistan in 1991 to help bin Laden move from Afghanistan to Sudan (see [Summer 1991](#)). Despite admitting this tie to bin Laden, there are no apparent repercussions for Mohamed, aside from his name appearing on the trial’s unindicted conspirators list (see [February 1995](#)). ([Lance 2006, pp. 173-174](#)) He will not appear at the trial, and it has been alleged McCarthy told Mohamed to ignore a subpoena and not testify (see [December 1994-January 1995](#)). Mohamed will later recall that after the interview, “I reported on my meeting with the FBI to [al-Qaeda leader Mohammed Atef] and was told not to return to Nairobi.” ([Aita 5/15/2001](#))

December 12, 1994: Operation Bojinka Trial Run; Credit Given to Philippine Militant Group



Damage inside the Philippine Airlines flight.
[Source: CNN] Ramzi Yousef attempts a trial run of Operation Bojinka, planting a small

bomb on a Philippine Airlines flight to Tokyo, and disembarking on a stopover before the bomb is detonated. The bomb explodes, killing one man and injuring several others. It would have successfully caused the plane to crash if not for the heroic efforts of the pilot. ([McDermott 9/1/2002](#); [US Congress 9/18/2002](#)) A man telephones the Associated Press and claims the attack was the work of the Abu Sayyaf, a Philippine militant group. One Bojinka plotter will later confess that the caller was Ramzi Yousef. Yousef made the call as part of a long term cooperation arrangement with the Abu Sayyaf. ([Wallace 5/28/1995](#)) Yousef had been working with the Abu Sayyaf for several years and members of the group are deeply involved in the Bojinka plot (see [December 1991-May 1992](#) and [Late 1994-January 1995](#)).

December 15, 1994: Bin Laden's Brother-in-Law Funding Militants Worldwide Using Philippine Charity Fronts

A secret report about al-Qaeda's support for Islamic militant groups in the Philippines is released to Philippine President Fidel Ramos and other top national leaders. Contents of the report are leaked to the media in April 1995. ([Agnote 4/16/1995](#); [Herrera 8/12/2000](#); [Ressa 2003](#)) Starting sometime in 1994, Philippine investigator Colonel Rodolfo Mendoza began looking into foreign support for Islamic militant groups in the Philippines. Mendoza combines "hundreds of wiretaps and countless man-hours of surveillance into a 175-page report..." which is titled "Radical Islamic Fundamentalism in the Philippines and its Links to International Terrorism." It includes a watch list of more than 100 names of Arab nationals. Mendoza is the handler for Edwin Angeles, second in command of the militant group Abu Sayyaf and secretly an undercover government operative (see [1991-Early February 1995](#)). The report is said to be based on information from many sources and corroborated by Angeles. ([Herrera 8/12/2000](#); [Ressa 2003](#)) The investigation has a special focus on Mohammed Jamal Khalifa, bin Laden's brother-in-law, who has been under surveillance for months. The report states Khalifa has founded at least eight organizations to fund terrorism: "Although most of them are seemingly legitimate charitable institutions or NGOs, it has been uncovered that Khalifa has been using them as cover for his terroristic activities in the Philippines as well as abroad." In the Philippines, this money mainly goes to the Abu Sayyaf and Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). ([Agnote 4/24/1995](#); [Herrera 8/12/2000](#); [CNN 11/24/2004](#)) The report also says Khalifa's activities in the Philippines strongly link with Muslim extremist movements in Iraq, Jordan, Turkey, Russia, Malaysia, the United Arab Emirates, Romania, Lebanon, Syria, Pakistan, Albania, the Netherlands and Morocco. ([Agnote 4/16/1995](#)) The Philippine branch of the Saudi charity the International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO) was founded by Khalifa in 1991. The report states, "The IIRO which claims to be a relief institution is being utilized by foreign extremists as a pipeline through which funding for the local extremists is being coursed." ([Herrera 8/9/2000](#)) It is not clear when US intelligence gets a copy of this report. However, Khalifa is arrested in the US one day after the report is released, then eventually let go (see [December 16, 1994-May 1995](#)). Remarkably, he will never be officially designated a terrorism funder

before his death in 2007 (see [January 30, 2007](#)) and the Philippines branch of IIRO will only be so designated in 2006 (see [August 3, 2006](#)).

December 16, 1994: Al-Qaeda Founding Member Arrested in US but Let Go



Benevolence International Foundation logo. [Source:

Benevolence International Foundation] One of the founders of al-Qaeda is arrested in the US and then let go. Mohammed Loay Bayazid is arrested in Morgan Hills, California, together with Mohammed Jamal Khalifa (see [December 16, 1994-May 1995](#)), Osama bin Laden's brother-in-law and a known terrorism financier, and Salem bin Laden, one of Osama's brothers (see [December 16, 1994](#)). Bayazid was born in Syria but moved to the US with his parents as a teenager and became a US citizen. In the mid-1980s he went to fight in Afghanistan and befriended bin Laden. He was one of the original members of al-Qaeda and took the notes during the group's founding meeting in 1988 (see [August 11-20, 1988](#)). Bayazid moved with bin Laden to Sudan in the early 1990s and has been called bin Laden's main business adviser there. In 1993, it is believed he was involved in an al-Qaeda effort to purchase nuclear material. By 1994, Bayazid moved back to the US and became the president of the Chicago-based Benevolence International Foundation (BIF), a charity suspected of links to al-Qaeda. ([Rizzo 9/9/2006](#)) The driver's license he shows for identification when arrests gives the Chicago office of BIF as his residence. ([USA v. Benevolence International Foundation and Enaam M. Arnaout 4/29/2002, pp. 16-17](#)) But surprisingly given Bayazid's history, he is released not long after his arrest in California. Lorenzo Vidino, an expert on Islamic militants, will later investigate Bayazid but is never able to determine when he was released, why, or where he went after that. ([Rizzo 9/9/2006](#)) There is evidence he stays in the US until April 1998, and then moves to Turkey. Bayazid will eventually reappear in Susan, where he will be interviewed by the FBI shortly after 9/11 (see [November 2001](#)). He apparently still operates several businesses there. He denies ever having any connection to terrorism. ([Herrmann 5/1/2002](#); [Rizzo 9/9/2006](#))

December 16, 1994: Brother of Bin Laden Arrested in US, Then Let Go

In a post-9/11 indictment, US Attorney Patrick Fitzgerald will claim that one of bin Laden's brothers is arrested at this time along with Mohammed Jamal Khalifa, bin Laden's brother-in-law (see [December 16, 1994-May 1995](#)), and Mohammed Loay

Bayazid, believed to be an al-Qaeda financier (see [December 16, 1994](#)). No contemporary accounts mention this third arrest along with the others, and the name of the brother is not known for certain. ([USA v. Enaam M. Arnaout 10/6/2003, pp. 24](#)) However, in a 2006 book, counterterrorism expert Steven Emerson will write, “A travelling companion [of Khalifa and Bayazid] who also was briefly detained was Salem bin Laden, brother of Osama.” ([Emerson 2006, pp. 331](#)) This arrest was hinted in a 2003 blog article about Khalifa, which said that Khalifa and Bayazid was arrested with “A brother of Osama bin Laden, whom the FBI declines to name. It’s not entirely clear why the FBI would decline to name this individual, but then the bin Laden family is extremely wealthy and has powerful friends in the US government even to this day.” ([Rotten \(.com\) 12/25/2003](#)) Note this cannot be the same Salem bin Laden who had business ties to future President George W. Bush, because that brother to Osama died in plane crash in Texas in 1988 (see [1988](#)). Nothing more is known about the apparent second brother of Osama named Salem (Osama has dozens of brothers), or his detention in the US.

December 16, 1994-May 1995: Osama’s Brother-in-Law Khalifa Is Arrested in US



Mohammed Jamal Khalifa. [*Source: CBS News*]/Mohammed Jamal Khalifa, a brother-in-law to bin Laden, is arrested in the US. He is held for visa fraud, but he is believed to be a major terrorist. His arrest takes place at a Holiday Inn in Morgan Hill, California. ([Hoge 10/24/2001](#)) That is only about 20 miles from Santa Clara, where double agent Ali Mohamed is running an al-Qaeda cell (see [1987-1998](#)). Counterterrorism expert Steven Emerson will later say of Khalifa and Mohamed, “It seems to me that they were probably in contact. I’m basing that only intuitively on the fact that they were in the same area, they were close to bin Laden, and they would’ve had an incentive to stay together.” ([Lance 2006, pp. 167](#)) According to one account, Khalifa is arrested on behalf of the government of Jordan, because he is on trial there. ([Hoge 10/24/2001](#)) Another account claims that Philippine authorities “tipped off Federal authorities on Khalifa’s movements.” ([Europa 4/27/1995](#)) He is traveling on a Saudi passport. He’d flown into the US from London on December 1 and has papers indicating he would be heading back to the Philippines. ([Lance 2006, pp. 158-159](#)) It has been claimed that the CIA helped him get his US visa (see [December 1, 1994](#)). There are many reasons for US authorities to suspect Khalifa is a major terrorist figure:

- He is arrested with Mohammed Loay Bayazid, one of the dozen or so original members

of al-Qaeda. Bayazid had attempted to purchase nuclear material for bin Laden the year before (see [December 16, 1994](#)).

- Philippine investigators had recently completed a secret report on terrorist funding. The report focuses on Khalifa, and says his activities in the Philippines strongly link with Muslim extremist movements in Iraq, Jordan, Turkey, Russia, Malaysia, the United Arab Emirates, Romania, Lebanon, Syria, Pakistan, Albania, the Netherlands, and Morocco. It calls a charity which Khalifa runs a “pipeline through which funding for the local extremists is being coursed.” Perhaps not coincidentally, the report was released just one day before Khalifa’s arrest in the US (see [December 15, 1994](#)).

- His possessions, which are quickly examined and translated, include a handwritten manual in Arabic detailing how to set up a terrorist curriculum at a school in the Philippines, giving lessons in bomb-making and assassination. ([Hoge 10/24/2001](#))

- Khalifa’s business card was discovered in a search of the New York City residence of Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman in 1993 (see [August 1993](#)).

- He is an unindicted coconspirator in the “Landmarks” bombings plot, which would have killed thousands in New York City. The trial is getting underway at this time. Abdul-Rahman will be convicted and sentenced to over 300 years in prison (see [June 24, 1993](#)).

- A State Department cable from days after his arrest states Khalifa is a “known financier of terrorist operations and an officer of an Islamic NGO in the Philippines that is a known Hamas front.”

- An alias is found in his personal organizer that was also used in a bomb-making manual brought into the US by Ahmad Ajaj, Ramzi Yousef’s travel partner, when the two of them came to the US to implement the 1993 World Trade Center bombing (see [September 1, 1992](#)).

- Bojinka plotter Wali Khan Amin Shah’s phone number is found in Khalifa’s possessions. The Bojinka plot, if successful, also would have killed thousands (see [January 6, 1995](#)). ([Lance 2006, pp. 158-159](#))

- A number in Pakistan that Ramzi Yousef had used to call the Philippines is found as well. Author Peter Lance will later note that such numbers “should have led the FBI directly to Ramzi Yousef, the world’s most wanted man” at the time. ([Lance 2006, pp. 160](#))

However, despite this wealth of highly incriminating material, within weeks of his arrest the US will decide to deport him to Jordan (see [January 5, 1995](#)). Over the next four months, even more of his links to terrorist activity will be discovered (see [Late December 1994-April 1995](#)). But Khalifa will be deported anyway (see [April 26-May 3, 1995](#)), and then soon freed in Jordan (see [July 19, 1995](#)).

December 16, 1994-February 1995: Phone Numbers Link Osama’s Bother-in-Law to Bojinka Plotters

When bin Laden’s brother-in-law Mohamed Jamal Khalifa is arrested in San Francisco, his phonebook and electronic organizer are found. They contain phone numbers to Bojinka plotter Wali Khan Amin Shah, associates of Bojinka plotter Ramzi Yousef, and Osama bin Laden’s phone number. When the Manila apartment used by these two plotters is raided, Yousef’s computer contains Khalifa’s phone number. Shah is arrested several

days later, and his phone book and phone bills contain five phone numbers for Khalifa, plus Khalifa's business card. Phone bills also show frequent telephone traffic between Khalifa and Shah's apartment in Manila in November 1994. When Yousef is arrested in February 1995 (see [February 7, 1995](#)), he has Khalifa's phone number and address, and more information on him in an encrypted computer file. Not surprisingly given all these links, Yousef is questioned about his ties to Khalifa within hours of being taken into US custody. He admits that he knew the name bin Laden, and knew him to be a relative of Khalifa's. ([DelVecchio 4/18/1995](#); [Knickmeyer 4/26/1995](#); [US Congress 4/29/2002](#)) Khalifa has already been tied to two others convicted of the 1993 WTC bombing. Yet despite these ties to Islamic militancy, and others, he will be deported from the US (see [December 16, 1994-May 1995](#)).

December 24, 1994: Al-Qaeda Connected Militants Attempt to Crash Passenger Jet into Eiffel Tower



French special forces storming the hijacked Air France plane. [Source: French channel 3] An Air France Airbus A300 carrying 227 passengers and crew is hijacked in Algiers, Algeria by four Algerians wearing security guard uniforms. They are members of a militant group linked to al-Qaeda. They land in Marseille, France, and demand a very large amount of jet fuel. During a prolonged standoff, the hijackers kill two passengers and release 63 others. They are heavily armed with 20 sticks of dynamite, assault rifles, hand grenades, and pistols. French authorities later determine their aim is to crash the plane into the Eiffel Tower in Paris, but French Special Forces storm the plane before it can depart from Marseille. ([Sancton 1/2/1995](#); [Wald 10/3/2001](#)) Time magazine details the Eiffel Tower suicide plan in a cover story. A week later, Philippine investigators breaking up the Bojinka plot in Manila find a copy of the Time story in bomber Ramzi Yousef's possessions. Author Peter Lance notes that Yousef had close ties to Algerian Islamic militants and may have been connected to or inspired by the plot. ([Sancton 1/2/1995](#); [Lance 2003, pp. 258](#)) Even though this is the third attempt in 1994 to crash an airplane into a building, the New York Times will note after 9/11 that "aviation security officials never extrapolated any sort of pattern from those incidents." ([Wald 10/3/2001](#)) Some doubts about who was ultimately behind the hijacking will surface later when allegations emerge that the GIA is infiltrated by Algerian intelligence. There is even evidence the top

leader of the GIA at this time is a government mole (see [October 27, 1994-July 16, 1996](#)). As journalist Jonathan Randal later relates, the aircraft was originally held at the Algiers airport “in security circumstances so suspect the French government criticized what it felt was the Algerian authorities’ ambiguous behavior. Only stern French insistence finally extracted [Algerian government] authorization to let the aircraft take off.” ([Randal 2005, pp. 171](#))

Late 1994-January 1995: Government Operative Deeply Involved in Bojinka Plot

News reports will later reveal that a Philippine government undercover operative working with the Philippine militant group Abu Sayyaf was deeply involved in the Bojinka plot, an early version of the 9/11 plot. Edwin Angeles, an uncover operative so deeply imbedded in Abu Sayyaf that he was actually the group’s second in command, gave up his cover in February 1995 (see [Early February 1995](#)), weeks after the Bojinka plot was foiled (see [January 6, 1995](#)). In 1996, the New York Times will report that according to US investigators, “Angeles said he worked alongside [Ramzi] Yousef as he planned the details of the [Bojinka] plot.” ([Kocieniewski 8/30/1996](#)) The Advertiser, an Australian newspaper, reports that after giving up his cover, Angeles reveals that Abdurajak Janjalani, the leader of Abu Sayyaf, and Abu Sayyaf generally, had a “far greater role in the plot to assassinate the Pope and blow up the US airliners than foreign intelligence agencies had previously thought. He said he had met Yousef several times in the Manila flat...” Unlike the New York Times, which only reported that Angeles switched sides in February 1995, the Advertiser notes that “many people believe” Angeles “was a military-planted spy” all along. ([Murdoch 6/3/1995](#)) This will be confirmed in later news reports, and in fact Angeles secretly had worked for Philippine intelligence since the formation of Abu Sayyaf in 1991 (see [1991-Early February 1995](#)). It is not clear what Angeles may have told his government handlers while the Bojinka plot was in motion, if anything.

Late December 1994-April 1995: Evidence against Bin Laden’s Brother-in-Law Continues to Grow

Bin Laden’s brother-in-law Mohammed Jamal Khalifa was arrested in the US in mid-December 1994 (see [December 16, 1994-May 1995](#)), and as he is held the evidence tying him to terrorism continues to grow:

- One week after his arrest, the State Department tells the immigration judge handling Khalifa’s case that he had “engaged in serious terrorist offenses” and that his release “would endanger US national security.” ([Lance 2006, pp. 158-159](#))
- In early January, police in the Philippines uncover the Bojinka plot, involving associates of Khalifa. A Philippine investigator makes a chart connecting the Bojinka figures and places Khalifa in the middle of it (see [Spring 1995](#)). The plot, if successful, would have killed thousands while also assassinating the Pope (see [January 6, 1995](#)). Meanwhile, The FBI translates literature in Khalifa’s luggage advocating training in assassination, explosives, and weapons, including discussions of the “wisdom of bombing churches and

murdering Catholic priests.” ([Miller 5/2/2002](#); [Lance 2003, pp. 233-35](#))

- Phone numbers to Khalifa’s Philippine charity fronts are found on bomber Ramzi Yousef’s laptop seized in early January 1995 as the Bojinka plot is exposed. Khalifa’s business card is found in the apartment Yousef was staying in as well. ([Lance 2006, pp. 158-159, 203](#))

- Bojinka plotter Wali Khan Amin Shah is arrested in early January 1995. He is found with multiple phone numbers for Khalifa. ([Star 7/31/1996](#); [Lance 2006, pp. 158-159](#))

- When Yousef is arrested in February 1995 (see [February 7, 1995](#)), he will be asked about Khalifa’s business card found in his apartment. According to an FBI report issued at the time, Yousef claims that he did not personally know Khalifa, but had been given the card by fellow Bojinka plotter Wali Khan Amin Shah as a contact in case he needed help. He also says that he is aware that Khalifa is a relative of Osama bin Laden. ([Lance 2006, pp. 203](#))

- In February and March, Philippine interrogation of one Bojinka plotter uncovers a planned second wave of attacks that would involve flying airplanes into US buildings, including the World Trade Center, CIA headquarters, and the Pentagon (see [February-Early May 1995](#)). This will eventually evolve into the 9/11 attacks. US investigators are notified about this sometime in the spring of 1995 (see [Spring 1995](#)).

- On April 1, Philippine authorities arrest six men and announce they are connected to Khalifa and Bojinka plotters such as Ramzi Yousef (see April 1, 1995-Early 1996). The Philippine Interior Secretary calls Khalifa a key figure in Islamic extremist efforts. ([Reid 4/16/1995](#))

- The Associated Press reports that Khalifa is believed to be “a key figure in efforts to recruit new members of the Abu Sayyaf group.” On April 4, the Abu Sayyaf raid a Christian town called Ipil and kill over fifty people in what is the group’s largest and most brutal terrorist attack (see [April 4, 1995](#)). This increases the importance of Khalifa’s ties with them. ([Reid 4/16/1995](#))

- Khalifa is accused by Yemen, Egypt, and Algeria of financing subversion in those countries. ([Reid 4/16/1995](#))

Despite all this evidence, Khalifa will soon be deported to Jordan for retrial there (see [May 3, 1995-August 31, 1995](#)), even though the key witness against him has already recanted. He will be found innocent and set free (see [July 19, 1995](#)).

1995: US Army Explosives Supposedly Handed to Future Embassy Bombers

According to Le Figaro, in the wake of the 1998 US embassy bombings in Africa (see [August 7, 1998](#)), FBI investigators will discover that the explosives used in the bombings came from the US Army. These explosives are delivered this year to mujaheddin. It has not been reported who exactly gave the explosives to whom, nor for what use they were originally intended. Double agent Ali Mohamed was in the Army Reserves until about this year and had a history of stealing from the Army, but it is not known if he was involved in this incident. ([Richard 10/31/2001](#))

1995: Germans Investigate Atta for Petty Drug Crimes

According to a book (citing federal law enforcement sources) by Jurgen Roth, described by Newsday as “one of Germany’s top investigative reporters,” in this year the BKA (the German Federal Office for criminal investigations) investigates Mohamed Atta for petty drug crimes and falsifying phone cards whilst he is a student at the Technical University at Hamburg-Harburg. While he isn’t charged, a record of the investigation will prevent him from getting a security job with Lufthansa Airlines in early 2001 (see [February 15, 2001](#)). ([Roth 2001, pp. 9f](#); [Moore 1/24/2002](#))

1995: Document Hints at Radical Muslim Infiltration of US Government

Salon will later write, “A document seized in a 1995 raid of a close [Abdurahman] Alamoudi friend and political ally, University of South Florida professor Sami al-Arian, outlined a plan to ‘infiltrate the sensitive intelligence agencies or the embassies in order to collect information and build close relationships with the people in charge of these establishments.’ The unsigned document, which authorities believe was authored by al-Arian in part because it was found among his papers, added: ‘We are in the center which leads the conspiracy against our Islamic world... Our presence in North America gives us a unique opportunity to monitor, explore and follow up.’ It instructed members of the ‘center,’ thought to refer to an Islamic think tank that al-Arian founded, to ‘collect information from those relatives and friends who work in sensitive positions in government.’” ([Jacoby 6/22/2004](#)) In 2005, Al-Arian will be acquitted on a number of terrorism-related charges (see [December 6, 2005](#)).

1995: Bin Laden Investigated for Using European Stock Markets

Shortly after 9/11, an Italian newspaper will report, “Six or seven years ago, probably in 1995, secret services from various European countries investigated the possibility that al-Qaeda, Osama bin Laden’s organization, was using a Milan stockbroker firm to operate on Europe’s money markets.” Italian intelligence first brings up the possibility, which is then investigated by other European intelligence agencies as well. However, it is also reported, “We neither know the name of the Milan stockbroker, nor whether the initial suspicions have ever been confirmed.” ([BBC 9/17/2001](#)) It will also be reported shortly after 9/11 that “Italian stock authorities [are] investigating abnormal movements in share prices on the Milan stock exchange prior to the terrorist attacks” (see [September 17, 2001](#)). ([Weinstein 9/18/2001](#))

After 1994-1999: CIA and Bin Laden Train KLA in Albania

In 1994 Albanian Premier Sali Berisha reportedly helps bin Laden set up a network in Albania through Saudi charity fronts after bin Laden visits Albania (see [Shortly After](#)

[April 9, 1994](#)). Berisha later uses his property to train the KLA militant group. ([Steven 11/29/1998](#))

1995: CIA Begins Program to Abduct Islamic Jihad Militants and Send Them to Egypt

The US begins a policy of abducting Islamic Jihad militants and sending them to Egypt. The US began a policy of allowing abductions, known as “renditions,” in 1993 (see [1993](#)). At first, renditions were rarely used because few countries wanted the suspects. Michael Scheuer, head of the CIA’s bin Laden unit, is one of the architects of a 1995 agreement with Egypt to send militants there. He will later recall, “It was begun in desperation.... We were turning into voyeurs. We knew where these people were, but we couldn’t capture them because we had nowhere to take them,” due to legal and diplomatic complications. The CIA realized that “we had to come up with a third party.” Egypt was the obvious choice because the Islamic Jihad is the prime political enemy of the Egyptian government, and many Islamic Jihad militants also work for al-Qaeda, an enemy of the US. However, the Egyptian secret police force, the Mukhabarat, is notorious for its torture of prisoners. As part of the program, the US helps track, capture, and transport suspects to Egypt and then turns a blind eye while the Egyptians torture them. Scheuer claims the US could give the Egyptian interrogators questions they wanted put to the detainees in the morning and get answers by the evening. Because torture is illegal in the US, US officials are never present when the torture is done. Further, the CIA only abducts suspects who have already been convicted in absentia. Talaat Fouad Qassem is the first known person the CIA renders to Egypt (see [September 13, 1995](#)). But the number of renditions greatly increases in 1998, when the CIA gets a list of Islamic Jihad operatives around the world (see [July 1998](#)). These renditions result in a big trial in Egypt in 1999 that effectively destroys Islamic Jihad as a major force in that country (see [1999](#)). ([Mayer 2/8/2005](#))

1995: Hijackers Alhazmi and Almihdhar Fight in Bosnia

9/11 hijackers Khalid Almihdhar and Nawaf Alhazmi fight in the Bosnian civil war against the Serbs. ([US Congress 7/24/2003, pp. 131](#)) The 9/11 Commission will later say that the two “traveled together to fight in Bosnia in a group that journeyed to the Balkans in 1995,” but will not give any other details. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 155](#)) Ramzi bin al-Shibh fights there too, and a witness later recounts traveling to Hamburg from Bosnia with bin al-Shibh in 1996. ([Schindler 2007, pp. 281-282](#)) 9/11 planner Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM) fights in Bosnia in 1995 as well (see [1992-1995](#)), but it is not known if any of them are ever there together. Under interrogation, KSM will say that in 1999 he did not know Almihdhar. However, doubts will be expressed about the reliability of statements made by KSM in detention, because of the methods used to extract them (see [June 16, 2004](#)). ([US District Court for the Eastern](#)

[District of Virginia 7/31/2006, pp. 17](#).) Alhazmi and Almihdhar will later go on to fight in Chechnya (see [1993-1999](#)).

1995: Hijacker Atta Still Connected to Group Linked to Muslim Brotherhood

In a three-month trip to his hometown of Cairo, Egypt, hijacker Mohamed Atta demonstrates that he is still a member of an engineering syndicate linked to the Muslim Brotherhood (see [1990](#)). He takes the two Germans students he is traveling with, Volker Hauth and Ralph Bodenstein, to the syndicate's eating club. According to Hauth, Atta does nothing during the trip he knows about that suggests he is a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, but the group's influence on the club is obvious. ([Finn 9/22/2001](#))

1995: French Set Up Bin Laden Unit

In 2007, a French newspaper will report that the French intelligence agency, the DGSE, set up a unit focusing on bin Laden by 1995. This predates the CIA unit focusing on him established in 1996 (see [February 1996](#)). As part of their efforts against bin Laden, the DGSE manipulates and turns "young candidates for the jihad from the suburbs of the big cities of Europe." They also work with Ahmed Shah Massoud, the leader of the Northern Alliance fighting the Taliban, and intercept satellite telephone conversations. ([Dasquié 4/15/2007](#))

1995: KSM Visits Bin Laden in Sudan

Sudanese intelligence files indicate that Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM) visited bin Laden in Sudan. The file on KSM calls him "Khalid Mohammed" and reads, "He visited Sudan for a short period while bin Laden was [here] and met him and went to Qatar." The file also mentions KSM's relationship with Ramzi Yousef and says that KSM used to "work in relief and aid" in Peshawar, Pakistan, and took part in the Afghan war in the 1980s. ([Miniter 2003, pp. 251](#)) While most of the Sudanese intelligence files will not be given to the US until shortly before 9/11 (see [July-August 2001](#)), apparently Sudan tips off an FBI official about much of what it knows regarding KSM not long after he moves to Qatar (see [Shortly Before October 1995](#)).

1995: Passport of 9/11 Hijacker's Namesake Stolen in Denver



Abdulaziz Alomari studied in Denver. [Source: BBC] A passport belonging to a man with the same first and last name as one of the 9/11 hijackers, Abdulaziz Alomari, is stolen and this will cause some confusion in the weeks following 9/11. Alomari, who studies at the University of Colorado from 1993 to 2000, informs the police of the theft, which occurs when a thief breaks into his apartment. ([Getter, Mehren, and Slater 9/21/2001](#); [Harrison 9/23/2001](#)) Although the validity of the stolen passport is not specified, a visa application submitted by another of the Saudi hijackers in 1997 will indicate that his passport was good for five lunar years, so the stolen passport may have been valid for the same period. ([US Department of State 11/2/1997](#)) When the FBI releases lists of the 9/11 hijackers on September 14 and 27, 2001, it will give two birthdates for the hijacker Abdulaziz Alomari. ([Federal Bureau of Investigation 9/14/2001](#); [Federal Bureau of Investigation 9/27/2001](#)) One of them, May 28, 1879, will be used by the hijacker, for example on his US visa application. ([US Department of State 6/18/2001](#)) The other, December 24, 1972, belongs to the former Denver student, who will be a telecommunications engineer in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on 9/11 and will comment: "I couldn't believe it when the FBI put me on their list. They gave my name and my date of birth, but I am not a suicide bomber. I am here. I am alive. I have no idea how to fly a plane. I had nothing to do with this." ([Harrison 9/23/2001](#)) It will be unclear how and why the birth date of Alomari the telecommunications engineer appears on the list of hijackers. However, after finding Alomari's name on a passenger manifest, the FBI will check various databases to find more information about him. ([US District Court for Portland, Maine 9/12/2001](#)) Alomari the telecommunications engineer is stopped three times by police in Denver for minor offences before 9/11 and gives them the 1972 birth date, so the FBI may obtain it by searching Denver police records. ([Hersh 5/27/2002](#)) Radical Sunni Muslims connected to Osama bin Laden had a presence in Denver from the mid-1990s (see [1994](#) and [March 2000](#)).

1995: Taliban Allies with Organized Crime in Pakistan Border Down

The Taliban, while just starting to take over Afghanistan, forms an important alliance with a powerful mafia of truck transporters based in Quetta, Pakistan (near the Afghanistan border) and Kandahar, Afghanistan. ([Rashid 2001, pp. 22](#)) The transporters pay hefty fees to the Taliban, who, in return, suppress any local warlords who interfere with the mafia's trade. Additionally, the Taliban ensures that roads are kept open so that the transporters can operate freely. Taliban expert and author Ahmed Rashid argues that

the alliance between the Taliban and the Quetta mafia becomes so successful that it ultimately destabilizes not only Afghanistan, but Pakistan as well. ([Rashid 2001, pp. 191-195](#))

1995-1998: Darkazanli Receives Large Sums From Saudi Intelligence Front Company

A Saudi company called the Twaik Group deposits more than \$250,000 in bank accounts controlled by Mamoun Darkazanli, a Syrian-born businessman suspected of belonging to the Hamburg, Germany, al-Qaeda cell that Mohamed Atta is also a part of. In 2004, the Chicago Tribune will reveal evidence that German intelligence has concluded that Twaik, a \$100 million-a-year conglomerate, serves as a front for the Saudi Arabian intelligence agency. It has ties to that agency's longtime chief, Prince Turki al-Faisal. Before 9/11, at least two of Twaik's managers are suspected by various countries' intelligence agencies of working for al-Qaeda. One Twaik employee, who is later accused of helping to finance the financing of the 2003 Bali bombing (see [October 12, 2002](#)), repeatedly flies on aircraft operated by Saudi intelligence. In roughly the same time period, hundreds of thousands of additional dollars are deposited into Darkazanli's accounts from a variety of suspicious entities, including a Swiss bank owned by Middle Eastern interests with links to terrorism and a radical Berlin imam. Darkazanli is later accused not just of financially helping the Hamburg 9/11 hijackers, but also of helping to choose them for al-Qaeda. ([Crewdson 10/12/2003](#); [Crewdson and Gienger 3/31/2004](#))

1995-1998: French Learn of Moussaoui's Trips to Afghanistan Training Camps, Ties to Militants



Zacarias Moussaoui's French national identification card. [Source: FBI] French agents believe Zacarias Moussaoui makes a trip to an al-Qaeda camp in Afghanistan in 1995. After this, he goes to Chechnya and joins Muslims radicals fighting Russian troops there. French intelligence learns of this, though when they learn it is not clear. He then attends the Khaldan al-Qaeda camp in Afghanistan around April 1998. French intelligence will apparently learn of this second trip to Afghanistan in 1999 (see [1999](#)). ([MSNBC 12/11/2001](#); [Burrell, Gumbel, and Sengupta 12/11/2001](#); [CBS News 5/8/2002](#)) The French additionally come to believe that

Moussaoui had been in contact with Farid Melouk, an Algerian suspected of belonging to the GIA, an Algerian militant group. Melouk is arrested in 1998 after a shootout with police in Brussels, Belgium, and later sentenced to nine years of prison. ([Borger, Dodd, and Norton-Taylor 9/18/2001](#))

1995-2001: Persian Gulf Elite Go Hunting with Bin Laden in Afghanistan



Sheik Mohammed ibn Rashid al Maktum, who is said to go falcon hunting with bin Laden, will later rule the emirate that owns DP World, the UAE company attempting to purchase a number of US ports in 2006. [*Source: UAE Government*] After the Taliban takes control of the area around Kandahar, Afghanistan, in September 1994, prominent Persian Gulf state officials and businessmen, including high-ranking United Arab Emirates and Saudi government ministers, such as Saudi intelligence minister Prince Turki al-Faisal, frequently secretly fly into Kandahar on state and private jets for hunting expeditions. ([Williams 11/18/2001](#)) General Wayne Downing, who will later serve as one of President Bush's counterterrorism "tsars," says: "They would go out and see Osama, spend some time with him, talk with him, you know, live out in the tents, eat the simple food, engage in falconing, some other pursuits, ride horses." ([Mitchell 9/5/2003](#)) One noted visitor is Sheik Mohammed ibn Rashid al Maktum, United Arab Emirates Defense Minister and Crown Prince for the emirate of Dubai. While there, some develop ties to the Taliban and al-Qaeda and give them money. Both bin Laden and Taliban leader Mullah Omar sometimes participate in these hunting trips. Former US and Afghan officials suspect that the dignitaries' outbound jets may also have smuggled out al-Qaeda and Taliban personnel. ([Williams 11/18/2001](#)) On one occasion, the US will decide not to attack bin Laden with a missile because he's falconing with important members of the United Arab Emirates' royal family (see [February 11, 1999](#)).

1995-1996: Reports: FBI Watches Hamas Supporters But Make No Arrests

In January 1995, the New York Times reports, "For more than a year the Federal Bureau of Investigation has closely monitored supporters of the Palestinian terrorist group Hamas in several cities, including Washington, Chicago, Los Angeles, Detroit, and Dallas." ([Sciolino 1/26/1995](#)) In August 1995, the Times reports, "For well over a year, the FBI

has monitored Hamas supporters in several American cities.” ([Brooke and Sciolino 8/16/1995](#)) On March 12, 1996, FBI Director Louis Freeh says to Congress, “We have several instances where we have been able to show the transfer of substantial cash funds from the US to areas in the Mideast where we could show Hamas received, and even made expenditure of, those funds.” He says some of the money raised is sent back from the Middle East to the US to support and expand phony front organizations for Hamas. The FBI, he adds, has a “very inadequate picture of what perhaps is much greater activity” in the US. He notes the difficulty of tracing “those funds to actual military or terrorist operations anywhere outside the US.” Hamas leaders say any such money raised is used for charitable and humanitarian purposes. (Legally, after 1995 it became a crime in the US to fund Hamas, no matter how they spent their money (see [January 1995](#))) In 1997, a Congressional analyst will say it is estimated Hamas receives from 30 percent to 80 percent of its budget from sources inside the US. ([Sisk 3/13/1996](#); [Cole 5/26/1997](#)) But in 2002, FBI agent Robert Wright will claim, “Against the wishes of some at the FBI in 1995, when I uncovered criminal violations in several of my cases, I promptly initiated active terrorism criminal investigations on these subjects. I developed probable cause to believe that some of these transfers or transmissions had been of money intended to be used in the support of domestic and international terrorism activities. The illegal transfers that supported specific terrorist activities involving extortion, kidnapping, and murder...” Much of Wright’s evidence will focus on Hamas figures Mohammad Salah and Mousa Abu Marzouk. ([Federal News Service 5/30/2002](#)) FBI agent Joe Hummel will say in 1997 that he has evidence “millions of dollars” passed through the bank accounts of Marzouk. But even though Marzouk is in US custody, he will merely be deported later in 1997 (see [July 5, 1995-May 1997](#)). ([Cole 5/26/1997](#)) Federal prosecutor Mark Flessner will later claim that Wright and others in the Vulgar Betrayal investigation were building a strong criminal case against some in this Hamas support network, but they were not allowed to charge anyone no matter how strong their evidence was (see [October 1998](#)). ([Federal News Service 5/30/2002](#)) In March 2002, the FBI will still publicly claim that it is watching an “elaborate network” of Hamas supporters in the US (see [March 15, 2002](#)).

1995-1998: Alleged Ties Between Al-Qadi Charity and Terrorist Groups Are Uncovered; No Action Taken

Beginning in 1995, evidence begins to appear in the media suggesting that a Saudi charity named the Muwafaq Foundation has ties to radical militants. The foundation is run by a Saudi multimillionaire named Yassin al-Qadi.

- In 1995, media reports claim that Muwafaq is being used to fund mujaheddin fighters in Bosnia (see [1991-1995](#)).
- Also in 1995, Pakistani police raid the foundation’s Pakistan branch in the wake of the arrest of WTC bomber Ramzi Yousef (see [February 7, 1995](#)). The head of the branch is held for several months, and then the branch is closed down. ([Jackson, Cohen, and Manor 10/29/2001](#))
- A secret CIA report in January 1996 says that Muwafaq is has ties to the al-Gama’a al-Islamiyya militant group and helps fund mujaheddin fighting in Bosnia and at least one training camp in Afghanistan (see [January 1996](#)).

- In February 1996, bin Laden says in an interview that he supports the Muwafaq branch in Zagreb, Croatia (which is close to the fighting in neighboring Bosnia). ([Pallister 10/16/2001](#))
- A senior US official will later claim that in 1998, the National Commercial Bank, one of the largest banks in Saudi Arabia, ran an audit and determined that the Muwafaq Foundation gave \$3 million to al-Qaeda. Both al-Qadi and the bank later claim that the audit never existed. Al-Qadi asserts he has no ties to any terrorist group. ([Jackson, Cohen, and Manor 10/29/2001](#)) In 2003, former counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke will elaborate on this allegation, saying to a Senate committee, “Al-Qadi was the head of Muwafaq, a Saudi ‘relief organization’ that reportedly transferred at least \$3 million, on behalf of Khalid bin Mahfouz, to Osama bin Laden and assisted al-Qaeda fighters in Bosnia.” ([US Congress 10/22/2003](#)) (Note that bin Mahfouz, a Saudi billionaire, denies that he ever had any sort of tie to bin Laden or al-Qaeda and has not been officially charged of such ties anywhere.) ([Bin Mahfouz Info 11/22/2005](#))
- Al-Qadi will claim that he shut down Muwafaq in 1996, but it is referred to in UN and German charity documents as doing work in Sudan and Bosnia through 1998. ([Pallister 10/16/2001](#); [BBC 10/20/2001](#))
- Shortly after 9/11, the US Treasury Department will claim that Muwafaq funded Maktab al-Khidamat (MAK)/Al-Kifah (the predecessor of al-Qaeda), al-Qaeda, Hamas, and Abu Sayyaf (a Philippines militant group with ties to al-Qaeda), and other militant Islamic groups. ([Ehrenfeld 6/17/2005](#))

However, despite all of these alleged connections, and the fact that the US will officially label al-Qadi a terrorism financier shortly after 9/11 (see [October 12, 2001](#)), the Muwafaq Foundation has never been officially declared a terrorist supporting entity. An October 2001 New York Times article will say that the reason, “administration officials said, was the inability of United States officials to locate the charity or determine whether it is still in operation.” But the same article will also quote a news editor, who calls Muwafaq’s board of directors “the creme de la creme of Saudi society.” ([Gerth and Miller 10/13/2001](#))

1995-1998: FBI Prohibits Probe of Suspected Terrorism Finance Network



Sami al-Arian. [*Source: Chris O'Meara*] In 1995, investigators raid two groups in Tampa, Florida, associated with Sami al-Arian, a university professor who some claim has been a supporter of terrorist groups. These raids alert investigators to a

group of Muslim charities in Herndon, Virginia, known as the SAAR network (see [July 29, 1983](#)). An investigation into that network's alleged terrorism financing begins. In 1998, National Security Council aides in the Clinton White House push the FBI to intensify the SAAR investigation. However, the FBI declines, claiming that an aggressive probe would be seen as ethnic profiling. The SAAR network will not be raided until early 2002 (see [March 20, 2002](#)). ([Farah and Mintz 10/7/2002](#)) Al-Arian will not be arrested until 2003, largely on the basis of activities from 1995 and before. He will eventually be sentenced to almost five years in prison and will admit to aiding the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (see [December 6, 2005](#)), which the US has officially designated as a terrorist group.

1995-1998: Al-Qaeda Leader Based in Philippines

Mamdouh Mahmud Salim, one of the founders and top leaders of al-Qaeda (see [August 11-20, 1988](#)), periodically lives in the Philippines during these years. Philippine officials will later note that their country makes a good place for Islamic militants to hide out due to lax immigration and "places of refuge" in the southern Philippines where a number of Islamic groups are fighting the government. ([Burgos 10/1/2001](#); [Abuza 12/1/2002](#)) In addition, Salim is believed to have visited Ramzi Yousef and Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM) in 1994 while they were working on the Bojinka plot in the Philippines. It is thought that he already had close ties to KSM by that time. ([Miller, Stone, and Mitchell 2002, pp. 139](#)) Salim will be arrested in Germany in late 1998 (see [September 20, 1998](#)) and charged with helping to plan the 1998 US embassy bombings (see [August 7, 1998](#)). Between 1994 and his 1998 arrest, it is believed he traveled to more than 20 countries, including Russia and Canada. ([Bonner 12/5/1998](#))

1995-1999: Monitored Al Jazeera Reporter Allegedly Couriers Money from Spain to Turkey and Afghanistan for Militants



Tayseer Allouni. [*Source: Public domain / Antonio Casas*] Al Jazeera reporter Tayseer Allouni makes several trips to Turkey and Afghanistan, taking money with him and giving it to people who are later said to be militants. Allouni, some of whose telephone conversations are recorded by Spanish authorities from the mid-1990s, makes five or six trips to Turkey and Afghanistan, carrying no more than \$4,000 each time. Allouni's associates include Mamoun Darkazanli and Mohammed Haydar Zammar,

who are linked to 9/11 hijackers Mohamed Atta, Marwan Alshehhi, and Ziad Jarrah (see [November 1, 1998-February 2001](#) and [October 9, 1999](#)), as well as Spain-based al-Qaeda operative Barakat Yarkas, who is in contact with Darkazanli and Zammar (see [August 1998-September 11, 2001](#)). However, Allouni will later say he is not a member of al-Qaeda and was only taking the money to friends and other Syrian exiles. Allouni will later interview Osama bin Laden (see [October 20, 2001](#)) and be sentenced to jail for his alleged al-Qaeda membership (see [September 26, 2005](#)). ([Miles 2005, pp. 306-313](#))

1995 and After: Charities Connected to Bojinka Plot Remain Operating in the Philippines

In early 1995, the Bojinka plot, an early version of the 9/11 plot that would have killed thousands, is foiled in the Philippines (see [January 6, 1995](#)). It is quickly learned that Mohammed Jamal Khalifa, bin Laden's brother-in-law, helped fund the plot while living in the Philippines as regional director of the Saudi-based charity, the Islamic International Relief Organization (IIRO). Wali Khan Amin Shah, a known bin Laden associate and Bojinka plotter, also was an employee of the IIRO in the Philippines. Yet the Philippine branch of the IIRO will remain open until 2000, apparently because of political pressure from Saudi Arabia. Even then, the IIRO is allowed to continue funding projects in the Philippines through a branch office in a neighboring country. One Philippine senior intelligence official will later complain, "We could not touch the IIRO." ([Abuza 3/7/2003](#) ^a) Counterterrorism expert Zachary Abuza will note that the IIRO is a "very well connected charity, whose supporters include the Saudi royal family and the top echelon of Filipino society." One board member of "the IIRO Philippine office was, not coincidentally, the Saudi Ambassador." ([Abuza 8/1/2003](#)) In 1996, a secret CIA report will conclude that the IIRO is funding radical militant groups in many countries, including the Philippines, but the US will not move against it either (see [January 1996](#)). Another Philippines-based Islamic charity, the International Relations and Information Center (IRIC), is also connected to the Bojinka plot. The IRIC's director is Ahmad al-Hamwi (better known by his alias Omar Abu Omar), who is the brother of Khalifa's Philippine wife. Investigators determine that most of the funding for the Bojinka plot went through a bank account controlled by al-Hamwi. As a result, the IRIC is shut down in 1995 and al-Hamwi leaves the country. However, its operations and staff is taken over by another Islamic charity headed by Mohammed Amin al-Ghafari. Al-Ghafari is also a close associate of Khalifa and is believed to have been involved in the Bojinka plot as well (see [June 1994](#)). Al-Ghafari will finally be deported in 2002 after years of police protection (see [October 8-November 8, 2002](#)). ([Brzezinski 12/30/2001](#); [Abuza 3/7/2003](#) ^a; [O'Brien and Kearney 4/8/2006](#)) Al-Hamwi will be granted asylum in Australia in 1996 and will continue to live there even after media reports expose his presence there and his ties to Islamic militancy (see [July 6, 1995-June 26, 1996](#)). ([O'Brien and Kearney 4/8/2006](#)) US will finally officially declare the IIRO's Philippine branch a terrorism funder in late 2006 (see [August 3, 2006](#)).

1995 and After: Britain's Attempts to Deport Radical Saudi Fail

Britain attempts to deport London-based Saudi dissident Mohammed al-Massari, but its efforts are unsuccessful. Al-Massari established a communications line for Osama bin Laden in the mid-1990s (see [1994](#)). The attempt is a result of pressure from the government of Saudi Arabia, to which al-Massari is opposed. The deportation is handled by what the BBC calls an “unusually senior British official,” which is “a sign of how important it was deemed.” However, Britain cannot deport him to his home country, because of torture concerns. Britain asks friendly countries to take him in and the small Caribbean nation of Dominica accepts, but this plan fails after it comes to light that Dominica has signed, but not incorporated the UN Convention on Refugees. ([Reynolds 7/27/2005](#)) The Saudis continue to urge action be taken against al-Massari, but he carries on operating from London. The Saudi ambassador will still be complaining about him in 2005 (see [August 10, 2005](#)).

Mid-1990s: Ali Mohamed Associate Said to Recruit 10 Sleeper Agents in US

Khaled Abu el-Dahab travels to Afghanistan to be personally congratulated by bin Laden. He is congratulated for recruiting 10 US citizens of Middle Eastern descent into al-Qaeda. Bin Laden was particularly keen to recruit such people so their US passports could be used for international travel by other al-Qaeda operatives. El-Dahab makes this visit with Ali Mohamed; the two of them make up the heart of an al-Qaeda cell based in Santa Clara, California (see [1987-1998](#)). El-Dahab will reveal this information in a 1999 trial in Egypt. The names of the recruits and other details about them apparently are not publicly revealed, and it is unclear if or when they are ever uncovered. ([Williams 11/21/2001](#))

Early 1995: Bosnian Leaders Admit They Are Using Anti-Serb Propaganda to Prompt Intervention

Bosnian leaders, including Deputy President Ejup Ganic, tell the BBC that their war strategy is to use anti-Serb propaganda in the mass media to force a massive military intervention. ([Ripley 1999, pp. 33](#))

Early 1995: Iraqi Intelligence Agent Meets with Bin Laden, but No Agreement or Alliance Results



Farouk Hijazi. [Source: CNN] In 2006, a bipartisan Senate report will conclude that only one meeting between representatives of al-Qaeda and Saddam Hussein's Iraq government took place prior to the Iraq war in 2003. "Debriefings and captured regime documents show that the Intelligence Community accurately assessed that Iraqi intelligence officer Farouk Hijazi met with bin Laden in 1995 in Sudan. Debriefings of Hijazi indicate that, prior to the meeting, Saddam directed Hijazi to "only listen" and not negotiate or promise anything to bin Laden. At the meeting, bin Laden requested an office in Iraq, military training for his followers, Chinese sea mines, and the broadcast of speeches from an anti-Saudi cleric," Sheikh Salman al-Awdah. Hussein immediately rejected most of the requests, but considered broadcasting the speeches. However, it is unknown if he actually did. Hijazi files a negative report to his superiors, telling them that bin Laden was hostile and insisted on the Islamicization of Iraq, which is not in line with Hussein's secular rule. Soon after filing the report, Hijazi is told by his superiors that he should not try to meet bin Laden again. ([US Senate and Intelligence Committee 9/8/2006, pp. 71-73](#)) Beginning in 1999, a number of news stories will allege a meeting between Hijazi and bin Laden, but will incorrectly claim the meeting took place in 1998 (see [Late December 1998](#)). The Boston Globe will later report, "[I]ntelligence agencies tracked contacts between Iraqi agents and Al Qaeda agents in the '90s in Sudan and Afghanistan, where bin Laden is believed to have met with Farouk Hijazi, head of Iraqi intelligence. But current and former intelligence specialists caution that such meetings occur just as often between enemies as friends. Spies frequently make contact with rogue groups to size up their intentions, gauge their strength, or try to infiltrate their ranks, they said." ([Canellos and Bender 8/3/2003](#)) Hijazi, head of the Iraqi Intelligence Service for a time, will be taken into custody by US forces in April 2003 and will make a deal to reactivate his intelligence network to benefit the US occupation. ([Hersh 12/8/2003](#))

January 1995: US Officially Declares Hamas a Terrorist Organization

President Clinton issues an executive order making it a felony to raise or transfer funds to designated terrorist groups or their front organizations (see [January 24, 1995](#)). He additionally officially declares Hamas to be a terrorist organization and orders a freeze on all Hamas banking assets. It now becomes illegal in the US to donate money to Hamas or its related charities. ([Sciolino 1/26/1995](#); [Brooke and Sciolino 8/16/1995](#)) Surprisingly, the US will not declare al-Qaeda a terrorist organization until October 1999 (see [October 8, 1999](#)).

January 1995: Ali Mohamed Gets Defense Contractor Job without Proper Security Clearance

Ali Mohamed applies for a US security clearance, so he can become a security guard with a Santa Clara defense contractor. His application fails to mention ever traveling to Pakistan or Afghanistan. Defense Department officials conduct a background check on him and interview him three times. Mohamed claims, “I have never belonged to a terrorist organization, but I have been approached by organizations that could be called terrorist.” These kinds of comments contradict what he has already told the FBI in interviews. ([Williams and McCormick 11/4/2001](#)) He never gets the required clearance, but somehow gets the job anyway. He works with Burns Security as a guard protecting a Northrop-Grumman factory in Sunnyvale, California. The factory makes triggers for the Trident missile. He has access to a computer inside the factory, but the computer is protected with a password so it is unknown if he gained access to the sensitive, classified information on it. ([Lance 2006, pp. 207-208](#))

1995-November 2001: US Lobbies India Over Enron Power Plant

Enron’s \$3 billion Dabhol, India power plant runs into trouble in 1995 when the Indian government temporarily cancels an agreement. The plant is projected to get its energy from the proposed Afghan pipeline and deliver it to the Indian government. Enron leader Ken Lay travels to India with Commerce Secretary Ron Brown the same year, and heavy lobbying by US officials continues in subsequent years. By summer 2001, the National Security Council leads a “Dabhol Working Group” with officials from various cabinet agencies to get the plant completed and functioning. US pressure on India intensifies until shortly before Enron files for bankruptcy in December 2001. US officials later claim their lobbying merely supported the \$640 million of US government investment in the plant. But critics say the plant received unusually strong support under both the Clinton and Bush administrations. ([Burger 1/18/2002](#); [Milbank and Blustein 1/19/2002](#))

January 1995-April 1996: FBI and Treasury Cancel Raid on Suspected Charity

As President Clinton issues an executive order making it a felony to raise or transfer funds to designated terrorist groups or their front organizations (see [January 1995](#)), counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke and Treasury official Richard Newcomb look for opportunities to use the new power. They review files to see if there are any clear cut cases to use it on. They decide that the Holy Land Foundation is in violation of the new order. Customs officials prepare to raid Holy Land’s headquarters in Arlington, Texas, and seize all their assets. However, FBI Director Louis Freeh and Treasury Secretary Bob Rubin object. Both claim the executive order might not hold up to legal challenges. Freeh additionally says he is concerned with alienating Arabs in the US, and Rubin is afraid the

raid might discourage investment in the US. The raid is cancelled. ([Sciolino 1/26/1995](#); [Clarke 2004, pp. 98](#)) The FBI is also aware of a public event held in January where the leader of Hamas' political wing is the keynote speaker. He urges the crowd, "I am going to speak the truth to you. It's simple. Finish off the Israelis. Kill them all! Exterminate them! No peace ever!" Holy Land raises over \$200,000 for Hamas from the event. The same speaker helps Holy Land raise money with many other events in the US. ([Los Angeles Times 12/6/2001](#); [Associated Press 3/15/2002](#)) After Hamas leader Mousa Abu Marzouk is arrested trying to enter the US in July 1995 (see [July 5, 1995-May 1997](#)), agents who search his belongings find financial records showing that he invested \$250,000 in Holy Land in 1992. Holy Land continues to pay him monthly profits on his investment even after Hamas was declared a terrorist organization and news of his arrest made the front pages of US newspapers (in fact, Holy Land will continue to pay him through 2001). Although Holy Land is in clear violation of the law, the raid still does not occur. ([McGonigle 12/19/2002](#)) In 1996, Congress will pass a law that confirms it is illegal to financially support officially designated terrorism groups such as Hamas. (see [April 25, 1996](#)). Clarke has never explained why Holy Land is not raided after the passage of this law, or in subsequent years when yet more evidence of terrorist ties are uncovered (see [1997](#); [September 16, 1998-September 5, 2001](#)). Holy Land will finally be raided after 9/11 (see [December 4, 2001](#)), largely on the basis of evidence collected in 1993 (see [October 1993](#)). In 2004, the US government will claim that Holy Land raised over \$12 million for Hamas between January 1995, when funding Hamas became illegal in the US, and December 2001, when Holy Land was shut down. ([Immigration and Customs Enforcement 7/27/2004](#))

Mid 1990s: Hijacker Atta Registers in Germany as UAE National Using Name Variant

Although lead hijacker Mohamed Atta is Egyptian and is known to some German acquaintances as such, he registers as a UAE national in Hamburg. This will be confirmed after 9/11 by Hamburg's interior minister, Olaf Scholz, who will say that his UAE nationality was recorded in the Ausländerzentralregister, a federal data base with personal data of foreign residents and asylum seekers. ([BBC 9/13/2001](#); [Erlanger 9/17/2001](#); [Hamburg Interior Ministry 9/23/2001](#)) Commenting on this after 9/11, the *Observer* will say, "In many respects, though, he led not one life, but two. He repeatedly switched names, nationalities and personalities. If... in the US, he was Mohamed Atta, then at the Technical University of Harburg, he was Mohamed el-Amir. For the university authorities, he was an Egyptian, yet for his landlord, as for the US authorities, he was from the United Arab Emirates. And while it is not hard to see Atta, whose face gazes out from the passport photograph released by the FBI, as that of the mass murderer of Manhattan, el-Amir was a shy, considerate man who endeared himself to Western acquaintances." ([Hooper 9/23/2001](#)) It is unclear how or why Atta registered as a UAE national. In addition, throughout most of his time in Germany Atta is registered under a name variant, Mohamed el-Amir, and only registers using his full name after obtaining a new passport (see [Late 1999](#)), three weeks before leaving Germany for the US (see [June](#)

3, 2000). ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#))

After 1994: Foreign Services Unhappy about Closeness between Yemeni Authorities and Militants

After the Yemen civil war in 1994, in which militants helped North Yemen defeat its southern counterpart, there is an effort to absorb extremists into the mainstream (see [After July 1994](#)). However, some foreign intelligence services complain that this allows radicals to operate freely in Yemen. Nabil ad-Din, a former officer in Egypt's state security will later say that "there were always problems" with Yemeni security officials because "they shared the same values of the people they were supposed to be arresting." US officials will say that although some senior officers in the local Political Security Organization (PSO) take antiterrorism seriously, the organization as a whole tends to see Islamists as useful allies against domestic opponents. In addition, an Italian intelligence report will later state that the PSO even provides "logistical and intelligence assistance" to Islamic Jihad, led by Ayman al-Zawahiri, who frequently visits Yemen (see [Mid-1990s-Spring 1998](#)). ([Higgins and Cullison 12/20/2002](#))

January 1-April 1995: Four Month Truce in Bosnia War

Former US president Jimmy Carter brokers a truce between Bosnian Serbs and Muslims. The truce is set to last four months and does, but then fighting resumes and intensifies. ([US Department of State 12/6/1995](#); [Time 12/31/1995](#))

January 3, 1995: Philippine Authorities on Red Alert after Bojinka Tip-off; Many Conspirators Involved

Two businessmen inform Philippine police that they heard explosions and saw Middle Eastern men engaged in what appeared to be military-type training on a remote beach two hours from Manila. Police quickly investigate and discover a partially burned Bible and pamphlets preaching a radical version of Islam. As a result, police go on red alert and several days later will foil the Bojinka plot (see [January 6, 1995](#)). An investigation conducted the following month will conclude that there were 20 people taking part in military-styled training on the beach from the last week of December until January 2. Fifteen of them were foreign nationals, from Egypt, Palestine, and Pakistan. ([Vitug and Gloria 2000, pp. 222-223](#); [Ressa 2003, pp. 33](#)) Ramzi Yousef is likely elsewhere at the time, but a beach house at this training location was rented by him. ([Reeve 1999, pp. 86](#)) Despite the suggestion that large numbers of people are involved in the Bojinka plot, the US will apparently lose interest in the case after detaining just three of the plotters. Later in 1995, the Philippine government will arrest several dozen suspected foreign terrorists

and then let them go (see [April 1, 1995-Early 1996](#)). ([Vitug and Gloria 2000, pp. 222-223](#); [Ressa 2003, pp. 33](#))

January 5, 1995: US Decides to Deport Bin Laden's Brother-in-Law

The US decides to deport Mohammed Jamal Khalifa, bin Laden's brother-in-law, who was arrested in the US in mid-December 1994 (see [December 16, 1994-May 1995](#)). Khalifa was sentenced to death in Jordan later in December and the Jordanian government wants the US to deport him to face retrial, even though Jordan does not have an extradition treaty with the US. On this day, Secretary of State William Christopher writes a letter to Attorney General Janet Reno: "Jordan is aware of Mr. Khalifa's presence in the United States and has asked for our assistance in sending him to Jordan so that he may be brought to justice. To permit Mr. Khalifa to remain in the United States in these circumstances would potentially be seen as an affront to Jordan and at odd with many of the basic elements of our cooperative bilateral relationship [and] potentially undermine our longstanding and successful policy of international legal cooperation to bring about the prosecution of terrorists." The next day, Deputy Attorney General Jamie Gorelick, acting for an absent Janet Reno, sends a letter supporting the deportation request. ([Lance 2006, pp. 160-161](#)) Gorelick will later be named one of the ten 9/11 Commissioners. The 9/11 Commission will not discuss the decision to deport Khalifa at all. Victim's relative Monica Gabrielle will later note, "Gorelick was one of those who wanted [the 9/11 Commission] to concentrate only on the last few years." ([Lance 2006, pp. 169](#)) In April 1995, Khalifa's conviction will be overturned in Jordan after a key witness recants, making it highly probable Khalifa will be found innocent if deported there (see [Early April 1995](#)). But the US will go ahead with the deportation anyway, and Khalifa will be found innocent and set free (see [April 26-May 3, 1995](#)).

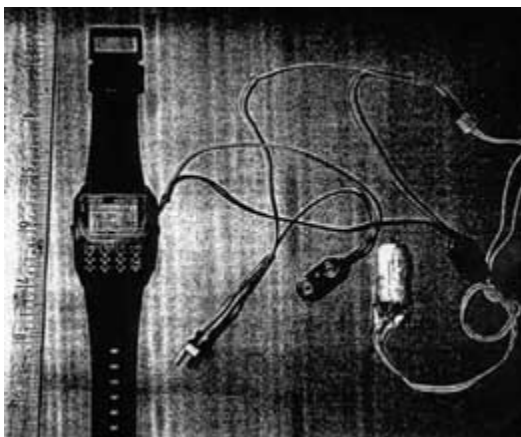
Before January 6, 1995: Bojinka Plotters under Surveillance, But Most Will Evade Arrest



The Josefa apartment, where the fire that foiled the Bojinka plot took place. [Source: CBC] It has widely been reported that the Bojinka plot was stopped by pure accident, days before plots to kill the Pope and thousands of airline passengers were to go forward (see [January 6, 1995](#)). Philippine

policewoman Aida Fariscal is said to have made the first arrest by responding to a routine report of a fire in the Manila apartment where some of the plotters were staying. She chases Bojinka plotter Abdul Hakim Murad down the street and arrests him when he trips on a tree stump. ([Brzezinski 12/30/2001](#)) However, shortly after 9/11, the Philippine press will report that while the initial arrest may have been coincidental, Philippine intelligence was already monitoring Ramzi Yousef and the apartment where the fire took place. Rolando San Juan was reportedly an undercover agent monitoring Yousef and his apartment mate Murad. He was passing what he learned to his brother Erick San Juan, a special intelligence. One article concludes, “The role of the San Juan brothers is not known publicly and it is time the Philippine and US governments give them due credit for the unmasking of the activities of Murad and Yousef leading to their capture.” ([Europa 10/11/2001](#)) In 2002, the Los Angeles Times will discount the widely reported accidental fire story and say, “The truth about that night and the fire, officials say now, is a bit more complicated.... Government officials now say police, worried about the pope’s imminent arrival, started the fire that set off the alarm at the Josefa. When it sounded, the occupants ran out, the cops walked in and looked around. They then left and hunted down a search warrant.” ([McDermott 9/1/2002](#)) It will also be later revealed that an undercover operative named Edwin Angeles actually worked with Yousef on the Bojinka plot while reporting to the Philippine government (see [Late 1994-January 1995](#)), and other key Bojinka plotters such as Mohammed Jamal Khalifa, bin Laden’s brother-in-law, and Tariq Javid Rana were under intensive surveillance before the fire as well (see [December 1, 1994](#) and [December 1994-April 1995](#)). It is not known what US intelligence may have been told about this surveillance, if anything. Despite all this surveillance, all the Bojinka plotters except Murad manage to escape, although many, such as Yousef, are arrested later (see [February 7, 1995](#)).

January 6, 1995: Pope Assassination and Bojinka Plot to Bomb Dozen Airplanes Is Foiled



One of Ramzi Yousef’s timers seized by Philippines police in January 1995. [*Source: Peter Lance*] Responding to an apartment fire, Philippine investigators uncover an al-Qaeda plot to assassinate the Pope that is scheduled to take place when he visits the Philippines one week later. While investigating that scheme, they also uncover Operation Bojinka, planned by the same people: 1993 WTC bomber Ramzi Yousef and 9/11 mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM).

([Gumbel 6/6/2002](#); [McDermott 6/24/2002](#); [McDermott 9/1/2002](#)) Many initial reports after 9/11 will claim the fire was accidental and the police discovery of it was a lucky break, but in 2002 the Los Angeles Times will report that the police started the fire on purpose as an excuse to look around the apartment. In the course of investigating the fire, one of the main plotters, Abdul Hakim Murad, is arrested. ([McDermott 9/1/2002](#)) The plot has two main components. On January 12, Pope John Paul II is scheduled to visit Manila and stay for five days. A series of bombs along his parade route would be detonated by remote control, killing thousands, including the Pope. Yousef's apartment is only 500 feet from the residence where the Pope will be staying. ([Reeve 1999, pp. 78](#); [Lance 2006, pp. 138](#)) Then, starting January 21, a series of bombs would be placed on airplanes. ([Insight 5/27/2002](#)) Five men, Yousef, Wali Khan Amin Shah, Abdul Hakim Murad, Abd al-Karim Yousef (a.k.a., Adel Anon, Yousef's twin brother), and Khalid Al-Shaikh (thought to be an alias for KSM) would depart to different Asian cities and place a timed bomb on board during the first leg of passenger planes traveling to Los Angeles, San Francisco, Honolulu, and New York. They would then transfer to another flight and place a second bomb on board that flight. In all, 11 to 12 planes would blow up in a two day period over the Pacific. If successful, some 4,000 people would have been killed. ([Agence France-Presse 12/8/2001](#); [Insight 5/27/2002](#); [Abuza 12/1/2002](#)) According to another account, some of the bombs would be timed to go off weeks or even months later. Presumably worldwide air travel could be interrupted for months. ([Lance 2003, pp. 260-61](#)) A second wave of attacks involving crashing airplanes into buildings in the US would go forward later, once the pilots are trained for it (see [February-Early May 1995](#)).

January 7-11, 1995: 'Intelligence Gold Mine' Only Leads to Two More Arrests



Bomb making materials found in Yousef's Manila apartment. [Source: CNN] After a late night raid of the Manila, Philippines, apartment central to the Bojinka plot (see [January 6, 1995](#)), investigators find what the Los Angeles Times calls "an intelligence gold mine." ([McDermott 9/1/2002](#)) Very quickly, a team of US intelligence agents joins Philippine investigators to sort through the evidence, which fills three police vans. Investigators are able to match fingerprints in the apartment with fingerprints on record for Ramzi Yousef, already believed to be the mastermind behind the 1993 World Trade Center bombing (see [February 26, 1993](#)). There are priests' robes, pipe bombs, a dozen passports, chemicals, maps of the Pope's planned

route through Manila, and more. ([Goldstein 9/30/2001](#); [McDermott 9/1/2002](#)) “The most damning information was gleaned from Yousef’s notebook computer, and four accompanying diskettes.” The data is encrypted and in Arabic, but technicians are quickly able to decipher and translate it. ([Goldstein 9/30/2001](#)) Computer data includes “the names of dozens of associates, and photos of some; a record of five-star hotels; and dealings with a trading corporation in London, a meat market owner in Malaysia, and an Islamic center in Tucson, Ariz.... They describe how money moved through an Abu Dhabi banking firm.” ([Struck et al. 9/23/2001](#)) Photographs of all five operatives who would place bombs on airplanes are recovered from a deleted computer file. ([Wallace 5/28/1995](#)) Wali Khan Amin Shah is identified from one of these five photos, plus a list of cell phone numbers found on the hard drive. He is traced to another Manila apartment and arrested on January 11. Under interrogation, Shah soon confesses that most of the funds for the Bojinka plot were channeled to Yousef through a bank account belonging to Ahmad al-Hamwi, a Syrian working at the International Relations and Information Center (IRIC), a charity front run by Mohammed Jamal Khalifa, bin Laden’s brother-in-law. ([Goldstein 9/30/2001](#)) But despite these leads, Ramzi Yousef is the only other person successfully arrested based on all this data (and Yousef’s arrest will largely be due to an informant responding to an existing tip off program (see [February 7, 1995](#))). The Philippine government will arrest other Bojinka plotters later in the year, including another one of the five operatives assigned to place bombs on the planes, but they will all be released (see [April 1, 1995-Early 1996](#)). Al-Hamwi is never arrested, while Khalifa is actually in US custody at the time of the Bojinka raid but is soon let go (see [April 26-May 3, 1995](#)). The IRIC will be closed down, but its operations are immediately taken over by another close associate of Khalifa (see [1995 and After](#)).

Shortly After January 7, 1995: Bojinka Plotters Threaten to Attack Inside the US

As the Bojinka plot is foiled (see [January 6, 1995](#)), a document found on Ramzi Yousef’s computer spells out the Bojinka plotters’ broad objectives. “All people who support the US government are our targets in our future plans and that is because all those people are responsible for their government’s actions and they support the US foreign policy and are satisfied with it.... We will hit all US nuclear targets. If the US government keeps supporting Israel, then we will continue to carry out operations inside and outside the United States to include...” At this point, the document comes to a halt in mid-sentence. ([Struck et al. 9/23/2001](#)) Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, much more than Ramzi Yousef, is the mastermind of the Bojinka plot. He will continue to work on the plot until it eventually morphs into the 9/11 attack. ([Gomez 6/25/2002](#)) Philippine Gen. Renado De Villa will later state, “They didn’t give up the objective.” Captured Bojinka plotter Abdul Hakim Murad “clearly indicated it was a large-scale operation. They were targeting the US. And they had a worldwide network. It was very clear they continued to work on that plan until someone gave the signal to go.” ([Struck et al. 9/23/2001](#))

January 13,1995: Algerian Government Responds to Peace Overtures by Plotting False Flag Attacks in France

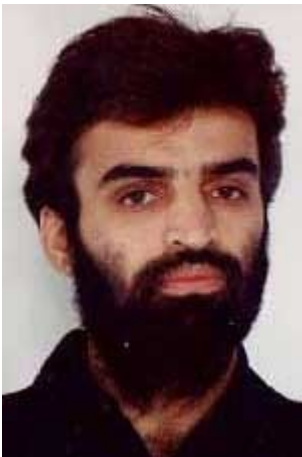


The Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) logo. [Source: *Public domain*] The Italian government hosts a meeting in Rome of Algerian political parties, including the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), whose probable election win was halted by an army coup in 1992 (see [January 11, 1992](#)). Eight political parties representing 80 percent of the vote in the last multi-party election agree on a common platform brokered by the Catholic community of Sant'Egidio, Italy, known as the Sant'Egidio Platform. The militant Groupe Islamique Armé (GIA) is the only significant opposition force not to participate in the agreement. The parties agree to a national conference that would precede new multi-party elections. They call for an inquiry into the violence in Algeria, a return to constitutional rule, and the end of the army's involvement in politics. The Independent notes the agreement "[does] much to bridge the enmity between religious and lay parties and, most significantly, pushe[s] the FIS for the first time into an unequivocal declaration of democratic values." French President Francois Mitterrand soon proposes a European Union peace initiative to end the fighting in Algeria, but the Algerian government responds by recalling its ambassador to France. ([Gumbel 2/5/1995](#)) The Washington Post notes that the agreement "demonstrate[s] a growing alliance between the Islamic militants [such as the GIA], waging a deadly underground war with government security forces, and the National Liberation Front," Algeria's ruling party, as both are opposed to peace with the FIS and other opposition parties. ([Drozdiak 1/14/1995](#)) The Guardian will later report that these peace overtures "left [Algeria's] generals in an untenable position. In their desperation, and with the help of the DRS [Algeria's intelligence agency], they hatched a plot to prevent French politicians from ever again withdrawing support for the military junta." The GIA is heavily infiltrated by Algerian government moles at this time and even the GIA's top leader, Djamel Zitouni, is apparently working for Algerian intelligence (see [October 27, 1994-July 16, 1996](#)). Some GIA moles are turned into agent provocateurs. GIA leader Ali Touchent, who the Guardian will say is one of the Algerian moles, begins planning attacks in France in order to turn French public opinion against the Algerian opposition and in favor of the ruling Algerian government (see [July-October 1995](#)). The GIA also plots against some of the FIS's leaders living in Europe. ([Bouteldja 9/8/2005](#))

Mid-January 1995: Bojinka Plotter's Confession Helps to Reveal KSM's Importance

One of the Bojinka plotters, Abdul Hakim Murad, confesses the importance of Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM) in a number of plots. Murad was arrested on January 6, 1995 (see [January 6, 1995](#)), and within days he begins freely confessing a wealth of valuable information to Philippine interrogator Colonel Rodolfo Mendoza. Murad does not know KSM's real name, but uses an alias known to investigators. Mendoza will write in a January 1995 report given to US officials that KSM was one of the main Bojinka plotters attempting to blow up US-bound airliners over the Pacific Ocean. In addition, he says KSM worked with Ramzi Yousef to "plan the bombing of the World Trade Center in 1993" (see [February 26, 1993](#)). He also says that KSM "supervised the plan to assassinate Pope John Paul II with a pipe bomb during a visit to the Philippines," which was part of the Bojinka plot. ([Gunaratna 2003, pp. xxvii](#)) Over the next few months, Murad will give up more information about KSM in further interrogation, for instance revealing that KSM has been in the US and is planning to come back to the US for flight training (see [April-May 1995](#)). Yet despite all these revelations, US intelligence will remain curiously uninterested in KSM despite knowing that he is also Yousef's uncle. Counterterrorism expert Rohan Gunaratna will later comment that Murad's confessions about KSM "were not taken seriously" by US intelligence. ([Gunaratna 2003, pp. xxvii](#))

January 20, 1995: First Hints of Bojinka Second Wave Revealed



Abdul Hakim Murad. [*Source: Justice Department*] Philippine and US investigators learn that Ramzi Yousef, Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, and their fellow plotters were actually planning three different attacks when they were foiled in early January. In addition to the planned assassination of the Pope, and the first phase of Operation Bojinka previously discovered, they also planned to crash about a dozen passenger planes into prominent US buildings. It is often mistakenly believed that there is one Bojinka plan to blow up some planes and crash others into buildings, but in fact these different forms of attack are to take place in two separate phases. ([Lance 2003, pp. 259](#)) Philippine investigator Colonel Rodolfo Mendoza learns about this second phase through

the examination of recently captured Bojinka plotter Abdul Hakim Murad. On January 20, Mendoza writes a memo about Murad's latest confession, saying, "With regards to their plan to dive-crash a commercial aircraft at the CIA headquarters, subject alleged that the idea of doing same came out during his casual conversation with [Yousef] and there is no specific plan yet for its execution. What the subject [has] in his mind is that he will board any American commercial aircraft pretending to be an ordinary passenger. Then he will hijack said aircraft, control its cockpit, and dive it at the CIA headquarters. He will use no bomb or explosives. It is simply a suicidal mission that he is very much willing to execute." ([Insight 5/27/2002](#); [Lance 2003, pp. 277-78](#))

January 24, 1995: Clinton Tries to Stop Terrorist Funding with Executive Order

President Clinton issues Executive Order No. 12947, making it a felony to raise or transfer funds to designated terrorist groups or their front organizations. ([US President 1/24/1995](#); [Clarke 2004, pp. 98](#))

January 30, 1995 and Before: French Informer Smuggles Explosives to North Africa before Bombing

Omar Nasiri, an operative of the Algerian Groupe Islamique Armé (GIA) and informer for French intelligence, smuggles explosives into North Africa before a massacre by the GIA in Algeria. Nasiri takes the explosives hidden in a car for a GIA cell in Belgium, for which he works as an ammunition and weapons purchaser (see [Mid 1994-March 2, 1995](#)). Nasiri tells his contact at the Direction Générale de la Sécurité Extérieure (DGSE) about the trip beforehand, but refuses to provide the French with updates about his progress while on route to Tangiers, Morocco, where he passes the car and explosives on to another operative. A short while after this, there is a car bombing in Algiers, in neighboring Algeria, killing over 40 people. Nasiri later comments: "I don't know if the explosives I carried were used in that blast. I will never know. The GIA had lots of suppliers, of course. And yet I kept thinking about the urgency of the trip. The way [an operative] yelled at me, and the frustration in [another operative]'s voice when I threatened to keep the car. The speed with which the mechanic replaced the engine in Brussels. Was everything timed for this attack? I will never know the truth, but the question still haunts me." ([Nasiri 2006, pp. 63-81](#))

January 31-February 2, 1995: Ramzi Yousef Attempts to Blow Up Airliners over US

Ramzi Yousef attempts to bomb two US airliners over the US. On January 31, 1995, Yousef flies from Pakistan to Thailand, despite an international manhunt, and meets his associate Istaique Parker there. Yousef has Parker check two suitcases filled with bombs and put one on a Delta Airlines flight and another on a United Airlines flight. Both are

timed to blow up over populated areas of the US. Parker spends much of the day at the airport, but is too scared to approach the airlines with the suitcases. Finally he returns to Yousef at a hotel and lies that the airline cargo sections were asking for passports and fingerprints so he could not go through with it. Yousef comes up with another plan. He calls a friend in Qatar who is willing to take the suitcases to London and then fly them to the US where they will explode and destroy the plane. The name of this friend has not been revealed but his father is said to be a very senior politician and leading member of the establishment in Qatar. Yousef plans to use the friend's diplomatic immunity to make sure the suitcases are not checked. (At this time, Yousef's uncle Khalid Shaikh Mohammed is living in Qatar as the guest of a Qatari cabinet official (see [1992-1996](#)).) However, a problem develops and the plot cannot be carried out. On February 2, Yousef and Parker return to Pakistan. Parker turns Yousef in for reward money a few days later. ([Reeve 1999, pp. 98-100](#))

February 1995: Hamas Operative Given Terrorist Status

The US officially designates Hamas operative Mohammad Salah a "Specially Designated Terrorist." Wright had begun investigating Salah in early 1993 based on Salah's widely publicized confession (see [January 1993](#)). Wright will later claim that he was ready to begin a criminal investigation in 1995, but he was not allowed to do so. Salah, who is serving a five year prison sentence in Israel at this time, will return to Chicago in November 1997 and live openly in the US despite his terrorist designation. Salah will not be charged for the crimes he allegedly committed in the early 1990s (see [1989-January 1993](#)) until 2004 (see [August 20, 2004](#)). ([Federal News Service 5/30/2002](#); [Federal News Service 6/2/2003](#))

February 1995: Secret Coconspirator List Proves US Knowledge of Ali Mohamed's Al-Qaeda Criminal Activity



92 Tareq Khatteria
93 Lawrence L. Khidr
94 Y'aqub Kursam
95 Osama Bin Ladin
96 Khalil Lahoud
97 Yousef Maani
98 Mokhtar Mahmoud
105 Hassan El Mansour
106 Safullah McNeil
107 Ahmed Megali
108 Mohamed Mehdi
109 Ali A. Mohamed
110 Arioua Mostafa
111 Adel Said Mohammed

Sections of the unindicted co-conspirator list for the “Landmarks” plot trial. Osama bin Laden is 95 and Ali Mohamed is 109. [Source: *National Geographic*] In February 1995, the US government files a confidential court document listing bin Laden and scores of other people as possible co-conspirators in the 1993 New York City “Landmarks” plot (see [June 24, 1993](#)). Ali Mohamed’s name is on the list, confirming that investigators are aware of his involvement in al-Qaeda operations. Yet he continues to live openly in California. Mohamed obtains the document, though it is not clear how he obtained it. ([9/11 Commission 6/16/2004](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 472](#)) US prosecutor Patrick Fitzgerald will later state that when Mohamed’s California residence is finally searched in 1998 (see [August 8, 1998-August 21, 1998](#)), investigators discover “a sensitive sealed document from the trial of Sheik Omar Abdul Rahman with notations indicating that [he sent it] to the head of the Kenyan al-Qaeda cell for delivery to bin Laden. I shudder to think of the people who may read this statement and where it may be found some day.” ([9/11 Commission 6/16/2004](#)) A later government indictment will say that Mohamed sent the list to Wadiah El-Hage in Kenya who was told to hand deliver it to bin Laden in Afghanistan. ([Lynch and Loeb 8/1/1999](#)) If that is not enough to prove Mohamed’s duplicity, when El-Sayyid Nosair is defended in this trial, Nosair’s lawyers will expose more evidence about Mohamed. They argue that Nosair’s activities were part of a US-sponsored covert operation to train and arm the mujaheddin. They argue that Mohamed was the key link in this operation, and present evidence and witnesses showing how Mohamed trained the bomb plotters in 1989 (see [July 1989](#)). They mention the classified military manuals that Mohamed stole and gave the group (see [November 5, 1990](#)). Mohamed’s name and role in these activities come out publicly during the trial, and the Washington Post reports in 1998 that after hearing this testimony, “the FBI began to focus on Mohamed as a potential terrorism suspect.” Yet both US intelligence and al-Qaeda apparently continue to work with him. ([Weiser 10/30/1998](#); [Risen 10/31/1998](#))

February 1995: Albanian Narco-Terrorism Destabilizes the Balkans

According to a report in Jane’s Intelligence Review, Albanian narco-terrorism, gun-running, and smuggling organizations are becoming a dominant economic, political, and

military force in the Balkans. Jane's expresses the concern that if left unchecked, the Albanian mafia will become powerful enough to control one or more states in the region. Albanian President Sali Berisha "is now widely suspected of tolerating and even directly profiting from drug-trafficking for wider political-economic reasons, namely the financing of secessionist political parties and other groupings in Kosovo and Macedonia." ([Milivojevic 2/1/1995](#))

February-Early May 1995: Bojinka Second Wave Fully Revealed to Philippines Investigators; Information Given to US



Colonel Rodolfo Mendoza. [*Source: Australian Broadcasting Corporation*] As Colonel Mendoza, the Philippines investigator, continues to interrogate Operation Bojinka plotter Abdul Hakim Murad, details of a post-Bojinka "second wave" emerge. Author Peter Lance calls this phase "a virtual blueprint of the 9/11 attacks." Murad reveals a plan to hijack commercial airliners at some point after the effect of Bojinka dies down. Murad himself had been training in the US for this plot. He names the ten or so buildings that would be targeted for attack:

- CIA headquarters.
- The Pentagon.
- An unidentified nuclear power plant.
- The Transamerica Tower in San Francisco.
- The Sears Tower in Chicago.
- The World Trade Center.
- John Hancock Tower in Boston.
- US Congress.
- The White House. ([Brzezinski 12/30/2001](#); [Lance 2003, pp. 278-280](#); [Gunaratna 6/1/2005](#))

Murad continues to reveal more information about this plot until he is handed over to the FBI in April (see [April-May 1995](#)). He also mentions that ten suicide pilots have already been chosen and are training in the US (see [February 1995-1996](#)). Mendoza uses what he learns from Murad and other sources to make a flow chart connecting many key al-Qaeda figures together (see [Spring 1995](#)). Philippine authorities later claim that they provide all of this information to US authorities, but the US fails to follow up on any of it. ([Lance 2003, pp. 303-4](#)) Sam Karmilowicz, a security official at the US embassy in Manila, Philippines during this time period, will later claim that just before Murad was deported to the US in early May, he picked up an envelope containing all that the Philippine

government had learned from Murad. He then sent the envelope to a US Justice Department office in New York City. He believes Mike Garcia and Dietrich Snell, assistant US attorneys who will later prosecute Murad, almost certainly had access to this evidence (see [Early 1998](#)). ([Cockburn 3/9/2006](#))

February 1995-1996: Bojinka Plotter Says 10 Suicide Bombers Training in US; Not Much Follow Up Investigation

While Bojinka plotter Abdul Hakim Murad is being interrogated by Philippine Colonel Rodolfo Mendoza (see [February-Early May 1995](#)), he mentions that he had pilot training in the US and ten other operatives are being trained to fly in the US. The second wave of the Bojinka plot required many suicide pilots. Mendoza will later recall that Murad said, “There is really formal training [going on] of suicide bombers. He said that there were other Middle Eastern pilots training and he discussed with me the names and flight training schools they went to.” Murad also mentioned some of their targets had already been picked and included CIA headquarters, the Pentagon, and an unidentified nuclear facility. ([Lance 2003, pp. 279](#)) The ten other men who met him at US flight schools or were getting similar training came from Sudan, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan. The names of these men have never been publicly released, but apparently none of them match the names of any of the 9/11 hijackers. The Associated Press will later report, “The FBI interviewed people at the flight schools highlighted by Filipino police but did not develop evidence that any of the other Middle Easterners other than Murad were directly plotting terrorism. With no other evidence of a threat, they took no further action...” ([Gomez and Solomon 3/5/2002](#)) Murad also revealed that between November 1991 and July 1992, he had trained at four different flight schools in the US. His friend Nasir Ali Mubarak and another man named Abdullah Nasser Yousef were roommates with Murad as they trained at the same schools at the same time. Mubarak appears to be one of Murad’s ten pilots, because he had served in the United Arab Emirates air force and the Associated Press mentioned one of the ten was “a former soldier in the United Arab Emirates.” ([Gomez and Solomon 3/5/2002](#); [Rosenfeld 6/16/2002](#); [Rosenfeld 1/12/2003](#)) Richard Kaylor, the manager of Richmor Aviation in Albany, New York, later says that FBI agents interviewed him in 1996 about the three men who studied at his school. He says he was told that the FBI was first alerted to his flight school after a Richmor business card was found in the Philippines apartment where Murad, Ramzi Yousef, and KSM had lived. But that is the only time the FBI interviewed him on these matters before 9/11. ([Goldstein 9/30/2001](#)) An assistant manager at Richmor will later say of Murad and his roommates, “Supposedly they didn’t know each other before, they just happened to show up here at the same time. But they all obviously knew each other.” ([Gomez and Solomon 3/5/2002](#)) The FBI investigates Mubarak in 1995 and does not find that he has any ties to terrorism. Mubarak will continue to openly live and work in the US, marrying an American woman. He will claim the FBI never interviewed him until hours after the 9/11 attacks, so apparently the ten named by Murad may not have been interviewed in 1995 after all. He will be deported in 2002, apparently solely because of his association with Murad ten years earlier. Nothing more is publicly known about

Abdullah Nasser Yousef. ([Rosenfeld 1/12/2003](#)) Murad will also mention to the FBI a few months later that future 9/11 mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM) had a valid US visa and has been thinking about learning to fly in the US. Murad says he had recommended Richmor Aviation to KSM (see [April-May 1995](#)). There appears to have been little knowledge of Murad's ten pilot claim inside US intelligence before 9/11; for instance FBI agent Ken Williams will not mention it in his July 2001 memo about suspected militants training in US flight schools (see [July 10, 2001](#)).

February-March 1995: Frequent Secret Flights Supplying Arms to Bosnian Muslims



Apparent footage of one of the mysterious Tuzla flights, from a BBC documentary on the subject. [Source: BBC] UN observers and others report that frequent flights entering Bosnia are supplying weapons to the Bosnian Muslims in violation of the UN arms embargo. The flights clearly have the support of the US. ([Wiebes 2003, pp. 177- 198](#)) A UN official who witnesses the flights is physically threatened by three American officers and warned to keep silent. ([Wiebes 2003, pp. 192](#)) Journalists are also pressured and threatened by the US embassy, which is later said to have been acting on instructions from the State Department. ([Wiebes 2003, pp. 192](#)) A subsequent investigation conducted with the support of the Netherlands government will conclude that the operation was conducted by a third party, probably Turkey, with “the assent of parts of the US government.” ([Wiebes 2003, pp. 195-198](#)) Tim Ripley, who covers the military conflicts in Yugoslavia for Jane's Intelligence Review, blames the Tuzla flights and similar operations on “‘covert warriors’ of the NSC [National Security Council] and State Department.” ([Ripley 1999, pp. 93](#)) Prof. Cees Wiebes, who conducts the Netherlands investigation, agrees saying that “the State Department and National Security Council (NSC) were involved, but not the CIA or the DIA.” According to a confidential source, “the operation was... paid for from a Pentagon Special Operations budget, with the complete assent of the White House. Probably the most important members of Congress were informed in the deepest of secrecy, and they were therefore ‘in the loop’ concerning the events.” ([Wiebes 2003, pp. 193](#)) Ripley says that US NATO officers were not involved, but points out that NATO Commander Admiral Leighton Smith was careful to only deny “uninformed” US military involvement. Ripley suggests that American “freelance operatives” were brought in by “senior members of the Clinton Administration.” ([Ripley 1999, pp. 62-63](#)) According to Ripley, “Senior US military

commanders and CIA officials were just staggered by the ‘duplicity’ and ‘deceit’ at the heart of the Clinton Administration’s policies.” ([Ripley 1999, pp. 91](#))

Early February 1995: Philippine Undercover Operative Exposed Shortly after Bojinka Plot Was Foiled

Edwin Angeles, a Philippine government operative so deeply embedded in the Muslim militant group Abu Sayyaf that he is actually the group’s second in command (see [1991-Early February 1995](#)), surrenders to Philippine authorities. Angeles will later tell a reporter that he was not supposed to surrender yet and was surprised that his military handlers unmasked his cover. ([Philippine Daily Inquirer 7/10/2001](#)) One report suggests a slightly different account: “In early February, rumors began to circulate that Angeles... was, in fact, a deep-penetration agent planted by the Philippine military; Angeles heard the rumors and knew he would be killed,” so he turned himself in. In any case, the timing may have something to do with the Bojinka plot, which he was involved in and was foiled just the month before (see [January 6, 1995](#) and [Late 1994-January 1995](#)). Angeles is debriefed for weeks and reveals many details about the Bojinka plot and Abu Sayyaf generally. It is not known what he may have told Philippine intelligence about the Bojinka plot while the plot was still in motion, if anything. ([Murdoch 6/3/1995](#)) Angeles leads the military in a number of operations against Abu Sayyaf and helps capture several top leaders, removing any doubt for the group that he was an undercover agent. Angeles then becomes a Philippine intelligence agent but, soon he has a falling out over what he believes are unethical methods and goes public with his complaints later in the year. He is then charged with multiple counts of kidnapping and murder for his actions when he was an Abu Sayyaf leader. However, he will be acquitted after the judge announces Angeles proved the crimes were all done as part of his job as an undercover operative. Hated by both the Philippine government and Abu Sayyaf, Angeles will disappear into the jungle and try to start his own rebel group. However, he will be shot and killed in early 1999. ([Philippine Daily Inquirer 7/10/2001](#))

February 3, 1995: Article Exposes Ali Mohamed’s Militant and US Intelligence Connections

A Boston Globe article publicly exposes Ali Mohamed, calling him “a shadowy individual described by defense attorneys as a key figure in the largest terrorism trial in US history.” The trial is the prosecution of Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman and others for the 1993 “Landmarks” bombing plot (see [June 24, 1993](#)). The Globe article notes that Mohamed was in the US Special Forces and connects him to both Abdul-Rahman’s radical militant group and the CIA. A senior US official claims that Mohamed’s “presence in the country is the result of an action initiated by [the CIA].” The article further states, “Senior officials say Mohamed, who is of Egyptian origin, benefited from a little known visa-waiver program that allows the CIA and other security agencies to bring valuable agents into the country, bypassing the usual immigration formalities. Intelligence sources say that waivers are controlled by the CIA’s Department of

Operations, the clandestine side of the agency, and have been used ‘sparingly’ in recent years. Waivers are generally used to bring into the country people who have served the agency in sensitive positions overseas. They come here, an intelligence officer said, because they fear for their lives, have been promised asylum in return for cooperation, or need to be debriefed after an operation.” According to the article, “Mohamed dropped out of sight several years ago, and his whereabouts remain unknown.” But in fact, the FBI interviewed him three months earlier and remains aware of his whereabouts (see [December 9, 1994](#)). Mohamed will continue to work with al-Qaeda despite this exposure. ([Quinn-Judge and Sennott 2/3/1995](#))

February 3-7, 1995: Accomplice Turns In Ramzi Yousef for Reward Money

One day after returning to Pakistan with Ramzi Yousef from a failed attempt to blow up US airliners (see [January 31-February 2, 1995](#)), his accomplice Istaique Parker calls the US embassy in Islamabad, Pakistan and tells them he wants to turn in Yousef for reward money. Yousef had just told Parker that Parker’s name was on Yousef’s laptop that he left behind in the Philippines after the foiled Bojinka plot (see [January 7-11, 1995](#)). Parker realizes that it is just a matter of time before he is caught and he also had recently purchased a Newsweek magazine that had an article mentioning a \$2 million reward for information leading to Yousef’s capture. Parker works with FBI and Pakistani agents and leads them to Yousef on February 7 (see [February 7, 1995](#)). Parker gets the reward money and a new identity in the US. ([Reeve 1999, pp. 105-106](#))

February 7, 1995: Ramzi Yousef Is Arrested in Pakistan



Ramzi Yousef apprehended. [*Source: Public domain*]/Ramzi Yousef is arrested in Pakistan, in a safe house owned by bin Laden (see [February 1992-February 7, 1995](#)). At the time, his uncle Khalid Shaikh Mohammed is staying in the same building, and brazenly gives an interview to Time magazine as “Khalid Sheikh,” describing Yousef’s capture. ([Lance 2003, pp. 328](#)) Yousef had recruited Istaique Parker to implement a limited version of Operation Bojinka, but Parker

got cold feet and instead turned in Yousef (see [February 3-7, 1995](#)). ([Lance 2003, pp. 284-85](#)) The New Yorker will later report that the CIA “fought with the FBI over arresting Yousef in Pakistan - the CIA reportedly wanted to continue tracking him - and President Clinton was forced to intervene.” ([Friedman 3/17/1995](#)) Yousef is extradited to the US the next day and makes a partial confession while flying there (see [February 8, 1995](#)).

After February 7, 1995-January 1996: Ramzi Yousef Arrest Points Investigators to KSM

Shortly after bomber Ramzi Yousef is arrested (see [February 7, 1995](#)), investigators discover a computer file of a letter on his laptop that is signed by “Khalid Sheikh, and Bojinka.” An eyewitness account of the arrest is given to Time magazine by a “Khalid Sheikh,” who is also staying in the same building. ([McDermott 2005, pp. 154, 162](#)) Investigators also discover that Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM) had frequently visited Yousef’s apartment in Manila, Philippines, where the bombs for the Bojinka plot were being made. ([PBS Frontline 10/3/2002](#)) They also find Yousef has multiple fax and phone numbers for a “Khalid Doha.” Doha is the capital of Qatar. KSM has been living there openly since 1992 (see [1992-1995](#)). Shortly after being apprehended, US authorities notice that Yousef calls one of these numbers in Qatar and asks to speak to a “Khalid.” The US already connected KSM to the 1993 WTC bombing just weeks after that attack and knew that he was living in Doha, Qatar (see [March 20, 1993](#)). ([US Congress 7/24/2003](#)) There is an entry in Yousef’s seized telephone directory for a Zahid Shaikh Mohammed, Yousef’s uncle and KSM’s brother. Not long after this discovery is made, Pakistani investigators raid Zahid’s offices in Peshawar, Pakistan, but Zahid has already fled (see [1988-Spring 1995](#)). In 1993, US investigators already discovered the connections between Yousef, Zahid, and KSM, after raiding Zahid’s house in Pakistan and finding pictures of them (see [Spring 1993](#)). ([McDermott 2005, pp. 154, 162](#)) The FBI successfully arranges for a photograph to be taken of KSM. He is positively identified from the photo in December 1995. This results in his indictment in January 1996 for his role in the 1993 WTC bombing. US intelligence labels him a “top priority,” according to the 9/11 Congressional Inquiry. ([McDermott, Meyer, and McDonnell 12/22/2002](#); [US Congress 7/24/2003](#))

February 8, 1995: Yousef Makes Partial Confession but Hides Bojinka Second Wave and Ties to Bin Laden and KSM

On day after Ramzi Yousef is arrested in Pakistan (see [February 7, 1995](#)), he makes a partial confession while being flown to the US. Apparently believing that his conversations with FBI agents flying with him could not be used as evidence since they are not being written down, he confesses to masterminding the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center (see [February 26, 1993](#)). In fact, the agents secretly take notes and they will be used as evidence in Yousef’s trial. As Yousef is flying over New York City on

his way to a prison cell, an FBI agent asks him, “You see the Trade Centers down there, they’re still standing, aren’t they?” Yousef responds, “They wouldn’t be if I had enough money and enough explosives.” ([Hansen 9/23/2001](#); [Miller, Stone, and Mitchell 2002, pp. 135](#)) Yousef also soon admits to ties with Wali Khan Amin Shah, who fought with bin Laden in Afghanistan, and Mohammed Jamal Khalifa, one of bin Laden’s brothers-in-law, who is being held by the US at the time (see [December 16, 1994-May 1995](#)). But although Yousef talks freely, he makes no direct mention of bin Laden, or the planned second wave of Operation Bojinka that closely parallels the later 9/11 plot (see [Spring 1995](#)). ([Lance 2003, pp. 297-98](#)) He also fails to mention his uncle, Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM), who is still at large and was a co-mastermind in most of Yousef’s plots. When talking about his preparations to assassinate President Clinton in Manila (see [September 18-November 14, 1994](#)), Yousef makes a vague mention of an “intermediary” who is actually KSM, but refuses to discuss him any further. ([Gunaratna 2003, pp. xxiv-xxv](#)) However, Yousef’s arrest will soon lead investigators to KSM in other ways (see [After February 7, 1995-January 1996](#)).

February 21, 1995: Mysterious US Militant Arrested on Minor Charges, Disappears from View

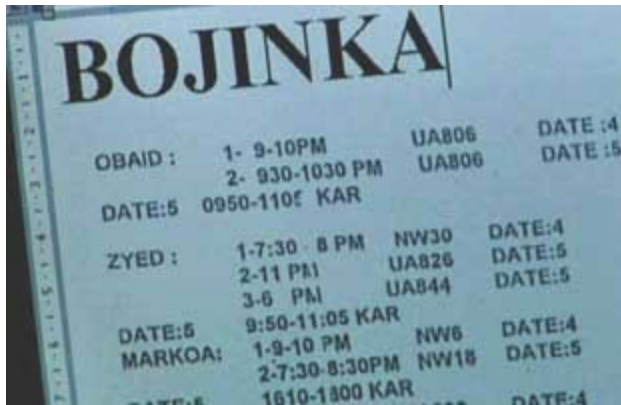
Abu Ubaidah Yahya, an ex-US marine tied to many of the “Landmarks” bombers, is arrested and charged with gun running. According to charges, Yahya bought at least six assault weapons at a Virginia gun show in November 1992 and then later distributed them to a group of militants he was training a training camp near New Bloomfield, Pennsylvania (see [Late 1992-Early 1993](#)). A number of the “Landmarks” bombers trained there and prosecutors claim the training was part of the overall “Landmarks” conspiracy, but strangely, Yahya is only charged with the gun running and not the training, even though the FBI actually briefly monitored him running the training camp (see [January 16-17, 1993](#)). Yahya, a US citizen who changed his name from Karl Dexter Taylor, runs a martial arts school in Brooklyn. ([King 2/21/1995](#); [McKinley 2/22/1995](#)) Yahya apparently fought in Bosnia for the Bosnian Muslims while the US government was secretly supporting the Bosnian Muslim cause (see [Spring 1993](#)). He was security chief for the Al-Kifah Refugee Center, a charity front linked to both al-Qaeda and the CIA (see [1986-1993](#)). He also transported money for the Third World Relief Agency (TWRA) charity front (see [Early April 1993](#)) while the US government was deliberately turning a blind eye to the actions of the TWRA (see [1993](#)). What happens next to Yahya is unclear. While the Lexis Nexus database reveals a number of articles about his arrest, there are no articles mentioning any subsequent trial or imprisonment.

Spring 1995: US Authorities Learn of Bojinka Second Wave Plot from Yousef’s Computer



Rafael Garcia. *[Source: Newsbreak Weekly]* Rafael Garcia, Chairman and CEO of the Mega Group of Computer Companies in the Philippines, often works with the Philippine National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) to decode computer files. He is assigned the task of decoding encrypted files on Ramzi Yousef's computer. Garcia will later comment to a popular Philippine newsweekly, "This was how we found out about the various plots being hatched by the cell of Ramzi Yousef. First, there was the plot to assassinate Pope John Paul II. Then, we discovered a second, even more sinister plot: Project Bojinka... This was a plot to blow up 11 airlines over the Pacific Ocean, all in a 48-hour period... Then we found another document that discussed a second alternative to crash the 11 planes into selected targets in the United States instead of just blowing them up in the air. These included the CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia; the World Trade Center in New York; the Sears Tower in Chicago; the Transamerica Tower in San Francisco; and the White House in Washington, DC... I submitted my findings to NBI officials, who most certainly turned over the report (and the computer) either to then Senior Superintendent Avelino Razon of the [Philippine National Police] or to Bob Heafner of the FBI... I have since had meetings with certain US authorities and they have confirmed to me that indeed, many things were done in response to my report." ([Garcia 11/15/2001](#)) Around the same time, Philippine interrogators were learning the same information from captured Bojinka plotter Abdul Hakim Murad (see [February-Early May 1995](#)). There has been some question whether Murad's complete description of Bojinka's second wave plot reached US authorities (see [May 11, 1995](#)), but if it did not, the US appears to have learned the information from Garcia's report. In fact, after 9/11, Garcia will claim to have spoken to a retired FBI agent who will recall being aware of the Bojinka second wave plot, and says of it, "This was ignored in the preparation of evidence for the trial [of the Bojinka plotters] because there was no actual attempt to crash any plane into a US target.... So there was no crime to complain about." ([Francia 9/26/2001](#))

Spring 1995: More Evidence that WTC Remains a Target

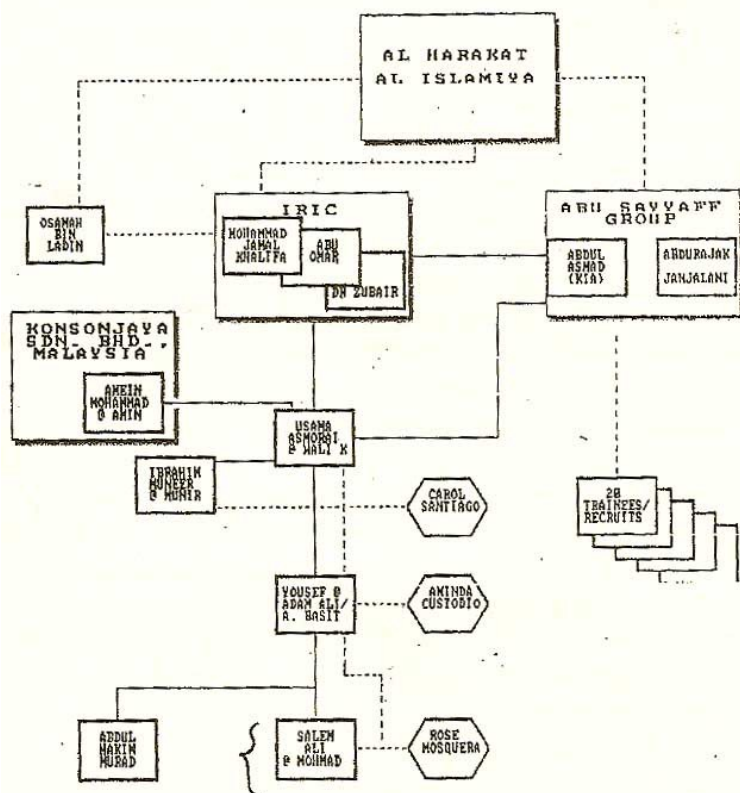


One of the Bojinka documents found.

This Word document apparently lists flight times. *[Source: CBC]* In the wake of uncovering the Operation Bojinka plot, Philippine authorities find a letter on a computer disc written by the plotters of the failed 1993 WTC bombing. This letter apparently was never sent, but its contents will be revealed in 1998 congressional testimony. ([US Congress 2/24/1998](#)) The Manila police chief also reports discovering a statement from bin Laden around this time that, although they failed to blow up the WTC in 1993, “on the second attempt they would be successful.” ([Agence France-Presse 9/13/2001](#))

Spring 1995: Flow Chart Given to US Connects Key Al-Qaeda Figures, but Not Followed Up

NETWORK DIAGRAM OF THE INTERNATIONAL TERRORISTS'
("LIBERATION ARMY") CONNECTIONS*



The flow chart made by Colonel Mendoza. [Source: Peter Lance] (click image to enlarge) Philippines investigator Colonel Rodolfo Mendoza makes a remarkably accurate flow chart connecting many key operators in the Bojinka plot, and sends it to US investigators. The chart is based on what he is learning from interrogating Bojinka plotter Abdul Hakim Murad (see [February- Early May 1995](#)), while also drawing on a terrorism report he recently finished (see [December 15, 1994](#)) and debriefings of a key undercover operative (see [Early February 1995](#)). The chart identifies the following key organizations as being involved in the plot:

- Al-Harakat al-Islamiya. Meaning “Islamic Movement,” this is an apparently meaningless group name used by Ramzi Yousef and others to disguise their connections to al-Qaeda. Yousef also sometimes uses the equally meaningless name “The Liberation Army.”
- The Abu Sayyaf. This Philippine Muslim militant group is believed to help with the Bojinka plot that is also penetrated by Philippine intelligence (see [Late 1994-January 1995](#)). The chart mentions 20 Abu Sayyaf operatives trained by Yousef in 1992 (see [December 1991-May 1992](#)). (Lance 2003, pp. 303-4)
- IRIC (International Research and Information Center). Most of the money for Bojinka is believed to flow through this charity front. The chart names the only three employees: Mohammed Jamal Khalifa (bin Laden’s brother-in-law), Abu Omar (whose real name is Ahmad al-Hamwi (see [1995 and After](#)), and Dr. Zubair. Mendoza’s 1994 report names Abdul Salam Zubair as an Iraqi working as Khalifa’s assistant in running a number of charity fronts. (Agnote 4/24/1995; Lance 2003, pp. 303-4)
- Konsonjaya. Money for the Bojinka plot also flows through this Malaysian business

front (see [June 1994](#)). Amien Mohammed (real name: Mohammed Amin al-Ghafari) is named and is one of the company directors. There is a link to Wali Khan Amin Shah, another company director. Hambali, a major al-Qaeda figure, is also a company director but is not included in the chart.

The chart also mentions many other key figures in the plot:

- Osama bin Laden, who is connected to the IRIC and Yousef's group.
- "Usama Asmorai / Wali K" is Wali Khan Amin Shah.
- "Yousef / Adam Ali / A Basit" is Ramzi Yousef.
- "Salem Ali / Mohmad" is Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM).
- Abdul Hakin Murad. ([Lance 2003, pp. 303-4](#))
- "Ibrahim Muneer / Munir." Ibrahim Munir, a rich Saudi Arabian businessman, has close ties to bin Laden. He came to the Philippines in November and witnesses say he was Yousef's constant companion. In 2003, it will be reported he is still wanted by authorities. ([Miller, Stone, and Mitchell 2002, pp. 139](#); [Ressa 2003, pp. 20](#))
- The names in hexagonal boxes are the girlfriends of the plotters. Some Bojinka money is transferred in their names.

However, despite the accurate information in this chart, only Shah, Yousef, and Murad will be caught before 9/11. Khalifa is actually in US custody at the time the US is given this chart (see [December 16, 1994-May 1995](#)), but he is allowed to be deported a short time later (see [April 26-May 3, 1995](#)). The US also learns about a connection between Konsonjaya and bin Laden by searching Yousef's apartment. But the other Konsonjaya directors, including Hambali, will not be apprehended, and the IRIC will be allowed to continue functioning with the same staff after being taken over by another charity front connected to Khalifa (see [1995 and After](#)). ([Lance 2003, pp. 303-4](#))

March 1995: US Slow to Show Interest in Al-Qaeda Training Manual

Belgian investigators find a CD-ROM of a recently published al-Qaeda training manual and begin translating it a few months later. Versions of the manual will later circulate widely amongst radical militants. ([Engelberg 1/14/2001](#)) The Arabic manual is called the *Encyclopedia of the Afghan Jihad* and it is over 7,000 pages long. It explains in simple terms how to build bombs, shoot down aircraft, conduct surveillance, and so on. Much of the material is culled from US and British military manuals. ([Gunaratna 2003, pp. 93-94](#)) A former CIA official will later claim the CIA did not obtain a copy of the manual until the end of 1999. "The truth is, they missed for years the largest terrorist guide ever written." He blames CIA reluctance to scrutinize its support for the anti-Soviet jihad in the 1980s. ([Engelberg 1/14/2001](#)) ABC News, which was first to report on the manual, also claims the CIA did not get a copy until December 1999 from a suspect in Jordan. ([ABC News 9/18/2000](#)) The CIA, however, claims that the manual is not that important, and that in any case it had copies for years. ([Engelberg 1/14/2001](#)) According to another account, the CIA first received a copy from Jordan in 1997. ([Gunaratna 2003, pp. 94](#))

March 1995-February 1996: Hijacker Jarrah Living in New York or Lebanon?

A man named “Ziad Jarrah” rents an apartment in Brooklyn, New York. ([Longman 2002, pp. 90](#)) The landlords later identify his photograph as being that of the 9/11 hijacker. A Brooklyn apartment lease bears Ziad Jarrah’s name. ([Neuffer 9/25/2001](#)) “Another man named Ihassan Jarrah lived with Ziad, drove a livery cab and paid the 800-dollar monthly rent. The men were quiet, well-mannered, said hello and good-bye. Ziad Jarrah carried a camera and told his landlords that he was a photographer. He would disappear for a few days on occasion, then reappear. Sometimes a woman who appeared to be a prostitute arrived with one of the men. ‘Me and my brother used to crack jokes that they were terrorists,’ said Jason Matos, a construction worker who lived in a basement there, and whose mother owned the house.” However, another Ziad Jarrah is still in his home country of Lebanon at this time. He is studying in a Catholic school in Beirut, and is in frequent contact with the rest of his family. His parents drive him home to be with the family nearly every weekend, and they are in frequent contact by telephone as well. ([Williams 10/23/2001](#)) Not until April 1996 does this Ziad Jarrah leave Lebanon for the first time to study in Germany. ([Neuffer 9/25/2001](#)) His family believes that the New York lease proves that there were two “Ziad Jarrahs.” ([CNN 9/18/2001](#)) Evidence seems to indicate Jarrah was also in two places at the same time from November 2000 to January 2001 (see [Late November 2000-January 30, 2001](#)).

March 4, 1995: Deputy Attorney General Extends ‘Wall’ for WTC Bombing Cases

Deputy Attorney General Jamie Gorelick issues a memo establishing procedures to regulate prosecutors’ and criminal investigators’ access to intelligence information generated in the wake of the 1993 WTC bombing cases (see [February 26, 1993](#)). These new procedures effectively extend the so-called “wall” that arose in the early 1980s. During the criminal investigation of the bombing, the FBI came across counterintelligence information related to Islamic extremists operating inside the United States, so it began an intelligence investigation. The new procedures are established because the Justice Department does not want to be perceived as using warrants issued under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA), which are thought to be easier to obtain than criminal warrants, to further the criminal investigations, because this might possibly lead to problems in court (see [Early 1980s](#)). In the memo, Gorelick, who will later be a 9/11 Commissioner (see [December 16, 2002](#)), acknowledges that the procedures go “beyond what is legally required.” ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 28-30](#); [Lance 2006, pp. 549-550](#)) A similar set of controversial procedures is issued later covering all intelligence investigations (see [July 19, 1995](#)). However, Andrew McCarthy, one of the WTC prosecutors cut off from the information, will later say this policy is “excessively prohibitive” and “virtually guaranteed intelligence failure” in the fight against terrorism. McCarthy will also note that there already are procedures in place to prevent the misuse of FISA-derived evidence. ([McCarthy 4/19/2004](#))

March 23, 1995: US Gives Up ‘Treasure Trove of Al-Qaeda Related Intelligence’

Bin Laden’s brother-in-law Mohammed Jamal Khalifa, who is being detained in the US, files a civil suit to have his possessions returned to him. These possessions, confiscated at the time of his arrest, include an address book and computer files linking him to Islamic militancy (see [December 16, 1994-May 1995](#) and [Late December 1994-April 1995](#)). On this day, the Justice Department states that it has no objection to returning his possessions to him. Author Peter Lance will later call these possessions a “treasure trove of al-Qaeda related intelligence” that the US loses access to. While some or all of material may have been copied, having the originals would increase their value in future trials. ([Lance 2006, pp. 162](#)) Khalifa will be deported from the US with all his possessions in early May 1995 (see [April 26-May 3, 1995](#)).

April-May 1995: FBI Learns KSM Has Been in US and Is Planning to Come Back for Flight Training



Richmor Aviation logo. [Source: *Richmor Aviation*] The FBI interrogates Bojinka plotter Abdul Hakim Murad and learns that 9/11 mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM) has been in the US and is planning to return for flight training. Murad had already been interrogated in the Philippines by Colonel Rodolfo Mendoza (see [February-Early May 1995](#)). The Associated Press will say that KSM “had traveled to Israel and the United States, according to [Mendoza’s] report.” Further, Murad met KSM several times in Pakistan in 1993, and “their conversations focused mainly on aircraft because of Mohammed’s intense interest in pilot training, Mendoza quoted Murad as saying.” ([Gomez 6/25/2002](#)) After Murad is handed over to the FBI around April, along with Mendoza’s report on him, he repeats much the same information to the FBI and adds more details about a man he calls Abdul Majid (which Mendoza had already learned was one of KSM’s many aliases). ([Gomez 6/25/2002](#); [Rubin and Dorgan 9/9/2002](#)) An FBI account of his April 1995 interrogation dated May 11, 1995, states, “Murad also advised that Majid had a United States visa and was planning to travel to the US sometime in the near future. Murad stated that he thought that Majid might go to the Richmor Flying School in Albany, New York, because Majid seemed interested in obtaining his pilots license and Murad suggested the Richmor Flying School.” ([Gomez 6/25/2002](#); [Lance 2006, pp. 501-502](#)) Despite this warning, apparently KSM will still be able to travel to the US, because in the summer of 2001 an al-Qaeda

operative will reveal that KSM visited the US at least through the summer of 1998 (see [Summer 1998](#)).

Early April 1995: Jordan Acquits Bin Laden's Brother-in-Law, But US Still Plans to Deport Him There

A Jordanian appeals court overturns the conviction of Mohammed Jamal Khalifa, bin Laden's brother-in-law. A Jordanian court had convicted Khalifa and sentenced him to death in December 1994, shortly after he was arrested in the US (see [December 16, 1994-May 1995](#)). His conviction hinged on the testimony of one witness, a student at a school in the Philippines run by one of Khalifa's organizations. The witness claimed that Khalifa had given him \$50,000 to finance bombings and assassinations in Jordan. But when the case goes to the appeals court, the witness recants, and the court overturns the conviction. ([Reid 4/9/1995](#); [Reid 4/16/1995](#); [DelVecchio 4/18/1995](#)) Shortly after the court's ruling, Khalifa's lawyer says that Khalifa wants to be deported to Jordan and retried in person. He is confident a new trial will end in his acquittal. ([Knickmeyer 4/26/1995](#)) The US will deport Khalifa to Jordan about one month later (see [April 26-May 3, 1995](#)). He will quickly be retried, found innocent, and set free (see [July 19, 1995](#)).

April 1, 1995: Osama's Brother Khaled Said to Be Supporting Him in Financing Militants



Khaled bin Laden. [*Source: Mahmoud Mahmoud/ Getty Images*] An article in the respected Jane's Intelligence Review discusses the growing radical Islamist militant movement around the world and says that "Among the financiers is Osama bin Laden and his brother Khaled..." ([Bruce 4/1/1995](#)) Khaled bin Laden is known as a horse breeder in Saudi Arabia. There apparently have been no further mentions of him in the media regarding financing militants.

April 1, 1995-Early 1996: Many Bojinka Plotters Arrested and Then Let Go

Many of the Bojinka plotters are arrested in the Philippines and then let go. On April 1, the Philippines police arrest six foreigners, who are from Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Oman, and the United Arab Emirates. They seize a cache of weapons and explosives in their

apartments. It is announced the men have ties to Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman and Ramzi Yousef and that they are being charged with stockpiling illegal firearms. ([Shenon 4/3/1995](#); [Shenon 4/8/1995](#); [Dikkenberg 12/19/1995](#)) On December 30, 15 more suspects are arrested. This group is made up of Iraqi, Sudanese, Saudi, and Pakistani nationals. They are found with guns and explosives. One of them is identified as Ramzi Yousef's twin brother Abd al-Karim Yousef, who had been using the alias Adel Anon. ([McFadden 12/31/1995](#)) Philippine authorities claim that not only were these men involved in the Bojinka plot (see [January 6, 1995](#)), but they were also planning to assassinate President Fidel Ramos and commanders of the Philippines army and national police. ([CNN 1/3/1996](#)) Edwin Angeles had been an undercover operative posing as a top leader in the Abu Sayyaf militant group (see [Late 1994-January 1995](#) and [Early February 1995](#)), and now he leads the investigation to capture these men based on what he knew about them when he was in the Abu Sayyaf. However, he later claims that not all of them were guilty and that some of them were framed by the planting of weapons and other evidence. He goes public with this complaint in early 1996. All of the men are released on bail and then all of them jump bail. Some flee the Philippines while others stay and go into hiding. ([Philippine Daily Inquirer 7/10/2001](#); [Abuza 12/1/2002](#)) It is not known what happens to most of these men after their release. But on December 27, 2001, a Jordanian named Hadi Yousef Alghoul, one of the men who had been arrested in March 1995, will be arrested in the Philippines again. He will be 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](#)) In 2003, it will be reported that Abd al-Karim Yousef was recently traveling with Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM), and in the wake of KSM's 2003 arrest he is capable of taking over as al-Qaeda's operational commander. ([Elliott 3/8/2003](#)) It has not been explained why the Philippines did not turn him over to the US, since the US had put out an alert for him in March 1995, shortly after his brother Ramzi Yousef was arrested. ([Burns 3/20/1995](#))

[April 3, 1995: Time Magazine and Senator Highlight Plane as Weapon Idea](#)



Senator Sam Nunn. [*Source: Carnegie Corporation of New York*] Time magazine's cover story reports on the potential for anti-American militants to kill thousands in highly destructive acts. It mentions that, three weeks earlier, Senator Sam Nunn (D) had outlined a scenario in which terrorists attack the US Capitol building on the night of a State of the Union address, by crashing a radio-controlled airplane into

it, “engulfing it with chemical weapons and causing tremendous death and destruction.” The scenario is “not far-fetched,” and the required technology is readily available, Nunn said. ([Nelan 4/3/1995](#)) An almost identical scenario was included in the storyline of the Tom Clancy bestseller *Debt of Honor*, released the previous year, but this involved a plane guided by a suicide pilot, rather than radio control (see [August 17, 1994](#)). High-ranking al-Qaeda leaders will claim later that Flight 93’s target was the Capitol Building. ([Tremlett 9/9/2002](#))

April 4, 1995: Philippine Militant Group Attacks Town; Government Alleged to Support the Attack



Devastation after the raid on Ipil. [*Source: Romeo Gacad / Agence France-Presse / Getty Images*] The Abu Sayyaf, a Muslim militant group, attacks the Christian town of Ipil in the Southern Philippines. About 200 militants burn, loot, and shoot inside the town for hours, killing 53 and withdrawing with 30 hostages. In 2001, the Independent calls this the group’s “bloodiest and most shocking attack.” ([Richburg 5/25/1995](#); [Parry 3/4/2001](#)) Edwin Angeles is an undercover operative for the Philippine government while also serving as Abu Sayyaf’s second in command (see [1991-Early February 1995](#)). Although Angeles’ undercover status was exposed in February 1995 (see [Early February 1995](#)), he claims to still have been in the group when the raid was planned. He says the raid was to test a new group of recruits recently returned from training in Pakistan, and to rob several banks. ([Richburg 5/25/1995](#)) Aquilino Pimentel, president of the Philippines Senate, will later allege that Angeles told him later in 1995 that the Philippine government provided the Abu Sayyaf with military vehicles, mortars, and assorted firearms to assist them with the raid. ([Pimentel 7/31/2000](#)) At this time, the Philippine government is unpopular due to a recent scandal and is attempting to pass an anti-terrorism bill. The government has sometimes been accused of manipulating the Abu Sayyaf for Machiavellian purposes (see [1994](#), [July 31, 2000](#), and [July 27-28, 2003](#)).

April 16, 1995: Philippine Government and CIA Keep Data on Bojinka Plotters in US and Overseas from the FBI

Newsday reports, “Some crucial computer evidence against notorious terrorist suspect Ramzi Yousef has been destroyed, and the FBI has begun an investigation into whether the CIA is responsible...” After the Bojinka plot was foiled in the Philippines (see [January 6, 1995](#)), a computer hard drive and several floppy discs were discovered in Yousef’s Manila apartment and found to contain a great deal of useful evidence. Pictures and phone numbers recovered from the hard drive led to the arrest of another Bojinka plotter just days later (see [January 7-11, 1995](#)). The computer files were copied by Philippine authorities and then turned over to the CIA. The CIA then “provided the FBI with a summary of the files, indicating they contained detailed information about Yousef’s coconspirators in the United States and overseas, including their names, addresses and in some cases, even phone numbers.... But when the CIA turned over the actual computer and disks, Justice Department experts determined that at least three separate computer deletion programs had been used to erase some of the data, law-enforcement sources said.” One US law-enforcement official complains, “We had teams of investigators frothing at the mouth to get at Yousef’s network. And we get handed an empty computer. It’s as if we’d been tracking a serial killer and someone intentionally shredded the investigative file.” Officials believe it is not likely the files will ever be recovered. Newsday reports that “The FBI is investigating whether CIA agents or their operatives intentionally destroyed the evidence.” Since Philippine authorities made copies of the files, the FBI has tried to get copies directly from them, but without success. ([Kocieniewski 4/16/1995](#)) A search of the Lexis Nexus database shows no follow up to this story. But only three Bojinka plotters—Ramzi Yousef, Abdul Hakim Murad, and Wali Khan Amin Shah—are arrested in the years before 9/11, and the rest of the network goes free.

[April 19, 1995: Oklahoma City Bombing; Possible Middle East Connection](#)

The Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City is bombed. US citizen Timothy McVeigh is convicted of the bombing, but some maintain there is a Middle Eastern connection. For instance, Richard Clarke, counterterrorism “tsar” during the Clinton and George W. Bush administrations, says the possibility is intriguing and he has been unable to disprove it. ([Clarke 2004, pp. 127](#)) Later in the day, Abdul Hakim Murad, an al-Qaeda operative in US custody, takes credit for the bombing. But his associate Ramzi Yousef, also in US custody, does not (see [April 19, 1995](#)). The bombing leads to a surge in concern about terrorism. The Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act becomes law as a result of such concern. However, many anti-terrorism provisions Clinton seeks are not approved by the Republican-controlled Congress. Many politicians agree with the National Rifle Association that proposed restrictions on bomb-making would infringe on the constitutional right to bear arms. ([Clarke 2004, pp. 98-99](#))

[April 19, 1995: Bojinka Plotter Takes Credit for Oklahoma City Bombing](#)

Abdul Hakim Murad is in a US prison awaiting trial for his alleged role in the Bojinka plot (see [January 6, 1995](#)). Told about the Oklahoma City bombing that took place earlier in the day (see [April 19, 1995](#)), he immediately takes credit for the bombing on behalf of his associate Ramzi Yousef. However, Yousef, also in US custody at the time, makes no such claim. An FBI report detailing Murad's claim is submitted to FBI headquarters the next day. ([Lance 2006, pp. 163-164](#)) A Philippine undercover operative will later claim that Terry Nichols, who will be convicted for a major role in the Oklahoma City bombing, met with Murad, Yousef, and others in the Philippines in 1994, and discussed blowing up a building in Oklahoma and several other locations (see [Late 1992-Early 1993 and Late 1994](#)). Counterterrorism "tsar" Richard Clarke will later comment, "Could [Yousef] have been introduced to [Nichols]? We do not know, despite some FBI investigation. We do know that Nichols's bombs did not work before his Philippine stay and were deadly when he returned." ([Clarke 2004, pp. 127](#)) Mike Johnston, a lawyer representing the Oklahoma City bombing victims' families, will later comment, "Why should Murad be believed? For one thing, Murad made his 'confession' voluntarily and spontaneously. Most important, Murad tied Ramzi Yousef to the Oklahoma City bombing long before Terry Nichols was publicly identified as a suspect." ([Timmerman 6/22/2002](#)) Also on this day, Mohammed Jamal Khalifa, an associate of Yousef and Murad who is being held in the US, is moved from a low security prison to a maximum security prison. ([Lance 2006, pp. 164](#)) But despite these potential links to Muslim militants, only five days after the Oklahoma City bombing the New York Times will report, "Federal officials said today that there was no evidence linking people of the Muslim faith or of Arab descent to the bombing here." ([Henneberger 4/24/1995](#)) Murad's claim apparently will not be reported in any newspaper until two years later. ([Flynn 6/17/1995](#))

[April 24, 1995: US Denies Philippine President's Request to Delay Deporting Bin Laden's Brother-in-Law](#)

Philippine President Fidel Ramos says he has asked the US to postpone the deportation of Mohammed Jamal Khalifa, bin Laden's brother-in-law, to Jordan. Khalifa had been arrested in the US in December 1994. Jordan requested his extradition and the US agreed, but earlier in April a Jordanian court overturned a conviction of Khalifa. Ramos says, "We have asked [US authorities] to hold his deportation because we are finding out his links with local terrorists here." A Philippines intelligence report completed in December 1994 already tied Khalifa to several planned attacks that could have killed thousands (see [December 15, 1994](#)). By comparison, he has already been acquitted of attacks in Jordan that injured several but killed no one. ([Agnote 4/24/1995](#)) Despite the request from Ramos, a US judge will approve Khalifa's deportation to Jordan two days later (see [April 26-May 3, 1995](#)). He will be acquitted again there and then set free (see [July 19, 1995](#)).

[April 26-May 3, 1995: Bin Laden's Brother-in-Law Deported from US](#)

An immigration judge approves the deportation of Mohammed Jamal Khalifa, bin Laden's brother-in-law, saying "his presence in the United States would have potentially serious adverse foreign policy consequences." Khalifa reportedly leaves the US for Jordan on May 3, although there is some evidence he remains in US custody until August (see [May 3, 1995-August 31, 1995](#)). ([United Press International 5/5/1995](#)) He will quickly be retried in Jordan, pronounced not guilty of all charges, and set free (see [July 19, 1995](#)). Jacob Boesen, an analyst at the CIA's Counter Terrorism Center, will later recall, "I remember people at the CIA who were ripsh_t at the time. Not even speaking in retrospect, but contemporaneous with what the intelligence community knew about bin Laden, Khalifa's deportation was unreal." ([DeVecchio 4/18/1995](#); [Knickmeyer 4/26/1995](#); [Miller 5/2/2002](#); [Lance 2003, pp. 233-35](#)) Author Peter Lance will later comment, "If this arrest had been properly followed up by the FBI and the Justice Department, it could have led to the seizure of both Ramzi Yousef and his uncle Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, and stopped the 9/11 plot dead in its tracks." ([Lance 2006, pp. 158](#))

May 3, 1995-August 31, 1995: Bin Laden's Brother-in-Law Still in US?

Mohammed Jamal Khalifa, bin Laden's brother-in-law, is reportedly released from a US prison on May 3, 1995, and deported to Jordan to stand trial there. He had been sentenced to death while outside Jordan, but according to Jordanian law he is allowed a retrial if he shows up in person for it. Media accounts at the time place Khalifa in Jordan, attending his retrial. For instance, according to one article published on May 15, "In San Francisco last week, American police officials quietly placed a slender, bearded man on a plane to the Middle East, where he was taken into custody by Jordanian security guards." ([Lief 5/15/1995](#)) Another article from July 19 puts him in a Jordanian courtroom, saying, "Khalifa sobbed in relief as the verdict was pronounced..." ([Agence France-Presse 7/19/1995](#)) However, US prison records released years later will indicate Khalifa was transferred to the custody of another unnamed US government agency on May 3 instead. He then remained in the US or in a remote US facility overseas until leaving the prison system on August 31, 1995, almost four months later. By that time, his trial in Jordan is over and he is allowed to go free there. Whether this contradiction is a clerical error or if there is some other explanation is not known. ([Lance 2006, pp. 165-166](#))

May 11, 1995: FBI Memo Fails to Mention Operation Bojinka Second Wave

FBI agents, having held Operation Bojinka plotter Abdul Hakim Murad for about a month, write a memo containing what they have learned from interrogating him. The memo contains many interesting revelations, including that Ramzi Yousef, a mastermind of the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, "wanted to return to the United States in the future to bomb the World Trade Center a second time." However, this memo does not contain a word about the second wave of Operation Bojinka—to fly about 12 hijacked airplanes into prominent US buildings—even though Murad had recently fully confessed

this plot to Philippines investigators, who claim they turned over tapes, transcripts, and reports with Murad's confessions of the plot to the US when they handed over Murad. It has not been explained why this plot is not mentioned in the FBI's summary of Murad's interrogation. ([Lance 2003, pp. 280-82](#)) If the US does not learn of the second wave plot from Murad's interrogation, it appears the US get the same information from a different source at about the same time (see [Spring 1995](#)). After 9/11, a Philippine investigator will refer to this third plot when he says of the 9/11 attacks, "It's Bojinka. We told the Americans everything about Bojinka. Why didn't they pay attention?" ([Fainaru and Grimaldi 9/23/2001](#)) In an interview after 9/11, Khalid Shaikh Mohammed will claim that the 9/11 attacks were a refinement and resurrection of this plot. ([Fouda 9/9/2002](#))

May 24, 1995: Serb Forces Begin Attacking UN Protected Muslim Safe Zones in Bosnia



Bosnian boundaries during the four month cease fire in early 1995. The area controlled by Bosnian Muslims and Croats is shown in gray while the area controlled by Bosnian Serbs is shown in white. UN safe zones are circled in red. [Source: *Time* / Cowan, Castello, Glanton] Serb forces ignore a UN order to remove heavy weapons from the Sarajevo area of Bosnia. NATO aircraft then attack a Serb ammunition depot. The Serbs begin shelling UN protected Muslim safe areas in response (see [April-May 1993](#)). Despite the UN protection, Serbs conquer two of the six safe areas, Zepa and Srebrenica, in July (see [July 1995](#)). ([Time 12/31/1995](#))

June 1995: US Considers Bombing Bin Laden for Sponsoring Assassination Attempt



Hussan al-Turabi. [Source: CNN] There is a failed assassination attempt on Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak as he visits Ethiopia. The CIA concludes bin Laden authorized the operation, and they plan a retaliation attack. ([US Congress 7/24/2003](#)) Evidence suggests that the government of Sudan and Hassan al-Turabi, Sudan's leader, know where bin Laden is living and helped support the plot. The United Nations Security Council places sanctions on Sudan as a result. The US examines options for attacking bin Laden and/or al-Turabi's facilities in the Sudanese capital. The options developed by the US military are rejected for being unstealthy and a de facto war on Sudan. In the ensuing months, there are reports of Egyptian covert operations against bin Laden and an Egyptian military build-up on the Sudanese border. These factors influence bin Laden's decision to move to Afghanistan in 1996 (see [May 18, 1996](#)). ([Clarke 2004, pp. 140-41](#))

June 1995-Early 1999: Boston Al-Qaeda Sleeper Cell Emerges

Nabil al-Marabh returned to Canada from Afghanistan in February 1994 using a fraudulent Saudi Arabian passport. But his request for asylum was eventually denied. He then enters the US in June 1995 and applies for asylum there. That too is denied, and he is ordered deported in 1997. But the order is not enforced and he continues to live in the US and Canada illegally until 9/11. ([Canadian Broadcasting Corporation 10/22/2001](#); [Ashenfelter 5/23/2003](#)) Al-Marabh moves to Boston and gets a job as a taxi driver. He had known al-Qaeda operatives Bassam Kanj, Mohamad Kamal Elzahabi, and Raed Hijazi in training camps in Afghanistan (see [Late 1980s](#); [1989-1994](#)), and this group of four regathers in Boston. Kanj has been there since 1995, driving taxis at the same company that hires al-Marabh. Elzahabi moves to Boston from New York City in 1997 and also gets a job at this same taxi company. There are conflicting accounts as to who brings Raed Hijazi to Boston and why he goes there, but by the beginning of 1998 he is also working for this taxi company. ([Kurkjian and Rakowsky 2/5/2001](#); [Golden and Miller 9/18/2001](#); [Risen and Engelberg 10/14/2001](#); [Fainaru 9/4/2002](#)) Al-Marabh and Hijazi are roommates for at least two months. While they work together driving taxis, Hijazi is saving his earnings to spend on bomb plots and is working on an al-Qaeda plot to attack a US warship. That plot will develop into the attack on the USS *Cole* in 2000. ([ABC News 1/31/2002](#); [Fainaru 9/4/2002](#)) Around the end of 1998, Kanj and Hijazi leave Boston to work on al-Qaeda plots overseas while Elzahabi leaves in 1999 to fight as a sniper in Chechnya. Al-Marabh will also leave, moving to Florida in early 1999 (see [February 1999-February 2000](#)), but he periodically returns to his Boston residence for

some time, as his wife and son continue to live there. These four men will continue to help each other in various al-Qaeda plots. ([Kurkjian and Rakowsky 2/5/2001](#); [Murphy 6/26/2004](#)) Apparently, al-Qaeda recruiter Kamal Derwish also works at the same Boston taxi company, though the timing is not clear. He trained in Afghanistan in 1992, a time when al-Marabh was also there. He will be killed by a US missile strike in November 2002 (see [November 3, 2002](#)). ([McLaughlin 5/23/2003](#)) Even though the Boston FBI is aware long before 9/11 that at least four of the men are connected to al-Qaeda (see [January 2001](#)), the FBI will officially deny the possibility of any al-Qaeda cell in Boston until 2004 (see [June 27, 2004](#)).

June 3, 1995: Plot to Crash Plane in CIA Headquarters First Mentioned in Media



A 1998 CNN map of likely flights to be hijacked in one version of Operation Bojinka. [Source: CNN] A search of the Lexis-Nexus database indicates that the first media mention of the Bojinka plot to crash an airplane into CIA headquarters occurs on this day. An article in the Advertiser, an Australian newspaper, will first mention the Bojinka plots to assassinate the Pope and then blow up about a dozen airplanes over the Pacific. Then the article states, “Then the ultimate assault on the so-called ‘infidels’: a plane flown by a suicide bomber was to nose-dive and crash into the American headquarters of the CIA, creating carnage.” ([Murdoch 6/3/1995](#)) While this first mention may be obscure from a United States point of view, the Bojinka planes as weapons plot will be mentioned in other media outlets in the years to come. In fact, in 2002 CNN correspondent David Ensor will comment about CNN coverage, “[E]veryone, all your viewers who wanted to, could have known that at one point Ramzi Yousef and some others were allegedly plotting to fly an airliner into the CIA headquarters in the United States, that, in fact, the idea of using an airliner as a weapon, that idea at least, had already been aired.... We talked about it. We’ve done stories about it for years, frankly.” ([CNN 6/5/2002](#))

June 21, 1995: Clinton Puts FBI in Charge of Managing Terrorism in the US

In the wake of the Oklahoma City bombing (see [April 19, 1995](#)), President Clinton issues a classified directive on US counterterrorism policy. Presidential Decision Directive 39

(PDD-39) states that the United States should “deter, defeat and respond vigorously to all terrorist attacks on our territory and against our citizens,” and characterizes terrorism as both “a potential threat to national security as well as a criminal act.” ([US President 6/21/1995](#); [9/11 Commission 3/24/2004](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 101](#)) The directive makes the State Department the “lead agency for international terrorist incidents that take place outside of US territory,” and the Justice Department, acting through the FBI, the lead agency for threats or acts of terrorism that take place in the United States. It defines “lead agencies” as “those that have the most direct role in and responsibility for implementation of US counterterrorism policy.” ([US President 6/21/1995](#); [Oliver 8/30/1999](#); [US Government 1/2001, pp. 8](#)) Journalist and author Murray Weiss later calls the signing of PDD-39, “a defining moment, because it brought representatives from several other federal agencies, including the Federal Emergency Management Administration, the Department of Environmental Protection, and the Department of Health, into the antiterrorism program.” ([Weiss 2003, pp. 105](#)) An April 2001 report by the Congressional Research Service will call this directive “the foundation for current US policy for combating terrorism.” ([Brake 4/19/2001, pp. 5](#))

Mid 1995-Spring 1996: French Agent Penetrates Afghan Camps, Meets Top Al-Qaeda Managers

A French intelligence asset called Omar Nasiri, who has previously informed on a Groupe Islamique Armé (GIA) cell in Brussels (see [Mid 1994-March 2, 1995](#)), is given the task of penetrating the network of militant camps in Afghanistan. He flies to Pakistan and soon is in contact with the al-Qaeda network. He is sent to Peshawar, where he meets al-Qaeda leaders Ibn al-Shaykh al-Libi and Abu Zubaida. From there he is then taken to al-Libi’s Khaldan camp inside Afghanistan, where he receives physical and weapons training, as well as religious instruction. The training also includes blocks on explosives, tactics, hand-to-hand combat, surveillance, and kidnapping, and is at least partially derived from US army manuals. While at the camp he is told by Kashmiri militants that they have been trained by the Pakistani army (see [Mid 1995-Spring 1996](#)) and he uses money given to him by French intelligence to purchase weapons for al-Qaeda (see [Late 1995-Spring 1996](#)). After several months of training at Khaldan and Darunta camps, he returns to Europe via Peshawar. In Peshawar he again meets Abu Zubaida, who gives Nasiri a phone number where he can be reached and asks him to send money from Europe. Upon returning to Europe, Nasiri contacts his handler at French intelligence and tells him about the camps. ([Nasiri 2006, pp. 101-244, 253-7](#))

(Mid 1995-Spring 1996): Militants Tell French Informer they Received Training from Pakistan Military

While training at al-Qaeda’s Afghan camps (see [Mid 1995-Spring 1996](#)), French intelligence informer Omar Nasiri meets a number of Kashmiri militants who are training to go back and fight the Indians in held Kashmir. The militants say that they received training from the Pakistani military. Nasiri will later write: “The Kashmiris also talked

about their route to the camps. They didn't come like I did through Peshawar. First they trained with a unit of the Pakistani military, which then sent them on to the camps. Every one of them told me the same thing." ([Nasiri 2006, pp. 175](#))

July 1995: US National Intelligence Estimate Concludes Islamic Militants Are Intent on Attacking Inside US

The US intelligence community releases a National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) entitled "The Foreign Terrorist Threat in the United States." It warns that radical Islamists have an enhanced ability "to operate in the United States." ([Tenet 2007, pp. 104](#)) It concludes that the most likely terrorist threat will come from emerging "transient" terrorist groupings that are more fluid and multinational than older organizations and state-sponsored surrogates. This "new terrorist phenomenon" is made up of loose affiliations of Islamist extremists violently angry at the US. Lacking strong organization, they get weapons, money, and support from an assortment of governments, factions, and individual benefactors. ([9/11 Commission 4/14/2004](#)) The estimate warns that terrorists are intent on striking specific targets inside the US, especially landmark buildings in Washington and New York. It says, "Should terrorists launch new attacks, we believe their preferred targets will be US Government facilities and national symbols, financial and transportation infrastructure nodes, or public gathering places. Civil aviation remains a particularly attractive target in light of the fear and publicity that the downing of an airline would evoke and the revelations last summer of the US air transport sector's vulnerabilities." Bin Laden is not mentioned by name, but he will be in the next NIE, released in 1997 (see [1997](#)). ([Solomon 4/16/2004](#); [9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 54](#) ^A)

July 1995: Bosnian Muslims Massacred at Srebrenica by Serb Forces



Nasir Oric. [*Source: Reuters / Corbis*] Bosnian Serb forces enter Srebrenica, capturing the Dutch peacekeeping forces there. Thousands of Muslim civilians are brutally executed by the Serbs. ([Rohde 10/2/1995](#); [Rohde 10/24/1995](#); [Danner 9/24/1998](#); [BBC 6/9/2005](#)) The commander of the Bosnian Muslim forces based in Srebrenica, Nasir Oric, forcibly prevented Muslim civilians from leaving Srebrenica prior to the Serb attack. ([Globe and Mail 7/12/1995](#)) However, Oric and his troops quietly withdrew from Srebrenica just two days before the Serbs arrived, leaving the civilians to

fend for themselves. There is fighting between Muslim forces who favor the retreat, and those who want to stay and defend the city. ([Cowell 7/24/1995](#)) The International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP) will announce in 2005 that they have been able to identify the remains of 2032 victims of the Serb assault. ([International Commission on Missing Persons 6/21/2005](#))

July-October 1995: Wave of Attacks in France Blamed on Algerian Islamist Militants Were Likely Masterminded by Algerian Government



A Paris subway car bombed in 1995. [*Source: Associated Press*] Ten French citizens die and more than two hundred are injured in a series of attacks in France from July to October 1995. Most of the attacks are caused by the explosion of rudimentary bombs in the Paris subway. The deaths are blamed on the Groupe Islamique Armé (GIA) Algerian militant group. Some members of the banned Algerian opposition Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) living in exile in France are killed as well. For instance, high-level FIS leader Abdelbaki Sahraoui is assassinated on July 11, 1995. The GIA takes credit for these acts. The attacks mobilize French public opinion against the Islamic opposition in Algeria and causes the French government to abandon its support for recent Algerian peace plans put forth by a united opposition front (see [January 13, 1995](#)). ([BBC 10/30/2002](#); [Randal 2005, pp. 171, 316-317](#); [Bouteldja 9/8/2005](#)) However, in September 1995, French Interior Minister Jean-Louis Debré says, “It cannot be excluded that Algerian intelligence may have been implicated” in the first bombing, which hit the Saint-Michel subway stop in Paris on July 25 and killed eight. ([BBC 10/31/2002](#); [Randal 2005, pp. 316-317](#)) And as time goes on, Algerian officials defect and blame Algerian intelligence for sponsoring all the attacks. Ali Touchent is said to be the GIA leader organizing the attacks (see [January 13, 1995](#)). But Mohammed Samraoui, former deputy chief of the Algerian army’s counterintelligence unit, will later claim that Touchent was an Algerian intelligence “agent tasked with infiltrating Islamist ranks abroad and the French knew it.” But he adds the French “probably did not suspect their Algerian counterparts were prepared to go so far.” ([Randal 2005, pp. 316-317](#)) A long-time Algerian secret agent known only by the codename Yussuf-Joseph who defected to Britain will later claim that the bombings in France were supported by Algerian intelligence in order to turn French public opinion against the Islamic opposition in Algeria. He says that intelligence agents were sent to France by General Smain Lamari,

head of the Algerian counterintelligence department, to directly organize at least two of the French bombings. The operational leader was actually Colonel Souames Mahmoud, head of the intelligence at the Algerian Embassy in Paris. ([Sweeney and Doyle 11/9/1997](#)) In 2002, a French television station will air a 90-minute documentary tying the bombings to Algerian intelligence. In the wake of the broadcast, Alain Marsaud, French counterintelligence coordinator in the 1980s, will say, "State terrorism uses screen organizations. In this case, [the GIA was] a screen organization in the hands of the Algerian security services... it was a screen to hold France hostage." ([Campbell 2/14/2004](#))

July 4, 1995: Kashmir Kidnapping Leads to US Charity, but US Takes No Action Against It

On July 4, 1995, six Western tourists are kidnapped in Kashmir, India. A Norwegian is soon found beheaded while an American manages to escape. The remaining hostages, two British, one German, and one American, are never found and are apparently killed in December 1995. The kidnapping is executed by an alias of the Pakistani militant group later known as Harkat ul-Mujahedeen. The kidnappers demand the release of a number of jailed Islamists, including Saeed Sheikh and Maulana Masood Azhar, both imprisoned in India (see [November 1994-December 1999](#)). Counterterrorism expert Rohan Gunaratna claims the leaders of the operation were trained by al-Qaeda. ([Gunaratna 2003, pp. 284-285](#)) In January 1996, a secret CIA report will say that, according to a foreign intelligence agency, Enaam Arnaout, the US director of the Benevolence International Foundation (BIF), was in Pakistan and matches the description of a man involved in the kidnapping who then left Pakistan in early October for Bosnia via the US. ([Central Intelligence Agency 1/1996](#)) Yet despite this information, the US will take no action against Arnaout or BIF. The US will not even designate Harkat ul-Mujahedeen until over two years after the kidnapping. ([Gunaratna 2003, pp. 284-285](#)) An airplane hijacking in 1999 will free Azhar and Sheikh (see [December 24-31, 1999](#)).

July 5, 1995-May 1997: Hamas Leader Held in the US, Then Let Go



Mousa Abu Marzouk. [*Source: US Department of Corrections*] On July 5, 1995, high-level Hamas leader Mousa Abu Marzouk is detained at a New York City airport as he tries to enter the US. An immigration agent checks

Marzouk's name against a watch list and finds a match. Marzouk's name had apparently been added to the watch list in recent months, so he had not been stopped on previous trips. Although not a US citizen, he had been living in the US for 14 years. Israel considers him the head of Hamas' political wing, and he is already under indictment in Israel for at least ten attacks that killed at least 47 people. In 1994 he appeared on Lebanese television to take credit for a Hamas suicide attack in Israel, saying, "Death is a goal to every Muslim." When he is detained in New York, he is found with an address book that the FBI says contains the names, telephone numbers, and addresses of numerous "active and violent terrorists and terrorist organizations." More than 20 percent of the addresses are in the US. He is also carrying paperwork connecting him to charities and companies worth more than \$10 million, which the FBI suspect are part of a Hamas money laundering operation in the US. On August 16, 1995, the US declares him a "Specially Designated Terrorist." ([Greenhouse 7/28/1995](#); [Emerson 2002, pp. 86-87](#); [Federal News Service 6/2/2003](#); [Simpson 6/21/2004](#)) In August 1995, the US announces it will extradite Marzouk to Israel rather than try him in the US. Extradition hearings proceed slowly until 1997, when Marzouk announces he will no longer fight being deported to Israel. Then Israel makes the surprise announcement that it is no longer seeking Marzouk's extradition. They cite a fear of a highly publicized trial and the fear of retaliatory terrorist attacks. In May 1997, the US deports Marzouk to Jordan, "ending what had become an embarrassing case for both the United States and Israel." Jordan in turn deports him to Syria, where he will live and continue to work as a top Hamas leader. At the time of his deportation, it is claimed that one reason Marzouk is being deported is because the evidence against him is weak. ([Schmemmann 4/4/1997](#); [Macfarquhar 5/6/1997](#); [Emerson 2002, pp. 87-89](#)) However, FBI agent Robert Wright will later claim that he uncovered more than enough evidence to convict Marzouk, but that higher-ups in the FBI did not want to disrupt the Hamas support network in the US, apparently in hopes that Hamas would commit enough violent attacks to disrupt peace negotiations between Israel and more moderate Palestinians (see [June 2, 2003](#)).

July 6, 1995-June 26, 1996: Bojinka Suspect Granted Asylum in Australia and Continues to Live There Openly

A Syrian suspected of involvement in the al-Qaeda Bojinka plot is granted asylum in Australia even though the Australian government is aware of some of his apparent terrorism ties. Ahmad al-Hamwi, a.k.a. Omar Abu Omar, was head of the International Relations and Information Center (IRIC) from 1993 to 1995, a charity front closely tied to the failed Bojinka plot (see [January 6, 1995](#)). In 1995, Philippine investigators determined that most of the funding for the plot went through a bank account controlled by al-Hamwi. ([Abuza 3/7/2003](#)) At the same time, he was roommates with Mohammed Jamal Khalifa, bin Laden's brother-in-law, and married the sister of one of Khalifa's Philippine wives. He worked closely with Khalifa in the IRIC until Khalifa was forced to leave the country in late 1994 (see [December 1, 1994](#)). ([O'Brien and Kearney 4/8/2006](#)) Shortly after the Bojinka plot is foiled by Philippines authorities in early 1995, the IRIC is shut down and al-Hamwi is brought in for questioning. However, he is let go and

travels to Australia in July 1995 then immediately applies for asylum there. The Australian asylum review board is aware of the following things:

- He was interrogated by Philippines intelligence and questioned about his ties to WTC bomber Ramzi Yousef and the Bojinka plot to kill the Pope.
- He tells the review board that he was interrogated by a senior officer with direct ties to the Philippine president
- He came into Australia using a fake Dutch passport and has two fake Syrian passports.
- He has ties to Khalifa, who had been convicted of funding a bombing in Jordan.
- He is a longtime member of the militant group the Muslim Brotherhood.

But incredibly, in June 1996 he is granted him asylum on the grounds that he could be persecuted in Syria due to his ties to the Brotherhood. ([Refugee Review Tribunal 6/26/1996](#); [O'Brien and Kearney 4/8/2006](#)) In 2006, it will be reported that he is still living openly in Australia. Further, Philippines intelligence alleges that he came to the Philippines after having been banned from Turkey for his suspected involvement in a 1986 bombing there. It is not clear how the Australian government missed information like this, or if they just ignored it. ([O'Brien and Kearney 4/8/2006](#)) In the wake of these 2006 reports, the Australian government will claim to be investigating his status. Yet there have been no reports that he has been arrested or had his residency revoked since then. ([Kearney 4/10/2006](#); [Age \(Melbourne\) 4/10/2006](#))

July 19, 1995: Bin Laden's Brother-in-Law Khalifa Set Free in Jordan

Bin Laden's brother-in-law Mohammed Jamal Khalifa is pronounced not guilty of all charges and set free in a retrial in Jordan. Khalifa had been convicted and sentenced to death in a December 1994 Jordanian trial, but then a key witness recanted and the verdict was overturned in April 1995 (see [Early April 1995](#)). The US then deported him to Jordan to face retrial anyway (see [April 26-May 3, 1995](#)). ([Agence France-Presse 7/19/1995](#)) He quickly returns to Saudi Arabia, where he has citizenship. Michael Scheuer, the first head of the CIA's bin Laden unit, will later claim that that "day he flew back to Saudi Arabia, he was greeted by a limo and a high-ranking official of the government embraced him." ([Lance 2006, pp. 164](#)) One later article similarly claims, "Returning to Saudi Arabia, Khalifa was allegedly welcomed like a hero by Prince Sultan, Saudi's second deputy premier." ([Herrera 8/11/2000](#)) Khalifa will go on to help found a militant group in Yemen that will take credit for the USS *Cole* bombing in 2000 (see [1996-1997 and After](#)), while his Philippine front companies will continue to fund militant groups with few obstacles long after 9/11 (see [1995 and After](#)).

July 19, 1995: 'Wall' Memo Cuts Criminal Investigators Off from Intelligence Information



Attorney General Janet Reno, who signed the 1995 Procedures memo. [Source: *US Department of Justice*] The Justice Department issues the “wall” memo, a later heavily criticized memo that establishes procedures to regulate the flow of information from FBI intelligence investigations to criminal investigators and prosecutors. Such procedures already exist, but this “wall” is now formalized and extended. The memo is signed by Attorney General Janet Reno, but is based on a similar one recently issued by Deputy Attorney General Jamie Gorelick governing the 1993 WTC bombing cases (see [March 4, 1995](#)). The wall exists to prevent defendants from successfully arguing in court that information gathered under a warrant issued under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) should not be used in a criminal prosecution, as the standard for obtaining a FISA warrant is considered to be lower than that for obtaining a criminal search warrant (see [Early 1980s](#)). Such arguments are usually unsuccessful, according to the Justice Department’s Office of Legal Counsel, which believes that courts are showing “great deference” to the government when such challenges are made. The procedures, which now apply to all intelligence investigations regardless of whether or not a FISA warrant has been issued, state that the FBI must consult the Justice Department’s Criminal Division, not local United States Attorneys’ offices, about intelligence investigations when it is considering starting a parallel criminal investigation, and that it must do so when there is reasonable indication of a significant federal crime. This means that FBI headquarters has veto power over whether a field office can contact a local prosecutor about an intelligence investigation. However, Criminal Division prosecutors should only be consulted and cannot control an investigation. ([Office of the Attorney General 7/19/1995](#); [US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 25-30](#).) These procedures will be implemented in such a way that even greater restrictions are placed on information sharing (see [Late 1995-1997](#)), although a partial exception will be created for the Southern District of New York, which handles a lot of terrorism work (see [August 29, 1997](#)). The procedures will also be much criticized for the way they are implemented in the FBI (see [July 1999](#)). The increased barriers to information sharing often mean that the FBI monitors terrorists as before, but the information does not get passed to criminal investigators, so the cells carry on operating in the US and the FBI carries on monitoring them. For example, the FBI monitors a Florida-based cell that funds and recruits for jihad throughout the world for nearly a decade before it is rolled up (see [October 1993-November 2001](#)). Some money raised by terrorism financiers in the US goes to Bosnia, where the US has a policy of enabling covert support for the Muslim side in the civil war (see [April 27, 1994](#)). Prosecutor Andrew McCarthy will later call the wall a “rudimentary blunder,” and say that it “was

not only a deliberate and unnecessary impediment to information sharing; it bred a culture of intelligence dysfunction.” ([McCarthy 4/13/2004](#)) John Ashcroft, Attorney General in the Bush Administration (see [April 13, 2004](#)), will say that “Government buttressed this ‘wall’,” and will call it the “single greatest structural cause for September 11.” ([9/11 Commission 4/13/2004](#))

August 1995: Bin Laden Criticizes Saudi Royals, Threatens Attacks on US Forces in Saudi Arabia

Bin Laden writes an open letter to King Fahd of Saudi Arabia. He calls for a campaign of guerrilla attacks to drive US forces out of the kingdom. ([PBS Frontline 9/13/2001](#)) Bin Laden rails against Saudi government mismanagement and corruption. “Do we not have the right to ask you, O King, where has all the money gone? Never mind answering-one knows how many bribes and commissions ended up in your pocket.” He also decries the presence of US troops in Saudi Arabia. He concludes, “Our best advice to you now is to submit your resignation.” But bin Laden does not call for revolution or the overthrow of the Saudi royal family, and pointedly makes no mention of Crown Prince Abdullah, the next in line to be king. ([Wright 2006, pp. 209-210](#)) In November 1995, al-Qaeda will bomb a US-operated training center in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia (see [November 13, 1995](#)).

August 4-8, 1995: Croats Launch Operation Storm, Expelling Serbs from Krajina

The Croatian military launches Operation Storm, a massive assault aimed at seizing Krajina, a Serb-populated region located within Croatia’s borders that, a year and a half earlier, had declared itself an independent state. As the Croatian force of 200,000 approaches the city of Knin, Krajina’s 40,000-strong army quickly retreats. Over the next two days, the Croatian army fires some 3,000 shells on Knin. According to two senior Canadian military officers who are present during the attack, the shelling is indiscriminate and targets civilians. ([Danner 10/22/1998](#); [Bonner 3/21/1999](#); [Rakate 12/31/2000](#)) Col. Andrew Leslie, one of the Canadians, will later say that no more than 250 shells hit military targets, leading him to believe that “the fire was deliberately directed against civilian buildings.” He will also recall seeing corpses of dead Serbians at Knin Hospital “stacked in the corridors... in piles.” ([Edwards 4/9/1999](#)) The operation results in a mass exodus of as many as 150,000 Serbian residents, who flee their homes in tractors, cars, and horse-drawn carts. ([Danner 10/22/1998](#); [Bonner 3/21/1999](#); [Rakate 12/31/2000](#)) This event will be remembered as the largest single instance of ethnic cleansing to have occurred during the Yugoslav war. ([Danner 10/22/1998](#)) A 150-page report later issued by an international war crimes tribunal in The Hague, titled “The Indictment. Operation Storm, A Prima Facie Case,” finds that the Croats were responsible for a number of atrocities. “During the course of the military offensive, the Croatian armed forces and special police committed numerous violations of international humanitarian law, including but not limited to, shelling of Knin and other cities. During, and in the 100 days following the military offensive, at least 150 Serb civilians were

summarily executed, and many hundreds disappeared,” the report will say. “In a widespread and systematic manner, Croatian troops committed murder and other inhumane acts upon and against Croatian Serbs.” ([Bonner 3/21/1999](#)) During the preceding year, Military Professionals Resources, Inc. (MPRI), a private military contractor, had been providing Croatian military officers with training—ostensibly in “Democracy Transition.” After the assault on Krajina, observers will suggest that MPRI’s team of instructors, made up of former US military generals, had actually trained the Croats in a set of military tactics, known as “AirLand Battle 2000,” which were then used against the Serbs in Krajina. ([Danner 10/22/1998](#)) A number of media accounts will even report that MPRI personnel helped plan the Croatian occupation and ethnic cleansing of the Serb-populated region. “Even the Foreign Military Training Report published by both the State Department and Department of Defense in May refers to these allegations against MPRI not entirely disparagingly,” UPI reports. ([armies-7/18/2002](#)) There is also evidence that the US provided Croatian President Franjo Tudjman with a green light just a few days before the operation. ([Danner 10/22/1998](#)) In September 1995, USAF General Charles Boyd, who was Deputy Commander in Chief European Command at the time condemns the Clinton Administration for having “watched approvingly as Muslim offensives began this spring, even though these attacks destroyed a cease-fire Washington has supported. This duplicity, so crude and obvious to all in Europe, has weakened America’s moral authority to provide any kind of effective diplomatic leadership. Worse, because of this, the impact of US actions has been to prolong the conflict while bringing it no closer to resolution.” ([Boyd 9/1995](#))

August 7, 1995: Clinton Sides with Interventionists During Cabinet Meeting

The differences on Bosnia policy between Madeleine Albright, Anthony Lake, and Richard Holbrooke on the one hand and the Pentagon on the other, are aired at a cabinet meeting. Albright et. al. argue for a firm commitment to military intervention. “They maintained that the stakes went far beyond the particulars in Bosnia. The issue was not one state or two, three, or none. Rather, the issue was US credibility as a world leader, its credibility in NATO, the United Nations, and at home.” Meanwhile, “the Pentagon was most concerned about avoiding a sustained military involvement, and saw in arm, train, and strike the shades of Vietnam.” Clinton comes down firmly on the side of intervention. After the meeting, Anthony Lake is dispatched to Europe to brief US allies on the new policy on Bosnia. ([Daalder 2000, pp. 106 - 110](#))

August 11, 1995: Clinton Vetoes Bill for US to Defy UN Weapons Embargo on Bosnia

On July 26, 1995, the US Senate votes for the US to defy a UN weapons embargo against Bosnia. On August 1, the House of Representatives also votes to defy the embargo. But on August 11, President Clinton vetoes the legislation. According to the Los Angeles Times, he argues that “the measure would backfire by increasing atrocities, torpedoing

diplomacy and ultimately converting the complex ethnic war into ‘an American responsibility.’” ([CNN 8/5/1995](#); [Risen and McManus 4/5/1996](#))

August 27, 1995 and Shortly After: CIA and Albanian Intelligence Recruit Knowledgeable Informer

The CIA and Albanian intelligence recruit an informer knowledgeable about al-Qaeda in the Balkans. The informer, whose name is Hassan Mustafa Osama Nasr, but is known as Abu Omar, is recruited by a special unit of the Albanian National Intelligence Service (ShIK) created at the behest of the CIA. An officer in the unit, Astrit Nasufi, will say that the unit is actually run by a CIA agent known as “Mike” who is based on the US embassy in Tirana, Albania, and who teaches them intelligence techniques. The CIA and ShIK are worried about a possible assassination attempt against the Egyptian foreign minister, who is to visit Albania soon, so about twelve radical Egyptians, members of Al-Gama’a al-Islamiyya and Islamic Jihad, are detained beforehand. Nasr is not on the list, but is detained because of a link to a suspect charity, the Human Relief and Construction Agency (HRCA). He is held for about 10 days and, although he initially refuses to talk, ShIK has a “full file” on him after a week. He provides information about around ten fellow Al-Gama’a al-Islamiyya members working for HRCA and two other charities, the Al-Haramain Islamic Foundation and the Revival of Islamic Heritage Society, both of which will be declared designated supporters of terrorism after 9/11. However, he says there are no plans to kill the Egyptian foreign minister, as this would mean Albania would no longer be a safe haven for fundamentalist Muslims. The intelligence Nasr goes on to provide is regarded as good quality and includes the identities of operatives monitoring the US embassy and entering and leaving Albania. The CIA is most interested in monitoring former mujaheddin joining the Bosnian Muslims, and Nasr also provides intelligence on Al-Gama’a al-Islamiyya branches in Britain, Germany, and Italy, in particular the Islamic Cultural Institute in Milan, which is a base for mujaheddin operations in the Balkans and is raided by the Italian government around this time (see [Late 1993-December 14, 1995](#)). Even though cooperation appears to be good, after a few weeks Nasr suddenly disappears and the CIA tells ShIK that Nasr has moved to Germany. ([Crewdson and Hundley 7/2/2005](#)) Nasr will later surface in Italy and will become close to Islamic militants in Milan (see [1997-February 17, 2003](#)), but will be kidnapped by the CIA after 9/11 (see [February 17, 2003](#)).

August 30, 1995: NATO Launches Bombing Campaign Against Bosnian Serbs

“Operation Deliberate Force,” a massive NATO bombing campaign against the Bosnian Serbs, begins. ([Sadler 8/31/1995](#))

September 1995: Raid Does Not Stop Bosnian Charity Front Controlling Illegal Weapons Pipeline

German and Austrian police raid the Vienna, Austria, office of the Third World Relief Agency (TWRA). Investigators fill three vans with documents, enabling them to gain a full picture of the illegal weapons network the TWRA has been running. But by this time, TWRA appears to be winding down most of its activities. The need for TWRA's smuggling routes greatly declined after a direct weapons pipeline opened between Iran and Bosnia with the tacit approval of the US. But the raid results in no charges and TWRA's Vienna office remains open. One Austrian investigator will later say, "They did a lot of talking here but as long as they did not move weapons through our territory, we could not arrest them." ([Pomfret 9/22/1996](#)) Authors J. Millard Burr and Robert Collins will later question that rationale, noting that, "The TWRA ledgers, however, gave a full accounting of the transfer of huge sums for arms trafficking through the First Austrian Bank." The Bosnian government officially shuts down TWRA after the Austrian raid, but in fact it remains open and active in Bosnia, and continuing to ship weapons. In fact, TWRA will still remain open and active there and elsewhere long after 9/11 (see [January 25, 2002](#)). The US government has yet to take any official action against TWRA as well. ([Burr and Collins 2006, pp. 143](#))

September-October 1995: Unocal Obtains Turkmenistan Pipeline Deal

Oil company Unocal signs an \$8 billion deal with Turkmenistan to construct two pipelines (one for oil, one for gas), as part of a larger plan for two pipelines intended to transport oil and gas from Turkmenistan through Afghanistan and into Pakistan. Before proceeding further, however, Unocal needs to execute agreements with Pakistan and Afghanistan; Pakistan and Ahmed Shah Massoud's government in Afghanistan, however, have already signed a pipeline deal with an Argentinean company. Henry Kissinger, hired as speaker for a special dinner in New York to announce the Turkmenistan pipeline deal, says the Unocal plan represents a "triumph of hope over experience." Unocal will later open an office in Kabul, weeks after the Taliban capture of the capital in late 1996 and will interact with the Taliban, seeking support for its pipeline until at least December 1997. ([Coll 2004, pp. 301-13, 329, 338, 364-66](#))

September 13, 1995: Muslim Militant Rendered by CIA in Croatia, Then Killed in Egypt

Talaat Fouad Qassem, 38, a known leader of the Al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya (the Islamic Group), an Egyptian extremist organization, is arrested and detained in Croatia as he travels to Bosnia from Denmark, where he has been living after being granted political asylum. He is suspected of clandestine support of terrorist operations, including the 1993 World Trade Center bombing (see [February 26, 1993](#)). He also allegedly led mujaheddin efforts in Bosnia since 1990 (see [1990](#)). In a joint operation, he is arrested by Croatian intelligence agents and handed over to the CIA. Qassem is then interrogated by US officials aboard a US ship off the Croatian coast in the Adriatic Sea and sent to Egypt, which has a rendition agreement with the US (see [1995](#)). An Egyptian military tribunal

has already sentenced him to death in absentia, and he is executed soon after he arrives. ([Olsen 10/31/1995](#); [Chandrasekaran and Finn 3/11/2002](#), pp. A01; [Mahle 2005](#), pp. 204-205; [Mayer 2/8/2005](#)) According to the 1999 book *Dollars for Terror*, two weeks before his abduction, Qassem was in Switzerland negotiating against Muslim Brotherhood leaders. Some Muslim Brotherhood exiles were negotiating with the Egyptian government to be allowed to return to Egypt if they agreed not to use Muslim Brotherhood Swiss bank accounts to fund Egyptian militant groups like Al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya, but Qassem and other radicals oppose this deal. So the removal of Qassem helps the Muslim Brotherhood in their conflict with more militant groups. ([Labeviere 1999](#), pp. 70-71)

Shortly Before October 1995: FBI Learns KSM Traveling to Sudan and Qatar

Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM) goes to Sudan, but he is soon discovered there by the Sudanese intelligence agency. Sudan is facing increasing trouble with Western countries due to its reputation as a terrorist haven, so KSM is told to leave and given a few weeks to move on. Later in the year, Sudanese intelligence tells an FBI agent about KSM's recent visit and also reveals that he was headed to Qatar (where he has already been based for several years [1992-1996](#)). By October 1995, the FBI tracks KSM to a certain apartment building in Qatar, but he will escape capture (see [October 1995](#)). ([Miniter 2003](#), pp. 85-86)

October 1995: CIA Learns KSM's Exact Location in Qatar but No Action Is Taken



Melissa Boyle Mahle. [*Source: Publicity photo*] According to a later account by CIA agent Melissa Boyle Mahle, "a tidbit received late in the year revealed the location" Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM) in Qatar (see [1992-1996](#)). ([Mahle 2005](#), pp. 247-248) This presumably is information the FBI learned in Sudan that KSM was traveling to Qatar (see [Shortly Before October 1995](#)). However, US intelligence should also have been aware that KSM's nephew Ramzi Yousef attempted to call him in Qatar in February 1995 while Yousef was in US custody (see [After February 7, 1995-January 1996](#)). Mahle is assigned to verify KSM's identity. She claims that at the time the CIA is aware of KSM's involvement in the Bojinka plot in the Philippines (see [January 6, 1995](#)) and in the 1993 WTC bombing (see [February 26, 1993](#)) She is able to match his

fingerprints with a set of fingerprints the CIA already has in their files. ([Mahle 3/31/2005](#)) By October 1995, the FBI tracks KSM to a certain apartment building in Qatar. Then, using high-technology surveillance, his presence in the building is confirmed. ([Miniter 2003, pp. 85-86](#)) Mahle argues that KSM should be rendered out of the country in secret. The US began rendering terrorist suspects in 1993 (see [1993](#)), and a prominent Egyptian extremist is rendered by the CIA in September 1995 (see [September 13, 1995](#)). She argues her case to CIA headquarters and to the highest reaches of the NSA, but is overruled. ([Mahle 3/31/2005](#)) Instead, the decision is made to wait until KSM can be indicted in a US court and ask Qatar to extradite him to the US. Despite the surveillance on KSM, he apparently is able to leave Qatar and travel to Brazil with bin Laden and then back to Qatar at the end of 1995 (see [December 1995](#)). KSM will be indicted in early 1996, but he will escape from Qatar a few months later (see [January-May 1996](#)).

October 1995: FBI Begins Investigating Bin Laden; CIA Already Monitoring Him

The FBI opens a case on bin Laden. Dan Coleman and John Ligouri, members of the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF), are sent to the CIA Counterterrorist Center (CTC) to see what the CIA knows about bin Laden. "They were amazed by the amount of material - some forty thick files' worth - that they found.... Most of the information consisted of raw, unfocused data: itineraries, phone records, associates lists, investment holdings, bank transfers." The vast majority of the data comes from NSA electronic eavesdropping and most of it has not been properly analyzed (see [Early 1990s](#)). They find that the CTC has been conducting a vigorous investigation on Wadih El-Hage, bin Laden's personal secretary. ([Miller, Stone, and Mitchell 2002, pp. 148-149](#)) Coleman will go on to become the FBI's biggest expert on bin Laden and will help start the bureau's bin Laden unit. ([Suskind 2006, pp. 90](#)) It is not known when the CIA or NSA began monitoring bin Laden or El-Hage.

October 1995: FBI and CIA Investigating Bin Laden's Personal Secretary

In 1995, the FBI is given the CIA's files on bin Laden, and they discover that the CIA has been conducting a vigorous investigation on Wadih El-Hage, bin Laden's personal secretary and a US citizen (see [October 1995](#)). The FBI had already started investigating El-Hage in 1991 (see [March 1991](#)), and in 1993 they found out he had bought weapons for one of the 1993 WTC bombers (see [Summer 1993](#)). Thanks to the CIA files, the FBI learns that in early 1992 El-Hage moved to Sudan and worked there as bin Laden's personal secretary. ([Zill 4/1999](#); [Miller, Stone, and Mitchell 2002, pp. 148-149](#)) Then, in 1994, he moved to Nairobi, Kenya, and officially started running a bogus charity there called "Help Africa People." ([Zill 4/1999](#); [Hirschhorn 10/16/2001](#)) In fact, El-Hage is running an al-Qaeda cell that will later carry out the 1998 African embassy bombings. He stays in close contact with top al-Qaeda leaders. ([Zill 4/1999](#)) Apparently El-Hage is

under US surveillance in Kenya, or at least people he is calling are under surveillance. For instance, a phone call between El-Hage in Kenya and Ali Mohamed in California is recorded in late 1994 (see [Late 1994](#)).and there are many calls recorded between El-Hage and bin Laden in Sudan. FBI agent Dan Coleman will analyze all this information about El-Hage and eventually supervise a raid on his Kenya house in 1997 (see [August 21, 1997](#)). ([Wright 2006, pp. 242-244](#))

October 1, 1995: US Army Officer: Propaganda Machine Whipping Up Support for US Intervention in Bosnia

The Foreign Military Studies Office publishes a piece by Army Lt. Col. John E. Sray who writes that advocates of a US intervention in Bosnia have formed a “prolific propaganda machine” to increase public support for deploying NATO forces to Bosnia. The propaganda machine is made up of a “strange combination of three major spin doctors, including public relations (PR) firms in the employ of the Bosniacs, media pundits, and sympathetic elements of the US State Department,” he says, who use “[d]iffering styles, approaches, and emphases” to advance their views. He notes how some of them have gone so far as to attack anti-interventionists as harboring “pro-Serb” or even “Nazi” sympathies. The United States’ European allies, who do not favor an intervention, are informed “from different information and a more realistic historical perspective,” he says. “They retain the advantages of more in-depth, professional, and probing journalism and better reporting from their embassies. Furthermore, they pay less attention to the constant propaganda themes emanating from the Bosniacs [Bosnian Muslim government] and their agents—the PR firms.” ([Sray 10/1995](#))

October 20, 1995: KSM Possibly Helps with Revenge Bombing in Croatia

A suicide bombing destroys the police station in the town of Rijeka, Croatia, wounding 29 people. The Egyptian militant group Al-Gama’a al-Islamiyya takes credit for the bombing, saying it is revenge for the abduction of Al-Gama’a al-Islamiyya leader Talaat Fouad Qassem in Croatia the month before (see [September 13, 1995](#)). The Croatians will later determine that the mastermind, Hassan al-Sharif Mahmud Saad, and the suicide bomber were both tied to al-Gama’a al-Islamiyya. They also were tied to the Islamic Cultural Institute in Milan, Italy, which in turn has ties to many militant attacks, some committed Ramzi Yousef (see [1993-1997](#)). CIA soon discovers that the suicide bomber also worked for the Third World Refugee Center charity front (see [January 1996](#)). ([Kohlmann 2004, pp. 153-155](#)) In 1999, the FBI’s Bojinka investigation will notice that Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM) was believed to be in neighboring Bosnia at the time and that the timing device of the bomb (a modified Casio watch) closely resembled those used by KSM and his nephew Yousef in the Bojinka plot (see [January 6, 1995](#)). Presumably, this would have increased the importance of catching KSM. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 489](#))

October 21, 1995: Clinton Launches Interagency Effort to Track Bin Laden's Money; Effort Fizzles

President Clinton signs a classified presidential order “directing the Departments of Justice, State and Treasury, the National Security Council, the CIA, and other intelligence agencies to increase and integrate their efforts against international money laundering by terrorists and criminals.” The New York Times will later call this the first serious effort by the US government to track bin Laden’s businesses. However, according to the Times, “They failed.” William Wechsler, a National Security Council staff member during the Clinton administration, will say that the government agencies given the task suffered from “a lack of institutional knowledge, a lack of expertise... We could have been doing much more earlier. It didn’t happen.” ([Weiner and Johnston 9/20/2001](#))

November 1995: US Current and Former Officials Play Prominent Roles in Dayton Peace Talks

Richard Perle and Douglas Feith act as advisors to the government of Bosnia during the Dayton peace talks. They do not register with the Department of Justice, as required by US law. Richard Holbrooke is the chief NATO civilian negotiator and Wesley Clark the chief NATO military negotiator. ([Zogby 5/13/2001](#)) After the Dayton peace talks, Richard Perle then serves as a military adviser to the Bosnian government. ([Beelman 1997](#))

(Late 1995-1997): Additional Restrictions Placed on Sharing of Intelligence inside FBI

Following the issuance of the “wall” memo, which established procedures to regulate the flow of information from intelligence investigations by the FBI to local criminal prosecutors (see [July 19, 1995](#)), an additional information sharing “wall” is erected inside the FBI. After 9/11, the Justice Department’s Office of Inspector General will find, “Although it is unclear exactly when this ‘wall’ within the FBI began, [it was] sometime between 1995 and 1997.” This additional wall segregates FBI intelligence investigations from FBI criminal investigations and restricts the flow of information from agents on intelligence investigations to agents on criminal investigations, because of problems that may occur if the flow is not regulated (see [Early 1980s](#)). If an intelligence agent wants to “pass information over the wall” to a criminal agent, he should get approval from one of his superiors, either locally or at FBI headquarters. A description of wall procedures comes to be commonplace in all warrant requests filed under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA). ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 30-32](#)) However, FBI agents often ignore these restrictions and over a hundred cases where information is shared without permission between intelligence and criminal FBI agents will later be uncovered (see [Summer-October 2000](#) and [March 2001](#)).

November 1-22, 1995: Bosnia Peace Talks Result in Agreement



Final boundaries in the Bosnian war. Gray represents the area controlled by Bosnian Muslims and Croats while white represents the area controlled by Bosnian Serbs. [Source: *Time* / Cowan, Castello, Glanton] On November 1, 1995, peace talks begin Croats, Muslims, and Serbs in Yugoslavia begin at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio. A cease-fire holds while the talks continue. On November 22, the leaders of the three factions agree to a settlement. The peace accord is signed several weeks later (see [December 14, 1995](#)). ([Time 12/31/1995](#))

November 13, 1995: Al-Qaeda Bombing in Saudi Arabia, US Realizes Bin Laden Is More than Financier



Destruction at the Saudi National Guard training center, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. [Source: *CNN*] Two truck bombs kill five Americans and two Indians in the US-operated Saudi National Guard training center in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Al-Qaeda is blamed for the attacks. ([Kugler 8/19/2002](#)) The attack changes US

investigators' views of the role of bin Laden, from al-Qaeda financier to its leader. ([Miller, Stone, and Mitchell 2002, pp. 150](#)) The Vinnell Corporation, thought by some experts to be a CIA front, owns the facility that has been attacked. ([Cobain 5/14/2003](#))

November 13, 1995: Islamic Jihad Kills Egyptian Official Investigating Al Taqwa Bank

Egyptian diplomat Alaa al-Din Nazmi is shot and killed as he is returning to his house in Geneva, Switzerland. While he is officially said to be negotiating with the World Trade Organization on economic matters, the Independent will later report, "Political sources suggested that Nazmi was working under diplomatic cover, and that his real job was to track down members of Egyptian Islamist armed groups in Europe who have sworn to overthrow President Hosni Mubarak's regime. Nazmi's murderers [say] as much two days later," when they take credit for the killing, using an alias for Islamic Jihad. ([Fisk 12/6/1995](#)) Swiss authorities seem uninterested in vigorously pursuing political connections to the murder, which is never solved. However, it will later be reported, "According to various sources close to the investigation, the Egyptian diplomat had been handling several sensitive files relating precisely to the financial resources of the Muslim Brotherhood, of which \$200 to \$500 was managed by various financial organizations" in Switzerland. The diplomat had played a major part in an attempt to recover these funds. He was focusing on the Al Taqwa Bank on the Swiss-Italian border, known to be a major bank for the Muslim Brotherhood. ([Labeviere 1999, pp. 63-68](#)) A few months earlier, Nazmi apparently had been in secret discussions with the Egyptian militant Talaat Fouad Qassem, who was then abducted by the CIA and executed in Egypt (see [September 13, 1995](#)). So Nazmi's assassination is seen as revenge for the death of Qassem. ([Labeviere 1999, pp. 70-71](#))

November 19, 1995: Islamic Jihad Attacks Egyptian Embassy in Pakistan

The Islamic Jihad blows up the Egyptian Embassy in Islamabad, Pakistan. Two cars filled with explosives crash through the embassy gates, killing the bombers and sixteen others. Ayman al-Zawahiri will later write in a book, "The bomb left the embassy's ruined building as an eloquent and clear message." Islamic Jihad is already closely tied to al-Qaeda by this time. ([Wright 9/9/2002](#)) The Egyptian government had recently dispatched up to 100 government agents to London with the task of eliminating militants opposed to the Egyptian government. The Independent will later report, "Sources in Cairo said that several of the dead embassy officials were working under cover as diplomats to help the Pakistani authorities track down" militants. In the wake of the attack, plans to send more Egyptian government agents to Pakistan to hunt militants in that region are scuttled. ([Fisk 12/6/1995](#)) Some of the money for the bombing operation was apparently raised by al-Zawahiri on a fundraising trip to the US (see [Late 1994 or 1995](#)).

Late 1995: Bin Laden Said to Consider Asylum in Britain



Michael Howard. [Source: BBC] Osama bin Laden is said to be unhappy with his exile in Sudan, where authorities are making noises about expelling him. Consequently, he requests asylum in Britain. Several of his brothers and other relatives, who are members of the bin Laden construction empire, own properties in London. He has already transferred some of his personal fortune to London, to help his followers set up terror cells in Britain and across Europe. Bin Laden employs Khalid al-Fawwaz, a Saudi businessman described as his “de facto ambassador” in Britain (see [Early 1994-September 27, 1998](#)), to assess his chances of moving there. British Home Secretary Michael Howard later says, “In truth, I knew little about him, but we picked up information that bin Laden was very interested in coming to Britain. It was apparently a serious request.” After Home Office officials investigate bin Laden, Howard issues an immediate order banning him under Britain’s immigration laws. ([McGrory 9/29/2005](#)) Bin Laden ends up going to Afghanistan instead in 1996 (see [May 18, 1996](#)). There are also later press reports that bin Laden travels frequently to London around this time (see [Early 1990s-Late 1996](#)), and even briefly lived there in 1994 (see [1994](#)).

Late 1995-September 11, 2001: Bin Laden’s Brother-in-Law Khalifa Still Active in Southeast Asia

Mohammed Jamal Khalifa, bin Laden’s brother-in-law, apparently continues to visit Southeast Asia and fund militant attacks there. Khalifa had run a number of charity fronts in the Philippines (see [1987-1991](#)) until he was arrested in the US in late 1994 (see [December 16, 1994](#)) and then let go in 1995 (see [April 26-May 3, 1995](#)). It has been widely assumed that he did not risk returning to the Philippines after that, but a 2006 book on terrorism funding will state that he “returned occasionally [to the Philippines] and was often seen elsewhere in Southeast Asia.” ([Burr and Collins 2006, pp. 191](#)) Presumably, these travels come to an end shortly after 9/11 when the Saudi government prohibits him from leaving the country until 2007 (see [January 30, 2007](#)). ([Fielding 3/2/2007](#)) Khalifa is also is frequent phone communication with militant groups in the Philippines and elsewhere, at least through the late 1990s (see [Late 1990s](#)).

(Late 1995-Spring 1996): French Intelligence Money Used to Purchase Weapons for Militants' Training

While training at al-Qaeda's Afghan camps (see [Mid 1995-Spring 1996](#)), French intelligence informer Omar Nasiri uses money given to him by his handler to purchase supplies for the training camps. Nasiri received \$16,500 from the Direction Générale de la Sécurité Extérieure (DGSE) for the mission and gives much of this to Khaldan camp leader Ibn al-Shaykh al-Libi for food, ammunition, and other supplies. ([Nasiri 2006, pp. 99, 178-9, 249](#))

December 1995: Caspian Sea Said to Contain Two-Thirds of World's Known Oil Reserves

The American Petroleum Institute asserts that the states bordering the Caspian Sea, north of Afghanistan, contain two-thirds of the world's known reserves, or 659 billion barrels. Such numbers spur demand for an Afghan pipeline. However, by April 1997, estimates drop to 179 billion barrels. ([Kuniholm 9/22/2000](#)) This is still substantial, but the estimates continue to drop in future years (see [November 1, 2002](#)).

December 1995: Bin Laden and KSM Travel to Brazil Together

Bin Laden and Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM) apparently travel to Brazil together. After KSM will be captured in 2003, documents in his possession will show he had a twenty-day visa to Brazil during December 1995. Brazilian intelligence sources will later claim that bin Laden travels with KSM, and is caught on video at a meeting in a mosque in the Brazilian town of Foz do Iguacu. This town is in the tri-border area of Brazil, Paraguay, and Argentina, which has the largest Muslim population in South America and has long been known to be a haven for criminal activity. Bin Laden is said to appear in the video with a goatee instead of his usual full beard. ([Orrego 5/4/2003](#)) In 1996, US intelligence will learn that KSM and bin Laden traveled together to a foreign country in 1995 (see [1996](#)). It is not known if that is a reference to this trip or if they made other trips together. The Brazilian government will later claim that it told the US about this trip in late 1998. ([Reuters 3/18/2003](#))

Shortly After November 19, 1995: Key Al-Qaeda Charity Front Closed in Pakistan, but Operations Continue Under New Names

Shortly after Islamic Jihad blows up the Egyptian Embassy in Islamabad, Pakistan in November 1995 (see [November 19, 1995](#)), Makhtab Al-Khidamat/Al-Kifah, a very crucial al-Qaeda charity front based in Pakistan, is shut down. This entity is not only

helping to fund al-Qaeda, but is also involved in sending recruits to training camps in Afghanistan. But there are no arrests and activities are redirected to other charity fronts. As one book will later note, “[the] recruiting and military training circuit, perfected during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, was never dismantled, neither at the end of the war nor after the office was officially closed.” ([Jacquard 2002, pp. 59](#))

December 14, 1995: Dayton Accords Brings End to Bosnian War



In the front row from right to left: Slobodan Milosevic, Franjo Tudjman, and Alija Izetbegovic, sign the Dayton accords. In the back row stands, from right to left, Felipe Gonzalez, Bill Clinton, Jacques Chirac, Helmut Kohl, John Major and Viktor Tchernomyrdine. *[Source: Reuters]* (click image to enlarge) A peace agreement between the Bosnians, Croats, and Serbs fighting in Bosnia is signed in Paris. Known as the Dayton Accords, the agreement was hammered out in Dayton, Ohio, the month before (see [November 1-22, 1995](#)). As part of the agreement, thousands of NATO troops begin arriving in Bosnia immediately to help keep the peace. UN peacekeepers turn their job over to NATO forces on December 20. The peace does hold in the Bosnia and Croatia regions, thus ending a war that began in 1992 (see [April 6, 1992](#)). It claimed more than 200,000 lives and made six million people homeless. ([Time 12/31/1995](#)) Fifty-one percent of Bosnia goes to an alliance of Muslims and Croats and 49 percent goes to a Serbian republic. ([Binder 10/20/2003](#)) As part of the deal, all foreign fighters are required to leave Bosnia within 30 days. In practical terms, this means the mujaheddin who have been fighting for the Bosnian Muslims (see [January 14, 1996](#)). ([Smith 3/11/2000](#))

December 14, 1995: Militant Leader's Death Reveals Links between Bosnian Government and Al-Qaeda Leaders

Anwar Shaaban, an Islamist militant in charge of logistics for mujaheddin fighting in Bosnia, is killed in Croatia. Shaaban had been based at the Islamic Cultural Institute mosque in Milan, but managed to avoid arrest when it was raided (see [Late 1993-December 14, 1995](#)). On December 14, 1995, the same day a peace accord is signed ending the Bosnian war, Shaaban is killed by Croatian troops in what mujaheddin claim

is an ambush. Shaaban's diary is found, and it cites regular meetings between al-Qaeda leaders and leaders of the Bosnian Muslim government, including General Staff Chief Rasim Delic and Interior Minister Bakir Alispahic. ([Schindler 2007, pp. 216-217](#)) Shaaban, a leader of the Al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya militant group, had been in regular contact with Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman and al-Qaeda second-in-command Ayman al-Zawahiri. ([Schindler 2007, pp. 163-164](#))

Late 1995: Illness of Saudi King Generates Long-Term Power Struggle



Crown Prince Abdullah. [*Source: Corbis*] King Fahd of Saudi Arabia suffers a severe stroke. Afterwards, he is able to sit in a chair and open his eyes, but little more. He slowly recovers from this condition. The resulting lack of leadership begins a behind-the-scenes struggle for power and leads to increased corruption. Crown Prince Abdullah has been urging his fellow princes to address the problem of corruption in the kingdom—so far unsuccessfully. A former White House adviser says: “The only reason Fahd’s being kept alive is so Abdullah can’t become king.” ([Hersh 10/16/2001](#)) This internal power struggle will continue until King Fahd dies in 2005 and Abdullah becomes the new king (see [August 1, 2005](#)).

1996: FBI Fumbles Flight School Investigation; Murad and Eleven Other Al-Qaeda Pilots Trained in US

Finding a business card for a US flight school in the possession of Operation Bojinka plotter Abdul Hakim Murad, the FBI investigates the US flight schools Murad attended. ([Fainaru and Grimaldi 9/23/2001](#)) He had trained at about six flight schools off and on, starting in 1990. Apparently, the FBI closes the investigation when they fail to find any other potential suspects. ([Insight 5/27/2002](#)) However, Murad had already confessed to Philippine authorities the names of about ten other associates learning to fly in the US, and the Philippine authorities had asserted that they provided this information to the US. Murad detailed how he and a Pakistani friend crisscrossed the US, attending flight schools in New York, Texas, California and North Carolina. The Associated Press reports,

“He also identified to Filipino police approximately 10 other Middle Eastern men who met him at the flight schools or were getting similar training. One was a Middle Eastern flight instructor who came to the United States for more training; another a former soldier in the United Arab Emirates. Others came from Sudan, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. None of the pilots match the names of the 19 hijackers from Sept. 11.” An assistant manager at a Schenectady, New York, flight school where Murad trained later recalls, “There were several [Middle Eastern pilot students] here. At one point three or four were here. Supposedly they didn’t know each other before, they just happened to show up here at the same time. But they all obviously knew each other.” However, US investigators somehow fail to detect any of these suspects before 9/11, despite being given their names. ([Gomez and Solomon 3/5/2002](#))

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

Al-Muqatila, a cover for a Libyan al-Qaeda cell, tries to kill Libyan leader Colonel Mu’ammar al-Qadhafi. Al-Qadhafi survives, but several militants and innocent bystanders are killed. ([Bright 10/30/2002](#)) According to David Shayler, a member of the British intelligence agency MI5, and Jean-Charles Brisard and Guillaume Dasquié, authors of the controversial book The Forbidden Truth, the British intelligence agency MI6 pays al-Qaeda the equivalent of \$160,000 to help fund this assassination attempt. Shayler later goes to prison for revealing this information and the British press is banned from discussing the case (see [November 5, 2002](#)). ([Lyll 8/5/1998](#); [Bright 11/10/2002](#)) Anas al-Liby, a member of the group, is given political asylum in Britain and lives there until May 2000 despite suspicions that he is an important al-Qaeda figure (see [Late 1996-May 2000](#)). He is later implicated in the al-Qaeda bombing of two US embassies in Africa in 1998 (see [Late 1993-Late 1994](#); [August 7, 1998](#)). ([Federal Bureau of Investigation 2002](#); [Bright 11/10/2002](#))

1996: Mossad Supposedly Plans to Kill Bin Laden

Israeli spy agency Mossad supposedly plots to kill Osama bin Laden. According to the Israeli newspaper Yedioth Aharonoth, it recruits a female confidante of his and assigns her the mission of killing him. Mossad has been trailing bin Laden while assisting the US and Egypt in investigating a failed assassination attempt on Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak (see [June 1995](#)). But the plan is aborted due to tensions between Israel and the woman’s country. ([Associated Press 1/27/2006](#))

1996: Germans Begin Investigating Hamburg Cell Member after Tip from Turkey



Mohammed Haydar Zammar. [Source: *Knut*

Mueller] Turkish intelligence informs German's domestic intelligence service that Mohammed Haydar Zammar is a radical militant who has been traveling to trouble spots around the world. He has already made more than 40 journeys to places like Bosnia and Chechnya. Turkey explains that Zammar is running a dubious travel agency in Hamburg, organizing flights for radical militants to Afghanistan. As a result, by early 1997 German intelligence will launch Operation Zartheit, an investigation of Islamic militants in the Hamburg area. The Germans will use a full range of intelligence techniques, including wiretaps and informants. ([Laabs 8/13/2003](#); [Zeman et al. 11/2004](#)) Apparently, while Zammar was a teenager in Syria, he became friends with Mamoun Darkazanli and the two of them joined the Muslim Brotherhood, a radical Muslim group banned in Egypt. In 1991, Zammar trained and fought in Afghanistan with the forces of the warlord Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. In 1995, he fought in Bosnia against the Serbs, while based in Zenica with other mujaheddin. German intelligence apparently is familiar with at least some of Zammar's background, because the New York Times will later report that Zammar "had been identified [in the late 1980s] by German authorities as a militant who frequented mosques in Hamburg and elsewhere." ([Finn 9/11/2002](#); [New York Times 1/18/2003](#)) Operation Zartheit will run at least three years and connect Zammar to many of the 9/11 plotters.

1996: US Intelligence Learns that KSM and Bin Laden Have Traveled Together

Prior to this year, US intelligence has been uncertain whether Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM) is connected to al-Qaeda. But this changes when a foreign government shares information that bin Laden and KSM had traveled together to a foreign country the previous year. ([US Congress 7/24/2003](#)) The country may have been Brazil, since it has been reported that KSM and bin Laden traveled to Brazil together in 1995 (see [December 1995](#)).

1996: Pakistan and Saudi Arabia Said to Make Secret Deals with Taliban and al-Qaeda

In June 2004, the Los Angeles Times will report that, according to some 9/11 Commission members and US counterterrorism officials, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia cut secret deals with the Taliban and bin Laden before 9/11. These deals date to this year, if not earlier, and will successfully shield both countries from al-Qaeda attacks until long after 9/11. "Saudi Arabia provid[es] funds and equipment to the Taliban and probably directly to bin Laden, and [doesn't] interfere with al-Qaeda's efforts to raise money, recruit and train operatives, and establish cells throughout the kingdom, commission and US officials [say]. Pakistan provide[s] even more direct assistance, its military and intelligence agencies often coordinating efforts with the Taliban and al-Qaeda, they [say]." The two countries will become targets of al-Qaeda attacks only after they launch comprehensive efforts to eliminate the organization's domestic cells. In Saudi Arabia, such efforts won't begin until late 2003. ([Meyer 7/16/2004](#)) However, such allegations go completely unmentioned in the 9/11 Commission's final report, which only includes material unanimously agreed upon by the ten commissioners. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004](#))

1996: Saudi Regime Goes to 'Dark Side'

The Saudi Arabian government, which allegedly initiated payments to al-Qaeda in 1991 (see [Summer 1991](#)), increases its payments in 1996, becoming al-Qaeda's largest financial backer. It also gives money to other extremist groups throughout Asia, vastly increasing al-Qaeda's capabilities. ([Hersh 10/16/2001](#)) Presumably, two meetings in early summer bring about the change. Says one US official, "[19]96 is the key year.... Bin Laden hooked up to all the bad guys—it's like the Grand Alliance—and had a capability for conducting large-scale operations." The Saudi regime, he says, had "gone to the dark side." Electronic intercepts by the NSA "depict a regime increasingly corrupt, alienated from the country's religious rank and file, and so weakened and frightened that it has brokered its future by channeling hundreds of millions of dollars in what amounts to protection money to fundamentalist groups that wish to overthrow it." US officials later privately complain "that the Bush administration, like the Clinton administration, is refusing to confront this reality, even in the aftermath of the September 11th terrorist attacks." ([Hersh 10/16/2001](#)) Martin Indyk, Assistant Secretary of State for Near East Affairs, will later write, "The Saudis had protected themselves by co-opting and accommodating the Islamist extremists in their midst, a move they felt was necessary in the uncertain aftermath of the Gulf War. Since Saddam Hussein remained in power, weakened but still capable of lashing out and intent on revenge, the Saudis could not afford to send their American protector packing. Instead, they found a way to provide the United States with the access it needed to protect Saudi Arabia while keeping the American profile as low as possible.... [O]nce Crown Prince Abdullah assumed the regency in 1996 (see [Late 1995](#)), the ruling family set about the determined business of buying off its opposition." Saudi charities are "subverted" to help transfer money to militant causes. "[T]he Clinton administration indulged Riyadh's penchant for buying off trouble as long as the regime also paid its huge arms bills, purchased Boeing aircraft, kept the price of oil within reasonable bounds, and allowed the United States to use Saudi air bases to enforce the southern no-fly zone over Iraq and launch occasional military strikes to contain Saddam Hussein." ([Indyk 1/1/2002](#))

1996: Atta Appears to Participate in Petty Fraud

Mohamed Atta and some of his associates appear to participate in financial fraud. The Chicago Tribune in 2004 claims that in 1995 Atta gives a Muslim baker named Muharrem Acar living in Hamburg roughly \$25,000 to help him open his own bakery. The newspaper calls this “noteworthy act of generosity to someone he barely knew.” However, the Wall Street Journal in 2003 presents a completely different story. Acar was sued and ordered to pay \$6,500 in 1996. Atta and Acar worked together to backdate documents and manage a bank account to make it appear that Atta had loaned Acar over \$20,000. This allowed Acar to claim he had no money and a large debt to Atta, and thus couldn’t pay the money he owed as part of the lawsuit against him. The Wall Street Journal notes Atta’s behavior conflicts with his media representation as “an ideologically pure Islamic extremist” and concludes, “It is increasingly evident that Mr. Atta and the other young men in Hamburg were typical of Islamist extremists in Europe, engaging in petty crime and fraud to make ends meet...” ([Crawford 9/9/2003](#); [Chicago Tribune 9/11/2004](#))

1996: Vulgar Betrayal Investigation Launched

Vulgar Betrayal, the most significant US government investigation into terrorist financing before 9/11, is launched. This investigation grows out of investigations Chicago FBI agent Robert Wright had begun in 1993 (see [After January 1993](#)), and Wright appears to be the driving force behind Vulgar Betrayal. He later will say, “I named the case Vulgar Betrayal because of the many gross betrayals many Arab terrorists and their supporters” committed against the US, but the name will later prove to be bitterly ironic for him. Over a dozen FBI agents are assigned it and a grand jury is empanelled to hear evidence. Wright will be removed from the investigation in late 1999 (see [August 3, 1999](#)), and it will be completely shut down in early 2000 (see [August 2000](#)). ([Federal News Service 6/2/2003](#); [Lighty and Cohen 8/22/2004](#); [Crogan 8/25/2004](#); [Judicial Watch 12/15/2004](#)) The investigation will first identify suspected terrorism financier Yassin al-Qadi as a target in 1997, but it will run into many obstacles in investigating him and others. Assistant US attorney Mark Flessner, the lead prosecutor for Vulgar Betrayal, will later claim that supervisors at the Justice Department’s headquarters obstructed the investigation because it appeared to trace terrorism financing to important figures in Saudi Arabia, a key US ally. Wright will later state that had the leads into al-Qadi and others been fully investigated, “I believe the FBI could have identified other significant links to Osama bin Laden, links which may have been addressed to prevent future attacks against the United States by bin Laden and his terrorist trainees.” ([Federal News Service 6/2/2003](#); [Lighty and Cohen 8/22/2004](#))

1996: Al-Qaeda Supposedly Loses Trust in Ali Mohamed

The New York Times will later report that Ali Mohamed “[runs] afoul of the bin Laden organization after 1995 because of a murky dispute involving money and [is] no longer trusted by bin Laden lieutenants.” This is according to 1999 court testimony from Khaled Abu el-Dahab, the other known member of Mohamed’s Santa Clara, California, al-Qaeda cell (see [1987-1998](#)). ([Sachs 11/21/2001](#)) Another al-Qaeda operative in another trial will claim that in 1994 al-Qaeda leader Mohammed Atef refused to give Mohamed information because he suspected Mohamed was a US intelligence agent (see [1994](#)). However, despite these accounts, it seems that Mohamed continues to be given sensitive assignments. For instance, later in 1996 he will help bin Laden move from Sudan to Afghanistan (see [May 18, 1996](#)), and he will be in contact with many of operatives in Kenya planning the US embassy bombing there until 1998, the year the bombing takes place (see [Late 1994](#)). The Associated Press will later comment that it is “unclear is how [Mohamed] was able to maintain his terror ties in the 1990s without being banished by either side, even after the Special Forces documents he had stolen turned up in [a] 1995 New York trial.”(see [February 3, 1995](#)) ([Hays and Theimer 12/31/2001](#))

1996: Mayor Giuliani Creates Office of Emergency Management



Jerome Hauer [*Source: Public domain*] New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani establishes the city’s Office of Emergency Management (OEM). This is tasked with coordinating the city’s overall response to major incidents, including terrorist attacks. ([Robinson 9/12/2001](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 83-284](#)) It will also be involved in responding to routine emergencies on a daily basis. ([9/11 Commission 5/18/2004](#).) OEM comprises personnel drawn from various City agencies, including police and fire departments, and emergency medical services. It begins with a staff of just 12, but by 9/11 this has increased to 72. Its first director is counterterrorism expert Jerome Hauer. Richard Sheirer takes over from him in February 2000, and will be OEM director on 9/11. ([Griscom 10/15/2001](#); [Jenkins and Edwards-Winslow 9/2003, pp. 12](#); [9/11 Commission 5/18/2004](#).) OEM is responsible for improving New York’s response to potential major incidents by conducting regular training exercises involving various city agencies, particularly the police and fire departments (see [1996-September 11, 2001](#)). ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 283](#)) According to Steven Kuhr, its deputy director from 1996 to 2000, one of the key focuses of the office is counterterrorism work, “responding to the consequence of a chemical weapons attack, a biological weapons attack or a high-yield explosive event.” ([CNN 1/16/2002](#)) Furthermore, OEM’s Watch

Command is able to constantly monitor all the city's key communications channels, including all emergency services frequencies, state and national alert systems, and local, national, and international news. It also monitors live video feeds from New York Harbor and the city's streets. ([9/11 Commission 5/18/2004](#) & [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 283, 542](#)) In June 1999, Mayor Giuliani will open the OEM's Command Center on the 23rd floor of World Trade Center Building 7 (see [June 8, 1999](#)).

1996: Al-Qaeda Linked Financier Reportedly Gives Money to Bosnian Muslim President Izetbegovic

In 2006, popular Sarajevo magazine Slobodna Bosna will report that Bosnian Muslim President Alija Izetbegovic received nearly \$200,000 from Yassin al-Qadi, who will later be officially designated a terrorist financier (see [October 12, 2001](#)). Bosnian authorities reportedly discovered the money transfer from a British bank while investigating the Muwafaq Foundation, a charity headed by al-Qadi. The investigation also learned that Muwafaq channeled \$15 to 20 million to various organizations, and at least \$3 million of that went into bank accounts controlled by Osama bin Laden. ([AKI 9/8/2006](#)) Muwafaq reportedly helped finance the mujaheddin during the Bosnian war, especially supporting a mujaheddin brigade fighting for Izetbegovic's government that was also called Muwafaq (see [1991-1995](#)).

1996: Chechen Rebels Threaten to Fly Airplane into Kremlin



Movladi Udugov. [Source: *Public domain*] According to Nikolai Patrushev, head of Russian intelligence, "In 1996, one of the ideologists of Wahhabism, Movladi Udugov stated that an air attack on the Kremlin was possible and even then we treated that statement seriously." Udugov is considered the chief public spokesperson for the Chechen rebels. He threatens that the rebels would hijack a civilian airplane and then have a suicide pilot fly it into the Kremlin to protest Russian actions in Chechnya. Fighting between Russia and the rebels is particularly intense in 1996, which is the end of the first Chechen war from 1994 to 1996. ([United Press International 9/15/2001](#)) The Chechen rebels and al-Qaeda are loosely linked at the time, especially through Chechen leader Ibn Khattab (see [1986-March 20, 2002](#)).

1996: Asian Countries Unite to Counter US Influence

The “Shanghai Five” is formed in Shanghai with China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan as its founding members. Its purpose is to resolve old Soviet-Chinese border disputes between the countries and ease military tension in the border regions. An agreement titled “Treaty on Deepening Military Trust in Border Regions” is signed at this time. The five members are said to be bound together by mutual distrust of US hegemony in the region. ([BBC 6/21/2001](#); [Daly 7/19/2001](#); [GlobalSecurity \(.org\) 7/4/2005](#)) In early 2001 the group will morph into the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (see [June 14, 2001](#)).

1996-1997: Ptech Begins to Get US Government Contracts



Ptech logo. [Source: Ptech] Ptech is a Boston computer company connected to a number of individuals suspected of ties to officially designated terrorist organizations (see [1994](#)). These alleged ties will be of particular concern because of Ptech’s potential access to classified government secrets. Ptech specializes in what is called enterprise architecture. It is the design and layout for an organization’s computer networks. John Zachman, considered the father of enterprise architecture, later will say that Ptech could collect crucial information from the organizations and agencies with which it works. “You would know where the access points are, you’d know how to get in, you would know where the weaknesses are, you’d know how to destroy it.” Another computer expert will say, “The software they put on your system could be collecting every key stroke that you type while you are on the computer. It could be establishing a connection to the outside terrorist organization through all of your security measures.” ([WBZ 4 \(Boston\) 12/9/2002](#)) In late 1996, an article notes that Ptech is doing work for DARPA, a Defense Department agency responsible for developing new military technology. ([Corbin 9/1/1996](#)) In 1997, Ptech gains government approval to market its services to “all legislative, judicial, and executive branches of the federal government.” Beginning that year, Ptech will begin working for many government agencies, eventually including the White House, Congress, Army, Navy, Air Force, NATO, FAA, FBI, US Postal Service, Secret Service, the Naval Air Systems Command, IRS, and the nuclear-weapons program of the Department of Energy. For instance, Ptech will help build “the Military Information Architecture Framework, a software tool used by the Department of Defense to link data networks from various military computer systems and databases.” Ptech will be raided by US investigators in December 2002 (see [December 5, 2002](#)), but

not shut down. ([Guidera and Simpson 12/6/2002](#); [CNN 12/6/2002](#); [Hosenball 12/6/2002](#); [Ranalli 12/7/2002](#)) A former director of intelligence at the Department of Energy later will say he would not be surprised if an al-Qaeda front company managed to infiltrate the department's nuclear programs. ([Verton 12/9/2002](#)) Ptech will continue to work with many of these agencies even after 9/11. After a Customs Department raid of Ptech's offices in late 2002, their software will be declared safe of malicious code. But one article will note, "What no one knows at this point is how much sensitive government information Ptech gained access to while it worked in several government agencies." ([WBZ 4 \(Boston\) 12/9/2002](#))

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

Albanian Mafia and KLA take control of Balkan route heroin trafficking from Turkish criminal groups. In 1998, Italian police are able to arrest several major traffickers. Many of the criminals involved are also activists for the Kosovo independence movement, and some are KLA leaders. Much of the money is funneled through the KLA (see [1997](#)), which is also receiving support and protection from the US. The Islamic influence is obvious in the drug operations, which for example shut down during the month of Ramadan. Intercepted telephone messages speak of the desire "to submerge Christian infidels in drugs." ([Agence France-Presse 6/9/1998](#); [Ruscica 10/15/1998](#); [Works 1/19/1999](#)) Testifying to Congress in December 2000, Interpol Assistant Director Ralph Mutschke states that "Albanian organized crime groups are hybrid organizations, often involved both in criminal activity of an organized nature and in political activities, mainly relating to Kosovo. There is evidence that the political and criminal activities are deeply intertwined." Mutschke also says that there is also strong evidence that bin Laden is involved in funding and organizing criminal activity through links to the Albanian mafia and the KLA.(see [Early 1999](#)) ([US Congress 12/13/2000](#) ³)

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

Bin Laden's brother-in-law, Mohammed Jamal Khalifa, helps fund a militant group in Yemen that will later take credit for the 2000 USS *Cole* bombing. The group, the Islamic Army of Aden, is apparently formed in 1996 or 1997, but is not heard from until May 1998, when it issues the first of a series of political statements. The group will kidnap 16 mainly British tourists in December 1998 and four of the tourists will be killed during a shootout with police. The remaining hostages are rescued. ([Yemen Gateway 1/1999](#)) Evidence ties Khalifa to the 1995 Bojinka plot and other violent acts, though he has denied all allegations that he is linked to terrorist groups. Vincent Cannistraro, former head of the CIA's Counter Terrorism Center, later claims that not only did Khalifa fund the Islamic Army of Aden, but that 9/11 hijacker Khalid Almihdhar had ties to the group as well. ([Golden, Bandler, and Levine 9/19/2001](#)) He further notes that Khalifa went on to from the group after being deported from the US in 1995. "He should never have been

allowed to leave US custody.” ([Hoge 10/24/2001](#)) The group praises bin Laden and uses a training camp reportedly established by him in southern Yemen. But the group is more clearly tied to Sheikh Abu Hamza al-Masri, a handless, one-eyed Afghan war veteran living and preaching openly in London. ([Struck et al. 9/23/2001](#))

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

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

1996-2001: 1989 Speech by Milosevic Wildly Distorted by Western Media



Slobodan Milosevic speaking in Kosovo on June 28, 1989, to commemorate the 600th anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo. [*Source: Tomislav Peternek/ Polaris*] (click image to enlarge) Professor Gil White will point out in 2002 that Slobodan Milosevic’s 1989 speech in Kosovo in front of a huge crowd is consistently misrepresented as a call to ethnic war, when in fact it was the exact opposite—a call for racial tolerance and

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

Early 1996: KSM Said to be Building a Bomb

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

January 1996: Muslim Extremists Plan Suicide Attack on White House

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

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



International Islamic Relief Organization logo. [Source: *International Islamic Relief Organization*] The CIA creates a report for the State Department detailing support for terrorism from prominent Islamic charities. The report, completed just as the Bosnian war is winding down, focuses on charity fronts that have helped the mujaheddin in Bosnia. It concludes that of more than 50 Islamic nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in existence, “available information indicates that approximately one-third... support terrorist groups or employ individuals who are suspected of having terrorist connections.” The report notes that most of the offices of NGOs active in Bosnia are located in Zagreb, Sarajevo, Zenica, and Tuzla. There are coordination councils there organizing the work of the charity fronts. The report notes that some charities may be “backed by powerful interest groups,” including governments. “We continue to have evidence that even high ranking members of the collecting or monitoring agencies in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Pakistan - such as the Saudi High Commission - are involved in illicit activities, including support for terrorists.” The Wall Street Journal will later comment, “Disclosure of the report may raise new questions about whether enough was done to cut off support for terrorism before the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001... and about possible involvement in terrorism by Saudi Arabian officials.” ([Central Intelligence Agency 1/1996](#); [Simpson 5/9/2003](#)) The below list of organizations paraphrases or quotes the report, except for informational asides in parentheses.

- The International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO). “The IIRO is affiliated with the Muslim World League, a major international organization largely financed by the government of Saudi Arabia.” The IIRO has funded Hamas, Algerian radicals, Al-Gama’a al-Islamiyya (a.k.a. the Islamic Group, an Egyptian radical militant group led by Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman), Ramzi Yousef, and six militant training camps in Afghanistan. “The former head of the IIRO office in the Philippines, Mohammad Jamal Khalifa, has been linked to Manila-based plots to target the Pope and US airlines; his brother-in-law is Osama bin Laden.”
- Al Haramain Foundation. It has connections to Al-Gama’a al-Islamiyya and helps support the mujaheddin battalion in Zenica. Their offices have been connected to smuggling, drug running, and prostitution.
- Human Concern International, headquartered in Canada. Its Swedish branch is said to be smuggling weapons to Bosnia. It is claimed “the entire Peshawar office is made up of [Al-Gama’a al-Islamiyya] members.” The head of its Pakistan office (Ahmed Said

Khadr) was arrested recently for a role in the bombing of the Egyptian embassy in Pakistan (see [November 19, 1995](#)). (It will later be discovered that Khadr is a founder and major leader of al-Qaeda ((a2001alkhadr)).)

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

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

■Benevolence International Foundation (BIF) (the report refers to it by an alternate name, Lajnat al-Birr al-Islamiyya (LBI)). It supports mujaheddin in Bosnia. It mentions "one Zagreb employee, identified as Syrian-born US citizen Abu Mahmud," as involved in a kidnapping in Pakistan (see [July 4, 1995](#)). ([Central Intelligence Agency 1/1996](#)) (This is a known alias (Abu Mahmoud al Suri) for Enaam Arnaout, the head of BIF's US office.) ([USA v. Enaam M. Arnaout 10/6/2003, pp. 37](#)) This person "matches the description... of a man who was allegedly involved in the kidnapping of six Westerners in Kashmir in July 1995, and who left Pakistan in early October for Bosnia via the United States."

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

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

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

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

■Saudi High Commission. "The official Saudi government organization for collecting and disbursing humanitarian aid." Some members possibly have ties to Hamas and Algerian militants.

■Other organizations mentioned are the Foundation for Human Rights, Liberties, and Humanitarian Relief (IHH) (a.k.a. the International Humanitarian Relief Organization), Kuwait Joint Relief Committee (KJRC), the Islamic World Committee, and Human Appeal International. ([Central Intelligence Agency 1/1996](#))

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

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

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

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



Jack Cloonan. [*Source: PBS*]The Justice Department directs an existing unit called Squad I-49 to begin building a legal case against bin Laden. This unit is unusual because it combines prosecutors from the Southern District of New York, who have been working on bin Laden related cases, with the FBI’s New York office, which

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

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

I-49, a squad of FBI agents and Justice Department prosecutors that began focusing on bin Laden in 1996 (see [January 1996](#)), is upset that the NSA is not sharing with them data it has obtained through the monitoring of al-Qaeda. To get around this, the squad builds a satellite telephone booth in Kandahar, Afghanistan, for international calls. The FBI squad not only monitors the calls, but also videotapes the callers with a camera hidden in the booth. ([Wright 2006, pp. 344](#)) It has not been revealed when this booth was built or what information was gained from it. However, the New York Times will later paraphrase an Australian official, who says that in early September 2001, "Just about everyone in Kandahar and the al-Qaeda camps knew that something big was coming, he said. 'There was a buzz.'" Furthermore, also in early September 2001, the CIA monitors many phone calls in Kandahar and nearby areas where al-Qaeda operatives allude to the upcoming 9/11 attack (see [Early September 2001](#)).

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

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

1996-December 2000: Majority of Hijackers Disappear into Chechnya



A young Ahmed Alnami in Saudi Arabia. [*Source: Boston Globe*] At least 11 of the 9/11 hijackers travel to Chechnya between 1996 and 2000:

■ Nawaf Alhazmi fights in Chechnya, Bosnia, and Afghanistan for several years, starting around 1995. ([Observer 9/23/2001](#); [ABC News 1/9/2002](#); [US Congress 6/18/2002](#); [US](#)

[Congress 7/24/2003](#) ^٥)

■Khalid Almihdhar fights in Chechnya, Bosnia, and Afghanistan for several years, usually with Nawaf Alhazmi. ([US Congress 6/18/2002](#); [McDermott 9/1/2002](#); [US Congress 7/24/2003](#) ^٥)

■Salem Alhazmi spends time in Chechnya with his brother Nawaf Alhazmi. ([ABC News 1/9/2002](#)) He also possibly fights with his brother in Afghanistan. ([US Congress 7/24/2003](#) ^٥)

■Ahmed Alhaznawi leaves for Chechnya in 1999 ([ABC News 1/9/2002](#)) , and his family loses contact with him in late 2000. ([Khashoggi and Al-Nayyef 9/22/2001](#))

■Hamza Alghamdi leaves for Chechnya in early 2000 ([Murphy and Ottaway 9/25/2001](#); [Fisk 9/27/2001](#)) or sometime around January 2001. He calls home several times until about June 2001, saying he is in Chechnya. ([Ba-Isa and Al-Towaim 9/18/2001](#))

■Mohand Alshehri leaves to fight in Chechnya in early 2000. ([Khashoggi and Al-Nayyef 9/22/2001](#))

■Ahmed Alnami leaves home in June 2000, and calls home once in June 2001 from an unnamed location. ([Ba-Isa 9/19/2001](#); [Murphy and Ottaway 9/25/2001](#))

■Fayez Ahmed Banihammad leaves home in July 2000 saying he wants to participate in a holy war or do relief work. ([Murphy and Ottaway 9/25/2001](#); [Freedberg 9/27/2001](#)) He calls his parents one time since. ([Ba-Isa and Al-Towaim 9/18/2001](#))

■Ahmed Alghamdi leaves his studies to fight in Chechnya in 2000, and is last seen by his family in December 2000. He calls his parents for the last time in July 2001, but does not mention being in the US. ([Ba-Isa and Al-Towaim 9/18/2001](#); [Khashoggi 9/20/2001](#))

■Waleed M. Alshehri disappears with Wail Alshehri in December 2000, after speaking of fighting in Chechnya. ([Ba-Isa and Al-Towaim 9/18/2001](#); [Murphy and Ottaway 9/25/2001](#))

■Wail Alshehri, who had psychological problems, went with his brother to Mecca to seek help and both disappear, after speaking of fighting in Chechnya. ([Murphy and Ottaway 9/25/2001](#))

■Majed Moqed is last seen by a friend in 2000 in Saudi Arabia, after communicating a “plan to visit the United States to learn English.” ([Khashoggi and Al-Nayyef 9/22/2001](#)) Clearly, there is a pattern: eleven hijackers appear likely to have fought in Chechnya, and two others are known to have gone missing. It is possible that others have similar histories, but this is hard to confirm because “almost nothing [is] known about some.” ([MacFarquhar 9/21/2001](#)) Indeed, a colleague claims that hijackers Mohamed Atta, Marwan Alshehhi, Ziad Jarrah and would-be hijacker Ramzi Bin al-Shibh wanted to fight in Chechnya but were told in early 2000 that they were needed elsewhere. ([Finn 10/23/2002](#); [Blenkinsop 10/29/2002](#)) Reuters has reported, “Western diplomats play down any Chechen involvement by al-Qaeda.” ([Sayenko 10/24/2002](#))

January-May 1996: US Fails to Capture KSM Living Openly in Qatar



Abdallah bin Khalid al-Thani. [Source: Fethi Belaid/

Agence France-Presse] Since Operation Bojinka was uncovered in the Philippines (see [January 6, 1995](#)), many of the plot's major planners, including Ramzi Yousef, are found and arrested. One major exception is 9/11 mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM). He flees to Qatar in the Persian Gulf, where he has been living openly using his real name, enjoying the patronage of Abdallah bin Khalid al-Thani, Qatar's Interior Minister and a member of the royal family (see [1992-1996](#)). ([Ross and Scott 2/7/2003](#)) He had accepted al-Thani's invitation to live on his farm around 1992 (see [1992-1995](#)). The CIA learned KSM was living in Qatar in 1995 after his nephew Ramzi Yousef attempted to call him there while in US custody (see [After February 7, 1995-January 1996](#)). The Sudanese government also tipped off the FBI that KSM was traveling to Qatar. Some CIA agents strongly urged action against KSM after his exact location in Qatar was determined, but no action was taken (see [October 1995](#)). In January 1996, KSM is indicted in the US for his role in the 1993 WTC bombing, and apparently this leads to an effort to apprehend him in Qatar that same month. FBI Director Louis Freeh sends a letter to the Qatari government asking for permission to send a team after him. ([McDermott, Meyer, and McDonnell 12/22/2002](#)) One of Freeh's diplomatic notes states that KSM was involved in a conspiracy to "bomb US airliners" and is believed to be "in the process of manufacturing an explosive device." ([Hersh 5/27/2002](#)) Qatar confirms that KSM is there and is making explosives, but they delay handing him over. After waiting several months, a high-level meeting takes place in Washington to consider a commando raid to seize him. However, the raid is deemed too risky, and another letter is sent to the Qatari government instead. One person at the meeting later states, "If we had gone in and nabbed this guy, or just cut his head off, the Qatari government would not have complained a bit. Everyone around the table for their own reasons refused to go after someone who fundamentally threatened American interests...." ([McDermott, Meyer, and McDonnell 12/22/2002](#)) Around May 1996, Mohammed's patron al-Thani makes sure that Mohammed and four others are given blank passports and a chance to escape. A former Qatari police chief later says the other men include Ayman al-Zawahiri and Mohammed Atef, al-Qaeda's number two and number three leaders, respectively (see [Early 1998](#)). ([McDermott 9/1/2002](#); [Ross and Scott 2/7/2003](#)) In 1999, the New York Times will report that "Although American officials said they had no conclusive proof, current and former officials said they believed that the Foreign Minister [Sheik Hamed bin Jasim al-Thani] was involved, directly or indirectly" in tipping off KSM. ([Risen and Weiser 7/8/1999](#)) KSM will continue to occasionally use Qatar as a safe haven, even staying there for two weeks after 9/11 (see [Late 2001](#)).

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

A 1996 CIA report shows that US intelligence believes that the International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO), a Saudi charity with strong ties to the Saudi government, is funding a variety of radical militant groups (see [January 1996](#)). However, no action is taken against it. Also in 1996, Valerie Donahue, a Chicago FBI agent who is presumably part of Robert Wright's Vulgar Betrayal investigation, begins looking into Global Chemical Corp., a chemical company that appears to be an investment fraud scheme. The company is jointly owned by the IIRO and Abrar Investments Inc. Suspected terrorism financier Yassin al-Qadi has investments in Abrar Investments and he is also director of its Malaysian corporate parent. Donahue finds that Abrar Investments gave Global Chemical more than half a million dollars, and the IIRO gave it over \$1 million. Further, the Saudi embassy has recently sent \$400,000 to the IIRO. The president of Global Chemical is Mohammed Mabrook, a Libyan immigrant and suspected Hamas operative. Mabrook had previously worked for a pro-Palestinian group led by Hamas leader Mousa Abu Marzouk. (Marzouk is in US detention from 1995 to May 1997, but he is apparently merely held for deportation and not questioned about matters like Global Chemical (see [July 5, 1995-May 1997](#)).) Donahue discovers that Global Chemical is keeping a warehouse full of highly toxic chemicals, but they do not seem to be selling them. In late 1996, a chemical weapons expert examines the chemicals and opines that they appear to be meant for a laboratory performing biochemistry or manufacturing explosives. While no direct evidence of bomb making is found, investigators know that a Hamas associate of Marzouk, Mohammad Salah, had previously trained US recruits to work with "basic chemical materials for the preparation of bombs and explosives." (see [1989-January 1993](#)) In January 1997, the FBI raids Global Chemical and confiscates the chemicals stockpiled in the warehouse. Mabrook is questioned, then let go. He moves to Saudi Arabia. Abrar Investments vacate their offices and cease operations. In June 1999, Mabrook will return to the US and will be prosecuted. He will be tried on fraud charges for illegal dealings with the IIRO and given a four year sentence. Meanwhile, the IIRO ignores an FBI demand for accounting records to explain how it spent several million dollars that seem to have gone to the IIRO and disappeared. In January 1997, Donahue requests a search warrant to find and confiscate the records, saying that she suspect IIRO officials are engaged in "possible mail and wire fraud... and money laundering." Apparently, the probe stalls and the financial records are never maintained. Some investigators believe the probe is dropped for diplomatic reasons. ([Simpson 11/26/2002](#); [Simpson 12/16/2002](#); [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation 10/29/2003](#)) Investigators will later be prohibited from investigating a possible link between al-Qadi and the 1998 US embassy bombings (see [October 1998](#)). After 9/11, the US will apparently have ample evidence to officially label the IIRO a funder of terrorism, but will refrain from doing so for fear of embarrassing the Saudi government (see [October 12, 2001](#)).

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

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

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

The Associated Press will later report that the Enron corporation bribes Taliban officials as part of a "no-holds-barred bid to strike a deal for an energy pipeline in Afghanistan." Atul Davda, a senior director for Enron's International Division, will later claim, "Enron had intimate contact with Taliban officials." Presumably this effort began around 1996, when a power plant Enron was building in India ran into trouble and Enron began an attempt to supply it with natural gas via a planned pipeline through Afghanistan (see [1995-November 2001](#) and [June 24, 1996](#)). In 1997, Enron executives privately meet with Taliban officials in Texas (see [December 4, 1997](#)). They are "given the red-carpet treatment and promised a fortune if the deal [goes] through." It is alleged Enron secretly employs CIA agents to carry out its dealings overseas. According to a CIA source, "Enron proposed to pay the Taliban large sums of money in a 'tax' on every cubic foot of gas and oil shipped through a pipeline they planned to build." This source claims Enron paid

more than \$400 million for a feasibility study on the pipeline and “a large portion of that cost was pay-offs to the Taliban.” Enron continues to encourage the Taliban about the pipeline even after Unocal officially gives up on the pipeline in the wake of the African embassy bombings (see [December 5, 1998](#)). An investigation after Enron’s collapse in 2001 (see [December 2, 2001](#)) will determine that some of this pay-off money ended up funding al-Qaeda. ([Barrett 3/7/2002](#))

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

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

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

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

February 1996: CIA Forms New Counterterrorism Bin Laden Unit

The CIA’s Counter Terrorism Center creates a special unit focusing specifically on bin Laden. It is informally called Alec Station. About 10 to 15 individuals are assigned to the unit initially. This grows to about 35 to 40 by 9/11. ([US Congress 9/18/2002](#)) The unit is set up “largely because of evidence linking [bin Laden] to the 1993 bombing of the WTC.” ([Gellman 10/3/2001](#)) Newsweek will comment after 9/11, “With the Cold War over, the Mafia in retreat, and the drug war unwinnable, the CIA and FBI were eager to have a new foe to fight.... Historical rivals, the spies and G-men were finally learning to work together. But they didn’t necessarily share secrets with the alphabet soup of other enforcement and intelligence agencies, like Customs and the Immigration and Naturalization Service, and they remained aloof from the Pentagon. And no amount of

good will or money could bridge a fundamental divide between intelligence and law enforcement. Spies prefer to watch and wait; cops want to get their man” ([Thomas 10/1/2001](#)) Michael Scheuer will lead the unit until 1999. He will later become a vocal critic of the US government’s efforts to combat terrorism. He later recalls that while bin Laden is mostly thought of merely as a terrorist financier at this time, “we had run across bin Laden in a lot of different places, not personally but in terms of his influence, either through rhetoric, through audiotapes, through passports, through money—he seemed to turn up everywhere. So when we [created the unit], the first responsibility was to find out if he was a threat.” ([Zeman et al. 11/2004](#)) By the start of 1997, the unit will conclude bin Laden is a serious threat (see [Early 1997](#)).

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



On the left: 5613 Leesburg Pike, address for WAMY’s US office. On the right: 5913 Leesburg Pike, the 2001 address for hijackers Hani Hanjour and Nawaf Alhazmi. [*Source: Paul Sperry*]The FBI begin an investigation into two relatives of bin Laden in February 1996, then close it on September 11, 1996. The FBI wanted to learn more about Abdullah Awad bin Laden, “because of his relationship with the World Assembly of Muslim Youth [WAMY]—a suspected terrorist organization.” ([Palast and Pallister 11/7/2001](#)) Abdullah Awad was the US director of WAMY and lived with his brother Omar in Falls Church, Virginia, a suburb of Washington. They are believed to be nephews of Osama bin Laden. The coding on a leaked FBI document about the case, marked secret, indicates the case related to national security. WAMY’s office address is 5613 Leesburg Pike. It will later be determined that at least two of the 9/11 hijackers lived at 5913 Leesburg Pike for much of 2001 at the same time the two bin Laden brothers were working only three blocks away (see [March 2001](#)). WAMY has been banned in Pakistan by this time. ([BBC 11/6/2001](#); [Palast and Pallister 11/7/2001](#)) The Indian and Philippine governments also will cite WAMY for funding Islamic militancy. The 9/11 Commission later will hear testimony that WAMY “has openly supported Islamic terrorism. There are ties between WAMY and 9/11 hijackers. It is a group that has openly endorsed the notion that Jews must be killed.... [It] has consistently portrayed the United States, Jews, Christians, and other infidels as enemies who have to be defeated or killed. And there is no doubt, according to US intelligence, that WAMY has been tied directly to terrorist attacks.” ([9/11 Commission 7/9/2003, pp. 66](#)) A security official who will later serve under President Bush will say, “WAMY was involved in terrorist-support activity. There’s no doubt about it.” ([Unger 10/2003](#)) Before

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

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



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

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



_____The Al-Quds mosque in Hamburg was monitored by German authorities. [Source: *Knut Muller*] Mohamed Atta and other members of the Hamburg cell begin regularly attending the Al Quds mosque and fall under surveillance by the German authorities. Atta becomes a well-known figure both there and at other mosques in the city. He grows a beard at this time, which some commentators interpret as a sign of greater religious devotion. The mosque is home to numerous radicals. For example, one of the preachers, Mohamed Fazazi, advocates killing non-believers and encourages his followers to embrace martyrdom. After a time, Atta begins to teach classes at the mosque; he is stern with his students and criticises them for wearing their hair in ponytails and gold chains around their necks, as well as for listening to music, which he says is a product of the devil. If a woman shows up, her father is informed she is not welcome and this is one of the reasons that, of the 80 students that start the classes, only a handful are left at the end. One of Atta's associates, Ramzi bin al-Shibh, also teaches classes and fellow hijackers Marwan Alshehhi and Ziad Jarrah attend and possibly first meet Atta there. Other mosque attendees who interact with the future hijackers at the mosque include Said Bahaji, and al-Qaeda operatives Mamoun Darkazanli and Mohammed Haydar Zammar. According to author Terry McDermott, German investigators notice Bahaji meets frequently with Darkazanli and Zammar at the mosque, so they presumably have a source inside it. ([PBS Frontline 1/2002](#); [Burke 2004, pp. 242](#); [McDermott 2005, pp. 1-5, 34-37, 72](#)) The German newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* will later report that there was an informer working for the LfV, the Hamburg state intelligence agency, inside the mosque by 1999 and that he appeared to be interested in Atta, Jarrah, Alshehhi, bin al-Shibh, Bahaji and others (see [April 1, 1999](#)). ([Schrom and Laabs 2/2/2003](#))

[Spring 1996: Hani Hanjour Stays in Florida](#)

Hijacker Hani Hanjour, who returned to his native Saudi Arabia after a previous stay in the US (see [October 3, 1991-February 1992](#)), now arrives in the US for the second time, and will spend much of the next three years in the country. Hanjour first stays in Miramar, Florida with a couple that are longtime friends with Abulrahman Hanjour, his eldest brother: Adnan Khalil, a Saudi professor at a local college, and his wife Susan. Susan Khalil later remembers Hani Hanjour as socially inept, with “really bad hygiene.”

She says, “Of all my husband’s colorful friends, he was probably the most nondescript. He would blend into the wall.” The Washington Post later reports: “Hanjour’s meek, introverted manner fits a recurrent pattern in the al-Qaeda network of unsophisticated young men being recruited as helpers in terrorist attacks. FBI agents have told people they have interviewed about Hanjour that he ‘fit the personality to be manipulated and brainwashed.’” Yet, Susan Khalil says, “I didn’t get the feeling that he hated me or hated Americans.” Hanjour, she says, “was very kind and gentle to my son, who was 3 years old.” He prays frequently, at their home and at a nearby mosque. After staying for about a month he leaves the Khalil’s, having been accepted at a flight school in California (see [April 30-Early September 1996](#)). ([Crary 9/20/2001](#); [Allison 10/2/2001](#); [Goldstein, Sun, and Lardner 10/15/2001](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 226](#)) Many of the hijackers will later live in this part of Florida. A nearby mosque is run by radical imam Gulshair Shukrijumah, who possibly associates with Mohamed Atta and Marwan Alshehhi in 2000 and 2001 (see [2000-2001](#) and [May 2, 2001](#)). ([Canedy and Lichtblau 3/22/2003](#))

Spring 1996-December 23, 2000: United Arab Emirates Army Sends Alshehhi to Germany



P<AREALSHEHHI<<MARWAN<YUSEF<MOHAMED<R<<<<<<< A poor photocopy of Marwan Alshehhi’s United Arab Emirates passport. [Source: FBI] Marwan Alshehhi, a United Arab Emirates (UAE) national, volunteered for the UAE army shortly after leaving high school (presumably in late 1995, based on his age). After going through basic training, in the spring of 1996 he is granted a college scholarship to Germany, paid for by the UAE army. Alshehhi is to learn German, then study marine engineering. The scholarship is accompanied by a monthly stipend of around \$2,200. Alshehhi will continue to receive this stipend even after he drops out of school in Germany and begins attending flight school in the US. The stipend comes to an end in December 2000. ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 132](#); [McDermott 2005, pp. 53-56, 196](#))

Early 1996: FBI and Philippine Agents Bungle Capture of KSM



Bandido's bar in Manila. This may be the restaurant frequented by KSM. [Source: *Public domain*] In January 1995 the Bojinka plot is foiled in the Philippines and on February 7, 1995, Ramzi Yousef is arrested in Pakistan (see [February 7, 1995](#)), but Yousef's uncle Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM) continues to live in the Philippines much of the time. KSM remains confident that he will not be arrested, and eats at a particular restaurant in Manila at roughly the same time almost every night. In early 1996, the FBI and Philippine authorities attempt to arrest KSM at Bandido's restaurant. But counterterrorism expert Rohan Gunaratna will later claim the "operation failed apparently due to the visibility of the FBI and other agents working on the case." KSM flees to Qatar, where he was been living off and on since 1992 (see [1992-1996](#)). But Gunaratna claims KSM continues to live part of the time in the Philippines as well until about September 1996. ([Gunaratna 2003, pp. xxx](#))

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

US demands for Sudan to hand over its extensive files about bin Laden (see [March 8, 1996-April 1996](#)) escalate into demands to hand over bin Laden himself. Bin Laden has been living in Sudan since 1991, at a time when the Sudanese government's ideology was similar to his. But after the US put Sudan on its list of terrorism sponsors and began economic sanctions in 1993, Sudan began to change. In 1994, it handed the notorious terrorist "Carlos the Jackal" to France. In March 1996, Sudan's defense minister goes to Washington and engages in secret negotiations over bin Laden. Sudan offers to extradite bin Laden to anywhere he might stand trial. Some accounts claim that Sudan offers to hand bin Laden directly to the US, but the US decides not to take him because they do not have enough evidence at the time to charge him with a crime. ([Gellman 10/3/2001](#); [Gould 10/31/2001](#); [Rose 1/2002](#)) Counterterrorism "tsar" Richard Clarke later will call this story a "fable" invented by the Sudanese and Americans friendly to Sudan. He will point out that bin Laden "was an ideological blood brother, family friend, and benefactor" to Sudanese leader Hassan al-Turabi, so any offers to hand him over may have been disingenuous. ([Clarke 2004, pp. 142-43](#)) CIA Director George Tenet later will deny that Sudan made any offers to hand over bin Laden directly to the US. ([US Congress 10/17/2002](#)) The US reportedly asks Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Jordan to accept bin Laden into custody, but is refused by all three governments. ([Coll 2004, pp. 323](#)) The 9/11 Commission later will claim it finds no evidence that Sudan offers bin Laden directly to the US, but it does find evidence that Saudi Arabia was discussed as an option. ([9/11](#)

[Commission 3/23/2004](#)) US officials insist that bin Laden leave Sudan for anywhere but Somalia. One US intelligence source in the region later will state: “We kidnap minor drug czars and bring them back in burlap bags. Somebody didn’t want this to happen.”

([Gellman 10/3/2001](#); [Gould 10/31/2001](#)) On May 18, 1996, bin Laden flies to Afghanistan, and the US does not try to stop him (see [May 18, 1996](#)).

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



Omar al-Bashir. [*Source: PBS*] In 1993, the US put Sudan on its list of nations sponsoring terrorism, which automatically leads to economic sanctions. Sudanese leader Hassan al-Turabi espoused radical militant views, and allowed bin Laden to live in Sudan. But, as the 9/11 Commission later will note, “The Sudanese regime began to change. Though al-Turabi had been its inspirational leader, General Omar al-Bashir, president since 1989, had never been entirely under his thumb. Thus as outside pressures mounted, al-Bashir’s supporters began to displace those of al-Turabi.” In 1995, the US begins putting serious pressure on Sudan to deal with bin Laden, who is still living there. ([Rose 9/30/2001](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 61](#)) On March 8, 1996, the US sends Sudan a memorandum listing the measures Sudan can take to get the sanctions revoked. The second of six points listed is, “Provide us with names, dates of arrival, departure and destination and passport data on mujaheddin that Osama Bin Laden has brought into Sudan.” ([Weiner and Risen 9/21/1998](#); [Gellman 10/3/2001](#)) Sudanese intelligence had been monitoring bin Laden since he’d moved there in 1991, collecting a “vast intelligence database on Osama bin Laden and more than 200 leading members of his al-Qaeda terrorist network.” The files include information on their backgrounds, families, and contacts, plus photographs. There also is extensive information on bin Laden’s world-wide financial network. “One US source who has seen the files on bin Laden’s men in Khartoum said some were ‘an inch and a half thick.’” ([Rose 9/30/2001](#)) An Egyptian intelligence officer with extensive Sudanese intelligence contacts says, “They knew all about them: who they were, where they came from. They had copies of their passports, their tickets; they knew where they went. Of course that information could have helped enormously. It is the history of those people.” To the surprise of US officials making the demands, the Sudanese seem receptive to sharing the file. This leads to a battle within the US government between top FBI officials, who want to engage the Sudanese and get their files, and Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and Susan Rice,

her assistant secretary for Africa, who want to isolate them politically and economically. The National Security Council is also opposed. The US decides to increase its demands, and tells Sudan to turn over not just files on bin Laden, but bin Laden himself (see [March-May 1996](#)). Ultimately, the US will get Sudan to evict bin Laden in May 1996 (see [May 18, 1996](#)), but they will not press for the files and will not get them. ([Gellman 10/3/2001](#); [Rose 1/2002](#)) An American involved in the secret negotiations later will says, “I’ve never seen a brick wall like that before. Somebody let this slip up.... We could have dismantled his operations and put a cage on top. It was not a matter of arresting bin Laden but of access to information. That’s the story, and that’s what could have prevented September 11. I knew it would come back to haunt us.” ([Gould 10/31/2001](#)) Vanity Fair magazine later will opine, “How could this have happened? The simple answer is that the Clinton administration had accused Sudan of sponsoring terrorism, and refused to believe that anything it did to prove its bona fides could be genuine.” ([Rose 1/2002](#)) The US will continue to refuse Sudan’s offers to take the files (see [April 5, 1997](#); [February 5, 1998](#); [May 2000](#)).

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



President Clinton meeting with Abdulrahman Alamoudi in the 1990s. [*Source: PBS*] (click image to enlarge) Counterterrorism expert Steven Emerson, head of the Investigative Project on Terrorism, criticizes the Clinton administration for its ties to Abdulrahman Alamoudi in a Wall Street Journal editorial. Alamoudi is a prominent Muslim activist and heads an organization called the American Muslim Council (AMC). Emerson notes that on November 9, 1995, President Clinton and Vice President Al Gore met with Alamoudi as part of a meeting with 23 Muslim and Arab leaders. And on December 8, 1995, National Security Adviser Anthony Lake, met with Alamoudi at the White House along with several other American Islamic leaders. Emerson notes that Alamoudi openly supports Hamas, even though the US government officially designated it a terrorist financier in early 1995 (see [January 1995](#)), and he has been the primary public defender of high ranking Hamas leader Mousa Abu Marzouk, who the US declared a terrorism financier and then imprisoned in 1995 (see [July 5, 1995-May 1997](#)). He notes that Alamoudi’s AMC also has close ties to other Islamist groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood, and in 1994 the AMC co-sponsored a trip to the US for Sudanese leader Hasan al-Turabi, a well-known radical militant who is hosting Osama bin Laden in Sudan at the time. Emerson

concludes, “The president is right to invite Muslim groups to the White House. But by inviting the extremist element of the American Muslim community—represented by the AMC—the administration undercuts moderate Muslims and strengthens the groups committing terrorist attacks.” ([Emerson 3/13/1996](#)) It will later be reported that in 1994, US intelligence discovered that the AMC helped pass money from bin Laden to Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman, but it is not known if Clinton was aware of this (see [Shortly After March 1994](#)). But Alamoudi’s political influence in the US will not diminish and he will later be courted by future President Bush (see [July 2000](#)). He will eventually be sentenced to a long prison term for illegal dealings with Libya (see [October 15, 2004](#)).

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



A photo montage of the seven murdered monks from Tibhirine. [*Source: Cistercian Order of the Strict Observance*] (click image to enlarge) On March 26, 1996, a group of armed men break into a Trappist monastery in the remote mountain region of Tibhirine, Algeria, and kidnap seven of the nine monks living there. They are held hostage for two months and then Djamel Zitouni, head of the Groupe Islamique Armé (GIA), announces that they were all killed on May 21, 1996. The French government and the Roman Catholic church state the GIA is to blame. But years later, Abdelkhader Tigha, former head of Algeria’s military security, will claim the kidnapping was planned by Algerian officials to get the monks out of a highly contested area. He says government agents kidnapped the monks and then handed them to a double agent in the GIA. But the plan went awry and the militants assigned to carry it out killed the monks. Furthermore, it will later be alleged that Zitouni was a mole for Algerian intelligence (see [October 27, 1994-July 16, 1996](#)). ([Lichfield 12/24/2002](#); [United Press International 8/20/2004](#)) In 2004, Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika will reopen the controversy when he says of the monks’ deaths, “Not all truth is good to say when [the issue is still] hot.” ([United Press International 8/20/2004](#)) He will also say, “Don’t forget that the army saved Algeria. Whatever the deviations there may have been, and there were some, just because you have some rotten tomatoes you do not throw all of them away.” ([Wilkinson 4/7/2004](#))

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

It will later be revealed in a US trial that, by this time, US intelligence agents are aware that an al-Qaeda cell exists in Kenya. (In fact, it may have been aware of this since late

1994 (see [Late 1994](#))). ([Kelly 1/1/2001](#)) Further evidence confirming and detailing the cell is discovered in May and June of 1996 (see [May 21, 1996](#)). By August 1996, US intelligence is continually monitoring five telephone lines in Nairobi used by the cell members, such as Wadiah El-Hage. The tapping reveals that the cell is providing false passports and other documents to operatives. They are sending coded telephone numbers to and from al-Qaeda headquarters in Afghanistan. The surveillance is apparently being conducted without the required approval of either President Clinton or Attorney General Janet Reno. ([Associated Press 12/19/2000](#); [Kelly 1/1/2001](#)) Prudence Bushnell, the US ambassador to Kenya, will be briefed about the cell in early 1997, but will be told there is no evidence of a specific threat against the embassy or American interests in Kenya. ([Risen and Weiser 1/9/1999](#)) Ali Mohamed, an al-Qaeda double agent living in California, will later admit in US court that he had been in long distance contact with Wadiah El-Hage, one of the leaders of the cell, since at least 1996. It will also be revealed that US intelligence had been wiretapping Mohamed's California phone calls since at least 1994 (see [Late 1994](#)), so presumably US intelligence is recording calls between Mohamed and the Kenya cell from both ends. The Nairobi phone taps continue until at least August 1997, when Kenyan and US agents conduct a joint search of El-Hage's Nairobi house (see [August 21, 1997](#)). ([United States of America v. Ali Mohamed 10/20/2000](#); [Associated Press 12/19/2000](#); [Kelly 1/1/2001](#))

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

Ramzi Yousef, mastermind along with Khalid Shaikh Mohammed of the 1993 WTC bombing and the Operation Bojinka plots, is in a maximum-security prison, sentenced to hundreds of years of prison time for his plots. However, he can communicate with Gregory Scarpa Jr., a mob figure in the cell next to him. The FBI sets up a sting operation with Scarpa's cooperation to learn more of what and whom Yousef knows. Scarpa is given a telephone, and he allows Yousef to use it. However, Yousef uses the sting operation for his own ends, communicating with operatives on the outside in code language without giving away their identities. He attempts to find passports to get co-conspirators into the US, and there is some discussion about imminent attacks on US passenger jets. Realizing the scheme has backfired, the FBI terminates the telephone sting in late 1996, but Yousef manages to keep communicating with the outside world for several more months. ([Smith 9/24/2000](#); [Smith 1/21/2002](#); [Lance 2003, pp. 280-82](#))

April 11, 1996: Mohamed Atta Makes Will

Mohamed Atta makes his will in Germany. It is not clear that the text of the will is actually written by Atta. For example, author Lawrence Wright will say that Atta merely signs a "standardized will" he gets from the mosque, and journalists Yosri Fouda and Nick Fielding will say that the will is a "printed-out form devised by the mosque." Atta apparently makes it as he is angered by new reports of an Israeli operation against

Lebanon, which begins on this day. ([Fouda and Fielding 2003, pp. 81-2](#); [Wright 2006, pp. 307](#)) Although the act of making a will is not that unusual for a 27-year old Muslim, the content of the will is unusual, perhaps reflecting the radical environment of the mosque (see [Early 1996](#)). For example, it says: "... [6] I don't want a pregnant woman or a person who is not clean to come and say good bye to me because I don't approve it... [9] The person who will wash my body near my genitals must wear gloves on his hands so he won't touch my genitals... [11] I don't want any women to go to my grave at all during my funeral or on any occasion thereafter." The will is witnessed by Abdelghani Mouzdi and Mounir El-Motassadeq, who also make wills around the same time. ([Atta 4/11/1996](#); [Burke 2004, pp. 242](#); [McDermott 2005, pp. 49, 245-7, 274](#))

April 25, 1996: New Anti-terrorism Law Passed

President Clinton signs the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act, which the New York Times calls "broad legislation that provides new tools and penalties for Federal law-enforcement officials to use in fighting terrorism..." Many Republicans opposed the bill, and forced a compromise that removed increased wiretap authority and lower standards for lawsuits against sellers of guns used in crimes. CNN called the version that finally passed the Republican-controlled Congress a "watered-down version of the White House's proposal. The Clinton administration has been critical of the bill, calling it too weak. The original House bill, passed last month, had deleted many of the Senate's anti-terrorism provisions because of lawmakers' concerns about increasing federal law enforcement powers. Some of those provisions were restored in the compromise bill." ([CNN 4/18/1996](#); [Mitchell 4/25/1996](#)) An unusual coalition of gun rights groups such as the National Rifle Association (NRA) and civil liberties groups such as the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) led the opposition to the law. ([Labaton 4/17/1996](#)) The law makes it illegal in the US to provide "material support" to any organization banned by the State Department. ([Whitaker 9/10/2001](#))

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

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

Southeast Asia operations were penetrated years before an important al-Qaeda summit in Malaysia discussing the 9/11 plot (see January 5-8, 2000).

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

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

May 1996: US Seeks Stability in Afghanistan for Unocal Pipeline



Robin Raphel. [Source: Mark Wilson / Agence France-Presse] Robin Raphel, Deputy Secretary of State for South Asia, speaks to the Russian Deputy Foreign Minister about Afghanistan. She says that the US government “now hopes that peace in the region will facilitate US business interests,” such as the proposed Unocal gas pipeline from Turkmenistan through Afghanistan to Pakistan. ([Coll 2004, pp. 330](#))

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

French intelligence secretly monitors a meeting of Saudi billionaires at the Hotel Royale Monceau in Paris this month with the financial representative of al-Qaeda. “The Saudis, including a key Saudi prince joined by Muslim and non-Muslim gun traffickers, [meet] to determine who would pay how much to Osama. This [is] not so much an act of support but of protection—a payoff to keep the mad bomber away from Saudi Arabia.” ([Palast 2002, pp. 100](#)) Participants also agree that bin Laden should be rewarded for promoting Wahhabism (an austere form of Islam that requires literal interpretation of the Koran) in Chechnya, Kashmir, Bosnia, and other places. ([Brisard 10/29/2003](#)) This extends an alleged secret deal first made between the Saudi government and bin Laden in 1991. Later, 9/11 victims’ relatives will rely on the “unpublished French intelligence report” of this meeting in their lawsuit against important Saudis. ([Gordon 8/16/2002](#)) According to French counterterrorism expert Jean-Charles Brisard and/or reporter Greg Palast, there are about 20 people at the meeting, including Saudi intelligence head Prince Turki al-Faisal, an unnamed brother of bin Laden and an unnamed representative from the Saudi Defense Ministry. ([Brisard 10/29/2003](#); [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation 10/29/2003](#)) Palast claims that Saudi businessman Abdullah Taha Bakhsh attends the meeting. Bakhsh also saved Bush Jr.’s Harken Oil from bankruptcy around 1990. Palast claims the notorious Saudi billionaire Adnan Khashoggi also attends the meeting. ([Democracy Now! 3/4/2003](#); [Bosse 3/20/2003](#)) In a somewhat tongue-in-cheek manner, Slate has claimed that Khashoggi is a “shadowy international arms merchant” who is “connected to every scandal of the past 40 years.” Amongst other things, he was a major investor in BCCI and a key player in the Iran-Contra affair. [Slate, 12/4/00, Slate, 11/14/01, Slate, 3/12/03] ([Noah 12/4/2000](#); [Noah 11/14/2001](#); [Noah 3/12/2003](#)) Palast, noting that the French monitored the meeting, asks, “Since US intelligence was thus likely informed, the question becomes why didn’t the government immediately move against the Saudis?” ([Palast 2002, pp. 100](#))

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

Al-Qaeda begins using an important communications hub in Yemen at this time. This is according to counterterrorism expert Rohan Gunaratna, who claims to have had access to “hundreds of telephone, email, and other communications” between al-Qaeda leaders due to his close ties to Western intelligence agencies. The hub uses the telephone line of Ahmed al-Hada, who lives in Sana’a, Yemen. Al-Hada is a veteran mujaheddin and close friend of bin Laden. He also has many militant relatives who will use the hub, including his son-in-law 9/11 hijacker Khalid Almihdhar. The hub is used as a switchboard to “divert and receive calls and messages from the [Middle East] region and beyond.” ([Gunaratna 2003, pp. 2-3, 16, 188](#)) US intelligence will begin monitoring calls to the hub by late 1998, if not before (see [August 5-25, 1998](#)).

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

After pressure from the US (see [March-May 1996](#)), the Sudanese government asks bin Laden to leave the country. He decides to go to Afghanistan. He departs along with many other al-Qaeda members, plus much money and resources. Bin Laden flies to Afghanistan in a C-130 transport plane with an entourage of about 150 men, women, and children, stopping in Doha, Qatar, to refuel, where governmental officials greet him warmly. ([McDermott 9/1/2002](#); [Coll 2004, pp. 325](#)) The US knows in advance that bin Laden is going to Afghanistan, but does nothing to stop him. Sudan's defense minister Elfatih Erwa later says in an interview, "We warned [the US]. In Sudan, bin Laden and his money were under our control. But we knew that if he went to Afghanistan no one could control him. The US didn't care; they just didn't want him in Somalia. It's crazy." ([Gellman 10/3/2001](#); [Gould 10/31/2001](#)) US-al-Qaeda double agent Ali Mohamed handles security during the move. ([Sullivan and Neff 10/21/2001](#))

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

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

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

A passenger ferry capsizes on Lake Victoria in East Africa and one of the more than 800 who drown is Abu Ubaidah al-Banshiri, al-Qaeda's military commander (his job will be taken over by Mohammed Atef). Al-Qaeda operatives Wadih El-Hage and Fazul Abdullah Mohammed (a.k.a. Haroun Fazul) show up at the disaster scene to find out if al-Banshiri is still alive. There are many journalists covering the disaster and a Western investigator recognizes Fazul and El-Hage when they happen to appear in some of the widely broadcast footage. ([Vick 11/23/1998](#)) The CIA already has much of El-Hage's biography on file by this time. It appears this event, along with the defection of Jamal al-Fadl (see [June 1996-April 1997](#)), only strengthen knowledge of the Kenya cell gained earlier in the year (see [April 1996](#)). By August 1996, if not earlier, the phones of El-Hage and Fazul in Nairobi are bugged and closely monitored by the CIA and NSA. Apparently, not much is learned from these phone calls because the callers speak in code, but the CIA does learn about other al-Qaeda operatives from the numbers and locations that are being

called. This information is shared with the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF), and the JTTF becomes "convinced that flipping El-Hage [is] the best way to get to bin Laden." ([Miller, Stone, and Mitchell 2002, pp. 200](#))

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

In 1996, al-Qaeda assumes control of Ariana Airlines, Afghanistan's national airline, for use in its illegal trade network. Passenger flights become few and erratic, as planes are used to fly drugs, weapons, gold, and personnel, primarily between Afghanistan, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Pakistan. The Emirate of Sharjah, in the UAE, becomes a hub for al-Qaeda drug and arms smuggling. Typically, "large quantities of drugs" are flown from Kandahar, Afghanistan, to Sharjah, and large quantities of weapons are flown back to Afghanistan. ([Williams 11/18/2001](#)) About three to four flights run the route each day. Many weapons come from Victor Bout, a notorious Russian arms dealer based in Sharjah. ([Pasternak and Braun 1/20/2002](#)) Afghan taxes on opium production are paid in gold, and then the gold bullion is flown to Dubai, UAE, and laundered into cash. ([Farah 2/17/2002](#)) Taliban officials regularly provide militants with false papers identifying them as Ariana Airlines employees so they can move freely around the world. A former National Security Council official later claims the US is well aware at the time that al-Qaeda agents regularly fly on Ariana Airlines, but the US fails to act for several years. The US does press the UAE for tighter banking controls, but moves "delicately, not wanting to offend an ally in an already complicated relationship," and little changes by 9/11. ([Williams 11/18/2001](#)) Much of the money for the 9/11 hijackers flows through these Sharjah, UAE, channels. There also are reports suggesting that Ariana Airlines might have been used to train Islamic militants as pilots. The illegal use of Ariana Airlines helps convince the United Nations to impose sanctions against Afghanistan in 1999, but the sanctions lack teeth and do not stop the airline. A second round of sanctions finally stops foreign Ariana Airlines flights, but its charter flights and other charter services keep the illegal network running. ([Williams 11/18/2001](#))

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

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

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

June 1996: Informant’s Clues Point to KSM



Wali Khan Amin Shah. [*Source: Peter Lance*] While al-Qaeda operative Jamal al-Fadl gives a treasure trove of useful information on al-Qaeda to US intelligence (see [June 1996-April 1997](#)), one person he describes in detail is Wali Khan Amin Shah. Shah was one of the plotters of the Operation Bojinka plot (see [February 7, 1995](#)). Al-Fadl reveals that Shah has al-Qaeda ties. Author Peter Lance notes that US intelligence should have concluded that Shah’s fellow Operation Bojinka plotter, Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM), also has al-Qaeda ties. However, there is no new effort to find KSM, and he later goes on to mastermind the 9/11 attacks. ([Lance 2003, pp. 330-31](#))

June 1996: Bin Laden Meets with Pakistani Military Leaders

Controversial author Gerald Posner claims bin Laden and al-Qaeda leader Abu Zubaida meet with senior members of Pakistan’s military, including Mushaf Ali Mir, who becomes chief of Pakistan’s air force in 2000. Bin Laden had moved to Afghanistan the month before, and the Pakistanis offer bin Laden protection if he allies with the Taliban.

The alliance proves successful, and bin Laden calls it “blessed by the Saudis,” who are already giving money to both the Taliban and al-Qaeda. ([Posner 2003, pp. 105-06](#); [Zabriskie 8/31/2003](#)) Perhaps not coincidentally, this meeting comes only one month after a deal is reportedly made that reaffirms Saudi support for al-Qaeda. Bin Laden is initially based in Jalalabad, which is free of Taliban control, but after the deal he moves his base to Kandahar, which is the center of Taliban power. ([Raman 9/17/2003](#))

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



Jamal al-Fadl testifying in a courtroom.

Because his identity has been kept secret, his face has been blocked out. [*Source: CNN*] Jamal al-Fadl, an al-Qaeda operative from al-Qaeda’s first meeting in the late 1980s until 1995, tells the US everything he knows about al-Qaeda. Before al-Fadl’s debriefings, US intelligence had amassed thick files on bin Laden and his associates and contacts. However, they had had no idea how the many pieces fit together. But an official says, “After al-Fadl, everything fell into place.” ([Miller, Stone, and Mitchell 2002, pp. 154-65](#)) The New Yorker will later call al-Fadl “arguably the United States’ most valuable informant on al-Qaeda.” FBI agent Dan Coleman will later say on al-Fadl, “He’s been very, very important to us. When it comes to understanding al-Qaeda, he’s the Rosetta Stone.” FBI agent Mike Anticev will similarly say, “He spoke to us in great detail, and everything that he told us panned out.” CIA officials debrief al-Fadl for a month and a half. Then the CIA hands him, and transcripts of all their interviews with him, over to the FBI. ([Mayer 9/11/2006](#)) Coleman and US prosecutor Patrick Fitzgerald interrogate al-Fadl at a US military base in Germany for months. ([Lance 2006, pp. 261](#)) Roughly between November 1996 and April 1997, al-Fadl tells the FBI about:

- The historical background of al-Qaeda. Al-Fadl was one of al-Qaeda’s founding members (see [August 11-20, 1988](#)).
- The structure of al-Qaeda and its leadership composition.
- Al-Qaeda’s objectives and direction.
- Its financial infrastructure and networks. Al-Fadl has extensive knowledge of this because he worked as an al-Qaeda financial officer (see [December 1996-January 1997](#)).
- Its connections and collaboration with other terrorist groups and supporters.
- Its activities against US soldiers in Somalia (see [October 3-4, 1993](#)).

- Its activities in Bosnia. Al-Fadl was sent there on several missions (see [Autumn 1992](#) and [Autumn 1992](#)).
 - The Al-Kifah Refugee Center, al-Qaeda's most important charity front in the US. Al-Fadl worked there in the 1980s (see [1986-1993](#)).
 - Bin Laden's efforts to acquire weapons of mass destruction. Al-Fadl was personally involved in an effort to buy uranium for al-Qaeda (see [Late 1993](#)). ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 479](#))
 - Bin Laden's plans to attack either inside the US or US embassies (see [Late 1996](#)).
- Al-Fadl continues to help US intelligence until current day. For instance, in 2000, he will help US officials capture his brother-in-law, Mohammed Suliman al-Nalfi, who is said to be close to Ayman al-Zawahiri. Al-Nalfi will eventually be sentenced to ten years in prison in the US. Al-Fadl will have no knowledge of the 9/11 plot, but he will continue to identify captured al-Qaeda operatives after 9/11. ([Mayer 9/11/2006](#)) Interestingly, al-Fadl, a Sudanese citizen, will later claim that he worked with the Sudanese intelligence agency with the direct approval of bin Laden. ([Day 2. United States of America v. Usama bin Laden, et al. 2/6/2001](#))

June 1996-February 1997: British Intelligence Recruits Prominent Al-Qaeda Imam, Extent of His Cooperation Is Unclear



MI5 headquarters in London.

[Source: *Cryptome*] In June and December 1996, and again in February 1997, a British MI5 agent meets with radical Muslim imam Abu Qatada, hoping he will inform on his fellow extremists. Qatada is a Jordanian national who entered Britain in September 1993 using a forged United Arab Emirates passport, and was granted asylum in 1994. In his meetings with the MI5 agent he claims to “wield powerful, spiritual influence over the Algerian community in London.” He says he does not want London to become a center for settling Islamic scores, and that he will report anyone damaging British interests. He says the individuals he has influence over pose no threat to British security, and promises that “he would not bite the hand that fed him.” He also promises to “report anyone damaging the interests of [Britain].” The MI5 agent records that “surprisingly enough— [Abu Qatada] revealed little love of the methodology and policies pursued by Osama bin Laden. He certainly left me with the impression that he had nothing but contempt for bin Laden’s distant financing of the jihad.” ([Special Immigration Appeals Commission 1/2004](#); [Israel 3/23/2004](#); [Norton-Taylor 3/24/2004](#); [McGrory and Ford 3/25/2004](#)) Yet

Qatada is later described as being a “key [British] figure” in al-Qaeda related terror activity. Videos of his sermons are later discovered in the Hamburg flat used by Mohamed Atta. Richard Reid, the shoe bomber, and Zacarias Moussaoui, who is later convicted in connection with the 9/11 attacks, are alleged to have sought religious advice from him. ([BBC 8/11/2005](#); [Jeffery 8/11/2005](#)) Reportedly, after Qatada’s February 1997 meeting with the British agent, no further such meetings occur. ([Special Immigration Appeals Commission 1/2004](#).) However, some French officials later allege that Qatada continues to be an MI5 agent, and this is what allows him to avoid arrest after 9/11 (see [Early December 2001](#)). ([Burke 2/24/2002](#))

Mid-1996-September 11, 2001: KSM Travels World; Involved in Many Al-Qaeda Operations

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

June 24, 1996: Uzbekistan Cuts a Deal with Enron

Uzbekistan signs a deal with Enron “that could lead to joint development of the Central Asian nation’s potentially rich natural gas fields.” ([Woodyard 6/25/1996](#)) The \$1.3 billion venture teams Enron with the state companies of Russia and Uzbekistan. ([Houston Chronicle 6/30/1996](#)) On July 8, 1996, the US government agrees to give \$400 million to help Enron and an Uzbek state company develop these natural gas fields. ([Oil & Gas Journal 7/8/1996](#))

June 25, 1996: Khobar Towers Are Bombed; Unclear Who Culprit Is



Destruction at the Khobar Towers,

Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. [Source: *US Air Force*] Explosions destroy the Khobar Towers in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, killing 19 American soldiers and wounding 500. ([CNN 6/26/1996](#)) Saudi officials later interrogate the suspects, declare them guilty, and execute them—without letting the FBI talk to them. ([PBS Frontline 2001](#); [Marlow 11/19/2001](#)) Saudis blame Hezbollah, the Iranian-influenced group, but US investigators still believe bin Laden was involved. ([Seattle Times 10/29/2001](#)) US intelligence listens when al-Qaeda's number two leader Ayman al-Zawahiri calls bin Laden two days after the bombing to congratulate him on the operation (see [June 27, 1996](#)). The New York Times will later report that Mamoun Darkazanli, a suspected al-Qaeda financier with extensive ties to the al-Qaeda Hamburg cell, is involved in the attack. ([Miller 9/25/2001](#); [Tagliabue and Bonner 9/29/2001](#)) Bin Laden will admit to instigating the attacks in a 1998 interview. ([Rosenberg 9/24/2001](#)) Ironically, the bin Laden family's construction company will be awarded the contract to rebuild the installation. ([Mayer and Szechenyi 11/5/2001](#)) In 1997, Canada will catch one of the Khobar Tower attackers and extradite him to the US. However, in 1999, he will be shipped back to Saudi Arabia before he can reveal what he knows about al-Qaeda and the Saudis. One anonymous insider will call it "President Clinton's parting kiss to the Saudis." ([Palast 2002, pp. 102](#)) In June 2001, a US grand jury will indict 13 Saudis for the bombing. According to the indictment, Iran and Hezbollah were also involved in the attack. ([US Congress 7/24/2003](#))

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

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

will show no interest in it (see [August 2001](#)). Fifteen of the nineteen 9/11 hijackers will reportedly come from Saudi Arabia.

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

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

Mid-1996: Bin Laden Withdraws Support from Algerian GIA, Claims It Has Been Penetrated by Spies

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

(Mid-1996): French and British Intelligence Listen in on Al-Qaeda Communications, Asset Relays Messages for Al-Qaeda

Omar Nasiri, who informs on al-Qaeda for the British intelligence service MI6 and the French service Direction Générale de la Sécurité Extérieure (DSGE), makes contact with al-Qaeda logistics manager Abu Zubaida using a telephone bugged by MI6. Nasiri met Abu Zubaida in Pakistan (see [Mid 1995-Spring 1996](#)). Usually, when Nasiri calls the number, he talks to one of Abu Zubaida's associates, but sometimes he talks to Abu

Zubaida himself. The phone is used to relay messages between Abu Zubaida in Pakistan and al-Qaeda representatives in London, in particular leading imam Abu Qatada. The French will apparently make great use of this information (see [October 1998 and After](#)). ([Nasiri 2006, pp. 270-1, 273, 281](#))

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

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

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

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

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

US officials identify crop dusters and suicide flights as potential weapons that could threaten the Olympic Games in Atlanta, Georgia. They take steps to prevent any air attacks. They ban planes from getting too close to Olympic events. During the games, they deploy Black Hawk helicopters and US Customs Service jets to intercept suspicious aircraft over the Olympic venues. Agents monitor crop-duster flights within hundreds of miles of downtown Atlanta. They place armed fighter jets on standby at local air bases. Flights to Atlanta get special passenger screening. Law enforcement agents also fan out to regional airports throughout northern Georgia “to make sure nobody hijacked a small aircraft and tried to attack one of the venues,” says Woody Johnson, the FBI agent in charge. Counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke will use this same security blanket approach to other major events, referring to the approach as “Atlanta Rules.”(see [January 20, 1997](#)) ([Fineman and Pasternak 11/18/2001](#); [Clarke 2004, pp. 108-09](#); [Paltrow 4/1/2004](#))

July 7, 1996: ‘A Clean Break’ Outlines New Middle East Strategy for Israel



Richard Perle. [*Source: Public domain*]The Institute for Advanced Strategic and Political Studies, an Israeli think tank, publishes a paper entitled “A Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing the Realm.” ([Novak 3/6/2003](#)) Lead author Richard Perle will later become chairman of President Bush’s influential Defense Policy Board. Several other co-authors will hold key positions in Washington after Bush’s election. In the paper, Perle and his co-authors advise the new, right wing Israeli leader Benjamin Netanyahu to make a complete break with the past by adopting a strategy “based on an entirely new intellectual foundation, one that restores strategic initiative and provides the nation the room to engage every possible energy on rebuilding Zionism....” The first step is to be the removal of Saddam Hussein in Iraq. A war with Iraq will destabilize the entire Middle East, allowing governments in Syria, Iran, Lebanon, and

other countries to be replaced. "Israel will not only contain its foes; it will transcend them," the paper concludes ([Guardian 9/3/2002](#)) , citing the original paper at ([Studies 7/8/1996](#)) . Perle will be instrumental in moving Bush's US policy toward war with Iraq after the 9/11 attacks.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Bin Laden issuing his 1996 fatwa. [Source: PBS] Secure in his new base in Afghanistan, Osama bin Laden issues a public fatwa, or religious decree, authorizing attacks on Western military targets in the Arabian Peninsula. This eliminates any doubts that bin Laden is merely a financier of attacks, rather than an active militant. ([US Congress 9/18/2002](#)) He made a similar call to attack US troops in Saudi Arabia in an open letter to the Saudi king the year before (see [August 1995](#)), which was followed by an actual attack (see [November 13, 1995](#)). He will issue a new fatwa in 1998 authorizing attacks against the US and its allies all over the world (see [February 22, 1998](#)).

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

A secret CIA report indicates the Pakistani ISI is giving “at least \$30,000 - and possibly as much as \$60,000 - per month” to the Harkat ul-Ansar, a Pakistani radical militant group that will be renamed Harkat ul-Mujahedeen (HUM) one year later. By this time, US intelligence is aware this group kidnapped and killed Americans and other Westerners in 1995 (see [July 4, 1995](#)). The CIA reports that Pakistan says it is reducing some of its monetary support to the group, presumably in an effort to avoid being placed on the US list of state sponsors of terrorism. But apparently this is just posturing, because in 2001 the State Department will report that the ISI is continuing to fund HUM (see [April 30, 2001](#)). The CIA also notes that HUM “might undertake terrorist actions against civilian airliners.” Saeed Sheikh, an alleged 9/11 paymaster, is a leader of the group (see [April 1993](#)), and in 1999 an airplane hijacking will free him and another HUM leader from prison (see [December 24-31, 1999](#)). ([Central Intelligence Agency 8/1996](#)) Several months later, another secret US report will note the growing ties between HUM, Osama bin Laden, and the Taliban. But the US will not take any serious action against HUM or Pakistan. ([US Embassy \(Islamabad\) 2/6/1997](#)) HUM deputy chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman Khalil will be one of the cosigners to bin Laden’s 1998 fatwa declaring it a Muslim duty to kill Americans and Jews (see [February 22, 1998](#)). ([Scott 2007, pp. 172](#))

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

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

August 14, 1996: State Department Calls Bin Laden One of Most Significant Terrorism Sponsors in the World

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

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

Based on a review of the Lexis-Nexus database, the term al-Qaeda is first mentioned in the mainstream media on this day. A “United Press International” article draws from a State Department fact sheet released the same day (see [August 14, 1996](#)), and states, “Earlier, during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Usama Bin Ladin drew on his family’s wealth ‘plus donations received from sympathetic merchant families in the Gulf region’ to organize the Islamic Salvation Foundation, or al-Qaida. The group established recruitment centers in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan that enlisted and sheltered thousands of Arab recruits to fight the Soviets. ‘This network remains active,’ the State Department said.” [The spelling is the same as in the original.] ([US Department of State 8/14/1996](#); [Banales 8/14/1996](#)) However, the term will remain little used and little understood by the media for the next several years. For instance, the New York Times will first mention the term two years later in quoting the courtroom testimony of one of the plotters of the 1998 US embassy bombing. It is referred to as “al-Qaeda, an international terrorist group, led by Mr. bin Laden.” ([Johnston 8/28/1998](#))

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

A Bosnian Muslim named Munib Zahiragic joins Bosnia's Muslim secret police by mid-1995, while he is also working for the Sarajevo office of the US-based charity Benevolence International Foundation (BIF). By September 1996, he is stealing top secret documents and giving them to Enaam Arnaout, the US executive director of BIF and also linked to al-Qaeda. He gives Arnaout hundreds of documents about mujaheddin and al-Qaeda operatives. Arnaout then passes them on to al-Qaeda, allowing many to avoid capture. For instance, high-ranking al-Qaeda leader Mamdouh Mahmud Salim is tipped off that investigators are onto him when he visits Bosnia in 1998 (see [May 7, 1998](#)). After Zahiragic leaves the secret police in June 2000, he works full time for BIF. In March 2002, Bosnian police will raid the BIF's Sarajevo office, arrest Zahiragic, and discover weapons, booby traps, fake passports, and bomb making plans. A raid on another BIF office at the same time will uncover the stolen documents. Zahiragic is convicted of espionage in Bosnia a year later but he is only sentenced to two years in prison. ([Associated Press 6/30/2003](#); [Schindler 2007, pp. 288-289](#)) Despite his arrest, Bosnian intelligence agencies remain completely penetrated by others. Highly classified Bosnian documents are sometimes found with Islamist militants in Bosnia and are even published in militant newsletters. ([Schindler 2007, pp. 312-313](#))

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



Ahmed Rashid. [*Source: Jane Scherr/ University of California, Berkeley*] Ahmed Rashid, correspondent for the Far Eastern Economic Review and The Daily Telegraph, conducts extensive investigative research in Afghanistan after the Taliban conquest of Kabul. As he will later write in his 2000 book, *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia*, he sees a “massive regional polarization between the USA, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and the Taliban on one side and Iran, Russia, the Central Asian states and the anti-Taliban alliance on the other. While some focused on whether there was a revival of the old CIA-ISI connection from the Afghan jihad era, it became apparent to me that the strategy over pipelines had become the driving force behind Washington's interest in the Taliban, which in turn was prompting a counter-reaction from Russia and Iran. But exploring this was like entering a labyrinth, where

nobody spoke the truth or divulged their real motives or interests. It was the job of a detective rather than a journalist because there were few clues. Even gaining access to the real players in the game was difficult, because policy was not being driven by politicians and diplomats, but by the secretive oil companies and intelligence services of the regional states.” ([Rashid 2001, pp. 163](#))

September 5, 1996: Yousef Trial Ignores Bojinka 9/11 Blueprint Plot

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

September 27, 1996: Victorious Taliban Supported by Pakistan; Viewed by US, Unocal as Stabilizing Force



Taliban forces conquering Afghanistan. [*Source: Banded Artists Productions*]/The Taliban conquer Kabul ([Kugler 8/19/2002](#)) , establishing control over much of Afghanistan. A surge in the Taliban’s military successes at this time is later attributed to an increase in direct military assistance from Pakistan’s ISI. ([Frantz 12/8/2001](#)) The oil company Unocal is hopeful that the Taliban will stabilize Afghanistan and allow its pipeline plans to go forward. According to some reports, “preliminary agreement [on the pipeline] was reached between the [Taliban and Unocal] long before the fall of Kabul Oil industry insiders say the dream of securing a pipeline across Afghanistan is the main reason why Pakistan, a close political ally of America’s, has been so supportive of the Taliban, and why America has quietly acquiesced in its conquest of Afghanistan.” ([Lockwood 10/11/1996](#)) The 9/11 Commission later concludes that some State Department diplomats are willing to “give

the Taliban a chance” because it might be able to bring stability to Afghanistan, which would allow a Unocal oil pipeline to be built through the country. ([9/11 Commission 3/24/2004](#))

September 30, 1996: CIA Reports Taliban Are Keeping Bin Laden’s Training Camps Open, Closing Some Other Camps

Four days after the Taliban conquers Kabul (see [September 27, 1996](#)), a classified CIA report notes that as the Taliban advance, they are closing some militant training camps but not others. They have closed the camps controlled by militant leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, militant leader Abdul Rasul Sayyaf, and Jamaat-i-Islami (a religious political party in Pakistan). They have kept open camps controlled by Osama bin Laden, militant leader Yunas Khalis, the Pakistan-based militant group Harkat ul-Mujahdeen, and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (another religious political party in Pakistan). ([Central Intelligence Agency 9/30/1996](#))

October 1996: Iranian Hijacking Plot Uncovered

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

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



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

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

October 1996: Security Firm with Connections to Bush Family Acquires Security Contract for World Trade Center; Possible Security Breach Is Alleged

A security company called Stratesec acquires an \$8.3 million contract to help provide security at the World Trade Center. It is one of numerous contractors hired in the upgrade of security at the WTC following the 1993 bombing. Stratesec, which was formerly called Securacom, is responsible for installing the “security-description plan”—the layout of the electronic security system—at the World Trade Center. It has a “completion contract” to provide some of the center’s security “up to the day the buildings fell down,” according to Barry McDaniel, its CEO from January 2002. Another of Stratesec’s biggest security contracts, between 1995 and 1998, is with the Metropolitan Washington Airport Authority, providing electronic security for Reagan National Airport and Dulles International Airport. Their work includes maintaining the airfield access systems, the CCTV (closed circuit television) systems, and the electronic badging systems. American Airlines Flight 77—one of the planes hijacked on 9/11—takes off from Dulles. Marvin P. Bush, the youngest brother of future President George W. Bush, is a director at Stratesec from 1993 to June 2000, when most of their work on these big projects is done. Wirt D. Walker III, a distant relative of George W. Bush, is chairman of the board at Stratesec from 1992, and its CEO from 1999 until January 2002. Another of Stratesec’s directors, from 1991 to 2001, is Mishal Yousef Saud Al Sabah, who is a member of the Kuwaiti royal family. Al Sabah is also chairman of an investment company called the Kuwait-American Corporation (KuWAm), which, between 1993 and 1999, holds a large, often controlling share of Stratesec. In 1996, it owns 90 percent of the company; by 1999 it owns 47 percent. According to Wayne Black, the head of a Florida-based security firm, it is delicate for a security company serving international facilities to be so interlinked with

a foreign-owned company. He suggests: "Somebody knew somebody." Black also points out that when a company has a security contract, "you know the inner workings of everything." Furthermore, if another company is linked to the security company, then "what's on your computer is on their computer." After 9/11 Stratesec CEO Barry McDaniel is asked whether FBI or other agents have questioned him or others at Stratesec about their security work related to 9/11. He answers, "No." ([Burns 1/20/2003](#); [Burns 2/4/2003](#); [Burns 3/1/2003](#); [Burns 4/15/2003](#); [Burns 2/15/2005](#))

October 1996-early 2002: Arms Dealer Aligns with Taliban and ISI



Victor Bout. [*Source: New York Times*]/Russian arms merchant Victor Bout, who has been selling weapons to Afghanistan's Northern Alliance since 1992, switches sides, and begins selling weapons to the Taliban and al-Qaeda instead. ([Pasternak and Braun 1/20/2002](#); [Smith et al. 4/17/2002](#); [Los Angeles Times 5/19/2002](#)) The deal comes immediately after the Taliban captures Kabul in late October 1996 and gains the upper hand in Afghanistan's civil war. In one trade in 1996, Bout's company delivers at least 40 tons of Russian weapons to the Taliban, earning about \$50 million. ([Osborn 2/16/2002](#)) Two intelligence agencies later confirm that Bout trades with the Taliban "on behalf of the Pakistan government." In late 2000, several Ukrainians sell 150 to 200 T-55 and T-62 tanks to the Taliban in a deal conducted by the ISI, and Bout helps fly the tanks to Afghanistan. ([van Niekerk and Verloy 2/5/2002](#)) Bout formerly worked for the Russian KGB, and now operates the world's largest private weapons transport network. Based in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bout operates freely there until well after 9/11. The US becomes aware of Bout's widespread illegal weapons trading in Africa in 1995, and of his ties to the Taliban in 1996, but they fail to take effective action against him for years. ([Los Angeles Times 5/19/2002](#)) US pressure on the UAE in November 2000 to close down Bout's operations there is ignored. Press reports calling him "the merchant of death" also fail to pressure the UAE. ([Financial Times 6/10/2000](#); [Bowcott and Norton-Taylor 12/23/2000](#)) After President Bush is elected, it appears the US gives up trying to get Bout, until after 9/11. ([Farah 2/26/2002](#); [Smith et al. 4/17/2002](#)) Bout moves to Russia in 2002. He is seemingly protected from prosecution by the Russian government, which in early 2002 will claim, "There are no grounds for believing that this Russian citizen has committed illegal acts." ([Smith et al. 4/17/2002](#)) The Guardian

suggests that Bout may have worked with the CIA when he traded with the Northern Alliance, and this fact may be hampering current international efforts to catch him. ([Smith et al. 4/17/2002](#))

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

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

October 1996-Late April 1999: Hani Hanjour Associates with FBI Suspects

On several occasion between 1996 and 1999, hijacker Hani Hanjour attends flight schools in Arizona (see [October 1996-December 1997](#); [1998](#)). The 9/11 Commission will later note, "It is clear that when Hanjour lived in Arizona in the 1990s, he associated with several individuals who have been the subject of counterterrorism investigations." Some of the time, he is accompanied by two friends, Bandar Al Hazmi and Rayed Abdullah. Al Hazmi and Abdullah have been friends with each other in high school in Saudi Arabia, but it is not known if either knew Hanjour before moving to the US. Al Hazmi and Hanjour are roommates for a time. Al Hazmi will finish his training and leave the US for the last time in January 2000 (he apparently will be interviewed overseas in 2004). Abdullah becomes a leader of a Phoenix mosque where he reportedly gives extremist speeches. He will continue to train with Hanjour occasionally through the summer of 2001. The FBI apparently will investigate him in May 2001. He will repeatedly be questioned by authorities after 9/11, then move to Qatar. In 2004, the 9/11 Commission will report that the FBI remains suspicious of Al Hazmi and Abdullah, but neither man is charged with any crime. The 9/11 Commission will also imply that another of Hanjour's Arizona associates is al-Qaeda operative Ghassan al Sharbi. Al Sharbi will be arrested in

Pakistan in March 2002 with al-Qaeda leader Abu Zubaida (see [March 28, 2002](#)). He apparently is a target of Ken Williams' "Phoenix memo." (see [July 10, 2001](#)) Another associate of Hanjour's, Hamed al Sulami, is in telephone contact with a radical Saudi imam who is said to be the spiritual advisor to al-Qaeda leader Abu Zubaida. This imam may have a role in recruiting some of the 9/11 hijackers. Abdulaziz Alomari, for instance, was a student of this imam. It seems that al Sulami is also a target of Williams' memo.. ([Fainaru and Ibrahim 9/10/2002](#); [US Congress 9/26/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004](#), pp. 233, 520-521, 529)

Late 1996 or After: Jarrah Associates with Monitored Hamas Fundraiser

Within a few months of arriving in Germany, hijacker Ziad Jarrah begins to associate with Abdulrahman al-Makhadi, a local hardline Muslim who raises money for the militant Palestinian group Hamas and is monitored by the German intelligence service BfV. The German newspaper Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung will say that al-Makhadi, also known as Abu Mohammed, is "known to the [German security service] BfV as a Hamas activist and 'instigator,'" and that, "It is therefore difficult to imagine that the 26 year old Lebanese [Jarrah] was not also registered by the machinery of the intelligence services." Jarrah later travels around Germany with al-Makhadi and meets other radicals. Al-Makhadi runs the local mosque and makes money by selling special Arab food he purchases in Hamburg there. ([Schrom and Laabs 2/2/2003](#); [McDermott 2005](#), pp. 51)

October 7, 1996: Future Bush Envoy to Afghanistan Wants US to Help Taliban Unify Country, Build Pipeline

In a Washington Post op-ed, Zalmay Khalilzad calls on the US to deal with the Taliban in Afghanistan. "It is time for the United States to reengage.... The Taliban does not practice the anti-US style of fundamentalism practiced by Iran—it is closer to the Saudi model." He calls on the US to help the Taliban "put Afghanistan on a path toward peace," noting that continuing violence "has been a source of regional instability and an obstacle to building pipelines to bring Central Asian oil and gas to Pakistan and the world markets." ([Khalilzad 10/7/1996](#)) However, by 2000, Khalilzad will sour on the Taliban. In a speech in March 2000, he will state, "Afghanistan was and is a possible corridor for the export of oil and gas from the Central Asian states down to Pakistan and to the world. A California company called Unocal was interested in exploring that option, but because of the war in Afghanistan, because of the instability that's there, those options, or that option at least, has not materialized." ([Khalilzad 3/9/2000](#))

October 11, 1996: Afghan Pipeline Key to 'One of the Great Prizes of the 21st Century'

The Daily Telegraph publishes an interesting article about pipeline politics in Afghanistan. “Behind the tribal clashes that have scarred Afghanistan lies one of the great prizes of the 21st century, the fabulous energy reserves of Central Asia.... ‘The deposits are huge,’ said a diplomat from the region. ‘Kazakhstan alone may have more oil than Saudi Arabia. Turkmenistan is already known to have the fifth largest gas reserves in the world.’” ([Lockwood 10/11/1996](#))

October 22, 1996: US Intelligence Indicates ISI Is Supplying Taliban with Weapons and Supplies

A classified US intelligence report concludes the ISI “is supplying the Taliban forces with munitions, fuel, and food.” The report notes that while the food shipments are taking place openly, “the munitions convoys depart Pakistan late in the evening hours and are concealed to reveal their true contents.” ([US Intelligence 10/22/1996](#))

November 1996-Late August 1998: US Tracks Bin Laden’s Satellite Phone Calls



An Inmarsat Compact M satellite phone, the type used by bin Laden. [Source: *Inmarsat*] During this period, bin Laden uses a satellite phone to direct al-Qaeda’s operations. The phone—a Compact M satellite phone, about the size of a laptop computer—was purchased by a student in Virginia named Ziyad Khaleel for \$7,500 using the credit card of a British man named Saad al-Fagih. After purchasing the phone, Khaleel sent it to Khalid al-Fawwaz, al-Qaeda’s unofficial press secretary in London (see [Early 1994-September 27, 1998](#)). Al-Fawwaz then shipped it to bin Laden in Afghanistan. ([Hirschhorn 4/16/2001](#)) It appears US intelligence actually tracks the purchase as it occurs (see [November 1996-Late December 1999](#)), probably because an older model satellite phone bin Laden has is already being monitored (see [Early 1990s](#)). Bin Laden’s phone (873682505331) is believed to be used by other top al-Qaeda leaders as well, including Ayman al-Zawahiri and Mohammad Atef. Al-Fawwaz also buys satellite phones for other top al-Qaeda leaders around the same time. Though the calls made on these phones are encrypted, the National Security Agency is able to intercept and decrypt them. As one US official will put it in early 2001, “codes were broken.” ([Sale 2/13/2001](#); [Hosenball and Klaidman 2/18/2002](#)) The Los Angeles Times will report that the monitoring of these phones “produced tens of thousands of pages of transcripts over

two years.” ([Braun et al. 10/14/2001](#)) Bin Laden’s satellite phone replaces an older model he used in Sudan that apparently was also monitored by the NSA (see [Early 1990s](#)). Billing records for his new phone are eventually released to the media in early 2002. Newsweek will note, “A country-by-country analysis of the bills provided US authorities with a virtual road map to important al-Qaeda cells around the world.” ([Fielding and Gadhery 3/24/2002](#)) The countries called are:

- Britain (238 or 260). Twenty-seven different phone numbers are called in Britain. Accounts differ on the exact number of calls. Khalid al-Fawwaz, who helps publish statements by bin Laden, receives 143 of the calls. Apparently most of the remaining calls are made to pay phones near him or to his associates. ([Hirschhorn 4/16/2001](#); [Hosenball and Klaidman 2/18/2002](#); [Fielding and Gadhery 3/24/2002](#))

- Yemen (221). Dozens of calls go to an al-Qaeda communications hub in Sana’a, Yemen, which is run by the father-in-law of 9/11 hijacker Khalid Almhidhar (see [Late August 1998](#)). ([Hosenball and Klaidman 2/18/2002](#); [McDermott 9/1/2002](#))

- Sudan (131). Bin Laden lived in Sudan until 1996 (see [May 18, 1996](#)), and some important al-Qaeda operatives remained there after he left (see [February 5, 1998](#)). ([Fielding and Gadhery 3/24/2002](#))

- Iran (106). Newsweek will later report, “US officials had little explanation for the calls to Iran. A Bush administration official said that US intelligence has believed for years that hard-line anti-American factions inside Iran helped bin Laden’s organization operate an ‘underground railroad’ smuggling Islamic militants to al-Qaeda training camps in Afghanistan.” ([Hosenball and Klaidman 2/18/2002](#); [Fielding and Gadhery 3/24/2002](#))

- Azerbaijan (67). An important al-Qaeda operative appears to be based in Baku, Azerbaijan. ([Loeb 5/2/2001](#)) This is most likely Ahmed Salama Mabruk, who is very close to al-Qaeda number two Ayman al-Zawahiri and is kidnapped by the CIA in Baku in July 1998 (see [July 1998](#)).

- Kenya (at least 56). In the embassy bombings trial, prosecutors introduce evidence showing 16 calls are made on this phone to some of the embassy bombers in Kenya (see [August 7, 1998](#)), apparently all before a raid in August 1997 (see [August 21, 1997](#)). The defense introduces evidence showing at least 40 more calls are made after that time (see [Late 1996-August 1998](#)). ([Hirschhorn 4/16/2001](#))

- Pakistan (59).

- Saudi Arabia (57).

- A ship in the Indian Ocean (13).

- The US (6).

- Italy (6).

- Malaysia (4).

- Senegal (2). ([Fielding and Gadhery 3/24/2002](#))

- Egypt (unknown). Newsweek reports that calls are made to Egypt but doesn’t say how many. ([Hosenball and Klaidman 2/18/2002](#))

- Iraq (0). Press reports note that the records indicate zero calls were made to Iraq. ([Hosenball and Klaidman 2/18/2002](#); [Fielding and Gadhery 3/24/2002](#)) 1,100 total calls are made on this phone. Adding up the above numbers means that the destination of over 100 calls is still unaccounted for. ([Hosenball and Klaidman 2/18/2002](#)) The use of this phone stops two months after the August 1998 embassy bombings in Africa. However, it appears bin Laden and other al-Qaeda leaders continue to use other satellite phones

occasionally after this time. Shortly after 9/11, James Bamford, an expert authority on the agency, says “About a year or so ago the NSA lost all track of him.... He may still use [satellite phones] occasionally to talk about something mundane, but he discovered that the transmitters can be used for honing.” ([Sieberg 9/21/2001](#)) According to a different account, bin Laden will attempt to use a different phone communication method, but US intelligence will soon discover it and continue monitoring his calls (see [Late 1998 and After](#)).

November 1996: Informer Spots Top GIA Operative in London, but British Intelligence Loses Him

Omar Nasiri, who informs on al-Qaeda for the British intelligence service MI6 and the French service Direction Générale de la Sécurité Extérieure (DGSE), sees Ali Touchent, a key member of the Algerian militant Groupe Islamique Armé (GIA) in London. British intelligence officers follow him, but lose track of him. Touchent, who is suspected of being an Algerian government agent who has penetrated the GIA, is thought to be responsible for bombings in France, one of which occurs shortly after this sighting. Nasiri sees Touchent at the Four Feathers club during a talk by a radical cleric. Although Nasiri does not initially realize the man is Touchent, he recognizes he is important and immediately informs MI6 after the talk. MI6 identifies Touchent from photographs taken of the attendees. When Nasiri asks his MI6 handler how they could have lost such an important militant leader, the handler replies, “He was at a café. Our guys were watching him. And then he somehow disappeared.” ([Nasiri 2006, pp. 277-8](#))

November 1996-September 1998: Al-Qaeda Front Company in Istanbul Facilitates Travel and Money Transfers

Senior al-Qaeda operatives establish a front company called Maram in Istanbul, Turkey, as a travel agency and import-export business. Investigators will later say they suspect that the company may be involved in efforts to obtain material for nuclear weapons and that it provides money and other assistance to radicals traveling between Europe and training camps in Afghanistan. Turkish intelligence and several foreign agencies are aware that militants transit Turkey at this time and some of them are under surveillance (see [1996](#), [1995-1999](#), and [Mid-1996](#)), but it is unclear whether Maram itself is monitored. The company, which receives a donation of US\$ 1.25 million from Saudi businessman Yassin al-Qadi (see [January-August 1998](#)), is established by Mamdouh Mahmud Salim, one of al-Qaeda’s founding members (see [August 11-20, 1988](#)), who is said to have a history of moving money and shopping for weapons for the organization. A few months later he transfers shares in the company to two other men. One is Wael Hamza Julaidan, a Saudi businessman also said to be a founder of al-Qaeda; the US will officially designate Julaidan a financial supporter of al-Qaeda in 2002 (see [September 6, 2002](#)). The other transferee is Mohammed Bayazid, another founder of al-Qaeda and a US citizen who was arrested in the US in 1994 and then let go (see [December 16, 1994](#)).

([Frantz 9/19/2002](#)) For a time before November 1998, toll records for the Illinois office of the Benevolence International Foundation (BIF) show telephone contact with a number in Turkey associated with Bayazid. Phone records indicate Bayazid moves to Turkey around April 1998. ([USA v. Benevolence International Foundation and Enaam M. Arnaout 4/29/2002, pp. 16-17](#)) US intelligence has been interested in BIF's ties to al-Qaeda since at least 1993 (see [1993](#) and [1998](#)), but apparently misses its links to Maram while the company is still open. After Salim is arrested in Germany in 1998 (see [September 20, 1998](#)), the company clears out its offices. A neighbor says, "I just came one morning and saw the office was empty. Nobody knows what happen[ed]." ([Frantz 9/19/2002](#))

November 24, 1996: Passenger Plane Suicide Attack Narrowly Averted



A hijacked airliner crashes into the shallow waters off the coast of a resort in the Comoros Islands. [*Source: SIPA*] (click image to enlarge) Several Ethiopians take over a passenger airliner and let it run out of fuel. Hijackers fight with the pilot as they try to steer the plane into a resort on a Comoros Islands beach in the Indian Ocean, but seconds before reaching the resort the pilot is able to crash the plane into shallow waters instead, 500 yards short of the resort. One hundred and twenty-three of the 175 passengers and crew die. ([McNeil 11/25/1996](#); [Australian Broadcasting Corporation 11/26/1996](#); [Houston Chronicle 11/26/1996](#))

Late 1996: Effort to Get Nukes Makes Al-Qaeda Threat Clear

Michael Scheuer, head of the CIA's Bin Laden unit (see [February 1996](#)), will write in 2004 that by this time, his unit has "acquired detailed information about the careful, professional manner in which al-Qaeda [is] seeking to acquire nuclear weapons... there could be no doubt after this date that al-Qaeda [is] in deadly earnest in seeking nuclear weapons." A report his unit produces about this threat is "initially suppressed within CIA, and then published in a drastically shortened form. Three officers of the [CIA]'s bin Laden cadre [protest] this decision in writing, and [force] an internal review. It [is] only after this review that this report [is] provided in full to [US intelligence] leaders, analysts, and policymakers." ([Atlantic Monthly 12/2004](#)) He later will claim that due to al-Qaeda's "extraordinarily sophisticated and professional effort to acquire weapons of mass destruction... by the end of 1996, it [is] clear that this [is] an organization unlike any other one we had ever seen." ([CBS News 11/14/2004](#))

Late 1996: Bin Laden Influences Election in Pakistan

Not long after bin Laden moves back to Afghanistan (see [After May 18, 1996-September 1996](#)), he tries to influence an election in Pakistan. Benazir Bhutto, Prime Minister of Pakistan, is running for reelection against Nawaz Sharif, who had been prime minister earlier in the 1990s. (Bin Laden apparently helped Sharif win in 1990 (see [October 1990](#)).) “According to Pakistani and British intelligence sources, bin Laden traveled into Pakistan to renew old acquaintances within the ISI, and also allegedly met or talked with” Sharif. Sharif wins the election. Bhutto will later claim that bin Laden used a variety of means to ensure her defeat and undermine her. She will mention one instance where bin Laden allegedly gave \$10 million to some of her opponents. Journalist Simon Reeve will later point out that while Bhutto claims could seem self-serving, “her claims are supported by other Pakistani and Western intelligence sources.” ([Reeve 1999, pp. 188-189](#)) It will later be reported that double agent Ali Mohamed told the FBI in 1999 that bin Laden gave Sharif \$1 million at some point while Sharif was prime minister (see [Between Late 1996 and Late 1998](#)). There are also reports that bin Laden helped Sharif become prime minister in 1990 (see [October 1990](#)). While Sharif will not support the radical Islamists as much as they had hoped, they will have less conflict with him than they did with Bhutto. For instance, she assisted in the arrest of Ramzi Yousef (see [February 7, 1995](#)), who had attempted to assassinate her (see [July 1993](#)).

Late 1996: Trusted Informant Warns that Bin Laden May Attack Inside US or US Embassies

According to the New Yorker, “Two years before the embassy bombings in East Africa, [Al-Qaeda defector Jamal al-Fadl] warned US officials that bin Laden’s followers might try to attack US embassies abroad or targets inside America.” ([Mayer 9/11/2006](#)) Al-Fadl defected to the US in mid-1996 and became a high-trusted informant (see [June 1996-April 1997](#)). In an early 2001 trial, he will roughly repeat the warning he gave, saying, “maybe [al-Qaeda] try to do something inside United States and they try to fight the United States Army outside, and also they try make bomb against some embassy outside.” Two US embassies will be bombed in Africa in August 1998 (see [August 7, 1998](#)). ([Hirschhorn and Feyerick 2/7/2001](#))

Late 1996: CIA Definitely Confirms Bin Laden Is Not Just Financier, but US Is Slow to Act

By late 1996, the CIA definitely confirms that Osama bin Laden is more of a leader of militants worldwide than just a financier of them. ([US Congress 7/24/2003](#)) CIA Director George Tenet will later comment, “By 1996 we knew that bin Laden was more than a financier. An al-Qaeda defector [Jamal al-Fadl] told us that [bin Laden] was the head of a worldwide terrorist organization with a board of directors that would include the likes of Ayman al-Zawahiri and that he wanted to strike the United States on our soil.” ([Tenet 2007, pp. 102](#)) Yet the US will not take “bin Laden or al-Qaeda all that seriously” until

after the bombing of US embassies in Africa in 1998. ([Miller, Stone, and Mitchell 2002, pp. 213](#)) Dan Coleman, the FBI's top al-Qaeda expert, helps interrogate al-Fadl in 1996 and 1997 (see [June 1996-April 1997](#)), and Coleman comes to the conclusion that the US is facing a profound new threat. But according to journalist Robert Wright, Coleman's reports "met with little response outside a small circle of prosecutors and a few people in the [CIA and FBI] who took an interest..." Michael Scheuer, head of the CIA's bin Laden unit, is interested, as is John O'Neill, who heads the New York FBI office that specializes in bin Laden cases. But O'Neill and Scheuer hate each other and do not cooperate. ([Wright 2006](#)) Al-Fadl's information will not turn into the first US indictment of bin Laden until June 1998 (see [June 8, 1998](#)).

Between Late 1996 and Late 1998: Bin Laden Allegedly Pays \$1 Million to Pakistani Prime Minister

According to FBI agent Jack Cloonan, in 1999, imprisoned double agent Ali Mohamed will tell Cloonan that he helped arrange a meeting between bin Laden and representatives of Nawaz Sharif, who is prime minister of Pakistan from 1990 through 1993 and again from 1996 to 1999. Mohamed claims that after the meeting he delivered \$1 million to Sharif's representatives as a tribute to Sharif for "not cracking down on the Taliban as it flourished in Afghanistan and influenced the Northwest Frontier Province in Pakistan." It is unknown when this took place, but it is likely between late 1996, when the Taliban gain control over much of Afghanistan and Sharif as prime minister would have been in a position to crack down against them or not, and late 1998, when Mohamed is arrested in the US (see [September 10, 1998](#)). Cloonan will later say that he believes the information from Mohamed is accurate. ([Sauer 11/30/2007](#)) There have been other allegations that Sharif met bin Laden in 1996 and used his help to win the election for prime minister (see [Late 1996](#)), and also allegations that bin Laden helped Sharif win the election for prime minister in 1990 (see [Late 1996](#)).

Late 1996-May 2000: Militant Connected to Al-Qaeda and British Intelligence Granted Asylum in Britain



Anas al-Liby. [Source: FBI] Anas al-Liby, member of a Libyan al-Qaeda cell called Al-Muqatila, lives in Britain during this time. He had stayed with bin Laden in Sudan until bin Laden moved to Afghanistan in 1996 (see [May 18, 1996](#)), and was already involved in an al-Qaeda plot (see [Late 1993-Late 1994](#)) that will result in the bombing of two US embassies in Africa in 1998 (see [August 7, 1998](#)). Then, as the Observer puts it, “Astonishingly, despite suspicions that he was a high-level al-Qaeda operative, al-Liby was given political asylum in Britain and lived in Manchester until May of 2000 when he eluded a police raid on his house and fled abroad.” He was apparently involved in a plot with the British intelligence agency to assassinate Libyan leader Colonel Mu’ammarr al-Qadhafi in 1996 (see [1996](#)) and presumably his ability to live in Britain was connected to cooperation with that plot. ([Bright 11/10/2002](#)) An important al-Qaeda training manual is discovered in the raid on his Manchester house (see [May 2000](#)). After the failed assassination attempt in 1996, the British allegedly continued to support Al-Muqatila—for instance, the group openly published a newsletter from a London office. ([Brisard and Dasquie 2002, pp. 97-98](#)) Whistleblower David Shayler had given British authorities details of this Libya plot in 1998 and again in 1999, and later will serve a short prison sentence for revealing this information to the public (see [November 5, 2002](#)). ([Shayler 8/27/2000](#)) Well after the failed attempt, the British allegedly continue to support Al-Muqatila—for instance, the group openly publishes a newsletter from a London office. ([Brisard and Dasquie 2002, pp. 97-98](#)) Al-Liby remains on the US government’s most wanted list with a reward of \$25 million for his capture. He is wanted for his involvement (see [Late 1993-Late 1994](#)) in the 1998 African embassy bombings (see [August 7, 1998](#)). ([Federal Bureau of Investigation 2002](#); [Bright 11/10/2002](#))

Late 1996-August 1998: US Listens In as Bin Laden Speaks to Planners of Embassy Bombings in Kenya

In 2001, four men will be convicted of participating in the 1998 embassy bombings (see [August 7, 1998](#)). During their trial, it will come to light that the NSA was listening in on bin Laden’s satellite phone (see [November 1996-Late August 1998](#)). Additionally, during this time bin Laden calls some of the plotters of the bombing before the bombing takes place. The prosecution will show records revealing that bin Laden calls Kenya 16 times,

apparently all before an August 1997 raid on the Nairobi, Kenya, house of Wadih El-Hage (see [August 21, 1997](#)), who is taking part in the embassy bombing plot and is bin Laden's former personal secretary. The transcripts of two calls between El-Hage and al-Qaeda leader Mohammed Atef (using bin Laden's phone) are even read to the jury in the trial. The defense however, shows that at least 40 additional calls are made from bin Laden's phone to Kenya after El-Hage left Kenya in September 1997. Further, El-Hage makes some calls to Khalid al-Fawwaz, who essentially is serving as bin Laden's press secretary in London and is being frequently called by bin Laden around the same time. The transcript of a February 1997 call between El-Hage and Mohamed Saddiq Odeh, one of the other embassy bombing plotters, is also read to the jury. The US had been wiretapping El-Hage's phone and other phones connected to the al-Qaeda Kenya cell, since at least April 1996 (see [April 1996](#)). ([Hirschhorn 4/16/2001](#)) In one call, El-Hage is overheard saying after returning from visiting bin Laden in Afghanistan that bin Laden has given the Kenya al-Qaeda cell a "new policy." After the raid on El-Hage's house, US investigators will discover that policy is "militarizing" the cell. But most details of what is said in these calls has not been made public. ([Loeb 5/2/2001](#)) In another call in July 1997, cell member Fazul Abdullah Mohammed (a.k.a. Haroun Fazul) specifies which mobile phone the cell needs to use when calling bin Laden. ([Weiser 1/13/2001](#)) US intelligence also listens in during this time as bin Laden frequently calls the Kenya office of Mercy International, an office that is being monitored because of suspected al-Qaeda ties (see [Late 1996-August 20, 1998](#)). It has not been explained how the US failed to stop the August 1998 embassy bombings, given their surveillance of all these calls before the bombing took place.

Late 1996-August 20, 1998: US Intelligence Monitors Charity Tied to Al-Qaeda Cell in Kenya

US intelligence begins monitoring telephones connected to the Kenyan branch of the charity Mercy International. By mid-1996, US intelligence began wiretapping telephones belonging to Wadih El-Hage, an al-Qaeda operative living in Nairobi, Kenya, and the NSA is also monitoring bin Laden's satellite phone. By the end of 1996, the number of monitored phones in Kenya increases to five, and two of those are to Mercy International's offices. What led investigators to this charity is unknown, and details of the calls have never been revealed. ([Weiser 1/13/2001](#)) The Mercy office will be raided shortly after the 1998 African embassy bombings (see [August 7, 1998](#)), and incriminating files belonging to El-Hage will be found there (see [October 1997](#)). It will be discovered that the office worked closely with al-Qaeda. For instance, it issued identity cards for al-Qaeda leaders Ali Mohamed, Mohammed Atef, and even bin Laden himself. ([Bergen 2001, pp. 140](#); [Huband 11/28/2001](#)) A receipt dated just two weeks before the embassy bombings made a reference to "getting the weapons from Somalia." ([Weiser 1/22/2000](#)) Most crucially, there were a number of calls between Mercy director Ahmad Sheik Adam and bin Laden. ([Kelley 2/16/2000](#)) And Adam's mobile phone was used 12 times by El-Hage to speak to bin Laden or his associates. Presumably, such calls would have drawn obvious attention to the Kenya al-Qaeda cell and their embassy attack plans, yet none of the cell members were arrested until after the attack. The Kenya branch of Mercy

International will be shut down by the end of 1998, but in 2001 it will be reported that Adam continues to live in Kenya and has not been arrested. ([Agence France-Presse 12/17/1998](#); [BBC 1/3/2001](#))

December 1996: NSA Refuses to Share Bin Laden Phone Surveillance with Other US Intelligence Agencies

In 2004, Michael Scheuer, head of the CIA's bin Laden unit from 1996 to 1999 (see [February 1996](#)), will write about the NSA's surveillance of bin Laden's satellite phone. Bin Laden began using the phone about a month earlier (see [November 1996-Late August 1998](#)). According to Scheuer, a CIA officer working overseas with the NSA tells the CIA bin Laden unit that the NSA is monitoring bin Laden's phone. The NSA refuses to share information gained from the phone and threatens legal action against the officer who revealed its existence to the CIA. This leads to a "desultory interagency discussion without resolution." The CIA is then "forced to devise its own ability to exploit the [monitoring of bin Laden's phone] and secure[s] about half of the available material." ([Atlantic Monthly 12/2004](#)) Apparently Scheuer says "half" because the CIA is only able to listen to one side of the conversations. ([Wright 2006, pp. 283](#)) While the NSA knows the rest of the material, it apparently continues to refuse to share it with the CIA, FBI, or Richard Clarke in the White House. Scheuer will not explain why the NSA is unwilling to share this very valuable material. ([Atlantic Monthly 12/2004](#); [Wright 2006, pp. 283](#))

December 1996-June 1999: US Military Fails to Help CIA Plan Operations Against Bin Laden

The CIA's bin Laden unit repeatedly and formally requests assistance from the US military to help plan operations against bin Laden and al-Qaeda. Michael Scheuer, the head of the unit, later will recall, "We needed and asked for special operations officers." But even after the US embassy bombings in August 1998, cooperation is not forthcoming. Finally, in June 1999, the unit is sent individuals who are not special operations officers and only have experience on Iran. Scheuer later will complain, "The bin Laden unit received no support from senior [CIA] officials vis-a-vis the US military." Scheuer is fired from the unit in June 1999, so presumably his first-hand knowledge of relations between the CIA and Pentagon ends at this time. ([Atlantic Monthly 12/2004](#))

December 1996-January 1997: Former Al-Qaeda Financial Officer Completely Exposes Al-Qaeda Financial Network, but US Takes No Action

Jamal al-Fadl, a highly-trusted informant who recently defected from al-Qaeda to the US (see [June 1996-April 1997](#)), is debriefed by FBI officials about al-Qaeda's finances. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 497](#)) According to the New Yorker, al-Fadl "provided a surprisingly full picture of al-Qaeda, depicting it as an international criminal network

intent on attacking the United States. Al-Fadl said that he had handled many of al-Qaeda's financial transactions after bin Laden left Afghanistan and moved the hub of his operations to [Sudan], in 1992. In this role, al-Fadl had access to bin Laden's payroll and knew the details of al-Qaeda's global banking networks, its secret membership lists, and its paramilitary training camps in Afghanistan, one of which he had attended, in the late eighties." ([Mayer 9/11/2006](#)) For instance, al-Fadl reveals that bin Laden co-founded the Al-Shamal Islamic Bank in Sudan and capitalized it with \$50 million. The US will make this allegation public shortly after al-Fadl is debriefed by the CIA (see [August 14, 1996](#)). Al-Fadl will further reveal that he and several other al-Qaeda operatives had accounts at the Al-Shamal Bank to finance their militant activities. ([Crewdson 11/3/2001](#)) Al-Fadl also reveals that bin Laden owns a number of businesses in Sudan, including:

- The El-Hijra Construction and Development company, which builds a new airport at Port Sudan and a long highway linking Port Sudan to capital of Khartoum.
- The Taba Investment Company, which deals in global stock markets and currency trading.
- The Wadi al-Aqiq import/export company, which serves as the parent body for most of the other companies.
- The Ladin International import-export company. In 1995, the FBI discovered links between this company and the Bojinka plot in the Philippines (see [May 23, 1999](#)).
- And other businesses, including several farms, a tannery, and a trucking company. Al-Fadl reveals that some of the farms double as training camps.

Furthermore, he gives details of various bin Laden-linked bank accounts in Britain, Austria, Sudan, Malaysia, Hong Kong, and the United Arab Emirates. Even though bin Laden leaves Sudan in 1996, most of his businesses there will continue to operate under his ownership. The US will not take any action against these businesses before 9/11 (see [March 16, 2000](#)). ([Moor 9/26/2001](#); [Callinan 10/7/2001](#))

December 1, 1996-June 1997: Russian Arrest of Zawahiri Brings Islamic Jihad and Al-Qaeda Closer Together



The picture of Ayman al-Zawahiri on the fake Sudanese passport he used to enter Russia in 1996. [Source: *Wall Street Journal*] Ayman Zawahiri, leader of Islamic Jihad and effective number two leader of al-Qaeda, travels to Chechnya with two associates. Chechnya was fighting to break free from Russian rule and achieved a cease-fire and de facto independence earlier in the year. Zawahiri hopes to establish new connections there. However, on December 1, 1996, he and his associates are arrested by Russian authorities as they try to cross into Chechnya. Zawahiri is carrying four passports, none showing his real identity. The Russians confiscate Zawahiri's laptop and send it to Moscow for analysis, but apparently they never translate the Arabic documents on it that could have revealed who he really is. Though some Russian investigators suspect Zawahiri is a "big fish," they can't prove it. He and his two associates are released after six months. ([Higgins and Cullison 7/2/2002](#); [Wright 2006, pp. 249-250](#)) Author Lawrence Wright will later comment, "This fiasco had a profound consequence. With even more defectors from [Islamic Jihad during Zawahiri's unexplained absence] and no real source of income, Zawahiri had no choice but to join bin Laden" in Afghanistan. Prior to this arrest, Zawahiri had been travelling all over the world and earlier in 1996 he apparently lived in Switzerland and Sarajevo, Bosnia. But afterwards he remains in Afghanistan with bin Laden until the 9/11 attacks. As a result, Islamic Jihad and al-Qaeda will grow even closer until they completely merge a few months before 9/11 (see [June 2001](#)). ([Wright 2006, pp. 249-250](#))

November 1996-Late December 1999: US Government Funding Charity Front It Knows Has Ties to Bin Laden and Hamas



IARA logo. [Source: IARA] In November 1996, the FBI monitors the progress of bin Laden buying a new satellite phone and tracks the purchase to Ziyad Khaleel, a US citizen and radical militant living in Missouri (see [November 1996-Late August 1998](#)). Newsweek will later say that this puts the Sudan-based charity Islamic American Relief Agency (IARA) “on the FBI’s radar screen” because Khaleel is one of IARA’s eight regional US directors. ([Isikoff and Hosenball 10/20/2004](#)) Khaleel is monitored as he continues to buy new minutes and parts for bin Laden’s phone at least through 1998 (see [July 29-August 7, 1998](#)). He is also the webmaster of the official Hamas website. His name and a Detroit address where he lived both appear prominently in ledgers taken by US investigators from the Al-Kifah Refugee Center in 1994, a charity front with ties to both bin Laden and the CIA (see [1986-1993](#)). That Detroit address is also tied to Ahmed Abu Marzouk, the nephew of Mousa Abu Marzouk, a high-ranking Hamas leader who is imprisoned in the US between 1995 and 1997 (see [July 5, 1995-May 1997](#)). Furthermore, Khaleel is working for the Islamic Association for Palestine (IAP), a Hamas-linked organization cofounded by Mousa Abu Marzook. ([Kohlmann 10/2/2003](#)) A secret CIA report in early 1996 concluded that the IARA was funding radical militants in Bosnia (see [January 1996](#)). US intelligence will later reveal that in the late 1990s, IARA is regularly funding al-Qaeda. For instance, it has evidence of IARA giving hundreds of thousands of dollars to bin Laden in 1999. But Newsweek will later note that “at the very moment that the [IARA] was allegedly heavily involved in funneling money to bin Laden, the US branch was receiving ample support from the US Treasury through contracts awarded by the State Department’s Agency for International Development (USAID).” Between 1997 and 1999, USAID gives over \$4 million to IARA, mostly meant for charity projects in Africa. Finally, at the end of December 1999, counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke gets USAID to cut off all funding for IARA. But the charity is merely told in a letter that US government funding for it would not be “in the national interest of the United States” and it is allowed to continue operating. At the same time, US agents arrest Khaleel while he is traveling to Jordan (see [December 29, 1999](#)). The US government will wait until 2004 before shutting down IARA in the US and raiding the Missouri branch where Khaleel worked. Newsweek will later comment, “One question that is likely to arise [in the future] is why it took the US government so long to move more aggressively against the group.” ([Isikoff and Hosenball 10/20/2004](#))

Late 1996: Bin Laden Becomes Active in Opium Trade

Bin Laden establishes and maintains a major role in opium drug trade, soon after moving the base of his operations to Afghanistan. Opium money is vital to keeping the Taliban in power and funding bin Laden’s al-Qaeda network. One report estimates that bin Laden takes up to 10 percent of Afghanistan’s drug trade by early 1999. This would give him a

yearly income of up to \$1 billion out of \$6.5 to \$10 billion in annual drug profits from within Afghanistan. ([Huband 11/28/2001](#)) The US monitors bin Laden's satellite phone starting in 1996 (see [November 1996-Late August 1998](#)). According to one newspaper, "Bin Laden was heard advising Taliban leaders to promote heroin exports to the West." ([Campbell 9/27/2001](#))

Late 1996: ISI Returns Afghanistan Training Camps to Bin Laden and Subsidizes Their Costs

When bin Laden moved from Sudan to Afghanistan (see [May 18, 1996](#)), he was forced to leave most of his personal fortune behind. Additionally, most of his training camps were in Sudan and those camps had to be left behind as well. But after the Taliban conquers most of Afghanistan and forms an alliance with bin Laden (see [After May 18, 1996-September 1996](#)), the Pakistani ISI persuades the Taliban to return to bin Laden the Afghanistan training camps that he controlled in the early 1990s before his move to Sudan. The ISI subsidizes the cost of the camps, allowing bin Laden to profit from the fees paid by those attending them. The ISI also uses the camps to train militants who want to fight against Indian forces in Kashmir. ([Wright 2006, pp. 250](#)) In 2001, a Defense Intelligence Agency agent will write about the al-Badr II camp at Zhawar Kili. "Positioned on the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan, it was built by Pakistan contractors funded by the Pakistan Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI), and protected under the patronage of a local and influential Jadran tribal leader, Jalalludin ((Haqani)),” the agent writes. “However, the real host in that facility was the Pakistani ISI. If this was later to be bin Laden's base, then serious questions are raised by the early relationship between bin Laden and Pakistan's ISI.” ([Defense Intelligence Agency 10/2/2001](#) ²⁴)

Late 1996-Late September 2001: Britain Not Interested in Sudan's Files on Al-Qaeda

Beginning in early 1996, the Sudanese government started offering the US its extensive files on bin Laden and al-Qaeda (see [March 8, 1996-April 1996](#)). The US will repeatedly reject the files as part of its policy of isolating the Sudanese government (see [April 5, 1997](#); [February 5, 1998](#); [May 2000](#)). Around this time, MI6, the British intelligence agency, is also offered access to the files. Sudan reportedly makes a standing offer: "If someone from MI6 comes to us and declares himself, the next day he can be in [the capital city] Khartoum." A Sudanese government source later adds, "We have been saying this for years." However, the offer is not taken. Even weeks after 9/11, it will be reported that while the US has finally accepted the offer of the files, Britain has not. ([Rose 9/30/2001](#))

1997: Possible Unmanned Aerial Attacks Raise Concerns at FBI, CIA

FBI and CIA are concerned that an unnamed militant group, which has apparently purchased an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV), will use it for attacks against US interests. At the time, the agencies believed that the only reason to use this UAV would be for either reconnaissance or attack. The primary concern is that it will be used to attack outside the United States, for example, by flying a UAV into a US Embassy or a visiting US delegation. ([US Congress 9/18/2002](#))

1997: CIA Re-opens Afghanistan Operations

Special CIA paramilitary teams enter Afghanistan again in 1997. ([Ricks 11/18/2001](#)) Gary Schroen, head of the CIA's Pakistan office during the late 1990's, will later comment, "We had connections to the Northern Alliance, Ahmed Shah Massoud's group of Tajik fighters up in the north. The CIA was sending teams into northern Afghanistan from '97 up until about 2000 to meet with Massoud's people, to try to get them involved." ([Schroen 6/20/2006](#)) (The CIA's anti-Soviet covert operations officially ended in January 1992. ([Coll 2004, pp. 233](#))) Around 1999 there will be a push to recruit more agents capable of operating or traveling in Afghanistan. Many locals will be recruited, but apparently none is close to bin Laden (see [1999](#)). This problem is not fixed in succeeding years. ([Coll 2/22/2004](#); [9/11 Commission 3/24/2004](#))

1997: Bin Laden Family Financial Connection With Osama Continues Until At Least This Year



Yeslam bin Laden, Osama's half brother, and a Westernized leader of the Binladin Group. [*Source: Publicity photo*] In 2004, Osama bin Laden's half brother Yeslam Binladin admits that he and other bin Laden family members share a Swiss bank account with Osama bin Laden from 1990 until 1997. The account was opened by brothers Omar and Heidar bin Laden in 1990 with an initial deposit of \$450,000. By 1997, only two people are authorized to conduct transactions on the account: brothers Osama and Yeslam bin Laden. The bin Laden family claims to have disowned Osama bin Laden in 1994 (see [Shortly After April 9, 1994](#)), and the US government officially designated him as a financier of terrorism in 1996. Yeslam had previously denied any financial dealings with Osama at this late date until evidence of this bank account was uncovered by French private investigator Jean-Charles Brisard. In December 2001, French authorities will open an investigation into the financial dealings of the Saudi Investment Company (SICO) run by Yeslam Binladin. ([Agence France-Presse 7/26/2004](#); [Scotsman 9/28/2004](#); [Mascolo and Follath 6/6/2005](#)) In 2002, his

house will be raided by French police. ([Souchard 3/20/2002](#)) No charges have been made as of yet, but the investigation will continue and in fact widen its scope in late 2004. A French magistrate will claim he is looking into “other instances of money laundering” apparently involving financial entities connected to Yeslam and other bin Laden family members. ([Reuters 12/26/2004](#)) Yeslam claims he’s had no contact with Osama in 20 years. Yet, in 2004, when asked if he would turn in Osama if given the chance, he replies, “What do you think? Would you turn in your brother?” ([MSNBC 7/10/2004](#)) His ex-wife Carmen Binladin will also comment around the same time, “From what I have seen and what I have read, I cannot believe that [the rest of the bin Laden family] have cut off Osama completely.... And I cannot believe that some of the sisters [don’t support him.] They are very close to Osama.” ([Hansen 7/10/2004](#))

1997 or 1998: Atta in Two Places at Once?



Mohamed Atta, from a January, 1996 Egyptian passport photo. [Source: Getty Images] Spanish newspaper El Mundo later reports, “According to several professors at the Valencia School of Medicine, some of whom are forensic experts, [Mohamed Atta] was a student there in 1997 or 1998. Although he used another name then, they remember his face among the students that attended anatomy classes.” It is also suggested that “years before, as a student he went to Tarragona. That would explain his last visit to Salou [from July 8-19, 2001], where he could have made contact with dormant cells...” (see [July 8-19, 2001](#)) ([Olmedo 9/30/2001](#)) If this is true, it would contradict reports concerning Atta’s presence as a student in Hamburg, Germany, during this entire period. There is also a later report that in 1999 Atta will meet an al-Qaeda operative in Alicante, less than 100 miles from Valencia (see [1999](#)).

1997: FBI Supervisor Said to Hide Information about Hamas Operatives from Other FBI Agents

FBI agent Robert Wright begins investigating two known Hamas suspects believed to be residing in the Chicago area. He asks a relief supervisor whether he has any information about these suspects. The relief supervisor says he does not. Wright spends several weeks investigating the location of these two terrorist suspects, only to later learn the relief

supervisor not only knew one of the suspects had been arrested overseas in 1995 as a result of terrorist activities, but that he had placed a copy of a statement provided by the arrested terrorist to overseas authorities in an obscure location where no one would find it. Wright will make this claim in a 1995 court case. He will allege this is just one instance of FBI superiors withholding information from his Vulgar Betrayal investigation. ([Robert G. Wright, Jr., v. Federal Bureau of Investigation 5/16/2005](#)) One suspect who seems to fit the description of one of the two suspects is Chicago resident Mohammed Joma Hilmi Jarad. He was arrested in Israel in 1995, confessed to being a Hamas operative, then was released and returned to live in Chicago. ([Brooke and Sciolino 8/16/1995](#))

1997: US Action Against Holy Land Foundation Blocked Again

The US government once again considers going after the Holy Land Foundation for its ties to Hamas. Israel freezes the foundation's assets this year, and the Treasury Department proposes making a similar asset freeze in the US as well. ([Simpson 2/27/2002](#)) In 2000, the New York Times will report, "Some government officials recommended that the group be prosecuted in 1997 for supporting Hamas, the militant Islamic group. But others opposed the effort, fearing that it would expose intelligence sources and spur public criticism of the administration as anti-Muslim." ([Miller 2/19/2000](#)) Those pushing to prosecute the group would certainly include Vulgar Betrayal investigation FBI agents like Robert Wright. Wright had been aware of Holy Land's ties to Hamas since 1993 (see [After January 1993](#) and [October 1993](#)). However, Attorney General Janet Reno blocks the proposal and no action is taken. ([Simpson 2/27/2002](#)) Counterterrorism "tsar" Richard Clarke claims that in 1995 he pushed for something to be done to Holy Land, but higher-ups overruled him (see [January 1995-April 1996](#)).

1997: CIA Deems Saudi Intelligence 'Hostile Service' Regarding Al-Qaeda

The CIA's bin Laden unit Alec Station sends a memo to CIA Director George Tenet warning him that the Saudi intelligence service should be considered a "hostile service" with regard to al-Qaeda. This means that, at the very least, they could not be trusted. In subsequent years leading up to 9/11, US intelligence will gather intelligence confirming this assessment and even suggesting direct ties between some in Saudi intelligence and al-Qaeda. For instance, according to a top Jordanian official, at some point before 9/11 the Saudis ask Jordan intelligence to conduct a review of the Saudi intelligence agency and then provide it with a set of recommendations for improvement. Jordanians are shocked to find Osama bin Laden screen savers on some of the office computers. Additionally, the CIA will note that in some instances after sharing communications intercepts of al-Qaeda operatives with the Saudis, the suspects would sometimes change communication methods, suggesting the possibility that they had been tipped off by Saudi intelligence. ([Risen 2006, pp. 183-184](#))

1997: KLA Surfaces to Resist Serbian Persecution of Albanians

The Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) emerges to resist Serbia's campaign against Yugoslavia's Albanian population. The force is financed by Albanian expatriates and Kosovar smugglers (see [1996-1999](#)) (see [Early 1999](#)). According to news reports, the KLA receives some \$1.5 billion in drug and arms smuggling profits from Kosovar Albanian traffickers each year. ([Klebnikov 1/2000](#)) The US Drug Enforcement Agency office in Rome tells the Philadelphia Inquirer in March 1999 that the KLA is "financing [its] war through drug trafficking activities, weapons trafficking, and the trafficking of other illegal goods, as well as contributions of their countrymen working abroad." ([Fleishman 3/15/1999](#)) Less than a year later, Mother Jones magazine will report that it obtained a congressional briefing paper which states: "We would be remiss to dismiss allegations that between 30 and 50 percent of the KLA's money comes from drugs." ([Klebnikov 1/2000](#))

1997: Future Hijackers Supposedly Watchlisted in Saudi Arabia for Failed Gunrunning Plot

Prince Turki al-Faisal, Saudi intelligence minister until shortly before 9/11 (see [August 31, 2001](#)), will later claim that al-Qaeda attempts to smuggle weapons into Saudi Arabia to mount attacks on police stations. The plot is uncovered and prevented by Saudi intelligence, and two of the unsuccessful gunrunners, future hijackers Khalid Almihdhar and Nawaf Alhazmi, are watchlisted. ([Follman 10/18/2003](#); [Wright 2006, pp. 266, 310-311, 448](#)) However, Almihdhar and Alhazmi continue to move in and out of Saudi Arabia unchecked and will obtain US visas there in April 1999 (see [1993-1999](#) and [April 3-7, 1999](#)). The US is supposedly informed of Almihdhar and Alhazmi's al-Qaeda connection by the end of 1999 (see [Late 1999](#)). Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri, an associate of Almihdhar and Alhazmi (see January 5-8, 2000), is implicated in a plot to smuggle four Russian antitank missiles into Saudi Arabia around the same time, although it is unclear whether this is the same plot or a different one. The Saudi authorities uncover this plot and the US is apparently informed of the missile seizure in June 1998. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 152-3, 491](#))

1997: Alshehhi Visits Philippines

9/11 hijacker Marwan Alshehhi visits the Philippines several times this year. He stays at the Woodland Park Resort Hotel near Angeles City, about 60 miles north of Manila and near the former US controlled Clark Air Base. Security guard Antonio Sersoza later claims, "I am sure Alshehhi had been a Woodland guest several times in 1997. I remember him well because I flagged his speeding car at least three times at the gate of Woodland." He adds that Alshehhi used different cars, knew how to speak some Filipino, and stayed at the hotel on several Saturdays. He is not sure if Mohamed Atta was with him. ([Cervantes 10/1/2001](#); [Gulf News 10/2/2001](#); [Lerner 10/11/2001](#)) Other

eyewitnesses will later recall seeing Alshehhi and Atta at the Woodland hotel in 1999 (see [December 1999](#)), and the Philippine military will confirm their presence there. A leader of a militant group connected to al-Qaeda will later confess to helping 9/11 hijacker pilots while they were in this area (see [Shortly After October 5, 2005](#)).

1997: US National Intelligence Estimate Briefly Mentions Bin Laden

The US intelligence community released another National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) dealing with terrorism. It mentions bin Laden on the first page as an emerging threat and points out he might be interested in attacks inside the US. However, the section mentioning bin Laden is only two sentences long and lacks any strategic analysis on how to address the threat. A previous NIE dealing with terrorism was released in 1995 and did not mention bin Laden (see [July 1995](#)). ([Solomon 4/16/2004](#); [9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 54](#).) The NIE also mentions that “Civilian aviation remains a particularly attractive target for terrorist attacks.” ([Tenet 2007, pp. 104](#)) There will be no more NIEs on terrorism before 9/11.

1997: Albanian Government Falls, Al-Qaeda and Other Criminal Groups Loot Armories



Sali Berisha. [*Source: Albanian government website*]The regime of Sali Berisha in Albania collapses due to a widespread failed pyramid scheme that greatly angers the population. This leads to the looting of 10,000 heavy weapons from government armories and 100,000 passports. Many of these are taken by al-Qaeda. ([Taylor 12/15/2001](#)) Subsequently, organized crime has a very strong influence in Albania. For example, in 1999, when Albanian police confiscate speed boats being used in smuggling operations, the angry gang barricades the main coastal road, beats up the police chief, and retakes the boats. Police, even though backed up by the Army, do not dare to intervene. ([Reuters 1/23/1999](#)) Thousands of Albanians are driven into hiding to try to escape vendettas and blood-feuds. ([Bowcott 9/30/1998](#)) After the collapse of his government, Berisha turns his family farm into a KLA base. ([Hedges 6/9/1998](#)) He will become prime minister in Albania in 2005.

1997: Moussaoui Travels to Azerbaijan, Meets CIA Asset There



A young Zacarias Moussaoui. [*Source: Corbis*] Zacarias Moussaoui travels to Baku, Azerbaijan. It is not known why he is there, but Baku is often a staging area for people attempting to go to nearby Chechnya, and there is an important al-Qaeda/Islamic Jihad cell there at the time (see [July 1998](#)). He meets a CIA informer there, but the informer does not learn Moussaoui's real name, and does not report on Moussaoui to the CIA until April 2001 (see [April 2001](#)). ([Tenet 2007, pp. 201](#))

1997-1998: World Trade Center Rated 'Critical' as a Possible Terrorist Target

The New York Police Department's Chief of Department Lou Anemone creates a citywide security plan that ranks 1,500 of the city's buildings, shopping areas, and transportation hubs as potential terrorist targets. The World Trade Center is rated as "critical"—the highest rating possible—on Anemone's "vulnerability list." Other "critical" targets include the New York Stock Exchange, and the Holland and Lincoln tunnels. Anemone later says the WTC "was very much near the top of that [vulnerability] list, certainly in the top 20." He announces his findings in 1998 at one of Mayor Rudolph Giuliani's weekly public safety meetings. Yet, he says, after finishing his briefing, Giuliani just "glazed over." Anemone adds, "We never had any discussion about security at the World Trade Center. We never even had a drill or exercise there." Anemone will later say that, based upon information from FBI counterterrorism expert John O'Neill, the detectives assigned to the Joint Terrorism Task Force, and other intelligence, he "knew the World Trade Center was a real continuing target." ([Barrett and Collins 2006, pp. 105-106](#))

1997-2002: 'Blind Sheikh' Continues to Head Global Jihad Movement from Inside Maximum Security Prison



Lynne Stewart. [Source: Robert Livingston/ public domain] The ‘Blind Sheikh,’ Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman, who has been in a maximum security facility since his conviction on terrorism charges in the mid 1990s, communicates with his supporters through his legal team, radical attorney Lynne Stewart, paralegal Ahmed Abdel Sattar, and interpreter Mohamed Yousry. Abdul-Rahman, who is held at the Supermax prison in Colorado and then at a medical facility in Minnesota, has no access to the outside world except through the team and he uses them to pass on advice. Author Peter Bergen will comment: “Sheikh Abdul-Rahman’s incarceration has not prevented him from communicating important messages to his followers through his family or lawyers; for instance, in 1997 he endorsed a ceasefire between the Egyptian government and the terrorist Islamic Group. Then in 2000 Sheikh Abdul-Rahman publicly withdrew his support from that ceasefire.” In addition, his will, which appears in 1998 and urges attacks against the US, may also be smuggled out by his legal team (see [May 1998](#)). However, passing on such information during the thrice-yearly visits is against the rules agreed for the visits. Stewart, who attempts to distract the prison guards while Abdul-Rahman passes on the messages, will be indicted in 2002 and found guilty on several charges, including conspiracy and providing material support to terrorists. She will be sentenced to 28 months in jail. ([Cassel 10/12/2002](#); [Fox News 2/11/2005](#); [CNN 2/14/2005](#); [Bergen 2006, pp. 208-9](#); [McCarthy 10/17/2006](#)) In 2001, one of the 9/11 hijackers, Mohand Alshehri, is reportedly seen near the Minnesota facility where Abdul-Rahman is being held (see [August 2001](#)).

Early 1997: CIA Unit Determines Bin Laden Is Serious Threat, But Cooperation Is Poor

By the start of 1997, Alec Station, the CIA unit created the year before to focus entirely on bin Laden (see [February 1996](#)), is certain that bin Laden is not just a financier but an organizer of terrorist activity. It is aware bin Laden is conducting an extensive effort to get and use a nuclear weapon (see [Late 1996](#)). It knows that al-Qaeda has a military committee planning operations against US interests worldwide. However, although this information is disseminated in many reports, the unit’s sense of alarm about bin Laden isn’t widely shared or understood within the intelligence and policy communities. Employees in the unit feel their zeal attracts ridicule from their peers. ([9/11 Commission 3/24/2004](#)) Some higher-ups begin to deride the unit as hysterical doomsayers, and refer to the unit as “The Manson Family.” Michael Scheuer, head of the unit until 1999, has an abrasive style. He and counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke do not get along and do not

work well together. Scheuer also does not get along with John O'Neill, the FBI's most knowledgeable agent regarding bin Laden. The FBI and Alec Station rarely share information, and at one point an FBI agent is caught stuffing some of the unit's files under his shirt to take back to O'Neill. ([Zeman et al. 11/2004](#))

Early 1997-Late 1998: Hijazi Turns Informant for Boston FBI Investigation on Heroin from Afghanistan



Raed Hijazi's Boston taxi license. [*Source: FBI*]/Raed Hijazi, an al-Qaeda operative later convicted in Jordan for attempting to blow up hotels there, is living and working in Boston with Nabil al-Marabh. According to an FBI source described in media reports as both "reliable" and "high-level," Hijazi is approached by FBI agents investigating a drug-trafficking network bringing in white heroin from Afghanistan. According to the source, Hijazi becomes "a willing informant" about the network. The source will claim that Hijazi also provided information about "Arab terrorists and terrorist sympathizers," but the agents were more interested in the heroin trade. ([WCVB 5 \(Boston\) 10/16/2001](#)) The timing of this is unclear, but it must have occurred between early 1997 and late 1998, the only time Hijazi lived in Boston (see [June 1995-Early 1999](#)). An FBI spokeswoman will decline to comment on the issue except to say, "Based on the reporting, I would question [Hijazi's] reliability [as an informant]." ([Mulvihill 10/17/2001](#))

1997-Late Spring 2001: Investigation into Al-Qaeda Linked-Charity Based in Chicago Hindered by FBI Headquarters

The Global Relief Foundation (GRF) is incorporated in Bridgeview, Illinois, in 1992. The US government will later claim that its founders had previously worked with Maktab al-Khidamat (MAK)/ Al-Kifah, which was the precursor to al-Qaeda (see [Late 1984](#)). By 2000, the US branch of GRF will report over \$5 million in annual contributions, and 90% of that will be sent overseas. ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 89-90](#)) The FBI's Chicago office first became aware of GRF in the mid-1990s due to GRF's connection to MAK/ Al-Kifah and other alleged radical militant links. After discovering a series of calls between GRF officials and others with terrorist links, the Chicago office opens a full field investigation in 1997. FBI agents begin physically monitoring the GRF office and searching through its trash. But the Chicago agents are repeatedly obstructed by FBI headquarters, which takes six months to a year to approve routine requests such as searches for GRF's telephone and bank records. The Chicago agents get more help from

foreign countries where the GRF has offices, and largely based on this overseas information, they conclude the GRF is funding terrorism overseas. They submit a request for a FISA warrant to step up surveillance, but it takes a full year for the warrant to be approved. After getting the approval, they begin electronic surveillance as well. By late 1999, they are convinced that the GRF executive director Mohammad Chehade is a member of both Al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya and al-Qaeda. For instance, Chehade called a mujaheddin leader closely tied to bin Laden, and there were calls between GRF and Wadih El-Hage, bin Laden's former personal secretary and one of the 1998 African embassy bombers. Searching through GRF's trash, the agents find evidence that GRF has bought sophisticated military-style handheld radios and sent them to Chechnya. By the start of 2001, the agents are convinced that GRF is funding militant groups, but they are unable to prove where the money is going overseas. They cannot make a formal request for bank records in other countries because they are conducting an intelligence investigation, not a criminal investigation. The Chicago agents want to travel to Europe to meet with officials investigating GRF there, but they are not allowed to go. Their superiors cite budget constraints. In late spring 2001, the FISA warrant is not extended, effectively ending any chance the FBI could act against GRF before 9/11. No reason has been given why the warrant was not extended, but around this time FBI headquarters do not even submit a valid FISA application for GRF put forth by the FBI's Detroit office (see [March 2000](#)). ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 89-94](#)) The GRF's offices in the US and overseas will be shut down shortly after 9/11 (see [December 14, 2001](#)). In 2004, it will be reported that Chehade is still living in the US and has not been charged with any crimes. ([Mullen 3/17/2004](#))

January 1997: Mystery Informant Confirms Al-Qaeda's Inner Workings

In mid-1996, Jamal al-Fadl will walk into a US embassy in Eritrea, defect from al-Qaeda, and become a key informant for the US about al-Qaeda's inner workings and leadership (see [June 1996-April 1997](#)). The 9/11 Commission's final report will later mention, "Corroborating evidence [to al-Fadl's revelations] came from another walk-in source at a different US embassy." ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 109](#)) Nothing more has been publicly revealed about this other defector, except for a 9/11 Commission footnote mentioning that the information about his defection comes from a January 1997 CIA cable. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 479](#)) This person does not seem to be L'Houssaine Kherchtou, another al-Qaeda defector from around this time, since the 9/11 Commission mentions him by name elsewhere in their final report, and he does not talk to the US until mid-2000 (see [Summer 2000](#)). ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 62](#)) This also does not fit the profile of Essam al Ridi, another al-Qaeda informant, who does not get into contact with US officials until after the embassy bombings in 1998. ([Moore 9/10/2006](#)) The 9/11 Commission also notes that, "More confirmation [about al-Fadl's revelations] was supplied later that year by intelligence and other sources, including material gathered by FBI agents and Kenyan police from an al-Qaeda cell in Nairobi" (see [August 21, 1997](#)). ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 109](#))

1997-September 11, 2001: US Knows Swiss Bank Funds Hamas and Top Al-Qaeda Leaders, Yet Considers Bank ‘Low Priority’



The Al Taqwa Bank had offices in this building in Lugano, Italy, on the border with Switzerland. [Source: *Keystone*]Newsweek will later claim that US investigators “on bin Laden’s trail” had known about the Al Taqwa Bank in Switzerland and its support for al-Qaeda “for years. But the group’s mazelike structure made it hard to track, and the Feds considered it a low priority.” A senior Treasury official later will tell Congress that US investigators learned in 1997 that Hamas had transferred \$60 million into accounts at the Al Taqwa Bank. Also in 1997, US investigators learn the names of many Al Taqwa shareholders. Many of them turn out to be rich and powerful Arabs, including members of the bin Laden family and members of the Kuwaiti royal family (see [1997-December 1999](#)). Newsweek later will claim that, “The US took a harder look at Al Taqwa after the [1998 US] embassy bombings (see [August 7, 1998](#)). Sources say US intelligence tracked telephone contacts between Al Taqwa and members of bin Laden’s inner circle. Al-Qaeda operatives would call Al Taqwa representatives in the Bahamas as they moved around the world. Still, the network’s complex structure made it difficult to prove how money changed hands, and the investigation stalled. Under US pressure, the Bahamian government revoked Al Taqwa’s license [in the spring of 2001]. Treasury officials say the network continued to do business anyway.” ([Hosenball 3/18/2002](#)) The US will declare Al Taqwa a terrorist financier two months after 9/11 (see [November 7, 2001](#)).

1997-December 1999: FBI and Swiss Fail to Act Against Suspicious Bank and Its Shareholders



Yousuf Abdullah Al-Qaradawi. [Source: Zuma Press/ Newscom]

In December 1999, the FBI apparently discovers a list of shareholders in the Al Taqwa Bank that reflects holdings in the bank at that time. The list is later confirmed as authentic by both US and Al Taqwa officials. It contains over 700 names. Youssef Nada, the president of Al Taqwa, will claim that the FBI knew the essential contents of the list in 1997, the same year they learned of other ties between the bank and officially designated terrorist groups (see [1997-September 11, 2001](#)). ([Komisar 3/15/2002](#)) Names on the list include:

- Yousuf Abdullah Al-Qaradawi, the grand mufti of the United Arab Emirates, and five members of his family. Qaradawi is said to be a high-ranking member of the Muslim Brotherhood and has made statements supporting suicide bombings against Israel (see [1986-October 1999](#)).
- Huta and Iman bin Laden, sisters of Osama bin Laden. Salon notes that the presence of their names on the list “undermin[es] the bin Laden family’s claim that it separated itself from [Osama’s] terrorist pursuits after he was expelled from Saudi Arabia in 1994.”
- Other bin Laden family members. For instance, Ghalib Mohammad Binladin, a brother of Osama, sues Al Taqwa in 1999 for failing to pay him a claim (the suit is thrown out of court.) ([Hosenball 11/7/2001](#))
- Unnamed members of Hamas, which the US declared a terrorist group in 1995.
- Members of Kuwait’s royal family.
- Hassan el-Banna, a leader of the Muslim Brotherhood. (A man with this name founded the Muslim Brotherhood but died in 1949; this may be one of his descendants.) Other names on the list are said to be connected to organizations linked to al-Qaeda. Swiss officials later will admit that they were aware of reports connecting Al Taqwa to terrorist groups, but will claim they never had enough evidence to obtain a search warrant. However, no effective action is taken against the bank or anyone on the list. ([Komisar 3/15/2002](#)) The Al Taqwa Bank is said to have amassed \$229 million in capital by 1997. In 1995, one of the bank’s directors said that oil-rich Saudi families “are very active” in using the bank. The bank will be shut down after 9/11, when US officials will charge it with funding al-Qaeda and other US-designated terrorist groups (see [November 7, 2001](#)). ([Wells 11/8/2001](#))

1997-July 2001: Hanjour Associate Wanted for FBI Investigation Before 9/11 But Not Put on Watch List

Hijacker Hani Hanjour begins associating with an unnamed individual who is later mentioned in FBI agent Ken Williams’ famous “Phoenix memo” (see [July 10, 2001](#)). Hanjour and this individual train at flight schools in Arizona (see [October 1996-](#)

[December 1997](#); [1998](#)). Several flight instructors later note the two were associates and may have carpooled together. They are known to share the same airplane on one occasion in 1999, and are at the school together on other occasions. The unnamed individual leaves the US in April 2000. In May 2001, the FBI attempts to investigate this person, but after finding out that he has left the US, the FBI declines to open a formal investigation. The person's name is not placed on a watch list, so the FBI is unaware that the person returns in June and stays in the US for another month. By this time, this person is an experienced flight instructor who is certified to fly Boeing 737s. The FBI speculates the person may return to evaluate Hanjour's flying skills or provide final training before 9/11. There is considerable circumstantial evidence placing this person near Hanjour in July 2001. ([US Congress 7/24/2003](#).) This unnamed individual may well be Lofti Raissi, as several details match him perfectly. For instance, Raissi is a flight instructor who left the US in April 2000, has been accused of sharing an airplane with Hanjour in 1999, and has been accused of being with Hanjour in July 2001. ([Gillan 1/31/2002](#)) Raissi will be arrested in Britain after 9/11 and accused of training Hanjour and other hijackers how to fly, but the case against him will collapse in April 2002. He will be released and many of the allegations against him will be withdrawn (see [September 21, 2001](#)). No media accounts have been reported that Raissi was mentioned in the Phoenix memo or wanted for an FBI investigation before 9/11.

1997-September 1999: FAA Finds Repeated Security Violations at Airport Later Used by Ten Hijackers

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) finds at least 136 security violations at Boston's Logan Airport between 1997 and early 1999. Flights 11 and 175 will depart from Logan on 9/11. Massachusetts Port Authority, which operates the airport, is fined \$178,000 for these breaches, which include failing to screen baggage properly and easy access to parked planes. In summer 1999, a teenager is able to climb over the airport's security fence, walk two miles across the tarmac, board a 747, and fly on it to London. In September 1999, the Boston Globe finds that doors are often left open at the airport, making it possible for potentially anyone to gain access to planes on the ground. ([Howe and Breilis 9/12/2001](#); [Slevin and Warrick 9/12/2001](#)) After 9/11, an analysis by the Boston Globe will conclude that Logan's security record is "dismal" (see [1991-2000](#)). ([Breilis and Carroll 9/26/2001](#))

1997-Shortly Before September 11, 2001: Jarrah Associates with Suspicious Radical Monitored by German Intelligence

When traveling with a radical associate known to be monitored by German intelligence, Abdulrahman al-Makhadi (see [Late 1996 or After](#)), Ziad Jarrah meets another suspicious Islamic radical. The man, a convert, is known in public accounts only as Marcel K and is the vice-president of the Islamic center in North-Rhine Westphalia. In March 2001, the Bundeskriminalamt federal criminal service will begin investigating the center's

president with respect to membership in a terrorist organization. Marcel K is apparently a close confidant of Jarrah, because Jarrah always calls him before taking important decisions, for example when he leaves to train in Afghanistan and when he applies for admission to US flight schools. He will also call Marcel K during his pilot training, for the last time shortly before 9/11. ([Schrom and Laabs 2/2/2003](#)) Marcel K will be arrested in a Europe-wide sweep of Islamic militants in February 2003. ([Deutsche Welle \(Bonn\) 2/6/2003](#); [Jansen 2/7/2003](#); [Hoge 2/7/2003](#)) It is not known what happens to him after this.

1997-February 17, 2003: CIA Informer Gravitates to Key Italian Al-Qaeda Cell



Hassan Mustafa Osama Nasr. [*Source: ABC*] Hassan Mustafa Osama Nasr (a.k.a. Abu Omar), a member of the Egyptian terrorist organization Al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya who previously informed for the CIA in Albania (see [August 27, 1995 and Shortly After](#)), arrives in Italy and becomes close to a cell of radical Islamists that works with al-Qaeda and appears to have foreknowledge of 9/11 (see [August 12, 2000](#) and [March 2001](#)). He arrives in Rome, where he is granted political refugee status, and then moves north to Milan, where he gravitates to the Islamic Cultural Institute. The Institute has a reputation as the most radical Islamic center in Italy, was a key supply point for Muslims fighting in Bosnia (see [Late 1993-December 14, 1995](#)), and was connected to the first World Trade Center bombing (see [Late 1993-1994](#)). He serves as deputy imam at the Center and preaches anti-US sermons. Italian law enforcement authorities monitor him with bugs in his apartment and through a tap on his phone, finding out that after 9/11 he recruits Muslims to go and fight in Afghanistan. He does not seem to be directly involved in serious illegal activity, but the information the Italians gain helps them monitor other radicals. His relationship with the CIA during his time in Italy is unclear, but in one monitored call after 9/11 he appears to be dissuading another radical from attacking Jews and in another he tells an associate not to carry out a car bombing. ([Crewdson and Hundley 7/2/2005](#)) The CIA will kidnap him in 2003 (see [February 17, 2003](#)).

January 20, 1997: Clinton Re-inaugurated; Atlanta Rules Applied at This and Other Events

Bill Clinton is re-inaugurated as president. An extensive set of security measures to prevent airplanes as weapons crashing into the inauguration is used. These measures, first used in the 1996 Atlanta Olympics and thus referred to as the “Atlanta Rules,” include the closing of nearby airspace, the use of intercept helicopters, the basing of armed fighters nearby, and more. This plan will later be used for the 1999 North Atlantic Treaty Organization’s 50th anniversary celebration in Washington, the 2000 Republican convention in Philadelphia, the 2000 Democratic convention in New York, and the George W. Bush inauguration in 2001. ([Clarke 2004, pp. 110-11](#); [Paltrow 4/1/2004](#)) At some point near the end of the Clinton administration, the Secret Service and Customs Service will agree to create a permanent air defense unit to protect Washington. However, these agencies are part of the Treasury Department, and the leadership there will refuse to fund the idea. The permanent unit will not be created until after 9/11. ([Paltrow 4/1/2004](#))

February 12, 1997: Vice President Gore’s Aviation Security Report Released

The White House Commission on Aviation Safety and Security, led by Vice President Al Gore, issues its final report, which highlights the risk of terrorist attacks in the US. The report references Operation Bojinka, the failed plot to bomb twelve American airliners out of the sky over the Pacific Ocean, and calls for increased aviation security. The commission reports that [it] “believes that terrorist attacks on civil aviation are directed at the United States, and that there should be an ongoing federal commitment to reducing the threats that they pose.” ([Gore Commission 2/12/1997](#)) However, the report has little practical effect: “Federal bureaucracy and airline lobbying [slow] and [weaken] a set of safety improvements recommended by a presidential commission—including one that a top airline industry official now says might have prevented the September 11 terror attacks.” ([Pasternak 10/6/2001](#))

March 1997: German Government Investigates Hamburg Al-Qaeda Cell

An investigation of al-Qaeda contacts in Hamburg by the Office for the Protection of the Constitution (BfV), Germany’s domestic intelligence service, begins at least by this time (Germany refuses to disclose additional details). The investigation is called Operation Zartheit, and it was started by a tip about Mohammed Haydar Zammar from Turkish intelligence (see [1996](#)). ([New York Times 1/18/2003](#)) It is later believed that Zammar, a German of Syrian origin, is a part of the Hamburg al-Qaeda cell. ([Rotella 1/14/2003](#)) He later claims he recruited Mohamed Atta and others into the cell ([Grimaldi 6/19/2002](#)) From 1995-2000, he makes frequent trips to Afghanistan. ([New York Times 1/18/2003](#); [Laabs 8/13/2003](#)) German intelligence is aware that he was personally invited to Afghanistan by bin Laden. ([Schrom and Laabs 2/2/2003](#)) It is not clear if or when the investigation ends, but it continues until at least September 1999. ([Associated Press 6/22/2002](#))

March 1997-April 2000: French and British Informer Helps Security Services Track Moussaoui and Shoe Bomber Reid



Reda Hassaine. *[Source: CBC]* Reda Hassaine, an Algerian journalist who informs for a number of intelligence services, including an Algerian service, the French Direction Générale de la Sécurité Extérieure (DGSE), and the British Special Branch and MI5, helps intelligence agencies track Zacarias Moussaoui and shoe-bomber Richard Reid. One place Hassaine sees Moussaoui and Reid is the Four Feathers club, where leading Islamist cleric Abu Qatada preaches. ([Dovkants 1/28/2005](#); [O'Neill and McGrory 2006, pp. 133](#)) Hassaine also sees Moussaoui, Reid, and Spanish al-Qaeda leader Barakat Yarkas at the Finsbury Park mosque in London. The mosque, a hotbed of Islamic extremism headed by Abu Hamza al-Masri, is the center of attention for many intelligence agencies. Hassaine does not realize how important these people will later become at this time, but recognizes their faces when they become famous after 9/11. ([O'Neill and McGrory 2006, pp. 133](#)) British intelligence also monitor phone calls between Moussaoui and Reid in 2000 (see [Mid-2000-December 9, 2000](#)).

April 5, 1997: US Again Not Interested in Sudan's Al-Qaeda Files



Mansoor Ijaz. *[Source: Crescent Hydropolis Resorts publicity photo]* The Sudanese government, frustrated in previous efforts to be removed from a US list of terrorism sponsors, tries a back channel approach using Mansoor Ijaz, a multimillionaire Pakistani-American businessman. Ijaz is personally acquainted with President Clinton, National Security Adviser Sandy Berger, and other high-level US officials. With help from Ijaz (who is also hoping to invest in Sudan), on April 5, 1997,

Sudan President Omar al-Bashir writes a letter to Lee Hamilton, the ranking Democrat on the House Foreign Affairs Committee. It states, “We extend an offer to the FBI’s Counterterrorism units and any other official delegations which your government may deem appropriate, to come to the Sudan and work with [us] in order to assess the data in our possession and help us counter the forces your government, and ours, seek to contain.” This is a reference to Sudan’s extensive files on al-Qaeda gathered during the years bin Laden lived there, which the Sudanese had offered the US before (see [March 8, 1996-April 1996](#)). Sudan allows Ijaz to see some of these files. Ijaz discusses the letter with Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, Berger, and other prominent US officials, but to no success. No US official sends any reply back to Sudan. Tim Carney, US ambassador to Sudan, will complain, “It was an offer US officials did not take seriously.” ABC News will report in 2002 that the 9/11 Congressional Inquiry plans to investigate Sudan’s offer. Sen. Bob Graham (D), co-chairman of the inquiry, will ask, “Why wouldn’t we be accepting intelligence from the Sudanese?” But the inquiry’s 2003 final report will make no mention of this offer or other offers to hand over the files (see [February 5, 1998](#); [May 2000](#)). (It should be noted the report is heavily censored so this might be discussed in redacted sections.) Hamilton, the recipient of the letter, will become the Vice Chairman of the 9/11 Commission. The Commission’s 2004 final report will fail mention Sudan’s offers and will fail to mention the direct involvement of the Commission’s Vice Chairman in these matters. ([Rose 1/2002](#); [ABC News 2/20/2002](#))

May 1997: Saudis Reveal Bin Laden Is Sending Money to US but Fail to Share More on Al-Qaeda Finances

Tayyib al-Madani (a.k.a. Abu Fadel) turns himself in to the Saudi government. He handled the distribution of al-Qaeda’s finances and ran some of bin Laden’s businesses in Sudan. It is said that he had to approve every al-Qaeda expenditure of more than \$1,000. ([Risen 2006, pp. 181](#)) Vincent Cannistraro, former head of the CIA’s Counter Terrorism Center, will say in 1998 that the US learned “a lot of intelligence” from this about how bin Laden “keeps his money, how he transfers it from one bank to another, what are the front companies [he uses].” ([Katz 8/21/1998](#)) The US presses the Saudi government for direct access to him to learn more, but the Saudis don’t allow it. The US will continue to press, and in September 1998, Vice President Gore will raise the issue with Crown Prince Abdullah. But the US will not gain direct access to him until some time after 9/11. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 14](#); [9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 39](#); [Risen 2006, pp. 181](#)) In August 1997, the Daily Telegraph will publicly reveal that al-Madani has turned himself in. The article suggests that he may have been working as a Saudi double agent for some time before defecting. US sources say that Saudis have shared information that some money has been sent from bin Laden bank accounts in Pakistan and Afghanistan to individuals in London, Detroit, Brooklyn, and Jersey City in New Jersey. The article notes that al-Madani’s “information is thought to have been the reason a federal grand jury has been secretly convened in New York to examine the financing of terrorism in America.” Is it not clear what becomes of the individuals being sent the money, but the article suggests that the recent arrest of two Palestinians planning an attack in New York City is connected to al-Madani’s revelations (see [July 31, 1997](#)). ([Davies 8/2/1997](#))

May 19, 1997: Military Review Suggests Cutting Fighter Protection Over US; Several Bases Are Discontinued



William Cohen. [Source: *US Department of Defense*] Secretary of Defense William Cohen issues a comprehensive assessment of America's defense requirements, called the Report of the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR). This is a six-month analysis of the "threats, risks and opportunities for US national security," and reviews all aspects of the US defense strategy. ([US Department of Defense 5/19/1997](#)) Amongst other things, the 1997 QDR outlines the conversion of six continental air defense squadrons to general purpose, training or other missions. It calls for there being just four "alert" air defense sites around the US: at Otis, Massachusetts; Homestead, Florida; Riverside, California; and Portland, Oregon. ([US Department of Defense 5/1997; Filson 2004, pp. 348](#)) Major General Larry Arnold, who is commanding general of NORAD's Continental Region on 9/11, later says, "The QDR didn't make any sense at all. [T]here was a fight just to maintain the number of alert sites that we had. We felt we could operate fairly reasonably with about 10 sites and thought eight was the absolute highest risk we could take." NORAD Commander in Chief General Howell M. Estes III has written to the Joint Chiefs of Staff that a minimum of seven alert sites are needed to maintain America's air sovereignty. In the end, three extra alert sites are added to the four suggested in the QDR. These are at Hampton, Virginia.; Panama City, Florida.; and Ellington, Texas. Larry Arnold later says: "I didn't feel particularly comfortable with seven [alert sites] because there are great large distances between the alert sites." ([Filson 2004, pp. 36](#)) Other bases will lose their NORAD air defense functions over the next year, including those in Fresno, California; Fargo, North Dakota; Duluth, Minnesota; Burlington, Vermont; Atlantic City, New Jersey; Great Falls, Montana. ([US Department of Defense 5/1997](#)) Of these closed bases, the most critical loss on 9/11 will be the Atlantic City, New Jersey, base, located about halfway between New York City and Washington. Boston air traffic control, apparently unaware the base has lost its air defense function will try and fail to contact the base shortly after learning about the first hijacking of the morning, Flight 11 (see [\(8:34 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)).

May 22, 1997: FBI: Terrorists Are Operating in US With Capability to Attack

The Associated Press reports that senior FBI officials have determined that militant Islamic groups are operating in the US. FBI agent John O'Neill is quoted as saying, "Almost every one of these groups has a presence in the United States today. A lot of these groups now have the capacity and the support infrastructure in the United States to attack us here if they choose to." ([PBS Frontline 10/3/2002](#))

May 25-28, 1997: Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and UAE Officially Recognize Taliban Government

Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) officially recognize the Taliban government. Pakistan is the first to give recognition, doing so on the same day the Taliban temporarily conquers the town of Mazar-i-Sharif in northern Afghanistan. ([Cooper 5/28/1997](#); [Evans 5/29/1997](#)) On 9/11, these three will still be the only countries that recognize the Taliban as the legitimate rulers of Afghanistan. ([US Congress 7/24/2003](#))

May 26, 1997: Taliban Government Is Officially Recognized by Saudis

The Saudi government becomes the first country to extend formal recognition of the Taliban government of Afghanistan. Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates will follow suit. On 9/11, these three countries are the only countries that officially recognize the Taliban. ([US Congress 7/24/2003](#))

Summer-Autumn 1997: CIA Fails to Connect Saudi Charity to Al-Qaeda Plot on US Embassy in Kenya



Al Haramain Foundation's Kenya office in 2004. [*Source: Associated Press*] An informant tells an intelligence agency allied to the US that the Nairobi, Kenya, branch of a Saudi charity named the Al Haramain Foundation is plotting to blow up the US embassy in Nairobi. The chief of the CIA station in Kenya passes on this informant's warning to Ambassador Prudence Bushnell and others at the embassy. On October 31, 1997, the Kenyan government acts on the informants' tip, arresting nine Arabs connected to the charity and seizing their files. The CIA sends a special team to analyze the files and finds no evidence of a plot. This team wants to question the nine arrested Arabs, but the CIA station chief refuses to ask the

Kenyan government for access to the suspects, saying he doesn't want to bother them any more about the issue. The CIA drops the investigation and the nine Arabs are deported. Ambassador Bushnell is told that the threat has been eliminated. But some members of the CIA team are furious and feel that their investigation was short-circuited. Some intelligence officials believe at the time that members of the charity have ties to bin Laden. The Nairobi embassy will be bombed in August 1998 (see [August 7, 1998](#)). ([Risen and Weiser 1/9/1999](#)) A secret CIA report in 1996 tied Al Haramain to militants, smuggling, drug running, and prostitution (see [January 1996](#)). In 2004, it will be reported that according to US officials, "A wholesale fish business financed with Al Haramain funds... steered profits to the al-Qaeda cell behind the [embassy bombing]." One of the bombers confessed days after the bombing that this "business was for al-Qaeda." A month later, the Kenyan government banned Al Haramain from the country, but its office remained open and some funds connected to it are believed to have helped support the al-Qaeda cell behind the 2002 bombings in Mombassa, Kenya (see [November 28, 2002](#)). Yet Al Haramain's Kenya office still remained open into 2004, when the Saudi government shut down Al Haramain worldwide in response to pressure from Western countries. ([Associated Press 6/7/2004](#))

[June 3, 1997: PNAC Think Tank Issues Statement of Principles](#)



William Kristol, one of the founders and leaders of PNAC.

[Source: Public domain] The Project for the New American Century (PNAC), a neoconservative think tank formed in the spring of 1997, issues its statement of principles. PNAC's stated aims are:

- to "shape a new century favorable to American principles and interests"
- to achieve "a foreign policy that boldly and purposefully promotes American principles abroad"
- to "increase defense spending significantly"
- to challenge "regimes hostile to US interests and values"
- to "accept America's unique role in preserving and extending an international order friendly to our security, our prosperity, and our principles." ([Project for the New American Century 6/3/1997](#)) The Statement of Principles is significant, because it is signed by a group who will become "a roll call of today's Bush inner circle." ([Freedland](#)

[2/26/2003](#)) ABC's Ted Koppel will later say PNAC's ideas have "been called a secret blueprint for US global domination." ([ABC News 3/5/2003](#))

Mid-1997: Militant Operative Uses British Intelligence Phone to Call All Over Europe

Omar Nasiri, who informs on al-Qaeda for the British intelligence service MI5 and the French service Direction Générale de la Sécurité Extérieure (DGSE), lends his phone to an operative of the Algerian militant Groupe Islamique Armé (GIA) his handlers are interested in. The operative, known only as "Khaled," uses the phone to make a call to Algeria that is recorded by MI5. Khaled later borrows the phone several times, and MI5 records calls he makes all over Europe. ([Nasiri 2006, pp. 291-2](#))

July 31, 1997: Islamic Extremist Suicide Attack in New York City Narrowly Averted



Gazi Ibrahim Abu Mezer. [*Source: Associated Press*] Gazi Ibrahim Abu Mezer, and Lafi Khalil, two Palestinian men who had recently immigrated from the West Bank to the US, are arrested in New York City. They are found with a number of hand made bombs, and officials claim they were mere hours away from using them on a busy Atlantic Avenue subway station and on a commuter bus. Police were tipped off to them by a roommate. ([Barry 8/1/1997](#); [CNN 8/2/1997](#)) In the days immediately after the arrests, numerous media reports claim that the FBI has tied the two men to Hamas. For instance, the Associated Press reports, "The FBI has linked two suspects in a Brooklyn suicide-bombing plot to the militant Mideast group Hamas... One man was linked to Hamas by intelligence sources, the other through an immigration document he had filled out in which he said he had been accused in Israel of having been in a terrorist organization. The organization, the source said, was Hamas." Reports say both suspects "are working for Mousa Abu Marzouk, the Hamas political leader who lived in Virginia for 15 years before being arrested in 1995, imprisoned as a terrorism suspect, and then deported earlier [in 1997]." (see [July 5, 1995-May 1997](#)) ([Associated Press 8/1/1997](#); [CNN 8/2/1997](#)) According to another account, "law enforcement authorities say these suspects made frequent phone calls from local neighborhood stores to various Hamas organization offices in the Middle East." ([PBS 8/1/1997](#)) Just days earlier, there had been a Hamas suicide bombing in Israel that killed fifteen people. Mezer or Khalil reportedly called the suicide bombers "heroes" and added, "We wish to join them." ([Barry 8/2/1997](#)) A note is found in their apartment that threatens a series of attacks unless several jailed

militants were released, including Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman, Ramzi Yousef, and Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, the top leader of Hamas. A copy of the letter was sent to the State Department two days before their arrest. A portrait of Abdul-Rahman is also found on the wall of their apartment. ([CNN 8/2/1997](#); [Kifner 8/6/1997](#)) However, on August 4, US officials announce that the two had no ties to Hamas or any other organization. In his trial, Mezer will say he planned to use the bombs to kill as many Jews as possible, though not in a subway. He will describe himself as a supporter of Hamas but not a member. He will be convicted and sentenced to life in prison. Khalil will be acquitted of the terrorism charge, but convicted of having a fake immigration card. He will be sentenced to three years in prison and then ordered deported. ([CNN 8/4/1997](#); [Fried 7/21/1998](#); [Zeller 9/19/2001](#))

August 1997: CIA Monitors Central Asia for Oil Reserves

The CIA creates a secret task force to monitor Central Asia's politics and gauge its wealth. Covert CIA officers, some well-trained petroleum engineers, travel through southern Russia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan to sniff out potential oil reserves. ([Nelán 5/4/1998](#))

August 1997: US Intelligence Monitoring Cell in Kenya Discovers Al-Qaeda Operatives around the World

On August 2, 1997, the Telegraph reports that Tayyib al-Madani, a chief financial officer for bin Laden, turned himself in to the Saudis in May 1997 (see [May 1997](#)). Later in the month, US agents raid Wadih El-Hage's house in Nairobi, Kenya (see [August 21, 1997](#)). El-Hage and Fazul Abdullah Mohammed (a.k.a. Haroun Fazul), both members of the al-Qaeda cell in Nairobi, Kenya, start a flurry of phone traffic, warning other operatives about the raid and the defection. Their phones are already being monitored by the CIA and NSA (see [May 21, 1996](#)), who continue to listen in as they communicate nearly every day with al-Qaeda operatives in places such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, London, and Germany. They also phone other members of their cell in Mombassa, Kenya. It appears they realize their phones are being bugged because at one point Fazul explicitly warns an operative in Hamburg, Germany, Sadek Walid Awaad (a.k.a. Abu Khadija), to stop calling because the lines are bugged. However, US intelligence is able to learn much just from the numbers and locations that are being called. For instance, the call to Awaad alerts US intelligence to other operatives in Hamburg who know the 9/11 hijackers living there (see [Late 1997](#)). ([Miller, Stone, and Mitchell 2002, pp. 200-202](#); [El País 9/17/2003](#))

After July 1997: CIA Obtains Domestic Call and Financial Information to Support 'Black Ops'

Some time after he is appointed CIA Director, but before 9/11, George Tenet negotiates a series of agreements with telecommunications and financial institutions “to get access to certain telephone, Internet, and financial records related to ‘black’ intelligence operations.” The arrangements are made personally by the companies’ CEOs and Tenet, who plays “the patriot card” to get the information. The arrangement involves the CIA’s National Resources Division, which has at least a dozen offices in the US. The Division’s main aim is to recruit people in the US to spy abroad. However, in this case the Division makes arrangements so that other intelligence agencies, such as the NSA, can access the information and records the CEOs agree to provide. ([Woodward 2006, pp. 323-5](#)) There is a history of co-operation between the CIA’s National Resources Division and the NSA. For example, Monte Overacre, a CIA officer assigned to the Division’s San Diego office in the early 1990s, said that he worked with the NSA there, obtaining information about foreign telecommunications programs and passing it on to the Technology Management Office, a joint venture between the two agencies. ([Dreyfuss 1/1998](#)) One US official will say that the arrangements only give the CIA access to the companies’ passive databanks. However, reporter Bob Woodward will say that the programme raises “serious civil liberties questions and also demonstrate[d] that the laws had not kept pace with the technology.” ([Woodward 2006, pp. 324-5](#)) There will be an interagency argument about the program after 9/11 (see [\(2003 and After\)](#)).

August 13, 1997: US Aware Taliban Are Paying Pakistani Government with Drugs

A classified US cable on this date reveals US intelligence is aware that the Taliban are paying the Pakistani government for wheat and fuel with drugs. The cable suggests that Pakistan is planning to demand hard currency instead of drugs in order to restrain drug trafficking and increase revenue, but it is unclear if this change ever takes place. ([US Embassy \(Islamabad\) 8/13/1997](#))

Shortly Before August 21, 1997: Expert FBI Agent Not Allowed to Join Al-Qaeda Raid

Michael Scheuer, the first head of the CIA’s bin Laden unit, will later write, “For most of a year the bin Laden unit prepared for an operation in a foreign city that was set to come to fruition in late-summer 1997. The unit’s lead US-based officer on this operation was an extraordinarily able analyst from [the FBI]; she knew the issue cold. Days before the operation occurred the [FBI] ordered her back to its headquarters. She protested, but was told that she would not be promoted if she balked at returning. I protested to my superiors and to the three most senior officers of the [FBI] who were then in charge of terrorism. All refused to intervene. The operation was much less well exploited because of the loss of this officer.” Other clues mentioned by Scheuer indicate this operation is the raid on Wadhi El-Hage’s house in Nairobi, Kenya (see [August 21, 1997](#)). ([Pollack 1/2004](#); [Scheuer 2005, pp. 191-192](#))

August 21, 1997: US Raids Al-Qaeda Cell Member's House but Fails to Stop Embassy Bombing Plot



The outside and inside of El-Hage's house in Nairobi. These pictures were apparently taken during the 1997 raid and were used as evidence in El-Hage's trial. [Source: *FBI*] Dan Coleman, an FBI agent working with Alec Station, the CIA's bin Laden unit, has been examining transcripts from wiretapped phones connected to bin Laden's businesses in Sudan (see [Early 1990s](#)). One frequently called number belongs to Wadih El-Hage, a US citizen who is later revealed to be bin Laden's personal secretary. El-Hage often makes obvious and clumsy attempts to speak in code. The CIA comes to believe that El-Hage might be recruited as an agent. On this day, Coleman, two CIA agents, and a Kenyan police officer enter El-Hage's house in Nairobi, Kenya, with a search warrant. The investigators interview El-Hage (who returned that day from visiting bin Laden in Afghanistan) and confiscate his computer. ([Braun et al. 10/14/2001](#); [Wright 2006, pp. 242-244](#)) A large amount of incriminating evidence is discovered in El-Hage's documents and computer files (see [Shortly After August 21, 1997](#) and [Shortly After August 21, 1997](#)). El-Hage moves to the US, where he is interviewed by a grand jury, then let go (see [September 24, 1997](#)). He will be arrested shortly after al-Qaeda bombs the US embassy in Nairobi (see [September 15, 1998](#)). He will be sentenced to life in prison for his role in that attack. State Department officials will later strongly assert that while staffers at the US embassy in Kenya were told about the raid at the time, they were not told about any potential connection to al-Qaeda. However, US intelligence officials strongly assert that the embassy staff was frequently briefed about the bin Laden connection. ([Risen and Weiser 1/9/1999](#))

Shortly After August 21, 1997: US Discovers More Evidence about Al-Qaeda Kenya Cell, but Fails to Act



Fazul Abdullah Mohammed. [Source: FBI/FBI agent Dan Coleman

and other US investigators discover a number of revealing items in the raid on Wadiah El-Hage's house in Nairobi, Kenya (see [August 21, 1997](#)). It is already known that El-Hage is a member of an al-Qaeda Kenya cell and bin Laden's former personal secretary. Items found include:

- A letter is found on El-Hage's confiscated personal computer written by Fazul Abdullah Mohammed (a.k.a. Haroun Fazul), another member of the al-Qaeda Kenya cell who is living with El-Hage at the time. The letter was written a week before the raid. It refers to the "East African cell," alludes to the cell's role in attacking US soldiers in Somalia in 1993 (see [1993](#)), explains that a cache of incriminating files was recently moved from El-Hage's house and hidden, and says the members of the cell are "convinced one hundred percent" that they're being monitored by intelligence agencies. It also talks about other operatives in the town of Mombassa, Kenya, and talks about the imminent arrival of "engineers" to help the cell. ([Risen and Weiser 1/9/1999](#); [PBS Frontline 4/1999](#); [Miller, Stone, and Mitchell 2002, pp. 204-205](#))
- Another document found on the same computer reveals that El-Hage was sent to Kenya by bin Laden to initiate a "new policy" for the Kenya cell and "prepare 300 activists." Other members of the cell were advised "of the need to move families to a secure region before the 'activism.'" It notes that other operatives have carried out an operation in the capital of Ethiopia (presumably the attempted assassination of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak (see [June 1995](#))) and adds, "There are a lot of explosions in the other cities, and the brothers are taking up these operations." ([Weiser 1/22/2000](#))
- A genuine-looking Kenyan travel stamp is found, which could be used to make documents appear authentic. ([Weiser 1/22/2000](#))
- Other files reveal that El-Hage and an associate are fabricating false passports for operatives in the Caucasus, as well as for fighters in Somalia. ([Weiser 1/22/2000](#))
- Further documents show that El-Hage bought guns for bin Laden in Eastern Europe and was making frequent trips to Tanzania (the Kenya al-Qaeda cell will bomb the US embassy in Tanzania in 1998 (see [August 7, 1998](#)). ([Wright 2006, pp. 244](#))
- Additionally, El-Hage's address book is found, which provides many more leads (see [Shortly After August 21, 1997](#)). Yet, despite all this, no arrests are made and no urgent alarms are sounded. The wiretaps on the Kenya cell are actually stopped by the end of the month. ([Windrem 12/4/2000](#)) Crucial data about Fazul Abdullah Mohammed is found as well. US intelligence does look for him for a while. But he simply leaves Kenya for a few months and then returns, moving to another house in Nairobi and where he starts work on building bombs in May 1998. ([Windrem 12/4/2000](#); [Braun et al. 10/14/2001](#); [US Congress 10/21/2003](#)) Author Lawrence Wright who interviews Coleman will paraphrase

Coleman's thoughts at the time: "Al-Qaeda was up to something, but it was unclear what that was. In any case, it was certainly a low-end operation, and the exposure of [El-Hage's] house in Nairobi had no doubt put an end to it." ([Wright 2006, pp. 244](#))

Shortly After August 21, 1997: Important Al-Qaeda Contacts Discovered through Seized Address Book

Wadih El-Hage has been bin Laden's personal secretary since the early 1990s. When US agents raid his house in Nairobi, Kenya, they seize his address book (see [August 21, 1997](#)), which contains the names and phone numbers for many other al-Qaeda operatives. ([Hirschhorn 5/25/2001](#)) The names discovered in the book include:

- Ali Mohamed, the al-Qaeda double agent living in California. US investigators are already tapping his California phone and have been tapping calls between him and El-Hage since at least 1996 (see [April 1996](#)).
- Mamoun Darkazanli. He is a Syrian-born businessman living in Hamburg, Germany, who has contacts with Mohamed Atta's al-Qaeda cell in the same city. Darkazanli's name and phone number are listed, and El-Hage even has a business card listing El-Hage's address in Texas and Darkazanli's address in Hamburg (see [Late 1998](#)).
- Ghassan Dahduli. He works at two US non-profit organizations, the Islamic Association for Palestine and InfoCom. Both organizations will be shut down for supporting terrorist networks (see [September 16, 1998-September 5, 2001](#)).
- Salah al-Rajhi. He is the brother of Sulaiman Abdul Aziz al-Rajhi, a Saudi banker and billionaire. This brother started a network of organizations in Herndon, Virginia known as the SAAR network (named for the four initials in his name). This network will be raided by US officials in 2002 for suspected terrorist funding ties (see [March 20, 2002](#)).
- Several business cards relating to the International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO). A 1996 CIA report connected the IIRO to terrorist funding, but the IIRO will not be prosecuted due to its close ties to the Saudi government (see [January 1996](#) and [October 12, 2001](#)). ([Isikoff and Hosenball 12/9/2002](#))
- According to author Douglas Farah, the address book is "full of the names of diamond dealers and jewelers, often including the purchaser's home phone number." This suggests al-Qaeda could be profiting from the diamond trade in Africa. ([Farah 2004, pp. 64-65](#)) But Farah also will note in 2004 that many of the leads from El-Hage's address book and other documents discovered around the same time are not fully explored. In fact, he says that "Most of El-Hage's notebooks, written in Arabic, have still not been translated into English." ([Farah 2004, pp. 64-65](#))

August 27, 1997: US Ambassador Criticizes Pakistan over Its Aid to Taliban



Tom Simons. [Source: *Stanford University press*] According to later released US documents, US Ambassador to Pakistan Tom Simons criticizes a high-ranking Pakistani official about Pakistan's aid to the Taliban. This official protests that total Pakistani aid to the Taliban is only about half a million dollars. However, Simons replies that even if he believed that figure, it does not include wheat, petroleum, oil, lubricants, and "trucks and buses full of adolescent [fighters] crossing the frontier shouting 'allahu akbar' and going into the line with a day or two of weapons training. That [is] Pakistan's real aid." ([US Embassy \(Islamabad\) 8/27/1997](#))

August 29, 1997: Attorney's Office Wins Partial Exception from 'Wall' Procedures



Mary Jo White. [Source: *CNN*] Mary Jo White, US Attorney for the Southern District of New York, which handles a lot of terrorism investigations, complains about the "wall" procedures regulating the passage of intelligence information to US attorneys and criminal agents at the FBI. The rules were recently formalized (see [July 19, 1995](#)), but she says that the 1995 procedures are building "unnecessary and counterproductive walls that inhibit rather than promote our ultimate objectives [and that] we must face the reality that the way we are proceeding now is inherently and in actuality very dangerous." Following her complaints, an exception is created for the Southern District of New York Attorneys' Office. The office works with the FBI's I-49 squad, which handles international terrorism matters (see [January 1996](#) and [Late 1998-Early 2002](#)). The FBI can now notify this office of evidence of a crime directly, without consulting the Justice Department. Once this is done, the office would then contact two units in the Justice Department, the Criminal Division and the Office of Intelligence Policy and Review. ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 29](#))

Autumn 1997: Al-Qaeda Still Not Recognized as Terrorist Organization by State Department

The State Department announces its first list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTO). Surprisingly, neither bin Laden nor al-Qaeda are included. The State Department did list bin Laden as a terrorist financier in its 1996 survey of terrorism. Al-Qaeda will not be officially recognized as a terrorist organization until 1999 (see [October 8, 1999](#)). The US had officially declared some organizations terrorist organizations prior to this first FTO list. For instance, the US declared Hamas a terrorist organization in early 1995 (see [January 1995](#)). ([Miller, Gerth, and van Natta 12/30/2001](#); [Coll 2004](#))

September 1997-May 1998: Al-Qaeda Makes Final Break with Algerian GIA, Forms New GSPC to Replace It



Hassan Hattab. [*Source: Public domain*]Facing criticism by bin Laden and other Islamist militants for massacres of fellow Muslims in Algeria (see [Mid-1996](#)), the Groupe Islamique Armé (GIA) issues a statement defending its actions. It states all of the Algerian populace are apostates and deserve to die for not supporting the GIA. It justifies the raping of captured women. This statement is considered so outrageous that al-Qaeda cuts all ties to the GIA leadership, denounces top leader Antar Zouabri, and encourages another GIA leader, Hassan Hattab, to form a new group. In May 1998, Hattab and several hundred GIA members leave the GIA and create the new Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC). The GIA continues but at a reduced level as the al-Qaeda supported GSPC becomes the main radical militant group in Algeria. ([Gunaratna 2003, pp. 184-185](#))

September 24, 1997: El-Hage Testifies before US Grand Jury



The Texas tire store where El-Hage worked in 1997.

[Source: CNN] In August 1997, US intelligence raids the home of Wadih El-Hage, bin Laden's former personal secretary and a US citizen (see [August 21, 1997](#)). With his cover blown, El-Hage decides to return to the US. Arriving at a New York City airport on September 23, he is served with a subpoena to testify before a grand jury the next day. He testifies for several hours and is questioned extensively. ([United State of America v. Usama Bin Laden, et al., Day 36 4/30/2001](#)) US prosecutor Patrick Fitzgerald will later claim that "El-Hage chose to lie repeatedly to the grand jury, but even in his lies he provided some information of potential use to the intelligence community—including potential leads" to the location of his confederates and wanted missing files. ([Risen and Weiser 1/9/1999](#); [US Congress 10/21/2003](#)) But after this, El-Hage is not arrested. He moves back to Texas, where he had lived in the early 1990s, and works in a tire store. ([Wagner and Zoellner 9/28/2001](#)) In October 1997, he is interviewed by agents in Texas ([United State of America v. Usama Bin Laden, et al., Day 28 4/12/2001](#)), and then left alone until August 1998 when he will be interrogated again shortly after the bombings in Kenya and Tanzania (see [August 7, 1998](#)). He is ultimately arrested and found guilty for his role in those bombings.

Before October 1997: \$400 Million Bosnian Defense Fund Fuels Balkan Conflict

Fourteen nations, including the US, support a \$400 million "Bosnian Defense Fund," which reportedly collects cash and equipment contributions for a "train and equip" program that is operated by the US. ([Arms Trade News 10/1997](#)) According to investigative journalist Wayne Madsen, a former Naval Officer who has worked with the NSA: "Via something called the Bosnia Defense Fund, these countries [Saudi Arabia, Iran, Malaysia, Brunei, Jordan, and Egypt] deposited millions of dollars into US coffers to buy weapons for the Bosnians.... According to Washington K Street sources, the law firm that established the Bosnia Defense Fund was none other than Feith and Zell, the firm of current Pentagon official and leading neo-con Douglas Feith. Feith's operation at Feith and Zell was assisted by his one-time boss and current member of Rumsfeld's Defense Policy Board, Richard Perle." ([Madsen 9/18/2003](#))

October 1997: Brzezinski Highlights the Importance of Central Asia to Achieving World Domination



Zbigniew Brzezinski. [Source: *USIS, American Embassy*] Former National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski publishes a book in which he portrays the Eurasian landmass as the key to world power, and Central Asia with its vast oil reserves as the key to domination of Eurasia. He states that for the US to maintain its global primacy, it must prevent any possible adversary from controlling that region. He notes, “The attitude of the American public toward the external projection of American power has been much more ambivalent. The public supported America’s engagement in World War II largely because of the shock effect of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.” He predicts that because of popular resistance to US military expansionism, his ambitious Central Asian strategy can not be implemented “except in the circumstance of a truly massive and widely perceived direct external threat.” ([Brzezinski 1997, pp. 24-25, 210-11](#))

October 1997: US Intelligence Stops Monitoring Al-Qaeda Cell in Kenya Despite Evidence It Is Planning an Attack

Shortly after the US raid on Wadhi El-Hage’s house in Nairobi, Kenya (see [August 21, 1997](#)), US investigators discover a letter in the house that mentions a cache of incriminating files had been moved from the house and hidden elsewhere. Investigators suspect the files could contain evidence of a coming attack by El-Hage’s Nairobi cell. A law enforcement official later says US investigators begin a “somewhat frantic, concerted effort” to locate the missing files. “The concern was high enough about something being out there to go right away.” A search for the files is conducted at another location in Kenya in September 1997, but the files are not found. ([Risen and Weiser 1/9/1999](#)) But despite this search, and even though other documents found in the raid refer to other unknown members of the cell and the imminent arrival of more operatives (see [Shortly After August 21, 1997](#)), the wiretaps on five phone numbers connected to El-Hage are discontinued in October 1997, one month after El-Hage moved to the US (see [September 24, 1997](#)). Fazul Abdullah Mohammed (a.k.a. Haroun Fazul), who had been living with El-Hage and using the same phones as him, takes over running the cell. US intelligence will resume monitoring the phones in May 1998 and continue to monitor them through

August 1998 (see [May 1998](#)), when the cell will successfully attack US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania (see [August 7, 1998](#)). It will be stated in the 2002 book *The Cell*, “The hardest thing to understand in retrospect is why US law enforcement did nothing else to disrupt the activities of the Nairobi cell” after the raid on El-Hage’s house. ([Weiser 1/13/2001](#); [Miller, Stone, and Mitchell 2002, pp. 203-205](#)) The files will be found only after the African embassy bombings, when the offices of the charity Mercy International are searched on August 20, 1998. They will contain incriminating information, including numerous phone calls from bin Laden to Nairobi. ([United States of America v. Usama Bin Laden, et al 3/20/2001](#)) It is not clear why the charity was not searched before the attacks, since two of the five phones monitored since 1996 were to Mercy’s Kenya offices (see [Late 1996-August 20, 1998](#)).

October 1997: Ali Mohamed Details His Extensive Al-Qaeda Ties to US Officials But Still Is Not Arrested

US prosecutor Patrick Fitzgerald and FBI agents Jack Cloonan and Harlan Bell, all members of the I-49 squad, take Ali Mohamed out for dinner at a restaurant in Sacramento, California (he has recently moved there from Santa Clara, California). Fitzgerald pays for Mohamed’s meal. Cloonan will later recall, “The purpose in us going to meet Ali at that point in time is that we wanted to gain his cooperation. We knew of his long history having been connected to al-Qaeda, and what we desperately wanted was to convince Ali Mohamed to cooperate with us that night.” During the several-hour-long meeting, Mohamed says the following:

- He “loved” bin Laden and “believes in him.” ([Williams and McCormick 11/4/2001](#); [Lance 2006, pp. 274-276](#))
- He organized bin Laden’s move from Afghanistan to Sudan in 1991 (see [Summer 1991](#)).
- He was in Somalia training militants to fight US soldiers in 1993. He claims “bin Laden’s people were responsible” for the killing of 18 US soldiers there (see [1993](#)).
- He trained bin Laden’s personal bodyguards in 1994 and he lived in bin Laden’s house while doing so (see [1994](#)). ([Lance 2006, pp. 274-276](#))
- He says he trained people in “war zones, and... war zones can be anywhere.” ([Waldman 11/26/2001](#))
- He asserts he doesn’t need a religious edict to make war on the US since it is “obvious” that the US is “the enemy.” Author Peter Lance will later note these words clearly “amounted to treason.”
- Cloonan will recall, “He said that he was in touch with hundreds of people he could call on in a moment’s notice that could be, quote, ‘operational,’ and wage jihad against the United States. Very brazenly, he said, ‘I can get out anytime and you’ll never find me. I’ve got a whole network. You’ll never find me.’”

After dinner, Cloonan will recall that Fitzgerald turned to him and said, “This is the most dangerous man I have ever met. We cannot let this man out on the street.” But Lance will later note, “But that’s just what he did. Patrick Fitzgerald allowed Ali Mohamed to go free”—even though Mohamed firmly rejected the offer to cooperate. During the dinner, other agents break into Mohamed’s house and bug his computer (his phone is already tapped (see [Late 1994](#)). Mohamed will continue to live in California for nearly a year and

won't be arrested until after the August 1998 African embassy bombings (see [August 7, 1998](#)). The FBI apparently makes a report based on Mohamed's comments at this meeting (see [After October 1997](#)). But no evidence has come to light that Mohamed's confession is shared with top US officials or spread widely within US intelligence before 9/11. ([Lance 2006, pp. 274-276](#)) In 2003, Fitzgerald will testify before a Senate committee and claim that when he had to make the decision after the embassy bombings whether or not to arrest Mohamed (see [September 10, 1998](#)), the "decision to arrest was made partly in the dark" because prosecutors could "not learn what information [the FBI] had gathered" on Mohamed. Fitzgerald will fail to mention that he was sitting with FBI agents when Mohamed gave this startling confession. ([US Congress 10/21/2003](#))

October 7, 1997: US Declares Abu Sayyaf and GIA Foreign Terrorist Organizations, But Not Al-Qaeda

The State Department officially designates the Abu Sayyaf a foreign terrorist organization. The Abu Sayyaf is a militant group in the Philippines with reported connections to bin Laden. Thirty groups are newly listed, including other groups associated with bin Laden, such as the Groupe Islamique Armé (GIA) in Algeria. ([Erlanger 10/7/1997](#)) However, al-Qaeda will not be so listed until 1999 (see [October 8, 1999](#)). Al-Qaeda is still relatively unknown; the name was first mentioned in the media in 1996 (see [August 14, 1996](#)).

Between October 1997 and August 7, 1998: Ali Mohamed Gives FBI Hint of Upcoming Al-Qaeda Attack in East Africa

Double agent Ali Mohamed gives a hint about the upcoming African embassy bombings to an FBI agent. Harlan Bell, one of the FBI agents who met with Mohamed at an October 1997 dinner where Mohamed detailed his al-Qaeda ties (see [October 1997](#)), is apparently continuing to regularly talk to him on the phone (though it is not known what they discuss). Bell begins recording these phone calls (which are presumably being recorded by others as well since all of Mohamed's communications are being monitored by this time (see [October 1997-September 10, 1998](#))). FBI agent Jack Cloonan, who works with Bell in the I-49 bin Laden squad, will later recall that after the embassy bombings Bell will replay one of these taped conversations. "It became apparent from listening to one of those tapes that Ali was talking about a possible target in East Africa. He never specifically said the embassy or that he knew an attack was imminent, but he was giving this up in a sense before the attack took place." ([Lance 2006, pp. 207-208](#))

October 1997-September 10, 1998: Ali Mohamed's California Computer Is Continually Bugged

The FBI installs a wiretap in double agent Ali Mohamed's computer (the FBI has been monitoring his phone since 1993 (see [Autumn 1993](#) and [Late 1994](#))). According to FBI agent Jack Cloonan, "The Sacramento [FBI] office did a wonderful job of getting into his apartment, wiring it up, and exploiting his computer. So we were able to download a lot of stuff." Journalist Peter Lance believes that, given Mohamed's apparent foreknowledge of the East African embassy attacks (see [Between October 1997 and August 7, 1998](#)), the computer probably contained references to that operation. In his book *Triple Cross*, he asks, "If [US agents] now had access to Mohamed's phone and hard disk, why didn't they come to understand his role as a key player in the embassy bombing plot?... If their motive was to lie in wait—to monitor his phone calls and e-mail traffic—why didn't that surveillance put them right in the middle of the embassy plot?" ([Lance 2006, pp. 276](#))

October 27, 1997: Halliburton Announces Turkmenistan Project; Unocal and Delta Oil Form Consortium

Halliburton, a company headed by future Vice President Dick Cheney, announces a new agreement to provide technical services and drilling for Turkmenistan. The press release mentions, "Halliburton has been providing a variety of services in Turkmenistan for the past five years." On the same day, a consortium to build a pipeline through Afghanistan is formed. It is called CentGas, and the two main partners are Unocal and Delta Oil of Saudi Arabia. ([Halliburton 10/27/1997](#); [CentGas 10/27/1997](#))

November 1997: Enron and Bin Laden Family Team Up for Project

Industry newsletter reports that Saudi Arabia has abandoned plans for open bids on a \$2 billion power plant near Mecca, deciding that the government will build it instead. Interestingly, one of the bids was made by a consortium of Enron, the Saudi Binladin Group (run by Osama's family), and Italy's Ansaldo Energia. ([Alexander's Gas & Oil Connections 1/22/1998](#))

November 1997: No Action Taken After Precise Warning of Embassy Attack



Mustafa Mahmoud Said Ahmed. [Source: PBS] An Egyptian named Mustafa Mahmoud Said Ahmed walks into the US embassy in Nairobi, Kenya, and tells CIA officers that he knows of a group planning to blow up the embassy. He reveals that he is part of the group and has already taken surveillance photos of the embassy for the attack. The details he mentions, such as the use of several vehicles and stun grenades, accurately depicts how the attack will actually occur nine months later. The CIA sends the State Department two intelligence reports on Ahmed's warning, but caution that he may have fabricated his story. Ahmed is released and deported. He apparently is involved in the bombing of the US embassy in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, on the same day the Nairobi embassy is bombed. Ahmed will contact the British embassy the day after the bombings and offer to help. He is overheard saying that, "I told them everything I knew" and that he had been cooperating with Western officials "since last year." He will reveal informant information that leads to the arrest of some of the bombers (see [August 8-15, 1998](#)). ([Bonner and Risen 10/23/1998](#); [Risen and Weiser 1/9/1999](#)) The State Department is in charge of embassy security, and the department steps up security at the Nairobi embassy for several weeks, but then security measures return to normal. Prudence Bushnell, the US Ambassador to Kenya, will plead for improved embassy security, but her requests will go unheeded (see [December 1997-Spring 1998](#)). ([Risen and Weiser 1/9/1999](#))

November 1997-August 1998: Future 9/11 Commission Staff Attend Terrorism Study Group; Predict Consequences of 'Catastrophic Terrorism'



Ashton Carter. [Source: Aspen Institute] Over a period of nine months, faculty from Harvard University, Stanford University, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and the University of Virginia meet in a collaborative effort called the Catastrophic Terrorism Study Group. Its members include experts on terrorism, national

security, intelligence, and law enforcement. The project director is Philip Zelikow, future executive director of the 9/11 Commission. Future 9/11 Commissioner Jamie Gorelick is also a member, along with Ernest May, who will be a senior advisor to the 9/11 Commission. The culmination of the group's efforts is a report written by Zelikow and its two co-chairs: former Assistant Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter and former CIA Director John Deutch. A condensed version of the report is published in the journal *Foreign Affairs* in late 1998. They write: "Long part of the Hollywood and Tom Clancy repertory of nightmarish scenarios, catastrophic terrorism has moved from far-fetched horror to a contingency that could happen next month. Although the United States still takes conventional terrorism seriously... it is not yet prepared for the new threat of catastrophic terrorism." They predict the consequences of such an event: "An act of catastrophic terrorism that killed thousands or tens of thousands of people and/or disrupted the necessities of life for hundreds of thousands, or even millions, would be a watershed event in America's history. It could involve loss of life and property unprecedented for peacetime and undermine Americans' fundamental sense of security within their own borders in a manner akin to the 1949 Soviet atomic bomb test, or perhaps even worse. Constitutional liberties would be challenged as the United States sought to protect itself from further attacks by pressing against allowable limits in surveillance of citizens, detention of suspects, and the use of deadly force. More violence would follow, either as other terrorists seek to imitate this great 'success' or as the United States strikes out at those considered responsible. Like Pearl Harbor, such an event would divide our past and future into a 'before' and 'after.'" ([Carter, Deutch, and Zelikow 10/1998](#); [Carter, Deutch, and Zelikow 11/1998](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. xi-xiv](#))

After October 1997: FBI Report Made of Stunning Ali Mohammed Confession, But FBI Takes No Action

A 1997 FBI report on double agent Ali Mohamed states, "He knows, for example, that there are hundreds of 'sleepers' or 'submarines' in place who don't fit neatly into the terrorist profile. These individuals don't wear the traditional beards and don't pray at the mosques." ([Sullivan and Neff 10/21/2001](#)) This is very likely a reference to comments Mohamed made while having dinner with some FBI agents and US prosecutors on October 1997 (see [October 1997](#)). One attendee of that dinner, FBI agent Jack Cloonan, will recall a very similar comment Mohamed made then: "He said that he was in touch with hundreds of people he could call on in a moment's notice that could be, quote, 'operational,' and wage jihad against the United States." ([Lance 2006, pp. 274-276](#)) If so, it is probable that other comments he made at the dinner were included in the FBI report as well, such as his comment that he loves and believes in bin Laden, the US is the enemy, and that he trained Somalis to kill US soldiers in 1993 (see [October 1997](#)). But the FBI still takes no action against him.

November 2, 1997-June 20, 2001: Hijackers Obtain US Visas

The 19 hijackers apply and receive a total of 23 visas at five different posts from November 1997 through June 2001. Hani Hanjour, Khalid Almidhar, Saeed Alghamdi and Ahmed Alnami, Saudi citizens, apply twice at Jeddah. Only Hanjour applies for a student visa, others for tourist/business visa. ([United States General Accounting Office 10/21/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 7-45](#))

■The fifteen Saudi hijackers apply for their visas in their home country. Four at the embassy in Riyadh: Hamza Alghamdi (10/17/2000), Mohand Alshehri (10/23/2000), Majed Moqed (11/20/2000) and Satam Al Suqami (11/21/2000). Eleven at the US consulate in Jeddah: Hani Hanjour (11/2/1997 and 9/25/2000), Khalid Almidhar (4/7/1999 and 6/13/2001), Saeed Alghamdi (9/4/2000 and 6/12/2001), and Ahmed Alnami (10/28/2000 and 4/28/2001), Nawaf Alhazmi (4/3/1999), Ahmed Alghamdi (9/3/2000), Wail Alshehri (10/24/2000), Waleed M. Alshehri (10/24/2000), Abdulaziz Alomari (6/18/2001), Salem Alhazmi (6/20/2001), and Ahmed Alhaznawi (11/12/2000).

■Fayez Ahmed Banihammad and Marwan Alshehhi apply in their home country, the United Arab Emirates, respectively at the US embassy in Abu Dhabi on 6/18/2001 and at consulate in Dubai on 1/18/2000.

■Mohamed Atta (Egyptian) and Ziad Jarrah (Lebanese) apply, as third-country national applicants, at the US embassy in Berlin, respectively, on May 18 and 25, 2000.

November 18, 1997: Tourists Massacred in Egypt; Al-Qaeda Leaders Said to Be Involved



Tourists in Luxor, Egypt, cower as militants begin firing on them. [*Source: BBC*] Fifty-eight foreign tourists are killed in Luxor, Egypt. Six radical militants attack an ancient Egyptian temple with machine guns before finally being killed by Egyptian police. The attack is the peak of a campaign to destroy the Egyptian tourism industry that had begun five years before. Thirty-four foreigners and 1,200 Egyptians were killed in the previous attacks. Al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya (the Islamic Group) takes credit for the attack. This group was founded in the late 1970s by Sheik Omar Abdul-Rahman. The militants are ultimately hoping to destabilize the Egyptian economy and overthrow the government. However, the attacks backfire, alienating many Egyptians. This will be the last serious militant attack in Egypt before 9/11. ([Jehl 11/18/1997](#); [Ibrahim 11/18/1997](#); [Gettleman 10/26/2001](#)) The Egyptian militant group Islamic Jihad is also thought to be involved. In 1999, Ayman al-Zawahiri, leader of Islamic Jihad and al-Qaeda's second in command, will be convicted in absentia for his role in this attack and other attacks. ([BBC 9/27/2004](#)) Also in 1999, the Egyptian

government will claim it has determined that bin Laden helped finance the attack. ([Plett 5/13/1999](#))

Late 1997: Phone Calls Alert US Intelligence to Al-Qaeda Operatives in Hamburg



The Sky 1, the ship purchased by Sadek Walid Awaad and other al-Qaeda operatives, shown as it sank in 2000. [Source: *Tele News Company*] US intelligence monitoring the al-Qaeda cell in Kenya trace phone calls to al-Qaeda operatives in Hamburg, Germany, where some of the 9/11 hijackers are living (see [August 1997](#)). Around August 1997, Sadek Walid Awaad (a.k.a. Abu Khadija) calls Kenya and is traced by US intelligence to where he lives in Hamburg. ([Miller, Stone, and Mitchell 2002, pp. 201](#); [El Pais 9/17/2003](#)) Sometime over the next year or so, it is discovered that Awaad has engaged in business dealing with Mamoun Darkazanli, another al-Qaeda operative. Awaad used a Hamburg address for some of his business dealings that was also used by Darkazanli and Wadih El-Hage, who served as bin Laden's business secretary in Kenya. In 1994, Awaad, Darkazanli, and El-Hage worked together to buy a ship for bin Laden. Apparently US intelligence puts this together by 1998, as one of El-Hage's notebooks seized in a late 1997 raid details the transaction (see [August 21, 1997](#)). Investigators later believe Darkazanli is part of the Hamburg al-Qaeda cell with 9/11 hijackers Mohamed Atta, Marwan Alshehhi, and others. ([Rashbaum and Weiser 12/27/2001](#)) Less is known about Awaad and whomever he may have associated with. But in a public trial in early 2001, El-Hage identified him as an Iraqi al-Qaeda operative with German and Israeli passports. ([Day 2. United States of America v. Usama bin Laden, et al. 2/6/2001](#); [Day 6. United States of America v. Usama bin Laden, et al. 2/15/2001](#)) An al-Qaeda operative with an Israeli passport connected to the Hamburg cell would seem to be highly unusual and significant, but there has been almost no mention of him in the media after 9/11 and it is unknown if he has ever been arrested.

December 1997-Spring 1998: Urgent Requests for Embassy Security Go Unheeded



Prudence Bushnell. [Source: PBS] By December 1997, Prudence Bushnell, the US Ambassador to Kenya, is aware that her embassy could be in danger. She has been told of an August 1997 warning that proved there was an al-Qaeda cell in Nairobi (see [Late 1994](#)), a precise (and ultimately accurate) November 1997 warning detailing a plot to attack the embassy (see [November 1997](#)), and other recent warnings, including information indicating that she is an assassination target. She sends two cables to State Department headquarters in Washington, claiming that the embassy's location makes it "extremely vulnerable to a terrorist attack," and asks for security improvements to be made. The State Department turns down her requests and begins to see Bushnell as a nuisance. In early 1998, General Anthony Zinni, the commander of US forces in the region, visits the Nairobi embassy and decides it is vulnerable to terrorist attacks. He offers to send a security team to inspect the situation, but his offer is turned down. The State Department sends its own team instead and in March 1998 determines that about \$500,000 worth of easily implemented improvements should make the embassy secure. But the money is not quickly allocated. Bushnell then sends "an emotional letter to Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright begging for the Secretary's personal help." She says she has been fighting for months for a more secure embassy as threats increase, and that the State Department's refusal to grant her requests for funding is "endangering the lives of embassy personnel." Albright takes no action. The embassy will be bombed in August (see [August 7, 1998](#)). ([Risen and Weiser 1/9/1999](#))

December 1997: Unocal Establishes Pipeline Training Facility Near bin Laden's Compound

Unocal pays University of Nebraska \$900,000 to set up a training facility near bin Laden's Kandahar compound, to train 400 Afghan teachers, electricians, carpenters and pipe fitters in anticipation of using them for their pipeline in Afghanistan. One hundred and fifty students are already attending classes. ([Lees 12/14/1997](#); [Coll 2004, pp. 364](#))

December 1997-November 1998: Moroccan Man Ties Hamburg and Milan Al-Qaeda Cells Together



Mohamed Daki. [Source: *Cageprisoners*]Records indicate that would-be hijacker Ramzi Bin al-Shibh lives at the same Hamburg, Germany, address as a Moroccan named Mohamed Daki during this time. Daki will be arrested in April 2003, and will admit to knowing bin al-Shibh and some others in the Hamburg cell. In April 1999 Daki will obtain a visa to travel to the US, but it is not known if he goes there. It is generally assumed by the press that the Hamburg cell keep themselves separate from other al-Qaeda cells in Europe. However, Daki is an expert document forger and a member of al-Qaeda's Milan cell. There is considerable evidence that the Milan cell has foreknowledge of the 9/11 plot. The cell is under heavy surveillance by Italian intelligence before 9/11 (see [August 12, 2000](#) and [January 24, 2001](#)), but apparently the connection between the Milan and Hamburg cells through Daki is not made. German authorities will interview him after 9/11, and he will admit ties to bin al-Shibh, but he will be let go, not investigated further, and not put on any watch lists. He will later come under investigation in Italy for recruiting fighters to combat the US in Iraq. He will finally be arrested and charged for that, but not for his 9/11 connections. ([Rotella 3/22/2004](#); [Golden, Butler, and van Natta 3/22/2004](#))

December 4, 1997: Taliban Representatives Visit Unocal in Texas



Taliban representatives in Texas, 1997. [Source: *Lions Gate Films*]Representatives of the Taliban are invited guests to the Texas headquarters of Unocal to negotiate their support for the pipeline. Future President George W. Bush is Governor of Texas at the time. The Taliban appear to agree to a \$2 billion pipeline deal, but will do the deal only if the US officially recognizes the Taliban regime. The Taliban meet with US officials. According to the Daily Telegraph, "the US

government, which in the past has branded the Taliban's policies against women and children 'despicable,' appears anxious to please the fundamentalists to clinch the lucrative pipeline contract." A BBC regional correspondent says that "the proposal to build a pipeline across Afghanistan is part of an international scramble to profit from developing the rich energy resources of the Caspian Sea." ([BBC 12/4/1997](#); [Lees 12/14/1997](#)) It has been claimed that the Taliban meet with Enron officials while in Texas (see [1996-September 11, 2001](#)). Enron, headquartered in Texas, has a large financial interest in the pipeline at the time (see [June 24, 1996](#)).

Late 1997-Early 1998: Hijacker Atta Disappears from Germany for Months



Mohamed Atta. [*Source: Der Spiegel*] Hijacker pilot Mohamed Atta leaves Hamburg for some time. When he returns in the spring of 1998 he tells his roommate that he has been on another pilgrimage (hajj) to Mecca, although author Terry McDermott will later note, "He had been on hajj just 18 months earlier, and it would be unlikely for a student—even one so devout—to go twice so quickly or stay so long." This is his longest absence since arriving in Hamburg, and there is no record of him spending any substantial portion of it at home in Cairo. According to McDermott, he leaves Hamburg "as he usually did over the winter holiday," but according to the 9/11 Commission, the gap is in February-March 1998, "a period for which there is no evidence of his presence in Germany." His friends hold a party for him on his return, which is unusual for a student that has just returned from home. After returning to Germany, he applies for a new passport, something he also does after returning from Afghanistan in early 2000 (see [Late 1999](#)). ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 167](#); [McDermott 2005, pp. 57](#)) There are other unexplained absences from Hamburg by members of the same cell around this time (see [Summer-Winter 1998](#)). Although the 9/11 Commission, based on information obtained from detainees during interrogation, will say that Atta and his associates did not travel to Afghanistan and join al-Qaeda until late 1999, some commentators will disagree and say that this happened earlier; for example, McDermott

will say of the cell members' various disappearances in 1997-8, "Practically, there is only one place they likely would have gone—Afghanistan." ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 166](#); [McDermott 2005, pp. 57](#)) Jane Corbin will say that "[t]he time that Mohamed Atta spent in Afghanistan in 1998 was a period of ambitious reach for Osama bin Laden." Jason Burke will say that "[i]n early 1998, [Atta] is thought to have traveled to Afghanistan, probably to Khaldan camp." ([Corbin 2003, pp. 142](#); [Burke 2004, pp. 243](#))

1998: FBI Agent Starts First Investigation into Arizona Flight Students



Ken Williams. [*Source: FBI*]The FBI field office in Phoenix, Arizona, investigates a possible Middle Eastern extremist taking flight lessons at a Phoenix airport. FBI agent Ken Williams initiates an investigation into the possibility of Islamic militants learning to fly aircraft, but he has no easy way to query a central FBI database about similar cases. Because of this and other FBI communication problems, he remains unaware of most US intelligence reports about the potential use of airplanes as weapons, as well as other, specific FBI warnings issued in 1998 and 1999 concerning Islamic militants training at US flight schools (see [May 15, 1998](#); [September 1999](#)). Williams will write the "Phoenix memo" in July 2001 (see [July 10, 2001](#)). He had been alerted about some suspicious flight school students in 1996, but it is not clear if this person was mentioned in that previous alert or not (see [October 1996](#)). ([US Congress 7/24/2003](#) ³¹)

1998: Training Exercise Held at the White House, Based Around Militants Using a Plane as a Weapon

Counterterrorism "tsar" Richard Clarke chairs a tabletop exercise at the White House, involving a scenario where anti-American militants fill a Learjet with explosives, and then fly it on a suicide mission toward a target in Washington, DC. Officials from the Pentagon, Secret Service, and FAA attend, and are asked how they would stop such a threat. Pentagon officials say they could launch fighters from Langley Air Force Base, Virginia, but would need authorization from the president to shoot the plane down, and currently there is no system to do this. The 9/11 Commission later states: "There was no clear resolution of the problem at the exercise." ([Kaplan 7/22/2004](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 345, 457-458](#))

1998: Hijacking Proposed to Obtain Release of ‘Blind Sheikh’

A son of Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman, the al-Qaeda leader convicted in 1995 of conspiring to blow up tunnels and other New York City landmarks, is heard to say that the best way to free his father from a US prison might be to hijack an American plane and exchange the hostages. This will be mentioned in President Bush's August 2001 briefing titled "Bin Laden Determined to Strike in US" (see [August 6, 2001](#)). ([Woodward and Eggen 5/18/2002](#)) It may be the warning was discovered by reporters at bin Laden's press conference this month, since two of Abdul-Rahman's sons are there and speak in belligerent tones (see [May 26, 1998](#) and [May 1998](#)). A similar warning will be discovered in May 2001, but will not be mentioned in Bush's briefing (see [May 23, 2001](#)).

1998: Indonesia Gives US Warning of 9/11 Attack?

Hendropriyono, the Indonesian chief of intelligence, will later claim that, "[we] had intelligence predicting the September 11 attacks three years before it happened but nobody believed us." He says Indonesian intelligence agents identify bin Laden as the leader of the group plotting the attack and that the US disregards the warning, but otherwise offers no additional details. The Associated Press notes, "Indonesia's intelligence services are not renowned for their accuracy." ([Associated Press 7/9/2003](#))

1998: FAA Testing Reveals Frightening Airport Security Lapses; Little Done in Response Except Small Penalties

The FAA creates "Red Teams" —small, secretive teams traveling to airports and attempting to foil their security systems—in response to the 1988 bombing of a Pan Am 747 over Scotland. According to later reports, the Red Teams conduct extensive testing of screening checkpoints at a large number of domestic airports in 1998. The results were frightening: "We were successful in getting major weapons—guns and bombs—through screening checkpoints with relative ease, at least 85 percent of the time in most cases. At one airport, we had a 97 percent success rate in breaching the screening checkpoint.... The individuals who occupied the highest seats of authority in the FAA were fully aware of this highly vulnerable state of aviation security and did nothing." ([Shenon 2/27/2002](#)) In 1999, the New York Port Authority and major airlines at Boston's Logan Airport will be "fined a total of \$178,000 for at least 136 security violations [between 1999-2001]. In the majority of incidents, screeners hired by the airlines for checkpoints in terminals routinely [fail] to detect test items, such as pipe bombs and guns." ([Associated Press 9/12/2001](#))

1998: US and Uzbekistan Begin Conducting Joint Operations against Taliban and Al-Qaeda

Beginning in 1998, if not before, Uzbekistan and the CIA secretly create a joint counterterrorist strike force, funded and trained by the CIA. This force conducts joint covert operations against the Taliban and al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. ([Times of India 10/14/2001](#); [Ricks and Glasser 10/14/2001](#); [Zeman et al. 11/2004](#)) In February 1999, radical Muslims fail in an attempt to assassinate the leader of Uzbekistan. Following this, the CIA is allowed to step up their secret operations in Uzbekistan. The CIA and NSA are allowed to install monitoring equipment to intercept Taliban and al-Qaeda communications. Intelligence is shared, and Uzbek military bases are made available for small-scale CIA operations. Uzbekistan borders Afghanistan to the north. By contrast, the other nations surrounding Afghanistan—Iran, Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan, do not cooperate with the US on these matters very much or at all. ([Coll 2004, pp. 456-457](#))

Between 1998 and 2000: US Intelligence Reportedly Doesn't Want Informant Who Could Pinpoint Bin Laden's Location

Congressman Dana Rohrabacher (R), who claims to have made many secret trips into Afghanistan and to have fought with the mujaheddin, later describes to Congress a missed opportunity to capture bin Laden. He claims that “a few years” before 9/11, he is contacted by someone he knows and trusts from the 1980s Afghan war, who claims he could pinpoint bin Laden's location. Rohrabacher passes this information to the CIA, but the informant isn't contacted. After some weeks, Rohrabacher uses his influence to set up a meeting with agents in the CIA, NSA, and FBI. Yet even then, the informant is not contacted, until weeks later, and then only in a “disinterested” way. Rohrabacher concludes, “that our intelligence services knew about the location of bin Laden several times but were not permitted to attack him... because of decisions made by people higher up.” ([US Congress 9/17/2001](#))

1998: By Some Accounts, Al-Qaeda Begins Planning for 9/11

According to closed-session testimony by CIA, FBI and NSA heads, al-Qaeda begins planning the 9/11 attacks this year. ([Diamond and Kiely 6/18/2002](#)) In a June 2002 interview, 9/11 mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed also asserts that planning for the attacks begin at this time. ([Shahine 9/8/2002](#)) However, it appears the targeting of the WTC and pilot training began even earlier. An al-Qaeda operative in Spain will later be found with videos filmed in 1997 of major US structures (including “innumerable takes from all distances and angles” of the WTC). There are numerous connections between Spain and the 9/11 hijackers, including an important meeting there in July 2001, however, the person who filmed the 1997 video will be acquitted of making it for al-Qaeda in 2005 (see [September 26, 2005](#)). ([Socolovsky 7/17/2002](#)) Hijacker Waleed Alshehri was living in Florida since 1995, started training for his commercial pilot training degree in 1996,

and obtained his license in 1997 (though it is not certain if this refers to the same person). ([Mackay 9/16/2001](#); [Socolovsky 7/17/2002](#))

1998: Diplomatic Passports Help Stifle FBI Investigation into Bin Laden Family

Michael Scheuer, the head of the CIA Counter Terrorism Center's special unit focusing on bin Laden from 1996 to 1999 (see [February 1996](#)), later will claim that before 9/11 members of the bin Laden family in the US are nearly completely off limits to US law enforcement. Author Douglas Farah, a former longtime Washington Post reporter, later will write that "All the bin Ladens living in the United States were granted Saudi diplomatic passports in 1996.... In 1998, when the FBI's New York office actually sought to investigate some of the bin Laden family's activities in this country because of suspicions of ties to terrorism, the State Department forced them to shut down the entire operation. Because the bin Ladens were 'diplomats' and as such enjoyed diplomatic immunity, making such investigations illegal." Scheuer will comment about the 1998 investigation, "My counterparts at the FBI questioned one of the bin Ladens. But then the State Department received a complaint from a law firm, and there was a huge uproar. We were shocked to find out that the bin Ladens in the United States had diplomatic passports, and that we weren't allowed to talk to them." Scheuer believes that these unusual diplomatic privileges may help explain how the bin Ladens will be able to depart so quickly just after 9/11 (see [September 13, 2001](#); [September 14-19, 2001](#)). Farah later says he interviewed Scheuer about this and claims to have found a second source to verify the information. ([Farah 12/5/2004](#); [Follath and Mascolo 6/6/2005](#)) The issue of diplomatic passports for the bin Laden family has generally not been reported in the US media, although a 2005 New Yorker article will mention in passing that in 1996, "the State Department stymied a joint effort by the CIA and the FBI to question one of bin Laden's cousins in America, because he had a diplomatic passport, which protects the holder from US law enforcement." ([Mayer 2/8/2005](#)) This is a probable reference to the 1996 investigation of Abdullah Awad bin Laden (although he is bin Laden's nephew, not cousin (see [February-September 11, 1996](#))). It is unclear what connection there may be, if any, between that investigation and this 1998 investigation.

1998: Atta Possibly Trains at Base Conducting Pilotless Aircraft Exercises

A military report released this year describes the "Joint Vision 2010" program, a series of "analyses, war games, studies, experiments, and exercises" which are "investigating new operational concepts, doctrines, and organizational approaches that will enable US forces to maintain full spectrum dominance of the battlespace well into the 21st century." "The Air Force has begun a series of war games entitled Global Engagement at the Air War College, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama." The same report mentions that the military is working on a "variety of new imaging and signals intelligence sensors, currently in advanced stages of development, deployed aboard the Global Hawk, DarkStar, and

Predator unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs)...” ([US Department of Defense 1998](#)) Global Hawk is a technology that enables pilotless flight and has been functioning since at least early 1997. ([US Department of Defense 2/20/1997](#)) While it may be mere coincidence, “Air Force spokesman Colonel Ken McClellan said a man named Mohamed Atta—which the FBI has identified as one of the five hijackers of American Airlines Flight 11—had once attended the International Officer’s School at Maxwell/Gunter Air Force Base in Montgomery, Ala.” But he adds that “there [was] discrepancies in the biographical data” (mainly the birth date) and that “it may just be a case of mistaken identity” (see also [1996-August 2000](#) and [September 15-17, 2001](#)) ([Radelat 9/17/2001](#); [Radelat and Madden 9/20/2001](#))

1998: Hani Hanjour Attends Two More Arizona Flight Schools



Sawyer Aviation logo. [*Source: Sawyer*

Aviation] In January 1998, hijacker Hani Hanjour and his friend Bandar Al Hazmi, who are now renting an apartment together in Phoenix, Arizona, train together at Arizona Aviation flight school. Hanjour supposedly receives his commercial pilot rating while there. ([US Congress 9/26/2002](#)) Later in 1998, Hanjour joins the simulator club at Sawyer School of Aviation in Phoenix. According to the Washington Post, Sawyer is “known locally as a flight school of last resort.” Wes Fults, the manager of the flight simulator, says Hanjour has “only the barest understanding what the instruments were there to do.” After using the simulator four or five times, Hanjour disappears from the school. ([Goldstein, Sun, and Lardner 10/15/2001](#))

1998: Information on Hijacker Hanjour Apparently Ignored by FBI



Aukai Collins in Chechnya. [Source: Lyons Press publicity photo] An American Caucasian Muslim named Aukai Collins later says he reports to the FBI on hijacker Hani Hanjour for six months this year. ([Montes 5/24/2002](#)) The FBI later acknowledges they paid Collins to monitor the Islamic and Arab communities in Phoenix between 1996 and 1999. He also was an informant overseas and once had an invitation to meet bin Laden (see [Mid-1998](#)). ([McWethy 5/23/2002](#); [Montes 5/24/2002](#)) Collins claims that he is a casual acquaintance of Hanjour while Hanjour is taking flying lessons. ([Montes 5/24/2002](#)) Collins sees nothing suspicious about Hanjour as an individual, but he tells the FBI about him because Hanjour appears to be part of a larger, organized group of Arabs taking flying lessons. ([Collins 5/24/2002](#)) He says the FBI “knew everything about the guy,” including his exact address, phone number, and even what car he drove. The FBI denies Collins told them anything about Hanjour, and denies knowing about Hanjour before 9/11. ([McWethy 5/23/2002](#)) Collins later calls Hanjour a “hanky panky” hijacker: “He wasn’t even moderately religious, let alone fanatically religious. And I knew for a fact that he wasn’t part of al-Qaeda or any other Islamic organization; he couldn’t even spell jihad in Arabic.” ([Collins 2003, pp. 248](#)) Collins tells the New York Times that he worked with FBI agent Ken Williams, who will write a July 2001 memo expressing concerns about radical militants attending Arizona flight schools (see [July 10, 2001](#)). He says that he quarrels with Williams and quits helping him. It is unknown if Williams ever learns about Hanjour before 9/11. ([Thomas 5/24/2002](#)) Collins closely matches the description of the informant who first alerted Williams to Zacaria Soubra, a flight student who will be the main focus of Williams’ memo (see [April 2000](#)). If this is so, it bolsters Collins’ claims that he knew Hanjour, because many of Soubra’s friends, including his roommate (and al-Qaeda operative) Ghassan al-Sharbi do know Hanjour (see [July 10, 2001](#)). After 9/11, Collins will claim that based on his experience with the FBI and CIA, he is 100 percent sure that some people in those agencies knew about the 9/11 attack in advance and let it happen. “Just think about it—how could a group of people plan such a big operation full of so many logistics and probably countless e-mails, encrypted or not, and phone calls and messengers? And you’re telling me that, through all of that, that the CIA never caught wind of it?” ([Lempinen 10/17/2002](#))

1998: National Security Council Finds No Link Between Al-Qaeda and Iraqi Government



Daniel Benjamin. [Source: Publicity photo] The National Security Council (NSC) completes a review of Iraq and terrorism. In an interview with journalist Robert Dreyfuss four years later, Daniel Benjamin, then-director of counterterrorism at the NSC, summarizes the report's conclusions: "[W]e went through every piece of intelligence we could find to see if there was a link [between] al-Qaeda and Iraq. We came to the conclusion that our intelligence agencies had it right: There was no noteworthy relationship between al-Qaeda and Iraq. I know that for a fact. No other issue has been as closely scrutinized as this one." ([Dreyfuss 12/16/2002](#))

1998: US Intelligence Starts Investigating Al-Qaeda-Linked Charity in US, After Knowing of Its Militant Ties for Years

The FBI begins an investigation into the Illinois-based Benevolence International Foundation (BIF) by chance. A Chicago FBI agent is attending a conference in Washington, DC, and learns of foreign intelligence reports that BIF executive director Enaam Arnaout was involved in providing logistical support for radical militants. It is not clear why the Chicago office near BIF's headquarters was not already informed about BIF and Arnaout, given what US intelligence already knows by this time: ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 95](#))

- Beginning in 1993, the FBI was continually monitoring an al-Qaeda cell in Florida that sends money to militants overseas using BIF bank accounts, and one of the cell members filed BIF's incorporation papers (see [October 1993-November 2001](#)). The FBI interviewed one of the cell members, Adham Amin Hassoun, and asked him about BIF and Arnaout. BIF founder Adel Batterjee was listed on the incorporation papers (see [1993](#)).
- It was reported in the Guardian and other newspapers in 1993 that BIF was shut down in Saudi Arabia, when closing a charity was a highly unusual move for that country. The Guardian says that BIF founder Batterjee, "a known political activist," has been detained. Media reports also link him to assisting Saudi fighters in the Bosnian war (see [1993](#)).
- In 1994, Mohammed Loay Bayazid, president of BIF at the time, was arrested in the US with Mohammed Jamal Khalifa, bin Laden's brother-in-law, and another of bin Laden's brothers. Khalifa was quickly linked to the Bojinka plot and many other al-Qaeda ties and plots, yet all three were let go and Bayaid continued to work at BIF until 1998. Bayazid was one of al-Qaeda's founding members (see [December 16, 1994](#)).
- In early 1996, a secret CIA report suggested that Arnaout was involved in the kidnapping

and murders of a small group of Western tourists in Kashmir, including Americans (see [July 4, 1995](#)). The report also links BIF to other militant charity fronts and extremists, including the commander of a training camp in Afghanistan. ([Central Intelligence Agency 1/1996](#))

■In 1996, trusted al-Qaeda defector Jamal al-Fadl revealed that bin Laden considered BIF one of its three most important charity fronts (see [1993](#)), and the FBI was heavily involved in debriefing al-Fadl for many months (see [June 1996-April 1997](#)). Al-Fadl also met with Arnaout and other al-Qaeda leaders in Bosnia and discussed many operations, including how to use Bosnia to establish a base to fight the US (see [Autumn 1992](#)).

■In 1996, al-Fadl also revealed that BIF president Bayazid took part in an al-Qaeda attempt to buy enriched uranium (see [Late 1993](#)).

■In early 1998, Bayazid moves to Turkey and works with Maram, an al-Qaeda front company involving a number of well-known al-Qaeda figures. US intelligence learns of calls between BIF headquarters in Illinois and Bayazid in Turkey (see [November 1996-September 1998](#)).

These agents will open a full field investigation into BIF in February 1999 (see [February 1999-September 10, 2001](#)). They will later learn some useful information from the CIA, but just what is unclear. The 9/11 Commission will say that the “CIA held back some information” from these agents, supposedly “because of fears of revealing sources and methods in any potential criminal litigation...” ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 96-98](#))

1998-September 10, 2001: Mayor Giuliani Ignorant of Al-Qaeda before 9/11

It is later revealed that, in the years up to 9/11, New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani has little knowledge of the threat posed by al-Qaeda. ([MSNBC 10/25/2007](#)) In private testimony before the 9/11 Commission in 2004, after being asked about the “flow of information about al-Qaeda threats from 1998-2001,” Giuliani will reply, “At the time, I wasn’t told it was al-Qaeda, but now that I look back at it, I think it was al-Qaeda.” Giuliani will also concede that it was only “after 9/11” that “we brought in people to brief us on al-Qaeda.” Before 9/11, he says, “we had nothing like this... which was a mistake, because if experts share a lot of info,” there would be a “better chance of someone making heads and tails” of the situation. He blames his lack of knowledge on terrorism partly on the FBI and the Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF), a partnership between the FBI and the New York City Police Department. Giuliani will state, “We already had JTTF, and got flow information no one else got. But did we get the flow of information we wanted? No. We would be told about a threat, but not about the underlying nature of the threat. I wanted all the same information the FBI had, and we didn’t get that until after 9/11.” In 2004, the 9/11 Commission asks Thomas Von Essen, who is Giuliani’s fire commissioner, what information he had about terrorism prior to 9/11. He will reply, “I was told nothing at all.” Yet in a speech in 2007, Giuliani will claim that, with the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, “Bin Laden declared war on us.... I thought it was pretty clear at the time, but a lot of people didn’t see it, couldn’t see it.” He also claims to have been “studying terrorism” for more than 30 years. ([Associated Press 6/26/2007](#); [Barrett 10/23/2007](#))

1998-2000: Al-Marabh Bank Transfers Are Flagged as Suspicious

Nabil al-Marabh makes “several large deposits, withdrawals and overseas wire transfers” that a Boston bank flags as suspicious. ([Solomon 6/3/2004](#)) Presumably some of these transfers go to al-Qaeda operative Raed Hijazi, as it will later be known he frequently sends money to Hijazi during this period (see [October 2000](#)). Some of these funds may even go to several of the 9/11 hijackers (see [September 2000](#); [Spring 2001](#)). As al-Marabh holds nothing but a low wage taxi driving job, it is unclear where this money is coming from. ([Solomon 6/3/2004](#))

1998-1999: Israeli Spy Operation in US Reportedly Discovered, Said to Cause ‘Incredible Damage’ for US Security

In 2004, it will be reported, “A former very senior CIA counterintelligence official told UPI that in 1998-99, the CIA discovered an Israeli couple, who were subcontracted to a US phone company, were working for Mossad, the Israeli intelligence service. ‘They did incredible damage—they got incredibly sensitive data, including key words identifying individuals or projects,’” this source said, adding he himself gave the case to the FBI. Additional details are not known. ([Sale 12/9/2004](#)) In 2005, a US criminal indictment will reveal that the FBI began monitoring some Israeli diplomatic officials in the US by April 1999 (see [April 13, 1999-2004](#)), but is it not known if there is any connection between that and this case.

1998-2001: Pakistani ISI Allegedly Protects Al-Qaeda Leader Zubaida from Capture

In 2006, author Gerald Posner will write that beginning in 1998, Pakistan receives several requests from US intelligence to track down al-Qaeda leader Abu Zubaida. Beginning by October 1998, the US and other countries have been monitoring Zubaida’s phone calls (see [October 1998 and After](#)), and will continue to do so through the 9/11 attacks (see [Early September 2001](#) and [October 8, 2001](#)). But according to Posner, “Pakistan’s agency, the ISI, had claimed to have made several failed attempts, but few in the US believe they did more before September 11 than file away the request and possibly at times even warn Zubaida of the Americans’ interest.” ([Posner 2003, pp. 184](#)) After Zubaida is arrested in 2002, he allegedly will divulge that he has personal contacts with high-ranking officials in Pakistan and Saudi Arabia (see [Early April 2002](#)).

Early 1998: Prosecutors Turn Down Deal That Could Reveal Bojinka Third Plot



Dietrich Snell. *[Source: Morris Mac Matzen/ Associated Press]* Abdul Hakim Murad, a conspirator in the 1995 Bojinka plot with Ramzi Yousef, Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM), and others, was convicted in 1996 of his role in the Bojinka plot (see [January 6, 1995](#)). He is about to be sentenced for that crime. He offers to cooperate with federal prosecutors in return for a reduction in his sentence, but prosecutors turn down his offer. Dietrich Snell, the prosecutor who convicted Murad, will say after 9/11 that he does not remember any such offer. But court papers and others familiar with the case later confirm that Murad does offer to cooperate at this time. Snell will claim he only remembers hearing that Murad had described an intention to hijack a plane and fly it into CIA headquarters. However, in 1995 Murad had confessed to Philippine investigators that this would have been only one part of a larger plot to crash a number of airplanes into prominent US buildings, including the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, a plot that KSM later will adjust and turn into the 9/11 plot (see [January 20, 1995](#)) (see [February- Early May 1995](#)). While Philippine investigators claim this information was passed on to US intelligence, it's not clear just which US officials may have learned this information and what they did with it, if anything. ([Smith 9/25/2001](#)) Murad is sentenced in May 1998 and given life in prison plus 60 years. ([Lyons 9/22/2002](#)) After 9/11, Snell will go on to become Senior Counsel and a team leader for the 9/11 Commission. Author Peter Lance later calls Snell "one of the fixers, hired early on to sanitize the Commission's final report." Lance says Snell ignored evidence presented to the Commission that shows direct ties between the Bojinka plot and 9/11, and in so doing covers up Snell's own role in the failure to make more use of evidence learned from Murad and other Bojinka plotters. ([Glazov 1/27/2005](#))

Early 1998: CIA Ignores Ex-Agent's Warning KSM Is 'Going to Hijack Some Planes,' Visiting Germany



Robert Baer. *[Source: Publicity photo]* In December 1997, CIA agent Robert Baer, newly retired from the CIA and working as a terrorism consultant, meets a former police chief from the Persian Gulf nation of Qatar. He learns that Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM) was being sheltered by then Qatari Interior Minister Abdallah bin Khalid al-Thani in 1996 (see [January-May 1996](#)). However, the ex-police chief knows other details, based on what Qatari police and intelligence learned when KSM was in the country. KSM was leading an al-Qaeda cell in Qatar together with Mohammed Shawqui Islambouli, the brother of the Egyptian who had killed Anwar Sadat. They also were linked to bomber Ramzi Yousef. But what worries the former police chief is that KSM and Islambouli are experts in hijacking commercial planes. He tells Baer that KSM “is going to hijack some planes.” Further, he is told that KSM has moved to the Czech Republic, and has also traveled to Germany to meet bin Laden associates there. In early 1998 Baer sends this information to a friend in the CIA Counter Terrorism Center, who forwards the information to his superiors. Baer doesn’t hear back. He says, “There was no interest.” ([Baer 2002, pp. 270-71](#); [Baer 2/2002](#); [Sale and Iqbal 9/30/2002](#)) Later in 1998, President Clinton will be briefed about a hijacking threat in the US involving Islambouli, but it is unclear if Islambouli was actually involved in the 9/11 plot or any other hijacking plots targeting the US (see [December 4, 1998](#)). He has yet to be captured. Baer also tries to interest reporter Daniel Pearl in a story about KSM before 9/11, but Pearl is still working on it when he is kidnapped and later murdered in early 2002. ([Waterman 4/9/2004](#)) Baer’s source later disappears, presumably kidnapped in Qatar. It has been speculated that the CIA turned on the source to protect its relationship with the Qatari government. ([Gertz 2002, pp. 55-58](#)) Al-Thani will continue to support al-Qaeda, even hosting visits by bin Laden between 1996 and 2000 (see [1996-2000](#)). ([Ross and Scott 2/7/2003](#)) Yet the US still has not frozen al-Thani’s assets or taken other action.

January 1998: US Intercepts Communications between 3 Al-Qaeda Agents in US, but Fails to Stop Their Plot

Ali Mohamed, the al-Qaeda double agent living in California, receives a letter from Ihab Ali Nawawi (an apparent al-Qaeda sleeper cell operative living in Orlando, Florida, at the time (see [September 1999](#))). Nawawi tells Mohamed that Wadih El-Hage, a key member of the al-Qaeda cell in Kenya, has been interviewed by the FBI (see [August 21, 1997](#)). Mohamed is given a new contact number for El-Hage. Mohamed calls El-Hage and speaks to him about this, then calls other operatives who pass on the warning of the FBI’s interest in El-Hage to bin Laden. US intelligence is monitoring Mohamed’s phone calls at

this time, so presumably they are aware of these connections. ([Weiser 10/24/2000](#); [Sullivan and Neff 10/21/2001](#); [Martin and Berens 12/11/2001](#)) Yet, despite all of these monitored communications, neither Mohamed, nor Nawawi, nor El-Hage, are apprehended at this time, even though all three are living in the US. Their plot to blow up two US embassies in Africa succeeds in August 1998 (see [August 7, 1998](#)).

January 1998: US Begins Preparing Indictment of Bin Laden

In January 1998, the FBI and a New York US Attorney begins preparing charges against him for murdering US citizens in Somalia in 1993 (see [October 3-4, 1993](#)), Saudi Arabia in 1995 (see [November 13, 1995](#)), and other attacks. A grand jury will approve a secret and sealed indictment charging him with involvement in these attacks in June 1998 (see [June 8, 1998](#)). ([Risen 9/6/1998](#); [Miniter 2003, pp. 168-169](#)) It is not known why an indictment was not prepared earlier. The indictment is based on information from al-Qaeda informant Jamal al-Fadl, who defected to the US in mid-1996 (see [June 1996-April 1997](#)).

January 1998: CIA Aware of Al-Qaeda Meeting Planning Future Attacks

Bin Laden holds a meeting with other top al-Qaeda leaders in Afghanistan this month to prepare for a new wave of attacks. CIA analysts are able to learn some about this meeting, apparently largely due to NSA communications intercepts. On US official will say later in 1998, "There were reams of intel documenting bin Laden before" the African embassy bombings later in the year (see [August 7, 1998](#)). Another official will say, "We've had the book on this guy for a long time." But it is not known which attacks may have been discussed at this meeting or how much US intelligence knew about what was said there. ([Risen 9/6/1998](#))

1998-September 2001: New Lobbying Group Connects Bush to Some Muslim Activists with Alleged Terrorist Sympathies



Khaled Saffuri. *[Source: Paul Sperry]* Grover Norquist, one of the most politically-connected Republican lobbyists, founds a group to build Republican support among Muslim Americans. Norquist cofounds the Islamic Institute, sometimes called the Islamic Free Market Institute, with Khaled Saffuri. Saffuri is executive director and Norquist is chairman of the board. The institute operates out of the headquarters of Americans for Tax Reform, Norquist's main lobbying group. ([Foer 11/1/2001](#)) The start-up money largely comes from Middle Eastern sources. Saffuri's former boss at the American Muslim Council, Abdurahman Alamoudi, gives at least \$35,000. Alamoudi has been suspected of ties to bin Laden and other Islamic radicals (see [Shortly After March 1994](#)) since at least 1994 and will later be sentenced to 23 years in prison (see [October 15, 2004](#)). The Safa Trust donates at least \$35,000, and the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) contributes \$11,000. Both organizations are part of the SAAR group and are among the organizations raided in early 2002 (see [March 20, 2002](#)). ([Jacoby 3/11/2003](#)) Norquist is very close to future President Bush. The Washington Post will later comment that "even before President Bush's election, [Norquist] positioned himself as a gatekeeper for supplicants seeking access to Bush's inner circle." ([Weisman 7/9/2006](#)) The St. Petersburg Times will later note that after the founding of the Islamic Institute, "then-candidate Bush began popping up in photographs with various politically connected Muslims (see [March 12, 2000](#)). The only problem was, many of these same prominent Muslims were also under scrutiny by federal investigators for links to terrorism." ([Jacoby 3/11/2003](#)) The Islamic Institute becomes a key power center for Muslim activists currying favor with Bush and other Republicans, and these alliances lead to more Muslim American votes for Bush. Norquist will later claim, "George W. Bush was elected President of the United States of America because of the Muslim vote." ([Foer 11/1/2001](#)) After Bush is elected president, Saffuri regularly appears at the White House with imams and heads of Islamic organizations to lobby for policy changes. Suhail Khan, who was a director of the Islamic Institute, is the point person arranging the Muslim groups' access to Bush. Khan's late father was imam at a mosque in Santa Clara, California, which once hosted a visit by Ayman al-Zawahiri, al-Qaeda's number two leader. Norquist apparently boasted that he got Khan his White House post. ([Foer 11/1/2001](#); [Jacoby 3/11/2003](#)) It will later be alleged that Norquist's ties to people openly sympathetic to Islamist militant groups stifled investigations before 9/11 (see [March 20, 2002](#)). Shortly after 9/11, one recently retired intelligence official will claim that a number of counterterrorism agents at the FBI and CIA are "pissed as hell about the situation and pissed as hell about Grover [Norquist]." ([Foer 11/1/2001](#))

January-August 1998: Saudi Businessman Pays Money to Al-Qaeda Front

Saudi Arabian businessman Yassin al-Qadi pays US\$1.25 million from an account in Geneva to a company called Maram, an Istanbul-based terrorism front founded by al-Qaeda chief financial officer Mamdouh Mahmud Salim (see [November 1996-September 1998](#)). The transfer is not direct, but is made through an unidentified person the US later says is an al-Qaeda operative. Writing in 2004, the Wall Street Journal will call this “the strongest documented link to date between the terror organization and Saudi financiers.” However, lawyers for al-Qadi, who the US will designate a terrorism financier after 9/11 (see [October 12, 2001](#)), will say that the money is not used to buy arms, but is spent on low-cost housing at a religious education facility. The final recipient is said to be the Al Imam University in Sana’a, Yemen, whose alumni include, for example, “American Taliban” John Walker Lindh. The university’s rector is Sheikh Abdul Mejid al-Zindani, who fought alongside Osama bin Laden in the anti-Soviet jihad, heads the Muslim Brotherhood in Yemen, and, according to a memo obtained by the US Justice Department, discussed with bin Laden the use of charities in Pakistan as a front for terrorist attacks. ([Simpson 4/2/2004](#))

(1998): Two Saudi 9/11 Hijackers Nonreligious and Drink Alcohol

According to the 9/11 Commission, two of the alleged Saudi 9/11 hijackers, Satam Al Suqami and Salem Alhazmi, appear “unconcerned with religion and, contrary to Islamic law, [are] known to drink alcohol.” In addition, they both have minor criminal offence records. However, Salem Alhazmi’s father will later remember that Salem “stopped drinking and started attending mosque regularly three months before he disappeared.” ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 232-3, 524](#))

Late 1990s: Many Hijackers Attend University in Saudi Arabia and Elsewhere



Wail Alshehri graduated from teacher training college. [Source: *FBI*] At least ten of the alleged hijackers attend various universities in Saudi Arabia, Germany, and Egypt. However, most of them drop out, and apparently only three,

Mohamed Atta, Abdulaziz Alomari, and Wail Alshehri, graduate. The 9/11 Commission will comment, "Several of the muscle hijackers seem to have been recruited through contacts at local universities and mosques."

- Wail Alshehri attends a teacher-training college in Abha, Asir Province. He graduates and gets a job as a teacher in his hometown of Khamis Mushayt before joining the plot. ([Ba-Isa and Al-Towaim 9/18/2001](#); [MSNBC 8/25/2002](#); [Saudi Information Agency 9/11/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 232-3](#)) Some sources will state he teaches physical education. ([Ba-Isa and Al-Towaim 9/18/2001](#); [MacFarquhar 9/21/2001](#); [Sunday Times \(London\) 1/27/2002](#); [Sennott 3/3/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 526](#)) Other sources will state he teaches art. ([ABC News 3/15/2002](#); [MSNBC 8/25/2002](#))
 - Waleed Alshehri also attends the same college, but does not complete his studies. ([Ba-Isa and Al-Towaim 9/18/2001](#); [Saudi Information Agency 9/11/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 232](#))
 - Abdulaziz Alomari graduates from the Imam Mohammed Bin Saud University in Buraidah, Qassim Province. ([Sunday Times \(London\) 1/27/2002](#); [Saudi Information Agency 9/11/2002](#); [Burke 2004, pp. 247](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 232-3](#))
 - Ahmed Alhaznawi reportedly studies at the Umm Al-Qura University in Mecca for two months before dropping out. ([Saudi Information Agency 9/11/2002](#))
 - Mohand Alshehri attends the Imam Mohammed Bin Saud University in Abha for a time before transferring to its main campus in Riyadh. He fails his exams, apparently because he spends too much time in Qassim Province. ([Khashoggi 9/20/2001](#); [Saudi Information Agency 9/11/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 233](#))
 - According to author Jason Burke, Majed Moqed attends the Imam Mohammed Bin Saud University in Buraidah, Qassim Province. ([Burke 2004, pp. 247](#)) Alternatively, the Saudi Information Agency and Arab News will say he attended the Administration and Economics faculty at the King Saud University in Riyadh. ([Khashoggi 9/20/2001](#); [Saudi Information Agency 9/11/2002](#)) He drops out before completing his studies. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 232](#))
 - Saeed Alghamdi transfers to a university in Qassim Province, but soon stops talking to his family and drops out of school without telling them. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 233](#))
 - According to most sources, Ahmed Alnami attends the King Khaled School of Islamic Law in Abha. ([Khashoggi 9/20/2001](#); [Sennott 3/3/2002](#); [Lamb 9/15/2002](#); [Burke 2004, pp. 247](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 232](#)) However, the Saudi Information Agency will say he attended the Imam Mohammed Bin Saud University there. ([Saudi Information Agency 9/11/2002](#))
 - According to the 9/11 Commission, Satam Al Suqami has little education. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 232](#)) However, the Saudi Information Agency will say he attends the King Saud University in Riyadh with Majed Moqed. ([Saudi Information Agency 9/11/2002](#))
 - One report will also say that Fayez Ahmed Banihammad attends the King Khalid University in Abha, Asir Province (despite being a citizen of the United Arab Emirates). ([Lamb 9/15/2002](#))
- Mohamed Atta attends university in Egypt, and he, Marwan Alshehhi, and Ziad Jarrah also attend university in Germany (see [Spring 1996-December 23, 2000](#)). ([McDermott 2005, pp. 49-53](#))

1998-December 11, 1999: Key Al-Qaeda Operative Working with Zubaida Allegedly Monitored in Pakistan

Khalil Deek, an al-Qaeda operative living in California for most of the 1990s, moves to Peshawar, Pakistan, around this time. Al-Qaeda leader Abu Zubaida is also operating from the same town and is a close associate of Deek. In fact, US intelligence have been investigating the two of them since the late 1980s (see [Late 1980s](#)). It appears Deek is under surveillance by this time. The Wall Street Journal will claim, “US intelligence officials had tracked the onetime California resident for years before they had tied him, [in December 1999], to [an] alleged Jordanian plot.” ([King and Cloud 3/8/2000](#)) A 2005 book by counterterrorism expert Jean-Charles Brisard will similarly relate that by the spring of 1999, “For several months the Jordanian government, with the help of the American FBI, had been stepping up pressure on [Pakistan] to arrest [Deek].” ([Brisard 2005, pp. 65](#)) Deek lives in a rented villa surrounded by high walls. He runs a small computer school and repair shop. He helps encrypt al-Qaeda’s Internet communications. He exports drums of local honey to the Middle East. Deek and Zubaida apparently use the honey to hide the shipment of drugs and weapons (see [May 2000](#)). ([King and Cloud 3/8/2000](#); [Schou 6/15/2006](#)) Deek also creates an electronic version of an al-Qaeda terrorist manual known as the *Encyclopedia of Afghan Jihad*. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004](#)) “US authorities say his house near the Afghan border also served as a way station for recruits heading in and out of terrorist training camps in Afghanistan.” ([King and Cloud 3/8/2000](#)) Zubaida also screens recruits and directs them to training camps in Afghanistan. Deek and Zubaida share a Peshawar bank account. ([Schou 6/15/2006](#)) It appears that Western intelligence agencies are monitoring Zubaida’s phone calls from 1998, if not earlier (see [October 1998 and After](#) and [\(Mid-1996\)](#)). Deek will be arrested on December 11, 1999, quickly deported to Jordan, and then released in 2001 (see [December 11, 1999](#)). It will later be alleged that Deek was a mole for the Jordanian government all along (see [Shortly After December 11, 1999](#)).

January 8, 1998: KSM Revealed as Major Al-Qaeda Operative at Yousef Sentencing



FBI reward notice for Khalid Shaikh Mohammed.

[Source: FBI]Islamic militant Ramzi Yousef is sentenced to 240 years for his role in the 1993 WTC bombing. At the same time, prosecutors unseal an indictment against Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM) for participating with Yousef in the 1995 Operation Bojinka plot (see [January 6, 1995](#)). In unsealing this, US Attorney Mary Jo White calls KSM a “major player” and says he is believed to be a relative of Yousef. ([Walsh 1/9/1998](#)) The US announces a \$2 million reward for his capture in 1998 and wanted posters with his picture are distributed. ([Risen 6/5/2002](#)) This contradicts the FBI’s claim after 9/11 that they did not realize he was a major terrorist before 9/11. ([US Congress 12/11/2002](#)) For instance, a senior FBI official later says, “He was under everybody’s radar. We don’t know how he did it. We wish we knew.... He’s the guy nobody ever heard of.” ([McDermott, Meyer, and McDonnell 12/22/2002](#)) However, another official says, “We have been after him for years, and to say that we weren’t is just wrong. We had identified him as a major al-Qaeda operative before September 11.” ([Risen 9/22/2002](#)) Yet strangely, despite knowing KSM is a major al-Qaeda operations planner and putting out a large reward for his capture at this time, there is no worldwide public manhunt for him as there successfully was for his nephew Ramzi Yousef. KSM’s name remains obscure and he isn’t even put on the FBI’s Most Wanted Terrorists list until one month after 9/11. ([Lance 2003, pp. 327-30](#))

[January 15, 1998: Former National Security Adviser Has No Regrets Giving ‘Arms and Advice to Future Terrorists’](#)

In an interview, Zbigniew Brzezinski, President Carter’s National Security Adviser, admits that it was US policy to support radical Islamists to undermine Russia. He admits that US covert action drew Russia into starting the Afghan war in 1979 (see [July 3, 1979](#)). Asked if he has regrets about this, he responds, “Regret what? That secret operation was an excellent idea. It had the effect of drawing the Russians into the Afghan trap and you want me to regret it? The day that the Soviets officially crossed the border, I wrote to

President Carter: We now have the opportunity of giving to the USSR its Vietnam war.” Then he is asked if he regrets “having given arms and advice to future terrorists,” and he responds, “What is most important to the history of the world? The Taliban or the collapse of the Soviet empire? Some stirred-up Muslims or the liberation of Central Europe and the end of the Cold War?” The interviewer then says, “Islamic fundamentalism represents a world menace today.” But Brzezinski responds, “Nonsense! It is said that the West had a global policy in regard to Islam. That is stupid. There isn’t a global Islam....” ([Brzezinski 1/15/1998](#)) Even after 9/11, Brzezinski will maintain that the covert action program remains justified. ([Alterman 10/25/2001](#))

January 26, 1998: Neoconservative Think Tank Urges US to Attack Iraq

The Project for the New American Century (PNAC), an influential neoconservative think tank, publishes a letter to President Clinton urging war against Iraq and the removal of Saddam Hussein because he is a “hazard” to “a significant portion of the world’s supply of oil.” In a foretaste of what eventually happens, the letter calls for the US to go to war alone, attacks the United Nations, and says the US should not be “crippled by a misguided insistence on unanimity in the UN Security Council.” The letter is signed by many who will later lead the 2003 Iraq war. 10 of the 18 signatories later join the Bush Administration, including (future) Defense Secretary Rumsfeld, Assistant Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, Assistant Secretary of State Richard Armitage, Undersecretaries of State John Bolton and Paula Dobriansky, presidential adviser for the Middle East Elliott Abrams, and George W. Bush’s special Iraq envoy Zalmay Khalilzad. ([Project for the New American Century 1/26/1998](#); [Mackay 3/16/2003](#)) Clinton does heavily bomb Iraq in late 1998, but the bombing doesn’t last long and its long term effect is the break off of United Nations weapons inspections. ([Weisman 3/23/2003](#))

February 1998: State Department Removes KLA from Terrorism List

Having already entered into its controversial relationship with the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), the US gives in to the organization’s demands that it be removed from the State Department’s list of foreign terrorist organizations. ([Kurop 11/1/2001](#)) Near the end of that same month, Robert Gelbard, America’s special envoy to Bosnia, says the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) is an Islamic terrorist organization. ([Sebak 6/28/1998](#)) “We condemn very strongly terrorist actions in Kosovo. The UCK [KLA] is, without any question, a terrorist group.” ([Agence France-Presse 4/1999](#)) “I know a terrorist when I see one and these men are terrorists,” he says. ([Sebak 6/28/1998](#))

Shortly Before February 1998 and After: KLA Receives Arms and Training from US and NATO

The US and NATO provide the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) with arms and training. ([Kurop 11/1/2001](#))

February 5, 1998: US Rejects Sudanese Al-Qaeda Files that Could Stop Embassy Bombings



A photocopy of Fazul Abdullah Mohammed's Comoros passport in Sudan's intelligence files. [Source: *Richard Miniter*] Gutbi al-Mahdi, head of Sudan's intelligence agency, sends a letter to David Williams, an FBI station chief. It reads, "I would like to express my sincere desire to start contacts and cooperation between our service and the FBI. I would like to take this opportunity with pleasure to invite you to visit our country. Otherwise, we could meet somewhere else." Apparently the FBI is very eager to accept the offer and gain access to Sudan's files on bin Laden and his associates. The US had been offered the files before (see [March 8, 1996-April 1996](#); [April 5, 1997](#)), but the US position was that Sudan's offers were not serious since Sudanese leader Hassan al-Turabi was ideologically close to bin Laden. But al-Turabi has lost power to moderates by this time, and in fact he is placed under arrest in 1998. There is a political battle between US agencies over the Sudanese offer, and in the end the State Department forbids any contact with al-Mahdi. On June 24, 1998, Williams is obliged to reply, "I am not currently in a position to accept your kind invitation." Al-Madhi later will complain, "If they had taken up my offer in February 1998, they could have prevented the [US embassy] bombings." Tim Carney, US ambassador to Sudan until 1997, will say, "The US failed to reciprocate Sudan's willingness to engage us on serious questions of terrorism. We can speculate that this failure had serious implications - at the least for what happened at the US Embassies in 1998. In any case, the US lost access to a mine of material on bin Laden and his organization." One of the plotters in the bombings is Fazul Abdullah Mohammed (a.k.a. Haroun Fazul), who is living in Sudan but making trips to Kenya to participate in the bombing preparations. Sudan has files on him and continues to monitor him. Sudan also has files on Saif al-Adel, another embassy bomber who has yet to be captured. Sudan also has files on Wadih El-Hage and Mamdouh

Mahmoud Salim, both of whom have contact with members of the Hamburg al-Qaeda cell (see [September 20, 1998](#); [Late 1998](#); [1993](#)). Salim even attends the same small Hamburg mosque as 9/11 hijackers Mohamed Atta and Marwan Alshehhi. Vanity Fair magazine will suggest that if al-Madhi's offer had been properly followed up, both the embassy bombings and the 9/11 attacks could have been foiled. ([Rose 1/2002](#)) It is later revealed that the US was wiretapping bin Laden in Sudan on their own (see [Early 1990s](#)).

February 12, 1998: Unocal VP Advocates Afghan Pipeline Before Congress

Unocal Vice President John J. Maresca—later to become a Special Ambassador to Afghanistan—testifies before the House of Representatives that until a single, unified, friendly government is in place in Afghanistan, the trans-Afghan pipeline will not be built. He suggests that with a pipeline through Afghanistan, the Caspian basin could produce 20 percent of all the non-OPEC oil in the world by 2010. ([US Congress 2/12/1998](#))

February 22, 1998: Bin Laden Expands Fatwa Against US and Allies



Osama bin Laden (right), Mohammed Atef (center), and an unidentified militant at the press conference publicizing the expanded fatwa in May 1998. Ayman al-Zawahiri is out of the picture, sitting on the other side of bin Laden. [Source: *BBC*] Bin Laden issues a fatwa, declaring it the religious duty of all Muslims “to kill the Americans and their allies—civilians and military... in any country in which it is possible.” ([Al-Quds al-Arabi \(London\) 2/23/1998](#); [PBS Frontline 2001](#); [Mackay 9/16/2001](#)) This is an expansion of an earlier fatwa issued in August 1996, which called for attacks in the Arabian Peninsula only (see [August 1996](#)). Ayman al-Zawahiri, the head of the Egyptian militant group Islamic Jihad, is one of many militant leaders who sign the fatwa. This reveals to the public an alliance between al-Qaeda and Islamic Jihad that has long been in effect. Also signing the fatwa are representatives from militant groups in Afghanistan, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Yemen, Eritrea, Djibouti, Kenya, Pakistan, Bosnia, Croatia, Algeria, Tunisia, Lebanon, the Philippines, Tajikistan, Chechnya, Bangladesh, Kashmir, Azerbaijan, and Palestine. All these representatives call

themselves allied to the “International Islamic Front for Jihad Against Jews and Crusaders” (the name al-Qaeda has not been widely popularized yet.) New York magazine will note, “The [fatwa gives] the West its first glimpse of the worldwide conspiracy that [is] beginning to form.” ([Wright 9/9/2002](#)) In March 1998, 40 Afghan clerics issue a fatwa calling for a jihad against the US. A group of Pakistani clerics issues a similar fatwa in April. These fatwas give much more religious authority to bin Laden’s fatwa. It is suspected that bin Laden “discreetly prompted these two bodies to issue the ordinances.” ([Gunaratna 2003, pp. 62-63](#)) Bin Laden then will hold a press conference in May 1998 to publicize the fatwa (see [May 26, 1998](#)).

Spring 1998: Experts Warn FAA of Potential Massive Kamikaze Attack

Three terrorism specialists present an analysis of security threats to FAA security officials. Their analysis describes two scenarios involving planes as weapons. In one, hijacked planes are flown into nuclear power plants along the East Coast. In the other, hijackers commandeer Federal Express cargo planes and simultaneously crash them into the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, the White House, the Capitol, the Sears Tower, and the Golden Gate Bridge. Stephen Gale, one of the specialists, later says the analysis is based in part upon attempts that had been made in 1994 to crash airplanes in the Eiffel Tower and the White House (see [September 11, 1994](#)) (see [December 24, 1994](#)). Gale later recalls that one FAA official responds to the presentation by saying, “You can’t protect yourself from meteorites.” ([Fainaru 5/19/2002](#))

Spring 1998: Bin Laden’s Stepmother Visits Afghanistan

Sources who know bin Laden claim his stepmother, Al-Khalifa bin Laden, has the first of two meetings with her stepson in Afghanistan during this period. This trip was arranged by Prince Turki al-Faisal, then the head of Saudi intelligence. Turki was in charge of the “Afghanistan file” for Saudi Arabia, and had long-standing ties to bin Laden and the Taliban since 1980. ([Mayer and Szechenyi 11/5/2001](#))

Spring-Summer 1998: Yemeni Officials Help Al-Qaeda with Knowledgeable Defector



Zein al-Abidine Almihdhar. [Source: Associated

Press] Ahmed Nasrallah, a veteran al-Qaeda operative who has been in Yemen for several years, decides to defect and turn himself in to the Yemeni government. He discloses the location of al-Qaeda strongholds in Yemen and even gives away the location of al-Qaeda's deputy leader Ayman al-Zawahiri in a southern Yemeni town. He describes al-Qaeda's weaponry, security, and violent plans for the future. He offers to spy on al-Qaeda in Afghanistan or on a militant Yemeni group led by Zein al-Abidine Almihdhar, a relative of hijacker Khalid Almihdhar. (In 1999 Zein will be caught and executed in Yemen for kidnappings and killings.) However, two officials in the Political Security Organization (Yemen's equivalent of the FBI) have radical militant ties and hand over Nasrallah to al-Qaeda operatives. These operatives plan to kill him for betraying their group, but he escapes to Egypt before they can do so. The Egyptian government then interrogates him for more than a year. However, it is not known what he told them before 9/11, or what they might have passed to the US. One of the two Yemeni officers helping al-Qaeda on this matter, Abdulsalam Ali Abdulrahman al-Hilah, will be recorded by Italian intelligence in 2000 apparently mentioning the upcoming 9/11 attacks (see [August 12, 2000](#)). ([Higgins and Cullison 12/20/2002](#))

March-June 1998: Al-Qaeda Leader Attempts to Meet Hussein, but Is Turned Away

In 2006, a bipartisan Senate report will conclude that al-Qaeda leader Mahfouz Walad Al-Walid (a.k.a. Abu Hafs the Mauritanian) travels to Iraq this year in an attempt to meet with Saddam Hussein. This is according to debriefings and documentation found after the 2003 Iraq war. But Hussein refuses to meet him and directs that he should leave Iraq because he could cause a problem for the country. Different documents suggest Al-Walid travels in March or June, or makes two trips. He will make a similar attempt to meet with Hussein in 2002, and will be similarly rebuffed (see [2002](#)). 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, pp. 73-75](#))

March 9, 1998: Pakistan Admits It Is Giving Weapons to Taliban

According to a later declassified US government cable, a Pakistani foreign ministry official admits to a US official that Pakistan has been giving the Taliban weapons. He says Pakistan “had not provided arms and ammunition to the Taliban since three or four months.” ([US Embassy \(Islamabad\) 3/9/1998](#).) But Pakistan does not stop giving weapons. In fact, in July 1998, another US government cable indicates Pakistani support for the Taliban “appears to be getting stronger.” Another Pakistani official admits Pakistan is giving the Taliban about \$1 million a month to pay the salaries of Taliban officials and commanders, but claims this is merely “humanitarian” assistance. ([US Embassy \(Islamabad\) 7/1/1998](#).)

Late Spring 1998: Kenyan Intelligence Tries to Warn CIA about Embassy Attack

“Just months before” the US embassy bombings (see [August 7, 1998](#)), Kenyan intelligence warns the CIA about an imminent plot to attack the US embassy in Nairobi, Kenya. Paul Muite, a prominent lawyer and legislator in Kenya, later says he was told the CIA showed the Kenyan warning to the Mossad, who was dismissive about its reliability. The CIA then chose to ignore it. ([Miller, Stone, and Mitchell 2002, pp. 206](#))

April 1998: Hijacker Associate Receives Saudi Money; FBI Fails to Investigate

Osama Basnan, a Saudi living in California, claims to write a letter to Saudi Arabian Prince Bandar bin Sultan and his wife, Princess Haifa bint Faisal, asking for financial help because his wife needs thyroid surgery. The Saudi embassy sends Basnan \$15,000 and pays the surgical bill. However, according to University of California at San Diego hospital records, Basnan’s wife, Majeda Dweikat, is not treated until April 2000. ([Serrano, McManus, and Krikorian 11/24/2002](#)) Basnan will later come under investigation for possibly using some of this money to support two of the 9/11 hijackers who arrive in San Diego, although the 9/11 Commission has concluded that evidence does not support these charges. ([9/11 Commission 6/16/2004](#)) Prior to this time, the FBI had several chances to investigate Basnan, but failed to do so. In 1992, they received information suggesting a connection between him and a militant group later associated with bin Laden. In 1993, they received reports that Basnan hosted a party for al-Qaeda leader Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman the year before, but again they failed to investigate. ([US Congress 7/24/2003](#).) According to one US official, Basnan later “celebrate[s] the heroes of September 11” and talks about “what a wonderful, glorious day it had been” at a party shortly after 9/11. ([Isikoff and Thomas 11/24/2002](#); [Reno 9/2003](#))

April 1998: FBI Agent Stifles Investigation into Ptech Figures



John Vincent. [Source: *Patriot TV*] FBI agent Robert Wright will later recall that at this time, he is pleasantly surprised when FBI management provides his Vulgar Betrayal investigation with a 10 year veteran agent to assist with his efforts. According to Wright, the unnamed agent is assigned to “investigate a company and its 20-plus subsidiaries which were linked to a major financier of international terrorism.” However, Wright and fellow agent John Vincent will soon become dismayed when they realize the agent is not actually doing any work. He merely shuffles papers to look busy when people walk by. He will continue to do no work on this important assignment until the Vulgar Betrayal investigation is effectively shut down one year later (see [August 3, 1999](#)). Wright will claim in 2003, “The important assignment he was given involved both the founder and the financier of Ptech.” Presumably these could be references to Oussama Ziade, the president and chief founder of Ptech, and Yassin al-Qadi, apparently Ptech’s largest investor. ([Federal News Service 6/2/2003](#))

April-May 1998: CIA’s Bin Laden Unit Almost Disbanded

The CIA’s bin Laden unit, first created in early 1996 (see [February 1996](#)), is ordered disbanded. It is unclear who gave the order. The unit appears to have been the most vocal section of the US government pushing for action against bin Laden. Apparently CIA Director George Tenet is unaware of the plans to disband the unit. He intervenes in mid-May and preserves the unit. Michael Scheuer, the head of the unit, later will comment that by doing so, Tenet “dodged the bullet of having to explain to the American people why the [CIA] thought bin Laden was so little of a threat that it had destroyed the bin Laden unit weeks before two US embassies were demolished.” Scheuer also will comment, “the on-again, off-again signals about the unit’s future status made for confusion, distraction, and much job-hunting in the last few weeks” before the embassy attacks. ([Atlantic Monthly 12/2004](#))

April 15, 1998: Libya Issues First Arrest Warrant for Bin Laden



Mu'ammar al-Qadhafi. [Source: *European Community*] The first Interpol (international police) arrest warrant for bin Laden is issued—by Libya. ([Bright 11/10/2002](#)) According to the authors of the controversial book *The Forbidden Truth*, British and US intelligence agencies play down the arrest warrant, and have the public version of the warrant stripped of important information, such as the summary of charges and the fact that Libya requested the warrant. The arrest warrant is issued for the 1994 murder of two German intelligence agents in Libya by the al-Qaeda affiliate in Libya, al-Muqatila (see [March 10, 1994](#)). Allegedly, the warrant is downplayed and virtually ignored because of the hostility of Britain towards the Libyan government. British intelligence collaborated with al-Muqatila in an attempt to assassinate Libyan leader Colonel Mu'ammar al-Qadhafi in 1996 (see [1996](#)). ([Brisard and Dasquie 2002, pp. 97-98](#))

Mid-April 1998: US Official Meets with Taliban; Promote Afghan Pipeline

Bill Richardson, the US Ambassador to the UN, meets Taliban officials in Kabul. (All such meetings are illegal, because the US still officially recognizes the government the Taliban ousted as the legitimate rulers of Afghanistan.) US officials at the time call the oil and gas pipeline project a “fabulous opportunity” and are especially motivated by the “prospect of circumventing Iran, which offers another route for the pipeline.” ([Shadid and Donnelly 9/20/2001](#)) Richardson tries to persuade the Taliban to hand over bin Laden to the US, promising to end the international isolation of the Taliban if they cooperate. ([Reeve 1999, pp. 195](#))

Late April 1998 and Shortly After: Tenet Unhappy over Saudi Information Sharing, Suggests Al-Qaeda Leader Wants to Assassinate Vice President

When Saudi authorities foil a plot by al-Qaeda manager Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri to smuggle missiles into the kingdom (see [1997](#)), CIA director George Tenet becomes so concerned they are withholding information about the plot from the US that he flies to

Saudi Arabia to meet Interior Minister Prince Nayef. Tenet is concerned because he believes that the four antitank missiles smuggled in from Yemen by al-Nashiri, head of al-Qaeda operations in the Arabian peninsula, may be intended for an assassination attempt on Vice President Albert Gore, who is to visit Saudi Arabia shortly. Tenet and another CIA manager are unhappy about the information being withheld and Tenet flies to Riyadh “to underscore the importance of sharing such information.” Tenet obtains “a comprehensive report on the entire Sagger missile episode” from Interior Minister Prince Nayef by making a not-so-veiled threat about negative publicity for Saudi Arabia in the US press. ([Tenet 2007, pp. 105-6](#)) It will later be reported that the militants’ plan is apparently to use the armor-piercing missiles to attack the armored limousines of members of the Saudi royal family. ([Tyler 12/23/2002](#)) There are no reports of the planned attack being carried out, so it appears to fail due to the confiscation of the missiles. However, al-Nashiri will later be identified as a facilitator of the East African embassy bombings (see [August 22-25 1998](#)) and will attend a summit of al-Qaeda operatives in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, which is monitored by local authorities and the CIA (see January 5-8, 2000).

May 1998: FBI Gives Counterterrorism Top Priority but No Extra Resources

The FBI issues a strategic, five-year plan that designates national and economic security, including counterterrorism, as its top priority for the first time. However, it is later determined that neither personnel nor resources are shifted accordingly. FBI counterterrorism spending remains constant from this point until 9/11. Only about six percent of the FBI’s agent work force is assigned to counterterrorism on 9/11. ([9/11 Commission 4/13/2004](#); [Johnston and Dwyer 4/18/2004](#))

May 1998: CIA Director Prefers Saudi Plan to Bribe Taliban over Direct Action against Bin Laden

According to author James Risen, CIA Director George Tenet and other top CIA officials travel to Saudi Arabia to meet with Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah, the de facto ruler of the country. Tenet wants Abdullah to address the problem of bin Laden. He requests that bin Laden not be given to the US to be put on trial but that he be given to the Saudis instead. Abdullah agrees as long as it can be a secret arrangement. Tenet sends a memo to National Security Advisor Sandy Berger, recommending that the CIA allow the Saudis to essentially bribe the Taliban to turn him over. Around the same time, Tenet cancels the CIA’s own operation to get bin Laden (see [May 29, 1998](#)). Prince Turki al-Faisal, the head of Saudi intelligence, does go to Afghanistan in June and/or July of 1998 to make a secret deal, though with whom he meets and what is agreed upon is highly disputed (see [June 1998](#) and [July 1998](#)). But it becomes clear after the failed US missile attack on bin Laden in August 1998 (see [August 20, 1998](#)) that the Taliban has no intention of turning bin Laden over to anyone. Risen later comments, “By then, the CIA’s capture plan was dead, and the CIA had no other serious alternatives in the works.... It is possible that the

crown prince's offer of assistance simply provided Tenet and other top CIA officials an easy way out of a covert action plan that they had come to believe represented far too big of a gamble.” ([Risen 2006, pp. 183-184](#))

May 1998: US Intelligence Resumes Monitoring Al-Qaeda Cell in Kenya

US intelligence resumes monitoring the al-Qaeda cell in Kenya, and continues to listen in all the way through the US embassy attacks that the cell implements in August 1998 (see [August 7, 1998](#)). US intelligence had begun wiretapping five phones used by the cell by late 1996, including the phones of cell leader Wadih El-Hage and two phones belonging to Mercy International, a charity believed to have been used as a front by the Kenya cell. The monitoring stopped in October 1997, though it is not clear why. The New York Times will report that “after a break, [monitoring] began again in May 1998, just months before the bombing and precisely during the time the government now asserts the attack was being planned.” It is not known what caused the monitoring to resume nor has it been explained how the cell was able to succeed in the embassy attacks while being monitored. ([Weiser 1/13/2001](#))

May 1998: 'Blind Sheikh' Message Urges Islamists to Seek 'Violent Revenge' on Infidels



The card containing Abdul-Rahman's message.

[Source: Peter Bergen] Pakistani journalist Ismail Khan is given a copy of 'Blind Sheikh' Omar Abdul-Rahman's purported will by one of his sons, while attending bin Laden's first and only press conference in May 1998 (see [May 26, 1998](#)). Abdul-Rahman is serving life in prison in the US but his will anticipates that he will die soon from mistreatment. He says, “Extract the most violent revenge... Cut off all relations with [the Americans, Christians, and Jews], tear them to pieces, destroy their economies, burn their corporations, destroy their peace, sink their ships, shoot down their planes, and kill them

on air, sea, and land. And kill them wherever you may find them, ambush them, take them hostage, and destroy their observatories. Kill these infidels.” Whether this will really was smuggled out of a US prison or not, the words will have a big impact for bin Laden’s followers and mark a dramatic increase in the violent rhetoric used by al-Qaeda. Ahmed Ressay, who will later be arrested for trying to bomb the Los Angeles airport, trains at the Khaldan training camp in mid-1998. He will later testify that this statement from Abdul-Rahman was widely distributed at the training camp. ([Bergen 2006, pp. 204-205](#)) US intelligence is presumably aware of the purported will, since CNN will report about it later in 1998. ([CNN 11/8/1998](#)) Journalist Peter Bergen, who is given a copy of the message around this time, will later comment that the message to “attack the US economy and American aviation was an important factor in the 9/11 attacks.... [His] fatwas are the nearest equivalent al-Qaeda has to an ex cathedra statement by the Pope.... [He] was able for the first time in al-Qaeda’s history to rule that it was legally permissible, and even desirable, to carry out attacks against American planes and corporations, exactly the type of attacks that took place on 9/11.” Bergen notes that while one cannot be certain if Abdul-Rahman actually wrote the message, in other cases his imprisonment did not prevent him from getting messages out through his family or lawyers. ([Bergen 2006, pp. 208-209](#))

May 1998-May 1999: Ten Opportunities to Strike Bin Laden in One Year

Michael Scheuer, head of the CIA’s bin Laden unit from 1996 to 1999, later will claim that in a one-year period starting in May 1998, the CIA gives the US government “about ten chances to capture bin Laden or kill him with military means. In all instances, the decision was made that the ‘intelligence was not good enough.’ This assertion cannot be debated publicly without compromising sources and methods. What can be said, however, is that in all these cases there was more concern expressed by senior bureaucrats and policymakers about how international opinion would react to a US action than there was concern about what might happen to Americans if they failed to act. Indeed, on one occasion these senior leaders decided it was more important to avoid hitting a structure near bin Laden’s location with shrapnel, than it was to protect Americans.” Details about four of the attempts will be made public (see [May 29, 1998](#); [December 18-20, 1998](#); [February 11, 1999](#); [May 1999](#)). Also during this time, there is one attempted but failed attempt to kill bin Laden.(see [August 20, 1998](#)) ([Atlantic Monthly 12/2004](#)) Counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke later will strongly disagree with Scheuer’s assessment, claiming that the intelligence needed for such an attack on bin Laden was never very good. But he will also point out that the National Security Council and White House never killed any of the operations Scheuer wanted. It was always CIA Director George Tenet and other top CIA leaders who rejected the proposals. Scheuer will agree that it was always Tenet who turned down the operations. ([Zeman et al. 11/2004](#))

May 7, 1998: Al-Qaeda Leader Visits Bosnia; US Charity Is Funding Al-Qaeda There

Mamdouh Mahmud Salim (a.k.a. Abu Hajer), a high-ranking al-Qaeda leader, visits Bosnia for unknown reasons and connects with a charity suspected of financing bin Laden's organization. Salim was one of the founders of al-Qaeda and will be arrested in Germany later in the year (see [September 20, 1998](#)) and charged in connection with the 1998 embassy bombings (see [August 7, 1998](#)). Records show that the Bosnia branch of the US-based Benevolence International Foundation (BIF) sponsored Salim's visa, reserved him an apartment, and identified him as one of its directors. A BIF mole in Bosnian intelligence is able to tip off Salim that investigators are onto him, so he is not caught (see [September 1996-June 2000](#)). Intelligence officials will question BIF officers about Salim's trip in early 2000, but the reason for the trip remains a mystery. ([Frantz 6/14/2002](#))

May 8, 1998: FBI Announces Its Highest Goal Is to Prevent, Detect and Deter Terrorism

FBI Director Louis Freeh announces a strategic plan for his agency. He notes that domestic counterterrorism falls "almost exclusively within the jurisdiction of the FBI." He summarizes the FBI's policy on terrorism established in 1998: "Some terrorism now comes from abroad. Some terrorism is home-grown. But whatever its origin, terrorism is deadly and the FBI has no higher priority than to combat terrorism, to prevent it where possible. Our goal is to prevent, detect and deter." ([US Congress 10/8/2002](#))

May 15, 1998: Oklahoma FBI Memo Warns of Potential Terrorist-Related Flight Training; No Investigation Ensues

An FBI pilot sends his supervisor in the Oklahoma City FBI office a memo warning that he has observed "large numbers of Middle Eastern males receiving flight training at Oklahoma airports in recent months." The memo, titled "Weapons of Mass Destruction," further states this "may be related to planned terrorist activity" and "light planes would be an ideal means of spreading chemicals or biological agents." The memo does not call for an investigation, and none occurs. ([Clay 5/29/2002](#); [US Congress 7/24/2003](#)) The memo is "sent to the bureau's Weapons of Mass Destruction unit and forgotten." ([Smith 9/25/2002](#)) In 1999, it will be learned that an al-Qaeda agent has studied flight training in Norman, Oklahoma (see [May 18, 1999](#)). Hijackers Mohamed Atta and Marwan Alshehhi will briefly visit the same school in 2000; Zacarias Moussaoui will train at the school in 2001 (see [February 23-June 2001](#)).

After May 15, 1998: FBI Again Ignores Warnings About Islamic Militants Planning to Obtain US Pilot Training

The FBI receives reports that a militant Islamic organization might be planning to bring students to the US for flight training, at some point in 1998 after the May 15 memo (see

[May 15, 1998](#)) warns about Middle Eastern men training at US flight schools. ([Smith 9/25/2002](#)) The FBI is aware that people connected to this unnamed organization have performed surveillance and security tests at airports in the US and made comments suggesting an intention to target civil aviation. Apparently, this warning is not shared with other FBI offices or the FAA, and a connection with the Oklahoma warning is not made; a similar warning will follow in 1999 (see [1999](#)). ([US Congress 7/24/2003](#))

May 22, 1998: Clinton Creates Counterterrorism Post, Selects Richard Clarke

President Clinton creates the new post of National Coordinator for Counterterrorism. He names Richard Clarke for the job, and Clarke soon becomes known as the counterterrorism “tsar.” ([Bennet 5/23/1998](#); [Dobbs 4/2/2000](#)) This is outlined in a new presidential directive on counterterrorism that also outlines goals of fighting terrorism and attempts to strengthen interagency coordination of counterterrorism efforts. ([9/11 Commission 3/24/2004](#)) Clarke, who had been working on terrorism issues since the start of the Clinton administration, has more symbolic than actual power in the new position, but he is allowed to sit on Cabinet level meetings that involve terrorism. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 101](#))

May 22, 1998: Presidential Directive Puts Secret Service In Charge of Security for Major Public Events

President Clinton issues Presidential Decision Directive 62 (PDD-62), which gives the National Security Council authority to designate any important upcoming public event as a National Special Security Event (NSSE). ([United States Secret Service n.d.](#); [Lawlor 10/27/2000](#)) Once an event has been designated as an NSSE, the FBI becomes the lead agency for crisis management, FEMA becomes lead agency for consequence management, and the Secret Service becomes lead agency for designing and implementing security operations. ([US Department of Defense 8/3/2001](#); [US Department of Homeland Security 7/9/2003](#); [Scalet 9/2004](#)) Approximately four or five events per year will subsequently be designated as NSSEs, such as the 2000 Republican and Democratic National Conventions, and the 2001 Presidential Inauguration. ([US Department of Homeland Security 7/9/2003](#); [US Department of Homeland Security 11/8/2004](#)) On 9/11, one or possibly both the cities targeted—Washington and New York—will be less than three weeks from major events that have been designated as NSSEs (see [8:30 a.m. September 11, 2001](#))(see [8:30 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). This is particularly interesting considering that once the Secret Service is put in charge of security for an NSSE, it becomes involved in providing air defense over that event. As then Director of the Secret Service Brian Stafford will point out in March 2000: “PDD-62 mandates the Secret Service to create additional capabilities that ‘achieve airspace security’ for designated ‘National Special Security Events (NSSE).’ This air security program utilizes air interdiction teams to detect, identify, and assess any aircraft that violates, or attempts to violate, an established Temporary Flight Restricted Area (TFR)

airspace above an NSSE.” ([US Congress 3/30/2000](#); [Gips 2/2002](#)) Whether the Secret Service will have such capabilities already in place in New York and Washington on 9/11 is unknown.

Shortly Before May 26, 1998: US Fails to Exploit Advance Notice of Bin Laden’s Only Press Conference



Hamid Mir interviewing Osama bin Laden shortly after 9/11. [*Source: Corbis*] In early May 1998, Pakistani journalist Hamid Mir interviews bin Laden in Kandahar, Afghanistan. During the interview, bin Laden tells Mir that he will be holding a press conference soon and invites Mir to attend. Mir will later recall that bin Laden showed him a list of journalists invited. More than 22 names are on the list, including CNN reporters Peter Bergen and Peter Arnett, and an unnamed reporter from the BBC. Mir says he will not attend, explaining that he is worried the press conference will be bombed. “I think that you are inviting a lot of Pakistani journalists. No doubt I have contacts with the intelligence guys, but I am not their informer. They will go back; they will help the intelligence agencies to bomb your compound.” ([Bergen 2006, pp. 200-202](#)) The press conference will take place later in the month and while al-Qaeda’s three top leaders bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri, and Mohammed Atef attend, only three journalists show up (see [May 26, 1998](#)). Presumably the press conference presents a rare opportunity to take out al-Qaeda’s top leadership in one fell swoop, perhaps as they are coming or going to it, but there is no known debate by US officials or officials in other countries about ways to take advantage of this gathering. The 9/11 Commission’s final report will not mention the press conference at all.

May 26, 1998: Bin Laden Promises to Bring Jihad to US



Top: Bin Laden, surrounded by security, walking to the press conference. Bottom: the three journalists attending the press conference sit next to bin Laden. [Source: CNN] Bin Laden discusses “bringing the war home to America,” in a press conference from Khost, Afghanistan. ([US Congress 9/18/2002](#)) Bin Laden holds his first and only press conference to help publicize the fatwa he published several months before. Referring to the group that signed the fatwa, he says, “By God’s grace, we have formed with many other Islamic groups and organizations in the Islamic world a front called the International Islamic Front to do jihad against the crusaders and Jews.” He adds later, “And by God’s grace, the men... are going to have a successful result in killing Americans and getting rid of them.” ([Robertson 8/20/2002](#)) He also indicates the results of his jihad will be “visible” within weeks. ([US Congress 7/24/2003](#)) Two US embassies will be bombed in August (see [August 7, 1998](#)). Bin Laden sits next to Ayman al-Zawahiri and Mohammed Atef during the press conference. Two Pakistani journalists and one Chinese journalist attends. But event never gets wide exposure because no independent videotaping is allowed (however, in 2002 CNN will obtain video footage of the press conference seized after the US conquered Afghanistan in late 2001). Pakistani journalist Ismail Khan attends and will later recall, “We were given a few instructions, you know, on how to photograph and only take a picture of Osama and the two leaders who were going to sit close by him. Nobody else.” Two sons of Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman attend and distribute what they claim is the will or fatwa of their father (see [May 1998](#)), who has been sentenced to life in prison in the US. Journalist Peter Bergen will later comment that the significance of the sons’ presence at the press conference “can’t be underestimated” because it allows bin Laden to benefit from Abdul-Rahman’s high reputation amongst radical militants. Bergen also later says the press conference is a pivotal moment for al-Qaeda. “They’re going public. They’re saying, ‘We’re having this war against the United States.’” ([Robertson](#)

[8/20/2002](#)) The specific comment by bin Laden about “bringing the war home to America” will be mentioned in the August 2001 memo given to President Bush entitled “Bin Laden Determined to Strike in US” (see [August 6, 2001](#)).

May 28, 1998: Bin Laden Wants to Use Missiles Against US Aircraft; Possibly Given Doctored Phone Battery



During his interview with John Miller, bin Laden is positioned in front of East Africa on a map and US embassies will be bombed in East Africa several months later. Bin Laden has considered it his religious duty to give warning before attacks and thus has left clues like this. [Source: CNN] In an interview with ABC News reporter John Miller, bin Laden indicates he may attack a US military passenger aircraft using antiaircraft missiles. In the subsequent media coverage, Miller repeatedly refers to bin Laden as “the world’s most dangerous terrorist,” and “the most dangerous man in the world.” ([Miller 5/28/1998](#); [Miller 6/12/1998](#); [Miller 2/1999](#); [US Congress 7/24/2003](#)) The book *The Looming Tower* by Lawrence Wright will later note, “Looming behind his head was a large map of Africa, an unremarked clue.” ([Wright 2006, pp. 264](#)) Bin Laden admits to knowing Wali Khan Amin Shah, one of the Bojinka plotters (see [June 1996](#)), but denies having met Bojinka plotter Ramzi Yousef or knowing about the plot itself. ([PBS Frontline 10/3/2002](#)) A Virginia man named Tarik Hamdi (see [March 20, 2002](#)) helped set up Miller’s interview. He goes with Miller to Afghanistan and gives bin Laden a new battery for his satellite phone (see [November 1996-Late August 1998](#)). Vincent Cannistraro, former head of the CIA’s Counter Terrorism Center, will later claim that this battery was somehow bugged to help the US monitor bin Laden. ([Isikoff and Hosenball 8/10/2005](#)) In 2005, Miller will become the FBI’s Assistant Director for the Office of Public Affairs. ([Ficara 8/24/2005](#))

May 28, 1998: Pakistan Tests Nuclear Bomb



Pakistan's first nuclear test takes place underground but shakes the mountains above it. [Source: *Associated Press*] Pakistan conducts a successful nuclear test. Former Clinton official Karl Inderfurth later notes that concerns about an Indian-Pakistani conflict, or even nuclear confrontation, compete with efforts to press Pakistan on terrorism. ([US Congress 7/24/2003](#)) Pakistan actually built its first nuclear weapon in 1987 but kept it a secret and did not test it until this time for political reasons (see [1987](#)).

May 29, 1998: Tenet Cancels Plan to Capture Bin Laden



Imagery of bin Laden's Tarnak Farms compound prepared for the aborted operation. [Source: *CBC*] In 1997 and early 1998, the US had developed a plan to capture bin Laden in Afghanistan. A CIA-owned aircraft was stationed in a nearby country, ready to land on a remote landing strip long enough to pick him up. However, problems with having to hold bin Laden too long in Afghanistan made the operation unlikely. The plan morphs into using a team of Afghan informants to kidnap bin Laden from inside his heavily defended Tarnak Farm complex. Mike Scheuer, head of the CIA's bin Laden unit, calls the plan "the perfect operation." Gary Schroen, the lead CIA officer in the field, agrees, and gives it about a 40 percent chance of succeeding. However, higher-ups at the CIA are skeptical of the plan and worry that innocent civilians might die. The plan is given to CIA Director George Tenet for approval, but on May 29, 1998, he rejects it without showing it to President Clinton. He considers it too unlikely to succeed and decides the Afghan allies are too unreliable. ([Clarke 2004, pp. 220-21](#); [Coll 2/22/2004](#); [Zeman et al. 11/2004](#)) Additionally, earlier in May the Saudis promised to try

to bribe the Taliban and try bin Laden themselves, and apparently Tenet preferred this plan (see [May 1998](#)). Scheuer is furious and after 9/11 he will complain, “We had more intelligence against this man and organization than we ever had on any other group we ever called a terrorist group, and definitive and widely varied [intelligence] across all the ends, and I could not understand why they didn’t take the chance.” ([Zeman et al. 11/2004](#)) It is later speculated that the airstrip used for these purposes is occupied and will be used as a base of operations early in the post-9/11 Afghan war. ([Gellman 12/19/2001](#))

May 29, 1998: PNAC Calls on Republican Congressional Leaders to Assert US Interests in Persian Gulf

The Project for a New American Century (PNAC) publishes a letter addressed to Congressman Newt Gingrich and Senator Trent Lott. The letter argues that the Clinton administration has capitulated to Saddam Hussein and calls on the two legislators to lead Congress to “establish and maintain a strong US military presence in the region, and be prepared to use that force to protect [US] vital interests in the Gulf—and, if necessary, to help remove Saddam from power.” ([Century 5/29/1998](#))

Summer 1998: One of Bin Laden’s Four Holy War Goals Is to Bring Down US Airliners

Bin Laden sends a fax from Afghanistan to Sheikh Omar Bakri Mohammed, a London-based Muslim imam who dubs himself the “mouth, eyes, and ears of Osama bin Laden.” Bakri publicly releases what he calls bin Laden’s four specific objectives for a holy war against the US. The instruction reads, “Bring down their airliners. Prevent the safe passage of their ships. Occupy their embassies. Force the closure of their companies and banks.” Noting this, the Los Angeles Times will wryly comment that “Bin Laden hasn’t been shy about sharing his game plan.” ([Braun et al. 10/14/2001](#)) In 2001, FBI agent Ken Williams will grow concerned about some Middle Eastern students training in Arizona flight schools. He will link several of them to Al-Muhajiroun, an extremist group founded by Bakri. Williams will quote several fatwas (calls to action) from Bakri in his later-famous July 2001 memo (see [July 10, 2001](#)). However, he apparently will not be aware of this particular call to action. These students linked to Bakri’s group apparently have no connection to any of the 9/11 hijackers. In another interview before 9/11, Bakri will boast of recruiting “kamikaze bombers ready to die for Palestine.” (see [Early September 2001](#)) ([Solomon 5/23/2002](#))

Summer 1998: KSM Travels to the US until at Least This Time

In June 2001, a CIA cable describing background information on bin Laden's associates will mention that 9/11 mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM) is regularly traveling to the US. The CIA's Renditions Branch had been looking for KSM since at least 1997. In July 2001, the source of this information will positively identify KSM's photo from a line up and clarify that the last known time KSM went to the US was in the summer of 1998 (see [June 12, 2001](#)). Presumably, KSM may have been more reluctant to travel to the US after the crackdown on al-Qaeda in the wake of the August 1998 embassy bombings (see [August 7, 1998](#)). ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 277, 533](#)) In May 1995, the FBI learned that KSM had been in the US, had a current and valid US visa, and was planning to come back to the US, possibly to take flying lessons (see [April-May 1995](#)). Additionally, KSM will receive a new US visa on July 23, 2001, though it isn't known if he ever uses it (see [July 23, 2001](#)).

Summer 1998: CIA Breaks Up Islamic Jihad Cell in Albania

A joint surveillance operation conducted by the CIA and Albanian intelligence identifies a six-man Islamic Jihad cell that is planning to bomb the US Embassy in Tirana, Albania's capital. The cell was created in the early 1990s by Mohammed al-Zawahiri. The operation intercepts lengthy discussions between the cell and al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri, who is also Mohammed al-Zawahiri's brother. ([Mayer 2/8/2005](#); [Wright 2006, pp. 269](#)) At the behest of the US government, Egypt, which has a rendition agreement with Washington (see [1995](#)), issues an arrest warrant for Shawki Salama Attiya, one of the militants in the cell. Albanian forces then arrest Attiya and four of the other suspected militants. The sixth suspect is killed. The men are taken to an abandoned airbase, then flown by a CIA-chartered plane to Cairo, Egypt, for interrogation. Attiya later alleges that he suffered electrical shocks to his genitals and was hung from his limbs. Two of the suspects, who had been sentenced to death in absentia, are hanged. On August 5, 1998, a letter by Ayman al-Zawahiri is published that threatens retaliation for the Albanian abductions (see [August 5, 1998](#)). Two US embassies in Africa are bombed two days later (see [August 7, 1998](#)). ([Chandrasekaran and Finn 3/11/2002, pp. A01](#); [Mayer 2/8/2005](#)) The US State Department will later speculate that the timing of the embassy bombings was in fact in retaliation for these arrests. ([Taylor 12/15/2001](#))

Summer-Winter 1998: Bin Al-Shibh and Alshehhi Not in Hamburg, Possibly Visiting Afghanistan

Two members of the Hamburg cell comprising some of the lead 9/11 hijackers and their associates are absent from the city for periods. Ramzi bin al-Shibh vanishes from Germany over the summer, it is unclear where he goes. Marwan Alshehhi is unaccounted for over a period of three months. Before disappearing he withdraws over \$5,000 from his bank and, while he is gone, his normally active credit card accounts are dormant. He makes no charges on them or withdrawals from ATM machines between September 3 and early December. Bin al-Shibh is again absent in the winter. Mohamed Atta is also absent

from Hamburg around the same time (see [Late 1997-Early 1998](#)). Commenting on the disappearances, author Terry McDermott will say, “Practically, there is only one place they likely would have gone—Afghanistan.” ([McDermott 2005, pp. 57](#))

June 1998: State Department Warns that Bin Laden Might Target Civilian Aircraft

The State Department warns Saudi officials that bin Laden might target civilian aircraft. Three State Department officials meet Saudi officials in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, and pass along a warning based on an interview bin Laden had just given to ABC News . In the interview, bin Laden threatened to strike in the next “few weeks” against “military passenger aircraft” and mentioned surface-to-air missiles. The State Department warns the Saudis that bin Laden does “not differentiate between those dressed in military uniforms and civilians” and there is “no specific information that indicates bin Laden is targeting civilian aircraft.” However, they add, “We could not rule out that a terrorist might take the course of least resistance and turn to a civilian [aircraft] target.” NBC News will note that the 9/11 Commission “made no mention of the memo in any of its reports... It is unknown why the [Commission] did not address the warning.” ([Shane 12/9/2005](#); [MSNBC 12/9/2005](#))

June 1998: Enron Shuts Down Uzbekistan Pipeline Project

Enron’s agreement from 1996 (see [June 24, 1996](#)) to develop natural gas with Uzbekistan is not renewed. Enron closes its office there. The reason for the “failure of Enron’s flagship project” is an inability to get the natural gas out of the region. Uzbekistan’s production is “well below capacity” and only 10 percent of its production is being exported, all to other countries in the region. The hope was to use a pipeline through Afghanistan, but “Uzbekistan is extremely concerned at the growing strength of the Taliban and its potential impact on stability in Uzbekistan, making any future cooperation on a pipeline project which benefits the Taliban unlikely.” A \$12 billion pipeline through China is being considered as one solution, but that wouldn’t be completed until the end of the next decade at the earliest. ([Alexander’s Gas & Oil Connections 10/12/1998](#))

June 1998: Saudi Benefactor Offers Funding for Mosque if Suspected Advance Man Is Retained as Building Manager

An Unknown Saudi benefactor pays a Saudi, Saad Al-Habeeb, to buy a building in San Diego, California, for a new Kurdish community mosque. However, the approximately \$500,000 will only be given on the condition that Omar al-Bayoumi be installed as the building’s maintenance manager with a private office at the mosque. After taking the job, al-Bayoumi rarely shows up for work. ([Isikoff and Thomas 11/24/2002](#); [Reno 9/2003](#))

This means he has two jobs at once. The people in the mosque eventually begin a move to replace al-Bayoumi, but he moves to Britain in July 2001 before this can happen. ([Isikoff and Thomas 11/24/2002](#)) An anonymous federal investigator states, “Al-Bayoumi came here, set everything up financially, set up the San Diego [al-Qaeda] cell and set up the mosque.” An international tax attorney notes that anyone handling business for a mosque or a church could set it up as a tax-exempt charitable organization “and it can easily be used for money laundering.” ([Gembrowski and Aryan 10/27/2001](#); [Thornton 10/22/2002](#))

June 1998: Taliban and Saudis Discuss Bin Laden

Relations between Taliban head Mullah Omar and bin Laden grow tense, and Omar discusses a secret deal with the Saudis, who have urged the Taliban to expel bin Laden from Afghanistan. Head of Saudi intelligence Prince Turki al-Faisal travels to Kandahar, Afghanistan, and brokers the deal. According to Turki, he seeks to have the Taliban turn bin Laden over to Saudi custody. Omar agrees in principle, but requests that the parties establish a joint commission to work out how bin Laden would be dealt with in accordance with Islamic law. ([Coll 2004, pp. 400-02](#)) Note that some reports of a meeting around this time—and the deal discussed—vary dramatically from Turki’s version (see [May 1996](#) and [July 1998](#)). If this version is correct, before a deal can be reached, the US strikes Afghanistan in August in retaliation for the US African embassy bombings (see [August 20, 1998](#)), driving Omar and bin Laden back together. Turki later states that “the Taliban attitude changed 180 degrees,” and that Omar is “absolutely rude” to him when he visits again in September (see [Mid-September 1998](#)). ([Whitaker 11/5/2001](#); [Reid 8/3/2002](#))

June 1998: KSM Almost Caught in Brazil; Using Exposed Bojinka Front Company as Cover

Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM) is almost caught in Brazil. Apparently, the Malaysian government discovers that KSM is in the country using an alias and an Egyptian passport, and that he has obtained a Brazilian visa. So on June 25, 1998, the US asks Brazil to help capture him. A former US official will later say, “We were fairly convinced... that he was there” in the town of Foz de Iguazu, a criminal haven that he had visited at least once before (see [December 1995](#)). ([McDermott, Meyer, and McDonnell 12/22/2002](#); [Hall 3/13/2003](#)) However, KSM gets away. Time magazine reporter Tim McGirk will later claim, “They almost nailed him in Brazil. They knew that he’d left from Malaysia to Brazil...” ([Block 3/3/2003](#)) “He had supposedly gone there to promote Konsonjaya, a Malaysian company that secretly funded Muslim rebels in Southeast Asia.” ([Gunaratna 6/1/2005](#)) Konsonjaya was the front company used for the Bojinka plot in 1995 (see [January 6, 1995](#) and [June 1994](#)), and it supposedly dealt in Sudanese honey and palm oil. ([Fineman and Paddock 2/7/2002](#); [Bokhari et al. 2/15/2003](#)) The Telegraph, in an apparent reference to Konsonjaya, will later report that KSM “acted as financier and coordinator, through another [Malaysian company] which traded Sudanese honey. He traveled widely, including at least one trip to Brazil...” ([Booth 3/2/2003](#)) The honey distribution business

had a base in Karachi, Pakistan, and employed KSM's nephew Ali Abdul Aziz Ali (a.k.a. Ammar al-Baluchi). ([US Department of Defense 4/12/2007, pp. 17](#)) It is remarkable that KSM would be connected to this company in 1998, considering that the company's records were introduced as evidence in a public trial of some Bojinka plotters in 1996. ([Fineman and Paddock 2/7/2002](#))

June 1998: Top Clinton Official Calls Bin Laden 'Most Dangerous' Terrorist

In an interview on the television program Nightline, National Security Adviser Sandy Berger says "Osama bin Laden may be the most dangerous non-state terrorist in the world." This is one of only a very few public warnings by top Clinton administration officials about bin Laden before the African embassy bombings later in the year. ([Miller, Stone, and Mitchell 2002, pp. 215](#))

June-July 1998: US Learns Bin Laden Is Considering Attacks Against Washington, New York

US intelligence obtains information from several sources that bin Laden is considering attacks in the US, including Washington and New York. This information is given to senior US officials in July 1998. ([US Congress 9/18/2002](#)) Information mentions an attack in Washington, probably against public places. US intelligence assumes that bin Laden places a high priority on conducting attacks in the US. More information about a planned al-Qaeda attack on a Washington government facility will be uncovered in the spring of 1999. ([US Congress 7/24/2003](#); [US Congress 7/24/2003](#))

June 8, 1998: Grand Jury Issues Sealed Indictment Against Bin Laden and Others

A US grand jury issues a sealed indictment, charging bin Laden and other al-Qaeda leaders with conspiracy to attack the United States. ([PBS Frontline 10/3/2002](#)) The grand jury began preparing the indictment in January 1998 (see [January 1998](#)). It is largely based on information from Jamal al-Fadl, a former al-Qaeda operative (see [June 1996-April 1997](#)). ([PBS Frontline 2001](#); [Risen 9/30/2001](#); [US Congress 7/24/2003](#)) This secret indictment will be superseded by a public one issued in November 1998 (see [November 4, 1998](#)). ([PBS Frontline 10/3/2002](#))

June 9, 1998: US Seizes Funds Connected to Hamas Operative and Al-Qadi

FBI agent Robert Wright, apparently frustrated that his Vulgar Betrayal investigation is not allowed to criminally charge Hamas operative Mohammad Salah and Saudi

multimillionaire Yassin al-Qadi, gets a court order to seize \$1.4 million in bank accounts and the Chicago house Salah owns. Wright says in the suit that the money is linked directly to al-Qadi and would be destined for terrorist activities. Wright uses a civil forfeiture law that had been frequently used to seize properties and funds of drug dealers or gangsters, but had never been used for accused terrorists. Salah had living in Chicago since his release from an Israeli prison in November 1997. A highly detailed affidavit tracks wire transfers from the US and Switzerland to specific Hamas attacks in Israel. Al-Qadi's money was deposited in bank accounts controlled by Salah, who is called an important courier and financial agent for Hamas. Then Salah invested the money in BMI Inc., a real estate investment firm with ties to many suspected terrorism financiers (see [1986-October 1999](#)). Some of the money is eventually withdrawn by Salah, brought to the West Bank, and given to Hamas operatives there (see [1989-January 1993](#)). Salah denies the charges and says all the transfers were for charitable causes. Al-Qadi also claims innocence. ([Johnston 6/14/1998](#); [Horrock 5/30/2002](#); [Guidera and Simpson 12/6/2002](#)) However, a federal judge agrees to the defendants' request for a stay order, and the suit is said to "languish" in a Chicago federal court. The funds remain frozen and Salah continues to live in his house. ([Cohen et al. 9/25/2001](#)) During the summer of 2001, the government will negotiate with Salah to settle the civil case, according to court records. ([Lighty and Cohen 8/22/2004](#)) The Justice Department will even move ahead with plans to return \$1.4 million that Wright had seized from al-Qadi. But the transfer will be set for October 2001, "and the 9/11 attacks came first, prompting wiser minds at Justice to quash the move." ([Schlussel 7/14/2004](#)) But also, in 2000, the parents of a US teenager said to have been killed by a Hamas attack in Israel will sue Salah and others for damages based on this investigation, and they will win the suit in 2004 (see [May 12, 2000-December 9, 2004](#)). The US government will finally arrest Salah in 2004, and will charge him for many of the same offenses described in this 1998 case (see [August 20, 2004](#)). As of the end of 2005, al-Qadi has not been charged of any crime.

June 23, 1998: Halliburton CEO Dick Cheney Discusses Importance of Oil Reserves in Caspian Basin

Speaking at a "Collateral Damage Conference" hosted by the Cato Institute, Halliburton CEO Dick Cheney says, "[W]e oftentimes find ourselves operating in some very difficult places. The good Lord didn't see fit to put oil and gas only where there are democratically elected regimes friendly to the United States. Occasionally we have to operate in places where, all things considered, one would not normally choose to go. But, we go where the business is." During this speech he also emphasizes the importance of the Caspian Basin. "I can't think of a time when we've had a region emerge as suddenly to become as strategically significant as the Caspian. It's almost as if the opportunities have arisen overnight," he says. ([Cheney 6/23/1998](#); [Cohn 8/10/2000](#))

Mid-1998: CIA/FBI Decline Informant's Request to Meet with Bin Laden



Aukai Collins, who has one leg, fighting with Muslim militants overseas. [Source: Publicity photo] In 1996, an American Caucasian Muslim named Aukai Collins, who has been fighting with the mujaheddin in Chechnya, successfully volunteered to become a CIA informant. ([Collins 2003, pp. 147-159](#)) At this time, Collins goes to London and meets with Abdul Malik, a politically well connected Islamist. Malik offers to set up a meeting between Collins and bin Laden in Afghanistan. Collins reports the offer to his CIA and FBI handlers. He is willing and even eager to accept the invitation, but his offer to go undercover into bin Laden's camp, even on his own responsibility and at his own expense, is flatly refused by his handlers. ([Collins 2003, pp. 175-176](#)) Collins also claims that he reports to the FBI on hijacker Hani Hanjour for six months this year as part of an assignment monitoring the Islamic and Arab communities in Phoenix between 1996 and 1999 (see [1998](#)) .

July 1998: Taliban and Saudis Meet and Purportedly Make a Deal

Taliban officials allegedly meet with Prince Turki al-Faisal, head of Saudi intelligence, to continue talks concerning the Taliban's ouster of bin Laden from Afghanistan. Reports on the location of this meeting, and the deal under discussion differ. According to some reports, including documents exposed in a later lawsuit, this meeting takes place in Kandahar. Those present include Prince Turki al-Faisal, head of Saudi Arabian intelligence, Taliban leaders, senior officers from the ISI, and bin Laden. According to these reports, Saudi Arabia agrees to give the Taliban and Pakistan "several hundred millions" of dollars, and in return, bin Laden promises no attacks against Saudi Arabia. The Saudis also agree to ensure that requests for the extradition of al-Qaeda members will be blocked and promise to block demands by other countries to close down bin Laden's Afghan training camps. Saudi Arabia had previously given money to the Taliban and bribe money to bin Laden, but this ups the ante. ([Fielding 8/25/2002](#)) A few weeks after the meeting, Prince Turki sends 400 new pickup trucks to the Taliban. At least \$200 million follow. ([Rashid 9/23/2001](#); [Lathem and Gorta 8/25/2002](#)) Controversial author Gerald Posner gives a similar account said to come from high US government officials, and adds that al-Qaeda leader Abu Zubaida also attends the meeting. ([Posner 2003, pp. 189-90](#)) Note that reports of this meeting seemingly contradict reports of a meeting the month before between Turki and the Taliban, in which the Taliban agreed to get rid of bin Laden (see [June 1998](#)).

July 1998: CIA Discovers ‘Rosetta Stone of Al-Qaeda’ but Doesn’t Share with FBI

CIA operatives kidnap Ahmad Salama Mabruk and another member of Islamic Jihad outside a restaurant in Baku, Azerbaijan. This is part of a covert CIA program to arrest Islamic Jihad operatives around the world and send them to Egypt (see [1995](#)). ([Higgins and Cullison 7/2/2002](#)) Mabruk is the closest ally of Ayman al-Zawahiri, al-Qaeda’s number two leader. Mabruk’s laptop computer turns out to contain al-Qaeda organizational charts and vital information about Islamic Jihad members in Europe. FBI agent Dan Coleman later calls this “the Rosetta Stone of al-Qaeda.” However, the CIA will not turn this information over to the FBI. John O’Neill, head of the FBI’s New York office, tries to get around this by sending an agent to Azerbaijan to get copies of the computer files from the Azerbaijani government. When that fails, he persuades President Clinton to personally appeal to the president of Azerbaijan for the files. The FBI eventually gets the files, but the incident deepens the tensions between the CIA and FBI. ([Wright 2006, pp. 268-269](#)) The US monitored 67 phone calls between bin Laden and Azerbaijan from 1996 to 1998 (see [November 1996-Late August 1998](#)). Presumably, many of these would have been to Mabruk. Mabruk is sent to Egypt and given a long prison sentence. ([Higgins and Cullison 7/2/2002](#))

July 1998-February 2000: CIA Renders Over Two Dozen Islamic Militant Operatives

In February 2000, CIA Director George Tenet testifies to Congress, “Since July 1998, working with foreign governments worldwide, we have helped to render more than two dozen terrorists to justice. More than half were associates of Osama bin Laden’s al-Qaeda organization.” Renditions are a policy of grabbing a suspect off the street of one country and taken the person to another where he was wanted for a crime or questioning without going through the normal legal and diplomatic procedures. ([Associated Press 12/27/2005](#)) The CIA had a policy of rendering Islamic Jihad suspects to Egypt since 1995 (see [1995](#)). In July 1998, the CIA discovered a laptop containing organizational charts and locations of al-Qaeda and Islamic Jihad operatives, so presumably these renditions are a direct result of that intelligence find (see [July 1998](#)).

July 7, 1998: Stolen Passport Shows Ties Between Hijackers and Spanish Terrorist Cells

Thieves snatch a passport from a car driven by a US tourist in Barcelona, Spain, which later finds its way into the hands of would-be hijacker Ramzi Bin al-Shibh. Bin al-Shibh allegedly uses the name on the passport in the summer of 2001 as he wires money to pay flight school tuition for Zacarias Moussaoui in Oklahoma. Investigators believe the movement of this passport shows connections between the 9/11 plotters in Germany and a support network in Spain, made up mostly by ethnic Syrians. “Investigators believe that

the Syrians served as deep-cover mentors, recruiters, financiers and logistics providers for the hijackers—elite backup for an elite attack team.” ([Rotella 1/14/2003](#)) Mohamed Atta twice travels to Spain in 2001, perhaps to make contact with members of this Spanish support team.

Mid-Summer 1998: MI6 and Moroccans Begin Discussions with Embassy Bombing Cell Member about Recruitment

The British intelligence service MI6 and Moroccan intelligence approach al-Qaeda operative L’Houssaine Kherchtou in an attempt to recruit him. Kherchtou is disillusioned with al-Qaeda and has been under surveillance by the Moroccans for some time. The results of the first meeting are not known, but after it Kherchtou returns to Nairobi, Kenya, where he had helped with a plot to bomb the US embassy and provided his apartment to other conspirators (see [Late 1993-Late 1994](#)), and makes contact with other cell members again in early August. He apparently does not know the precise details of the operation, but when the attack happens (see [August 7, 1998](#)), he realizes who did it. MI6 is aware that he is in Kenya and he is detained at the airport by local authorities and turned over to them. MI6 debriefs him about the embassy bombings, but this information is not immediately shared with the FBI (see [Shortly After August 7, 1998](#)), which later takes him into custody (see [Summer 2000](#)). ([Vest 6/19/2005](#))

July 29-August 7, 1998: NSA Listens to Surge of Phone Calls about Upcoming Embassy Bombings; No Warnings Are Given



Khalid al-Fawwaz. [*Source: CNN*]The NSA is monitoring phone calls between bin Laden in Afghanistan and Khalid al-Fawwaz in London, yet no action is taken after al-Fawwaz is given advanced notice of the African embassy bombings (see [August 7, 1998](#)). Al-Fawwaz, together with Ibrahim Eidaous and Adel Abdel Bary, are operating as bin Laden’s de facto international media office in London, and the NSA has listened in for two years as bin Laden called them over 200 times (see [November 1996-Late August 1998](#)). On July 29, 1998, al-Fawwaz is called from Afghanistan and told that more satellite minutes are needed because many calls are expected in the next few days. Al-Fawwaz calls a contact in the US and rush orders 400

more minutes for bin Laden's phone. A flurry of calls on bin Laden's phone ensues, though what is said has not been publicly revealed. ([Morris 9/20/2001](#)) One of bin Laden's calls to al-Fawwaz apparently concerns the embassy bombings, because on August 7 at around 4:30 a.m., less than six hours before the bombings take place, a fax taking credit for the bombings is sent to a shop near al-Fawwaz's office. The fingerprints of his associates Eidarous and Abdel Bary are later found on the fax. They fax a copy of this to the media from a post office shortly after the bombings and their fingerprints are found on that fax as well. ([Seattle Post-Intelligencer 7/13/1999](#); [O'Neill 9/19/2001](#)) Before 9/11, bin Laden's phone calls were regularly translated and analyzed in less an hour or so. It has not been explained why this surge of phone calls before the embassy bombings did not result in any new attack warnings. The three men will be arrested shortly after the embassy bombings (see [Early 1994-September 27, 1998](#)).

August 1998: CIA Warns That Arab Militants Plan to Fly Bomb-Laden Plane From Libya into WTC

A foreign intelligence agency warns the FBI's New York office that Arab militants plan to fly a bomb-laden aircraft from Libya into the World Trade Center. The FBI and the FAA do not take the threat seriously because of the state of aviation in Libya. Later, other intelligence information will connect this group to al-Qaeda. The CIA will include the same information in an intelligence report. ([Risen 9/18/2002](#); [US Congress 9/18/2002](#); [US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 97-98](#) ³¹) An FBI spokesperson later says the report "was not ignored, it was thoroughly investigated by numerous agencies" and found to be unrelated to al-Qaeda. ([Priest and Eggen 9/19/2002](#)) However, the 9/11 Congressional Inquiry will come to the conclusion that the group in fact did have ties to al-Qaeda. ([Risen 9/18/2002](#); [US Congress 7/24/2003](#) ³²)

August 1998: Germany Investigates Hamburg Al-Qaeda Cell Member



Mounir El Motassadeq. *[Source: Associated Press]*A

German inquiry into Mounir El Motassadeq, an alleged member of the Hamburg al-Qaeda cell with Mohamed Atta, begins by this time. Although Germany will not reveal details, documents show that by August 1998, Motassadeq is under surveillance. “The trail soon [leads] to most of the main [Hamburg] participants” in 9/11. Surveillance records Motassadeq and Mohammed Haydar Zammar, who had already been identified by police as a suspected extremist, as they meet at the Hamburg home of Said Bahaji, who is also under surveillance that same year. (Bahaji will soon move into an apartment with Atta and other al-Qaeda members.) German police monitor several other meetings between Motassadeq and Zammar in the following months. ([New York Times 1/18/2003](#)) Motassadeq is later convicted in August 2002 in Germany for participation in the 9/11 attacks, but his conviction is later overturned (see [March 3, 2004](#)).

August 1998-September 11, 2001: Spanish and CIA Fail to Share Spanish Surveillance with Germany



Barakat Yarkas (a.k.a. Abu Dahdah). [Source: *Associated Press*] A German newspaper will later note, “For much of the 1990s, the Spanish ran an impressive operation against a Madrid al-Qaeda cell, led by Imad Barakat Yarkas, also known as Abu Dahdah. Wiretaps on Yarkas’s phone had revealed that he was in regular contact with [Mohammed Haydar] Zammar and [Mamoun] Darkazanli.” Spanish intelligence shares this information with the CIA, but not with German intelligence. The CIA also fails to share the information with Germany. A top German intelligence official will later complain, “We simply don’t understand why they didn’t give it to us.” ([Laabs 8/13/2003](#)) Spanish intelligence monitors dozens of telephone calls between Darkazanli in Hamburg and suspected al-Qaeda operatives in Spain starting at least by August 1998. On at least four occasions, Darkazanli is monitored as he travels to Spain and visits Yarkas and Mohammed Galeb Kalaje Zouaydi (who will be arrested in Spain in 2002 on charges of being a key al-Qaeda financier (see [April 23, 2002](#))). ([Crewdson 10/19/2003](#)) For instance, at the end of January 2000, Darkazanli is monitored by Spanish intelligence as he meets with Yarkas and some other some suspected al-Qaeda figures. Because the CIA and Spanish intelligence fail to share any of this surveillance information with German intelligence, the Germans are unable to see clear links between Hamburg al-Qaeda operatives and the rest of the al-Qaeda network in Europe. ([Crewdson 11/17/2002](#)) The Spanish will continue to monitor Yarkas and those he communicates with until 9/11, and in fact, in late August 2001 one of his associates will apparently make an oblique reference to the 9/11 attacks (see [August 27, 2001](#)).

August 1998-Late-September 2001: Inexperienced Manager Heads FAA’s Boston Security Field Office

Mary Carol Turano is appointed director of the Federal Aviation Administration’s Boston Civil Aviation Security Field Office (CASFO). This is the office that oversees security at Logan Airport, from where Flights 11 and 175 depart on 9/11. Yet Turano has little experience in airport security, and has not even begun the basic training that all FAA special agents must undergo. During her tenure, according to an agent who is assigned to Logan, staff that document security violations become frustrated, as she allows violations to accumulate without taking appropriate action. After 9/11, it is revealed that she lacks the identification badge necessary for unescorted access to secure areas. An official

familiar with airport security procedures comments, “An organization does well what a commander checks, and how can you check what they do if you don’t have a ramp access badge?” Turano is subsequently reassigned. ([Associated Press 9/29/2001](#); [Brelis and Murphy 9/29/2001](#); [Thys 10/4/2001](#); [Thomas 2003, pp. 61](#)) Logan Airport’s poor record for security continues while she heads CASFO (see [1991-2000](#))(see [1997-September 1999](#)).

August 5, 1998: Threat Precedes Embassy Bombings

The Islamic Jihad, a militant group that has joined forces with al-Qaeda, issues a statement threatening to retaliate against the US for its involvement rounding up an Islamic Jihad cell in Albania (see [Summer 1998](#)). It is believed Ayman al-Zawahiri wrote the statement, which says, “We wish to inform the Americans... of preparations for a response which we hope they read with care, because we shall write it with the help of God in the language they understand.” The bombing of two US embassies in Africa follows two days later (see [August 7, 1998](#)). ([Feyerick 1/2001](#); [Wright 2006, pp. 269](#))

August 5-25, 1998: Embassy Bomber’s Arrest Points to Vital Al-Qaeda Communications Hub



Mohamed al-Owhali. [*Source: CNN*] Before and after the August 7, 1998 attack on the US embassy in Nairobi, Kenya (see [August 7, 1998](#)), a bomber involved in that attack named Mohamed al-Owhali makes a series of calls to al-Qaeda associate Ahmed al-Hada, who runs an al-Qaeda communications hub in Sana’a, Yemen. Al-Owhali, who was supposed to be martyred in the attack, is asking al-Hada for help getting out of Kenya and eventually receives \$1,000 from him. Al-Hada also receives three calls from bin Laden’s satellite phone, which is being monitored by the NSA (see [November 1996-Late August 1998](#)). Following a raid by London police, the FBI trace a fax claiming responsibility for the attack through Baku, Azerbaijan to bin Laden’s satellite phone, which leads them to the communications hub in Sana’a. Phone records for the hub direct them to al-Owhali in Nairobi. Al-Owhali has already been arrested based on a tip-off and, after the FBI interrogators realize he is lying to them, he confesses to calling the number. ([United State of America v. Usama bin Laden, et al., Day 14 3/7/2001](#); [United State of America v. Usama bin Laden, et al., Day 23 3/27/2001](#); [Burke 8/5/2001](#)) The translator during al-Owhali’s interviews is Mike Feghali, who will

later be accused of serious improprieties after 9/11 by whistleblower Sibel Edmonds (see [July-August 2001](#)). ([Federal Bureau of Investigation 9/9/1998, pp. 1-3](#)) Author Lawrence Wright will say, “This Yemeni telephone number would prove to be one of the most important pieces of information the FBI would ever discover, allowing investigators to map the links of the al-Qaeda network all across the globe.” ([Wright 2006, pp. 275-8](#)) The NSA may well already have been aware of the number since bin Laden’s monitored phone called it many times, but the US intelligence community now begins a joint effort to exploit it (see [Late August 1998](#) and [Late 1998-Early 2002](#)). Other apparently inaccurate stories about how al-Owhali was captured have been reported in the press. ([Reeve 1999, pp. 48](#))

August 5-16, 1998: Hijacker Almihdhar Calls Al-Qaeda Communications Hub Before and After US Embassy Bombings, FBI Learns of This

9/11 hijacker Khalid Almihdhar makes a series of calls to an al-Qaeda communications hub run by his father-in-law, Ahmed al-Hada. A Yemeni police official will later tell Agence France-Presse that Almihdhar “made a number of overseas calls to Ahmed al-Hada, who was then in Sana’a, before, during, and after” the African embassy bombings (see [August 7, 1998](#)). Al-Hada is involved in the embassy bombings and the US intelligence community begins joint surveillance of his phone after the bombings (see [Late August 1998](#)), although the NSA may already have been monitoring it (see [Before August 7, 1998](#)). The calls made by Almihdhar are from overseas and the FBI learns of this, presumably during the investigation into the embassy bombings (see [August 5-25, 1998](#)) ([Mounasser 2/15/2002](#)) Around this time Almihdhar is also in contact with al-Hada’s son, Samir, who is his brother-in-law, and the Yemen Times will later report that these contacts are monitored. However, it is not clear whether this is just by local authorities in Yemen, or also by US intelligence. ([Yemen Times 2/18/2002](#)) British Prime Minister Tony Blair will later say that one of the 9/11 hijackers, presumably Almihdhar, played a key role in the attacks on the US embassies in East Africa (see [October 4, 2001](#)).

Before August 7, 1998: NSA Intercepts Calls to Communications Hub Involved in Embassy Bombings

Calls are made using Osama bin Laden’s satellite telephone to an al-Qaeda communications hub in Sana’a, Yemen, which is involved in the embassy bombings (see [August 7, 1998](#)). According to MSNBC, two of the calls from bin Laden’s phone are made “days before” the bombings. The NSA is intercepting calls from bin Laden’s satellite phone at this time (see [November 1996-Late August 1998](#)) and his phone is used to make dozens of calls to the Yemen communications hub from 1996 to 1998, but it is unclear what is done with the intercepts, as the NSA is sometimes unwilling to share information with other US intelligence agencies (see [Between 1996 and August 1998](#), [December 1996](#), [Between 1996 and September 11, 2001](#), and [Before September 11, 2001](#)). ([Los Angeles Times 10/10/2001](#); [MSNBC 2/14/2002](#); [Hosenball and Klaidman](#)

[2/18/2002](#); [McDermott 9/1/2002](#)) The communications hub is run by veteran mujaheddin Ahmed al-Hada, an associate of one of the embassy bombers, Mohamed al-Owhali. Al-Owhali stays at the hub in the months before the bombing and obtains a fake passport in Yemen (see [August 5-25, 1998](#)). ([Federal Bureau of Investigation 9/9/1998](#)) The NSA continues to intercept calls to and from the hub after the embassy bombings (see [Late August 1998](#) and [August 5-25, 1998](#)).

August 7, 1998: Al-Qaeda Bombs US Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania



Bombings of the Nairobi, Kenya, US embassy (left), and the Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, US embassy (right). [*Source: Associated Press*] (click image to enlarge) Two US embassies in Africa are bombed within minutes of each other. The attack in Nairobi, Kenya, kills 213 people, including 12 US nationals, and injures more than 4,500. The attack in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, kills 11 and injures 85. The attack is blamed on al-Qaeda. ([PBS Frontline 2001](#)) The Tanzania death toll is low because, remarkably, the attack takes place on a national holiday so the US embassy there is closed. ([Miller, Stone, and Mitchell 2002, pp. 195](#)) The attack shows al-Qaeda has a capability for simultaneous attacks. A third attack against the US embassy in Uganda fails. ([Associated Press 9/25/1998](#)) In the 2002 book *The Cell*, reporters John Miller, Michael Stone, and Chris Miller will write, “What has become clear with time is that facets of the East Africa plot had been known beforehand to the FBI, the CIA, the State Department, and to Israeli and Kenyan intelligence services.... [N]o one can seriously argue that the horrors of August 7, 1998, couldn’t have been prevented.” ([Miller, Stone, and Mitchell 2002, pp. 195](#)) After 9/11, it will come to light that three of the alleged hijackers, Khalid Almihdhar, Nawaf Alhazmi, and Salem Alhazmi, had some involvement in the bombings (see [October 4, 2001](#), [Late 1999](#), and [1993-1999](#)) and that the US intelligence community was aware of this involvement by late 1999 (see [December 15-31, 1999](#)), if not before.

After August 7, 1998: Witness Tells FBI Al-Qaeda Operative Intends to Hit US Vessel in Aden

A witness questioned during the FBI’s investigation of the African embassy bombings says that al-Qaeda operative Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri intends to attack a US vessel in Aden. The USS *Cole* will be bombed in Aden harbor two years later (see [October 12, 2000](#)) and al-Nashiri, who provided a fake passport for one of the embassy bombers (see

[August 22-25 1998](#)), will be one of the managers of the operation (see [November-December 2000](#)). ([Federal Bureau of Investigation 9/9/1998](#); [Wright 7/10/2006](#))

August 8, 1998-Late 1998: US Refuses Extradition of Two Embassy Bombers

One day after the bombing of the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, Sudan arrests two suspects who just crossed the border from Kenya. They are using the names Sayyid Nazir Abbass and Sayyid Iskandar Suliman and possess Pakistani passports. They had rented an apartment overlooking the US embassy in an apparent attempt to scout it for a possible future attack. Sudanese intelligence believes they are al-Qaeda operatives, and notes they had been staying in the same Nairobi, Kenya, hotel as the plotters of the embassy bombings. Sudan offers to extradite the men to the US. The FBI wants them, but on August 17, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright forbids their extradition. Instead, three days later, the US bombs a factory in Sudan as retaliation for the embassy bombings. Within days, it becomes clear that the factory had no connection to bin Laden. Despite the bombing, a couple of months later, Sudan informs the FBI that interrogation of the two men has uncovered some interesting information, and Sudan again offers to hand them over. They also remind the FBI of the extensive files on al-Qaeda that they say they are still willing to share (see [March 8, 1996-April 1996](#); [April 5, 1997](#); [February 5, 1998](#)) The FBI wants to set up a meeting to pursue the offers, but the State Department vetoes the idea. The two men are deported to Pakistan and set free. According to Vanity Fair, the senior FBI official who has to decline the offers “expressed his deep regret for what had happened and said he hoped that in time the politicians would allow his agency to examine the Sudanese intelligence.” ([Rose 9/30/2001](#); [Rose 1/2002](#))

August 8, 1998-August 21, 1998: Ali Mohamed Interviewed and Searched in Wake of Embassy Bombings

One day after the US embassy bombings in Africa (see [August 7, 1998](#)), the FBI interview Ali Mohamed over the telephone. He says he knows who the perpetrators are, but he won't give their names to the FBI. A week later, prosecutors subpoena Mohamed to testify before a grand jury hearing in New York to be held in September. On August 21, federal agents secretly search Mohamed's home (he has recently moved from Santa Clara to Sacramento, California). They copy computer files and photograph documents. They find documents from the Nairobi al-Qaeda cell and training manuals. ([Williams and McCormick 9/21/2001](#); [Sullivan and Neff 10/21/2001](#); [Waldman 11/26/2001](#))

August 8-15, 1998: Bombing Informant Again Reveals Key Information

In November 1997, an Egyptian named Mustafa Mahmoud Said Ahmed walked into the US embassy in Nairobi, Kenya, and told CIA officers of a group planning to blow up the embassy (see [November 1997](#)). His warning would turn out to be a startlingly accurate description of the 1998 US embassy bombing in Nairobi (see [August 7, 1998](#)). Ahmed apparently is involved in the bombing of the US embassy in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, that takes place the same day the Nairobi embassy is bombed. One day after the attacks, Ahmed contacts the British embassy and offers to help. He is overheard saying, "I told them everything I knew." He also tells the British that it was "not the first time" he had cooperated with Western officials, and that he had been doing so "since last year." ([Bonner and Risen 10/23/1998](#); [Risen and Weiser 1/9/1999](#)) CIA officer Gary Bernstein will later reveal that he meets Ahmed as Ahmed is being kicked out of an allied government's embassy. Bernstein then interviews Ahmed, and while the account of the interview is almost completely censored, Ahmed apparently gives information that leads to the arrest of one of the embassy bombers in Pakistan on August 15. This is the crucial break that allows the US to conclusively determine al-Qaeda's role in the bombings and arrest some of the other bombers. ([Berntsen and Pezzullo 2005, pp. 22-25](#)) The US does not ask for Ahmed's extradition, and he is charged for the Tanzania bombing in that country. The New York Times will report, "Several non-American diplomats in the region [speculate] that the United States is allowing the Tanzanians to try Mr. Ahmed because they fear his trial in America might bring to light his dealings with American authorities and other Western intelligence services." ([Bonner and Risen 10/23/1998](#); [Risen and Weiser 1/9/1999](#)) In March 2000, Tanzania will announce that all charges against Ahmed have been dropped and he is being deported. No reason will be given. ([New York Times 3/20/2000](#))

After August 7, 1998: Operative Linked to Al-Qaeda Communications Hub in Yemen Questioned about Embassy Bombings



Samir al-Hada, who helped run an al-Qaeda communications hub in Yemen. [*Source: CNN*] Yemeni al-Qaeda operative Samir al-Hada is questioned over the embassy bombings in East Africa. A communications hub run by him and his father, Ahmed al-Hada, facilitated the attacks (see [Late August 1998](#)) and will also apparently facilitate the attack on the USS *Cole* and 9/11 (see [Before October 12, 2000](#) and [Early 2000-Summer 2001](#)). Details of the questioning, such as the agency that performs it and what results are passed to US intelligence, are not known, but the communications hub

the al-Hada family runs will subsequently be monitored and US intelligence will derive much useful information from it (see [Late 1998-Early 2002](#)) ([Standora 2/14/2002](#)) Samir al-Hada will die in an explosion in February 2002 (see [February 13, 2002](#)).

Shortly After August 7, 1998: MI6 Withholds Key Information about Embassy Bombings from FBI

After the bombings of two US embassies in East Africa (see [August 7, 1998](#)), the British intelligence service MI6 obtains some important information about the attacks, but does not share it with the FBI. MI6 obtains the information from a member of the bombing cell, L'Houssaine Kherchtou, who already has a relationship with MI6 when the attack happens (see [Mid-Summer 1998](#)). Kherchtou tries to flee Kenya after the bombing, but, tipped off by the British, local authorities detain him and hand him over to MI6. He is debriefed in Nairobi, but, although the British say they share the information with the CIA, they do not provide it to the FBI, which is investigating the bombing. FBI agent Jack Cloonan will later comment: “[W]e’ve got hundreds of agents on the ground in Kenya and Tanzania trying to figure out what happened. Let me just say it would have been real helpful if the British had told us they had one of the cell members in custody.” Kherchtou helped plan the bombings (see [Late 1993-Late 1994](#)) and is handed over to the FBI in the summer of 2000, later becoming a star prosecution witness at the trial (see [Summer 2000](#) and [September 2000](#)). ([Vest 6/19/2005](#))

After August 7, 1998: Moussaoui’s Flat Allegedly Raided After Embassy Bombings

Zacarias Moussaoui’s flat in Brixton, London, is raided after the bombing of two US embassies in East Africa (see [August 7, 1998](#)), according to a statement made by Moussaoui in a pre-trial motion. ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/2/2002](#).³⁸) There are no other reports of this and it is unclear why his flat would be raided, although there were raids in London following the embassy bombings, as bin Laden faxed a claim of responsibility to associates in the British capital (see [Early 1994-September 27, 1998](#) and [July 29-August 7, 1998](#)). In addition, Moussaoui may be linked to a man named David Courtailler, who trained at radical camps in Afghanistan and is questioned in France in the wake of the embassy bombings. Courtailler lived in London and frequented the same mosques as Moussaoui, and intelligence agencies believe Courtailler lived with Moussaoui at one point. However, Courtailler will deny ever having met him. French authorities requested a raid of Moussaoui’s previous flat in 1994, but the raid was not carried out at that time (see [1994](#)). ([Rotella and Zucchini 10/20/2001](#)) Note: the actual text of the handwritten motion by Moussaoui is, “It is not the case that my address 23 A Lambert Road was raided after the Embassy bombing in Africa.” However, this appears to be a frequent grammatical error by Moussaoui, who is not a native speaker of English. For example, he may have been intending to ask a rhetorical question, but got the words “it” and “is” in the wrong places. Moussaoui uses the same formulation—“it is not the case that”—for events which did

occur and which he seems to believe occurred, for example, “It is not the case that Mohammad Atta flew out of Miami to Madrid Spain for a week,” and, “It is not the case that Coleen Rowley, an FBI Agent in Minneapolis, sent a letter to the Congress,” so presumably he also alleges his flat was raided after the embassy bombings. ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/2/2002](#).)

August 9, 1998: Northern Alliance Stronghold Conquered by Taliban; Pipeline Project Now Looks Promising

The Northern Alliance capital of Afghanistan, Mazar-i-Sharif, is conquered by the Taliban. Military support of Pakistan’s ISI plays a large role; there is even an intercept of an ISI officer stating, “My boys and I are riding into Mazar-i-Sharif.” ([Frantz 12/8/2001](#)) This victory gives the Taliban control of 90 percent of Afghanistan, including the entire proposed pipeline route. CentGas, the consortium behind the gas pipeline that would run through Afghanistan, is now “ready to proceed. Its main partners are the American oil firm Unocal and Delta Oil of Saudi Arabia, plus Hyundai of South Korea, two Japanese companies, a Pakistani conglomerate and the Turkmen government.” However, the pipeline cannot be financed unless the government is officially recognized. “Diplomatic sources said the Taliban’s offensive was well prepared and deliberately scheduled two months ahead of the next UN meeting” where members are to decide whether the Taliban should be recognized. ([Spillius 8/13/1998](#))

August 12-25, 1998: Suspect Claims ‘Extensive Network of Al-Qaeda Sleeper Agents’ Is Planning ‘Big Attack’ Inside US

Mohamed al-Owhali is arrested and immediately begins confessing his role in the recent al-Qaeda bombing of the US embassy in Nairobi, Kenya. He reveals to the FBI what an FBI agent will later call “blue-chip” information. ([Hirschhorn 1/19/2001](#)) He reveals to prosecutor Patrick Fitzgerald and others that when he was told by a handler in Afghanistan that he would take part in an operation in Kenya, he insisted “I want to attack inside the US” instead. But his handler tells him that the Kenya attack is important because it will keep the US distracted while the real attack is being prepared. Owhali further explains to his interrogators, “We have a plan to attack the US, but we’re not ready yet. We need to hit you outside the country in a couple of places so you won’t see what is going on inside. The big attack is coming. There’s nothing you can do to stop it.” ([Locy, Johnson, and Willing 8/29/2002](#); [Wright 2006, pp. 278-279](#)) Presumably, Owhali is also the suspect at this time who “inform[s] the FBI that an extensive network of al-Qaeda ‘sleeper agents’ currently exists in the US.” It is known that counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke passes on this information to Condoleezza Rice when she begins her position as National Security Adviser in January 2001 (see [January 25, 2001](#)), but other details about this warning are not known. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 260](#)) Owhali

also reveals the telephone number of a key al-Qaeda communications hub in Yemen (see [Late August 1998](#)) and warns that an al-Qaeda attack in Yemen is being planned (see [Mid-August 1998](#)). ([Hirschhorn 1/19/2001](#))

Mid-August 1998: Clinton Authorizes Assassination of bin Laden

President Clinton signs a Memorandum of Notification, which authorizes the CIA to plan the capture of bin Laden using force. The CIA draws up detailed profiles of bin Laden's daily routines, where he sleeps, and his travel arrangements. The assassination never happens, supposedly because of inadequate intelligence. However, as one officer later says, "you can keep setting the bar higher and higher, so that nothing ever gets done." An officer who helped draw up the plans says, "We were ready to move" but "we were not allowed to do it because of this stubborn policy of risk avoidance... It is a disgrace." ([Bowden 9/16/2001](#)) Additional memoranda quickly follow that authorize the assassination of up to ten other al-Qaeda leaders, and authorize the shooting down of private aircraft containing bin Laden. ([Gellman 12/19/2001](#)) However, "These directives [lead] to nothing." ([Mayer 7/28/2003](#))

Mid-August 1998-2000: US Submarines Ready to Attack bin Laden

Within days of the US African embassy bombings, the US permanently stations two submarines, reportedly in the Indian Ocean, ready to hit al-Qaeda with cruise missiles on short notice. Missiles are fired from these subs later in the month in a failed attempt to assassinate bin Laden. Six to ten hours' advance warning is now needed to review the decision, program the cruise missiles, and have them reach their target. However, in every rare opportunity when the possibility of attacking bin Laden occurs, CIA Director Tenet says the information is not reliable enough and the attack cannot go forward. ([Gellman 12/19/2001](#); [Miller, Gerth, and van Natta 12/30/2001](#)) At some point in 2000, the submarines are withdrawn, apparently because the Navy wants to use them for other purposes. Therefore, when the unmanned Predator spy plane flies over Afghanistan in late 2000 and identifies bin Laden, there is no way to capitalize on that opportunity. ([Clarke 2004, pp. 220-21](#)) The Bush administration fails to resume the submarine patrol. Lacking any means to attack bin Laden, military plans to strike at him are no longer updated after March 2001. ([9/11 Commission 3/24/2004](#))

Mid-August 1998: Al-Qaeda Operative Tells FBI about Planned Yemen Attack

Mohamed al-Owhali is arrested and immediately begins confessing to FBI investigators his role in the recent al-Qaeda bombing of the US embassy in Nairobi, Kenya (see [August 7, 1998](#)). In addition to revealing the existence of an al-Qaeda network in the US

planning an attack there ([August 12-25, 1998](#)) and also revealing the phone number of a key al-Qaeda communications hub in Yemen (see [Late August 1998](#)), it appears he also reveals al-Qaeda plans for an attack in Yemen. In October 2000, Al-Qaeda operatives bombed the USS *Cole* in a port in Yemen (see [October 12, 2000](#)). In January 2001, in coverage of al-Owhali's trial for his role in the embassy bombings, a court document mentions that during his interrogation he mentioned "a possible attack in Yemen." ([Hirschhorn 1/19/2001](#)) However, one newspaper notes, "It could not be learned how the authorities followed up on the information or how detailed it was." ([Weiser 1/18/2001](#)) It will later be revealed that al-Owhali identified the two leaders of the *Cole* bombing as participants in the planning for the US embassy bombings. ([Hirschhorn 10/16/2001](#))

(Mid-August 1998): Al-Qaeda Leader Calls Yemen to Discuss Ship-Bombing Operation

After the East African embassy bombings, al-Qaeda leader Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri calls a number in Yemen to discuss attacking a US warship. Al-Nashiri will go on to have a prominent role in the attacks against the USS *The Sullivans* (see [January 3, 2000](#)) and USS *Cole* (see [October 12, 2000](#)) in Yemen. US authorities learn of this call no later than December 2000, although it is not clear how they do so. ([CNN 12/20/2000](#)) The number called by al-Nashiri is not disclosed by the media, but some of al-Nashiri's associates lived at an al-Qaeda communications hub in Sana'a, Yemen, which began to be monitored by US authorities around this time (see [Late 1998-Early 2002](#) and January 5-8, 2000).

Mid-August 1998-October 2000: Al-Qaeda Operatives Use Monitored Yemen Communications Hub to Coordinate *Cole* Bombing

Al-Qaeda operatives use a communications hub in Sana'a, Yemen, to "put everything together" before the bombing of the USS *Cole*. The communications hub is run by Ahmed al-Hada, who US officials will later describe as "a prominent al-Qaeda member who is believed to have been involved in the *Cole* bombing." The hub is monitored by US intelligence from 1998, at least, (see [Late August 1998](#)) and information gleaned from it is used to thwart a number of plots (see [Late 1998-Early 2002](#)). The US monitors the house through bugs planted inside and through spy satellites to monitor people leaving and entering it. The hub was also used before the 1998 embassy bombings and will be used to communicate with the 9/11 hijackers before 9/11 (see [Early 2000-Summer 2001](#)). ([MSNBC 2/14/2002](#); [Wigmore 6/9/2002](#); [Windrem 5/2005](#)) When the FBI arrives in Yemen to investigate the bombing, it finds that "telephone records show[...] that suspects in the *Cole* bombing had been in touch with suspects from the 1998 embassy bombings in Kenya." ([Miller, Stone, and Mitchell 2002, pp. 238](#)) Calls between the hub and an al-Qaeda cell in Ireland that seems to have a connection to the *Cole* bombing are also intercepted during part of this period (see [Late December 1999-October 12, 2000](#)). It is unclear why the information does not allow the NSA to thwart the plot. Despite the scope

of the monitoring, NSA Director Michael Hayden will later say there were no intercepts the NSA could have exploited to stop the bombing: “When the *Cole* disaster took place I had brought to my desk in, in this office, every stitch of NSA reporting on the—that could in any way be related to this. And I went thought it report by report and I sent a letter out to our entire work force, which was essentially, you performed well. Keep up the good work.” ([Martin 6/19/2002](#))

August 20, 1998: US Fires on Al-Qaeda’s Afghan Training Camps, Sudanese Facility



El Shifa Plant in Sudan. [*Source: US government*] The US fires 66 missiles at six al-Qaeda training camps in Afghanistan and 13 missiles at a pharmaceutical factory in Khartoum, Sudan, in retaliation for the US embassy bombings. ([Gellman 10/3/2001](#)) The US insists the attacks are aimed at terrorists “not supported by any state,” despite obvious evidence to the contrary. The Sudanese factory is hit in the middle of the night when it is unoccupied. Between six and 30 people are killed in the Afghanistan attacks. But no important al-Qaeda figures die. ([Hirst 8/23/1998](#); [Weaver 1/24/2000](#); [Wright 2006, pp. 285](#)) At least one of the missiles accidentally landed inside Pakistan and Pakistan may have been able to build their own cruise missile from examining the remains. There are additional reports that bin Laden was able to sell unexploded missiles to China for more than \$10 million. ([Wright 2006, pp. 285](#))

August 20, 1998: ISI Alerts Bin Laden and Taliban to US Missile Strike

Hours before the US missile strike meant to assassinate bin Laden, he is warned that his satellite phone is being used to track his location and he turns it off. A former CIA official later alleges the warning came from supporters working for Pakistani intelligence, the ISI. ([Reeve 1999, pp. 201-202](#)) It has been claimed that a tracking beacon was placed in bin Laden’s phone when a replacement battery was brought to him in May 1998 (see [May 28, 1998](#)). The US military only gave Pakistan about ten minutes’ advance notice that cruise missiles were entering their air space on their way to Afghanistan. This was done to make sure the missiles wouldn’t be misidentified and shot down. ([Weaver 1/24/2000](#)) But Pakistan was apparently aware several hours earlier, as soon as the missiles were launched. Counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke later claims he was promised by the Navy that it would fire their missiles from below the ocean surface. However, in fact,

many destroyers fired their missiles from the surface. ([Clarke 2004, pp. 188-89](#)) He adds, “not only did they use surface ships—they brought additional ones in, because every captain wants to be able to say he fired the cruise missile.” ([Mayer 7/28/2003](#)) As a result, the ISI had many hours to alert bin Laden. Clarke says he believes that “if the [ISI] wanted to capture bin Laden or tell us where he was, they could have done so with little effort. They did not cooperate with us because ISI saw al-Qaeda as helpful in pressuring India, particularly in Kashmir.” ([Clarke 2004, pp. 188-89](#)) Furthermore, bin Laden cancels a meeting with other al-Qaeda leaders after finding out that 180 US diplomats were being immediately withdrawn from Pakistan on a chartered plane. Thanks to these warnings, he is hundreds of miles away from his training camps when the missiles hit some hours later (see [August 20, 1998](#)). ([Reeve 1999, pp. 202](#)) In 1999 the US will intercept communications suggesting that Hamid Gul, ISI Director in the early 1990’s, played a role in forewarning the Taliban about the missile strike which may even have predated the firing of the cruise missiles (see [July 1999](#)).

August 20, 1998-1999: US Pressure on Persian Gulf Governments Fails to Impact Funding of Al-Qaeda

On August 20, 1998, President Clinton signs an Executive Order imposing sanctions against bin Laden and al-Qaeda. The order gives US officials the power to block accounts and impose sanctions on any government, organization, or person providing “material assistance” to al-Qaeda. Beginning in 1999, mid-level US officials travel to Saudi Arabia and a number of Persian Gulf countries seeking information about charities supporting al-Qaeda and attempting to put pressure on governments allowing such charities to operate (see [June 1999](#)). But these governments provide little to no assistance. The New York Times claims that by the end of 1999, “with the [US] embassy bombings receding into memory, the [Clinton] administration largely moved on. ‘These visits were not followed up by senior-level intervention by the State Department, or for that matter by Treasury, to those governments,’ [says] Stuart Eizenstadt, a Treasury official and a participant in the trips. ‘I think that was interpreted by those governments as meaning this was not the highest priority.’” William Wechsler, one US official involved in these efforts, will later claim, “We had only marginal successes.” He will cite the United Arab Emirates imposing money laundering laws for the first time in 1999 and efforts to ban flights by Ariana, the Afghan national airline (see [November 14, 1999](#); [January 19, 2001](#)), as the main successes. Counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke later notes that the Saudis promised information and support, but in the end gave little of either. He will claim that they “protested our focus on continuing contacts between Osama and his wealthy, influential family, who were supposed to have broken all ties with him years before. ‘How can we tell a mother not to call her son?’ they asked.” The New York Times concludes that by 9/11, “the assault on al-Qaeda’s finances had largely fallen by the wayside.” ([Weiner and Johnston 9/20/2001](#); [Eichenwald 12/10/2001](#); [Clarke 2004, pp. 190-195](#))

August 22, 1998: Mullah Omar Calls State Department and Expresses Interest in Confidential Dialogue



State Department official Michael Malinowski. [Source: Reuters / Corbis] Two days after the US missile strikes on militant training camps in Afghanistan (see [August 20, 1998](#)), top Taliban leader Mullah Omar unexpectedly telephones the State Department in Washington. He talks to Michael Malinowski, office director for Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh in the Bureau of South Asian Affairs. Although Mullah Omar does not threaten the US, he suggests that the missile strikes could spark more terrorist attacks. He says the Taliban is open to the idea of establishing a secure communication channel with US officials, possibly through the US embassy in Pakistan (there is no embassy in Afghanistan). The State Department comments, “Omar’s contact with a US official is rather remarkable, given his reclusive nature and his past avoidance of contact with all things American.” ([US Department of State 8/23/1998](#); [US Department of State 1/14/2002](#)) The US then sends the Taliban some evidence of bin Laden’s militant activities (see [August 23, 1998](#)), but it appears the secure communications channel never materializes.

Shortly After August 20, 1998: Pakistani Army Secretly Hides Bin Laden to Help Taliban

In the wake of the US missile strike on Afghanistan (see [August 20, 1998](#)), the Taliban is under intense pressure to turn over bin Laden or face further attacks. Several days later, top Taliban leader Mullah Omar announces that he does not know where bin Laden is, except that he is no longer in Afghanistan. Journalist Kathy Gannon will later claim that the Pakistan army secretly gave bin Laden sanctuary in Pakistan at this time to ease US pressure on the Taliban. Taliban fighters traveling with bin Laden will later tell Gannon about a convoy of around 20 vehicles that brought bin Laden to Chirat, a commando training base in northwest Pakistan. He stayed there with his bodyguards and some senior Taliban leaders for several weeks. Gannon will later comment, “Mullah Omar needed some breathing space and Pakistan provided it.” ([Gannon 2005, pp. 163-164](#))

August 22, 1998: Leading London-based Radical Reveals Deal with British Authorities

When asked why militant Islamic groups based in London never attack in Britain, leading cleric Omar Bakri Mohammed says that he has a deal with the British government: “I work here in accordance with the covenant of peace which I made with the British government when I got [political] asylum... We respect the terms of this bond as Allah orders us to do.” ([Ulph 2/26/2004](#)) Bakri will confirm this in a later interview: “The British government knows who we are. MI5 has interrogated us many times. I think now we have something called public immunity.” ([Feldner 10/24/2001](#))

August 22-25 1998: Bomber Identifies Photo of Al-Qaeda Commander

After he is arrested for the Nairobi embassy bombing (see [August 7, 1998](#)), Mohamed al-Owhali is questioned by local Kenyan law enforcement and the FBI, and discloses important information (see [August 5-25, 1998](#)). When he is shown photographs of al-Qaeda operatives, one of the people he identifies is Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri (a.k.a. Bilal), a cousin of another Nairobi bomber. Al-Nashiri is an al-Qaeda commander who helped al-Owhali obtain a false passport in Yemen when al-Owhali stayed at an al-Qaeda safe house in April-May 1998. It is unclear where the FBI obtained the photo of al-Nashiri, although US intelligence was previously informed of al-Nashiri’s involvement in a plot to smuggle anti-tank missiles into Saudi Arabia (see [1997](#)). ([Federal Bureau of Investigation 9/9/1998, pp. 16](#) ^{١٦}; [United State of America v. Usama bin Laden, et al., Day 14 3/7/2001](#); [Burke 2004, pp. 174](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 152-3](#))

August 23, 1998: US Warns Taliban of Bin Laden’s Activities but Fails to Provide Detailed Evidence

After being asked by Taliban leader Mullah Omar (see [August 22, 1998](#)), the US sends the Taliban a cable about bin Laden’s activities. The cable states, “We have detailed and solid evidence that Osama bin Laden has been engaged and is still engaged in planning, organizing, and funding acts of international terror.” However, the sections on the various plots in which bin Laden is supposed to have been involved are brief and do not include supporting evidence. For example, the Yemen bombing in 1992 (see [December 29, 1992](#)) is described in a single sentence: “Bin Laden and his network conspired to kill US servicemen in Yemen who were on their way to participate in the humanitarian mission ‘Operation Restore Hope’ in Somalia in 1992.” ([US Department of State 8/23/1998](#) ^{١٨}) Afghanistan’s supreme court will later acquit bin Laden of his involvement in the 1998 embassy bombings (see [October 25-November 20, 1998](#)) because of the US’s refusal to provide the court with the requested evidence.

August 24, 1998: Bombed Training Camps Were Built by US and Allies



A satellite image of the Zhawar Kili training camp in Afghanistan, taken shortly before it was hit by a US missile strike in August, 1998. [Source: *Corbis*] (click image to enlarge) The New York Times reports that the training camps recently attacked by the US in Afghanistan were built by the US and its allies, years before. The US and Saudi Arabia gave the Afghans between \$6 billion and \$40 billion to fight the Soviets in the 1980s (see [December 8, 1979](#)). Many of the people targeted by the missile attacks were trained and equipped by the CIA years before. ([Weiner 8/24/1998](#))

Late August 1998: US Intelligence Community Begins Joint Surveillance of Al-Qaeda Communications Hub

The investigation of the East Africa embassy bombings (see [August 7, 1998](#)) led to the discovery of the phone number of an al-Qaeda communications hub in Sana'a, Yemen (see [August 5-25, 1998](#)). The hub is run by an al-Qaeda veteran named Ahmed al-Hada, who is helped by his son Samir and is related to many other al-Qaeda operatives in Yemen and elsewhere. He is also the father in law of 9/11 hijacker Khalid Almihdhar, whose wife, Hoda al-Hada, lives at the hub with their children. ([Isikoff and Klaidman 6/2/2002](#); [Schrom 10/1/2002](#); [Myers 7/21/2004](#); [Suskind 2006, pp. 94](#); [Wright 2006, pp. 277, 309, 343, 378](#)) Several of Ahmed al-Hada's relatives die fighting for al-Qaeda before 9/11, a fact known to US intelligence. ([Meyer 12/21/2005](#); [al-Haj 2/15/2006](#)) The NSA may already be aware of the phone number, as they have been intercepting bin Laden's communications for some time (see [November 1996-Late August 1998](#)) and, according to Newsweek, "some" of bin Laden's 221 calls to Yemen are to this phone number. ([Hosenball and Klaidman 2/18/2002](#); [Fielding and Gadhery 3/24/2002](#); [O'Connor 9/5/2006](#)) The US intelligence community now begins a joint effort to monitor the number. The NSA and CIA jointly plant bugs inside the house, tap the phones, and monitor visitors with spy satellites. ([Wigmore 6/9/2002](#); [Wright 2006, pp. 343](#); [Wright 7/10/2006](#)) US intelligence also learns that the communications hub is an al-Qaeda "logistics center," used by agents around the world to communicate with each other and plan attacks. ([Isikoff and Klaidman 6/2/2002](#)) The joint effort enables the FBI to map al-Qaeda's global organization (see [Late 1998-Early 2002](#)) and at least three of the hijackers use the number, enabling the NSA to intercept their communications and find out about an important al-Qaeda meeting in Malaysia (see [December 29, 1999](#) and January 5-8, 2000 and [Early 2000-Summer 2001](#)). It appears al-Qaeda continues to use this phone line until Samir al-Hada dies resisting arrest in early 2002 (see [February 13, 2002](#)).

August 27, 1998: Clarke's Delenda Plan to Combat Al-Qaeda Is Prepared

Following the cruise missile attack on al-Qaeda targets on August 20 (see [August 20, 1998](#)), immediate plans are made for follow up attacks to make sure bin Laden is killed. However, on this day, Defense Secretary William Cohen is advised that available targets are not promising. Some question the use of expensive missiles to hit very primitive training camps, and there is the concern that if bin Laden is not killed, his stature will only grow further. As discussions continue, counterterrorism "tsar" Richard Clarke prepares a plan he calls "Delenda," which means "to destroy" in Latin. His idea is to have regular, small strikes in Afghanistan whenever the intelligence warrants it. The plan is rejected. Counterterrorism officials in the Defense Secretary's office independently create a similar plan, but it too is rejected. ([9/11 Commission 3/24/2004](#)) The Delenda Plan also calls for diplomacy against the Taliban, covert action focused in Afghanistan, and financial measures to freeze bin Laden-related funds. These aspects are not formally adopted, but they guide future efforts. ([9/11 Commission 3/24/2004](#))

Late August 1998: NSA Defies Order to Share Raw Intelligence with Other Agencies

According to Michael Scheuer, head of the CIA's bin Laden unit from 1996 to 1999, information collected by the NSA can be shared with other US intelligence agencies in two ways: verbatim transcripts and summaries. Scheuer will claim that verbatim transcripts are more useful, especially since summaries are rarely done in a timely manner. From the establishment of the bin Laden unit in February 1996, Scheuer asked the NSA for transcripts of al-Qaeda surveillance, but in every instance his unit was only given summaries. Other senior CIA officers have the same problem. In August 1998, after the US embassy bombings in Africa, senior CIA managers ask the bin Laden unit what the unit needs most to improve their capabilities against al-Qaeda. Scheuer will claim he again raises what he will call a "dire need for verbatim reports derived from electronic collection." Higher officials order the NSA to comply, and they do, but only for less than twelve requests. Then the system returns to the way it was, with NSA only sharing summaries. Apparently the problem will not be fixed before 9/11. ([Atlantic Monthly 12/2004](#))

Late August 1998: Bin Laden Stops Using His Satellite Phone, Reason Unclear

Bin Laden's satellite phone is being monitored by US intelligence at the time of the US embassy bombings in early August 1998 (see [November 1996-Late August 1998](#) and [August 7, 1998](#)). On August 21, 1998, an article in the Washington Times says of bin Laden, "He keeps in touch with the world via computers and satellite phones..." The Washington Post will later note, "The information in the article does not appear to be

based on any government leak and made no reference to government surveillance of bin Laden's phone." However, it will become widely believed that this article causes bin Laden to stop using his satellite phone, which is being secretly monitored by the US (see [November 1996-Late August 1998](#)). ([Kessler 12/20/2005](#)) For instance, the 9/11 Commission will later blame this article and President Bush will repeat the story in late 2005. However, bin Laden's use of a satellite phone was already widely publicized. For instance, in December 1996, Time magazine noted that bin Laden "uses satellite phones to contact fellow Islamic militants in Europe, the Middle East, and Africa." In 1997, bin Laden actually talked in a CNN interview about his use of satellite phones. It is only on September 7, 1998, after bin Laden apparently stopped using his phone, that the Los Angeles Times is the first newspaper to mention that the US is monitoring his calls. The article says that US authorities "used their communications intercept capacity to pick up calls placed by bin Laden on his Inmarsat satellite phone, despite his apparent use of electronic 'scramblers.'" ([Kessler 12/22/2005](#)) One possible explanation is that bin Laden stops using his phone after the August 1998 missile strike aimed at him (see [August 20, 1998](#)) for fear that the phone was used as a homing device for the missiles. The phone was in fact used as a homing device, and Defense Secretary William Cohen publicly acknowledged this by early 2001. The missile strike took place just one day before the Washington Times article. ([Daly 2/21/2001](#)) In 1998, a US man named Tarik Hamdi delivered a new battery for bin Laden's phone. A former head of the CIA's Counter Terrorism Center has stated that the battery was somehow bugged to improve US monitoring of bin Laden (see [May 28, 1998](#)).

Late August 1998: CIA Learns KSM Involved in Embassy Bombings



KSM's name is not included in this US wanted poster of embassy bombing suspects. The names included are: Mustafa Mohammed Fadhil, Khalfan Khamis Mohamed, Ahmed Khalfan Ghailani, Fahid Mohammed Ally Msalam, and Sheikh Ahmed Salim Swedan. [Source: *US State*

Department] According the 9/11 Congressional Inquiry, shortly after the bombing of the US embassy in Nairobi, Kenya (see [August 7, 1998](#)), a foreign government sends the CIA a list of individuals who flew into Nairobi before the attack. The CIA recognizes that one of the names is an alias for Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM). The report that identified this alias also describes KSM as being close to bin Laden. Yet the 9/11 Commission will fail to mention KSM's role in the embassy bombings and instead will suggest that KSM is not yet a member of al-Qaeda at this time and only joined al-Qaeda after being impressed by the results of the embassy bombings. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 149-150](#))

Late August 1998: CIA Learns That KSM Was Involved in the African Embassy Bombings

A foreign government sends the CIA a list of the names of individuals who flew into Nairobi before the al-Qaeda attack on the US embassy there (see [August 7, 1998](#)). Based on information from another agency, the CIA recognizes one of the passenger's names as an alias for Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM). The other agency also describes KSM as being close to bin Laden. This information is given to the FBI and other US intelligence agencies. However, the 9/11 Commission claims that such information does not generate an aggressive investigative response. ([US Congress 7/24/2003](#))

Late August 1998: Al-Qaeda Planning US Attack, but Not Yet Ready

The FBI learns that al-Qaeda is planning an attack on the US, but "things are not ready yet. We don't have everything prepared," according to a captured member of the al-Qaeda cell that bombed the US embassy in Kenya. ([Locy, Johnson, and Willing 8/29/2002](#))

Late August 1998-2001: US Intelligence Steadily Collects List of Potential Bombing Targets in Afghanistan

In response to the 1998 US embassy bombings (see [August 7, 1998](#)), an interagency US intelligence team is created to identify potential bombing targets in Afghanistan. The team continues to work steadily. By 2001, it will have a comprehensive list of potential bombing targets in the country. This list will be turned over the US military after 9/11 and used during the bombing campaign beginning in October 2001 (see [October 7, 2001](#)). ([Risen 2006, pp. 154](#))

Late August 1998-November 2000: Top Clinton Officials Regularly Meet to Discuss Terrorism



Al Gore (close left) and Bill Clinton (close right), in a Small Group meeting. Sitting at the table between them, from left to right, are George Tenet, Henry Shelton, William Cohen, and Sandy Berger.

[Source: CBC] (click image to enlarge) In the wake of the embassy bombings (see [August 7, 1998](#)), top Clinton officials begin frequently meeting to discuss terrorism and continue to do so through the rest of Clinton's term. What is called the "Small Group" of cabinet-ranked principals involved in national security meets almost every week on terrorism. The lower level interagency Counterterrorism Security Group led by counterterrorism "tsar" Richard Clarke regularly meets two or three times a week. National Security Advisor Sandy Berger will later say, "From August 1998, bin Laden was Enemy No. 1." However, terrorism still has to compete with other issues. For instance, US diplomats are reluctant to press Pakistan to do more on terrorism because of other competing diplomatic issues with Pakistan. The Bush administration by contrast will only hold two cabinet-level meetings on terrorism during the nine-month period spanning from January 2001 to September 11 (see [September 4, 2001](#)). (Miller, Gerth, and van Natta [12/30/2001](#))

Autumn 1998: Rumors of Bin Laden Plot Involving Aircraft in New York and Washington Surface Again

US intelligence hears of a bin Laden plot involving aircraft in the New York and Washington areas. ([US Congress 9/18/2002](#); [Risen 9/18/2002](#)) In December it will learn that al-Qaeda plans to hijack US aircraft are proceeding well and that two individuals have successfully evaded checkpoints in a dry run at a New York airport. ([US Congress 7/24/2003](#))

Autumn 1998: US Intelligence Aware of 'Unholy Alliance' between ISI, Taliban, and Al-Qaeda

By this time, US intelligence has documented many links between the Pakistani ISI, Taliban, and al-Qaeda. It is discovered that the ISI maintains about eight stations inside Afghanistan which are staffed by active or retired ISI officers. The CIA has learned that ISI officers at about the colonel level regularly meet with bin Laden or his associates to coordinate access to al-Qaeda training camps in Afghanistan. The CIA suspects that the ISI is giving money and/or equipment to bin Laden, but they find no evidence of direct ISI involvement in al-Qaeda's overseas attacks. The ISI generally uses the training camps

to train operatives to fight a guerrilla war in the disputed Indian province of Kashmir. But while these ISI officers are following Pakistani policy in a broad sense, the CIA believes the ISI has little direct control over them. One senior Clinton administration official will later state that it was “assumed that those ISI individuals were perhaps profiteering, engaged in the drug running, the arms running.” One US official aware of CIA reporting at this time later comments that Clinton’s senior policy team saw “an incredibly unholy alliance that was not only supporting all the terrorism that would be directed against us” but also threatening “to provoke a nuclear war in Kashmir.” ([Coll 2004, pp. 439-440](#))

September 1998: Bin Laden’s Next Operations May Involve Crashing Airplane into US Airport

US intelligence uncovers information that bin Laden’s next operation could possibly involve crashing an aircraft loaded with explosives into a US airport. This information is provided to senior US officials. ([US Congress 9/18/2002](#); [Priest and Eggen 9/19/2002](#))

September 1998: Memo Outlines Al-Qaeda’s US Infrastructure

US intelligence authors a memorandum detailing al-Qaeda’s infrastructure in the US. This memo, which includes information regarding al-Qaeda’s use of fronts for terrorist activities ([US Congress 9/18/2002](#)), is provided to senior US officials. ([US Congress 7/24/2003, pp. 51](#))

September 1998-July 1999: FBI Conducts Inquiry of Suspected Al-Qaeda Advance Man



Omar al-Bayoumi. [*Source: Saudi Government via Al Arabiya*]The FBI conducts a counterterrorism inquiry on Omar al-Bayoumi, suspected al-Qaeda advance man, and possible Saudi agent. The FBI discovers he has been in contact with several people also under investigation. ([US Congress 7/24/2003](#)) The FBI is given a tip that he was sent a suspicious package filled with wire from the Middle East, and that large numbers of Arab men routinely meet in his apartment. His

landlord notices that he switches from driving a beat up old car to a new Mercedes. ([Isikoff and Klaidman 7/28/2003](#)) According to the 9/11 Congressional Inquiry, the FBI notes that al-Bayoumi has “access to seemingly unlimited funding from Saudi Arabia.” For instance, an FBI source identifies him as a person who has delivered about \$500,000 from Saudi Arabia to buy a mosque in June 1998 (see [June 1998](#)). However, the FBI closes the inquiry “for reasons that remain unclear.” ([US Congress 7/24/2003](#)) Also in 1999, al-Bayoumi is working as an employee of the Saudi company Dallah Avco but apparently is doing no work. Someone in the company tries to fire him and sends a note to the Saudi government about this, since the company is so closely tied to the government. However, Mohammed Ahmed al-Salmi, the Director General of Civil Aviation, replies that it is “extremely urgent” his job is renewed “as quickly as possible,” and so he keeps his job. ([Simpson 8/11/2003](#))

September 1998-January 1999: US Fails to Capture KSM Again as He Makes Second Attempt to Assassinate Pope

9/11 mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM) lived in the Philippines for much of 1994 and took part in the failed Bojinka plot to assassinate Pope John Paul II and crash a dozen airplanes (see [January 6, 1995](#)). In the years after this, he makes repeated visits to the Philippines, as well as neighboring Malaysia. ([McDermott 9/1/2002](#)) KSM returns to the Philippines in September 1998 and stays to organize the assassination of Pope John Paul II, who is due to visit the country in January 1999. KSM is seen at a nightclub in Manila in early 1999. ([Gunaratna 2003, pp. xxv](#)) But the Pope’s visit is canceled; it isn’t known if the cancellation is due to security concerns or not. That same year, the FBI alerts Philippine intelligence that KSM has returned to that country to visit an old girlfriend. However, he disappears before agents arrive to arrest him. Further details on how he was traced there or how he got away have not been made public. ([McDermott 9/1/2002](#); [Fielding 11/10/2002](#)) KSM will continue to return to the Philippines occasionally. There are even “credible reports” that he is seen there in the summer of 2002. ([McDermott 9/1/2002](#); [Rubin and Dorgan 9/9/2002](#))

Late 1998: FBI Asks NSA to Pass on All Calls between Al-Qaeda Yemen Hub and US

The FBI asks the NSA to pass on all calls between an al-Qaeda communications hub in Yemen and the US. The hub, which is run by an operative named Ahmed al-Hada and was involved in the attacks on US embassies in East Africa (see [Late August 1998](#)), is a key al-Qaeda logistics center and intelligence gleaned from listening in on calls to and from it will help prevent some attacks (see [August 5-25, 1998](#) and [Late 1998-Early 2002](#)). Dan Coleman, one of the FBI agents who places the request, will say, “anyone who called the Yemen number is white-hot, a top suspect.” However, the NSA will not inform the FBI of all calls between the hub and the US. ([Suskind 2006, pp. 94](#)) In particular, two 9/11 hijackers will call the hub while they are in the US (see [Early 2000-](#)

[Summer 2001](#)). However, the information will be withheld from the FBI and various explanations will be offered for this failure (see [\(Spring 2000\)](#), [Summer 2002-Summer 2004](#), and [2004 and After](#)).

September 10, 1998: Ali Mohamed Secretly Arrested Despite Failure to Share Information Between US Agencies



Patrick Fitzgerald [*Source: Publicity photo*] Ali Mohamed is finally arrested after testifying at a grand jury hearing. The arrest is officially kept secret, but the media will report it one month later. ([Weiser 10/30/1998](#)) Patrick Fitzgerald is on the prosecutor team that subpoenaed Mohamed to appear, but apparently he and the other prosecutors know very little about Mohamed. Fitzgerald blames this on a legal “wall” between intelligence gathering and criminal prosecution. He later will relate what happened on the day Mohamed testified: “Ali Mohamed lied in that grand jury proceeding and left the courthouse to go to his hotel, followed by FBI agents, but not under arrest. He had imminent plans to fly to Egypt. It was believed [by the prosecutors] at the time that Mohamed lied and that he was involved with the al-Qaeda network but Mohamed had not by then been tied to the [embassy] bombings. The decision had to be made at that moment whether to charge Mohamed with false statements. If not, Mohamed would leave the country. That difficult decision had to be made without knowing or reviewing the intelligence information on the other side of the ‘wall.’ It was ultimately decided to arrest Mohamed that night in his hotel room [and he was arrested]. [The prosecution] team got lucky but we never should have had to rely on luck. The prosecution team later obtained access to the intelligence information, including documents obtained from an earlier search of Mohamed’s home by the intelligence team on the other side of ‘the wall.’ Those documents included direct written communications with al-Qaeda members and a library of al-Qaeda training materials that would have made the decision far less difficult. (We could only obtain that access after the arrest with the specific permission of the Attorney General of the United States, based upon the fact that we had obligations to provide the defendant with discovery materials and because the intelligence investigation of Mohamed had effectively ended.)... Mohamed [later] stated that had he not been arrested on that day in September 1998, he had intended to travel to Afghanistan to rejoin Osama bin Laden. Thus, while the right decision to arrest was made partly in the dark, the ‘wall’ could easily have caused a different decision that September evening that would have allowed a key player in the al-Qaeda network to escape justice for the embassy bombing in Kenya and rejoin Osama bin Laden in a cave in Afghanistan,

instead of going to federal prison.” ([US Congress 10/21/2003](#)) Mohamed’s associate Khaled Abu el-Dahab, now living in Egypt, will hear of Mohamed’s arrest and attempt to leave the country, but will be arrested in October 1998. He will be put on trial there and sentenced to 15 years in prison (see [1999](#)). ([Williams 11/21/2001](#))

September 11, 1998: PNAC Calls on Clinton To Take ‘Decisive Action’ Against Milosevic

The Project for a New American Century publishes an open letter to President Clinton urging him put an end to diplomatic efforts attempting to resolve the situation in the Balkans. Instead, they argue, he should take “decisive action” against the Serbs. The US must “distance itself from Milosevic and actively support in every way possible his replacement by a democratic government committed to ending ethnic violence,” the group writes. ([Century 9/11/1998](#))

September 15, 1998: US Arrests Bin Laden’s Personal Secretary



Wadih El Hage. [*Source: FBI*] On September 15, 1998, Wadih El-Hage is arrested in the US after appearing before a US grand jury. A US citizen, he had been bin Laden’s personal secretary. He will later be convicted for a role in the 1998 US embassy bombings (see [August 7, 1998](#)). ([Weiser 9/18/1998](#))

Shortly After September 15, 1998: US Investigators Find Mention of ‘Joint Venture’ between Al-Qaeda and Texas Charity

In the wake of the US embassy bombings in Africa (see [August 7, 1998](#)), the US arrests Wadih El-Hage, who will later be convicted for his role in those bombings. Looking through his diaries, investigators discover a reference to a “joint venture” between al-Qaeda and the Holy Land Foundation, a charity based in Texas known for its support of Hamas. The name and phone number of a Texas man connected to Holy Land is also found in El-Hage’s address book (see [September 16, 1998-September 5, 2001](#)). The US

had considered taking action against Holy Land in 1995 (see [January 1995-April 1996](#)) and again in 1997 ([1997](#)). Yet, as the Wall Street Journal will later note, “Even when [this] evidence surfaced in 1998 suggesting a tie between the foundation and Osama bin Laden, federal investigators didn’t act.” ([Simpson 2/27/2002](#))

Mid-September 1998: Taliban Supposedly Rejects Secret Deal to Hand Bin Laden to Saudis

According to Saudi intelligence minister Prince Turki al-Faisal, he participates in a second meeting with Taliban leader Mullah Omar at this time. Supposedly, earlier in the year Omar made a secret deal with Turki to hand bin Laden over to Saudi Arabia (see [June 1998](#)) and Turki is now ready to finalize the deal. ISI Director Gen. Naseem Rana is at the meeting as well. But in the wake of the US missile bombing of Afghanistan ([August 20, 1998](#)), Omar yells at Turki and denies ever having made a deal. Turki leaves empty handed. ([Wright 2006, pp. 244](#)) However, other reports stand in complete contrast to this, suggesting that earlier in the year Turki colluded with the ISI to support bin Laden, not capture him (see [May 1996](#) and [July 1998](#)).

September 16, 1998-September 5, 2001: Link with Bin Laden’s Secretary Leads to Muslim Charities in Texas

On September 15, 1998, bin Laden’s former personal secretary Wadih El-Hage is arrested in the US (see [September 15, 1998](#)). His address book had been discovered in 1997 (see [Shortly After August 21, 1997](#)), but apparently after his arrest investigators pursue new leads from it. One name in the book is Ghassan Dahduli. Both El-Hage and Dahduli lived in Tucson, Arizona in the late 1980s. Dahduli ran an Islamic Association for Palestine (IAP) office from the same Tucson mosque that El-Hage attended. Dahduli moved to Richardson, Texas, with the IAP office in 1990, around the time El-Hage moved to Arlington, Texas. Both towns are in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. El-Hage lived in Africa for much of the 1990s, but by 1998 he was back in Texas and he was seen in a Texas restaurant with Dahduli. The IAP, InfoCom, and Holy Land Foundation all have offices next to each other, and all have been accused of being fronts for Hamas. Dahduli worked at both the IAP and InfoCom. ([McGonigle 9/23/2001](#); [Bach 12/24/2001](#)) Based on the connection between Dahduli and El-Hage and other information, the FBI opens up a criminal investigation into all three organizations in 1999. They determine that Hamas leader Mousa Abu Marzouk invested \$150,000 in InfoCom in 1992, and his wife Nadia Marzouk invested \$250,000 in 1993. On September 25, 2000, federal agents confront Dahduli in a shopping center parking lot and threaten to deport him, but offer to not do so if he agrees to become an informant on these organizations. Dahduli refuses and publicizes the offer to turn informant, even putting information about it on the Internet. He applies for political asylum in the US. ([Bach 12/24/2001](#); [McGonigle 12/20/2002](#)) In early 2001, the Dallas Morning News begins publishing stories about InfoCom and its suspected ties to Hamas. Apparently, some combination of the Dahduli-El-Hage link, media pressure, and the investments of Marzouk and his wife prompts the FBI to raid

InfoCom on September 5, 2001, one week before 9/11 (see [September 5-8, 2001](#)). It will be the only significant action the US government takes against a Muslim charity in the US before 9/11. ([Lipton and Giuffo 1/2002](#)) Shortly after 9/11, Dahduli will be arrested and questioned. He will be deported to Jordan in December 2001. ([Bach 12/24/2001](#))

September 20, 1998: Important Al-Qaeda Leader Arrested in Germany



Mamdouh Mahmud Salim. [*Source: FBI*]Mamdouh Mahmud Salim (a.k.a. Abu Hajer), an al-Qaeda operative from the United Arab Emirates connected to the 1998 US embassy bombings (see [August 7, 1998](#), is arrested near Munich, Germany. ([PBS 9/30/1998](#)) The 9/11 Congressional Inquiry will later call him bin Laden's "right hand man," and "head of bin Laden's computer operations and weapons procurement." He is also "the most senior-level bin Laden operative arrested" up until this time. ([Tagliabue and Bonner 9/29/2001](#); [US Congress 7/24/2003, pp. 51](#)). Author Lawrence Wright will later note that bin Laden and Salim worked together in Afghanistan in the 1980s, "forging such powerful bonds that no one could get between them." Salim was also one of the founding members of al-Qaeda (see [August 11-20, 1988](#)) and bin Laden's personal imam (i.e., preacher). ([Wright 2006, pp. 131, 170](#)) Starting in 1995, Salim had been making frequent visits to Germany. Mamoun Darkazanli, who lived in Hamburg and associated with Mohamed Atta's al-Qaeda cell, had signing powers over Salim's bank account. Both men attended al-Quds mosque, the same Hamburg mosque as hijackers Mohamed Atta and Marwan al-Shehhi. ([Rose 1/2002](#)) The FBI learns much from Salim about al-Qaeda, and this information could have been useful to the US embassy bombings investigation. However, the FBI is unwilling to brief their German counterparts on what they know about Salim and al-Qaeda. ([Tagliabue and Bonner 9/29/2001](#))

September 23, 1998: US Administration Officials Confirm No Direct Bin Laden Link to Sudanese Factory

Senior Clinton administration officials admit they had no evidence directly linking bin Laden to the Al Shifa factory at the time of retaliatory strikes on August 20. However,

intelligence officials assert that they found financial transactions between bin Laden and the Military Industrial Corporation—a company run by the Sudan’s government. ([New York Times 9/23/1998](#); [PBS Frontline 2001](#)) A soil sample is said to show that the pharmaceutical factory was producing chemical weapons, but many doubts about the sample later arise. ([Weiner and Risen 9/21/1998](#); [Hersh 10/12/1998](#)) The US later unfreezes the bank accounts of the nominal factory owner and takes other conciliatory actions, but admits no wrongdoing. It is later learned that of the six camps targeted in Afghanistan, only four were hit, and of those, only one had definitive connections to bin Laden. Clinton declares that the missiles were aimed at a “gathering of key terrorist leaders,” but it is later revealed that the referenced meeting took place a month earlier, in Pakistan. ([Hirst 8/23/1998](#); [Weaver 1/24/2000](#))

October 1998: Military Analyst Goes Where Spies Fail to Go, but Her Efforts Are Rejected



Julie Sirrs. [*Source: Julie Sirrs*] Julie Sirrs, a military analyst for the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), travels to Afghanistan. Fluent in local languages and knowledgeable about the culture, she had made a previous undercover trip there in October 1997. She is surprised that the CIA was not interested in sending in agents after the failed missile attack on bin Laden in August 1998, so she returns at this time. Traveling undercover, she meets with Northern Alliance leader Ahmed Shah Massoud. She sees a terrorist training center in Taliban-controlled territory. Sirrs claims, “The Taliban’s brutal regime was being kept in power significantly by bin Laden’s money, plus the narcotics trade, while [Massoud’s] resistance was surviving on a shoestring. With even a little aid to the Afghan resistance, we could have pushed the Taliban out of power. But there was great reluctance by the State Department and the CIA to undertake that.” She partly blames the interest of the US government and the oil company Unocal to see the Taliban achieve political stability to enable a trans-Afghanistan pipeline (see [May 1996](#)) (see [September 27, 1996](#)). She claims, “Massoud told me he had proof that Unocal had provided money that helped the Taliban take Kabul.” She also states, “The State Department didn’t want to have anything to do with Afghan resistance, or even, politically, to reveal that there was any viable option to the Taliban.” After two weeks, she returns with a treasure trove of maps, photographs, and

interviews. ([ABC News 2/18/2002](#); [Sheehy 3/11/2004](#)) By interviewing captured al-Qaeda operatives, she learns that the official Afghanistan airline, Ariana Airlines, is being used to ferry weapons and drugs, and learns that bin Laden goes hunting with “rich Saudis and top Taliban officials” (see [Mid-1996-October 2001](#)) (see [1995-2001](#)). ([Braun and Pasternak 11/18/2001](#)) When she returns from Afghanistan, her material is confiscated and she is accused of being a spy. Says one senior colleague, “She had gotten the proper clearances to go, and she came back with valuable information,” but high level officials “were so intent on getting rid of her, the last thing they wanted to pay attention to was any information she had.” She is cleared of wrongdoing, but her security clearance is pulled. She eventually quits the DIA in frustration in 1999. ([ABC News 2/18/2002](#); [Sheehy 3/11/2004](#)) Congressman Dana Rohrabacher (R) will later claim that the main DIA official behind the punishment of Sirrs is Lt. Gen. Patrick Hughes, who later becomes “one of the top officials running the Department of Homeland Security.” ([Dana Rohrabacher 6/21/2004](#))

October 1998: Vulgar Betrayal Investigation Nearly Shut Down



Mark Flessner. Two months after the US embassy bombings in Africa (see [August 7, 1998](#)), FBI agent Robert Wright and his Vulgar Betrayal investigation discover evidence they think ties Saudi multimillionaire Yassin al-Qadi to the bombings. Since 1997, Wright had been investigating a suspected terrorist cell in Chicago that was connected to fundraising for Hamas. They discovered what they considered to be clear proof that al-Qadi and other people they were already investigating had helped fund the embassy bombings. Wright asks FBI headquarters for permission to open an investigation into this money trail at this time, but the permission is not granted. Wright will later recall, “The supervisor who was there from headquarters was right straight across from me and started yelling at me: ‘You will not open criminal investigations. I forbid any of you. You will not open criminal investigations against any of these intelligence subjects.’” Instead, they are told to merely follow the suspects and file reports, but make no arrests. Federal prosecutor Mark Flessner, working with the Vulgar Betrayal investigation, later will claim that a strong criminal case was building against al-Qadi and his associates. “There were powers bigger than I was in the Justice Department and within the FBI that simply were not going to let [the building of a criminal case] happen. And it didn’t happen.... I think there were very serious mistakes made. And I think, it perhaps cost, it cost people their lives ultimately.” ([Ross and Walker 12/19/2002](#)) Flessner later will speculate that Saudi influence may have played a role. ABC News will report in

2002, “According to US officials, al-Qadi [has] close personal and business connections with the Saudi royal family.” ([ABC News 11/26/2002](#)) Wright later will allege that FBI headquarters even attempted to shut down the Vulgar Betrayal investigation altogether at this time. He says, “They wanted to kill it.” ([Ross and Walker 12/19/2002](#)) However, he will claim, “Fortunately an assistant special agent in Chicago interceded to prevent FBI headquarters from closing Operation Vulgar Betrayal.” ([Federal News Service 6/2/2003](#)) He claims that a new supervisor will write in late 1998, “Agent Wright has spearheaded this effort despite embarrassing lack of investigative resources available to the case, such as computers, financial analysis software, and a team of financial analysts. Although far from being concluded, the success of this investigation so far has been entirely due to the foresight and perseverance of Agent Wright.” ([Federal News Service 5/30/2002](#)) When the story of this interference in the alleged al-Qadi-embassy bombings connection will be reported in late 2002, Wright will conclude, “September the 11th is a direct result of the incompetence of the FBI’s International Terrorism Unit. No doubt about that. Absolutely no doubt about that. You can’t know the things I know and not go public.” He will remain prohibited from telling all he knows, merely hinting, “There’s so much more. God, there’s so much more. A lot more.” ([Ross and Walker 12/19/2002](#))

October 1998: Islamic Conference Calls KLA Struggle ‘Jihad’

An annual international Islamic conference in Pakistan formally characterizes the Kosovo Liberation Army’s struggle as a “jihad.” ([Kurop 11/1/2001](#))

October-November 1998: Al-Qaeda US-based Recruiting Efforts Uncovered

US intelligence learns al-Qaeda is trying to establish a cell within the US. There are indications that the organization might be trying to recruit US citizens. This apparently will be mentioned in President Bush’s August 6, 2001 briefing, which states, “A clandestine source said in 1998 that a bin Laden cell in New York was recruiting Muslim-American youth for attacks” (see [August 6, 2001](#)). In the next month, there is information that a terror cell in the United Arab Emirates is attempting to recruit a group of five to seven young men from the US to travel to the Middle East for training. This is part of a plan to strike a US domestic target. ([US Congress 9/18/2002](#); [US Congress 7/24/2003](#))

October 1998 and After: Multiple Countries Monitor Zubaida’s Phone Calls

Counterterrorism expert Rohan Gunaratna will later write that after the US embassy bombings (see [August 7, 1998](#)), surveillance of al-Qaeda is stepped up around the world. “One intelligence officer attached to the French embassy in Islamabad, [Pakistan], urged his counterparts in foreign missions in Pakistan to detail the recipients of phone calls

made by... al-Qaeda leader Abu Zubaida, then living in Peshawar, to individuals in their various countries.” As a result, “several governments [launch] investigations of their own.” ([Gunaratna 2003, pp. 245](#)) One such investigation is launched by the Philippine government on October 16, 1998, after being asked by French intelligence to gather intelligence on people in the Philippines in contact with Zubaida. Code named CoPlan Pink Poppy, the investigation reveals connections between al-Qaeda and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), a Philippine militant group. On December 16, 1999, Abdesselem Boulanouar and Zoheir Djalili, two French Algerians belonging to the Algerian al-Qaeda affiliate the Salafist Group for Call and Combat (GSPC), are arrested due to information learned from monitoring Zubaida’s calls to the Philippines. Boulanouar is arrested at an airport carrying a terrorist training manual he admitted writing for the MILF. Both men also are arrested carrying explosive devices. French intelligence says Boulanouar had ties to Ahmed Ressay (see [December 14, 1999](#)), and like Ressay, may have been planning to carry out attacks at the turn of the millennium. He will be deported to France and imprisoned on terrorism related charges. CoPlan Pink Poppy will be canceled in 2000 for lack of funds. ([Gulf News 3/14/2000](#); [Ressa 2003, pp. 132-133](#); [Gunaratna 2003, pp. 245](#)) However, while details are murky, it appears other governments continue to monitor Zubaida’s calls. Around the same time as the Philippines arrests, one militant in Jordan is even arrested while still in the middle of a phone call to Zubaida (see [November 30, 1999](#)). US intelligence will remain intensely focused on Zubaida before 9/11 (see [Late March-Early April 2001](#) and [May 30, 2001](#)), and just days before 9/11 the NSA will monitor calls Zubaida is making to the US (see [Early September 2001](#)). It appears his calls will continue to be monitored after 9/11 as well (see [October 8, 2001](#)).

October 2, 1998: Italian Tip Leads to Increased German Surveillance of Hamburg Cell

Three Yemeni men are arrested in Turin, Italy. They are connected to planned attacks on US facilities in Europe. They are members of Islamic Jihad, the Egyptian militant group led by al-Qaeda number two, Ayman al-Zawahiri. Italian police search their apartments and discover beards, wigs, weapons, and contact details for Mohammed Haydar Zammar, a member of the Hamburg al-Qaeda cell. This information is quickly passed to the German domestic intelligence service. Prior to this point, Germany has been investigating Zammar (see [March 1997](#)), but apparently they are uncertain if his claims of training in Afghanistan and meeting bin Laden are idle boasts. But after these arrests in Italy, German intelligence will realize Zammar has connections to real terrorists. The surveillance operation on him, and others in the Hamburg cell, will increase in intensity. ([Laabs 8/13/2003](#); [Zeman et al. 11/2004](#))

October 8, 1998: FAA Warns of Al-Qaeda Threat to US Civil Aviation

The FAA issues the first of three 1998 warnings to US airports and airlines urging a “high degree of vigilance” against threats to US civil aviation from al-Qaeda. It specifically warns against a possible terrorist hijacking “at a metropolitan airport in the Eastern United States.” The information is based on statements made by bin Laden and other Islamic leaders and intelligence information obtained after the US cruise missile attacks in August. All three warnings come in late 1998, well before 9/11. ([Ranalli 5/26/2002](#))

October 14, 1998: 'Poised Response' Exercise Prepares for Bin Laden Attack on Washington

A training exercise, code-named Poised Response, is held at the FBI's headquarter in Washington, DC, based around a possible terrorist attack in the nation's capital. US Attorney General Janet Reno invites 200 policemen from the Washington metropolitan area to participate. They have to consider four scenarios: a car bombing, an explosive device in a federal building, an assassination attempt on Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, and a chemical weapon attack on a Washington Redskins football game. As Time magazine later describes, while the exercise participants are “never told which terrorist might carry out such an audacious attack, Reno and other top Administration aides had one man in mind: Osama bin Laden, whose Afghan camp had been blasted by US cruise missiles two months earlier. His operatives might be coming to town soon.” Time will report there being evidence that bin Laden could be planning to strike Washington or New York (see [December 21, 1998](#)). Reportedly, Poised Response is unsuccessful, quickly degenerating into interagency squabbling, and Reno leaves it feeling uneasy. ([Agence France-Presse 12/15/1998](#); [Waller 12/21/1998](#); [Hallow and Boyer 5/17/2002](#))

October 16, 1998: DIA Report Details Bin Laden's Chechen Connections

The Defense Intelligence Agency acquires a report on the connections between Osama bin Laden and Chechen rebel leader Ibn Khattab. The report states that Ibn Khattab fought with bin Laden in Afghanistan and established training camps in Chechnya at bin Laden's request. It also says that bin Laden has met with Chechen leaders and agreed to help them with “financial supplies”, and that the Chechen camps will be used to train European militants to conduct kidnappings and terrorist acts against French, Israeli, US, and British citizens. A direct route from Afghanistan to Chechnya has been established through Turkey and Azerbaijan, and is being used for “volunteers”, as well as drug smuggling. ([Defense Intelligence Agency 10/16/1998](#).) What US intelligence knows about the relationship between Ibn Khattab and bin Laden will play an important role in the handling of the Zacarias Moussaoui case just before 9/11 (see [August 22, 2001](#) and [August 24, 2001](#)).

October 19, 1998: US Officials Aware Some Saudi Royalty Are Funding Bin Laden

It is reported that some of the many thousands of Saudi royal family members are aiding bin Laden. Dick Gannon, who retired several months before as deputy director for operations of the State Department's Office of Counterterrorism, says, "We've got information about who's backing bin Laden, and in a lot of cases it goes back to the royal family... There are certain factions of the Saudi royal family who just don't like us." Paradoxically, this support comes despite bin Laden's repeated calls to overthrow the Saudi royal family. ([Auster and Kaplan 10/19/1998](#))

(October 25-November 20, 1998): Bin Laden Tried by Taliban for Embassy Bombings, Set Free After US Does Not Provide Much Evidence

After the Taliban is warned that bin Laden has been accused of involvement in the recent 1998 African embassy bombings (see [August 7, 1998](#)), it initiates judicial proceedings against him. But when the US fails to provide Afghanistan's supreme court with sufficient evidence, bin Laden is acquitted. ([Associated Press 11/20/1998](#)) The Taliban has already received some claims regarding bin Laden's involvement in terrorism from the US (see [August 23, 1998](#)), but these are insufficient and more evidence is requested. Originally, there is no cut-off date for supplying evidence, but when the US does nothing, the Taliban leaders become frustrated and announce a time limit on the inquiry: "If anyone has any evidence of bin Laden's involvement in cases of terrorism, subversion, sabotage, or any other acts, they should get it to the court before November 20. If by then there is nothing, we will close the case and in our eyes he will be acquitted." In a November 10 cable the US embassy in Pakistan, which also handles Afghan affairs, comments: "The Taliban appear to many observers not to be totally unreasonable in their demand that the US provide them evidence on bin Laden." ([US Embassy \(Islamabad\) 11/10/1998](#))³ The US then sends the Taliban a video of an interview bin Laden gave CNN in 1997, a transcript of his ABC 1998 interview, and a copy of his US indictment for the embassy bombings. ([US Department of State 11/11/1998](#))⁴ The inquiry is headed by the country's chief justice, Noor Mohamed Saqib. After the evidence is found not to be enough and bin Laden is set free, Saqib comments: "It is their shame that they have been silent. America is wrong about bin Laden... Anything that happens now anywhere in the world they blame Osama, but the reality is in the proof and they have not given us any. It's over and America has not presented any evidence. Without any evidence, bin Laden is a man without sin... he is a free man." ([Associated Press 11/20/1998](#)) However, the State Department says that it did not "endorse, support, or request" the sharia court trial, but simply wanted bin Laden extradited. A White House spokesperson says, "Without commenting on the rigor of the Taliban judicial system, it is clear that Mr. bin Laden is a proven threat to US national interests." ([US Department of State 11/11/1998](#))⁵; ([Associated Press 11/20/1998](#)) The Taliban's leadership is not satisfied with the outcome

of the trial and will subsequently ask the US for help in getting rid of bin Laden (see [November 28, 1998](#)).

October 31, 1998: Clinton Signs Law Making It US Policy to Remove Hussein in Iraq

President Clinton signs the Iraq Liberation Act of 1998 into law. The act, which passed with overwhelming support from Democrats and Republicans in both the House and Senate, was written by Trent Lott and other Republicans with significant input from Ahmed Chalabi and his aide, Francis Brooke. The act makes it “the policy of the United States to support efforts to remove the regime headed by Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq and to promote the emergence of a democratic government to replace that regime.” To that end, the act requires that the president designate one or more Iraqi opposition groups to receive up to \$97 million in US military equipment and nonlethal training. The act authorizes another \$43 million for humanitarian, broadcasting, and information-collection activities. To be eligible for US assistance, an organization must be “committed to democratic values, to respect for human rights, to peaceful relations with Iraq’s neighbors, to maintaining Iraq’s territorial integrity, and to fostering cooperation among democratic opponents of the Saddam Hussein regime.” ([US Congress 10/31/1998](#); [DeYoung and Pincus 1/25/2002](#); [Mayer 6/7/2004](#)) Chalabi’s Iraqi National Congress receives \$17.3 million from the State Department to carry out what it calls the “collection and dissemination of information” about Saddam Hussein’s atrocities to the public. It will continue to receive hundreds of thousands per month from the Defense Department as well. ([Fairweather 4/2006](#))

November 1998: Turkish Extremists’ Plan to Crash Airplane into Famous Tomb Uncovered

US intelligence learns that a Turkish extremist group named Kaplancilar had planned a suicide attack. The conspirators, who were arrested, planned to crash an airplane packed with explosives into a famous tomb during a government ceremony. The Turkish press said the group had cooperated with bin Laden and the FBI includes this incident in a bin Laden database. ([US Congress 9/18/2002](#); [US Congress 7/24/2003](#))

November 1998: Former President George H. W. Bush Meets with Bin Laden Family

Former President George H. W. Bush meets with the bin Laden family on behalf of the Carlyle Group. The meeting takes place in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. ([MacKay 10/7/2001](#))

November 1998: Americans and Saudis Possibly Attempt to Poison Bin Laden

According to the 1999 book *The New Jackals* by journalist Simon Reeve, bin Laden is nearly poisoned to death this month. The operation “involved American technology and know-how in concert with Saudi finance and manpower, thus avoiding any difficult questions in the US Congress about state-sponsored assassinations. The attack involved an assassin called Siddiq Ahmed who was paid \$267,000 to poison bin Laden. It was only partially successful, causing acute kidney failure.” ([Reeve 1999, pp. 204](#)) Apparently, different Saudi factions have vastly different attitudes towards bin Laden, because the same book claims that around this same time, Prince Turki al-Faisal, the Saudi intelligence minister, may have met with senior Taliban leaders to extract guarantees of support for bin Laden, to ensure the Taliban would not hand bin Laden over to the US. ([Reeve 1999, pp. 191](#)) No post-9/11 investigations will mention this alleged poisoning incident.

November 1, 1998-February 2001: Atta and Other Islamic Militants Are Monitored by US and Germany in Hamburg Apartment



The Marienstrasse building. [*Source: Associated Press*] Mohamed Atta and al-Qaeda operatives Said Bahaji and Ramzi Bin al-Shibh move into a four bedroom apartment at 54 Marienstrasse, in Hamburg, Germany, and stay there until February 2001 (Atta is already living primarily in the US well before this time). Investigators believe this move marks the formation of their Hamburg al-Qaeda cell ([McDermott 1/27/2002](#); [Bernstein et al. 9/10/2002](#)) Up to six men at a time live at the apartment, including other al-Qaeda agents such as hijacker Marwan Alshehhi and cell member Zakariya Essabar. ([Erlanger 9/15/2001](#)) During the 28 months Atta's name is on the apartment lease, 29 Middle Eastern or North African men register the apartment as their home address. From the very beginning, the apartment was officially under surveillance by German intelligence, because of investigations into businessman Mamoun Darkazanli that connect to Said Bahaji. ([Eggen 10/23/2001](#)) The Germans also suspect connections between Bahaji and al-Qaeda operative Mohammed Haydar Zammar. ([McDermott 9/1/2002](#)) German intelligence monitors the apartment off and on for months, and wiretaps Mounir El Motassadeq, an associate of the apartment-mates who is later put on trial in August 2002 for assisting the 9/11 plot, but apparently do not find any indication of suspicious activity. ([Crewdson and Simpson 9/5/2002](#)) Bahaji is directly monitored at least for part of 1998, but German officials have not disclosed when

the probe began or ended. That investigation is dropped for lack of evidence. ([Associated Press 6/22/2002](#); [McDermott 9/1/2002](#)) It is now clear that investigators would have found evidence if they looked more thoroughly. For instance, Zammar, a talkative man who has trouble keeping secrets, is a frequent visitor to the many late night meetings there. ([Miller, Stone, and Mitchell 2002, pp. 259-60](#); [McDermott 9/1/2002](#); [Crewdson and Simpson 9/5/2002](#)) Another visitor later recalls Atta and others discussing attacking the US. ([Rubin and Dorgan 9/9/2002](#)) 9/11 mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed is in Hamburg several times in 1999, and comes to the apartment. However, although there was a \$2 million reward for Mohammed since 1998, the US apparently fails to tell Germany what it knows about him (see [1999](#)). ([Hosenball 9/4/2002](#); [Butler 11/4/2002](#)) Hijacker Waleed Alshehri also apparently stays at the apartment “at times.” ([Stafford 9/14/2001](#); [Washington Post 9/16/2001](#)) The CIA also starts monitoring Atta while he is living at this apartment, and does not tell Germany of the surveillance. Remarkably, the German government will claim it knew little about the Hamburg al-Qaeda cell before 9/11, and nothing directed them towards the Marienstrasse apartment. ([Helm 11/24/2001](#))

November 4, 1998: US Issues Public Indictment of Bin Laden, Others for Embassy Bombings



US Attorney Patrick Fitzgerald announcing the indictment of Osama bin Laden. [*Source: Henny Ray Abrams/ Agence France-Presse/ Getty Images*] The US publicly indicts bin Laden, Mohammed Atef, and others for the US embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania. Bin Laden had been secretly indicted on different charges earlier in the year in June (see [June 8, 1998](#)). Record \$5 million rewards are announced for information leading to his arrest and the arrest of Mohammed Atef. ([PBS Frontline 2001](#)) Shortly thereafter, bin Laden allocates \$9 million in reward money for the assassinations of four US government officials in response to the reward on him. A year later, it is learned that the secretary of state, defense secretary, FBI director, and CIA director are the targets. ([US Congress 9/18/2002](#); [Miklaszewski 9/18/2002](#); [US Congress 7/24/2003](#) ²¹)

November 28, 1998: Taliban Hints at Possible Expulsion of Bin Laden

Senior Taliban spokesman Mullah Wakil Ahmed Muttawakil meets diplomats from the US embassy in Islamabad, Pakistan, to examine new ways of resolving the problem of Osama bin Laden's presence in Afghanistan after judicial proceedings against him collapse there (see [\(October 25-November 20, 1998\)](#)). Ahmed expresses his opinion that Taliban leaders are caught between "a rock and a hard place" since, if they expel bin Laden without cause they will have internal problems and, if they do not, they will have external ones due to the US. Ahmed suggests that the Saudis have a key to the solution. Afghan and Saudi religious scholars could convene a joint meeting and issue a ruling that bin Laden had acted illegally, for example by holding a news conference when he was under a communication ban. He could then be expelled without this causing internal unrest in Afghanistan and the problem would be resolved "in minutes, not hours." The US would be happy if bin Laden were expelled to Saudi Arabia or Egypt, but the Saudis apparently do not favor a joint meeting and the proposal is not acted upon. ([US Department of State 11/28/1998](#).)

Late 1998: Al-Qaeda Leader Located in Sudan, but US Does Not Try to Capture Him

Intelligence agents learn Mohammed Atef (also known as Abu Hafs), al-Qaeda's military commander, is staying in a particular hotel room in Khartoum, Sudan. White House officials ask that Atef be killed or captured and interrogated. International capture operations of wanted militants, a practice known as "rendition," have become routine by the mid-1990s (see [1993](#)). In fact, over a dozen al-Qaeda operatives are rendered between July 1998 and February 2000 (see [July 1998-February 2000](#)). But in this case, both the Defense Department and the CIA are against it, although Atef does not even have bodyguards. The CIA puts the operation in the "too hard to do box," according to one former official. The CIA says it is incapable of conducting such an operation in Sudan, but in the same year, the CIA conducts another spy mission in the same city. ([Miller, Gerth, and van Natta 12/30/2001](#); [Clarke 2004, pp. 143-46](#)) A plan is eventually made to seize him, but by then he has left the country. ([Miller, Gerth, and van Natta 12/30/2001](#)) Atef is considered a top planner of the 9/11 attacks, and is later killed in a bombing raid in November 2001 (see [November 15, 2001](#)).

Late 1998: US Initiates New Effort to Stop Financing of Al-Qaeda, but to Little Effect



William Wechsler. [Source: CAP] Shortly after the US embassy bombings in 1998 (see [August 7, 1998](#)), the US launches a new interagency effort to track bin Laden's finances. There had been a previous interagency effort in 1995 but it had fizzled (see [October 21, 1995](#)). Counterterrorism "tsar" Richard Clarke sets up a task force. He orders it to find out how much money bin Laden has, where it comes from, how it is distributed, and to stop it. Clarke appoints William Wechsler, a National Security Council staff member, to head the task force. The task force begins an investigation of bin Laden's finances (see [Late 1998](#)). Clarke later writes that he and Wechsler "quickly [come] to the conclusion that the [US government] departments [are] generally doing a lousy job of tracking and disrupting international criminals' financial networks and had done little or nothing against terrorist financing." ([Weiner and Johnston 9/20/2001](#); [Clarke 2004, pp. 190-191](#)) Clarke will later claim there was only limited effort from within the US government to fight bin Laden's financial network. He will assert that within weeks of setting up the interagency effort, it was determined that only one person in the US government, a lowly Treasury Department official, appeared to have any expertise about the hawala system, an informal and paperless money transfer system used by al-Qaeda that is popular with Muslim populations worldwide (see [1993-September 11, 2001](#)). Clarke will later write that the "CIA knew little about the [hawala] system, but set about learning. FBI knew even less, and set about doing nothing." The FBI claims there are no hawalas in the US, but Wechsler finds several in New York City using a simple Internet search. Clarke will say, "Despite our repeated requests over the following years, nobody from the FBI ever could answer even our most basic questions about the number, location, and activities of major hawalas in the US—much less taken action." The efforts of other departments are not much better. The one Treasury official with some expertise about hawalas is eventually let go before 9/11. ([Clarke 2004, pp. 192-193](#)) Efforts to pressure governments overseas also meet with little success (see [August 20, 1998-1999](#)).

Late 1998: Moles within Al-Qaeda Lead to Arrests of 20 of Bin Laden's Closest Associates

Journalist Simon Reeve will write in the 1999 book *The New Jackals* that shortly after the African embassy bombings, "With the help of one, possibly two, medium-level moles within [al-Qaeda], Americans arrested and questioned 20 of bin Laden's closest associates and began inquiries in 28 countries." Reeve doesn't say how he knows this, but his book is heavily sourced by interviews with US intelligence officials. The notion that the US had moles within al-Qaeda runs counter to the usual official US position after 9/11 that al-Qaeda was nearly impenetrable. ([Reeve 1999, pp. 204](#)) Top bin Laden

associates arrested during this time include Mamdouh Mahmud Salim (see [September 20, 1998](#)) and Khalid al-Fawwaz (see [Early 1994-September 27, 1998](#)).

Late 1998: US Investigators Reassess Bin Laden's Finances, Discover Saudi 'Fundraising Machine'

In late 1998, a new US interagency task force is created to track bin Laden's finances (see [Late 1998](#)). The task force asks for help from the CIA's Illicit Transactions Group (ITG), a little known entity keeping track of criminals, militants, and money launderers. The task force and ITG scour US intelligence data on al-Qaeda's finances and soon discover that the assumption that al-Qaeda gets most of its funds from bin Laden's huge personal fortune and numerous businesses is wrong. While he does have a fortune, according to William Wechsler, the task force director, al-Qaeda is "a constant fundraising machine." The evidence is indisputable that most of the money is coming from Saudi Arabia. ([Kaplan, Ekman, and Latif 12/15/2003](#)) However, what little pressure the US will put on Saudi Arabia before 9/11 to stop the funding of al-Qaeda will have no effect (see [August 20, 1998-1999](#) and [June 1999](#)).

Late 1998-August 10, 1999: Pakistani Air Force Pilot Temporarily Replaces Alshehhi as Atta's Roommate

Hijacker Marwan Alshehhi moved to Bonn, Germany in 1996, and studied German there. He then lived in Hamburg for several months in 1998, and returned to Bonn after failing a language exam. Just as he leaves town, a Pakistani student named Atif bin Mansour arrives in Hamburg, and begins living and studying together with Mohamed Atta. Early in 1999, Mansour applies with Atta for a room to hold a new Islamic study group. Mansour is a pilot on leave from the Pakistani Air Force. As the Los Angeles Times puts it, "This in itself is intriguing—a Pakistani pilot? Investigators acknowledge they haven't figured out Mansour's role in the plot, if any." On this day, Mansour's brother, also in the Pakistani armed forces, is killed (along with 15 other officers) when his surveillance plane is shot down by India. Mansour returns home and was detained and stopped from returning to Germany. Soon afterwards, Alshehhi returns to Hamburg. According to Mansour's father, "Atif was detained because he had not sought permission from the authorities before returning home to attend his younger brother's funeral." Then he is set free with assistance from a relative and works on Pakistani air force base. Contacted on his mobile phone by a reporter, Mansour says, "I won't be able to speak further on such a sensitive issue." ([Mir 7/17/2002](#); [McDermott 9/1/2002](#); [Finn 9/11/2002](#)) In March 2001, Mohamed Atta applies together with a Pakistani Air Force pilot for a security job with Lufthansa Airlines (see [February 15, 2001](#)). This pilot is a member of the same Islamic study group as Mansour, but it's not clear if this is Mansour and he did come back to or stay in Germany, or if Atta was associating with a second Pakistani Air Force pilot. ([Roth 2001, pp. 9f](#); [Moore 1/24/2002](#)) The FBI later notes that Alshehhi arrived "almost as a replacement" for Mansour. After 9/11, the FBI asks Pakistan if the flight lieutenant and squad leader Mansour can be found and questioned about any possible role he may have

had in the 9/11 plot, but there's no indication Pakistan as to whether has ever agreed to this request. ([Mir 7/17/2002](#)) In late 2002, the German Federal Bureau of Criminal Investigations will say that Mansour remains "a very interesting figure." ([McDermott 9/1/2002](#))

Late 1998-Early 2002: US Intelligence Maps Al-Qaeda Network Using Phone Records; Many Attacks Thwarted



Dan Coleman [*Source: CNN*] Beginning in the autumn of 1998, the FBI uses the phone records of an al-Qaeda communications hub run by operative Ahmed al-Hada and his son Samir to build a map of al-Qaeda's global organization. A map showing all the places in the world that have communicated with the hub is posted on the wall of the interagency counterterrorism I-49 squad in New York. The hub's telephone number was uncovered during the East African embassy bombings investigation (see [August 5-25, 1998](#) and [Late August 1998](#)). ([Arrabyee 2/21/2002](#); [Myers 7/21/2004](#); [Wright 2006, pp. 343](#); [Wright 7/10/2006](#) ³) According to FBI agent and I-49 squad member Dan Coleman, al-Hada is "uncle of half the violent jihadists we knew in the country." ([Suskind 2006, pp. 94](#)) Several of his sons and sons-in-law are al-Qaeda operatives and some die fighting and training with radical Islamists; this is known to US intelligence before 9/11. Hijacker Khalid Almihdhar is also a son-in-law of al-Hada. ([MSNBC 2/14/2002](#); [Fox News 2/14/2002](#); [Meyer 12/21/2005](#)) The number is monitored by the NSA and over the next three years it mines intelligence that helps authorities foil a series of plots, including planned attacks on the US Embassy in Paris and the US Consulate in Istanbul, along with an attempted airline hijacking in Africa. However, the hub also serves as a planning center for the 2000 attack on the USS *Cole* in Yemen, which is successful (see [October 12, 2000](#)). ([Kaplan and Whitelaw 3/15/2004](#)) The CIA, as the primary organization for gathering foreign intelligence, has jurisdiction over conversations on the al-Hada phone. Helped by the NSA, it stakes out the house—tapping the phone, planting bugs, and taking satellite photographs of its visitors. However, the CIA apparently does not provide the FBI with all the relevant information it is obtaining about al-Qaeda's plans. ([Wigmore 6/9/2002](#); [Wright 7/10/2006](#) ³) For example, the FBI is not informed that hijackers Khalid Almihdhar and Nawaf Alhazmi make calls to the communications hub from the US between spring 2000 and summer 2001 (see [Spring-Summer 2000](#) and [Mid-October 2000-Summer 2001](#)). The FBI also

asks the NSA to pass any calls between the communications hub and the US to the FBI, but the NSA does not do this either (see [Late 1998](#)). ([Suskind 2006, pp. 94](#))

Late 1998 and After: US Intelligence Still Monitors Bin Laden's Calls after He Stops Using His Satellite Phone

Shortly after an August 1998 US missile strike on Afghanistan (((see [August 20, 1998](#)), bin Laden stops using his satellite phone, correctly deciding that it was being monitored by US intelligence ((see [Late August 1998](#)). According to counterterrorism expert Rohan Gunaratna, al-Qaeda quickly “developed a system to deceive those monitoring his calls. [But] Western security and intelligence agencies were soon able to monitor the new system, which was based on transferring international calls within safe houses in Pakistan to make them seem like domestic calls.” Other al-Qaeda leaders such as Abu Zubaida will be frequently monitored as they make calls using this new system (see [October 1998 and After](#)). Gunaratna later claims to have learned this from a confidential source in a “communications monitoring agency” in Western Europe. ([Gunaratna 2003, pp. 15-16, 3291](#)) It is not known how long it took until al-Qaeda realized this new system was compromised, but there are accounts of bin Laden and Zubaida's calls being monitored days before 9/11 (see [Early September 2001](#), [September 9, 2001](#), and [Early September 2001](#)).

December 1, 1998: Bin Laden Actively Planning Attacks Inside US

According to a US intelligence assessment, “[bin Laden] is actively planning against US targets and already may have positioned operatives for at least one operation.... Multiple reports indicate [he] is keenly interested in striking the US on its own soil... Al-Qaeda is recruiting operatives for attacks in the US but has not yet identified potential targets.” Later in the month, a classified document prepared by the CIA and signed by President Clinton states: “The intelligence community has strong indications that bin Laden intends to conduct or sponsor attacks inside the US.” ([US Congress 9/18/2002](#); [Priest and Eggen 9/19/2002](#); [US Congress 7/24/2003](#) ³; [US Congress 7/24/2003](#)) This warning will be mentioned in the August 2001 memo given to President Bush entitled “Bin Laden Determined to Strike in US” (see [August 6, 2001](#)).

December 2, 1998: Clinton Meets Pakistani Leader but Bin Laden Not Top Priority



Nawaz Sharif meeting

with US Defense Secretary William Cohen at the Pentagon on December 3, 1998.

[Source: US Department of Defense] Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif comes to Washington to meet with President Clinton and other top Clinton administration officials. The number one issue for Clinton is Pakistan's nuclear program, since Pakistan had recently illegally developed and exploded a nuclear weapon (see [May 28, 1998](#)). The second most important issue is Pakistan's economy; the US wants Pakistan to support free trade agreements. The third most important issue is terrorism and Pakistan's support for bin Laden. Author Steve Coll will later note, "When Clinton himself met with Pakistani leaders, his agenda list always had several items, and bin Laden never was at the top. Afghanistan's war fell even further down." Sharif proposes to Clinton that the CIA train a secret Pakistani commando team to capture bin Laden. The US and Pakistan go ahead with this plan, even though most US officials involved in the decision believe it has almost no chance for success. They figure there is also little risk or cost involved, and it can help build ties between American and Pakistani intelligence. The plan will later come to nothing (see [October 1999](#)). (Coll 2004, pp. 441-444)

December 4, 1998: CIA Director Issues Ineffective Declaration of War on Al-Qaeda

CIA Director Tenet issues a "declaration of war" on al-Qaeda, in a memorandum circulated in the intelligence community. This is ten months after bin Laden's fatwa on the US (see [February 22, 1998](#)), which is called a "de facto declaration of war" by a senior US official in 1999. Tenet says, "We must now enter a new phase in our effort against bin Laden.... each day we all acknowledge that retaliation is inevitable and that its scope may be far larger than we have previously experienced.... We are at war.... I want no resources or people spared in this efforts [sic], either inside CIA or the [larger intelligence] community." Yet a Congressional joint committee later finds that few FBI agents ever hear of the declaration. Tenet's fervor does not "reach the level in the field that is critical so [FBI agents] know what their priorities are." In addition, even as the

counterterrorism budget continues to grow generally, there is no massive shift in budget or personnel until after 9/11. For example, the number of CIA personnel assigned to the Counterterrorist Center (CTC) stays roughly constant until 9/11, then nearly doubles from approximately 400 to approximately 800 in the wake of 9/11. The number of CTC analysts focusing on al-Qaeda rises from three in 1999 to five by 9/11. ([Risen 9/18/2002](#); [US Congress 9/18/2002](#)) Perhaps not coincidentally, on the same day Tenet issues his declaration, President Clinton is given a briefing entitled “Bin Laden Preparing to Hijack US Aircraft and Other Attacks” and US intelligence scrambles to respond to this threat (see [December 4, 1998](#)).

December 4, 1998: Clinton Warned ‘Bin Laden Preparing to Hijack US Aircraft’ Inside US



Mohammed Shawqui Islambouli. *[Source: Public domain]* On December 4, 1998, an item in President Clinton’s Presidential Daily Briefing (PDB) is titled, “Bin Laden Preparing to Hijack US Aircraft and Other Attacks.” The PDB says “Bin Laden and his allies are preparing for attacks in the US, including an aircraft hijacking to obtain the release of Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman, Ramzi Yousef, and Muhammad Sadiq ‘Awda. One source quoted a senior member of Al-Gama’a al-Islamiyya (IG) saying that, as of late October, the IG had completed planning for an operation in the US on behalf of bin Laden, but that the operation was on hold. A senior bin Laden operative from Saudi Arabia was to visit IG counterparts in the US soon thereafter to discuss options—perhaps including an aircraft hijacking.” The same source says bin Laden may implement plans to hijack US aircraft before the start of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan on December 20 and that two members of the operational team had evaded security checks in a recent trial run at a New York airport. A possible different source says that in late September, Mohammed Shawqui Islambouli, brother of the assassin of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and described in the PDB as an IG leader, was planning to hijack a US airliner during the “next couple of weeks” to free Abdul-Rahman and other prisoners. The PDB also says that “some members of the bin Laden network have received hijack training, according to various sources, but no group directly tied to bin Laden’s al-Qaeda organization has ever carried out an aircraft hijacking. Bin Laden could be weighing other types of operations against US aircraft.” The PDB mentions other bin Laden related threats, including recent reports that the IG has obtained surface-to-air missiles and intends to move them from Yemen to Saudi Arabia to shoot down aircraft. ([Schmidt 7/18/2004](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 128-130](#)) The

private intelligence group Stratfor will later say that, in addition to his ties with IG, Islambouli worked with bin Laden in the Maktab al-Khidamat charity front in Pakistan and is believed to have lived in Afghanistan in the 1990s as “part of the group of key Egyptian advisers surrounding bin Laden.” Islambouli will formally join with al-Qaeda in 2006. ([Burton 8/10/2006](#)) In early 1998, the CIA ignored information from a recently retired CIA agent that claimed 9/11 mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed was in a terrorist cell with Islambouli, both were experts on plane hijackings, and were planning to hijack planes (see [Early 1998](#)). Perhaps not coincidentally, on this same day, CIA Director George Tenet issues a “declaration of war” against al-Qaeda in a memo to the US intelligence community (see [December 4, 1998](#)). Also on this day, counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke holds a meeting of his interagency Counterterrorism and Security Group (CSG) to discuss the threat. The group agrees that New York City airports should go on a maximum security alert that weekend and security should be boosted at other East Coast airports. The FBI, FAA, and New York City Police Department get versions of the PDB report. Later in December and again in January 1999 the source says the hijacking has been postponed because two operatives have been arrested in Washington or New York. But the FBI is unable to find any information to support the threat nor is it able to verify any arrests similar to what the source described, and the source remains mysterious. The high alert in New York airports is canceled by the end of January. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 128-130](#)) This PDB will be mentioned in President Bush’s famous August 6, 2001 PDB, but mentions that US officials “have not been able to corroborate” the plot (see [August 6, 2001](#)).

December 5, 1998: Unocal Abandons Afghan Pipeline Project

Unocal announces it is withdrawing from the CentGas pipeline consortium, and closing three of its four offices in Central Asia. President Clinton refuses to extend diplomatic recognition to the Taliban, making business there legally problematic. A concern that Clinton will lose support among women voters for upholding the Taliban plays a role in the cancellation. ([Levine 12/5/1998](#))

December 18-20, 1998: US Locates Bin Laden but Declines to Strike



The governor's mansion in Kandahar, Afghanistan. [Source: CBC] On December 18, 2000, CIA receives a tip that bin Laden will be staying overnight on December 20 at the governor's mansion in Kandahar, Afghanistan. Missile strikes are readied against him. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 130-131](#)) Gary Schroen, head of the CIA's Pakistan office, e-mails CIA headquarters with the message, "Hit him tonight—we may not get another chance." However, principal advisers to President Clinton agree not to recommend a strike because of doubts about the intelligence and worries about collateral damage. The military estimates the attacks will kill about 200 people, presumably most of them innocent bystanders. Schroen will later recall, "It struck me as rather insane, frankly. They decided not to attack bin Laden because he was in a building in fairly close proximity to a mosque. And they were afraid that some of the shrapnel was going to hit the mosque and somehow offend the Muslim world, and so they decided not to shoot on that occasion. That's the kind of reason for not shooting that the policy maker, anyway, came up with endlessly." ([9/11 Commission 3/24/2004](#); [CBC 9/12/2006](#)) Later intelligence appears to show that bin Laden left before the strike could be readied, but some aware of the intelligence felt it was a chance that should have been taken anyway. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 130-131](#)) In the wake of this incident, officials attempt to find alternatives to cruise missiles, such as precision strike aircraft. However, US Central Command Chief General Anthony Zinni is apparently opposed to deployment of these aircraft near Afghanistan, and they are not deployed. ([9/11 Commission 3/24/2004](#))

December 21, 1998: Bin Laden May Be Planning Attacks on New York and Washington

In a Time magazine cover story entitled "The Hunt for Osama," it is reported that intelligence sources "have evidence that bin Laden may be planning his boldest move yet—a strike on Washington or possibly New York City in an eye-for-an-eye retaliation. 'We've hit his headquarters, now he hits ours,' says a State Department aide." ([Waller 12/21/1998](#))

December 22, 1998: Bin Laden Thanks Pakistani Government Departments for Their Assistance

In an interview with ABC News, bin Laden says, “As for Pakistan, there are some governmental departments, which, by the Grace of God, respond to the Islamic sentiments of the masses in Pakistan. This is reflected in sympathy and cooperation. However, some other governmental departments fell into the trap of the infidels...” ([Laden 1/2/1999](#)) A Slate article will call this “bin Laden obliquely express[ing] gratitude to his ISI friends.” ([Silverstein 10/9/2001](#))

December 22, 1998: Bin Laden Takes Credit for ‘Instigating’ Embassy Bombings

In an interview for Time magazine held on this date, bin Laden is asked whether he was responsible for the August 1998 African embassy bombings (see [August 7, 1998](#)). He replies, “If the instigation for jihad against the Jews and the Americans in order to liberate [Islamic shrines in Mecca and Medina] is considered a crime, then let history be a witness that I am a criminal. Our job is to instigate and, by the grace of God, we did that—and certain people responded to this instigation.... I am confident that Muslims will be able to end the legend of the so-called superpower that is America.” He admits knowing certain people accused of being behind the bombing, such as Wadih El-Hage and Mamdouh Mahmud Salim, but denies they had any connection to the bombings. ([Yusufzai 1/11/1999](#); [Globe and Mail 10/5/2001](#))

December 23, 1998-January 12, 1999: Plan to Attack Bin Laden with Special Aircraft Is Proposed but Not Pursued



An AC-130. [*Source: US Air Force*] In the immediate aftermath of a decision not to attack bin Laden with cruise missiles for fear of collateral damage (see [December 18-20, 1998](#)), the US military looks for other options than the inaccurate cruise missiles. On this day, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Henry Shelton formally directs Generals Anthony Zinni and Peter J. Schoomaker to develop plans for an AC-130 gunship attack against al-Qaeda bases in Afghanistan. The AC-130 is an aircraft designed specifically for special forces missions. It can fly in fast or

from a high altitude, undetected by radar. It is capable of rapidly firing precision-guided projectiles that are much less likely to cause collateral damage. The two generals do submit such a plan on January 12, 1999, but the plan will never be developed beyond this initial document. One reason is that Zinni is against the idea. Another obstacle is that due to technical reasons the AC-130s would need to be based in a nearby country (most likely Uzbekistan, which is the most supportive of US efforts to get bin Laden at this time (see [1998](#))). Political agreements allowing for basing and overflight rights would have to be arranged, but there is never any attempt to do so. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 135, 486](#))

Late 1998: Clinton Signs More Directives Authorizing CIA to Plan Bin Laden Assassination

President Clinton signs additional, more explicit directives authorizing the CIA to plan the assassination of bin Laden. The initial emphasis is on capturing bin Laden and only killing him if the capture attempt is unsuccessful. The military is unhappy about this, so Clinton continues to sign additional directives before leaving office, each one authorizing the use of lethal force more clearly than the one before. ([Coll 2/22/2004](#))

Late 1998: Failed Missile Attack Said to Increase Bin Laden's Stature in Muslim World



Top: a protest sign in a late 1998 Pakistan protest reads: "Down Down Clinton! Long Live Laden!" Bottom: a children's toy featuring bin Laden from the late 1990s. [*Source: National Geographic*] According to reports, the failed US missile attack against bin Laden on August 20, 1998 greatly elevates bin Laden's stature in the Muslim world. A US defense analyst later states, "I think that raid really helped elevate bin Laden's reputation in a big way, building him up in the Muslim world.... My sense is that because the attack was so limited and incompetent, we turned this guy into a folk hero." ([Gellman 10/3/2001](#)) An Asia Times article published just prior to 9/11

suggests that because of the failed attack, “a very strong Muslim lobby emerge[s] to protect [bin Laden’s] interests. This includes Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah, as well as senior Pakistani generals. Crown Prince Abdullah has good relations with bin Laden as both are disciples of slain Sheikh Abdullah Azzam (see [1985-1989](#)).” ([Shahzad 8/22/2001](#)) In early 1999, Pakistani President Musharraf complains that by demonizing bin Laden, the US has turned him into a cult hero. The US decides to play down the importance of bin Laden. ([Waterman 4/9/2004](#))

Late 1998: Taliban Stall Pipeline Negotiations to Keep Western Powers at Bay

During the investigation of the August 7, 1998 US embassy bombings (see [August 7, 1998](#)), FBI counterterrorism expert John O’Neill finds a memo by al-Qaeda leader Mohammed Atef on a computer. The memo shows that bin Laden’s group has a keen interest in and detailed knowledge of negotiations between the Taliban and the US over an oil and gas pipeline through Afghanistan. Atef’s analysis suggests that the Taliban are not sincere in wanting a pipeline, but are dragging out negotiations to keep Western powers at bay. ([Brisard 6/5/2002](#))

Late 1998: El Hage Points to Darkazanli and Hamburg Cell



On top is El-Hage’s business card for his fake charity, Help Africa People. Below is his card for his business Anhar Trading. On the lower left is a US address and on the lower right is Darkazanli’s address in Germany. [Source: CNN] The CIA first became interested in Mamoun Darkazanli in 1993 (see [1993](#)). The FBI shows interest in Darkazanli after al-Qaeda operatives Wadih El Hage and Mamdouh Mahmud Salim (a.k.a. Abu Hajer) are arrested in late 1998 (see [September 16, 1998-September 5, 2001](#) and [September 20, 1998](#)). According to FBI documents, Darkazanli’s fax and telephone numbers are discovered in El Hage’s address book. Darkazanli’s Deutsche Bank account number is found in the book as well. ([Hirschhorn 10/16/2001](#)) El-Hage had created a number of shell companies as fronts for al-Qaeda activities, and one of these uses the address of Darkazanli’s apartment. ([Crewdson 11/17/2002](#)) Further, El-Hage’s business card shows Darkazanli’s Hamburg address. The FBI also discovers that Darkazanli has power of attorney over a bank account belonging to Salim, a high-ranking al-Qaeda member. El Hage will later be convicted for his role in

the 1998 US embassy bombings, and Salim will remain in US custody. ([Erlanger 6/20/2002](#); [US Congress 7/24/2003, pp. 157](#)^{As}) By this time, Darkazanli is associating with members of the Hamburg al-Qaeda cell, and may be a member of the cell himself.

Late 1998: Key Embassy Bombing Witnesses Are Beheaded Before They Can Talk to FBI

FBI counterterrorism expert John O'Neill and his team investigating the 1998 US embassy bombings are repeatedly frustrated by the Saudi government. Guillaume Dasquie, one of the authors of *The Forbidden Truth*, later tells the *Village Voice*: “We uncovered incredible things.... Investigators would arrive to find that key witnesses they were about to interrogate had been beheaded the day before.” ([Brisard and Dasquie 2002, pp. xxix](#); [Ridgeway 1/2/2002](#))

Late 1998-2000: US Administration Officials Seek Ground-Based Plan to Kill Bin Laden



Henry Shelton. [*Source: US Military*] National Security Adviser Sandy Berger and Secretary of State Madeleine Albright repeatedly seek consideration of a “boots on the ground” option to kill bin Laden, using the elite Delta Force. Clinton also supports the idea, telling Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Henry Shelton, “You know, it would scare the sh_t out of al-Qaeda if suddenly a bunch of black ninjas rappelled out of helicopters into the middle of their camp.” However, Shelton says he wants “nothing to do” with such an idea. He calls it naive, and ridicules it as “going Hollywood.” He says he would need a large force, not just a small team. ([Gellman 12/19/2001](#))

Counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke similarly recalls Clinton saying to Shelton “in my earshot, ‘I think we ought to have US commandos go into Afghanistan, US military units, black ninjas jumping out of helicopters, and go after al-Qaeda in Afghanistan.’ And Shelton said: ‘Whoa! I don’t think we can do that. I’ll talk to Central Command.’ And of course Central Command came back and said, ‘Oh no, that’s too difficult.’” ([Clarke 6/20/2006](#)) US Central Command chief General Anthony Zinni is considered the chief opponent to the “boots on the ground” idea. ([Washington Post 10/2/2002](#)) Clinton orders

“formal planning for a mission to capture the al-Qaeda leadership.” Reports are contradictory, but some claim Clinton was told such plans were drawn up when in fact they were not. ([Elliott 8/4/2002](#); [Washington Post 10/2/2002](#)) In any event, no such plans are implemented.

Late 1998-September 11, 2001: Mosque Connections **Hint at Al Taqwa Knowledge of Al-Qaeda Plots**



The Islamic Cultural Institute in Milan, Italy.

[Source: Public domain] By late 1998, US and Italian intelligence are already aware of the importance of a mosque in Milan, Italy, called the Islamic Cultural Institute. After 9/11, the Treasury Department will call the mosque “the main al-Qaeda station house in Europe. It is used to facilitate the movement of weapons, men and money across the world.” Additionally, they are aware that Ahmed Idris Nasreddin, a founder and director of Al Taqwa Bank, is also a founder and financier of the mosque. The mosque is also less than 50 miles away from Al Taqwa’s headquarters on the Swiss border.(see [1993-1997](#)). ([Hosenball 3/18/2002](#)) US officials will later say that al-Qaeda operatives involved in the 1998 US embassy bombings stayed at the Milan mosque. This causes US and Italian intelligence to watch the mosque more closely, and it also causes the US to look closer at Al Taqwa Bank (see [1997-September 11, 2001](#)). ([Hosenball 3/18/2002](#)) One member of the al-Qaeda cell in Milan lives in Hamburg with 9/11 plotter Ramzi bin al-Shibh for most of 1998 (see [December 1997-November 1998](#)). In 2000, Abderazek Mahdjoub, the head of the Milan cell, lives in Hamburg, attends the Al-Quds mosque that the Hamburg al-Qaeda cell attends, and has ties with some of the 9/11 hijackers (see [2000](#)). Al-Qaeda operatives involved in the failed millennium bombing plot in Jordan also stay at the Milan mosque (see [November 30, 1999](#)). The Jordanian government later will claim that Al Taqwa helped fund these millennium bombers. ([Hosenball 3/18/2002](#); [Isikoff and Hosenball 4/12/2004](#)) Starting in late 2000, Italian intelligence, wiretapping people associated with the Milan mosque and/or the Milan al-Qaeda cell, record conversations suggesting foreknowledge of the 9/11 plot (see [August 12, 2000](#); [January 24, 2001](#)). This information is shared with the US in early 2001 (see [March 2001](#)). Additional evidence will come out after 9/11 suggesting some people in Milan had foreknowledge of the 9/11 attacks (see [September 4, 2001](#); [September 7, 2001](#)). Given the closeness of the Al Taqwa Bank to the mosque, especially through Nasreddin, this raises the possibility of Al Taqwa involvement and knowledge of specific al-Qaeda plots, including the 9/11 attacks, though there is no known evidence of such direct ties except for the attempted millennium bombing mentioned above.

Late December 1998: Data Mining Program Authorized to Go after Bin Laden

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Henry Shelton will later say, “Right after I left SOCOM (Special Operations Command), I asked my successor to put together a small team, if he could, to try to use the Internet and start trying to see if there was any way that we could track down Osama bin Laden or where he was getting his money from or anything of that nature.” A team of six intelligence officers will be given this task and Shelton will be periodically briefed on the progress of the program. But apparently the team, later to be called Able Danger, will focus on data mining tasks relating to Bosnia and China for most of 1999. ([Rosen 12/7/2005](#); [US Congress 2/15/2006](#)) Gen. Peter Schoomaker, the head of the military’s Special Operations Command (SOCOM), helped come up with the idea for Able Danger and helps to set it up. SOCOM, based in Tampa, Florida, is responsible for America’s secret commando units. ([Goodwin 9/2005](#)) Mark Zaid, a lawyer for several Able Danger whistleblowers in 2005, will give this description of Able Danger: “In the most understandable and simplistic terms, Able Danger involved the searching out and compiling of open source or other publicly available information regarding specific targets or tasks that were connected through associational links. No classified information was used. No government database systems were used.... The search and compilation efforts were primarily handled by defense contractors, who did not necessarily know they were working for Able Danger, and that information was then to be utilized by the military members of Able Danger for whatever appropriate purposes.” ([US Congress 9/21/2005](#)) Apparently, Able Danger does not begin to use real data to fight al-Qaeda until near the end of 1999.

1999: British Intelligence Warns Al-Qaeda Plans to Use Aircraft, Possibly as Flying Bombs



MI6 headquarters in London.

[Source: *Cryptome*] MI6, the British intelligence agency, gives a secret report to liaison staff at the US embassy in London. The reports states that al-Qaeda has plans to use “commercial aircraft” in “unconventional ways,” “possibly as flying bombs.” ([Rufford 6/9/2002](#))

1999: FBI Learns of Militant Group's Plans to Send Students to US for Aviation Training; Investigation Opportunity Bungled

The FBI receives reports that a militant organization is planning to send students to the US for aviation training. The organization's name remains classified, but apparently it is a different organization than one mentioned in a very similar warning the year before (see [After May 15, 1998](#)). The purpose of this training is unknown, but the organization viewed the plan as "particularly important" and it approved open-ended funding for it. The Counterterrorism Section at FBI headquarters issues a notice instructing 24 field offices to pay close attention to Islamic students from the target country engaged in aviation training. Ken Williams's squad at the Phoenix FBI office receives this notice, although Williams does not recall reading it. Williams will later write his "Phoenix memo" on this very topic in July 2001 (see [July 10, 2001](#)). The 9/11 Congressional Inquiry later will conclude, "There is no indication that field offices conducted any investigation after receiving the communication." ([US Congress 7/24/2003](#)) However, an analyst at FBI headquarters conducts a study and determines that each year there are about 600 Middle Eastern students attending the slightly over 1,000 US flight schools. ([Risen 5/4/2002](#); [US Congress 7/24/2003](#)) In November 2000, a notice will be issued to the field offices, stating that it has uncovered no indication that the militant group is recruiting students. Apparently, Williams will not see this notice either. ([US Congress 7/24/2003](#))

1999: FBI Creates Bin Laden Unit

The FBI creates its own unit to focus specifically on bin Laden, three years after the CIA created such a special unit. By 9/11, 17 to 19 people are working in this unit out of over 11,000 FBI staff. ([US Congress 9/18/2002](#))

1999: Joint CIA-NSA Project Taps into Al-Qaeda's Tactical Radios

A joint project team run by the CIA and NSA slips into Afghanistan and places listening devices within range of al-Qaeda's tactical radios. ([Gellman 12/19/2001](#))

1999: CIA Builds Network of Informants throughout Afghanistan, Central Asia

CIA already has a network of local agents in Afghanistan by this time (see [1997](#)). However, in this year there is a serious effort to increase the network throughout Afghanistan and other countries for the purpose of capturing bin Laden and his deputies. ([Lake 10/17/2002](#)) Many are put on the CIA's payroll, including some Taliban military

leaders. Many veterans of the Soviet war in the 1980s who worked with the CIA then are recruited again. All of these recruitments are kept secret from Pakistani intelligence because of their support of the Taliban and al-Qaeda. ([Coll 2004, pp. 491-492](#)) CIA Director George Tenet will later state that by 9/11, “a map would show that these collection programs and human networks were in place in such numbers to nearly cover Afghanistan. This array means that, when the military campaign to topple the Taliban and destroy al-Qaeda [begins in October 2001], we [are] able to support it with an enormous body of information and a large stable of assets.” ([US Congress 10/17/2002](#)) However, apparently none of these sources are close enough to bin Laden to know about his movements in advance. ([Coll 2004, pp. 491-492](#))

1999: US Ready to Fight For Oil, Especially in Persian Gulf and Caspian Regions

A top level US policy document explicitly confirms the US military’s readiness to fight a war for oil. The report, Strategic Assessment 1999, prepared for the US Joint Chiefs of Staff and the secretary of defense, states, “energy and resource issues will continue to shape international security,” and if an oil “problem” arises, “US forces might be used to ensure adequate supplies.” Oil conflicts over production facilities and transport routes, particularly in the Persian Gulf and Caspian regions, are specifically envisaged. ([Goldstein 5/20/2003](#))

1999: Neighbors Report Suspicious Activities to CIA; No Apparent Response



The Vienna, Virginia, house where Waleed Alshehri and Ahmed Alghamdi lived. [*Source: Paul Sperry*] Diane and John Albritton later say they call the CIA and police several times this year to report suspicious activity at a neighbor’s home, but authorities fail to respond. ([Sisk and Smith 9/15/2001](#); [Hansen 9/23/2001](#)) A man named Waleed Alshehri, allegedly one of the 9/11 hijackers, is renting the house on Orrin Street in Vienna, Virginia, at the time (three blocks from a CIA facility). ([Kelley 9/15/2001](#)) He makes his neighbors nervous. “There were always people coming and going,” said Diane Albritton. “Arabic people. Some of them never uttered a word; I don’t know if they spoke English. But they looked very focused. We thought they might be dealing drugs, or illegal immigrants.” ([Firestone and Canedy 9/15/2001](#)) A man named Ahmed Alghamdi, allegedly another one of the hijackers, lived at the same

address until July 2000. ([Sperry 9/14/2001](#); [Fox News 6/6/2002](#)) Shortly after 9/11, it was reported that Waleed Alshehri lived with Ahmed Alghamdi in Florida for seven months in 1997. ([Telegraph 9/20/2001](#)) Albritton says they observed a van parked outside the home at all hours of the day and night. A Middle Eastern man appeared to be monitoring a scanner or radio inside the van. Another neighbor says, “We thought it was a drug house. All the cars parked on the street were new BMWs, new Mercedes. People were always walking around out front with cell phones.” There were frequent wild parties, numerous complaints to authorities, and even a police report about a woman shooting a gun into the air during a party. ([Sperry 9/14/2001](#)) Other neighbors also called the police about the house. ([Barakat 9/14/2001](#)) “Critics say [the case] could have made a difference [in stopping 9/11] had it been handled differently.” Standard procedures require the CIA to notify the FBI of such domestic information. However, FBI officials have not been able to find any record that the CIA shared the information. ([Fox News 6/6/2002](#)) FBI Director Mueller has said “the hijackers did all they could to stay below our radar.” ([US Congress 5/8/2002](#)) Although Fox News, based on information from the CIA and FBI, will still be reporting that these two men are the hijackers of the same name in the summer of 2002, the 9/11 Commission will say that these two hijackers first entered the US in the spring of 2001 (see [April 23-June 29, 2001](#)). ([Fox News 6/6/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 527-8](#))

1999: KSM Repeatedly Visits Atta and Others in Al-Qaeda’s Hamburg Cell

Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM) “repeatedly” visits Mohamed Atta and others in the Hamburg al-Qaeda cell. ([Czuczka 8/24/2002](#)) US and German officials say a number of sources place KSM at Atta’s Hamburg apartment, although when he visits, or who he visits while he is there, is unclear. ([Drogin and Meyer 6/6/2002](#); [Butler 11/4/2002](#)) However, it would be logical to conclude that he visits Atta’s housemate Ramzi Bin al-Shibh, since investigators believe he is the “key contact between the pilots” and KSM. ([Laabs and McDermott 1/27/2003](#)) KSM is living elsewhere in Germany at the time. ([Risen 9/22/2002](#)) German intelligence monitors the apartment in 1999 but apparently does not notice KSM. US investigators have been searching for Mohammed since 1996, but apparently never tell the Germans what they know about him. ([Butler 11/4/2002](#)) Even after 9/11, German investigators complain that US investigators do not tell them what they know about KSM living in Germany until they read it in the newspapers in June 2002. ([Erlanger 6/11/2002](#))

1999: French Put Moussaoui on Watch List, Ask British to Monitor Him

French intelligence learns Zacarias Moussaoui went to an al-Qaeda training camp in Afghanistan in 1998 (see [1995-1998](#)). ([Burrell, Gumbel, and Sengupta 12/11/2001](#)) The Associated Press will report that he was placed on the watch list for alleged links to the GIA, an Algerian militant group. ([Haven 5/19/2002](#)) The French also warn the British

about Moussaoui's training camp connections. ([Zucchini 12/13/2001](#)) French investigators ask MI5, Britain's domestic intelligence agency, to place Moussaoui under surveillance. In early December 2001, the Independent will report that "The request appears to have been ignored" and that the British "appear to have done nothing with the information." ([Burrell, Gumbel, and Sengupta 12/11/2001](#)) However, later in the same month, the Observer will report that MI5 did in fact place Moussaoui under surveillance, as MI5 was monitoring his telephone calls in 2000 (see [Mid-2000-December 9, 2000](#)).

1999: 9/11 Funder Offered Deal to Turn Informant

Saeed Sheikh, imprisoned in India from 1994 to December 1999 for kidnapping Britons and Americans, meets with a British official and a lawyer nine times while in prison. Supposedly, the visits are to check on his living conditions, since he is a British citizen. ([Watson and Barua 2/8/2002](#)) However, the London Times will later claim that British intelligence secretly offers amnesty and the ability to "live in London a free man" if he will reveal his links to al-Qaeda. The Times claims that he refuses the offer. ([Williams 7/16/2002](#); [Hussain and McGroarty 7/16/2002](#)) Yet after he is rescued in a hostage swap deal in December, the press reports that he, in fact, is freely able to return to Britain. ([Press Trust of India 1/3/2000](#)) He visits his parents there in 2000 and again in early 2001 and is alleged to wire money to the 9/11 hijackers during this period (see [Early August 2001](#)). ([BBC 7/16/2002](#); [O'Neill 7/16/2002](#); [Anson 8/2002](#)) He is not charged with kidnapping until well after 9/11. Saeed's kidnap victims call the government's decision not to try him a "disgrace" and "scandalous." ([Press Trust of India 1/3/2000](#)) The Pittsburgh Tribune-Review later suggests that not only is Saeed closely tied to both the ISI and al-Qaeda, but may also have been working for the CIA: "There are many in [Pakistani President] Musharraf's government who believe that Saeed Sheikh's power comes not from the ISI, but from his connections with our own CIA. The theory is that... Saeed Sheikh was bought and paid for." ([Pittsburgh Tribune-Review 3/3/2002](#))

1999: Atta Said to Meet Los Angeles Airport Bomber in Spain

A Spanish newspaper later will claim that Ahmed Ressam, the al-Qaeda operative who attempted to bomb the Los Angeles airport at the turn of the millennium (see [December 14, 1999](#)), meets Mohamed Atta in the Alicante region of Spain in this year. It is unclear whether the men trained at the same camp while they were in Afghanistan. ([Reuters 11/26/2001](#); [Passchier 9/14/2002](#)) According to other Spanish reports, in 1997 or 1998 Atta was a student in Valencia under an assumed name (see [1997 or 1998](#)). Valencia is less than 100 miles from Alicante. After his arrest, Ressam began cooperating with US investigators in the summer of 2001 (see [May 30, 2001](#)), leading to the possibility that he could have confirmed Atta's identity as an al-Qaeda operative before 9/11, if he had been asked.

1999: Atta Warns Religious Associate to Stay away from Islamic Extremists



Mohamed Atta with a beard. [Source: FBI] This year, Mohamed Atta is regularly attending Islamic study group meetings led by a fellow Hamburg student named Mohammed bin Nasser Belfas. By this time, Atta and most of the rest of the group have replaced their Western jeans and clean-shaven faces with long beards and tunics. After one of these meetings, Atta asks to privately see Volker Harum Bruhn, an ethnic German who is also a member of the group. Bruhn says that Atta strongly warns him to stay away from Islamic extremists, to follow the Koran strictly, and live a careful life. ([McDermott 9/1/2002](#); [Rubin and Dorgan 9/9/2002](#))

1999: Clinton Officials Ask About Islamic Jihad Leader's US Visits, FBI Agents Respond: 'Don't Worry About It'

Dan Benjamin and Steve Simon, director and senior director of the National Security Council's counterterrorism team, review some old intelligence files and learn that Ayman al-Zawahiri, head of Islamic Jihad and al-Qaeda's number two leader, had done fundraising in the US a few years earlier (see [Spring 1993](#)) (see [Late 1994 or 1995](#)). They call FBI agents Michael Rolince and Steve Jennings to a meeting at the White House. Benjamin will recall, "We said to them: 'This is incredible. Al-Zawahiri was here. He must have been fundraising, he had to have handlers. What can you tell us?' And [one of them] said, 'We got it covered. Don't worry about it.' And it was a blow-off." Only later do Benjamin and Simon learn that one of al-Zawahiri's hosts had been Ali Mohamed, even though Mohamed is already in US custody and his arrest had been front page news by the time the White House meeting took place. The FBI still fails to pursue the connection and rejects an offer of new authority to monitor activity in radical mosques. ([Weiser 10/30/1998](#); [Benjamin and Simon 2002](#), pp. 306-307, 465; [CBS News 10/2/2002](#); [Washington Post 10/2/2002](#))

1999: US and British Special Forces Train KLA Operatives in Albania

British SAS teams, US Special Forces, and representatives from Military Professional Resources Inc. (MPRI) are actively training KLA fighters at bases in Northern Albania (see [Late June-Early July 2001](#)). ([Sherwell 4/18/1999](#); [Bruce 3/27/2001](#))

1999: Al-Qaeda Linked Philippine Militants Involved in Drug Trade



A group of Abu Sayyaf militants photographed on July 16, 2000. [Source: Associated Press] In the book “Dollars for Terror” published this year, investigative journalist Richard Labeviere claims that the Philippine drug trade is worth billions of dollars a year and that Muslim militants connected to al-Qaeda have a role in it. “Admittedly, the Islamists do not control all of these flows, but the Abu Sayyaf group plays a big part. Its mercenaries look after the protection of transport and the shipping of cargoes via jungle airports in the [southern Philippines.] By the same air channels, and also by sea, weapons are delivered for the group’s combat unit. This supply chain is managed by Pakistani intermediaries who are trained directly in the Afghan camps around Peshawar” in Pakistan. He does not give his source for this information. ([Labeviere 1999, pp. 365](#)) Perhaps not coincidentally, a Pakistani believed to be connected to the drug trade is suspected of helping to fund the Bojinka plot (see [January 6, 1995](#)), which was planned in the Philippines with the help of the Abu Sayyaf (see [December 1994-April 1995](#)). Victor Bout, the world’s biggest illegal arms dealer, is said to use his network to ship weaponry to the Abu Sayyaf, though details have not been reported. Bout’s network also delivers weapons to the Taliban (see [Mid-1996-October 2001](#)). ([McNeil 2/27/2002](#); [Abuza 9/1/2005](#)) There are many reports on the Abu Sayyaf’s involvement with illegal drugs. For instance, in 2002 a Philippine newspaper will note that the region dominated by Abu Sayyaf has become such a notorious drug center that it is sometimes nicknamed “Little Colombia.” ([Sicat 3/13/2002](#))

1999: Germans Miss Links between Hamburg 9/11 Hijackers and Key Al-Qaeda Operative



Mohamedou Ould Slahi. [Source: *Fahnnungsfoto*]The 9/11

Commission will later call Mohamedou Ould Slahi “a significant al-Qaeda operative who, even [in late 1999], was well known to US and German intelligence, though neither government apparently knew he was operating in Germany....” ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 165](#)) However, while in US custody after 9/11, Slahi will allege that a phone call he received in January 1999 from his cousin Mahfouz Walad Al-Walid, a top al-Qaeda leader living in Afghanistan, was monitored. Slahi will say, “I later learned that my cousin was using Osama bin Laden’s satellite phone that was intercepted.” Another mutual cousin was arrested that month and Slahi says, “I wasn’t captured, but I am sure I was followed by the German police [and/or] German intelligence.” He claims the imam at his mosque told him that German officials had come to ask questions about him and was told Slahi had ties with terrorists. ([US Department of Defense 4/20/2006, pp. 184-216](#)) In 2000, the New York Times will report that German authorities became interested in Slahi “shortly after the bombings of American Embassies in East Africa in 1998. The German authorities learned that [he] might have ties to Islamic extremists in Europe...” ([Johnston 1/29/2000](#)) After Hamburg al-Qaeda cell member Ramzi bin al-Shibh is captured in 2002, he will allegedly claim that Slahi was the one who originally recruited 9/11 hijackers Marwan Alshehhi and Ziad Jarrah. ([Agence France-Presse 10/26/2002](#)) After 9/11, another prisoner in US custody will say that Slahi and bin al-Shibh met in Frankfurt in 1999 through an acquaintance. This acquaintance will go further and will claim Slahi knew bin al-Shibh and Jarrah since at least 1998 and that Slahi later lived with them in Hamburg. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 496](#)) In October 1999, bin al-Shibh and Alshehhi call Slahi, and he invites them to come to where he lives in Duisburg, Germany. Bin al-Shibh, Alshehhi, and Ziad Jarrah soon go visit him there. Karim Mehdi, an apparent leader of the al-Qaeda Ruhr Valley cell who will later be sentenced to nine years in prison for a post-9/11 plot, is also at this meeting. Bin al-Shibh, Alshehhi, and Jarrah follow Slahi’s advice to go to Afghanistan instead of Chechnya, and he gives them instructions on how to meet up with al-Qaeda operatives there. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 165](#); [Deutsche Presse-Agentur \(Hamburg\) 8/3/2005](#); [Soucard](#)

[10/26/2006](#)) US investigators later believe Slahi worked closely on al-Qaeda matters with bin al-Shibh and instructed another militant to go to the US and to take part in the 9/11 plot. Additionally, he is believed to have a key role in Ahmed Ressam's millennium plot (see [December 15-31, 1999](#)). ([Meyer 4/24/2006](#)) German authorities are monitoring and wiretapping the phones at bin al-Shibh's apartment throughout 1999 (see [November 1, 1998-February 2001](#) and [2000](#)), but they apparently don't connect Slahi to the Hamburg militants or don't act on that connection. The Germans will apparently miss another chance to learn of his ties to the Hamburg cell in April 2000, when Slahi is arrested for three weeks in Germany and then let go (see [January-April 2000](#)). ([US Department of Defense 4/20/2006, pp. 184-216](#)) Note that the testimonies of detainees such as Slahi and bin al-Shibh are suspect due to widespread allegations that they were tortured into confessions (for instance, see [September 27, 2001](#)).

1999: FBI Headquarters Delays Check on Terrorist Trainer for 9 Months, Tries to Block Warning for National Guard

FBI Minneapolis agent Harry Samit learns that an unnamed man plans to travel from the US to Afghanistan to train militants there, and that one of his relatives has applied to join the Minnesota National Guard. Samit wants to run a check on him and notify the National Guard, as he is worried because guardsmen have access to local airports. However, he is blocked for several months by Michael Maltbie, an agent in the Radical Fundamentalist Unit at FBI headquarters, who becomes "extremely agitated" and says this is "just the sort of thing that would get the FBI into trouble." ([Gordon 3/21/2006](#); [Gordon 3/21/2006](#); [Powell 3/21/2006](#)) Samit and Maltbie will later have another running disagreement over the Zacarias Moussaoui case (see [August 15-September 10, 2001](#), [August 20-September 11, 2001](#), [August 27, 2001](#), and [August 28, 2001](#)).

1999: George W. Bush Hints at Invading Iraq in Future Presidency



Mickey Herskowitz. [*Source: Public domain*] Presidential candidate George W. Bush tells prominent Texas author and Bush family friend Mickey Herskowitz, who is helping Bush write an autobiography, that as president he would

invade Iraq if given the opportunity. "One of the keys to being seen as a great leader is to be seen as a commander-in-chief," Herskowitz remembers Bush saying. "My father had all this political capital built up when he drove the Iraqis out of [Kuwait] and he wasted it. If I have a chance to invade Iraq, if I had that much capital, I'm not going to waste it. I'm going to get everything passed I want to get passed and I'm going to have a successful presidency." Herskowitz later says he believes Bush's comments were intended to distinguish himself from his father, rather than express a desire to invade Iraq. ([Cobb 10/31/2004](#))

Late 1990s: CIA and German Police Foil Airplane Bomb Plot by Al-Qaeda in Northern Germany

Journalist Seymour Hersh will write in the New Yorker in 2002, "In the late nineteen-nineties, the CIA obtained reliable information indicating that an al-Qaeda network based in northern Germany had penetrated airport security in Amsterdam and was planning to attack American passenger planes by planting bombs in the cargo, a former security official told me." The CIA, working with German police, stage a series of successful preemptive raids and foil the plot. The former official says, "The Germans roused a lot of people." The CIA and FAA work closely together and "the incident was kept secret." ([Hersh 5/27/2002](#)) Nothing has been revealed about this incident except for the short mention in the New Yorker, but it would seem probable that there would have been some connection to the Hamburg al-Qaeda cell involved in 9/11, since it seems to be the primary al-Qaeda cell in northern Germany. The cell had connections to other al-Qaeda cells in Germany and Europe, and some of the Hamburg hijackers even held a mysterious meeting in Amsterdam in 1999 (see [Mid-June 1999](#)). But what opportunities the CIA and German government may have had to learn about the Hamburg cell while foiling this plot is not known.

Late 1990s: Bin Laden's Brother-in-Law Khalifa Still in Contact with Militants

Now living in Saudi Arabia, bin Laden's brother-in-law Mohammed Jamal Khalifa keeps in contact with charity fronts and militant groups he helped to organize. According to a Philippines police report, he maintains contact with:

- Leaders of the Philippine militant groups Abu Sayyaf and Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).
- Abdul Salam Zubair, who was a key employee in the IRIC (International Relations and Information Center), a charity front used in the Bojinka plot (see [Spring 1995](#)). By this time, Zubair is working with Khalifa Trading Industries in Manila with other Khalifa associates.
- The staff of the International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO) in the Philippines. Many of its staffers, including its Philippines coordinator, are also believed to be Hamas operatives. The US will designate the chapter a terrorist financier in 2006 (see [August 3, 2006](#)).

- Ibrahim Mata, the head of Islamic Studies, Call and Guidance (ISCAG), in the Philippines.
- - The Philippine chapter of the Muslim Brotherhood. ([Gunaratna 2003, pp. 194](#))
- The Benevolence International Foundation (BIF). In a post-9/11 trial in the US, US Attorney Patrick Fitzgerald will allege that the Illinois office of BIF calls Khalifa in Saudi Arabia as recently as November 19, 1998. ([USA v. Benevolence International Foundation and Enaam M. Arnaout 4/29/2002, pp. 14, 21-22](#)) The US will officially designate BIF a terrorism financier in 2002. Khalifa also still visits the Philippines periodically (see [Late 1995-September 11, 2001](#)).

1999: US Government Ignores ‘Who’s Who’ Book of Al-Qaeda Figures

Rita Katz, a researcher at The Investigative Project on Terrorism, discovers a book called *The Arab Volunteers in Afghanistan*. Published in Arabic in 1991, the book is very obscure. The 9/11 Commission will later say the book contains “a particularly useful insight into the evolution of al-Qaeda—written by an early bin Laden associate, Adel Batterjee, under a pseudonym.” ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 467](#)) Katz discovers that Batterjee was close acquaintances with Osama bin Laden and that the book describes bin Laden’s career and that of many others during the 1980s war in Afghanistan in great detail. She will later call the book “practically the ‘Who’s Who of al-Qaeda’” because so many people described in it went on to become important al-Qaeda figures. The book discusses:

- Adel Batterjee, the author of the book and a Saudi millionaire. He helped found the Benevolence International Foundation (BIF). The US will declare him a terrorism financier in 2004.
 - Wael Hamza Julaidan, a Saudi multimillionaire. The US will designate him a terrorism financier in 2002 (see [September 6, 2002](#)).
 - Enaam Arnaout. He runs the US headquarters of BIF from 1993 until late 2001, when the US will shut BIF down.
 - Mohammed Loay Bayazid, a US citizen. He is a founding member of al-Qaeda and worked in the US for BIF until 1998.
 - Mohammed Jamal Khalifa, bin Laden’s brother-in-law. He is tied to the Bojinka plot and numerous militant charity fronts.
 - Mohammed Galeb Kalaje Zouaydi (the book mentions him by his alias, Abu Talha). Considered al-Qaeda’s main financier of cells in Europe, he will be arrested a few months after 9/11 (see [April 23, 2002](#)).
 - Wali Khan Amin Shah, one of the Bojinka plotters. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 468](#))
 - Mamdouh Mahmud Salim, an al-Qaeda leader involved in the 1998 African embassy bombings who will be arrested in Germany in 1998 (see [September 20, 1998](#)). ([Devon and Mitre 10/28/2002](#))
- Katz says that “many, many others” are mentioned. “Many others mentioned in the book decorate the FBI’s ‘most wanted’ lists.... There was nothing like [the] book to put everything in order, organize loose bits of information, and clear parts that were obscure

to me (and to everyone else.)” Katz has connections in the US government, so she calls the White House and tries to convey the importance of the book’s information. She repeatedly sends them translations of important sections. However, she sees very little interest in the book. After 9/11, she will get a call from the Justice Department, finally expressing interest. Katz will later comment, “The government took interest in the book only after 9/11, two years after I’d first discovered it and offered it to them. No wonder that government agents told me I knew more about al-Qaeda than they did.”

1999: Candidate Bush Meets with Radical Muslim Activist



George W. Bush and with Muslim activist Abdurahman Alamoudi. Judging from the background, this picture was probably taken in a meeting held in 2000. [Source: PBS] Presidential candidate George W. Bush and his political adviser Karl Rove meet with Muslim activist Abdurahman Alamoudi. The meeting is said to have been brokered by Republican lobbyist Grover Norquist. Little is known about the meeting, which will not be reported until 2007. At the time, Alamoudi is head of the American Muslim Council (AMC), which is seen as a mainstream activist and lobbying group. But Alamoudi and the AMC had been previously criticized for their ties to Hamas and other militant groups and figures (see [March 13, 1996](#)). Bush and/or Rove will meet with Alamoudi on other occasions (see (see [July 2000](#), [June 22, 2001](#), [September 14-26, 2001](#)). US intelligence learned of ties between Alamoudi and bin Laden in 1994 (see [Shortly After March 1994](#)); he will be sentenced to a long prison term in 2004 (see [October 15, 2004](#)). ([Isikoff and Hosenball 4/18/2007](#))

1999: Monitored Al-Qaeda Operative Sits Next to Bin Laden at Banquet

Ahmed al-Hada, an operative who runs a communications hub for al-Qaeda in Yemen, travels to Afghanistan and attends a banquet, where, US intelligence learns, he sits next to Osama bin Laden. The communications hub run by al-Hada, who fought in the anti-Soviet jihad in Afghanistan, helped coordinate the East African embassy bombings and has been under heavy surveillance by the NSA and other US agencies since at least late 1998 (see [Late August 1998](#)). ([Hosenball and Klaidman 2/18/2002](#))

1999: CIA Launches Operation to Track Militants Passing through Dubai Airport

The CIA begins an operation to track suspected al-Qaeda operatives as they transit the airport in Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE). When it is revealed in 2002 that 9/11 hijacker Ziad Jarrah is monitored as a part of this operation (see [January 30, 2000](#)), sources from the UAE and Europe describe the operation to CNN, and one of them draws a map of the airport, showing how the operation usually works and how the people wanted for questioning are intercepted. UAE officials are often told in advance of who is coming in and who should be questioned. ([MacVicar and Faraj 8/1/2002](#)) Almost all the hijackers pass through Dubai at some point in the months before 9/11, some repeatedly (see [December 8, 2000](#), [April 11-June 28, 2001](#), and [June 2001](#)). One of them, Khalid Almihdhar, has his passport photocopied in Dubai by local authorities and the CIA (see [January 2-5, 2000](#)). Also, three of the hijackers, Satam al Suqami, Ahmed Alghamdi and Hamza Alghamdi, are the subject a US customs investigation at the time they pass through Dubai (see [September 2000](#) and [Spring 2001](#)), but it is unknown if there is any attempt to track them through Dubai.

1999-2000: Two 9/11 Hijackers Radicalized by Saudi Education System

Two of the alleged 9/11 hijackers, Abdulaziz Alomari and Ahmed Alnami, are apparently radicalized by the education system in Saudi Arabia. Abdulaziz Alomari is an Islamic law graduate (see [Late 1990s](#)) and serves as a prayer leader at his mosque. At university in Qassim Province, he studies under radical cleric Sulayman al-Alwan. The 9/11 Commission will say that al-Alwan's mosque is "known among moderate clerics as a 'terrorist factory.' The Province is at the very heart of the strict Wahhabi movement in Saudi Arabia." Al-Alwan is reportedly spiritual advisor to al-Qaeda logistics manager Abu Zubaida and is in telephone contact with Hamed al-Sulami, an associate of Hani Hanjour (see [July 10, 2001](#)). ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 232-3, 521](#)) Ahmed Alnami leads a carefree life until 1999, but then becomes more pious after returning from a Saudi-government sponsored training camp, growing a beard and shunning his old friends. He reportedly sings the call to prayer at the al-Basra mosque in the city of Abha and, occasionally, another mosque in Khamis Mushayt, a nearby town where some of the other hijackers live. ([Ba-Isa 9/19/2001](#); [Khashoggi 9/20/2001](#); [Sennott 3/3/2002](#)) He is also reported to be a prayer leader in Abha. ([Murphy and Ottaway 9/25/2001](#); [Fisk 9/27/2001](#); [Saudi Information Agency 9/11/2002](#)) However, after 9/11 his father will say that he "practiced religion like most of us do." ([ABC News 3/15/2002](#))

Early 1999: Memo Calls for New Approach on Bin Laden; Focuses on State-Sponsorship, Money Trail

State Department Coordinator for Counterterrorism Michael Sheehan writes a memo calling for a new approach in containing bin Laden. He urges a series of actions the US could take toward Pakistan, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen to persuade them to help isolate al-Qaeda. He calls Pakistan the key country and urges that terrorism be made the central issue with them. He advises the US to work with all these countries to curb money laundering. However, a former official says Sheehan's plan lands "with a resounding thud." Pakistan continues to "feign cooperation but [does] little" about its support for the Taliban. ([Risen and Miller 10/29/2001](#))

Early 1999: NSA Monitoring Hears 9/11 Hijacker Names, This Information Is Not Shared with CIA or FBI



Salem Alhazmi. [*Source: FBI*] As the NSA continues to monitor an al-Qaeda communications hub in Yemen run by hijacker Khalid Almihdhar's father-in-law (see [Late August 1998](#)), they find references to Almihdhar and the hijacker brothers, Salem and Nawaf Alhazmi. They also learn that Almihdhar and Nawaf Alhazmi are long time friends. ([9/11 Commission 1/26/2004, pp. 6](#); [9/11 Commission 1/26/2004](#)) In early 1999, the NSA intercepts communications mentioning the full name "Nawaf Alhazmi." However, this information is not disseminated to the intelligence community, as it apparently does not meet NSA reporting thresholds. The 9/11 Congressional Inquiry will say, "Those thresholds vary, depending on the judgement of the NSA analyst who is reviewing the intercept and the subject, location, and content of the intercept." Another intelligence organisation intercepts the same or similar calls and reports this to the NSA. The Inquiry comments: "NSA's practice was to review such reports and disseminate those responsive to US intelligence requirements. For an undetermined reason, NSA did not disseminate the [...] report." ([Lumpkin 9/25/2002](#); [US Congress 10/17/2002](#); [US Congress 7/24/2003, pp. 135](#)) The NSA continues to intercept such calls and finds more information a few months later (see [Summer 1999](#) and [Late Summer 1999](#)). Near the end of 1999, there will be additional intercepts that give Khalid Almihdhar's full name and the first names of the other two (see [Shortly Before December 29, 1999](#)). But while the NSA will provide some information about these new intercepts to the CIA and other

agencies, they will not go back to the earlier intercepts to figure out Nawaf's full name and close connection to Almihdhar (see [December 29, 1999](#)).

Early 1999: FBI Fails to Pursue Possible Connection Between BMI and Embassy Bombings

BMI Inc. is a New Jersey-based investment firm with connections to a remarkable number of suspected terrorist financiers (see [1986-October 1999](#)). In 1999, a former BMI accountant contacts the FBI and says that he believes BMI is supporting terrorism. He claims that money he "was transferring overseas on behalf of the company may have been used to finance the embassy bombings in Africa." (see [August 7, 1998](#)) US investigators establish a financial link between BMI and an Islamic charity named Mercy International. A Nairobi, Kenya, branch of that charity helped support the embassy bombings. FBI agent Robert Wright's Vulgar Betrayal investigation had recently discovered evidence suggesting a link between Saudi multimillionaire Yassin al-Qadi and the embassy bombings (see [October 1998](#)), and al-Qadi is a major investor of BMI. The Vulgar Betrayal investigation begins looking at this new possible link. BMI president Soliman Biheiri hears that FBI agent Gamal Abdel-Hafiz has been told about this, and he asks to meet with Abdel-Hafiz to explain. Apparently, he does not realize that Abdel-Hafiz is an undercover FBI agent. Wright asks Abdel-Hafiz to wear a wire to the meeting, and Abdel-Hafiz refuses to do so (see [Early 1999-March 21, 2000](#)). Apparently the meeting with Biheiri never takes place and the possible connections between BMI and the embassy bombings are not fully investigated before 9/11. ([Simpson 11/26/2002](#); [Farah 8/20/2003](#); [Telvick 10/16/2003](#))

Early 1999: KSM Allegedly Works on 9/11 Plot in Hamburg

Counterterrorism expert Rohan Gunaratna will later claim that Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM) visits Hamburg at this time and meets with Mohamed Atta and Ramzi bin al-Shibh. Together, they make plans to carry out the 9/11 attacks in the US. ([Gunaratna 2003, pp. xxx](#)) Other accounts claim KSM repeatedly visits Hamburg this year but do not definitively state who he meets (see [1999](#)). The 9/11 Commission will later claim that the Hamburg al-Qaeda cell including Atta and bin al-Shibh will not be asked to join the 9/11 attacks until late 1999 in Afghanistan (see [October 1999](#)).

Early 1999: Europol Ties KLA to International Drug Gangs

The police forces of three Western European countries, as well as Europol, the European police authority, are separately investigating a growing pool of evidence that the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) is being funded by drug money. And on March 24, 1999, the London Times reports that "Europol... is preparing a report for European interior and

justice ministers on a connection between the KLA and Albanian drug gangs.” (see [1996-1999](#)) ([Boyles and Wright 3/24/1999](#))

Early 1999-March 21, 2000: Muslim FBI Agent Refuses to Wear Wire in Meeting with BMI Head; FBI Infighting Follows



Gamal Abdel-Hafiz. [*Source: Charles Ommannney*] Gamal Abdel-Hafiz, the only Muslim FBI agent in the years just prior to 9/11, becomes involved in FBI agent Robert Wright’s Vulgar Betrayal investigation in early 1999. An accountant working for BMI Inc., an investment firm with connections to many suspected terrorism financiers (see [1986-October 1999](#)), tells Abdel-Hafiz that he is worried that BMI funds had helped fund the 1998 US embassy bombings in Africa (see [August 7, 1998](#)). BMI president Soliman Biheiri hears that Abdel-Hafiz had been told about this, and wants to meet with him to discuss it (apparently without realizing that Abdel-Hafiz is an undercover FBI agent). Wright asks Abdel-Hafiz to wear a wire to the meeting, but Abdel-Hafiz refuses to do so. This leads to infighting within the FBI. On July 6, 1999, Abdel-Hafiz files a religious discrimination complaint, accusing Wright of making derogatory comments to fellow agents. ([Telvick 10/16/2003](#)) On March 21, 2000, Wright makes a formal internal complaint about Abdel-Hafiz. FBI agent Barry Carmody seconds Wright’s complaint. Wright and Carmody accuse Abdel-Hafiz of hindering investigations by openly refusing to record other Muslims. In an affidavit, Wright claims that Abdel-Hafiz refused to wear the wire “based on religious reasons saying, ‘A Muslim doesn’t record another Muslim.’” Abdel-Hafiz does not deny the quote, but claims it was taken out of context. ([Simpson 11/26/2002](#); [Ross and Walker 12/19/2002](#); [Telvick 10/16/2003](#)) Federal prosecutor Mark Flessner and other FBI agents back up the allegations against Abdel-Hafiz. ([Ross and Walker 12/19/2002](#)) Carmody will also claim that, in a different investigation, Abdel-Hafiz hindered an inquiry into the possible ties to Islamic militants of fired University of South Florida Professor Sami al-Arian by refusing to record a conversation with the professor in 1998. ([Fechter 3/4/2003](#)) Complaints to superiors and headquarters about Abdel-Hafiz never get a response. ([Fox News 3/6/2003](#)) “Far from being reprimanded, in February 2001 Abdel-Hafiz [is] promoted to one of the FBI’s most important anti-terrorism posts, the American Embassy in Saudi Arabia, to handle investigations for the FBI in that Muslim country.” ([Ross and Walker 12/19/2002](#); [Telvick 10/16/2003](#)) In 2003, FBI agent John Vincent will complain, “Five different FBI field divisions complained of this agent’s activities, and the FBI headquarters response was to promote him to a sensitive position in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.” ([Federal News Service 6/2/2003](#)) Abdel-

Hafiz will be suspended in February 2003 over charges that he faked a break-in of his own house in order to collect \$25,000 in insurance benefits and then failed an FBI polygraph test when asked about it. In January 2004, the FBI's Disciplinary Review Board will reinstate him after deciding there was insufficient evidence in the case. ([Fechter 3/4/2003](#); [Telvick 10/16/2003](#))

Between 1999 and September 11, 2001: NORAD Practices Live-Fly Mock Shootdown of a Poison-Filled Jet

At some point during the two-year period preceding 9/11, NORAD fighters perform a mock shootdown over the Atlantic Ocean of a jet loaded with chemical poisons heading toward the US. ([Komarow and Squitieri 4/18/2004](#))

January 1999: US Air Defense Mission Rated 'Outstanding' in Inspections



Logo of the 1st Air Force. [*Source: 1st Air Force*]The 1st Air Force air sovereignty team, which, as part of the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD), is responsible for the air defense of the continental United States, scores an unprecedented “grand slam” in a four-day evaluation of its effectiveness in performing the air sovereignty mission. The three air defense sectors responsible for protecting the skies above the continental US—the Northeast, Southeast, and Western sectors—have their command and control skills tested in the Air Combat Command Operational Readiness Inspections (ORI). The 1st Air Force headquarters is concurrently tested in the NORAD Operational Evaluation (NOE). All are rated “outstanding,” the highest score possible on a five-tier scale. Only recently, on October 1, 1997, the Air National Guard had assumed command and control of the 1st Air Force and the Continental United States NORAD Region. Retired Col. Dan Navin, former 1st Air Force vice commander, says, “No transition can be truly complete until it is proven that the mission is being performed the right way. This ‘ORI’ proved exactly that, and validated the confidence the senior leaders of the Air Force had in the Air National Guard.” ([Filson 1999, pp. vi, 114-115, 184](#); [Arias 3/1999](#)) The Northeast Air Defense Sector (NEADS) is responsible for an area of over 500,000 square miles of airspace, including that over New

York City and Washington, DC. All the hijackings on 9/11 will occur within this area. ([Filson 1999, pp. 51](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 17](#)) Despite its “outstanding” rating two-and-a-half years earlier, NEADS will fail to intercept any of the four hijacked airliners.

January 1999: Indicted War Criminal Takes Over Command of the KLA with US Approval



From left to right: Hashim Thaci, UCK leader; Bernard Kouchner, UN Administrator of Kosovo; Gen. Sir Michael Jackson, KFOR Commander; Agim Ceku, Commander of KLA; Gen. Wesley Clark, NATO Commander. [*Source: Vojin Joksimovich*] General Agim Ceku retires his commission in the Croatian armed forces to take command of the KLA. Despite the fact that Ceku is an indicted war criminal (see [1993-1995](#)), this move has the blessing of the US State Department. As head of the KLA, Ceku is viewed by NATO and presented in the mainstream media as a loyal and valuable NATO ally. He is a frequent participant in NATO briefings along with top generals such as Wesley Clark and Michael Jackson. ([Taylor 2002, pp. 164](#)) Ceku will be elected prime minister of Kosovo in 2006 despite the still pending war crimes charges.

January 1999: Morton Abramowitz Urges Full Support for Kosovo Independence

Morton Abramowitz writes a column in the Wall Street Journal calling for a drastic change in US policy toward Kosovo. Abramowitz is highly influential with the US foreign policy elite (see [1991-1997](#)). He argues that the US should support full independence for Kosovo and outlines options the US should consider including bombing Serbia, removing Milosevic, arming and training the KLA, and turning Kosovo into a NATO protectorate through the use of ground forces. ([Roberts 6/1999](#))

1999-September 10, 2001: Some 9/11 Hijackers Possibly Spend Time in Philippines

The names of four hijackers are later discovered in Philippines immigration records. However, whether these are the hijackers or just other Saudis with the same names has not been confirmed.

- Abdulaziz Alomari visits the Philippines once in 2000, then again in February 2001, leaving on February 12. ([Gomez 9/19/2001](#); [Lacuerta 9/19/2001](#); [Telegraph 9/20/2001](#))

- Ahmed Alghamdi visits Manila, Philippines, more than 13 times, starting in 1999. He leaves the Philippines the day before the attacks. ([Telegraph 9/20/2001](#); [Arizona Daily Star 9/28/2001](#); [Europa 10/11/2001](#))

- Faye Ahmed Banihammad visits the Philippines on October 17-19, 2000. ([Telegraph 9/20/2001](#); [Arizona Daily Star 9/28/2001](#))

- Saeed Alghamdi visits the Philippines on at least 15 occasions in 2001, entering as a tourist. The last visit ends on August 6, 2001. ([Telegraph 9/20/2001](#))

Hijackers Mohamed Atta and Marwan Alshehhi were seen Philippines several times, the last time in December 1999 (see [December 1999](#)). 9/11 mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed occasionally stays there as well (see [September 1998-January 1999](#)).

Nothing more has been heard to confirm or deny the hijackers' Philippines connections since these reports.

1999-September 11, 2001: NORAD Exercise Simulates Crashes into US Buildings; One of Them Is the World Trade Center

According to USA Today, "In the two years before the Sept. 11 attacks, the North American Aerospace Defense Command conduct[s] exercises simulating what the White House [later] says was unimaginable at the time: hijacked airliners used as weapons to crash into targets and cause mass casualties." One of these imagined targets is the World Trade Center. According to NORAD, these scenarios are regional drills, rather than regularly scheduled continent-wide exercises. They utilize "[n]umerous types of civilian and military aircraft" as mock hijacked aircraft, and test "track detection and identification; scramble and interception; hijack procedures; internal and external agency coordination; and operational security and communications security procedures." The main difference between these drills and the 9/11 attacks is that the planes in the drills are coming from another country, rather than from within the US. Before 9/11, NORAD reportedly conducts four major exercises at headquarters level per year. Most of them are said to include a hijack scenario (see [Before September 11, 2001](#)). ([Komarow and Squitieri 4/18/2004](#); [Starr 4/19/2004](#))

1999-After October 12, 2001: Al-Qadi Continues to Fund Ptech

After a 2002 US government raid on the offices of Ptech, a Boston based computer company (see [December 5, 2002](#)), Ptech officials will downplay any connection between Ptech and Yassin al-Qadi, a multimillionaire suspected of financing groups that have been officially designated as terrorist organizations. For instance, Ptech vice president Joseph Johnson will say al-Qadi had no ties to the company but “may have had something to do with it [in 1994].” Al-Qadi was one of Ptech’s biggest initial investors in 1994, if not the biggest investor (see [1994](#)). ([Anderson 12/7/2002](#)) However, there is considerable evidence al-Qadi is still involved in Ptech at least through 1999. Company insiders will later tell investigators that they were summoned to Saudi Arabia in 1999 to brief Saudi investors in Ptech. They are introduced to al-Qadi, who is described as an owner of Ptech. A photograph taken at this meeting shows al-Qadi with Ptech CEO Oussama Ziade and others. ([WBZ 4 \(Boston\) 12/9/2002](#)) Most media accounts say al-Qadi invested about \$5 million in Ptech in 1994, one quarter of the company’s start-up money. But one account claims that al-Qadi invested an additional \$9 million indirectly through BMI, the New Jersey-based investment firm with ties to several individuals suspected of financing Islamic militant groups (see [1986-October 1999](#)). Swiss investigators also allege that al-Qadi transfers \$2 million to Ptech between 1997 and 2000. ([Ehrenfeld 6/17/2005](#)) There are even allegations that al-Qadi continues to support Ptech after the US officially designates him a terrorist financier on October 12, 2001. In late 2002, CNN will report, “Sources said Ptech executives are believed to have been aware of al-Qadi’s suspected connections but did not sever their relationship with him.” ([CNN 12/6/2002](#)) Al-Qadi will deny allegations that he had any interest in Ptech after 9/11. But in late 2002 al-Qadi’s lawyer will concede that it is possible an al-Qadi representative continued to sit on Ptech’s board after 9/11. ([Hosenball 12/6/2002](#))

January 16, 1999: US Diplomat Claims Massacre of Albanians; Foreign Press Disputes Allegation

The Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) invites foreign journalists to the scene of an alleged Serb massacre of some 45 Albanians in Raqak, Kosovo. Later, at 12 noon, the Kosovo Verification Mission leader, US diplomat William Walker, leads another group of news reporters to the scene. The story makes international headlines and is later used to justify NATO bombings. The New York Times will call this the “turning point” in NATO’s decision to wage war on Yugoslavia. But the claim that a massacre occurred is quickly called into question. It turns out that an Associated Press television crew—at the invitation of Yugoslav authorities—had filmed a shootout the day before between the Yugoslav police and fighters with the KLA at the location where the alleged massacre took place. They say that upon arriving in Raqak most of the villagers had already fled the expected gun battle between the KLA and the police. They also report that they did not witness any executions or massacres of civilians. Furthermore, after the firefight, at about 3:30 p.m., the Yugoslav police announced in a press conference that they had killed 15 KLA “terrorists” in Raqak. And then about an hour later, at 4:40 p.m., and then again at 6 p.m., a Le Monde reporter visited the scene and reported that he saw no indications that a massacre of civilians had occurred. Finally, the foreign journalists escorted to Raqak by the KLA found no shell casings lying around the scene. “What is disturbing,”

correspondent Renaud Girard remarks, “is that the pictures filmed by the Associated Press journalists radically contradict Walker’s accusations.” Belarussian and Finnish forensic experts later investigate the claims but are unable to verify that a massacre actually took place. ([Chatelot 1/21/1999](#); [Chatelot 1/21/1999](#); [Covert Action Quarterly 6/1999](#))

January 17, 1999: Large Number of Mujaheddin Entering Albania

The Greek press reports that Afghan mujaheddin are entering Albania in large numbers. Osama bin Laden is named as one of those who have organized groups to fight in Kosovo to fight alongside the Albanians. According to the Arab-language news service Al-Hayat, an Albanian commander in Kosovo code named Monia is directly linked to bin Laden, and commands a force that includes at least 100 mujaheddin. An Interpol report released on October 23, 2001 also reveals that a senior bin Laden associate led an elite KLA fighting unit in Kosovo. According to the report, bin Laden also maintained extensive ties with the Albanian mafia. ([Taylor 12/15/2001](#))

January 29, 1999: Western Nations Issue Ultimatum to Serbs and Albanians

The six-nation “Contact Group,” comprised of delegations from the United States, Britain, France, Germany, Italy, and Russia, meets in London to discuss a resolution to the Kosovo conflict. At the conclusion of the conference, they issue an ultimatum to the Yugoslavian government and Kosovar Albanians, requiring them to attend peace talks in Rambouillet, France beginning on February 6 (see [February 6-23, 1999](#)). ([Press Association \(London\) 1/29/1999](#); [BBC 1/30/1999](#)) However, It appears only the KLA is invited to speak on behalf of the Kosovar Albanians, not Ibrahim Rugova—the only democratically elected leader of Kosovo—or any other member of the Kosovo Democratic League. “Western diplomats have described Rugova as increasingly irrelevant, while the key players in Kosovo are now the rebels of the KLA,” the BBC reports. ([BBC 1/31/1999](#))

January 31, 1999: Germany Monitors 9/11 Hijacker’s Calls, Shares Information with CIA



Marwan Alshehhi. This picture is taken from his US visa.

[Source: FBI] German intelligence is tapping the telephone of al-Qaeda operative Mohammed Haydar Zammar, and on this date, Zammar gets a call from a “Marwan.” This is later found to be hijacker Marwan Alshehhi. Marwan talks about mundane things, like his studies in Bonn, Germany, and promises to come to Hamburg in a few months. German investigators trace the telephone number and determine the call came from a mobile phone registered in the United Arab Emirates. ([US Congress 7/24/2003](#)³³; [Deutsche Presse-Agentur \(Hamburg\) 8/13/2003](#); [Risen and Lichtblau 2/24/2004](#)) German intelligence will pass this information to the CIA about one month later, but the CIA apparently fails to capitalize on it (see [March 1999](#)).

February 1999: Pilot Suicide Squad Rumored in Iraq

US Intelligence obtains information that Iraq has formed a suicide pilot unit that it plans to use against British and US forces in the Persian Gulf. The CIA comments that this report is highly unlikely and is probably disinformation. ([US Congress 7/24/2003](#)³⁴)

February 1999: Bin Laden Strengthens Ties with Philippine Militant Group



Hashim Salamat. [Source: BBC] Western intelligence monitors a series of phone calls in which bin Laden asks the leader of a Philippine militant group to set up more training camps that al-Qaeda can use. Bin Laden is said to call Hashim Salamat, the leader of Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). There are reports that al-Qaeda started funding and using MILF training camps in 1995. But apparently bin Laden successfully asks for more camps because the movement of militants into Afghanistan has grown increasingly difficult since the African embassy bombings in 1998 (see [August 7, 1998](#)). ([Goodenough 9/19/2002](#); [Ressa 10/28/2002](#); [Garrido 10/30/2003](#)) The same month, Salamat claims in a BBC interview that the MILF has received money from bin Laden, but says that it has only been for humanitarian purposes. ([Neilan 2/11/1999](#); [Garrido 10/30/2003](#))

February 1999-February 2000: Al-Marabh Possible Florida Advance Man for Hijackers

In February 1999, Nabil al-Marabh moves to Tampa, Florida. He gets a Florida driver's license and begins driving taxis in Tampa, just as he did previously in Boston. According to an apartment complex manager, from February 1999 to February 2000 he lives in an apartment with another Arab man with a different last name. Investigators later will wonder if al-Marabh was an advance man for the Florida-based 9/11 hijackers. Tampa is about 50 miles north of Venice, where several 9/11 hijacker pilots will attend flight schools beginning in July 2000 (see [July 1-3, 2000](#)). While immigration records indicate Mohamed Atta will first arrive in the US in June 2000, there is some evidence of him being in the US before then (see [Late April-Mid-May 2000](#); [April 2000](#)), and he may arrive in Florida by September 1999 (see [September 1999](#)). ([Golden and Miller 9/18/2001](#); [ABC News 1/31/2002](#)) Most of the information on al-Marabh's taxi license application is fraudulent, including where he lived and worked from 1994 to 1999. ([ABC News 1/31/2002](#)) In May 1999, a potential al-Qaeda sleeper agent named Ihab Ali Nawawi is arrested in Orlando, Florida, about 80 miles from Tampa. Nawawi had been working as a taxi driver and was in contact with top al-Qaeda leaders. While the similarity between him and al-Marabh is intriguing, there is no known reported connection in Florida between the two men (see [May 18, 1999](#)). In the early 1990s, both worked for the Pakistani branch of the Muslim World League, a charity with suspected

terrorism ties (see [1989-1994](#)). ([Murphy 10/28/2001](#)) Al-Marabh also apparently goes to Afghanistan some time in 1999 or early 2000. ([Schiller 10/11/2001](#))

February 1999-September 10, 2001: FBI Agents Investigating Al-Qaeda-Linked US Charity Get Little Help

The FBI's Chicago office opens a full field investigation into the Illinois based Benevolence International Foundation (BIF), after one of its agents stumbled across links between BIF and radical militants while attending a conference. The CIA and FBI already have extensive evidence linking BIF to al-Qaeda from a variety of sources but how much of that is shared with the Chicago office after they start their investigation is unclear (see [1998](#)). Chicago FBI agents begin looking through BIF's trash and learn much, since BIF officials throw out their phone records and detailed reports without shredding them. They also cultivate a source who gives them some useful information about BIF, but apparently no smoking guns. But they run into many difficulties:

- In the summer of 1999, the FBI sends a request to the Saudi government asking for information about Adel Batterjee, the founder of BIF, but they get no reply before 9/11.
 - In April 2000, they apply for a FISA warrant so they can conduct electronic surveillance, but it is not approved until after 9/11. It has not been explained why there was such a long delay.
 - They discover the bank account numbers of the BIF's overseas offices and ask for help from other US intelligence agencies to trace the money, but they never hear back about this before 9/11.
 - They submit a request to an allied European country for information about European intelligence reports linking BIF executive director Enaam Arnaout to the kidnapping and murders of Americans in Kashmir in 1995. But they never even receive an acknowledgment that the request was received (see [July 4, 1995](#)).
 - A European intelligence agency invites the Chicago agents to a meeting to share information about BIF, but the agents are not allowed to go as their superiors say they cannot afford to send them. ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 96-98](#))^٩
- BIF will not be shut down until shortly after 9/11 (see [December 14, 2001](#)).

February 11, 1999: Bin Laden Missile Strike Called Off for Fear of Hitting Persian Gulf Royalty



Apparently, this surveillance photo of a C-130 transport plane from the United Arab Emirates plays a key role in the decision not to strike at bin Laden. [Source: *CBC*] Intelligence reports foresee the presence of bin Laden at a desert hunting camp in Afghanistan for about a week. Information on his presence appears reliable, so preparations are made to target his location with cruise missiles. However, intelligence also puts an official aircraft of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and members of the royal family from that country in the same location. Bin Laden is hunting with the Emirati royals, as he did with leaders from the UAE and Saudi Arabia on other occasions (see [1995-2001](#)). Local informants confirm exactly where bin Laden will be in the camp on February 11, and a strike is prepared. But policy makers are concerned that a strike might kill a prince or other senior officials, so the strike is called off. Bin Laden leaves the camp on February 12. A top UAE official at the time denies that high-level officials are there, but evidence subsequently confirms their presence. (9/11 Commission 3/24/2004; Zeman et al. 11/2004) Michael Scheuer, head of the CIA's bin Laden unit at the time, will claim in 2004 that "the truth has not been fully told" about this incident. He will claim that the strike is cancelled because senior officials at the CIA, White House, and other agencies, decide to accept assurances from an unnamed Islamic country that it can acquire bin Laden from the Taliban. "US officials accepted these assurances despite the well-documented record of that country withholding help—indeed, it was a record of deceit and obstruction—regarding all issues pertaining to Bin Laden" in previous years. (*Atlantic Monthly* 12/2004) This may be a reference to Saudi Arabia. In mid-1998, the CIA called off a plan to capture bin Laden in favor of an ultimately unfulfilled Saudi promise to bribe the Taliban to hand bin Laden over (see [May 1998](#)). Many in US intelligence will be resentful over this missed opportunity and blame a conflict of interest with the Emirati royals (see [Shortly After February 11, 1999](#)).

Shortly After February 11, 1999: Gulf Politics Causes Resentment after Missed Chance at Bin Laden

The failure to strike at bin Laden in February 1999, despite having unusually good intelligence about his location (see [February 11, 1999](#)), causes strong resentment in the US intelligence community. It is believed that the US held its fire because of the presence of royalty from the United Arab Emirates(UAE), but some felt those royals were

legitimate targets as well since they were associating with bin Laden there. Further, intelligence at the time suggests the planes carrying these royals to Afghanistan were also bringing weapons to the Taliban in defiance of United Nations bans. Michael Scheuer, head of the CIA's bin Laden unit at the time, is particularly upset. He reportedly sends a series of e-mails to others in the CIA that are, in the opinion of one person who read them, "angry, unusual, and widely circulated." His anger at this decision not to strike at bin Laden will apparently contribute to him losing his position leading the bin Laden unit a few months later (see [June 1999](#)). Some resentment is directed at counterterrorism "tsar" Richard Clarke, who voted against the missile strike. Clarke was known to be close to the UAE's royal family. He'd negotiated many arms deals and other arrangements with them, including a \$6 billion deal in May 1998 to buy F-16 fighters from the US. ([Coll 2004, pp. 447-450](#)) In March 1999, Clarke calls Emirati royals and asks them to stop visiting bin Laden. However, he apparently did not have permission from the CIA to make this call. Within one week, the camp where the Emiratis and bin Laden met is abandoned. CIA officers are irate, feeling that this ruined a chance to strike at bin Laden if he made a return visit to the location. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 138](#))

February 15, 1999: Philippine Charities Exposed for Passing Money from Bin Laden to Militant Group, But Remain in Operation

A classified Philippine military report claims bin Laden is funding Muslim militants in the Philippines through known charity fronts. Some of the charities include World Alliance of Muslim Youth (WAMY), the International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO), and the Islamic Wisdom Worldwide Mission (IWWM). WAMY has been under investigation for ties militant groups in a number of countries, including the US (see [February-September 11, 1996](#)). The other two organizations are said to be connected to Mohammed Jamal Khalifa, bin Laden's brother-in-law. All the charities are accused of passing money on to the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), a militant group in the southern Philippines. ([New Straits Times 2/15/1999](#)) Between this time and 9/11, the leader of the Abu Sayyaf militant group will say in an interview that "the primary purpose of the IIRO is to help groups like us." ([Vitug 10/22/2001](#)) Also in February 1999, the head of the MILF admits to getting funds from bin Laden, but says they are for humanitarian purposes only (see [February 1999](#)). The charities remain open after the report. In 2002, Mohammed Amin al-Ghafari, the head of the IWWM, will be arrested and deported. It will come out that he was arrested and then let go in 1995 after being strongly suspected of involvement in the Bojinka plot (see [June 1994](#)). He also had protectors in the police and military who are IWWM directors. In 2002, one of them will admit to having helped prevent his deportation (see [October 8-November 8, 2002](#)). The US will not officially accuse the IIRO's Philippine branch of funding al-Qaeda until 2006 (see [August 3, 2006](#)).

February 17, 1999: Germans Intercept Al-Qaeda Calls, One Mentions Atta's Name



Said Bahaji, computer expert for the Hamburg cell. [Source: *German Bavarian Police*] German intelligence is periodically tapping suspected al-Qaeda operative Mohammed Haydar Zammar's telephone. On this day, investigators hear a caller being told Zammar is at a meeting with "Mohamed, Ramzi, and Said," and can be reached at the phone number of the Marienstrasse apartment where all three of them live. This refers to Mohamed Atta, Ramzi Bin al-Shibh, and Said Bahaji, all members of the Hamburg al-Qaeda cell. However, apparently the German police fail to grasp the importance of these names, even though Said Bahaji is also under investigation. ([Associated Press 6/22/2002](#); [New York Times 1/18/2003](#)) Atta's last name is given as well. Agents check the phone number and confirm the street address, but it is not known what they make of the information. ([Cziesche, Mascolo, and Stark 2/3/2003](#))

Spring 1999: US Uncovers Bin Laden Plans to Attack Washington

US intelligence learns of a planned bin Laden attack on a US government facility in Washington (the specific facility targeted has not been identified). ([US Congress 9/18/2002](#); [Risen 9/18/2002](#))

Spring 1999: New Jersey HMO Is Possibly Funding al-Qaeda

Randy Glass is a con artist turned government informant participating in a sting called Operation Diamondback. ([Pacenti 9/29/2001](#)) He discusses an illegal weapons deal with an Egyptian-American named Mohamed el Amir. In wiretapped conversations, Mohamed discusses the need to get false papers to disguise a shipment of illegal weapons. His brother, Dr. Magdy el Amir, has been a wealthy neurologist in Jersey City for the past twenty years. Two other weapons dealers later convicted in a sting operation involving Glass also lived in Jersey City, and both el Amirs admit knowing one of them, Diaa Mohsen. Mohsen has been paid at least once by Dr. el Amir. In 1998, Congressman Ben Gilman was given a foreign intelligence report suggesting that Dr. el Amir owns an HMO that is secretly funded by bin Laden, and that money is being skimmed from the HMO to

fund al-Qaeda activities. The state of New Jersey later buys the HMO and determines that \$15 million were unaccounted for and much of that has been diverted into hard-to-trace offshore bank accounts. However, investigators working with Glass are never given the report about Dr. el Amir. Neither el Amir has been charged with any crime. Mohamed now lives in Egypt and Magdy continues to practice medicine in New Jersey. Glass's sting, which began in late 1998, will uncover many interesting leads before ending in June 2001. ([MSNBC 8/2/2002](#))

Spring 1999: FBI Team Learns about Islamist Threat, Including Possible 9/11 Link, but Stymied by Bureaucracy

Myron Fuller is an FBI official in charge of several hundred FBI employees in the Asian region, including Pakistan and Afghanistan, and his primary job is to fight terrorism. According to journalist Seymour Hersh, Fuller's team "had unraveled a great deal about the threat from Islamic militants by the spring of 1999, but that no one in Washington seems to be listening." For instance, Fuller learned information from the CIA that revealed who was behind the killing of four US businessmen in Pakistan in 1997. According to Fuller, this information revealed "much more" than just the names of the killers, including "a country that supported the act. It was possibly the trail to the planning of September 11th." But Fuller discovered the CIA had asked that this information should not be revealed to any field agents. Few details about Fuller's account are known, so what link there may have been to 9/11 is not known. ([Hersh 2004, pp. 95](#))

March 1999: Plot to Use Hang Glide Bomb Tested, Thwarted

US intelligence learns of plans by an al-Qaeda member who is also a US citizen to fly a hang glider into the Egyptian Presidential Palace and then detonate the explosives he is carrying. The individual, who received hang glider training in the US, brings a hang glider back to Afghanistan, but various problems arise during the testing of the glider. This unnamed person is subsequently arrested and is in custody abroad. ([US Congress 9/18/2002](#))

March 1999: Germany Provides CIA Hijacker's Name and Telephone Number

German intelligence gives the CIA the first name of hijacker Marwan Alshehhi and his telephone number in the United Arab Emirates. The Germans learned the information from surveillance of suspected Islamic militants. They tell the CIA that Alshehhi has been in contact with suspected al-Qaeda members Mohammed Haydar Zammar and Mamoun Darkazanli. He is described as a United Arab Emirates student who has spent some time studying in Germany. ([US Congress 7/24/2003](#); [Deutsche Presse-Agentur \(Hamburg\)](#))

[8/13/2003](#); [Risen and Lichtblau 2/24/2004](#)) The Germans consider this information “particularly valuable” and ask the CIA to track Alshehhi, but the CIA never responds until after the 9/11 attacks. The CIA decides at the time that this “Marwan” is probably an associate of bin Laden but never track him down. It is not clear why the CIA fails to act, or if they learn his last name before 9/11. ([Risen and Lichtblau 2/24/2004](#)) The Germans monitor other calls between Alshehhi and Zammar, but it isn’t clear if the CIA is also told of these or not (see [September 21, 1999](#)).

March 1999: London Imam Diverts Funds to Bin Laden Camp

Radical London imam Abu Hamza al-Masri sends money to bin Laden’s Darunta camp, which is part of al-Qaeda’s network of training camps in Afghanistan. Abu Hamza, who is under investigation by Scotland Yard at this time for his involvement in a kidnapping and murder scheme in Yemen, apparently diverts the money from a fund at London’s Finsbury Park Mosque, which he runs. The US will later say it has e-mail traffic that proves the transfer. Abu Hamza trained at the camp in the mid-1990s. ([O’Neill and McGrory 2006, pp. 74-5](#))

March 3, 1999: New Pearl Harbor Needed to Change US Military Policies, Says Expert

Andrew Krepinevich, Executive Director of the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, testifies before the Senate Armed Services Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities: “There appears to be general agreement concerning the need to transform the US military into a significantly different kind of force from that which emerged victorious from the Cold and Gulf Wars. Yet this verbal support has not been translated into a defense program supporting transformation... the ‘critical mass’ needed to effect it has not yet been achieved. One may conclude that, in the absence of a strong external shock to the United States—a latter-day ‘Pearl Harbor’ of sorts—surmounting the barriers to transformation will likely prove a long, arduous process.” ([US Congress 3/5/1999](#)) This is very similar to what strategists at PNAC have said (see [June 3, 1997](#)).

March 19, 1999: Kosovo Peace Talks Fail

The Kosovo peace talks end in failure with the Yugoslav government refusing to agree to Appendix B of the Rambouillet Accords (see [February 6-23, 1999](#)), which would require the Serbs to provide 28,000 NATO troops “unimpeded” access to the country. ([Black 3/16/1999](#))

Late March-June 1999: NATO Begins Bombing Campaign Against Serbs

Gen. Wesley Clark leads the NATO bombing campaign against Serbia. ([BBC 12/25/2003](#))

April 1999: Atta and Alshehhi Seen Near Philippine Flight School



The Woodland Park Resort. [*Source: Woodland Park Resort*]/9/11 hijacker Mohamed Atta takes flying lessons in the Philippines and Marwan Alshehhi is with him. They stay at the Woodland Park Resort Hotel near Angeles City, which is about 60 miles north of Manila and near the formerly US controlled Clark Air Base. Victoria Brocoy, a chambermaid at the hotel, will later claim that Atta stayed at the hotel for about a week while he learned to fly ultra-light planes at the nearby Angeles City Flying Club. ([Dacanay 9/29/2001](#); [Gulf News 10/2/2001](#)) She also says, “He was not friendly. If you say hello to him, he doesn’t answer. If he asks for a towel, you do not enter his room. He takes it at the door... Many times I saw him let a girl go at the gate in the morning. It was always a different girl.” ([Kirk 10/5/2001](#)) Atta stays with some other men who call him Mohamed. She recalls that one of them is Marwan Alshehhi, who is treated like Atta’s sidekick. However, there are no recollections of Alshehhi going to the nearby flight school. ([Bigornia 10/2/2001](#); [Gulf News 10/2/2001](#)) She says Atta was hosted by a Jordanian named Samir, who speaks Filipino and runs a travel agency in Manila. She adds that many Arab guests stayed at the hotel between 1997 and 1999, and Samir always accompanied them. Samir denies knowing any of the hijackers. ([Dacanay 9/29/2001](#); [Bigornia 10/2/2001](#); [Kirk 10/5/2001](#)) The Philippine military will later confirm that Atta and Alshehhi were at the hotel after finding four other employees who claim to have seen them in 1999. Other locals, such as the manager of a nearby restaurant, also recall seeing them. ([Cervantes 10/1/2001](#); [Gulf News 10/2/2001](#); [Kirk 10/5/2001](#); [Lerner 10/11/2001](#)) Atta and/or Alshehhi were seen at the same resort in 1997 (see [1997](#)) and will return to it later in 1999 (see [December 1999](#)). A leader of a militant group connected to al-Qaeda later confesses to helping 9/11 hijacker pilots while they were in this area (see [Shortly After October 5, 2005](#)).

April 1999: CIA Rejects Working with High-Level Taliban Leader Opposed to Bin Laden



Mullah Mohammed Khaksar. *[Source: Amir Shah / Associated Press]* High-level Taliban leader Mullah Mohammed Khaksar secretly meets with CIA officials to explore cooperating with them, but the CIA is not interested. Khaksar had been the Taliban's intelligence minister, but he recently switched posts to deputy interior minister. He is friends with top Taliban leader Mullah Omar, has thousands of policemen under his command, and has solid links to intelligence sources within the Taliban. He secretly meets with US diplomats Gregory Marchese and Peter McIlwain in Peshawar, Pakistan. Marchese will later confirm the meeting took place. Khaksar says he fears the Taliban has been hijacked by the Pakistani ISI and al-Qaeda. He believes Mullah Omar has fallen under the influence of bin Laden and wants to oust him. Khaksar later claims he told them that he was worried about al-Qaeda because "one day they would do something in the world, but everything would be on the head of Afghanistan." The diplomats pass his offer to Washington (though it is unknown if it was relayed to high-level officials or not). Khaksar soon receives a letter back rejecting his offer. The letter is later shown to the Associated Press, and states, in part, "We don't want to make mistakes like we made in the holy war [in the 1980s]. We gave much help and it later went against us." ([Gannon 6/9/2002](#); [Borger 6/11/2002](#)) Khaksar later says he did provide the CIA with information on two or three other occasions before 9/11, but it is not known if this takes place before or after this meeting. Starting in 1997, he also keeps a regular secret dialogue with Ahmed Shah Massoud, leader of the Northern Alliance fighting the Taliban. The Northern Alliance's foreign minister will note after 9/11 that Khaksar was in "constant contact" with Massoud until 9/11, giving him a steady stream of valuable information. ([Raghavan 11/29/2001](#); [Baker 11/30/2001](#)) After 9/11, the US will show no interest in Khaksar's intelligence about the Taliban (see [Between September 12 and Late November 2001](#) and [February 25, 2002](#)).

April 1999-August 1999: FBI Asks Al-Marabh about Two Associates

Nabil al-Marabh will claim in a 2002 statement that in May 1999, the FBI approaches him in Boston, looking for Raed Hijazi. Al-Marabh will say he lied and said he did not know Hijazi, even though he knew him well. Hijazi apparently has not been involved in

any violent crime yet, but will participate in a failed attempt to bomb a hotel in Jordan (see [November 30, 1999](#)) and will help plan the USS *Cole* bombing in October 2000 (see [October 12, 2000](#)). ([Fainaru 9/4/2002](#)) In August 1999 FBI agents again visit al-Marabh's Boston apartment to ask him about another man. Al-Marabh's wife will later recall that the first name of this man is Ahmed. ([Zernike 10/14/2001](#)) He is from Jordan and had lived in their apartment for two months. ([Wilgoren and Miller 9/21/2001](#))

[April 1, 1999: Hijacker Jarrah Photographs Wedding Party](#)



Friends of Ziad Jarrah taken on April 1, 1999. Third from left in back row is Abdelghani Mzoudi, fifth is Mounir El Motassadeq; seventh is Ramzi bin al-Shibh; Mohamed Atta is on middle row far right; Atta rests his hands on Mohammed Raji. [Source: DDP/AFP] (click image to enlarge) Ziad Jarrah has an unofficial wedding with his girlfriend, Aysel Senguen. Interestingly, a photo apparently taken by Jarrah at the wedding is found by German intelligence several days after 9/11. An undercover agent is able immediately to identify ten of the 18 men in the photo, as well as where it was taken: the prayer room of Hamburg's Al-Quds mosque. He is also able to identify which of them attended Mohamed Atta's study group. He knows even "seemingly trivial details" of some of the men, showing that "probably almost all members of the Hamburg terror cell" has been watched by German state intelligence since this time, if not before. The head of the state intelligence had previously maintained that they knew nothing of any of these men. ([Schrom and Laabs 2/2/2003](#))

[April 2, 1999: Bosnian Muslim Army Caught Smuggling Weapons to KLA in Kosovo](#)

The US State Department temporarily suspends cooperation between the Bosnian army and the US private mercenary company MPRI. No official reason is given, but media reports indicate that the Bosnian Muslims being trained by MPRI were caught sending weapons to Muslim rebels in the regions of Kosovo and Sandzak in Serbia. Supposedly,

millions of dollars of weapons were smuggled to the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) in Kosovo. ([BBC 4/5/1999](#); [Madsen 8/1/1999](#); [Peterson 10/28/2002](#))

April 3, 1999: Candidate Hijacker Denied US Visa in Yemen



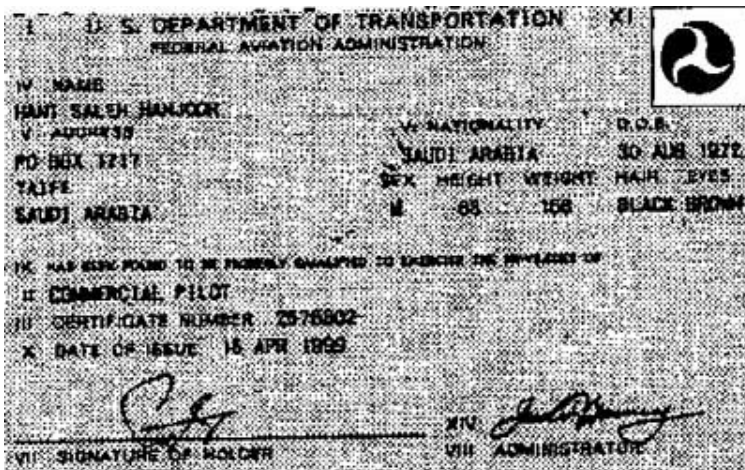
Sarbarz Mohammed / Sam Malkandi. [*Source: Public domain via Seattle Post-Intelligencer*] Al-Qaeda leader Khallad bin Attash unsuccessfully applies for a US visa in Sana'a, Yemen. His application, which is made under the alias Salah Saeed Mohammed bin Yousaf, is denied because he fails to submit sufficient documentation in support of it. Three actual hijackers obtain US visas in Saudi Arabia on the same day and shortly after (see [April 3-7, 1999](#)). ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 492](#)) Bin Attash is already known to the US intelligence community at this point (see [Summer 1999](#)), at least partly because he briefed Mohamed al-Owhali, one of the 1998 African embassy bombers who was captured after the attack, and helped him make a martyrdom video in Pakistan. ([Federal Bureau of Investigation 9/9/1998](#)) The US will begin to associate this alias with terrorist activity no later than early 2000, when bin Attash uses it to take a flight with Nawaf Alhazmi and Khalid Almihdhar, who are under US and allied surveillance at this point (see [January 8, 2000](#)). However, the alias will not be watchlisted by the US until August 2001 (see August 23, 2001). Apparently, when the US learns the alias is associated with terrorism there is no check of visa application records, and this application and the fact it was made by an al-Qaeda leader will not be discovered until after 9/11 (see [After January 8, 2000](#), [After December 16, 2000](#), and [After August 23, 2001](#)). On the application, bin Attash gives his reason for going to the US as getting a new prosthesis for his missing leg, and he says Bothell, Washington State, is his final destination. Bin Attash's contact in Bothell is a man named Sarbarz Mohammed. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 155-6, 492](#)) Mohammed contacts a clinic in the area and speaks to bin Attash once on the phone, but bin Attash says the new leg would cost too much and hangs up. Mohammed, who will later change his name to Sam Malkandi, will deny knowing bin Attash was a terrorist and say that he thought he was just helping a friend of a friend. However, he will later admit lying on his green card application and be arrested in 2005. ([Skolnik 10/17/2005](#))

April 3-7, 1999: Three 9/11 Hijackers Obtain US Visas



Nawaf Alhazmi and Khalid Almihdhar's US visas. [Source: FBI] (click image to enlarge) Hijackers Nawaf Alhazmi, Salem Alhazmi, and Khalid Almihdhar obtain US visas through the US Consulate in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. ([US Congress 7/24/2003](#)) Almihdhar and Nawaf Alhazmi are already "al-Qaeda veterans" and battle-hardened killers. Almihdhar's visa is issued on April 7, and he can thereafter leave and return to the US multiple times until April 6, 2000. ([Laabs 8/13/2003](#)) Nawaf Alhazmi gets the same kind of visa; details about Salem are unknown. The CIA claims the hijackers then travel to Afghanistan to participate in "special training" with at least one other suicide bomber on a different mission. The training is led by Khallad bin Attash, who applies for a US visa on April 3 from Yemen, but fails to get one (see [April 3, 1999](#)). The CIA will learn about Almihdhar's visa in January 2000 (see [January 2-5, 2000](#)). The Jeddah Consulate keeps in its records the fact that Nawaf and Alhazmi obtain US visas several days before Almihdhar, but apparently these records are never searched before 9/11. ([US Congress 7/24/2003, pp. 135](#))

[April 15, 1999: Hanjour Gets Pilot's License Despite Dubious Skills](#)



A photocopy of Hani Hanjour's 1999 pilot license. [Source: FBI] (click image to enlarge) When Hani Hanjour attended flight schools between 1996 and 1998 he was found to be a "weak student" who "was wasting our resources" (see [October 1996-December 1997](#)), and when he tried using a flight simulator, "He had only the barest understanding what the instruments were there to do." (see [1998](#)) Yet, on April 15, 1999, he is certified as a multi-engine

commercial pilot by Daryl Strong in Tempe, Arizona. Strong is one of many private examiners independently contracted with the FAA. A spokesperson for the FAA's workers union will later complain that contractors like Strong "receive between \$200 and \$300 for each flight check. If they get a reputation for being tough, they won't get any business." Hanjour's new license allows him to begin passenger jet training at other flight schools, despite having limited flying skills and an extremely poor grasp of English. ([Lunney 6/13/2002](#); [Associated Press 6/13/2002](#)) At the next flight school Hanjour will attend in early 2001, the staff there will be so appalled at his lack of skills that they will repeatedly contact the FAA and ask them to investigate how he got a pilot's license (see [January-February 2001](#)). After 9/11, the FBI will appear to investigate how Hanjour got his license and question and polygraph the instructor who signed off on his flying skills. The Washington Post will note that since Hanjour's pilot skills were so bad, how he was ever able to get a license "remains a lingering question that FAA officials refuse to discuss." ([Goldstein, Sun, and Lardner 10/15/2001](#); [CBS News 5/10/2002](#)) After gaining the license, Hanjour returns to Saudi Arabia for a few months in late April 1999.

April 27, 1999: Sen. Lieberman Says US and KLA 'Stand for the Same Human Values and Principles'

Speaking in front of a small public rally in Washington in favor of an independent Kosovo, Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D) says that the "United States of America and the Kosovo Liberation Army stand for the same human values and principles.... Fighting for the KLA is fighting for human rights and American values." ([Wheeler 4/28/1999](#))

May 1999: US Intelligence Provides bin Laden's Location; CIA Fails to Strike

US intelligence obtains detailed reporting on where bin Laden is located for five consecutive nights. CIA Director Tenet decides against acting three times, because of concerns about collateral damage and worries about the veracity of the single source of information. Frustration mounts. Mike Scheuer, head of the CIA's Bin Laden Unit, writes to a colleague in the field, "having a chance to get [bin Laden] three times in 36 hours and foregoing the chance each time has made me a bit angry..." ([Coll 2004, pp. 450](#); [9/11 Commission 3/24/2004](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 140](#)) An unnamed senior military officer later complains, "This was in our strike zone. It was a fat pitch, a home run." However, that month, the US mistakenly bombed the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, due to outdated intelligence. It is speculated Tenet was wary of making another mistake. ([Atlantic Monthly 12/2004](#)) There is one more opportunity to strike bin Laden in July 1999, but after that there is apparently no intelligence good enough to justify considering a strike. ([9/11 Commission 3/24/2004](#))

May 1999: New Owner with 'Checkered History' Takes Over Flight School Later Attended by 9/11 Hijackers



Huffman Aviation. [Source:

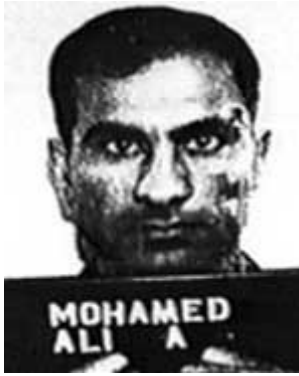
FBI] Huffman Aviation, the Venice, Florida flight school later attended by Mohamed Atta and Marwan Alshehhi (see [July 1-3, 2000](#)) is sold to Naples-based flight school Ambassador Airways, which is owned by Wally Hilliard and Rudi Dekkers. Although Hilliard finances the purchase, Dekkers becomes the sole stockholder. Dekkers is a Dutch national with a highly questionable past. The St. Petersburg Times will later comment, he “seems to have benefited from the same type of casual scrutiny of visa applicants that let the 9/11 hijackers live and train here [in the US].” Even before 9/11, he has “a long history of troubled businesses, run-ins with the Federal Aviation Administration and numerous lawsuits... It is the kind of checkered history, experts say, that should have raised questions both before and after the 9/11 attacks about Dekkers’ fitness to run a school that trained pilots.” Having previously run a computer company in Holland that went bankrupt, he’d moved to Naples, Florida in 1992. After running a computer chip exporting company, he’d started Ambassador Airways. Yet he’d been so late on some of his bills there that at one point the Naples airport refused to sell him aviation fuel, even if he paid cash. At some point in 1999 the FAA revoked his pilot’s license for 45 days—a severe penalty—for several violations, including “operating an aircraft in a careless or reckless manner.” In spite of Dekkers’ dubious history and the fact that his Ambassador Airways is struggling, Wally Hilliard, a prominent retired businessman, loans him \$1.7 million to buy Huffman Aviation. Dekkers says he plans spending \$60,000 per year promoting the school, advertising extensively in Germany and other European countries. ([McIntyre 5/29/1999](#); [Mudge 1/25/2003](#); [Martin 7/25/2004](#)) Huffman Aviation is just up the road from Florida Flight Training Center, where Ziad Jarrah, the alleged pilot of Flight 93, will begin flying lessons in summer 2000 (see [June 28-December 2000](#)). ([Corte 9/9/2002](#)) Dekkers will close Ambassador Airways in December 2001, due to financial difficulties, and sell Huffman Aviation in January 2003. ([Zoldan 1/25/2003](#); [Kimel 1/28/2003](#))

May 18, 1999: Potential Al-Qaeda Sleeper Pilot Arrested in Florida; Later Disappears into US Custody



Ihab Ali Nawawi. [Source: FBI] Ihab Ali Nawawi is arrested in Orlando, Florida. He is considered an unindicted co-conspirator in the 1998 US embassy bombings in Africa. Nawawi's family moved from Egypt to the US in the late 1970's and he graduated from an Orlando high school. He fought in Afghanistan in the 1980's and helped bin Laden move to Sudan in 1991. Nawawi received a commercial pilot's license from Airman Flight School in Norman, Oklahoma, in 1993. He crashed an airplane owned by bin Laden in 1995 on a runway in Khartoum, Sudan (see [1993](#)). He lived in Sudan until 1996 when he moved back to Orlando. Nawawi's role in al-Qaeda is revealed days after the 1998 US embassy bombings in Africa when Ali Mohamed's residence in California is raided. A letter from Nawawi is discovered asking Mohamed to give his "best regards to your friend Osama"(see [August 8, 1998-August 21, 1998](#)). Nawawi's connection to the embassy bombings were possibly discovered months earlier, because there were a series of phone calls in 1997 between an Orlando telephone owned by Nawawi's sister and an al-Qaeda safe house in Nairobi, Kenya. Many telephone numbers connected to that house were being monitored by US intelligence at the time. Given his obvious al-Qaeda ties, it is not clear why agents waited until May 1999 before arresting Nawawi. He is questioned in front of a grand jury, but prosecutors say he is lying and he refuses to talk anymore. FBI agents will visit the Airman Flight School in September 1999 to enquire about his attendance there (see [September 1999](#)). He will remain jailed and in September 2000 is finally charged for contempt and perjury. In October 2001, the St. Petersburg Times will report, "There are signs that Ali's resolve might now be weakening. Court records indicate that Ali's lawyers seemed to reach an understanding with the government in March [2001]. Since that time, all documents in the case have been filed under seal." ([Murphy 10/28/2001](#)) In May 2002, three full years after his arrest, the New York Times will report that "Nawawi remains in federal custody even now, although he has not been charged with conspiring in the embassy bombing." ([Shenon 5/18/2002](#)) As of the end of 2005, there appears to be no further news on what has happened to Nawawi, and no sign of any trial. When Nawawi is arrested, he is working as a taxi driver. At this time Al-Qaeda operative Nabil al-Marabh is working as a taxi driver about 80 miles away in Tampa, Florida, and while the similarity is intriguing, there is no known reported connection between the two men (see [February 1999-February 2000](#)). ([Murphy 10/28/2001](#))

May 18, 1999: Ali Mohamed Indicted After Secret Talks Fail



Ali Mohamed's booking photo. *[Source: Peter Lance]* It is reported that after eight months of secret negotiations between US prosecutors and Ali Mohamed, talks have broken down. Prosecutors had been attempting to get Mohamed to cooperate and tell all that he knows about al-Qaeda in return for a lighter sentence. ([Weiser 5/18/1999](#)) Mohamed will later plead guilty to five counts of conspiracy (see [October 20, 2000](#)), but will never be publicly sentenced. There will be speculation that he eventually does agree to some secret deal (see [July 2001-December 2001](#)).

May 23, 1999: FBI Connects Hambali to Bojinka Front Company

It has been widely assumed in media reports that US intelligence did not connect al-Qaeda leader Hambali to the Bojinka plot (see [January 6, 1995](#)) before 9/11. However, the 9/11 Commission will mention in a footnote, "Hambali also was one of the founders of Konsonjaya, a Malaysian company run by close associate of Wali Khan [Amin Shah]. FBI report, Manila air investigation, May 23, 1999." ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 489](#)) The Christian Science Monitor will later note, "Konsonjaya was not just supplying money. It also coordinating the Bojinka plotters" (see [June 1994](#)). ([Murphy 2/14/2002](#)) In the spring of 1995, Philippine Colonel Rodolfo Mendoza gave the US a chart he made of the Bojinka plotters, and Konsonjaya was centrally featured in it (see [Spring 1995](#)). He later said, "It was sort of their nerve center." ([Murphy 2/14/2002](#)) Shortly after Ramzi Yousef's Manila apartment was broken into, documents found there connected Konsonjaya with the "Ladin International" company in Sudan, an obvious bin Laden front. An FBI memo at the time noted the connection. ([Lance 2003, pp. 303](#)) Hambali's photograph was also found on Yousef's computer. ([Pereira 2/2/2002](#)) In 1996, the company's records were introduced as evidence in a public trial of some Bojinka plotters, and in 1998, Khalid Shaikh Mohammed was nearly caught in Brazil while using Konsonjaya as his business cover (see [June 1998](#)). So it's not clear why it took the FBI four years to learn about Hambali, but that still means they were aware of who he was prior to the January 2000 al-Qaeda summit in Malaysia attended by Hambali and two 9/11 hijackers (see January 5-8, 2000). But apparently the connection will not be made.

Summer 1999: US Intelligence Links Zammar to Senior Bin Laden Operatives, Fails to Share Information

Around this time, US intelligence notes that a man in Hamburg, Germany, named Mohammed Haydar Zammar is in direct contact with one of bin Laden's senior operational coordinators. Zammar is an al-Qaeda recruiter with links to Mohamed Atta and the rest of the Hamburg terror cell. The US had noted Zammar's terror links on "numerous occasions" before 9/11. ([US Congress 7/24/2003](#)³) However, apparently the US does not share their information on Zammar with German intelligence. Instead, the Germans are given evidence from Turkey that Zammar is running a travel agency as a terror front in Hamburg. In 1998, they get information from Italy confirming he is an Islamic militant. However, his behavior is so suspicious that they have already started monitoring him closely. ([US Congress 7/24/2003](#)³; [Laabs 8/13/2003](#))

Summer 1999: Bin Laden Makes Secret Deal with Government of Yemen

In early 1999, al-Qaeda operative Khallad bin Attash is sent to Yemen to help al-Qaeda leader Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri obtain explosives to bomb a ship, and also to get a US visa so he can travel to the US to take part in an operation there. Three 9/11 hijackers get a US visa around this time (see [April 3-7, 1999](#)), but bin Attash has more trouble, apparently because he is Yemeni and the others are Saudi. While there, bin Attash is arrested by Yemeni authorities. Bin Laden finds out about the arrest and is concerned that bin Attash might reveal the ship bombing and US operations while under interrogation. Bin Laden contacts a Yemeni official and makes a deal, offering not to attack Yemen if the Yemeni government does not confront him and releases bin Attash in the summer of 1999. Both sides agree to the deal and bin Attash returns to Afghanistan without revealing either plot. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 155-156](#)) There is other evidence Yemeni officials will help al-Nashiri, as his ship attack plot eventually targets the USS *Cole* while stationed in Yemen (see [April 2000](#) and [After October 12, 2000](#)).

June 1999: Bin Laden Wants All US Males Killed

In an interview with an Arabic-language television station, bin Laden steps up his rhetoric and issues a further threat indicating that all US males should be killed. ([MSNBC 12/11/2001](#))

June 1999: CIA Fires Bin Laden Unit Chief, But He Refuses to Resign from Agency



Michael Scheuer. *[Source: Publicity photo]* CIA Director George Tenet removes Michael Scheuer as head of Alec Station, the CIA's bin Laden unit. Scheuer had headed the unit since its inception in 1996, and was known as a strong advocate for more government action against bin Laden. The full name of the new head of the unit has not been released and little is known about his performance. ([Zeman et al. 11/2004](#)) Deputy Director of Operations Jack Downing tells Scheuer he is being fired because he is "mentally burned out" and because of a recent disagreement with the FBI over whether the deputy chief of Alex Station, who was detailed to the CIA from the FBI, could release information to the FBI without Scheuer's approval. Downing tells Scheuer he was in the right, but that the criticism of his subordinate "should not have been put on paper", and the FBI's management is angry with him. Downing says he will get a medal and a monetary award, but should tell his subordinates he has resigned. Scheuer refuses to lie to his officers, signs a memo saying he will not accept a monetary award, and tells Downing "where he should store the medal." ([Scheuer 2005, pp. 263-4](#); [Wright 2006, pp. 313](#)) According to author Steve Coll, Scheuer's CIA colleagues "could not be sure exactly [why Scheuer left] but among at least a few of them a believe settled in that [he] had been exiled, in effect, for becoming too passionate about the bin Laden threat..." In particular, he was angry about two recent missed opportunities (see [May 29, 1998](#) and [February 11, 1999](#)) to assassinate bin Laden. ([Coll 2004, pp. 449-450](#)) Scheuer will write in 2004 that, "On moving to a new position, I forwarded a long memorandum to the Agency's senior-most officers—some are still serving—describing an array of fixable problems that were plaguing America's attack on bin Laden, ones that the bin Laden unit had encountered but failed to remedy between and among [US intelligence agencies]... The problems outlined in the memorandum stood in the way of attacking bin Laden to the most effective extent possible; many remain today." Problems include poor cooperation between agencies and a lack of experienced staff working on the bin Laden issue. Scheuer never receives a response to his memo. ([Atlantic Monthly 12/2004](#))

June 1999: Enron Plans Power Plant with Bin Laden Family

Enron announces an agreement to build a \$140 million power plant in the Gaza Strip, between Israel and Egypt. One of the major financiers for the project is the Saudi Binladin Group, a company owned by bin Laden's family. This is the second attempted

project between these two companies. Ninety percent complete, the construction will be halted because of Palestinian-Israeli violence and then Enron's bankruptcy. ([Grimaldi 3/2/2002](#))

June 1999: US Fails to Get Saudis to Act Against Al-Qaeda Financiers



Richard Newcomb. [*Source: Scott Ferrell/ Getty Images*]The US has been pressuring the Saudi government to do more to stop Saudi financing for al-Qaeda and other militant groups, but so far little has been accomplished (see [August 20, 1998-1999](#)). Vice President Al Gore contacts the Saudis and arranges for some US officials to have a meeting with their top security and banking officials. William Wechsler from the National Security Council (NSC), Richard Newcomb from the Treasury Department, and others on an NSC al-Qaeda financing task force meet about six senior Saudi officials in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. One US official will later recall, "We laid everything out—what we knew, what we thought. We told them we'd just had two of our embassies blown up and that we needed to deal with them in a different way." But the Saudis have virtually no oversight over their charities and do not seem interested in changing that. Newcomb threatens to freeze the assets of certain groups and individuals if the Saudis do not crack down. The Saudis promise action, but nothing happens. A second visit by a US delegation in January 2000 is ineffective as well. ([Kaplan, Ekman, and Latif 12/15/2003](#))

June-July 1999: CIA Reports That Bin Laden Plans Attack in US

In testimony before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence and in a briefing to House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence staffers one month later, the chief of the CIA's Counter Terrorism Center describes reports that bin Laden and his associates are planning attacks in the US. ([US Congress 9/18/2002](#))

June 1999-March 2000: FBI Investigates Muslim Leader Possibly Involved in 9/11 Plot

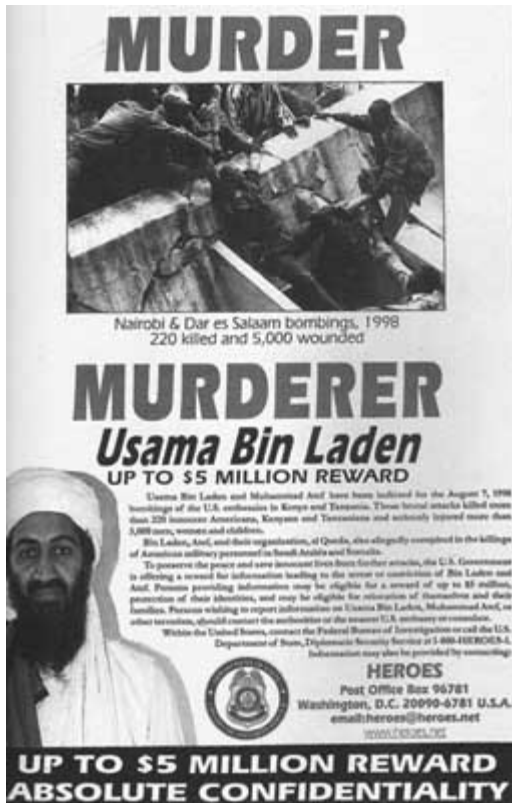


Anwar Al Aulaqi. [Source: Public domain] The FBI conducts a counterterrorism inquiry into Anwar Al Aulaqi, an imam who will later be suspected for involvement in the 9/11 plot. From about February 2000, he serves as the “spiritual leader” to several of the hijackers while they live in San Diego, and again in March 2001 when he and they move to the East Coast (see [March 2001](#)). During the investigation, the FBI discovers Al Aulaqi is in contact with a number of other people being investigated. For instance, in early 2000 he is visited by an unnamed associate of Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman. At this time a program called Able Danger run by the US Army identifies four of the hijackers as being part of a cell it gives the codename “Brooklyn,” because they visit mosques that are visited by associates of Sheikh Abdul-Rahman (see [January-February 2000](#)). Although the associates’ identities are not disclosed, this visitor to Al Aulaqi could be one such connection. However, as the 9/11 Congressional Inquiry later notes, the investigation is closed “despite the imam’s contacts with other subjects of counterterrorism investigations and reports concerning the imam’s connection to suspect organizations.” ([US Congress 7/24/2003, pp. 131](#))

Summer 1999: NSA Intercepts More of Almihdhar’s Calls

The NSA intercepts more calls (see [Early 1999](#)) involving Khalid Almihdhar, who is at an al-Qaeda communications hub in Sana’a, Yemen, with his family (see [Late August 1998](#)). The identity of the person he is talking to and the content of the intercepts is so sensitive that the whole passage regarding these communications is redacted in the 9/11 Congressional Inquiry’s report. After the redacted passage, the Inquiry comments, “At about the same time, the name [of al-Qaeda leader] Khallad [bin Attash] came to the attention of the NSA for the first time,” so the calls may involve bin Attash in some way. ([US Congress 7/24/2003, pp. 155-6](#)) Almihdhar is staying at the communications hub at this time and will stay there later as well (see [\(Mid-June-Mid-July 2000\)](#) and [Late October 2000-July 4, 2001](#)).

June 7, 1999: Bin Laden Finally Makes FBI’s 10 Most Wanted



A US wanted poster for bin Laden, highlighting the African embassy bombings and a \$5 million reward. [Source: *US State Department*] The FBI puts bin Laden on its “10 Most Wanted List.” This is almost a year and a half after bin Laden’s “declaration of war” against the US on February 22, 1998 (see [February 22, 1998](#)), and about six months after the CIA’s “declaration of war against al-Qaeda” in December 1998 (see [December 4, 1998](#)). It is also three years after an internal State Department document connected bin Laden to financing and planning numerous terrorist attacks. ([PBS Frontline 10/3/2002](#); [US Congress 7/24/2003](#))

June 8, 1999: New York Emergency Command Center Opened in WTC Building 7



Giuliani’s emergency command center. [Source: *CNN*] New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani opens a \$13 million emergency command center on the 23rd floor of World Trade Center Building 7. ([MacGowan 9/12/2001](#)) The center is intended to coordinate responses to various emergencies, including natural disasters like hurricanes or floods, and terrorist attacks. The 50,000 square foot center has

reinforced, bulletproof, and bomb-resistant walls, its own air supply and water tank, beds, showers to accommodate 30 people, and three backup generators. It also has rooms full of video monitors from where the mayor can oversee police and fire department responses. It is to be staffed around the clock and is intended as a meeting place for city leaders in the event of an act of terrorism. ([CNN 6/7/1999](#); [Bone 9/12/2001](#); [Glanz and Lipton 2004, pp. 233](#)) The center is ridiculed as “Rudy’s bunker.” ([Pooley 12/22/2001](#)) Most controversial is the 6,000-gallon fuel tank. In 1998 and 1999, Fire Department officials warn that the fuel tank violates city fire codes and poses a hazard. According to one Fire Department memorandum, if the tank were to catch fire it could produce “disaster.” Building 7 will be destroyed late in the day on 9/11; some suspect this tank helps explain why. ([Glanz and Lipton 12/20/2001](#))

Mid-June 1999: Hijackers Meet in Amsterdam and Get Saudi Cash

Hijackers Mohamed Atta and Marwan Alshehhi, plus would-be hijacker Ramzi Bin al-Shibh and associate Mounir El Motassadeq, hold a meeting in Amsterdam, Netherlands. All are living in Hamburg at the time, so it is not clear why they go to meet there, though some speculate that they are meeting someone else. Motassadeq also goes to the town of Eindhoven, Netherlands, on three occasions, in early 1999, late 1999, and 2001. ([Associated Press 9/13/2002](#)) On at least one occasion, Motassadeq receives cash provided by unnamed “Saudi financiers” that is meant to fund a new Eindhoven mosque. Investigators believe he uses the money to help pay for some 9/11 hijacker flying lessons. ([Baltimore Sun 9/2/2002](#))

June 24, 1999: CIA Director Gives Congress Secret Warning Bin Laden Planning Attacks in US

CIA Director George Tenet tells a closed session of Congress, “We have seen numerous reports that bin Laden and his associates are planning terrorist attacks against US officials and facilities in a variety of locations, including in the US.” ([Coll 2004, pp. 454](#)) However, six months later and after a well-publicized attempted al-Qaeda attack on the Los Angeles airport (see [December 14, 1999](#)), he will not mention in an open session that bin Laden has the capability to stage attacks inside the US (see [February 2, 2000](#)).

Mid-1999-November 1999: Data Mining Study Causes Controversy by Connecting Prominent US Figures to Chinese Military Weapons Purchases



Hua Di. *[Source: Stanford University]* A report commissioned in mid-1999 by Rep. Curt Weldon (R) looks into possible Chinese front companies in the US seeking technology for the Chinese military. Dr. Eileen Preisser and Michael Maloof are commissioned to make the report. Dr. Preisser, who runs the Information Dominance Center at the US Army's Land Information Warfare Activity (LIWA) and will later become closely tied to Able Danger, uses LIWA's data mining capabilities to search unclassified information. According to Maloof, their results show Chinese front companies in the US posing as US corporations that acquire technology from US defense contractors. When the study is completed in November 1999, the General Counsel's office in the Office of the Defense Secretary orders the study destroyed. Weldon complains about this to Army Chief of Staff Eric Shinseki, and apparently delays the destruction of the report. Weldon also writes a letter to FBI Director Louis Freeh requesting an espionage investigation into these Chinese links, but Freeh never responds to this. ([Maloof 10/9/2005](#)) As part of this report, LIWA analysts had produced a chart of Chinese strategic and business connections in the US. But this data mining effort runs into controversy when the chart apparently shows connections between future National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice, former Defense Secretary William Perry, and other prominent US figures, and business deals benefiting the Chinese military. ([Lathem 8/27/2005](#); [Gertz 9/22/2005](#)) The China chart was put together by private contractor James D. Smith, who will come forward in August 2005 to corroborate revelations about the Able Danger unit and its findings (see [August 22-September 1, 2005](#)). The New York Post later says there is "no suggestion that Rice or any of the others had done anything wrong." ([Lathem 8/27/2005](#)) However, articles first appear one month later and through 2001 in the conservative publications WorldNetDaily and NewsMax, which connect Perry and Rice to Hua Di, a Chinese missile scientist and possible spy, and question the nature of their relationship with him. ([Smith 12/21/1999](#); [Smith 4/5/2000](#); [Smith 1/24/2001](#)) Di defected to the US in 1989 and worked most of the 1990s at Stanford University's Center for International Security and Arms Control, which was co-directed by Perry. Di later returned to China and is subsequently sentenced to ten years in prison for writing influential articles said to reveal vital Chinese state secrets. ([Trei 2/7/2001](#)) However, other accounts claim that he was in fact passing on disinformation through these articles, successfully misleading the US military for a couple of years about the abilities of certain Chinese missile programs. ([Smith 12/21/1999](#)) Additionally, Hua Di teamed in 1994 with Stanford professor Dr. John Lewis and William Perry to buy an advanced AT&T fiber-optic communications system for "civilian" use inside China that instead is used by the Chinese army. The General Accounting Office later criticized the sale. In 1997, Stanford University investigated Dr. Lewis for his role in it, but Condoleezza Rice, serving as a Stanford provost at the time, apparently stopped the

investigation. ([Smith 4/5/2000](#); [Smith 1/24/2001](#)) Able Danger and LIWA's data mining efforts will be severely proscribed in April 2000 as part of the fallout from this China controversy (see [April 2000](#)), and the destruction of their collected data will follow shortly thereafter (see [May-June 2000](#)).

July 1999: Ex-ISI Head Is Providing Taliban Information on US Missile Launches



Hamid Gul. [Source: Public domain] The US gains information that former ISI head Hamid Gul contacts Taliban leaders at this time and advises them that the US is not planning to attack Afghanistan to get bin Laden. He assures them that he will provide them three or four hours warning of any future US missile launch, as he did "last time." Counterterrorism "tsar" Richard Clarke later suggests Gul gave al-Qaeda warning about the missile strike in August 1998. ([Mayer 7/28/2003](#))

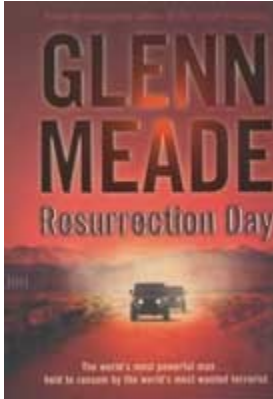
July 1999: FBI Investigates Individual Linked to Al-Qaeda and Nuclear Science

The FBI begins an investigation of an unnamed person for ties to important al-Qaeda figures and several organizations linked to al-Qaeda. The FBI is concerned that this person is in contact with several experts in nuclear sciences. After 9/11, the FBI determines that hijacker Marwan Alshehhi had contact with this person on the East Coast of the US. This person also may have ties to Mohamed Atta's sister. Most additional details about this person, including his/her name, when and how often Alshehhi had contact, and if the investigation was ever closed, remain classified. ([US Congress 7/24/2003](#))

July 1999: Campaign Finance Report Criticizes 'Wall' Procedures

The Justice Department's Office of Inspector General issues a report into the FBI's use of intelligence information in an investigation into campaign finance, and this report is critical of the "wall". The "wall" regulates the passage of some information from FBI intelligence investigations to criminal FBI agents and prosecutors, to ensure such information can legitimately be used in court (see [Early 1980s](#)). After the procedures were formalized (see [July 19, 1995](#)), the FBI drastically reduced its consultations with Justice Department attorneys about intelligence investigations, because any consultation with such attorneys could result in an intelligence warrant not being granted, as it may lead authorities reviewing a warrant application to conclude that the warrant was really being sought for a criminal investigation, not an intelligence investigation. The result is that the FBI does not ask for input from prosecutors until it is ready to close an intelligence investigation and "go criminal." The campaign finance report finds that FBI failed to disclose some information from intelligence investigations not only to Congress and the Attorney General, but also to its own Director, Louis Freeh. The "wall" procedures are found to be vague and ineffective, as well as misunderstood and often misapplied. ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 32-33](#)) The "wall" procedures are also criticized by other reports (see [May 2000](#)).

Summer 1999-August 31, 2001: Best-Selling Author Writes Novel About Al-Qaeda Attack on Washington; Assisted by US Counterterrorism Experts



Resurrection Day by Glenn Meade. [Source: Coronet Books] Glenn Meade, an Irish thriller writer, writes a novel based around an al-Qaeda attack on Washington, DC. In the novel, called *Resurrection Day*, a terrorist gang parks a van containing a tank of poisonous gas in a lock-up garage, wired to explode by remote control. The US president is given five days to comply with a list of demands, before the van is to be blown up. In his research for the book—which is completed just days before 9/11, at the end of August 2001—Meade is helped by numerous US counterterrorism experts. One of these is John O'Neill, the FBI's counterterrorism chief and top expert on Osama bin Laden. (O'Neill will die in the 9/11 attacks, after leaving the FBI to become the head of security at the World Trade Center (see [August 23, 2001](#)).) Meade later says the feeling he got from O'Neill was that the threat posed by Islamic extremists "is a bigger danger than a lot of people in the FBI are prepared to admit; some are sticking their heads in the sand." The Irish Independent later highlights the similarities between

Resurrection Day and the 9/11 attacks, saying, “In Meade’s book it is Washington, not New York, that takes the brunt of the attack. The weapon is nerve gas, not hijacked airliners. But the terrorist network is al-Qaeda. Its head is Osama bin Laden (renamed for the sake of post-September 11 sensitivities) and his operatives, like Mohamed Atta, favor the porous borders of New England as the best way to slip undetected into the US.” Another person who helps Meade in his research for the book is a former member of the US Secret Service. In the days after 9/11, this person will ring Meade and tell him, “What kept running through my mind was ‘I’ve spent the past six weeks helping this author with this book that has such a similar scenario.’” ([Whitterell 7/6/2002](#); [Glenn Meade 2003](#); [Irish Independent 1/26/2003](#))

July 1999-November 2000: Hijacker Alshehhi Receives \$100,000 from His Brother

Hijacker Marwan Alshehhi receives about \$100,000 from an account in Sharjah, United Arab Emirates, during this time. ([Griffith, Spiegel, and Williamson 11/30/2001](#); [Beith 12/2/2001](#); [US Congress 9/26/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 132](#)³¹) The money is apparently sent by Mohamed Yousef Mohamed Alqusaidi, believed to be Alshehhi’s brother. Alqusaidi had been sending money to Alshehhi in Germany since at least March 1998. The account is closed around late 2000 and the balance withdrawn in cash. ([US Congress 9/26/2002](#)) The origin of the money is not clear, although Alshehhi was receiving a monthly stipend of approximately \$2,200 from the United Arab Emirates army (see [Spring 1996-December 23, 2000](#)). ([McDermott 2005, pp. 54](#)) At least \$12,000 of this money is used to fund Alshehhi in the US (see [January 15, 2000-August 2001](#) and [June 13-September 25, 2000](#)). Several other hijackers also have bank accounts in the UAE (see [December 5, 2000](#)). ([US Congress 9/26/2002](#))

1999: Egyptian Trial Cripples Islamic Jihad and Exposes Its Links to Al-Qaeda

A large group of Islamic Jihad operatives are sentenced in Cairo in what becomes known as the “Trial of the Albanian Returnees.” Various disclosures are made at the trial about the way Islamic Jihad operated and how it provided support to al-Qaeda by forging travel documents, transferring money, and arranging communications. One of the revelations is that al-Qaeda has a key communication hub in Yemen. Despite this revelation (see [Late 1998-Early 2002](#)), al-Qaeda will continue to use it through 2001 (see [Early 2000-Summer 2001](#)). The defendants were arrested not only in Egypt, but also in Albania, Bulgaria, Azerbaijan, and the United Arab Emirates. In 1995, the CIA arranged a deal with Egypt to capture Islamic Jihad operatives around the world and send them to Egypt to be tortured and prosecuted (see [1995](#)). Apparently, the CIA was able to use surveillance of bin Laden’s phone calls to capture key operatives like Ahmad Salama Mabruk in Azerbaijan, who had been called by bin Laden many times (see [July 1998](#)). Eighty-seven of the defendants are convicted and ten are sentenced to death, including al-Zawahiri, who is tried in absentia. ([Sachs 11/21/2001](#)) One of the convicted is Khaled Abu el-

Dahab, who was operating a sleeper cell in California with double agent Ali Mohamed throughout the 1990's (see [1987-1998](#)). El-Dahab is sentenced to fifteen years in prison (see [September 10, 1998](#)). There are credible reports that many of the defendants confessed after being tortured in Egypt and Albania. ([Sachs 11/21/2001](#); [Wright 2006, pp. 269](#)) The trial nearly eradicates the remnants of Islamic Jihad in Egypt and, according to some of the defendants, leaves only about forty members outside of Egypt. Al-Zawahiri and the other remaining members end up allying even closer to al-Qaeda. The two organizations will formally merge in early 2001 (see [June 2001](#)). ([Wright 2006, pp. 336](#))

July 4, 1999: Executive Order Issued Against Taliban

With the chances of a pipeline deal with the Taliban looking increasingly unlikely, President Clinton finally issues an executive order prohibiting commercial transactions with the Taliban. The order also freezes the Taliban's US assets. Clinton blames the Taliban for harboring bin Laden. ([CNN 7/6/1999](#); [US President 7/12/1999](#))

July 4, 1999: During Regional Crisis, Clinton Threatens to Publicly Expose Pakistan's Support for Bin Laden



Nawaz Sharif [*Source: Publicity photo*] In early May 1999, the Pakistani army, at the instigation of Gen. Pervez Musharraf, seizes a strategic height called Kargil in the Indian province of Kashmir. This creates a grave crisis between Pakistan and India. By early July, the CIA picks up intelligence that Pakistan is preparing to launch nuclear missiles against India if necessary. Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif comes to the US on July 4 to meet with President Clinton about this. Clinton is livid and yells at Sharif for breaking promises, not only about Kashmir but also about failing to help with bin Laden. According to notes taken at the meeting, Clinton says he had "asked repeatedly for Pakistani help to bring Osama bin Laden to justice... [Sharif] promised often to do so but had done nothing. Instead, the ISI worked with bin Laden and the Taliban to foment terrorists." Clinton threatens to release a statement calling worldwide attention to Pakistan's support for terrorists. He adds, "You've put me in the middle today, set the US up to fail, and I won't let it happen. Pakistani is messing with nuclear war." Sharif backs down and immediately withdraws his troops from Kargil, ending the crisis. But as a result, Sharif becomes deeply unpopular in Pakistan. A few

months later he will be ousted in a coup by Musharraf (see October 12, 1999), the general who started the crisis in the first place. ([Coll 2004, pp. 476-478](#))

July 14, 1999: Pakistani Intelligence Agent Says WTC 'Are Coming Down' in Recorded Conversation



This unnamed Pakistani intelligence agent was captured on undercover video in January 2001. [*Source: Corbis*] In a conversation recorded by US government agents as part of a sting operation, a Pakistani ISI agent named Rajaa Gulum Abbas points to the WTC and says, “Those towers are coming down.” He later makes two other references to an attack on the WTC (for more details on this sting operation, (see [Spring 1999](#)), (see [July 14, 1999](#)), and (see [June 12, 2001](#))). ([Pacenti 8/2/2002](#); [WPBF 25 \(West Palm Beach\) 8/5/2002](#); [Pacenti 10/17/2002](#))

July 14, 1999: Pakistani ISI Agent Promises Attack on WTC in Recorded Conversation



Shireen Shawky holding a guided missile system (left), and Mohammed Malik (right). [Source: *Getty Images*] US government informant Randy Glass records a conversation at a dinner attended by him, illegal arms dealers Diaa Mohsen, Mohammed Malik, a former Egyptian judge named Shireen Shawky, and ISI agent Rajaa Gulum Abbas, held at a restaurant within view of the WTC. FBI agents pretending to be restaurant customers sit at nearby tables. ([MSNBC 8/2/2002](#); [WPBF 25 \(West Palm Beach\) 8/5/2002](#)) Abbas says he wants to buy a whole shipload of weapons stolen from the US military to give to bin Laden. ([Pacenti 8/2/2002](#)) Abbas points to the WTC and says, "Those towers are coming down." This ISI agent later makes two other references to an attack on the WTC. ([Pacenti 8/2/2002](#); [WPBF 25 \(West Palm Beach\) 8/5/2002](#); [Pacenti 10/17/2002](#)) Abbas also says, "Americans [are] the enemy," and "We would have no problem with blowing up this entire restaurant because it is full of Americans." ([NBC 3/18/2003](#)) The meeting is secretly recorded, and parts are shown on television in 2003. ([MSNBC 3/18/2003](#))

Late Summer 1999: NSA Intercepts Calls Mentioning Almihdhar, Does Not Disseminate Information

The NSA intercepts more calls involving an al-Qaeda communications hub in Sana'a, Yemen (see [Early 1999](#) and [Summer 1999](#)). The names of Khaled, who turns out to be 9/11 hijacker Khalid Almihdhar, and others are mentioned in the calls. However, the NSA reportedly does not think the intelligence gleaned from the calls is important and does not disseminate it. ([US Congress 7/24/2003, pp. 156](#)) However, the FBI regarded the hub as a key element in al-Qaeda's communications network and after 9/11 a senior US counterterrorism official will say, "The NSA was well aware of how hot the number was... and how it was a logistical hub for Al Qaeda." Several plots are stopped based on information obtained from listening to calls to and from the hub (see [Late 1998-Early 2002](#)). ([Meyer 12/21/2005](#))

August 3, 1999: Wright Removed from Vulgar Betrayal Investigation

Chicago FBI agent Robert Wright is abruptly removed from the Vulgar Betrayal investigation into terrorism financing (see [1996](#)). The entire investigation apparently

winds down without his involvement, and will shut down altogether in 2000 (see [August 2000](#)). A New York Post article will state, “[T]he official reason was a fear that Wright’s work would disrupt FBI intelligence-gathering. My sources find this dubious: After years of monitoring these individuals, the bureau had likely learned all it could.... [But] conversations with FBI personnel indicate that he was told informally that his work was too embarrassing to the Saudis. In support of this is the fact that Wright was shut down as he seemed to be closing in on Yassin al-Qadi.” ([Grimaldi and Mintz 5/11/2002](#); [Schlussel 7/14/2004](#)) Wright later will claim that a reason he is given for being taken off the investigation is a recent dispute he is having with a Muslim FBI agent who refuses to wear a wire (see [Early 1999-March 21, 2000](#)). ([Federal News Service 6/2/2003](#)) He is also accused of sexually harassing a female FBI agent. This charge is investigated and later dropped. ([Lighty and Cohen 8/22/2004](#)) Wright is removed from counterterrorism work altogether and remains that way at least through early 2002. ([Associated Press 3/15/2002](#)) In September 1999, he will hire Chicago lawyer David Schippers, famed as House investigative counsel in the Clinton impeachment, to help fight the closure of the investigation. Although Schippers is known as an enemy of President Clinton, Wright will say, “I’m confident President Clinton had absolutely nothing to do with the lack of support and eventual closure of the Vulgar Betrayal investigation.” ([Federal News Service 6/2/2003](#); [Novak 6/19/2003](#))

August 4, 1999: FAA Considers Suicide Hijacking Possibility

The FAA’s intelligence office sends an internal memo summarizing the al-Qaeda hijacking threat. After reciting information available on the topic, a few principal scenarios are presented. One of them is a “suicide hijacking operation.” However, this is considered an option of last resort because “it does not offer an opportunity for dialogue to achieve the key goal of obtaining [Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman] and other key captive extremists.” ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 345, 561](#))

August 17, 1999: Arms Merchants Seek Nuclear Materials in US; Report Is Sanitized



Randy Glass, holding a Stinger missile.

[Source: David Friedman/ Getty Images] A group of illegal arms merchants, including an ISI agent with foreknowledge of 9/11, had met in a New York restaurant the month before (see [July 14, 1999](#)). This same group meets at this time in a West Palm Beach, Florida, warehouse, and it is shown Stinger missiles as part of a sting operation. ([Burststein 3/20/2003](#)) US intelligence soon discovers connections between two in the group, Rajaa Gulum Abbas and Mohammed Malik, Islamic militant groups in Kashmir (where the ISI assists them in fighting against India), and the Taliban. Mohamed Malik suggests in this meeting that the Stingers will be used in Kashmir or Afghanistan. His colleague Diaa Mohsen also says Abbas has direct connections to “dignitaries” and bin Laden. Abbas also wants heavy water for a “dirty bomb” or other material to make a nuclear weapon. He says he will bring a Pakistani nuclear scientist to the US to inspect the material. ([MSNBC 8/2/2002](#); [NBC 3/18/2003](#)) According to Dick Stoltz, a federal undercover agent posing as a black market arms dealer, one of the Pakistanis at the warehouse claims he is working for A.Q. Khan. A Pakistani nuclear scientist, Khan is considered the father of Pakistan’s nuclear weapons program and also the head of an illegal network exporting nuclear technology to rogue nations. ([Hansen 1/14/2005](#)) Government informant Randy Glass passes these warnings on before 9/11, but he claims, “The complaints were ordered sanitized by the highest levels of government.” ([WPBF 25 \(West Palm Beach\) 8/5/2002](#)) In June 2002, the US secretly indicts Abbas, but apparently they aren’t trying very hard to find him: In August 2002, MSNBC is easily able to contact Abbas in Pakistan and speak to him by telephone. ([MSNBC 8/2/2002](#))

Autumn 1999: Bizarre Connection Between Moussaoui and Future Beheading Victim



Nick Berg. *[Source: Associated Press]* Nick Berg is an American who will become known for being beheaded on video in Iraq in 2004 (see [March 24-May 11, 2004](#)). It will later come out that he had a curious connection to Zacarias Moussaoui. In the autumn of 1999, Berg is a university student in Norman, Oklahoma, where Moussaoui will attend flight school in early 2001. According to Berg's father, one day Nick Berg is riding a bus to his classes and he meets Moussaoui on the bus. Moussaoui asks him for his password so he can use Berg's laptop to check the Internet. Berg gives him his password. FBI investigators later will discover Moussaoui's use of this password, and will interview Berg about it in 2002. Berg will be cleared of any criminal connection with Moussaoui. Jayna Davis, a former NBC reporter known for her controversial investigation of the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing, calls the explanation as to why Moussaoui had Berg's password "totally nonsensical." She will note the low odds of anyone being able to log onto the Internet on a bus in 1999 and will say, "You're sitting on a bus. It's a five- to ten-minute ride. How in the world would a stranger sitting next to you say, 'Hey, can I borrow your laptop computer because I want to log on to your e-mail?'" She also notes that the FBI insists Berg gave his password to an acquaintance of Moussaoui, while Berg's family insists it was Moussaoui himself on the bus. ([NewsMax 5/18/2004](#); [CBS News 5/21/2004](#)) The London Times will note that this acquaintance "is believed to have been Hussein al-Attas," Moussaoui's roommate when he will be arrested in Minnesota in August 2001. The Times will note that Berg's "past links to an al-Qaeda terrorist have raised questions in some quarters as to whether he might even have been working for the intelligence services." ([Allen-Mills and Fielding 5/23/2004](#))

Fall 1999: Army Intelligence Program Begins Gathering Information on Al-Qaeda



Gen. Pete Schoomaker. [Source: *US Defense Department*] A data mining program called Able Danger was set up by US Special Operations Command (SOCOM) in late 1998. It had been collecting data mostly on Bosnia and China (see [Late December 1998](#)). But at this time, it begins collecting data on al-Qaeda. ([Goodwin 9/2005](#)) At least some of the data is collected on behalf of Maj. Gen. Geoffrey Lambert, the J3 at US Special Operations Command. ([US Congress. Senate. Committee on Judiciary 9/21/2005](#)) Eleven intelligence employees are directly involved in Able Danger's work. Six are with SOCOM's Able Danger unit. Four more, including Dr. Eileen Preisser and Maj. Eric Kleinsmith, are with the US Army's Land Information Warfare Activity (LIWA), which joins the effort in December 1999. LIWA had been conducting data mining already on a wide variety of topics, including international drug cartels, corruption in Russia and Serbia, terrorist linkages in the Far East, and the proliferation of sensitive military technology to China (see [April 2000](#)). ([Phucas 6/19/2005](#); [Goodwin 8/2005](#); [Jehl 8/9/2005](#); [Garza 8/10/2005](#); [Kelly 8/14/2005](#); [Goodwin 9/2005](#); [US Congress 9/21/2005](#); [US Congress. Senate. Committee on Judiciary 9/21/2005](#)) Lt. Col. Anthony Shaffer, running a military unit called Stratus Ivy in the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), will also take part in the effort. According to Shaffer, Stratus Ivy is tasked "to take on 'out of the box' ideas, and develop them into real intelligence operations." So the goal is to use the information gathered by Able Danger to conduct real operations against al-Qaeda targets. ([US Congress 2/15/2006](#)) Using computers, the unit collects huge amounts of data in a technique called "data mining." They get information from such sources as al-Qaeda Internet chat rooms, news accounts, web sites, and financial records. Using sophisticated software, they compare this with government records such as visa applications by foreign tourists, to find any correlations and depict these visually. ([Kelly 8/14/2005](#); [Goodwin 9/2005](#)) The program will be shut down early in 2001 (see [January-March 2001](#)).

September 1999: US Report Predicts Spectacular Attack on Washington

A report prepared for US intelligence titled the "Sociology and Psychology of Terrorism" is completed. It states, "Al-Qaeda's expected retaliation for the US cruise missile attack... could take several forms of terrorist attack in the nation's capital. Al-Qaeda could detonate a Chechen-type building-buster bomb at a federal building. Suicide bomber(s) belonging to al-Qaeda's Martyrdom Battalion could crash-land an aircraft packed with high explosives (C-4 and Semtex) into the Pentagon, the headquarters of the

Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), or the White House. Whatever form an attack may take, bin Laden will most likely retaliate in a spectacular way.” The report is by the National Intelligence Council, which advises the president and US intelligence on emerging threats. ([Solomon 4/18/2002](#)) The Bush administration later claims to have never heard of this report until May 2002, despite the fact that it had been publicly posted on the Internet since 1999, and “widely shared within the government” according to the New York Times. ([CNN 5/18/2002](#); [Shenon 5/18/2002](#))

September 1999: Bin Laden to Attack in US, Possibly in California and New York City

US intelligence obtains information that bin Laden and others are planning an attack in the US, possibly against specific landmarks in California and New York City. The reliability of the source is unknown. ([US Congress 9/18/2002](#))

September 1999: FBI Investigates Flight School Attendee Connected to Bin Laden

Agents from Oklahoma City FBI office visit the Airman Flight School in Norman, Oklahoma to investigate Ihab Ali Nawawi, who has been identified as bin Laden’s former personal pilot in a recent trial. The agents learned that Nawawi received his commercial pilot’s license at the school 1993, then traveled to another school in Oklahoma City to qualify for a rating to fly small business aircraft. He is later named as an unindicted coconspirator in the 1998 US Embassy bombing in Kenya. The trial witness who gave this information, Essam al Ridi, also attended flight school in the US, then bought a plane and flew it to Afghanistan for bin Laden to use (see [1993](#)). ([Cullen and Ranalli 9/18/2001](#); [Hirschhorn 10/16/2001](#); [Fainaru 5/19/2002](#); [US Congress 10/17/2002](#)) When Nawawi was arrested in May 1999, he was working as a taxi driver in Orlando, Florida (see [May 18, 1999](#)). Investigators discover recent ties between him and high-ranking al-Qaeda leaders, and suspect he was a “sleeper” agent. ([Murphy 10/28/2001](#)) However, the FBI agent visiting the school is not given most background details about him. ([US Congress 7/24/2003](#)) It is not known if these investigators are aware of a terrorist flight school warning given by the Oklahoma City FBI office in 1998. Hijackers Mohamed Atta and Marwan Alshehhi later visit the Airman school in July 2000 but ultimately will decide to train in Florida instead. ([Cullen and Ranalli 9/18/2001](#)) Al-Qaeda agent Zacarias Moussaoui will take flight lessons at Airman in February 2001 (see [February 23-June 2001](#)). One of the FBI agents sent to visit the school at this time visits it again in August 2001 asking about Moussaoui, but he will fail to make a connection between the two visits (see [August 23, 2001](#)).

September 1999: Atta Obtains US Store Membership Before Alleged Arrival in US

BJ's Wholesale Club, a store in Hollywood, Florida, later tells the FBI that Mohamed Atta may have held a BJ's membership card since at least this time ("more than two years" before 9/11). Several cashiers at the store vaguely remember seeing Atta there. ([Babson, Lebowitz, and Viglucci 9/18/2001](#)) According to the official story, Atta does not arrive in the US until June 3, 2000. ([Morgan, Kidwell, and Corral 9/22/2001](#))

September 1999: CIA Analyst Suggests US Use Muslims to Further US Interests in Central Asia

Graham Fuller, former Deputy Director of the CIA's National Council on Intelligence, advocates using Muslim forces to further US interests in Central Asia. He states, "The policy of guiding the evolution of Islam and of helping them against our adversaries worked marvelously well in Afghanistan against [the Russians]. The same doctrines can still be used to destabilize what remains of Russian power, and especially to counter the Chinese influence in Central Asia." Later in 1999, investigative journalist Richard Labeviere suggests that Fuller is revealing actual US foreign policy in Central Asia and comments, "the convergence of strategic and economic interests between the American government and Sunni Islam is doing just fine...." ([Labeviere 1999, pp. 5-6](#))

September 15, 1999: Bipartisan Commission Concludes Terrorist Attack Will Occur on US Soil, Killing Many

The first phase of the US Commission on National Security/21st Century, co-chaired by former Senators Gary Hart (D) and Warren Rudman (R), is issued. It concludes: "America will be attacked by terrorists using weapons of mass destruction and Americans will lose their lives on American soil, possibly in large numbers." ([US Commission on National Security 9/15/1999](#))

September 21, 1999: German Intelligence Records Calls Between Hijacker and Others Linked to Al-Qaeda

German intelligence is periodically tapping suspected al-Qaeda operative Mohammed Haydar Zammar's telephone, and on this day investigators hear Zammar call hijacker Marwan Alshehhi. Officials initially claim that the call also mentions hijacker Mohamed Atta, but only his first name. ([Helm 11/24/2001](#); [New York Times 1/18/2003](#)) However, his full name, "Mohamed Atta Al Amir," is mentioned in this call and in another recorded call. ([Schrom and Laabs 2/2/2003](#)) Alshehhi makes veiled references to plans to travel to Afghanistan. He also hands the phone over to Said Bahaji (another member of the Hamburg cell under investigation at the time), so he can talk to Zammar. ([Laabs 8/13/2003](#)) German investigators still do not know Alshehhi's full name, but they recognize this "Marwan" also called Zammar in January, and they told the CIA about that call. Alshehhi, living in the United Arab Emirates at the time, calls Zammar frequently.

German intelligence asks the United Arab Emirates to identify the number and the caller, but the request is not answered. ([Cziesche, Mascolo, and Stark 2/3/2003](#))

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October 1999: Joint US-ISI Operation to Kill Osama Falters

The CIA readies an operation to capture or kill bin Laden, secretly training and equipping approximately 60 commandos from the Pakistani ISI. Pakistan supposedly agrees to this plan in return for the lifting of economic sanctions and more economic aid. ([Gellman 10/3/2001](#)) Pakistan proposed the plan in December 1998 (see [December 2, 1998](#)). US officials were said to be “deeply cynical” of the plan, knowing that Pakistani intelligence was allied with bin Laden (see [Autumn 1998](#)). They figured that if Pakistan really wanted bin Laden captured or killed, they could just tell the US when and where he would be, but Pakistan never revealed this kind of information. But the US went ahead with the plan anyway, figuring it held little risk and could help develop intelligence ties with Pakistan. ([Coll 2004, pp. 442-444](#)) After months of training, the commando team is almost ready to go by this month. However, the plan is aborted because on October 12, General Musharraf takes control of Pakistan in a coup (see [October 12, 1999](#)). Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif tries to use the commando team to protect himself during the coup, but the team dissolves rather than fight on what they judge to be the losing side. Musharraf refuses to reform the team or continue any such operation against bin Laden despite the promise of substantial rewards. ([Gellman 10/3/2001](#); [Coll 2004, pp. 442-444, 478-480](#)) Some US officials later say the CIA was tricked, that the ISI just feigned to cooperate as a stalling tactic, and never intended to get bin Laden. ([Risen and Miller 10/29/2001](#))

October 1999: CIA Considers Increased Aid to Northern Alliance



Ahmed Shah Massoud. *[Source: French Ministry of Foreign Affairs]* Worried about intercepts showing a growing likelihood of al-Qaeda attacks around the millennium, the CIA steps up ties with Ahmed Shah Massoud, leader of the Northern Alliance fighting the Taliban. The CIA sends a team of agents to his headquarters in a remote part of northern Afghanistan, seeking his help to capture or kill bin Laden. Massoud complains that the US is too focused on bin Laden, and isn't interested in the root problems of Taliban, Saudi, and Pakistani support for terrorism that is propping him up. He agrees to help nonetheless, and the CIA gives him more aid in return. However, the US is officially neutral in the Afghan civil war and the agents are prohibited from giving any aid that would "fundamentally alter the Afghan battlefield." ([Coll 2/23/2004](#)) DIA agent Julie Sirrs, newly retired, is at Massoud's headquarters at the same time as the CIA team (see [October 1998](#)). She gathers valuable intelligence from captured al-Qaeda soldiers while the CIA agents stay in their guesthouse. She publishes much of what she learned on this trip and other trips in the summer of 2001. ([Washington Post 2/28/2004](#))

October 1999: CIA Does Not Share Information with Able Danger Program



Lt. Col. Anthony Shaffer. *[Source: Sandy Schaeffer]* Capt. Scott Phillpott, head of the Able Danger program, asks Lt. Col. Anthony Shaffer to talk to a representative of CIA Director George Tenet and attempt to convince him that the new Able Danger program is not competing with the CIA. Shaffer later recalls the CIA

representative replying, “I clearly understand the difference. I clearly understand. We’re going after the leadership. You guys are going after the body. But, it doesn’t matter. The bottom line is, CIA will never give you the best information from ‘Alex Base’ [the CIA’s covert action element targeting bin Laden] or anywhere else. CIA will never provide that to you because if you were successful in your effort to target al-Qaeda, you will steal our thunder. Therefore, we will not support this.” Shaffer claims that for the duration of Able Danger’s existence, “To my knowledge, and my other colleagues’ knowledge, there was no information ever released to us because CIA chose not to participate in Able Danger.” ([Goodwin 9/2005](#))

October 1999: Atta Reportedly Gets Engaged and Asks His Parents If He Can Stay in Egypt

After Mohamed Atta completes his Master’s Degree in Hamburg, Germany, he goes home to Cairo, Egypt, one last time. By this time, his parents are estranged from each other. His father tells Atta they should find him a wife, and has a potential bride lined up. According to his father, they visit a family, Mohamed meets the daughter and they like each other. The woman’s parents also likes Atta, but their only condition to the marriage is that their daughter doesn’t have to leave Cairo. Mohamed gets engaged to her, and then goes back to Germany. According to Mohamed’s aunt, Mohamed asks his mother, who is ill, whether he can remain in Egypt permanently, to begin a career and care for her. However, she insists he continue his education and go on to a doctoral program in the US. ([McDermott 1/27/2002](#); [McDermott 9/1/2002](#))

October 1999: Alshehhi Takes First Flying Lessons in Germany

9/11 hijacker Marwan Alshehhi takes flying lessons in Bonn, Germany. He takes a lesson in an ultralight two-seater and then returns ten days later for a second lesson. His former flying teacher will later recall, “The young man was highly attentive and especially talented.” ([Agence France-Presse 10/9/2001](#)) There are reports that Mohamed Atta also takes lessons on ultralight aircraft in the Philippines in 1999 (see [April 1999](#) and [December 1999](#)).

October 1999: Hamburg Cell Downloads Flight Training Software

According to German investigations, by at least this time, the Hamburg cell including Mohamed Atta, Marwan Alshehhi, Ziad Jarrah, and Ramzi bin al-Shibh has come up with the idea of attacking the United States using airplanes. This theory is based on witness statements and the discovery by the German police of a flight simulator file on a computer used by the Hamburg cell that was downloaded by this time. ([Finn 9/11/2002](#); [Burke 2004, pp. 244](#)) Both Atta and Alshhehi start taking lessons on ultralight aircraft this

year (see [April 1999](#), [October 1999](#), and [December 1999](#)). Some suggest they first joined the 9/11 plot in early 1999 (see [Early 1999](#)). However, the 9/11 Commission claims that the 9/11 plot was hatched by al-Qaeda's leadership and was communicated to the Hamburg al-Qaeda cell in Afghanistan in December 1999. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004](#), pp. 165-169)

October 5, 1999: Bin Laden Might Be Planning Major Attack in US

The highly respected Jane's Terrorism and Security Monitor reports that US intelligence is worried that bin Laden is planning a major attack on US soil. They are said to be particularly concerned about some kind of attack on New York, and they have recommended stepped-up security at the New York Stock Exchange and the Federal Reserve. ([Limbacher 10/5/1999](#))

October 8, 1999: Al-Qaeda Declared Foreign Terrorist Organization

The State Department legally declares al-Qaeda a foreign terrorist organization that is threatening to the US. Previously, it had been illegal in the US to support bin Laden as an individual; now it is illegal to support any part of his organization. ([US Congress 7/24/2003](#); [9/11 Commission 3/24/2004](#)) The State Department had announced its first list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations in autumn 1997. Surprisingly, neither bin Laden nor al-Qaeda were included (see [Autumn 1997](#)). ([Coll 2004](#))

October 9, 1999: Wedding Connects Darkazanli with Hamburg Cell



Video footage of Said Bahaji's wedding in October 1999. Clockwise from top left: Ramzi bin al-Shibh, Said Bahaji, Mamoun Darkazanli, Ziad Jarrah, and Marwan Alshehhi. [Source: *Agence France-Presse*] Mamoun Darkazanli, along with most of the Hamburg al-Qaeda cell, attends the wedding of Said Bahaji. Bahaji is one of Mohamed Atta's roommates and believed to be a core member of the cell. The wedding takes place at the Al-Quds mosque in Hamburg. A videotape of the wedding is discovered by German investigators shortly after 9/11, and eventually more than 20 men are identified from the video. Other attendees include: Ramzi bin al-Shibh, Marwan Alshehhi, Ziad Jarrah, Mounir el Motassadeq, Mohammed Haydar Zammar, and Abdelghani Mzoudi. ([Bernstein et al. 9/10/2002](#); [CBS News 5/7/2003](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 345, 561](#); [Zeman et al. 11/2004](#)) Zammar is Bahaji's best man in the wedding. ([Erlanger 6/20/2002](#)) The video first shows Bahaji's nuptial ceremony, followed by a series of radical militant speeches and songs. The songs celebrate violent holy war and martyrdom. The New York Times will later report, "The presence of all of these men at the wedding of Mr. Bahaji has led investigators to believe that the plan to attack the United States had essentially been formed by then... ." ([Bernstein et al. 9/10/2002](#))

October 12, 1999: General Musharraf Takes Control of Pakistan



Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf. [Source: *Government of Pakistan*] Gen. Pervez Musharraf becomes leader of Pakistan in a coup. One major reason for the coup is the ISI felt the previous ruler had to go “out of fear that he might buckle to American pressure and reverse Pakistan’s policy [of supporting] the Taliban.” ([Frantz 12/8/2001](#)) Shortly thereafter, Musharraf replaces the leader of the ISI, Brig Imtiaz, because of his close ties to the previous leader. Imtiaz is arrested and convicted of “having assets disproportionate to his known sources of income.” It comes out that he was keeping tens of millions of dollars earned from heroin smuggling in a Deutsche Bank account. ([Raman 8/10/2001](#)) Lt. Gen. Mahmood Ahmed, a close ally of Musharraf who is instrumental in the success of the coup. Mahmood actually secured the capital and detained Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, but then honored the chain of command and stepped aside so Musharraf, as head of the military, could take over. Mahmood is rewarded by being made the new director of the ISI. ([Harding 10/9/2001](#); [Coll 2004, pp. 504-505](#))

October 23, 1999: Atta Enters US Green Card Lottery, Fails to Obtain Residency

Mohamed Atta enters a lottery for permanent resident status in the US. The application is submitted over the Internet to the National Visa Service, a company that, for a \$50 fee, helps individuals enter green card lotteries for permanent resident status in the US. Atta submits another lottery application in November, but both applications are unsuccessful. ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006, pp. 19-20](#).) This may indicate that Atta is already involved in the 9/11 plot in some way prior to December 1999, when the 9/11 Commission suggests he joins the plot (see [Late November-Early December 1999](#)). He appears to have traveled to Afghanistan (see [Late 1997-Early 1998](#)) and has discussed studying in the US with his parents (see [October 1999](#)). In addition, he and fellow Hamburg cell member Marwan Alshehhi may have already started taking flying lessons (see [April 1999](#) and [October 1999](#)).

October 25, 1999: Golfer Payne Stewart Dies in Plane Crash; Incident Raises Questions about Shooting Down Off-Course Planes



A map showing the planned flight path of Payne Stewart's plane and the crash site location. [Source: CNN] A runaway Learjet crashes near Mina, South Dakota, after flying on autopilot for several hours. On board is champion golfer Payne Stewart, along with five others. It is believed the accident is due to a loss of cabin pressure at high altitude, which would have caused all on board to go unconscious from lack of oxygen. (Sealey 10/25/1999; Walsh and Claiborne 10/26/1999; National Transportation Safety Board 11/28/2000) After air traffic controllers lost contact with the plane, it was tracked by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), assisted by several Air Force and Air National Guard fighters and an AWACS radar control plane, up until when it crashed. It was also tracked on radar screens inside the National Military Command Center in the Pentagon. (McIntyre 10/26/1999) The Learjet had departed Orlando, Florida at 9:19 a.m., bound for Texas. The FAA says controllers lost contact with it at 9:44 a.m. (Walsh and Claiborne 10/26/1999) , but according to a later report by the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) the plane first failed to respond to air traffic control at 9:33 a.m., after which the controller repeatedly tried to make contact for the next 4 1/2 minutes, without success. (National Transportation Safety Board 11/28/2000) NORAD's Southeast Air Defense Sector was notified of the emergency at 9:55 a.m. (9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 459) At 10:08 a.m., two F-16 fighters from Tyndall Air Force Base, Florida that were on a routine training mission had been asked by the FAA to intercept the Learjet, but never reached it. At about 10:52 a.m., a fighter from Eglin Air Force Base, Florida, was directed to within 9 miles of it, and at around 11:00 a.m. began a visual inspection of the plane. It accompanied the Learjet from 11:09 to 11:44 a.m. At 11:59 a.m., according to early accounts, four Air National Guard fighters and a refueling tanker from Tulsa, Oklahoma

were told to chase the Learjet, but got no closer than 100 miles from it. However, the NTSB later claims that two Tulsa fighters were with it between 12:25 and 12:39 p.m., and were able to visually inspect it. At 12:54 p.m., two Air National Guard fighters from Fargo, North Dakota intercepted the Learjet. Soon after 1:14 p.m., it crashed in swampland, after spiraling to the ground. ([Walsh and Claiborne 10/26/1999](#); [Associated Press 10/27/1999](#); [National Transportation Safety Board 11/28/2000](#)) During its flight, the FAA had routed air traffic around the Learjet, and made sure no other planes flew beneath it, due to the danger of it crashing. ([Associated Press 10/26/1999](#)) There is some discussion as to what could have been done had the plane been on a collision course with a populated area, with CNN reporting, “[O]nly the president has the authority to order a civilian aircraft shot down.” Pentagon spokesman Ken Bacon says the military has no written instructions for shooting down manned civilian planes. According to a 1997 military instruction, the shooting down of unmanned objects such as missiles requires prior approval from the secretary of defense. ([US Department of Defense 7/31/1997](#); [McIntyre 10/26/1999](#)) A Pentagon spokesman says the fighters that monitored the Learjet had no missiles, but two other fighters on “strip alert” at Fargo had been armed but didn’t take off. ([CNN 10/26/1999](#)) The 9/11 Commission will later compare NORAD’s response to this incident with its response to Flight 11 on 9/11, and claim: “There is no significant difference in NORAD’s reaction to the two incidents.” ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 459](#))

October 31, 1999: Suicide Pilot Crashes Commercial Airliner into Ocean



Gameel el-Batouti was suspected of purposely crashing Egyptair 990 (left). Wreckage of the plane (right). [*Source: Mike Stewart/ Corbis, and Brian Snyder/ Reuters*] EgyptAir Flight 990 crashes into the ocean off the coast of Massachusetts, killing all 217 people on board. It is immediately suspected that one of the pilots purposely crashed the plane, and this is the eventual conclusion of a National Transportation Safety Board investigation. Thirty-three Egyptian military officers were aboard the plane, leading to suspicions that killing them was the motive for crashing the plane. No connections between the supposed suicide pilot and militancy are found. ([ABC News 11/2/1999](#); [Rising 1/21/2000](#); [Langewiesche 11/2001](#); [Fiorino 3/25/2002](#)) The Egyptian government publicly asserts that the crash was caused by mechanical failure. However, shortly before 9/11 it will be reported that US intelligence

secretly monitored communications between Egyptian officials and hear that Egyptian investigators “privately accept” that the pilot was “probably responsible” for the crash. ([Ensor 6/25/2001](#)) Mohammed Atef, al-Qaeda’s military operations chief, is said to be inspired to use the idea of planes as weapons after learning of this incident. The US learns of Atef’s interest from the interrogation of al-Qaeda suspects in Jordan, but it hasn’t been reported if this is learned before or after 9/11. ([Finn 9/11/2002](#))

November 1999: Hijackers Said to Lease Apartment in San Diego, Two Months Before Alleged First Arrival in US

The Washington Post refers to hijackers Nawaf Alhazmi and Khalid Almihdhar when it later reports, “In November 1999, two Saudi Arabian men moved into a ground-floor apartment at the Parkwood Apartments, a town house complex near a busy commercial strip in San Diego.” ([Goldstein 9/30/2001](#)) Alhazmi’s name is on the apartment lease beginning in November 1999. ([Washington Post 10/2001](#)) The Los Angeles Times similarly notes, “A man by [the name Alhazmi] moved to the Parkwood Apartments in San Diego in 1999, according to manager Holly Ratchford.” ([Schrader and Richter 9/15/2001](#)) Some reports even have them visiting the US as early as 1996. ([Mollenkamp et al. 9/17/2001](#); [Puit and Kalil 10/26/2001](#)) However, FBI Director Mueller has stated the two hijackers did not arrive in the US until the middle of January 2000, after attending an important al-Qaeda summit in Malaysia (see [January 5-8, 2000](#)). While some news reports mention that the hijackers first arrive in late 1999 ([McDermott 9/1/2002](#); [Serrano, McManus, and Krikorian 11/24/2002](#)), over time, mentions of the lease beginning in 1999 will slowly fade from media accounts.

November 1999-August 2001: Suspects with Saudi Embassy Ties Increases Concerns about Radical Militants in Phoenix

Two Saudis, Hamdan al Shalawi and Mohammed al-Qudhaeein, are detained for trying twice to get into the cockpit on a passenger airplane flying from Phoenix, Arizona, to Washington, D.C. They claim they thought the cockpit was the bathroom, and sue the FBI for racism. After 9/11, the FBI will consider the possibility that this was a “dry run” for the 9/11 attacks, but apparently does not come to a definite conclusion. In late 1999, it is discovered that the two were traveling to Washington to attend a party at the Saudi embassy and their ticket had been paid by the Saudi government. Apparently influenced by their government ties, the FBI decides not to prosecute or investigate the men. Al-Qudhaeein leaves the US. In 2000, intelligence information will be received indicating al-Qudhaeein had received explosives and car bomb training in Afghanistan. As a result, his name is added to a no-fly watch list. In April 2000, FBI agent Ken Williams is investigating Zacaria Soubra, a suspected radical militant attending a flight school in Phoenix, and discovers that the car Soubra is driving is actually owned by al-Qudhaeein.

Soubra is friends with al Shalawi and al-Qudhaeein. This and other evidence will influence Williams to write his later-famous July 2001 memo warning about potential terrorists training in Arizona flight schools (see [July 10, 2001](#)). In August 2001, al-Qudhaeein applies for a visa to reenter the US, but is denied entry. It has not been revealed why al-Qudhaeein wanted to reenter the US, or if Williams or anyone else in US intelligence knew about his attempted reentry, or if anyone took action as a result of it. ([Graham and Nussbaum 2004, pp. 43-44](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 521](#); [Sherman 11/2004](#)) Al Shalawi, the other Saudi involved in the cockpit incident, also has a radical militant background. In November 2000, US intelligence discovers he is training in a camp in Afghanistan, learning how to conduct a car bomb attack. One of his friends in Arizona is Ghassan al Sharbi, an al-Qaeda operative who will be captured in Pakistan with al-Qaeda leader Abu Zubaida. Al Sharbi is one of the targets of Williams' July 2001 memo. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 521](#))

Late 1999-2000: Alleged CIA Informant Said to Train Six 9/11 Hijackers in Turkey

In 2007, the London Times will report that imprisoned al-Qaeda leader Luai Sakra claims that he trained six of the 9/11 hijackers in Turkey. Sakra allegedly had links to the CIA and Syrian intelligence before 9/11 (see [2000](#) and [September 10, 2001](#)) and also allegedly was in contact with 9/11 hijacker Mohamed Atta before 9/11 (see [September 2000-July 24, 2001](#)). According to Sakra's account, Sakra established a training and support network for radical militants in Turkey in the mid-1990s. In the Yalova mountain resort area between the cities of Bursa and Istanbul, he trained many militants heading to fight in Chechnya and elsewhere. Sakra worked with al-Qaeda leader Abu Zubaida to provide forged documents enabling trainees to travel to Afghanistan and elsewhere after their training was over. According to Sakra's lawyer, in late 1999, 9/11 hijackers Ahmed Alghamdi, Hamza Alghamdi, Saeed Alghamdi, and Nawaf Alhazmi undertook Sakra's training program. They had been planning to go to fight in Chechnya, but Sakra recommended them to Zubaida and they went to Zubaida's training camp in Afghanistan instead. Hijackers Majed Moqed and Satam Al Suqami also later trained with Sakra in Turkey. Sakra alleges Moqed and Al Suqami were hand-picked by al-Qaeda leaders for the 9/11 plot. Sakra claims that at one point the entire group were arrested by police in Yalova, Turkey, after their presence raised suspicions. They were interrogated for a day but released because no evidence of wrongdoing could be shown. ([Gourlay and Calvert 11/25/2007](#)) In early 2006, Sakra made the claim that he had helped some of the 9/11 hijackers near Bursa, but he did not give specifics. ([Vick 2/20/2006](#)) While Sakra's account cannot be corroborated, it does fit with details given in the 9/11 Commission's final report. According to that report, after 9/11, captured al-Qaeda leader Khallad bin Attash claimed that a number of militants trying to go to Chechnya in 1999 were unable to get there and stayed at al-Qaeda guesthouses in Turkey instead, where they were to wait to make another attempt to enter Chechnya in the summer of 2000, but they ended up going to Afghanistan instead. Bin Attash mentions nine hijackers who may have been trying to get to Chechnya in this fashion, including all the ones mentioned by Sakra. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 233](#)) The 9/11 Commission report also mentions that most of

the “muscle” hijackers trained at the al Faruq camp, except for Al Suqami and Moqed, who trained at the Khaldan camp. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 234](#))

November 4, 1999: CIA Rejects Proposal for Center to Share Data on Terrorist Threats

Rep. Curt Weldon later claims that while he never learns about Able Danger prior to 9/11, he does become aware of the Land Information Warfare Activity’s (LIWA) similar data mining efforts in 1999 and is very impressed. He says that on this day, he is part of a meeting with the deputy directors of the FBI and the CIA and others. Using LIWA as a model, Weldon proposes a national collaborative center that would use open source data as well as classified information from 33 government agencies “to basically assess emerging transnational terrorists threats. The CIA, two years before 9/11, said, we don’t need that. We’ve put language in three successive defense bills, in spite of that, calling for a national collaborative capability. Prior to 9/11, we didn’t have that capability, and we were hit.” ([US Congress 2/15/2006](#))

November 10, 1999: North WTC Tower Suffers Last ‘Significant’ Fire Prior to 9/11; Bigger Fire Occurred in 1975

The North Tower of the WTC suffers a fire on its 104th floor. This is the 15th and last of what the National Institute of Standards and Technology later describes as “significant fires,” which occurred in the Twin Towers from 1975 onwards, and prior to 9/11. These fires each activate up to three sprinklers but are confined to just one floor. ([Kuligowski, Evans, and Peacock 9/2005, pp. 7-11](#)) Additionally, on February 14, 1975 a major fire occurred, the result of arson, which began on the 11th floor of the North Tower during the middle of the night. Spreading through floor openings in the utility closets, it caused damage from the 10th to 19th floors, though this was generally confined to the utility closets. However, on the 11th floor about 9,000 square feet was damaged. This was about 21 percent of the floor’s total area (43,200 square feet) and took weeks to repair. Some parts of the steel trusses (floor supports) buckled due to the heat. 132 firefighters were called to the tower in response, and because the fire was so hot, many got their necks and ears burned. Fire Department Captain Harold Kull described the three-hour effort to extinguish it as “like fighting a blowtorch.” ([WTC Environmental Assessment Working Group 9/2002, pp. 10](#); [Glanz 5/8/2003](#); [Glanz and Lipton 2004, pp. 213, 214, 324](#); [Kuligowski, Evans, and Peacock 9/2005, pp. 1](#)) An article in Fire Engineering magazine will later summarize, “[A]lmost all large buildings will be the location for a major fire in their useful life. No major high-rise building has ever collapsed from fire. The WTC was the location for such a fire in 1975; however, the building survived with minor damage and was repaired and returned to service.” ([Glover 10/2002](#)) Building 7 of the WTC, which completely collapses late in the afternoon on 9/11, has also suffered a ‘significant’ fire in 1988, occurring on its third floor, with multiple sprinklers being activated. ([Kuligowski, Evans, and Peacock 9/2005, pp. 12](#))

November 14, 1999: Limited UN Sanctions on Afghanistan

United Nations sanctions against Afghanistan take effect. The sanctions freeze Taliban assets and impose an air embargo on Ariana Airlines in an effort to force the Taliban to hand over bin Laden. ([BBC 2/6/2000](#)) It had been widely reported that Ariana had become a transportation arm for al-Qaeda (see [Mid-1996-October 2001](#)). However, Ariana will keep its illegal trade network flying, until stricter sanctions will ground it in 2001 (see [January 19, 2001](#)).

Late 1999: 9/11 Hijackers Train with *Cole* Bomber and Other Militants

A group of al-Qaeda operatives receives advanced training at the Mes Aynak camp in Afghanistan. The large group includes 9/11 hijackers Nawaf Alhazmi and Khalid Almihdhar (see [November/December 1999](#)), al-Qaeda commander Khallad bin Attash, would-be 9/11 hijacker Abu Bara al Taizi, USS *Cole* bomber Ibrahim al-Thawar (a.k.a. Nibras), an operative who leads a series of suicide bombings in Riyadh in 2003, and another who is involved against the 2002 attack against a ship called the Limburg (see [October 6, 2002](#)). According to statements by detainees, the course focuses on physical fitness, firearms, close quarters combat, shooting from a motorcycle, and night operations. Osama bin Laden and Khalid Shaikh Mohammed apparently visit the camp during the course. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 157](#); [Office of the Director of National Intelligence 9/6/2006, pp. 12](#).) Candidate hijacker Abderraouf Jdey, a Canadian passport holder, may also be present at this training course. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 527](#))

November 29, 1999: UN Says ISI Makes Billions from Drugs

The United Nations Drug Control Program determines that the ISI makes around \$2.5 billion annually from the sale of illegal drugs. ([Nooruzzaman 11/29/1999](#))

Late November-Early December 1999: Hamburg Cell Members Travel Monitored Route to Afghanistan



Mohamed Atta filmed in Afghanistan in January 2000. [Source: *London Times*] Hamburg cell members Mohamed Atta, Marwan Alshehhi, Ziad Jarrah, Ramzi bin al-Shibh, and possibly Said Bahaji travel to Afghanistan via Turkey and Karachi, Pakistan. They travel along a route often used by one of their associates, al-Qaeda recruiter Mohammed Haydar Zammar, to send potential operatives to Afghanistan for training. Turkish intelligence is aware of the route and informed German intelligence of it in 1996, leading to an investigation of Zammar (see [1996](#)). However, it is unclear whether German or Turkish intelligence register the Hamburg cell members' travel and how and whether they disseminate and act on this information. Jarrah is reportedly noticed by an intelligence service in the United Arab Emirates on his return journey from Afghanistan (see [January 30, 2000](#)). ([Bernstein et al. 9/10/2002](#); [CBS News 10/9/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004](#), pp. 167; [McDermott 2005](#), pp. 89)

November 30, 1999: Jordan Thwarts Al-Qaeda Connected Millennium Plot



On December 5, 1999, a Jordanian raid discovers 71 vats of bomb making chemicals in this residence. [Source: *Judith Miller*] Jordanian officials successfully uncover an al-Qaeda plot to blow up the Radisson Hotel in Amman, Jordan, and other sites on January 1, 2000. ([PBS Frontline 10/3/2002](#)) The Jordanian government intercepts a call between al-Qaeda leader Abu Zubaida and a suspected Jordanian terrorist named Abu Hoshar. Zubaida says, "The training is over." ([Miller 1/15/2001](#)) Zubaida also says, "The grooms are ready for the big wedding." ([Bernton et al. 6/23/2002](#)) This call reflects an extremely poor code system, because the FBI had

already determined in the wake of the 1998 US embassy bombings that “wedding” was the al-Qaeda code word for bomb. ([Miller, Stone, and Mitchell 2002, pp. 214](#)) Furthermore, it appears al-Qaeda fails to later change the system, because the code-name for the 9/11 attack is also “The Big Wedding.” ([Crewdson and Simpson 9/5/2002](#)) Jordan arrests Hoshar while he’s still on the phone talking to Zubaida. In the next few days, 27 other suspects are charged. A Jordanian military court will later convict 22 of them for participating in planned attacks, sentencing six of them death. In addition to bombing the Radisson Hotel around the start of the millennium, the plan calls for suicide bombings on two border crossings with Israel and a Christian baptism site. Further attacks in Jordan are planned for later. The plotters had already stockpiled the equivalent of 16 tons of TNT, enough to flatten “entire neighborhoods.” ([Miller 1/15/2001](#)) Key alleged plotters include:

- Raed Hijazi, a US citizen who is part of a Boston al-Qaeda cell (see [June 1995-Early 1999](#)). He will be arrested and convicted in late 2000 (see [September 2000](#) and [October 2000](#)). ([Miller 1/15/2001](#))
- Khalid Deek, who is also a US citizen and part of an Anaheim, California al-Qaeda cell. He will be arrested in Pakistan and deported to Jordan, but strangely he will released without going to trial.
- Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. He initially escapes arrest (see [2001](#)) but is later sentenced in absentia. He will later be a notorious figure in the Iraq war starting in 2003. ([Whitlock 10/3/2004](#))
- Luai Sakra. The Washington Post will later say he “played a role” in the plot, though he is never charged for it. Sakra apparently is a CIA informant before 9/11, perhaps starting in 2000 (see [2000](#)). ([Vick 2/20/2006](#))

The Jordanian government will also later claim that the Al Taqwa Bank in Switzerland helped finance the network of operatives who planned the attack. The bank will be shut down shortly after 9/11 (see [November 7, 2001](#)). ([Isikoff and Hosenball 4/12/2004](#))

[Late 1999: Saudis Claim to Add Two 9/11 Hijackers to Watch List and Inform CIA](#)

Prince Turki al Faisal, Saudi intelligence minister until shortly before 9/11 (see [August 31, 2001](#)), will later claim that around this time its external intelligence agency tells the CIA that hijackers Nawaf Alhazmi and Khalid Almihdhar have been put on a Saudi terror watch list. Saeed Badeeb, Turki’s chief analyst, and Nawaf Obaid, a security consultant to the Saudi government, support Turki’s account though Turki himself will later back away from it after becoming the Saudi ambassador to the US (see [August 21, 2005](#)). In 2003, Prince Turki says, “What we told [the CIA] was these people were on our watch list from previous activities of al-Qaeda, in both the [1998] embassy bombings and attempts to smuggle arms into the kingdom in 1997,” (see [1997](#) and [October 4, 2001](#)). However, the CIA strongly denies any such warning, although it begins following Almihdhar and Alhazmi around this time (see [January 2-5, 2000](#) and [January 5-8, 2000](#)). ([Solomon 10/16/2003](#); [Follman 10/18/2003](#); [Wright 2006, pp. 310-311, 448](#)) The US will not put Almihdhar and Alhazmi on its watch list until August 2001 (see August 23, 2001).

Late 1999-Early 2000: 'Wall' Procedures Altered for Expected Millennium Attacks

Because of concerns that al-Qaeda will launch attacks during the millennium celebrations (see [Early December 1999](#), [December 15-31, 1999](#) and [December 14, 1999](#)), the Justice Department and the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court alter the set of procedures known as the “wall,” which governs the sharing of intelligence inside the FBI and between the FBI and prosecutors. As a result of these changes, it becomes easier for the FBI to obtain wiretap warrants from the court, so the court itself becomes the wall with the authority to determine what information can be released to prosecutors. ([Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court 5/17/2002](#); [US Department of Justice 11/2004](#), pp. 32, 149, 194.) Nonetheless, US attorney Patrick Fitzgerald, working with the I-49 squad on al-Qaeda cases at the time, will later complain about the lack of information prosecutors receive around the millennium, “Criminal prosecutors received information only in part and with lag time so as not to breach the ‘wall’ . The persons who determined what could be shared with the prosecutors were on the other side of the ‘wall,’ making their best guess as to what would be helpful. This was no way to defend our country from imminent attack.” ([US Congress 10/21/2003](#)) Fellow attorney Andrew McCarthy will say this change was not that unusual, and that the “wall” “could be raised or lowered based on Justice’s perception of the threat environment at any given time.” ([McCarthy 4/13/2004](#))

Winter 1999-March 2000: US Intelligence Installs Listening Posts in Afghanistan But Makes Little Use of Intelligence Gained

In the winter of 1999, a covert four-man CIA and NSA team arrives in the part of Afghanistan controlled by the Northern Alliance. They set up a listening post within range of al-Qaeda’s tactical radios. The Northern Alliance is shown how to run it, and then the team leaves. ([Gellman 12/19/2001](#); [Miniter 2003](#), pp. 197-198) In March 2000, CIA agent Gary Bernstein leads a small CIA team into Northern Alliance territory (see [March 2000](#)). While there, they improve the existing listening post and set up a new one closer to Taliban-controlled territory. ([Berntsen and Pezzullo 2005](#), pp. 57-61) The US makes little use of the intelligence gained from these intercepts, leading Northern Alliance leader Ahmed Shah Massoud to conclude that the US is “not serious” about getting bin Laden. ([Miniter 2003](#), pp. 197-198)

December 1999: CIA Attempts to Recruit Man with Links to Atta and Hamburg Cell



Mamoun Darkazanli. *[Source: Interpol]*

The CIA begins “persistent” efforts to recruit German businessman Mamoun Darkazanli as an informant. Darkazanli knows Mohamed Atta and the other members of the Hamburg al-Qaeda cell. US and German intelligence had previously opened investigations into Darkazanli in September 1998. Agents occasionally followed him, but Darkazanli obviously noticed the tail on him at least once. More costly and time-consuming electronic surveillance is not done however, and by the end of 1999, the investigation has produced little of value. German law does not allow foreign governments to have informants in Germany. So this month, Thomas Volz, the undercover CIA representative in Hamburg, appears at the headquarters of the Hamburg state domestic intelligence agency, the LfV, responsible for tracking terrorists and domestic extremists. He tells them the CIA believes Darkazanli has knowledge of an unspecified terrorist plot and encourages that he be “turned” against his al-Qaeda comrades. A source later recalls he says, “Darkazanli knows a lot.” Efforts to recruit him will continue in the spring next year. The CIA has not admitted this interest in Darkazanli. ([Crewdson 11/17/2002](#); [Laabs 8/13/2003](#))

December 1999: Atta and Alshehhi Seen Partying and Taking Flying Lessons in Philippines



One of the ultralights used at the Angeles City Flying Club. [Source: Woodland Park Resort] 9/11 hijackers Mohamed Atta and Marwan Alshehhi are seen again in the Philippines, partying and taking flying lessons. They stay at the Woodland Park Resort Hotel about sixty miles north of Manila, as they did in 1997 and earlier in 1999. Gina Marcelo, a waitress at the hotel, will later recall that Marwan Alshehhi threw a party there. "There were about seven people. They rented the open area by the swimming pool... They drank Johnnie Walker Black Label whiskey and mineral water. They barbecued shrimp and onions. They came in big vehicles, and they had a lot of money. They all had girlfriends." ([Kirk 10/5/2001](#)) 9/11 mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed is also known to be in the Philippines for much of 1999, plotting again to assassinate the Pope (see [1999-September 10, 2001](#)). There are no eyewitness accounts of him being seen with Atta or Alshehhi at this time, but when he lived in the Philippines in 1994 he was known to party and have local girlfriends (see [Early 1994-January 1995](#)). Security guard Ferdinand Abad later recalls Mohamed Atta registered under his own name at the hotel this month. Atta went to the nearby Angeles City Flying Club about two of three times a week to train on ultralight aircraft. Abad recalls seeing the flying club van pick up Atta at least five times. Just as when Atta and Alshehhi were at the resort earlier in the year, no one recalls Alshehhi taking flying lessons, only Atta. ([Cervantes 10/1/2001](#); [Gulf News 10/2/2001](#); [Kirk 10/5/2001](#)) The Philippine military will later confirm that Atta and Alshehhi were at the hotel after finding a number of employees who claim to have seen them. ([Cervantes 10/1/2001](#); [Gulf News 10/2/2001](#)) A leader of a militant group connected to al-Qaeda will later confess to helping 9/11 hijacker pilots while they were in this area (see [Shortly After October 5, 2005](#)). The 9/11 Commission will not mention the possibility of Atta and Alshehhi staying in the Philippines. They will note that the two of them left Germany in the last week of November 1999 with the intention of going to Afghanistan, but there is no mention of when they arrived in Afghanistan. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 166-167](#))

December 1999: Able Danger Immediately Determines Al-Qaeda Has 'Surprising Presence in US'

The new Able Danger team begins collecting data on al-Qaeda. The aim is to gain intelligence that will allow Special Operations forces to conduct strikes against al-Qaeda around the world. Erik Kleinsmith will later claim that he is visited by Special Operations officials and he gives them a demonstration of what the data mining techniques they've

developed can do. He claims that within 90 minutes, his analysts find evidence that al-Qaeda has a “worldwide footprint” including “a surprising presence in the US. That’s when we started losing sleep.” ([Harris 12/3/2005](#)) Using computers, the unit collects huge amounts of data in a technique called “data mining.” They get information from such sources as al-Qaeda Internet chat rooms, news accounts, web sites, and financial records. Using sophisticated software, they compare this with government records such as visa applications by foreign tourists, to find any correlations and depict these visually. ([Kelly 8/14/2005](#); [Goodwin 9/2005](#)) The data harvest is far too huge to be useful, so the analysts try to pare it down by looking at links between known terrorists and finding who they associate with. By the spring of 2000, they are able to isolate about 20 people whom Special Operations wants further analysis. The Able Danger team creates massive charts, measuring up to 20 feet in length and covered in small type, to show all the links between suspects that have been discovered. ([Harris 12/3/2005](#))

December 1999-January 2000: FBI’s New York Office Receives NSA Information on Hijackers’ Travel to Malaysia Summit

The FBI’s New York field office, which specializes in international terrorism and houses the I-49 squad that focuses on Osama bin Laden (see [January 1996](#)), receives information from the NSA about a wiretap on the phone of 9/11 hijacker Khalid Almihdhar. The information concerns travel by Almihdhar, fellow alleged hijacker Nawaf Alhazmi, and other operatives to an al-Qaeda summit in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (see [December 29, 1999](#), [Shortly Before December 29, 1999](#), and [January 5-8, 2000](#)), but the office, like the rest of the FBI, is not told Almihdhar has a US visa (see [January 4-6, 2000](#)). However, the New York office apparently does not realize it has this information and when investigators become aware of its importance in June 2001 they will conduct a running argument with FBI headquarters and the CIA over whether they can receive it again (see [June 11, 2001](#)). ([US Department of Justice 11/2004](#), pp. 293-294)

Early December 1999: US Takes Action to Stop Al-Qaeda Millennium Bombing Plot



Ahmed Ressam. *[Source: Public domain]* The CIA learns from the Jordanian government about an al-Qaeda millennium bombing plot in that country (see [November 30, 1999](#)). Further, the CIA concludes more attacks are likely soon, including some inside the US (see [December 8, 1999](#)). Counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke is told of this, and he implements a plan to neutralize the threat. ([Clarke 2004, pp. 205, 211](#)) The plan, approved by President Clinton, focuses on harassing and disrupting al-Qaeda members throughout the world. The FBI is put on heightened alert, counterterrorism teams are dispatched overseas, a formal ultimatum is given to the Taliban to keep al-Qaeda under control, and friendly intelligence agencies are asked to help. There are Cabinet-level meetings nearly every day dealing with terrorism ([Dobbs 4/2/2000](#); [Bridis 6/28/2002](#)) All US embassies, military bases, police departments, and other agencies are given a warning to be on the lookout for signs of an al-Qaeda millennium attack. One alert border agent responds by arresting terrorist Ahmed Ressam (see [December 14, 1999](#)), which leads to the unraveling of several bombing plots (see [December 15-31, 1999](#)). No terror attacks occur. However, Clarke claims the FBI generally remains unhelpful. For example, around this time the FBI says there are no websites in the US soliciting volunteers for training in Afghanistan or money for terrorist front groups. Clarke has a private citizen check to see if this is true, and within days, he is given a long list of such websites. The FBI and Justice Department apparently fail to do anything with the information. ([Wingert 3/31/2004](#))

Early December 1999: KSM Trains Operatives for Hijackings

Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM) gives a course lasting one or two weeks for three operatives scheduled to take part in the 9/11 operation. Nawaf Alhazmi, Khallad bin Attash, and abu Bara al Taizi learn how to say basic English words and phrases, read plane timetables and phone books, use the Internet, make travel reservations, rent an apartment, and use code words. In addition, they play flight simulator games, watch hijacking-themed films, and investigate visas for Southeast Asian countries. KSM also tells them what to watch for when casing a flight, for example whether flight attendants bring food into the cockpit. Khalid Almihdhar is apparently not present at the training,

since he has just returned to Yemen (see [November/December 1999](#)). ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 157-8, 493](#))

Late 1999: Hijacker Almihdhar Has Foreknowledge of Forthcoming Seaborne Attack

9/11 hijacker Khalid Almihdhar tells another operative that al-Qaeda is planning a ship-bombing attack. The US will learn this from a detainee interviewed in December 2001. The detainee will say that Almihdhar informed him that al-Qaeda operative Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri was the plot's originator. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 491](#)) Al-Nashiri discussed the ship bombing attack in a telephone call made in late 1998. The call may have been to the al-Qaeda communications hub at which Almihdhar lived and may also have been picked up by the US (see [Mid-August 1998](#)). Al-Qaeda soon attempts to attack the USS *The Sullivans* in Aden, Yemen, but the plan fails (see [January 3, 2000](#)). Almihdhar, who will be accused of participating in the plot to bomb the USS *Cole* in Yemen (see [October 12, 2000](#), [Early October 2001](#) and [October 4, 2001](#)), travels to Yemen shortly before the attack on the *Sullivans* (see [November/December 1999](#)) and apparently leaves one day after it (see [January 2-5, 2000](#)).

November/December 1999: Almihdhar Returns to Yemen, Falls under US Surveillance

9/11 hijacker Khalid Almihdhar returns from Afghanistan to Yemen, where he and his family live at an al-Qaeda communications hub that is being monitored by the US (see [Late 1998-Early 2002](#)). The NSA listens in on calls to his number and finds that he and several al-Qaeda leaders are to meet in Malaysia for a terrorism summit (see [December 29, 1999](#)). The reason for his departure to Yemen is unclear, as he has already been selected for the 9/11 operation and his fellow operatives are undergoing training in Afghanistan at this point (see [Late 1999](#) and [Early December 1999](#)). Detainees give varying accounts of the reasons for his departure, as well as the exact timing. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 157, 493](#)) Whatever the reason for Almihdhar's travel to Yemen, while he is there al-Qaeda mounts an abortive attack against the USS *The Sullivans* (see [January 3, 2000](#)).

(Late 1999): Richard Clarke Holds Anti-Terrorist Training at the World Trade Center; 9/11-Style Attacks Not Envisaged

An anti-terrorist training session for the millennium celebration is held at the World Trade Center in New York. There are fears around this time that Osama bin Laden may want to launch attacks on the millennium, including within the US (see [December 8, 1999](#)). Representatives of 40 law enforcement and military agencies attend the meeting, which is chaired by counterterrorism "tsar" Richard Clarke. During two hours of brainstorming,

no one envisages terrorists flying passenger planes into skyscrapers. Rudy Washington, who is one of Rudy Giuliani's deputy mayors, is at the session, and will utilize what he learns on 9/11, so as to develop an emergency strategy in response to the attacks (see [After 9:59 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). ([Crouch 5/20/2004](#))

December 4, 1999: Saudi Ambassador's Wife Gives Funds that Are Possibly Passed to 9/11 Hijackers



Prince Bandar (pictures of his wife and Osama Basnan are not available). [*Source: Publicity photo*] Princess Haifa bint Faisal, the wife of Prince Bandar, the Saudi ambassador to the US, begins sending monthly cashier's checks of between \$2,000 and \$3,500 (accounts differ) to Majeda Dweikat, the Jordanian wife of Osama Basnan, a Saudi living in San Diego. Accounts also differ over when the checks were first sent (between November 1999 and about March 2000; a Saudi government representative has stated December 4, 1999 ([Fox News 11/23/2002](#))). Basnan's wife signs many of the checks over to her friend Manal Bajadr, the wife of Omar al-Bayoumi. The payments are made through Riggs Bank, a bank which appears to have turned a blind eye to Saudi embassy transaction and also has longstanding ties to covert CIA operations (see [July 2003](#)). ([Isikoff 11/22/2002](#); [Isikoff and Thomas 11/24/2002](#); [Borger 11/25/2002](#); [Seper 11/26/2002](#)) Some later suggest that the money from the wife of the Saudi ambassador passes through the al-Bayoumi and Basnan families as intermediaries and ends up in the hands of the two hijackers. The payments from Princess Haifa continue until May 2002 and may total \$51,000, or as much as \$73,000. ([Isikoff 11/22/2002](#); [MSNBC 11/27/2002](#)) While living in the San Diego area, al-Bayoumi and Basnan are heavily involved in helping with the relocation of, and offering financial support to, Saudi immigrants in the community. ([Serrano, McManus, and Krikorian 11/24/2002](#)) In late 2002, al-Bayoumi claims he did not pass any money along to the hijackers. ([Sands 12/4/2002](#)) Basnan has variously claimed to know al-Bayoumi, not to know him at all, or to know him only vaguely. ([ABC News 11/25/2002](#); [Almotawa 11/26/2002](#); [ABC News 11/26/2002](#); [MSNBC 11/27/2002](#)) However, earlier reports say Basnan and his wife were "very good friends" of al-Bayoumi and his wife. Both couples lived at the Parkwood Apartments at the same time as the two hijackers; prior to that, the couples lived together in a different apartment complex. In addition, the two wives were arrested together in April 2001 for shoplifting. ([Thornton 10/22/2002](#))

December 8, 1999: CIA Concludes that Bin Laden Plans Many Imminent Attacks, Including Some inside US

The CIA's Counter Terrorism Center concludes in a classified report that bin Laden wants to inflict maximum casualties, cause massive panic, and score a psychological victory. He may be seeking to attack between five and 15 targets on the Millennium. "Because the US is bin Laden's ultimate goal... we must assume that several of these targets will be in the US." ([Elliott 8/4/2002](#); [US Congress 7/24/2003](#)) CIA Director George Tenet delivers this warning to President Clinton. Author Steve Coll later comments that Tenet also "grabbed the National Security Council's attention with that prediction." ([Coll 2004, pp. 482](#)) The US takes action in a variety of ways (see [Early December 1999](#)). It will turn out that bin Laden did plan many attacks to be timed for the millennium celebrations, including ones inside the US, but all failed (see [December 31, 1999-January 1, 2000](#)).

December 9, 1999: President Clinton Warned about Al-Qaeda Operatives Living in US

As an al-Qaeda millennium plot is broken up in Jordan (see [November 30, 1999](#)), attention is focused on the fact that two of the plotters were long time US residents. National Security Adviser Sandy Berger sends a memo to President Clinton about the two men, Raed Hijazi and Khalil Deek. Hijazi had lived in California and then moved to Boston to drive a taxi there for several years. The 9/11 Commission will say Berger tells Clinton was a naturalized US citizen who had "been in touch with extremists in the United States as well as abroad." Later in the month, counterterrorism "tsar" Richard Clarke will warn Berger in an e-mail, "Foreign terrorist sleeper cells are present in the US and attacks in the US are likely." ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 179, 501](#)) Deek is arrested on December 11 (see [December 11, 1999](#)), but he will eventually be released without being charged (see [May 2001](#)). A few days later, Clarke authorizes a study that looks into Deek's connections, but no action will be taken when it is discovered Deek's next-door neighbor is still living in Anaheim, California, and running an al-Qaeda sleeper cell there (see [December 14-25, 1999](#)). Similarly, while Hijazi will be arrested overseas some months later (see [September 2000](#)), US intelligence seems oblivious to the other al-Qaeda operatives who have been his roommates and fellow taxi drivers in Boston (see [June 1995-Early 1999](#) and [October 2000](#)). One of them, Nabil al-Marabh, will apparently go on to have a major role in the 9/11 plot (see for example [January 2001-Summer 2001](#) and [Early September 2001](#)). Investigators will also fail to act on knowledge of financial transactions between Hijazi and three of the 9/11 hijackers (see [Spring 2001](#)).

December 11, 1999: Watch List Importance Is Stressed but Procedures Are Not Followed

The CIA's Counter Terrorism Center sends a cable reminding all its personnel about various reporting obligations. The cable clearly states that it is important to share

information so suspected members of US-designated terrorist groups can be placed on watch lists. The US keeps a number of watch lists; the most important one, TIPOFF, contains about 61,000 names of suspected terrorists by 9/11. ([Meyer 9/22/2002](#); [McCaffrey 1/27/2004](#)) The list is checked whenever someone enters or leaves the US “The threshold for adding a name to TIPOFF is low,” and even a “reasonable suspicion” that a person is connected with a US-designated terrorist group warrants being added to the database. ([US Congress 9/20/2002](#)) Within a month, two future hijackers, Nawaf Alhazmi and Khalid Almihdhar, will be identified as al-Qaeda operatives (see [December 29, 1999](#)), but the cable’s instructions will not be followed for them. The CIA will initially tell the 9/11 Congressional Inquiry that no such guidelines existed, and CIA Director Tenet will fail to mention the cable in his testimony to the Inquiry. ([Gerth 5/15/2003](#); [US Congress 7/24/2003](#), pp. 157³)

December 11, 1999: US Citizen, Alleged Mastermind of Jordanian Bomb Plot, Is Arrested but Never Charged



Khalil Deek. [*Source: Tawfiq Deek*] Khalil Deek is arrested by police in Peshawar, Pakistan, and immediately extradited to Jordan. The Jordanian government requested the arrest after tying Deek to a millennium plot to blow up hotels in Jordan that had been broken up a few days earlier (see [November 30, 1999](#)). ([Schou 6/15/2006](#)) Deek is a naturalized US citizen who has been part of a California al-Qaeda sleeper cell for most of the 1990s. He had been investigated by US authorities since the late 1980s (see [Late 1980s](#), [March 1993-1996](#), and [December 14-25, 1999](#)) but strangely was never arrested. Deek’s computer is confiscated when he is arrested, and computer files reveals the targets of the Jordanian plot. ([Cooley 2002](#), pp. 33) According to contemporary press accounts, Deek, who was running a computer repair shop in Peshawar, Pakistan, had helped encrypt al-Qaeda’s Internet communications and smuggled recruits to al-Qaeda training camps in Afghanistan. Some reports identify him as a former mujaheddin fighter, a US Army veteran, and a close associate of bin Laden. Articles also claim he worked closely with al-Qaeda leader Abu Zubaida on the Jordanian plot and other things (see [May 2000](#), [Late 1980s](#), and [1998-December 11, 1999](#)). ([Schou 6/15/2006](#)) CNN says Deek “is believed to be the mastermind” of the Jordanian plot. ([CNN 12/17/1999](#)) But unlike the rest of the defendants in the Jordanian case, Deek is transferred from a maximum-security prison to a minimum-security one. He alone is not charged. He will be released in May 2001 (see [May 2001](#)). ([Schou 6/15/2006](#)) It will later

be alleged that Deek was a Jordanian intelligence mole (see [Shortly After December 11, 1999](#)).

Shortly After December 11, 1999: Al-Qaeda Operative Based in California Allegedly Is Turned or Works as Mole for Jordanian Government

Khalil Deek, a US citizen accused of helping to plot an al-Qaeda linked millennium attack in Jordan, reportedly cooperates against al-Qaeda shortly after being deported to Jordan (see [December 11, 1999](#)). Journalist Jonathan Randal will later assert that “a highly placed American in [Jordan] did claim that early on Deek had sung,” meaning he revealed all that he knew. ([Randal 2005, pp. 6](#)) The Los Angeles Times reports in March 2000 that Deek “reportedly has cooperated with US investigators in deciphering [al-Qaeda] computer disks.” ([Drogin and Wilkinson 3/29/2000](#)) The London Times will later report the same thing. ([Fielding 11/4/2001](#)) Deek will be mysteriously released from Jordanian prison in mid-2001, fueling speculation about his cooperation (see [May 2001](#)). In 2003, journalist Jason Burke will claim in a book that Deek “was, in fact, an agent for the Jordanian secret services.” Burke mentions this in passing and does not explain how he would know this. ([Burke 2004, pp. 317](#)) In 2005, Randal will echo Burke’s claim in a book, saying, “If [Deek] indeed did sing, one possible explanation is that Deek may have been a Jordanian intelligence mole all along and had tipped his masters off to the impending millennium plot and perhaps much more about al-Qaeda. That would elucidate why he was jailed, but never charged or tried.” ([Randal 2005, pp. 6](#)) If true, it would suggest that Jordan had great insight into al-Qaeda for many years. Deek has been considered an important al-Qaeda leader with knowledge about many other al-Qaeda operatives. For instance, one US official calls him a “concierge” or “travel agent” for al-Qaeda. ([Risen 2/4/2000](#)) He is also considered a close associate of high ranking al-Qaeda leader Abu Zubaida. If Deek is a Jordanian mole, this might explain why it will later be reported that US intelligence has been investigating Zubaida and Deek since the late 1980s (see [Late 1980s](#)). It also might explain why US intelligence was seemingly uninterested in intelligence that Deek was running militant training camps in California in the early 1990s (see [Early 1990s](#)), running an al-Qaeda sleeper cell in California for most of the 1990s (see [March 1993-1996](#) and [December 25, 1999](#)), and why the US never officially charged Deek with any crimes (see [Spring 2004](#)). But it would be harder to explain why Deek’s associates have yet to be been arrested or deported from the US (see [January 2002](#)) or why Deek apparently moved to remote areas of Pakistan dominated by al-Qaeda after it was reported he helped decipher al-Qaeda’s computer codes (see [Spring 2004](#)).

December 14, 1999: Al-Qaeda Operative Planning LA Airport Attack Is Arrested



Diana Dean. [Source: *Seattle Times*] Al-Qaeda operative Ahmed Ressam is arrested in Port Angeles, Washington, attempting to enter the US with components of explosive devices. One hundred and thirty pounds of bomb-making chemicals and detonator components are found inside his rental car. He subsequently admits he planned to bomb Los Angeles International Airport on December 31, 1999. ([Miller, Gerth, and van Natta 12/30/2001](#)) Alert border patrol agent Diana Dean stops him; she and other agents nationwide had been warned recently to look for suspicious activity. Ressam's bombing would have been part of a wave of attacks against US targets over the New Year's weekend (see [December 15-31, 1999](#)). He is later connected to al-Qaeda and convicted. ([US Congress 9/18/2002](#); [Gilmore and Wiser 10/3/2002](#))

December 14, 1999: US Warns Taliban They Will Be Held Responsible for New Al-Qaeda Attacks

The US warns the Taliban that the US will punish them for any attacks ordered by bin Laden, who is living in Afghanistan under Taliban protection. On this day, Ahmed Ressam is arrested trying to enter the US to conduct a bombing there (see [December 14, 1999](#)). In response, that evening, the State Department's counterterrorism chief Michael Sheehan calls Taliban foreign minister Wakil Ahmed Muttawakil. Sheehan later recalls saying bin Laden "is like a criminal who lives in your basement. It is no longer possible for you to act as if he's not your responsibility. He is your responsibility." The implied threat is that the US will punish the Taliban, possibly with military force, in response to further bin Laden attack. Muttawakil says he understands and urges the US to use restraint. ([King and Cloud 3/8/2000](#))

December 14-25, 1999: Private Investigators Discover Al-Qaeda Sleeper Cell in California



Rita Katz. [Source: Publicity photo /]Counterterrorism “tsar”

Richard Clarke, hearing about Ahmed Ressam’s arrest earlier in the day (see [December 14, 1999](#)), hires a team of private terrorism analysts to complete a report on militant Islamic cells in North America. The Investigative Project on Terrorism, led by Steven Emerson, finishes the report just prior to the end of the year, hoping to help stop any millennium plots. ([Wallace-Wells 5/29/2006](#)) Investigator Rita Katz discovers that a man named Khalil Deek who has just been arrested in Jordan for a role in a millennium plot is a US citizen (see [December 11, 1999](#)). Using only public records, she begins looking into Deek’s activities in the US. She believes that she discovers a sleeper cell consisting of: ([Katz 2003, pp. 161-162](#))

- Khalil Deek. He is an al-Qaeda operative who has lived in Anaheim, California, for most of the 1990s. A former senior CIA official will later claim that Deek’s extremist connections were already “well established in the classified intelligence” by this time, and in fact, it will later be reported that Deek’s connections with al-Qaeda leader Abu Zubaida had been investigated since the late 1980s (see [Late 1980s](#)). Katz learns from intelligence reports that Deek has connections to a militant cell based in Montreal, Canada that includes Ressam. She suspects that Deek is coordinating al-Qaeda groups in North America. ([Anderson 9/15/2005](#); [Khatchadourian 1/22/2007](#)) Deek regularly wires tens of thousands of dollars to overseas destinations. Business records show Deek was still in Anaheim as late as August 1998. The research team discovers Deek may have been visiting the US as late as September 1999. ([US Congress 1/25/2000](#); [Schou 6/15/2006](#))

- Hisham Diab. Katz learns that Diab is Deek’s next door neighbor in Anaheim and she suspects the two of them have been operating a sleeper cell there (in fact, Diab’s wife had already repeatedly tried to warn the FBI about her husband, to no avail (see [March 1993-1996](#)). ([Anderson 9/15/2005](#))

- She discovers that Deek and Diab have formed a charity front called Charity Without Borders (this group received a \$75,000 state grant in 1997 to distribute fliers encouraging the recycling of used motor oil). ([Anderson 9/15/2005](#); [Schou 6/15/2006](#))

- Tawfiq Deek, Khalil Deek’s brother. Katz discovers that Tawfiq has presented himself as the Islamic Association for Palestine (IAP) spokesman in California. Katz calls the IAP the “ Hamas front in America.” ([Katz 2003, pp. 167](#)) Khalid Ashour, a Palestinian. He had lived in the same apartment building as the Deek brothers and Diab, and also worked with the IAP. But what most interests Katz is that he had been heavily involved in the Islamic Center of Tuscon in the early 1990s. The Islamic Center is important for the IAP but is also believed to be the focal point for al-Qaeda’s first base in the US (see [1994](#)). Katz discovers that he had been arrested in 1991 trying to enter the US with a fake ID and

border guards found handbooks of explosives and bombs in his car. In 1999, he had moved nearly half a million dollars out of the US despite holding a job that only paid \$600 a week. ([Katz 2003, pp. 167-168](#))

■Although Katz does not discover it at the time, another associate of the Deeks and Diab in Anaheim named Adam Gadahn will later emerge as a prominent al-Qaeda spokesman in Afghanistan (see [Spring 2004](#)).

Katz, Emerson, and other members of the Investigative Project on Terrorism will brief members of the National Security Council about what they learned on December 25, 1999, but no action will be taken against the suspects they have uncovered (see [December 25, 1999](#)).

December 1999: Hijackers Meet to Discuss Operation, Indication Alhazmi Flew Flight 77

Mohamed Atta, Ziad Jarrah, Marwan Alshehhi, Ramzi bin al-Shibh, and Nawaf Alhazmi meet to discuss the 9/11 operation at a building known as the “House of Alghamdi” in Kandahar, Afghanistan, according to a statement made by bin al-Shibh in 2002. Bin al-Shibh will say, “We had a meeting attended by all four pilots including Nawaf Alhazmi, Atta’s right-hand man,” which the Guardian will interpret to mean Alhazmi flew Flight 77, which hit the Pentagon, instead of Hani Hanjour (see [December 2000-January 2001](#)). ([Tremlett 9/9/2002](#)) The 9/11 Commission, based on information obtained from Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM) under interrogation, will place Hanjour in Afghanistan in spring 2000, indicating he will arrive some months after this meeting is held, and could not therefore attend it. Please note: information from detainee interrogations is thought to be unreliable due to the methods used to extract it (see [June 16, 2004](#)). ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 226](#)) In a substitution for testimony introduced as evidence at the trial of Zacarias Moussaoui, KSM will place Hanjour’s arrival at the training camps in Afghanistan in “September or October” of 2000. ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia 7/31/2006, pp. 23](#))

December 15-31, 1999: US Intelligence Launches Worldwide Effort to Thwart Millennium Attack Plots



From left to right: Mokhtar Haouari, Abdelmajid Dahoumane, Abdel Ghani Meskini. The picture of Meskini is from an ATM camera. [*Source: Public domain, public domain, and Seattle Times*] (click image to enlarge) In the wake of the arrest of Ahmed Ressam (see [December 14, 1999](#)), FBI

investigators work frantically to uncover more millennium plots before the end of the year. US authorities also make a number of arrests.

- A telephone number found in Ressam's pocket leads to Abdel Ghani Meskini, an Algerian living in New York City who had gone to Seattle to meet Ressam. Meskini is monitored and arrested in New York on December 30.

- One of Ressam's credit cards leads to the arrest of Mokhtar Haouari, an Algerian living in Montreal, Canada. Meskini later cooperates with US investigators and is never charged, while Haouari will be sentenced to 24 years in prison. ([Calabresi 2/7/2000](#); [Hirschhorn and Feyerick 1/16/2002](#); [Wright 2006, pp. 298](#))

- Another Algerian associate of Ressam's, Abdelmajid Dahoumane, escapes to Afghanistan, but will eventually be caught by the Algerian government and convicted in Algeria. ([PBS Frontline 10/25/2001](#))

- Investigators believe that Mohamedou Ould Slahi, an al-Qaeda operative whose cousin is a top al-Qaeda leader, went to Canada to give the go-ahead for Ressam's attack. Slahi is arrested several times overseas, but never charged (see [January-April 2000](#)). ([CNN 3/6/2002](#))

- Khalid Deek, a US citizen, is arrested around this time for masterminding another al-Qaeda millennium plot (see [December 11, 1999](#)). But counterterrorism expert Rita Katz will later say Deek was a suspected mastermind of Ressam's Los Angeles airport plot, too. ([Campbell and Brown 9/12/2005](#)) Deek's name and phone number is found in Ressam's telephone book. Ressam knew Deek from bin Laden training camps in Afghanistan. Both of them, like most of Ressam's group, have links to the GIA, an Algerian militant group associated with al-Qaeda. ([Newsweek \(International\) 3/13/2000](#)) Others escape the US after hearing media reports of Ressam's arrest. However, enough people are caught to stop additional millennium attacks. Counterterrorism "tsar" Richard Clarke later says, "I think a lot of the FBI leadership for the first time realized that... there probably were al-Qaeda people in the United States. They realized that only after they looked at the results of the investigation of the millennium bombing plot." ([Gilmore and Wiser 10/3/2002](#)) Yet Clinton's National Security Adviser Sandy Berger later claims that the FBI will still repeatedly assure the Clinton White House until Clinton leaves office that al-Qaeda lacks the ability to launch a domestic strike (see [2000](#)).

December 20, 1999: Iran Said to Be Supporting Conflict in Afghanistan to Further Their Own Pipeline Plans

The BBC explains one reason why the Northern Alliance has been able to hold out for so long in its civil war against the Taliban in Afghanistan: "Iran has stirred up the fighting in order to make sure an international oil pipeline [goes] through its territory and not through Afghanistan." ([Simpson 12/20/1999](#))

December 21, 1999: FBI Misses Chance to Discover Moussaoui's Al-Qaeda Connections

The FBI misses a chance to learn about Zacarias Moussaoui after a raid in Dublin, Ireland. On December 14, 1999, Ahmed Ressam was arrested trying to smuggle explosives into the US (see [December 14, 1999](#)). On December 21, Irish police arrest Hamid Aich and several other North African immigrants living in Dublin. ([Rashbaum 1/22/2000](#)) During the arrests, police seize a large amount of documents relating to citizenship applications, identities, credit cards, and airplane tickets. A diagram of an electrical switch that could be used for a bomb is found that is identical to a diagram found in Ressam's apartment in Vancouver, Canada. ([Cusack 7/31/2002](#)) The suspects are released about a day later, but, "Within days, authorities in Ireland and the United States began to realize that they might have missed a chance to learn more about a terrorist network." ([Rashbaum 1/22/2000](#)) It is discovered that Aich lived with Ressam in Montreal, and then later lived with him in Vancouver. Investigators conclude there has been an al-Qaeda cell in Dublin since the early 1990s, when the charity Mercy International opened an office there (this charity has several known al-Qaeda connections by this time (see [1988-Spring 1995](#) and [Late 1996-August 20, 1998](#)) and also an alleged CIA connection (see [1989 and After](#))). The cell is mainly involved in providing travel and identity documents for other cells committing violent acts. Investigators also connect Aich to the Islamic Jihad. But the US and Canada do not seek Aich's extradition, and instead have the Irish police keep him under surveillance. He will escape from Ireland shortly before 9/11 (see [June 3, 2001-July 24, 2001](#)). ([Rashbaum 1/22/2000](#); [Cusack 7/31/2002](#)) Apparently, many of the documents seized in the raid will only be closely examined after 9/11. Documents will show that in 1999 and 2000, Mustafa Ahmed al-Hawsawi, a top al-Qaeda financier, worked with the Dublin cell to finance Moussaoui's international travel. Aich made travel arrangements and possibly provided fake identification for Moussaoui. ([Cameron 7/30/2002](#); [Cusack 7/31/2002](#)) Presumably, had these links been discovered after the 1999 raid instead of after 9/11, events could have gone very differently when Moussaoui was arrested in the US in August 2001 (see [August 16, 2001](#)).

December 24-31, 1999: Hijacked Flight Leads to Freeing of Future 9/11 Funder



Hijackers threaten the Indian Airlines plane, under Taliban supervision. *[Source: Agence France-Presse/ Getty Images]* An Indian Airlines flight is hijacked and flown to Afghanistan where 155 passengers are held hostage for eight days. They are freed in return for the release of three militants held in Indian prisons. One of the hostages is killed. One of the men freed in the exchange is Saeed Sheikh, who will later allegedly wire money to the 9/11 hijackers (see [Early August 2001](#)). ([BBC 12/31/1999](#)) Another freed militant is Maulana Masood Azhar. Azhar emerges in Pakistan a few days later, and tells a crowd of 10,000, “I have come here because this is my duty to tell you that Muslims should not rest in peace until we have destroyed America and India.” ([Hussain 1/5/2000](#)) He then tours Pakistan for weeks under the protection of the ISI. ([Anson 8/2002](#)) The ISI and Saeed helps Azhar form a new Islamic militant group called Jaish-e-Mohammed, and Azhar is soon plotting attacks again. ([Pittsburgh Tribune-Review 3/3/2002](#); [McCarthy 7/16/2002](#); [Lancaster and Khan 2/8/2003](#))

December 25, 1999: US Intelligence Learns of Al-Qaeda Sleeper Cell in California but Fails to Take Action

US intelligence learns about a likely al-Qaeda cell in California but fails to act on it. In early December 1999, US intelligence learned that a participant in an attempted al-Qaeda linked millennium plot in Jordan was a US citizen by the name of Khalil Deek. President Clinton was immediately notified because of the implication that al-Qaeda had a presence inside the US (see [December 9, 1999](#)). The FBI began interviewing Deek’s neighbors in Anaheim, California, but apparently learned little. However Counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke tasked the Investigative Project on Terrorism, a private research team, to look into Deek’s US ties. On this day, the team goes to the White House and gives a report on their findings to Clarke and an assistant of his known only as Peter, and others on the National Security Council (NSC). Rita Katz has been leading the research effort and gives a presentation outlining the sleeper cell they believe they have discovered in Anaheim consisting of Deek, his brother Tawfiq Deek, Khalid Ashour, Hisham Diab, and a charity front known as Charity Without Borders (see [December 14-25, 1999](#)). According to a later account by Katz, Clarke, Peter, and the others are impressed at how much the team was able to learn looking only through public records. They express

surprise that the FBI was not able to learn as much. The NSC gives the information to the FBI but apparently they do nothing with it. Katz will report in 2003 that Ashour is still living in California even though his request for asylum could have been easily denied. ([Katz 2003, pp. 156-174](#))

December 29, 1999: NSA Tells CIA about Planned Al-Qaeda Summit Involving Future Hijackers

The NSA, monitoring a telephone in an al-Qaeda communications hub in Yemen (see [Late August 1998](#) and [Late 1998-Early 2002](#)), has listened in on phone calls revealing that hijackers Khalid Almihdhar, Nawaf Alhazmi, and Salem Alhazmi are to attend an important al-Qaeda summit in Malaysia in January 2000 (see [Shortly Before December 29, 1999](#)). Almihdhar's full name was mentioned, as well as the first names of hijackers Nawaf Alhazmi and Salem Alhazmi. On this day, the NSA shares this information with the CIA's Alec Station bin Laden unit. Other US intelligence agencies, including FBI headquarters and the FBI's New York field office, are told as well. Although Khalid Almihdhar's full name was mentioned in one call, the NSA only passes on his first name. Also, the NSA has already learned from monitoring the Yemen hub that Nawaf's last name is Alhazmi and that he is long-time friends with Almihdhar (see [Early 1999](#)). However, they either don't look this up in their records or don't pass it on to any other agency. ([9/11 Commission 1/26/2004, pp. 6](#); [US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 239](#); [Wright 2006, pp. 310](#)) An NSA analyst makes a comment that is shared between US intelligence agencies, "Salem may be Nawaf's younger brother." This turns out to be correct. ([US Congress 7/24/2003, pp. 135](#); [9/11 Commission 1/26/2004, pp. 6](#)) A CIA officer will later tell the 9/11 Congressional Inquiry that information from the Africa embassy bombings (see [August 7, 1998](#)) was reviewed in late 1999 during a worldwide effort to disrupt millennium attack plots (see [December 15-31, 1999](#)) and "a kind of tuning fork... buzzed when two [of the hijackers] reportedly planning a trip to [Malaysia] were linked indirectly to what appeared to be a support element... involved with the Africa bombers." ([US Congress 7/24/2003, pp. 135](#)) The fact that they are connected to the Yemen communication hub already indicates some importance within al-Qaeda. It is learned they are connected to the embassy bombings in some way (see [October 4, 2001](#) and [Late 1999](#)). ([US Congress 7/24/2003, pp. 135](#); [9/11 Commission 1/26/2004, pp. 6](#)) The NSA report about them on this day is entitled, "Activities of Bin Laden Associates," showing the clear knowledge of their ties to bin Laden. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 502](#); [Zeman et al. 11/2004](#)) The CIA will track Almihdhar and Nawaf Alhazmi to the Malaysia summit (see [January 2-5, 2000](#) and [January 5-8, 2000](#)).

Shortly Before December 29, 1999: NSA Monitors 9/11 Hijackers Talking to Each Other about Upcoming Al-Qaeda Summit

The NSA has been monitoring a telephone in an al-Qaeda communications hub in Yemen (see [Late August 1998](#) and [Late 1998-Early 2002](#)). According to Vanity Fair, "Amid the

storm of pre-millennial ‘chatter,’ the [NSA] intercepted communications among three Arabic men, each of whom bore some connection to the East Africa bombings (see [August 7, 1998](#)) and to al-Qaeda.” The men are hijackers Khalid Almihdhar, Nawaf Alhazmi, and Salem Alhazmi. ([Zeman et al. 11/2004](#)) Apparently, the NSA listens in on a phone call between al-Qaeda figure Khallad bin Attash and hijacker Khalid Almihdhar, who is staying at the hub. Attash mentions Almihdhar’s full name, as well as the first names of hijackers Nawaf Alhazmi and Salem Alhazmi. He says he wants the three of them to come to an important al-Qaeda summit in Malaysia in January 2000 (see [January 5-8, 2000](#)). The NSA has already heard the names of the three hijackers mentioned repeatedly in 1999 while monitoring the Yemen hub (see [Early 1999](#)). Apparently, US intelligence does not yet know bin Attash’s full name or role in al-Qaeda and won’t figure it out until late 2000 (see [Early December 2000](#)). ([Wright 2006, pp. 310](#)) At the same time, US officials in Pakistan intercept Nawaf Alhazmi in Karachi calling Almihdhar at the Yemen hub. They learn Nawaf is planning a trip to Malaysia on January 4, 2000. The NSA is also monitoring Nawaf calling his brother Salem (the location of Salem at this time has not been revealed). ([US Congress 7/24/2003, pp. 143-144](#); [John 3/19/2004](#)) The NSA will share details of these calls with the CIA and other agencies on December 29, 1999 (see [December 29, 1999](#)) and the CIA will eventually track Almihdhar to the Malaysia summit (see [January 2-5, 2000](#)).

December 29, 1999: Bin Laden’s ‘Procurement Agent’ Detained in Jordan, Said to Describe ‘Bin Laden’s US Operations’



Ziyad Khaleel in Missouri in 1996. [*Source: Evan Kohlmann*] Police in Jordan detain Ziyad Khaleel, who the FBI calls a Florida-based “procurement agent” for bin Laden. The FBI says Khaleel’s role was to “procure computers, satellite telephones, and covert surveillance equipment” for al-Qaeda leaders. ([Newsweek 2/7/2000](#)) In 1995, Khaleel started studying at Columbia College in Kansas City. The following year, using money sent by others, the FBI monitored him as he helped bin Laden buy a satellite phone (see [November 1996-Late December 1999](#) and [November 1996-Late August 1998](#)). He continued to buy new minutes and parts for the phone at least through 1998 (see [July 29-August 7, 1998](#)). ([Morris 9/20/2001](#)) While living in the US, he also was helping Hamas, the Islamic Association for Palestine (IAP), and working as a regional director for the Islamic American Relief Agency (IARA),

which was directly funding bin Laden (see [November 1996-Late December 1999](#)). US intelligence also linked him to the Al-Kifah Refugee Center in 1994, a charity front with ties to both bin Laden and the CIA (see [1986-1993](#)). Once in custody, Khaleel cooperates with the FBI and is said to provide “crucial evidence about bin Laden’s US operations.” But he is quickly released. He will graduate from Columbia College later in 2000. ([Newsweek 2/7/2000](#); [Morris 9/20/2001](#)) He will leave the US some time after that and apparently will die in a car crash at some time before 2004. ([Isikoff and Hosenball 10/20/2004](#))

Late 1999: Hijackers Clear Their Passport Records

Hijackers Mohamed Atta and Marwan Alshehhi report their passports missing; Ziad Jarrah reports his missing in February 2000. ([Lipka 9/28/2001](#); [Der Spiegel 2002, pp. 257-58](#)) Alshehhi receives a replacement passport on December 26, 1999. ([Kennedy 9/20/2001](#))

Late 1999-Late 2000: French Continue to Develop ‘Thick File’ on Moussaoui as He Works with Radical Militants

After the French put Zacarias Moussaoui on a watch list some time in 1999 (see [1999](#)), they continue to discover more of his ties to militant groups. In late 1999, Moussaoui’s mother says a French intelligence officer contacts her and says her son’s name was in the address book of a man named Yannick who had died fighting for the Muslim cause in Bosnia. ([Zucchino 12/13/2001](#)) In April 2000, French investigators increase their interest in Moussaoui when they learn his best friend Masooud Al-Benin was killed while fighting in Chechnya. Investigators conclude al-Benin and Moussaoui traveled and fought together in Chechnya. Moussaoui’s mother is contacted by French authorities and asked about her son’s whereabouts and his connections to Al-Benin. ([Boulden 12/11/2001](#)) At some time in 2000, French intelligence follows Moussaoui to Pakistan. They believe he goes to see an al-Qaeda leader named Abu Jaffa. ([CBS News 5/8/2002](#)) (Abu Jaffa, also known by the names Abu Jafar al-Jaziri and Omar Chaabani, is an Algerian in charge of al-Qaeda’s training camps in Afghanistan. It appears he will be killed in Afghanistan in late 2001.) ([Infield, Brown, and Landay 1/9/2002](#)) By 2001, French intelligence will be said to have a “thick file on Moussaoui.” ([CBS News 5/8/2002](#)) When Moussaoui is arrested in the US, the French will send this information to Washington at the FBI’s request (see [August 22, 2001](#) and [August 30, 2001](#)).

Late December 1999: FBI Exposes Errors in CIA Reporting on Millennium Plots, Finds Key Evidence CIA Ignored

After the FBI learns of the Millennium plots to attack targets in Jordan (see [November 30, 1999](#)), it sends a team of agents to investigate. The team looks at the work the local CIA station has done on the bombing and finds that the reports it has been sending to the US are deeply flawed; twelve cables sent to CIA headquarters are subsequently withdrawn. FBI agent Ali Soufan finds a box of evidence delivered by Jordanian partners on the floor of the CIA's Amman station. Nobody has examined the box, but Soufan finds it contains key evidence, such as a map of the proposed bomb sites. Author Lawrence Wright will comment, "Soufan's success embarrassed the CIA." ([Wright 7/10/2006](#))

Late December 1999-October 12, 2000: FBI Investigation in Ireland Leads to Clues about *Cole* Bombing

Following a raid on suspected al-Qaeda operatives in Dublin on December 21, 1999 (see [December 21, 1999](#)), FBI investigators begin monitoring the al-Qaeda cell there. The cell is believed to specialize in providing travel and identity documents for others committing violent acts. It will later be reported that "further investigation led to the tracing of telephone calls between Dublin and the Yemen in the period before al-Qaeda launched" its attack on the USS *Cole* (see [October 12, 2000](#)). ([Cusack 7/31/2002](#)) Additional details such as what was said in these calls have not been reported. The calls to Yemen may well have been to a Yemeni al-Qaeda communications hub that was under US surveillance since at least 1998 (see [Late August 1998](#)).

December 31, 1999-January 1, 2000: Attacks Against US Targets Avoided through Alerts and Luck

Earlier in December, the CIA estimated that al-Qaeda would launch between five and 15 attacks against American targets around the world over the New Year's weekend, and that several targets would likely be inside the US (see [December 8, 1999](#)). Since late 1999, there has been intelligence that targets in Washington and New York would be attacked at this time. ([US Congress 9/18/2002](#)) There in fact are a number of planned attacks, including bomb attacks on the Boston and Los Angeles airports (see [December 14, 1999](#) and [December 15-31, 1999](#)), a hotel in Jordan (see [November 30, 1999](#)), and a naval ship in Yemen (see [January 3, 2000](#)). However, all of the attacks are foiled, thanks to alerts and luck. ([Gellman 1/20/2002](#))

December 31, 1999-January 2, 2000: Al-Qaeda Operative Cases Airplane Security

Al-Qaeda leader Khallad bin Attash, cases four flights to acquire basic information about how a hijacking might be conducted. Starting from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, he flies to Bangkok and then on to Hong Kong, before returning to Malaysia via Bangkok. He will later tell a CIA interrogator that he took a box cutter onto the plane but that security did

not notice it. While in Malaysia he and fellow operative Abu Bara al Taizi initially stay with Jemaah Islamiyah leader Hambali and at the Endolite clinic, where Khallad receives a new prosthesis. Presumably, he shares what he learned at the al-Qaeda summit in Malaysia attended by two or three 9/11 hijackers that is held in Malaysia a few days later (see [January 5-8, 2000](#)). ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 158-9](#))

2000 and before: Some Saudi Hijackers Moderately Religious in Saudi Arabia

Although at least two of the 9/11 hijackers are distinctly unreligious when young (see [1998](#)), some of them appear to be moderately religious before they travel to Afghanistan:

- According to the 9/11 Commission, Hamza and Ahmed Alghamdi attend prayer services regularly;

- Salem Alhazmi stops drinking and starts going to the mosque three months before he disappears;

- Abdulaziz Alomari and Ahmed Alnami are reported to become more religious after contact with the education system in Saudi Arabia (see [1999-2000](#)).

But in general, the Saudi 9/11 hijackers are seen as devout, but not fanatical. For example, the 9/11 Commission will comment, “Their families often did not consider these young men religious zealots,” and Alnami’s father will say his son “practiced religion like most of us do.” ([ABC News 3/15/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 232-3](#))

2000: Attempted Flight Simulator Purchase Hints at Pilot Training

At some point during this year, an FBI internal memo states that a Middle Eastern nation has been trying to purchase a flight simulator in violation of US restrictions. The FBI refuses to disclose the date or details of this memo. ([Lichtblau and Meyer 5/30/2002](#))

2000: FBI Repeatedly Tells Clinton that Al-Qaeda Is Unable to Attack Inside US

In the wake of disrupting Ahmed Ressam’s millennium bomb plot at the end of 1999 and arresting his cohorts (see [December 14, 1999](#)) (see [December 15-31, 1999](#)), US intelligence remains concerned that al-Qaeda sleeper cells remain in the US (see [March 10, 2000](#)). However, Clinton’s National Security Adviser Sandy Berger later claims that the FBI still repeatedly assures the Clinton White House that al-Qaeda lacks the ability to launch a domestic strike. ([Risen 9/22/2002](#)) He says, “Until the very end of our time in office, the view we received from the [FBI] was that al-Qaeda had limited capacity to operate in the US and any presence here was under surveillance.” No analysis is done

before 9/11 to investigate just how big that presence might be. ([Priest and Eggen 9/20/2002](#))

2000: German Intelligence Stops Monitoring Atta's Apartment



Zakariya Essabar. [*Source: Associated Press*] German investigators are monitoring Said Bahaji, a member of the Hamburg al-Qaeda cell, for his ties to Mamoun Darkazanli. They had been monitoring a Marienstrasse address where Bahaji had been living. But Bahaji moved out after his 1999 wedding (see [October 9, 1999](#)) to live down the street with his new wife. A request to continue monitoring the Marienstrasse address is denied in 2000 for lack of evidence. Bahaji had lived at that address with Mohamed Atta, Marwan Alshehhi and other members of the Hamburg al-Qaeda cell. Although Bahaji, Atta, and Alshehhi all moved out by mid-2000, other associates like Ramzi bin al-Shibh, Zakariya Essabar, and Abdelghani Mzoudi moved in. Atta's name stayed on the lease until early 2001. ([Erlanger 6/20/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 495](#))

2000: Head of Milan al-Qaeda Cell Under Investigation in Hamburg by This Time



Abderazek Mahdjoub. [*Source: Associated Press*] Abderazek Mahdjoub, an Algerian living in Hamburg, Germany, attends the al-Quds mosque, and has ties to some of the 9/11 hijackers. According to a senior German intelligence official, Mahdjoub is under observation by German domestic intelligence since at least this year. However, he is also connected to the al-Qaeda cell in Milan and in fact is believed to be the head of that cell. There is considerable evidence that the Milan cell has foreknowledge of the 9/11 plot. The cell is under heavy surveillance by Italian

intelligence before 9/11 (see [August 12, 2000](#)) (see [January 24, 2001](#)). But apparently the connection between the Milan and Hamburg cells through Mahdjoub is not made. He is also tied to Mohamed Daki, another alleged member of the Milan cell periodically living in Hamburg before 9/11 (see [December 1997-November 1998](#)). He apparently continues to be a major organizer after 9/11, and the Italian and German governments fail to share information about him. He is suspected of leading European recruitment of those who want to fight the US in Iraq. In late 2003, he will finally be arrested trying to cross the border into Iraq. He is put in German custody. ([Butler 11/29/2003](#); [Golden, Butler, and van Natta 3/22/2004](#))

2000: German Intelligence Issues Report on al-Qaeda Connections in Germany

The BKA, the German counterpart to the FBI, prepares an extensive report on al-Qaeda's connections in Germany. The BKA warns that "Unknown structures" are preparing to stage attacks abroad. However, the German federal prosecutor's office rejects a proposed follow-up investigation. One of the persons named in the BKA report supposedly had contacts with the Hamburg terror cell. ([Forster 9/24/2001](#))

2000: Bin Laden Suggests His Family Supports Him

Bin Laden says in an interview, "I thank God that he has allowed my family to understand my path. They are praying for me." ([Follath and Mascolo 6/6/2005](#)) The Bin Laden family formally disowned Osama in 1994 (see [Shortly After April 9, 1994](#)), but some suggest that some of his relatives continue to support him.

2000: \$250 Million Bank Transfer Suggests Links Between Bin Laden, His Family, and Pakistani

A transfer of 241 million euros (over \$250 million) is made to Pakistan in this year from a Swiss bank account belonging jointly to Osama bin Laden and a Pakistani. The Pakistani is Akberali Moawalla, a former business partner and an acquaintance of Osama's brother Yeslam bin Laden. This Deutsche Bank joint account belongs to a company called Cambridge, which is a subsidiary of the Saudi Binladin Group, the bin Laden family company. After French investigators will discover records of this money transfer in late 2004, a French judge will authorize widening a probe into the financial network surrounding the bin Laden family. ([Reuters 12/26/2004](#); [Mascolo and Follath 6/6/2005](#)) The discovery of this sizable joint bank account will contradict the conclusions of the 9/11 Commission, which will claim that bin Laden inherited far less than is commonly reported and never had a fortune in the hundreds of millions of dollars (see [August 21, 2004](#)). ([Agence France-Presse 7/26/2004](#))

2000: Security Consultant Warns of Someone Flying Plane into WTC

During a review of security procedures, Charlie Schnabolk, a security consultant who wrote a secret report in 1985 about the security of the World Trade Center (see [July 1985](#)), is asked what are the greatest terrorist dangers to the WTC? He replies, “Someone blowing up the PATH tubes from New Jersey,” and “someone flying a plane into the building.” Further details, such as who is conducting the security review and who Schnabolk gives his warning to, are unreported. ([Reeves 10/12/2001](#))

2000: Putin Reportedly Feels Clinton Administration Is Acting Helpless about Bin Laden Problem

Russia’s President Vladimir Putin will later recall, “I talked with the [Clinton] administration and pointed out the bin Laden issue to them. I was surprised by their reaction. They wrung their hands so helplessly and said: ‘the Taliban are not turning him over, what can one do?’ I remember I was surprised: if they are not turning him over, one has to think and do something.” ([Interfax 9/21/2001](#); [Steele et al. 9/22/2001](#)) This exchange, if true, must take place in 2000 because Putin becomes acting president of Russia on the first day of 2000 and President Bush replaces Clinton in the US in January 2001. The Washington Post will report in December 2000 that “The United States has quietly begun to align itself with those in the Russian government calling for military action against Afghanistan and has toyed with the idea of a new raid to wipe out Osama bin Laden (see [December 19, 2000](#)),” but no such raid takes place.

2000: Saeed Sheikh Works with Al-Qaeda, Establishes Dubai Base

After his released from an Indian prison at the end of 1999 (see [December 24-31, 1999](#)), Saeed Sheikh stays in Kandahar, Afghanistan, for several days and meets with Taliban leader Mullah Omar. He also meets with bin Laden, who is said to call Saeed “my special son.” ([Anson 8/2002](#)) Saeed soon has a falling out with Pakistani militant leader Maulana Masood Azhar and draws closer to al-Qaeda. Based mostly in Karachi, Pakistan, he reports to al-Qaeda leader Abu Zubaida. Saeed is said to “soon [become] a key figure, especially in terms of fund-raising.” ([Gunaratna 2003, pp. 286](#)) He regularly travels to Afghanistan and helps train new al-Qaeda recruits in training camps there. ([Jehl 2/25/2002](#); [India Today 2/25/2002](#); [Cienski 2/26/2002](#); [McCarthy 7/16/2002](#)) Saeed helps train some of the 9/11 hijackers, presumably in Afghanistan as well. ([Bamber, Hastings, and Syal 9/30/2001](#)) He also helps al-Qaeda develop a secure web-based communications system. His work is generally so impressive that there is talk he could one day succeed bin Laden. ([O'Neill 7/16/2002](#); [Anson 8/2002](#)) Saeed forged a relationship while in Indian prison with Aftab Ansari, a Pakistani gangster who has fled to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) (see [November 1994-December 1999](#)). Thanks to this connection,

Sheikh is able to establish an al-Qaeda base for himself in Dubai, UAE. ([Gunaratna 2003, pp. 286](#)) Numerous 9/11 hijackers will later move through Dubai and some of the money sent to Mohamed Atta in 2001 will come from Sheikh and Ansari through Dubai (see [Early August 2001](#)). ([McCarthy 2/9/2002](#)) At the same time Saeed is strengthening his al-Qaeda ties, he is also openly working with the Pakistani ISI (see [January 1, 2000-September 11, 2001](#)).

2000: Al-Qaeda Operative Allegedly Turns Informant for CIA and Other Intelligence Agencies

Al-Qaeda operative Luai Sakra apparently begins working as an informant for the CIA, Syrian intelligence, and Turkish intelligence. Sakra, a young Syrian whose parents were Turkish, attended the Khaldan training camp in Afghanistan in 1997. He developed a bond with Abu Zubaida, the al-Qaeda leader who was logistics manager for the camp. Zubaida will later be captured and interrogated by the CIA and will reportedly confirm a link with Sakra. Zubaida tasked Sakra with building up an al-Qaeda network in Turkey. In 1999, the Syrian government began hunting him for his role in a revolt in a Lebanon refugee camp. ([Stark 8/24/2005](#)) The Turkish newspaper Zaman will report shortly after his capture in 2005, "Sakra has been sought by the secret services since 2000." The CIA interrogated him twice in 2000. "Following the interrogation, the CIA offered him employment. He also received a large sum of money by the CIA. However the CIA eventually lost contact with him. Following this development, in 2000 the CIA passed intelligence about Sakra through a classified notice to Turkey, calling for the Turkish (intelligence) to capture him. [They] caught Sakra in Turkey and interrogated him." ([Gun 8/14/2005](#)) Sakra was then apparently let go again. He will then move Germany and assist some of the 9/11 hijackers (see [September 2000-July 24, 2001](#)), then reveal details about the 9/11 attacks to Syrian intelligence the day before 9/11 (see [September 10, 2001](#)). He also will later claim to have trained some 9/11 hijackers in Turkey starting in late 1999 (see [Late 1999-2000](#)). In 2007, former CIA Director George Tenet will write in his book "At the Center of the Storm" that "a source we were jointly running with a Middle Eastern country went to see his foreign handler and basically told him something big was about to go down." ([Tenet 2007, pp. 160](#)) This is very likely a reference to Sakra, since no one else comes close to matching the description of telling a Middle Eastern government about the 9/11 attacks one day in advance, not to mention working as an informant for the CIA at the same time. Tenet's revelation strongly supports the notion that Sakra in fact accepted the CIA's offers in 2000 and had been working with the CIA and other intelligence agencies at least through 9/11.

2000: CIA Stops Reviewing NSA Transcripts after Short Period of Time, Allegedly Due to 'Resource Constraints'

The CIA sends an officer from its Counterterrorist Center (CTC) to the NSA to review raw transcripts of intercepted communications between terrorists. However, the officer is only there for a "brief period" and is subsequently withdrawn and not replaced, damaging

the CIA's ability to exploit the information gleaned from the intercepts. The CIA only previously received summaries of intercepted calls, not the transcripts themselves, and had been arguing for years that it needed the actual transcripts to better understand the material (see [December 1996](#) and [Late August 1998](#)). After the single officer leaves the NSA, which intercepts calls between the US-based 9/11 hijackers and an al-Qaeda communications hub in Yemen around this time (see [Early 2000-Summer 2001](#)), the reason the CIA gives for not replacing him is "resource constraints." In 2005, the CIA's Office of Inspector General will regard this failure as so serious that it will recommend an accountability board be convened to review the performance of the CTC managers responsible, and will suggest that officers should have been detailed to the NSA "on a consistent, full-time basis." ([Central Intelligence Agency 6/2005, pp. xxiii](#).) The CIA and NSA are obtaining information about people in the US from phone companies to support "black ops" at this time (see [After July 1997](#)).

2000-2001: 'Planes as Weapons' and 'Simulated Attacks' Part of Security Planning for Major Events in the US

A 1998 presidential directive gave the National Security Council authority to designate important upcoming events as National Special Security Events (NSSEs) (see [May 22, 1998](#)). The US Secret Service is in charge of planning and implementing security for NSSEs, and the FBI and FEMA also have major security roles. ([Scalet 9/2004](#); [Lowy 1/11/2005](#)) Louis Freeh, director of the FBI for much of the 1990s until June 2001, will later tell the 9/11 Commission that in the years 2000 and 2001, the subject of "planes as weapons" was always one of the considerations in the planning of security for "a series of these, as we call them, special events," and "resources were actually designated to deal with that particular threat." He confirms that "the use of airplanes, either packed with explosives or otherwise, in suicide missions" was "part of the planning" for NSSEs. ([9/11 Commission 4/13/2004](#)) According to the Secret Service, "there is a tremendous amount of advance planning and coordination" for NSSEs, sometimes taking months or even years. Various training initiatives are conducted, including "simulated attacks and medical emergencies, inter-agency tabletop exercises, and field exercises." ([United States Secret Service n.d.](#); [US Congress 7/9/2002](#)) Presumably the use of airplanes in suicide missions is incorporated into some of these simulated attacks.

2000-2001: Atta and Alshehhi Attend Florida Mosque



Former Brooklyn imam Gulshair Shukrijumah. [Source: lifeinlegacy.com] The Congressional Joint Inquiry will later find that several of the hijackers, including Mohamed Atta and Marwan Alshehhi, attend mosques in the US and that at least one of the mosques is in Florida. ([US Congress 7/24/2003, pp. 169](#)) The Florida mosque attended by Atta and Alshehhi may be the Al Hijrah mosque run by Gulshair Shukrijumah in Miramar, Broward County, Florida. Mohamed Atta and several other hijackers live near the mosque (see [April 11, 2001](#)) and train at nearby Opa-Locka airport (see [December 29-31, 2000](#)). After 9/11, the FBI will visit the mosque and ask Shukrijumah and his wife if they recognize the hijackers and if their son, Adnan, knew Atta or had mentioned trips to Pakistan and Afghanistan. ([Strouse 4/3/2003](#); [Meyer 9/3/2006](#)) Atta was seen with Adnan Shukrijumah, a suspected al-Qaeda operative, in 2001 (see [May 2, 2001](#)). His father previously served as an imam at the Al Farouq mosque in Brooklyn. In addition to working as a translator for Sheikh Abdul-Rahman, he also testified as a character witness at the WTC bombing trial for one of the defendants, Clement Rodney Hampton-El, who attended Al Farouq. ([Kaufman and Rabinowitz 10/27/2003](#); [Meyer 9/3/2006](#)) Gulshair Shukrijumah is receiving money from the Saudi embassy in Washington at this time. ([Isikoff and Hosenball 4/7/2003](#)) The army's Able Danger data mining program identifies Atta as a member of an al-Qaeda cell centered on Brooklyn. Exactly how it does this is never disclosed, although Atta's apparent association with Gulshair and Adnan Shukrijumah is one possible explanation (see [January-February 2000](#)).

Early 2000: US Builds Up Influence in Central Asia

By the start of this year, the US has already begun "to quietly build influence" in Central Asia. The US has established significant military-to-military relationships with Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan. Americans have trained soldiers from those countries. The militaries of all three have an ongoing relationship with the National Guard of a US state—Kazakhstan with Arizona, Kyrgyzstan with Montana, and Uzbekistan with Louisiana. The countries also participate in NATO's Partnership for Peace program. ([Kaiser 8/27/2002](#))

Early 2000: Chechens Begin Working with Bin Laden on Hijacking Plot

According to a French intelligence report, in the beginning of 2000 bin Laden meets with Taliban leaders, other al-Qaeda leaders, and armed groups from Chechnya to plan a hijacking, possibly of an airplane flying to the US. They create a list of seven possible airlines to hijack: American, Delta, Continental, United, Air France, Lufthansa, and a vague "US Aero." The group considers hijacking a US airline flying out of Frankfurt and diverting it to Iran or Afghanistan or hijacking a French or German plane and diverting it to Tajikistan or Afghanistan. The goals are to increase international pressure to force a Russian withdrawal from Chechnya and to force the release of Islamists in US prisons. ([Doland 4/16/2007](#); [Le Monde \(Paris\) 4/17/2007](#)) This latter goal is a likely reference to the Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman, as US intelligence repeatedly hears of al-Qaeda hijacking plots to free him (see [1998](#), [March-April 2001](#), and [May 23, 2001](#)). The Chechens are likely connected to Chechen leader Ibn Khattab, who has a long history of collaboration with bin Laden (see [1986-March 20, 2002](#) and [Before April 13, 2001](#)). According to other news reports, in early 2000, the CIA observed Mohamed Atta as he bought large quantities of chemicals in Frankfurt, apparently to build explosives (see [January-May 2000](#)), and in February and March 2001, Atta and two associates will apply for a job with Lufthansa Airlines at the Frankfurt airport that would give them access to secure areas of the airport, but apparently none of them are able to get the job (see [February 15, 2001](#)). Bin Laden will apparently uphold the decision to go forward with this plot later in 2000 (see [October 2000](#)) and the French will continue to report on the plot in January 2001, apparently passing the information to the CIA (see [January 5, 2001](#)). But it is unclear what happens after that and if the plot morphs into the 9/11 attacks, is canceled, or was a ruse all along. Some of the 9/11 hijackers fought in Chechnya and therefore might also be linked to Ibn Khattab (see [1996-December 2000](#)).

Early 2000: Treasury Department Blocked from Freezing Assets of Al-Qaeda Financiers in Saudi Arabia

Treasury Department official Richard Newcomb has been to Saudi Arabia with other US officials in an attempt to pressure the Saudis to crack down on financing al-Qaeda, but no action has resulted (see [June 1999](#)). He had threatened to freeze the assets of certain individuals and groups funding al-Qaeda if not action is taken, and now he starts to act on that threat. As head of the Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control, he submits names for sanctions. But imposing sanctions requires approval from an interagency committee, and the permission to go ahead is never given. CIA and FBI officials are "lukewarm to the idea, worried that sanctions would chill what little cooperation they had with their Saudi counterparts." But the State Department puts up the most opposition. One official will later recall, "The State Department always thought we had much bigger fish to fry." ([Kaplan, Ekman, and Latif 12/15/2003](#))

Early 2000: US Develops Mysterious New Technique for Detecting Bin Laden

National Security Adviser Sandy Berger will later say that in early 2000 the National Security Council (NSC), the US military, and the CIA develops a “new technique for detecting Bin Laden.” Berger calls it “very promising as a way of determining where he would be if we had one strand of human intelligence.” The Los Angeles Times will comment, “But whether the new technique was some sort of high-tech homing device or silent surveillance craft is a question left to future generations.” The next two and a half pages of the 9/11 Congressional Inquiry report discussing this technique are completely censored. ([Miller 7/27/2003](#)) Despite Berger’s implication that the US does not have human intelligence on bin Laden’s movements at this time, other accounts indicate that it does (see [March-April 2001](#) and [April 2001](#)).

Early 2000-September 2001: Al-Qaeda Recruiter Said to Run Radical Militants Communications Network

Mohamedou Ould Slahi, who helped recruit three of the 9/11 hijackers and has been known to German and US intelligence for some time (see [1999](#)), returns home to Mauritania in early 2000 and starts working at a series of internet cafes that appear to be cover for a radical militant communication network. Slahi is also thought to be involved in the Millennium Plot, is arrested and released twice before 9/11, and is questioned by the FBI and others about his knowledge of the Millennium Plot (see [January-April 2000](#)). After 9/11, Slahi will be investigated by an independent Swiss researcher called Guido Rudolphi, who runs an internet monitoring service. Rudolphi will find that Slahi runs a group of seemingly innocuous websites, but behind them there are guest books where visitors can leave messages. According to Rudolphi, this is the perfect communication tool for extremists, “[I]f you want to hide the content of the communication, you can put a message in the guest book. The owner of the guest book receives an e-mail, within seconds can look at the message, edit it, so it looks pretty normal, although the real content, which he has seen already, has disappeared, and may be harmful.” A dramatic increase in such traffic begins in May 2001, but then drops to an all-time low shortly before September 2001. By analysing the traffic, Rudolphi will find that the trail leads back to Duisburg, Germany, where Slahi studied at university. After 9/11, western intelligence agencies will come to the conclusion that Rudolphi’s research is well-founded and indicate that al-Qaeda had an operations center in Duisburg. ([CNN 3/6/2002](#))

Early 2000-December 2001: Al-Zarqawi Operates Independent Militant Training Camp in Afghanistan

In early 2000, Islamist militant leader Musab Abu al-Zarqawi starts a new training camp in Afghanistan, near the town of Herat. Osama bin Laden reportedly does not like him, but al-Zarqawi gets some help from al-Qaeda leader Saif al-Adel, who serves as a liaison between al-Zarqawi and al-Qaeda. His camp starts with only a dozen or so followers, but it rapidly grows and eventually numbers several thousand. His group consists mostly of Jordanians and Syrians, and is helped by links to the Muslim Brotherhood. According to

the Atlantic Monthly, bin Laden repeatedly asks al-Zarqawi to come to him and take an oath of allegiance, but each time al-Zarqawi refuses. “Under no circumstances did [al-Zarqawi] want to become involved in the battle between the Northern Alliance and the Taliban. He also did not believe that either bin Laden or the Taliban was serious enough about jihad.” But in October 2001, the US begins bombing Afghanistan, and al-Zarqawi’s camp is targeted. He is reportedly wounded in the chest when a ceiling falls on him. But in December 2001, he manages to escape to Iran with about 300 followers and is based there for several months while regrouping. ([Weaver 6/8/2006](#))

(Early 2000-November 2000): Hani Hanjour Possibly Spends Time in San Diego; 9/11 Commission Says He Visits Afghanistan

Officially, in 2000, hijacker Hani Hanjour is said to enter the US on December 8 (see [December 8, 2000](#)). However, some reports suggest he may spend time in San Diego earlier in the year. ([Williams, Dahlburg, and Reza 9/27/2001](#); [Thornton 9/14/2002](#)) For example, in the two weeks following 9/11, the FBI will identify him as having lived in San Diego during 2000. ([Kelly 9/14/2001](#); [NBC \(San Diego\) 9/15/2001](#); [Thornton 9/21/2001](#)) In 2004, court records relating to a local terror probe will include authorities stating that Hanjour, along with hijackers Nawaf Alhazmi and Khalid Almihdhar, had regularly dined and prayed with Mohdar Abdullah, a Yemeni university student in San Diego. ([Thornton 6/2/2004](#)) When Alhazmi and Almihdhar attend a San Diego flying school in May 2000 (see [May 5 and 10, 2000](#)), they are accompanied by one or even two men called Hani. ([KGTU 10 \(San Diego\) 9/18/2001](#); [Williams, Dahlburg, and Reza 9/27/2001](#); [Lipka 9/28/2001](#)) A neighbor of Abdussattar Shaikh, a Muslim leader and also undercover FBI asset living in San Diego, later remembers Shaikh having introduced him to a friend called Hani, who he assumes to have been Hanjour. ([Brandon 9/30/2001](#)) (Alhazmi and Almihdhar stay with Shaikh during 2000 (see [Mid-May-December 2000](#)).) For a short period beginning August 10, another resident at Shaikh’s San Diego house is a Saudi called Yazeed al-Salmi. After 9/11, Al-Salmi will reportedly confide to having known Hanjour and, according to the 9/11 Commission, has “childhood ties” to him. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 222 and 518](#)) Little else is written about Hanjour’s movements during 2000, but the Washington Post notes that for at least part of the year, he “appears to have been in Saudi Arabia, because it was there that he obtained a student visa to take another English course. He applied in September 2000.” ([Goldstein, Sun, and Lardner 10/15/2001](#)) The 9/11 Commission will claim that Hanjour goes to Afghanistan in spring 2000, where he spends time in al-Qaeda’s al Faruq camp. He is then sent to Khalid Shaikh Mohammed in Karachi, for training in using code words, before returning to Saudi Arabia on June 20. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 226](#)) However, this account will come mainly from written reports of the interrogation of Mohammed, with whom the commission has no direct contact. ([9/11 Commission 6/16/2004](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 146 and 521](#)) Partly because of the highly coercive interrogation methods used, there will be questions about the reliability of Mohammed’s information. ([New York Times 6/17/2004](#)) According to the 9/11 Commission, the only

time Hanjour is in San Diego this year is from December 8-12, before he moves to Arizona. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 223](#))

January 2000: Former President Bush Meets with bin Laden Family on Behalf of Carlyle Group



Ex-President Bush Sr. meeting with Saudi Arabia's King Fahd on behalf of the Carlyle Group in 2000. [*Source: Saudi Embassy*]/Former President George H. W. Bush meets with the bin Laden family on behalf of the Carlyle Group. He had also met with them in November 1998 (see [November 1998](#)), but it is not known if he meets with them again after this. Bush denies this meeting took place until a thank you note is found confirming that it took place. ([Golden, Bandler, and Walker 9/27/2001](#); [Burkeman and Borger 10/31/2001](#))

January 2000: Israeli Spy Ring Begins Penetrating US

A DEA government document later leaked to the press ([Drug Enforcement Agency 6/2001](#)) suggests that a large Israeli spy ring starts penetrating the US from at least this time, if not earlier. This ring, which will later become popularly known as the “art student spy ring,” is later shown to have strange connections to the events of 9/11. ([Berlau 3/11/2002](#))

January 2000: Millennium Bomb Plotters Tied to Bosnian War



NATO troops patrol the village of Bocinja

Donja in 2001. [Source: NATO / Paul Hanson] In the wake of the failed al-Qaeda millennium bomb plots, US investigators will discover that a number of suspects in the plots have connections to an obscure village in Bosnia named Bocinja Donja. At the end of the Bosnian war in late 1995, Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic kicked out the Serbians living in this small village 60 miles north of the capital of Sarajevo and gave their houses to about 100 former mujaheddin who fought in Bosnia. Most of them married local women, allowing them to stay despite a treaty requiring all foreign fighters to leave Bosnia. In contrast to the rest of Bosnia, the village is governed by strict Islamic law. Suspects who lived in or visited the village include:

- Karim Said Atmani. A former roommate of Ahmed Ressaam, he is believed to be the document forger for Ressaam's group that attempted to bomb the Los Angeles airport (see [December 14, 1999](#)). He was a frequent visitor to Bosnia until late 1999. ([Smith 3/11/2000](#))
- Khalil Deek. Suspected of masterminding the Los Angeles airport plot (see [December 15-31, 1999](#)) and a Jordanian millennium plot (see [December 11, 1999](#)), Deek was investigated by US intelligence since the late 1980s (see [Late 1980s](#)) but inexplicably never even watchlisted until 2004 (see [Spring 2004](#)). Deek's brother says Khalil lived in Bosnia for a while, working for a "Muslim relief organization." ([Smith 3/11/2000](#); [Schou 6/15/2006](#)) He worked for the IARA, which reportedly funneled weapons and recruits into Bosnia (see [Early 1990s](#)).
- Hisham Diab. While he has not been explicitly connected to this village, he fought in Bosnia and was Deek's next door neighbor and close al-Qaeda associate all through the 1990s (see [March 1993-1996](#) and [December 14-25, 1999](#)), so presumably they spent time in Bosnia together. ([Khatchadourian 1/22/2007](#))
- Hamid Aich. He lived in Canada and is connected to Ressaam's group (see [December 21, 1999](#)). He also will openly live in Ireland and apparently fund a wide variety of militant groups and plots there before escaping to Afghanistan just before 9/11 (see [June 3, 2001-July 24, 2001](#)).

Other mujaheddin connected to this village are wanted by authorities in other countries for other alleged crimes. A senior US official will say, "We have been concerned about this community for years. We flushed out a lot of them [after the end of the war].... [But] we find the whole group of them a threat, and we want them out of there." ([Smith 3/11/2000](#)) Others tied to the millennium plots have ties to Bosnian war generally because Ressaam belonged to a group of armed robbers called the "Roubaix gang" that trained in Islamic camps in Bosnia. ([Dahlburg 1/13/2000](#)) Izetbegovic will step down as leader of Muslim Bosnia in October 2000. ([Binder 10/20/2003](#)) In late 2000 and early

2001, the mujaheddin will gradually be moved out of the village and replaced by the original Serbian inhabitants.

January-May 2000: CIA Has Atta Under Surveillance in Germany

Hijacker Mohamed Atta is put under surveillance by the CIA while living in Germany. ([Agence France-Presse 9/22/2001](#); [Elflein et al. 9/24/2001](#); [Forster 9/24/2001](#)) He is “reportedly observed buying large quantities of chemicals in Frankfurt, apparently for the production of explosives [and/or] for biological warfare.” “The US agents reported to have trailed Atta are said to have failed to inform the German authorities about their investigation,” even as the Germans are investigating many of his associates. “The disclosure that Atta was being trailed by police long before 11 September raises the question why the attacks could not have been prevented with the man’s arrest.” ([Bright et al. 9/30/2001](#)) A German newspaper adds that Atta is able to get a visa into the US on May 18. According to some reports, the surveillance stops when he leaves for the US at the start of June. However, “experts believe that the suspect [remains] under surveillance in the United States.” ([Forster 9/24/2001](#)) A German intelligence official also states, “We can no longer exclude the possibility that the Americans wanted to keep an eye on Atta after his entry in the US.” ([Elflein et al. 9/24/2001](#)) This correlates with a Newsweek claim that US officials knew Atta was a “known [associate] of Islamic terrorists well before [9/11].” ([Klaidman, Isikoff, and Hosenball 9/20/2001](#)) However, a congressional inquiry later reports that the US “intelligence community possessed no intelligence or law enforcement information linking 16 of the 19 hijackers [including Atta] to terrorism or terrorist groups.” ([US Congress 9/20/2002](#)) In 2005, after accounts of the Able Danger program learning Atta’s name become news, newspaper accounts will neglect to mention this prior report about Atta being known by US intelligence. For instance, the New York Times will report, “The account [about Able Danger] is the first assertion that Mr. Atta, an Egyptian who became the lead hijacker in the plot, was identified by any American government agency as a potential threat before the Sept. 11 attacks”(see [August 9, 2005](#)) . ([Jehl 8/9/2005](#))

January-March 2000: Hijacker Atta Begins E-Mailing US Flight Schools, Seeking Pilot Training

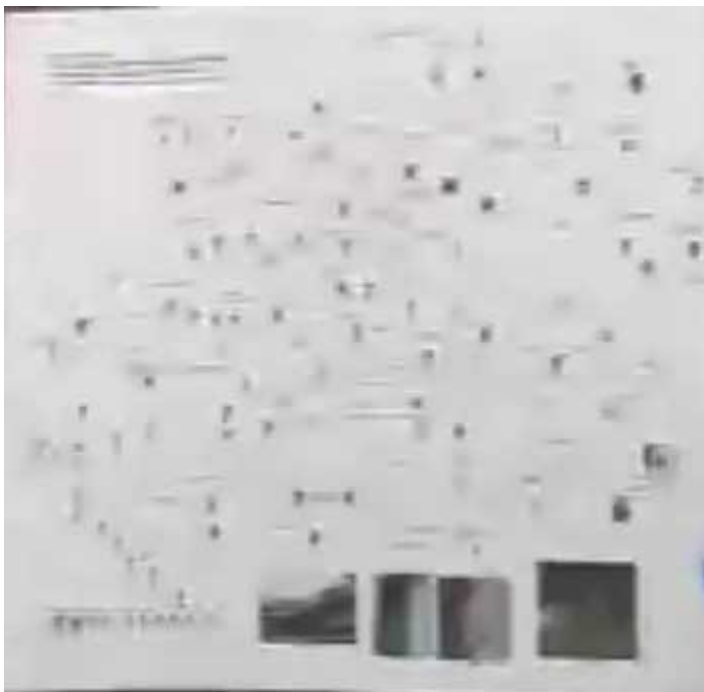
Hijacker Mohamed Atta, who is under CIA surveillance at this time, begins sending e-mails to US flight schools, inquiring about their pilot training programs. One e-mail states, “We are a small group (2-3) of young men from different arab [sic] countries.” “Now we are living in Germany since a while for study purposes. We would like to start training for the career of airline professional pilots. In this field we haven’t yet any knowledge, but we are ready to undergo an intensive training program.” Apparently, multiple e-mails are sent from the same Hotmail account. Some e-mails are signed “M. Atta,” while others are signed “Mahmoud Ben Hamad.” ([Crewdson, Swanson, and Simpson 2/25/2003](#)) According to the 9/11 Commission, Atta e-mails 31 different US

flight schools, and requests details on the cost of training, sources of financing, and accommodation. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 168](#))

January-May 2000: Hijacker Associate Frequently Calls Saudi Government Officials

According to Sen. Bob Graham (D), co-chair of the 9/11 Congressional Inquiry, during this time Omar al-Bayoumi has an “unusually large number of telephone calls with Saudi government officials in both Los Angeles and Washington.” Graham will note this increased communication corresponds with the arrival of hijackers Nawaf Alhazmi and Khalid Almihdhar into al-Bayoumi’s life. He will see this as evidence of Saudi government involvement in the 9/11 plot. ([Graham and Nussbaum 2004, pp. 168-169](#))

January-February 2000: Secret Military Unit Identifies Al-Qaeda ‘Brooklyn’ Cell; Mohamed Atta is a Member



A blurry photograph of a 2005 reconstruction of the pre-9/11 Able Danger chart showing Mohamed Atta and others. [Source: C-SPAN] A US Army intelligence program called Able Danger identifies five al-Qaeda terrorist cells; one of them has connections to Brooklyn, New York and will become informally known as the “Brooklyn” cell by the Able Danger team. This cell includes 9/11 ringleader Mohamed Atta, and three other 9/11 hijackers: Marwan Alshehhi, Khalid Almihdhar, and Nawaf Alhazmi. According to a former intelligence officer who claims he worked closely with Able Danger, the link to Brooklyn is not based upon any firm evidence, but computer analysis that established patterns in links between the four men. “[T]he software put them all together in Brooklyn.” ([Jehl 8/9/2005](#); [Washington Times 8/22/2005](#); [Fox News 8/23/2005](#); [Goodwin 9/2005](#)) However, that

does not necessarily imply them being physically present in Brooklyn. A lawyer later representing members of Able Danger states, “At no time did Able Danger identify Mohamed Atta as being physically present in the United States.” Furthermore, “No information obtained at the time would have led anyone to believe criminal activity had taken place or that any specific terrorist activities were being planned.” ([CNN 9/21/2005](#); [US Congress 9/21/2005](#)) James D. Smith, a contractor working with the unit, discovers Mohamed Atta’s link to al-Qaeda. ([Green 9/1/2005](#)) Smith has been using advanced computer software and analysing individuals who are going between mosques. He has made a link between Mohamed Atta and Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman, ringleader of the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center. ([Fox News 8/28/2005](#); [Goodwin 9/2005](#)) Atta is said to have some unspecified connection to the Al Farouq mosque in Brooklyn, a hotbed of anti-American sentiment once frequented by Abdul-Rahman, which also contained the notorious Al-Kifah Refugee Center. ([Phucas 9/22/2005](#)) Smith obtained Atta’s name and photograph through a private researcher in California who was paid to gather the information from contacts in the Middle East. ([Shenon 8/22/2005](#)) Lt. Col. Anthony Shaffer claims the photo is not the well-known menacing Florida driver’s license photo of Atta. “This is an older, more grainy photo we had of him. It was not the best picture in the world.” It is said to contain several names or aliases for Atta underneath it. ([Shaffer 9/20/2005](#); [Crewdson and Zajac 9/28/2005](#)) LIWA analysts supporting Able Danger make a chart, which Shaffer describes in a radio interview as, “A chart probably about a 2x3 which had essentially five clusters around the center point which was bin Laden and his leadership.” ([Shaffer 9/16/2005](#)) The 9/11 Commission later claims that Atta only enters the United States for the first time several months later, in June 2000 (see [June 3, 2000](#)). ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 224](#)) However, investigations in the months after 9/11 find that Mohamed Atta and another of the hijackers rented rooms in Brooklyn around this time (see [Spring 2000](#)). Other newspaper accounts have the CIA monitoring Atta starting in January 2000, while he is living in Germany (see [January-May 2000](#)). Atta, Alshehhi, Almihdhar, Alhazmi and other hijackers have connections to associates of Sheikh Abdul-Rahman (see [Early 2000-September 10, 2001](#)).

January-April 2000: US and Germany Fail to Discover Militant’s Links to 9/11 Plot Despite Arrests

The US and Germany miss an opportunity to uncover the 9/11 plot through the arrest of Mohamedou Ould Slahi, an al-Qaeda operative tied to millennium attacks and the Hamburg al-Qaeda cell. Slahi lived in Duisburg, Germany for most of the 1990s and apparently US and German intelligence began monitoring him there around the start of 1999 due to his communications with his cousin, al-Qaeda leader Mahfouz Walad Al-Walid. In 1999 he had repeated contact with members of the Hamburg al-Qaeda cell and helped some of the 9/11 hijackers travel to Afghanistan. US investigators will later allege he also advised one militant to “travel to the United States to take part in the planned [9/11] attacks” (see [1999](#)). In November 1999, Slahi moves to Canada and is seen with associates of Ahmed Ressam, who is planning to bomb the Los Angeles airport. US officials will later believe that Slahi went to Canada to activate Ressam’s cell. ([Meyer](#)

[4/24/2006](#)) After Ressam is arrested in mid-December 1999 (see [December 14, 1999](#)), Slahi is monitored closely. He is arrested in Senegal after flying there in mid-January 2000. Transferred to his home country of Mauritania, he is interrogated by FBI officials. ([Johnston 1/29/2000](#); [Agence France-Presse 2/20/2000](#); [Meyer 4/24/2006](#)) In early February 2000, Newsweek will report, “The key link in the chain connecting bin Laden to Ahmed Ressam—and an alleged New Year’s bomb plot in the United States—may be Mohamedou Ould Slahi.” ([Newsweek 2/7/2000](#)) However, despite these suspicions, he is released later in February. He moves back to Germany, and is arrested and held there in April 2000 for three weeks, and then released again. He quickly returns to Mauritania. He will be arrested again shortly after 9/11. ([Agence France-Presse 2/20/2000](#); [US Department of Defense 4/20/2006, pp. 184-216](#)) Despite all this interest in Slahi, his connections to the 9/11 plot and some of the 9/11 hijackers in Hamburg are apparently not made until after 9/11. He will later be sent to Guantanamo where he is reportedly subjected to harsh interrogation (see [September 27, 2001](#)).

January-March 2000: '50 to 60' CIA Officers Learn of Hijackers' Travel, but They Are Not Watchlisted and FBI Not Told They Are in US

Fifty to sixty CIA officers read cables reporting on travel by hijackers Khalid Almihdhar and Nawaf Alhazmi. The cables are generated in connection with al-Qaeda’s Malaysia summit, which Almihdhar and Alhazmi attend and the CIA monitors (see [January 5-8, 2000](#)). Even though some of the cables state that Khalid Almihdhar has a US visa and Nawaf Alhazmi has arrived in the US, the FBI is not informed of this (see, for example, [January 6, 2000](#) and [March 5, 2000](#)), and the two men are not watchlisted until the summer of 2001 (see August 23, 2001). The cables are drafted at four field offices and at headquarters and are read by overseas officers, headquarters personnel, operations officers, analysts, managers, junior employees, CIA staff, and officers on attachment from the NSA and FBI. The CIA’s inspector general will comment: “Over an 18-month period, some of these officers had opportunities to review the information on multiple occasions, when they might have recognized its significance and shared it appropriately with other components and agencies.” ([Central Intelligence Agency 6/2005, pp. xiv](#) ^{٤١})

(2000-August 2001): Atta and Other Hijackers Seen at Charlotte County Airport, Florida

Mohamed Atta, along with others of the alleged 9/11 hijackers, is believed by some to have resided in Punta Gorda, Florida before July 2000 (see [Before July 2000](#)), prior to his attending flight school in Venice, about 30 miles north of there (see [July 6-December 19, 2000](#)). He is also witnessed in Punta Gorda around July-August 2001 (see [Mid-July - Mid-August 2001](#)), well after the time he leaves Venice. Additionally, Atta and some other hijackers are reportedly witnessed at the Charlotte County Airport in Punta Gorda. Cathy Mohr, the owner of a cafe there, later says, “The picture [of Atta] in the paper looked really familiar and people from the airport said, ‘Hey you know they were here.’”

([Oshier 4/24/2002](#)) After seeing photos of them after 9/11, Frank Cvelbar, whose Aero Precision flight school is based at the airport, believes he has seen four of the alleged hijackers “very occasionally” visiting the airport, shopping in his school’s pilot supplies shop, or hanging around the airport’s lobby. Cvelbar will say he is “very sure” about having seen Atta, and “pretty sure” about seeing Marwan Alshehhi, Saeed Alghamdi, and Ahmed Alnami. ([Arnold and Martin 10/3/2001](#)) A salesperson at Eastern Avionics, a vendor at the airport, later recalls Marwan Alshehhi having bought a pilot’s headset from them. After the sale, he starts receiving e-mails, apparently sent by Mohamed Atta (see [Before September 11, 2001](#)). After 9/11, the Punta Gorda Police Department will confirm handing over half a dozen pieces of information to the FBI. ([Arnold 10/2/2001](#); [Oshier 4/24/2002](#)) Yet according to official accounts, Atta and Alshehhi were only in this area when attending flight school in Venice. ([US Congress 9/26/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 223-253](#)) When asked to corroborate or refute reports of the hijackers having been in Charlotte County, FBI spokeswoman Sara Oates will only respond, “The FBI has information but the FBI cannot disclose the information because the investigation is pending.” ([Arnold and Martin 10/3/2001](#))

January 1, 2000-September 11, 2001: Saeed Sheikh Lives Openly in Pakistan, Strengthens Ties with ISI



Mohammed Aziz Khan. [*Source: US Defense Department*] After being released from prison at the end of 1999 (see [December 24-31, 1999](#)), Saeed Sheikh travels to Pakistan and is given a house by the ISI. ([Anson 8/2002](#)) He lives openly and opulently in Pakistan, even attending “swanky parties attended by senior Pakistani government officials.” US authorities conclude he is an asset of the ISI. ([Klaidman 3/13/2002](#)) Amazingly, he is allowed to travel freely to Britain, and visits family there at least twice. ([Anson 8/2002](#)) He works with Ijaz Shah, a former ISI official in charge of handling two militant groups; Lt. Gen. Mohammed Aziz Khan, former deputy chief of the ISI in charge of relations with Jaish-e-Mohammed; and Brigadier Abdullah, a former ISI officer. He is well known to other senior ISI officers. ([Jehl 2/25/2002](#); [India Today 2/25/2002](#); [Cienski 2/26/2002](#); [McCarthy 7/16/2002](#)) At the same time that he is working closely and openly with the ISI, he is also strengthening his links with al-Qaeda (see [2000](#)).

2000-September 11, 2001: 9/11 Hijackers Living in US Make Many Calls to Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Other Countries

While living in the US, the 9/11 hijackers make at least 206 international phone calls. In 2006, these calls will be mentioned in a German intelligence report based on telephone records obtained from the FBI. There are 66 calls to Syria, 32 calls to Saudi Arabia, and 29 calls to Germany. A majority of the call are made from a cell phone registered to hijacker Marwan Alshehhi. Additional details on who was called, who else made the calls, when the calls were made, what other countries were called, etc... have not been made public. The Chicago Tribune will later note that the calls to Germany are not surprising since Alshehhi and some others were living there, but “the hijackers’ connections to Saudi Arabia and Syria are far from fully explained.” ([Crewdson 3/8/2006](#)) It is unknown when these calls were discovered, but reports suggest at least some of the hijackers’ international calls were being monitored by US intelligence as they were made (see [Summer 2001](#), [September 10, 2001](#), and [Early 2000-Summer 2001](#)).

January 2-5, 2000: CIA Learns 9/11 Hijacker Almihdhar Has US Visa as He Is Tracked to Al-Qaeda Summit



A photocopy of Nawaf Alhazmi’s passport. No image of Khalid Almihdhar’s passport has been released, but it would have looked similar to this one. [Source: FBI] The CIA is aware that hijacker Khalid Almihdhar is staying at a highly monitored al-Qaeda communication hub (see [Late 1998-Early 2002](#)) and is planning to travel to an al-Qaeda meeting in Malaysia. He is closely watched as leaves the hub and flies from Sana’a, Yemen, to Dubai, United Arab Emirates, on his way to Malaysia. Agents from eight CIA offices and six friendly foreign intelligence services are

all asked to help track him, in the hopes he will lead them to bigger al-Qaeda figures. ([Laabs 8/13/2003](#); [9/11 Commission 1/26/2004, pp. 6](#)) The CIA and local authorities are running an operation to track militants transiting Dubai airport (see [1999](#)), and United Arab Emirates officials secretly make copies of his passport as he is passing through it, immediately reporting this to the CIA. ([Bamford 2004, pp. 224](#)) Another account suggests CIA agents break into Almihdhar's Dubai hotel room and photocopy the passport there. Either way, the information is immediately faxed to Alec Station, the CIA's bin Laden unit. ([Wright 2006, pp. 244](#)) The CIA not only learns his full name, but also discovers the vital fact that he has a multiple entry visa to the US that is valid from April 1999 to April 2000. But even though the CIA now knows about this US visa which indicates he plans to go to New York City, they do not place him on a terror watch list and they fail to tell the FBI about the visa. ([Bamford 2004, pp. 224](#); [9/11 Commission 1/26/2004, pp. 6](#))

January 2-4, 2000: US Intelligence Loses Track of 9/11 Hijacker Alhazmi as He Travels to Malaysia

US intelligence is aware from monitored phone calls that Nawaf Alhazmi is travelling to an important al-Qaeda summit in Malaysia (see [January 5-8, 2000](#)). Alhazmi is known to be in Karachi, Pakistan, with a ticket to Malaysia for January 2, 2000. CIA and Pakistani officials plan to have his passport scrutinized as he passes through the airport, but he changes his ticket departure date twice. Officials get confused and are not there when he leaves the country, so they still don't learn his last name. ([Laabs 8/13/2003](#)) The 9/11 Commission later notes that "officials could have worked on logical flight itineraries and perhaps realized that Nawaf could and probably did keep to his original plan." But not only is this not done at the time, apparently the flight manifests are not checked after the fact to see in anyone with the name Nawaf had boarded. ([9/11 Commission 1/26/2004, pp. 6](#)) Even after being monitored for several days in Malaysia, US intelligence supposedly still will not learn his last name (see [January 6-9, 2000](#)).

January 3, 2000: Al-Qaeda Attack on USS *The Sullivans* Fails; Remains Undiscovered



The USS The Sullivans. [Source: US Navy] An al-Qaeda attack on USS *The Sullivans* in Yemen's Aden harbor fails when their

boat filled with explosives sinks. This is one of a series of failed al-Qaeda attacks planned to take place around the turn of the millennium (see [December 31, 1999-January 1, 2000](#)). But the attack remains undiscovered, and a duplication of the attack by the same people will successfully hit the USS *Cole* in October 2000 (see [October 12, 2000](#)). ([PBS Frontline 10/3/2002](#)) The US will first learn of the planned *The Sullivans* attack when interrogating a suspect in the *Cole* bombing in early November 2000. ([Myers 11/10/2000](#))

January 4-6, 2000: CIA Prevents FBI from Learning about Hijacker's US Visa; Other CIA Agents Are Deliberately Misled about This

The CIA has been tracking Khalid Almihdhar as he travels to Malaysia for the al-Qaeda summit that starts on January 5, 2000 (see [January 5-8, 2000](#)). The CIA has just received a photocopy of his passport that shows he has a valid visa to travel to the US (see [January 2-5, 2000](#)). But they deliberately prevent the FBI from learning about this visa. On January 4, a CIA cable containing the photocopy is sent from the CIA's Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, office to Alec Station, the CIA's bin Laden unit. An FBI agent named Doug Miller assigned to the unit sees the cable and drafts a memo requesting the required permission from the CIA to advise the rest of the FBI that one participant in the Malaysia summit would likely be traveling soon to the US. ([US Congress 7/24/2003, pp. 135](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 502](#); [Wright 2006, pp. 244](#)) Miller further writes that Almihdhar's visa indicates he will be traveling to New York City and that he has been connected to the 1998 embassy bombings (see [August 7, 1998](#) and [October 4, 2001](#)) and the monitored al-Qaeda communications hub in Yemen (see [Late 1998-Early 2002](#)). He also writes that photos of Almihdhar have been obtained and will be sent as well. However, a headquarters desk officer tells him that a deputy unit chief, Tom Wilshire, does not want it sent yet, and that, "This is not a matter for the FBI." ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 240](#)) Several hours later, this desk officer writes a cable that is distributed only within the CIA. It is sent the next day and claims that Almihdhar's visa documents were shared with the FBI. This officer will later admit she didn't personally share the information with the FBI either, and the 9/11 Commission will not be able to find anyone in the CIA who did share it with the FBI. ([US Congress 7/24/2003, pp. 135](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 502](#); [Wright 2006, pp. 310-311](#)) A week later, Miller follows up by sending his rejected memo to Wilshire. Miller asks, "Is this a no go or should I remake it in some way?" He never gets an answer and drops the matter. ([Wright 2006, pp. 311](#)) The Justice Department's Office of Inspector General will later call the failure to pass the information to the FBI a "significant failure" but will be unable to determine why the information was not passed on. ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 250](#)) In 2002, CIA Director George Tenet will allude to e-mails he claims prove the information about the visa is passed to the FBI around this time. However, the 9/11 Congressional Inquiry and 9/11 Commission fail to find any evidence of these e-mails. The FBI claims it never received any such e-mails. ([US Congress 7/24/2003, pp. 135](#); [Thomas 5/10/2004](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 502](#))

January 5, 2000: CIA Warns Other Intelligence Agencies that Almihdhar Has Visa to US, but Lies about FBI Knowledge of This

The CIA had just learned that hijacker Khalid Almihdhar not only is travelling to an al-Qaeda meeting in Malaysia, but also has a visa to travel to the US (see [January 2-5, 2000](#)). Alec Station, the CIA's bin Laden unit, sends a cable to a number of friendly intelligence agencies around the world, saying, "We need to continue the effort to identify these travelers and their activities to determine if there is any true threat posed." The cable also says that Almihdhar's travel documents have been given to the FBI. But in fact the FBI does not know about the visa, and Alec Station is clearly aware that the FBI does not know (see [January 4-6, 2000](#)). ([9/11 Commission 1/26/2004, pp. 6](#); [Wright 2006, pp. 311](#)) The 9/11 Commission will later conclude that "the weight of available evidence does not support" that the FBI was told about the visa. ([9/11 Commission 1/26/2004, pp. 6](#))

January 5, 2000: Malaysian Intelligence Only Videotapes First Day of Al-Qaeda Summit, 9/11 Hijackers Videotaped with Hambali

Acting on the behalf of the CIA, Malaysian intelligence videotapes the attendees of an al-Qaeda summit. Counterterrorism expert Rohan Gunaratna will later claim that the attendees were "videotaped by a Malaysian surveillance team on January 5, 2000." ([Gunaratna 2003, pp. 261](#)) But this is only the first of four days of meetings, all held at the same location (see [January 5-8, 2000](#)), and the attendees are secretly photographed on the other days (see [January 6-9, 2000](#)). The Los Angeles Times will similarly note that Malaysian intelligence made a single surveillance videotape "that shows men arriving at the meeting, according to a US intelligence official. The tape, he said, has no sound and [isn't] viewed as very significant at the time." ([Braun et al. 10/14/2001](#)) The contents of the videotape remain murky, but one account claims Ramzi bin al-Shibh was one of the attendees videotaped at the summit. ([Thomas 11/26/2001](#)) Further, a US Treasury press release in 2003 will state that "[Hambali] was videotaped in a January 2000 meeting in Malaysia with two of the September 11, 2001 hijackers of AA Flight 77 - Khalid Almihdhar and Nawaf Alhazmi." ([US Department of the Treasury 1/24/2003](#)) US intelligence officials consider the summit so important that CIA Director George Tenet, FBI Director Robert Mueller, National Security Adviser Sandy Berger, and other high-ranking officials are given daily briefings about it while it is taking place (see [January 6-9, 2000](#)). So it is unclear why only the first day would be videotaped and why such video would not be considered more important. Malaysia will give the CIA a copy of the tape about one month after the summit ends (see [February 2000](#)). By 1999, the FBI had connected Hambali to the 1995 Bojinka plot and also obtained a photo of him (see [May 23, 1999](#)). Yet the CIA will not share this video footage with the FBI nor will they warn

Malaysian intelligence about Hambali's Bojinka plot connection (see [Shortly After January 8, 2000](#)).

January 5-8, 2000: Al-Qaeda Summit in Malaysia Discusses 9/11 and *Cole* Plots; CIA Has Malaysians Monitor It



Attendees of the Malaysian summit. Top row, from left: Nawaf Alhazmi, Khalid Almihdhar, Khalid Shaikh Mohammed. Middle row, from left: Khallad bin Attash, Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri, Hambali. Bottom row, from left: Yazid Sufaat, Ramzi bin al-Shibh, Fahad Al-Quso. [Source: FBI] About a dozen of bin Laden's trusted followers hold a secret, "top-level al-Qaeda summit" in the city of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. ([Ressa 8/30/2002](#); [Eckert 9/27/2002](#)) Plans for the October 2000 bombing of the USS *Cole* (see [October 12, 2000](#)) and the 9/11 attacks are discussed. ([Kelley 2/12/2002](#); [Ressa 8/30/2002](#)) At the request of the CIA, the Malaysian Secret Service monitors the summit and then passes the information on to the US (see [January 6-9, 2000](#)). Attendees of the summit are said to include:

■Nawaf Alhazmi and Khalid Almihdhar. The CIA and FBI will later miss many opportunities to foil the 9/11 plot through Alhazmi and Almihdhar and the knowledge of their presence at this summit. The CIA already knows many details about these two by the time the summit begins (see [January 2-4, 2000](#)), and tracked Almihdhar as he traveled to it (see [January 2-5, 2000](#)).

■Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM), a top al-Qaeda leader and the alleged “mastermind” of the 9/11 attacks. The US has known KSM is an Islamic militant since the exposure of Operation Bojinka in January 1995 (see [January 6, 1995](#)), and knows what he looks like. US officials have stated that they only realized the summit was important in the summer of 2001, but the presence of KSM should have proved its importance. ([Fineman and Drogin 2/2/2002](#)) Although the possible presence of KSM at this summit is highly disputed by US officials, one counterterrorism expert will testify before the 9/11 Commission in 2003 that he has access to transcripts of KSM’s interrogations since his capture, and that KSM has admitted leading this summit and told the attendees about a planes as weapons plot targeting the US (see [July 9, 2003](#)). ([Isikoff and Hosenball 7/9/2003](#); [Blomquist 7/10/2003](#)) Many other media reports identify him there as well. ([Gumbel 6/6/2002](#); [Ressa 8/30/2002](#); [Ressa 11/7/2002](#); [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation 10/29/2003](#)) For instance, according to Newsweek, “Mohammed’s presence would make the intelligence failure of the CIA even greater. It would mean the agency literally watched as the 9/11 scheme was hatched—and had photographs of the attack’s mastermind... doing the plotting.” ([Isikoff and Hosenball 7/9/2003](#))

■An Indonesian militant known as Hambali, or Nurjaman Riduan Isamuddin. ([BBC 8/15/2003](#)) He was heavily involved in the Bojinka plot, an early version of the 9/11 plot (see [January 6, 1995](#) and [June 1994](#)). ([Ressa 3/14/2002](#); [Ressa 8/30/2002](#)) The FBI was aware of who he was and his connections to the Bojinka plot at least by 1999 and identified a photograph of him by that time (see [May 23, 1999](#)). He will be arrested by Thai authorities in August 2003 (see [August 12, 2003](#)). ([CNN 8/14/2003](#); [CBS News 8/15/2003](#)) Malaysian officials recognize Hambali from summit surveillance photos, as he is a long-time Malaysian resident. But the US does not tell them of his Bojinka connections so they will not know to arrest him after the summit is over (see [Shortly After January 8, 2000](#)). ([Pereira 2/10/2002](#))

■Yazid Sufaat, a Malaysian man who owned the condominium where the summit was held. ([Shenon and Johnston 1/31/2002](#); [Isikoff and Klaidman 6/2/2002](#)) A possibility to expose the 9/11 plot through Sufaat’s presence at this summit is later missed in September 2000 (see [September-October 2000](#)). Sufaat will travel to Afghanistan in June 2001 and be arrested by Malaysian authorities when he returns to Malaysia in late 2001. ([Abuza 12/24/2002](#)) Malaysian officials also recognize Sufaat from summit surveillance photos, as he is a long-time Malaysian resident (see [Shortly After January 8, 2000](#)). ([Pereira 2/10/2002](#))

■Fahad Al-Quso, a top al-Qaeda operative. ([Klaidman, Isikoff, and Hosenball 9/20/2001](#)) Al-Quso will be arrested by Yemeni authorities in December 2000 (see [Late October-Late November 2000](#)), but the FBI will not given a chance to fully interrogate him before 9/11. He will escape from prison in 2003. ([CNN 5/15/2003](#))

■Tawfiq bin Attash. Better known by his alias “Khallad.” Bin Attash, a “trusted member of bin Laden’s inner circle,” was in charge of bin Laden’s bodyguards, and served as bin Laden’s personal intermediary at least for the USS *Cole* bombing. ([Klaidman, Isikoff, and](#)

[Hosenball 9/20/2001](#)) He is also thought to be a “mastermind” of that attack. Attash is reportedly planning to be one of the hijackers, but will be unable to get a US visa. ([9/11 Commission 6/16/2004, pp. 8](#)) US intelligence had been aware of his identity as early as 1995. ([US Congress 9/18/2002](#)) A possibility to expose the 9/11 plot through bin Attash’s presence at this summit will later be missed in January 2001 (see [January 4, 2001](#)). Bin Attash had been previously arrested in Yemen for suspected terror ties, but let go (see [Summer 1999](#)). ([Abuza 12/1/2002](#)) He will be captured in Pakistan by the US in April 2003 (see [April 29, 2003](#)).

■Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri. ([Los Angeles Times 10/10/2001](#); [Graham and Nussbaum 2004, pp. 59](#)) (Note: in the sources al-Nashiri is referred to by two of his aliases: Muhammad Omar al-Harazi and Al Safani). ([CNN 12/11/2000](#); [Central Intelligence Agency 9/6/2006](#)) Al-Nashiri is one of al-Qaeda’s top field commanders and operates out of Malaysia while 9/11 is being prepared. ([Gunaratna 2003, pp. 188](#)) He was involved in an arms smuggling plot (see [1997](#)) and the East African embassy bombings (see [August 22-25 1998](#)), in which his cousin was martyred (see [August 7, 1998](#)). He also organized the attack against the USS *The Sullivans* (see [January 3, 2000](#)), and will be involved in the attacks against the USS *Cole* (see [October 12, 2000](#)) and the *Limburg* (see [October 6, 2002](#)). He will be arrested in the United Arab Emirates in November 2002. An al-Qaeda operative had identified a photo of al-Nashiri for the FBI in late 1998 (see [August 22-25 1998](#)). ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 152-3](#))

■Ramzi bin al-Shibh. Investigators believe he wanted to be the twentieth hijacker. His presence at the summit may not have been realized until after 9/11, despite the fact that US intelligence had a picture of him next to bin Attash, and had video footage of him. ([Thomas 11/26/2001](#); [Finn 7/14/2002](#); [Elliott 9/15/2002](#); [Schrom 10/1/2002](#); [Ressa 11/7/2002](#)) German police have credit card receipts indicating bin al-Shibh is in Malaysia at the same time. ([McDermott 9/1/2002](#)) Ulrich Kersten, director of Germany’s federal anticrime agency, the Bundeskriminalamt, will later say, “There are indications that Ramzi bin al-Shibh was in Kuala Lumpur for the meeting.” ([Frantz and Butler 8/24/2002](#)) Another account noting he was photographed at the summit further notes that he entered and left Thailand three times in the first three weeks of January 2000. ([Drogin and Meyer 10/17/2001](#)) Anonymous Malaysian officials claim he is there, but US officials deny it. ([Sullivan 9/20/2002](#)) One account says he is recognized at the time of the summit, which makes it hard to understand why he is not tracked back to Germany and the Hamburg cell with Mohamed Atta and other hijackers. ([Gebauer 10/1/2002](#)) Another opportunity to expose the 9/11 plot through bin al-Shibh’s presence at this summit will be missed in June. It appears bin al-Shibh and Almihdhar are directly involved in the attack on the USS *Cole* in October 2000 (see [Around September 15-16 and October 10-21, 2000](#)). ([Whitaker 10/15/2001](#); [Finn 7/14/2002](#); [Hosenball 9/4/2002](#)) So presumably better surveillance or follow-up from this summit could have prevented that attack as well.

■Ahmad Hikmat Shakir. An al-Qaeda agent of Iraqi nationality, he may have attended this summit, according to some documents, but his presence is uncertain. ([Associated Press 10/2/2002](#); [Isikoff and Klaidman 10/7/2002](#); [Abuza 12/24/2002](#)) After 9/11, he will be linked to the 1993 World Trade Center bombing and the 1995 Bojinka plot. Jordan will arrest him and let him go after the US says they don’t want to take custody of him (see [September 17, 2001](#)).

■Salem Alhazmi, 9/11 hijacker and brother of Nawaf Alhazmi. He is possibly at the

summit, although very few accounts mention it. ([Abuza 12/24/2002](#)) US intelligence intercepts from before the summit indicate that he at least had plans to attend. ([US Congress 7/24/2003, pp. 51-53](#))

- Abu Bara al-Taizi. A Yemeni al-Qaeda agent. He is reportedly meant to be one of the 9/11 hijackers, but will be unable to enter the US due to greater scrutiny for Yemenis. ([9/11 Commission 6/16/2004, pp. 8](#))

- Mohamed al-Khatani. A Saudi, he allegedly will confess to attending the summit while being held in the US Guantanamo prison (see [July 2002](#)). He apparently will unsuccessfully attempt to enter the US in August 2001 to join the 9/11 plot (see [August 4, 2001](#)). However, al-Khatani will later recant his testimony and say he lied to avoid torture (see [October 26, 2006](#)).

- Unnamed members of the Egyptian-based Islamic Jihad are also said to have been at the summit. ([King and Bhatt 10/21/2001](#)) Islamic Jihad merged with al-Qaeda in February 1998. ([James 11/17/2001](#)) However, according to the Wall Street Journal, bin Attash and al-Quso are suspected of being Islamic Jihad members at one point, so this may just be a reference to them. ([Cloud, Wartzman, and Tkacik 10/8/2001](#))

January 5-6, 2000: CIA Liason with FBI Who Just Learned About Almihdhar's US Visa Twice Fails to Tell FBI about It

On the night of January 5, 2000, a CIA officer known as "James" who has been assigned to the FBI's Strategic Information Operations Center (SIOC) to deal with problems "in communicating between the CIA and the FBI" briefs an FBI agent who works in the FBI's bin Laden unit (which is part of the SIOC at that time) about a number of cables he has received regarding the al-Qaeda summit that is just starting in Malaysia and one of the people attending it, hijacker Khalid Almihdhar. The CIA agent writes an e-mail to several other CIA agents and details "exactly" what he briefed this person on. Although the CIA should inform the FBI of a terrorist like Almihdhar having a US visa, he does not mention discussing the visa with the FBI agent, even though he has just seen several CIA cables talking about it. The FBI agent will later say he does not know why James chooses to brief him, as he is not a designated contact point for the CIA. Overnight, another CIA cable comes in to him providing new details about Almihdhar and the Malaysia summit. The next morning, the CIA agent briefs a different FBI agent in the SIOC about these new developments. Again, records indicate he fails to mention anything about Almihdhar's US visa. This FBI agent will also say he does not know why he was briefed on the matter, as he is not a designated contact point for the CIA. James then sends an e-mail to other CIA agents describing "exactly" what he told both of the FBI agents. One section of his e-mail reads, "Thus far, a lot of suspicious activity has been observed [in Malaysia] but nothing that would indicate evidence of an impending attack or criminal enterprise. [I told the first FBI agent] that as soon as something concrete is developed leading us to the criminal arena or to known FBI cases, we will immediately bring FBI into the loop. Like [the first FBI agent] yesterday, [the second FBI agent] stated that this was a fine approach and thanked me for keeping him in the loop." Due to the briefings James gives, another CIA officer assigned to the FBI will not bother to brief the FBI on

Almihdhar (see [January 6, 2000](#)). After 9/11, James will refuse to talk to the Justice Department's Office of Inspector General, but will tell the CIA's inspector general that he has no recollection of these events. ([US Congress 7/24/2003, pp. 135](#) ⁸; [US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 241-247](#) ⁹; [Tenet 2007, pp. 195](#))

(January 5-8, 2000): CIA Fails to Act on Triangle of Calls Linking Malaysia Summit, *Cole* Bomber's House, and 9/11 Hijackers' Hotel

A series of calls by al-Qaeda operatives, some of whom are under surveillance by the CIA and the Malaysian Special Branch at this time, links three sites involved in the bombing of the USS *Cole*. Even though the CIA is aware of the calls, it will later say it is unable to find the hijackers in Bangkok, the location of one of the call sites. The calls made by the operatives are between the following three locations:

- A payphone in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, near an apartment where about a dozen al-Qaeda operatives are holding a summit (see January 5-8, 2000);
- The Washington Hotel in Bangkok, Thailand. Al-Qaeda operatives Ibrahim al-Thawar and Fahad al-Quso are staying at the hotel around this time and will go on to be involved in the *Cole* bombing (see [October 12, 2000](#)). They are later joined in the hotel by summit attendees Nawaf Alhazmi, Khalid Almihdhar, and Khallad bin Attash;
- Al-Quso's house in Yemen. The calls from the payphone to this location are made by bin Attash.

Although bin Attash and possibly others call the Washington Hotel while they are under surveillance, the CIA will be unable to locate them there during the week they spend in Bangkok, from January 8-15 (see [January 8-15, 2000](#)). Author Lawrence Wright will comment, "Although the CIA later denied that it knew anything about the phone, the number was recorded in the Malaysians' surveillance log, which was given to the agency." ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 156-160, 181-2](#); [Wright 7/10/2006](#) ¹⁰) The FBI team investigating the *Cole* bombing will later learn some of this information before 9/11 and ask the CIA for details. However, the CIA will fail to disclose what it knows about the Malaysia summit or that it looks for the hijackers and associates in Thailand after January 8 (see [July 2001](#)).

January 6, 2000: CIA Informs FBI Leaders about Al-Qaeda Malaysia Summit but Fails to Mention One Attendee Has US Visa

FBI Director Louis Freeh and other top FBI officials are briefed about the ongoing al-Qaeda summit in Malaysia (see January 5-8, 2000) as part of their regular daily update. They are told the CIA is in the lead and that the CIA promises to let the FBI know if an FBI angle to the case develops. But they also are not told that the CIA just found out one of the participants, Khalid Almihdhar, has a US visa. ([9/11 Commission 1/26/2004](#)) One FBI official familiar with the case will later complain, "[The CIA] purposely hid

[Almihdhar] from the FBI, purposely refused to tell the bureau.... The thing was, they didn't want John O'Neill and the FBI running over their case. And that's why September 11 happened.... They have blood on their hands." ([Bamford 2004, pp. 224](#)) Jack Cloonan, an FBI agent in the I-49 squad that focused on al-Qaeda, later says: "If that information [got] disseminated, would it have had an impact on the events of 9/11? I'm telling you that it would have." ([Thomas 5/10/2004](#))

January 6, 2000: CIA Officer Detailed to FBI Fails to Brief FBI on Almihdhar's US Visa, Is Told FBI Already Has Almihdhar Information

An FBI agent asks a CIA officer detailed to the FBI for an update on hijacker Khalid Almihdhar, but the CIA officer does not provide the information. When he tells another CIA officer, known as "James," that he has been asked for the information, James sends him a series of e-mails saying he has already briefed the FBI on the latest news about Almihdhar (see [January 5-6, 2000](#)). However, the briefings James gave the FBI failed to include the fact that Almihdhar has a US visa, even though James knew of the visa and should have communicated it to the FBI. ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 245](#); [Tenet 2007, pp. 195](#))

January 6, 2000: Two Malaysia Summit Attendees Travel to Singapore and Thailand, But Agents Monitoring Them Fail to Get Their Names

Two of the operatives attending al-Qaeda's Malaysia summit make short trips to neighboring countries, returning to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, within 24 hours. The two operatives are Nawaf Alhazmi and Khallad bin Attash and the two countries they visit are Thailand and Singapore, but it is not definitively known which operative goes to which country. ([9/11 Commission 1/26/2004, pp. 4](#)) However, an associate of bin Attash's, Fahad al-Quso, arrives in Thailand on this day. ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 269](#)) In addition, Alhazmi will later be said to have visited Singapore. ([Thornton 1/4/2003](#)) Presumably, therefore, it is bin Attash that travels to Thailand, whereas Alhazmi goes to Singapore. The 9/11 Commission will later say of these two trips, "After the fact, efforts were made to track them. US officials in Kuala Lumpur wondered if one of these Arabs was the still mysterious Nawaf. Both returned to Kuala Lumpur within the next 24 hours, though the authorities did not know it at the time." ([9/11 Commission 1/26/2004, pp. 4](#)) Khalid Almihdhar is also said to visit Singapore, and both he and Alhazmi are said to travel to Indonesia around this time as well, but the circumstances of these additional trips, if they are actually made, are not known. ([Thornton 1/4/2003](#)) Almihdhar's passport was copied by intelligence services on the way to Malaysia (see [January 2-5, 2000](#)) and a similar operation to obtain Alhazmi's passport details failed (see [January 2-4, 2000](#)). These two trips represent opportunities to obtain Alhazmi and bin

Attash's passport details, but this is apparently not done, even though the two are under surveillance at this point (see January 5-8, 2000).

January 6-9, 2000: Malaysia Provides CIA with Information on Al-Qaeda Summit and Attendees



Hazel Evergreen Park, located on the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, is the condominium complex where the terror summit was held. [Source: FBI] At the CIA's request, the Malaysian Secret Service is monitoring an important al-Qaeda summit (see January 5-8, 2000) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and begins passing what it knows to the CIA even before the summit is over. Media accounts are consistent that the operatives at the summit are photographed, and even videotaped on the first day (see January 5, 2000), but there is no wiretapping or other recording of their conversations. ([Hunter 9/17/2001](#); [Helmore and Vulliamy 10/7/2001](#); [Wright 1/14/2002](#); [Ressa 3/14/2002](#); [Isikoff and Klaidman 6/2/2002](#); [Laabs 8/13/2003](#); [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation 10/29/2003](#)) However, Malaysian officials are not informed what to look for, and focus more on monitoring the local Malaysian and Indonesian hosts who serve as drivers than the visitors attending the summit. ([Sullivan 9/20/2002](#)) One account says that in general, "As the terrorists left the [condominium where the summit was held], the Malaysian police clicked away with their cameras. There was enough material for a whole photo series. The terrorists strolled around town like regular tourists. They casually searched out an Internet cafe and spent many hours in front of the computers, always surreptitiously watched by an observation team." ([Schrom 10/1/2002](#)) Authorities find out what hotel Khalid Almihdhar is staying at and he and his associates are photographed there ([Klaidman, Isikoff, and Hosenball 9/20/2001](#); [Helmore and Vulliamy 10/7/2001](#)), as well as coming and going from the condominium where the meeting is held. ([McDermott 9/1/2002](#)) On January 7, Khalid Almihdhar and others go shopping, giving Malaysian security ample opportunity to collect information about them. They spend hours at Internet cafes, and after they leave, Malaysian intelligence searches the hard drives of the computers they used. ([Abuza 12/24/2002](#); [Laabs 8/13/2003](#)) On January 8, the CIA will be told that an unnamed new person has just joined Almihdhar and the others, and that additional photographs have been taken. ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 247](#)) By January 9, all the data and photos the Malaysians have collected are in the hands of the CIA, except for the video footage, which apparently is sent to US intelligence one month later (see [February 2000](#)).

However, no photos or video and few details from any of this surveillance have been publicly released. It is known that there are photos of:

- Khallad bin Attash with Almihdhar.
- Fahad al-Quso next to Almihdhar.
- Some photos are of Ramzi bin al-Shibh. ([Klaidman, Isikoff, and Hosenball 9/20/2001](#); [Laabs 8/13/2003](#))
- Hambali is in some photos, and is immediately recognized by Malaysian intelligence (see [Shortly After January 8, 2000](#)).
- Yazid Sufaat also is in some photos, and also is recognized by Malaysian intelligence. ([Pereira 2/10/2002](#))

January 6-9, 2000: Top CIA and Clinton Cabinet Officials Repeatedly Briefed about Al-Qaeda Summit in Malaysia

On January 6, 2000, the CIA office in Malaysia begins passing details from the Malaysian government's surveillance of the al-Qaeda summit in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, to the CIA Counterterrorist Center (CTC) (see January 5-8, 2000 and [January 6-9, 2000](#)). Cofer Black, head of the CTC, orders that he be continually informed about the meeting. CIA Director Tenet is frequently informed as well. They are given continual updates until the meeting ends on January 8. ([Laabs 8/13/2003](#)) National Security Adviser Sandy Berger, FBI Director Louis Freeh, and other top officials are briefed, but apparently President Clinton is not. ([Bamford 2004, pp. 225-26](#)) However, it appears that the CIA deliberately and repeatedly fails to tell the FBI that one attendee, hijacker Khalid Almihdhar, has an active visa to visit the US (see [January 5, 2000](#), [January 6, 2000](#), and [January 5-6, 2000](#)). No evidence has been presented suggesting anyone else outside the CIA was told this crucial fact either. The Malaysian summit ended on January 8. According to the 9/11 Commission, "On January 14, the head of the CIA's al-Qaeda unit again updated his bosses, telling them that officials were continuing to track the suspicious individuals who had now dispersed to various countries." ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 237](#)) Officially, the CIA will later claim to have lost hijackers Alhazmi and Almihdhar as they left the meeting (see [January 8, 2000](#)), however, Almihdhar will later report back to al-Qaeda that he thought he was followed to the US (see [Mid-July 2000](#)). It has never been reported if any of the other attendees were monitored after leaving the meeting or not.

(After January 6, 2000): CIA Fails to Check FBI Has Been Notified of Almihdhar's US Visa, Although this Is 'Routine Practice'

Although the CIA passes information to the FBI about the attendance of hijackers Khalid Almihdhar and Nawaf Alhazmi at al-Qaeda's Malaysia summit, it repeatedly fails to mention that Almihdhar has a US visa (see [January 6, 2000](#), [January 4-6, 2000](#), [January](#)

[5-6, 2000](#)). It also fails to check that the FBI has received this information. The CIA's inspector general will say it "found no indication that anyone in [the CIA's Counterterrorist Center] checked to ensure FBI receipt of the information, which, a few [Osama bin Laden] Station officers said, should have been routine practice." ([Central Intelligence Agency 6/2005, pp. xv](#))

January 8, 2000: Al-Qaeda Summit Ends; CIA Still Fails to Add Attendees to Watch List

The al-Qaeda summit in Malaysia (see January 5-8, 2000) ends and the participants leave. Hijackers Nawaf Alhazmi and Khalid Almihdhar fly to Bangkok, Thailand, with al-Qaeda leader Khallad bin Attash (see [January 8, 2000](#)). Other attendees depart to other locales. There have been no media reports that any of the others were followed by intelligence agents. ([Sullivan 9/20/2002](#); [US Congress 7/24/2003, pp. 131](#)) Before the summit started the CIA knew one attendee was named Khalid Almihdhar and that another had the first name Nawaf. At the end of the summit the CIA appears to have learned little more, and still does not know Nawaf's last name is Alhazmi. Around this time, on January 7 and 10, the CIA searches for their names in their databases but get no hits. Yet they don't ask for a search of the much larger NSA databases, which had vital information on them (see [Early 1999](#)). CIA headquarters asks the NSA to put Almihdhar on their watch list so they can pass on more information about him (see [Mid-January 2000](#)). However, neither Alhazmi nor Almihdhar are placed on the State Department's watch list, which would actually prevent them from coming to the US. ([9/11 Commission 1/26/2004](#)) The CIA still fails to tell the FBI that Almihdhar has a valid US visa, and in fact seems to go out of their way not to tell the FBI about it (see [January 4-6, 2000](#), [January 6, 2000](#), [January 5, 2000](#), and [January 5-6, 2000](#)). ([US Congress 7/24/2003, pp. 131](#); [Laabs 8/13/2003](#))

January 8, 2000: 9/11 Hijackers Slip Surveillance as They Fly to Thailand

The al-Qaeda summit in Malaysia (see January 5-8, 2000) ends and the participants leave. Hijackers Nawaf Alhazmi and Khalid Almihdhar fly to Bangkok, Thailand, traveling under their real names. Al-Qaeda leader Khallad bin Attash also travels with them and the three sit side by side in the airplane, but bin Attash travels under the false name "Salah Saeed Mohammed bin Yousaf" (see [After January 8, 2000](#)). ([Sullivan 9/20/2002](#); [US Congress 7/24/2003, pp. 131](#); [US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 248](#)) However, the CIA fails to alert anyone that they should be followed. Apparently, no one in Thailand is warned about their arrival until after they have already disappeared into Bangkok. The CIA is told by Malaysian intelligence that Khalid Almihdhar was on the flight, as well as someone with the last name Alhazmi. For the third person, the CIA is given part of bin Attash's "Salah" alias. But apparently no one puts Nawaf's first name together with his last name Alhamzi, even though he sat next to the known Khalid Almihdhar and his real full name was on the flight manifest. ([9/11 Commission](#)

[1/26/2004, pp. 6](#)) The CIA and Thai authorities will try and fail to find them in Thailand (see [January 8-15, 2000](#)).

January 8, 2000: Bin Laden Speech Is Videotaped and Later Used by US Intelligence



Bin Laden speaking at the podium in the top image. Ramzi bin al-Shibh is said to be the one wearing the red bandana on his head in the below image. [Source: *London Times*] Bin Laden is videotaped speaking to about 100 of his followers in Afghanistan. The video of the speech, which has no sound, will apparently be captured by US forces in late 2001 and leaked to the media in late 2006 (see [September 30, 2006](#)). The time stamp on the video footage reads "1/8/2000," suggesting the speech took place in January 8, 2000 at the end of Ramadan, though it could also be from August 1, 2000, since some countries reverse the order of months and days. The speech takes place at Tarnak Farm, a complex of buildings near Kandahar where bin Laden sometimes lives. Bin Laden speaks in the open air at a podium while the audience sits on the ground. Ramzi bin al-Shibh is said to be in the audience, although photographs, video footage, and even credit card receipts place him at a meeting in Malaysia held from January 5-8 (see January 5-8, 2000). ([Fouda 10/1/2006](#)) The video footage focuses more on the audience than the crowd, leading at least one terrorism specialist to speculate that the video maybe have been made by an intelligence agency. ([Associated Press 10/3/2006](#)) It appears US intelligence will later use the footage to identify bin Laden's followers in the crowd (see [September 30, 2006](#)).

January 8-15, 2000: CIA Fails to Locate 9/11 Hijackers in Thailand

Hijackers Nawaf Alhazmi and Khalid Almihdhar arrive in Thailand from Malaysia, where they were monitored while attending an al-Qaeda summit there (see [January 8, 2000](#)). Khallad bin Attash, who flew there with them, is met in Bangkok by two al-Qaeda operatives, Ibrahim al-Thawar and Fahad al-Quso, who give him \$36,000. Some of this money may be passed on to Alhazmi and Almihdhar for their upcoming work in the US. ([9/11 Commission 1/26/2004](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 159](#)) These two men who meet him happen to be plotters of the bombing of the USS *Cole* later in the year, though US intelligence will not learn about this until long after the *Cole* bombing. ([Wright 2006, pp. 312](#)) The CIA attempts to find Almihdhar and his companions in Thailand but are unsuccessful because, as one official will later put it, “when they arrived we were unable to mobilize what we needed to mobilize.” On January 13, a CIA official will notify superiors that surveillance of the men is continuing. Additionally, that same day the Thai government puts Almihdhar’s name on a watch list in case he tries to fly out of Bangkok. ([9/11 Commission 1/26/2004](#); [US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 247](#).) But despite being on this watch list, Almihdhar is able to fly to the US two days later, travelling with Nawaf Alhazmi and using his own name (see [January 15, 2000](#)). Bin Attash flies undetected to Karachi, Pakistan, on January 20. ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 248](#).) In February, the CIA will reject a request from foreign authorities to give assistance in the search. The CIA will stop what search there is in early March when the Thai government tells the CIA that Almihdhar has already flown to the US (see [March 5, 2000](#)). ([US Congress 7/24/2003, pp. 157](#).)

Shortly After January 8, 2000: US Fails to Warn Malaysian Government about Hambali

The US knows that Hambali has ties to the 1995 Bojinka plot (see [January 6, 1995](#)) but apparently fails to share this information with Malaysian authorities, who therefore miss a chance to arrest him. By 1999, the US determined that Hambali was one of the founders of Konsonjaya, a front company central to funding the Bojinka plot (see [May 23, 1999](#)). US investigators also found a photograph of him on Ramzi Yousef’s computer in 1995, further tying him to the Bojinka plot. ([Pereira 2/2/2002](#)) In January 2000, Malaysian intelligence monitors an al-Qaeda summit meeting at the request of the CIA (see [January 5-8, 2000](#)). Malaysian intelligence recognize Hambali and Yazid Sufaat from photos of the meeting; both are long-time residents in Malaysia. However, because the US does not share the information about Hambali, the Malaysians decide not to arrest or question Hambali and Sufaat since they are not aware either man has any criminal ties. ([Pereira 2/10/2002](#)) As a result, Malaysian authorities fail to learn more about this summit meeting, which was attended by two 9/11 hijackers. The US also fails to follow up with Hambali, despite their knowledge of him.

After January 8, 2000: US Apparently Does Not Realize Al-Qaeda Leader Has Applied for US Visa

On January 8, 2000, hijackers Nawaf Alhazmi and Khalid Almihdhar plus al-Qaeda leader Khallad bin Attash fly from Malaysia to Thailand together, sitting next to each other. Malaysian intelligence soon informs the CIA that Almihdhar was on the flight, sitting next to someone with the last name of Alhazmi and someone with the name Salah Saeed Mohammed bin Yousaf (see [January 8, 2000](#)). This is an alias for bin Attash, and in fact is the same alias he used when applying for a US visa in 1999 (see [April 3, 1999](#)). Two months later, the CIA learns that several days later, Nawaf Alhazmi flew from Thailand to the US, which means he had to have had a US visa (see [March 5, 2000](#) and [March 6, 2000 and After](#)). In fact, Almihdhar, Alhazmi, and bin Attash, using the “bin Yousaf” alias, all applied for US visas within days of each other (see [April 3-7, 1999](#)). Alhazmi and bin Attash even applied on the same day. However, apparently no check of visa application records is made that would reveal this. US intelligence also suspects that Alhazmi has a militant brother named Salem, which he does, and Salem Alhamzi also applied for and received a US visa from the same consulate on nearly the same day as his brother Nawaf, but this is not discovered either. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 155-6, 181-2, 492](#); [9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 9](#); [US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 248](#)) The US will miss other opportunities to learn more about this alias (see [After December 16, 2000](#) and [After August 23, 2001](#)).

January 10, 2000: NSA Receives CIA Report on Almihdhar, but Does not Disseminate More Information about Him

The CIA sends the NSA some information about hijacker Khalid Almihdhar, including information about al-Qaeda’s Malaysia summit (see January 5-8, 2000), which Almihdhar attended, as well as the name of a person who helped him in Kuala Lumpur, where the summit was held. The NSA is also told Almihdhar’s primary purpose for coming to Malaysia was to meet with other people. The CIA knows Almihdhar has a US visa (see [January 2-5, 2000](#)), but it is unclear whether the NSA is informed of this. ([US Congress 7/24/2003, pp. 156](#)) At this time, the NSA has some information about Almihdhar, whose calls it has been intercepting for at least a year (see [Early 1999](#), [Summer 1999](#), [Late Summer 1999](#), and [Shortly Before December 29, 1999](#)), that has not been disseminated. In particular, the NSA seems to have overheard something in early 1999 that should have been disseminated, but was not. This new information from the CIA does not cause the NSA to re-examine its material on Almihdhar or disseminate any important information to other US agencies. However, Almihdhar is subsequently put on the NSA watchlist (see [Mid-January 2000](#)) and the NSA intercepts calls between his home in Yemen and him in the US (see [Spring-Summer 2000](#)), but fails to alert the FBI to his presence in the US (see [Spring 2000](#)).

Mid-January 2000: CIA Asks NSA to Pass on New Information about Hijacker Almihdhar, but NSA Fails to Do So

Following a request by the CIA, the NSA puts hijacker Khalid Almihdhar on its watch list. This means that the NSA should pass details of any new monitored communications involving him to the CIA. ([US Congress 7/24/2003, pp. 157](#); [9/11 Commission 1/26/2004, pp. 6](#)) The CIA is looking for Almihdhar and knows he has a US visa (see [January 8-15, 2000](#)), but fails to add him to the State Department's watch list until 19 months later (see August 23, 2001). The 9/11 Congressional Inquiry will later state: "In mid-January 2000, NSA queried its databases for information concerning Khaled [redacted]. These queries remained active until May 2000, but did not uncover any information." In fact, the NSA intercepts eight of Almihdhar's calls from San Diego to Yemen during this time and even gives some details about some of the calls to the FBI (see [Spring-Summer 2000](#)). However, they do not tell the CIA everything about them, despite the watch list requirement to provide the information. It is not clear why the NSA failed to share this with the CIA. It is also not known if or when Almihdhar was removed from the NSA watch list before 9/11. ([US Congress 7/24/2003, pp. 157](#))

January 15, 2000: 9/11 Hijackers Alhazmi and Almihdhar Travel to US

A week after attending the al-Qaeda summit in Malaysia (see January 5-8, 2000), hijackers Nawaf Alhazmi and Khalid Almihdhar fly together from Bangkok, Thailand, to Los Angeles, California. ([MSNBC 12/11/2001](#)) The CIA will later claim that it lost track of them when they arrived in Bangkok and that it did not receive notification from the Thai government that Almihdhar and Alhazmi entered the US until March 2000 (see [March 5, 2000](#)). However, Almihdhar will later tell 9/11 mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed that he and Alhazmi think they were watched and followed from Bangkok to Los Angeles by unknown individuals (see [Mid-July 2000](#)). ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 181, 215](#))

Early 2000-September 10, 2001: Hijackers Have Several Links to Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman

The 9/11 hijackers have links to several people associated with "Blind Sheikh" Omar Abdul-Rahman, the spiritual head of the group that bombed the World Trade Center in 1993. Abdul-Rahman has been in prison since the mid-1990s.

- Khalid Almihdhar and Nawaf Alhazmi attend a mosque in San Diego that is visited by an unnamed associate of Abdul-Rahman who is under investigation by the Los Angeles FBI (see [June 1999-March 2000](#));
- The mosque is also attended by Osama Basnan, who threw a party for Abdul-Rahman in 1992 (see [Spring 2000](#));

- Mohamed Atta is seen with Adnan Shukrijumah, son of Abdul-Rahman's former translator (see [May 2, 2001](#)) and Atta and Alshehhi may attend a mosque run by his father (see [2000-2001](#));
 - Hijacker Mohand Alshehri is seen near the Minnesota clinic where Sheikh Abdul-Rahman is being held (see [August 2001](#));
 - Some hijackers have the same mailing address as Sheikh Abdul-Rahman and at least one of his associates (see [Before September 11, 2001](#));
 - Khalid Almihdhar and other hijackers obtain false ID cards from Mohamed el-Atriss, an associate of an unindicted co-conspirator at Sheikh Abdul-Rahman's trial (see [July-August 2001](#)); ([Lance 2006, pp. 373](#))
 - In addition, people attending a Bronx mosque are warned to stay away from lower Manhattan on 9/11 (see [Early September 2001](#)).
- In early 2000, the Able Danger data-mining program apparently identifies Atta, Alshehhi, Alhazmi, and Almihdhar as members of al-Qaeda through their associations with people linked to Sheikh Abdul-Rahman (see [January-February 2000](#)).

January 15-Early February 2000: Suspected Advance Man Helps 9/11 Hijackers Settle in San Diego

Hijackers Nawaf Alhazmi and Khalid Almihdhar arrive in Los Angeles and stay there for two weeks. Omar al-Bayoumi, a suspected al-Qaeda advance man and possible Saudi agent, arrives in Los Angeles and visits the Saudi Consulate there. According to Newsweek, "Law-enforcement officials believe al-Bayoumi may [have] a closed-door meeting with Fahad al Thumairy, a member of the consulate's Islamic and Culture Affairs Section." ([Isikoff and Klaidman 7/28/2003](#)) (In March 2003, al Thumairy is stripped of his diplomatic visa and barred from entry to the US, reportedly because of suspected links to terrorism. ([Farah 11/23/2003](#))) Later that same day, al-Bayoumi goes to a restaurant and meets Alhazmi and Almihdhar. Al-Bayoumi later claims that this first contact with the hijackers is accidental. However, one FBI source later recalls that before he drives to Los Angeles that day he says he is going "to pick up visitors." ([US Congress 7/24/2003](#) ^١; [Isikoff and Klaidman 7/28/2003](#)) Al-Bayoumi returns to San Diego after inviting the two hijackers to move there; Alhazmi and Almihdhar follow him there shortly thereafter. ([US Congress 7/24/2003](#) ^٢) The FBI's "best source" in San Diego says that al-Bayoumi "must be an intelligence officer for Saudi Arabia or another foreign power." A former top FBI official working on the al-Bayoumi investigation claims: "We firmly believed that he had knowledge [of the 9/11 plot], and that his meeting with them that day was more than coincidence." ([Isikoff and Klaidman 7/28/2003](#)) Al-Bayoumi helps Alhazmi and Almihdhar settle in the US. After meeting them in Los Angeles and after bringing them to San Diego, he finds them a place to live. Al-Bayoumi lives at the Villa Balboa apartments with a wife and children, and the two hijackers move into the Parkwood apartments directly across the street. ([Bassey 10/21/2001](#); [McDermott 9/1/2002](#)) It appears the lease was actually signed by Alhazmi a few months earlier. Al-Bayoumi cosigns the lease and pays \$1,500 cash for their first month's rent and security deposit. Some FBI officials claim the hijackers immediately pay him back, others claim they do not. ([Isikoff and Thomas 11/24/2002](#); [US Congress 7/24/2003](#) ^٣) Within days of

bringing them from Los Angeles, al-Bayoumi throws a welcoming party that introduces them to the local Muslim community. ([Goldstein and Booth 12/29/2001](#)) One associate later says an al-Bayoumi party “was a big deal... it meant that everyone accepted them without question.” ([Thornton 10/25/2001](#)) He also introduces hijacker Hani Hanjour to the community a short time later. ([Thornton 9/14/2002](#)) He tasks an acquaintance, Modhar Abdallah, to serve as their translator and help them get driver’s licenses, Social Security cards, information on flight schools, and more ([Thornton 9/14/2002](#); [US Congress 7/24/2003](#).)

January 15, 2000-August 2001: Hijackers Bring Money into US



Hamza Alghamdi in Afghanistan. [Source: *Spiegel*

TV] Several of the hijackers bring money into the US in the form of cash and traveler’s checks. At least \$69,000 is imported this way:

- Nawaf Alhazmi and Khalid Almihdhar bring in about \$15,000 (see [February 4, 2000](#));
- Marwan Alshehhi purchases \$2,000 in traveler’s checks in New York on May 31, 2000, apparently using money withdrawn from his Dresdner bank account in Hamburg; ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 136](#).)
- Ziad Jarrah opens a bank account with a \$2,000 deposit shortly after arriving in the US (see [June 28-July 7, 2000](#));
- Majed Moqed, Wail Alshehri, Ahmed Alhaznawi, Saeed Alghamdi, Hamza Alghamdi, and Ahmed Alnami bring in traveler’s checks worth \$43,980 purchased in the UAE (see [April 11-June 28, 2001](#)); ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 137](#).)
- Khalid Almihdhar brings in traveler’s checks worth \$4,900 purchased in Saudi Arabia. ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 137](#).)

Mid-January 2000: Senior FBI Representative to CIA Bin Laden Unit Resigns Over Illness, Hampering Passage of Information to FBI

The FBI’s most senior representative at Alec Station, the CIA’s bin Laden unit, develops cancer and is forced to resign, meaning no FBI agent assigned to Alec Station has the power to release information from the CIA for months. A key cable informing the FBI that hijacker Khalid Almihdhar has a US visa will fail to be released to the FBI around

this time (see [January 4-6, 2000](#)). The representative, who is referred to in documents as “Eric”, is deputy chief of Alec Station. He has the power to release information to the FBI having acquired this power in a row with former Alec Station chief Michael Scheuer (see [June 1999](#)). The Justice Department’s Office of Inspector General will say Eric left the unit in mid-January, which would have given him over a week to give the FBI information about Almihdhar discovered during the surveillance of an al-Qaeda summit held from January 5-8 (see January 5-8, 2000). It is known Eric accessed a cable related to the Malaysia summit on January 5 and discussed surveillance photos taken of the summit with CIA officer Tom Wilshire (see [\(Mid-January 2000\)](#)). Author Lawrence Wright will comment: “None of the... FBI agents remaining in Alec had the seniority to release information, and consequently had to rely on the agency to give them permission for any transfer of classified cable traffic.” ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 241, 320](#); [Wright 2006, pp. 313](#))

(Mid-January 2000): CIA Officer Discusses Almihdhar with FBI Counterpart, Fails to Mention His US Visa

Deputy Chief of the CIA’s Bin Laden Unit Tom Wilshire discusses al-Qaeda’s Malaysia summit with another deputy unit chief who is on loan from the FBI. Wilshire mentions that surveillance photos have been taken, but apparently fails to mention that one of the extremists attending the summit, Khalid Almihdhar, has a US visa. ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 254](#)) Wilshire blocks passage of the information about Almihdhar’s US visa to the FBI around this time (see [January 4-6, 2000](#)).

January 18, 2000: Hijackers Atta and Jarrah Filmed Together in Afghanistan



Mohamed Atta (left) and Ziad Jarrah (right). [Source: *London Times*] Hijackers Mohamed Atta and Ziad Jarrah are filmed together recording their martyrdom wills in Afghanistan. The video footage will later be captured by US forces in late 2001 and leaked to the media in late 2006 (see [September 30, 2006](#)). The footage is significant because it is the only hard evidence that

Atta and Jarrah were ever in the same place at the same time. Although the two men were frequently in close proximity to each other, for instance both attended Florida flight schools just a couple of miles apart at around the same time, their paths often just miss each other. However, they appear friendly to each other in this footage, frequently laughing and smiling. Atta reads his will and then Jarrah reads his, but their exact words are unknown since the sound was not recorded and lip-syncing experts apparently failed to understand what they said. ([Fouda 10/1/2006](#))

Early 2000-Summer 2001: NSA Intercepts Communications between Hijackers in US and Al- Qaeda Communications Hub

The NSA intercepts approximately 14 calls between the hijackers in the US and an al-Qaeda communications hub in Sana'a, Yemen, run by Ahmed al-Hada, who is hijacker Khalid Almihdhar's father in law (see [August 5-25, 1998](#)).

- The first calls are made by Almihdhar and are intercepted during the spring and summer of 2000 (see [Spring-Summer 2000](#)).
- More calls are made by hijacker Nawaf Alhazmi after the bombing of the USS *Cole* in October 2000 (see [Mid-October 2000-Summer 2001](#)).
- The final call from the US is intercepted just a few weeks before 9/11 (see [August 2001](#)). The NSA intercepted the hijackers' calls outside the US before this (see [Early 1999](#) and [December 29, 1999](#)) and continues to do so in 2000 (see [Summer 2000](#)) after Almihdhar returns to Yemen (see [June 10, 2000](#) and [Mid-June-Mid-July 2000](#)). Some of the calls may only contain non-operational information, as they are between Almihdhar and his wife. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 17](#); [Suskind 2006, pp. 94](#); [Wright 2006, pp. 343](#)) However, the calls are also used to relay messages to the 9/11 hijackers. ([Embassy of Yemen \(Washington\) 2/13/2002](#); [MSNBC 2/14/2002](#); [Windrem 5/2005](#)) The CIA is the lead agency monitoring the communications hub. It has planted bugs inside the house and is wiretapping all calls (see [Late August 1998](#)). Intercepts of calls to and from the hub are a major plank of the US intelligence community's effort to fight al-Qaeda. Also involved is the FBI, which is using phone records to plot these calls on a map (see [Late 1998-Early 2002](#)). Some of the calls intercepted by US intelligence come from bin Laden's satellite phone in Afghanistan (see [August 5-25, 1998](#) and [Late August 1998](#)). After 9/11, counterterrorism officials will say that the number was one of the hottest targets being monitored by the NSA and was an "intelligence bonanza." ([Meyer 12/21/2005](#); [Wright 2006, pp. 343](#)) Also after 9/11, counterterrorism officials will agree that the failure to follow leads to the US from this number was a huge missed opportunity to stop the plot. For instance, FBI agent Kenneth Maxwell will say: "Two al-Qaeda guys living in California—are you kidding me? We would have been on them like white on snow: physical surveillance, electronic surveillance, a special unit devoted entirely to them." ([Myers 7/21/2004](#); [Wright 7/10/2006](#)) The failure to roll up the plot based on these communications intercepts will be discussed following 9/11 (see [Summer 2002-Summer 2004](#) and [2004 and After](#)).

January 30, 2000: Hijacker Jarrah Questioned by UAE Officials over Terrorism Links, CIA Possibly Notified

Hijacker pilot Ziad Jarrah arrives in Dubai to change planes when flying from Peshawar, Afghanistan, to Amsterdam, Holland. He is stopped in Dubai by United Arab Emirates (UAE) immigration officials and questioned because they suspect him of being a radical Islamist. ([MacVicar and Faraj 8/1/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 496](#); [McDermott 2005, pp. 186](#)) Almost every aspect of this stop is disputed by UAE and US officials:

- Some accounts place it one year later (see [January 30, 2001](#));
- UAE officials claim Jarrah was stopped based on a tipoff from the US. A UAE source will tell author Jane Corbin “It was at the request of the Americans and it was specifically because of Jarrah’s links with Islamic extremists, his contacts with terrorist organizations. That was the extent of what we were told.” ([Corbin 2003](#)) UAE officials will continue to repeat this story to other media. ([Crewdson 12/13/2001](#); [MacVicar and Faraj 8/1/2002](#); [McDermott 2005, pp. 294](#)) However, US officials claim no such tipoff was ever given. ([MacVicar and Faraj 8/1/2002](#); [Crewdson and Zajac 9/28/2005](#)) In this version Jarrah raised suspicion because of an overlay of the Koran in his passport and because he was carrying religious tapes and books. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 496](#)) According to CNN, “The questioning of Jarrah in Dubai fits the pattern of a CIA operation described to CNN by UAE and European sources. Those sources say that in 1999, the CIA began an operation to track suspected al-Qaeda operatives, as they transited there. One of those sources provided [a] drawing showing the airport layout and describes how people wanted for questioning were intercepted, most often at a transit desk. As was the case with Ziad Jarrah, CNN sources say UAE officials were, often, told in advance by American officials who was coming in and whom they wanted questioned;” ([MacVicar and Faraj 8/1/2002](#))
- UAE officials will claim that the stop is long and that, after the suspicious tapes and books are found, Jarrah is questioned for four hours. However, the FBI will claim that it was “routine” and the 9/11 Commission will call it a “minor problem” and relegate it to an endnote; ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 496](#); [McDermott 2005, pp. 294](#))
- UAE officials will claim they inform the US they are holding Jarrah while he is at the airport and ask what they should do with him. The US tells them to let Jarrah go and that they will track him. ([MacVicar and Faraj 8/1/2002](#); [Corbin 2003](#); [McDermott 2005, pp. 186-7](#); [Crewdson and Zajac 9/28/2005](#)) However, US authorities will deny being informed of the stop until after 9/11. ([Crewdson 12/13/2001](#); [MacVicar and Faraj 8/1/2002](#)) Regarding the denials by US authorities, author Terry McDermott will point out, “It is worth noting, however, that when the initial reports of the Jarrah interview were made by Jane Corbin for the BBC in 2001..., the Americans publicly denied they had ever been informed of it. As it happened, Corbin had the wrong date for the event, so the American services might have been technically correct in denying any knowledge of it. They later repeated that denial several times when other reports repeated the inaccurate date.” However, based on information from his UAE sources, McDermott will conclude that the stop occurred and that the US was informed of it at the time. ([McDermott 2005, pp. 294-5](#))

Late January 2000: CIA Faces Legal Barriers Helping Warlord Who Wants to Kill Bin Laden



A US satellite photo of the Darunta camp. *[Source: US military]* By the start of 2000, US intelligence has had a particular focus on Darunta Camp, one of al-Qaeda's training camps in Afghanistan. This simple camp near Jalalabad draws attention because of intelligence gathered during the last year indicating that al-Qaeda is experimenting with poisons and chemical weapons. The CIA has inserted a special device in the vicinity that can take high quality photographs of the camp from over ten miles away. Sometime in late January, the CIA learns that bin Laden has arrived in the camp. They pass this information on to Ahmed Shah Massoud and his Northern Alliance, who are fighting the Taliban and al-Qaeda. Massoud dispatches a small team on mules to get near the camp and fire rockets at bin Laden. However, when Massoud tells the CIA about this, the CIA's lawyers are alarmed. They don't want the CIA legally complicit if the operation kills innocent civilians and they order Massoud to withdraw his team. But due to poor communications the team goes ahead anyway and apparently shells the camp. However, bin Laden is not hurt and the incident passes without notice. Some US intelligence officials are upset at the legal policy that led to the order for Massoud's team to withdraw. A new policy is drawn up allowing the CIA to assist Massoud on an operation if the primary purpose of the operation is to kill bin Laden or one of his top assistants. Otherwise, the US officially remains neutral in the war between the Northern Alliance and the Taliban. ([Coll 2004, pp. 487-490](#))

January 31, 2000: Clarke's Group Discusses Al-Qaeda Hijackings

Counterterrorism "tsar" Richard Clarke leads a meeting of the interagency Counterterrorism Security Group (CSG) devoted largely to the possibility of an airline hijacking by al-Qaeda. The meeting is said to come during a period of low threat, after

the millennium alerts had ended (see [December 15-31, 1999](#)). Clarke later will recall that the possibility of a suicide hijacking would have been only one of many speculative possibilities considered. The apparent suicide hijacking of EgyptAir Flight 990 off the coast of Massachusetts in late 1999 appears to have been a concern of the CSG around this time (see [October 31, 1999](#)). Also, one month earlier, a militant group connected to al-Qaeda successfully hijacked an airplane in India, won their demands, and escaped. (see [December 24-31, 1999](#)) ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 345, 561](#))

February-Summer 2000: Saudi Hijackers Leave Home



Ahmed Alhaznawi. [Source: *US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division*] Several of the Saudis accused of taking part in 9/11 will later be reported to leave home around this time:

- Wail and Waleed Alshehri: spring 2000; ([Sunday Times \(London\) 1/27/2002](#); [Sennott 3/3/2002](#); [Saudi Information Agency 9/11/2002](#))
- Ahmed Alghamdi, Hamza Alghamdi, and Ahmed Alhaznawi, as well as candidate hijacker Saeed Abdullah Saeed Alghamdi: spring 2000. ([Sunday Times \(London\) 1/27/2002](#); [Sennott 3/3/2002](#); [Saudi Information Agency 9/11/2002](#))
- Salem Alhazmi: spring 2000; ([Khashoggi 9/20/2001](#); [Saudi Information Agency 9/11/2002](#))
- Ahmed Alnami: 2000. ([Khashoggi 9/20/2001](#); [Saudi Information Agency 9/11/2002](#))
- Mohand Alshehri: More than a year before the attacks. ([Khashoggi 9/20/2001](#))

February 2000: CIA Obtains Videotape from Al-Qaeda Summit in Malaysia, But Express Little Interest in It

About a month after the Malaysia al-Qaeda summit (see January 5-8, 2000), “The CIA obtain[s] a surveillance videotape” from Malaysian intelligence “that shows men arriving at the meeting, according to a US intelligence official. The tape, he said, has no sound and [isn’t] viewed as very significant at the time.” ([Braun et al. 10/14/2001](#)) Apparently, only the first day of the summit was videotaped (see January 5, 2000). Contents of the tape, which might definitively prove who was at the meeting, have never been made public, but the US Treasury will later mention that Hambali and hijackers Nawaf Alhamzi and Khalid Almihdhar were on the tape. ([US Department of the Treasury 1/24/2003](#)) There is no evidence the CIA shares the videotape with any other agency before 9/11.

February 2000: CIA Rejects Foreign Request for Involvement with Almihdhar Due to Own Investigation

The 9/11 Congressional Inquiry will later report that: “[I]n February 2000, CIA rejected a request from foreign authorities to become involved [in the search for and/or monitoring of hijacker Khalid Almihdhar] because CIA was in the middle of an investigation ‘to determine what the subject is up to.’” However, the CIA will later say it has no idea where Almihdhar is at this point (see [January 8-15, 2000](#)). The identify of the “foreign authorities” and the nature of the proposed assistance is not known. ([US Congress 7/24/2003, pp. 147.](#))

February 2000-Early September 2001: San Diego Neighbors to Hijackers See Mysterious Late Night Visits and Car Rides

While Nawaf Alhazmi and Khalid Almihdhar live in the Parkwood Apartments in San Diego in early 2000 and then again before 9/11, neighbors note unexplained late night car rides and visits. Time reports that a neighbor, “Nancy Coker, 36, saw them getting into limos late at night, even though the car that neighbors said they drove was a gray Toyota Camry, early ‘90s vintage. ‘A week ago, I was coming home between 12 and 1 a.m. from a club. I saw a limo pick them up. It wasn’t the first time. In this neighborhood you notice stuff like that. In the past couple of months, I have seen this happen at least two or three times.’” Note the comment, “a week ago,” which is further evidence the two are living in the Parkwood Apartments again just before 9/11 (see [Early September 2001](#)) ([Mcgeary and van Biema 9/24/2001](#) Sources: [Nancy Coker](#)) Keith Link, a neighbor with a view of one of the apartments, referring to one of these hijackers, says, “People later in the evening would come and pick him up in really fancy nice cars, brand-new Lincolns. Everybody is friendly in this whole complex, except for that guy. Nobody knew him, nobody spoke to him.” Another neighbor, Sharon Flower, says, “I would see this man being picked up or dropped off at all hours of the day or night.” ([Thornton 9/15/2001](#) Sources: [Keith Link](#), [Sharon Flower](#)) A similar pattern is seen by neighbors when the hijackers live with FBI asset Abdussattar Shaikh in the neighborhood of Lemon Grove in late 2000. Neighbor Dave Eckler later explains, “There was always a series of cars driving up to the house late at night. Sometimes they were nice cars. Sometimes they had darkened windows. They’d stay about 10 minutes.” At the time, Eckler guesses they are selling fake IDs. ([Mcgeary and van Biema 9/24/2001](#) Sources: [Dave Eckler](#)) Neighbor Marna Adair says, “People come and go at all hours. We’ve always thought there was something strange going on there.” Her daughter Denise Adair adds, “We thought it was a little weird, but we never thought this [i.e., the 9/11 attacks].” ([Fox 9/16/2001](#) Sources: [Denise Adair](#), [Marna Adair](#)) There has never been any media speculation as to the meaning of these late night rides and official 9/11 investigations have never mentioned the issue.

Early February-Summer 2000: Hijackers Alhazmi and Almihdhar Live Openly in San Diego



| | |
|----------------------------------|--------------|
| ALHARBI Lafi 6363 Seabrook Wy | 858 874 4468 |
| ALHARK Akram | 619 303 7629 |
| Akram 9715 Osage Sp Vly | 619 303 7632 |
| ALHASAN Majed | 619 590 0358 |
| AL-HASSAN Hekmat | |
| 1000 S. Milligan Ave El Caj | 619 444 0021 |
| ALHASSOON Omar | 619 294 7790 |
| ALHAZMI Nawaf M 6401 Mesa Ada Rd | 858 279 5919 |
| ALHMARI Ahmad | |
| 8633 La Mesa Bl La Mesa | 619 460 8615 |
| AL-HOSINY Agel | |
| 1041 N Milligan Ave El Caj | 619 593 1178 |
| AL-MIKCAINY Fathi | |

Nawaf Alhazmi in the 2000-2001 San Diego phone book. [Source: *Newsweek*/Hijackers Nawaf Alhazmi and Khalid Almihdhar move to San Diego and live there openly. ([US Congress 7/24/2003, pp. 135](#)) Hijacker Hani Hanjour joins them as a roommate in February 2000 but apparently does not stay long. ([KGTV 10 \(San Diego\) 9/18/2001](#); [Thornton 9/21/2001](#)) The hijackers use their real names on their rental agreement ([US Congress 9/20/2002](#)) , driver's licenses, Social Security cards, credit cards ([Isikoff and Klaidman 6/2/2002](#)) , car purchase, and bank account. Alhazmi is even listed in the 2000-2001 San Diego phone book. ([Lipka 9/28/2001](#); [Isikoff and Klaidman 6/2/2002](#)) Neighbors notice odd behavior: They have no furniture, they are constantly using cell phones on the balcony, constantly playing flight simulator games, keep to themselves, and strange cars and limousines pick them up for short rides in the middle of the night (see [February 2000-Early September 2001](#)). ([Mcgeary and van Biema 9/24/2001](#); [Goldstein 9/30/2001](#); [Cloud 10/1/2001](#))

February 2, 2000: CIA Director Tells Public that Bin Laden Is Planning 'Further Blows Against America'

CIA Director George Tenet tells a Senate committee in open session that bin Laden "wants to strike further blows against America." He points out the close links between al-Qaeda and Islamic Jihad and says this is part of an "intricate web of alliances among Sunni extremists worldwide, including North Africans, radical Palestinians, Pakistanis, and Central Asians." He points out ties between drug traffickers and the Taliban and says, "There is ample evidence that Islamic extremists such as Osama bin Laden use profits from the drug trade to support their terror campaign." But there is no mention of Pakistan's support for al-Qaeda and the Taliban, despite CIA knowledge of this (see [Autumn 1998](#)). Instead, he claims Iran is "the most active state sponsor" of terrorism. Additionally, he does not mention that bin Laden is capable of planning attacks inside the US, even though he told that to Congress in a closed session six months earlier (see [June 24, 1999](#)). ([Senate 2/2/2000](#))

February 4, 2000: Hijackers Open San Diego Bank Account

Hijackers Khalid Almihdhar and Nawaf Alhazmi open an account at the Bank of America in San Diego with a \$9,900 deposit. The 9/11 Commission will later report, “The \$16,000 that [Khalid Shaikh Mohammed] said he gave Alhazmi to support his and Almihdhar’s travel and living expenses in the United States is the likely source of their funds.” ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 135-136](#)) The account is closed in early June when Almihdhar returns to the Middle East (see [June 10, 2000](#)). ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 222](#))

February 6, 2000: Apparent Mossad Attempt to Infiltrate Al-Qaeda Thwarted

India’s largest Newsweekly reports that it appears a recent Mossad attempt to infiltrate al-Qaeda failed when undercover agents were stopped on their way to Bangladesh by Indian customs officials. These 11 men appeared to be from Afghanistan, but had Israeli passports. One expert states, “It is not unlikely for Mossad to recruit 11 Afghans in Iran and grant them Israeli citizenship to penetrate a network such as bin Laden’s. They would begin by infiltrating them into an Islamic radical group in an unlikely place like Bangladesh.” ([Bhaumik 2/6/2000](#))

February 16, 2000: Bin Laden Finally the Subject of Public Reward Campaign



The front cover of the matchbox announcing a reward for bin Laden. [*Source: Saeed Khan / Getty Images*] The US begins circulating matchboxes in Pakistan with a picture of bin Laden and an announcement of a large reward for information leading to his capture. The reward promises confidentiality but also only lists the reward money as \$500,000 instead of the \$5 million announced by Washington. Additionally, 100 rupee notes, worth about \$2, are being circulated with a message stamped on them announcing the reward. There is no matchbox campaign for other known al-Qaeda leaders. ([Gannon 2/16/2000](#)) The reward program is notable for its late start and low profile, especially when compared to a similar matchbox reward

program for Ramzi Yousef starting in 1993 (see [April 2, 1993](#)). That program was announced about a month after Yousef was determined to be a major suspect, and it eventually helped with his capture (see [February 3-7, 1995](#)).

February 19, 2000: US Said to Be Investigating 30 Charities for Supporting Terrorism, But No Action Until After 9/11

The New York Times reports that “In recent months, American officials have circulated within the government a list of more than 30 groups that they are examining for links to terrorism, at least two of which are based in the United States.” The only groups specifically mentioned as being on the list are: ([Miller 2/19/2000](#))

- The Islamic African Relief Agency (IARA), a charity said to be tied to the government of Sudan, which the US officially lists as a terrorism sponsor. The State Department’s USAID program gave the IARA two grants in 1998 worth \$4.2 million for work in Mali, then later cancelled the grants (see [November 1996-Late December 1999](#)).

- The Holy Land Foundation, based in Richardson, Texas.

- The Global Relief Foundation, also based in Richardson, Texas.

- Human Concern International, a Canadian-based group shut down by Canada in 1997.

The US government is said to be stepping up investigations into such charities, and talking to countries in the Persian Gulf about their support of specific charities. “But officials said Washington had been reluctant to interfere in a domain safeguarded by constitutional guarantees of free association and separation of church and state. In addition, officials said, they lacked evidence that could be used in public court proceedings.” ([Miller 2/19/2000](#)) Later in 2000, the State Department will ask its USAID program not to give aid to Holy Land any more. It will cite the payments the charity gives to the families of suicide bombers. ([Miller 8/25/2000](#)) But aside from this one minor step, the US will take no actions against any of the four named charities until after 9/11. Three of the charities will be shut down shortly after 9/11 (see [December 4, 2001](#); [October 12, 2001](#)), while in 2004 the IARA will be shut down for providing “direct financial support” to al-Qaeda. ([Miller 8/25/2000](#))

February 24, 2000: Atta Returns to Germany Using Monitored Route

Mohamed Atta returns to Germany from Pakistan using the same monitored route as he traveled on the outward journey (see [Late November-Early December 1999](#)). He flies from Karachi to Istanbul, Turkey, where he changes planes for Hamburg. Turkish intelligence discovered that militants use this route to travel between Europe and training camps in Afghanistan in the mid-1990s and alerted Germany to it at that time, causing Germany to launch an investigation into one of Atta’s associates (see [1996](#)). However, it is not known whether the intelligence agencies register Atta’s travel at this time. ([Laabs 8/13/2003](#)) Fellow alleged 9/11 pilot Ziad Jarrah appears to be noticed on his way back to Germany from Afghanistan (see [January 30, 2000](#)) and another member of the cell,

Ramzi bin al-Shibh, may be monitored in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, at this time (see January 5-8, 2000).

Spring 2000: CIA Paramilitary Teams Begin Working with Anti-Taliban Forces

Around this time, special CIA paramilitary teams begin “working with tribes and warlords in southern Afghanistan” and help “create a significant new network in the region of the Taliban’s greatest strength.” ([Ricks 11/18/2001](#))

Spring 2000: CIA Continues Efforts to Recruit Man Close to Hamburg Cell

German investigators finally agree to the CIA’s request to recruit businessman Mamoun Darkazanli as an informant. An agent of the LfV, the Hamburg state intelligence agency, casually approaches Darkazanli and asks him whether he is interested in becoming a spy. Darkazanli replies that he is just a businessman who knows nothing about al-Qaeda or terrorism. The Germans inform the local CIA representative that the approach failed. The CIA agent persists, asking the German agent to continue to try. However, when German agents ask for more information to show Darkazanli they know of his terrorist ties, the CIA fails to give them any information. As it happens, at the end of January 2000, Darkazanli had just met with Barakat Yarkas in Madrid, Spain. ([Crewdson 11/17/2002](#)) Darkazanli is a longtime friend and business partner of Yarkas, the most prominent al-Qaeda agent in Spain. ([Rotella 1/14/2003](#)) The meeting included other suspected al-Qaeda figures, and it was monitored by Spanish police. If the CIA is aware of the Madrid meeting, they do not tell the Germans. ([Crewdson 11/17/2002](#)) A second LfV attempt to recruit Darkazanli also fails. The CIA then attempts to work with federal German intelligence officials in Berlin to “turn” Darkazanli. Results of that effort are not known. ([Crewdson 11/17/2002](#))

Spring 2000: DIA Analyst Believes Malaysia Summit Attendees Have Connection to Iranian Embassy

Kie Fallis, a Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) terrorism intelligence analyst, later claims that around this time he uncovers an intelligence report about the January 2000 al-Qaeda summit in Malaysia (see January 5-8, 2000). Public details of his exact knowledge about this summit have been scant, but it suggests at least some information on the summit spreads beyond the CIA and FBI not long after it takes place. But apparently, Fallis, who had been researching terror links between al-Qaeda and Iranian intelligence, learns that US intelligence discovered at the time that Malaysian security officials traced some attendees of the summit to the Iranian Embassy in Kuala Lumpur, where they spent the night. Fallis will use this lead along with other leads to suggest a terror warning in

late September 2000 (see [May 2000-Late September 2000](#)) that he believes might have stopped the USS *Cole* attack in October 2000 (see [October 12, 2000](#)) . ([Gertz 8/26/2002](#))

Spring 2000: Payments to Suspected Hijacker Associate Increase Significantly

According to leaks from the still-classified part of the 9/11 Congressional Inquiry, monthly payments to Omar al-Bayoumi increase significantly at this time. Al-Bayoumi has been receiving a salary from the Saudi civil authority of about \$500 a month. However, shortly after hijackers Nawaf Alhazmi and Khalid Almihdhar move to San Diego, al-Bayoumi's salary increases to about \$3,000 to \$3,500 a month ([Johnston and Jehl 7/29/2003](#)) It is not clear whether this pay spike is from his Dallah Avco job, or an additional payment by the Saudi government ([Johnston and Jehl 7/29/2003](#); [Risen and Johnston 8/2/2003](#)) , but the pay spike appears to be a separate stream of money, because another report indicates his Dallah Avco job started with \$3,000 a month payments and remained consistent. ([Simpson 8/11/2003](#)) It also fits in with his claims to acquaintances at the time that he is receiving a regular government scholarship. ([McDermott 9/1/2002](#))

Spring 2000: Saudi Suggestion to Track Bin Laden's Stepmother in Planned Meeting with Him Is Rejected

Sources who know Osama bin Laden later claim that his stepmother, Al-Khalifa bin Laden, has a second meeting with her stepson in Afghanistan (her first visit took place in the spring of 1998 (see [Spring 1998](#))). The trip is approved by the Saudi royal family. The Saudis pass the message to him that ““they wouldn't crack down on his followers in Saudi Arabia' as long as he set his sights on targets outside the desert kingdom.” In late 1999, the Saudi government had told the CIA about the upcoming trip, and suggested placing a homing beacon on her luggage. This does not happen—Saudis later claim they weren't taken seriously, and Americans claim they never received specific information on her travel plans. ([Mayer and Szechenyi 11/5/2001](#); [Gellman 12/19/2001](#))

Spring 2000: Atta and Alshehhi Rent Rooms in Brooklyn and the Bronx

Mohamed Atta and another of the 9/11 hijackers (presumably Marwan Alshehhi) rent rooms in New York City, according to a federal investigator. These rooms are in the Bronx and Brooklyn. Following 9/11, Atta is traced back to Brooklyn by a parking ticket issued to a rental car he was driving. However, immigration records have Mohamed Atta entering the US for the first time on June 3, 2000 (see [June 3, 2000](#)). The Associated Press article on this subject does not specify if Atta first stayed in New York before or after that date. ([Milton 12/8/2001](#)) According to a brief mention in the 9/11 Commission's final report, in the month of June, “As [Atta and Marwan Alshehhi] looked at flight schools on the East Coast, [they] stayed in a series of short-term rentals in New York

City.” ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 224](#); [Eggen 8/13/2005](#)) Earlier in 2000, a US Army intelligence program called Able Danger identified an al-Qaeda terrorist cell based in Brooklyn, of which Atta is a member (see [January-February 2000](#)). Also, a number of eyewitnesses later report seeing Atta in Maine and Florida before this official arrival date (see [April 2000](#); [Late April-Mid-May 2000](#)).

Spring 2000: ISI Director Said to Become Fundamentalist Muslim



Pashtun ethnic areas, shown in red, cover much of the heavily populated areas in Pakistan and Afghanistan. [Source: *New York Times*] Lt. Gen. Mahmood Ahmed, director of the Pakistani ISI since October 1999 (see October 12, 1999), is not considered especially religious. However, around this time he begins telling his colleagues that he has become a “born-again Muslim.” While he doesn’t make open gestures such as growing a beard, when US intelligence learns about this talk they find it foreboding and wonder what its impact on the ISI’s relations with the Taliban will be. Perhaps not coincidentally, around this time he begins meeting less frequently with CIA liaisons and becomes less cooperative with the US. ([Coll 2004, pp. 510-511](#)) But if Mahmood becomes a fundamentalist Muslim, that would not be very unique in the ISI. As Slate will write shortly after 9/11, “many in the ISI loathe the United States. They view America as an unreliable and duplicitous ally, being especially resentful of the 1990 sanctions, which came one year after the Soviets pulled out of Afghanistan. Furthermore, the ISI is dominated by Pashtuns, the same tribe that is the Taliban’s base of support across the border in Afghanistan. Partly because of its family, clan, and business ties to the Taliban, the ISI, even more than Pakistani society in general, has become increasingly enamored of radical Islam in recent years.” ([Silverstein 10/9/2001](#))

Spring 2000: FBI Agent Privately Shown Al-Qaeda Summit Photos but Fails to Make Any Connections

FBI agent Jack Cloonan, a member of the FBI's I-49 bin Laden squad, will tell author Peter Lance after 9/11 that another FBI agent belonging to I-49 named Frank Pellegrino saw some of the surveillance photos taken of the al-Qaeda summit in Malaysia several months earlier (see January 5-8, 2000 and [January 6-9, 2000](#)). Cloonan will say, "Pellegrino was in Kuala Lumpur," the capital of Malaysia. "And the CIA chief of station said, 'I'm not supposed to show these photographs, but here. Take a look at these photographs. Know any of these guys?'" But Pellegrino does not recognize them, as he is working to catch Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM) and apparently is not involved in other cases. However, there have been numerous reports that KSM was at the summit (see January 5-8, 2000). Further, Lance will note that if Pellegrino could not identify KSM, he could have recognized Hambali, another attendee of the summit. Pellegrino was in the Philippines in 1995 and worked with local officials there as they interrogated Abdul Hakim Murad, one of the Bojinka bombers (see [February-Early May 1995](#)). During this time, Murad's interrogators learned about Hambali's involvement in a front company called Konsonjaya and passed the information on to US officials (see [Spring 1995](#)). Further, an FBI report from 1999 shows the FBI was aware of Hambali's ties to Konsonjaya by that time (see [May 23, 1999](#)). ([Lance 2006, pp. 340-341](#))

Spring 2000: Hijackers Attend Same Mosque as Terrorism Suspect

A Saudi citizen named Osama Basnan, who had an apparent connection to Eritrean Islamic Jihad in the early 1990s (see [May-December 1992](#)), lives across the street from 9/11 hijackers Khalid Almihdhar and Nawaf Alhazmi and attends the same mosque in San Diego as them. He will later be alleged to have known the two men, but he will deny this. He will, however, admit to knowing one of their associates, Omar al-Bayoumi. ([Thornton 10/22/2002](#); [Al-Sharq Al-Awsat 11/28/2002](#); [US Congress 7/24/2003, pp. 175-7](#); [Alkhereiji 8/5/2003](#)) In early 2000, a US Army program called Able Danger identifies four of the hijackers as members of the so-called "Brooklyn" cell after the program links them to mosques that were visited by associates of Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman (see [January-February 2000](#)). The US Army has not disclosed the identities of the sheikh's associates, but it is possible that Osama Basnan, who is believed to have held a party for the sheikh in 1992 (see [April 1998](#)), is one of them.

(Spring 2000): Candidate Hijacker Obtains Pilot's Licence in Malaysia

Zaini Zakaria, a Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) and al-Qaeda operative who has been assigned to a 9/11-style operation, is instructed to take flight training by al-Qaeda commander Mohammed Atef and travels to Malaysia to obtain a pilot's license. He meets fellow JI

operative Faiz abu Baker Bafana in Kuala Lumpur and visits the Royal Selangor Flying Club at a nearby Malaysian Air Force base. Zaini had earlier traveled to Afghanistan with JI leader Hamabli, Bafana, and another operative called Zamzulri in 1999 to receive military training, and had met Khalid Shaikh Mohammed in Karachi, Pakistan. Zaini obtains a pilot's license and makes inquiries in Australia about learning to fly jets, but eventually drops out of the plot in 2001. ([9/11 Commission 6/16/2004, pp. 17](#); [Freeman 2/10/2006](#); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 3/8/2006](#)) Zacarias Moussaoui will later visit the same flying school (see [Early September 2000](#)).

(Spring 2000): Hijackers Alhazmi and Almihdhar Talk about Wars in Afghanistan and Chechnya, Alhazmi Praises Bin Laden

Nawaf Alhazmi and Khalid Almihdhar talk to San Diego acquaintances about the wars in Afghanistan and Chechnya, in which they fought, but apparently do not mention the war in Bosnia, which they also fought in (see [1993-1999](#) and [1995](#)). Alhazmi says that it would be a "big honor" to fight for Islam. He also expresses his admiration for Osama bin Laden and says bin Laden is acting on behalf of all Muslims. ([McDermott 2005, pp. 191](#)) Alhazmi will make similar comments in Virginia to two roommates there (see [Mid April 2001](#)).

Spring-Summer 2000: NSA Intercepts Communications between Hijacker in US and Al-Qaeda Communications Hub

Around eight calls made by hijacker Khalid Almihdhar from San Diego to an al-Qaeda communications hub in Sana'a, Yemen, owned by his father-in-law are intercepted by the NSA. At least one of the calls is made from a phone registered to hijacker Nawaf Alhazmi in their San Diego apartment; other calls are made from a mobile phone registered to Alhazmi. ([US Congress 7/24/2003, pp. xii, 16-17, 157](#); [US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 251](#); [McDermott 2005, pp. 296](#); [Meyer 12/21/2005](#); [Wright 2006, pp. 343](#); [Wright 7/10/2006](#)) Calls may also be made from the communications hub to the US. ([Myers 7/21/2004](#)) One of the calls takes place days after they move into their San Diego apartment in February (see [January 15-Early February 2000](#)). ([Myers 7/21/2004](#)) Another is on March 20, 2000. ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 251](#)) Although NSA analysts pick up his first name, "Khalid," they do not connect it to his second name, even though the NSA has been intercepting communications to and from the hub involving him throughout 1999 (see [Early 1999](#) and [December 29, 1999](#)) and he is on the NSA watch list at this point (see [Mid-January 2000](#)). ([US Congress 7/24/2003, pp. xii, 16, 157](#); [Kaplan and Whitelaw 3/15/2004](#)) Some, or perhaps all, of these calls are between Almihdhar and his wife, who lives at the communications hub and gives birth to a daughter in early 2000 while Almihdhar is in the US. ([9/11 Commission](#)

[7/24/2004, pp. 222](#); [Suskind 2006, pp. 94](#); [Wright 2006, pp. 343](#); [Wright 7/10/2006](#).) However, the NSA analysts suspect that Khalid is part of an “operational cadre.” ([Kaplan and Whitelaw 3/15/2004](#)) According to the 9/11 Congressional Inquiry, the NSA disseminates some of this information to the FBI, CIA, and other agencies, but not all of it, as it apparently does not meet reporting thresholds. It is unclear why it did not meet such thresholds, although some sources suggest he was just talking to his wife. ([US Congress 7/24/2003, pp. 157](#); [Kaplan and Whitelaw 3/15/2004](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 222](#); [Suskind 2006, pp. 94](#)) Another source suggests operational information was passed on during the calls (see [Early 2000-Summer 2001](#)). However, two FBI agents who worked on al-Qaeda cases relating to Yemen, Dan Coleman and Ali Soufan, will later claim that they and other senior counterterrorism officials only learned about these calls after 9/11. ([Meyer 12/21/2005](#); [Suskind 2006, pp. 94](#); [Wright 7/10/2006](#).) Author Lawrence Wright will comment: “You know, this is the key. The NSA is all over this phone. And everybody, you know, that has any connection with it is drawing links from that phone. Now imagine eight lines from Yemen to San Diego. How obvious would it be that al-Qaeda is in America[?]” ([Wright 10/5/2006](#)) The NSA also intercepted various other communications between the hijackers and the communications hub (see [Early 2000-Summer 2001](#)).

March 2000: US Intelligence Learns Bin Laden May Target Statue of Liberty, Skyscrapers, Other Sites

US intelligence obtains information about the types of targets that bin Laden’s network might strike. The Statue of Liberty is specially mentioned, as are skyscrapers, ports, airports, and nuclear power plants. ([US Congress 9/18/2002](#))

March 2000: US Intelligence Learns Al-Qaeda May Attack West Coast

The US intelligence community obtains information suggesting al-Qaeda is planning attacks in specific West Coast areas, possibly involving the assassination of several public officials. ([US Congress 7/24/2003](#)) While these attacks do not materialize, this is the same month the CIA learns that two known al-Qaeda operatives have just flown to Los Angeles (see [March 5, 2000](#)).

March 2000: FBI Agent Apparently Destroys Al-Qaeda E-Mail Intercepts

The FBI obtains a wiretap warrant to seize al-Qaeda-related e-mails under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA), but experimental software malfunctions and an angry FBI agent is said to destroy all the e-mails collected. The Carnivore software, which was installed in Denver, collects e-mails not only from the target, but also from other people. The FBI technician is reportedly so upset when he discovers e-mails from

people whose communications the FBI has no authorization to collect that he apparently deletes everything the FBI has gathered, including the e-mails from the target. However, the article that first reports this deletion also says the opposite: "A Justice Department official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Tuesday night that the e-mails were not destroyed." In either case, the Office of Intelligence Policy and Review (OIPR) at FBI headquarters, which deals with FISA warrants, is then informed and expresses its surprise it was not told the software was experimental before the warrant was issued. An FBI official will comment: "To state that [an OIPR official] is unhappy with [the FBI's International Terrorism Operations Section] and the [Usama bin Laden] Unit would be an understatement of incredible proportions." As the target's e-mails have been destroyed in the FBI system, the FBI then wants a physical search warrant under FISA to go and collect the e-mails from the carrier. However, the OIPR insists on an explanation for the error before this can happen, and also demands an explanation for the problem, so the special FISA court can be notified. ([Federal Bureau of Investigation 4/5/2000](#); [Hopper 5/28/2002](#)) It is not known who was being monitored, though there are potential al-Qaeda Denver connections: in 1994, a bin Laden front began routing communications through Denver (see [1994](#)), and a passport was stolen there in 1995 from a man who was later confused with one of the 9/11 hijackers (see [1995](#)).

March 2000: Clinton Attempt to Fight Terrorism Financing Defeated by Republican

The Clinton administration begins a push to fight terrorism financing by introducing a tough anti-money laundering bill. The bill faces tough opposition, mostly from Republicans and lobbyists who enjoy the anonymity of offshore banking, which would be affected by the legislation. Despite passing the House Banking Committee by a vote of 31 to 1 in July 2000, Senator Phil Gramm (R) refuses to let the bill come up for a vote in his Senate Banking Committee. ([Cohen 10/15/2001](#)) Other efforts begun at this time to fight terrorism financing are later stymied by the new Bush administration in February 2001.

March 2000: Bin Laden Relative Associates with Islamic Militants in Philippines

Four Arabs allegedly visit the headquarters of the Abu Sayyaf Islamist militant group, deep in the jungles of the southern Philippines. One of them goes by the name Ibnu bin Laden and appears to be a close relative of Osama bin Laden. They give equipment and money. Just days later, Abu Sayyaf militants seize about 50 students and teachers and demand the release of Ramzi Yousef and Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman from US prisons in exchange for their hostages. (They are ultimately unsuccessful in winning their demands.) Osama bin Laden's ties to Abu Sayyaf go back at least to 1988, when it is believed he personally visited the Philippines. ([Schloss and Robles 10/11/2001](#) Sources: [Wahab Akbar](#))

March 2000: US Team Plans to Capture Al-Qaeda Leader in Afghanistan, but Mission Is Aborted



Maj. Brock Gaston. [Source: State Department] CIA official Gary Bernstein and a US Army Special Forces major known as Brock (an apparent reference to Maj. Brock Gaston) lead a six-person team with the mission to enter Afghanistan and capture one of bin Laden's top aides. The exact target is not specified; the team is expected to take advantage of whatever opportunities present themselves. The team passes through Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, then meets up with Northern Alliance forces in the part of Afghanistan still under their control. But from the very beginning they encounter resistance from a CIA superior officer who is based in a nearby country and is in charge of CIA relations with the Northern Alliance. Known publicly only by his first name Lawrence, he apparently had a minor role in the Iran/Contra affair and has a personal dispute with Gaston. The team stays at Ahmad Shad Massoud's Northern Alliance headquarters high in the Afghan mountains for about two weeks. However, they never have a chance to cross into Taliban territory for their mission because Lawrence is sending back a stream of negative messages to CIA headquarters about the risks of their mission. A debate ensues back at headquarters. Cofer Black, head of the CIA's Counter Terrorist Center, and his assistant Hank Crumpton support continuing the mission. But CIA Director George Tenet and his assistant Jim Pavitt cancel the mission on March 25. Upon returning to the US, Bernstein, Gaston, Black, and Crumpton formally call for Lawrence's dismissal, but to no effect. Bernstein will later comment that Black and Crumpton "had shown a willingness to plan and execute risky missions. But neither CIA Director George Tenet nor President Bill Clinton had the will to wage a real fight against terrorists who were killing US citizens." ([CNN 12/15/2001](#); [Berntsen and Pezzullo 2005, pp. 43-64](#))

March 2000: German Intelligence Places Two Hijacker Associates on a German Watch List

German intelligence places two members of the Hamburg cell, Mounir El Motassadeq and Said Bahaji, on a German watch list. The two men, associates of 9/11 hijackers Mohamed Atta, Marwan Alshehhi, and Ziad Jarrah, had come to the Germans' attention

because of their association with al-Qaeda recruiter Mohammed Haydar Zammar, who they meet regularly. The watchlisting means that their arrivals and departures to and from Germany will be reported immediately. ([Cziesche, Mascolo, and Stark 2/3/2003](#); [US Congress 7/24/2003](#) ٥) Motassadeq was first investigated by German authorities in 1998 (see [August 1998](#)) and Bahaji may have recently traveled to Afghanistan with some associates using a route monitored by European intelligence agencies (see [Late November-Early December 1999](#)).

March 2000: FBI Headquarters Fails to Approve Investigation into Al-Qaeda-Linked Charity in US

FBI agents in Chicago are already investigating the Illinois-based Global Relief Foundation (GRF) for linked to al-Qaeda and other radical militant groups (see [1997-Late Spring 2001](#)), when they discover a connection to Detroit. They find that GRF executive director Mohammad Chehade, a suspected al-Qaeda operative, is calling two people in the Detroit area, GRF's unnamed spiritual leader and Rabih Haddad, a major GRF fund raiser. Based on this lead, in March 2000, the FBI's Detroit office opens a full field investigation on these two subjects. A Detroit agent also applies for a FISA warrant on the two subjects to conduct electronic surveillance on them. But the FISA applications are not approved until just after 9/11 because FBI headquarters does not formally submit the request until then. The Detroit agent is never given a reason for the delay. In fact, FBI headquarters agents tell him the application looks good and repeatedly say that they are working on it. The agent will later tell the 9/11 Commission he "believes [the delay] caused him to miss a great opportunity to gather critical intelligence and substantially limited the Detroit investigation of GRF before 9/11." ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 93-94](#) ٥) The GRF's offices in the US and overseas will be shut down shortly after 9/11 (see [December 14, 2001](#)). Haddad will be imprisoned for 19 months for an immigration violation and then deported. ([Mullen 3/17/2004](#))

March-April 2000: Able Danger Data Confiscated by Federal Agents



James D. Smith. [*Source: Getty Images/ Alex Wong*] James D. Smith is working for the private company Orion Scientific Systems on a contract that assists the Able Danger project. Smith will later claim that around March or April 2000, armed federal agents come into Orion and confiscate much of the data that Orion had compiled for Able Danger. Orion's contract stops at this time and Smith has no further involvement

with Able Danger. However, Smith happens to have some unclassified charts made for Able Danger in the trunk of his car when the agents raid his office. The chart with Mohamed Atta's picture on it will thus survive and be remembered well by Smith, though it will be destroyed in the summer of 2004 (see [August 22-September 1, 2005](#)). Smith will later state, "All information that we have ever produced, which was all unclassified, was confiscated and to this day we don't know who by." ([US Congress 9/21/2005](#); [US Congress 2/15/2006](#))

March 2000-February 2001: London Mosque Worshipper Helps Purchase \$335,000 of Equipment for Chechen Rebels

A group of London radicals purchases communications equipment worth \$335,000 for the Chechen rebels. One of the purchasers is Abu Doha, one of the most senior al-Qaeda members ever to have lived in Britain and a worshipper at the Finsbury Park mosque of Abu Hamza al-Masri. The equipment includes 19 satellite telephones and 36 SIM cards with airtime. ([O'Neill and McGrory 2006, pp. 67-8](#))

Spring 2000: Ceremony Possibly Precedes 9/11 Hijackers' Departure for Afghanistan

After 9/11, various media will report that a sort of ceremony is held before some of the Saudi hijackers depart for Afghanistan. According to the *Boston Globe* and the *Daily Telegraph*, the gathering is at the Sequeley mosque in Khamis Mushayt in the spring of 2000. It is led by Wail Alshehri and attended by Waleed Alshehri, Ahmed Alnami, and Saeed Alghamdi, who swear "an oath commit themselves to jihad." ([Sennott 3/3/2002](#); [Lamb 9/15/2002](#)) The *Sunday Times* agrees the gathering was led by Wail Alshehri, but says it was attended by five other people whose identities it is unable to ascertain. It speculates they may include Waleed Alshehri, Ahmed Alghamdi, Hamza Alghamdi, and Ahmed Alhaznawi. ([Sunday Times \(London\) 1/27/2002](#))

Spring 2000: Al-Qaeda Recruits Future 9/11 Hijackers in Saudi Arabia

After 9/11, US investigators will find evidence that there is an active branch of al-Qaeda in Saudi Arabia, and will believe it recruits most of the Saudi hijackers there. ([Schneider 10/17/2001](#)) The 9/11 Commission will comment: "Like many other al-Qaeda operatives, the Saudis who eventually became the muscle hijackers were targeted for recruitment outside Afghanistan—probably in Saudi Arabia itself. Al-Qaeda recruiters, certain clerics, and—in a few cases—family members probably all played a role in spotting potential candidates. Several of the muscle hijackers seem to have been recruited through contacts at local universities and mosques. According to the head of one of the training camps in Afghanistan, some were chosen by unnamed Saudi Sheikhs who had contacts with al-

Qaeda. Abdulaziz Alomari, for example, is believed to have been a student of radical Saudi cleric Sulayman al-Alwan. His mosque, which is located in al Qassim Province, is known among the more moderate clerics as a ‘terrorist factory.’ The province is at the very heart of the strict Wahhabi movement in Saudi Arabia.” ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 232-3](#)) Dr. Ali al-Mosa, a Saudi academic from Asir Province, will later say that a cleric known as Sheikh al-Hawashi, who runs a mosque in Khamis Mushayt, is also instrumental in recruiting the hijackers: “Sheikh al-Hawashi was the evil father of the whole thing here. He was the one behind it all and he is still there—he knew five of the kids and he was praying with them.” When Asir is visited by Australian journalist Paul McGeough in 2002, Sheikh al-Hawashi will still be preaching and Dr. al-Mosa will comment: “He has been here for 25 years and he’s very popular.” ([McGeough 10/5/2002](#))

(Spring 2000): NSA Does Not Inform FBI Hijacker Almihdhar Is in US, Reason Unclear

The National Security Agency (NSA) intercepts calls between hijacker Khalid Almihdhar in the US and an al-Qaeda communications hub in Yemen, but does not notify the FBI that Almihdhar is in the US. However, the NSA disseminates reports about some of the calls, which are made from phones registered to Nawaf Alhazmi (see [Spring-Summer 2000](#)). The NSA will later say that it does not usually intercept calls between the US and other countries at this time, as it believes that this should be done by the FBI. Despite this, the NSA acquires information about such calls and provides the information to the FBI in regular reporting and in response to specific requests. The FBI, which has a standing request for such information about any calls between the communications hub in Yemen and the US (see [Late 1998](#)), then uses this information in its investigations based on warrants issued under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act. The NSA will later tell the 9/11 Congressional Inquiry the reason the FBI is not notified about Almihdhar is because it does not realize that Almihdhar is in the US. However, no explanation is offered for why the NSA fails to realize this. ([US Congress 7/24/2003, pp. 36, 73-4](#)) This explanation will be contradicted by one offered in a 2004 article about the issue that reports the intercepts are not exploited precisely because the NSA knows one of the parties is in the US and therefore does not want to deal with his calls (see [Summer 2002-Summer 2004](#) and [2004 and After](#)). In addition, the FBI used information gained from intercepted calls to and from the hub in Yemen to make a world map of al-Qaeda’s organization, indicating that the locations talking to the hub could be determined by US intelligence (see [Late 1998-Early 2002](#)). ([Myers 7/21/2004](#))

March 5, 2000: CIA Learn Hijackers Alhazmi and Almihdhar Have Entered US but Don’t Tell the FBI or Other Agencies

After being prompted by CIA colleagues in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, to provide information about what happened to hijackers Nawaf Alhazmi, Khalid Almihdhar, and al-Qaeda operative Khallad bin Attash after they flew from Malaysia to Thailand on January

8, 2000 (see [January 8, 2000](#)), the CIA station in Bangkok, Thailand, drafts a cable saying that Nawaf Alhazmi arrived in the US from Thailand on January 15 (see [January 15, 2000](#)). This information was received from Thai intelligence, which watchlisted Almihdhar and Alhazmi after being asked to do so by the CIA (see [January 8-15, 2000](#)). Almihdhar's departure is not reported to the Malaysia CIA station, even though he accompanied Alhazmi on the same United Airlines flight. The 9/11 Commission will later presume this departure information on the two hijackers was obtained by the CIA Bangkok station some time in January, but the commission's report will not explain why the station waited until March to share this information with anyone else in the CIA. ([New York Times 10/17/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 181, 502](#)) According to later testimony of a senior FBI official, the CIA also learns about hijacker Khalid Almihdhar at this time: "In March 2000, the CIA received information concerning the entry of Almihdhar and Alhazmi into the United States." ([US Congress 9/20/2002](#)) The CIA disputes this, however. ([US Congress 7/24/2003, pp. 157](#)) Later, CIA officials, including CIA Director George Tenet and Counterterrorism Center Director Cofer Black, will admit that this was one of the missed opportunities to watch list the hijackers. Black will say, "I think that month we watchlisted about 150 people. [The watch listing] should have been done. It wasn't." ([New York Times 10/17/2002](#); [US Congress 7/24/2003, pp. 157](#)) The knowledge that Alhazmi has entered the US will be disseminated throughout the CIA one day later, but not to the FBI or other US intelligence agencies (see [March 6, 2000 and After](#)).

March 6, 2000 and After: Numerous CIA Officers Learn Hijacker Is in US; Fail to Inform FBI

After the CIA learns that hijacker Khalid Almihdhar has a US visa (see [January 2-5, 2000](#)) and hijacker Nawaf Alhazmi has arrived in Los Angeles (see [March 5, 2000](#)), operational documents reporting this are accessed by numerous CIA officers, most of whom are in the Counterterrorism Division. ([Central Intelligence Agency 6/2005](#)) ([US Congress 9/20/2002](#)) However, it is unclear what is done with this information as CIA Director George Tenet and Counterterrorism Center Director Cofer Black will later incorrectly testify that nobody read the cable stating Alhazmi had entered the US (see [October 17, 2002](#)), so the use to which the information is put is never investigated. In addition, the CIA fails to inform the FBI that the al-Qaeda operative has entered the US. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 182](#))

March 10, 2000: Review of Counterterrorism Efforts Show Continued Worries; Sleeper Cells Feared

National Security Adviser Sandy Berger chairs a Cabinet-level meeting to review the wave of attempted terror attacks around the millennium. There are counterterrorism reports that disruption efforts "have not put too much of a dent" into bin Laden's overseas network, and that it is feared "sleeper cells" of al-Qaeda operatives have taken root in the US. It is recommended that the FBI and the Immigration and Naturalization Service

should begin “high tempo, ongoing operations to arrest, detain, and deport potential sleeper cells in the United States.” Some ideas, like expanding the number of Joint Terrorism Task Forces across the US, are adopted. Others, like a centralized translation unit for domestic intercepts, are not. ([9/11 Commission 3/24/2004](#)) In July 2004, it is revealed that the Justice Department is investigating Berger for taking classified documents relating to this review effort out of a secure reading room in 2003. Most of the documents are returned, but a few apparently are lost. ([Solomon 7/20/2004](#); [Harris and Schmidt 7/22/2004](#))

March 12, 2000: Presidential Candidate George Bush Meets with Suspected Supporter of US-Designated Terrorist Groups



Laura and George W. Bush on the left, Sami al-Arian on the right. [*Source: Al-Arian family via Associated Press*] Sami al-Arian poses for a picture with George W. Bush and his wife, Laura Bush, while Bush is campaigning for president in Florida. Bush chit-chats with al-Arian’s family and gives his son Abdullah the nickname “Big Dude.” Al-Arian is a former Florida professor and Muslim political activist who has been under investigation for suspected ties to US-designated terrorist groups. ([Allen and Leiby 2/22/2003](#)) Al-Arian will later tell friends that he used the occasion to press Bush about overturning the Justice Department’s use of “secret evidence” to deport accused terrorists, which is an issue for many Muslim Americans during the presidential campaign. Newsweek will later comment, “In those pre-9-11 days, Bush was eagerly courting the growing Muslim vote—and more than willing to listen to seemingly sincere activists like al-Arian.” ([Isikoff 3/3/2003](#)) At the time, al-Arian is vigorously campaigning for Bush at mosques and Islamic cultural centers in the pivotal state of Florida. In a reference to Bush’s tight margin for victory in Florida which wins Bush the presidential election, al-Arian will later say, “We certainly delivered him many more than 537 votes.” ([Clemetson and Naughton 7/16/2001](#)) Author Craig Unger will later comment, “Astonishingly enough, the fact that dangerous militant Islamists like al-Arian were campaigning for Bush went almost entirely unnoticed.” Bush’s speechwriter David Frum will later write, “Not only were the al-Arians not avoided by the Bush White House—they were actively courted.... The al-Arian case was not a solitary lapse... That outreach campaign opened relationships between the Bush campaign and some very disturbing persons in the Muslim-American community.... [We] Republicans are very

lucky—we face political opponents too crippled by political correctness to make an issue of these kinds of security lapses.” ([Unger 3/15/2004](#))

March 16, 2000: Report: Intelligence Agencies Are Not Acting to Stop Bin Laden’s Businesses and Charities

Intelligence Newsletter reports that a number of Osama bin Laden-owed businesses in Sudan are still operating and still controlled by bin Laden. The report specifically mentions Wadi al-Aqiq, El-Hijra Construction and Development, Taba Investment Company, and the Al-Shamal Islamic Bank. Bin Laden’s control of all these businesses were revealed in detail to US intelligence by al-Qaeda informant Jamal al-Fadl several years earlier (see [December 1996-January 1997](#)). The report notes that both Mahfouz Walad Al-Walid and his cousin-in-law Mohamedou Ould Slahi, both known al-Qaeda leaders, were reportedly employed in recent years by the El-Hijra company. The report further notes that money for bin Laden “pours into accounts at branch offices of Al Taqwa [Bank] in Malta,” Switzerland, and the Bahamas. Businesses and charities supporting bin Laden “are thriving around the world without any real curb on their operations” because “some US and European agencies hunting him seem to lack zeal” in stopping him. “To be sure, if journalists can track down bin Laden’s friends without too much trouble it can be imagined that law enforcement and intelligence agencies have long found the same connections. Recent anti-terrorism history has shown that when the authorities really want to crack down on an organization they cut off its financial and logistic roots. So why are bin Laden’s backers prospering when the world’s most powerful anti-terrorist organizations are chasing him?” ([Intelligence Newsletter 3/16/2000](#))

March 17, 2000: Bin Laden Reportedly Ill

Reports suggest bin Laden appears weak and gaunt at an important meeting of supporters. He may be very ill with liver ailments, and is seeking a kidney dialysis machine. ([Gannon 3/25/2000](#)) It is believed he gets the dialysis machine in early 2001. ([Sage 11/1/2001](#)) He is able to talk, walk with a cane, and hold meetings, but little else. ([Deutsche Presse-Agentur \(Hamburg\) 3/16/2000](#); [Asiaweek 3/24/2000](#)) The ISI is said to help facilitate his medical treatment. ([CBS News 1/28/2002](#))

March 25, 2000: Clinton Visits Pakistan Despite Fears of ISI Ties to Al-Qaeda

President Clinton visits Pakistan. It is later revealed that the US Secret Service believed that the ISI was so deeply infiltrated by Islamic militant organizations, that it begged Clinton to cancel his visit. Specifically, the US government determined that the ISI had long-standing ties with al-Qaeda. When Clinton decided to go over the Secret Service’s protestations, his security took extraordinary and unprecedented precautions. For

instance, an empty Air Force One was flown into the country, and the president made the trip in a small, unmarked plane. ([Risen and Miller 10/29/2001](#))

April 2000: Suspicious Flight School Student Leads to Arizona FBI Investigation



Zacaria Soubra. [*Source: Public domain*] In early April 2000, Arizona FBI agent Ken Williams gets a tip that makes him suspicious that some flight students might be Islamic militants. Williams will begin an investigation based on this tip that will lead to his “Phoenix memo” warning about suspect Middle Easterners training in Arizona flight schools (see [July 10, 2001](#)) ([Yardley and Thomas 6/19/2002](#)) It appears that Lebanese flight school student Zacaria Soubra has been seen at a shooting range with Abu Mujahid, a white American Muslim who had fought in the Balkans and the Middle East. ([Connell 10/28/2001](#); [Sherman 11/2004](#)) Abu Mujahid appears to match Aukai Collins, a white American Muslim who had fought in the Balkans and the Middle East, who also goes by the name Abu Mujahid, and is an FBI informant spying on the Muslim community in the area at the time (see [1998](#)). Collins also claims to have been the informant referred to in the Phoenix memo, which again suggests that Collins was the one at the shooting range with Soubra. ([Lempinen 10/17/2002](#)) On April 7, Williams appears at Soubra’s apartment and interviews him. Soubra acts defiant, and tells Williams that he considers the US government and military legitimate targets of Islam. He has photographs of bin Laden on the walls. Williams runs a check on the license plate of Soubra’s car and discovers the car is actually owned by a suspected militant with explosives and car bomb training in Afghanistan who had been held for attempting to enter an airplane cockpit the year before (see [November 1999-August 2001](#)). ([Graham and Nussbaum 2004, pp. 43-44](#)) On April 17, Williams starts a formal investigation into Soubra. ([House 7/24/2003](#)) Williams will be reassigned to work on an arson case and will not be able to get back to work on the Soubra investigation until June 2001 (see [April 2000-June 2001](#)). He will release the Phoenix memo one month later. After 9/11, some US officials will suspect Soubra had ties to terrorism. For instance, in 2003, an unnamed official will claim, “Soubra was involved in terrorist-supporting activities, facilitating shelter and employment for people... involved with al-Qaeda.” For a time, he and hijacker Hani Hanjour attend the same mosque, though there is no evidence they ever meet. Soubra’s roommate at the time of Williams’ interview is Ghassan al-Sharbi. In 2002, al-Sharbi will be arrested in Pakistan with al-Qaeda leader Abu Zubaida. While Williams will focus on Soubra, al-Sharbi will also be a target of his memo. ([Krikorian](#)

[1/24/2003](#)) In 2004, Soubra will be deported to Lebanon after being held for two years. He will deny any connection to Hanjour or terrorism. ([Wagner 5/2/2004](#))

April 2000: Would-Be Hijacker Tells FBI About Plot to Fly Plane into US Building



Niaz Khan. [*Source: NBC via Banded Artists*

Productions]/Niaz Khan, a British citizen originally from Pakistan, is recruited into an al-Qaeda plot. In early 2000 he is flown to Lahore, Pakistan, and then trains in a compound there for a week with others on how to hijack passenger airplanes. He trains on a mock cockpit of a 767 aircraft (an airplane type used on 9/11). He is taught hijacking techniques, including how to smuggle guns and other weapons through airport security and how to get into a cockpit. In April 2000 he flies to the US and told to meet with a contact. He says, “They said I would live there for a while and meet some other people and we would hijack a plane from JFK and fly it into a building.” ([Lamb 5/9/2004](#)) He has “no doubt” this is the 9/11 plot. However, Khan slips away and gambles away the money given to him by al-Qaeda. Afraid he would be killed for betraying al-Qaeda, he turns himself in to the FBI. For three weeks, FBI counterterrorism agents in Newark, New Jersey interview him. ([Myers 6/3/2004](#); [Barnett, Hannon, and Bright 6/6/2004](#)) One FBI agent recalls, “We were incredulous. Flying a plane into a building sounded crazy but we polygraphed him and he passed.” ([Lamb 5/9/2004](#)) A former FBI official says the FBI agents believed Khan and aggressively tried to follow every lead in the case, but word came from FBI headquarters saying, “Return him to London and forget about it.” He is returned to Britain and handed over to British authorities. However, the British only interview him for about two hours, and then release him. He is surprised that authorities never ask for his help in identifying where he was trained in Pakistan, even after 9/11. ([Myers 6/3/2004](#)) His case will be mentioned in the 2002 9/11 Congressional Inquiry report, but the plot apparently will be mistakenly described as an attempt to hijack a plane and fly it to Afghanistan. ([US Congress 9/18/2002](#))

April 2000: US Granted Permission to Expand Qatar Military Base

The US obtains permission to expand greatly a military base in the Persian Gulf nation of Qatar, and construction begins shortly thereafter. The justification for expanding Al Adid, a billion-dollar base, is presumably preparedness for renewed action against Iraq. ([Arkin 1/6/2002](#)) Dozens of other US military bases sprang up in the region during the 1990s. ([Trilling 11/13/2002](#))

April 2000: LIWA and Able Danger Face Trouble After LIWA Connects Prominent US Figures to Chinese Military

A 1999 study by the US Army's Land Information Warfare Activity (LIWA) to look into possible Chinese front companies in the US seeking technology for the Chinese military created controversy and was ordered destroyed in November 1999 (see [Mid-1999-November 1999](#)). However, apparently Rep. Curt Weldon (R) protests, and the issue finally comes to a head during this month. One result of this controversy will be what Maj. Erik Kleinsmith will later call "severely restricted" support for Able Danger, including a temporary end to LIWA support (see [April 2000](#)) In an April 14, 2000 memorandum from the legal counsel in the Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Capt. Michael Lohr writes that the concern over the LIWA data mining study raises privacy concerns: "Preliminary review of subject methodology raised the possibility that LIWA 'data mining' would potentially access both foreign intelligence (FI) information and domestic information relating to US citizens (i.e. law enforcement, tax, customs, immigration, etc..... I recognize that an argument can be made that LIWA is not 'collecting' in the strict sense (i.e. they are accessing public areas of the Internet and non-FI federal government databases of already lawfully collected information). This effort would, however, have the potential to pull together into a single database a wealth of privacy-protected US citizen information in a more sweeping and exhaustive manner than was previously contemplated." Additionally, the content of the study is another reason why it caused what Weldon calls a "wave of controversy." The study had connected future National Security Adviser and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, former Defense Secretary William Perry, and other prominent US citizens to business transactions with Chinese military officials.(see [Mid-1999-November 1999](#)). ([Lathem 8/27/2005](#); [Office of Congressman Curt Weldon 9/17/2005](#); [US Congress 9/21/2005](#); [Gertz 9/22/2005](#); [Maloo 10/9/2005](#)) One article on the subject will comment, "Sources familiar with Able Danger say the project was shut down because it could have led to the exposure of a separate secret data mining project focusing on US citizens allegedly transferring super-sensitive US technology illegally to the Chinese government." ([Green 9/1/2005](#)) A massive destruction of data from Able Danger and LIWA's data mining efforts will follow, one month later (see [May-June 2000](#)).

April 2000: LIWA Support For Able Danger Program Ends; It Later Restarts

Four analysts from the US Army's Land Information Warfare Activity (LIWA) unit are forced to stop their work supporting the Able Danger program. At the same time, private contractors working for Able Danger are fired. This occurs around the time that it becomes known by some inside the military that LIWA had identified future National Security Adviser and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, former Defense Secretary William Perry, and other prominent Americans as potential security risks (see [April 2000](#)). It was apparently these LIWA analysts (such as Dr. Eileen Preisser) and contractors (such as James D. Smith) who conducted most of the data mining and analysis of al-Qaeda in the preceding months. One of the four LIWA analysts, Maj. Erik Kleinsmith, will later be ordered to destroy all the data collected (see [May-June 2000](#)). LIWA's support for Able Danger will resume a few months later (see [Late September 2000](#)). ([Latham 8/27/2005](#); [US Congress 9/21/2005](#); [Gertz 9/22/2005](#))

[April 2000: Atta Pays For Mysterious Passengers' Taxi Ride](#)

A taxi driver from Bayern, Germany, tells police after 9/11 that this month he drives three Afghanis from Furth, Germany, to meet Mohamed Atta in Hamburg. Atta pays the approximately \$650 taxi bill. Police later determine the identities of these suspicious passengers. One of them, aged 44, trained as a pilot in Afghanistan. His 33 year-old brother is another passenger. The brother had military training and had just come back from the US. Video tapes, aviation papers, and documents that are confiscated in their house are investigated after 9/11. ([Elflein et al. 9/24/2001](#))

[April 2000: Atta in Portland Public Library Before Official Arrival Date](#)

Spruce Whited, director of security for the Portland, Maine Public Library, later says Mohamed Atta and possibly a second hijacker are regulars at the library and frequently use public Internet terminals at this time. He says four other employees recognize Atta as a library patron. "I remember seeing [Atta] in the spring of 2000," he says. "I have a vague Memory of a second one who turned out to be [Atta's] cousin." Whited also says federal authorities have not inquired about the library sightings. Even a year later, he says the FBI does finally speak to librarians, but not in relation to their 9/11 investigation. ([Wedge and Farmer 10/5/2001](#); [Portland Press Herald 10/5/2001](#); [Nasrawi 9/9/2002](#)) The library's executive director says that three other employees came to her saying they had seen Atta about half a dozen times in the spring and summer 2000. ([Walsh 9/30/2001](#)) According to the official story, Atta does not arrive in the US until June 3, 2000. ([Morgan, Kidwell, and Corral 9/22/2001](#); [Australian Broadcasting Corporation 11/12/2001](#))

[April 2000: Yemen's Interior Minister Gives Cole Bombers Safe Passage](#)



Hussein Arab [*Source: al-bab*]Yemen's interior minister, Hussein Arab, issues a letter to al-Qaeda commander Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri instructing Yemeni authorities to give safe passage to al-Nashiri and three bodyguards without being searched or intercepted. The letter states that, "All security forces are instructed to cooperate with him and facilitate his mission." Al-Nashiri's mission turns out to be the attack on the USS *Cole* in which seventeen US sailors are killed (see [October 12, 2000](#)). Arab will be removed from his position in April 2001, but the letter will not come to light until the *Cole* trial in Yemen in 2004, when it is read out in court by the defense. Jamal Amer, editor of the weekly Al-Wasat, will comment that the letter "proves that there is a link between the security authorities and these groups." ([Associated Press 8/25/2004](#)) In May 2001, UPI will report, "According to several US government sources, one of the reasons the attack on the *Cole* succeeded was involvement by the 'highest levels' of the Yemen government of President Ali Abdallah Saleh, although Saleh himself personally was not, one said." ([Sale 5/20/2001](#))

April 2000-June 2001: Arizona FBI Investigation into Suspect Flight School Students Faces Delays

In April 2000, FBI agent Ken Williams begins investigating an Arizona flight student named Zacaria Soubra with suspicious radical militant ties. Soubra will be the main focus of Williams's July 2001 memo about suspect Middle Easterners training in Arizona flight schools (see [July 10, 2001](#)). But Williams' investigation into Soubra is greatly slowed because of internal politics and personal disputes. When he returns to this case in December 2000, he and all the other agents on the international terrorism squad are diverted to work on a high-profile arson case. James Hauswirth, another Arizona FBI agent, will later say, "[Williams] fought it. Why take your best terrorism investigator and put him on an arson case? He didn't have a choice." The arson case is solved in June 2001 and Williams returns to the issue of Islamic militant flight school students. His memo comes out much later than it otherwise might have. Hauswirth will write a letter to FBI Director Mueller in late 2001, complaining, "[Terrorism] has always been the lowest priority in the division; it still is the lowest priority in the division." Others insiders later concur that the Arizona FBI placed a low priority on terrorism cases before 9/11. ([Los Angeles Times 5/26/2002](#); [Yardley and Thomas 6/19/2002](#))

April-May 2000: Hijacker Tells Librarian About Major Attack in US

Around this time hijacker Marwan Alshehhi boasts of planning an attack to a Hamburg librarian. He says, “There will be thousands of dead. You will think of me.” He also specifically mentions the WTC. ([Agence France-Presse 8/29/2002](#); [Butler 8/29/2002](#)) “You will see,” Alshehhi adds. “In America something is going to happen. There will be many people killed.” ([Bernstein et al. 9/10/2002](#)) The Guardian notes that this “demonstrates that the members of the Hamburg cell were not quite as careful to keep secret their plans as had previously been thought. In addition, it appears to bury for good the theory that the pilots were informed of their targets only hours before they took off. Not least, though, Marwan Alshehhi’s boast provides a key element for the reconstruction of the plot—a date by which the terrorists had decided on their target.” ([Hooper 8/30/2002](#))

April 2, 2000: Some Complain Clinton Administration Focusing Too Much on Terrorism

The Washington Post writes, “With little fanfare, [President Clinton] has begun to articulate a new national security doctrine in which terrorists and other ‘enemies of the nation-state’ are coming to occupy the position once filled by a monolithic communist superpower.” In his January 2000 State of the Union address, President Clinton predicts that terrorists and organized criminals will pose “the major security threat” to the US in coming decades. However, some claim that a “preoccupation with bin Laden has caused errors in judgment.” National Security Adviser Sandy Berger counters that the threat of large-scale terrorist attacks on US soil is “a reality, not a perception.... We would be irresponsible if we did not take this seriously.” Counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke predicts that the US’s new enemies “will come after our weakness, our Achilles heel, which is largely here in the United States.” ([Dobbs 4/2/2000](#))

April 4, 2000: ISI Director Visits Washington and Is Told to Give Warning to Taliban

ISI Director and “leading Taliban supporter” Lt. Gen. Mahmood Ahmed visits Washington. He meets officials at the CIA and the White House. In a message meant for both Pakistan and the Taliban, US officials tell him that al-Qaeda has killed Americans and “people who support those people will be treated as our enemies.” The US threatens to support the Northern Alliance, who are still engaged in a civil war with the Taliban. A short time later, Mahmood goes to Afghanistan and delivers this message to Taliban leader Mullah Omar. However, no actual US action, military or otherwise, is taken against either the Taliban or Pakistan. Author Steve Coll later notes that these US threats were just bluffs since the Clinton administration was not seriously considering a change of policy. ([Gellman 12/19/2001](#); [Coll 2004, pp. 508-510](#))

April 4, 2000: Alhazmi Looks Good in First US Flying Lesson

Nawaf Alhazmi takes his first flying lesson in the US. In contrast to a lesson elsewhere a short time later, where the instructor describes him as “dumb” (see [May 5 and 10, 2000](#)), he does quite well. The lesson is at the National Air College in San Diego, in a four-seater plane with instructor Arnaud Petit. During the hour-long flight, Alhazmi proves to be surprisingly adept, and can almost take off and land on his own. Alhazmi is courteous and acts like a businessman. He wants a license within a month and does not seem fazed when Petit says it will cost \$4,000. However, his English is not good enough to start flight training. Petit tells him to improve it and come back in a month, but he never returns. ([Miller, Stone, and Mitchell 2002, pp. 271-2](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 517-8](#)) Alhazmi will say that his flight training continues in the winter (see [December 2000-January 2001](#)).

April 7, 2000: Al-Zawahiri's Brother Arrested, Reveals Secrets of Islamic Jihad

Mohammed al-Zawahiri, brother of al-Qaeda second-in-command Ayman al-Zawahiri, is arrested at the Dubai airport in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). While much less known than his brother, Mohammed quietly served an important role as Ayman's deputy in Islamic Jihad, and the group's military commander (see [1993](#)). He apparently disagreed with the increasing unification between Islamic Jihad and al-Qaeda, and quit in 1998 over that issue. ([Jacquard 2002, pp. 108](#)) According to some sources, he is kidnapped in the UAE by Egyptian forces and then taken back to Egypt, where he had been sentenced to death in absentia the year before. ([Wright 9/9/2002](#)) But his execution is not carried out, and he is said to reveal what he knows about Islamic Jihad. In 2007 it will be reported that his sentence is likely to be lessened in return to agreeing to renounce violence. ([Jacquard 2002, pp. 108](#); [Associated Press 4/20/2007](#))

April 16-18, 2000: Hijackers Receive First Wire Transfer from UAE; Almihdhar Suspected of Being Saudi Intelligence Operative

According to the 9/11 Commission, al-Qaeda financial facilitator Ali Abdul Aziz Ali uses the name “Mr. Ali” to make the first wire transfer from abroad to the hijackers in the US. Five thousand dollars is wired from the Wall Street Exchange Center in Dubai to an account of an acquaintance of hijackers Nawaf Alhazmi and Khalid Almihdhar in San Diego. The Exchange Center makes a copy of Ali's work ID and notes his cell phone number and work address, which is helpful to the FBI after 9/11. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 220](#); [9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 134](#)) Ali, who is a nephew of 9/11 mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, is also accused of wiring hijacker Marwan Alshhehi \$115,000 (see [June 29, 2000-September 18, 2000](#)). Although in a 2007 US

military tribunal in Guantanamo Bay he will admit sending this amount to Alshehhi, he will deny sending \$5,000 to Alhazmi, saying that his personal information was distributed to “thousands of people from different parts of the world,” so it could have been used by somebody else. Some reports indicate that Saeed Sheikh may also have wired the hijackers some money this year (see [Summer 2000](#)). ([US Department of Defense 4/12/2007, pp. 17](#)) Although the hijackers have at least one US bank account (see [February 4, 2000](#)), they tell the administrator of their local mosque, Adel Rafeea, that they do not have one and ask him to allow the money to be paid into his account. It is unclear why they do this. The administrator will come forward after 9/11 and say that Alhazmi and Almihdhar initially described themselves as Saudi government clerks and needed his help to find an English school. After declining Alhazmi’s request for a loan, he permits his account to be used, but then distances himself from them because he is suspicious of the transfer: it came from the United Arab Emirates, not Saudi Arabia, where Alhazmi said it would come from, and the sender is only identified as “Ali.” This causes him to worry that Almihdhar might be an intelligence agent of the Saudi government. ([US Congress 9/26/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 517](#); [McDermott 2005, pp. 191](#))

April 19, 2000: Reports Indicate Israeli Organized Crime Units Dominate Ecstasy Distribution

USA Today reports that “Israeli crime groups... dominate distribution” of Ecstasy. ([Leinwand and Fields 4/19/2000](#)) The DEA also states that most of the Ecstasy sold in the US is “controlled by organized crime figures in Western Europe, Russia, and Israel.” ([United Press International 10/25/2001](#)) According to DEA documents, the Israeli “art student spy ring” “has been linked to several ongoing DEA [Ecstasy] investigations in Florida, California, Texas, and New York now being closely coordinated by DEA headquarters.” ([Berlau 3/11/2002](#))

April 24, 2000: KSM and Other Al-Qaeda Figures Put on New US Domestic ‘No-Fly’ List

TIPOFF is a US no-fly list of individuals who should be detained if they attempt to leave or enter the US. There are about 60,000 names on this list by 9/11 (see [December 11, 1999](#)). Apparently there had been no prohibition of travel inside the US, but on this day a FAA security directive puts six names on a newly created domestic no-fly list. All six are said to be associates of bomber Ramzi Yousef, including his uncle, Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM). On August 28, 2001, six more names will be added to this list. Apparently all 12 names are associated with al-Qaeda or other Islamic extremist groups. 9/11 Commissioner Bob Kerrey will later note the discrepancy of the 60,000-name list with the 12-name list and comment, “seems to me, particularly with what was going on at the time, that some effort would have been made to make—to produce a larger list than [only 12 names].” ([9/11 Commission 1/27/2004](#)) On the day of 9/11, two of the 9/11 hijackers will be on the 60,000-name TIPOFF list but not the 12-name domestic list, so

airport security does not know to stop them from boarding the planes they hijack that day (see August 23, 2001).

April 27, 2000: FAA Advisory Warns of Increased Risk of Terrorist Hijacking

The FAA issues an advisory to airports and air carriers, setting forth its views on the hijacking threat. The advisory states that while conditions for hijackings of airliners had been less favorable in the 1980s and 1990s, “We believe that the situation has changed. We assess that the prospect for terrorist hijacking has increased and that US airliners could be targeted in an attempt to obtain the release of indicted or convicted terrorists imprisoned in the United States.” However, “the terrorist hijacking of a US airliner is more probable outside the United States due to access to safe havens.” ([9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 59](#); [Lichtblau 9/14/2005](#))

Late April-Mid-May 2000: Atta Leaves Numerous Clues While Seeking Crop-Dusting Airplane Loan



Johnelle Bryant. [Source: ABC

News/Mohamed Atta reportedly has a very strange meeting with Johnelle Bryant of the US Department of Agriculture (incidentally, one month before the official story claims he arrived in the US for the first time). According to Bryant, in the meeting Atta does all of the following:

- He initially refuses to speak with one who is “but a female.”
- He asks her for a loan of \$650,000 to buy and modify a crop-dusting plane.
- He mentions that he wants to “build a chemical tank that would fit inside the aircraft and take up every available square inch of the aircraft except for where the pilot would be sitting.”
- He uses his real name even as she takes notes, and makes sure she spells it correctly.
- He says he has just arrived from Afghanistan.
- He tells about his travel plans to Spain and Germany.
- He expresses an interest in visiting New York.

- He asks her about security at the WTC and other US landmarks.
- He discusses al-Qaeda and its need for American membership.
- He tells her bin Laden “would someday be known as the world’s greatest leader.”
- He asks to buy the aerial photograph of Washington hanging on her Florida office wall, throwing increasingly large “wads of cash” at her when she refuses to sell it. ([Ross 6/6/2002](#))
- After Bryant points out one of the buildings in the Washington photograph as her former place of employment, he asks her, “How would you like it if somebody flew an airplane into your friends’ building?”
- He asks her, “What would prevent [me] from going behind [your] desk and cutting [your] throat and making off with the millions of dollars” in the safe behind her.
- He asks, “How would America like it if another country destroyed [Washington] and some of the monuments in it like the cities in [my] country had been destroyed?”
- He gets “very agitated” when he isn’t given the money in cash on the spot.
- Atta later tries to get the loan again from the same woman, this time “slightly disguised” by wearing glasses. Three other terrorists also attempt to get the same loan from Bryant, but all of them fail. Bryant turns them down because they do not meet the loan requirements, and fails to notify anyone about these strange encounters until after 9/11. Government officials not only confirm the account and say that Bryant passed a lie detector test, but also elaborate that the account is consistent with other information they have received from interrogating prisoners. Supposedly, failing to get the loan, the terrorists switched plans from using crop dusters to hijacking aircraft. Other department employees also remember the encounter, again said to take place in April 2000. The 9/11 Commission has failed to mention any aspect of Johnelle Bryant’s account. ([Weiss and Blum 9/25/2001](#); [Ross 6/6/2002](#); [Doran 6/8/2002](#)) Compare Atta’s meeting with FBI Director Mueller’s later testimony about the hijackers: “There were no slip-ups. Discipline never broke down. They gave no hint to those around them what they were about.” ([CNN 9/28/2002](#))

April 30, 2000: State Department Issues Counterterrorism Report Focused on South Asia

The State Department issues its annual report describing the US attempt to combat terrorism. For the first time, it focuses on South Asia. The New York Times notes, “The report reserves its harshest criticism for Afghanistan” and “is also severely critical of Pakistan.” However, neither country is placed on the official list of countries sponsoring terrorism, which has remained unchanged since 1993. ([Miller 4/30/2000](#))

May 2000: CIA and FBI Again Reject Sudan’s Offer to Provide Al-Qaeda Files

The CIA and FBI send a joint investigative team to Sudan to investigate whether that country is a sponsor of terrorism. Sudan again offers to hand over its voluminous files on al-Qaeda (see [March 8, 1996-April 1996](#), [April 5, 1997](#), and [February 5, 1998](#)), and the

offer is again rejected. ([Rose 9/30/2001](#); [Rose 1/2002](#)) The US will finally agree to see the files shortly before 9/11 (see [July-August 2001](#)).

May 2000: FBI Suspect Al-Qaeda Is Infiltrating US after Training Manual Is Discovered



The inside cover of the training manual found in Manchester, depicting a knife plunging through the Earth. [Source: *FBI*] British authorities raid the Manchester home of Anas al-Liby. Remarkably, Liby was a top al-Qaeda leader who nonetheless had been given asylum in Britain (see [Late 1996-May 2000](#)); some speculate his treatment was connected to a joint al-Qaeda-British plot to assassinate Libyan leader Colonel Mu'ammar al-Qadhafi in 1996 (see [1996](#)) . ([Observer 9/23/2001](#)) The raid may have been conducted as part of an investigation into al-Liby's role in the 1998 embassy bombings. ([Associated Press 9/21/2001](#)) During the raid of his home, investigators find "Military Studies in the Jihad Against the Tyrants," a 180-page al-Qaeda training manual. ([Observer 9/23/2001](#)) The manual appears to have been written in the late 1980's by double agent Ali Mohamed. He wrote the manual, and many others, by cobbling together information from his personal experiences and stolen US training guides (see [November 5, 1990](#)). Others have since updated it as different versions spread widely. "The FBI does not know if any of the Sept. 11 hijackers used the manual... However, many of their tactics come straight from Mohamed's lessons, such as how to blend in as law-abiding citizens in a Western society." ([Martin and Berens 12/11/2001](#)) George Andrew, deputy head of anti-terrorism for the FBI's New York City office, later will claim that after studying the manual, the FBI suspect that al-Qaeda operatives are attempting to infiltrate US society. But the FBI think they are not yet ready to strike. ([Associated Press 9/21/2001](#)) The document is quickly exposed in a public trial. ([Observer 9/23/2001](#))

May 2000: Bin Laden Dispatches 400 Fighters to Chechnya

According to al-Qaeda military instructor Abu Daoud, Osama bin Laden sends four hundred fighters to Chechnya with explosives and weapons. Western intelligence sources will confirm the movement in August 2000, but they will not be able to say whether the

fighters are Arabs or Afghans. Abu Daoud will also tell the Associated Press that hundreds of other fighters went in February 1999 and many returned. ([Associated Press 8/30/2000](#)) Two of the 9/11 hijackers, Khalid Almihdhar and Nawaf Alhazmi, reportedly fight in Chechnya (see [1993-1999](#)). Several others plan to do so (see [1996-December 2000](#)), and Ahmed Alghamdi and Saeed Alghamdi have documentation suggesting travel to a Russian Republic. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 233](#))

May 2000: CIA Details Al-Qaeda Using Honey Trade to Move Drugs and Weapons, but No Action Taken Until After 9/11

A secret CIA report details al-Qaeda's use of the honey trade to generate income and secretly move weapons, drugs, and operatives around the world. The CIA had been gathering information and monitoring some honey stores for almost two years before the study. Bin Laden is believed to control a number of retail honey shops in various countries, especially in Sudan, Yemen, and Afghanistan. Al-Qaeda leaders Abu Zubaida and Khalil Deek, an American citizen, are said to be particularly tied to the honey trade. One US official will later say, "The smell and consistency of the honey makes it easy to hide weapons and drugs in the shipments. Inspectors don't want to inspect that product. It's too messy." But although a number of companies dealing in honey are tied to al-Qaeda (and sometimes to Islamic Jihad), the US will not make any move to freeze the assets of these companies until after 9/11. ([Miller and Gerth 10/11/2001](#))

Counterterrorism expert Steven Emerson will later claim Deek was "running an underground railroad in the Middle East for terrorists, shuttling them to different countries," which would fit with his alleged role in the honey network. ([Anderson 9/15/2005](#))

May 2000: 'Wall' Procedures Criticized by Another Report

A Justice Department report into the handling of the Wen Ho Lee investigation attacks the "wall" procedures. The "wall" regulates the passage of some information from FBI intelligence investigations to criminal FBI agents and prosecutors, to ensure such information can legitimately be used in court (see [Early 1980s](#)). After the procedures were formalized (see [July 19, 1995](#)), they were criticized in a 1999 Justice Department report (see [July 1999](#)). The Wen Ho Lee report finds that additional requirements imposed by the Office of Intelligence Policy and Review (OIPR) at the Justice Department (see [Late 1995-1997](#)) that hamper consultations between agents on intelligence investigations and attorneys at the Justice Department's Criminal Division are actually in contravention of the procedures specified in the original 1995 memo. The report states, "It is clear from interviews... that, in any investigation where [the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA)] is employed or even remotely hoped for (and FISA coverage is always hoped for), the Criminal Division is considered radioactive by both the FBI and the OIPR." It also says that the FBI's deputy director has told agents that

contacting prosecutors without the OIPR's permission is a "career stopper." Another report, published in July 2001, finds that some improvements have been made in this area, but recommends further steps. ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 33-36](#))

May-June 2000: Army Officer Told to Destroy Able Danger Documents



Erik Kleinsmith. [*Source: C-SPAN*] Maj. Eric Kleinsmith, chief of intelligence for the Land Information Warfare Activity (LIWA) unit, is ordered to destroy data and documents related to a military intelligence program set up to gather information about al-Qaeda. The program, called Able Danger, has identified Mohamed Atta and three other future hijackers as potential threats (see [January-February 2000](#)). According to Kleinsmith, by April 2000 it has collected "an immense amount of data for analysis that allowed us to map al-Qaeda as a worldwide threat with a surprisingly significant presence within the United States." (see [January-February 2000](#)) ([Fox News 9/21/2005](#); [New York Times 9/22/2005](#)) The data is being collected on behalf of Maj. Gen. Geoffrey Lambert, the J3 at US Special Operations Command, who is said to be extremely upset when he learns that the data had been destroyed without his knowledge or consent. ([US Congress. Senate. Committee on Judiciary 9/21/2005](#)) Around this time, a separate LIWA effort showing links between prominent US citizens and the Chinese military has been causing controversy, and apparently this data faces destruction as well (see [April 2000](#)). The data and documents have to be destroyed in accordance with Army regulations prohibiting the retention of data about US persons for longer than 90 days, unless it falls under one of several restrictive categories. However, during a Senate Judiciary Committee public hearing in September 2005, a Defense Department representative admits that Mohamed Atta was not considered a US person. The representative also acknowledges that regulations would have probably allowed the Able Danger information to be shared with law enforcement agencies before its destruction. Asked why this was not done, he responds, "I can't tell you." ([Broache 9/21/2005](#)) The order to destroy the data and documents is given to Kleinsmith by Army Intelligence and Security Command General Counsel Tony Gentry, who jokingly tells him, "Remember to delete the data—or you'll go to jail." ([Stirland 9/21/2005](#)) The quantity of information destroyed is later described as "2.5 terabytes," about as much as one-fourth of all the printed materials in the Library of Congress. ([De 9/16/2005](#)) Other records associated with the unit are allegedly destroyed in March 2001 and spring 2004 (see [Spring 2004](#)). ([Associated Press 9/21/2005](#); [US Congress 9/21/2005](#); [Fox News 9/24/2005](#))

May 1, 2000-June 4, 2001: Workshops Held at WTC Discuss Possibility of Terrorist Attack on Wall Street



The logo of the New Rule Sets Project, showing the WTC Twin Towers. [Source: *US Naval War College*] Beginning early in 2000, a unique research partnership takes place between the Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island and the Wall Street bond firm Cantor Fitzgerald. The venture is called the New Rule Sets Project and is directed by Thomas Barnett, a senior strategic researcher at the Naval War College. It aims to explore how globalization is altering America's definitions of national security. In particular, the project leads to three-day-long workshops being held at the Windows on the World Restaurant on the 107th floor of the north World Trade Center tower, where Cantor Fitzgerald has offices. These are in May 2000, October 2000, and June 2001. They bring together "Wall Street heavyweights, senior national security officials, and leading experts from academia and think tanks." The participants discuss "globalization's future and the threats that could derail it." They explore scenarios such as "a terrorist strike on Wall Street, war in the Persian Gulf, and a financial crisis in Asia," all of which, as Barnett will later point out, "proved amazingly prescient." ([Naval War College 1/7/2002](#); [Barnett 2004, pp. 5-6, 46-47 and 197](#)) At the second of these workshops, three mysterious "spies" turn up. They do not participate or interact with anyone, but just observe. Despite having a Top Secret clearance, project director Thomas Barnett is not allowed to know their identities. This particular workshop involves the future of foreign direct investment in Asia, so Barnett later suggests the "spies" are observing it, "because both the Pentagon and the intelligence community had developed a laserlike focus on China as the 'rising near-peer competitor.'" Due to the Naval War College's partnership with Cantor Fitzgerald, Barnett visits the World Trade Center two or three dozen times between 1998 and 2001. The last of these visits will be just four days before 9/11, and Barnett is originally scheduled to meet there again two weeks after 9/11. As director of the New Rule Sets Project, he also visits the Pentagon on a regular basis, and will be scheduled to give another briefing there a week after 9/11, in the Navy's command center facilities: an area of the building that is destroyed when the Pentagon is struck. ([Barnett 2004, pp. 46-47 and 224-225](#); [C-SPAN 5/30/2004](#)) Barnett will later reflect, "September 11 was crystallizing. We all just went, This is what we were talking about—a peacetime, war-like event that's so profound it forces us to rethink everything." ([Chaikivsky 12/2002](#)) Cantor Fitzgerald will suffer the greatest single loss by any company on 9/11, with 658 of its employees dying in the north WTC tower.

([Business Week 9/11/2006](#)) But Barnett's two "mentors" at the firm that he interacts with—Bud Flanagan and Philip Ginsburg—will both be out of the building at the time, for "accidental reasons," and therefore survive the attacks. ([Bloomberg 9/13/2001](#); [Barnett 2004, pp. 199](#); [Kreiser 3/8/2005](#)) Within weeks of 9/11, Barnett will be installed as the assistant for strategic futures in Donald Rumsfeld's newly created Office of Force Transformation (see [October 29, 2001](#)). ([Chaikivsky 12/2002](#))

May 5 and 10, 2000: Alhazmi and Almihdhar Are 'Dumb and Dumber' as Pilot Students

Nawaf Alhazmi and Khalid Almihdhar arrive at Sorbi's Flying Club, a small school in San Diego, and announce that they want to learn to fly Boeing airliners. Alhazmi had previously had a lesson at another nearby flying school (see [April 4, 2000](#)). ([Goldstein 9/30/2001](#)) They are there with someone named "Hani"—possibly hijacker Hani Hanjour—but only the two of them go up in an airplane. The 9/11 Commission will say that Hanjour is outside the US at this time, although some media reports will place him in San Diego (see [Early 2000-November 2000](#)). ([Lipka 9/28/2001](#)) Instructor Rick Garza says that the dream to fly big jets is the goal of practically every student who comes to the school, but he notices an unusual lack of any basic understanding of aircraft in these two. When he asks Almihdhar to draw the aircraft, Almihdhar draws the wings on backwards. Both speak English poorly, but Almihdhar in particular seems impossible to communicate with. Rather than following the instructions he was given, he would vaguely reply, "Very good. Very nice." ([Brandon 9/30/2001](#)) The two offer extra money to Garza if he will teach them to fly multi-engine Boeing planes, but Garza declines. ([Goldstein 9/30/2001](#)) "I told them they had to learn a lot of other things first... It was like Dumb and Dumber. I mean, they were clueless. It was clear to me they weren't going to make it as pilots." ([Helmore and Vulliamy 10/7/2001](#) Sources: [Rick Garza](#))

May 10-Mid-December 2000: FBI Asset Fails to Share Valuable Information on Hijackers



Abdussattar Shaikh. [*Source: courtesy Daniel Hopsicker*] While hijackers Nawaf Alhazmi and Khalid Almihdhar live in the house of an FBI asset, Abdussattar Shaikh, the asset continues to have contact with his FBI handler. The handler, Steven Butler, later claims that during the summer Shaikh mentions the

names “Nawaf” and “Khalid” in passing and that they are renting rooms from him. ([Isikoff 9/9/2002](#); [US Congress 7/24/2003, pp. 51](#) ^٥; [Hettena 7/25/2003](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 220](#)) In early media reports, the two are said to have moved in around September, but the 9/11 Congressional Inquiry implies that Shaikh lied about this, and they moved in much earlier. Alhazmi stays until December; Almihdhar appears to be mostly out of the US after June. ([Thornton 9/16/2001](#); [Mollenkamp et al. 9/17/2001](#); [Lipka 9/28/2001](#); [US Congress 7/24/2003, pp. 157](#) ^٥) On one occasion, Shaikh tells Butler on the phone he cannot talk because Khalid is in the room. ([Isikoff 9/9/2002](#)) Shaikh tells Butler they are good, religious Muslims who are legally in the US to visit and attend school. Butler asks Shaikh for their last names, but Shaikh refuses to provide them. Butler is not told that they are pursuing flight training. Shaikh tells Butler that they are apolitical and have done nothing to arouse suspicion. However, according to the 9/11 Congressional Inquiry, he later admits that Alhazmi has “contacts with at least four individuals [he] knew were of interest to the FBI and about whom [he] had previously reported to the FBI.” Three of these four people are being actively investigated at the time the hijackers are there. ([US Congress 7/24/2003, pp. 51](#) ^٥) The report mentions Osama Mustafa as one, and Shaikh admits that suspected Saudi agent Omar al-Bayoumi was a friend. ([US Congress 7/24/2003, pp. 51](#) ^٥; [Reza, Connell, and Lopez 7/25/2003](#)) Alhazmi and Shaikh remain in contact after Alhazmi leaves San Diego in December. Alhazmi calls Shaikh to tell him he intends to take flying lessons in Arizona and that Almihdhar has returned to Yemen. He also e-mails Shaikh three times; one of the e-mails is signed “Smer,” an apparent attempt to conceal his identity, which Shaikh finds strange. However, Alhazmi does not reply to e-mails Shaikh sends him in February and March of 2001. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 223](#)) The FBI later concludes Shaikh is not involved in the 9/11 plot, but they have serious doubts about his credibility. After 9/11 he gives inaccurate information and has an “inconclusive” polygraph examination about his foreknowledge of the 9/11 attack. The FBI will believe he had contact with hijacker Hani Hanjour, but claimed not to recognize him. There are other “significant inconsistencies” in Shaikh’s statements about the hijackers, including when he first met them and later meetings with them. The 9/11 Congressional Inquiry later concludes that had the asset’s contacts with the hijackers been capitalized upon, it “would have given the San Diego FBI field office perhaps the US intelligence community’s best chance to unravel the September 11 plot.” ([US Congress 7/24/2003, pp. 51](#) ^٥) The FBI later tries to prevent Butler and Shaikh from testifying before the 9/11 Congressional Inquiry in October 2002. Butler ends up testifying, but Shaikh does not. ([Schmidt 10/11/2002](#))

May 12, 2000-December 9, 2004: Parents of Slain Teenager Successfully Sue Hamas Entities



David Boim. *[Source: Public domain]* The parents of a US teenager killed in a West Bank attack sue Mohammad Salah, Mousa Abu Marzouk, the Holy Land Foundation, Quranic Literacy Institute, and Islamic Association for Palestine (IAP) for \$600 million. Stanley and Joyce Boim claim these people and entities were a “a network of front organizations” in the US that funded the attack that killed their 17-year-old David Boim. Their son was gunned down in 1996 while waiting at a bus stop; the attack was blamed on Hamas. Suing suspected terrorists for damages is allowed under a 1992 law, but it had never been done before. The suit claims that the Hamas finance network paid for the vehicle, machine guns, and ammunition used to kill Boim. The case is based on the investigative work of FBI agent Robert Wright and his *Vulgar Betrayal* investigation. Salah’s house and bank accounts were seized as part of the investigation. ([Schweid 5/14/2000](#); [Associated Press 6/6/2002](#)) The Holy Land Foundation is defended in the suit by Akin, Gump, Strauss, Hauer & Feld, a Washington law firm said to have influence with the Bush family. For instance, one firm partner is James Langdon, one of the future President Bush’s close Texas friends. ([Mulvihill, Wells, and Meyers 12/11/2001](#)) On December 9, 2004, it will be announced that the elder Boims have won the suit. All of the above-mentioned people and entities will be found guilty and ordered to pay the Boims a total of \$156 million. There is little chance the Boims will ever see all of that large sum, especially since the organizations will be shut down and have their assets frozen in the years since the suit began. Joyce Boim will say, “I finally have justice for David. He’s up there, smiling down.” ([Associated Press 12/9/2004](#))